

LAW

THE MORELLI BROTHERS
SONS OF THE WICKED SERIES

USA TODAY BEST SELLING AUTHOR

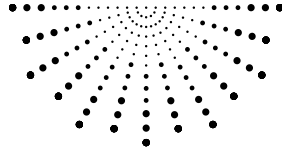
SK LESSLY

LAW

THE MORELLI BROTHERS

SONS OF THE WICKED SERIES

BOOK ONE



SK LESSLY

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AUTHOR THANKS

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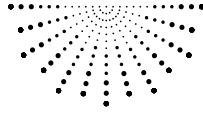
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PROLOGUE



LAWSON

It was four o'clock in the morning, and despite the early hour, darkness still covered the city. I loved this city. It could be early in the morning or late at night, and you would always see and hear the pulse of city life. Tonight was no different. Despite the hour, from where I was perched, I could hear the busy streets below. People were speeding through the neighborhood with probably no place important to go. Just driving recklessly because they could. Foot traffic from locals were either trying to get home or leaving their home to start their day.

However, I didn't care about the musings happening on the streets below. My focus was on the building in front of me, a set of windows in particular.

"Law, everything's quiet around you," my brother, Grey, announced through the high-powered earpiece, which sat behind my ear instead of inside it.

The earpiece was small, close to the size of a dime, and obscured by my earlobe. It was very powerful, a state-of-the-art communication tech engineered by my brother. The earpiece also acted as a mic. It was strong enough to pick up my voice even if I whispered.

To turn the device on or activate an open line of communication to my brothers, all I had to do was tap the small device once. From there I could speak freely to my brothers and them to me. You also tapped twice to end transmission. This hardware was truly a work of genius.

He spoke again, giving me the Intel that I needed. “There’s no movement coming from the dark windows of the building in front of you and not a peep from the building beneath you. The coast is clear.”

Grey was my eyes and ears in the sky with the use of tiny drones he had built. The drones came in handy when we needed on site Intel gathered before boots were placed on the ground. They were quiet, small, and could blend in with the shadows of night.

The drones could also pick up a person’s body heat behind thick walls, even ones lined with reinforced steel, concrete, and even lead. They could record private conversations and take digital videos and pictures. I depended on them when out in the field alone. They made my job easier, which made them a must have on any op.

“Understood,” I whispered back.

A soft warm breeze swirled around me, carrying an awful stench of garbage, sewage, and hot piss. *You gotta love New York, especially in the summer.*

I reluctantly took a deep breath, adjusted the measurements on the scope of my rifle, reacquired my target, and let the breath I was holding, out slowly.

“Target is in sight.”

“Is he alone?”

That question was asked by my other older brother, Nix, and it took everything in me not to cuss him the fuck out.

Was he serious?

I knew for a fact he saw the same shit I did. The feed from Grey’s drones was being fed to his cell phone. So why in the fuck was he asking me if the target was alone? *To piss me off, that’s why.*

For the record, I hated when someone questioned me. Yes, I was fully aware that asking questions was a part of our everyday life. It was how we learned, how we got by in this fucked up world. That didn’t mean I had to like it. I barely

tolerated someone asking me simple shit like, ‘what would I like to order?’ or ‘can I help you?’ or my favorite... ‘would you like me to suck you off?’ *Of course I do. Why else would you be on your knees?*

What I did not tolerate were people questioning me while I was on a job or about a job I completed. I put 110% in everything I did. I did nothing half-assed. I was a professional, for fuck’s sake. Which meant there was no need to waste breath questioning me or my abilities. It was downright insulting and fucking disrespectful, if you asked me.

My *knobhead* brothers knew that questioning me sent my temper to other worldly heights. This wasn’t some hidden secret. This was a known fact dating back to when I was a snot-nosed kid and yet those two roadkill, fucking idiots, still pushed for the hell of it.

Fucking wankers...

When I didn’t answer Nix, he sighed as if his own temper was being tested—*like I gave a toss*—and added, “Fuckface, I’m not looking at my phone. Timmy is driving and you know how he drives. I have to have my head on a swivel to make sure he doesn’t kill us. So, cut me some slack, stop being an *arse* and answer my question.”

Knowing he had a point about Timmy and his driving skills, I blew out a slow, exaggerated breath and said in a low tone, barely giving him the benefit of the doubt, “No, he’s not alone.”

“Really? Male or female?”

“Female. Or shall I say females. Two, to be exact. Probably paid entertainment. His fat *arse* couldn’t pull a wagon of pillows, much less these two gorgeous women.”

I heard two snorts in my earpiece, which caused my lips to twitch slightly.

Nix cleared his throat, and I instantly tensed, knowing what this fucker was about to do. He paused for a long couple of heartbeats before he asked hesitantly, barely hiding the humor in his voice, “Will they be a problem for you?”

See what the fuck I mean? Do you see why I don't give them an inch? Because these greedy, shit-eating cunts always took a mile.

I briefly closed my eyes and counted to ten, then twenty, all while trying to talk myself out of beating the shit out of my older *brother* on sight.

“I’m just asking,” he added, which from the lightness in his voice, I knew he enjoyed pissing me off.

Fortunately for the little pissant, I wasn’t in the mood to play this silly mind game. Instead, I asked a question of my own.

“Tell me again why we’re killing this clueless shit for brains?” I whispered, trying to keep my breathing under control, resisting the urge to train my sights on the other windows facing me and allowing the drones to have my back. Don’t get me wrong, I trusted Grey and his lil’ helpers. I did. But sometimes, in certain situations, I just trusted myself more.

“He’s supposed to be this bad arse, right?” I asked pointedly. “He doesn’t seem like it. First, he arrived at his flat alone with these trollops, gallivanting around as if he was royalty. He had no bodyguards with him. No one hanging around the building keeping him safe. He also didn’t check his surroundings or conduct a sweep of the flat before he settled. I’m telling you, something isn’t right. This entire job smelt like shit.”

Nix grunted in my ear but remained silent. I assumed he was thinking about what I said, which was what I needed him to do.

“I agree, *bruv*, there is something off with his behavior,” Grey agreed, then added quickly, “But so far, the drones haven’t picked up anything that would cause concern.”

“Yeah, I don’t see anything either, but you’re missing the point,” I said sharply. “Shit just doesn’t feel right. Something’s off with this whole mess. Just be sure to keep your little toys airborne, looking for anything out of the ordinary, yeah?”

“Yeah, got it,” was Grey’s reply.

I took a deep breath and tried to focus on the task at hand, but I still felt unsettled. I felt eyes on me. I felt exposed, despite hiding in the shadows of this roof. The dark clothes I wore aided as my camouflage.

I wasn’t being paranoid about feeling eyes on me, and it had nothing to do with the many windows facing me. The shit my brothers and I have been dealing with for the past several weeks was the reason for my uneasiness.

About two months ago, someone thought it was a great idea to try to kill us. We had been ambushed by ten mercenaries armed to the teeth during a job we completed for one of our clients. The attempt failed of course, however, I didn’t leave anyone alive to *chat up*, much to Nix’s dismay. Yet all was not lost. Grey found the one responsible for sending the kill squad. Regrettably, when Nix went to interrogate him, he didn’t get much from the bloke. Only a few leads that didn’t pan out. We confiscated his personal computer, hoping to get everything sorted, but so far, we had nothing.

I wasn’t worried. I knew it would only be a matter of time before we found the cunts who tried to take us out and when we did... *whew*. I got chills just thinking about all the fun I would have educating them on what happens when you fuck with the Morelli brothers.

Who were the Morelli brothers, you ask? Good question. One I would let slide this one time and answer. Just don’t make a habit of questioning me, yeah?

The Morelli brothers consisted of three intelligent, good-looking blokes: me, Nix, and Grey. We wore many hats in our world. We were entrepreneurs for the most part, taking on various jobs that required a certain set of skills my brothers and I possessed. We charged handsomely for our services and created a proper name for ourselves, but we always remained professional.

Most of the time, we worked in the shadows under a pseudonym. It was safer that way, safer for the ones that hired

us mainly, but I guess safer for us too. When we weren't in the shadows, we worked as enforcers for our father.

More about his sorry arse later. Just note I hate his fucking useless, piece of shit, arse...

A thought suddenly popped into my head. I asked, "Did this hit come from another handler? One we know?"

Irritation crept along my spine as the realization of what my words could mean sank in. *Why in the hell didn't I think to ask this sooner?*

In our world, handlers were individuals that either requested special services or searched for, *how shall I say it...*, unlawful jobs to assign to skilled technicians such as myself and my brothers.

These individuals were tasked with seeing a job assigned to completion and provide support if ever necessary. You had to be a suspicious and careful bloke dealing with handlers. They were trained to look out for themselves and could burn you in any job. The op came second and the ones out there risking their lives to complete the job were indispensable.

Most of the time my brothers and I worked alone. We rarely needed or used handlers for the reasons I mentioned. People reached out to us on the dark web for our services, and Nix decided if we took the jobs or not. However, we stumbled on a handler that was different from the rest. She was good. She actually thought of us as more than disposable bodies. It could also have something to do with her having a thing for Grey, but we'd take it.

Nix let out a sigh and said, bringing me out of my thoughts, "Yes, this came from a reliable source. It wasn't Jade, but it was someone we've used in the past."

Jade was the aforementioned female handler, the one that had the hots for Grey who, I might add, either didn't have a clue about Jade *fancying* him or was in denial. My vote was the former.

I snorted, couldn't help it.

“You do know we knew the handler that set up the hit on us too. We had done work for him, and he still stabbed us in the back. Who’s to say this wasn’t the same situation?”

“I understand your concern,” Nix replied. “But don’t worry. We’re good on this. Plus, this job was backed up by Zeus.”

“What?!” I hissed, doing my best to contain my temper and failing. “Fuck, now I know this shit is a setup.” I growled and thought about packing up my long gun and getting the fuck out of here.

Fuck Zeus!

“*Bruv*, calm down. The Intel checked out, trust me,” Grey said quickly, knowing I was about to bail, and he needed to talk me into staying fast before I was gone. “Jade and I checked him out. Tony Cipriano was the money man for a couple of families out of Chicago and here in New York. He stole money from the families he worked for and they found out. They put a price on his head because of it. But somehow, he got wind of it and went into hiding. Unfortunately, he wasn’t hiding well enough. The Feds picked him up in some underage prostitution-ring bullshit. They found videos of him with young girls and boys.”

I could feel my stomach turning and my hatred and rage building as my brother spoke. If there was one thing that I hated the most, besides my useless knob of a father and being questioned, were those who hurt children. Pieces of shit like that needed to have their dicks cut off, shoved down their throats, then set on fucking fire and burned alive.

“Let me guess,” I interrupted, disgust in my voice, “the Feds offered him a deal. Testify against the families for no jail time.”

“Bingo,” Grey replied, and I could hear the disgust in his voice too. “This *nonce* needs to eat a bullet.”

“Hold on, question. If he’s under the protection of the Feds, how is he free and roaming the streets of New York?”

Nix asked. It was a good question, one that was on the tip of my tongue.

“Not sure about that,” Grey informed us. “Maybe he gave his babysitters the slip for some arse. Or maybe he’s sitting out in the open waiting for someone to take him out so the Feds could grab the gunman, who knows? Does this change the job at hand?”

I knew that question was for me, and I had no problem with answering.

“Fuck no.”

With a new attitude and purpose, I put more focus on Tony Cipriano, the soon to be dead man. I relaxed my index finger on the trigger, while taking a few long deep breaths, calming my heart rate and pulse. The trio in my sights were sitting on a cream sofa, Tony in the middle, the women on either side of him. They were laughing, drinking, not a care in the world. Well, that was about to change.

I wonder if I should shoot him in the dick first before the head. Make him suffer before he died.

I grinned at that thought as I centered on a new target. I began to breathe in... and out... noting the wind blowing lightly around me and adjusting my scope.

In... and out... I locked down all sounds around me except for the pulsing of my heart as it slowed.

In... and out... a shot to his balls, then double tap to the head. It'd be messy but fuck it.

In... and... what the fuck?

I caught a slight movement of curtains in a window just above Cipriano's. It could have been because of a breeze from the opened window, but my instincts were telling me I finally found the source of my unease. I was just about to ask my brother to confirm my suspicions when I heard his heightened tone in my ear.

“Hold on, bruv, we got movement.”

“Yeah, I saw it. The flat just above Tony's. I need—”

“Well yeah, there too, but that’s not what I meant. There are two SUVs speeding toward your direction. I don’t think they’re taking a nice early morning drive,” Grey announced, and I immediately tensed.

“Feds?” I blurted out, moving my scope to the window where I saw movement. I switched to infrared to check and see if I could pick up any heat signatures, and fuck me, I found one. I heard tires screeching in the distance, but I didn’t move. I was too busy trying to figure out what the prone figure in my sights was doing.

“Uhh, I don’t think they’re Feds unless the Feds like to carry silenced submachine guns,” Grey answered in a faraway tone.

Fuck...

“Give me the skinny, Grey, and do it fast,” Nix ordered, his voice heightening to alarm.

I heard Grey giving Nix a play-by-play on what was happening, but I wasn’t paying them any attention. My focus remained on the figure in my sights. I was just about to cut in and tell Grey to put a drone on the window I was looking into when I saw a flash of heat through my scope. My instincts, being what they were, helped me understand my situation immediately.

“There’s another shooter,” I whispered and lowered my head just as a high-velocity bullet zipped over my head. “Looks like I’m the fucking target.”

Nix yelled for me to haul ass.

Yeah, I wasn’t going anywhere. Not yet anyway. Not until I...

I fired three silenced shots, *tap... pause... tap-tap*.

I didn’t wait around to confirm my kill. There was no fucking need. I started disassembling my rifle as my brother gave me an update.

“Law, there are ten guys on the street below you. Five from each truck. Four just entered the building you’re on.

Three went around the back and the rest have the front door covered. Get the fuck out of there.”

“Yeah, no shit. I need a fucking exit. You have one for me?”

I packed up my gear in my backpack and slung it over my shoulder. I policed my brass before hightailing it to the rooftop door, hoping I had time to make my way down a few floors before they started looking for me on the roof. I placed my ear to the cool metal door and paused, listening for any sounds. At first, it sounded as if the coast was clear. But just as I was about to open the door and step inside the staircase, I heard heavy booted footsteps loud and fast, which meant they were heading to the roof.

Bollocks...

“I need another exit, Grey. Fucking now!” I barked, searched my area, and found a possible getaway.

It would be risky, but I had no choice. I started running for the building next to the one I was on. The roof was flat just like this one, but the distance was tricky. I ran full speed and jumped as far and as high as I could. I landed roughly, my shoulder taking the brunt of my landing, rolled, and came up in a crouch. I pulled my Sig Sauer, P226, pistol from the waistband of my jeans. I breathed in and out and pointed my gun toward the roof I’d just left.

I quickly screwed on my silencer while scanning the surrounding darkness.

The sound of the rooftop door bursting open caused me to start moving again. I noticed the next building was a bit further than I had just jumped. However, I knew I could make it. I didn’t look behind me, but I felt, then heard a bullet as it zoomed past my head.

Fuck, that was close.

“Grey... get me the fuck out of here.”

“I’m working on it, bruv, gimme a second, yeah,” came a growled tone through my earpiece.

“Well, work fucking faster. I’m running out of buildings to leap to,” I told him just as I made another leap to a back building to my right, trying to put some distance from the men waiting on the street for me and the ones in hot pursuit.

There was no need to look back because I felt them, felt the threat behind me, the danger. Adrenaline and excitement surged throughout my body like a rush of wind from a strong storm. Fuck, I loved this shit. I was outnumbered, outgunned. But one thing I knew for sure. They would never catch me.

There was a dark brick structure in front of me with a door that led inside the building. I checked the door, found it locked. I was just about to shoot the lock off the door when the heat from another bullet whizzed past me, hitting the brick right next to my head.

Fuck...

I took cover behind the brick structure, took aim, and scanned the area for a target. It was a long few seconds before I saw someone leap from one building to the next. Another dark-clad figure made the leap, but when a third tried, I took aim and shot him in midair. The man dropped instantly, hitting something metal as he fell. The sound caused the other two men to pause and look behind them. That was all I needed. Four rapid, silenced shots spit out of my gun and into both assailants. They dropped as well. A barrage of bullets suddenly took out chunks of brick next to my face, causing me to take cover again. The fourth man had been lagging behind just in case.

Keeping cover, I scanned the area behind me while my brother gave me instructions on how to get the fuck out of dodge. The instructions given told me to head to the building’s edge to the fire escape. I darted to the edge of the building, keeping to the shadows. I climbed over, jumped on the metal landing, and quickly made my way down the rickety steps to the last level; stealth be damned. Bullets started ricocheting off the metal as I moved quickly. Return fire came from a black SUV sitting in the alleyway beneath me, aiming in the directions of the shots behind me. I kept going.

I saw Nix step out of the truck, took aim again, and fired his silenced weapon giving me cover. I climbed over the edge of the fire escape steps, dropped to the truck's hood, and shimmied over the side and onto the street.

"Let's go!" I yelled at my brother as I opened the back door. I fired the rest of my rounds at the building's edge as Nix ran for the passenger door. Once he was in, I hopped in and slammed the door.

"Go, go, go!" I screamed out, and the truck took off down the alleyway. The driver, our pal Timmy, took a right turn at the mouth of the alleyway and drove as fast as he legally could, putting as much distance between the scene we'd just left and us.

Timmy made a few more turns, then came to a stop at another alleyway. A dark figure dressed in black emerged from the mouth of the alley. I leaned over, opened the back door, and Grey slid into the seat, throwing his bag inside the truck before taking his seat. The truck started moving again, this time at a much slower pace. I kept my eyes to our rear, watching for any tails while pulling off my backpack and stowing it in the back of the SUV.

Ten minutes later, after confirming no one followed us, I took a calming breath and finally relaxed. Nix turned from the passenger seat and glanced at me.

"You good?"

I gave him a pointed look and growled, "What the fuck do you think? Someone tried to kill me... again. That's once too many."

"The hit was a setup," Nix stated, and I rolled my eyes.

"Yeah, no fucking shit." I barked but didn't elaborate on the thoughts swirling around in my head. We were in mixed company, and we didn't trust Timmy for obvious reasons. He was Zeus's stooge.

I closed my eyes and tried to make sense of what just happened. Who in the fuck was trying to take us out? Yeah, I was sure we had enemies, but for the most part, we've kept

under the radar. Any of the shit we did for our business wasn't public knowledge.

People hired an image, a fictitious name called John Smith. We were extremely careful, never having met any of our clients in person. Security was our top priority, and we made sure no one could trace our identities.

And yet there were two attempts on our lives. That meant whoever was after us knew who we were. Maybe this had to do with Zeus. The underworld knew that we worked for our father. That wasn't a secret. We also had a few friends we did jobs for, but they had no clue that we also worked under the name John Smith.

Regardless, we checked out everyone we did business for, outside of Zeus, and they came up clean. So, this had to be something else. Someone wanted us dead, and we needed to find out who that someone was and soon.

"Fuck me, that shit was close," Timmy blurted out, chuckled lightly, then asked hesitantly, "So I guess the job was a bust? Who's going to tell Zeus?"

I opened my eyes and met his in the rearview mirror.

"Why do you think the job was a bust, Timmy?"

He frowned, his face reddening slightly, but he answered, "I mean... there were people chasing you. Nix said there was another shooter I assumed."

I shook my head and tsked. "Ye of little faith. I have never *not* completed a mission."

"So, you shot the guy then?"

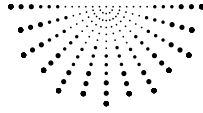
I sighed audibly and gave him a heated look that caused him to look away. I leaned forward and whispered close to his ear, "I shot them both, Timmy. One for the sniper here," I reached around and tapped him in the middle of the forehead with my index finger, "... and two for Cipriano." I tapped him two more times, same spot. I then brought my hand on the knobhead's shoulder and squeezed hard. "Any other questions?"

Timmy tried not to flinch, but he couldn't help himself. I released my hold, allowing him to snatch his shoulder out of my grip. He didn't look my way, nor did he utter a sound, which was smart on his part. He understood the killer that was behind him. It was better for him to keep his mouth shut. I had no problem putting a bullet in the back of his head, dumping him in the gutter, then driving away, leaving his corpse for the rats to feast.

Silence consumed the car again. I could feel the smirks from my brothers, but I didn't make eye contact. I simply leaned back in my seat and closed my eyes.

I needed a fucking drink.

CHAPTER ONE



SYDNEY

My eyes perused the packed bar area, looking for an open space where I could sit and order a drink without being forced to socialize or get hit on.

I was standing just outside of a place called the Ty Bar, which was located inside the Four Seasons Hotel in Midtown, New York. I had just arrived here from L.A., and the plane and cab rides here were long and tedious. All I wanted to do was go up to my hotel suite, run myself a bath, and soak the entire day away. But before that, I needed a drink. Matter of fact, I needed a shitload of drinks.

My eyes finally found an empty seat at the bar that seemed too good to be true. The empty bar stool sat alone on the corner facing me, facing the entire bar to be exact. It was prime real estate if someone wanted to people watch, your back to a wall and the bar view uninhibited. And yet it was available?

Still not believing my eyes, I searched the space further, looking for signs that someone occupied the seat. As far as I could tell, there wasn't anyone there claiming the seat. There wasn't an abandoned glass or bottle of beer sitting there waiting for its owner to return. There were two women, one sitting and the other standing, at the end of the bar, but their focus was on each other instead of the seat. They didn't seem interested at all.

Wait a minute... Hold on. Maybe the stool wasn't free. I noticed a man standing in the shadows with his back to me and

a phone to his ear. He was a few paces away from the bar but close enough for the seat to be his.

I decided to head in that direction anyway. If I got there and the seat was his, then so be it. I'd just order a drink and find a piece of a wall to lean on for a while. I was sure, from all the horny looking people at the bar, that a seat would come open sooner rather than later. If I hadn't accomplished my goal of being shit-faced by then, I'd take their seat.

Plans now set, I carefully made my way to the bar, keeping my eyes focused in front of me. In this type of setting, you never wanted to make eye contact just in case there were some hopefuls and delusional people present thinking it was okay to hit on you. A piece of advice... if you wanted to survive in shark-infested waters such as this bar, or any bar or club, you had to keep an unfriendly expression on your face at all times. Otherwise, you would definitely get hit on by men unpleasant to look at or those individuals that loved to bathe in cheap cologne or any cologne for that matter. Or worse, men who were old enough to be your great-grandfather. No bullshit. And I won't go into the women out here looking for PYTs—*that stands for 'Pretty Young Things' for those who don't know the Michael Jackson hit song.*

As I weaved my way through the crowded bar, I could feel hungry eyes on me, taking me in greedily, ready to pounce if I faltered. I kept my head held high and a pep in my step, glancing beyond the mini crowd that was hoarding the space around the bar. All the while, I prayed that I would get to the seat in one piece.

I was a few paces back from my final destination when a woman suddenly stumbled into me laughing, giggling, and drunk, with a heavy thirstiness in her eyes.

I side-stepped her, avoiding her sloshing drink, when some guy came out of nowhere, pushed me aside, and rushed to aid the so-called damsel in distress. I stumbled a few steps, righted myself, and threw an evil eye his way, which he ignored. He was too busy focused on the girl in his arms.

Fucking asshole...

I glanced down at my clothes and shoes, checking to make sure I was dry. I glanced behind me again and found the woman who had stumbled, smiling up at her expensively dressed hero. She was completely focused on him, her hands resting possessively on his puny biceps, her drunk act successful.

I snorted derisively in her direction. *See what I mean? So fucking thirsty...*

I shook my head in pity, so thankful I wasn't that hard up to find some penis action or to find a man at all. She could have it. All these women in here could. As far as I was concerned, I was done with men for a while. Hell, maybe forever. I didn't need one in my life. All they caused was heartache, pain and... *Ho-ly shit! Who the fuck is that?*

I stopped dead in my tracks as the man who had been on the phone turned around and blessed me with a full view of his stunning good looks. *I mean, this man right here was... good god almighty!*

It felt as if the entire world stopped moving except for him. My imagination went wild. I pictured this man's gorgeous hair flapping in the wind as he stood there looking ominous and feral. You know, like in one of those shampoo commercials where the wind blew the overly handsome man's hair back. Yeah, I was having one of those moments and I had no idea how to snap out of it.

This man was the definition of a Greek God, jaw chiseled and masculine, a tamed beard surrounding full lips. His shoulders were broad and encased in an expensive charcoal gray suit, a white shirt with the first two buttons undone, and no tie. His dark hair was long and wavy, falling past his shoulders.

I had never—in all the days of breathing life inside my lungs—seen a man that looked as fine as this man.

And his eyes... when they finally met mine, I inhaled sharply, my own eyes wide as hell. To see this man head on, his storm-filled gray eyes took me in... shit, I damn near fainted.

Is that a thing? Can you faint from just the sight of a man? I was about to test that theory if I didn't get my shit in order.

But I couldn't seem to stop staring at him. The look on his face bartered no room for pleasantries or niceties, but I didn't care. The brooding look he sported made him even more tantalizing, appealing, and sexy as hell. I was hypnotized by him, unable to shift my eyes away from all of God's glory to get ahold of my life, my bearings.

Hottie McNaughty—that's what I was calling him for the moment—watched me intently as he approached the bar, his eyes perusing my body from head to toe, slowly taking in every inch of me, which was okay with me.

Please get your fill because I'm definitely doing the same.

From the intensity in his eyes, I felt my body heat rise. My heart pounded feverishly against my chest. The funny thing was that the look of '*don't fuck with me*' that he wore proudly never wavered. The tension I saw along his shoulders didn't ease. He didn't even smile at me. That was okay by me too. I was too busy thinking about all the ways he could elicit mind blowing orgasms from my body until I passed the hell out to care.

"Ummm, excuse me, that's his seat," said a bitter female voice that snapped me out of my trance.

I blinked a few times, realizing I had been eye fucking this man without shame. I didn't bother with an apology because I wasn't sorry at all. No, sir. Since God saw fit to make this man fine as hell, I had the right to ogle until my heart's content, especially when he was doing the same to me.

I ignored the whiny voice behind me and focused on the quiet, mysterious man before me.

"Is this seat yours?" I asked, praying he'd say yes just so I could... so I could... fuck, I hadn't a clue what I wanted to do.

No, that wasn't true. I knew what I wanted to do. It was just that I would probably go to jail for indecent exposure if I allowed my imagination to run free.

Hottie McNaughty gave me a twitch of a smile, but when I heard his sexy as fucking hell voice, I almost passed out again.

“It was, but it’s all yours,” he said in this sultry, deep British accented voice.

My word...

I was speechless, mouth dry and all.

Not only was this specimen of a man hot as all hell, but he was British too? Fate hated me. I was sure of it.

All I was capable of, in that moment, was a small smile as Hottie pulled out the stool for me to sit down. At first, I thought he was going to leave, in which case my heart would have shattered into a million pieces. Gratefully, he merely stepped up to the bar between me and the woman who screeched at me about his seat being taken.

I finally placed my eyes on said woman and found her to be... attractive, if you liked the plastic looking, fake type. It finally occurred to me that Hottie and the woman could’ve been a couple. When I really looked at them both, I could see it. They looked like they could be one of those hot power couples. Like Jay-Z and Beyoncé.

Here’s the visual...

The woman was deeply tanned, tall, thin with large breasts, long blonde hair, green eyes, and pouty lips. Okay, let me change my previous observation of the woman and admit, *reluctantly*, that she was very attractive. I could see why Hottie didn’t mind giving up his seat. It probably meant he could be closer to her.

I let out a loud sigh, resolve settling deep in the pits of my soul, and waved for the bartender’s attention.

Listen, by no means did I think I was unattractive or that I couldn’t grab Hottie’s attention from the blonde if he was single. I knew I was attractive, even better than a lot of women in here. However, everything from my neck down always seemed to be an issue for most men I had dated or tried to date. I was five foot four and a half, with a body type that a lot

of women secretly wanted but refused to say it out loud to anyone except their priest and plastic surgeon.

To sum me up, I had naturally thick thighs, hips that seemed to go on for days, and an ass that could probably have its own zip code. Okay, the ass thing was an exaggeration, but I had to admit, it was pretty big. Any pants or jeans that I purchased, I had to always get them tailored to fit my waist, thighs and ass. And let's not get started on my girls.

Despite everything I brought to the table—brains, looks, sex appeal—I still sucked at finding love. I mean, my father had paid someone to marry me, so what does that tell you?

Don't worry, I'll get to that later.

Doing my best to ignore the “meant to be” couple next to me, I focused on the bartender heading in my direction, a bored or rather put off look plastered on his attractive face.

“What can I get you?” he asked, in that wonderful, couldn't care less about you or your well-being, New York accent that I loved. He placed a small square napkin in front of me on the bar top and gave me his tired and jaded eyes.

I gave him a small, quick smile, leaned in close so he could hear me over the bustle of the bar and asked, “Yes, can I have a shot of the strongest whiskey or bourbon you have? Make it a double, please.”

The man gave me a small nod and busied himself with pouring my drink into a whiskey glass. I didn't ask what he poured; I didn't give two shits, really. All I noticed was that the color of the beverage was a deep rich brown, a shade or two lighter than my skin tone, and would probably burn like hell going down.

That's just what I needed.

A glass was placed in front of me and just as the bartender was about to move on, I held up my finger, signaling for him to wait. At the same time, I lifted the glass to my full lips.

“Hold on,” I told him, then took the drink back quickly, and instantly felt the effects of my rash judgement.

The tears in my eyes and the angry cough from my throat came immediately. I brought my red eyes to the guy in front of me, my hand quickly going to my throat.

“Jeez-us,” I croaked out. “What in the hell did you give me? Gasoline?” I wiped my eyes and looked at him resentfully. I knew it was going to burn going down, but damn... I didn’t expect THAT!

“It’s what you asked for,” he informed me. “The strongest drink we have.”

“Yeah, well, make the next one the strongest that doesn’t taste like kerosene, please. And don’t be stingy with the alcohol.”

Without a word, the bartender made me another drink. He placed it in front of me, and I took it down in two gulps. My throat was still burning, but it wasn’t as bad as the first one. I gave him a nod of approval and slid my glass to him.

“That’ll work. Another one, please. Actually, make that two.”

“Shall I open up a tab for you?” He asked.

I nodded, still rubbing at my neck.

“Yes, and bill it to my room, please.”

I gave him the name and the room number of the suite I would occupy for my time there in New York.

He asked nothing further of me, placed my drinks in front of me, and like the good New Yorker that he was, walked away without another word.

I wrapped my fingers around one of the two glasses in front of me and took another healthy sip from the glass in my right hand. My eyes perused the bar area, taking in my surroundings but being sure not to make eye contact with anyone.

This place was packed with people from all social classes. Some looked to have just gotten off work and needed to unwind. Some may have just stopped in for a drink before making their way to the ballet or the MET or something.

Others looked to be on a prowl like the girl that practically knocked me down or the perfect blonde currently eye fucking Hottie next to me. Then there were folks who didn't quite fit in any category, such as me, who came here to drink until we could no longer feel our faces.

Yes, that was my goal tonight. To wallow in self-pity and drink until I puked on myself.

You know, you're never really fully drunk until you become a hot puking mess.

If you hadn't figured it out yet, I was going through some shit. I had recently gained my freedom from a no good, fucking shit stain, asshole mother fucker by the name of George Aloysius Benedict, the third.

Four years of hell, that's what I've been through. Four long excruciating years with nothing to show for the time lost but misery and despair.

My marriage didn't start off in the toilet. No, I thought I was in love, thought I had found my soulmate and would live happily ever after. Boy was I wrong. God, I was so wrong.

The reality was George only married me because my father promised him lots of fucking money and a top position in my father's company.

Isn't that fucked up?

Sadly, the second I learned my marriage was a sham, I didn't bail out right away like I should've done. Nope, I stuck it out, hoping shit would change. It didn't. Throughout the years, things just got worse and worse.

But the difference between me and others in my family was that I knew when to pull the plug. I had had enough and did something about my circumstances. I refused to spend another second of my life with a weak ass, cheating, son of a bitch who constantly showed me how much he didn't want me. I refused to be miserable for the rest of my life. I was going to live my life for me. Now, I just needed to figure out how to do it and I'd be good.

Remembering my goals for the night, ones that didn't include Hottie—although I would've made an exception if he asked—I leaned back against the high-back barstool and sighed audibly. I brought my hands to the top of my head and worked to free my hair from the tight bun I'd worn all day. As my long, thick tresses fell over my shoulders, I leisurely scraped my nails along my scalp. A satisfying groan stumbled past my lips.

Mmm, this feels amazing...

I closed my eyes, and I could actually feel my body relaxing, anxiety releasing with each pass of my nails along my scalp. Or maybe it was the two drinks I had taken to the head that were finally working their magic, warming my body. No matter what it was, I was loving the way the tension and stress seemed to melt away from my body.

Oh what I wouldn't do to be in a pair of sweatpants and a t-shirt right now, sans this suffocating bra. I should've gone upstairs to change out of this restricting gray pencil skirt and jacket before I came here. No matter, I was here now. I might as well make the best of it.

I hiked up my skirt a bit to free my legs, and because I felt hot all over, I removed my jacket, thankful that I had worn a pink camisole underneath. I didn't bother with placing my jacket neatly over the back of my seat like a good little debutant. *Fuck that jacket and the horse it rode in on!* I was just glad to be rid of it so I could cool down.

Lastly, I kicked off my shoes, wiggled my toes, dropped my head back, and finger combed my hair to some semblance of a style. My fingertips raked over my scalp again, and this time I used the tips of my fingers to massage my scalp thoroughly.

My eyes rolled to the back of my head, and I allowed another moan to escape my lips.

“Rough night?” said a deep baritone voice next to me, that British accent of his washing over me like a cool summer nights breeze.

I opened my eyes to find his on me. *And can I just say, in my humble opinion, one of the best parts of this man was his eyes.*

They were this clear gray color, filled with intelligence, strength, and calculated awareness. First off, they could easily make a woman's panties melt clear off her body. But as I studied him further, I could also see this savagery of darkness in his eyes that seemed to run straight into his soul.

I cleared my throat, remembering what he had asked, and fumbled with my answer. It wasn't my best moment, but it would do.

I started off with a very unladylike snort before I replied, "Rough night is putting it mildly. My day, week, and year basically sucked."

I gave him a quick smile and brought my attention back to my drink. I brought my glass to my lips and took a sip to wet my dry mouth. I could still feel his eyes on me. It made me nervous.

This man was dangerous in every sense of the word. It wasn't anything overt about him that pushed me to that conclusion. There wasn't a need for it. I just knew it. Crazy thing, I was never the one that went for bad boys. I stayed away from them, and you'd be surprised how many flocked in my direction when I attended NYU. It also could've had something to do with my roommate, Hailey. She was definitely a bad boy magnet. However, I kept my distance from those rough-around-the-edges sort of guys. Which was ironic now, because I wanted nothing more than to be close to the bad boy next to me.

In so many delicious ways, it seemed as if that darkness I saw in him called to me, stirring something that woke up my soul. I felt an instant connection with him. Not sure why or how that could be, but somehow this feeling of contentment, of home, wove its way around my body, my heart, and pulled me closer to him like tightened shoelaces.

Damn, I'd never felt this way for any man, and I've had a few in my lifetime. Nothing serious, you know. Just a few

flings here and there with a couple of guys I had dated in college, but that was it. I didn't have anything substantial until I met my ex.

Come to think of it, I'd never had these types of feelings for George either.

What is going on with me?

I glanced at him out of the corner of my eye, and saw he was *still* watching me. He was beginning to make me nervous, or more nervous than I already felt. I looked over at him, to tell him to stop looking at me, when his expression changed from sultry and curious to expecting. Why did he look at me like that? Did he say something else?

"I'm sorry, did you say something else?"

He leaned in a little and I caught the scent of his cologne and damn near fainted again.

"Nothing serious. Just that I was sorry to hear your day, week and year sucked."

"Oh, umm...thank you," I fumbled my answer, doing my best to get ahold of myself.

I considered taking my drinks down quickly and making my escape before it was too late and I did something profoundly stupid like... like... stick my tongue down his throat or see how many licks it took to get to the center of his...

Ack! Stop it, girl! Take it down a few notches.

Taking my own advice, I took a few long breaths and tried to relax, tried to focus. But dammit, I couldn't. He smelled *sooo* good. I could practically taste him on my tongue. I had half a mind to bury my face in his neck and live there forever, inhaling him, licking him, sucking on him.

Gah... I need to get the fuck out of here before I become a victim of my weakness.

I heard him say, after seconds had passed, "Hopefully, things will get better."

Shit, why is he still talking to me?

I crossed my legs and squeezed my thighs together, hoping to ease the pressure building by just the sound of his fucking voice.

“Yeah,” I replied with a rough snort of a laugh. *Jeez, I sound like an idiot. Such a fucking lady.* “I hope so too.”

I peeked at him, just to be polite, before I took another sip of my drink.

Please don't say anything else...

He didn't listen.

“So, are you drinking alone, or are you waiting for someone to join you?” He queried, and I noticed his body was facing me now with his back to Ms. Perfectly Plastic, who he'd spoken to earlier.

I tilted my chin to the woman behind him.

“Aren't you here with someone? Clearly, *you're* not drinking alone.”

He frowned. “Actually, I've been drinking alone since I sat down. Uninterested in everyone around me until now.” His already intense eyes grew heavier, darker. He gave me a quick once over before repeating his question, “Are you waiting for someone or drinking alone?”

I heard myself whisper, “Yes,” then, without thinking, I quickly amended, “I mean no, I'm not waiting for anyone.”

Why did I just tell him that?

“Good,” he stated, and took a drink from the beer bottle in his hand.

Is this guy for real?

“Why is that a good thing?” I raised my brow and looked directly into his expressive, come fuck me eyes. “Should I be worried?”

Sexy Beast chuckled, and I melted inside.

Notice that I've changed his name from Hottie McNaughty to Sexy Beast. Sounds more fitting, doesn't it?

“No, not at all,” he admitted. “It’s not like I’m a serial killer or anything morbid like that. Just wanted to be sure I had you all to myself,” he explained before he leaned in close and lowered his deep voice, “I’m really not the sharing type.”

Ummm... Wow.

Okay, first of all, holy hell, the way he just pronounced “killer” like “killa” was so freaking hot. And how he blended “at all” to sound like “a tall” had my thighs now drenched. And to top it all off, he was overtly flirting with me.

He wants me all to himself?

I think I'm in trouble.

I was playing with fire sitting here. I hadn’t been thoroughly fucked and worked over since... well, since never. My ex didn’t like to get sweaty during sex.

Yup, you heard what I said. I'll leave you to imagine how he kept himself from sweating during a physical act such as lovemaking.

But this man to my left looked as if he could make me sweat out my relaxer in a matter of seconds.

Give me strength...

I gave Sexy Beast a smile, trying my best to downplay my reaction to his words. He definitely didn’t need to know just how much he affected me.

“Well, that’s good to know that you’re not a serial killer,” I said, trying to ignore the butterflies in my stomach and the fact that he looked at me as if he wanted to devour me.

I resumed staring at my drink, letting my hair fall forward, covering my face to hide my embarrassment. Yes, even though my complexion was on the darker side of brown, I was sure he would’ve been able to see my cheeks blossom in embarrassment. His gaze seemed to scrutinize me intently. I bet he could read my thoughts too if he wanted.

Good thing I had my hair to hide behind. I had planned to cut my hair off last week, of all things, wanting a drastic change to represent my new life. But I changed my mind at the last second.

I loved my hair. It was long, thick, and healthy, but I knew nothing about taking care of it besides the basics: shampooing, blow drying, and straightening. Ponytails and buns were my styles of choice, aside from wearing it down. Short hair, I learned, was more high maintenance than I had the patience to support.

Glad I dodged a bullet there...

“So, are you staying at this hotel or just visiting?” Sexy Beast asked, cutting into my thoughts.

I nodded and pushed my hair behind my ear so I could see him out of the corner of my eye. He had snagged a seat to my surprise. Trying to hold back my smile, I knew who the chair had belonged to. I looked up to find Ms. Perfectly Plastic and her friend leaving, both giving me death glares. I smirked at them before placing my eyes back on Sexy Beast.

“Yes, you?” I answered and asked.

He raised an eyebrow, his eyes bright and intense, and damn if the heat from those sliver globes of his didn't turn up a notch.

“Yes, I am. What are the odds? This must be my lucky night,” he answered, curling the side of his mouth before he brought his bottle of beer to his kissable lips.

Okay, now he was being over the top. I scrunched up my face and snorted. He chuckled lightly and leaned into me slightly.

“Too much?” He queried amusingly.

“Yes, just a little,” I smiled and gestured with my fingers.

He grew serious suddenly, causing my heart to stop and stomach to churn.

“My apologizes for my behavior,” he began, his voice deep and penetrating. “I'm not used to being around flawless

beauty. Forgive me.”

And now I was a puddle of goo.

Did he just call me a flawless beauty?

“Subtly isn’t your middle name, is it?” I asked him softly.

He shook his head and ran his fingers through his hair in that sexy way models did. Fuck, he was hot. “Not really. If I’m interested in something or someone, I don’t waste time. I just go for it.”

Shit, this was getting deep. My nerves were ratcheting up like tenfold.

Trying to lighten the mood a little, I asked jokingly, “You do know that I’m not one of the many working women in this bar, right?”

A look of confusion actually appeared on his handsome face. He glanced around the bar, then back at me. “Are there escorts around here? I hadn’t noticed,” He stated, then grinned at me.

“You’re full of sarcasm, too, I see,” I joked, and he gave me a shrug.

“Oh, sweetheart, I’m a man of many, many talents,” he admitted, innuendos laced throughout his voice. He then pushed out his hand to me and smiled.

“Lawson.”

I placed my hand in his, trying my best to ignore the spark I felt when we touched and shook his hand firmly.

“Lawson, huh?” I asked, doubt on my face. “Is that your real name?”

He smirked at me.

“Well, it’s the name I’ve been using for quite some time. If it makes you feel any better, you can just call me Law. It’s what my family calls me.”

Please note, we have not let go of each other’s hand.

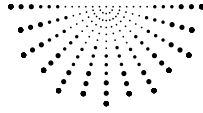
“Law,” I repeated slowly, tasting the nickname and loving it. “Okay, Law. I’m Sydney, which, by the way, is my real name,” I added lightheartedly, a smile on my face, but froze when Lawson lifted my hand to his mouth. My breath caught in my throat, and a jolt of pure desire shot throughout my body as his soft lips brushed lightly across my knuckles.

“It’s a pleasure to meet you, Sydney,” He confessed, his voice still low and oh so damn sexy.

Yup, it’s official. I was done for.

I wonder if I packed my vibrator. Shit, I hoped so...

CHAPTER TWO



LAWSON

What in the hell is going on with me? Since when do I kiss the hand of any woman, flirt, or show this level of restraint? This is insane.

Admittedly, this wasn't like me. I wasn't social or friendly. I was far from it.

For one, if someone saw me walking down the street, they would avoid me like the plague. I wasn't approachable. I didn't walk around with a welcoming charm on my features, nor was I someone you'd stop to ask for directions. If my day was shit... yeah, let's just say it would be better for everyone if you would not only avoid me, but it would also be smart if you hauled arse off the street and bolted yourself behind closed doors until I passed.

Two, I wasn't one to put in the effort to *chat up women*, particularly ones I wanted to fuck. I had no time for it, no patience, and no desire to listen to them ramble on about their lives, their existence, or their hopes and dreams.

There was no prerequisite that stated someone needed to know another person's life story just to fuck. Most women took one look at me and understood I only wanted one thing from them and that was the sweet prize hidden between their thighs. Nothing more.

Three, I wasn't someone who laughed a lot or even chanced a smile. The acts weren't foreign to me. I just didn't do it often. Until this moment, I had never smiled this much in

my life. My cheeks were even sore from using muscles in my face that I didn't know existed.

If my brothers could see me now, they would think I was possessed with human emotions instead of being dead inside. I could feel warmth flowing through my veins instead of the normal coldness from my frigid heart.

It was this woman next to me. Her light, the warmth of her smile, the joy in her laughter were all affecting me in ways I wasn't used to or prepared to feel.

Understand, I wasn't a complete asshole or heartless. I had empathy for a few select people. Naturally, I felt something for my brothers and my mum. They were embedded in my soul forever, and I'd destroy this world over them. There were also a handful of people in my life that I tolerated, which included my aunt on my mum's side and her husband, who helped raise us. However, that was the extent of my emotional connection to others.

I gave zero fucks about anyone else.

Tonight, I found myself at the Four Seasons Hotel bar, drinking a few pints. My mind focused on the trouble coming our way, as well as the shit that happened last night. It was important that I figured out why my brothers and I were being targeted for extinction. Or at least, I needed to think of suspects to pursue.

Sadly, there was no way that I could focus residing in the suite I shared with my brothers.

One of them was entertaining company, a woman whose laugh sounded like nails on a chalkboard to my ears.

The other was in one of his "moods". If I'd stayed around him much longer, I would've thrown the fucker off the balcony *after* I had beaten the snot out of him. He was sex deprived and instead of handling his shit, he was taking his frustrations out on everyone around him. Since my patience had run its course decades ago, I decided to head to the hotel bar.

I had successfully located a quiet corner right at the bar without being molested by the starved crowd in attendance. I was into my third bottle of ale, my head deep into my thoughts, when I heard giggling to my left. Two women, desperately trying to gain my attention, looked over at me, or rather they pretended *not* to look.

I hated the coy games some women played. It annoyed the shit out of me. The furtive glances, the shy, demure looks in their eyes. If I had been in a better mood, and on the pull tonight, I would have already approached them, led one of them, or both, into the women's loo for a quick blow job. However, I was more irritated than interested.

Until she stepped into my world.

Sydney...

I glanced to my right, taking in the woman next to me again without shame as she ordered a drink. I didn't give a fuck if she caught me staring at her. She was by far the sexiest woman in this whole fucking place.

A proper woman, not like the porcelain-looking blonde and brunette next to me. She was thick in all the right places, which made my mouth water. My hands itched to explore all of her voluptuous curves, generous valleys, and smooth skin.

The moment her soft, hypnotizing brown eyes connected with mine, I was hooked. I felt my body wake up and my soul took fucking notice. This overwhelming feeling of excitement billowed through me as if I had been waiting for her all my life and she was finally here. The woman made for me.

I could not breathe. I could barely respond to her when she asked if the seat next to her belonged to me. But I'd be damned if she sat anywhere else but right next to me. This overwhelming feeling of possession, of dominance, came over me. I fucking wanted this woman... all of her, and I would have her, make no mistake about it.

Description? Fucking gladly.

She stood close to five four, minus the four-inch heels. The business suit she wore hugged every curve of her body

deliciously. Her complexion was the color of dark mocha. Flawless. Gorgeous fucking lips and slanted brown eyes with innocence in them tempting me to corrupt her. I couldn't tell the length of her dark hair at the time. It had been pinned up into a bun, yet I was thankful for the unknown. The fact that her hair was up and away from her face allowed me to gaze upon her beauty freely.

A bit of information about me. I wasn't one of those blokes that cared about the race of a woman. That wasn't something I focused on. However, I had to admit that there was something about black women that turned me on more than any other race. I loved the fire that lived in their eyes, the drive and determination to prove to the world that they would not be denied, ignored or mistreated.

Some of my mates over the decades thought I had gone mad. They didn't understand why I was so attracted to black women. They had this preconceived notion that black women had attitude issues. That they were hard to deal with and didn't know a thing about being soft.

I strongly disagreed. All they needed was someone to make them feel cherished, adored, and worshipped. Someone to fuck them into submission and if you could do all those things, believe me, you'd have a partner in your corner for life.

I felt a touch on my forearm, and I glanced to my left to find the blonde giving me a gorgeous smile, her green eyes sparkling with the dirty thoughts swimming in her head.

"My friend and I are going someplace a little more... intimate. Quiet. Would you like to join us?"

The blonde darkened her gaze, doing her best to give me her come-fuck-me eyes, but I wasn't buying. I wasn't interested in her or her friend. No, who held my interest, who captivated me, was the woman that had just coughed up a lung from the whiskey she'd thrown back in haste.

"No, that's quite alright. I'm good here," I stated plainly and to the point. The blonde looked at me blankly. Her friend did too, as if they didn't understand me at all.

“Are you serious? You don’t want to leave with us? With me?” the blonde asked, perplexed that I didn’t jump at the chance to spend time with her and her friend.

And here I thought I spoke plain English...

“Is English not your first language?” I queried, narrowing my eyes, doing my best not to lose my shit. “I said no, I’m good.”

It was in that moment when the object of my desires moaned in delight, the sound eased my frustrations.

Yeah, I wasn’t going anywhere.

I vaguely took notice of red faces and stunned looks on both of the women’s faces before I dismissed them, snagged the stool next to them, and sat as close to my new obsession as I could.

Everything about this woman had my body running on overdrive, from her sultry voice to her sexy-as-hell full lips, not to mention the blazing need in her eyes. She seemed different from any woman I had ever been with, which was why I was making a fool out of myself. It was also why I couldn’t seem to leave her alone.

Sydney...

Her name sounded good on my tongue. I wondered what else of hers would feel good on my tongue.

I shifted on my stool, resisting the urge to attend to the erection I was now shamelessly sporting in my trousers. What I wouldn’t have given to strip her bare and take her here on top of this bar or, in the least, to stick my tongue down her throat and grab a quick taste of her.

There was something I saw in her eyes that had my aggressive nature wanting to shine through, but I did my best to keep a lid on my alter ego. Despite her undressing me with her eyes, I could sense she wasn’t ready for the likes of me. She was a walking contradiction, and my entire body was on fire for her.

“Tell me, Sydney,” I said, taking her attention off the phone in her hand and bringing her gaze to me, “what brings you here to New York.” Her beautiful brown eyes took me in greedily, and I loved it. I loved how I affected her just as much as she affected me. Instant attraction rarely happened to me. But when it did, I couldn’t ignore it.

Sydney scrunched up her cute little nose and gave me a look of death. “What makes you think I’m not a native New Yorker, and that I just came in for a drink after a stressful day at work?”

I smiled at her—*There I fucking go again*—and shrugged. “Well, love, for one, the accent is a dead giveaway. You sound as if you’re from the southern states, perhaps Virginia. But definitely not New York. Trust me, anyone from here can’t hide their accent even if they tried. Plus, you couldn’t have just moved here. You still have your sweetness and innocence intact, which would have been swallowed up the moment you settled into this city’s life.”

She frowned after my last statement and my eyes went straight to her full and fuckable lips.

Damn, I bet they would feel amazing round my cock. Better than the blonde’s or brunette’s injected lips, for sure.

“You think I’m sweet and innocent?” Sydney scoffed and rolled her eyes, put off by my observation. “I’m hardly sweet or innocent.”

“I beg to differ. You’re everything that’s sweet and good with the world. Personally, I prefer you sweet and innocent,” I admitted honestly. I then leaned in and added in a low tone, “It means you’re corruptible.” I winked at her and gave her my best undress-you-with-my-eyes look that I could muster.

I knew I had poured it on very thick. I couldn’t help it. To see her blush, despite her complexion, was something that I wanted to see every chance I got. It was adorable.

Sydney looked away from me and fidgeted in her seat. The smirk that spread along my stubble cheeks deepened at the thought that I made her nervous. I wondered if she was

thinking dirty thoughts about me, about what I could do to her body, her soul.

“So, you think I’m weak then?” she asked, still not looking at me.

“Not at all. Being sweet and innocent has nothing to do with the strength I see in you, the fierceness you yield with just the look in your eyes.”

She turned to me. Setting determined brown eyes on me.

“So why did you say I was sweet and innocent?”

I shrugged and lightly touched the tip of her nose with my finger. That small gesture, the feeling of her skin against mine, seemed to charge me to want more.

“I don’t know. Maybe it’s because of the tenderness I see in your eyes that tells me you’re sweet. A side of you I bet no one ever gets to see but for some reason you’re allowing me the pleasure, and I can’t wait to see more.”

I gave her body a once over again, not hiding my interest, or stopping my imagination from running wild. For the life of me, I couldn’t stop thinking about all the positions I could put her sexy body in as I fucked her relentlessly. The best vision I had played on repeat in my head was of her sitting on the bar top in front of me, naked, her legs wide open for me, her body writhing and begging to be touched, stroked and licked. And I would do everything and anything to make her scream out my name in pleasure. Fuck, I would lick her from her sweet lips down to her toes.

FYI... I’m not a toe-sucking man, but hell, I’d suck her toes any day.

“Are you trying to pick me up, Lawson?” she asked bluntly, cutting into my deviant sexual thoughts, and I didn’t hesitate to answer.

“Yes. Is it working? Do you mind if we cut out the chasing part and get right to foreplay?”

I met her eyes and allowed lasciviousness to soak in mine. I refused to hide the fact that I was insanely attracted to her. I

wanted her to see it and feel it. If she wasn't getting the clue that I wanted to lick every inch of her, I'd have to try harder.

But what Sydney said and did next let me know she understood completely. She smiled at me first, and it was a beautiful sight to see. It lit up my world and all the darkness inside it. She then leaned closer to me, and her eyes took on a wicked gleam. She curled her index finger and signaled for me to move in closer. I did as she asked, hanging on the edge of my seat waiting for what was about to fall from those heavenly soft looking lips of hers. Her voice dipped to a tone that had my mouth salivating.

“Well, I've heard that anticipation is the best form of foreplay.”

And... I was stunned into silence. *Fucking blow me, I want this woman...*

Before I could get my brain to work, to think of a comeback, she leaned away from me and grinned at me proudly. Unfortunately for her, she was completely unaware of what she had just started. I was about to tell her just as my phone vibrated in my pocket. I excused myself, fished out my phone, and frowned down at the screen. I vaguely recognized the number. Still frowning, I glanced up at Sydney, hating to be apart from her for a second.

“Will you excuse me, love? I need to take this.”

She smiled up at me, but I could see the light in her eyes had dimmed slightly. *Hmm, what was that about?*

“Sure, okay.”

“I'll be right back.”

I answered the call before it went to voicemail, turned, and stepped away from the bar.

“What!” I barked into the phone.

There was a slight pause before the caller spoke up.

“Which one of you imbeciles am I speaking to?” came a gruff, disgruntled voice that boiled the blood in my veins. I

took a deep breath to try to not explode. I hated this fucker with everything in me.

Typically, he didn't call me. He fucking knew better, and yet...

"You called me," I responded coldly, allowing my annoyance to bleed through my voice. "You should know who the fuck you're talking to."

He snorted. "You fucking arsecunts sound the same. How the fuck should I know who I'm calling?"

I closed my eyes, took a few deep breaths and... I fucking hung up on him. The *bell-end*, hairy dog balls, fuckface had the audacity to call me, insult me, *and* he expected me to just take it?

Fuck that and fuck him! Fat sloppy fuck!

As I mentioned before, my brothers and I did the dirty work for our sperm donor: bullying, torturing, and killing those who threatened his way of life or territory. We did this because... well... because we were good at it, and quite frankly, we enjoyed it. It allowed us to sharpen our skills and make a shit ton of money doing what we loved.

Despite helping the cunt for brains, we hated our father with a passion forged by fire. He didn't trust us, and the feeling was indeed mutual. He was a piece of shit that left our mum to live in squalor while he, his wife, and his three boys, lived like Nobs.

We had approached him one day when we were younger. We thought there was no way he knew about us. The power he possessed in the streets, he would've said something or done something for us and our mum if he had known. Boy were we fucking wrong.

He knew about us actually and didn't give a fuck that we were starving, dressed in rags, and living in hell. He sent us away, denying our existence. The only reason I hadn't slit his fucking throat yet was because of my brothers. They *claimed* we needed him. If it were up to me, I'd string him up by his balls and gut him like the pig filth he was. It would bring me

great pleasure to watch his life fade to nothing. Hell, I'd probably nut all over his dead corpse. I'd be so excited. But my brothers have told me to be patient. The time would come for retribution, they've said.

Yes, well... I was never one for patience. So...

I closed my eyes for a few seconds to calm the flow of boiling hot rage running in my veins. I took a few deep breaths and called my brother. My call was picked up on the second ring, but I didn't let him get a word in edge wise.

"King Dick just called me, giving me shit. I hung up on his fat arse. You tell him if he calls me again, I will put a bullet in each of his tiny balls."

There was a pause before Nix said, "I take it you're referring to our father, Zeus?"

Yeah, that's what our father wants to be called by everyone: Zeus. No, it's not his real name. And don't ask where he got the name or how it came about. God complex maybe, who knows. If you ask me, he's a daft prick, looking for attention, which says a lot in my opinion.

I took another deep breath and remained silent instead of answering his obvious question. *Who else would I be referring to?*

Amused, Nix asked, "What did he want?"

"To give me fucking recipes. I don't fucking know what he wanted. I hung up on him."

"And he didn't call back?"

"I'm sure his sausage-sized fingers are trying, but so far he hasn't called back."

Nix sighed deeply but didn't respond. I waited him out, turned to check on Sydney, and found she had company. A soon to be dead man it seemed. The bloke was shorter than me, but stalky, dark hair, and tanned.

At first, he just stood there as if he was waiting for the bartender to notice him. But after a while, he turned and started speaking to Sydney. I stood there and watched the

exchange, feeling my body tense, the jealous streak of mine warming up to make a grand appearance.

I knew I didn't have the right to be jealous. Sydney didn't belong to me. Oh, but she would soon, which only exacerbated my temper and my need to beat the shit out of someone. And since *King Dick* wasn't here, I guess this bloke would have to do.

"Do you have any idea why he called me?" I asked into my phone, my eyes narrowing at the arm that was now resting on the back of Sydney's stool.

"No, I have no bloody idea. He didn't say anything to me when I spoke to him earlier tonight. Maybe he was just fucking with you."

I snorted.

"Then I guess he has a death wish," I replied low and menacingly. I noticed that Sydney turned and smiled in the man's direction, but I could tell it was forced. I also noticed how far back she turned, as if she was looking for me.

"I need to go," I told Nix, my voice full of the fresh wave of rage that rose in me.

"Where are you?" Nix asked, his tone sharp, aware. I knew he could hear something in my voice.

Fuck... I didn't need him coming down here.

"At the bar," I blurted, then added, "I'm fine."

I started moving back toward the bar at the same time the dead man leaned into Sydney and whispered something in her ear.

"You don't sound like it," I heard Nix say in my ear. "Which bar? The hotel's bar?"

I clocked when Sydney's back tensed up. She leaned away from him, which was my cue. "Don't worry, bruv, I won't leave a mess this time."

I disconnected the call, dropped the phone in my jacket pocket, and stepped up to the bloke. I placed a heavy palm on

the man's shoulder, causing him to look up surprised.

I could feel Sydney relax next to me, a deep breath fell from her lips in relief.

I tightened my grip on the man's pressure point at the base of his neck to bring home the point I was about to make.

I leaned into the startled fuckwit whose face scrunched up in pain and warned in a low tone, "You need to back the fuck off, mate, before I rip your balls off and shove them down your fucking throat."

I met his wide eyes with a dark stare that I knew would convey the threat I'd just made and more.

"Oh, uh yeah sure, buddy. I was just—"

I cut in sharply, "Don't give a piss what you were doing, mate. Just do it somewhere else. Got it?"

After another second or two had passed, I let him go. He stepped back from me, rotated his shoulder and tried to get the circulation working again. I kept my eyes on him as he turned and scurried off to the far end of the bar. I didn't stop watching until he was out of my sight. Only then did I turn around to find Sydney's eyes as wide as the bloke's that had just run off.

She said nothing, just looked up at me expectedly.

Wow, her eyes were a lighter shade of brown than I had once thought.

Blinking out of my thoughts, I shrugged and raised a finger, signaling the bartender. I said to her just as the bartender gave me his attention, "I told you, I don't like to share."

She snorted and mumbled under her breath, "Neither do I," she said as she faced away from me.

I smirked, and instead of signally for another drink, I signaled for the check. I pointed to the pouting woman next to me, indicating that I was paying for her drinks as well. The bartender simply nodded and stepped to his little computer.

I shifted my focus back to the sexy woman next to me. I leaned in close to her ear and whispered, “Why don’t we get out of here? We can take our party of two somewhere a bit more private.”

She quickly glanced in my direction, and I could see the hesitation in her eyes. *That wouldn’t do...*

“What do you have in mind?” she queried hesitantly, her guard coming up.

I leaned in again and answered, inhaling as much of her delicious scent as I could, “Come with me and let me show you.”

I laced our fingers together, and at the moment we connected I felt a powerful jolt of electricity slam into me like a high-speed rail. I wasn’t ready for my body’s reaction to the feel of her. It almost knocked me on my arse.

On the outside, I looked cool, calm and collected. However, I could barely take in a breath. My heart pounded against my ribcage, doing its best to get her attention. My pulse raced as if I had just run a marathon. I was all over the place with this woman. I needed to be close to her, wanting and desiring her desperately.

I should walk away from her. No good could come of what I was feeling, and yet I couldn’t seem to leave her alone.

Fuck, Law, why do you want this woman so much? You can have any woman in this place you want, with little effort.

Which was true, I could have any woman that I wanted. However, the problem was that I didn’t want *any* woman. I wanted this one... and I didn’t just want her; I *wanted* her.

Bollocks...

I heard myself begin to speak, as if it was an out-of-body experience, the world dropping away, leaving just the two of us, “Trust me, Sydney, I wouldn’t do anything to harm you or allow harm to be brought to you. All I want to do is talk to you, get to know you better. Learn about your hopes and dreams and I can’t do that here.”

Yeah, yeah, I know... the irony of it all!

I went on, bleeding my heart to her like a sap. “There’s too many people here, too many distractions, and I want you all to myself.”

A range of emotions ran through her gorgeous features, all of them called me to ease her fears. Unable to stand it much longer, I reached up and caressed her soft cheek lightly with the backs of my fingers. The notion was intimate, personal, something I didn’t know that I could do.

Huh, warm and tender, me? Go figure.

I knew I had won her over by the slight shiver I felt rippling through her body. I had her right where I wanted. It was time to go in for the kill.

We continued to stare at each other, our gazes said so much more than our lips did. She was so beautiful, gorgeous. Her brown eyes were alive with this need that I sensed ran deep. Her skin looked as smooth and as soft as it felt. She had no makeup on, which just proved that she never needed to wear any. Her beauty was undeniable.

I fought the urge to lick my hungry lips, but I allowed a quiet, salacious groan to fall from my mouth instead.

My control waned as we stared at each other. I felt myself giving into the need to have her, to claim her, to take her lips, despite her innocence and hesitation.

We needed to get out of this bar.

Deciding to push her along, I stepped back from the bar, raised my hand with hers attached, and started to help her off the stool.

“Wait, I need to,” she began and looked down at the floor. I did the same and realized she was barefoot, her shoes lying underneath the stool.

She twisted her foot awkwardly, trying to put her shoes back on, seemingly without her foot touching the floor, but I stopped her.

“Here, allow me,” I offered, and damn if I didn’t take a knee.

FYI... Law Morelli bowed to no one. No fucking one, but here I am doing the very thing in front of this woman I barely know.

I reached for one of her black Christian Louis Vuitton pumps, placed it upright, and gently guided her foot into the shoe. I repeated the move for the other foot and once her shoes were on, and she stood, I rose slowly and resisted the urge to drag my fingers along her bare...

Oh, fuck it...

At the last moment, as the distance between us evaporated, I slid my palms along the sides of her generous thighs to her hips. It wasn’t skin on skin, but the effect for both of us was the same.

We stood closer now, her breasts lightly touched my chest, the sweetness of her whiskey breath tickled my face as I stared down at her. The air between us crackled with intense heat. My heart was at it again, beating like a crazed fool. My body came alive, wanting nothing more than to feel her body against mine, skin to skin, soul to soul.

I threaded my fingers through her hair, my eyes drifted down to those sexy lips of hers. I wanted to taste. I would taste.

Unfortunately, it wouldn’t be now. *Why you ask?*

Simple.

The got damn blonde from earlier. I guess she decided that she would interrupt our moment by stumbling into us. Or rather, she tried to stumble into us, but I caught the movement to my left and wrapped my arm around Sydney’s waist. I drew her close to me and stepped to the side, allowing the so-called drunk girl to stumble right past us and fall on the floor. Her drink flew onto the bar and herself.

It caused a whole scene. However, it wasn’t the type of scene the blonde wanted.

“Oh, my god!” Sydney exclaimed, trying to step out of my hold, but I gripped her tighter.

She looked up at me questioningly and I said to her, “Don’t bother.”

“W-what do you mean?” she glanced down at the struggling girl then back up at me. “Aren’t you going to help her up?”

“No, and neither are you,” I said sternly, not loosening my hold on her waist.

“Why not? Let go,” she protested, her eyes narrowed on me. “If you won’t help her, then I’ll—”

I leaned in close to her ear and said sharply, “You’ll do no such thing.” I felt her body grow rigid in my arms, her hands on my biceps ready to push away from me. *That shit wasn’t happening...*

I met her hard eyes with narrowed slits of my own and explained, “Think about it. What do you think would’ve happened if I didn’t move you out of the way?”

It took a second for her to get it. She glanced at the two women, the brunette clumsily helping the blonde up from the floor. Another bloke stepped over to help.

She clocked the wet bar, then looked back at me. When she frowned, I knew she understood.

“Let’s get out of here,” I said and took her hand in mine once more, again, feeling that spark shoot straight to my dick.

“No, wait,” she called out again.

I glanced back at her, doing my best not to show the irritation I felt. I was ready to get the fuck out of here and get her alone so I could fondle her lips with mine in peace.

“Is there something wrong?” I asked, praying she wouldn’t change her mind. No, what she said was even better. It shocked the shit out of me and delighted me all at the same time.

“If you say I can trust you, why don’t we go to my suite and talk? It’s quiet and we can relax and still drink.”

Shit, I think I’m in love.

I raised an eyebrow.

“Are you sure?” I asked, because fuck I had to.

“Are you serious when you said I can trust you? I mean, truly trust you?” she countered, and I answered without hesitation.

“Yes, I’m serious. You can trust me.”

“Then so am I,” she said simply, grabbed her jacket that laid over her stool, then turned on her heels and headed for the exit steps.

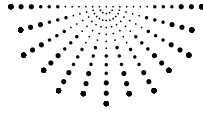
I followed her, still trying to recover from the turn of events.

I thought I would have to find some empty meeting room or something where we could talk. A safe space for her. Going to her hotel room far outreached what I had in mind. Now, all I had to do was keep my hands to myself.

I snorted.

Yeah, that shit wasn’t happening.

CHAPTER THREE



SYDNEY

Inviting Law to my suite was by far the best decision I had ever made, right up there with picking NYU as my college of choice. Being in this man's presence, watching how relaxed he was with me, how open, caused me to relax, too. I could talk to this man for hours, gaze upon him for hours. It was as if he and I had known each other forever. Everything was just so... effortless.

We didn't talk about anything heavy so far, like my failed marriage or anything. We did, however, confirm that we both were single on the elevator ride up here, which was a shock to me. It was damn hard to believe that he didn't have anyone special in his life, considering this man was perfection on two legs.

I wanted to know more, wanted to dive into his psyche to find out why he was single, why he wasn't married with kids or at least engaged. But I didn't. Mainly because I didn't want him asking me the same questions. We silently agreed to keep everything light and airy, and I was all for it.

The sound of his rich, sultry laughter rang throughout my suite. The melody of it caused my belly to do backflips. I loved the sound of him laughing, the look of mirth and mischief in his eyes as he asked me about my life in Virginia and teased me about growing up with a platinum spoon in my mouth.

It didn't take long for him and me to get into this comfortable rhythm. It started the moment we stepped inside the suite with Law taking charge, sweeping the room to make

sure it was safe. I loved that, by the way. It's been a long time since someone looked out for me like that. My family sure as hell didn't, I tell you that much. No. It was Hailey and her family who always had my back.

Now, sometimes, Hailey's brothers were over the top with their protective detail. No matter what club she and I went to, what part of town we were in, they would always find us and escort us back home when the club closed or when we called it a night. Their overprotectiveness played hell on our single life. It drove Hailey crazy, but I didn't mind it so much. Especially when I had late night study sessions. No matter if I was at a friend's dorm room or the library, one of the DiMaggio men was right there waiting to escort me back home. It felt good to know that I didn't have to be afraid or live in fear.

Sure, I had a driver that took me everywhere I wanted to go, but as far as someone truly looking out for me, I didn't have that. Not even with George.

But Law... he was different. He treated me differently, as if I was special to him, and he didn't even know me. Prime example would be how he got rid of the creeper at the bar. Another one would be when we stepped inside my room. This man searched my room to make sure we were safe before he relaxed and took his seat on the couch. It was just one more thing that I loved about him... Err... I mean, liked. What I *liked* about him. I liked him even more after I asked, "Why did you check my room? I told you it was just me here."

He had replied, "You can never be too careful. Plus, you're here alone. I wanted to make sure you were safe, no matter if I stayed or left."

Sigh...

Anyway, after Law deemed the hotel suite was safe, I freshened up and quickly changed out of my restricted clothing and into a crop-top style sweatshirt and cotton running shorts. When I made my way back to the living space, I found Law standing in front of a large picture window, staring out into the night. I stood there for a moment and took *him* in.

He had gotten rid of his jacket and stood there dressed in his white button-down shirt, sleeves rolled up, and his impressive ass prominently on display through his gray slacks. He stood well over six feet, with broad, powerful shoulders and an athletic frame. His forearms looked defined, and I knew the rest of him was just as built. Strength and dominance seemed to exude from him, which admittedly was far from what I was used to in a man.

I'm referring to my ex-husband, George, of course, and also my brother and father, pretty much every male in my family.

Watching Law command the space he was in with authority only confirmed my suspicions about him. He was without a doubt someone you didn't fuck with. Like ever. He proved that tonight the way he dealt with that asshole at the bar, who, by the way, asked me if I could tie him up and spank him until he cried for his mama. Yeah, crazy right?

The rich were definitely different breeds, let me tell ya.

“Are you getting your fill?”

I jumped at the sound of his voice and noticed his reflection in the window, his eyes looking right at me.

He turned around to face me, mirth showed in his eyes, and he leaned his back against the window. His eyes slowly perused my body, doing the exact same thing I had done to him. I guess it was only right, which was why I stood there for a moment longer before I sauntered over to the bar and poured myself a healthy glass of whiskey.

“You have a beautiful view. Does the bedroom face Central Park?” Law inquired, as he stepped over to the couch. He placed his glass on the table in front of him, dropped onto the couch and slouched back, his eyes never leaving me.

Unnerved by all of his focus, I took my drink to the head and made myself another.

Easy, Fontane, you don't want to be plastered, not tonight anyway.

“Yeah, it does,” I finally replied. “It’s a magnificent view, although I wish I had a balcony. I would love to sit out there at night or in the early a.m., drinking coffee and inhaling the polluted morning air.”

With a drink in one hand and a bottle of Honey Jack in the other, I made my way to the couch. I placed the bottle on the table and took my seat on the other end of the couch. I did, however, place my back against the armrest, my legs folded facing him.

Law leaned forward, grabbed his glass, and raised it.

“Here’s to getting to know each other,” he offered.

I nodded, smiled, and we touched our glasses. I took a long sip before resting the glass on my thigh.

We fell silent for a few minutes, but honestly, the quiet between us wasn’t uncomfortable. I felt at peace, surprisingly, as if being alone with him was an everyday occurrence.

Huh, don’t I wish...

Law slouched further into the couch, laid his head back, and seemed content with the silence as well. Unfortunately, the silence only spurred on my imagination, and I pictured myself crawling into his lap, straddling him, and tasting those heavenly lips of his.

They looked so soft and sexy and... I cleared my throat and tried to get my thoughts back in order.

“So, um... mister?”

Law opened his eyes and glanced up at the ceiling, a smile slowly sliding along his cheeks. “Morelli.”

“Ahh, okay, Mr. Morelli, tell me more about yourself.” I smirked at him and added, “Give me all of your juicy secrets.”

He turned his head to face me, gracing my life with this gorgeous smile of his, and stole the breath right out of my lungs. He was so beautiful, so sexy. I couldn’t get over the fact that he was here with me.

“Sorry, love,” he quipped, “you would have to be a lot closer to me to give you my secrets.”

Huh, fine by me...

I held his gaze and scooted closer, eyes wide with eagerness, waiting for him to spill the goods.

“How’s this? Close enough?”

Law stared at me, dumbfounded for two seconds before he laughed. Heartily, I might add, which... yes, you guessed it, the sound melted me.

“No, love, I meant we need to have known each other a lot longer than a few hours.”

“Ohhh,” my eyebrows raised to my forehead. “I get it. But you don’t have to tell me like your deepest secrets. It’s not like I’m going to ask what’s your favorite sexual position or anything. I mean—”

“Love,” he cut in quickly before I could finish my sentence, “I’d gladly tell you my favorite position. That’s not a secret I would hold back from you.”

I smirked at him.

“It’s doggy-style, isn’t it?”

He chuckled but didn’t confirm or deny.

“It figures.” I rolled my eyes. “Typical male response.”

He shrugged.

“What can I say? I’m an arse kind of guy, so.”

I shook my head and downed my drink as fast as what I’d warned myself of earlier. I then leaned forward to grab the bottle of Jack.

“Okay, smartass. Then tell,” I began, looking back at him, catching his eyes on my ass. “Really? Were you just looking at my ass?”

He didn’t shift his eyes, nor did he seem apologetic for getting caught. He just shrugged. “I just told you I was an arse

man, and you practically bent over in front of me. What did you expect?”

I laughed.

“Okay, point taken, but it wasn’t on purpose.” I poured more whiskey into my glass and tilted the bottle toward him, silently asking if he wanted more. He nodded and brought his glass to me. “So,” I hesitated for a fraction, then asked, filling his glass, “how is my ass? I mean, if you were going to grade it.”

I didn’t meet his eyes until I completed my task and sat the bottle back down on the table. When I brought my eyes to his, I could see humor all over his features, despite his straight face.

“Well, I would need to try it out first. You know, squeeze it, smack it, rub it as you bounce on my—”

“Oh my God, Law!” I screeched over him as he spoke, my eyes wide as hell, my mouth open in shock. “Don’t you even finish that sentence!” I smacked his arm, feeling my entire body light up with embarrassment.

“What...? It’s the only way to be completely certain.”

I groaned and covered my face with my hands. *I’m going to die... right here, I swear.*

Law laughed, wrapped his long fingers around my wrists and pulled my hands from my face.

“What’s the matter, love? You asked and I’m just telling you that I would need to test drive your gorgeous arse before I could make a sound decision.”

I shook my head and waved this topic away, the sides of my mouth far into my cheeks.

“Okay, change the subject, please.”

“Why? Are you embarrassed?”

“Ummm... No,” I expressed as convincingly as I could, knowing deep down that I was lying my ass off. I mean, I wasn’t embarrassed, per se. Just, you know, a little

uncomfortable. As I mentioned before, I wasn't every man's cup of tea. But from the looks Law had been giving me all night... maybe that wasn't true in his eyes.

He confirmed it when he said, "You do know that there's nothing to be embarrassed about. Don't be ashamed of your body, baby. You're thick in all the right places. You're a beautiful, need-to-feel-you-everywhere, sexy as fuck woman. Don't let anyone tell you otherwise, yeah? They're either lying to you or jealous of you."

I smiled shyly as my cheeks flamed. I looked away from him and took a large helping of my drink. It was that or jump this man, and I was doing my best to behave myself. *Goodness, he was making it so hard to do.*

"Thanks, Law," I whispered.

Law didn't say anything else, but I felt his eyes on me, undressing me, appraising me. I felt as if I was naked underneath his gaze. I was two seconds from excusing myself and escaping to the bedroom, never to come out again, when he cleared his throat and asked, "Okay, love, you get to ask three deep and meaningful questions, and I'll answer them without hesitation."

My face lit up.

"Really? Three, huh?" I queried, my sarcasm meter on ten. Either he ignored my poke at him or missed it because he went on conversationally.

"Yes, so make the shit count, yeah?"

I took the contents of my glass down, then placed my empty glass on the table in front of us. I rubbed my hands together. A gleam of excitement pooled in my chocolate-colored eyes.

"I'm so excited... okay... ready?" I paused for affect then asked my first question, smirking the whole time, "When you go to the beach, which do you prefer, board shorts, speedos or au natural?"

Law paused, his glass in midair right at his mouth. He blinked a few times, then laughed his ass off.

That was the beginning of a night I would never forget.

Before I knew it, three hours had gone by, and there wasn't a hint of us slowing down.

“Are you serious right now? The first time you had sex was at thirteen?” My eyes were wide as I stared at him in shock.

Yeah, it had turned into one of those nights. Not sure when the shift occurred from us talking about living in the States versus the UK or about college life, but I was here for it all. Whatever he wanted to tell me, I would take it all in.

Law shrugged his shoulders as if it was no big deal. Maybe it wasn't for him, but for me I couldn't imagine.

“Yeah, Princess, I'm serious.”

Oh yeah, he started calling me Princess when he learned about my sheltered childhood. It got on my nerves at first, as if he was making fun of me, but I don't know, the nickname was growing on me.

“It wasn't a big deal,” he continued to explain. “I think Nix had a girl go down on him when he was twelve, before we left the UK.”

“Holy Shit!” I blurted, shaking my head.

“What? You weren't that *cheeky* when you were at that age?” his eyebrows rose and fell suggestively.

“Uh no. I wasn't even thinking about boys at that age. Well, I mean, not really.”

“Yeah, well, we were thinking about girls all the time.”

It was clear, the moment we started talking, that he and I lived vastly different lives. I grew up privileged. He did not. I didn't have to work for anything except for good grades in school and college. He had to fight just to eat, to survive, and when I say fight, I meant it literally.

Hearing his stories, the way he and his brothers—yup, he had two older brothers—ran the streets felt like a movie. The shit they did to survive was crazy, especially at such a young age. I wasn't naïve to eleven- and twelve-year-olds selling drugs or being street thugs. But I was naïve to think that shit only happened here in the states or in war-torn countries. The UK wasn't a war-torn country, not in the sense I was thinking about, and yet their streets were just as deadly as ours or any other country.

At first, I was surprised at how much Law gave up his past to me, but I didn't interrupt, nor did I question my luck. I soaked up every word he said, my eyes wide open, my heart bleeding for them as kids and, at the same time, pulse racing.

Law was so animated when he spoke. I had no problems picturing everything in my mind as if I was there with them. Hell, I knew for a fact I wouldn't have survived like they had, no way. He told me they were running around the streets, stealing, pick-pocketing tourists, being picked up by the cops at the early age of seven. *Yup, you heard right SEVEN!*

It was just so crazy listening to him.

He further told me that when he turned twelve, his mom had had it. She couldn't deal with her out-of-control sons and sent them to live with her sister and her husband here in New York. His aunt and uncle had no children and plenty of room in their house. Plus, her brother-in-law requested that she send her boys to him. He said that they needed a strong male figure to teach them how to be a man and her family in the UK was too old to handle rambunctious boys.

Law said they hated it at first. Didn't want to be away from home or their mom. But they grew to like it. They no longer had to figure out creative ways to eat. His aunt cooked for them all the time. They never went hungry again. They finally had good quality clothes on their backs, shoes on their feet with no holes, and their shoes actually fit. They were feeding their minds in excellent schools, made a few friends and things were simply better for them.

I had sensed there was more to his story, but I didn't get into it. That part of our conversation was heavy, and I needed a break. To lighten the surrounding air, I started asking him silly questions like what his favorite cereal was back in the day, his favorite cartoon, action hero, goofy shit like that. Then our conversation shifted to sex, and well, you know what happened after that. Conversations always seemed to gravitate to that forbidden topic, especially when the opposite sex was around.

"Okay," I straightened my spine, took my drink to the head, and sat the empty glass on the table in front of the couch, "...so you had sex at thirteen. How old was the girl? The same age as you?" I was still facing Law, sitting with my legs crossed, eyes filled with mischief, grinning broadly.

"I think so. She could have been fourteen, I don't really remember. She let me touch her tits one time when we were playing tag or something. We were at my uncle's boss's house. My uncle always took us to his boss's house for parties and things. There were plenty of kids of all ages and we'd run around the large estate with the other kids. We'd go swimming, play basketball in the pool and on the basketball court that was on the side of the house. We'd also play hide and seek in the woods at the back of the house. Lots of shit happened in those woods. The same girl let me grab her arse in those woods and it wasn't just a quickie. My hands lingered before she pushed my hand away."

I smirked. "Oh, she was a fast ass then," I stated, then rolled my eyes.

Law laughed.

"I guess she was. I didn't care. She let me cop a feel, and I had no problem taking advantage of her hospitality."

He grinned mischievously and winked at me. I rolled my eyes. "Yeah, well, you can leave your story right there. I don't want the details on when she let you touch the rest of her."

He chuckled heartily.

“Jealous?” he queried, and I rolled my eyes again and gave him the finger.

“No, not at all.”

“Would you like me to fill you up, perhaps? Have a go at testing how soft that arse of yours is?”

I snorted. “Not anymore,” tumbled out of my mouth without me thinking about it. My eyes grew in surprise, and I covered my mouth with my hand.

Law thought that shit was funny as hell.

“Fuck you, Law,” I countered quickly and desperately tried to calm my beating heart.

“Anytime, anywhere, Princess, just let me know,” He quipped, a heated gleam in his eyes and it took me a few to get his meaning. When I did, I wanted to crawl under the couch and hide.

“What about you, Princess?” he asked, still smiling. “When was the first time you had sex?”

I rolled my eyes.

“Not at thirteen. I was in college. Some guy I had been dating, and it wasn’t all that great.”

“Sometimes the first time isn’t great, but after that,” His eyes gleamed provocatively.

I snorted. “Yeah, that’s not for me. I wasn’t that lucky. Let’s just say I’ve had some unpleasant experiences that I’m still trying to forget,” I admitted vaguely.

Yeah, no way was I telling him about George. No fucking way. Not now and, if I could help it, not ever.

“That’s too bad.”

I waved him off.

“No big deal,” I stated, then quickly changed the subject. “So, what brings you to New York? Business or pleasure?”

“Business... You?”

“All pleasure,” I admitted, smiling.

He raised an eyebrow.

“All pleasure, huh? That sounds riveting.”

Hearing what I said playing back in my head, and the carnal look in his eyes, I sucked my teeth.

“Not that kind of pleasure. Get your mind out of the gutter.”

Law’s seductive mouth curled into a half smile.

“Now what would be the fun in that?”

I ignored him and answered, “I’m here on vacation. I plan to relax for a couple of weeks, visit with my college roommate, and enjoy the city. I have a bucket list I plan to work through, too.”

“Yeah? What’s on this bucket list of yours?”

“Nothing exciting. A little of this, a little of that. I want to see the Empire State Building and the Statue of Liberty.”

“You went to school here. Haven’t you seen those monstrosities already?” he frowned.

I laughed at the look of disgust on his face.

“I have, but I want to see them again with a fresh set of eyes, I guess. It’s all part of my plan. So far, I’ve been to Hawaii and visited Volcano National Park, which was something I hadn’t done before.” I grinned conspiratorially. “I even saw an active volcano.”

“Ahh, a volcano, huh? What else?”

“I also went to Black Sand Beach just to say I walked along the beach of jet-black sand and—”

“And how was that?” he interrupted, smiling.

I frowned.

“Messy... Anyway, I’ve been to L.A., did some shopping, saw some celebrity mansions, and toured the city. I also did the Miami nightlife on South Beach. And now I’m here.”

“Wow, you’ve been busy. And besides the Empire State Building and the Statue of Liberty, what are your plans while

you're here?" he asked thoughtfully.

I patted my sides and searched my surrounding area, looking for my phone, and realized that I had left it in the bedroom. I excused myself and went into the bedroom to retrieve it.

When I returned, I woke up the screen on my phone, found the notes app, and tapped the note I saved, then handed it to him.

"Nothing too crazy, as you can see," I explained. "I'm very interested in 1 and 2. I haven't done those yet. And although I've done 4, 5, and 6 already, I didn't have a good time. It was a group of us, and they talked and joked like the entire time."

Law looked at my phone, then back at me with a stunned look on his face.

I chuckled lightly. "What? I know it's probably silly to you, but... you know, it's kinda important to me."

I tried not to sound defensive, but I couldn't help it. There wasn't much on the list but shopping, sightseeing, catching a Broadway play or two, you know, simple stuff like that. Why did he have that crazy look on his face?

"And you say you haven't done 1 and 2 but 4, 5, and 6 you've done with a group of people?" he spoke up and asked but never moved his eyes from my phone. When I didn't reply right away, he raised his eyes to me and I smiled, trying to relax and ignore the alarm bells that were going off in my head.

"Yeah, I was hoping to get to 1 and 2 today, you know," I confided in him. "But I got to the city too late. I'll remedy that, bright and early, in the morning, though. I can't wait to start my day and see what I can get into."

"Huh," he mumbled. He looked more than shocked, almost troubled in fact, and he seemed a little uncomfortable.

Feeling defensive from the way he was looking at me, judging me, I narrowed my eyes.

“What? Why are you looking at me like that? What’s wrong with my plans?”

Law raised an eyebrow.

“There’s nothing wrong with them, if you’re into shit like...” he trailed off, a slow smile appearing on his face.

Confused and feeling the hairs on the back of my neck stand at attention, I folded my arms protectively in front of me.

“If you’re into shit like what? Are you judging me?”

Law chuckled lightly and shook his head.

“Love, I’m doing no such thing. I’m just trying to understand you.”

“Why? My list is self-explanatory. You can clearly see what I like to do.”

He laughed again and said, “Indeed I can. So, let’s talk about this list then. Clarify some things for me because I’m at a loss. I pegged you as sweet, proper, and slightly sheltered. But this list.”

“I’ll have you know I’ve experienced a lot of things,” I said defensively, narrowing my eyes. “I may have grown up wealthy, far beyond most people. However, my life wasn’t completely sheltered.”

Law sat up and turned to face me.

“Alright, love, so based on what you’ve written, and pertaining to number 4, you’ve gotten finger fucked from behind by a group of chatty friends. Where did this happen? At one of your socialite parties?”

“I’m sorry, what?!” I screeched on a sonic level and snatched my phone from his hands. I looked at the screen and I swear my eyes grew the size of two Empire State Buildings. I brought a shaking hand to my mouth, then to my chest.

What the ever-loving fuck did I just do?

“Oh, crap,” I whispered, feeling my world spinning out of control. *How could I be so careless?*

Apparently, instead of giving Law my bucket list on the Notes app, I showed him my fuck me list. I didn't even confirm that I had picked the right list when I handed over my phone. I just concededly and blindly said, "Here you go!"

I had no idea that I had selected the wrong list and now all I wanted to do was die.

I met Law's amused expression with panic laced all over my face.

He went on to say, teasing me and my embarrassment, "I'm not the type of person to judge anyone's lifestyle. I just didn't get kinky swinger vibes from you, that's all."

"Shit." I closed my eyes and dropped my chin to my chest, wishing like hell a tidal wave would suddenly take out this city and me along with it.

Law chuckled. He was enjoying this shit. *Asshole!*

"You're definitely more adventurous than me, but I have to ask you about 1 and 2. Fucking a stranger and having sex with one is kind of the same thing, isn't it?"

I buried my face in my hands. "I'm so embarrassed."

I felt the couch dip next to me and hands grip my wrists.

"Why are you embarrassed?" he queried in a low voice. "It's sexy when a woman knows what she wants and makes a list. "But..." I groaned louder, and he laughed before he added, "starting bright and early to find a stranger to fuck you up against the wall is very tenacious of you. Let me know if you need help with that. I'm game if—"

"Ohhh, kill me now."

Law laughed again. "I'm game if you are."

I stood abruptly, causing him to lean back from me. I refused to sit there any longer.

"Excuse me, I'm just going to find a way to open one of these windows and jump to my death."

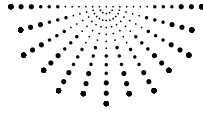
I stepped away from the couch, about to hightail it to my bedroom, lock the door and never come out again. *I couldn't*

believe what I'd done.

However, Law reached up and wrapped those long fingers of his around my wrist again, pulling me back to the couch.

“Oh, no, love. You’ve spilled your guts about everything else tonight. You can’t leave me hanging on this list you made. It’s out there now, I’ve seen it. The naughty list.” He laughed, and I rolled my eyes and groaned. “Come on, love, tell me all about it.”

CHAPTER FOUR



SYDNEY

A lright, yes! I made a “fuck me” list. It was the only way I could handle being so close to him at the bar. Haven’t you done the same after you met or saw a hot guy? Okay, maybe you hadn’t actually written said list, but you’ve thought of one. I’m not the only one on this island, am I?

Lawson was walking-talking-sex, literally, and he had been flirting heavily with yours truly ever since I had sat next to him at the bar. The alcohol I consumed inspired me, and as I sat next to him, I wondered what it would be like to have a one-night stand with him.

In the romance novels that I’d read on the regular, the heroine always had amazing, mind-blowing sex with some stranger she met at a bar, club, or her job. They also ended up falling in love in a week or less, which I was not interested in doing. Besides, it was far-fetched and unrealistic to fall in love with a stranger in only a week. Believe me, I’ve learned from my mistakes trusting my heart, but it may not be unrealistic to have unbelievable sex with a stranger.

So, as the hot British guy spoke, I thought about all the sexual things I wanted to do with him. Also, I thought of all the amazing, kinky things I wanted him to do to me. I was not that experienced when it came to sex. Besides George, I’d had a few willing partners in college, but I wouldn’t call it mind-blowing experiences. The only two sexual positions I had experienced were missionary and a dry-ass version of doggy style. I didn’t know what it was like to have hot, passionate sex.

It's sad, I know, but it's my reality.

But... If I could change that, what would I try?

That was how the list was born. I let my imagination free and jotted some of my fantasies down quickly on the Notes app in my phone, trying not to allow myself to get carried away. As you could imagine, the list in my head was extensive. I had to narrow it down to a few things.

Here was the “naughty list”:

1. Have sex with a stranger.

2. Fuck a stranger.

Yes, Lawson was right about these two. They sounded the same. Except for me, they're different. Very different. Having sex with a stranger could be anything, oral sex or actual penetration. Also, just sex could be boring. I wanted to experience hot, passionate, gotta-have-you, rip-off-your-clothes sex with a stranger, i.e. fucking. There's no expectation, or embarrassment, or disappointments afterwards. You two leave and never see each other again.

Moving on...

3. Have an orgasm during sex.

Yup, I haven't had an orgasm during sex in a very long time. Remember, George didn't like to sweat during sex. And when it came to oral, oh, he wanted it all the time, but I couldn't get him to kiss me below my belly button.

Were things getting clearer to you about my depressing life?

Understand, I wasn't saying that I'd never experienced an orgasm before. I had used methods of self-pleasure to get me there. And I wasn't a virgin. I'd had sex with men before George. However, I didn't want to just cum during sex. I wanted to feel a body shaking, stars bursting, head exploding kind of orgasm. That's what I wanted to feel, that's what I needed, and I believed Law could give me that and more.

Okay...

4. Get pushed up against the wall and finger fucked from behind.

I don't have an explanation for this one. I just think it's hot as hell when your man can't wait for you to take off your clothes to get to your girlie parts and would attack you with his fingers. It would probably feel amazing. Anyway, back to my list...

5. Have a man go down on me while I was standing, or lying down, or just whenever.

6. Fuck up against the wall anywhere: the shower, up against a door, an elevator, whatever.

7. Have sex in a public place.

Yeah, I was not really comfortable with this last one, but I'll leave it on there. After all, this list was supposed to be for fun.

8. Learn how to give a proper blowjob.

9. Explore as many positions as possible, especially ass up, face down. And hair pulling is a must.

Those were just some things that came to mind. Again, I had more, but I didn't want to be greedy.

Back to the Cheshire Cat in front of me...

I refused to answer the question he had asked, wishing like hell the couch would open up and swallow me whole, or him, whatever worked. Seeing that I would not elaborate on the list he'd read, Law started feeling around me, around the couch cushions, touching my heated skin as he did so.

"What are you doing?" I asked.

"Looking for your phone. I want to see that list again. I have so many questions."

"Oh, no way. That's not happening."

I reached behind me and grabbed my phone, but as it would seem, my grip wasn't tight enough. He snatched my phone right out of my hand.

“What was number eight? Something about giving a proper blow job?” He started fiddling with my phone, but I knew he couldn’t get the thing open without my biometrics.

Just as that thought entered my mind, he turned the phone in front of... yup, you guessed it, my face. I watched in horror as my screen lit up, and the first thing that I saw was the list.

Oh crap!

Without thinking, I dove for my phone. But Law was quick, as if he knew what I was about to do. He leaned his body back, stretching his arm above his head away from me. That didn’t deter me one bit if that was his plan. I reached over his body to grab my phone from his hand, but his arm was too long.

Bastard.

I called him an asshole under my breath and started to back away from him when his arm wrapped around my waist and held me to him. It was then that I realized my position. I was on top of him, my lips inches from his. One of my legs was bent next to his waist, the other lying next to his. I gasped lightly. My heart suddenly kicked into overdrive. My whole body warmed. Hidden parts tingled with the awareness that his particular body part was snug up against *my* particular body part.

Goodness holy hell...

His eyes grew dark, heady, filling with desire I had never seen before in my life, especially focused on me.

Law dropped my phone next to him and cupped the side of my face with his free hand, his fingers getting lost in my hair under my now loosened ponytail. His eyes searched my face, glanced at my lips, then back to my eyes.

I mumbled an apology and tried to get off of him, but his hold tightened around my waist.

“Law,” I whispered. My voice became unsteady, my body tensed.

Goodness, he looked good up close.

Have you ever looked at someone up close, I mean, really up close? Sometimes hot people didn't look so hot when you were right on them, but Law, fuck, he looked so... good.

“You’re so beautiful,” he whispered, his voice taking on this tone that made my body melt into him. As if I was made to be there, and fuck, it felt like it too.

Suddenly, my heart picked up its pace, *like the stupid thing hadn't been going ten trillion miles already*, as the distance between us became smaller and smaller.

I could feel his breath on my face, the scent of whiskey clouding my judgement.

“I need a taste, love,” he stated so plainly and with authority. And the way he looked deeply into my eyes told me he would not be denied.

My eyes were wide, my mouth opened to reply, but nothing came out. Law’s grip on my hair suddenly tightened.

He pulled me closer to him, and at first, his soft-looking lips lightly brushed against mine. He grazed my top lip, then bottom before claiming me, plunging his tongue into my mouth, owning me instantly. I felt an electrical spark go through my entire body. Everything inside of me came alive. My pussy pulsed and my clit ached.

I had never been kissed like this. The hunger I felt from him, the lust and desire in the tight grip of my hips and hair, showed me how much he wanted me.

I couldn’t help the moan that rumbled in my throat, which seemed to charge Law. He sat up suddenly, causing me to straddle his waist. He shifted so his back was against the couch, slouched deep into the cushion, and pulled me closer to him until I felt his hardness against me. He trapped my face between both hands and deepened the kiss, devouring me. And I wanted nothing more but to give him all of me. I didn’t care that I was kissing a stranger. I was lost in the taste of him, the feel of him.

Law ripped free from my lips and rested his forehead against mine. “I should go,” he whispered softly, breathlessly.

His hands had shifted to my ass, and he squeezed tight.

I moaned softly, threaded my fingers in his soft hair and, well... okay, I ground my hips against his. I couldn't help it. He was making me feel so good.

“Fuck, woman,” he bit out harshly, painfully.

I stopped and mumbled, “Sorry,” but I wasn't sorry. Not in the least. His touch felt amazing, his lips. When I shifted against him again, he placed his hands on my hips and stopped my movements.

I met his lust-filled gaze with a bit of heat of my own. We continued to stare at each other, our breaths coming out in harsh pants against our faces. My pulse raced, pussy throbbed with hunger, with a yearning to have this man between my legs. But as much as I wanted him, and I knew he wanted me, he wasn't making a move.

Did I read his signals wrong? He kissed me. Did he not want me?

I tried not to show the disappointment and embarrassment as I pushed away from him and tried to stand, but Law tightened his hold on my hips, keeping me where I was. Confused, I asked, “I thought you wanted to go?”

“No, I said I *should* go. I don't *want* to go. In fact, what I want to do is carry you into your room, strip you naked and fuck you into next week. That's what I *want*.”

My eyes grew wide, breath hitched in my throat. Holy shit!

I bit my bottom lip, trying not to pass out.

“You do?” I inquired breathlessly, unable to say anything else.

Law cupped the sides of my face. “Yes, I do. I want that more than anything right now. But I need to know if that's what you want. I didn't come up here to fuck you. I wanted to talk to you more, relax without interruption. That's all. But being this close to you and not being able to touch you was driving me crazy. You're driving me crazy. I need to touch

you, to caress every inch of you, but if you don't want that, tell me now and I'll leave. I won't like it, but I will."

Shit... was he serious? Was he real?

This man was hard as diamonds underneath me. I could see an overwhelming desire in his eyes. But he was leaving this up to me. Fuck, this only made me want him more.

I tightened my grip on his hair, bit my bottom lip, rested my forehead back against his and slowly ground my hips against his generous hardness.

"Stay," I said, my lips inches from his. I kissed him lightly on the lips, one peck, two, all the while my hips never stopped shifting, grinding, begging.

Law groaned, gripped my ass tight, and began rotating my hips against him, creating his own rhythm. He rocked me again, this time causing a shiver to rage through my body and a moan to fall ever so softly from my lips.

"Tell me you want me to fuck you," he demanded just above my lips and I swore I had just cum on myself.

He pressed me harder against him and thrust deeper into me.

"Ahhh," I cried out.

"Tell me, Princess. Tell me you want this dick stroking your pussy hard and rough, all night long."

"Yesss... Please." Was all I could say as I felt an orgasm begin to take hold of my body.

He stopped moving my hips, gripped my face again, and stared deeply into my eyes. It was as if he didn't believe the words falling from my mouth. He wanted to see the truth in my eyes.

I gave him my truth and then some. I was dying to have him. I just hoped I wouldn't regret this decision in the morning. I mean, this would only be sex. He wasn't offering me anything more, and I wasn't expecting anything. I was going to take this bull by his large-as-fuck *horn* and ride him until I was satisfied. That's it.

I haven't been with anyone else, other than my husband, in five years. And as we both now know, he sucked in bed. Seriously, it was so bad. I stopped trying to please him and just laid there until he got himself off. But Law was different. He would be different. I was about to have the best night of my life. I felt that throughout my soul. I was aware of the potential of being ruined for all others after tonight. I could end up alone for the rest of my life because I would never find another man like Law.

But fuck it, you only live once, right?

I trapped his face between my hands, feeling the tightness in his jaw under my fingertips, and said, "I want you to fuck me, Law. Make me lose my mind until I barely know my own name."

He remained silent for long, uncomfortable seconds. His eyes searched mine, taking me in, making me feel insecure, exposed and unsure. Then, just like that, all of my worries fell away with five words. Five words that caused my heart to melt, butterflies to take flight, and my soul to soar.

"You are so... fucking breathtaking. Do you know that?"

Yeah, just like that... I think I'm in love.

"Wrap your legs around my waist, Princess," he instructed, as he stood with me still in his arms. I quickly obeyed, attaching my body to his. He took his time walking to the back room, never taking his eyes off of me. It was the sexiest shit I had ever experienced in my life.

We made it to the bedroom, and he tapped on my ass, signaling he wanted me to release him. I stood in front of him, waiting for his next command. I didn't have to wait very long.

"Arms up."

I raised my arms, and he pulled my sweatshirt over my head and dropped it behind me. His fingers caressed my skin, touching my stomach, my waist, and traveled along my spine. Once they arrived at the back of my bra, he squeezed the two halves together, releasing the clasp.

“Off, baby,” he commanded, his deep voice causing goosebumps to appear along my heated skin.

I shimmied the bra off as I felt his thumbs slide underneath the elastic band of my shorts and panties. He slid them down past my hips, then my thighs. I twisted, helping them slide easily past my curves until they dropped to my ankles.

Law stayed close to me. His greedy eyes and hands roamed all over my body, caressing me softly, reverently. Not wanting him to be the only one getting his fill, I began unbuttoning the buttons of his shirt. I didn't get very far before Law stepped back, gripped the back of his shirt, and pulled it and his t-shirt up and over his head.

The moment his defined-ass chest was revealed, I damn near passed the fuck out, again.

I've seen six packs before. Not from anyone in my family, of course. But when I used to stay with Hailey at her family's home, her brothers would walk around the house shirtless. They were beefy, powerful men that looked hot as shit shirtless. Back then, I thought I had won the lottery watching those sexy-as-hell men walk around, their brawn on display.

But Law was rocking like an eight pack or something with side muscles as a bonus. The man was cut and built just as my imagination had conjured up.

I reached up and fondled the hell out of his abs, his obliques, his pecs, and doing my best not to salivate.

“Woman, you're driving me crazy,” he whispered low.

I paused, my hands resting along his shoulders. Freaked out, I looked up at him concerned.

“I'm sorry. Am I doing something wrong?”

Law gripped my wrists tight, stepping closer to me. “No, baby, you're doing everything right. But if you keep touching me the way you are, I'm going to lose my mind, bend you over the bed and savagely fuck you from behind.”

Well, damn...

Eyes wide, I confessed softly, “I wouldn't mind that.”

“Shit, beautiful.”

Law reached up and captured my face between large hands... *Were his hands this large before? Fuck, that explained a lot.*

“Woman, best believe I’m going to have you on every fucking surface in this hotel suite. But first, I want to taste you, baby. I want you coming all over my face, my fingers. Then I’ll have you writhing on my dick. Is that something you can handle? Giving yourself that way to me?”

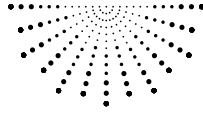
Damn if my knees didn’t buckle from just his words. His promise of a night I would never forget.

I didn’t respond. Instead, I backed up until the back of my legs hit the bed. I sat down and crawled backward until I was fully on the soft, down comforter. I laid on my back, spread my legs open for him, and waited.

“Holy fucking shit... you’re going to be the death of me before this night is through.” His eyes stayed on my pussy for a long moment before he admitted in a breath, “So perfect... and all mine.”

I wasn’t sure if it was to me or if he simply spoke his inner thoughts out loud. Whatever the reason, I couldn’t help but smile.

CHAPTER FIVE



LAWSON

*F*uck me, this woman... she was... fuck...

She had stolen my breath away again. The way she laid out before me, gifting me one of the most perfect views I had ever seen. And I wasn't just speaking about her soaked pussy. I meant just her. The way her skin seemed to glow and the way the white comforter contrasted with her dark complexion.

I ran my hand down my face, took in a breath, and let it out slowly. I had to count to twenty before I could get my legs to move. I stepped to the foot of the bed, never moving my eyes from her body, taking in her wicked, voluptuous, sinful, and erotic body inch by fucking inch and loving every damn thing I saw.

"Fuck, baby," I rasped out, shaking my head in astonishment. I mean, I knew she would be glorious to see naked, but I didn't imagine this... I brought my eyes back to hers.

"You. Are. Stunning."

She gave me a soft smile that warmed her face through the dimly lit room, but she didn't hold my intense gaze for very long. I didn't blame her. I knew I was again pouring it on thick and just like the many other times, I couldn't help it.

Sydney was... fuck, she was everything. That's all I could come up with. All I could say. She was everything, and I barely knew this woman. However, that would soon change.

I kicked off my shoes and crawled onto the bed next to her, my fingers lightly traveling along her bare thigh.

“Your body is glorious; skin soft as silk,” I praised lightly, roaming my eyes along her stomach, her breasts, noticing her peaks tightening, demanding my attention.

Not yet, my heavenly morsels, not yet.

Sydney’s lips curled into her cheek, but remained silent, watching my eyes. I hoped she saw the truth in them, understood what this moment meant for me.

I reached her hip and traveled along her soft stomach, in between her supple breasts to the side of her face. I leaned down and leisurely, passionately kissed her. I took my time adoring her lips, tasting her, teasing her. I felt her body shudder, an arm wrapped around me, her fingers in my hair, but I maintained my lazy speed, taking my time with her. I wanted this moment to last. *I wanted to last and not say fuck it all and devour her.*

I had a feeling she had never been worshiped by a man. I bet the men in her past knew nothing about her, how she enjoyed being stroked, touched, kissed. I could tell that kissing her and worshiping her was part of her foreplay. It was what drove her crazy with unchartered passion. Her breathing was erratic, body humming with need. But again, I took my time.

I released her lips and traveled along her jaw, kissing, nipping down to her neck, tasting her warm skin, inhaling her scent. I slid further down her body to her breasts and sucked on the nipple closest to me while my fingers played with the other, pinching lightly, fondling, caressing. She gasped and arched her back slightly into my touch. I pinched her again.

“Ahh... Law,” she cried out, thrusting her hips into my chest, her fingers tightened in my hair.

Her body responded to everything I did, from pinching her nipples to simple caresses. I revered her breasts lovingly, thrived off the moans she made and the writhing of her body. Her hips moved against me with more determination, and I knew she was building.

“Do you want to cum, Princess?”

“Mmm, yes, please.”

I shifted to her side and slid my hand down her belly. I glided two fingers between her slick folds to her clit and circled the sensitive bud, creating a slow rhythm. But to be honest, I didn't need to. She started circling her hips against my fingers, gyrating fast, as if she was chasing her own release. I slipped a finger inside her soaked channel, wanting to feel more of her. She was so fucking tight. I slipped a second one inside and swore she was going to break my fingers, her muscles clamped down so hard.

"Fuck, baby, you're so tight, so fucking wet," I whispered in her ear, then hummed my appreciation. I moved my fingers in and out of her, arching them as I pulled out, tickling her hidden bundle of nerves. "Cum for me, yeah? Let me see you break apart."

"Oh, fuck... yes... yes... mmmm," she crooned in a soft tone, her eyes closed tight, her lip trapped between her teeth as I worked her over, teasing her clit. Then her eyes opened wide suddenly, and she looked at me just as she cried out, "Oh... Oh... Oh... Fuck!"

Her body tensed, shook, and her pussy convulsed as she came undone for me.

"Ahhhh..." She cried out while she arched her back, gripping the hell out of the comforter underneath her.

"Fuck, baby, you're so goddamn sexy," I praised, smiling down at her. I stroked her slowly, softly, not allowing her to calm down. "How did that feel?"

She hummed her appreciation and smiled, but then her eyes grew wide as I pinched her clit and increased the pace of my fingers.

"Law... what are you... oh no... oh shit... I-I." She closed her eyes again just as her entire body convulsed violently, her impending climax taking hold. "Shiiiiitttt," she cried out loud and gripped the comforter like a lifeline.

I continued to strum her pussy with my fingers, slipping into her wet core while teasing her clit with my thumb. I sucked on her neck, licked the bud of her ear and bit down on

her skin just behind her lobe. She almost elevated from the bed when she came again. She screamed my name, and I watched mesmerized by how stunningly gorgeous her ecstasy face was in my eyes. She seemed to let go of everything and gave me her body, her mind, her heart. The look in her eyes was pure, unsullied pleasure. She cupped my face and gave me her eyes as I worked her over again, needing to see her cum again, wanting that experience embedded in my brain for fucking ever because damn...

She spoke to me, but I couldn't tell you what the fuck she said. I was so enraptured. This being the first time a woman has truly given herself to me and I wasn't sure I deserved it. *You know what... to hell with this.*

I couldn't wait any longer. I could no longer take my time with her. Suddenly, this deep clawing need to get inside of her ripped through me. I needed to know if what I was feeling, what I sensed from her, was real.

I dragged my fingers from her pussy, my digits soaked with her need. I shifted off the bed and stood next to it. She watched me as I placed a finger into my mouth then another, tasting her essence, and wanting more. Her eyes darkened with a wicked carnal need I was all too eager to fulfill. I grinned at her, moved my fingers to my belt buckle and released the strap. Then I unbuttoned and unzipped my trousers. I let the material drop to my ankles. Leaving me in my boxer briefs.

Her eyes wandered all over my body, taking in my definition, the strength in my shoulders, my chest and arms. She then lowered her eyes to my hips and finally to the rather large, slanted cock imprint. The tip peaked past the waistband of my briefs.

Her eyes grew and her jaw dropped. The side of my mouth curled into my cheek.

"Don't worry, love, I got you," I said to her, my voice taking on this gritty sound, the tone foreign to my own ears.

She ran her fingers through her hair and chuckled nervously.

“I bet you say that to all the girls,” she joked.

I dropped my smile, my brows creased.

“No, love. I just fuck them and leave. But with you, Princess, I plan to take my time, tickle your insides, stretch you, own you, have you surrender to me. After that, then I’ll fuck you.”

Sydney sat up, turned on the bed to face me, and slid closer to the edge. She stood and slowly stepped up to me. I watched her as she moved with grace and seduction. I bet she had no idea how sexy she was. My heart rate picked up its pace, anticipating her touch as she got closer. I damn near closed my eyes and breathed out a sigh of relief as she lifted her fingers and caressed me. She started at my arms, traveled along the ridges of the straining muscles along my chest and to my back, while her eyes never left mine. I loved the way she felt, what her touch did to me. It soothed yet charged me. She willed me and controlled me. At this fucking moment, she could have asked me to give her the fucking moon and I would have done it. But her words... the shit she said next sealed her fate.

“But I’ve already surrendered to you,” she confessed softly, and fuckkkk... I was... I mean, I couldn’t... yeah, I was fucking gone.

“Fuck, woman, give me those lips,” I growled. I picked her up by her thighs until her legs wrapped around my waist. We fell on the bed. She threaded her fingers in my hair and planted her succulent lips on mine.

Now this kiss right here... fuck yeah, it wasn’t soft at all. It was rough, primal, all-consuming, and merciless. All rational thoughts had gone. The precautions that I’d taken before I laid with a woman, I didn’t do. Hell, I didn’t care. I wasn’t waiting for shit, couldn’t fucking think straight if someone held a gun to my head and threatened to kill me if I didn’t stop *to* think.

Without breaking our connection, I lifted my body, pulled down my briefs just enough to release my aching cock. I lined up and... yeah, I slipped between her drenched soft folds.

“Fuckkkk,” I dragged out on a haggard breath, finally releasing her lips, as I slid along her slick heat.

“Oh, Law,” she gasped, held me tight, and started panting and writhing underneath me.

“I’m sorry, Princess, I need-ta... Bloody hell, your pussy is sooo. Fuckkk!”

It wasn’t easy getting all the way inside her body. For one, I wasn’t your average size and second, fuck, she was tight. I knew she felt every ridge of my hard cock against her muscled walls, felt every throb, every breath.

Her pussy gripped me so tight I thought I was going to cum before I could get balls deep.

“Damn, baby, you’re so tight,” I mumbled into her neck. She moaned her response, tightened her legs around my waist, while her fingers tangled tight in my thick strands.

“Is that a good thing?” she asked me. Dammit, I needed her to stop being so sweet.

“Yeah, Princess, it’s fucking fantastic.”

She clamped down tighter... her walls choked the shit out of my dick.

I saw fucking stars...

“Jeez—us... Princess,” I panted.

Once I was finally settled deep inside, I took a moment to get myself together before I slid out slowly and fell back into heaven. She felt so damn good, saturated and... and...

Bloody hell, I couldn’t get a good rhythm. Not the one I wanted. I reached underneath her and lifted her up so I could carry us further on top of the bed. We were diagonal on the mattress, angled crazily, but I’d be damned if I was pulling out of her sweet pussy to adjust our bodies further. This shit would have to do.

I began moving my hips, eventually finding the rhythm I wanted. I moved slowly. Deep, controlled, thrusts, as my body tightened with the pleasure of fucking her. I lifted my torso so

that I could stare into her eyes, wanting to see just how much she surrendered to me.

I knew what she had said was true. She had relinquished all of herself to me. I felt it in her touch. I felt it when her body quivered underneath me. But to see it in her eyes, the windows to her soul? Yeah... I knew it was real. *She* was fucking real.

Without warning, I did something that I had never done in my life. I allowed her to see the real me: unguarded, raw, unfiltered. The storm that was constant in me was vivid in my eyes and she didn't shy away. She didn't look away or seem disgusted by what she saw. In fact, her eyes seemed to melt, her features warm and inviting.

I quickly captured her mouth, unable to stand it any longer, unable to take the vulnerability and sweetness in her eyes. I gripped her leg, tightened my hold, increased my pace, and introduced her to the real me. To the beast within.

I watched her come undone underneath me. The orgasmic bliss she'd lost herself in was such a beautiful thing. I encouraged her to let go, to give herself to me, by talking to her. I told her how good she felt, how I loved feeling her squeeze the fuck out of me, and let me tell you, her pussy walls were like vice grips. I stayed as close to her body as my deep violent thrusts would allow, the need to make her cry out my name, to dig her nails into my back and in my ass was something I strived for with every movement of my hips.

Oh, and when she got the hang of it, and added her hips into the mix, oh yeah, I lost my fucking mind.

"Yes, love, just like that, Princess. Fuck, you feel so good. So beautiful, do you hear me? So damn sexy."

I told her all types of shit after that and she rewarded me with that sexy smile of hers, or the sinful, seductive way she'd bite her bottom lip. *She's so hot!*

I allowed myself to cum, finally, but my recovery didn't last very long. She kept touching me, caressing my chest, teasing me with curious, hesitant fingers.

When she wrapped her fingers around my shaft, my cock swelled in her hand. Round two began immediately with her on top. Her hot, wet pussy devoured my dick in one fluid motion.

“Fuckkkk, Sydney!” I growled, bit my lip as she rode me slow, leaning her body close to mine, her eyes never wavered. It was the sexiest shit I had ever seen.

Being with Sydney was an experience I would never forget, and I told her as much.

Well... to be honest, I didn't say the shit exactly. I said something along the lines of, as I gripped her hair tight, “This pussy is mine, do you understand? Fucking. Mine. No one else's. I will kill anyone that touches what's mine, breathes on what's mine, or even thinks about what's mine. Do you hear me? You're mine. Mine.” Or something to that effect.

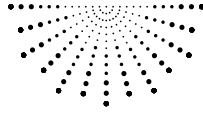
The craziest thing... she didn't balk at me or seemed freaked out. She rode the fuck out of me, both of us faced each other, my back against the wall, her tits smashed up against me. She had her fingers in my hair, gripping tight. My claim on her pussy was made with her eyes on me, a finger in her arse and her cumming on my dick.

“Yesss, Law... I'm all... all yours, baby... fuckkkk being anyone else's.... Got damn it!”

Now, I knew I had no business saying that shit, and she had no business agreeing either. We both knew that this was going to be a one-night stand, right? I would go on my way afterwards and she'd forget about me. I didn't want that, but fuck, we couldn't afford, or scratch that, *I* couldn't afford for this to be anything else but one and done. The shit I was into, what I did for a living, it would probably scare the fucking shit out of her. It may even cause her to regret this night, and I didn't want that to happen. I wanted this night to be memorable. I didn't want her to—*fuck okay, I'm just going to come right out and say it*—I didn't want her to forget about me.

Bloody hell!!!

CHAPTER SIX



SYDNEY

I laid on the couch in the dark, a drink in hand and stared out of the window of my suite for close to an hour now. There wasn't much to see but the lights of the city skyline. My mind had been elsewhere ever since I'd laid down. No, that's not completely accurate. My mind had been elsewhere for days now, clouded with thoughts of a certain tall, dark and sexy as fuck British Greek God.

Law.

I couldn't stop thinking about him.

What he had done to my body, how he had made me feel. It truly turned out to be, by far, the best sex of my life. The best *experience* of my life.

When he kissed me for the first time, I knew that being with him would be amazing but temporary. The man was still a stranger, regardless of the things we shared about our pasts. However, the way I had been feeling for the last few days didn't make sense. I shouldn't be thinking about him as much as I had been. I shouldn't want or need more from him as bad as I did. It was a one-night stand. I had been changed forever because of that night, but it was just a night.

And yet, I couldn't get him off my mind.

I also made a mistake that night that I knew would cost me. However, at the time, I didn't think about how much it would affect me. *What mistake did I make you ask?* I gave myself to him, and not just in body, but in mind and soul. In

other words, I surrendered myself to this man, dropped my guard and allowed him entrance into my heart.

What kind of shit was that you say? What in the fuck was I thinking?

I wasn't thinking, that was for sure. I knew better, despite it had been the first time I had ever had a one-night stand. I still knew better. I just couldn't help it. I couldn't stop myself from letting go and giving him my all. It was how I was built, I guess. Sex for me wasn't just some act between two people. It was a bond, a way of connecting souls.

And no, that didn't mean I had to open my heart to the man, but I didn't know how to come half-ass, if that made sense. Plus, the way Law treated me, how he handled me, spoke to me, touched me... He wouldn't have accepted half-ass from me, anyway. He demanded all of me, required it, in fact. He took and took, and I gave it willingly.

I woke the next day alone and tried not to let that shit get to me, but admittedly, it did. Granted, it had been closer to the afternoon when I had finally opened my eyes, but I had still wished that he would've stayed. Maybe we could've talked a little bit before he left. But honestly, as I thought about it more, it had been better that he wasn't here when I woke up. I would've felt even worse than I did right now if I saw him leave.

I wanted to see him again. I wanted to talk to him, to lie in his arms, feel his body against mine.

He made me feel so good, you know? I felt cherished when I was with him, desired, wanted. When we talked to each other, he kept intense eyes on me, as if he was absorbing every word that fell from my lips. Now, I wasn't so sure that the complete focus on me was just an act. Nonetheless, it still felt good.

I sighed, sat up, and took the remaining glass of wine down.

If my best friend, Hailey, could see me now, she'd probably call me pathetic. I wasn't built for the life of one-

night stands. They were too much. Or maybe Law was just too much.

I missed him. How sad was that? It only took one night, and I was hooked.

My cell vibrated on the table in front of me and I had the audacity to wish that it was Law. I snorted and picked up the device. *Like you gave him your number, stupid.*

I checked the screen and saw it was Hailey, my bestie from college.

I thought about letting it go to voicemail. It was almost midnight. She was probably calling to get me to hang out with her tonight, but I wasn't in the mood. However, I hadn't seen her or spoken to her since I arrived in New York, and I needed my friend.

I picked up the call before it stopped ringing.

"Hey, girl," I greeted, laid back down on the couch, and threw my legs over the back cushion.

"Hey, yourself. I thought you would have called me by now. You've been in my city for two days now."

"I know, I'm sorry. I've been a little, umm... preoccupied," I admitted with a sigh.

She let out a sigh of her own, one of annoyance.

"Please tell me you're not having second thoughts about leaving Puddin Pie."

I chuckled lightly at Hailey's nickname for George.

The first day she met him, she had given him that name. She told me she could smell pussy all over him and that it wasn't due to him fucking some stank girl. *He* was the pussy. She said he had a weak handshake and that his voice sounded weak. His walk lacked confidence, as if he wanted everyone around him to forget him instead of taking notice of him.

I, of course, didn't agree with her. Back then I had blinders on when it came to George. I thought he was the best thing since, since... I don't know, Starbucks. In the beginning of our

relationship, he was always sweet to me. He made me feel special. I didn't see him as weak. I saw him as sensitive and caring.

Boy, that shit was a lie. That fucker was just a really good actor. He needed an academy award for best actor in a drama series, that's for sure.

Plus, when I looked back at our marriage and experiences, I could see that Hailey had a point. There were many situations that George failed to stand up for himself and for me. He let some people at my dad's company walk all over him. He allowed his clients to pull him around by his balls, getting him to do whatever they wanted, at all hours of the day and night. He was a huge pushover and anytime I would encourage him to stand up for himself, to even tell my father to go to hell, he would tell me no. Saying, "You don't understand what it takes to be successful. I got this. You just stay behind me and do what women do."

Do what women do?

Yeah, I had no idea what the hell he meant by that. Did he expect me to keep my mouth shut and be the doting wife? *Fuck that and fuck him!* I was never one to keep my mouth shut, which was something that we argued about for years. He even stopped taking me to business functions because the moment someone stepped out of line or said some shit to him I didn't like, I spoke up.

Why did I stay married to that mother fucker for so long? I have no fucking clue.

I replied to my friend, with disdain laced in my voice, "Fuck no. I told you, I'm done playing the doting wife, trying to make my marriage work. As I said, I am too good to be treated like shit."

"Good, because if you didn't leave his ass I was going to go down there and kick *your* ass, then kidnap you."

"Whatever, girl." I laughed, took my phone away from my ear, and put the call on speaker. I rested the phone on my chest and closed my eyes.

Hailey DiMaggio was what I'd liked to call a mafia princess. Her father, or rather her family, the DiMaggio's, were one of the baddest, most ruthless crime families in New York. Actually, her father was one of four brothers, and they all had territories in four of the five boroughs of New York: Queens, Brooklyn, Bronx, and Staten Island.

Being roommates with Hailey at NYU was not only a blast, but a life-changing experience. We met freshman year and connected instantly. I had grown up in a tight little bubble surrounded by friends who were mean spirited, snobbish, entitled, pretentious, and downright grade "A" assholes. And that was only the guys. The girls were even worse.

Meeting Hailey was just refreshing. She had a background and childhood that I envied and feared both at the same time. We ran the streets of New York and got into a lot of shady situations, ones that if I repeated what went down, I would probably disappear. But let me tell you, those four years were the best years of my life.

I had reached out to Hailey when I'd made my plans to escape George and my family. She was all too willing to help me. She was the one who set up this hotel suite for me, using one of her many aliases. She also booked the flight from Miami to New York using a private airline. Hailey always looked out for me. I swear, if it wasn't for her, I don't know where I'd be right now. Maybe still married and miserable.

I had the pleasure of meeting and hanging out with her family, too, during the time we were in college. To me, they didn't seem like this ruthless family of killers and criminals. They were fun, down to earth, and loved to eat, drink, and party. They were nothing like my family; stuck up, judgmental, and fake as hell.

Hailey's dad, Joe DiMaggio, was like my honorary father. He always treated me as if I was family. Hailey's mom was not in the picture. She was alive and well but didn't agree with the family dynamics as it stood. I had asked Hailey why her mom left without taking her kids if she didn't like the life, and she kindly told me, "Neither of us wanted to go. The woman was

off her rocker. It was hell living with her. We were so glad when she up and left.”

I felt bad for her until she told me stories of some of the wild things her mom did to her and her brothers. After that, I envied her. I wished my mom would’ve just up and left too. No such luck on that front.

Hailey also had four bad ass brothers who were crazy as hell too. Were they crazy like their mother? Maybe. These boys were like 6’5, close to three hundred pounds of pure muscle, who treated me like an annoying little sister right along with Hailey. Frankie was the oldest, then there was Lorenzo, Aldo, and Fredo. I loved them all. The DiMaggio’s were like my second family.

I felt safe and protected with them. However, it was the exact opposite when I returned home after school. Hailey’s dad had offered me a place to stay with him and Hailey after we graduated, at their large estate outside of the city. I was completely flattered, but I told him I needed to get back home. My family claimed that they missed me and wanted me home with them. Looking back on the last five years of my life... I should’ve stayed my ass in New York.

“What’s going on with you? How’ve you been?” I asked.

“Good, stressed. Nothing new. My father has been pressuring me for an answer about taking my rightful place over the family business.”

“Wow, really?”

“Yeah,” she blew out a frustrating breath. “I’m not sure I want it, though.”

“Hailey, who do you think you’re talking to? I know you. You are so looking forward to the day you get to run your family’s business, and you know it.”

Hailey laughed and admitted, “Ah, you know me so well. Okay, yes, I’ll admit I am looking forward to the day my father hands over the reins to me, but I just didn’t expect it to happen so soon. I thought yeah, he’d retire in ten years, maybe twenty, and *then* I’d take over.”

“But you said he wants to get you prepared to take over. I’m sure what he *really* wants is to make sure everyone else is ready for you to take over,” I said smiling, half joking, half not.

“Oh fuck you, whatever.”

I laughed. So did she.

“Seriously, I’m sure he just wants to groom you. To make sure you’re dedicated.”

Hailey sighed audibly. “I know, it’s just... I dunno. You know what I mean? It’s a lot so soon.”

“So... you’re going to let one of your brother’s take over?”

“Fuck no! Those idiots would ruin this family. We’d be at war with anyone that disagreed with their crazy asses. No, I know I have to be the one to take over.” She then let out another sigh, this one showing the resolve in her fate. “I just had other plans for my life, remember? I wanted to start my fashion label, *Femme fatale*.”

Fashion was Hailey’s true passion. She loved it, loved immersing herself with the latest trends, and what the world was wearing. She attended every fashion show on the planet. When we were in school, she had dragged me to every New York sponsored fashion week. We even went to Paris twice.

Hailey had an eye for fashion, too. She could look at a person and know exactly how to style them. She used to practice on me all the time. She would even dress the girls in our dorm. And during homecoming or any formal type of event in school, the girls would pay her to find them a fabulous gown to wear for the festivities.

You would think, because of this passion of hers, that she had gone to NYU for design and fashion, but sadly no. Her father said that if he was going to pay for her education, it would be to benefit the family. He didn’t believe in her vision, her dream. He told her he was raising his successor, someone to take over the family business in the event that he wasn’t able to for any reason. He’d be damned if one of his brothers took over *his* territory. Over his dead body was his mantra.

“I get it, I do,” I sympathized. “But that doesn’t mean you have to put your dreams on hold. You can do both.”

I heard her snort before she paused, and I heard rustling on the other line. I assumed she was putting the phone in a better position.

“You sound like Ivie,” she admitted finally.

I grinned hearing the name of the gorgeous woman who was Hailey’s other bestie. I hadn’t met Ivie before, but I had seen a picture of her, and let me tell you, the woman was smoking hot in that badass, don’t-fuck-with-me-if-you-want-to-continue-breathing kind of way. She was half Nigerian, and her name was pronounced *e-v-yay*, even though the spelling looked like her name should be pronounced *i-v-ee*.

Hailey and Ivie had known each other since they were thirteen. They were like sisters, sort of like Hailey and me. Kindred spirits she had told me. I couldn’t wait to meet her. I was sure she and I would get along just as well as me and Hailey. From the stories I’d heard about Ivie, she was just as crazy as Hailey, and for some reason, I flocked to crazy.

“What did Ivie say?” I asked.

“Same as you. She thinks I can do both; learn the ropes and start my business. I just don’t see how yet. Both will take a lot of time to get off the ground. My father is going to want one hundred percent of my attention. He will not settle for anything less. My business will also need my time.”

“That’s true,” I agreed, then added, “but I still think you can do it. Maybe if you had some help with the business side of your business, it could work. You just need a strategy, a plan to start up everything. I know you have the sketches. I’ve seen them, so you don’t have to worry about that part. It’s getting your business plan created and put into motion that’s the issue or obstacle. You need to decide where you’re going to open your warehouse, find someone to bring your designs to life, and then find out how to market yourself. Yeah, it’s going to be work, and it may not happen right away, but it *will* happen.”

There was a pause on the other end of the phone, and I lifted it up to make sure the call wasn't disconnected. After a few heartbeats, Hailey said to me, "I love you. Do you know that?"

I smiled.

"Yeah, I know. Anyway, when do you have to give your father your answer?"

"End of the week, but he knows I'm going to say yes. There's no other person fit to take over. And I'd be damned if he grooms one of my cousins to do the job. Fuck that. So yeah, I'm going to do it. I'm just going to let the man sweat."

Hailey and I talked more about her vision for her label, where she would like to set up shop, and how she wanted to market herself. We bounced off ideas back and forth and set up some time to get together tomorrow to talk further, hang out and do what we love to do the most, shop.

I envied Hailey. She'd known exactly what she wanted ever since she was a little girl and took steps to make her dreams come true. My dreams consisted of working at my father's company like my brother. Maybe work my way up to Senior VP of Marketing or something. I was a marketing guru in college, graduated top in my class. I even impressed one of the top marketing firms in New York, Steel Global Marketing Group. They offered me a paid internship the summer after graduation, but I turned it down, expecting to get hired on by my father. Suffice it to say, that didn't happen.

My parents had other plans for me. They wanted me to come home, find a proper husband, get married, give them grandchildren and become the debutant they tried to raise. They didn't care about my education, my hopes and dreams. 'Dreams were for the poor', my father had said.

My father had been against me going to college. He thought it was a waste of time and money. However, my mother had talked him into letting me go, saying it would be good for me. Back then, I had thought she had said yes to encourage me to follow my dreams, my heart, but the only reason she let me go was to 'sow my royal oats'. In other

words, she figured I'd party for four years, be wild, have fun, then come home, buckle down and get married. At the end of the day, they didn't care what I wanted. If I was to live under *their* roof, spend *their* money, I would do what *they* said.

Do you see why I left?

I ended my call with Hailey and was about to call it a night when someone started knocking on my door. I glanced over at the room service tray that the server had left and figured they had returned to retrieve their tray. The guy said he'd return for the tray later, but I had assumed it would be tomorrow morning sometime since he hadn't shown in hours. I did *not* expect him to return at one in the morning.

The knocking started up again, and I reached over to the lamp next to me and turned it on. I stood, glanced down at my body and figured I was covered up enough. I was still wrapped in the robe I had adorned the second I emerged from the bathtub about an hour and a half ago. I didn't bother with dressing for the night, knowing that the moment I stepped into my bedroom I was crawling under the covers and going to sleep. I preferred sleeping in the nude. I didn't get the chance to do it at home, not wanting George to get any ideas that it was okay to touch me. I hadn't allowed that asshole anywhere near my naked body in months.

Maybe that's why he sought pleasure in the arms of that skinny whore, Laura.

Bang, bang, bang!

I jumped at the sound of banging coming from the door and narrowed my eyes.

I know that motherfucker did not just bang on my door.

"I'm sorry to bother you, Ms. Duluth. I know it's late, but I wasn't supposed to leave the cart. Do you think I can get it back? Please?"

I leaned against the wall, staring at the door. There was no fucking way I was opening it up now. Nope, not gonna happen. Earlier, when he delivered my food, I felt something was off with him. Never mind that he kept staring at me as if I

was naked whenever I was fully clothed. Also, when he smiled at me, it never reached his eyes.

He knocked again. I was about to tell him to leave and that I didn't feel comfortable opening my door when I heard another voice on the other side of the door. Curious who the person was, I stepped quietly to the peephole and placed my eye on it.

I gasped and immediately opened the door. Standing in front of the server was Law.

Cold hard eyes fell on me, and my own eyes grew from the sight before me. Law looked good as hell, first and foremost, with his hair pulled back in some sort of man bun or ponytail. He was dressed smartly in a dark gray suit and lavender shirt, no tie, the first two buttons undone. What had me wanting to either slam the door and lock it, clutching my pearls, or open the door wider and beg for him to ravish my body was the rage billowing from him. It was scary and sexy, all wrapped up in a beautiful, deadly package.

"Love," Law greeted me, his voice stern yet void of the rage in his eyes. "This gentleman claims he needs a tray from the room. Would you mind fetching it for him?"

I nodded, closed the door, and quickly retrieved the tray. When I opened the door again, the server was standing off to the side away from the door and Law. He looked scared as shit, face red, eyes darting everywhere but in my direction.

I pushed the tray out and glanced back at Law expectantly.

Law reached for the tray and pushed it further out to the server who smiled at me and Law, but again, his smile didn't reach his fearful eyes.

"Thank you, and again, I apologize for the late visit."

He swiftly hauled ass, turning around and heading for the elevator. Law didn't turn back to me until the man disappeared and we heard the elevator door open then close.

Our eyes met, and I resisted the urge to jump into his arms and thank him for coming when he did.

“Tell me you weren’t going to open the door for him this late at night dressed the way you are.”

Andd... just like that, the moment was broken. I narrowed my eyes and folded my arms underneath my chest, the excitement of seeing him turning to annoyance.

“Uh, no, I wasn’t. In fact, I shouldn’t have opened the door for you either. What are you doing here?”

Law, now smirking slightly, leaned against the doorway.

“I’m here to see you.”

“Oh yeah, at one in the morning? That’s nice of you.”

“I called your suite earlier, but you didn’t pick up.”

I rolled my eyes and snorted. How convenient he would use that excuse, knowing I couldn’t confirm it.

As if reading my mind, he added, “Why don’t you check your messages? You’ll see I’m telling the truth.”

I rolled my eyes. “Oh please, you can’t leave messages.”

Law didn’t reply. He stared at me expectantly, confidence in his eyes. It made me pause and wonder was he telling the truth?

I softened my features, unable to stop my eyelids from rising into my forehead. I heard myself ask softly, “You left me a message?”

Law touched the side of my face with a lone finger, causing my body to spark alive from his touch.

“Yes, love. I did. Why don’t you go check your messages on the hotel phone? You should see a red light on the phone indicating a message is waiting for you. I’ll wait right here while you check.”

I couldn’t find my legs for a half second, too busy trying to get myself together.

He had actually called me. I couldn’t believe it. Here I was wondering about him, wishing I had given him my number, wished he had sought me out, and he had. What did that mean

exactly? I hadn't a clue, but I wasn't going to question it. I gave him a nod, closed the door, and walked into the living room toward the phone that was sitting on the desk.

Indeed, there was a red light blazing on the phone's console. I had noticed it earlier but didn't know what it meant. I followed the directions that were displayed on the phone, and as I listened to the messages, my eyes grew as wide as Central Park. He was telling the truth. In fact, he didn't just leave one message. He left two.

One was left this morning. He was checking up on me, making sure I was good. He promised to call me later to see if I had time to go to dinner with him.

Holy shit! He had asked to take me out. One-night stands didn't do stuff like that, right? I mean, they didn't call you two days later asking of you, then asking to take you out. They fuck you and you typically never hear from them again.

Now I wasn't that naïve to think that the only reason he called me was so he could fuck me again. That man could have any woman he wanted. I was sure he didn't have to work to find someone else's bed to lie in. So why did he choose me?

I listened to the next message, and it was just him fulfilling his earlier promise. He said that he had hoped I would be in so he could take me to dinner, but offered me a rain check and... fuck, get this... he left me his goddamn number.

Again... Holy Shit!

I hung up the receiver and hastened toward the door. I flung it open to find Law still standing there, leaning his back against the wall next to the door.

He smiled down at me.

“Get my messages?”

I nodded my reply, then cleared my throat and said, “Yes, I just got them. Sorry, I didn't even know you could leave messages on hotel phones.”

“No worries, love. I had been thinking about you and wanted to see you again.”

Eyes probably as wide as Central Park again, I stared up at him as he stepped closer to me.

“You were thinking about me?” I asked lamely.

His smile grew, and he caressed my cheek with his thumb.

“Of course. I wanted to call you the next day, but I had business to take care of and it required my time and focus. But the moment I was free, I called you.”

“You did?” I questioned, and yes I knew I still sounded like an idiot, but I couldn’t help it. He had robbed me of common sense, of intelligent speech. I couldn’t think straight even if someone paid me. He was softly gliding his fingers along my cheek, staring down at me as if he wanted to devour me and fuck if I didn’t want that too.

“Can I come in?” he asked in a tone that sent shivers down my spine.

“Yes.”

Law stepped closer, and I backed up, allowing him space to enter my room. He closed the door behind him and locked it. He stepped forward, reaching out to grasp me by the side of my face. He threaded his fingers in my hair, leaned down, and placed a chaste kiss to my lips.

“Hello, Sydney,” he greeted, his voice low, that British accent of his deep, rich, and sexy as hell.

“Hey, Lawson,” was my breathy reply before he kissed me again. But this time he delved his tongue between my lips.

He kissed me slow, fond and meaningful but never took it further than what I would call a hello kiss, much to my disappointment.

When he parted from my lips, he lightly kissed the tip of my nose before reaching for my hand, lacing his fingers through mine and guiding me into the living room, to the couch. We sat next to each other, and I swear my heart started beating a mile a minute, my nerves ratcheted to heights I had never felt before.

For some reason, I was super nervous with Law, as if he had never been in my space before. It was that nervous feeling you felt when you found yourself alone with the guy you've been crushing on for months or years, or in my case, days.

Fuck, get a grip, Sydney...

Unsure about what to say to him, I simply smiled at him. He smiled back and thankfully took the reins.

"I apologize for my abrupt departure the morning after our night together. I wanted to wake you to tell you I was leaving, but you looked so peaceful."

I chuckled. "It's okay. I'm sure I looked a fright."

"Actually, no. You looked adorable."

I laughed and rolled my eyes.

"Oh please. From the way I looked when I finally woke up, I highly doubt that, but thanks for saying it."

"What did you do these last few days?" he asked me and genuinely looked as if he was very interested in my answer. I had no idea how to take this strange predicament I found myself in. It was as if he wanted to have small talk or something. I was so confused. I needed to ask Hailey if this was the norm for one-nighters.

"Umm, well, nothing really. I did some shopping, went to The Museum of Modern Art, took the ferry to the Statue of Liberty, and spent some time at the hotel pool and relaxed."

"How was the museum?"

I shrugged. "It was okay. I'm not much of an artsy type, but I enjoyed the exhibits and historical artistry of famous painters."

"I'm not into art either, if I'm honest. I own a few paintings; a Jackson Pollock and a Monet painting or two, but they were more of a simple purchase to say I have them rather than a need or want. They're nice though, goes with the décor of my flat in London."

I swallowed harshly as he mentioned two of the most famous painters in history. Now, I knew little about the art world, but I knew Jackson Pollock paintings were rare and very expensive. And he had multiple paintings of these artists? If what he said was true, then that meant he had to be extremely, *extremely*, wealthy.

No pressure, Sydney, it's not like you've never been around someone with money. Yeah, not that kind of money.

“Sydney? Are you alright?”

I blinked a few times, then asked bluntly, “Why are you here, Lawson? I mean...” I backpedaled to explain, placing a gentle hand on his forearm, when shock resonated on his handsome face, “... don't get me wrong, it's nice to see you. But I guess I never *expected* to see you again, that's all. I didn't expect you to call me either. Again, I'm glad to see you and glad you called. It's just...” I trailed off, afraid that one, I was making a fool of myself, and two, I didn't want to make a *complete* fool of myself. That would be worse.

Lawson let out a long sigh and leaned back against the side of the couch. His eyes took on a softness that I didn't expect to see from him. Warmth radiated from him too, which made me relax as well.

He ran his hand over his head and rested it against his neck.

“Yes, I know, and I apologize for my late visit.” He paused, then sat up, placing a determined gaze on me. I tensed naturally, preparing myself for what was going to fall from those heavenly lips of his.

“I'm going to be straight with you, Sydney.”

“Oh, okay.” *Here we go!*

“Since I left you in your bed the other morning, I haven't been able to stop thinking about you.”

Shock... that's what I felt right then, shocked and flabbergasted and in complete and utter disbelief.

Was he serious right now?

“Are you serious right now? Because you don’t have to say that to me just to get into my bed again.”

Frowning, he leaned back from me, a shocked look of his own covering his face.

“Why would I say that shit just to shag you?”

“Exactly, been there done that, so why—”

Law placed his fingers against my lips and the rest of my sentence came out in a mumble.

We both fell silent, my eyes narrowing because of his fingertips on my lips, his eyes blazing with... rage?

He dropped his fingers and settled me with a stare that had me wanting the couch cushions to open up and swallow me whole again. *Damn, he looked pissed...*

“First, I don’t have to say bullshit to get any woman to sleep with me. I don’t play mind games like that. I told you I was going to be straight with you and I am. You’ve been on my mind ever since I left you. Now, that’s not the norm for me. No woman has ever impressed me enough for me to spend time thinking about them. I just don’t have that kind of mental energy.” He shifted closer and cupped my chin when I dropped my gaze to my lap. He tilted my chin up so I could look at him.

“I don’t know how it happened or what happened, but you’ve put a spell on me. I have been dying to see you again, going out of my mind and if you knew me thoroughly, you would know that that’s not me. I’m never out of control. I need control in all things, do you understand?”

I snorted—*I sure do*—and he dropped his hold on my chin.

He gave me a half smile and went on. “My brothers may say that I’m a controlling arse. But there’s just something about you that has caused chaos in my life and if I were to be completely honest, I kind of like it.”

“You do?”

“Well, I said kind of. I didn’t say I was a complete fan.”

I laughed and so did he.

“What I’m trying to say is that I want to see you again. I have meetings and shit this week and next, but I want to see you again. Is that possible? Maybe we can have a late dinner or breakfast or something? Even if it’s just to sit here and talk. I’m not that much of a talker either, but again, I find myself in uncharted territory. I just want to get to know you more. Is that okay with you?”

Okay, I needed a minute to get my shit together. I stood from the couch and headed for the bar behind us. I glanced over my shoulder and asked, “Can I get you anything over here? Whiskey, water?”

Law glanced at my personal setup of various bottles of liquor and nodded.

“Yes, thank you. I’ll have some of that Macallan you have over there. You didn’t have that here the last time.”

“Nope, I didn’t. I made a liquor run when I was out shopping. A girl needs variety.”

I went about making him a drink as well as myself.

I brought both glasses back to the couch and handed him his drink. I took a very healthy sip of mine before I sat down. With my fingers gripping the hell out of my glass, I rested it on my thigh, my legs folded in front of me.

I took a deep breath and said to Law, “I’m extremely flattered you want to get to know me, but I’m just a bit leery, that’s all. I’m just recently divorced, and I can’t—”

“Sydney, hold on, let me stop you right there,” he interrupted, and my heart stopped. I couldn’t believe that I had admitted that I had been married. I wasn’t supposed to let that cat out of the bag. *Shit! Would he be pissed?*

As he went on, not rattled at all by my admission, I relaxed. Maybe he didn’t catch what I said.

“All I’m asking is that the two of us have a bit of fun while we’re both in town,” he explained. “That’s it. Nothing more and nothing serious. I’m not the type to settle down and it

seems you just found your freedom. I enjoy spending time with you. I would like to see you again. May it be at a restaurant or the bar downstairs. Or... if you like, here in your hotel room or mine. There is no pressure to do anything you're not comfortable with. I just want to spend time with you."

Well, shit, what was I supposed to say to that? This fine as hell man wants to spend time with me, no strings attached, and I could possibly have more nights like I did a couple of nights ago? I would be a fool to say no.

And yet I was wavering. Why?

Because I wasn't the type that did casual, never have been. Plus, as I mentioned before, there was something between us, something I couldn't quite explain. Maybe Law felt it too since he claimed he thought about me all the time. He felt out of control, and quiet is kept, I felt the same when I was around him. It was a good feeling though. One that I wanted all the time, and I feared if I saw more of him it would be harder to lock my feelings up, to keep myself from getting attached.

And to be even more honest with myself, I was already attached.

I smiled at Law and gave him a slight nod of my head.

"Okay, I'm game." *I'm going to regret this. I feel it in my bones.* "But." I held up my hand. "And I don't want to assume or be too forward, but if we find ourselves, you know, wrapped up in each other's arms again, we need to use protection from now on."

"Oh, of course, and that reminds me." He reached inside his suit jacket and produced a folded paper and handed it to me.

"Test results. I had them expedited for you. I want to stress that I'm not the type to engage in unprotected sex with any woman that doesn't belong to me. I guess I got wrapped up in being with you. I lost my head. But you're right, that's not something that we should do again."

I unfolded the paper and read his results. He tested negative on everything you could think of. From Chlamydia to

the big H. I couldn't tell you how relieved I felt. I refolded the paper and handed it back to him. I also clocked his full name as Lawson Morelli, confirming that he had been telling me the truth about his name. Not that I thought he would lie but the name Lawson... really?

"I'm clean as well," I admitted, thinking first before I went on, not wanting to reveal the reason I was tested. *Fucking George!* "I was tested a few weeks ago. Plus, I'm on the pill, so we're protected that way. But thanks for understanding and thanks for getting tested."

"No worries, love. I would like for you to feel comfortable and safe with me and knowing that I'm clean proves I will not put your life in any jeopardy."

I raised my glass to him.

"I appreciate that."

We clinked glasses.

"So, Mr. Lawson Morelli." I grinned. He grinned back.

"Ms. Sydney." He paused and looked at me expectantly, as if waiting for me to give him my full name.

"Sydney Fontane."

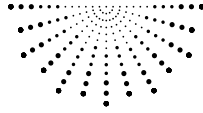
Law raised an eyebrow, as if he was expecting a different answer, but he didn't elaborate on his expression.

"Well Sydney Fontane, it's nice to meet you officially." He reached for my hand and lightly brushed his lips against my knuckles.

I gave him a shy smile, blushing like a schoolgirl.

"It's nice to meet you too."

CHAPTER SEVEN



LAWSON

Why in the bloody hell was I wasting my time with these blokes again?

I leaned against a metal beam and folded my arms across my chest. The scent of blood, urine, desperation, and fear met my nostrils, and I fought back the feeling of excitement that threatened to take over. I didn't want to welcome the elation surging through my body. I had better things to do and the sooner I could get the fuck out of this bloody place the better I'd feel.

I placed narrowed eyes on the man in the center of the room tied to a metal chair. His clothes had been removed, eyes were swollen shut, cheeks and lips were bruised, cut open and bleeding. Sweat drenched his body, his long black hair limp and sticking to his face. His chest was moving, which meant he was still alive, but not for long.

I blew out an exacerbated sigh, which brought both of my brother's eyes to me. I didn't meet their questioning gazes. They had the annoying, uncanny capability to read me like a book. They'd take one look at the irritation on my face, know that there was more to my expression than irritation, and ask more questions.

If you hadn't guessed it, I didn't want to be here. I had plans tonight that involved my face buried in a certain chocolate goddess's pussy, drowning myself in her desires.

Sydney was her name, and she had been on my mind since the moment I met her. She had my complete attention, which

was a new feeling for me. A lot of women have grabbed my attention over the years, but after twenty minutes of conversation, or a quick fuck in the women's loo, my interest would drift elsewhere. That hadn't happened with Sydney.

I had met a gorgeous woman who rocked me to my core. Was I pussy whipped? I wouldn't go that far, but I would admit to being wrapped around her finger and I didn't understand how that shit happened. All we did was fuck. We got to know each other a little, but not enough to affect me this much. I couldn't stop *thinking* about her.

Did I want to fuck her again? Yes, of course I did. I would be daft if I said that I didn't. Her pussy was fucking perfection, smooth like silk, tighter than a nun's arse. And the sex... it was mind blowing, hot as fuck and unforgettable.

But there was more.

She and I connected in a way I have never connected with another. I felt her open up to me, give me a piece of her, and fuck if I didn't do the same. I had no idea how deep I was in until this morning.

I've been in a fucked-up mood more than normal for the past few days. I felt off. My brothers noticed it too and called me out on my shit. I thought it had to do with the second attempt on my life earlier this week. However, this morning, after having a stellar sex dream about watching Sydney ride the hell out of my cock, I realized my issue. I was missing her.

That rocked me to my core because I didn't do relationships. It wasn't my thing. I fucked them and left, and that was it. *And don't be so quick to judge.* I've never played games with my dick. The women I had been with knew I was good for only one thing, a proper shagging. After that, I was gone.

But as I'd said and have been saying, Sydney was different. I knew the moment I met her I was playing a dangerous game, one that I wouldn't win. There was more at stake than I had realized, and when I finally did, I was hooked. And now I was paying for it.

The sound of fists meeting flesh brought me out of my thoughts and back to the situation at hand. I needed to get the fuck out of here.

We were inside an abandoned building bordering Queens and the East River. Nix, Grey and I were standing in the back of the room observing our uncle and his guys rough up some wanker they *claimed* was a traitor to their organization. He was guilty of the ultimate crime, they had said. He had betrayed the family, orchestrated a hit on a made man within my uncle's organization. The bastard then ran his mouth to the Feds to save his own skin. The Feds had him in protective custody, providing him safety from the people he betrayed. Yet through ingenuity, and my brother's skills, he was found and brought here to die. But first, our uncle wanted to see what he could learn from the man before they killed him.

Tired of the bullshit, I leaned over to Nix and asked in a harsh whisper, "Why are we here, again?"

Nix shook his head and shrugged. "I have no idea. Uncle Duke said he still needed us. That's it."

"Yeah, well, clearly, they are doing a bang-up job with this bloke. What do they want us to do? Beat him some more?"

Nix glanced over at me and studied me closely. He narrowed his eyes, and I knew whatever he was about to say was going to piss me off even more.

"Do you have a better place to be? Something more important to do than be here for family?"

See what the fuck I mean? He's always riding that honor horse, trying to guilt me into doing shit I didn't want to do. I could understand his tactic working if I gave a toss, but he knew I didn't.

"Actually, I do," I said to him but didn't elaborate.

Nix raised an eyebrow.

"Oh yeah, like what?"

I gave my brother a pointed look, trying desperately not to let his irritating questions piss me off.

“It doesn’t matter if I have something to do or not. You know damn well this is a waste of time. We have better things to do than stand here and watch these coffin-dodgers beat on this man. If they want answers, I’ll get them a lot faster than this.”

Nix, smirking, spread out his arm toward Uncle Duke and his punching bag as if giving me permission to carry on.

I grunted and stepped closer to my uncle, who was winding up for another blow.

I reached behind me with both hands, wrapped my fingers around both handles of my 1911k tactical curved blades, and pulled them out.

“Step aside, old man,” I mumbled to my uncle. Once he was clear, I slammed both blades into the traitorous bastard’s thighs. He screamed out in agony and shock. I could just make out the brown of his irises through his swollen lids. I kept my blade in his thighs and twisted them just to bring home the point that I was now in charge. I held his gaze to make sure he understood that I wasn’t anyone to fuck with. That I was different from the rest.

The moment he realized who was standing in front of him—the fucking devil himself—I leaned in close to his ear and whispered, “I’m not sure if you know who I am. Let me cut to the chase and tell you. I’m Law Morelli. I know if you’ve worked for my uncle, you’ve heard of me. Heard the rumors of the shit I’ve done. Let me be the first to say that all the tales you’ve heard are true. I am *that* demented, *that* evil, and *that* cold-blooded. But right now, I’m something else that I have never been in my fucking life, sexually frustrated. I know that’s fucking absurd, isn’t it? I mean, look at me. I’m a god among men.” I leaned back so he could look at me before I continued, “But sadly, what I’ve admitted is true. You see, I’ve met this woman. Fuck man, she’s very fit, very lush, if you get my meaning.” I shifted my knives again just to make sure he was with me.

He cried out, trying to move away from me, but fuck, he wasn’t going anywhere.

Satisfied that I had his attention, I continued.

“Here’s the problem mate, I am past the limit of self-control. Your shenanigans are keeping me from my woman and it’s beginning to piss me the fuck off, and you really don’t want to see me pissed off.”

I leaned back and met his eyes.

“Now you’re going to tell my uncle everything he wants to know and be quick about it, yeah? If you don’t, then he’s going to take longer beating the shit out of you, which in turn, is going to cause me to become very displeased. And fuck, if that shit happens, there’s no telling what I would do to you. For instance, I could take this knife and peel the skin from your lil’...” I paused, glanced down at his crotch, and smirked at him. “... Your lil’ *John Thomas* like a fucking apple, then pour some acid on what’s left of your knob. Bet you’d enjoy that, yeah?” I yanked the blade out of his leg and gently touched the tip against the bulge in his briefs just to bring home the visual he had running in his head.

“Take notice, my friend. My imagination knows no bounds. There’s no telling what my devious brain could think of, but best believe it would be epic and very painful for you.”

I met his frightened gaze and again saw the brown of his eyes and the whites of them too. He started to shake, and I noticed wetness forming in the front of his briefs.

Not yet believing he understood the potential pain and danger he was truly in, I said to him, “Do you see the two behind me over my left shoulder?” I paused a second to make sure he did what I asked. “Those are my brothers. I know, hard to believe those ugly fuckers are related to me. But listen, one of them is a genius with computers. He can find anyone. The other one is a sociopath who doesn’t think he’s one, which is very dangerous don’t you think? Fuck, I know what *I* am, but he’s in fucking denial. Anyway, he’s smart as shit, cunning, and fancies himself as the leader of our trio. I say all that to say we are the reason you’re here, mate. One of them found you, the other led the brainstorming session on how we could get you from the Feds, and I was the one that grabbed you.”

I tapped his forehead with the tip of my knife.

“With that in mind, understand what’s going to happen if you don’t give these tired blokes what they want. The men around you will go after your family, and before you tell yourself that your family could never be found, please note that we found *you*. We got to you and you’re here. You’ll die here. What you have control over is who else dies with you? Now if you don’t cooperate, I’m still going to carve you up, then after that I’m going to go hunting for your family and believe me, I will find them. What I do to them will be entirely up to you.”

I held his sliver of a gaze for a few seconds more before I rose and snatched the knife from his other thigh. I wiped his blood off my knives using the dry parts of his *knickers* and ambled back to my spot next to my brothers, confident the bloke would take proper heed and listen to my warnings.

Sadly, the little shit didn’t take my advice seriously at first. He had to be difficult, and I ended up showing him the error of his ways. After a bit of begging, slicing, and screaming on his part, he gave up all the information my uncle needed. Unfortunately, it took longer than I had expected and by the time I arrived back at our hotel, it was past midnight.

Good thing I was staying at the same hotel as Sydney. Bad thing was that it was late. You don’t call on a woman at this time of the night to engage in light conversation. No, at this late hour you only did one thing, fuck the night away until the morning. I wasn’t opposed to fucking until the sun came up. But I didn’t want to come off as being insincere.

Wait... what the fuck?

I sat on the living room sofa inside my suite, alone, with a drink in my hand, pondering on what I should do. Should I fuck it all and call on her, or should I wait until tomorrow? I had left her a message listing my number for her to call me. I had fought the urge to check my phone all day, but I couldn’t help noticing that I had no missed calls from her nor did I receive a text. Seeing that she hadn’t reached out to me should

be proof enough of her lack of interest. But I wasn't buying it. There was just no way.

There was something heavy between us, and it went far beyond sexual chemistry. I felt it every time she looked at me, touched me, smiled at me. Which was the reason I drained my glass, stood, and made my way to her room.

As I headed to the lift, I thought of an excuse to use for my early visit when she opened the door. Fuck, *if* she opened the door. What the fuck would I do if she wasn't home or worse, had company?

I closed my eyes and took a deep breath as *that* thought washed over me. Jealousy and rage filled my veins. I prayed she was alone because if she wasn't... well, I'd have to introduce her to the *real* Law Morelli sooner than I wanted. She would also witness the murder of the man with her, and I knew that wouldn't go over very well, either.

I called for the lift and seconds later it arrived empty, thank fuck. I selected her floor and reined in my emotions for the short ride. As the doors opened on her floor, I could hear someone banging on a door. A male voice called out, "Ms. Duluth, I know it's late, but I wasn't supposed to leave the cart. Do you think I can get it back? Please?"

I checked the time on my watch and confirmed it was too fucking late for servers to be knocking on a guest's door for a damn tray. I turned the corner and saw the piece of shit was standing at the door to Sydney's room. I felt an uneasy feeling wash over me, looking at the back of this man's head. Both of his hands were in view, so I wasn't completely sure that he was here to do her harm, but I didn't put it past the man.

Once I was close enough to react if he made a move that I didn't like, I announced my presence.

"*Oi*, is there a reason why you're banging on the door to my suite at one in the fucking morning?" I asked, my voice low, dark and menacing, right along with the look in my eyes.

The man jumped at the sound of my voice and turned to face me. I moved closer just as he backed away.

“Uhh, my apologies, sir,” he stuttered, “I realize the late hour. I was supposed to bring the cart back after I delivered Ms. Uhh... sorry, Mrs. Duluth, her food, but I forgot.” He laughed nervously, running his fingers through his hair. *Duluth? Why did that last name sound very familiar?*

I sized up the man quickly, noting that he was close to my height and muscled. Nothing exciting about him, memorable or distinct. If we were anywhere else, I wouldn't have looked at him twice, which was why I was now more alert than before. The man's brown beady eyes glanced everywhere but at me, which told me he had other plans in mind for coming here. What his plans were, I wasn't sure, but it was probably a good thing I came when I did.

The door to the suite suddenly opened, and Sydney appeared, dressed in a hotel robe, shocked eyes landing on me. Despite her being covered, my body heated at seeing her again. Never mind that she could be naked underneath the robe she wore. I was just happy to see her beautiful face.

I noticed how tense her body was and realized I wasn't the only one ogling her, which only exacerbated the rage in me.

I did my best to keep as much of my anger out of my voice when I spoke to her. I didn't want to spook her, but I also knew I couldn't keep what I felt out of my voice.

“Love, this gentleman claims he needs a tray from your room. Would you mind fetching it for him?”

She nodded and the fucking second she closed the door, I pounced. Reaching out and wrapping my fingers around the server's neck, I squeezed tight and pulled him closer to me.

His eyes bulged out of his face as he frantically tried to break my grip. I tightened my hold, and ignoring the fear in his bloodshot eyes, I spoke to him gravely, “I don't know why you're really here, but I'm going to give you a pass tonight. You need to get gone, do you understand me? If I see you again, in this fucking hotel or outside of it, I will assume you don't value your life and I will take it from you. Nod if you understand.”

He didn't hesitate and nodded his understanding. I shoved him away from me, his back hitting the wall behind him. Just as he righted himself, Sydney reappeared with the tray. I grabbed it and pushed it further out to the server who had the audacity to smile, but I could see the fear laced in his eyes.

I hope to God he doesn't value his life. I want nothing more than to throw his smiling ass off the roof of this building, head first.

He mumbled something I didn't quite hear over the roaring of my rage and quickly turned and headed for the lift, pushing his tray in front of him. He disappeared around the corner, and I didn't allow my shoulders to relax until I heard the lift doors open, and the sound of the tray being pushed across the metal lining of the lift before the doors closed. I waited a few heartbeats to see if any other trouble was headed this way, my hand on the butt of the gun tucked away at the small of my back. When all was quiet and I was sure we were alone, I turned to face her. I took a deep breath and let it out slowly, allowing my temper to fall away.

I held her gaze, doing my best not to get lost in her rich brown eyes and fucking failed miserably.

An hour or so had passed, and I found myself laughing at something she said... again. *Damn, my cheeks were sore from smiling so bloody damn much.* This shit just wasn't normal, not for me, anyway. As I explained before, I wasn't one who smiled a lot. I didn't talk a lot, and I damn sure didn't laugh a lot. However, I did all those things and more, *again*, and I rather liked it.

If my brothers were here, they'd probably drop me off with a priest for an exorcism or something, thinking I had been possessed. I had been possessed, but it was this heavenly beauty before me that had taken hold of my soul.

It was just something about her, something that was drawing me to her. I had let my guard down with her, a danger

that I had never purposefully allowed to happen. Sure, I've pretended to be open in order to get what I wanted from someone, but that was the extent of it. I'd always been in control, was never fond of giving anyone power over me, and yet this lovely being had complete power over me and she had no clue.

Sydney and I had been talking ever since I'd sat down on the sofa next to her. It was late and I should've excused myself and allowed her to sleep, but I couldn't bring myself to get up and bid her goodnight. I was like an addict and her voice, her smile, her laugh were my drugs.

"Okay, Law," Sydney announced, bringing me back to her, "I feel like I've been monopolizing the conversation again. Tell me something else about you. Like, what do you do for a living?"

I took a deep breath and let it out slowly.

I had a feeling she would ask me that one day, and I had a standing answer too. One that I used for those outside of our world. The motto was to stick as close to the truth as possible. So that's what I did.

"My brothers and I work for our father. He's in the shipping business."

She raised an eyebrow and smirked at me.

"Really? Shipping, huh? What exactly do you guys ship?"

I shrugged. "A little of this, a little of that. Recently, it's been machine parts for U.S. companies that have businesses in Europe and Asia."

That part was actually true. Zeus was a big deal in the shady parts of the world. He supplied weapons to anyone that paid him. He also dabbled in the distribution of drugs, mainly opioids, with connections that ran all the way to the pharmaceutical distribution companies.

Our goal, to make sure he stayed alive and out of some country's prison was to legitimize his

business and what better way to do that than actually act as a true shipping company. It also allowed us to ship other unsavory things under the watchful eye of the U.S. government. So far, we've been successful. We hadn't been caught yet and we'd been doing this for a few years now.

“Uh-huh. I see. And you and your brothers work for him?”

“We do. My brother's and I make sure whatever he's shipping gets to its destination safely. It's all about our customers and we make sure they're satisfied.”

She studied my face, looking for tales that I was holding back or lying to her. I had been doing a little of both, but I knew she wouldn't be able to read me. At least that was what I told myself as a sly grin spread along her beautiful face.

She then shook her head.

“What?” I asked, taking a sip of whiskey, trying not to react to the look of doubt on her face.

“I don't know. I didn't expect you to say that you worked for your father's shipping business.”

“What did you expect me to say?”

She shrugged and hesitated as if she didn't want to answer.

“Go on, Princess,” I gently encouraged. “Tell me, what do you think I do for a living?”

Sydney remained quiet for a long moment before she spoke again, hesitation still laced in her voice, which practically had me on the edge of my seat.

“There's something... about you. Something right at the surface of your being, just waiting for the right moment to be unleashed.”

I smirked. “Yeah? And do you know what it could be? Lasciviousness perhaps?”

She chuckled. “Well, yeah, I have an idea. And while I'm sure lasciviousness is flowing through your veins, that's not what I was going to say.”

“Okay, love, you have me on the edge of my seat. What is it you see in me?”

She paused again, but when she spoke, she damn near robbed me of the air in my lungs.

“Rage. I see rage in you.” She glanced heavily into my eyes and grew quiet, just watching me. I was too busy reeling to even pay any attention.

All this time I was hiding my true nature, who I really was from her, and she could see it all along? I had kept my alter ego in check whenever I was around her, except for the night we spent together. But I figured I had masked that side of me with the desire I had for her. Could she really see me?

“Law, I hope I didn’t offend you.”

“Don’t be silly. Why would that offend me?”

She shrugged. “I don’t know. I’m just...”

“What? Tell me. You say you see rage in me. Do you think I’m some deranged lunatic?”

She gave me a side eye and smirked.

“Well,” she dragged the word out, then chuckled.

“Alright, alright,” I chastised lightly, more shocked than offended.

“No seriously,” she reached over and placed her hand on my forearm. She squeezed lightly and smiled up at me. “There’s just something about you that screams dangerous. Deadly. You’re no one to trifle with. It’s like you’re barely holding on to that part of you. I’m not saying you’re about to go off and blow this entire building up, but I don’t know. I think you could if you really wanted to and not lose sleep.”

Damn...

“So, you think I’m what, a ahh... sociopath or a psychopath?”

“No!” she blurted, then just as quick amended, “Eh, maybe. But I think you’re capable of more than just rage.”

You've shown me more than that. I'm sure you could show others remorse or patience, but I bet it's rare."

I didn't respond, nor did I react to the truth of her words. She couldn't be more right about me. I was everything she said and more. Except the remorse part. But as I thought about it, she was right about that too. I could do anything I set my mind to. I let that bloke in the hallway live. I could have easily broken his neck for just looking at what belonged to me. The desire to do so was strong, especially when I wrapped my fingers around his neck. But I held back the beast living within, mainly for Sydney's sake, not wanting her to see that side of me just yet.

Looks like that was for naught.

"Are you upset with me?"

I narrowed my eyes at her. "No, why would I be upset with you?"

"I'm pretty much calling you psycho."

I snorted and took the rest of my drink down. "Please, Princess, I've been called much worse."

"Still."

I moved closer to her and placed my palms gently on the sides of her face and glanced heavily into her eyes. I did not give her the full-on Lawson Morelli look, the one my enemies saw right before I killed them. But I let her see more than what I had done the other night.

"You're right about me. I am... different. I'm not offended at all. But I wonder, why aren't you running for the hills? If you claim you see my better half, why invite me into your hotel room? Why entertain me at all?"

She blessed me with one of her soft smiles that always seemed to render me breathless.

"I don't scare easily. And... you said you wouldn't hurt me. I believe you."

I leaned in and kissed her gently on her lips.

“No, love. I wouldn’t. I also won’t let anyone hurt you either. Best believe that too.”

I kissed her again on her lips, the tip of her nose and her forehead.

“I do,” she whispered.

We connected our foreheads together, symbolizing the truth spoken between us. I knew by letting my guard down, she would learn more about me, the parts I kept hidden from the world. What she has yet to learn was *what* I was. Maybe I’d share that side of me too one day, but not today.

“Sooo,” she leaned back from me, a wicked smile planted on her face, “are we sticking to the whole ‘I-work-for-my-father’s-shipping-company’ thing?” She used air quotes around the parts about working for my father.

I grinned and leaned forward to pour the remaining whiskey from the bottle into my glass.

“Why is that so hard to believe?”

She shook her head and took a sip of her drink.

“It’s not. It’s just hard to swallow that you help to run a shipping business knowing you grew up running the streets, pick pocketing, and getting arrested at seven.”

“That’s right. What did you call me? A hooligan?”

She laughed.

“A street thug.”

“Ah... yes. A street thug. So, you take me for a thug, then.”

“Yup.”

“Okay, Miss Fontane. What do you think I really do for a living?”

“Well,” she gave me a side eye, mirth evident all over her gorgeous dark features. “I believe you work for your father. Shipping machine parts? Maybe as a front to make your

family legitimate. I think you're part of a crime syndicate, you and your brothers."

I laughed. *Damn, she was close.*

"A crime syndicate? Really?"

She nodded, getting more animated as she spoke, "Yes. You and your brothers run some underground crime family or something. And you're the muscle of the family, walking around beating the shit out of people that go against your family."

Well, shit... I damn near swallowed my tongue.

Mistaking my shocked expression, one I couldn't hide at all, she quickly added, "I know that's farfetched. I'm exaggerating of course. I'm just saying. I pictured you more of a badass, that's all."

Silence fell between us for a long moment, and I did nothing to change it. I was too busy trying to figure this woman out. She sat before me, drink in her hand, speaking about crime families as if it was an everyday occurrence for her despite her lame attempt at downplaying her words. There was something I was missing. Something huge.

Her family name, Fontane, wasn't familiar to me, but that didn't mean her family wasn't in the life. But fuck, if that was the case, it changed the dynamics between us. I would get Grey on this woman immediately. I had more questions than I knew she would give answers, and if I planned to spend more time with her, I needed to know everything.

Sydney stood abruptly and took the rest of her drink to the head.

"I'm starving. Are you? How about we order some pizza? Maybe play some cards. I have a deck here somewhere. Unless..." she looked at her watch, then back at me, "...you have somewhere else to be. I know it's late and—"

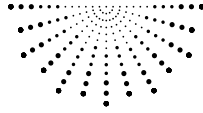
"I'm game, Princess."

I also threw my drink back and slammed my empty glass on the table in front of me.

“Order the pizza and open another bottle of whiskey, yeah?
Let’s get a game of strip poker started.”

She laughed, but I was dead fucking serious.

CHAPTER EIGHT



SYDNEY

I opened my eyes to the view of the New York skyline. Déjà vu hit me hard. I was on the couch in the living room, still in my robe, alone... again.

I sighed and covered my face with my arm.

Last night was unbelievable. Law and I stayed up most of the night talking, laughing, and yup playing strip poker. Unfortunately, I couldn't remember who won. To be honest, I remembered little of the night before. Since I was still in my robe, my panties and bra still on my body, I must have won the game or games. Fuck, my memory was foggy.

Shamefully, I think I passed out on him last night. I know for sure we didn't have sex. I think I kissed him and maybe he copped a feel, but that was about it.

I groaned to myself and tightened my eyes shut. I couldn't believe I passed out on him. I felt so embarrassed. No wonder he left before I woke up again. I probably wouldn't be seeing him again despite what he had said.

Oh well, it was fun while it lasted.

I rose from the couch and headed to the restroom to drain my bladder, wash my face, and brush my teeth. My mouth tasted foul. I was sure my hot breath could melt metal right now, it was so bad. I completed my business and stepped into my room to change into a pair of shorts and a mid-drift, oversized t-shirt. It was close to twelve in the afternoon. I needed to get myself together and figure out where Hailey wanted to meet for lunch.

I glanced around the room looking for my phone. Realizing that I had left it in the living room, I sighed and made my way to the front of the suite. Just as I stepped into the living room, I froze dead in my tracks. Sitting on the couch was Law, dressed in his button up lavender shirt and gray slacks from last night.

He grinned at me, giving me this sexy as fuck once over.

“Morning, sleepy head. I trust you slept well. Considering you were knocked out when I left, I would assume you did.”

“Where? I mean, how did—” I fumbled out, confused and excited to see him all wrapped in a stuttering mess.

“I borrowed one of your keys,” he informed me, still smiling up at me. “I went downstairs to grab us cups of coffee and a few pastries.” He pointed to the table in front of him and indeed there was a white bag filled with what I assumed were danishes, or pastries as he’d said. Also on the table were two large plastic coffee cups.

“You alright, love?”

I blinked a few times, then placed my eyes on him. I took a deep breath, and without thinking, climbed into his lap, and kissed the fuck out of him.

Law met my frantic lips with the same crazy energy. His hand slid under my shorts and gripped my ass. The other hand threaded in my hair and gripped my tresses tight. I didn’t care. I ground against him, both my hands buried in his hair, held on tight, desperate for him, craved him.

Law laid me down on my back and started pulling down my shorts. I shimmied my hips and helped him. He tossed them over his shoulder, and I sat up and pulled off my t-shirt. No words were exchanged between us. The hunger in both of our eyes said enough. Law covered me with his body, taking my lips in the hottest, wettest kiss of my life. Good thing I had brushed my teeth. And his mouth tasted like he had done the same.

I felt him fumbling with his belt buckle as he continued tonguing the hell out of me.

Fuck, he was taking too long.

I bucked my hips up off the couch as hard as I could and Law, being off balanced, rolled off the couch and hit the floor between the table and the couch. I followed him to the floor and slid down his body so I could finish taking his pants down. Law sat up, undid some buttons of his shirt, then pulled it and his t-shirt off in one sexy motion. I finally got his cock out and wrapped my fingers around his warm, thick shaft. I slid my hand up and down and watched the precum appear like a drop of dew.

“Hmmm, Princess, do that again,” he commanded, his voice low and gritty. I did him one better. I slid down his legs further, bent over and made as much of his cock disappear into my mouth.

“Bloody hell,” he growled and leaned back, his head dropping back.

I had given George so many blow jobs over the years that I knew the basics of how to please a man. The extras, like deep throating, practically swallowing a man’s dick, took time and patience. Good thing I had all the patience in the world.

I worked up to taking him deeper. His dick was much larger and longer than George. But once I relaxed, I licked his shaft, took him deeper into my throat and hummed as the tip of his cock touched the back of my throat.

Law cursed, gripped the hell out of my hair, and moaned his approval as I worked his hard shaft in and out of my mouth. I used my hands to help bring him pleasure, one by playing with his balls. The other hand had fingers tight around his shaft as I sucked him off.

I felt his body tense under me, his dick swelling with his impending release. I moved my fingers along his hardness faster, took him deeper.

“Fuck, Princess, yess... Fuck... this mouth of yours, these lips.” He touched my lips with his thumb. I glanced at him to find him watching me with dark, hooded eyes. So damn

sexy... “Take me deeper baby... deeper, that’s it... ohhhh, fuck yeah, just like that.”

Just when I thought he was about to come, he pulled me off him. “Come up here, love,” he instructed, and I released him quickly, not wanting to hurt him. He sat up, drew me close and took my mouth, kissing me, teasing me, taunting me. I moved closer to him, my breasts smashed against his chest, rubbing my clit against his length.

My head was spinning, heart beating wildly. Law held me up so he could wrap his lips around my nipple.

“Law,” I cried out, dropping my head back as a surge of pleasure flowed through my body to the tips of my toes, fingers, and lady bits.

His hands felt good as they traveled along my spine, down to my ass, squeezing, caressing, making me shiver with need. Fuck this, I needed to feel him inside me, needed him to make me feel good, to satisfy the feeling of longing, of being wanted, desired. I just needed him.

Without thinking or hesitation, gripped his shaft, guided him to my center and slowly slid down his length, biting my bottom lip as he filled me.

“Fuuuck, Princess,” he bit out, his eyes closing before resting his forehead against mine.

I rotated my hips slowly, fighting the urge to roll my eyes into the back of my head. I didn’t, however, stop the moan of pleasure from escaping my lips.

“Ohhh... mmm... you feel so good,” I whimpered, getting lost in the glorious feel of this hard man.

“Give me your eyes, Princess.”

I opened my eyes and met his deep gray ones. We stayed like that, giving more of each other than we had before. Again, I was blown away at how good he made me feel, how open and vulnerable I felt with him. It felt as if we’d known each other for years, not days. The connection holding us together seemed so strong and powerful. I wasn’t sure what was

happening between us, but I didn't want whatever it was to end.

Our thrusts quickly became erratic as our breathing became choppy. I felt his heart thumping against my chest, and I knew he felt mine doing the same. A serious orgasm began to build from my toes, rising along my back, igniting every nerve ending throughout my body.

“Oh, Law,” I cried out, moving faster against him, meeting his deep thrusts as he moved underneath me.

He wrapped his arms around my body, held me close, and laid down on his back.

“Yess, baby, fuck, you feel like silk, so fucking sexy, I can't seem to get enough of you.”

He bent his knees and began pushing into me, hitting this spot inside me that had me crying out in ecstasy.

“Give me your lips, Princess,” he panted, and I lifted my face to meet his and gave him my lips.

When we climaxed, we did it with our lips inches from each other, our eyes intertwined, along with the limbs of our bodies. After about a minute or two of lying there still connected, Law sat up and kissed me sweetly while still trying to catch his breath.

We took a moment to gather ourselves by lightly touching the other, caressing backs, arms. Kissing lips, cheeks, necks, shoulders.

The moment I finally had my wits back, I sat up and grinned shyly at him.

“I guess I was hungry for something other than pastries.”

He grinned broadly at me, captured my face between his hands, and placed a chaste kiss to my lips.

“I guess so.”

We held each other for a moment, our eyes locked together, our bodies still connected in the most intimate ways. Law ran his fingers through my hair as best he could as this

serious look came over him. I immediately felt nervous. I wasn't sure what he was thinking and hella afraid of what he was going to say.

"Sydney," he began slowly. I held my breath, waiting, hoping whatever he said would not break my heart. I was ashamed to admit this, but I felt so wide open, so vulnerable right now that he had complete power over me, something that I wasn't supposed to give to anyone. Ever again. And fuck, here I was giving it to this man, this stranger. Something was definitely wrong with me.

"Listen... I—" Law was cut off by the ringing of his cell phone. It wasn't just any ring either. It was a tone you picked when you wanted to know when a certain someone called you. He even added to my paranoia when he cursed under his breath.

I cleared my throat and slowly lifted my hips from his, breaking our connection. I stood awkwardly and grabbed my clothes, saying softly, without looking at him, "Umm... I'll let you get that. I'll be right back. I need to... you know."

"Yes, of course. No worries, love."

"I'll bring you something to clean up too if you like."

He smiled up at me just as his phone rang again, the same tone filling the space between us.

"Yes, I appreciate that, thank you," he responded, rising from the floor and fixing his briefs.

I gave him a quick nod and made my escape. I could hear him curse again, then bark into the phone.

"What!"

The coldness in his voice caused a shiver to run through my body. Damn, he sounded scary.

I stepped into the bathroom, closed, then locked the door. I quickly cleaned up and dressed in the same shorts and top I had on earlier. I needed to take a shower, but I'd take care of that once he left.

I brushed through the knots in my hair and tried to look presentable instead of looking freaked the hell out. For one, I had unprotected sex again! This time, it was me losing my head. At least it was confirmed that the both of us were clean and I was on birth control, so that was covered too. Despite that, being with Law makes me throw away all common sense. I have lost all inhibitions with this man, and I loved the way it felt to be free with him, to give myself to him.

I should be committed.

Is this what happens when a woman gets dickmatized? If so, I needed to end this with him now.

I gazed into the mirror at my reflection and caught the utter panic settle in my eyes with the idea of never seeing Law again.

What in the bloody hell is wrong with me?

I took a few deep breaths to gather myself and exited the bathroom. I quietly made my way back to the living room to find Law standing by the window, staring into the distance, his cup of coffee in his hand.

He turned around to face me and leaned his back against the window.

“Have I told you how beautiful you are?” he asked me, just like that... like he hadn't just rocked my world a minute ago. He just had to shake my world up even more.

I couldn't hold back a smile that spread along my face.

He pushed off the window and sauntered over to me. He placed his cup on the table, then placed both his palms on my cheeks.

“I forgot your towel,” I muttered softly. I tilted my head up to meet his gaze.

“Don't worry about it,” he replied, leaned in and kissed me with such tenderness, such sweetness, I thought I was going to melt. I definitely felt my body awaken once again. Damn, this man had such of an effect on me. I wondered if I did the same for him?

Law pulled back, but he didn't go far. He wrapped me tight in his arms and rested his chin on the top of my head. We swayed in silence for a few seconds before he kissed the top of my head and stepped back.

"That was my brother who just called me. It seems he's unable to function without me and needs my assistance in some business matter. I'm sorry I have to leave like this."

I placed my hand up to stop him from turning me into a puddle of goo at his feet.

"No, no, Law, it's fine. I have plans anyway."

He straightened his spine and regarded me with questions in his eyes.

"Really? What kind of plans?"

I gave him a side smile, especially when I heard a hint of bitterness in his voice.

"Well, if you must know. I'm meeting up with my college roommate."

"And this roommate of yours, it's a woman, right?"

I laughed this time, shaking my head. I stepped around his imposing frame to the table behind him. I picked up the cup of coffee he bought for me and took a sip, knowing the java was going to be lukewarm but not caring. I needed something to wet my now dry mouth.

Was he really jealous or was this an act?

"Sydney," he called out in warning, folded his arms in front of him and narrowed his eyes at me.

"Wow, Law. What's this I see... jealousy?"

"Yes, it is," he admitted, without shame. "Now answer the question. You're not going to meet up with some bloke, are you?"

I felt a quick flash of irritation, but I stamped down that feeling just as I saw Law's body brimming with anger.

“Not that it’s any of your business, but if you must know, no. I’m meeting with my best friend who happens to be a female. But to be honest with you, it really doesn’t matter who I’m meeting, whether it was a man or a woman. You said we’re just hanging out. What difference does it make if—”

“I don’t like to share, Sydney. If I tell you I want to spend time with you, it will be only you. No one else. I expect the same in return, otherwise we can say goodbye now.”

Really mother fucker...

My spine stiffened as his words awakened my anger. I folded my own arms in front of me and narrowed my eyes at him.

I was just about to lay into him when two things happened. One, Law ate up the distance between us in two strides. And two, he grabbed me by the back of my head and plunged his tongue down my throat, swallowing the ass chewing that was surely about to fall from my lips.

Law’s kiss was a rough, demanding, passion-filled mess of lips, tongue, touching and groping. It was me who broke the connection. I had to. This man was going to destroy me, and I’ve only known him for three days.

He allowed me to break from his lips, but he refused to let me go.

“Fuck,” he whispered. He caged my face between his hands and leaned forward to rest his forehead against the top of my head. “I can’t take the thought of you being with someone else. It’ll drive me crazy.” His hands rubbed along my bare arms as he breathed in and out slowly, gathering himself.

I was in complete and utter shock. *Again, is this supposed to happen when you have one-night stands?*

“Listen, agree to meet me later tonight for dinner. It may be a late one, but please wait up for me. We can meet in the restaurant downstairs or at the bar. I don’t care. I just need to see you tonight. Then we can talk about my crazy stalker

ways. Plus, there are... things that I want to talk to you about. Yeah?"

Something inside me told me to tell him hell fucking no, but the rest of me was jumping for joy that he even wanted to see me again. Yup, something was definitely wrong with me. I hesitated for a long moment, just staring into his hypnotizing gray eyes. I gave in to his request, but I made him sweat it out first.

Yeah, yeah, I know. I'm sure I'll regret it all later. I always do.

"Okay, Law. I'll meet you." I finally said, making a mental note to check myself into a psych ward the second I got the chance.

Law smiled down at me and kissed me lightly on the lips.

"Good. Thank you. We'll sit down, have a good meal and talk. I'll see you later tonight."

Law picked up his coffee, his jacket that had been thrown over a chair, and left. Once he was gone, I dropped my dragging, confused ass to the couch and tried to make sense of what had just happened.

If Law was any other man, I would change rooms right now, labeling him as a stalker crazy man. But no, I was too busy smiling like a schoolgirl who just learned her crush was also crushing on her.

Pray for me, y'all... please.

Something's happened to me. Something that I cannot explain. Something indescribable, and beautiful, and pure, and amazing. I've fallen victim to fate. I said it would never happen, said I would not allow it to happen. Such things only happened in fairytales, movies, and romance novels. But no matter how hard I tried to resist, it happened.

I had fallen in love, and it only took a week. Did you hear what I said? A week!

I glanced up at the man next to me, holding my hand, guiding me through Central Park at twelve midnight—*Don't ask why we're out this late*—and smiled. Ever since the night that he had left me at my suite to meet with his brother, we'd been hanging out. We'd met for breakfast and we had met in the city for lunch. He had even walked with me as I roamed all over the city shopping at my favorite high-end boutiques and department stores.

He surprised me when he accompanied me to Rockefeller Center and Top of the Rock Observation Deck, of all places. I thought it would bore him, but he looked very interested. We'd gone to dinner three times, once at the hotel's restaurant and the other times he had treated me to beautiful romantic dinners at a couple of swanky Manhattan restaurants. We had strolled along Battery Park, talking, holding hands. We'd even gone to Coney Island just to say that we had gone.

I loved being with him, loved how he made me feel.

When I wasn't with him, I felt this emptiness, this... this loneliness that coursed through me. I felt incomplete, as if a piece of me was missing. But all I had to do was hear his voice and the darkness that threatened to consume me would be lifted. And please... the moment I would see him, goodness... my entire world lit up.

I know what I felt was wrong on so many levels, but I couldn't stop myself. There was this connection between us that I couldn't explain. My heart seemed to ache all the time, even when he was close to me. It was as if him being near wasn't enough. I wanted more, needed so much more.

I tried not to look at him as if he hung the moon. I tried to stay chill, to act as if my heart didn't bleed for him, but I knew I was failing.

I couldn't help my excitement when I saw him or spoke to him. And when we laid with one another, when he fucked my brains out or made love to me, the passion was so overwhelming, so consuming, I cried.

Yes, you heard right. I fucking cried during sex.

And I knew that crying wasn't the norm, unless the sex sucked so badly you wished you were anywhere but there. That wasn't what happened to me. Crying was the only way I could express the emotions that were suffocating me to death. It was a bliss that I never wanted to end. And it depressed me to no end, knowing that at some point it would. All of this would end.

As I mentioned before, Law and I strolled along Central Park, hand-in-hand. It was damn near midnight and yes, I know what you're thinking... but as I said, the man was psycho, and he had no problem proving me right.

I felt safe with him, though. No one bothered us. Hell, it almost seemed that the dark shadows of the park even scattered away from us.

Law had his fingers laced with mine as we moved through the park. There were a few people who risked a stroll along the spooky-looking trails of the infamous and iconic park right along with us. We ignored them all, encased in our own world. Well, I was in my own world with Law of course. Law, on the other hand, had his head on a swivel as we walked and was checking our surroundings in his own private world.

He had been quiet for most of the night. There was something weighing heavily on his mind. I felt it. I was trying to find the right time to ask him about it. I wasn't sure if he would share with me or not. He'd been very forthcoming with his past during the times we were together, but it seemed ever since I called him out on his dark side- what he called his better half- he seemed different. Not different in a bad way, but in a good way. It was as if he had let his guard down with me more.

We exited the park, making our way toward our hotel, which was just around the corner. I tried not to let the somberness that filled my heart ruin my night, but I couldn't help the feeling of loss that I felt. The man was still with me, holding my hand, and already I missed him.

I didn't want our night to end. I wanted to spend more time with him, talking to him, being in his arms. He had already told me that he wouldn't be able to spend the night with me. I wanted to tell him to forget whatever he had to do and be with me, but I couldn't, and I didn't. I accepted my fate, praying I'd get the chance to see him again.

I started for the bank of elevators once we stepped inside the lobby of the Four Seasons. I felt him pull my hand. I glanced up at him and did my best not to look as hopeful as I'd felt.

"Hey, why don't we go have a nightcap?" he suggested, turned to our left and led me toward the Ty Bar. The smile on my face was large, and I didn't hide my excitement at all. Law glanced my way and smiled too. Good, it looked like we both didn't want this night to end.

The bar area was fairly empty. There were plenty of tables and booths that were free, but Law guided me to an empty red suede couch off in the corner, away from everyone else.

"Have a seat. I'll get us something to sip on. Whiskey okay with you, or do you want something else?"

"White wine for me tonight," I told him.

He nodded and sauntered off. That sexy as hell walk of his grabbed the attention of every female and male around us. Lawson Morelli was that alpha male men probably loved to hate. This man had confidence that rolled off of him in spades. He walked around, or shall I say strutted around, as if he owned the very ground he walked on, owned the air everyone breathed. He didn't look down on people, or treat anyone as if they were beneath him, but you couldn't convince me he didn't know that he was a god among mere mortals.

Fuck, I was hot for him right now.

I sat down on the soft couch, conscious of the short dress I wore, and crossed my bare legs. I tried to get my breathing under control and the warmth that flooded my body to cool, but I failed miserably.

Do you see what he does to me? Just the sight of him, his walk, has turned me into a horny mess.

I fanned myself with my hand. I needed to get myself together before he returned. Law had this uncanny knack of reading me like a book. Anytime I allowed lustful thoughts to enter my brain when he was around, he would smirk at me and say, “Stop thinking about me naked. All you have to do is ask, baby, and I’m yours.”

Shit, and just like that I was soaked for him, aching to be stroked long, deep and slow. And... he would do just that.

“Princess!” Law called out, and I jumped, startled by how close his voice was to me. I could have sworn he was just standing over by the bar. I looked up to find his hand outstretched, a wine glass filled with the white wine I had ordered.

I smiled up at him, blushed like all hell, and hoped because of the dim lights in here that he couldn’t tell.

“Thank you.” I collected the glass from his hand and immediately took a long sip. Law opened his suit jacket and took his seat next to me.

He took a sip of his own drink and sat the glass on the table in front of us, but not before saying, “Sitting over here thinking about me naked, were you?”

I sputtered and gave him a pair of wide eyes.

“Wha—? How?”

He shrugged.

“Princess, that shit is always written all over your face when you’re with me. You can’t hide your desires from me. But rest assured, I’ll make tonight up to you. Promise that on everything.” He reached for my hand and placed a soft kiss to my knuckles, the look of pure carnal lust all over his features.

I swallowed hard and brought my glass to my now dry mouth.

Law sent a smirk my way before he leaned back against the couch and pulled me into him. I snuggled against him, my

back against his front. The glass in my hand rested on my bare thigh. We sat in silence for a few minutes, watched the people around us and listened to the instrumental jazz that played on hidden speakers.

I closed my eyes and relished in the feel of powerful arms around me, protecting me, coveting me. I felt him lace our fingers together, along with a soft touch from his lips to my fingers.

“Tell me about him,” he requested, his voice low, close to my ear.

Wrapped up in the feel of him, I didn’t quite catch his meaning.

“Who?” I asked thoughtlessly.

Law didn’t respond. Instead, he kissed my ring finger on my left hand then rubbed it between his thumb and forefinger.

It took a second for me to understand his meaning and when I did, my eyes popped open, my body immediately tensed.

“Oh, umm... okay. What do you want to know?” I asked him. My voice cracked just a bit.

Come on, Sydney, hold it together. You should have been prepared for this question. After all, you were the one who let it slip that you were divorced. He didn’t ask, you volunteered.

“Whatever you want to tell me,” he stated, then added, “How did you two meet?”

I snorted. I couldn’t help it. The thought of everything about George Aloysius Benedict, the third, irritated me to my core.

“My father introduced us. He’s the son of one of my father’s prominent business partners.”

I sighed, extricated myself from his arms, and turned to face him. I’d hoped I could hide the sadness I suddenly felt. But as I said before, Law had the uncanny ability to read me like a book, no matter how hard I tried to hide my feelings.

Law caressed the side of my cheek with a lone finger, strength and support in his eyes.

“How long were you two married?” he asked after seconds of silence had passed between us.

I blew out a breath.

“Four excruciating years,” I admitted, a small smile planted on my face.

Law’s brows furrowed.

“Excruciating? It wasn’t heavenly bliss for you two?”

I sucked my teeth and rolled my eyes.

“No. Well, maybe in the beginning, but it was all one sided.”

Law let out a breath, and I knew I was frustrating him with the half-ass answers I provided. I just didn’t want to talk about George and my marriage. I felt stupid as it was that I had lived the lie. I didn’t want to share my stupidity with the world, let alone *with him*. But looking into his turbulent eyes, I knew his patience had weaned.

“Alright, look. I’m sure you can tell how much I don’t want to talk about my marriage or about George. But I will,” I added quickly when he looked as if a protest was about to fall from his lips.

However, Law surprised me. He grunted and took a sip of his drink.

“I understand. With a name like George, he’s probably a no good wanker.”

I snorted out a laugh and relaxed ever so slightly.

“Well, he is that and more.”

“Listen, Princess. If you don’t want to talk about it, that’s fine.”

“No, it’s not that I don’t...” I paused and took a few deep breaths. I took the remainder of my wine down and handed him the empty glass. “If I’m going to spill my guts about my

asshole of an ex, I'm going to need something a lot stronger than wine."

Law smirked and took the rest of his drink down as well.

"Understood. I'll be right back."

I closed my eyes and fell back against the couch as Law stepped away to get us more to drink. Dread suddenly came over me. As the distance between us grew, embarrassment crept along my spine right along with shame.

For a long ass time, being married felt as if I had been stuck in a rut for which there was no escape. At first, it had the potential to be everything I had ever dreamed of since I was a kid. But after a year it had turned sour, and it was all my parent's fault. Yes, that's right. I was blaming my parents for my situation.

Let me explain...

I had been brought up in a family that believed in staying together, no matter what. My parents were a true testament to that fact, being as though they'd been together for a lifetime.

That's amazing, right? Well, not for me and my brother.

My parents weren't together because they loved each other. *Hell no!* They were together more out of habit and necessity than anything else. They had an understanding. My father stayed out of my mother's way, and in turn, she promised not to cut off his balls in his sleep.

They had lived complete and separate lives behind closed doors. They didn't sleep in the same bedroom and barely spoke to one another when they *were* in the same room, unless absolutely necessary. I even think they had side pieces they fucked regularly.

But when it came to them making public appearances or if they were around their stuffy ass friends, they were the happiest couple you had ever seen. They never showed their true disdain for each other in public. According to the people in their world, my father was the best man, husband, father, and provider ever made. And my mom had portrayed herself

as a loving mother and wife who supported her man in all things.

But, let me be the first to say that it was all smoke and mirrors. And even though they had been putting on this grand production since I had known them, I think they were only fooling themselves.

No, on second thought, that's not true. There was someone else that drank the Kool-Aid, knowing damn well it was spiked with arsenic, and that was Theodore Brandon Fontane, the fourth. My idiot brother.

He, unfortunately, didn't learn from the mistakes of others. Instead, he followed in my parent's footsteps and entered a committed relationship not for love. No sir, he married for prestige and wealth.

Yup, the saying was true. *The apple doesn't fall too far from the tree.*

This man was in a soulless marriage with a woman that tolerated his face because of the thickness of his wallet.

Isn't that romantic?

And... to make matters worse, I didn't think he was getting any ass out of the deal.

No bullshit, I swear it's true.

Every time my brother and I crossed paths over the years, the man looked pent up and frustrated, as if he hadn't busted a nut in ages.

I didn't feel sorry for my brother, though. He had brought this on himself, the fucking idiot. He had an opportunity to marry for love and the beautiful pleasure of experiencing what it felt like to be cherished by someone.

Seriously, how rare is that?

And get this, he managed to fuck it up and ended up losing the only woman that would ever love him. In my opinion, instead of listening to the 'Spawn of Satan' which was our mother, he should have told her to go back to hell where she came from and mind her own business. He *allowed* that

woman to run his life, and now he was a miserable sack of shit who married some woman because his mama told him to.

I refused to be their next victim, which was why they tricked me. Again, do you see why I left? My parents were tricksters. They were master manipulators. I swear, if I would've stayed home and dealt with George, my parents would have figured out a way to guilt me into staying with the no-good, cheating sack of shit. They probably would've had me blaming myself for him cheating on me too.

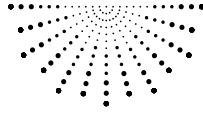
I had to escape, had to leave without them being the wiser, and I refused to go back home. There was nothing there for me, no one held me back. Once I have gotten myself together, I'd visit or at least call them to let them know I was fine, but that was about it.

This was the start of a new chapter in my life. I was the protagonist. I even had a supporting cast, Hailey. The thing I feared most was the antagonist of my story. Who would that end up being? I prayed with everything in me that it wouldn't be Law.

I opened my eyes just in time to see him heading back to me. With two empty glasses in one hand and a bottle in his other, he weaved between tables with an intense gaze planted right on me. I inhaled deeply and let the breath that I held seep out slowly. My heart started to beat a little faster, my nerves tightened around my throat and made it hard to swallow.

Oh boy... I hope y'all are still praying for me; I'm gonna need it.

CHAPTER NINE



LAWSON

As I headed back to the sofa and Sydney, I did my best to rein in my rage. However, I was too busy trying to figure out why I was so pissed. So... she was married, big fucking deal. Except it was a big deal to me.

The thought of someone else touching her, holding her in their arms, set the beast within into a torrent of emotions, none of them good. *What was this woman doing to me?* I had no rights to her and yet I wanted nothing more than to find her ex and rip his arms off so he could never touch her or hold her again. I could grab his face, dig my fingers into his eye sockets and push until I felt the softness of his brain, just so he couldn't gaze upon her beauty anymore. Or better yet, cut out his tongue so he couldn't speak to her anymore.

I was insane with rage for a woman I barely knew but wanted desperately.

Bloody hell...

I locked my emotions down and smiled down at her once I arrived back at her side.

“Wow, the entire bottle, huh?” she grinned at me.

“I thought the situation caused for the entire bottle instead of one glass.”

I retook my seat next to her and set the two glasses on the table in front of us. I opened the bottle of Jameson and poured three fingers into both glasses.

I set the bottle down, top on, and handed her a glass.

“Thanks,” she whispered.

We both took a sip, never moving our eyes from each other.

I placed my glass back on the table and asked, “So, you were married for four years?”

“Yes, but it wasn’t all butterflies and rainbows. Are you sure you want to hear this?”

“Yes, I’m sure. Why wouldn’t I be?”

“Well, I mean, I’m sure you have better things to—”

“I promise you I don’t have anywhere pressing to be at this moment. I’m dying to hear how this daft prick let you go.”

She grunted, rolled her eyes, and took a sip of her drink.

“He hardly let me go. I left.”

“Things were that bad?” I asked, doing my best to keep my anger in check, especially when I asked the next question. “He didn’t hurt you, did he?”

I’m going to cut off his balls and make him eat them.

Sydney smiled and shook her head.

“Not in the way you’re thinking.”

How does she know what I’m thinking?

As if she could read my mind, she added, “It’s written all over your face. You look like you’re ready to pounce.”

Deciding to be honest with her, I said, “Well, Princess, that depends on your answer.”

“I believe you. But you can relax. He didn’t lay a hand on me. George and I didn’t work out because our marriage was arranged. Much to my surprise, I might add. And well, he’s a cheating sack of shit too.”

I raised an eyebrow.

“Okay, hold on. Let’s take this step-by-step. Let’s talk about the arranged marriage thing. I only thought that shit

happened in the UK or, I guess, other cultures in the Middle East and maybe Africa. Is it a culture thing for you?"

Being from London, there were still a few royals hanging around, so arranged marriages were very common. Plus, in the world I lived in, this old practice could be brought up to combine allegiances between rival families. But here in the states, I didn't believe that shit was in practice.

Sydney shook her head. "No, it's not a..." she paused thoughtfully, then replied, "well, maybe it is a culture thing. My family comes from a certain pedigree, if you will. It's improper for us to just marry anyone. They have to come from the same cloth. Do you know what I mean?"

I did, and I told her so.

"Yes, your family is wealthy. They would shit bricks if you married, let's say... the pool boy."

She snapped her fingers and pointed at me. "Exactly. So, my father tells me about his golf buddy's son named George. At first, I thought nothing of it. My father said the guy was new to the area, and he thought it would be a good idea if I showed him around. At the time, I wasn't sure why he asked me and not my brother. I should've asked, but I didn't. I don't know, maybe I secretly wanted to meet this guy. I had been on countless dates with the *inner circle*." Sydney placed air quotes around the phrase 'inner circle' and I chuckled. She added, "The idea of meeting someone new intrigued me."

"Okay, so, you guys go out and it's love at first sight, yeah?" I probed gently.

She smiled that lovely smile of hers; you know the one that always made my dick twitch.

Maybe you didn't know that. Well, now you do.

"Yeah, it was," she went on to say. "Well, it was for me anyway. To make a long story short, George seemed like the perfect guy. He showered me with extravagant gifts, treated me like a queen, and courted me like he wanted nothing more than to make me happy for the rest of *his* life. I was smitten by

him and when he asked me to marry him six months later, I didn't hesitate to say yes."

I looked at her incredulously.

"Six months? I've taken longer to commit to a brand of boxer briefs. You were engaged to him six months after you met?"

She shrugged nonchalantly, then nodded her head. "Yes. It was love at first sight. A fairytale. I had met my prince charming. At least that's what I thought. Instead, I married a wolf in sheep's clothing."

"So, how was this marriage arranged? It sounds like your father just introduced you two and everything else happened naturally."

"Oh, but it didn't," she informed me chuckling. "You see, the lifestyle of the rich wasn't appealing to me. I never cared about my family's money, the conniving way they lived. My parents have been together for over thirty years, and they can't stand the sight of each other. But they stayed together, tolerated each other for the sake of appearances. My brother is in the same predicament. He didn't marry for love. No, he married a girl because his mama told him to. I refused to be their next victim, and they knew it, which was why I was bamboozled."

"George turned out not to be Prince Charming. He was crude, ignorant, a whiner, pampered, a mama's boy, and he didn't like me at all. He told me so after we were married for about a year. I had caught him cheating, and that's when he informed me that our marriage was for convenience. He was forced by *his* father as a favor to *my* father. He never wanted to get married but was told if he did, he would get a VP job at my father's firm, an endowment of X amount of dollars, and after a year, he could see whomever he wanted and do whatever he wanted."

"Damn!" *Yeah, I'm definitely going to cut off his balls and make him eat them.*

She nodded. "I know, pathetic."

I leaned into her a bit and added, “No, I mean damn that you had to waste your time with that stupid fuck.”

“No, honestly, I don’t blame him. After he told me that our marriage was a sham, I stayed with him. I thought maybe he could grow to love me like I loved him. I had even asked that he give us a chance. I was the one who was stupid. He said that he would change. And I believed him. But at the end of the day, I wasn’t his type. My skin was too dark. My hair wasn’t long enough or straight enough. My boobs were too real, my ass was too big. I was too fat, not smart enough, too smart, mouthy, needy. God, I could go on and on. Over the years, he had expressed all the reasons he didn’t want me until finally I said, ‘fuck you’, and I left.”

I stayed quiet for a minute and watched her. I wanted to shake the hell out of her and ask her why in the hell did she stay with a man that clearly didn’t love her. He didn’t physically abuse her, but mentally, he beat the shit out of her. From the brief time we’d been together, the attitudes that she had been giving me, and her temper, I didn’t peg her for someone that would tolerate that kind of behavior. She seemed like the one to bite back instead of rolling over and taking it.

Fuck it. I asked, because I couldn’t help it, “Why did you stay with that son of a bitch?”

Sydney smiled at me, but it didn’t reach her eyes. “I don’t know. I guess you could say that I fell into quicksand and didn’t know I was trapped until it was too late. Then, every time I struggled to break free, I sank faster and faster. My mother encouraged me to stay married. She told me he would eventually get it together and realize that I was more important than his mistresses. She said that if things didn’t change after a while, then I should get a few sidepieces of my own. I didn’t want that. That wasn’t my idea of a marriage.

“I tried to lean on the hope that things would change between me and George. I put my all into the relationship until I caught the bastard cheating again. After that, I had had enough of being used. That’s when I told him I was leaving him.” She paused a second then laughed bitterly.

“Do you know he laughed at me when I told him I was leaving him?” she asked me. I shook my head. *I’m going to pour acid down his throat.* “He had said some things that I don’t want to repeat or relive, but he didn’t think I could do this; live on my own. But I’m determined to do it, without my parent’s money. Well, for the most part,” she added, rolling her eyes at the skeptical look I had on my face.

She couldn’t blame me for it. She told me she was from a wealthy family. That meant she wasn’t working to earn an income. And if that was the case, how did she have her own money? I stayed quiet this time and let her continue to share with me her plan of survival.

“I used some of my inheritance to start my savings in the beginning,” she admitted. “But I have since replaced what I had used and left it all in my family’s account. I have separate accounts scattered in various banks overseas under various names. I’ve been saving and investing for years. The amount of money I’ve made won’t allow me to live the way I have been accustomed, but that’s okay. I’ll make do with what I have and make life adjustments in order to survive.”

I gave her an appreciative grin. “That sounds like a solid plan, and I know you’ll figure out a way to achieve your goal. I have faith in you. Do you plan on living in New York or are you going back home?”

“Hell no, I’m not going back home. There’s nothing for me there. My divorce should be final in a couple of months. And —”

“Wait, your divorce isn’t final?”

“Not yet. I just filed for divorce a couple of weeks ago. It should have been sooner, but I needed to find a way to get George to sign the papers. He would not let me go easily. He lives a cushioned life and didn’t have to lift a finger to do anything. Honestly, the job he has is just for show. It’s not like he decides on anything important. The job just makes him *feel* and look important. That’s what it’s about, right? Ego stroking?”

I smirked and chuckled. “I have no clue, but I’ll take your word for it.”

“Well, anyway, I needed to be sure he would sign the divorce papers, so I found incriminating evidence that would embarrass the hell out of his family and him. He didn’t like it, called my bluff and everything. But he realized I was serious about destroying him and his wretched family. He signed the papers before I left.”

“What did you find on your ex to make him see he had no choice but to give you what you wanted?”

Sydney’s shoulders rose then fell absently. “It wasn’t anything major. He was stealing from my father’s company to settle his gambling debts. Apparently, his family isn’t doing that great financially. George was trying to use gambling to get them back on top. I had hired a private detective to help me find something that would convince him to do the right thing and give me a divorce. They came through for me. I approached George with what they found out and threatened to go to the papers to oust him. The hell with the authorities. It’s all about perception in our world. He could have beaten any charges with the right lawyer. He wouldn’t be able to escape public scrutiny.”

I was proud of her more than I wanted to admit. I loved the fact that she could take matters into her own hands to get what she wanted. Not that it would stop me from seeking my own justice, but I was proud of her for getting out of a situation that wasn’t good for her. She didn’t deserve to be miserable. She deserved to be happy.

“I’m impressed, Princess. It seems you’re sexy, beautiful, *and* conniving. You’re a woman after my own heart.”

She laughed. I didn’t. I wasn’t kidding.

“Oh, stop. You flatter me.”

“So, the schmuck signed the papers. Now what?”

“Now I wait, I guess. My lawyer said she would handle everything. I’ll check back with her via email to confirm that

everything went through in another week or so. After that, I'm free. Well, I'm free now, but you know what I mean."

"Well, listen. If you have any problems with him, let me know. I'll be happy to persuade him to do the right thing."

I'm going to string him up by his balls and beat the fuck out of him like a piñata.

"Hmm, persuade, huh?" The corners of her mouth curled into her cheeks.

"Yes, persuade. I can be very persuasive when I want to be."

I leaned toward her. She did the same.

"Oh, I bet you can," she rebutted softly, her eyes dropping to my mouth before traveling back to my eyes.

The moment our lips touched, the rage ebbed away, replaced with a paralyzing need that only this woman could fulfill.

I threaded my fingers through her hair and pulled her closer, directing her onto my lap, her legs straddling my hips. Mindful of the short dress she wore, I pulled her closer to me and rested my hands on her ass. You know, to make sure the dress didn't rise to reveal her voluptuous globes.

Her hands went to the sides of my face, and she kissed me sweet and slow. When we finally parted, she rested her forehead against mine.

"Are you sure you can't come upstairs with me? We can be quick."

I groaned, squeezed her ass.

"Love, I'm afraid I could never be quick with you. All I'm going to do is want more and I need to catch a late flight out of town. But I'll be back in a few days. I promise, the moment I get back I'll call you."

Sydney sighed and leaned back from me to meet my eyes.

"Law, you don't owe me anything. It's okay if—"

I placed a finger against her lips, stopping her from spoiling this moment.

“Stop. Don’t say anything that will only piss me off. I said I’m going to call you when I get back and I will.”

She smiled against my finger.

I dropped it just in time for her to say, “How do you know I’ll still be in town waiting for you?”

My eyes narrowed. *See what I mean?*

“Woman, don’t make me come find you.”

She raised an eyebrow.

“You think you’ll be able to find me if I left?”

I snorted.

“Love, I would find you before you even thought about leaving. Trust me on that.”

I held her gaze, hoping like fuck she saw the truth in my eyes. There wouldn’t be a place she could hide that I wouldn’t find her. I would turn this world upside down, destroy it if I needed to, in order to find her. That thought scared the fuck out of me. I grabbed her face and kissed her hard, possessively, letting her know I meant every fucking word.

My phone buzzed in my inner jacket pocket, and I knew it was one of my brothers. We had a job tonight, and I needed to make my way to Chicago afterwards. We had a lead on who hired the handler that orchestrated the hit on us. I needed to get going to prep for the trip and for tonight’s job. I also needed to pack.

I released her lips, albeit very reluctantly, and stared into her beautiful brown eyes.

“Do you know how beautiful you are?” I marveled, caressing her cheeks, pushing her hair from her face. “So fucking gorgeous. Stunning.”

She gifted me that sweet smile of hers and I almost said fuck it all and carried her upstairs. I wanted to fuck her nice and slow for at least a week. Her body drove me crazy, the

scent of her desires like an aphrodisiac. I could barely think straight, could barely breathe. Fuck, what would I do if she left before I got back? I'd find her and make sure she never left me again.

Bloody hell...

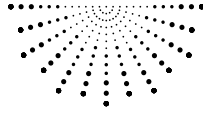
"I take it you have to go," she replied, her voice soft, light.

"I do. But as I said, I'll be back in a few days, and we can continue where we left off tonight, yeah?"

"Okay."

I kissed her again, allowed myself to let go for a few minutes before I helped her up and escorted her to her room. Leaving her was hard as fuck. I didn't want to imagine what I would do when this had to end. Would I truly be able to walk away from her? Could I? Right now, the answer was no. But I was sure, if we continued to spend more time together, the answer would be a resounding *fuck* no. Then what?

CHAPTER TEN



SYDNEY

Oh, *Sydney Fontane, you are so fucking stupid...*

I sat at the Ty bar at a quarter till eleven, waiting for Law. He had texted me about an hour ago, asking if I could meet him. I should've told his lying ass to go to fucking hell, but I didn't. He and I needed a come-to-Jesus meeting, and it had to be face-to-face with the no-good piece of horseshit asshole. I knew I should have listened to my gut and left him alone after that first or rather second night we spent together. But I was still in a daze from his glorious dick to think straight. Well, now, I was thinking very clearly.

I took my drink to the head for the fourth time and wanted to order another one, but I didn't want to get up to order it. There were vultures hovering around the bar looking for tables and I'd be damned if I would give up mine.

My heart had been aching for what felt like a lifetime. I was exaggerating, of course. It was more like days, but it felt earth shattering, so I went with a lifetime. That's what this betrayal from Law felt like. It ran deep to the core of me, the roots of my soul.

What happened, you ask?

I need another drink to tell you all of it without breaking down, but as I stood to get said drink, the room started spinning as if I was on the Ferris wheel or something. No better yet, the Merry-go-round. I sat back down or rather plopped back down and stared at the entrance to the bar, waiting for the liar.

Okay, here's what happened...

Law and I hadn't seen each other for close to a week. Before he left, he said he would only be gone a day or two, but it turned out to be longer. He claimed there was some issue with the *family business*.

Yeah right.

I didn't believe him when he said that he worked for his father's shipping business. There was more to the story. I felt it. He was into something deep, and I had hoped he trusted me enough to confide in me, but he hadn't.

Doubt also tried to creep in, and a small part of me wondered if he wasn't just blowing smoke up my ass. Maybe he had never left, and this was his way of letting me off easily. But I quickly dismissed that idea. Law wasn't the type to play games. I read that about him the minute he started talking to me at the bar. Sure, he played *my* game a little, engaged in light banter before stripping me naked and having his way with me. But that was different, and the end result was a night of passion neither one of us would ever forget.

No. If he didn't want to see me again, he would've said so.

I hung on that notion like a lifeline. He also eased my fears by calling and texting me whenever he was able. Our phone calls never lasted long, but it didn't matter to me. I was just glad that he took the time to call me.

So, this week I did my own thing. I saw a few Broadway plays and fulfilled my love for the theater. Some were really good, and some were so bad that I walked out pissed that I would never get back the hours I had lost. I did more sightseeing, ate hotdogs at Battery Park, paid my respects to those that lost their lives at the 9/11 memorial site, and cried into my cup of ice cream. I saw more art, statues, and played leapfrog with the traffic of New York just for the hell of it.

Mostly I enjoyed myself, especially when Hailey gave me passes to this exclusive club only for the rich and famous. She felt bad for standing me up this week, something about a family quarrel, and told me to have a spa day, or days, on her

whenever I wanted. She promised we'd get together at the end of the week. I had spent this week alone but definitely not lonely.

I spent the mornings getting pampered with massages. I got waxed in places that still burned, got a facial, and a mani/pedi. I got my hair washed, flat-ironed, and spent most of my time poolside while drooling over the stars that I only watched on the big screen.

I was on cloud nine until the other day when I had walked past a restaurant in Midtown and saw Law sitting at a table with another woman. They were smiling at each other, talking, and looked to be engrossed in each other's world. My heart dropped to my toes. I couldn't believe it. Was he a player? One that played with sweet innocent women such as myself, who lived in her pristine and sheltered bubble for all her life?

I blinked a few times, trying to make sure this wasn't some illusion that he was indeed sitting in front of me with someone else. I couldn't believe this shit. I was so wrong about him. So very fucking wrong.

I debated whether I should turn and leave or call him and hope he'd pick up, then cuss his ass out, or walk in there and cuss his ass out. The decision was made for me when he turned and met my eyes. My eyes grew wide, and I expected him to look just as shocked as I was or to stand and come outside to explain himself. But he did none of those things. It was worse. He just looked at me as if he didn't know me at all. To say my heart shattered in a trillion pieces was an understatement. I was devastated.

And let me say, the woman he was with was gorgeous too, a model type body, sort of like the two women at the bar when I first met him. She had sun-kissed skin, long dark hair, skinny. I ran my hands along my curves, trying not to doubt myself, but it was fucking hard not to.

Things went downhill from there. Feeling vulnerable and raw, I decided to text him last night. I wanted to call him out, scream at him, then block him and delete his number from my phone. The games he played with my heart didn't deserve to

go unchecked. Consequently, he didn't text back or call me. Then this morning I saw him heading for the hotel elevators as I came into the building. I called out his name and do you know he had the audacity to look my way, stare at me, then smirk before stepping onto the elevator?

Can you believe that shit?

So yeah. Right about now I was pissed, hurt, embarrassed, and ready to fight. I made sure I kept a glass of water on the table because the first thing I planned to do was drench him with it, then cuss his ass out for wasting my time. After that, I'd kick him in the balls and leave him standing there looking stupid. The same way I looked and felt earlier today and the day before.

So that was the plan that I had decided on about an hour ago. However, now all I wanted to do was slither back to my room and hide for the rest of eternity or get the first flight out of this city. I needed to escape somewhere else, anywhere else but New York. Except if I did that, Hailey would lose her shit and hunt me down. She'd twist my arm to tell her everything that happened, then make it her mission to castrate Law. I didn't want that to happen, even though he deserved it.

But to be honest with you and myself, it wasn't like he had promised me anything. Yeah, he said he enjoyed spending time with me, that he wanted to see me again, but big deal. I loved spending time at the nail salon with my favorite manicurist. That didn't mean I loved her. I needed to put everything into perspective. I had unforgettable experiences with a hot-as-hell guy. He was charming, sexy as hell, and he showed me what it felt like to be cherished by a man.

However, let's be real. Law could have any woman that he wanted, case in point the woman I saw him with the other day. She was flawless, and I wasn't taking anything away from my own looks. I was attractive too, but my body type was something that most didn't find sexy. I had hips, ass, and a bit of a pooch. Law said he loved it, loved a woman that had meat on her bones. It's possible he only said that to make me feel comfortable. Who knows? But one thing was for certain, I

wasn't going to sit here and wait for him just so he could break me further. No fucking way.

I stood slowly and left the bar. I quickly headed for the elevator and passed the entrance to the hotel. Apparently, that was a huge mistake. I should have left sooner.

"Princess!" I glanced in the voice's direction and saw Law step through the doors, a smile on his face that looked delectable. He was dressed in black pants, black boots, and a black pullover shirt. His hair was pulled back into a ponytail and his eyes were vibrant, bright, and centered solely on me.

I turned and kept walking.

"*Oi*," he called out, his English accent coming in thick. "Where are you going?"

I didn't answer. I kept walking, picked up my pace and knew that he was doing the same. I didn't see him do it, mind you, but I felt him get closer and I was afraid that if he touched me, I would fall apart.

I didn't though, thank goodness.

Instead, I snatched my arm out of his grasp, turned on him, and slapped him in the face.

Well, yeah, okay, I didn't actually make contact. Law must've felt or saw it coming because with a quickness I'd never seen before, he gripped my wrist before I made contact. That didn't stifle the rage in my eyes or my voice. It actually pushed it to another level.

"Get your fucking hands off me," I growled out.

"Not until you tell me what the fuck is going on," he growled back and stepped into my space, caging me between his hard body and the wall.

"I don't have to tell you shit. Now let go before I scream bloody murder."

"Do that and I promise you, if anyone approaches me or lays a hand on me, they'll never take another breath again. Do you want that? Do you want to be responsible for someone dying tonight?"

I scoffed and rolled my eyes. But the truth of his words, of the promise in his eyes, made me shiver.

“You’re so full of shit.”

“How?”

“Let go,” I countered, and he stepped closer.

“No!”

“Argh... You’re so fucking frustrating.”

“So I’ve been told. Why don’t you calm down and tell me why your knickers are in a twist?”

My eyes turned to slits of fire as I brought my other hand up to hit him. Big mistake, of course, because I found myself completely at his mercy with my hands pinned behind my back.

Law took a few deep breaths before he spoke, his voice low and calm considering I had just tried to hit him twice.

“You’re pissed at me.”

I snorted. “You think?!”

“And... understandably so. I told you I wanted to spend time with you, and I bailed on you for an entire week. I apologize for that and for not calling on you straight away when I arrived back in town.”

I leaned back from him and gave him my best, ‘*are you kidding me?*’ look.

“What?” he prodded, puzzlement on his face.

“You think I’m this pissed because you bailed on me?”

“That’s the only reason I could think of to explain why you’re pissed. I’m not a bloody mind reader, and I haven’t done—”

“Please let me go,” I asked, cutting him off. The fight fell from my shoulders to the expensive tiled floor beneath my feet.

Law let go of my wrists and placed gentle palms on the sides of my cheeks.

“Talk to me, love. What’s going on? What have I done that’s upset you?” His voice dropped to this tender tone that caused my eyes to water and butterflies to take flight in my stomach.

“You lied to me,” I admitted softly, closed my eyes, and took a deep breath. When I opened them, I placed them on a confused Law.

“How? When?”

“I saw you yesterday and today.”

He frowned and shook his head.

“That’s impossible. Well maybe today you could have seen me. However, yesterday I was still out of town on business. Love, you couldn’t have seen me.”

“No, I saw you through a restaurant window. You were eating dinner with a woman. You two looked to be completely into each other.”

“And I saw you? I made eye contact with you?”

“Yes, and you did nothing. You looked at me as if you didn’t even know me. Then I saw you again today in front of the elevator. You looked right at me and dismissed me as if I didn’t matter at all. Do you have any idea how that made me feel?”

Law’s lips curled into a smile, one that I didn’t fucking like or appreciate.

“Princess, let me explain,” he began, but I put my hand up in his face to stop him. I was done hearing him and seeing his face.

“Don’t bother. Look, this isn’t going to work. What we had was great. You have given me the best memories of my life and I thank you, but we need to end it now. I just got out of a painful, wasteful marriage with a liar and a cheater. I don’t want to enter into the same shit with you. I’m good. Goodnight.”

I stepped away from him and when he went to grab me again, I moved my arm from his grasp.

“Sydney, will you wait a got damn minute?” he demanded. But I shook my head and quickly made my way to the hotel steps.

I could hear his steps behind me, but then he stopped. I turned back quickly to find two huge security guys standing in his way, their hands up, stopping him from pursuing me. The look that accosted Law’s face in that moment had me tripping over my own two feet. *Holy shit!*

My breath hitched in my throat as cold, deadly rage filled his eyes. It also had the two security guards stepping back slightly. *Good God in heaven*, was I about to witness two murders? Thankfully, Law didn’t kill the two guards, but he said a few words I couldn’t hear. Whatever he said, though, I swear I saw one of the security guard’s knees buckle.

I sprinted up two flights of stairs, getting the fuck out of there, and used my key card to open the door to the floor. I sprinted to the set of elevators and prayed whatever car was called to this floor didn’t have angry Law on it. The elevator came quickly, and I stepped on it and rode it to my room and made it safely inside my suite.

Tomorrow, I’ll reach out to Hailey and get her to change my room. She’s going to shit bricks when I tell her what happened, but it was something I needed to do. I had another reservation at a different hotel that I could escape to but that one was for emergencies and this situation I was in wasn’t an emergency... yet. I took a deep breath, fell back against the suite’s door, and let the air in my lungs out slowly.

Only you, Sydney Fontane... Only you!

LAWSON

I did my best to rein in my better half. He wanted to come out and play, to get messy, but now wasn’t the time or the place despite the suffocating need to bleed these two shit-eating cunts. They were stopping me from getting to my woman. But

I refrained from acting out the violence playing on repeat in my head.

Instead, I leaned in close and whispered, “If you two cunts don’t get the *fuck* out of my face and out of my way...” I trailed off, letting them come to their own conclusions. I did, however, allow them to see the beast within, to understand the threat behind my words, the promise in my cold, hard eyes.

One of the security guards looked as if he was on the verge of passing out. The other straightened his spine and narrowed his eyes on me.

Oh, so he has a set of balls, I see.

“Look, sir,” he said, albeit a bit shakily, “we’re just doing our jobs.”

I stared at him long and hard for at least a minute before he swallowed hard, nodded, and stepped back. He tapped his partner, who I almost forgot was there, and thankfully left my sight.

I stayed where I was, resisting the urge to chase after Sydney. Despite how pissed off I was right now, I knew her walking off, on the brink of tears, was my fault. I kept shit from her. She was right about that. I hadn’t outright lied to her like she claimed, but I omitted shit about myself, and that was as much of a lie as lying itself.

Fuck...

I should’ve told her everything. I had every opportunity to do it. As much time as we’d spent together, I could have given her my life story and then some. But I didn’t. I hesitated. I wasn’t sure if she was truly ready for the truth about who I was and what I was. I felt she needed time. Bloody hell, *I* needed more time. But I could have at least given her the basic shit. The shit about my brothers and I, and I didn’t.

I ran my hand down my face and did my best to breathe slowly.

She claimed she didn’t want to see me again, said we were done. To be honest with myself, I should’ve been thankful that this shit had come to a head. But I wasn’t. There was no

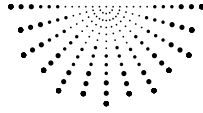
fucking way I was letting her go. Fuck that. If she thought we were over, she was sadly mistaken.

I'd give her space, time to calm down. A few hours would suffice. But after that, I was going to find her and remind her who the fuck she belonged to.

I smirked at myself as the anticipation of an impending battle made my dick hard. Sydney would not make this easy for me. That was fine by me. I fucking loved a challenge.

“Get ready, Princess. I’m coming for you.”

CHAPTER ELEVEN



LAWSON

“Come on, pretty boy, we’re going to be late,” my eldest brother Nix yelled from the living room of the suite.

I ignored the posh bastard and finished getting ready. He, and my other pain in the arse brother, Grey, had been here at the hotel sleeping for hours and doing fuck knew what. I, on the other hand, had to work earlier today. So, when I finally made it back to the hotel suite, they had already showered and were dressed.

“Seriously, if you make me miss the entertainment because of your slow arse, I’m going to make you pay,” Grey chimed in.

A smirk rose on my face, and I shook my head as Grey continued to give me hell. The little shit-for-brains was all talk and no bite. He knew damn well he couldn’t handle me on his good day, with my hands tied behind my back.

Deciding not to respond to his not so obvious plot to get under my skin, I ignored my brothers, fixed the collar of my jacket, then took in my reflection.

Despite my lack of enthusiasm, I was ready to get this night over with. The black tailored suit and black silk button-down shirt I wore were fitting for the festivities of the night. The bored look on my face, however, masked the rage and irritation I felt for having to attend this useless, waste of time dinner. The sudden urge to tell my brothers to piss off and forget this shit show was on the tip of my tongue. However, I didn’t. Mainly due to Nix.

He argued that we needed to attend this meeting now more than ever. It was possible we could discover something useful in the hunt for who tried to take us out or at least find out how the job I had completed a couple of weeks ago went to shit. The men attending this dinner knew we were in town. They could have easily set us up, or they had answers we needed.

Admittedly, he had a point. Business came first. The need to settle shit with Sydney had to wait, but I wouldn't let it stand long. I needed to clear the air with her and erase the misconception she had about me. If talking would not work, I planned to fuck her into submission. But before I could make my way to her, I needed to focus on tonight.

We had a target on our backs. Staying alive, keeping my brothers safe was my top priority, and this meeting tonight would aide in my hunt for those responsible for the attempt on our lives.

I forced my fingers through my shoulder-length dark hair and pushed it back and away from my face in an effort to relax. I gave myself another once over. A pair of hard, steel-grey eyes looked back at me, void of any emotion.

“Alright you wanker,” I coached myself quietly. “Let's be done with this shit early so we can get back here and find your woman, yeah?”

I walked out of my bathroom and into the living room, a scowl prominently sealed on my face. My brothers were there waiting for me dressed similarly to myself in black tailored suits, dress shirts, and their hair pushed back loosely against the nape of the neck.

Nix, the bossy oldest, was sitting on the sofa with his phone glued to his ear. Grey saw me enter the room and started for me, a glass of whiskey in his outstretched hand.

“Bout bloody time. Thought I was going to have to come in there and get you,” he smirked before handing me the glass.

“Whatever, asshole. Let's get this shit done and over with,” I barked and threw back the whiskey, giving my brother

the empty glass.

“Right. So, now that you’re in a better mood, how did it go today?” he asked me. I took a long moment to fucking respond.

Zeus wanted us to look into some Albanian arsewipe here in the city. He *claimed* they were trying to take business away from him. I spent hours watching these fuckers, taking pictures, looking for any evidence of Zeus’s claim. Grey’s drones could have done this mindless fucking shit, but Zeus wanted me to do it. Said he didn’t trust machines.

I say fuck him and his trust issues.

Despite the time and effort that I had put into today, I came up empty. A waste of fucking time.

I gave Grey a blank stare, trying not to lose my shit.

“How do you think it went?”

My brother chuckled. I didn’t find shit funny.

“Law, don’t be a bastard. Did you get anything on the Albanians that I need to look into or not?”

“Grey, you know how I feel about stupid arse questions. And yet, here you are treating me like I’m a two-time wanker. Go fuck yourself. Do you think that if I had found something I would have told you already? Now, stop wasting my time and let’s get the fuck out of here.”

Normally I wasn’t this much of a dick... okay, I was lying. I was this much of a prick the majority of the time. But these asshats have been riding me ever since I got back from Chicago.

Grey had finally discovered a lead to who funded the hit on us. There had been a money trail that started in the windy city. Neither of my brothers could make the trip, or so they said. Nix *claimed* that he was busy running down a lead of his own here in New York, and Grey was working on information about the second attempt on our lives and couldn’t make the trip. That left me. I didn’t want to go, didn’t want to leave Sydney. I even thought about inviting her to go with me. If she

knew my secrets, I wouldn't have hesitated in asking her, but since I hadn't told her the truth about me, inviting her wasn't an option.

Regrets... Regrets... Fucking regrets.

Unfortunately, the trip turned out to be a colossal waste of time, which did nothing for my mood but irritate the fuck out of me even more. The lead dried up, resulting in us having nothing more to go on. To make shit worse while I was there, a member of the Cipriano family showed up at my hotel requesting a meeting. They wanted to thank us properly on the job we did.

How did they know we did anything? Fuck, more importantly, how did they know I was in Chicago and staying at the Fairmont? Fucking Zeus...

Do you see why he needs to meet my knife?

He had just exposed us to people I did not know or trust. Who's to say they wouldn't use the knowledge they had against us? Nothing. Which told me Zeus did that shit on purpose to throw his weight around, to make sure we knew he owned us.

My patience is waning...

Suffice it to say, I was tired, irritated, and I hadn't had the pleasure of being wrapped up in Sydney's arms in fucking days. And to top it off, we were at odds at the moment, something I hadn't had the time to fix. If you add all that shit and the fact that there was an active contract on us, I wasn't a pleasant person on a good day, but today I was reeling.

Nix finally got off the phone, stood, and spoke to me while typing away on his phone.

“Good, you're done. We can finally get out of here. I don't want to be out all night. I got shit to get into later.” He then looked at me and I knew what was coming. “How did it go today? Did you find out anything useful about the Albanians?”

I frowned, and said, my voice laced with the irritation I felt, “Take a fucking guess.”

My oldest brother chuckled, and I was two seconds from beating the shit out of him. I'm telling you, these two knew just how to piss me off and they did it often.

I looked into the amused eyes of the only two people I trusted the most in the world and narrowed my eyes at them. I gave each of them a murderous look that only made their eyes explode in hilarity at my fucking expense.

"Calm down, Law," Nix instructed, ignoring my angry stare. "I'm just asking. Shit can always come up. You know how Zeus can get. He asked me and now I'm asking you."

He made sense, of course, and I knew that. It should have calmed me down, but it didn't. It pissed me off even more. Why? Zeus.

Hearing that name was like a trigger for me. It unleashed something dark and evil inside of me, and my brothers knew that. They named dropped just to get me to react. So, I gave them what they wanted... a reaction.

I flipped them off, letting the hate, bitterness and contempt cover my face. "Fuck him and you. Make sure you relay that message to him as well, yeah?"

They both laughed. I turned and exited the suite.

Arseholes...

Despite our light and warm banter, my brothers and I were very close. We were inseparable in fact. Where one went, the other two were definitely close by, and we allowed no one to come between us.

Trust didn't extend to anyone outside of our trio, except our mum and maybe a few others. It had been that way since we were kids. Sure, we argued amongst ourselves all the time. We even used our fists a time or two to settle family disputes, but it never escalated to anything else. We were the epitomes of an alpha male with a lot of anger issues. There were always power struggles between us, however, nothing would ever tear us a part.

I got to the lift and pushed the button to call it to our floor. It came quickly, and I held it open just as my brothers emerged

from the suite, still smiling. *The bastards...*

“I agree with you, he *is* more moody than normal. The little shit just needs to get some arse,” Nix said as he passed me. Grey stepped inside the car next, then I followed and moved to the left of him. The doors closed, and we started our descent.

“I think we need to help him out, but you know what he’ll say,” Grey said to Nix, carrying on as if I wasn’t here. I closed my eyes and rested my head against the wall behind me. If this lift could somehow swallow them whole, I’d be grateful. Instead, I tried to block them out, but that wasn’t working either.

“Yes, yes. I know he has particular tastes,” Nix added sardonically.

“Right, so where are we going to find a beautiful, sexy, curvaceous woman with skin the color of—”

Grey trailed off just as the lift settled on another floor and the doors opened. What I hadn’t expected was the silence that followed. That wasn’t like my brother. That wasn’t like any of us. I opened my eyes just as a familiar gasp filled the air.

She would gasp like that every time I ran my fingers along her body, or when my cock would slide along her sensitive inner muscles.

Sydney...

Holy hell, my heart fucking stopped.

I couldn’t breathe, literally. I had to force my lungs to take in air or I would have collapsed. It was crazy how much she affected me. And apparently, I had done the same to her, but for different reasons.

“Holy fucking shit,” she mumbled, her eyes wide as hell as she took us in.

I had expected the shocked look on her face when she finally met my brothers. We were used to it, in fact. Everyone reacted this way when meeting us for the first time. We were

three brothers that looked exactly alike in every way, from our hair, facial features, eye color, to our body type, height and sometimes weight. Tonight, we were even dressed the same. We didn't do that shit often, but when we did, it was comical to watch the stunned looks on people's faces that we passed, especially women.

Sydney was no different.

The shock on her face was priceless and fucking comical. If I wasn't pissed the fuck off that she had been running from me these last few days, I would have laughed. But I didn't. I was too busy taking her in slowly, my eyes skimming over her body inch by inch, doing my best to keep my temper in check.

Where in the bloody hell did she think she was going dressed like this?

She wore these tight as shit black leather shorts that hugged every curve of her hips and barely reached the top of her thighs. They fit like second skin they were so tight. And she had the audacity to wear a black corset over this white lacy shirt. The sleeves of the shirt were short and fell softly over her shoulders, but the front of the shirt barely covered the swell of *my tits*. *That's right, I said my fucking tits*. A group of silver necklaces attached to a strip of leather wrapped around her neck like a fucking collar and large silver hoop earrings fell from her ears behind a curtain of straight, dark hair.

What set off her outfit, besides the flawless makeup she wore, the dark eyes, dark thick lashes and red lips, were these black wedged heels that had black and white shiny shit swirled along the heel. The four and a half inch wedges she wore made her thighs look sexy as shit; flawless, muscular, and thick. Fuck, she was so got damn sexy I could barely breathe. My dick was so hard that I could probably tear this whole building down with one swing of my hips.

She continued to stand there, taking us in with bewilderment in her wide eyes. Her gaze then traveled to mine and stayed there expectantly. It was as if she was waiting for me to give her an explanation. *Yeah, sweetheart, I was trying to do that the other day, but you wouldn't listen.*

Wait, hold on a second... can she tell the difference between us? Does she know who she's staring at?

I met her gaze with a blank expression that I knew mirrored my brothers. She didn't shift her eyes.

Fuck me, she knows...

"Everyone out!" I barked. No, I fucking growled the command. I was on the brink of losing my shit. She could tell us apart. I could count on one hand the amount of people that could do that, and she was one of them? Sydney jumped slightly, startled by my outburst. My brothers only chuckled, however, they were smart blokes. They stepped off the lift.

"W-wha..." Sydney began, frowning in confusion. She tried to step back away from the lift, but I wasn't having that. I reached for her wrist and pulled her inside the lift before the doors closed.

"Ten minutes, Law," Nix stated before the doors closed. I gave him the finger.

The finality of the heavy metal doors closing settled around us. I was alone with the woman that had my balls in a fucking vice. We continued to stare at each other, a few inches separating us. The longer the ride, the harder it was to resist her. Her perfume was driving me crazy. I wanted to rip her clothes off and fuck her up against the lift right bloody then.

My heart started beating like crazy as the visual of taking her right here, of claiming her body as mine, flooded my mind. Heat surged through my veins, setting every part of my body on fire. I put my hands inside my pockets to keep the temptation to touch her at bay. Because fuck me, if I did, whatever was playing in my mind's eye would become both of our realities.

She blew out a breath, and my eyes drifted to her lovely face, unaware that I had been staring *at my tits*.

"You could have told me," she admonished lightly, nothing in her voice, just stating the obvious.

"If you would've given me the chance the other day, I would have," I countered, hoping my rebuttal would suffice,

but it didn't.

"You had plenty of chances to tell me."

I snorted. "Maybe you thought so, but I didn't," I revealed, giving her a piece of my truth, a piece of me.

I didn't blame her for being pissed. I just wished she would've at least talked to me, allowed me to explain. She didn't and there wasn't anything I could do about it.

"My turn," I said, stepped closer, and asked, "Where in all that is holy do you think you're going dressed like this?"

With her brows furrowed, she placed her hands on her hips. I followed the motion, noticing the red polish on her long nails, and her toes. They were as deep and rich as the lipstick on her luscious lips that were moving, but I couldn't focus on the words coming from her mouth. I was too busy thinking about all the glorious things she could do with that mouth. Yeah... She had two seconds to answer me, and if I didn't like the answer, she wasn't going anywhere but to my bedroom. I had a set of handcuffs that would come in handy to keep her right where I wanted her. In my bed naked for the rest of her life. Or at least until I returned from this fucking meeting.

"Did you hear me?" she hissed.

I blinked a couple of times, got my shit in check, and walked her up against the lift wall. "Did you hear what *I* said? Where are you going dressed like this? No, better yet, *who* are you going with?"

She scoffed and folded her arms underneath her chest. "None of your fucking business."

"Oh, Princess, you *are* my business," I countered just as the doors to the lift opened to the lobby floor.

Sydney, seeing the sight of freedom rolled her eyes and turned to leave. "Go fuck yourself, Lawson Morelli," Sydney bellowed over her shoulder and stepped off the lift. My eyes naturally went to her arse, and I damn near had a heart attack. Did you see... Hell, you couldn't see shit, but damn her arse looked...

Bloody fucking hell!

I followed her off just when the lift next to ours opened and my brothers stepped off, smirks still plastered on their faces.

“Give me a minute,” I said to them as I grabbed Sydney by her arm, and as gently as I could, guided her away from the lifts, the exit, and my nosy arse brothers.

“Hey, let go of me,” she cried out as I pulled her along. I ignored her and led her around a corner, into an empty corridor. Once we were alone, I released her, but I didn’t go far.

She set a death glare on me. It was so adorable.

“You have a fucking nerve,” she raged, pointing a finger at me, *such a turn on...* “grabbing me like that. How dare you! You must be insane to think I want to talk to you, much less be alone with you. That ship has fucking sailed.”

I studied her closely as she raged on, saying shit I couldn’t repeat, even if someone paid me handsomely. I was too busy watching the way her nose flared in anger and how her eyes lit up with controlled rage to pay attention to the words spilling from her red lips. She folded her arms underneath her breasts only to unfold them when she pointed a finger at me.

Fuck, this woman was beautiful when she was pissed.

I felt my temperature rise, both signaling that my temper was elevating right along with my desires for this woman. The sexy-as-fuck shorts and corset that she wore... I swear if she bent over, you could see her entire arse. And she was wearing this shit without me? She wasn’t dressed simply to have dinner alone or with her roommate. She was going out on the town or... was she going out on a date?

I closed my eyes, took a few deep breaths as my blood boiled. My heart rate suddenly calmed, and when I opened my eyes a transformation within took place.

Catching the change in my mood, Sydney stopped talking abruptly, eyes wide, body frozen with panic. There wasn’t fear in her eyes, however, she did glance to her right, maybe in

hopes that someone would come around the corner to save her. Or she was thinking about an exit strategy. Whatever scheme she planned in her mind, she wasn't going anywhere.

“Have I not explained that I am a jealous and selfish asshole?” I asked calmly, a complete contrast to what I was feeling, to what I knew blazed in my eyes. “And yet you insist on teasing me, with these skintight leather knickers you're wearing, your thick thighs on display. Do you realize you're playing with fire?”

The panic in her eyes was quickly replaced with anger as she narrowed them on me.

“Teasing you? Please. I'm not wearing these *shorts* to tease you. But if I did, I don't care about you or your feelings.”

I snorted. “That's a fucking lie.”

“No, it's not. I didn't get dressed thinking about you at all. In fact, I haven't thought about you since the moment I walked away from you. And another thing...”

She went off again in a tirade that I ignored. I stepped closer to her. She started moving backwards until her back hit the wall. I kept coming until my body was inches from hers. I rested my hands on the wall on either side of her tempting body, resisting the urge to touch her.

There was no way I could touch her. I knew if I did, shit would escalate to a level I wasn't prepared to deal with. But it didn't mean that I couldn't take in her heavenly scent. I lowered my head to her neck and inhaled deeply. Her sweet scent driving me insane.

She smelled so good, so delicious. The smoothness of her skin called to me. I wanted to taste between *my* breasts, to run my tongue in between these generous globes, lick along the shell of her ear, and outline her jawline with hungry lips. But some way, somehow, I restrained myself. I was too pissed at the moment to allow my desires for this woman to take... *Wait... is that Jasmine I smell? Bloody hell to piss! Fuck everything that I just said. This woman was mine. MINE!*

“You mean to tell me you haven’t thought about me in days?” I asked, running my nose along her jawline, taking my time to re-acclimate myself with this lovely woman.

“No, I haven’t,” she answered in a shaky voice. I felt her body tremble slightly, which only fueled me on.

“No? Well, I haven’t stopped thinking about you since the moment we met. Your gorgeous smile, your sweet-sounding voice.” I dropped one hand from the wall and rested my palm on her hip, reveling in the feel of her. Hell, I felt my body shudder with excitement, and we had a layer of clothing between us. Could you imagine what would happen if we were skin to skin?

“I’ve missed you, Princess,” I whispered in her ear.

“Really?” she asked softly, and from the sound of her voice, she had let go of the anger holding her back from me; for now, anyway. I needed to take advantage of this moment. Don’t get me wrong, I was still pissed the fuck off, but I could feel my anger waning, replaced with the same deep, dark need I had inside the lift.

“Yes, of course I’ve missed you.” I rested her hair behind her ear and lightly kissed the shell of her ear, allowing my need to taste her take over. I switched to her other ear, moving her hair and kissing her gently behind her lobe. “I would’ve told you as much the day you ran from me.”

She stiffened and my grip on her hip tightened, reminding her she was at my mercy.

“Imagine my surprise when an old angry woman answered the door to what was once your suite at three in the morning.”

She snorted. “Serves you right.”

“Does it?” I bit her neck, then sucked on her skin right above her collar. Her knees buckled, and she gripped my forearm. I smiled and rubbed my nose along her jawline. “Do you have any idea how it felt to learn my woman was hiding from me?”

“I’m not your woman,” she countered, but her voice had no conviction in it.

“Oh, but, Princess, you are. You declared it yourself. And understand something, you can try to run and hide all you want, but I will always find you.” Just to prove my point, I whispered the newest suite number she occupied. She gasped lightly, as I knew she would. Did that make me a crazy stalker? Would she run for the hills? Probably, but I didn’t give a fuck. I’d just follow her. Sydney was mine, and I refused to lose her.

“There is no place you could ever hide from me.” I kissed her where her neck met her shoulders, goose pimples invading her skin as my lips caressed her.

“You’re crazy, do you know that?” she accused in a low tone, void of any anger or fear, but I knew she meant it.

I leaned back and met her eyes. “You make me crazy,” I confessed, which was partly true.

She had driven me out of my mind for fucking days until I found her. I should be the one denouncing her, keeping my distance, but I didn’t. No, instead I was moving closer to her, getting more and more addicted to her. And I would not stop, I would not let her go.

“I don’t belong to you,” she declared, her back straight, defiance in her eyes and voice.

I raised an eyebrow.

“So, you’re going back on your word? You’re a liar, then?”

She leaned back from me, shocked, as if I’d just slapped her in the face.

“What? No.”

“Then you *belong* to me.”

“Yes... I mean, no. Lawson, stop. Let me go. You’re confusing me, playing mind games. You’re the one who’s lied to *me*. You’re—”

“I’m not playing mind games,” I interrupted harshly. “I don’t play games and I would never lie to you. Omit something to protect you, yes. Outright fucking lie, no. Not to you.”

“Why? Why am I so special?”

I inched closer until her breasts touched my chest. I captured her lovely face between my hands.

“I’ve already told you. You belong to me. You’re mine and only mine.”

“I don’t even know you,” she retorted softly. And she had a point. She didn’t know me, but she would soon.

I caressed her cheek softly with the backs of my fingers, needing to touch her skin on skin.

“Mine,” I professed, voice deep, dark, and throaty. I threaded my fingers through her long, dark hair and gripped her hair tight in my fist. “Mine,” I whispered again, losing myself, my fucking sanity. *Fuckkkk! This woman!*

“Fuck, woman,” I admitted hoarsely, right before I crashed my lips against hers.

Being the stubborn woman that she was, Sydney didn’t open up to me right away. Not until I tightened my hold on her hair and squeezed the fuck out of her arse.

She exhaled, opened that gorgeous mouth of hers, and I dove in tongue first, consuming her taste, and every reluctant moan her desires produced. I was just about to fall completely over the edge, fuck off my brothers and take this woman up to my suite when I felt a sharp bite on my lip.

I released her mouth and looked down at her, the taste of copper on my tongue.

Well, well, the little minx bit me.

I smirked down at her, charged with the taste of my own blood. Defiance met my eyes, but I also saw unbridled passion and desire staring back at me. Her eyes narrowed further, but no matter how angry she was, she couldn’t hide how much I affected her.

The look in her eyes only teased the beast in me. I grabbed her and kissed her again. This time the kiss was hard, greedy, and messy but fucking glorious. And to my delight, she matched me stroke for stroke this time, her fingers in my hair,

leg wrapped around mine. I took advantage of her position, grabbed a huge helping of her arse, and squeezed as I deepened the kiss.

Our lewdness would have carried on until I ripped her shorts off her body, dropped my trousers and rammed my hard cock into her wetness, but she pulled away first. She looked up at me questioningly, her brows furrowed, breaths choppy and quick, lipstick slightly smudged.

I had a confused expression on my own face, wondering why in the hell did she stop kissing me. Only when her hands glided from my back to my hips that I realized she must've felt the handles of either the knives nestled at my back or the gun.

Gazing heavily into her eyes, I searched for a hint or a sign of fear or disgust. I didn't see anything but a lot of questions.

I trapped her face with my hands and tilted her head up to make sure her gaze remained on me.

“I will answer the questions swimming in your gorgeous eyes later. After my meeting tonight, I'll find you. Let's hope when I do, you're alone. It would be a shame to show my true colors before we've had a chance to talk. And best believe you and I will talk about everything, especially you running from me, after I fuck you until you can no longer walk.”

I placed a chaste kiss to her shocked mouth before I reluctantly walked away, running my hands through my hair in an effort to calm the jealousy and rage warring inside.

By the time I got to the entrance of the hotel and saw Grey waiting there for me, I had placed the mask of indifference back on my face. However, I knew, when it came to my brothers, that shit wouldn't work. And it was proven the second I sauntered up to Grey's side.

The *arselicker* wore a stupid fucking grin on his face as he asked, “Sooo, who was that?”

I gave him a look but didn't reply, which only caused his grin to spread wider along his ugly face. I stepped out of the hotel and glanced up and down the street, clocking Nix standing by a black SUV just a few feet away from me.

“Oh, come on, *bruv*,” Grey injected as he stepped to my left, he too taking in our surroundings. “Don’t be like that. The lipstick smudges on your face.” I wiped around my mouth with my thumb and forefinger. I checked at my fingers for lipstick and found they were clear. *Arsehole!*

I frowned up at Grey who smiled back smugly. He continued. “Not to mention the off-the-fucking-charts sexual chemistry between you two. That’s proof something’s going on. I swear I thought you were going to shag her right in the lift. She means something to you. How and where did you two meet?”

The revolving doors shifted behind me, and my body stiffened. I knew who had stepped through the hotel doors before she appeared in the corner of my eye. I found the strength to look at her and saw that her hair looked to be back in its place, falling gently along her shoulders and back. An improvement from the way I had left it. Wild and everywhere. A black limo pulled up to the curb. She stepped to the back just as the driver ran around to the other side to guide her to her seat.

I could tell she was doing her best to ignore me, however, once she was seated inside the limo, I felt her eyes on me. It didn’t matter about the distance or the dark tinted glass that separated us. I knew her stunning brown eyes were studying me, curious, wanting me, needing me. I held her gaze, showing her just how much I needed her until the limo was out of sight.

“Damn, that was hot to watch,” my brother chimed in, breaking my connection. “You undressing her with your eyes, she avoiding you until she was safely inside the limo... *bruv*, that was foreplay at its finest.”

I sighed and breathed out a tired breath, my patience on its last leg.

“Find out where she’s going and with whom, yeah? Make some calls too. I want someone on her, asap.” I instructed. He nodded.

“Consider it done,” he replied, pulled out his phone to do as I asked, but paused as if he remembered something. He snapped a finger and tapped my arm. “Hey, wait a minute... was she the woman staying in suite 3512? The one that used one of Hailey’s aliases?”

“What?” Now he had my attention. I fucking knew the last name of Duluth sounded familiar. “How do you know that?”

Grey snorted and started walking toward Nix and the SUV.

“Please, who do you think created Hailey’s aliases?” He snapped his fingers again. I wanted to break them. “Her name is Sydney, right? Yeah, Hailey had asked me to create an alias for a friend of hers some time back. Shit, Sydney Fontane was her name. Damn, I must be completely out of it. I didn’t remember that bit of information until now.” He then chuckled. “How ironic is that? Your girl and Hailey are besties.”

Quick info on Hailey DiMaggio.

We had met Hailey when we were teens. Once she was older and deep into the family business, she’d hire us occasionally. We’d sometimes act as muscle if she wanted something handled under the radar or she didn’t want to get messy by using her brothers. We would supply guns for her father through her, and if she needed someone to disappear, she knew who to call. We were also her eyes and ears in parts of the world that were out of her reach. If there was any heat coming her way, we’d either let her know so she could handle her business, or we’d tell her later, after we eliminated the threat.

I had to admit. The woman was truly off her trolley. I thought I was twisted and loved to inflict pain. This woman was insane with the need to see her prey suffer a horrifying death. She wasn’t as ruthless as I was, but she was close. The woman was hot as fuck too, curvaceous, and stacked in all the right places. She was average height with black hair that she typically wore long, but now she had it skimming along her shoulders. She was smart, cunning, and had the temperament for this life. We knew she would probably take over her

father's empire, which was something New York and the arseholes living here weren't ready for. No fucking way.

She had become a part of our threesome, the only confidant outside of our brotherhood besides our uncle and a couple of others. It came down to this... she protected us, and we protected her.

Back to the shit that Grey said...

I grabbed his arm and stopped walking.

“What the fuck do you mean, you created an alias for her? Why did she need a new identity?”

“How should I know? I didn't ask. This is Hailey we're talking about. Whatever she needed, I did it, no questions asked.”

“When was this?”

“A couple of months ago, I think.” Grey then grinned and stepped closer to me. “So, are you going to tell me about her, or do I need to do a bit of digging for my own answers?”

I grunted. “You're going to do that shit anyway, regardless. And make sure you do it immediately. I want everything.”

“Of course, you got it. I'll get right on it.”

I gazed into his eyes and saw the excitement and his anticipation growing.

I sighed again and finally admitted, “Look, there's nothing really to tell. I met her some weeks back inside the Ty Bar. We had some drinks and talked. That's it.”

Grey nodded, then his eyes grew the size of saucers. “What are the fucking odds?”

“What?”

“So last week I was out with... a uhh... friend at a local restaurant. There was this gorgeous woman, who I now believe was Sydney, stopped in front of the window of the restaurant. She didn't say anything, just stared at me as if she knew me. I had my fingers wrapped around my gun, thinking she was there to kill me or something. But the look of hurt and

disappointment in her eyes surprised me. Now I know why she looked like that. She thought I was you.”

I grunted but didn't reply.

I remembered Sydney had mentioned that she had seen me out with another woman. At first, I had thought she was just mistaken, but when she said she also saw me in the hotel's lobby the following day and I didn't speak to her, I knew she had seen my brothers. What were the fucking odds is right? This city was vast, with millions of people here. How could she have run into both of my brothers? Fucking insane.

Grey bumped my shoulders, gaining my attention.

“So, is she your woman now? And does *she* know that? From the looks of it, she doesn't.”

I let out a frustrated breath but didn't reply.

“Do you want to talk about it?”

No, the fuck I did not...

“No. There's nothing to talk about. She belongs to me. She just needs me to remind her. But I'll handle her just as soon as we get this fucking night over with.”

“Oh, I bet you will, *bruv*. Good luck with that.” He laughed. Could you believe that? The fucker actually laughed at me before walking off. I stayed behind for a moment to talk myself out of beating the shit out of him.

I focused on the scenery around me, making sure we hadn't captured unwanted attention. The streets were choked with cars. New Yorkers on their way out to explore the city. It was a great night for it, despite the suffocating humidity. It's what I loved about the city. No matter the hour, this city stayed alive with no signs of slowing down.

Thankfully, when I finally made it to the SUV, Grey had dropped the subject, but I knew it wasn't the end. I could feel Nix's eyes examining me too as I approached. There was no way they would let this go.

Nix announced, once I was next to Grey, “The restaurant we're going to is only fifteen minutes away on Madison and

24th Street. Let's just pay our respects and get the fuck out of there.”

We acknowledged the plan with a head nod. Good. The sooner we get this done, the faster I could locate Sydney. I opened the back passenger door and Grey slid in first. I started to follow when Nix tapped my shoulder.

“Are you going to tell me what happened back there?” His chin pointed to the hotel, and I knew what he was asking me.

I gave him a disdainful look and answered firmly, “No!” before climbing inside the truck.

Our driver moved away from the curb cautiously and entered the busy traffic on 57th Street.

The meeting we were attending tonight was hosted by associates of ours, the DiMaggios. The family consisted of four brothers that ran most of New York's underground world. Ironically, they also did business with our father, but the relationship was... complicated. *I'll explain later.*

Since Zeus couldn't be here, and we had business to take care of for him in the city, he sent us in his stead. He also thought it smart to advise the brothers of our presence here in their city. It was a sign of respect, he had told us. I disagreed. Unless we had business with the families in the city, it wasn't their fucking business why we were here.

It also placed unwanted eyes on us. We would be watched, or should I say, they would *try* to watch us. If anything went down in the city, such as what transpired the other night, we would be to blame. They wouldn't have proof of course. We weren't sloppy. However, doubt would be enough to draw unwanted attention our way.

Occasionally, we pacified the old man when it made sense to us and when it benefitted our agenda. On the occasions when it didn't benefit anyone knowing our whereabouts, we remained in the shadows. Zeus hated not having complete control over us, but fuck, what could he do about it, kill us? Yeah, right! He didn't have the balls. Or hell, maybe he did.

As we rode through the city, my mind wandered to Sydney and those tight as hell knickers she called shorts. Fuck, the woman was a vision of sex personified. The way the soft leather contoured her hips, her arse. Not to mention how the corset contoured her waist and offered those generous mounds of hers up for the taking. They were practically falling out of the restricted clothing. Hell, I was hungry for her. She was by far the sexiest woman I had ever seen and the fact that my dick was hard as steel from just thinking about her told me what I felt for her ran deeper than I imagined. I was royally fucked in more ways than one.

I hadn't lied to her when I admitted I had missed her. I did, more than I could express or imagine. I was in uncharted territory here. I had never felt this way for any woman and believe me, I had plenty in my lifetime. But Sydney was special. She made me feel things no one else had ever done. She made me want things I never thought I wanted. It was more than a physical connection with her. We had an emotional connection, a spiritual one.

I needed her close to keep the chaos swimming in my head calm. To keep the beast within fed. Normally, killing did that. But having Sydney close to me, in my arms, calmed the beast within, or at least tamed him long enough for me to breathe. She helped me breathe.

I had to make this right between us. I had to be honest with her and tell her everything about me. If she was friends with Hailey, then I knew she would be accepting. The question was, did she feel the same way for me as I did for her? I guess I'd find out later tonight.

Grey tapped my arm, bringing me out of my thoughts. He handed me his phone and I read a text message from Frankie, Hailey's oldest brother.

"Yeah, bro, I've got a body on them. They're supposed to go out to eat then to some rooftop bar by NYU. I'll keep you posted on where they end up."

I nodded, relief flooding my body as I handed Grey's phone back to him. Now that I knew she was covered, I could

focus on tonight.

Nix turned around from the passenger seat and looked at me then Grey. “Zeus mentioned that his oldest friend, Fabio DiMaggio, is expected to be at the restaurant tonight.”

“Shit, did Zeus hint that there would be a problem?” Grey asked.

Both brothers then turned to me as Nix announced, “No, but you know that his son Arthur is being groomed to take over the family business. I can guarantee you he will be there too.”

Understand that these two were again carrying on a conversation as if I wasn't sitting here. Fucking arseholes...

“Shit.”

“Yeah.”

I gave both of them a pointed look. “You two are fucking wankers, you know that? First, it's been years since I shagged his fiancée in Uni. I saw him last year, and we didn't have an issue then, and I doubt we will have an issue tonight. Look, if the little knob head is still holding onto the past then he's not ready to take over.”

“Yeah, well, Zeus wants you to stay away from him at all cost,” Nix informed me, then asked, “Do you think you could refrain from being your normal arsehole self, tonight?”

There he goes with the fucking questions again.

I looked back at him, narrowing my eyes. “Keep the fucking cuntbag away from me and we won't have a problem. Otherwise, I make no promises. And again, tell Zeus to fuck all the way off.”

Grey chuckled and shook his head, giving a quick glance at our driver, Timmy. Nix just sighed heavily and turned back around in his seat, saying nothing else to me. But I knew what he was thinking, and I couldn't help but smirk. I was indeed that arsehole.

Our driver for tonight, Timothy or Timmy for short, wasn't one of ours. He owed his allegiance to Zeus, the non-trusting

bastard. There was no telling what instructions he gave this idiot in the car with us. But I wasn't worried. Timmy wasn't stupid. He could be Zeus's stooge all day. But if he ever crossed me or my brothers, he understood that I would kill his whole fucking family while he watched. Right before I tortured then killed him.

My eyes inadvertently went to the back of the driver's head as thoughts of all the ways I could torture him before killing him ran through my mind.

I heard Grey chuckle again, and my eyes went to him.

"What?" I asked, annoyed as he stared back at me, but I couldn't hold back the smirk even if I tried.

He laughed. "You are sick, do you know that? Stop thinking about all the ways to torture Timmy over there and concentrate on not killing Arthur."

I saw Timmy visually tense up and his eyes met mine in the rearview mirror. I could see his fear, practically taste it on my tongue. I didn't waver my gaze from his and I sure as hell didn't let up on the intensity. The little shit knew I didn't trust him. Hell, I trusted very few, but I trusted Timmy even less. He never crossed me or anything, and he had never given me a reason to distrust him except for being my half-brother. It was something in his beady brown eyes that had me distrusting the little pisser, though.

The fact that he saw nothing wrong with spending his entire existence around a man who knew nothing about loyalty, had to be proof that he had shit for brains. Zeus was a man who didn't believe in taking ownership of his responsibilities. He knowingly allowed his sons to live in shit holes while he, his wife, and his other three sons lived the rich life. All because he didn't want anyone to know he had shagged a woman that wasn't his wife.

The only time he acknowledged his bastard sons was when it benefited him. He would be dead if we didn't warn him trouble was coming, and he has yet to own up to that shit. He treated us as if *we* should be fucking thanking *him* for the opportunity of breathing.

But sometimes, when we were all together, I could see the fear in his eyes too. At first, I wasn't sure what he was afraid of, but then it hit me. He knew at any point, if we wanted, we could easily take everything he possessed from him before he had time to fucking blink.

We were unpredictable—especially me—and uncontrollable, and he didn't like that at all. We were smarter than him, deadlier than him, and we had more power than he would ever have in his lifetime. We were unstoppable, and there was nothing he could do about it but wait, hope and pray. Wait for us to make a move, hope we didn't succeed, and prayed he'd survive.

“Looks like we have company up ahead,” Grey announced, grabbing my attention again.

I looked over at him and leaned into his space. Nix turned in his seat and looked at Grey.

“What do you mean?”

Grey, his head still down, typing on his phone, replied, “The Feds are camped across the street from the restaurant. They probably got word of tonight's dinner and decided to see who answered the invitation.”

“Cameras?”

“Yup. Around the perimeter only.”

“Shit,” That was Timmy with the little outburst. We looked over at him.

“Something wrong, Timmy?” Nix asked.

Timmy glanced quickly at Nix.

“Stop calling me that. I hate it and you know it. My name is Tim-o-thy for fuck's sake. Fucking Timothy or Tim would do.”

I could hear the exasperation in his voice as he enunciated the syllables in his name, which made me chuckle despite myself.

Nix laughed and clasped Timmy on his shoulder.

“That was funny, Timmy. Unnecessary too, because I give zero fucks what you want to be called. Why don’t you explain your little outburst? Quickly now. I can feel my brother getting antsy behind me.”

Timmy wanted to say something else, but I believed he could also feel me getting a bit riled up. He sighed but didn’t look back at me.

“I didn’t mean anything by it. Just that you were right to be cautious.”

Grey leaned forward and clasped Timmy on his shoulders, which made the man flinch slightly. “We are always cautious, my friend. Trust isn’t something given, it’s earned. Now, drive around the block so we can get a good look at the building, yeah?”

Timmy did as asked and followed the crawling traffic as it inched up to the building. I had noticed quite a few places where the Feds sat perched, ready to receive the guests of the dinner party. There was a white panel van across the street that screamed FBI. Also, there were a few unmarked cars parked with tinted windows you couldn’t see in, but they could definitely see out. They probably had long ranged cameras too, taking photos of everyone entering the restaurant. And before we turned the corner to head to the side of the restaurant, I noticed a few undercover agents dressed like bums, city workers and there was even a cop who stood in the middle of the street directing traffic. Cute.

We circled the block and found that the Feds even had the back door covered. There wasn’t a way for us to enter without being seen.

“Well, it looks like you guys aren’t going to avoid getting detected, are you?” Timmy said into the quiet car. No one spoke or responded to his comment.

He slowed as we approached the front of the restaurant again. He put on his hazard lights and stopped directly in front of the restaurant.

He looked at us expectantly and smiled. “Are you guys going to go inside or not, considering?”

I looked deeply into Timmy’s eyes and saw just a hint of malice in them. His eyes rested on me and stared back at me challengingly. I didn’t move nor did I break our connection. In fact, I darkened my stare, hoping he could see just what I was going to do to him later once I caught him.

“Yes, of course we’re going in,” Nix cut in, breaking up our pissing contest. “But I advise you to head straight to the airport from here.”

Timmy looked over at him, startled, and I knew exactly what he saw. “Oh yeah? W-why is that?”

Nix sighed. “Because Timmy, my boy” He turned back at Grey and me with a soft white silicone mask on his face. Timmy’s eyes were wide. No words fell from his shocked features. Grey typed quickly on his phone for a few more seconds, then nodded to Nix. Nix turned back to Timmy. “... the Feds no doubt have the license plate of this vehicle and probably your picture. You’re now starring in the Fed’s award-winning amateur movies. You’re a liability to us.”

Timmy cursed and put his head down.

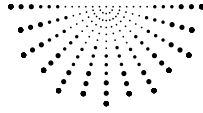
“Shit happens,” Nix added with a hint of humor in his voice, then looked back at Grey. “Grey, have you killed their feed and the cameras inside?”

Grey looked at his watch. “It will be killed in 5-4-3-2...” Grey trailed off for a second or two before he tapped Nix on the shoulder.

I nodded, gave one last look at a royally pissed off Timmy before Grey and I pulled out the same translucent mask Nix wore from our inside jacket pockets and placed them over our faces. We exited the vehicle and moved purposefully to the front of the restaurant. I could feel eyes on me, but we were quickly dismissed as I heard another car door open, and footsteps followed by people probably wearing the same mask we had on. Clever wasn’t it.

And the Feds thought we were stupid...

CHAPTER TWELVE



SYDNEY

My best friend, Hailey DiMaggio, had been prattling on about her latest partner and their sexual conquests for over an hour now. I had managed to respond on cue, laugh and even asked a few questions. But to be honest, my mind had been solely on my encounter with Lawson Morelli.

I could still feel his lips on my neck when he kissed me, teased me, and made me desperate for him. The man was a seductive mastermind. I was putty in his hands and did my best to resist him, to resist his charm and sex appeal. But I failed miserably. The moment his lips grazed along my ear, I was done for. No, I was doomed the moment I saw him on the elevator with his brothers.

Triplets...

You could imagine my shock at seeing two identical replicas of Lawson Morelli in the flesh. For a minute, I thought I was being punked, or I was stuck in the Twilight Zone.

Do you remember that show back in the day? I didn't until my father made us watch reruns of the show. I was twelve years old at the time. It became our thing to do with our father on Thursday nights, me and my brother.

Okay, back to Law.

I had no idea that he was a part of a trio. He had told me he had brothers, yes, but he neglected to tell me they were identical to him. I mean, had I known, I wouldn't have tripped out when I saw Law at the restaurant, or who I thought was

Law. And when I saw him again the next day at the elevator. Let's just say he could have saved me a lot of heartache and grief, the asshole.

I couldn't believe it...

I stood in front of the opened elevator, staring at them for a long time. It had been a chore to get my heart beating again, much less my limbs to move. I had always said that Law Morelli was the sexiest man I had ever laid eyes on. Imagine finding out that there were two more of him. They looked exactly alike, in every way, from the color of their eyes to their long hair. They possessed the same body type and wore the same suit. They even stood the same and carried the same brooding look on their faces.

Despite their likeness, I knew which of the brothers was Law when the three of them were together. It was something I should've noticed when I had run into his brothers. I couldn't pinpoint other differences between them, but my body reacted to Law in a way that no man had ever done. When he looked at me, my body melted. When he was near, I had this overwhelming need to feel his touch, to taste his lips. I wanted to be held by him, simply to be near him was a turn-on.

Was I pathetic or stupid for feeling this way? Probably both, but I couldn't help myself. This man had a power over me, and I couldn't break free. And if I was being completely honest with myself, I didn't think I wanted to break free.

Augh... I'm so pitiful...

“Syd?”

I jumped when I felt Hailey's hand grip my forearm.

“Yeah?”

Shit...

Hailey studied me for long, excruciating seconds before she spoke.

“Are you okay? You spaced out on me for a second.”

Get your shit together, Fontane...

I recovered quickly, covered her hand with mine, and squeezed. I placed a reassuring smile on my face and tried to pretend I was all in when I could barely hold myself together.

“Yeah, I’m good. Sorry about drifting. The five shots of tequila were working their magic.”

I broadened my smile, trying to be convincing, and it seemed to have worked. But to make sure, I changed the subject to show I had been paying attention.

“So, this guy you mentioned, the bouncer.”

“Coby,” she offered, helping me with his name.

I snapped my fingers.

“Yes, that’s right, Coby. So Coby is into that kinky shit you like to do?”

She grinned, as I knew she would.

“Yes, he is,” she replied, then launched into the first night she took him to her favorite place on earth, *The Red Room*, which was the hottest and the most exclusive sex club in New York, her words not mine.

Hailey was all kinds of kinky. She was adventurous and knew how to use her body and her sex appeal for good rather than evil. I had envied her lifestyle, how free she was with her sexuality, throughout our four years of college together. She didn’t bang every guy she met, but she oozed sex. She could get some poor bastard to do anything for her by just batting her eyes.

Ahhh, she was my idol...

She also loved to tell me, in great detail, all about her experiences at the sex club. She’d tell me what she did to others and what others did to her, which was why I brought up the subject. I needed her to talk more so I could figure out how to get my mind off Law and focused on her.

Sadly, no matter what I did, how deep and in depth her stories were, I couldn’t stop thinking about tall, dark and sexy as fuck, Law Morelli.

You're mine...

That's what he said as he rocked my world with a kiss that set my soul ablaze. I couldn't be his, though. That was absurd. First, I knew nothing about this man. Not really. I knew the basics, but I didn't *know him*, know him. And what about the lies? Should I forget that he lied to me and still trust this man? The rational part of my brain was like, *fuck no! Kick this son of a bitch to the curb*. Yet the other half, the half ran by my heart, wanted to hold on to Law and never let go.

I caught a glimpse out of the corner of my eye that made my heart stutter. I shifted to the entrance of the rooftop bar and thought I had seen Law. I didn't, but tell that to my heart.

There is no place you could ever hide from me... I will always find you...

Fuck me. My heart pounded faster against my chest, thinking about those words. In fact, I should take out a restraining order on his crazy ass instead of wishing like fuck he *would* find me so he could keep his word and fuck me until I could no longer walk. That would be a delight, let me tell you.

I didn't want to admit this to him or myself, but I was afraid he was right when he declared I was his. I *was* his mind, body, and soul. I had come to that conclusion on the limo ride to meet Hailey.

I had felt this heavy weight on my chest as I watched him through the tinted glass of the limo. I could barely breathe as we drove away. I almost told the driver to turn back around. I wanted to go to him, to be back in his arms again. I didn't want to be apart from him any longer.

It had been hell this week being without him. I had felt depressed. I barely left my suite. Hailey had been trying to get me to hang out with her for days now, and I gave her every excuse I could think of. I was not in the right frame of mind to be in the presence of my best friend. I barely had the energy to wash my ass, let alone get fully dressed to hang out.

The only reason I was here tonight was because Hailey threatened to drag me out with whatever I had on at the time, which, by the way, was a pair of shorts and nothing else. As you could imagine, that wouldn't have gone well for me in more ways than one. So, I put my big girl pants on, i.e., these hip hugging shorts, did my make-up, and agreed to meet my best friend at our favorite rooftop bar on Madison Ave., close to NYU.

I was in great spirits as I got ready. I listened to some music, danced around the suite, and got my head on straight to see my bestie. I told myself tonight was about me and Hailey. We were going to get drunk and dance the night away. Maybe I would meet someone nice, someone to take my mind off a certain someone. As fate would fucking have it, all of my hard work went right out of the window the moment my eyes fell on the man himself. Crazy stalker-ass, Law Morelli.

Then he had to go and touch me, kiss me. Now I couldn't stop thinking about him, couldn't stop wanting him. My body ached for him. My heart bled for him.

Fuck me...

I felt tears gathering in my eyes and I fought hard to push them back down. Too late.

Hailey cupped the side of my cheek with her palm, her touch caused my eyes to well even more. When I focused on her, through the liquid haze forming over my eyes, I saw a warm smile on her gorgeous face.

“Babe, talk to me, what's the—”

“I think I'm in love,” I whispered over her, just as a tear streaked down my face.

Hailey sighed, swiped her thumb along my cheek, then stood up and signaled for our waiter. When the smiling and energetic waiter came to the table, Hailey ordered more shots of tequila. I took this time to wipe at my eyes, careful of my makeup, and took a few deep breaths to gather my emotions and keep them in check. I didn't want to turn into a blubbing mess at this bar. No, I refused to be that girl.

“Okay, listen,” Hailey began once the waiter was gone, her dark eyes leveling me, “I know it’s been hard for you, leaving your life behind and starting over. But when I say it was the best decision of your life, I mean it. You were miserable being there with your so-called family. They mistreated you, tried to run your life, and didn’t give a fuck about you or your happiness. Don’t waste any more energy on those clowns, especially that pussy-ass piece of shit, George. Babe, he doesn’t deserve you, your thoughts, or your heart. He doesn’t deserve to breathe the same air as you. You deserve so much better. You’re beautiful, smart, kindhearted, and sweet as pie. You deserve a man that will treat you like the queen you are.”

I smiled through my glossy eyes. “Thank you for saying that. And you’re right, my family doesn’t deserve me, especially my ex.”

Hailey leaned over the table with a fierce look of determination evident all over her features.

“So why are you still in love with pussy boy?”

I leaned back from her and frowned. “Woman, I’m not in love with fucking George.” I shivered in disgust. “Fuck him! You’re right, he didn’t deserve me. I know this.”

Hailey paused and studied me for a long moment, reading me, making sure I was telling her the truth. Once she saw what she needed from me, she backed down.

“Good. Okay, so if you’re not in love with your ex, then who are you in love with?”

I didn’t respond to her question right away. Mostly, I was trying to figure out how to tell her that I fell in love with a one-night stand without sounding like an idiot. I was just about to blurt it out when this weird look settled on her face. Her eyes widened in recognition. She mouthed the word ‘oh’, her eyes darted everywhere but at me, which was strange to see. Hailey wasn’t one to get nervous, and yet I could see sweat beginning to form on her forehead.

“Listen, sweetie, I’m flattered. Really, I am. I’m just not into women like that.”

“What?” I blurted, confused as hell. It took me a few seconds to understand what was running through her mind, and I started to laugh.

She narrowed her eyes at me.

“What’s so fucking funny?”

I reached across the table and clasped her arm.

“Babe, although you’re hot as fuck, especially in this short black dress of yours, I’m not talking about you either. Don’t get me wrong,” I added when the frown on her face deepened, “I love you, but not like that.”

Our waiter arrived with a tray of eight shots. This woman was going to get me white-girl wasted. We remained quiet as he lined up four shots in front of me then in front of Hailey. He asked if we needed anything else and we both shook our heads. Once he was gone, Hailey raised up one of the shot glasses. I did the same. We clinked glasses and touched the tabletop with the bottom of the glass before throwing back the shot.

Surprisingly, the shot went down smoothly. What I was going to say next wouldn’t.

“There’s something I need to confess,” I started off by saying. Hailey gave me a side eye, but I saw her body relax a bit. I wanted to laugh again, but I didn’t.

“Okay, tell me,” she replied, grabbed her second shot and threw it back.

I took my second shot of tequila, then the third. As I slammed down the shot glass, I blurted, “I met someone.”

Hailey froze, her drink in mid-air. Again, she searched my eyes for a few seconds before she smiled and took her drink to the head.

“I see. When? Where? How? And who? Lay it on me.”

I took a deep breath and told her all about Law. I told her about how we met, some of the things we talked about and of course, the night we shared. I even went into details about the sex we had, telling her how he made me feel, the stuff he did

to me, everything. Hell, I even told her just how blessed he was in his boxers. The man was a sex-god, and I made sure to give him his props.

I told her about what happened the night he showed up at my hotel at one in the morning and the messages he left. I gave her everything, play-by-play, detail after detail. I didn't hold anything back. I could feel the excitement surging through my body as I explained the connection we had, how he owned my body, owned my soul.

And Hailey just listened. She didn't say a word to interrupt me. She raised her eyebrows in parts, smiled in others. When I was done with my story, Hailey didn't speak for a long few seconds before she stood up from her chair and began clapping. Loudly. Thoroughly embarrassed, I grabbed her hands to stop her show of avid approval.

"Would you stop that?" I glanced around me, thinking judgmental eyes were truly on us, but to my surprise we were being ignored. I thought it was strange, but I remembered where I was... New York City.

"Ho-ly fucking shit!" she breathed out, excitement laced throughout her voice. "I can't believe you had a one-night stand."

I smiled and took the last shot down. My world was beginning to spin, but I was too loopy to notice. The praise from my friend had me feeling proud and excited all at the same time.

"I am so proud of you."

I beamed. *Ridiculous, I know, but I did.* I wanted to pat myself on the back for the accomplishment, but the reality of my situation crashed me back to earth.

"I'm also an idiot," I admitted softly, wishing I had another shot to take down.

"Yeah, the whole love thing. Are you sure about that part? You do know that love can be mistaken for lust. You could just be lusting after this man."

“Oh, I *am* lusting after him. There is no doubt about that. The man is sexy as hell, and how he orchestrates my body during sex is mind blowing. But there’s more, Hails. I’ve never felt like this for any man and even though I haven’t had a lot in my lifetime, I know what it feels like to be in love. Despite how everything went down with my ex, I loved him once. I was in love with him in the beginning, thinking he was my Prince Charming. Later he turned out to be a frog in prince clothing. But when I first fell for him, I felt those butterflies fluttering in my stomach when he was near. I felt as if the universe revolved around him.

“The only difference between this guy and George,” I explained further, “... is what I see in their eyes when they look at me. Everything I feel, I see mirrored in this guy’s eyes. George wasn’t the type to show affection in public. Sure, he treated me like gold in the beginning. However, this guy I met showed me how much he was into me, whether we were in public or behind closed doors. Fact is, I think he showed me more affection in public than in private. It’s as if he wanted the world to know I was his, that I belonged to him. He actually told me I belonged to him. Can you believe that shit?”

Hailey raised an eyebrow.

“It sounds a bit stalk-ish to me, but to each its own,” Hailey admitted. “And you believe that he’s sincere? Because I know I don’t have to tell you that men would say anything to get what they want.”

“Yes, I know. Which is why I’m beating myself up here. I don’t know if he’s truly sincere. I don’t think he’s the type to play silly mind games. He’s even said as much. And Hailey, when I say the man is fine as hell, I’m not exaggerating. He’s fucking flawless, gorgeous. He doesn’t have to spend time with me. He could be with any woman he wants. I told you there were two at the bar pining for his attention.”

“And he left with you,” Hailey pointed out. “Don’t sell yourself short. You’re hot as fuck too.”

I smiled at my bestie.

“I know,” I retorted, trying not to blush.

“Do you?”

“Yes. I’m just saying. I already gave him the goods. And let’s face it, I’m not bringing much to the table when it comes to sex. I barely existed when I slept with George. I used to tune him out when we had sex. My mind would be on what I was going to do in the next three minutes once he was done. Sex was just sex. But with this guy, it was so much more.”

We fell silent, allowing the surrounding atmosphere to take over. We could hear a band warming up, and I glanced over in that direction to confirm what my ears had picked up. The rooftop bar seemed more crowded than two hours ago. This was a popular place filled with college kids, couples, and those out looking for a good time. I took in the city’s skyline and smiled.

Memories of the shenanigans Hailey and I used to get into flooded my mind. The parties we used to attend and how this bar used to be our pregame spot before we hit the streets. Hailey’s brothers used to go out of their minds trying to keep up. They had finally learned that this was our spot, and if they had wanted to keep an eye on us, they would have had to pick up our tails here. Unfortunately for them, it meant a long ass night.

“For argument’s sake,” Hailey began, and I brought my eyes back to her, “let’s say this man is sincere and you two have experienced a bond that rarely happens. Why do you look like your world has ended?”

I sighed and slumped onto the stool.

“It’s complicated,” I confessed.

“How so? Wait, please don’t tell me the man is married?”

“No!” I barked, pissed she would even insinuate that I would date, let alone fuck a married man.

“Okay, okay. Sorry. I just wanted to check. So, what gives, then? Why do you look like someone stole your puppy?”

I blew out another deep breath and told her about the day I thought I had seen Law at a restaurant with another woman and the time I had seen him at the elevator and he dismissed

me. I told her about finally seeing him, how he tried to explain, and I walked away.

Hailey's demeanor changed as I told her about what happened. I had given it to her just how I took it. I wanted her in the right frame of mind when I told her about the brothers.

"So, he's a lying piece of shit. How can you be in love with a man like that? What's up with you and finding losers?"

"I know. It must be engraved on my forehead. But that's not the kicker and why I've been camped out in my suite all week."

"Hold on," she raised her hand to stop me from proceeding. "Is he the reason you asked for a new suite? Is he stalking you?"

I could see the wheels turning in her mind. She was thinking about all the ways to castrate Law as I knew she would.

"Yes, but listen to the rest of it."

"I don't need to. Just tell me the fucker's name and I'll handle it."

"No, I don't need you to *handle* anything. Just listen."

I waited for her to calm down enough to listen. Hailey had a temper to be feared and crazy ass brothers who had no problem acting on her temper.

When I felt she had calmed enough, I went on.

"I bumped into him on the way here."

"Where? When?"

"On the elevator. I was waiting for it when it opened up and he was standing there, along with his two older brothers." I chuckled to myself, thinking about how stupid I must have looked to them. My mouth all hanging open, eyes wide as shit. I couldn't believe what I had seen, still couldn't. Fucking identical triplets.

"What happened?" she asked, bringing me out of my thoughts.

“So, apparently, Law was hiding something from me. He told me he had two older brothers, but what he didn’t tell me was that they looked exactly alike. They were fucking triplets. Can you believe that? Do you see why I’m tripping? Why I’m pissed he lied?”

Hailey didn’t say anything. She just stared at me as if I had grown a third tit or something. She slumped in her seat and just stared for a long ass time. I was getting nervous under her scrutiny. The hairs on the back of my neck stood at attention.

“Hails,” I called out to her, nervous energy ringing throughout my voice. “What’s wrong?”

Again, she remained quiet. Now she was staring blankly at me, as if her mind was completely elsewhere. I let the silence continue. I watched her watch me.

Finally, after what felt like eternity, she blinked out of her trance, sat up and folded her hands in front of her.

“What’s this guy’s name again? I want to make sure I heard you right.”

I hesitated for a fraction of a second before I replied, “His name is Law.”

“Law. Just Law?”

“Well, no. And why do I feel you’re about to say something that I’m not going to like?”

“Because you’re paranoid. Now tell me this guy’s full name.”

“Fine, Lawson Morelli.”

To my surprise, she sat up straight, shushed me, and glanced around her conspiratorially.

“Shh, do not say that name so loud.”

“Why?” I looked around us as well, my nerves getting the better of me.

Hailey didn’t elaborate, instead she gave me an appreciative smile.

“Holy fucking shit. I thought I would never see the day, much less hear about it. You’re telling me that the guy you’ve been hanging out with, the one that rocked your world and who fell for you hard, is the one and only Law Morelli?”

“Whoa, now hold on a second. I didn’t say he fell for me. And honestly, now that I think about it, I’m probably not in love anyway. Maybe you’re right and it’s just strong lust.”

Hailey waved off my attempt at aloofness.

“Oh please, bitch, you’re in love.” She laughed and shook her head.

I folded my arms, realizing my friend, apparently, had some explaining to do.

“It seems I’m not the only person at this table that knows Law. How do you know him?”

She smirked at me, and my eyes grew larger than the island of New York. “Oh fuck, never mind. Please don’t tell me. I don’t want to know.” I dropped my forehead to the wooden table in front of me and groaned.

Hailey laughed and pushed me up, using my shoulders.

“It’s not what you think. I didn’t fuck him. In fact, I’ve never been with any of his brothers. Well, I kissed Grey one time, but it felt like I was kissing my brother. Not that I know what that’s like or anything, but you get my meaning. They’re like brothers to me.”

Hailey laughed and shook her head. “I can’t believe this. This is unreal. You hooked up with Law. From the shit you said about him, there’s no way we’re talking about the same man.”

I furrowed my brows. “Why do you say that?”

“Syd, the Law I know isn’t the type to chitchat with a female. He doesn’t smile, laugh, and he damn sure doesn’t visit with a woman at one in the morning just to talk. The things you said you two did isn’t something my friend would do. No way and yet you described his features to the tee. And

he's British right? He was born in Manchester and grew up here in the states?"

I shrugged. "He didn't say Manchester, just that he was from the UK."

She nodded. "Makes sense. The man I know would never give that side of him to anyone and yet..." she trailed off and just grinned at me.

"Stop looking at me like that. You're making me feel weird. Alright, you know the Morellis. How? How do you know them?" I asked, letting out a relieved sigh.

Hailey gave me a side eye and said cautiously, "Do you really want to know? I mean..."

"Yeah, I want to..." My voice died out when I suddenly had an idea how she knew them. I groaned and closed my eyes, placing my forehead against the table again. "Please tell me no."

"I'm afraid so. Now, I can't get into specifics on what he does for my family, but they are definitely associates of ours, or mainly they're associates of mine. Their uncle works for my father. He's been in the family for decades. I've known Law and his brothers since I was a kid. They've helped my dad out in the past, but mostly they've helped me whenever I needed it and I do the same for them."

"Oh god... what have I done?"

"Oh girl, stop being so dramatic." Hailey admonished lightly.

I sat up abruptly and narrowed my eyes on her, lowering my voice so only she could hear. "Do you hear yourself? I'm in love with a guy who's probably a hitman. Well, knowing the little that I know about him, no probably about it. What do I do?"

Hailey rolled her eyes. "What do you want to do?"

I gave her a puzzled look, unsure of what she wanted me to say. I would think that what I wanted to do would be obvious. Crawl under a rock and die.

“Sydney,” Hailey began when she noticed I wasn’t responding, “Law has allowed himself to open up to you. He’s done shit with you I have never seen before in my life. He seems really interested in you.”

“How do you figure that? He couldn’t even tell me about being one of three. You have no idea how hurt I felt seeing him out with another woman. Granted, I understand it could have been one of his brothers, but I didn’t know that at the time. And Hails, this woman was drop dead gorgeous.”

“Really?”

I nodded. “Yeah. He had me second guessing myself. Had I known his brothers looked just like him, I wouldn’t have tripped out. And seeing him at the elevator the very next day, watching him ignore me and step on the elevator gutted me.”

Hailey gripped both my hands in hers and squeezed. “I know that must have hurt you to the core. And what I’m about to say is in no way excusing him for his actions. But think about the man I just described to you. The man and the life that I know you understand. The life he leads doesn’t give him the liberties of a normal guy. It’s not like he can tell you what he truly does for a living or give you his true-life story without knowing how you’d react. He had to protect himself.”

“Yeah, I know. And I understand all that... I just... I thought we had a connection, you know. I thought he was different. That he thought of me differently than any other female.”

“He has! That’s what I’m trying to tell you. You said he left you a message with his number for you to call him back. Think about this, do you think any of my brothers would do something like that for a girl they had a one-night stand with? I can tell you the answer to that is no. And let me tell you something else. Lawson Morelli isn’t the type to tell a woman he wants to get to know them if he didn’t mean it. You were right about him. Law isn’t the one to play games. Maybe if you had given him the chance, he would have told you everything. Again, maybe he wasn’t sure how you’d react to what he had to say, and he held back until he was certain.”

“I would agree with you if he and I had only slept together once and I never saw him again. Hailey, he and I spent hours talking. I could tell you stories about his childhood in the UK and the shit he got into in New York. I knew the moment I met him that there was another side to him, a darker side. He even tried to sell me some bullshit story about him working for his father’s shipping business. I balked at him. Told him I expected more from him.”

Hailey grinned broadly. “You did? How did he take it?”

I smiled too, in spite of myself. “He laughed. I told him he seemed like a badass that wouldn’t take orders from anyone. From there, I think he could have told me the truth. I already suspected he was more than what he let on. I just wanted him to trust me. To give himself to me, like I did him. And he didn’t.”

“Oh, babe, I know.” Hailey laced her fingers with mine and squeezed gently. The warm smile on her face caused new tears to spring up in my eyes. “And you might not want to believe this, but he trusts you. If he didn’t, he wouldn’t have told you about himself or even mentioned that he had brothers. And I can tell you, even without knowing what he’s shared with you, that everything he’s told you was true.” Hailey stood and came around the table to sit next to me. She turned and faced me, grabbing both my hands in hers.

“Lawson Morelli is a complicated man. And I won’t lie to you, he’s dangerous as fuck and deadly as hell. The fucker is crazy.” I chuckled and shook my head. She wasn’t telling me something that I didn’t already know. The question I needed to ask myself was, why wasn’t I freaked the fuck out?

“Here is what I think,” Hailey began. “I think he was planning to tell you everything about himself that night you walked away. Maybe it’s the reason he asked you to meet him at the hotel restaurant. Even though you gave him some hints about your acceptance or that you knew there was more to him than he was letting on, to admit that shit was probably hard.

“Think about the man. I can tell you with all certainty that this is new territory for him. He’s a fuck you and leave you

kind of guy. He doesn't ask women out on dates, walk hand in hand along Central Park at night, and he damn sure doesn't go to fucking Coney Island for the fucking hell of it. He's done all that for you, with you. That's huge. Also, if he's feeling you the way I suspect, telling you about his brothers, letting you in his life is a gigantic step for him. I'm not saying let him off the hook but give him the benefit of the doubt."

I stayed quiet, taking everything that she said to heart. She made valid points on Law's behalf. If I looked at everything through her eyes, I could see why Law held back from me. However, I still felt uneasy about how things had gone down between us. I expected more from him, regardless of his hesitation or wariness. I felt as if I deserved the benefit of the doubt and maybe Hailey was right. When Law asked to meet at the restaurant, maybe he was about to tell me the truth about who he was. Maybe he wasn't. Sadly, it was too late to find out now.

The million-dollar question would be, what do I do now? Where did I go from here? Law said he wanted to get to know me, hang out for the time he was in the states. What did that mean for me? I was in love with the man. How would things end up for me if I kept seeing him, to allow myself the pleasure of loving him, only for him to leave me behind? It would be stupid of me to allow that to happen. He was right about one thing, he and I definitely needed to talk.

I let out a long and tired sigh and addressed my friend.

"I hear you, Hailey. And I'll think about talking to him tomorrow or something. Or hell, maybe I'll just let sleeping dogs lie and end things with him."

Hailey laughed, stood up, and stepped around to her side of the table.

"Girl, please. Do you have any idea who you're dealing with?"

"What do you mean?"

"You said that he's claimed you. That you belong to him. Do you think those were just words spoken?"

I opened my mouth to reply, but nothing came out. Hailey shook her head and started grabbing her things. She threw down a few hundred-dollar bills to pay for our drinks.

“I don’t belong to him,” I finally said feebly, lying my ass off. If the look of doubt on Hailey’s face was any indication of what she felt, she didn’t believe me, either.

“You keep telling yourself that. Come on, let’s get out of here. I wanna go dancing and have a good time before he finds you, and you best believe he will find you. Whether you like it, or not.” She laughed again and headed for the exit.

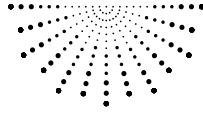
I sat on my stool for a moment longer, contemplating escaping the city altogether. Lawson Morelli didn’t own me. He wasn’t my keeper and he damn sure wasn’t my jailer. If I didn’t want to talk to him, I wouldn’t. If I didn’t want to be found, he wouldn’t find me.

That last thought caused my soul to crack the fuck up.

Yeah, right, you keep dreaming, she said to me.

I sighed, grabbed my shit, and headed for the exit.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN



LAWSON

Dinner went off without a hitch. The 20oz porterhouse steak I had was cooked to perfection. I had consumed enough alcohol to ease the rage threatening to overtake this room, which was a good thing for everyone present. At least I didn't pull out my gun and place it on the table like I had done in the past. Sometimes you needed to remind people how unbalanced you were to keep them in line. And let me tell you, some weak arse cuntfuckers in this room needed reminding. There were some unfamiliar faces here who had problems with their eyesight. They kept staring at our table.

Don't worry, I'll make their acquaintance soon enough.

Those in here tonight were some of the heaviest hitters in the underground world. The four DiMaggio brothers, who were the hosts of tonight, were in attendance of course. Among them were some of their soldiers, Capos, and underbosses. The rest of the invitees consisted of a few members of the Irish mob, the Albanians, Mexican amigos, a handful of the Yakuza, an African American by the name of Dennis Razer, who claimed he ran Harlem, and some of *his* crew. Our unbalanced Nigerian and Jamaican friends were also in attendance, a couple of Cubans, and others that I hadn't had the pleasure of knowing.

Vladimir Andreyev was also here, as well as some of his closest guys. Vlad was one of the top men in the Bratva, the Russian mob. He had connections here in New York but ran his operation out of London. Who I didn't see standing behind

him was his right-hand woman—some even say his second in command—Ivie.

Ahh... Ivie Andreyev, her first name pronounced as ē-v-yay, was an extraordinary woman. She was also my brother, Nix's Mt. Everest. However, he was in denial.

Grey and I knew Nix had a thing for the woman, as he should. The woman was hot as fuck. He would be crazy not to. But he wouldn't admit that shit. On the flip side of that, Ivie had a thing for my brother as well, and yet she hadn't given any hint to that fact. It was fucking sickening. They were playing games with each other, which was irritating as fuck to witness. Why couldn't they just be real with themselves and us and put all of us out of our misery? It hadn't happened yet, however, I was hoping for a bit of entertainment tonight with these two. You just never knew how they would react to each other.

After dinner, the heads of the families present, accompanied by one or two bodyguards and/or a second in command, reconvened to a smaller dining hall. A huge round table sat in the middle of the room with each leader of a family taking a seat while the other attendees took their places behind the chairs of their leaders. Grey and I took our spots behind Nix, our eyes open, watching everyone in the room for any subtle hints that shit could potentially head south.

We had heard rumors of a few disagreements between families in the city. The last thing we needed was to get in between some feud. We didn't have much of a stake in this city. We'd conducted business with a few people sitting at the table, but it wasn't enough to give a shit if the blokes in this room killed each other.

Laughter and chatter filled the large room as people sauntered inside and found their seats. My eyes drifted to the door just as Arthur entered with his father. Fabrizio aka Fabio DiMaggio sat next to Nix, which brought his little pussy ass son right next to me.

I could feel both of my brother's tense.

Relax fuckers, I'm not going to start shit.

Besides, I had some place to be later. The sooner we could leave this place, the sooner I could make my way to Sydney.

Speaking of Sydney...

As we sat at our table during dinner, Grey did some digging on Miss Fontane. It didn't take him long to get the information I needed, which made me want to get to her sooner rather than later, as well as beat the shit out of her ex.

"Your debutant's family is fucking swimming in money." Grey had announced, leaning in close to me as I placed a piece of steak inside my mouth.

"Yeah, I figured as much," I said after a second or two of chewing. "She said she was from a wealthy family in Virginia."

"Yeah, but she's part of some old money from her father's side. His family made their money in the railroad business. A rare thing for African Americans back then. I can dig a little deeper in that if you want."

"No, don't waste your time on that. I don't care. She said she was married, in the process of getting a divorce. Do you see the paperwork filed?"

Grey's eyes went to his phone screen.

"No, I don't see a divorce decree, or anything filed. Are you sure she filed the paperwork?"

My bullshit radar started rising.

"That's what she said. She's not the type to lie about something like that. She gave me the rundown of the marriage. Said his name was George. She caught him cheating and served him divorce papers. She claimed she found evidence of him skimming off her father's company and threatened to expose him if he didn't sign the papers."

I had started to get a bad feeling in the pit of my gut as Grey did his thing. I didn't believe that she had lied to me. As I told my brother, Sydney wasn't capable of giving that level of bullshit, and for what? I didn't give a fuck about her being married. I would have fucked her regardless of her marital

status if she'd let me. But she had offered that story, told me all about it and the sincerity in her eyes, the rage and pain I saw envelope her, told me she had been telling the truth. If that was the case, why didn't Grey find the filing?

"I don't know, bruv. I see her husband's name. George Aloysius Benedict, the third. That's a mouth full. He's thirty, currently works for Westward Transportation Industries. His wife's name is Sydney Benedict. Let me look into that shit further. You said she caught him stealing from the company?"

I nodded. "Yeah."

"Okay, let me see if I can find some dirt on him. In the meantime, let me..." Grey trailed off, and I watched his fingers fly over his phone screen, a smile creeping along his face.

After a few minutes when he remained silent, still smiling, I asked hesitantly, "What?"

"Oh, this is good."

"What's good?" said a familiar voice, one matching my own.

I had glanced up to find Nix pulling out a chair on the other side of me. I clocked the wait staff in the room, setting dessert on tables, indicating the dinner portion of this night's festivities were about to be over.

"I just confirmed our brother's woman is friends with Hailey." Grey looked up from his screen, grinning like a Cheshire cat.

I ignored Nix's raised eyebrow and kept my focus on Grey. "We already established that. It's nothing new."

"Yeah, I know, but I'm confirming it again. They're close, like really close. There's a fuck lot of pictures of them two on Sydney's page dating far back to their college days. According to some comments she posted with the pictures, she's calling Hailey her roomie and bestie."

I started nodding as conversations and events of the past came back to me.

“Yeah, I remember Hailey talking about her roommate a lot. Remember she had spent a few Christmases in Virginia? She was supposed to meet us in the Caribbean one year and said her roommate couldn’t make it. She decided to spend the holidays with her instead.”

Grey nodded and smiled.

“Yeah, I remember that. Well, it looks like her bestie is your girl. How crazy is that? And you had no clue when you met her? She didn’t say anything? Didn’t mention Hailey’s name?”

“Nope. She mentioned she had a friend here, but that was about it. We didn’t get around to asking deep questions like that.”

Grey snorted. “Yeah, I bet you didn’t.”

“Fuck you, what else? What’s the information on the identity you created for Sydney?”

“I created Desiree DiMaggio, Desiree being Sydney’s middle name and as the last name with the insistence of Hailey. She wanted me to create documents that lists Desiree as a member of the DiMaggio family. Adopted. I did that, created adoption paperwork that dated back twenty-three years ago. Also created the usual package consisting of a birth certificate, a driver’s license, and a couple of credit cards. Looks like Sydney also opened a couple of bank accounts in that name, some offshore accounts in the Caymans and Switzerland.”

“Why did she do that?” Nix asked.

“Don’t know. Hailey didn’t give me any information and honestly, I didn’t ask. Of course, I had completed a cursory background check on Sydney. Checked her finances, criminal background, shit like that. There weren’t any red flags popping up, so I did what Hailey asked me to do.”

Nix glanced at me. “She didn’t mention anything to you, like the need to hide or something?”

“Nope. But I will get to the bottom of everything when Grey finds her for me,” I said to him, then brought my focus to

Grey. "Now, what else do you have?"

Grey had given me a little of her background, exactly where she lived in Virginia, background on her parents, her brother. Shit like that. Listening to everything sparked a fire in me that threatened to consume this entire building. The need to get to Sydney, to talk to her, tell her the shit I had wanted to when I got back from Chicago had burned deep in my soul.

Now, I just had to hold my shit until this meeting was over. Grey informed me, just before we entered this room, that Sydney and Hailey were at the club we owned called Club Sheas, a monstrosity of a building close to the meatpacking district. God help anyone I found groping her on the dance floor. I would not be held accountable for my actions.

I continued to ignore Arthur DiMaggio standing to my right and focused on the people around me. Everyone was talking amongst themselves, waiting for the meeting to begin. There were a few familiar faces that had made their way into the room. Ones I didn't expect to see here.

I stepped closer to Nix, bent, and whispered, "Do you know who the fucker is that's taking the seat directly across from you? He's one of the Albanian scums I had seen at the bar Zeus wanted me to stake out."

Nix's eyebrows rose, and he looked over at me.

"I do, in fact. He's a new player by the name of Fatmir Shkreli. He's supposed to be running with Lorik, but Grey couldn't confirm that for certain. It's funny that he's in here and Lorik is not, when Lorik is the local contact for the Albanians."

Fucking Albanians...

So far, our relationship with the Albanians was cordial. We had dealings with some of them in Europe, provided guns to the head of the Albanian mob in the UK. But that was the extent of our dealings with them. They were shifty and couldn't be trusted to have your back in any tight situation. Why did we do business with these kinds of people? They paid handsomely for our services every time. However, I didn't

know this son of a bitch across from us or his crew, except for what I had learned tailing them, which wasn't much. Throughout the night, they had been watching me and my brothers. It unnerved me and put me on edge the entire night.

"Yeah," I agreed. "Maybe he'll prove to be smart like Lorik and keep to himself."

Nix hummed his agreement. However, the moment he did, one of the Albanian's bodyguards leaned forward and whispered something in his leader's ear. They both shifted their eyes to me.

I heard Nix say, "On second thought maybe they won't," just as I righted myself, my eyes heavy on the two across from me.

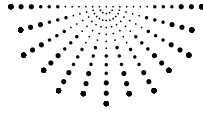
In that same moment, the door to the meeting room opened and in strolled a gorgeous dark skin woman dressed in a black skintight romper. Her curves filled out every inch of the clothing, leaving nothing to the imagination. Her hair was in braids tied up in a bun on the top of her head, showing a long neck, high cheekbones, and slanted brown eyes.

What made her even more sexy were the two holsters strapped around her thighs that housed two stainless steel semi-automatic, double-sided action, FNP .45s with her initials engraved in the black grip. The entire room seemed to pause as every heterosexual male watched the deadly beauty strut confidently to stand behind Vladimir Andreyev.

I smirked as I watched Nix's body tense, sitting upright in his chair. I knew on the outside his features were stoic, calm, and unreadable. But inside... it was a *category 6* hurricane.

Let the fucking entertainment begin!

CHAPTER FOURTEEN



SYDNEY

The bass of the music flowed through my body like electricity charging my soul. I closed my eyes, raised my arms in the air, and swayed to the club beat. It was house music, and that shit was glorious.

To say I was drunk off my ass would be an understatement. I wasn't totally shit faced. I had control of my faculties. I knew where I was and who was around me. However, my inhibitions were left at the entrance of the club.

I was having a ball.

Hailey and I had arrived at this poppin' club about an hour and a half or so ago. There was a huge line outside that seemed to wrap around the block when we pulled up. But my friend was a boss. Her brother dropped us off at the front of the club, and she headed right for the door and the huge bouncers. To my surprise, as well as everyone else around us, she gripped one bouncer by the back of his neck, pulled him down to her level, and stuck her tongue down his throat.

"Fuck, Hails, you couldn't fucking wait until I drove away?" Frankie, her oldest brother, yelled out before I heard him skid off.

I laughed. My friend hadn't changed a bit.

Once the sucking face fiasco was over, the bouncer grinned down at the little sex kitten and stepped back, letting her walk inside the club. I stepped up behind her and he looked at me expectantly.

I shook my head.

“Uh-uh. I’m not kissing you. I’m with her.” I pointed to a grinning Hailey. She was wiping the sides of her mouth with her thumb and index finger, getting a kick out of the whole scene.

“Oh no, Coby,” Hailey spoke up. “You don’t want to mess with her. Law would kill you ten times over.”

The smirk on the bouncer’s face suddenly fell, replaced with a look I could only describe as horror. He straightened his back, glanced all around before placing his eyes on Hailey.

“You fucking serious? Is he here?”

Hailey laughed. “Don’t worry, big guy. I’ll keep the fact that you were eye fucking his woman to myself for a small price.”

Despite the look of panic on his face, he gave her a small smile.

“You know I got you. As long as you keep that bit of information to yourself.”

I didn’t wait for Hailey to respond to him or set up a time and place for them to get it on. My own eyes wide as shit, I pushed Hailey inside the club.

“Why did you tell him I was Law’s woman?” I leaned in and asked as we stepped into the crowded club. “I’m not his woman.”

Hailey gave me a placating smile and threaded her arm through mine. “Come on, let’s get some drinks.”

Hailey directed us to the bar and raised a hand, signaling for a bartender to look her way. The place was packed. The bar was so crammed with gyrating bodies that I didn’t think we would get through. But to my surprise, the bartender saw her and pointed his chin in her direction, signifying she had his attention.

Hailey and the bartender had a silent conversation with hand gesture before he nodded and turned to make drinks. Hailey turned to face me, and I took this moment to ask

questions I had been dying to ask her the second she'd said that she knew Law and his brothers.

“So... you've known the Morelli brothers since you were a kid?”

“Yes, their uncle used to bring them to my house a lot when my father would have his family gatherings. They were riots back then, always getting into fights. Actually, they were cool with my cousin, Arthur. You remember him, don't you?”

I rolled my eyes. How could I forget?

Arthur DiMaggio was Hailey's first cousin. Ever since we'd met, he had been trying to get me to go out with him. I would always say no, and it had nothing to do with his looks. The man was hot as hell, tall, dark and handsome. He had a nice body and a smile that had the potential to render you helpless. And the man could wear the hell out of a suit. Every woman that crossed his path had sought for his attention. Everyone except me.

I didn't know what it was about him that didn't have me falling at his feet or hanging on his every word. Arthur had always been nice to me. He always treated me with respect and never let anyone treat me otherwise. It's just... he didn't do it for me. When I looked at him, I didn't quiver with need. My body didn't hum with the desire to see him naked or for him to rip my clothes off and fuck me up against the wall with fierce dominance and hunger like a certain someone. Maybe something was wrong with me, but I just didn't find Arthur attractive, if you know what I mean.

“Yeah, I remember Arthur. So, they were tight with him?”

“Yup, until Law and Arthur had a falling out?”

I raised an eyebrow. “Oh yeah, over what?”

She shrugged. “Over some girl. I think Arthur was in love with her, but *she* was in love with Law. You know, petty guy bullshit.”

“And they're not friends anymore because of that?”

“Nope. But I don’t think it’s because of some girl. It has to be deeper than that. So, tell me, when you saw them in the elevator, did you pass the fuck out?”

I smiled. “Girl, you have no idea. I couldn’t believe it when the elevator doors opened up and they were there looking hot as shit. They look so much alike it’s uncanny. How can you tell them apart? Can *you* tell them apart?” I asked her.

It was crazy that I could. Well, I could only tell the difference between Law and his brothers. It was something in his eyes that drew me to him that night at the hotel bar. A look that made my knees weak and heart beat out of control. He’s had that look in his gray eyes every time I’d seen him. He had that look tonight, too. No matter how much he tried to close off his emotions from me, I could see the need for me in his eyes.

Hailey smiled. “For me, it’s their eyes.” *umm... what was that now?* “Okay I assume you don’t know the names of his brothers, or do you?”

I shook my head. “We didn’t get that far. It’s not like he introduced them to me.”

Hailey nodded. “Right. Okay, so the oldest is Nix. When it comes to him, I can tell him from his brothers by the intense intelligence in his eyes. He’s very calculated and never acts without thinking. He’s meticulous in everything he does. Grey is the second oldest. With him there’s always an electronic device in his hands, but you can see how his eyes never stay on an object for very long. What grabs his attention is code. He’s a hacker, a computer whiz who’s sick with any program at his fingertips.

“Then there’s Law. Unhinged people recognize unhinged people, which is how I could tell Law from the others. It’s something in his eyes that is very distinctive. There’s a coldness there, a depth of darkness that granted, could be found in any brother, but it’s more profound in Law. He can look through to your soul and find out all your secrets just by looking at you. He’s a very dangerous man.”

I nodded my head, not agreeing with the things she'd said about the other brothers per se. I didn't know them that well, but I agreed with her descriptive narrative about Law. He definitely had this intense stare, and I said it before that I thought that there was darkness behind those stormy gray eyes of his. Ever since I had met him, I believed he was holding back from me. I guess I was right.

"What about you? Could you identify Law from his other brothers?"

I nodded and raised my voice a few octaves as the tempo of the music blaring around us somehow became louder.

"Yeah, I did. I noticed Law first when the elevator opened. My eyes just gravitated to him when I first saw him. It's just something in his eyes that draws me to him." I shrugged. "I can't explain it, but there's something between us; a connection of some kind. I feel it every time we look at each other. At least that's my opinion, anyway. Does that make sense?"

"It makes perfect sense. That's why I think you should talk to him. See where his head is at. I'm not saying you have to marry the man, but if he wants to get to know you better, what's wrong with that?"

"But don't you think it's too soon for me to start seeing other people? The ink on my divorce isn't even dry yet."

"Oh please, you've been over Puddin pie and his pussy ass for a long time now. You've wasted too much of your life holding on to a man that didn't deserve to breathe the same air as you. So what you have a thing for Law, a connection, as you call it. That's great. There's nothing wrong with you pursuing that, seeing where it leads. If nothing else, have fun and get your head knocked into a headboard a few times a week. It'll be good for you."

I laughed, shaking my head.

"You're crazy, you know that?"

"Yes, I do, but I'm telling the truth."

Still shaking my head, my eyes drifted to the club scene around me. As I had said, the place was packed. Bodies were everywhere. People were dancing by tables, the bar areas and, of course, the dance floor. There were also bouncers standing around, watching the crowd of drunks, keeping everyone safe from themselves and each other.

I could only imagine what kind of revenue the owners collected every month. If this place looked like this every night, damn...

Thinking back to this crazy situation I was in, I leaned into Hailey and said, "I just can't believe Law is in the mafia."

"Well, I wouldn't say he's straight mafia. He's not like Arthur or me or my brothers. He works for us, does things for families."

"What kinds of things?"

"It could vary."

"But it's dangerous," I said in a matter-of-fact tone.

Hailey shrugged a shoulder.

"Hon, the Morelli brothers are in a class by themselves. You get my meaning? I don't know half of the things they do, so I can't answer that question completely. You'll have to ask Law. But I can tell you this, no one fucks with them. If you do, you will regret it. They're like the baddest motherfuckers on the planet, times one million. They're cold, calculating, devious, and very intelligent. If anyone went after them, they better come with nukes or something and they better not miss, because if they do," she leaned back and narrowed her eyes at me, "shit would get very messy, bodies dropping like flies, and there wouldn't be anyone to stop them."

Holy shit!

I froze, stock still, as she spoke. My heart pounded against my chest, faster than the bass coming from the huge speakers by the DJ. If her goal was to scare the shit out of me, she succeeded.

I asked her, "So I should keep my distance?"

She smirked at me. “Are you planning on backstabbing them or declaring war against them?”

I rolled my eyes. “No, you goofy ass. What I mean is, do you think I’m safe around him like I am with you? Like, should I even entertain Law?”

She narrowed her eyes and looked up at me through her thick lashes.

“Sydney, understand something. They’re emphatically the most dangerous men you’d ever meet. But would they hurt you? No. In fact, I bet my vagina that no one would ever come close to hurting you again. From the things you’ve told me about Law and what he’s said to you, you’re more protected than the president. Law would blow this world up for you.” She bumped her hip against mine. I gave her the deer in headlights look but couldn’t bring myself to respond.

“Hails!”

We heard her name yelled over the music and we glanced back at the bar. The bartender from before held up two glasses filled with brown liquor. Hailey nodded and pushed her way to the bar.

As she disappeared into the throngs of bodies around the bar, I decided not to let her last statement cloud my brain or get my heart pumping crazily again. I did, however, take a moment to appreciate the sexy trio, especially one in particular.

The Morelli brothers were sexy as hell, fine as shit and from what little I gathered and from what Hailey had just said, they were the epitome of the word bad. The brothers were perfection personified, with their piercing, smoldering, and intense gray eyes that warned anyone around them to back the fuck off.

Hailey described Law as being the most dangerous of the three. That was true. But from what she’d said, you’d better not sleep on the other two. They were tall, above six feet, with the same athletic build and broad shoulders that hinted at the strength that lived underneath their perfectly tailored suits.

Their long black wavy hair reached slightly below their shoulders, and their five o'clock shadow was trimmed and lined perfectly along their firm jaws.

I mean, these three looked as if they had just left a GQ photoshoot tonight.

And the sound of their voices... *whew*. The sound was deep, dark and gritty, almost growly, if that made sense. And their accents only accentuated their sex appeal.

Yeah, I was hooked. I just wasn't sure what he wanted from me, or worse, what I wanted from him. *I guess I will find out soon enough.*

I clocked Hailey making her way back to me with two drinks in her hands. There were a few angry faces staring in her direction too. They had been waiting for a long time to get serviced and she'd just walked up to the bar and got her drink. Hell, I'd be pissed too if I were them. However, I was more surprised she could jump in front of them like that. It was as if the woman owned this fucking place.

I asked her, as she handed me a glass, "Do you own this place or something?"

She smiled and shook her head.

"Nope. The boys do, though."

My eyes grew wide.

"You mean the Morelli's own this place?"

She nodded.

"Yup. They have directed all staff members to consider me the VIP of VIPs."

"Does serving you extend to the bouncers?" I smirked at her, remembering the scene outside of the club, and took a sip of my drink.

She grinned devilishly at me. "Oh no, that's a bonus. Come on, let's get to the VIP section."

I nodded and followed her as she bobbed and weaved through the thick crowd. I danced to the music as we moved,

taking in more of my surroundings.

The club was huge, with lots of space for club goers to hang out at tables, mill around the dance floor, dance, and pick up wanted bedfellows. There seemed to be enough bar tops to supply lots of liquid courage to the crowd too. I also noticed that there were signs indicating more levels to this club. The way the line looked outside, long and slow moving, I could only imagine the amount of people in this club.

Hailey steered us toward the back of the club. I figured we were heading upstairs or something, to a specified section that probably looked down on the main floor, but was surprised seconds later when she steered us toward an open concept style, split-level floor, in the far corner of the dance floor. Besides the height of the split level, and the four beefy, scary looking bouncers guarding the area, the only thing separating the regular folk from anyone in VIP was a hip-level glass wall.

It was strange to see the VIP so close to the dance floor. As I said, I was expecting the section to be on another floor or something. You know, have the rich and famous looking down on the commoners kind of thing. But I guess this was sort of the same thing, right?

Hailey strolled past the bouncers, giving them a head nod before she took my hand and led me up the wide steps onto the VIP level of the club. As I took in the section, which by the way was guarded by more big, beefy scary looking men, I found a few celebs that I recognized.

A lot of them had their own entourages and bodyguards surrounding them while they drank, laughed, and had a good time. Some had their eyes on the dance floor, watching the half-dressed women giving them a show. The rest had their own shows right in front of them.

The VIP section was huge, with one rather large bar on the left side. There were separated pods, if you will, with U-shaped couches surrounding a large table. Each pod was filled with A-listers and their crew, while others just stood around the high bar tables or crowded the bar top. There were tons of

bottles on the tables and barmaids running around serving the drunk and happy.

Hailey pulled me past the crowds of people to this area in the center of the floor. This level was also raised slightly, roped off and manned by two more bouncers. In this section was a huge U-shaped suede black couch, larger than the other ones I saw, with a large table in the center. On the table was an array of liquor bottles and an ice tray with glasses next to the tray.

“Looks like someone called ahead for us,” Hailey announced, taking the contents of her glass down swiftly before we made it to the reserved section.

One bouncer unharnessed the rope in front of the steps to this empty area and moved aside. The other one reached out a hand and helped us up the few steps.

I glanced around the entire space and noticed all eyes were on us. I felt like royalty and couldn't help but smile. I took a deep breath and let it all sink in. I was finally free from my jailers, i.e., my family. I was at a banging club about to have the night of my life. And I had met a man that had the potential to make me fall completely, head over heels in love *and* kill me a thousand ways from Sunday. Damn, my life was good.

Hailey tapped me on my arm with a glass filled with who knew what. We clinked glasses and took the drinks down. After that we let loose and turned up.

We rocked out with the crowd in VIP. We rocked out with the folks on the dance floor. We rocked out with anyone that wanted to rock out with us. I was having the time of my life. It was the best fun I'd had in a long time.

Let me tell you, I never partied like this at home. We had to maintain a certain level of control when around the stuck-up people at the country club. Don't get it twisted, our wild parties of Huntington Falls—that's the name of our ritzy neighborhood—were definitely legendary, but it was never on this scale.

I fucking danced with Rhianna... singing her own goddamn song. Can you believe that shit?

Eat your heart out Huntington Falls!

Anyway, a lot of people wanted to take selfies with the hot party girls, that was us if you didn't know, but we declined. One, I didn't want to end up on social media so my family could keep tabs on what I was doing. But two, Hailey made it her rule to never be caught with her knickers down. Oh, she partied with me, danced, and had a ball, but she also kept her shit cool, keeping her eyes on the crowd, never allowing anyone too close to us. The bouncers did the same.

In the beginning, I was put off with all the security, however, when some random grabbed me on the dance floor and started groping me, I was thankful for the 6'5, three-hundred-pound bouncer who grabbed the groper by his neck and escorted him swiftly off the dance floor.

And that's where I'd been for the past thirty minutes. The DJ shifted from house music to reggae and let me tell you, my body had no issues with slowing down the pace. I felt no pain as my hips ground to the beat. My eyes were closed, head tilted to the sky, singing at the top of my lungs to one of my favorite reggae songs...

"No, no, no... you don't love me and I know now."

"No, no, no... you don't love me and I know now."

I love this fucking song!

"Coz you left me... baby... and I got no place to go now."

I was in my own world, feeling the music throughout my body. My hands traveled along said body, my hips, my stomach, waist, and thighs, wishing it was someone else's touch instead of mine.

Law...

There was something about that man that had my female parts melting for him. He really didn't do anything or say anything that caused this feeling of need that flowed through my veins to exist. It was just him. It was his presence, the

pure, raw, predatory nature he possessed that had my heart beating as if I was having a heart attack, my breaths coming fast and my nerve endings standing at attention.

As the music shifted to another reggae song, I could feel the air around me shift. It felt as if space around me surged with something heavy, thick, and dark. Goosebumps rose along my heated, sweaty skin, a shudder racking my body with an intensity I hadn't expected. *Fuck... what was happening?*

My breathing became labored, and I swore my heart raced, and not in a good way. I opened my eyes and took in my surroundings cautiously, expecting to see danger standing in front of me and, well, that's exactly what I saw.

There was a man standing a few feet from me. He was eye level with me, his sultry eyes mysterious, looking almost primal. It was as if he saw me as his prey.

Shit, shit, shit...

I looked around, hoping to find a bouncer standing close by, but I didn't see a one. *Perfect.* Just when I needed one, they suddenly went MIA. I turned back around and found the man had moved a little closer to me. Staring into his eyes caused fear to crawl along my spine.

This wasn't some average club goer looking to grind on some helpless female. He reminded me of something far worse, like the epitome of evil.

Fuck, I was in trouble. I felt it in my bones, my flight or fight reflexes kicked in with a vengeance.

As if he sensed my flight reflexes were about to take over, he moved quickly in my direction. My eyes bulged with panic but before I could react, like scream bloody murder, a body dressed in black came out of nowhere, zipped past me and gripped the man by his throat, pushing him back and away from me. It took me a few seconds to learn it wasn't a bouncer that came to my rescue. It was Law.

I saw the man's eyes practically bulge out of his eye sockets as he frantically scrambled to remove the tight fingers

strangling him to death. I could feel Law's rage from here. It was palpable and thick, completely overwhelming.

I was about to approach him, get him to let the man go, but he gave me this look over his shoulder that caused me to stop dead in my tracks. I had gotten a glimpse of those deadly eyes of his and stood there rigid with terror, unable to move or speak. Hell, I couldn't get my throat muscles to work in order to swallow the huge lump stuck in my esophagus.

I wasn't afraid of Law. I knew with everything in me he wouldn't hurt me. No, I was more afraid of what he was going to do to the man in his grasp who was now turning red.

Fuck, it was one thing to talk about the rage in him, but another thing to see it live and in person.

I watched on as Law leaned in close to the man, slightly bending over, and whispered in his ear.

The guy stopped fighting and stood stock still. He received what I could only imagine was some serious shit. The man's already large eyes went to me and surprisingly grew wider. He started shaking his head feverously and started mumbling words I couldn't hear. Maybe he was begging for his life or pleading, but whatever it was, Law didn't like it one bit.

I heard the words, "Oh fuck me!" to my left, and I glanced in that direction to find one of Law's brothers standing next to me, his eyes narrowed on the two figures in front of us.

He reached in his pocket, pulled out his phone and from Hailey's descriptions of the brothers, I assumed this one was Grey. *Grey* began typing with speed that I hadn't ever seen before in my life. I mean shit, I thought I was skilled at texting. Watching his fingers flutter over his screen was mesmerizing. I was convinced he could probably break the Guinness book of world records for the fastest texter.

"Are you alright?" he asked me, leaning in close so he could be heard over the music, his eyes never leaving his phone.

I nodded, mumbled yes, and shifted my attention back to Law and the man whose face was now turning this deep

purple. Just when I was about to ask Grey if he was going to stop him, Law released the man, and he dropped to the dance floor in a heap of skin and bones. He balled up protective-like, holding his hand tight against his body. A few of the onlookers, I noticed, had their phones out, taking in the spectacle before them, going live on social media. However, they started staring at their phones, confused.

I heard one guy yell to another, “Shit, it was working a minute ago. Now I have no signal. Did you get that, bro?”

The other guy shook his head. “Naw, man. My phone wouldn’t work. You know connection is shitty in this place.”

I glanced up at Grey, remembering what else Hailey had said about him... *“He’s a hacker, a computer whiz that is sick with any program at his fingertips.”*

My eyes went wide with that affirmation. Grey just shrugged and winked at me. He then looked past me, nodded, then turned and walked away.

Bouncers appeared out of nowhere and moved to the man now sprawled out on the floor. I glanced behind me to see if I could find Hailey and saw she was looking in my direction. Her eyes narrowed, a harsh coldness radiating from her. A third Morelli brother, Nix, I assumed, was standing beside her, also looking at me. Or maybe he wasn’t looking directly at me. I turned back around to see who or what had his attention and found Law standing in front of me.

Holy fucking shit...

What I saw... what was radiating from the man before me had my breath hitching in my throat. Law appeared foreboding as hell, deadly, and downright dangerous as fuck. His body was tense, hands balled at his sides, ready to rip someone a part with his bare hands. But goodness, those storm-filled gray eyes of his... they seemed to call to me, call to my soul, my innermost being, and shit, she was answering.

Before I could blink, Law was a breath away from me, his hands cupping the sides of my face. His pupils seemed larger than life as he watched me, intensely scrutinizing me. I

couldn't help but look up at him with my eyes wide the fuck open. His gray depths were filled with so much rage and fury, but there was something else there too. Something buried deep that had my heart pounding against my chest, butterflies fluttering in my stomach, and my body damn near melting into him.

Shit to hell, I wanted him.

Is that a weird thing to admit, considering what had just happened? Do you think I should be committed?

The answer was probably yes, but I didn't care.

I wanted him right this very moment, and that scared the crap out of me. I should've run for the hills from the display of violence I had just witnessed and the rage floating just below the surface of his being. But fuck me, this man was glorious to look at. He was commanding, daunting, intense, and all I could think about was him fucking me right where we stood. I didn't care who was around. I wanted to feel all of him, feel this energy that was threatening to suffocate everyone around us. I wanted him to take control and dominate me in such a way that I would be ruined for any other man.

But as much as I willed him to take action, nothing happened. I stood where I was and watched the turmoil rage in his eyes. I could tell he was thinking the same thing I was, but he didn't allow his darkness to take over. *Dammit!*

"Are you alright?" he asked finally.

I nodded my reply, then cleared my throat and confirmed my actions with words.

"Yeah, I'm fine."

Law watched me closely for a few more moments and just when I thought he was going to step away from me, I made a move of my own. I dropped my guard and allowed him to see just how turned on I was, how desperately I wanted him. I reached up and ran my fingers through his hair and fuck if that didn't do it. All I needed to do was touch him and those smoldering eyes of his darkened to a shade I had never seen from him.

His hand went to my ass and gripped my cheek to the point of pain right before he mumbled, “Fuck woman.” and finally claimed my lips in this kiss that would rival every kiss I had ever had.

Yesss, now this is what I’m talking about...

Law lifted me, holding me up by my ass, until I was eye level with him. I got lost kissing the hell out of him, my fingers tangled in his hair, allowing everything I felt for him to flow between us. Did I care we were standing in the middle of the dance floor? Nope. All I cared about was the fire that ignited my soul, that consumed every part of my body.

All the doubt, the second guessing and the anger that I had held for him seemed to dissipate the longer I claimed his mouth, opened my heart and let go of my senses. Everything fell away. The club, his brothers, Hailey and even the gawkers that I knew had their eyes glued on us. Good thing they couldn’t record me. I would probably end up on some social media site or something with a tag line, GIRL SUCKS FACE OFF BOY, but again, did I care? Fuck no!

Law finally let us both up for air, but his lips remained a breath away from mine. I rested my forehead against his, closed my eyes and tried to get my heart beating normally again.

I ran my fingers through his hair as a deep rumble of a moan escaped his lips.

“Tell me everything,” I whispered loud enough for him to hear.

He placed my feet back on solid ground, but kept his arms wrapped around me.

“Can you handle it?” he asked, and I smirked up at him and brushed my thumb along his bruised lips, wiping my lipstick away from his mouth.

“If I couldn’t, I wouldn’t have been here waiting for you.”

“You won’t run?” he questioned, running his thumb along the sides of my mouth, wiping the excess lipstick from our face-sucking fiasco.

“No, I won’t run. I promise you I won’t,” I admitted, and he gave me a skeptical look. I assured him, “If what you said was true, you want to get to know me, then I want to get to know you too. Hell, I already know who you are. What you tell me won’t change anything.”

Law let out a resounding sigh, lightly grazing his fingertips along my cheek.

“Oh, Princess,” he said gently, “you only know the surface. Wait until you see what’s underneath.”

“I’m not afraid of you,” I confessed and made sure, as his eyes roamed my face for the truth, to show him I meant every word.

“I won’t go into a lot of details,” he finally said.

“I don’t want details. I just want you,” I stated, then realized what I’d said and amended quickly. “You know, I want to get to know you.”

Law grinned at me, then leaned in and placed a soft kiss on my lips.

Damn, he smelled good.

“Let’s get out of here.”

I wasn’t going to lie. The excitement that surged through my body damn near put me on my ass. Truthfully, I knew I was way out of my league dealing with this man. I had never dealt with such a powerful, primal and feral man like him, and I didn’t want to seem as if I was inexperienced, but I also didn’t want to seem too eager either. I had to put everything into perspective. I didn’t know enough about this man to let my guard down. He lied to me, or I guess he didn’t lie per se. Just held things back from me. I needed to know why and if he was telling the truth when he said he wanted to get to know me better.

Not waiting for my reply, Law took my hand and led me to the VIP section. We spotted Hailey, and he leaned into me and said, “Go and say goodbye to your girl.”

I nodded and made a beeline to Hailey, who happened to be sitting on the lap of the bouncer, Coby from outside, the one she basically suffocated with her tongue.

“You leaving?” she asked me, once I was close, grinning up at me. She then glanced behind me, and her smile broadened.

“Yeah, I’ll call you tomorrow,” I informed her as she stood and gave me a fierce hug. “You have a good time tonight,” she said in my ear. “Don’t overthink anything. Let him do the talking and keep an open mind. Okay?”

I kissed her cheek and smiled at her.

“Yes, mummy,” I quipped, my voice dripping with sarcasm, but the smile on my face told her I would try to do exactly what she suggested.

I glanced around, looked for Law, and found him standing with his brothers who looked to be heavily engrossed in conversation. I took a deep breath and slowly made my way to them. Once I was close, Law turned in my direction and stretched out his hand to me. I took it and he pulled me closer to him.

“Sydney,” he began, leaning close so I could hear him. “These are my brothers, Nix and Grey.”

He first pointed to the one closest to him, then to the one on the other side of me.

I reached out my hand to Nix to shake and he took my hand and leaned in close to peck me on my cheek, but Law pushed his brother back.

Nix didn’t seem offended in the least. He actually laughed.

“It’s nice to meet you, Sydney,” he greeted, his eyes dancing with mirth.

“You’re such an asshole,” Grey charged, took my hand from Nix and brought my knuckles to his lips.

“It’s a pleasure to... hey!” Grey shouted as Law gripped his brother by his shoulder hard.

“If you want to keep your lips, you’ll be sure to keep them away from my woman.”

Grey’s eyebrows rose, as did mine, I’ll admit.

“Your woman, huh?” Grey prodded, a smirk forming on his sexy as hell face. Goodness, it was so crazy how much these three looked alike.

I would have commented on the ‘my woman’ title, but I was too busy trying to breathe.

His woman... I wasn’t sure if I could or would get used to hearing him say that. However, I couldn’t lie, it made me feel all mushy and warm inside.

“Yes, that’s right. So, if you knobheads want to see another day, keep your lips away from her.”

Law gave them such a serious and deadly look that it had me shivering with fear for his brothers, but those two just grinned at him.

“Oh, don’t mind him, Sydney. He’s all piss and no wind,” Nix said to me, then addressed his brother. “You two heading out?”

“Yeah, we’re going back to the hotel,” Law told him, then addressed Grey, “Make sure you let me know the moment you find them, yeah?”

“Of course, I’ll send you a message. Give you all the specifics.”

Law pointed at his brother. “Don’t touch them until I get there.”

“Yeah, I got you. They’ll be waiting for you,” Grey said to him.

I started to ask who “they” were but decided against it. He had said no details, and I agreed. If he wanted me to know, he’d tell me.

Shit, was I ready for that kind of relationship? Not that this was the start of a... oh who the hell was I kidding. This *was* the start of a relationship. The man had just called me his

woman in front of two of the most important people in his life, for fuck's sake. What else could this be?

Law and I said our goodbyes and made our way to the front of the club. Once outside, Law guided me to an all-black sports car idling in the front of the club. The valet opened the driver's door, and it lifted in the air.

Holy shit, that was cool!

Okay yes, considering the life I'd led these twenty some odd years, this wasn't the first time I had seen a sports car with wing doors. I knew a few people that owned Tesla's where the doors lifted like wings as well as your typical Lambos and such. But this sports car was so sleek in design that it would probably put the best looking Lambo to shame.

Law opened my door and helped me as I lowered myself into my seat. He closed the door once I was inside and I stared in awe at the dashboard, the center console, the knobs, and lit up buttons. It looked as if I had just stepped inside the cockpit of a freaking jet.

Law settled into the seat next to me, closed his door, and gave me a devilish smile.

“Put your seatbelt on, love.”

I did as ordered, ignoring the butterflies fluttering in my belly at the sound of him calling me love.

“What kind of car is this?” I asked him. I wasn't a car connoisseur, so I couldn't begin to take a guess.

Law revved the engine, his features taking on a boyish charm and excitement.

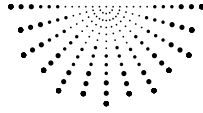
“It's an exclusive 2020 McLaren Sabre. Only fifteen in existence. It has a turbo V8 engine that can produce eight hundred and twenty-four of horsepower and five hundred and ninety pounds of torque.”

I giggled sheepishly. “And what does all that mean?”

“It means she can go very fast in a blink of an eye. Shall we test her out?”

Before I could reply, he had placed the car in drive and took off down the street, speeding, without a care in the world. All I could do was hold on to the dash—there wasn't an 'oh shit' handle above the passenger door for me to grab—and laugh my ass off. It was either that or throw up.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN



LAWSON

We had arrived back at the hotel in no time. And yeah, I pushed my 2020 McLaren Sabre sports car to its limit the entire way there, mainly because the scent of the woman next to me was driving me crazy. She smelled so fucking good. Not to mention that laugh of hers. It was so damn addicting. So much so I found myself laughing with her as I took corners, weaved between cars on the road, and barely missed red lights. I showed off like a fucking schoolboy. It was the thrill in her eyes as she screamed with delight that kept me going. I couldn't help it.

The tension I had felt seemed to have ebbed just a bit when I left the club. It wasn't completely gone, but at least I didn't feel as if I was going to lose my mind to my demons. It was her. She was the reason I was no longer in a murderous rage. I had hoped she would be the one to consume my focus when I arrived at the club. I just didn't imagine I'd have to choke someone nearly to death once I arrived. Oh, I had hoped for violence, believe me, but never thought it would come true.

I had been charged up since the moment I entered the club. The fucker that thought it was a good idea to touch what belonged to me didn't help at all. As a matter of fact, there were three things that aided in the fucked-up mood I was in upon arriving at the club.

For one, the meeting at the restaurant was a waste of time and tested my patience for the *entire* duration of the meeting. The shit they were talking about had nothing to do with us. It was all territorial bullshit. Arguing about who would take over

after some fat fuck keeled over. I truly believed Zeus sent us here to further irritate me and throw his power around, to make people believe we were under his thumb.

Again... Fuck him!

Next were the fucking Albanians. There were two sitting in the meeting directly across from us. The problem was the ogling and the fucking whispering those two did that had carried over from dinner. They were causing my temper to spike past the point of being out of control. I didn't appreciate them watching me. I had half a mind to say something. In fact, I did only have half a mind.

I had asked them, once the lull in the mindless conversation died, "Do you two have a fucking problem with your vision?"

I stared at the boss of the Albanians, fucking Fatmir, as I spoke. The bloody wanker's name fit him well if you asked me. He had some height on him, but his weight took over the chair he occupied.

He leaned back and regarded me. "Actually, yes, there is a problem. I do not know you," he said in heavily accented English. He waved a hand in front of him, signaling me and my brothers. "In fact, I do not know either of you. You have been sitting around us during dinner and now our meeting, however, you have not addressed this room, explaining your presence here."

"So, let me get this straight," I prodded acidly, "you've been staring at us like a bunch of prissy pussies because we didn't introduce ourselves to you? What are you, fucking five? Do you want us to put name tags on our fucking chests? Give you three adjectives to describe us, you knob head fucking cunt." The rage in my voice flooded the room. I wasn't hiding my disdain for this son of a bitch at all.

The Albanian frowned, his own anger filtering through his so-called rough exterior. He sat up straight in his chair and was about to open his mouth when Nix spoke up, his authoritative voice filling the room.

“Excuse my brother. He’s just a bit cranky. Dealing with bullshit irritates his soul. However, he has a point. All the eye fucking you’ve been doing, along with the whispering, is completely unnecessary. If you don’t know who we are, that’s not our problem to rectify, that’s yours. All you had to do was ask around. I’m sure someone could’ve told you. But if you like, we will be happy to introduce ourselves to you now.” Nix never lost the pleasantries in his voice, but the threat in his eyes was clear. I didn’t have to see him to know it. Plus, the underlying warning was as plain as the surrounding walls. Everyone knew it. It could be felt through the tension in the air that grew thicker as each of our heartbeats pulsed.

I kept my gaze on both the Albanian fucking scums to see if they moved or flinched. Neither happened, but I felt it in my bones. It wouldn’t last long.

Hailey’s father, Joe DiMaggio, cleared his throat, being ever the peacemaker when it suited him.

“Fatmir, the Morelli brothers were sent by their father, Zeus, to represent his interests,” He chimed in, his voice calm, a smile on his face. “Their father has ties to my family and a few others in this room and the city.”

Fatmir broke his connection with my brother and glanced at Joe.

“Very interesting. However, we were told a different story.” He glanced back at Nix. “You see, I *have* asked around and what I found out is not very favoring for you.” Fatmir glanced around the room, raising his voice as if we all couldn’t hear his fat arse.

“Apparently, these three are hired guns, assassins, who operate separately from their father. Sometimes they take jobs from leaders of countries such as the United States. Is that something we want hanging around us? Filth who deals with government pigs,” he bit out that last part, gritting his teeth and sending hard eyes towards us. *Interesting...* He knew about our side hustle. Or he could just be fishing for a reaction. Either way, we needed to look into the fat fuck further. Find out more about him.

Fatmir went on bitterly, “How do we know they are not spies sent in here to infiltrate our confidence? You know the federal pigs are right outside. They could have sent them for all we know.”

Just as I was about to reply to the fucking insult, the Albanian’s foolish bodyguard did the dumbest shit imaginable. He went for his fucking gun.

Well, that shit wasn’t going to fly. Before the idiot could pull it, I reacted first, going for the throwing knives at my hip. With a flick of my wrist, I sailed two knives across the room, seconds after each other. One just skidded past his shoulder, through the fucking idiot’s jacket, and into the wall behind him, pinning him. The other landed in the daft prick’s right hand, right before it closed around the butt of his gun.

Fucking spies? Was he kidding me?

The cock sucker cried out in agony and surprise. He started yelling some shit in his native language while trying to reach his gun with his other hand. Fatmir placed a hand on the man’s left hand and gun, stopping him from pulling his gun free. For one, he understood if that happened, both of them would be dead. And two, every boss around the table, and their bodyguards, now had their weapons out and safeties off.

The asshole next to me mumbled loudly, “Not a-fucking-gin...” as he, too, pulled his Beretta from the pancake holster at the middle of his back.

I gave him a withering side glance that I knew he caught.

Fuck you, Arthur!

The Albanian *prick* with the new hole in his hand was carrying on like a bitch, but his boss looked surprised, which I had to admit shocked me. Maybe he had no idea his man would go for his weapon. Maybe this was supposed to be a posturing tactic, you know, the art of measuring one’s dick or something. But his man had other plans. Clearly, the bodyguard thought his boss had a teeny weeny and decided to pull *his* gun out instead.

Fatmir glanced over at his subordinate, who couldn't move without pulling the knife out of the wall. However, he couldn't reach it. He was too busy cradling his right hand. Fatmir then let out a long haggard breath before addressing the table, making eye contact with everyone, before resting on Nix.

"I apologize for the disruption. He reacted to my words very poorly, assuming that I was in danger."

Bullshit!

"Bullshit." Nix barked, speaking my thoughts out loud, doing his best to keep his temper in check. "You had the balls to accuse us of being traitors, spies at that. If you did your fucking due diligence and asked around to learn the little you did, then you should have fucking known better. We're in the business of making money not spying. We've serviced most of the families in this room in some capacity. We had even assisted Admir last month."

The sound of the name caused the Albanian to stiffen ever so slightly. As he should, if he was big time in the organized crime world. Admir Hoxha was the leader of the Albanian Mafia in London. His reach spanned from Italy, France, Russia, to parts of the U.S., mainly New York City.

I noticed the Albanian pale. He leaned over and shushed his man, who had resorted to whimpering.

He then straightened and cleared his throat.

"Pardon me. I did not know about your connection to Admir. He has told me of someone he uses for special jobs from London, brothers, but he did not go into specifics. I apologize again for the misunderstanding."

Nix didn't respond right away. He turned to face me and gave me a look that asked if I was good with that bullshit apology.

I replied with a look of my own that said, *I'm ready to get the fuck out of here.*

He smirked at me.

“A misunderstanding, yes, we’ll call it that for now,” Nix replied, turning around to face the table. “However, my brother needs his knives back.” He pointed to the knives still stuck in my victim’s hand and jacket.

The Albanian nodded, but I was already on the move. I walked around the table to the clammy looking man still whimpering his displeasure. I pulled out the knife in the wall, then yanked my knife from his hand. He cried out in pain, growled and stepped in my face as if he was going to do some shit.

I had a slight inch or two on him, but he had me in bulk, which didn’t matter to me. If he so much as breathed funny on me, I would gut him where he stood. I met his stare with a pair of dark and deadly eyes promising a swift, yet painful death if he so much as twitched wrong.

Our staring match lasted less than a second before he stepped back from me. I waited until he was behind his boss before I turned and walked away, knowing my brothers had my back. I also had someone else on my side. I’d have to thank her later, although she probably wasn’t protecting me.

I made it back to the spot behind Nix, and Arthur said to me, “Was that even necessary?”

I snorted. “At least I wasn’t as messy as the last time.”

He grunted and shook his head, but he couldn’t argue my point.

A few minutes had passed before everyone retook their seats and continued with the meeting. Overall, the meeting went on without a hitch. So, I stabbed someone. Big deal. At least I didn’t slit anyone’s throat like I had done last year. I thought that was an improvement.

Now, the third and final reason that caused my temper to flare was none other than the tiresome song and dance between Nix and Ivie. After the meeting, Ivie stepped out of the door behind the Albanians and not a minute later Nix stood and left the room mumbling, *‘I’ll be back,’* to me and Grey. I

groaned and was about to tell him to just meet us at the club, but the asshole was already out of the room.

Grey and I waited for Nix back in the dining hall and I swear the fucker was gone for a long time. I had to endure god damn small talk waiting for his sex-deprived arse.

Finally, after what felt like a millennium, he emerged from the back of the restaurant looking downright grim, as if he was going to explode and kill everyone around him. A minute later Ivie appeared, and I could tell she was also pissed off. Grey leaned into me.

“I take it shit didn’t go well.”

I grunted and watched my brother run his fingers through his hair before he let out a long sigh and headed in our direction.

“Let’s get the fuck out of here,” he announced.

“How did shit go between you and Ivie?” Grey asked, and I inwardly groaned and shook my head when Nix pinned him with a death stare.

“What the fuck are you talking about?”

Grey, not getting the hint to back off, trudged on, *the wanker*, “She left the meeting, then you followed. You came back looking like a pissed-off bull more than usual, and not a minute later she appeared equally pissed. You can’t tell me you two weren’t just pissing each other off.”

Nix stepped to the bar, signaled for the bartender, and asked for a double shot of tequila. He turned and faced us and the room, his eyes moving to the dark chocolate beauty in question. She hadn’t looked in our direction, but I could see from here she was tense. It was as if she could feel our eyes on her and she was fighting hard not to give in to her curiosity, or should I say weakness, and look in our direction.

Vlad was speaking to a few people, and she was standing close by, ridged, but powerful and deadly. She reminded me of that hot female warrior character from the movie Alicia Vikander starred in like four or five years ago. What was that name? The character was from a video game, I think. No

matter, Ivie was completely a badarse with her cannons holstered at her thighs.

The bartender provided my brother with his drink, and he took it down in one gulp.

“Are you going to tell us what happened between you two?” Grey prodded.

“No!” Nix exclaimed through gritted teeth and headed for the door.

Grey and I looked at each other before looking at the opened door that Nix disappeared through. We then glanced in Ivie’s direction to find her too staring at the door where Nix had exited.

I slapped Grey in the chest and followed Nix out. I couldn’t wait to get to Sydney, however, we had to be cautious when leaving the building.

My brothers and I placed our masks back on in the back hallway of the restaurant. We tapped our forearms together as our farewell, and Nix headed for the front of the restaurant. I moved to the back door, while Grey waited for about ten minutes before he followed me out.

We had planned to ditch Timmy after dinner long before tonight and had made other transportation arrangements to get around the city once the meeting was over. Timmy, ol’ boy, had outlived his usefulness in our opinion, or rather *my* opinion. Fuck, I wanted to kill his sorry ass and dump his body in the East River, but I was of course out voted. However, we agreed he needed to go. What we didn’t factor in was the usefulness of the Feds.

We knew that the area would be crawling with law enforcement: the local police, Feds and the like. It was to be expected, considering some of the most powerful and dangerous men in this city were in attendance. Every year they’d show up and set up shop, hoping to gain Intel on the members of tonight’s festivities. And every year, Grey would fuck up their night by hacking into any video and audio feed they had around the area before we arrived, preventing them

from getting video of us arriving and leaving. Those shit for brains had to rely on photos of us that were dodgy at best. Fuck'em!

I exited the back door of the restaurant that spilled out into an alleyway. It was dark and smelled of urine, booze and despair... good old New York. I made a left and walked purposefully until I reached the street. My destination was about two blocks west of here. A parking garage that housed my transportation. I headed that way. I could see Nix in front of me, heading to another parking garage about a block away.

Grey would grab a cab on the corner of the restaurant and head east of us, get out, and head to a parking lot where he had transportation waiting for him as well.

We created this elaborate scheme to thwart off the scent of the Feds. We knew they would wait around, follow who they could. For all we knew, those fuckers could pose as cab drivers. If that were true, Grey would take proper measures to lose any tail the Feds put on him. Nix and I would do the same.

I arrived at the parking garage and entered on the main floor. The place was quiet, deserted. I took the steps to the fourth floor, exited the stairway, and walked purposefully toward my car. My ears remained tuned to my surroundings. I heard nothing but the echo of my Italian hard bottoms tapping the gray concrete below my feet. My car was parked in the lot's corner, a 2020 black on black two door McLaren Sabre. A beautiful fucking car made for nothing but speed. I clicked the key fob in my pocket and watched as the driver's door lifted.

I caressed the sleek body of this perfect specimen of a car with my fingertips before sliding into my seat. The door closed, and I started it up, revving the eight-cylinder engine a few times just to hear her purr. Smiling like a schoolboy, I skidded out of my parking space, leaving a trail of smoke in my wake.

I couldn't tell you if I had a tail once I exited the parking garage. The way I weaved through traffic, no one could keep

up with me, no matter how hard they tried. By the time I made it to the club, there was nothing, or should I say no one, behind me. However, that shit didn't matter. If they somehow learned who I was, they knew where I might end up, anyway.

When Grey brought up the idea of opening a club here in New York, I had been against it. It put a bull's eye on our backs, provided a place where the Feds could watch us, monitor our whereabouts or raid whenever they saw fit. Either that or they would stake out the fucking place in hopes we'd show up so they could tail us wherever we went in the city.

However, Grey and Nix thought it was a perfect cover. If we had legitimate businesses in the city, the shit we did in the dark would be overlooked. The U.S. government would be too busy monitoring what they could see instead of concentrating on the shit we did in the dark.

I still didn't agree, but we had had this club for three years now and I had to say the eyesore was very lucrative. I pulled up to the front of the club, clocking the huge ass line at the door and the many Lamborghinis, Ferraris, Bentleys, and limos parked on the side of the warehouse. The place was probably packed. I groaned, knowing it would be a long night if I couldn't get Sydney to leave the club with me.

I climbed out of my ride and was promptly met by the valet. His eyes grew large when he saw it was me. I was sure he didn't know which of the Morellis was in front of him, but it didn't matter. I handed him the key fob.

“Sit inside and keep the engine running until I come back.”

“Yessir,” he replied, a huge smile covering most of his face.

I stepped to the bouncers at the door, inquired if there were any issues tonight. They advised there were a few disagreements, but they were swiftly handled.

I nodded and stepped inside, making my way to the VIP section where I knew I'd find Sydney. I couldn't wait to see her, my body hummed with anticipation. My hands were itching to touch her, to feel her in my arms. My plan was to get

her to leave with me. I wanted her alone, away from prying eyes and loud fucking music. Maybe then I could, one, get to the bottom of her still being fucking married. Two, deal with her being pissed that I kept shit from her and anything else she wanted to talk about before I stripped her naked and buried ten inches inside her tight sheath.

The VIP section was packed with A-list celebrities and the royals of New York. I ignored everyone and made a beeline for Hailey, who was leaning against a wall, her attention on the dance floor in front of her. Who I didn't see next to her was Sydney.

Hailey saw me coming and smiled at me. I was just about to ask her where my woman was when she pointed to the dance floor. I shifted my eyes and found the object of my desires on the floor, swaying seductively to the music. I wanted to stop and appreciate the view, the sway of her hips and maybe even cop a feel or two, but my focus quickly shifted to something else. A man stood directly in front of Sydney watching her, his tongue gliding along his lips, eyes dead center on my woman.

I headed in her direction, moved fast, weaved between gyrating bodies, devouring the distance between us in a few long strides. I noticed the instant she saw the guy watching her. She stopped dancing and her body tensed immediately.

Just when the fucker was about to step into her space, I was there, my fingers wrapped around the motherfucker's neck. I lifted him off the ground and walked away from Sydney, separating us from her.

The piece of shit tried to break my hold by clawing at my hand, but I only tightened my grip. He looked into my eyes and I knew the instant when he recognized me. I wasn't surprised. I knew him too. In fact, I knew him well. He was a gun for hire, one of those cheap sons of bitches that one would call to handle dirty work when you couldn't afford a professional like me.

I felt Sydney moving closer to me. I threw her a look over my shoulder that told her to stay the fuck put. She listened to

my silent warning, which allowed me to focus on the shit in my grasp. I leaned in close to my prey.

“Do you have any idea who that woman is?” I asked him, releasing my hold on him just enough for him to speak.

He glanced over at her, then back at me. “No,” he bit out harshly. “I—”

“She’s mine. Do you understand what the fuck that means?”

I tightened my hold.

“I didn’t know,” he rasped out, still trying to pull my hand away from his throat. “She has a mark on her.”

I loosened my hold, shocked as fuck but not showing it.

“Oh yeah, by who? What’s it for?”

“Her-her husband, man. He wants her back. Twenty K.”

I took a deep breath, knowing a trip to Virginia was now etched in stone. That motherfucker actually put a mark on her? Was he fucking serious?

I focused my attention and anger on the son of a bitch still in my grasp.

“So, you decided to conduct business in my club? Did you get permission from me or my brothers? I can tell you right now you didn’t.”

“I—” he began, but I tightened my grasp on his neck.

“Shut the fuck up, you piece of shit. You make sure you spread this to every fucking body you know. Sydney Fontane is not to be touched. Do you understand me? If I so much as smell anyone near her, I will come after you. If someone so much as speaks her name, I will come after *you*, not them, you. Do you get my meaning? It’s your job to get the word out. It’s your job to make them understand or you’ll be the one to pay. Understand?”

He nodded frantically.

I shifted my body to hide what I was about to do next.

I stared the man in his eyes, allowed him to see the truth of my threat, the promise of pain he could not imagine. Then I gripped his fingers, twisted his hand at the wrist in an awkward position fast and hard. To everyone around me, it just looked like I pulled him closer to my body. But only he and I knew what I'd done, the sound of his wrist bone snapping could only be heard by us.

He tried to scream, but I clamped down harder against his jugular, cutting off his air. He made a choking sound instead, pain and darkness threatening to take him under.

I whispered in his ear so he could hear every word I said next. "Think of this as my way of showing you mercy for even thinking about touching what belongs to me. I need you to spread the word, which is the only reason you're still breathing. But think about coming near what belongs to me again and I'll cut off each of your fingers and make you choke on them. Understand?"

I didn't wait for a reply or a confirmation that he heard me. I let go of his neck and the son of a bitch dropped to the floor. He fell in a heap, curling into himself, trying to catch his breath and cradling his broken limb. I took a few deep breaths of my own, resisting the urge to stomp him to death, before I turned around to face my woman.

She was standing there, panic gripped her body. Her eyes were wide, taking everything in, the man at my feet and the rage-filled man before her. I devoured the distance between us and cupped her face between my hands. I glanced heavily into her eyes, fighting back the urge to claim her tempting-as-fuck mouth. I hesitated, ignored my needs and focused on her. There were a lot of fucking questions and fear in her gaze. I wasn't sure if she was afraid of what she saw or afraid of me. There was no way I would impose my will on her, allow myself to get wrapped up in a woman that was afraid of the real me, afraid of the beast.

I harnessed my rage and tamed my alter ego down just a bit. I was about to escort her back to VIP and hand her off to Hailey, when this woman, yet again, threw me for a loop. As we gazed into each other's eyes, I saw her brown eyes liquefy.

Her body relaxed and she gave me this look of pure, animalistic salaciousness. I swear that fucking need to dominate her grew even stronger. That's when I let go and claimed her in front of everyone, my brothers, Hailey, the world. Fuck all who knew or who they told. Sydney Fontane was mine.

I pulled up to the front of the hotel and shut the engine off. I brought questioning eyes to Sydney, who seemed to have dropped into a tense silence, her eyes facing the building instead of me.

“Come on, love, let's go,” I instructed just as the valet attendant opened her door and offered her his hand. She accepted it graciously and stood up awkwardly to her feet.

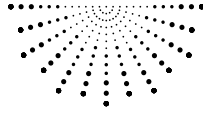
I stepped around the car and gave the man the keys. I leaned into him and warned, “If there is a scratch on this car, I will take it out of your arse. Got it?”

“Yessir, I got it.” The red-faced attendant replied and slid his thin frame behind the wheel of the car.

I brought my attention to the lovely woman before me, trying desperately not to devour her where she stood.

Later, Law, you'll get your fill later.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN



SYDNEY

We made it to my room in silence. I was still recuperating from the exhilarating car ride in one of the fastest cars I ever had the privilege to ride in. Also, listening to Law laugh, seeing him smile at me, the brightness in his eyes, the way his gaze sung to me... I could barely breathe for half of the ride here.

And now we were alone.

Law locked the door, checked the room for any unwanted guests before heading for my living space. I selected the same type of suite I had before, loving the layout, except I now had a balcony. I hadn't spent any time out there yet, paranoid some gust of wind would sweep me off the edge, causing me to fall to my death. Maybe tonight I'd request we talk out there instead of inside. Maybe that will keep me from wanting to rip his clothes off and explore his body once again.

No! Focus, Sydney. Talk first... then if things go well, you can explore his body.

"Be right back," Law announced, then disappeared into my living room. I stayed where I was, leaning against the wall, and waited. He returned, sans jacket, and held a bottled water in his hand. I stared at him, unable to move my eyes from his. My lungs stopped working, so did my legs. I was struck at how sexy this man was, how much I wanted him and, fuck, it wasn't that I wanted him for just sex. No I *wanted him*, wanted him. The care he took with me, the look of desire, of longing and want in his eyes... he wasn't afraid to show me how he felt. And yeah, for a while I thought he was just playing me,

but I knew deep down it was real. What he felt was real and shit, what I felt was real too.

Law opened my water and handed it to me.

I pushed his hand aside, jumped into his arms, and stuck my tongue down his throat.

Yeah, okay, call me what you want, but I just couldn't contain myself. The man looked so freaking hot standing there, being all sweet getting me water.

Law headed for my bedroom, one hand around my waist, kissing me back. A few times we crashed into the wall and stayed there, my body being held up by his glorious hard body. His hands roamed all over my body, squeezing my ass, gripping the back of my neck, cupping my face. I had my hands in his hair, holding on for dear life, desperately trying to mold my body with his.

Deciding I needed more, I untangled my limbs from his hips and started working to unbuckle his belt. Law started ripping at my corset, I assumed, trying to get it off. When it wouldn't budge, he cursed, reached behind him and produced this small knife. I paused, eyes wide, wondering what the hell.

“Be still,” he ordered, and I obeyed as he took the tip of the knife and placed it in between my breasts. I held my breath and watched as he suddenly arched his hand downward, bringing the knife along the fabric of my leather corset. I gasped as the leather, along with the lace shirt I wore, fell into two halves. He then went to work on my shorts, ripping them on the sides until it fell in pieces to my feet. Law dropped the knife, then removed the rest of the torn materials off my body by hand.

“Impatient, are you?” I teased, smirking at him.

He met my eyes and replied, “You've been teasing me since the moment I saw you outside the elevator. You damn right I couldn't wait.” His hands traveled along my hips, around to my back and along my spine. I shuddered from the feel of his touch, closed my eyes, and reveled in the sensations his caress created.

“Fuck, Princess, I’ve missed you,” I heard him whisper and immediately opened my eyes to find his filled with adoration and desire. They raked over my body, taking in every inch of my bareness.

Law slid his thumbs over my black sheer strapless bra, sliding along my perky nipples.

“Do you know how crazy I’ve been since I left you?”

My brows furrowed in confusion. When? Was he talking about the time he went away? When I walked away? Or earlier tonight?

“I don’t know what it is about you,” he went on to say in a whisper, still caressing my nipples, “but I can’t stop thinking about you, can’t stop myself from wanting you...”

My eyes rolled to the back of my head, his name falling from my lips on a soft moan.

I felt him shift closer to me. His lips gently touched mine.

“... from needing you...” he continued, kissing my jaw, shifting to my neck, kissing, sucking, licking. “Forgive me for being an arse...”

He pinched my nipples. My knees buckled.

“Law,” I cried out, wrapped an arm around his neck and gripped his shirt for balance.

“Forgive me,” he whispered against the heated skin of my neck, repeated himself as he kissed my shoulder. He pulled down the front of my bra and sucked a nipple into his mouth. At the same time, he pinched my other nipple harder than before. I gasped, feeling wetness pool between my legs, the throbbing of my clit as my heart raced, breaths coming out in pants. And when he buried two fingers inside my wet heat, I damn near lost my shit.

“Fuck... yess, Law, yesss. I forgive you... I for... oh yes, right there... please... please...”

The panting grew faster, heavier. My hips rotated against his fingers. My body quivered as an impending orgasm climbed along my body. His fingers were working some

serious magic, sending white hot sparks flowing through my veins.

When I climaxed, I couldn't stop the scream that fell from my lips, nor the blasphemy that roared out as he teased and toyed with my clit to make me come back-to-back.

His lips were on mine again, his tongue dancing with mine, the kiss feral, hot, hard, and greedy. He pulled his fingers from my pussy and started pulling down my thong. I took over and pulled them down past my thighs and shimmed them the rest of the way, our lips still bumping into one another, our tongues doing their best to stay connected.

Law shifted his hips and worked on unbuckling his pants. I worked on getting his shirt off by snatching the two sides apart.

The rest of our frantic movements went on until he grabbed my thigh, placed it against his hip and rammed his cock into my eager and greedy pussy, pushing me to my tippy toes, despite my four-inch wedges.

Damn, that shit felt good, especially when his thrusts immediately turned violent, uncontrolled and gloriously rough. This... this was what I have been missing ever since I lost my virginity: straight, unhinged, grimy fucking. He felt sooo fucking good, and I told him so over and over and over and over again.

Just when I felt my body getting ready for an earth-shattering release, Law suddenly pulled out, turned me around and pushed me up against the wall. I was about to protest when he yanked on my hips back toward him, kicked my legs open and slammed back into me.

“Ahhh,” fell shakily from my parted lips as a new sensation took over my body.

“Fuck... Princess... this pussy. Fuckkkk...”

We moved together. Me bouncing back against his hard, deep thrusts. I glanced over my shoulder and found the most erotic sight I had ever seen. Law's eyes were glued to my ass,

watching himself, his lip trapped between his teeth, his hair draped all around his dark sensual features.

I was in awe, in reverence, completely transfixed on this sexy as fuck man as he fucked me so thoroughly. I knew I would see stars when I came. I swear this was the best fucking night of my...

“Oh, fuck me,” I screamed out, lifted on my tiptoes as Law bent his knees and hit a place inside my body I didn’t know existed.

“You like that, Princess?”

I nodded frantically, did my best to grip the wall in front of me and allowed this man to bring me pleasure I’d never felt before in my entire life.

He picked up his pace and gripped my hips tight.

“Touch yourself, Princess. Pinch your nipples... yeah, like that, ohhh fuckk...”

Naturally, I did what he asked and came so hard I damn near fell face first on the tiled floor beneath me. Law was right behind me, growling out my name as he spilled inside me. A curse fell from his lips, after a second or two had passed. He slowly pulled out of me, turned me around and kissed me deeply, passionately as he backed me into the bedroom. We fell on the bed, shifted to the top and remained cuddled together, kissing, petting, catching our breaths.

I finally fell to my back when my heartbeat slowed. I closed my eyes and smiled, feeling the rush of goosebumps along my skin as Law caressed my hip, my thighs.

“Too bad you dropped that water. I could really use some right about now.”

Law chuckled and placed a soft kiss on my cheek.

“Your wish is my command.”

I felt him shift off the bed and I opened my eyes to catch him walk out of the bedroom, his glorious tight ass moving as he walked. And those back muscles... damn, they... wait... what was that inked in an arch across his upper back? All I

saw were wings with words in the middle. The many times we've been together naked, this was the first time I've seen him from behind.

Fuck, that was hot. His tatt was large and looked detailed. I bet that shit hurt. I didn't have any tattoos. I went with Hailey when she got tatted, but I couldn't find anything that moved me to do the same. Maybe I'd get one now, put that on my to-do list.

Law reentered the bedroom, and all thoughts flew right out the window, along with the will to speak, as I openly ogled him. He was so sexy, and his walk was so commanding and dominant. *And those eyes of his... fuck, I love him...*

Dammit!

"You alright?"

What in the hell do I do now? I love him. I am completely, head over tits, in love. Did he feel anything close to what I felt?

"Princess?"

I closed my eyes and shook my head, trying to get my thoughts back to rational levels instead of insane. I was in love with Lawson Morelli despite barely knowing him. Hell, according to him, I didn't know him at all. And I know I had admitted to Hailey that I was in love, but dammit, whatever I felt was deeper than just love. So much deeper.

"Sydney!"

I jumped, startled by the heavy sound of my name coming from a now frowning Law.

"Yes... Yes. Umm sorry. I'm good. I'm good."

"Are you sure? You sort of spaced out on me for a moment," he informed me, handing me my water, the top already removed.

I thanked him, took the bottle from him, sat up, and rested against the headboard. I chuckled nervously. "Oh, yeah, sorry about that. No, I'm good, I promise."

Fucking Liar...

I managed to drink more than three-fourths of the bottle before I came up for air.

“You didn’t seem thirsty at all,” Law joked before he too drank most of his water.

I placed my bottle down on the side table and waited patiently for him to come up for air. When he did, I asked, “What does your tattoo say?”

“My brother’s keeper.”

My eyebrows rose.

“Wow, I take it all three of you have the same tattoo?”

“Yes. We got it when we turned eighteen.”

“Can I see it up close?”

Law drank the rest of his water, handed the empty bottle to me, and I placed it next to mine. When I turned back around, he was lying on his stomach.

I traced my finger along the length of a pair of intricate wings. In the middle of the wings were words in another language, Latin perhaps. *Custos Fratris Mei*. The words were blocky, in a script that made this tatt badass.

“Is this Latin, or Italian, or something?”

“It’s Latin,” he replied, rolled over, grasped my hand and, with his eyes closed, he kissed my palm, then each of my five fingers.

“I take it you three are close?”

He smiled, giving me his eyes.

“We are. We’ve been like that since birth. Where there’s one, the others are always close by.”

I raised an eyebrow and started looking toward the doorway of the bedroom, thinking that his brothers were possibly sitting in the living room, and they just heard us having sex.

Law's laughter caused my heart to flutter. For one, it was such a glorious sound, and for two, based on what Hailey said, he didn't do it often.

"Love, I don't mean that literally, well rather not in this situation I don't."

"Oh, okay. Hey don't laugh. Maybe you three were into some kinky stuff or something."

"Are you into that kind of kink?" he asked me, his voice dropping a few octaves as he spoke. "Do you like being watched while having sex?"

I leaned away from him, grabbed the pillow behind me and swatted him with it.

"Um, fuck no. I'm good."

He graced me with that beautiful, rich, dark laugh of his again. Damn, I loved it.

Smiling, I asked, "What about you? Do you like it?"

"Not particularly. Have I done it before? Yes. But it's not something I need to do to get off. However, if you like it. I'll make an except—"

"Wait, stop. You had sex while others watched?" I asked, eyes wide. I knew he was out of my league, but damn.

"Yes, of course I did."

I shook my head. "Don't say it like it's normal. That's so not normal."

He laughed. "Maybe not for you. But shit, the parties I used to attend as a teenager, that shit happened all the time. It wasn't like we swapped partners or paid attention to others around us. We were too busy focusing on the girls we were with to care."

I was in awe. He was a swinger in high school. That's in-fucking-sane. Suddenly, I started to panic. I knew he said he wasn't into it now, but I still had to ask?

"Soooo, you're not into that stuff now, right? Like you're not a swinger or into sex clubs?"

He chuckled. “No, love. I’m not. I told you before I’m a jealous asshole. I couldn’t handle anyone looking at you the way I do. I’d have to beat the shit out of them all. It would be very messy.”

I smiled and shook my head, knowing he spoke the truth. I should be freaked the fuck out, but yeah, I wasn’t. I was flattered. “Ooh-kay, just checking.”

We lulled into a comfortable silence. Law propped the pillows at his back and got comfortable. He pulled me down next to him and I rested my head on his shoulder, my arm draped over his chest. He curled his arm around me and began caressing the arm sitting against his chest lightly with his free hand. I closed my eyes, listening to the sound of his strong heartbeat, soaking up his attention, the feel of being in his arms.

I felt myself relaxing just as he broke the silence.

“I never meant to deceive you on purpose.”

I blew out a breath and admitted softly, “I know.”

Law tilted my head up with his finger and leaned back so his eyes were on mine.

“Honestly, I didn’t think you and I would see each other again after that first night. Thought it would be one of those nights, you know.”

I smiled.

“I do,” I replied, and I did understand his reasoning for being vague about who he was and what he did for a living. I just expected things to change the moment he showed up at my door at one in the morning. The declarations of interest he expressed. I think that’s when I expected things to change between us.

I rested on my elbows, trying not to feel some type of way that I wasn’t wrapped in his arms and told him what was on my mind.

“I just expected things to be different between us after you showed up at my suite at one in the morning,” I admitted

softly.

Law ran his hand down his face and breathed out a sigh.

“Yeah, I know. To be honest, I wasn’t sure what in the hell I was doing at your suite that second night. It was late. I should have waited until morning to see you or tried to call again. But I couldn’t wait to see you.” He reached up and caressed the side of my face with the backs of his fingers. “I needed to see you, which isn’t something that I’m used to feeling.”

He sat up fully and rested his back against the headboard. I sat up too and folded my legs in front of me. I grabbed a pillow and held it against my chest, mainly to hide my nakedness, but also to protect myself from the vulnerability I had felt.

“I don’t do personal relationships with women,” he confessed, and I could see he too dropped his guard for me, allowed me to see the other side of him. “Never had one in the past, not anything meaningful. This shit is new to me, actually wanting to be with a woman for reasons other than to fuck. There’s just something about you, something I can’t quite put my finger on, but I know whatever it is, I can’t seem to get enough of you. You’re beautiful, sweet, sassy. You make me feel things I’m not used to feeling. I have no clue what I’m supposed to do now. I just know I want to be with you, to get to know you.”

Law reached up, grasped the side of my face, and pulled me toward him. He placed a soft kiss on my lips. Then another. Then another. The next thing I knew, Law was on top of me, his body nestled between my legs, kissing me softly, worshiping my lips as if they were his prized possession.

And hell, I couldn’t concentrate for shit. I had questions, things I wanted to talk to him about, but I couldn’t get my brain to function right.

Damn sexy beast and his devilish tongue.

My head was all muddled, my heart beating like crazy, my soul was soaring with delight and my pussy... well that hoe

was screaming yes, yes, yes. More, more, more.

“Is this what you want, Sydney? Do you want to get to know me too?” I heard him whisper against my lips, finally giving me air to breathe. I opened my eyes and found his on me, studying my face, intently gazing into my soul.

“I do,” I finally whispered back, but thankfully had the wherewithal to add, “but I’m scared.”

He leaned back a little, those deep silvery irises of his hardening slightly.

“Of me?”

I shook my head.

“No, not of you. I may not know you that well, but I know you wouldn’t physically hurt me. Especially considering what happened at the club tonight.”

“Then what are you afraid of?”

I pushed against his chest.

“Can you give me some space? I can’t think clearly with you this close,” I admitted, and truly meant that shit. How was I supposed to lay everything out for him with his hard as hell dick inches from my pussy? And he smelled good too? *And* his sexy, deep accented voice wasn’t helping either. Nope, I wouldn’t be able to focus if my life depended on it.

Law smirked but did what I asked, however, he didn’t go far. He laid next to me on his side, propping his head up with his bent arm.

My eyes traveled along his body, of course, and found his *missile* pointing right at me looking as if it was about to launch at any second.

I sat up, reached for a pillow behind me and placed it over his pocket rocket.

“And do something with him, please. I definitely can’t focus with you pointing that weapon at me.”

Law laughed and draped his arm around the pillow.

“What do you expect, Princess? You’re lying next to me naked. How else do you want me to react?” he raised an eyebrow and looked at me expectantly. Hell, I couldn’t answer that shit. No one has ever said anything like that to me before. Definitely not fucking George.

I shook my head and waved him off.

“Stop trying to distract me with that dangerous tongue of yours too.”

“I would rather slide my tongue along your wet pussy lips, make you come all over my face. Why don’t you lay back and —”

“No! Stop. Law!” I cried out as his hand started gliding along my thigh. I quickly climbed out of bed and took like three steps away from the bed.

“I’m trying to be serious here,” I said pointedly, folding my arms in front of my chest trying to hide my girls. But I realized, as his eyes focused on my nether lips, that I had to cover her as well and I was all out of hands. “Oh fuck!” I blanched, left the room, and rushed into the bathroom to grab my robe.

When I returned, Law was sitting up, his back against the headboard, smiling. Thankfully, as my eyes naturally perused his body, the pillow was still covering his dangerous parts.

“Look, Law,” I started quickly before he did something else to muddle my brain. “I want to get to know you, I do. But I’m worried that starting something with you is too soon. I’m just recently divorced, and the ink isn’t even dry yet. Shouldn’t I wait for a while before getting into something else with another man? Isn’t there some mourning period I’m supposed to go through?”

I remained standing at the edge of the bed, looking at him, waiting. When he didn’t reply, I started pacing, walking to the door to the patio, then walking back to the bed.

“Granted, I’ve been over George for a long time,” I went on to say. “Like three years, despite that, I have this foul taste in my mouth about relationships, you know?” I looked over at

him as I walked back to the bed. He was still sitting in the same place, his arms folded in front of him, watching me. His silence was making me even more nervous than I was already. I kept yapping away and pacing.

“Not that you’re asking to be in a relationship with me or anything I know, but still. I shouldn’t get into anything with anyone right now. And yet I still want to get to know you. I want to spend time with you. I like you, despite you lying to me. Well, you didn’t lie per se... you—Hey!” I screeched in surprise when I turned to head back to the bed and Law was standing right in front of me. *How in the fuck did he do that? Move without me hearing him.*

“How did...” I began to ask when he reached up and trapped my face between his large hands.

He kissed my lips, a sweet kiss, soft and meaningful. A kiss that made my heart go pitter-patter, and my stomach flutter.

“I’m sorry for not telling you about my brothers,” He admitted, his eyes bearing down on me, tenderness in his voice. “I wanted to tell you, I really did, but I hesitated. I wasn’t sure about what I was feeling. Or how to deal with it. As I said, I’m not used to this relationship shit. But what I do know, is that I want you. We can take shit slow if that’s what you want, but I’ll tell you right now, Sydney, that I’m not letting you go. And maybe that scares you, or makes you panic, but the sooner you get used to being mine the better off we both will be.”

“L-Law,” I stammered out, reached up and grabbed his wrists. I tried to step back from him, but he only walked me backwards until my back hit the patio door, caging me.

“You said it yourself,” he pointed out. “You are way past being over that prick you were married to, so there’s nothing stopping you from being with me.”

“It’s too soon,” I argued feebly.

“Fuck too soon. Sydney don’t deny what you feel or ignore what your heart is telling you. You know there’s something

between us, something deep and confusing, but amazing too. I can feel it every time I'm with you, but it gets deeper when I'm not with you. It's to where I feel like I'm going to lose my fucking mind if I don't get to you. Believe me, that's not good for someone like me."

"But I don't know you well enough," I countered. "Do you understand? I shouldn't be feeling like..." I paused, feeling my eyes beginning to water.

Get your shit together, Sydney. Do not cry in front of this man.

Law took advantage of my sudden silence and tightened his hold on me. He stepped closer into my space and locked me down with this fierce intensity in his eyes that took my breath away.

"Then get to know me. Take the time and learn what you need to know about me. Fuck, I bet you know most of it already if I know Hailey, but you need more from me. You want to hear the shit from my mouth then fine. I'll be happy to explain the man standing before you. Just... give me that chance to show you who and what I am. Princess, somehow, you've gotten through my defenses. You've embedded yourself deep inside my soul, and now I can't let you go. I just can't, not until you're sure you want to be free. But don't run without first giving us a chance. Let me show you what it's like to be with a real man, one that adores the fuck out of you. I promise you, baby, if you do, all your fears and hesitation will fall away. You'll then realize the same thing I did."

"Yeah? And what's that?" I asked breathlessly.

Law didn't hesitate.

"That I'm the only one for you."

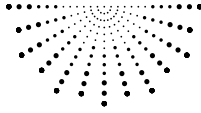
Well, got damn...

What in the hell do I say to that shit? Nothing.

Instead, I opted for actions. I jumped in his arms, wrapped my legs around his waist and stuck my tongue down his throat.

Nuff said!

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN



LAWSON

My grip on her damp, tangled hair was tight. I forced my will on her, controlled her, just how I knew she liked it. I was aggressively going at her pussy like a man out of my mind, and I *was* out of my mind, in lust, with a feverish need to dominate her in every way possible.

Sweat dripped down my face, into my eyes, but I refused to let her go to wipe it away.

“Oh fuck, Law... yesss, please, right there. Right...” She panted, screamed, chanted oh shit, oh shit so loud I thought the walls shook from the sound of her pleasure. Being the gentleman that I was, I pushed her head back into the pillow to absorb the sounds of her cry, but I knew it was fruitless.

She couldn't keep quiet to save her life. I was hitting her G-spot, gliding along her smooth as silk walls with a purpose to destroy and I had no desire to stop. I couldn't help myself. She felt so damn good, so fucking amazing and addictive.

I started off slow after I got her back into the bed and removed her stupid robe, with me on top sliding into her slick heat with ease. After we changed positions, her on her stomach, ass up, I increased my speed, fucking her harder, deeper than I ever thought possible. It was a passion-filled onslaught of both of our senses and okay, I fucking lost it. I blacked out and gave into that carnal desire to make her mine, to dominate and control her every moan of pleasure, every cry of ecstasy.

I also learned never to sleep on Sydney. Just as she surprised me with how well she sucked me off, she wasn't a slouch in the bedroom either. She showed me that very thing when she started bouncing her thick ass on my cock.

I cursed, slapped her ass hard in appreciation and demanded in a gravelly voice, "Fuck me, baby. Just like that. Fuck yeah, Princess. Fuck me... ohhh fuckkkk!"

I threw my head back and I swear I felt like a fucking king as she took her pleasure from me. When she came, fuck if I didn't see stars when her walls collapsed around my dick.

"Law, baby... I can't take it... please I can't... oh fucking hell," she barked out and I could feel her coming again fast. This one was going to take her under, I felt it, felt how tight she was gripping my dick. Did I speed up, yes, but not for my pleasure. This was all about her.

"I'm going to cum... I'm cumming. I'm..."

"Cum for me baby, give it to me. Fuck, you're so fucking beautiful, so got damn sexy. Yesss. Baby, just like that, fuckkkk..."

She buried her own face in the pillow and screamed out her release. She collapsed to the bed, taking me with her. I shifted her ass up, shoved a pillow underneath her hips and bent her leg. I threaded my fingers through her matted hair and twisted her face to the side and bent close to her ear.

"You're mine, Sydney, no one else's. This pussy is mine. This body is mine. Your heart is mine. Your soul is fuc-king mine. I will kill anyone that touches you, anyone that harms you, anyone that makes you cry. I will protect you with my life. Comfort you, adore you, worship you. You're a part of me now, baby. Mine. Mine. Mine."

Fuck, I said some other shit to her I'd rather keep between us for now, but it was the most I've ever promised to a woman, hell to anyone for that matter. I didn't know when or how it happened, but Sydney Fontane had become a part of my soul. She would be mine for the rest of her life and mine. I would

not let her go. I would not allow her to leave me, and I didn't give two fucks how that sounded.

I was being honest with myself, and I would be honest with her too. If she ever left me, I would lose my fucking mind. I would destroy this world until I found her, beg her to take me back and do whatever I could to make up for whatever mistake I made. Was that healthy for either of us? Fuck no, but I didn't give a shit.

I finally allowed my body to release and screamed out her name into the pillow next to her. I collapsed on the side of her, bringing her limp body with me and wrapped my arms around her body, holding her close.

I kissed her shoulder before reaching around her and pulling the comforter over both of our sweaty bodies.

I was just about to succumb to sleep when I heard her ask breathlessly, "Did you cum?"

I chuckled. "Yeah, princess, I did. You didn't hear me? I think all of New York heard me."

"No, I think I passed out." She admitted, shock in her soft voice.

I froze, eyes wide.

"Did I hurt you?" I asked, chastising myself for being too rough with her. She started to move, and realizing I was still inside her, I had to slide out of her quickly before she castrated me. She completed her turn and faced me, placing her soft hand on my bearded cheeks.

"No, of course not. It was amazing. Being with you is amazing. I just think I came so hard I blacked out."

I smirked, and she rolled her eyes. "Alright, don't give yourself too much credit."

"I'll try not to. But you're okay?"

"Yes, I'm good. You?"

My lips curled into a smile.

“Yeah, I’m good. So, fucking good,” I admitted softly, then tightened my hold on her.

I closed my eyes, ready again to let sleep come when she spoke again.

“I’m yours, huh?”

I opened my eyes. “Yes. Do you have a problem with that?”

The side of her mouth curled into her cheeks.

“It would have been nice if you asked first.”

“Mmmm,” was my reply as my eyes involuntarily closed.

“You know this doesn’t get you off the hook. You can’t just dick me down every time you piss me off. I still have questions about who you are, what you do. Specifically, about what went down at the club.”

“Umm-hmm, and I’ll answer them all tomorrow. But right now, sleep, baby. I need sleep.” I then opened one eye and teased lightly, “Unless you’re ready for round three?”

Sydney’s eyes widened, and she turned her back to me and tucked her body against mine.

“Nope, sleep sounds amazing. We’ll talk tomorrow.”

I couldn’t help the shit-eating grin that spread along my face. I kissed her shoulder and settled my arm around her waist.

“Goodnight, love.”

“Night.”

I settled into my pillow, feeling my body relax when she started moving again.

I couldn’t help the growl that escaped my mouth.

“Where are you going?” I mumbled, barely containing my frustration. I was so bloody tired. I wanted to sleep, but I couldn’t do it comfortably without her. Don’t ask why, I haven’t the foggiest idea.

“Bathroom,” she whispered back. I groaned, not caring how it sounded, and reluctantly released my hold.

“Hurry back, I need to sleep.”

“You need me to sleep?”

I opened one eye and gave her a death stare.

“Yes!”

Her eyebrows lifted.

“Ooh-kay,” she said softly and scurried out of the bed and out of the room.

It only took her a few minutes before I heard her return, but that shit felt like forever. I watched impatiently as she climbed back into the bed and settled against me. I moaned my approval, draped an arm over her hip, and I drifted off in seconds.

Fucking unfortunately, not long after I fell asleep, my phone started ringing. I wanted to ignore it, but the ringer told me that one of my brothers was calling me. The ringing stopped, but not a second later it started ringing again.

Sydney squirmed in my arms. I groaned and cursed. The ringing stopped. Then started again.

“Fuck.”

“Is that your phone?” Sydney asked groggily.

“Yeah, it’s one of my brothers calling me.”

“How do you know?”

“I have a special ringer for them. It only goes off if they really need me.”

She turned her head to look at me over her shoulder.

“How do you know if they really need you by the ringer?”

“It’s a long story, but they call using a specific number. I set a particular ringer for that number, letting me know their call is important.”

The phone stopped, then started back up again.

I laid on my back and stared up at the ceiling, trying to get my body moving. I didn't want to leave Sydney, but I knew if I didn't get up now and find out what they wanted, one of them would walk inside this room, guns out.

I growled and turned away from the warmth of Sydney's body. I stood from the bed and headed to the hallway where I had left my pants. My phone was in my pocket. I bent over, grabbed my pants, and pulled out my phone. I had two messages. One from Grey that said simply, '*found them. Sending Uncle Duke now.*'

I grinned.

He was talking about the two bouncers that should have been watching Sydney on the dance floor. I had called ahead to set up the protection detail, along with the bottles for Hailey and Sydney, when Frankie advised they were leaving the rooftop bar and he was taking them to Sheas. But when I arrived and saw that motherfucker on the dance floor about to touch what belonged to me, there wasn't a bouncer in sight. I had specifically said if anything happened to either of the women, I would personally gut them like the fucking pigs they were. Maybe they thought I was figuratively speaking. I guess they'll find out soon enough.

However, I had to put aside my need for revenge. Nix had also texted me and said simply, '*we need you now*'.

That was it. Nothing else, and it came in just before the calls started.

"Fuck!"

I texted back, quickly, '*I'm on my way*'.

"Is everything okay?" Sydney asked from the bedroom.

I started pulling on my pants before entering the bedroom.

"Not sure. Nix needs me for something. I need to go see what he wants." I zipped up my pants and sat on the bed next to her. I caressed her cheeks with the backs of my fingers. "Go back to sleep. I'll be back once I find out what's going on. If I can't make it back, I'll call you. We can head to breakfast or

something later. There're some things we need to talk about, things to get straight. Are you alright with that?"

She smiled up at me. "Yeah, okay, sounds like a plan," she said sleepily, barely keeping her eyes open. I leaned over and kissed her forehead.

I stared at her for a moment or two longer before I rose, grabbed the rest of my shit from the front room and exited the suite, but not before grabbing one of her keys to the room before I left.

It was a short walk to my suite from the elevator and as I stepped inside, I froze. Inside the living space were my brothers, of course, but also Ivie and another woman. The other woman I had learned a long time ago was Ciara Brooks, aka Jade, the handler that had her knickers in a twist for Grey.

How did I find a woman whose job was to remain a ghost? Fuck if my brother was crushing on a woman and I didn't know shit about her. I had found her easily enough, wondered why Grey hadn't.

What the fuck was she doing here?

"I'm here. What's up?" I asked, allowing the door to close behind me. I locked the door and stepped further into the living area.

"Looks like Timmy grew a set of balls in just a few hours," Nix announced with disdain lacing his voice.

He then proceeded to tell me shit that had my blood boiling and trigger finger itching for some action.

"Make a long story short," he concluded. "Our sibling is out having private meetings with your best mate, Fatmir and his crew."

"I'm going to kill that little shit the moment I find him," I announced, challenging Nix and Grey to try to talk me out of

it. Yet they didn't say a word. They knew damn well nothing would stop me from killing him now. Nothing.

“Oh, that's not all,” Nix added. “For some unknown reason, the Albanians have put out a hit on us. Five million.”

I raised an eyebrow. “Fat arse has balls, doesn't he? Do we know where they are?”

“They?” Both Grey and Nix asked.

“Yeah, *they*. And I don't mean Fat boy and his walking dead arse crew.”

My brothers looked at each other before giving me a blank stare.

I sighed deeply and explained, “Look, Timmy might have grown a set, but he didn't grow it alone. He's not that bright. He wouldn't have set all this shit in motion by himself, let alone put a hit out on us. No, his older brother Lucian is with him, isn't he?”

Again, Nix and Grey glanced at each other before Nix spoke up. “Yeah, he is.”

“And do we know where they are?” I queried the entire room.

“No, we don't,” Ivie spoke up. “We assumed they would be on their way here.”

“Wait, back up? Grey interjected, his eyes on me. “How did you find out Lucian was in town?” Grey prodded, glancing at his laptop before bringing his eyes back to me. “I didn't even know, and I have a program that's supposed to let me know whenever any of our siblings travel.”

I shrugged. “You're not the only smart one in the family. He's using an alias, one that he just got, so it's not on your radar yet. I found out from a source loyal to us. They reached out and gave me his new name and info. I didn't think anything of it until I got notification that the alias had been used to travel from the UK to New York. I thought he would show up at the dinner tonight. Now we know why he's really here.”

Nix blew out a breath.

“We need to devise a plan. It seems we’re about to have an impromptu family reunion.”

“Yeah, looks like it,” I replied, then looked at both of my brothers. “You do know what this means, don’t you?” They didn’t answer, but the looks in their eyes told me they understood completely. However, I said anyway just for the sake of saying it, and the pleasure of knowing my wishes were finally going to come true, “Zeus has declared war.”

Nix raised his hand and shook his head. “We don’t know that for sure.”

I stepped closer to him, giving him my best, *the fuck, are you stupid*, look. “Yes, we fucking do.”

“Why do you think it’s Zeus?” Jade asked, her eyes hopping from me to Nix, then finally Grey. “What if this is something completely different? Like what if the two brothers are working alone or with—”

“Timmy and Lucien are too stupid to act alone,” Grey said, cutting her off. “There’s something more at play here, and Zeus is at the helm of it all.”

“You have another brother, right?” Jade asked. “What about him? Do you think he’s involved?”

I shook my head. “No, Alexi is clean.”

“Yeah, he is,” Ivie added. “He’s away in college trying to forget all about his family. He has a girlfriend and they’re thinking about getting a flat of their own in Chelsea.”

Nix grunted. “He’s always been like that. He’s told us he didn’t want anything to do with his father, brothers or his mum. Said they were all psychotic.”

Ivie smiled. “Yeah, but he likes you three.”

“That’s because we treat him like a human fucking being,” Nix bit out coldly. “He’s not like us, he doesn’t have an evil bone in his body. His family thinks there’s something wrong with the lad. They treat him like shit. We don’t.”

“That left the other two idiots, your father and evil stepmother,” Ivie replied then pointed to Jade. “I had contacted Cee-Cee to do a workup on Lucien and Timmy. To see what she could come up with.”

Nix raised an eyebrow. “Okay, did you find anything useful?” Nix asked.

She shook her head. “No, not really. I mean, you know how deep the hatred for you goes for those two. That’s not something new. But so far, I haven’t found anything else.”

“So that leaves Zeus. He’s the one running this show,” I reiterated, placing hard eyes on each of my brothers.

Nix stood and headed for the bar at the corner of the room. He made himself a drink, took a sip, then regarded the room.

“Alright, shit’s about to get messy. We can’t have anything go down here. We need to move this party somewhere else.”

“Do you want to lure them somehow?” Ivie asked, then added. “I don’t know if there’s time for that. They have to be on their way. I’m surprised we beat them here.”

Grey informed her, “We changed rooms after we left the hotel earlier today. We paid for someone to move our shit to this room. Timmy doesn’t know that, so it will take him some time to find us.” He then looked at Nix. “But he will find us, so what do you want to do?”

Nix remained quiet for a few before he laid out a plan.

“We don’t know what their plans are for coming here. I doubt they’re coming here to have some gun fight, or any fight for that matter. Let’s wait it out, see what happens. If they come here alone, just the two of them, we hunker down and wait for them to come to us. If they come with company, then...” Nix trailed off, shrugged a shoulder, a sly smirk spreading along his face.

I nodded agreeing with the plan, especially the silent one. It was risky, but I was good with it. In the meantime, I needed to call Sydney. I didn’t want her anywhere near what was about to go down and being in this hotel was too close for my comfort.

I pulled out my phone and searched for her number. As I brought the phone to my ear, I announced to the room, "I'm going to call Sydney. I need to warn her not to open the door for anyone until I come and get her. I need to get her out of here before this shit hits the fan." The call went to voicemail, and I hung up and dialed again, trying not to let the panic I began to feel take shape.

"Ohhhh, Sydney huh? Who's that? Your girlfriend?" Ivie asked, smirking at me. I gave her the finger. She laughed.

Nix asked, "What do you want to do? You know we don't have time to make sure she gets out of here safely."

"We can take care of that. What's her room number? Cee-Cee and I can get her, take her somewhere safe."

I glanced at Nix first, making sure I could indeed trust Ivie. I knew I could, but I wanted to be sure how deep that trust should go. Also, I wanted him to know that if anything happened to Sydney when she was with Ivie, shit would get complicated really quick.

Nix gave me a nod, and shocked as fuck, I regarded Ivie.

"Yeah, thanks. She's not answering her phone. Let's get this plan in motion. I need to go to her room and make sure she's good." I glanced back at Nix and Grey. "I'll make the intros and meet you back here. In the meantime, Grey, I hope you're searching for our beloved siblings. When you find them, ping me. If they're already here, let me know."

"Got it," Grey replied, but his focus was on Jade, or rather Cee-Cee.

I headed for the door, not waiting for Ivie or Cee-Cee, but I heard their footsteps quickly following.

I was getting a bad feeling that had a vice grip around my chest. I wasn't sure what it all meant, but something wasn't right. I had called her cell multiple times and the room phone. All the calls had gone unanswered.

I called for the lift, and we waited in silence before the doors opened and we stepped inside.

The ride took less than a minute and I found myself damn near running to her suite. I pulled out the key, inserted it, and stepped inside.

“Sydney!” I called out just in case and waited for a reply. The only answer I received was silence. I gave Ivie a nod, and she broke off toward the living space, her gun in hand. I looked back at Cee-Cee and was surprised she too had her gun out. She gave me a nod, showing she knew I needed her to watch the door.

I pulled my Glock and proceeded to walk down the hall. I cleared the bathroom, then the closet. Dread seeped deeper into my soul as I made my way to the bedroom. Darkness that I barely contained beneath the surface of my being took over. I felt it flowing through my veins.

I entered the bedroom and found the bed empty. I glanced at the patio door and my heart fucking sank. I quickly checked the small space and there she was, sitting in a chair wrapped in a blanket. She had her eyes closed, slouched in the chair so she could rest her head against the back cushion. From the distance, it looked as if she wasn't breathing. As if she could be...

I blinked a few times, stepped further out onto the patio and, as if she sensed my presence, she opened her eyes and glanced my way.

I couldn't tell you the level of relief I felt. Her gorgeous brown eyes met mine and her face morphed into a smile that damn near had me confessing my soul to her.

She stood and made her way to me. As she got close, I saw the questions fill her eyes as her smile faltered slightly. She opened her mouth as if to ask me a question, but she didn't have time to form her words. The moment she was close, I reached out with my free hand, gripped the back of her head and pulled her to me, my lips finding hers before she took in a breath.

Kissing this woman was my drug, but the fear that overcame me when she didn't answer my calls caused my heart to damn near stop beating. I had never felt fear like that

in my life. Never. The life I led didn't have room for that word. And yet, for the first time, that's what I felt. Fear of losing the woman that I... what loved?

Fuck me...

I tucked my Glock in the small of my back and wrapped my arms around this woman that would probably be the death of me. I consumed her taste, her touch, desperately wanting to push her up against the wall and get lost in her. Shit, that's all I wanted to do in this moment. The hell with the threat of violence coming my way, or that more blokes were gunning for me and my brothers. I wanted to run away with her and never look back.

I released her lips, lifted her until her legs wrapped around my waist and rested my forehead against hers. I closed my eyes and inhaled her, reveled in the feel of her against me. The surrounding sounds fell away. Nothing but the sound of my woman's heart beating gave me solace, gave me peace.

She ran her fingers through my hair as a soft moan escaped my lips.

"Did you miss me?" she asked softly, humor lacing her voice.

I grunted, not wanting to express out loud how I felt the moment I thought she was gone. Fuck that, I was going to my grave with that feeling.

Instead of answering her, I leaned back and chastised her. "Where is your phone? I called you multiple times."

She frowned. "It's in the bedroom. I was just going to come out here for a second, but the moment I sat down, I don't know. I guess I fell asleep." She smirked at me. "Someone tired me out."

I breathed out a sigh. "Baby, go nowhere without your phone, do you hear me?" I reprimanded, unable to hide the urgency in my voice.

She stiffened in my arms. "What's wrong? Is everything okay?"

I unwrapped her from my waist and planted her on the patio floor. I took her hand and guided her back inside. As we entered into the bedroom, Ivie stepped through the doorway.

“I just called Hailey and... oh shit. You found her?”

Sydney gasped lightly and tightened the blanket around her body.

“Who is she? What’s going on?”

Before I could say something, Ivie smiled and stepped further into the room.

“Hey, Sydney. I know we haven’t had the pleasure of meeting. We were supposed to do that this week. My name is Ivie. I’m a friend of Hailey’s.”

I watched Sydney’s facial features turn from guarded to curious. She looked from me to her and smiled slightly. “Yeah, I’ve seen your picture before. You’re Hailey’s friend from childhood.”

Ivie smiled brighter, more relaxed. “That’s right. And you’re her roommate from college.” She glanced up at me. “I don’t know why I didn’t put it together downstairs.” She then looked back at Sydney. “I’ve heard a lot about you.”

“Same,” Sydney replied. She looked up at me, her eyes narrowed slightly. “What’s going on, Law?”

I took a deep breath and met her eyes, trying to figure out what all I should tell her. There was a lot going on, besides my half-brothers wanting me dead, and I had zero time to get into it. I turned to face her and rubbed her arms through the blanket, meeting her eyes and questions with temporary silence.

I heard Ivie clear her throat and announce, “Ummm, I’m going to call Hailey back and let her know you’ve found her before the bloodshed starts. You know how crazy her brothers are.”

I grunted my agreement, but my eyes never left Sydney. When we were alone, I said, “Princess, I know we have a lot to talk about, questions you need answered, shit you need to

hear. I promise once I get some shit sorted, you and I will talk.”

“What shit do you need to get sorted? Can you at least tell me that?” she asked, and it was a valid question, one I should have been expecting.

“In a nutshell, it seems my siblings have put out a hit on us.”

Her eyes grew wide, then she frowned her cute little nose. “Wait... what other siblings?” Damn I had a lot to tell her.

“My father has three other sons and two of those three are after us.”

“Why are they after you?”

“Who knows. They’re jealous, stupid or suicidal. Either way, my brothers and I need to go find them and have a little chat.”

Sydney stepped back from me giving me a wary eye. “That sounds dangerous.”

I shrugged. “It won’t be for me. I can’t say the same for them.”

“Law...” she began, but I closed the distance and captured her face between my hands.

“Princess, I don’t want you to worry.”

She gave me the dirtiest of looks and pushed my hands away from her face. “Don’t tell me not to worry. I know what you mean when you say you’re going to have a little “chat”. I may not know everything about you, but I know one thing, if someone tried to kill you, you’re going to kindly return the favor.”

Damn...

I bit back a grin, but she saw it and rolled her eyes. “Oh, please wipe that smirk off your face. I’m being serious here.”

“Love...” I went to touch her, and she slapped my hand away.

“Don’t *Love* me, with that deep sexy ass British accent of yours. You’re downplaying this, trying to make this seem like it’s not a big deal when I know it is.”

Sydney stepped out of the room and from the sound of it, she walked inside the walk-in closet. I sat on the bed and waited for her to return, not wanting to crowd her, giving her a minute to work through this shit.

When she returned to the room, she was dressed in a pair of black spandex tights and a cropped, oversized t-shirt, one side hanging off her bare shoulder. She had flip-flops on her feet and anger in her eyes. She stepped over to the dresser, grabbed her purse, her phone, and narrowed her heated gaze on me. I raised an eyebrow in response.

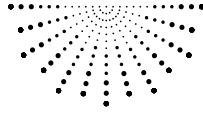
“What?” She asked. “I’m leaving here, right? Didn’t you come here to tell me I had to go somewhere safe? Maybe with Hailey?”

Well shit...

I had no words. I knew she had some understanding about the life I led dealing with Hailey, but I didn’t expect this. I figured I’d have to coax her to get dressed, push her to be quick and promise her the moon so she wouldn’t ask me any more questions. I didn’t have to do any of that. Well, I mean, I did promise to answer all of her questions, but that went without saying. The fact that she knew what I wanted before I even told her meant one thing... this woman was definitely made for me.

I stood and motioned for her to walk ahead of me. She gave me a stiff nod, turned and marched out of the bedroom. I sighed deeply, knowing I was going to pay for this in more ways than one. I smiled at the thought of her punishing me. Yeah... There was no doubt in my mind. I loved this woman.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN



SYDNEY

My heart was pounding against my chest. I knew or at least suspected what Law did in the dark, however, when my thoughts became a reality, it was very overwhelming. I kept my cool, though. I didn't want Law to see the fear in my eyes, or the apprehension. If I stayed with this man, this would be my life. Law leaving in the middle of the night to do who knows what, go who knows where, and to who knows whom. This would be the norm, *my* norm. Could I handle that? To make matters worse, there was a huge possibility that I would never see him again. Then what? What would my life look like? Let me just say, now that I've opened my heart to him and fell head over heels for him, my life would be nothing without him.

I couldn't lose him. Not now and not ever.

I took a deep breath, ready to confess my soul to him, when I stepped into the living space of my suite and stopped in my tracks.

There, standing in front of me, was another goddess. Where Ivie looked like a sexy as hell badass, this woman looked sweet, warm, friendly. I glanced over at Law, waiting for him to explain why he had two women with him when Ivie spoke up. She moved to the woman's side and placed her arm around her.

"Sydney, I'd like you to meet a very good friend of mine, Cee-Cee. Cee, this is Sydney. She's friends with Hailey and, well... she's Law's woman."

Cee-Cee's lips spread to a stunning smile, one that lit her entire face. It was infectious to see. Despite the craziness I was feeling, I couldn't help but smile back. She extended her hand, and I took it.

"Hey, Sydney, it's nice to meet you," she replied, and her voice was also sweet sounding and warm. Damn, this woman gave me the warm and fuzzies. If I played for the other team, I'd jump her in a heartbeat. I stole a glance toward Law, wondering if they had a connection. Fuck, was this one of his ex's?

Cee-Cee went on, still giving me her warm, and shall I say, very generous smile. "Sorry that it's under these circumstances. Hopefully, when this craziness is over, the four of us can hang out." My eyes immediately went to Law, mind going all types of troubled places. Who the hell was this woman? "Oh no, no!" Cee-Cee blurted, squeezing my hand, eyes wide. "I wasn't including *him*. I meant us and Hailey." She then frowned her cute little nose. "No boys allowed."

I chuckled lightly in spite of myself and replied, albeit hesitantly, "That sounds amazing. I'm down with that."

Cee-Cee, seemingly happy with my reply, launched into all the places we could go and hang out. She seemed very excited and the more she spoke, the more I became at ease. She seemed so nice, her zealous demeanor was contagious. Yeah, I highly doubted she and Law were intimate in any way.

My jealousy eased a lot especially when Law billowed, his annoyance shining through, "Ladies, I hate to interrupt, but I need to go. Are you three good? Ivie, I trust you can handle things from here?"

I stepped back from him, not used to hearing this dark tone from him. Cee-Cee seemed to cower within herself, but Ivie rolled her eyes and crossed her arms in front of her chest.

"Yes, Law," Ivie replied, her own voice dropping a few octaves into frigid zone. "I have it from here. There's been a change of plans, anyway. I'm not taking Sydney to Hailey, she's coming here. She said she's about ten minutes away, which in New York time that's about thirty minutes. We'll

hang out here until she gets here. I'll make sure they're good before I head back to the suite. Does that work for you?" She smirked, and I thought Law was about to lose his top. But he remained calm, or as calm as he could.

"Fine, that's even better," he retorted, then glanced down at me, his hard eyes growing softer. "Call me when you leave with Hailey, and text me your location once you're settled, yeah?"

I nodded, stunned at the transformation. A minute ago, he looked as if he was about to spit fire into the entire room. However, the moment his eyes fell on me, he seemed to calm. Did I do that for him?

"Walk me to the door," he sort of asked and demanded, grabbed my hand and pulled me with him. I glanced back at the ladies and Ivie gave me another eye roll, but she smiled. Cee-Cee gave me wide eyes. I wondered what that was all about.

"Hey?"

I glanced up to find piercing eyes staring down at me. He cupped the side of my face, leaned down, and kissed me gently on the lips. The moment I opened myself to him, he deepened the kiss, lifting me so I could wrap my legs around him, pushing me up against the wall and devouring me. And... I let him. I didn't care who was around, who saw us, nothing. I even forgot that I was pissed at him and scared for him. I threaded my fingers through his hair and gave this man my soul.

When he released me, he rested his forehead against mine. I kept my eyes closed, loving this quiet moment with him, holding him and him holding me. I whispered to him as I pushed his hair from his face, "Stay safe."

He leaned back and met my eyes. He ran his fingers lightly against my cheek. "Always, baby. I'll be to collect you the moment I've handled the spawns of my father."

"You better," I said to him and meant every word.

He grinned at me and placed a feather-like kiss on my lips. We stayed in each other's arms for another minute before his cell began to vibrate in his pocket. He sighed loudly as I shifted from his arms, placing my feet on the floor.

"How long will you be?" I asked.

"Don't know. We have no clue what's going on, just that people seemed to have lost their minds."

"I can't believe your brothers are after you?"

"It happens. But don't worry, love, we'll figure everything out. Then I'll whisk you away from here to a romantic getaway, just the two of us."

I smiled up at him. "Yeah?"

"Yes. We'll leave our lives behind, get lost in each other."

"That sounds amazing. I can't wait."

He leaned over to kiss me again just as we heard Ivie say in the doorway behind Law, "Yes, he's still here. No... he has her pinned up against the wall, though. Pretty sure he consumed every breath in her lungs. I'm surprised she's still conscious."

I closed my eyes, rested my forehead against his chest, and cracked up. Law, of course, didn't find anything funny.

"Uh huh... I'll tell him," Ivie announced, then said to Law, "Your presence is being requested."

A growl escaped my man's body, and I heard Ivie say in response, "Hey don't shoot the messenger."

"Yeah, you're right. I'll just shoot the source of the message," said Law before he kissed my forehead and stepped back from me.

Still smiling, I looked up into his frowning face and touched the side of his cheek. "No shooting your brother."

He grunted.

I shook my head, my smile spreading even more. "Go..." I pushed him toward the door. He didn't budge, so I added,

“Hurry and take care of business, so you can find me and take care of me.”

His brows creased even more. “What do you need?”

“Just you. Now go.”

When I pushed him this time, he moved toward the door, albeit hesitantly. He opened the door to the suite and stepped out into the hallway.

“I’ll text you once Hailey gets here.”

He turned around and nodded. “Do that.”

“Please be careful, Law.”

He gave me a half smile. “I will, Princess.” He then said the craziest shit... something that would’ve had me damn near passing out from shock, from my heart stopping and head spinning if I wasn’t still gripping the door.

What did he say you ask?

Well, this sexy as fuck man leaned into me, kissed my lips and said simply, “I’ll see you later. Love you.”

Yeah... you heard me. He said that he loved me. And... he said it as if he’d been saying it to me all my life, like this wasn’t the first time. I couldn’t speak. I couldn’t breathe. I couldn’t move. I stood there, dumbfounded, as he planted another kiss against my trembling lips, turned and walked away.

I stood in the doorway long after he disappeared down the hallway and long after I heard the ding of the elevator. I couldn’t believe he’d just told me he loved me as if it was just something to say. No, that’s not right. He said it as if fuck... as if he completely meant that shit.

“Sydney? You alright?” I heard behind me. The voice of Ivie caused me to breathe again. I closed the door, engaged the lock and fell against it. I brought wide eyes to her.

“He said he loved me.”

She smirked at me. “Yeah, I heard that.”

“He’s never said that to me before.”

Her smile dropped and her brows furrowed. “What do you mean he’s never said it before? You saying he just told you he loved you for the first time?” I nodded, mouth still hanging open. Ivie’s smirk returned deeper this time. “Awww, hun, that’s great.”

That made me frown.

“What do you mean, that’s great? Who does that? That wasn’t... I mean, you just don’t come out like that and say you love someone.”

“Why not?” she folded her arms over her chest. “It sounded fine to me. I mean, did you think he lied to you?”

“No, I’m not saying that. I—”

“Okay then,” she interrupted. “Because let me tell you, you’re lucky he even said that shit at all.”

“What do you mean?”

“A man like Law...” she took a deep breath and blew it out slowly, dropping her shoulders as she spoke. “Guarantee, he’s never said that to another living soul. And I’m not counting his mama. I’m sure, during his lifetime, he’s told the woman who birthed him he loved her, but that’s about it. He’s just not built like that, so the fact that he told you he loved you, no matter how he said it, means a great deal.”

“Yeah, but...” I started to say but stopped.

She had a point.

Law didn’t seem like the type that would spill his guts to me or lay his heart on the line. Not in the way an average man would. But he was far from average.

I snorted and rolled my eyes.

“What?” Ivie asked.

I chuckled and shook my head just as Cee-Cee stepped into the hallway to join us, a glass of amber liquid in her hand. She handed it to me as I said to them both, “Imagine if he ever asks me to marry him.”

Cee-Cee smiled. “You’ll probably just wake up and find a fat rock on your ring finger and that’s it.”

Ivie laughed. “Girl, ain’t that the truth.” She then eyed Cee-Cee up and down. “Bitch, where’s my drink?”

Cee-Cee smirked. “It’s in there,” she pointed behind her. “I brought hers because I knew her mouth was dry from hearing that Adonis of a man tell her he loved her. You’re still in denial about being in love with Nix. You don’t deserve a drink.”

My eyes practically fell out of my sockets with that bit of news.

“Fuck you. I’m not in love with that asshole. You saw the way he was with me. We barely spoke.”

Cee-Cee rolled her eyes. “Oh please, all I saw was pent up sexual tension. You two need to go handle that.”

Ivie waved her off and headed for the living room, but not before I saw the fire blazing in her eyes.

I couldn’t help the smile that spread along my face as I followed. “Oh, so Nix and Ivie, huh? I can see it.”

Cee-Cee laced her arm through mine. “Girl, you have no idea.”

“Stop talking shit behind my back,” yelled Ivie. Cee-Cee and I giggled as we joined her in the living room.

The ladies and I spent the rest of the time talking and getting to know one another. These ladies were amazing, full of life, fun, and crazy as hell. And I loved them already. Hailey arrived about fifteen minutes after we settled and were at least two drinks in. Her brothers Aldo and Fredo were right behind her, looking all menacing and deadly. They were such cuddly teddy bears. Hailey greeted her longtime friend and Cee-Cee pleasantly enough, but the warmth that was usually swimming on her face was nonexistent.

I stood, taking in the tension in her body, the frown on her face.

“What’s wrong?” I looked from her to her brothers, then back at her.

Instead of answering my question, she posed one of her own. “Has Law brought you up to speed?”

I nodded, glancing at Ivie, Cee-Cee, then back at Hailey. “Yeah, he told me what’s happening.”

She raised an eyebrow. “Really? He did?”

“Yeah. Why, what’s going on? Have you heard something about him? Is he okay?”

She snorted. “He is now, but I doubt for long.”

I moved closer to Hailey and placed my hand on her arm, my other hand going to my chest. I swear I thought I was about to pass out.

“What? Don’t say that. What have you heard?”

Realizing her words and demeanor freaked me out, Hailey gripped me tight on my shoulders and leveled her eyes on me.

“Calm down. I haven’t heard anything about Law. I’m sure he’s fine. That’s not what I meant when I said he won’t be okay for long.”

I took a few seconds to breathe in and out, settle my beating heart, before I asked, “Okay, what did you mean? Why did you say that?”

“Well, because I don’t think he’s told you everything. You’re too calm.”

Hearing the tone in her voice, I sat my tipsy ass back down. I glanced up at her, took a deep breath, and let it out slowly.

“Okay, tell me. What’s up?”

Hailey sat next to me and said, “Okay, I’m just going to come right to it. Apparently, George has backstabbed you.”

Confused and taken aback by her statement, I narrowed my eyes and leaned back from her. “What do you mean, he backstabbed me? What did he do?”

“It’s not what he did, but it’s what he didn’t that’s the problem.”

I shook my head, trying not to get pissed. I hated when Hailey played word games. Why couldn’t she just come right out and say it?

“What are you talking about, Hailey? Stop beating around the bush and just—”

“You’re still married.”

I froze, not expecting her to say that shit.

“Well, yeah,” I responded hesitantly, nervously looking at everyone in the room before facing Hailey again. “I know that filing for a divorce takes time.”

“Yeah, but the thing of it is, he never filed the paperwork.”

I jumped to my feet, heart dropping to my toes. “What!”

“Yup. From what I’ve learned, he didn’t file for divorce like you told him too. Instead, the fucker ran to your mama, told her what happened, and that you left him. Your mom then called her friend, which, of course, is *your* attorney. She said some shit and well... yeah. You’re still Mrs. George —”

I pointed to her, venom laced in my voice, “Don’t you fucking finish that sentence!” I stomped away from them toward the windows facing the city life. “You’ve got to be fucking shitting me! That cunt fucking asshole!”

“Yeah, well, that’s not all.” I heard Hailey say through the hazy fog of my rage.

I whirled around to face her. “What else could there fucking be?”

“As it would seem, because he couldn’t locate you using regular means, he hired someone to do it. He put a contract on you.”

“That’s fucked up...” I heard whispered to my left, but I ignored it and focused on my friend.

“He put a hit out on me? He’s trying to kill me?”

“No! No. If that were the case, do you think he’d be still breathing? Law and I would have handled him. Hell, he probably would’ve fou—”

“Wait! What’s Law have to do with all this?” I asked, but suddenly her words came back to me.

“Is he okay?” ... “He is now, but I doubt for long.”

My body stiffened and my eyes grew wide.

“That son of a bitch! He knew, didn’t he? Law found out I was still married and about the contract and he didn’t say anything.”

I glanced at Ivie and Cee-Cee to gage their reaction, but they gave me nothing useful.

“Ohhh, I’m going to kill that son of a bitch!”

“Who? Puddin Pie?” Hailey asked. I shook my head.

“No. Him I’m going to destroy, fucking annihilate. No, I’m going to kill Lawson Morelli. He’ll be lucky if he even gets another whiff of this ass.” I said, my anger rising with every beat of my heart. I stumbled to my purse, yanked it up and rummaged through the contents before I grabbed my phone.

“Sydney, calm down,” Hailey attempted, her voice now calm, cool, and collected. Well, not me!

I gave her hard eyes as I said, “I will not calm down. Do you have any idea how it feels knowing someone you care about kept something so personal from you? He should have told me. Hell, he had ample opportunity to do so. I can’t believe him.”

I found my phone, woke the screen and found his number. I hit send and brought the device to my ear, praying he wouldn’t answer so I had a reason to hunt his ass down.

He picked up on the second ring, and said simply ‘Princess’, his voice almost stifling out my fire. *Almost!*

I straightened my spine and charged, “Is there something you want to tell me?”

Pause... then, “I don’t quite follow.”

“Oh yes, you do!” I narrowed my eyes, gave the room my back, and made my way to the windows again. “I can’t believe you didn’t tell me.”

Another pause then, “Tell you what, Princess. You have to be more specific.”

“Oh, I got your specific, asshole. Why didn’t you tell me you found out I was still married to that fucking asshole? When did you find out? How long have you known? And what about this damn hit on my life? You think it wasn’t important to tell me I had a contract out on me?” I heard him sigh deeply, as if I was irritating him. The nerve of his ass.

I went on, barely controlling my rage. “You expect me to trust you, to be with you, and all you keep doing is lying to me?”

“Sydney, I didn’t lie to you.”

“Whoa, okay sorry. You *omitted* information pertinent to my health. What did you think? That I couldn’t handle it? Oh no, you figured you’d take care of it. Make my troubles disappear. That’s what you thought, isn’t it?” I didn’t wait for him to respond. I continued, “Well, let me tell you something. I don’t fucking need you to fight my battles for me. I can do this shit on my own and you best believe that’s exactly what I’m going to do—”

“Un-fucking-believable...” he growled, but I ignored him and continued to speak over him.

“And as far as you and I are concerned, we’re over. I will not be—”

“We’re not over.”

“Yes, we are. We’re done.”

“No, we are not,” he countered, his voice turning dark and scary. I continued to ignore him. He wouldn’t get the better of me. I would stand my ground.

“Yes, we are, Law. I will not be with someone that thinks it’s okay to keep shit from me, especially when that shit has something to do with me. We’re done.”

Law snorted. “Please, Princess. We will never be done. You’re pissed, fine. Be pissed. I’ll give you an hour or two to untwist your knickers.”

Taken aback by his nonchalant tone in his voice, I barked, “What? You’ll give me an hour?”

“Yes, that’s right, Princess, you heard me. We’re not done. You belong to me always and fucking ever.”

I laughed, I couldn’t help it. It wasn’t an easy ha-ha kind of laugh. It was a ha-ha you must be out of your fucking mind crazy kind of laugh.

“Are you on something? You are out of your mind if you think I belong to you. I belong to the God almighty and that’s it. Oh... we are so over. This right here is done. I’m getting the fuck out of New York and away from you.”

Law laughed too, but his laugh sent chills down my spine. “Fuck that, over my dead body. You’re not going anywhere. Don’t even think about leaving this island. I swear, I will find you, throw you over my knee and spank your ass raw. You won’t be able to sit for a fucking week. Don’t test me, Princess.”

I gasped and stumbled back as if he was standing right in front of me and not on the phone.

“You’re fucking crazy,” I mumbled.

“Oh sweetheart, I’m that and so much more. Hide from me and see what happens.” He threatened and damn if it didn’t make my stomach do backflips.

Fuck, something must be wrong with me too.

“In fucking fact,” he charged on. “Tell Hailey never mind and stay where the fuck you are. I’ll be done with this bullshit in twenty minutes, then I’ll be there. You can tell me all this shit to my face. You don’t belong to me? Yeah, fucking right.”

Oh yeah, this man was off his rocker for sure.

I ignored the goosebumps and pitter-patter of my heart and said, “Goodbye, Law.”

He chuckled, actually *fucking* chuckled. “I’ll see you soon, Princess.”

I hung up, gripping my phone tight between both hands. Was he fucking serious? Spank my ass raw? Fuck that and fuck him! I would not sit here and wait for him. No fucking way. I had no idea where I would go from here, maybe back home to settle this divorce, hang George by his tiny balls, get him to sign the divorce papers and file it with the courts myself. After that... I would be on the next thing smoking out of the country and the hell away from Lawson Morelli.

I closed my eyes and tried to ease my racing heart. My phone vibrated in my hand, startling me. Afraid to see who it was, knowing it could only be that psycho Law, I sent the call to voicemail, turned off my phone and turned around to meet three shocked faces. I shoved my phone inside the side pocket of my workout tights.

“It’s time to go,” I said abruptly. I smacked my hands together, causing the three ladies to jump from the sound. I stared expectantly at Hailey, waiting for her to get over whatever had her frozen in time.

It took a second or two for Hailey to snap out of her shock before she stammered, “Uhhh, yeah. Let’s go.”

I gave her a sharp nod, sent a stiff chin lift to Ivie and Cee-Cee and hauled ass to the door to the suite. I felt a sense of urgency to get out of here. I wasn’t sure where he was or if he would send one of his brothers to detain me or something. I needed out of this hotel and fast. My passport, credit cards and cash were all in my bag. I didn’t need anything else.

Hailey followed me out with her brothers not too far behind. I could feel Hailey’s questioning gaze on me, but she didn’t say a word until we were well into our descent to the lobby floor.

“I take it things didn’t go so well between you and Law?”

I shook my head, trying not to let the tears that formed in my eyes fall. “No, they didn’t.” I turned to face her, leaning against the elevator wall.

“He’s crazy. Do you know that? He’s either off his meds, or his doctor needs to up his dosage, *or* he needs to get on some shit.”

Hailey grinned. I shook my head and pointed at her. “No, don’t smile. It’s not funny. This whole situation isn’t funny. I’m in love with a psychopath.”

Her smile grew even more. “Aww, that’s so sweet. Ain’t it, Aldo.”

I rolled my eyes and her brother grunted. “That son of a bitch is crazy as fuck.”

I pointed to him as he made the same point I did. “See, he agrees with me.”

Hailey waved off her brother. “Oh please, his opinion doesn’t count. He’s just as unhinged as Law.”

“Fuck that, you take that back.” Aldo quipped; his brows furrowed at his sister.

Hailey just shook her head and regarded me. “What did he say?”

I blew out a breath. “Oh, I told him this was over. Said I didn’t appreciate him keeping things from me and that I was leaving. Then he had the audacity to tell me I wasn’t leaving and it would be over his dead body. Something about me belonging to him. Whatever. Oh, and when I told him I didn’t belong to his crazy ass, get this, he threatened me.”

Hailey’s brothers stiffened, but Hailey just looked at me expectantly. “What did he say?”

“He said if I left he would find me, throw me over his knee and spank me. He said I wouldn’t be able to sit for a week.”

Fredo added, “He’s going easy on you.”

Shocked, I said to him, “What do you mean, easy? He threatened to spank me.”

Fredo snorted. “If my woman tried to leave me, I’d spank her ass, *then* tie her to my bed and make sure she never left me again.”

Aldo chuckled and fist bumped his brother. “Yeah bro, then remind her who she belongs to all night long.”

“Damn fucking straight!”

My mouth was wide open at this point. *I’m surrounded by crazy people.*

“You do know that caveman shit doesn’t work in real life? No sane woman would go for that shit.”

“It worked on me,” Hailey interjected, and I waved her off.

“Bitch, you’re not sane.”

“And neither are you,” she countered back, then gripped my hand. “Syd, Law is a different breed. I doubt he would literally spank you. That’s not his kink.”

I heard Aldo mumble under his breath to his brother that sent my pressure to new heights. “Since when?”

Fredo snickered. I damn near passed out, remembering the way he would take me from behind. I had looked over my shoulder at him one time and he had this salacious look of pleasure in his eyes and on his face. As if he was in heaven or something. A fire blazed in his eyes, especially when he slapped my ass.

“Oh, fuck!” I exclaimed aloud, realizing that I was just as crazy as everyone else in this elevator because I had thought the look of reverence, of desire in Law’s eyes when he slapped my ass, was sexy as hell.

Hailey stepped into my space and gripped my shoulders. “Listen to me, Law isn’t used to being in a relationship. I’m not trying to make excuses for him, but give him a little slack.”

I narrowed my eyes. “So, I’m supposed to give him a pass? Let this shit slide?”

“No, of course not. Make him pay for not telling you what was going on. Men like him are always trying to fight our battles for us like we’re some weak porcelain dolls or something. We’re not. We’re just as tough, just as crazy, and just as ruthless as they are.”

I rolled my eyes. “Speak for yourself. I’m not crazy. And I’m not ruthless. I just want him to be honest with me. To trust me.”

“What I’m saying is that he does.” Hailey explained. “Look, there’s a lot of shit going on right now. From his brothers trying to kill them to some other shit. Just... don’t give up on him, that’s all I’m saying.”

I fell silent, letting her words sink in. Admittedly, she had a point. She had lots of points. I knew this was unfamiliar territory for Law, being in a relationship, if that’s what you wanted to call what he and I had. He’s even said as much. I just hated being in the fucking dark. My parents did it to me, George did it too. I refused to let anyone else fucking screw me in the ass without lubrication. Never a-fucking-gin.

The elevator door opened, and we peeled out of the car and headed for the back entrance to the hotel. I slowed down and grabbed Hailey by the arm as the boys moved further away from us. I stopped walking and Hailey did too, her puzzled baby blues on me.

“He told me he loved me. What am I to make of that?” I asked, truly torn and confused. I wanted to believe him, believe that I had finally found the one made for me. But him holding back from me, not trusting me, had me second guessing everything. I slumped against the wall next to me, my eyes wide, heart beating profusely, and head spinning like crazy.

Hailey sighed and focused determined eyes on me. “That he meant every word,” she replied, her voice soft, but strong and surprisingly very comforting.

“You think so?”

“Syd, I know so. He doesn’t use those words for just anyone. That’s not in his make-up. But I guarantee you he’s never spoken those words to another person outside of his brothers and mom, much less to some female.” Hailey blew out a long breath and stepped closer to me. She placed a warm palm against my cheek and gave me a half smile. “Listen, don’t decide to leave just yet. Give him a chance to explain

shit to you. Talk this shit out. Not saying he'll have the answers you want to hear, but still hear him out and then decide if this is worth your time and heart. If it's not, tell him. I know he'll let you go. Oh, he won't be happy, believe me," she added when I gave her a skeptical look. "But he won't keep you either, especially if you don't want to be kept. But..." she dropped her hand and narrowed her eyes on me, becoming serious and cold. "Don't just let him slide between your thighs after you two talk. No. Make his ass suffer. It's the only way to teach men like Law a lesson."

I grinned and hugged my friend. "You bet your ass I will."

I felt better after talking things out with Hailey. Oh, it didn't ease the rage I felt. I was still pissed as shit at Law and George. I refused to be controlled, to allow someone to decide my life for me. I was more than capable of doing that myself. I've said that I didn't know who Law was, the man, the assassin, the killer. Well, he didn't know Sydney Fontane either and it was high time he did.

I pulled out my phone and turned it back on. I waited for the screen to turn on and found I had one text message from Law and it was a doozy. *'Is this how you want to play it? I'm coming for you and when I find you...'*

I couldn't help the sly grin that slid into my left cheek. I breathed out a sigh, felt my heart skip a beat and butterflies go wild in my stomach. I sent my reply, three words that summed up everything I felt and more.

'Bring it on!'

'Yeah, yeah, I know. I am just as crazy as he is. Keep praying for me y'all.'

I darkened my screen, placed my phone in my purse and shuffled forward to catch up to Hailey. She sent a smile my way once I caught up and started in about getting something to eat.

"I'm starving," she stated, touching her flat stomach. Just then, my stomach growled loud enough to echo in the hallway. She stopped walking and looked over at me.

I shrugged. “I guess so am I.”

We burst out laughing, linking our arms with each other. She resumed guiding us to the steps leading to the street. Aldo and Fredo were standing by the entrance, waiting for us.

“Remember that restaurant my father took us to after graduation? That expensive steak place on Broadway?” I nodded, remembering it well.

We had racked up a crazy bill that night. Her father booked a private room and told us we could invite anyone we wanted. We invited at least twenty people, on top of our family. You could only imagine what that bill was like, but he didn’t even flinch when he paid it.

Hailey squeezed my arm, grabbing my attention again. “Why don’t we go there before...” Hailey trailed off, stopped walking and pulled her vibrating phone from her back pocket.

My heart started beating in my chest as I asked, “Is it Law?”

She slowly shook her head and sent the person to voicemail. “No, it’s just Arthur.”

She put her phone away just as it started buzzing again. She checked the screen, and it was her cousin Arthur again.

“You don’t think you should answer it?” I asked her, concern on my face.

“Fuck no. He just wants to talk about our family shit, and I don’t.” She sent him to voicemail again and placed her phone in the back pocket of her jeans.

We climbed down a set of steps, laughing and bringing up the memories of the night of our graduation, when I noticed someone walking along the sidewalk to the revolving doors of the hotel. He had his head down, nothing to write home about, but he still caught my eye. I watched the man curiously. For some reason, there was something familiar about him, and I hadn’t seen his face yet. But there was something... Something that made a particular feeling shoot down my spine. Fear.

However, I couldn't find the threat. And I still couldn't see his face. Yet, the moment I did, shit happened so fast I didn't have time to react. It had taken five seconds for everything to go to shit, but it felt like five hours.

The man pushed through the revolving doors slowly, his eyes finally meeting mine. I recognized him immediately. It explained the fear that suddenly caused my heart to seize in my chest. The last time I had seen him, he had stopped by my room at one in the morning for the room service tray. Law was there that night to protect me and despite having Hailey and her brothers here with me, for some reason, I felt it wouldn't be enough.

And why were his hands behind his back?

I opened my mouth to warn everyone when two things happened. The scary room service attendant sent one of the slickest, dirtiest smirks my way that made me shiver. My eyes grew and my mouth opened to warn Aldo and Fredo just as the man brought his hands from behind his back, with lightning speed, revealing a gun with a cylinder attached to it.

He moved quickly, sending three shots directly to his targets. Aldo was the first to go down, then Fredo, both unaware and not ready to react. Hailey was ready, however, the shot to her thigh dropped her, and she tumbled down a couple of steps, her gun falling from her grip.

I screamed, but immediately covered my mouth when the attendant placed his gun to Hailey's head.

"Scream again and she dies," he threatened. I kept my hand over my mouth, not trusting myself to keep quiet.

"Come down to me," he ordered.

"No, Sydney. Run," Hailey bit out through clinched teeth, her hand covering the bullet wound on her thigh. She was trying to stop the river from flowing between her fingers. It wasn't working.

"Run and she dies. She's going to die anyway if she doesn't get help soon. You're wasting the little time your friend has left. Come."

“Don’t listen to him, get... ahhh...” she cried out when the gunman pressed his black boot on her thigh.

“Okay, okay. Stop. I’m coming,” I screeched, holding my hands up, pleading.

“No, Syd. Please,” Hailey cried out, pain etched in her voice and on her beautiful face. I heard footsteps behind me. Help was coming. I just needed to get this psycho away from my friend.

I took the remaining steps down, he grabbed my arm, and pulled me closer to him. He placed me in front of him as a shield as he backed away from Hailey and her unmoving brothers.

“Do you have any idea who she is? Who she belongs to?” Hailey asked breathlessly, her face turning ghostly pale as blood continued to flow between her fingers.

“I do. But by the time he realizes I have her, we’ll be long gone. That’s if he survives what’s coming to him.” He snatched my arm. “Oh, you won’t need this,” he charged, snatched my bag from my shoulder and tossed it toward Hailey. “Come on. Let’s go.”

He pulled me through the revolving doors and the last view I saw, through the tears gathering in my eyes, was Hailey collapsing.

“Why are you doing this?” I finally asked, my voice but a whisper.

“There’s a bounty that I mean to collect.” He said close to my ear, his hot breath against my face.

“If it’s money that you want. I can pay you to let me go.” I told him, trying to plead with the man. He yanked my arm and pushed his gun into my side as we walked down the busy streets.

“Oh, you *will* give me whatever I want, so will your husband.” He laughed, and it wasn’t pleasant at all. It was dark, scary and made my heart fill with dread. I prayed silently that Law was true to his word. He said no matter where I went, he would find me. I hoped that was true.

A dark SUV pulled up next to us and my now kidnapper opened the back door and pushed me inside.

“Hey...” I protested as I fell over, face hitting cool leather. I righted myself, ready to cuss this fucker out, when I felt a prick to my neck.

“Ouch, motherfucker!”

My hand immediately cupped the spot where I was pricked and narrowed my eyes on my kidnapper.

The asshole had the audacity to smirk at me. “What are you going to do?”

I smirked back as I leaned against the back seat, unable to stop the darkness threatening to take over. Oh, but I would give them a piece of my fucking mind until I couldn't.

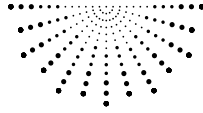
“Oh, it's not me you'll have to worry about.” I met his eyes as he pushed me to the side and climbed inside the truck next to me. “You do know you're going to die, right? All of you are going to fucking die the most painful death imaginable. He... will make you... pay.” I struggled to get the last of my words out, fighting to keep my eyes open.

“Oh yeah? Who?”

I did answer him. Oh, it was in my mind, but he couldn't say I didn't try to warn him.

“Law.”

CHAPTER NINETEEN



LAWSON

I made it back to my hotel suite from Sydney's suite and found my brothers hunched over in front of Grey's computer screens.

"I'm here. What have you got? Anything on our two 'walking dead' siblings?" I had asked, taking off my jacket and tossing it on the sofa.

Nix straightened, regarded me with a smirk, and answered my question with one of his own. "I take it all went well with Sydney?"

Grey turned too, his eyes taking me in, a grin on his face.

Bullocks, we don't have time for this shit.

My brows drew together as I took in these two dimwits.

"Oh, for fuck's sake, did you two get shit sorted or what?"

They both remained silent, regarding me, grinning at me like fucking wankers.

"*Oi*, will you two knobheads get your shit together and answer my fucking question?" I barked, but as always it caused no effect.

A second or two of more silence and grinning had passed before Nix sobered and answered my question. "Nothing so far. We're still looking for them."

"Maybe they're not coming here." Grey added, turned around, and went back to his laptop.

I let out a sigh, agreeing with him. “Yeah, I agree. If it’s war they’re after, it wouldn’t be started here. They would attack us far away from this place.”

“Yeah, but how would they lure us out?” Grey asked over his shoulder, his eyes remaining on the laptop screen before him.

Nix didn’t reply straight away, but I had an idea and shared it with them. “The only way is to send us on a job. Maybe have us meet with the Albanian fat boy, or spy on them again. Something. Anything to get us away from this hotel.”

Nix pointed in my direction, re-joining the conversation. “Yeah, but I don’t think a call for a meeting with the Albanians would do the trick. We would be on guard if that was the case. And he wouldn’t ask us to spy on them. Zeus knows I would only send you. It wouldn’t warrant all of us going.”

“Maybe that’s the point,” I added. “It’s better if they figure out a way to separate us, take us out one by one instead of together. We’re hard to kill when we’re alone, but when we’re together, it’s damn near impossible.”

Nix hummed his agreement and ran his fingers through his loose hair, deep in thought. Grey turned to face us and leaned back in his seat, a faraway gaze on his familiar features.

My brothers and I each had our own set of deadly skills and honed into those said skills like a dog in heat, which made it hard to take us out individually. But if you put all our skills together... we were a force to be reckoned with, a unified killing machine that didn’t take prisoners. We didn’t know the meaning of mercy and made sure we made our presence felt no matter where we went or who we killed. We had a reputation, one that set us apart from the rest. In fact, I was sure you’d see what we’re capable of very soon. Just let us find our siblings.

Finally, after a second or two, Nix said, “I think you’re right. They would split us up. They would think it less difficult to take us out that way. Plus, we wouldn’t expect it. Right now, they have no clue we know they’re coming.”

“But they have to know we would learn about the hit,” I commented.

“Yes, but the Albanians put the hit out, not our siblings,” Nix countered.

“Either way, we need to find them before they figure out a plan or put it into motion,” I insisted.

Nix slowly nodded his agreement. “Yeah, you’re right. We also need to play this cool. We have to assume that we’re being watched. Maybe not in this room, but once we step foot outside, we’ll have bodies on us. We have to play this our way, make them play our game instead of the other way around.”

“And finding them first is the best course of action,” I said, folding my arms and resting stormy grey eyes on Grey. “You guys mentioned something about a warehouse. Does it belong to the Albanians? Can we get bodies on it, and see if that place leads to anything?”

“Yeah, it belongs to the Albanians, and I’m already on it,” Grey informed me. “I’ve already sent drones to that location. The moment they get there we can...” he drifted off when his phone started vibrating. He picked up the device, checked the screen, and smiled. He looked up at me after he typed a reply.

“Looks like this whole warehouse business is on hold. That was our fateful Uncle Duke. He’s finally corralled those two bouncers that betrayed you.”

“Who were they?”

“Donnie and Craig.”

I nodded. Those two were the ones I’d figured would stab me in the back.

I had heard they had been dealing drugs inside the club. Everyone knew that was something we didn’t tolerate. I had sent word around to the blokes, letting them know I would deal with them when I got back into town. Now, instead of having simple words with them, an easy beat down, and maybe a few broken bones before firing them, they were going to die a painful death. I nodded at my brother, feeling my

heartbeat slow and a sense of calm wash over me. The killer within licked his chops. It was feeding time.

I glanced at Nix, who was watching me. “You want company?” he asked, but he already knew the answer.

I told him anyway. “No. I’m good.”

“You sure?”

“Yeah. I’m sure.”

Nix nodded. “Okay. Why don’t you go take care of those two meat heads and we’ll hang back, look for Lucian and Timmy. It shouldn’t take long for us to locate them. Watch your back when leaving. I highly doubt they’ve set up camp outside of the hotel, but you never know. We’ll map out a plan and get shit sorted. Ring me when you’re done. I’ll tell you where to meet us.”

I gave each of my brothers a fist bump before I grabbed my jacket and headed for my room to get ready. I didn’t bother showering. I wanted them to smell the scent of my woman on me and understand just how badly they fucked up. I did put on a black, long sleeve pullover shirt and threw my jacket back on. I reached for the Glock at the small of my back and checked the mag to make sure it was fully loaded. I grabbed three spare magazines and placed them inside my jacket pocket. Next, I grabbed my 1911k tactical curved blades, my babies, which were already sheathed and ready for use. I placed the knives at the small of my back, right next to my Glock. And just for the hell of it, I picked up two of my throwing knives. *You never know when you’d need an extra pair of blades.*

I grabbed a hair tie, tied my locks at my neck, and stared at my reflection. I was ready for war, ready to take my pound of flesh in the name of my woman. After I took care of the dead men, I would find her and make this shit between us official. I didn’t care about her still being married. She would be mine now and forever.

I closed my eyes and took a few deep breaths. The acrid stench of piss, blood, and shit met my nostrils. It permeated the air around me. I breathed in again and released it. I would have smiled and reveled in the glory of my kills, but I couldn't. Despite my love for the scent, sound, and taste of death, I was still swimming in the rage of dealing with Sydney Fontane.

Various sounds from behind me met my ears. There was the sound of someone whimpering and crying behind me, the creek of chains swaying the dying side to side. There was also a lot of whispering going on behind my back. My uncle's men, no doubt, and maybe the dying were also praying to their God.

Wait a minute... My ears perked up. *What else do I hear?*

I tilted my head to the side, slowed my heart rate even more so I could pick up the muffled sound. Was someone retching in the corner? I snorted.

Pussies...

My grip tightened on the knife I still had clutched in my sticky hand and fingers. I had lost the other one on the chin bone of one of the *fucking pigs* I had just gutted. I had tried to yank it free, but it wouldn't budge. I had lost what little patience I possessed and was about to rip the fucker's jaw off when Uncle Duke called out to me.

"Hey, hey," I glanced over my shoulder and found him approaching slowly to my left, his hands up in a calming gesture. "It looks like the knife is stuck. Why don't you let me get it out for you? It will be easier once I lay him down, yeah?"

I had kept the grip on my knife, contemplating his words. My mind had been clear enough to discern my uncle made sense, however I still hesitated. I didn't trust anyone else handling my babies. But again, what he said made sense. I had nodded in agreement and stepped away, giving space for my uncle and his crew to begin cleanup. I had taken that time to get my shit in order and calm the raging beast. I had closed my eyes and began breathing in and out slowly, methodically. Unfortunately, no matter how many times I tried to settle my pulse, unbridled rage still ran through my veins.

During my ride to my uncle's warehouse, I had been thinking about all the ways I was going to torture the fuck-head bouncers that betrayed me. Uncle Duke had told me he would have them prepped and ready when I arrived. I had debated if I would take my time with them, drag out their torture or make that shit quick. I had decided to take my time. That was until I answered Sydney's call.

I had presumed she was calling to tell me she was with Hailey. But no, that wasn't the case. She had called to give me shit for not telling her about the contract her ex put on her and the fact that she was still married.

There was no reason to tell her any fucking thing. For one, I gave two shits about her being married. That was just a fucking formality. And that contract didn't exist anymore. I had handled it and I would handle her ex the second I dealt with my family shit.

I would have told her all of that and more. She even had a point about purposefully keeping her in the dark about her own life, however, she didn't let me get in a word edge wise. Instead, she told me how we were over, and she was leaving me.

Leaving me? Was she out of her bloody mind? Did she not realize there was no place she could go that I wouldn't follow? That I wouldn't find her?

I didn't know how else to get her to see what was right in front of her. She was fucking mine and she would always be mine, no matter what. She could run to the ends of the earth, and I would find her and bring her back to me. I would never let her go and I knew that sounded creepy as fuck, like I *lost the plot* or something, but I didn't care one bit. I had found my better half; and I refused to let her go.

When I tried to call her back, to tell her everything that I had just said and more, she had turned her bloody phone off and I hadn't been able to get a hold of her since. To say that I was beyond livid was an understatement. I shook with the rage I had felt. She turned her fucking phone off. I understood she was pissed. But to turn her phone off after the threats of

leaving... I couldn't wait to get my hands on that arse of hers. I would show her what it truly meant to be with Law Morelli.

You could imagine the zone I had slipped into the moment I stepped into the warehouse. My uncle indeed had the two cock suckers hanging upside down by their ankles, nothing but their skivvies on, their hands tied behind their backs. They'd been worked over a little. I could see bruising on their torsos and faces. A few love taps, nothing serious. When they saw me step into the room, their eyes grew, and they began to squirm.

As if they could ever get away from me, even if they could break free.

Uncle Duke had stepped to my left and gave me the rundown of what he learned about these two, what happened at the club, and who hired them. Shit like that. However, I was barely listening. I pulled out my 1911k blades that I had stowed at the small of my back and held them tight in my fists as I studied my prey. One of my victims started screaming through the gag in his mouth, squealing and squirming against his binds. The other one closed his eyes tight, as if not seeing me would save him.

No one would save him.

Uncle Duke, sensing the shift in my mood, stopped talking and stepped back from me. I waited until he was clear of me before I held out my knives and hastened, with determined steps, toward my prey. Once I was close, I sliced both men across their bellies, then rammed the tip of my babies into their belly buttons and with great force. A loud roar came from deep within while I dragged the knives down their bellies and chests.

Their entrails tumbled out immediately, falling over my hands to the ground, unable to be contained by flesh and muscle. The screams were supersonic, damn near cracking the darkened windows. But the sound that came from me cracked the foundation of this fucking building.

How dare these lowlife fucking cunts go against me?! Threaten my woman! No one betrayed me and lived to fucking

talk about it.

No fucking one!

I was not someone to be trifled with on a good day. But all about my family? The ones I held close to my frozen heart... you so much as thought about hurting them, and I annihilated you.

I took a few more so-called cleansing breaths before I opened my eyes and glanced over my shoulder. The one to the left of me was still squealing, albeit low and ever fading. As I focused on the hanging body to my right, I saw a rather large puddle of blood pooling underneath his body.

The human body carried ten pints of blood inside it, roughly eight percent of a human's body weight. The puddle under the piece of shit to my left wasn't large, but it was growing. The prick to my right... damn, it was a lake underneath his body. Guess I must have nicked an artery. This was the one who still had my knife stuck underneath his chin, the tip caught on his mandible, so maybe I serrated his jugular on my swing.

No matter. My point was made.

Now it was time to find those cunt motherfuckers, Timmy and Lucian. I couldn't wait to wrap my fingers around their necks and squeeze until their eyes popped out of their sockets before I ripped their heads off and pissed down their bloody throats. Then their father was next.

I headed for a small sink in the corner. I washed my hands with this horrible smelling soap and cleaned my knife. My uncle handed me my other baby, and I cleaned this one off too.

I turned off the water, sheathed my knives and thought about next steps. I hadn't heard from Nix yet. He should have called me by now. I was about to tap my earpiece next to my ear to call Grey when all the lights in the warehouse went out.

"The fuck..." came from my uncle, who stood next to me.

I tapped the earpiece.

“Bruv, what the fuck is happening? The lights to the warehouse have just gone out.”

“I know,” Grey replied, his voice rushed, and I could hear his fingers pounding against his keyboard. “It looks like you’ve got company.”

“How did they know I was here? I didn’t see a tail on me.”

“Dunno. Maybe they were just watching the warehouse hoping you’d show. Who knows. Just note they’ve found you.”

“Yeah, and who’s they?” I asked, reaching behind me to pull out my Glock. I checked the mag using my fingers, slammed it back and released the safety. I heard Uncle Duke and his crew moving about the room, using what little light from the street lamps outside to move about. No need to make themselves targets of potential snipers if they used a flashlight or something.

“Don’t know that either,” Grey replied. “But it looks like about forty men, all heavily armed.”

I snorted. “Aren’t they always?”

I said out loud to my uncle and his men, “There’s about forty men, heavily armed, about to gain entrance into the warehouse. Please tell me you have more than handguns?”

“Of course we do. We’re not fucking amateurs.” Uncle Duke bit back. My eyes somewhat used to the dark, I noticed a tall, wide figure strolling in my direction. He stretched out a dark object toward me. It was goggles, no doubt NVGs or night vision goggles. I put them on, and the entire room lit up green.

“Can you get the lights back on?” I asked Grey, while roaming my eyes all over the room, clocking my uncle’s men, what they were doing and if they had found an exit of some kind.

“They seemed to have cut the wire to the building, so no. All I can tell you is that about half of them are heading to the back of the building and the others are going around to the front. They should be breeching in ten seconds.”

“Roger that,” I said as Uncle Duke handed me an AR-15 suppressed assault rifle. I briefed the men in the room on what Grey said. It was about six of us. We were outnumbered and possibly outgunned. We had assault rifles. However, Uncle Duke didn’t provide an extra mag, which meant we wouldn’t last a long fight. I didn’t give a toss if I had thousands of rounds or just fifteen. Let these motherfuckers come. I was ready for them.

Uncle Duke tapped me on my shoulder, signaling he wanted me to follow him to the back of the warehouse. There was a door that led to another room. This room was vast with large machinery large enough to provide cover and wide cement and steel poles structured throughout the room to use as shields. Uncle Duke, his men, and I fanned out, looking for places to hunker down.

“Fuck me,” I heard my brother yell in my ear.

“What?”

“There are two more SUVs heading in the warehouse’s direction. I doubt they are there to help you. Look bruv, I’m going to make a few phone calls myself to get you some help. Then I’m on my way.”

“No!” I barked. “Don’t you dare fucking come here. I’m good. I have everything under control.” I focused my eye on the scope of my rifle, resting my arm and the gun on top of some contraption part of an assembly line.

My brother started rambling on about me not being superman or some shit. I interrupted him and said, “Look, Grey. Uncle Duke and I have everything under control. I’m sure he’s calling for backup now. What I need you to do is locate Sydney.”

“Law, I don’t see the importance of finding your woman right now. You’re outnumbered and outgunned. You need to survive so you can go find her yourself. Besides, isn’t she with Hailey?”

I paused for a second before answering, “Honestly, I’m not sure. She and I had a uh... disagreement. She claimed we were

done, and that she didn't want to see me anymore. Clearly, she didn't mean what she said. I need you to find her for me so I can talk to her."

"Yeah bruv, I'm pretty sure if a woman says they're done, that's it. You're over."

I grunted just as I heard footsteps coming fast toward the door to this room. "As I said, she didn't mean it. She's just confused. That's why I need to talk to her. Find her. I want to be balls deep inside my woman before the sun comes up."

I tapped the line clear just as an explosion rocked the building, the door to the room blown off its hinges. Machine guns barked inside the room, bullets coming from the destroyed doorway and from Uncle Duke's men. I focused on the doorway to the room ready to shoot anyone stupid enough to step through the doorway.

I saw a round object arching in the air and knew immediately what it was. I yelled, "Grenade!" before I ducked down, closed my eyes tight, and covered my ears as best as possible.

The grenade ignited, sending blinding light throughout the room. There were screams, yelling and gunfire everywhere, but I stayed tight into a ball until the lights behind my eyelids subsided. Even after that, I stayed in my hiding place, giving my body a few minutes to adjust.

When I had at least some of my wits about me, I peeked around the machinery covering me and saw men entering the room, dressed in all black, masks covering their faces. Their machine guns were out, sweeping the room, searching for someone to shoot. I slung my AR rifle over my shoulder, pulled out my Glock, screwed on a state-of-the-art silencer, and slowly crept out from my hiding place. The room was packed with bodies, some on the prowl, some writhing in pain on the ground, while others laid there, not moving.

The room was covered in smoke, which I was grateful for. It hid my movements from my prey. The men had NGVs on as well, but I knew the smoke hindered them more than helped. I waited until the last man entered the room before I positioned

myself behind the intruders. I quickly holstered my gun and drew my knife as another plan popped into my head. When no one else came inside the room, I checked the doorway to make sure it was clear before I crept up behind the last man.

I grabbed him quickly and pulled him backward, covering his mouth with one hand to muffle his scream. Apparently, it wasn't muffled enough. The man in front of him turned to check on his comrade. I shielded my body with the man in my arms. I knew the guy in front of me didn't have a clear shot of me, but that didn't stop him from quickly bringing his weapon to bear. However, before his barrel was pointed at my face, I reached behind me and sailed one of my throwing knives at him. The knife hit him square in his throat. A gurgling sound erupted from him. He dropped his machine gun, grabbed his throat before he collapsed. I was already moving before he was even hit. I dragged the man in my arms to my hiding place. On the way, I reached behind me, grabbed one of my babies and slashed my blade across the man's neck. I avoided the geyser of blood that arched in the air as I quickly checked him for weapons, ID, anything.

I stumbled on something better. This guy had two more flash bangs attached to his belt. I took them both as gunfire exploded inside the room, bullets flying everywhere. I peeked around my hiding place and noticed the room had doubled with masked men. I assumed the ones Grey saw heading to the back of the warehouse found an entrance. They were shooting the fuck out of the machinery, hitting their targets with ease. To make this gunfight fair, I pulled out both flash bangs, released the pins and threw them in the middle of the crowd.

"Frag out!" I yelled in warning, went back to my hiding place, and covered my ears and eyes.

The explosion seemed to rock this entire building. Screams were out of this world. I waited for as long as I could before I stood, moved from my hiding place and started picking off these sons of bitches one by fucking one. I clocked Uncle Duke coming out of hiding, along with one other man. We took out the dazed, blind, and deaf that were still standing with vicious retribution.

It was a slaughterhouse.

Bodies dropped everywhere. The stench of cordite and copper wasn't a pleasant mix, but I loved every bit of it. It allowed me to work out the rest of my rage. It cleared my mind and fed the beast within.

We heard tires screeching outside and raised voices coming from broken windows inside the room. Uncle Duke called my name and signaled me to follow him as he jogged to a door on the side of the room. He opened the door and guided us into an office with a desk, chair, and a long cabinet, as its only occupants. He locked the door, then he and his man dragged the desk against it. He then pulled up a latch from the floor, where the desk used to be, revealing a dark hole. Stale cool air, mixed with another foul smell, wafted up from the dark space.

Uncle Duke waved me over and pointed to the hole. "This tunnel will lead you to safety. Take the steps down. There will be only two directions to go once you get down there. Make a left. Use the NVGs to find your way. About two hundred yards you should see another ladder. Take it up and push over the manhole cover, it should move easily. You'll find yourself inside a boathouse next to the river. In front of the boathouse will be a car parked with the keys inside. Take it. It should get you far away from here."

"And what about you? I'm not leaving you here," I told him, narrowing my eyes, getting ready to grab him and throw him down the hole.

Uncle Duke clasped my shoulder and squeezed. "Don't worry about me, my boy. I'll be right behind you. We have a building to destroy, then we'll be taking the same tunnel out of here. Trust me."

"So, I'll wait."

"No, there's no time. Besides, we're going right. There's another location, a safe house that we'll hide out until everything dies down. Believe me son, I'm not martyring myself for the cause. Your aunt would kill me."

I grunted, knowing he had a point. My aunt would bring him back alive only to kill his ass if he died on her.

“Reach out to Grey when you’re safe.”

Uncle Duke nodded. “Yeah, I will.”

I captured his shoulder tight in my grip and squeezed. “Thanks, old man. I’ll see you on the other side.”

He grinned at me, as I disappeared into the darkness below.

I had made it two minutes along the tunnel when I heard the explosion above me. I had thought the tunnel would collapse within itself and bury my ass down here. That would truly fucking suck. But the structure held. It took the length of time my uncle told me to find the ladder he mentioned. Everything else went as he planned. I drove a beat up four-door sedan heading back into the city, far away from the burning blaze in the distance.

I pulled out my phone and dialed Grey. I had tried the earpiece inside the tunnel, but it malfunctioned somehow. Maybe it was the flash bangs who knew.

“Bloody hell, you son of a bitch!” barked Grey through the speaker of my phone.

“Don’t let our mother hear you call her a bitch.”

“Fuck you. Where are you?”

I grinned. “I’m heading into the city.” I filled him in on what happened and how I escaped.

“Can you check to see if Uncle Duke made it out?”

“He did,” he informed me, causing me to exhale in relief. “He called me already and gave me his location. I sent drones over to where he was and watched him climb into a waiting SUV and drove off.”

“How did his ride get there so soon?”

“I had called Gregor the moment you hung up on me.” Grey advised. I nodded as if he could see me. Gregor was my uncle’s right-hand man since they were teenagers. “He was

close by,” Grey reported. “He had dropped off Uncle Duke and his cargo earlier and stayed in the neighborhood just in case he was needed. It took him about ten minutes to get to the safe house. I thought you’d be with him, but when I didn’t see you leave the building, I thought something might have happened.”

I could hear the panic in his voice, and it sobered me. “I’m good bruv. Trust me. Those blokes were amateurs. We left a lot of bodies underneath the rubble of that warehouse for the cops to find.”

“I doubt it. Uncle Duke is known for using some heavy ordnances. I’m sure there were explosives hot enough to disintegrate the bodies to ash. Unless the cops know what they’re looking for, they won’t have a clue the soot from the fire was bones from dead bodies.”

“Good,” I said as I made my way into Manhattan. “Now tell me where I’m going. Have we located Timmy and Lucien? Have you found Sydney?” I smirked from the memory of the text she sent me. *‘Bring it on!’*, she had texted. *Yeah, baby, I plan to do that and more.*

There was a long pause, and I knew whatever he was about to tell me would drop me right back into the blind rage I had just escaped. However, what he said damn near caused my heart to stop. A fear of which I’d never felt before in my life, gripped my chest so tight I thought I would have a heart attack.

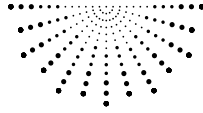
Hailey was down. Shot and it didn’t look good.

Uhh... he said that our brother Nix was MIA. There was some mass explosion at the Albanian’s warehouse. Ivie and Nix went there to stake it out and they haven’t been seen or heard from since. That was an hour ago. I closed my eyes, trying to see if I could feel him, feel my brother, my other half. I felt nothing but deep-seated rage and despair.

And Sydney... my *fucking* woman. She was... was gone. Some shit about Hailey, barely holding on to life, telling him that someone took her. Grey had no bloody idea where to look or how to find her.

Dammit all to hell! New York City is going to burn!

EPILOGUE



I leaned over the small sink and took in my red eyes and ashen looking complexion. My body felt heavy. My heart hung like a ton of bricks, barely beating against my chest. The emptiness that held me captive since I had been taken off the streets of New York had slowly drained my soul of any hope. Hope of an escape. Hope of being found. Hope of...

I closed my eyes and took a deep breath, doing my best to breathe through the despair threatening to take over.

He said he would find me anywhere. That I could never hide from him. In fact, as my memory served me well, his exact words when I threatened to leave were, *“I swear, I will find you, throw you over my knee and spank your ass raw. You won’t be able to sit for a fucking week. Don’t test me, Princess”*. Law was a man of his word. He’d proven that time and time again. *So where is he?*

A thought popped into my head that had my heart racing more than it had been doing. The words my kidnapper used in response to Hailey’s warning came to mind. “... That’s if he survives what’s coming to him.”

Survives? What did that mean? I shook the bad thoughts from my mind and tried to shift my focus to something else.

It’s been close to twenty days since I had been taken. Twenty days since I heard Law’s voice, since I had seen his gorgeous face, since I’ve been in his arms. At least, I think it was twenty days. The last thing I remember, before I woke up and found myself in this strange room, high above someone’s

sea, was helplessly watching my best friend bleed to death on the floor of the Four Seasons Hotel.

I had no idea where I was, or how long I'd been here. The moment my captor shoved me inside the SUV, it had been lights out. Someone drugged me, stuck a needle in my neck full of some sleeping agent. I say someone because I wasn't sure who'd done it. It could have been the asshole that shoved me inside the SUV, or it could have been the huge asshole that was sitting in the back seat of the SUV waiting for me to climb inside.

Either way, I was clueless to my location and to the identity of my captors. I had even asked the masked man that brought me food where I was and how long they were going to keep me here. And every time I received silence as my answer. *Fucking assholes.*

I did have a hint to my whereabouts. One thing's for certain, I wasn't in the U.S. When I woke from my forced slumber, I found myself inside a plain-looking bedroom with a bed, a dresser and a private bathroom. It also had a private balcony. At first, I thought my kidnappers couldn't be that stupid. Putting me inside a room with a balcony I could use in my escape plan wasn't very smart of them. Except, when I opened the French doors and glanced down, I could see escape wasn't an option. I was at least fifty feet high, maybe a hundred, with a bed of rocks below me. I couldn't see shit for miles, but high cliffs in the distance on either side of the sea, which spilled out into a vast horizon.

And the breeze that slapped me in the face had to be forty degrees cooler than New York. Which I concluded I had to be in a cooler part of the world, may it be Canada or something, or Europe? It's still summer in the northern states and I knew I wasn't down and out for *that* long to have missed an entire season.

What wasn't a mystery was the reason *why* I was here. My *fucking* family. Apparently, the guy that grabbed me, he never mentioned his name, but I started calling him Harry because the asshole had hair everywhere. It ran along his arms and his legs like a thick carpet. It even peaked from the collar of his

shirts. It looked like fur, he was so hairy. Anyway, *Harry* told me that because of who was with me when he snatched me, he needed more money from my ex. He called it hazard pay. He knew he would be on the run for eternity and wanted this little snatch and grab to be worth his while. That was about eighteen days ago.

Harry has made my acquaintance quite a few times, pissed as hell, asking me what I had done to my ex. I shrugged and gave him my best, most innocent doe eyes as I replied, “I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

And I didn’t. As far as I knew, George was the one living free and clear. We were still legally married, which meant he still had a job and was still making a shitload of money doing nothing. I was the one getting screwed over.

Harry didn’t believe me. He damn near ransacked the room, breaking the dresser mirror, throwing the television off the balcony. He even dumped the few changes of clothing he had given me off the balcony and my blanket, leaving me with only shorts and a t-shirt. He also used zip ties to keep the balcony doors open, freezing me to death. I had to use the fitted sheet still on the bed and slept in the bathtub to keep warm. *Fucking asshole.*

I had no idea what he wanted me to say, but from the ranting and raving he did, I had gathered that *Georgie Porgie* wasn’t paying up. Either he didn’t want to pay extra, or he didn’t want to pay him at all. I had nothing to do with that, and yet I was paying for it. Last night I had been given an ultimatum, or rather George had been given the ultimatum. Harry had called him while I was in the room. He put him on speaker and told him if he didn’t pay by tomorrow night, he was throwing me off the balcony. He even gave him visual aid by holding the phone over the side of the balcony as he threw a chair over the side. I could hear it hit the rocks. George was quiet for a long time before he exhaled. I sighed too, thinking he was going to cave finally and I would get to go home.

However, that didn’t happen. Nope... This *DEADMAN*—as soon as I figure out how to come back to life, I was going to kill him—said to Harry, “Well, shit. I’d pay you for that.

Throw her ass off the balcony. Send me pictures that it's done, and you'll have exactly what you want. Hell, I'd even throw in a bonus amount if you film her going over and send me the video."

"You son of a bitch!" I had screamed and charged Harry, trying to grab the phone so I could look that motherfucker in the eyes when I promised the most painful death I could think of. I never made it to the man or his phone. Someone grabbed me from behind, stopping my momentum, but it didn't stop the words from spewing out of my mouth. "You're a dead fucking man. Do you hear me? I'm the only reason you're still alive. Well, fuck that. The next time and I mean the next fucking time I see him; I will tell him to rip the skin from your body and throw your ass in acid right after he beats the ever-loving fuck out of you. You spineless twit for brains, asshole!" I tried to push this man's powerful arm from my waist, kicking at air, trying to get away from him and to Harry. "You better hope he throws me off the balcony. Because if he doesn't, I swear I'll get free and come and beat the shit out of you my damn self. You fucking, worthless, small dick having, pussy ass bi—" I had mumbled the last part of my sentence into a large beefy hand.

Harry gave me a puzzling look as he disconnected the call, right in the middle of my promise of retribution. I finally aimed a kick in the right place, landing on the big man's shin. He growled and dropped me to the ground. I fell hard, but it didn't quaver my rage.

"Call that fucker back. I still have shit to say." I had ordered, fixing my t-shirt as I stood to my feet. I had barely steadied myself when Harry grabbed me by my neck and walked me backwards until my back collided with a wall, all the while growling his frustration.

"You think this is a game!" he yelled, spittle hitting my cheek. I clawed at his hand, trying to remove his vice grip on my neck. My eyes bulged out of my face. My lungs ached for air, pleaded for it. Harry leaned closer, his dark eyes growing darker. "You better hope and fucking pray he pays. If he

doesn't, my men will have their way with you before I slice you up and throw you over the balcony. Fucking pray."

With that, he released me and left.

I cried all last night and into the morning. I've barely slept and every time I thought about his threat, no better yet, his promise, I'd run to the bathroom and throw up the bile barely living in my stomach.

I took one last look at my haggard reflection and splashed cold water on my face. I wiped the excess water with my shirt and stepped out of the bathroom into the freezing cold bedroom. Honestly, I didn't feel the cold anymore. Time was ticking away. The sun had already gone down. I had a sinking feeling that George wasn't going to pay the ransom. So that left me with zero options.

No, I take that back. I still had one option left, but I couldn't do that, no matter how bleak my situation looked. But believe me, I thought about it... ending my own life I mean. Compared to what my imagination envisioned the last moments of my life would be like dealing with Harry and his men, throwing myself off the balcony would be mercy.

God would give me a pass, right?

Oh shit...

I closed my eyes and rubbed my belly. The world around me spun again, and I felt my tummy start to toss around the last of my stomach lining. I tried to focus, tried to center myself, but I felt my body shake, fear and dread taking over my soul, especially when I heard loud laughter from the hallway outside my bedroom door.

I gasped, scampered into the bathroom and glanced around frantically for something to fight with, anything. However, there was nothing. Not even a shower curtain rod. There were no towels either. All of those things had been tossed the night before. My heart started beating against my chest as the thoughts of jumping to my doom started to sound more appealing. I darted for the balcony door, thinking everything would be over soon. The fall... the rocks... my life. Done.

But yeah, I never made it. Someone grabbed me by my hair and yanked me back. I screamed and grabbed at the man behind me. I fought, clawed, all the while screaming for someone to save me. Thinking about Law.

Fuck, something must have happened to him. Was he dead? Was that why he wasn't here? Why hasn't he saved me? And what about Hailey? Did she survive? God, I knew between the two of them, I should have been found. That could only mean one thing...

No, no, no!

"Get off me!" I screamed, yelling at the top of my lungs.

I was thrown on the bed, but I didn't stop fighting. I kicked someone in the nuts, not sure who. They all wore masks. I kicked another in the face before two men grabbed my ankles and pinned my legs to the bed, spread eagle. Someone else held my wrists down, pinning them above my head, leaving me vulnerable and exposed.

"Please, don't do this. Please. Please. I'll pay you. Whatever you want, I'll pay. I have money. Please," I cried out, pleaded with them, but it fell on deaf ears. I tried to struggle, but there was no use. I wasn't going anywhere. I was going to get gang raped. Why was this happening to me?

I screamed, "No!" at the top of my lungs just as my t-shirt was ripped open and bra torn from my body.

I closed my eyes and screamed at the top of my lungs, "Law!"

Large hands groped my breasts. Foreign voices rang out around me, laughter bitterly surrounding me. I screamed Law's name louder and louder, over and over again. I closed my eyes tight as my shorts were cut off me. *Oh God, it's really happening...*

Suddenly, the weight against one of my ankles loosened. I kicked at my attacker and push him off me. I opened my eyes to see the second guy holding my other ankle drop, his brains splattering the wall behind him.

I screamed as the guy holding my wrists let me go. He scrambled away from me, but he didn't make it very far before the back of his head exploded, painting the bare mattress with crimson and brains. I screamed again, covered my chest with the rest of my t-shirt and rolled off the bed. I cowered beside the bed, using it as a shield from the opened balcony.

Shouting began throughout the room. More bodies crammed into the room. Everyone scrambled, trying to hide from bullets that were coming from the balcony, however no one was *standing* on the balcony. A sniper then?

Another man dropped next to me. I screamed and tried to make myself small against the wall next to me.

There were five or six men huddled in the bathroom. Four others were crouched by the door, unable to see around the corner to the balcony. They missed a figure dressed in all black, mask over their face, pull themselves up from the edge of the balcony railing. He climbed over, agile as a cat, pulled some kind of machine gun from around his back and knelt on one knee.

I studied the figure, their build, the way they searched the room, looking for someone to shoot. Our eyes met, and the figure froze, watching me, studying me. It was at that moment when I felt my body instantly relax as my breathing spiked to new levels. Excitement flowed through my veins and all I wanted to do was run to him, but I could barely move. Instead, I smiled and did the only thing I could do. I breathed out his name.

“Law”

Then, before the bodies dropped one by one, I threw up.

Bloody fucking hell!!!!

The End... Until Nix

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The Morelli Brothers

Coming Soon:

Nix

The Morelli Brothers

Grey

The Morelli Brothers

Standalones:

Broken Promises

Cage Chronicles volume 2:

Analisa's "Cage" Night Stand

Alpha Males Series

Ruined: Loving an Alpha Male

Desired: Loving an Alpha Male

Desired Too: Loving an Alpha Male

Obsession: Loving an Alpha Male

Obsession Too: Loving an Alpha Male

Obsession 2.5: Loving an Alpha Male

Controlled: Loving an Alpha Male

Controlled 2: Loving an Alpha Male

Controlled 3: Loving an Alpha Male

Coming soon:

Obsession 3: Loving an Alpha Male

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My Redemption

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