



MELT AWAY

arabella black

Melt Away

A Dark Reverse Harem

Arabella Black

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Playlist



“DEMONS - MASSANE REMIX” BY JERRO, SOPHIA BEL,
MASSANE

“USCITO DI GALERA” BY LAZZA

“SUSHI FOR BREAKFAST” BY BAYLI

“INNER LIGHT” BY ELDERBROOK, BOB MOSES

“ANOTHER YOU” BY BONNIE X CLYDE

“SAFE - JORIS VOORN REMIX” BY MONKEY SAFARI, JORIS
VOORN

“SAD GIRLZ LUV MONEY REMIX (FEAT. KALI UCHIS AND
MOLIY)” BY AMAARAE, KALI UCHIS, MOLIY

“UNTIL WE LEAVE THE GROUND - STEVE JAMES REMIX” BY
EMMIT FENN, STEVE JAMES

“BECAUSE YOU MOVE ME” BY TINLICKER, HELSLOOT

“CHAINS CHILLED (WITH PROJECT 46)” BY KASKADE,
PROJECT 46

“PATTERN” BY LE YOUTH, SULTAN + SHEPARD, EMILY
FALWAY

“ESCAPE (FEAT. HAYLA)” BY KX5, DEADMAU5, KASKADE,
HAYLA

“YOU’RE SO HIGH” BY ELI & FUR

“FALLING” BY CROOKED COLOURS

“END UP” BY SEVYN STREETER

“COMMITMENT ISSUES” BY RIN

“<DEMONS>” BY KIM PETRAS

“JENNIFER (FEAT. SOULKING)” BY GHALI, SOULKING

“NTG INTRO” BY NUGAT

“INTO THE BLACK” BY CHROMATICS

Blurb

August Scott stole me.

To protect me, he claims.

But it's a lie.

Without any remorse, he took away my innocence.

He claimed me as his pet.

And then he shared me with his family.

I'm theirs to use.

A prey they hunger for.

When there's nowhere left to run, their sinful secrets come to
light.

Something wicked tore these men apart.

It's up to me to reconcile them.

Because now?

They crave *me*.

Triggers

This is a complete standalone.

This is a dark reverse harem story.

This is not a safe love story.

Subjects of noncon, breeding kink, degradation, exhibitionism, voyeurism, parental neglect, s**ual abuse, sex work, abortion, and [more](#) will be touched upon.

TROPES:

Dark Reverse Harem, Captive romance, Enemies to Lovers

A Warning

They're *not* blood-related.

Prologue

Mae

DUE AMOUNT: \$501,349

In bright red letters, my future gets flushed down the toilet. A six-figure debt is not what I imagined I'd call my own at nineteen years old.

Deep breaths. My left pinky finger tremors, and I can't get it to stop.

I haven't been able to calm down since Mrs. Kovač kicked me out earlier today. She caught me with a book in my hand while I was supposed to be scrubbing and polishing the floor of one of her countless restrooms.

And she freaked out. She didn't even pay me for today, and she knows, *she absolutely knows*, that I count every penny.

An uncomfortable snicker escapes me. During a short and spontaneous break, I chose to study, and she acted like I squirted over her imported hand-sewn towels.

Mrs. Kovač is my best friend Marcus's mom, and she does me a favor by letting me dust and clean for her. My boss's various demands and rigid schedules aim to degrade me, but I can take it.

I've been cleaning after myself and my mom for years. It's not a glamorous job. I'm not ashamed to admit it. The pay? It's horrendous, quite frankly. But I have debts I need to get rid of.

Debts that go half a million deep.

How much do I have to sweep to erase that nuisance? Enough to keep me busy my entire lifetime, but I can and will make it happen by any means necessary.

One year after my mom's untimely death, this debt letter is what I have left of her. Every month, it invades my space with its ominous presence. How can a piece of paper mutilate my peace like that?

Easy.

It's a reminder of every second I ever spent at a goddamn hospital.

After everything we've been through as a family, all I have is this warning letter. I'm the one to receive it because I'm what's left of my family. This letter predicts what my future will look like.

Unfortunately for me, it doesn't look too bright.

I pick up my phone, dreaming of a naughty distraction. Instead, I find my best friend looking for me.

MARCUS KOVAČ:

Are you coming

Mom said she kicked you out

Idiot

I BOTTLE UP THE RESPONSE I WANT TO GIVE HIM. I SWALLOW IT down, and I know that one day, I'll explode.

How do I avoid such a dreadful twist? With a sketchy plan.

Fuck emptying trash cans. Instead, sell your soul like many girls have done before you! Successfully so!

Now, I've got a problem. It's minuscule in front of my colossal debt, but it's there.

I'm not OnlyFans material. Never in a million years.

I'm not social. My body type is mildly outdated. Boobs? Mine are tiny. Ass? If you were to give me a BBL, where would you take the fat from? I've been starving myself for months.

My only plus is my friendly face, youthful despite the tears and the agony of the past five years of my life.

Since cancer took my mother from me, I've been strategizing.

I'm done vacuuming my bestie's pubic hair from underneath his sink.

I will sell pictures and videos of my body.

I don't have my own website. I must rely on somebody else to do the distribution for me. As for content... How will I compete with my six-year-old phone? I don't even have a proper laptop to retouch my pictures. If I want to make money as a self-anointed ho, I must prioritize updating my tech.

I'm not sure yet how, but I'll get there.

One scrub at a time.

I can be like the girls online. They don't have financial problems. They take pictures of their bodies, and they figure things out. I can wipe out my debt if I become like them.

The chances are low, but I can make it happen, can't I?

I leave the debt letter on my bed. I can't read it in full right now. I'll read it when I return from the party. I'll read this letter every night if I have to.

My trembling finger disturbs me as I pick out my clothes for the night. I shouldn't go out. I should stay inside and strategize. Cut up my clothes. Make scraps of the fabrics. Outline a plan that will get me out of this mess sooner rather than later.

How many pictures of my tits will suffice to rack up half a million dollars in my state? I've studied women online. It's been a lonely year, and their social media feeds have kept me company.

To an outsider, I suppose it's simple. I'm young and dumb, aren't I? That sells. All I must do is get naked. Record a couple of videos. Chat with thirsty clients. Do whatever these thirsty clients expect of me.

But I have my limits.

If I do this, I'll do it on my terms. I'll take advantage of my loneliness. I'm not going to look for a partner in crime, no male performer to spice up my videos with his fleshy cock.

No, thank you.

I'll keep it simple. I've been dead on my private socials, but I created a new account that my friends... well, my only friend, Marcus, doesn't know about. I've been posting promising selfies, and I've even had a few slimy DMs to show for it.

Next step? Opening an account across all socials to widen my reach. Video-sharing socials where girls in the online sex work business share suggestive videos where they don't actually do anything but trick their audience into lusting over them. Yeah, I figure I can shake a juice box off-camera, pretend I'm jerking somebody off, and then reveal that, oops, I'm innocent. It's just a juice box! Or I could go into shallow waters like the content-driven apps with boards and communities, where they vote on which girls have the best tit drops.

I don't have to show my entire body if I don't want to. Not yet.

I can test the waters first.

I'm drawn back into the real world when I catch a glimpse of the letter on my bed. It reminds me that I'm utterly alone in this world. And for that reason, I can succeed in selling parts of my soul to even this freaking debt.

I don't have a safety net to fall back on. I refuse to involve actual touch in my plan. I know that selling actual sex would end my debt sooner rather than later.

But I have a plan.

A plan with lots of holes, and I don't mean the untouched ones I carry around every day.

My phone tings, but I leave it on the floor where I'm charging it. Marcus will have to wait. I'm getting ready as a favor to him. It's been one year since my mother died while I was supposed to be celebrating my high school graduation.

He doesn't remember, or he pretends to have forgotten.

It stings that my best friend expects me to show up for him, but it hurts even more that I can't communicate my needs better. It leaves a bitter taste, my new life. I desperately cling to Marcus Kovač, the guy I met as a junior in high school. We bonded over the fact that he loved patronizing people, and I enjoyed being at the end of it because, duh, any male attention is better than none. Daddy issues, if you must know. He's stuck around me ever since, and he's attempted to change me.

Unfortunately for me, he has managed to do just that. I've lost my edge, the energy I once cruised the world with when I found out my mother was dying. I took it upon myself to be the adult in the household, to figure shit out. I helped her and eased her journey in and out of hospitals.

I was determined to save my mother.

But in the end, I failed. Her lungs gave up. The oncologists gave up.

Shutting my eyes, I will myself to find a distraction. Think of all the dick pics you're going to have at your disposal once you complete your self-anointed ho phase. All the money!

I slip into my jeans, buttoning them with ease. The top I pick used to be tight, but now it's baggy on me, not giving me any shape. Marcus will chastise me for showing up to his frat party looking like a mess, but I'll deal with his demands later.

My phone's charged up. Picking it up from the floor, I read Marcus's frantic messages asking about my whereabouts. I don't reply.

On one of my other accounts on my socials, I've received another message from a faceless stranger that I've been

entertaining lately. I make my way to the bathroom as I scroll through our chat.

RAMPAGE377:

What are you doing right now?

xMOONPRINCESSX:

Getting dressed. Going out tonight

RAMPAGE377:

Good girls go to bed early. What are you wearing

xMOONPRINCESSX:

Excuse me, sir. But you don't pay me for THAT information

And I'm not a good girl!

RAMPAGE377:

I'm not your sir

Did your friend coerce you into going out again

Send me your details. I'll reimburse you for more than information

MY PHONE MEETS THE SINK IN THE COMMUNAL BATHROOM. I can't do this. I'm already getting attached to a faceless person that most likely just wants a closer look at my tits. Maybe my pussy.

And that ruins my mood because I haven't felt horny in a while.

He doesn't want *me*. He doesn't care about *me*. Why would he? I'm a moody bitch with ulterior motives. One of these days and Rampage377 knows it, I'll give in, and I'll send him my details.

I can't wait for that day.

Then the letter on my bed won't feel as heavy. Perhaps I'll feel horny for the man, but right now, I crave the messages of disappointment. The check-ups. I want *him* to patronize me because Marcus, my real-life toxic attention-giver... He sucks these days.

My trembling pinky forces me to reapply my make-up five times. Okay, maybe that's an exaggeration. I own one lipstick that I've had since high school. I don't want to think about the germs or how stupid this makes me look.

The other girls on my floor have left already, but I can envision them in here, prepping for the night. Who knows where they'll go on a Saturday? Out with their girlfriends? On a date? To a party like me?

With their little cosmetic bags, concealers, brushes, and eyeshadows, they stand here, chatting and complaining about what people my age complain about. What would that be? I have no fucking clue. I've been a recluse since I graduated high school, obsessing over online cam girls and Instagram models. These girls have entire skin care routines that I know nothing about because, by the time I was ripe and ready to explore the feminine side of my body, I was drowning in medical terms and bills alongside my mom.

It's just that mom passed, and I'm still here, trying to move on.

Before I leave the bathroom, I apply lipstick in an effort to look like I care about this shit. I don't. I have much better things to do. I could be sulking on my bed all night. It would feed my inner toxicity much better than going out to a frat party on Marcus's behalf.

It takes forty minutes to reach the frat party on foot, and by the time I arrive, I'm sweating and irritable. I haven't had a

drink yet, but I already feel like vomiting. The garbage can in front of the frat house is overflowing, and the party has barely begun. They're still playing the teenage bops of our youth, Pitbull and Flo Rida. They're warming up.

And I'm already tired of it.

I'd be better off planning how to take advantage of thirsty online perverts in the comfort of my bed.

"There you are!" Marcus exclaims, and I jolt. He hurries down the steps of the entrance, approaching me before I can hide in the bushes. "What took you so long?"

He takes one look at me, and he says, "I could have bought you a dress. You don't have to wear these jeans everywhere."

I shake my head, and I give him the standard response. "I'm okay. Thank you."

"Come inside. Let's get you a drink...." He leads the way through the overflowing crowd by the entrance. The deeper we venture into the frat house, the more I feel the monotonous bass of the music pulse in my ears.

I receive my red cup once we're in the nasty kitchen, and Marcus pours me some plastic bottle vodka. I cringe at the taste. I always have plastic bottle vodka, but this one just tops the list of worst drinks I've ever had.

"Look, let's go somewhere quiet. We need to talk," he says, and it's like he's talking to the wall. He could be.

As we head for the stairs, I bump into a girl that I remember from my classes. She never speaks up, quietly observing our classes from the corner. At least she's dressed better than me in her sparkly little dress. I should ask her for advice sometime. The girl scans me from top to bottom, and I feel judgment pouring down from her eyes.

She attempts to talk to me, but I hurry away from her. I don't want to lose sight of Marcus. If I do, I'll have to socialize with people I don't want to know. Marcus waves at his friends by the speakers. They give each other signals I don't understand, but in the end, Marcus gestures at the upper floors.

That's where we're headed.

It's not the first time that Marcus has had to sacrifice a party for me. It's what he gets for dragging me to places I don't want to be.

I almost trip on my way up the stairs, but Marcus doesn't notice. With a pep to his step, he leads the way to his room. I struggle to keep up with him.

Indebted teen and wannabe ho trips and dies at a frat party.

It's a wonderful headline for my demise, but I won't need it. Not today. I climb up the stairs without falling on my ass.

There are people hanging out up here, and Marcus kindly asks them to fuck off.

Once the door shuts behind us in his room, I take a deep breath. It stinks like rotten eggs in here, but it'll do for a short while. I'd prefer to be in my room, overanalyzing a letter I receive every month. Stalking my favorite girls online. They have their picture-perfect life with their immaculate bodies, dolled-up faces, lush hair, and clothes that make anybody salivate.

Even me.

Even if I haven't felt horny in a while, possibly ever, I know that these women are gorgeous. It'll take me triple the amount of time to get to my goal of money because I'm not like them. They know what they're doing while I dabble in and out of this world, hesitant to make a decision.

I giggle out loud. They're my new friends, these girls online. They're something I can rely on.

"What's so funny?" Marcus asks. He tilts his head to the side, his blue eyes inspecting me.

"Nothing," I claim, but my mind spins. I took an insignificant sip from the cheap vodka. It shouldn't hit me this bad.

Marcus scoffs as he prepares his bed for us to sit on. In the last year, he's been metaphorically stitching me up, urging me

to move on with my life after my mom's death. I should do as he says. Marcus Kovač has his life figured out. Due to his parents, he's debt-free and set to achieve great things once he graduates from medical school.

He can tell me what to do. He's allowed to give me instructions. It's his final summer before his boring life begins, a life of high stakes in medicine. He's passed the MCAT, and he's applied to medical school.

He's got plans, and I don't even know why I agreed to this party.

I couldn't say no. I shouldn't complain. And I don't.

Marcus has done a lot for me since my mom passed. He's the only friend I've held on to since my early teens when we moved here after my parents... After my dad left, basically. My mom and I had been by ourselves since I was ten years old.

"Chelsea broke up with me," Marcus announces, and I'm momentarily taken aback.

"But...How? You were supposed to go hiking in the Highlands next week!" I blurt out. I rock back and forth on his bed, unable to find a comfortable position to sit in. I can't shake the startling nausea that claws at me, begging to consume me.

"Mae? Are you okay? You're red," Marcus comments, examining me with his curious eyes. He touches my shoulders with his hands, working his way up to my neck. He searches for a pulse.

He does that a lot.

"What happened with Chelsea?" I ask again. My throat feels dry. I take one look at the cheap vodka, and I decide that it would be a good idea to finish it off. Once I do that, the headaches start.

I'm supposed to stay still. Why can't I stay still?

"Help me out here, Mae. I want what's best for you," he says. He scoots closer to me, and I smell his sickly sweet

vanilla and leather body spray. It makes me gag. “Tell me what’s wrong.”

I don’t want him to worry. I wish I could dress my own wounds, but I don’t know how to do it. “I’m okay.”

“You’re not. I can see it. What’s wrong?” he insists, and I want to cry. My eyes drift shut.

“If you’re hurting, you need to tell me. We can get you checked out. Eyes open. Stay with me.”

I shake my head, and my eyelids flutter open.

He’s here, but I’m alone. I haven’t felt more alone in a long time.

I attempt to lie down on my right side, but nausea wraps its tail around my neck, and I almost throw up on his bed. He encourages me to lie down, and I listen.

When Marcus swings over to my side, I jerk away. Marcus pulls me in for an uncomfortable hug. He doesn’t know how to show affection, and it’s fine. We’re not close like that.

“Sorry. You caught me off guard there,” Marcus says once he removes himself from my still-shivering body. Perhaps I could use a blanket, a soft one that’ll warm me up in no time. I don’t want his blankets. He doesn’t have a good track record with hygiene. “Can I lie down next to you? I could keep you warm like that.”

“Please, try,” I beg. I’m not usually this needy around him. He’s been actively trying to diminish that side of me like it’s poisoning my insides. I’m about to burst into tears over my words. He hates it when I’m needy, and I despise myself for showing him the side of me he loathes so much.

I want to be held. I’m sinking, and I need to be kept afloat.

That’s all.

Marcus takes off his shirt. The disgusting body spray and his sweat don’t scare me off anymore. I’ve given up on caring about smells. My comfort.

When he wraps a naked arm around my upper body, I shudder. He's warm, though. It's what I need. I don't understand why I feel so cold.

"Is this okay?" Marcus asks gently. I'm not used to his tone being humble like this. He doesn't ask questions. Usually, he gives me instructions, and he doesn't accept no for an answer. He knows best, after all.

He's got his life figured out while I tag along where I'm tolerated.

I give him a brief nod.

"You're growing so much," Marcus says. I can't hold my eyes open for much longer. "You used to be tiny. Do you remember?"

I nod against his chest.

His hand wanders, and he suddenly cups the side of my breast. "They just appeared one day. I hope they grow bigger. Don't you? These are just a handful."

His fingers are thick and short. He tries to grope my breast while I doze off, and he can't. My breast bursts out of his palm.

I don't like that he touches my breast. I didn't ask him to touch me like that.

I'm dizzy. I want a good hug. I want to be told that everything will be okay.

He doesn't need to touch me like that. Why is he taking it there?

"I told you Chelsea was planning to have a breast reduction this summer, right?" Marcus asks, but he's not *asking*. He talks to himself. "Not that I care anymore. She can do whatever she wants now that I don't have to deal with her high-maintenance bullshit."

I'm not there.

I'm sinking. I'm right there where I thought I was safe, looking up at the ceiling.

“If you ask me, it’s ridiculous. She had a good pair of tits. Why ruin it?”

I faintly remember him complaining about her constant nagging. She suffered from back pain. Surely, that’s a good enough reason.

“Oh, look at your nipples.” I jerk in his embrace, but I’ve sunk into nothingness. I can’t remove myself from his touch. “Freaking hard like little rocks.”

He tweaks them, and I whine. Or I think I do. I can’t move my lips.

“You like this, don’t you?” Marcus removes his hand from my breast, and I breathe out in relief. I have no idea why my nipples would be hard right now. I’m in pain. I’m sad. I want to go to sleep in my bed, read my debt letter and feel empowered by it. I have a responsibility now, and I don’t take it lightly. “I knew you would. The other day, I swear I heard you masturbate before I knocked on your door to pick you up for lunch. Did you?”

I don’t reply. I don’t remember. I’ve been crying, but I haven’t felt horny in a while. That shall become a problem if I truly intend to sell my lovely persona online, but we’ll figure that problem out once we’re safely tucked in our bed later. “Your cheeks were so flushed when I caught you in your room. Chelsea was like a robot when I had sex with her.”

My eyelids grow heavy, but I hear how Marcus spits.

And then two fingers brush my clit. Where are my jeans? I don’t feel them. I don’t see them in the dark of Marcus’s room.

I want to throw up, but I can’t muster the strength to speak out. I can’t stop shaking.

“You want this, Mae. I know you do. You say that I’m like your big brother, but I’m not. I wish I’d have dated you from the start. My parents said you were crazy, and quite frankly, they’re still spooked by you. You’ve got a lot of baggage, no proper home. I wish I could’ve lost my virginity to you. It’s crazy to say it out loud. To you out of all people....”

My eyes are too exhausted to produce tears. Everything hurts.

It happens fast.

Marcus goes back to giving me directions instead of asking for permission. *Spread your legs. Spread those legs, Mae. I know you're not on the pill, but you're good. It's okay, Mae. Relax. Come on. You've wanted it for so long. I'm finally giving you what you've always wanted.*

Am I imagining things? I question my reality until something pokes me. It's flaccid. Wet from his spit, not my body. I'm dry. He rubs himself on me, and I wail. Nobody will hear me. The music's too loud.

I don't understand why he doesn't stop.

“Argh!” Marcus yelps like a wounded puppy. I see him twice, and it makes me vomit on his sheets. I almost choke on my vomit, but I manage to turn on my side. Marcus hovers like a ghost in front of me. Why am I floating like this? “Who... No! Who are you? That hurts, damn... Ugh...”

Marcus shrinks on top of me, fading away. Where does he go?

Darkness takes his place. I struggle to inhale because I catch a whiff of something foreign. We're not alone in this room.

Marcus shrinks in the shadows, breathing heavily. The unknown presence in the room approaches me without hesitation, emerging from the night.

“You should leave now! Help!” Marcus yells. He's frantic, waving his arms around like a helpless child crying out for attention.

We're alone. His cries for help are of no use. His buddies won't hear him over the music.

I can't move my face, my limbs.

“She's my girlfriend!” Marcus throws out, and I manage a strangled cough because I have no other reaction inside of me.

My limbs are boneless. I can't speak up and renounce his statement.

The shadowy man picks me up like I weigh nothing. He bypasses Marcus without a word. The man holds back, and Marcus would do better to stop pushing him.

"I'll call the cops!" Marcus yelps like a banshee before the man carries me out of his room. "I'll get you arrested! You're kidnapping her! Let her go!"

His words fade in the distance. He doesn't follow us.

My droopy eyes manage to remain open until we reach the stairs.

That's where I feel a prick in the back of my neck.

"Don't you worry, Ms. Zito. You're going home."

Home? I have no home.

Chapter 1

Mae

THERE'S A TIME AND A PLACE TO BE A CATATONIC AIRHEAD, and this is the most inappropriate time I can think of.

I can't move my feet, but I keep pushing. Sticky sweat coats my skin. In my nineteen years, I have never felt as dirty.

It's agonizing to realize that I can't move my limbs. I feel dead inside. I'm slowed down by an invisible force. I don't remember much of what happened. Drenched and in and out of consciousness, I'm falling.

It's a different type of fall, one I can't explain. Fear hugs my body inside out, an old friend of mine. Back to snatch away more of my sanity.

Dick. Cash. Debt-free. Oh fuck. It doesn't work. I feel like sobbing. Where is Rampage377? He'd talk me out of a panic attack right about now.

"Mae." I stir, my sluggish body giving in. That's not Marcus's voice. Fuck... This voice is much more attractive. It's the voice you yearn to hear when you wake up. When he tells you that you're safe, he means it. Fuck. If he says my name one more time, I'll melt into a puddle.

I remember that I've been loitering in a dreamy state for hours. The medication I'm on must be heavy.

"Don't make me repeat myself."

What happened? I muffle out a response, assembled letters that make no sense whatsoever. "Hmhm."

I keep falling. I don't open my eyes.

I fall until I'm rattled awake by two hands that have no business touching me. Panic overcomes me.

His hands cup my face. "Wake up."

My eyes flutter open, and I face my new reality.

His brown hair is combed over. A permanent scowl decorates the man's clean-shaven face. There are faded bruises on it, and his crooked nose reveals that it's undergone numerous ordeals. He is older than me, closer to my parents' age than mine, but he doesn't have the wrinkles to show for it.

No tie decorates his neck, and the top buttons of his dark shirt are popped open. I'm not sure he could pull off a buttoned-up shirt anyway. His suit is fitted, but his body is too big.

Too dangerous.

The man assumes more than half the bed while he sits on it.

Whoever this is, I know to keep my mouth shut. I don't work out, although I should start preserving my youth. Sign up for cheap classes to stay fit. It will benefit me once I start posing on the internet for real.

With this man's unrelenting size, his audacity, I can't fight back with my body in the state that it's in.

My body. I inspect myself, and to my utter relief, I'm shielded from the man's hungry gaze, but these aren't my clothes.

I inhale sharply, and the air is heavy with smoky notes of cedarwood and amber. A rich scent that chokes me where I lay.

He scalds my skin with his hooded eyes, overwhelming me with his intense presence. He sits on the edge of the bed that I lie on. If this is a life-or-death situation, I'll die at the hand of a man who could crush me with his hands. I didn't know that this was the way to go for me, but I'll take it. It certainly tastes better than dying on a rotting hospital bed.

The man doesn't remove his fingers from my face. I try to yank my head out of his hold with no results.

Who is he? Why did he take me away? Stupid questions but valid, nonetheless. If I've been kidnapped, I want to know why. My head throbs at the memory of a shadow removing me from Marcus's frat party.

"Don't touch me," I say when his thumbs rub my cheeks, but I don't recognize my voice. I'm hoarse, and I'm desperate for hydration. My eyes drift shut. "Please, don't."

"Show me your eyes," he demands. It's a stern reply, almost full of judgment. His voice does things to me that I don't know how to explain. "Do as told, Mae."

"Who are you?" My dry eyes hurt as I open them to confront my new reality. "Where's Marcus?"

The man doesn't want to respond. His cut-throat gaze watches me, anticipating my next move. He wills me to understand that there's no escape. I haven't bothered to explore where I'm being held just yet.

"He doesn't matter anymore," the man says.

"He's my friend," I insist.

The hands that cupped my face slip to my neck, where he wraps his fingers around my stiff skin. I attempt to fight back with my arms, to shove at him. But all I manage is to moan at my sore muscles.

He drops his hands from my face like I repulse him, and that's when I'm able to explore the high cream walls, the floor-to-ceiling windows. The blinders are shut, and they rattle wildly against the wind.

What wind? I don't live in a windy city.

The air conditioning in the corner blows crisp air into an otherwise intense room. This isn't a room I'd ever thought I would wake up in. Sleek and shiny surfaces. A glass door that's slightly ajar, hinting at racks of clothes hiding behind it.

The bed is too comfortable. The pillow is too soft. Not even Marcus's home felt this lavish when I used to sleep over

at his place.

I fold when the man rises from the bed.

“What’s going on?” I shift where I lay, eager to find more clues as to why I’m here.

When I find the letter that I hadn’t finished reading next to me on the bed, the document almost slips through my fingers. I grip it. It’s not as wrinkled as I remember it.

I begin to read it. *Dear Ms. Zito...*

DUE AMOUNT: \$0

I CACKLE. THERE MUST BE A MISTAKE. “EXCUSE ME, SIR. That’s the wrong letter. That’s not my letter. I have... Why do you have this letter anyway? Why am I here? Care to tell me? It’s fairly rude to keep me captive without telling me why.”

“You’re here because your debt’s been paid, and now, you owe me,” he reveals. Does he expect me to know what this means? I don’t. I’ve never seen this man before. Never heard of him.

Why would he pay my debt off?

I don’t want to admit it, but what scares me the most is that this man is calm. Everything about his fear-inducing body screams impatient and dangerous. Like he could snap with one false move on my end.

Yet, his voice grazes my ears with its sharp depth.

Does he think I’ll fall for this? “And I rode a unicorn to Neverland. Please, spare me the bullshit.” I moan as I attempt to leap from the bed. My unstable limbs wage war against me today. “This must be a stupid joke. Is Marcus behind all of this? Because I didn’t play along to his advances? Sorry. I refuse to be a rebound. I have better shit to do with my body than waste it on a guy who gives me anxiety over my small tits!”

At the end of my monologue, I heave. I'm out of breath because every move I make in this new state is a chore.

"Did Marcus Kovač touch you?" he asks, and his gaze drops to the junction between my thighs, compelling a reaction out of the very spot the unknown man scrutinizes. Please, beloved pussy of mine, remember that we're dead inside? This is not the time to react to male attention.

"Touch me?" I swallow. The man runs a hand through his carefully combed hair, risking ruining it.

"My men said that you were half naked when they found you," he says. His mask of calm slips, and I notice how he swallows, his Adam's apple bobbing along impatiently.

"Your men?" I attempt to rise, but my limbs feel too heavy to move. "What... I don't understand."

"You don't have to understand."

"Well, first of all, I don't believe you," I claim. There are a lot of coincidences in this world, and if my mom, bless her wherever she is, sent this strange man to scare me away from sex work...

It may actually work.

Mom, I'm sorry. I'll go back to mopping up Mrs. Kovač's dog's diarrhea, okay?

I'll never contact Rampage377 again. Never. I'll forget he exists.

I'll forget that some nights, his messages keep me the warmest company I could ever ask for.

I'll forget that I'm buttering him up so that, one day, he'll unzip his wallet for me to pay for nude pics, a naughty video, among other things. Now that mom's not around... I'll wear a chastity belt until I'm thirty or something. Whatever pleases you up there!

"I don't need you to believe me," he says. His tone sharpens, and a wave of panic crushes me. The blinders quake, distracting me. What is with the damn blinders? I live in a

dusty dorm, and my blinders make less noise. “Your debt’s been paid off.”

“I didn’t consent to my debt being paid off—”

“I don’t need your consent, Mae.”

“But why? Please. I have nothing to offer you. I’m useless,” I blurt out. I must look like a damn fool with my shaky gestures. “Why would you bring me here? Where am I? I could’ve paid my debt off myself. I didn’t need your help. I was looking forward to it, actually. It gave me immense confidence to handle this issue on my own. It would’ve been an easy matter to control. I had a whole plan—”

“That’s not going to be enough from now on,” he says, and his mouth turns into a hard line.

“But, sir. Listen to me. You look old enough to know the recent trends. A lot of girls find a following online, and they make fast cash. All I have to do is smile at the camera! Show a little skin. That’s all. I truly don’t need your money. I’m thankful for your offer, but you can take it back now.”

My stomach flips upside down when the man responds with a growl. “My name is August, and from this day forward, you belong to me. You don’t share what’s mine on the internet, Mae.”

“I don’t know you,” I scowl. I struggle to keep my composure. I don’t know any man by the name of August. He’s not my age. He seems younger than my mom, but that doesn’t mean much. He must be in his mid-thirties. I don’t know anyone in that age group. This must be a joke. “Send me home.”

“You can’t go home,” August says. His eyes narrow in on me.

“I can and I will,” I insist.

“I’d like to see you try,” August says, a cruel smirk gracing his face.

All I need to do is get up from bed. After tossing and turning for a while, I manage to get on my two feet. I wobble

where I stand, and it takes me a moment to find balance. His eyes scrutinize every move I make. “Where are my things?”

“If I told you, I’d make it easy for you.” His hands are squeezed into fists by his sides. But his shoulders are relaxed. I tiptoe my way around him, praying he won’t snatch me by my neck to hurl me back into bed. I struggle to reach the room’s door.

“Can you at least tell me where we are?” I ask. I rub my forehead. “Fuck, my feet hurt. I can’t walk...” Shut up, Mae. I’m not about to reveal that I already walked for forty minutes last night.

“Avenue de l’Annonciade,” August reveals, and I tilt my head at his words. Ave-what?

“I don’t know where that is. It’s fine, though. I’ll find my way back home. I always do—”

“You don’t have a home anymore,” August says. It stings more than I want to admit. Mom lived a paycheck-to-paycheck life, one financial decision away from ruining us. She didn’t mean to. It simply happened after my father left us when I was ten. I haven’t had a place to call my own in years.

“I do. The dorms. It’s a tiny room, but it’s home to me.” I ignore his poised words, and I exit the room. My knees buckle, and I lean against the nearest wall. I don’t want to fall over.

The wind howls to my right. It’s a strong tide that I don’t recognize.

I follow the hallway until the very end. That’s where a shiny elevator waits for me. My sluggish limp slows me down, and I decide not to look for my phone or keys. I don’t panic, but I know that whatever that man’s on is not something that I want to test.

I can survive without a phone.

Somehow.

I cannot survive owing half a million dollars to a stranger. I feel uncomfortable accepting Marcus’s ten dollars for a

cheap meal when he's generous. I click on the elevator button and cross my arms as I wait for it to come to me.

August appears at the end of the hallway. He stalks toward me. He's much faster than me, even when he doesn't try to be. In less than four strides, he's by my side. "It won't take you where you need to go."

"Help me then? Please?" I ask. "Just push the right button. I'll be out of your hair in no time. This must be a mistake. I'm a lot of things, but I'm not a sugar baby or whatever people my age do with people your age. I'm doing good. I need to go home. What I intend to do to end my debt is less touchy-feely than whatever you must think I'll let you do to me. I don't do well with people. I prefer the distance a computer screen provides. Of course, I'll have to find a computer screen. I'll go to the library! Yes, that's what I'll do tomorrow...."

"Tomorrow? When would that be?" he asks, tilting his head to the side.

"Monday. Tomorrow's Monday," I assert. I gawk at the elevator, willing it to hurry the fuck up.

"It's already Monday," he says. "And there's no library for you to visit."

"It's not Monday. It's only been a couple of hours...." My aching limbs beg me to reconsider my words. It was almost Sunday by the time I reached the frat party.

"You've been sleeping for almost two days," August announces. His patience runs out, and he throws me over his shoulder before I can escape his attack. I kick at him, but he doesn't budge. "I'd prefer if you took it slow for a couple of hours."

"I don't understand." I groan as the blood flows to my head, and my breathing quickens. "What did you do to me?"

"I brought you home," he says, reversing my progress in less than ten seconds. I'm back in the bed that I woke up in. "Welcome to Monaco, Mae Zito."

I faint.

Chapter 2

August

MAE'S OUT OF IT AGAIN.

I fold the dirty clothes I've removed from her body, stowing them by her side of the bed. I steal her panties, tucking them in my pocket. That's the thing we'll agree on, her and I.

Her snug panties, boring and simple.

It's the first time I've met Mae, and she doesn't even know who I am. It's better that way for now.

I run my thumb over the spot on the back of her neck where my men injected her. A tiny red circle, almost invisible to the untrained eye.

One glance at Mae's social media feeds, and I knew that I had to meet her. Her bright and deep-set eyes caught my attention right away. Intrigued by how she carried the pain in her innocent eyes, she haunted me for days.

I found a new little obsession. A beautiful blond with an affinity for leather jackets too big for her feminine shoulders. Her perky little tits, not protected by a bra, shone through her tight white tank top. If she were mine, I'd never let her out of the house looking like that. As innocent as the look may appear, those tits would be mine. She wouldn't have permission to show them to anyone but me.

Her innocent little pictures teased me. She's not famous in any way. She doesn't even have a ton of followers.

Those types are the perfect prey.

Mae Zito shouldn't be here. She shouldn't sleep in my guest room. She should be at the airport, boarding a flight back to Washington, D.C.

But she's not.

The girl's here to stay. She's my new project. Does she even have a choice? Money talks and her money is quiet. I ran a background check on her, realizing that she was fucked.

Legitimately, fucked.

It immensely satisfied me that I cleared out her debt, finally, after a year of procrastination.

I don't regret installing surveillance devices to track her. Privacy became a foreign concept for her the moment I set my eyes on her.

I let her play around for a year. Behind her back, I've been planning her relocation to Monaco for months. What she must understand is that playtime is officially over, and she'll have to answer to me now. She's a young woman, and she needs guidance. I've written down my ideas for her future, and now that she's here, I'll test which would work best for her.

Mae Zito has the best timing in the world. I wasn't planning to force her arrival this soon, but now that she's here, I can integrate her.

It took me one year to prepare for this exact moment. I won't fail now.

My phone vibrates. I pick it up before the ringtone can disturb Mae's sleep. She stirs, but she continues breathing heavily in measured inhales and exhales.

I shouldn't take this call while she's in the same room as me. That's too risky. I don't want her to hear the other end. Not today. She's seen enough, and she seems beat up already, fainting on me.

"What did you do?" Dad asks, hissing through the line as soon as I pick up.

Dad doesn't know. It pleases me that he's in the dark. It serves him right. Only I know. I've been paying people to keep

tabs on my new investment. I orchestrated a smart surveillance system in her pitiful dorm room with a broken window. I dug deep enough to find thirsty college girls eager to make a couple of bucks on the side.

I paid college students to monitor Mae's every move. At her dorm. Her classes. Her meals at the dining halls... I had to hold myself back from paying for her food. Mae seemingly stopped dining at the dining halls a couple of months ago, choosing to eat her meals in private.

My eyes take her body in, and I don't like what I see. She's not only exhausted from the trip. She's starved, her color pale. She's a little taller than the average girl, and I hate to see the structure of her bones so clearly. I don't want to shame her, but this result doesn't seem like a choice.

This is forced.

I should've paid more attention to her but overseeing her from afar while I'm working full-time means that I'll make mistakes.

And I fucking did.

It's nothing that can't be reversed.

For his sake, I hope Marcus Kovač stays away. He let his best friend, or so I was told, starve.

It's not like he knows where Mae is. He hasn't even bothered to ask around about her. My sources at her school report that he's been quiet.

I hate flying, but I'd take the jet to Washington, D.C., in a heartbeat. I'd like to have a word with him.

Once Mae's warmed up to me, I need her to forget all about Marcus Kovač. He did this to her. He forced my hand, and then he ran like a bitch. He didn't even fight for the girl that he claimed was his girlfriend in that filthy room of his. He watched my men, strangers to these numbed-out college kids, storm in and usher Mae away.

He didn't lift a finger to save her.

Fuck him.

My fingers twitch as I clench them around the phone. I can't afford my anger issues to ruin my plans.

"I brought a girl home," I finally tell Dad.

"Who the fuck did you bring home, son?" he asks, and his voice cracks at the end. "Not another one of those models from London? Son, they do too much cocaine...."

I let him vent without paying any attention to him.

When my sources reported that Marcus had taken Mae upstairs at the frat party, I ordered them to follow Marcus and Mae. They did, and they heard unusual noises from inside the bedroom, moans and squealing mattresses. At the thought of Marcus on top of my new project, my first thought was to protect her innocence.

Because that innocence belongs to me.

"Is it a serious matter?" Dad retorts. He asserts his way to the balcony of his home in Menton, the familiar creak of the wooden floor and the scraping of the ancient glass door telling on him.

"She belongs to me. She owes me," I say. He doesn't reply, and I begin to anticipate his outburst. He flips open his lighter, and he lights a cig. He takes a deep inhale. The wind rushes by, whistling down the line.

I wait. Briefly, I glance over at Mae. Her lips are parted, and light snores erupt from her. Her calm hasn't been disturbed just yet.

The cigarette calms him down for now. Dad says, "She could steal from you while you're asleep. Run away with your cash. What are you doing? We didn't risk it all for a stranger to come in and ruin it for us."

"You're being overdramatic." As always. Dad lives his teenage dream vicariously through me. He wanted to be a boxer, but then my mom happened. She seduced the fuck out of him when he was fresh out of high school, and she ruined his plans of becoming an athlete. She gave him babies to care about at home while she was busy taking over the world, and the sentimental dickhead that he is, Dad fell for it.

He ruined his life for pussy.

I can't say that I find it appealing.

While I never wanted to repeat Dad's mistakes with women, I followed in his footsteps once my brother was... Gone. Yeah, he was gone. Out of our way. My brother was tucked away in a prison cell while I discovered that I had a thing for punching people in the face and profiting from it.

Of course, punching people in the face means much more than *that*. I made a name for myself in the mixed martial arts world, which I found to be a more promising art form than boxing at the time.

Twenty years later, I'm retired, and I don't have to punch people in the face anymore.

"Did you at least tell *her* what you were up to? You didn't tell me," Dad accuses me, and he's fucking right.

"I don't have to ask for anyone's permission," I tell him, and I take one of Mae's soft ankles in my hands. If Dad can have a cig to calm himself, I can touch Mae.

I caress her ankle, and I can already feel her settle down for me.

"Why now? Why bring a girl home now?" Dad asks, and the answer is on the tip of my tongue.

I glimpse at Mae, and for fuck's sake, I almost throw my phone out of the window. I'm a spoiled piece of shit with a hard-on for control. Mae's my new project, and there's nothing my father can do about it.

"Because I can," I say. I let it sink in, and he doesn't respond. My family will freak the fuck out when they meet her. They won't appreciate my guest's looks or what she smells like. Her entire demeanor.

She's not on her own anymore, and she'll have to adjust to us, how we move. "Come over for breakfast next Sunday." It's a dare. He better accept it. "Bring Alfie and... Him."

I click the line dead, tossing the phone.

She flinches, and I curse under my breath. I don't want to scare her, but I can't control myself sometimes.

Most of the time.

Mae needs to be put on the right path. She's now mine to protect. I don't know who I saw in that picture on her feed, my future project, or just another whore selling her body online, but I don't care. It's turned into an unhealthy obsession, and I'm about to give in to it.

I'm going to protect Mae Zito, and nobody, not even my father, will deviate my plans.

"Marcus Kovač should've fought harder for you," I tell her, and her body quivers at the sound of my voice. "Because what he didn't take is mine now."

Her eyes blink open in fear.

She may be a tall little girl, but she's still a girl. She can't fight. Not with her shape, her posture. I can push her body in whichever way I please, and she'll fold for me.

And that's exactly what I do.

I'm not a man who stabs people in the back. I face my challenges head-on. I could flip little Mae on her back, fuck her tiny hole, and be done with it. But that's not how I want to do it tonight.

She remains clueless, her relaxed features almost unaware of the looming danger.

"I'd spank your ass for trying to leave earlier," I tell her. At the mention of a spanking, bells ring for my innocent little guest. She's adorable when she's shocked. Her mouth gapes open, and I want to stuff it shut with my cock.

No can do.

Patience.

I can't claim all her firsts before she meets my family. If she's still as untouched as I believe that she is. While I had her surveilled, she didn't get on her knees for Marcus. A girl like

Mae is loyal to her core. If there was any man that she'd ever suck the dick of, it would be Marcus Kovač.

Lucky me, she never did.

I twist Mae's body so that I can climb on top of her with ease, and she giggles in response. It's not a giggle I'm used to. She's stressed, and I add to it when I spread her thighs.

I take my rightful position between her juicy thighs. She attempts to fight me, but she can't land a single pathetic punch. If she knew that once upon a time, I used to do this for a living.

Upon inhaling her feminine scent, I crave nothing but to dive my face between her creamy thighs.

"August? Why are we wrestling?" she asks. Her laughter remains, but her eyes tell me that she's terrified. Laughter is her coping mechanism.

"We're not wrestling," I tell her. She squirms, putting on a fight while I remove any barriers between me and her pussy. "I'm trying to decide whether I should spank your pussy as punishment or kiss it because it looks too fucking good to miss."

"What are you talking about?" Mae wakes up, darting her eyes down at me. Oh, but it's too late already. "Stop staring at me! Get off me!"

She moves to shut her legs, but I grip them, spreading them further. I grip her too hard, and she'll bruise tomorrow. Fuck. I need to be careful. If she wears short dresses, which is the uniform for women who hang around us, then the bruises will show.

I can't have anyone wondering.

No visible bruises. She's a treasure that I fought hard to bring home. I won't hurt her without reason.

"You're not shaved, but that's not going to protect you tonight. You're too fucking gorgeous. Smell like honey. I bet your pussy tastes so sweet..." I take a dip, and I smell her first. I anticipate for her hands to shove at my head.

She wants me gone, doesn't she?

Unfortunately, tonight, she won't get her wish.

She went to her dreadful frat party, and she risked her pretty pussy for it. I can't have her virginity dangling like a treat in the air for all men to see. Marcus was about to take what's mine, and I managed to snatch her away in time.

Now, she belongs to me.

"What did Marcus Kovač do to this pretty pussy?" I ask, and my insides boil with rage. I can't show her how much, though. I'd scare her off. She'd dry up, and then, it would hurt much more than it should during her first time.

"August, you must be joking. That's... Not cool. Please? Don't do that. I don't feel comfortable—"

"Answer the question," I demand, and she rolls her hips to get away from me. I grip her hard. "What did he do to this pussy?"

"No, please! Let me go!" she cries out. "Stop staring at me!"

"Why would I stop?" I ask her, and I dive my nose through her folds. She quivers at the touch, whining like a needy girl. She's wet already despite her refusal to give in. I could smell her forever. Her musk intoxicates me.

"I stink!" she yelps.

I chuckle, and she gasps in response. Her arms shove at me, but she doesn't get far. I'm eating her pussy tonight, and there is nothing she can do about it. "Are you trying to scare me away? You won't succeed."

"I'm dirty! I feel... I need hundreds of showers to wash away...."

She doesn't know that I ran her a bath earlier. It would spook her. There's no way I'd let her on this bed while she stank of Marcus Kovač.

When I dive in for a first kiss to her folds, she whimpers above me. "You're not dirty." I part her lips with my prying

fingers. “I’m going to show you just how sweet you taste, Mae. Are you ready?”

“But...”

I nibble on her clit. Her tight little button gets her amped up, so I lick it some more.

“What if I say no? What if I tell you to stop?” she asks with a trembling breath.

“Your pussy tells me yes, Mae.” I eat her honey, swallowing her juices. She tastes unlike anything I’ve ever encountered, sweeter than heaven. She has no fucking idea who I am, and she’ll despise me when she finds out.

I crave her because I’m a bad man. She doesn’t know.

But taking her virginity tonight?

That’s about as tame as I can be.

I’ll never see heaven’s doors, and I’m just about fine with it. As long as I get to defile Mae Zito while I’m down here on this filthy earth, I’ll take whatever I can get.

“I’m confused,” she blurts out.

“What confuses you?” I ask, not in any rush. I lick her juices, lapping her pussy up. Just as I think I’ve taken all her sweet nectar, the girl produces more for me to eat. She could make a starved man gloriously happy.

“We shouldn’t be doing this. You... You abducted me. I’m in a foreign country,” she says, but it hasn’t sunk in yet. Once she steps outside of this forty-seven-story building, she’ll feel the salt on her skin. Hear how the tires of the vehicles smoothly drift over the asphalt of this affluent sovereign city-state.

She breathes hard, her tight body tensing under my hold. I let her thighs go, and I focus on fondling her pussy some more. She deserves the uttermost attention before I defile her tonight.

The night is long, and I’m a patient man for now.

I'll prepare her because I don't want to hurt her any more than I have to. If she's already confused, the least I can do is ease my passage to her body by seducing her.

"Tell me why we shouldn't be doing this. You deny your body, Mae. Don't lie to yourself," I tell her, and I thrust a thumb inside her tight channel. I work it in circles, digging my way inside her walls.

I've got condoms back in my room, but I won't get one.

I'm fucking her bare tonight. When she meets my father soon, she can look him in the eye, knowing that his son fucked his cum into her unprotected womb. Let him suffer some more.

He did this to us. He fucked up when he raised us.

"August, please..." She begs for me to stop, but her body pulls me closer. Her legs cross behind me as I free myself from my underwear. I can't help but stroke my cock at the sight of her wet pussy. She's puffy from my kisses, eager for more attention. "I'm not supposed to be here. This is a mistake. I don't know who you are! How will I get back home? I have responsibilities—"

"Give in, Mae. You're mine. I'll take your virginity tonight because if you keep it for one more second, I'll drive myself crazy over it. You're in danger, a creature as beautiful as you. Scumbags like Marcus want nothing but to hurt you, to take away what's not theirs—"

"But it's yours?" she cries.

I tease her tight entrance with my cock. I won't last long tonight. "It is. Can you feel it?" I rub the crown of my cock up and down her entrance, teasing her with what's to come. Her sweet little moans are dipped in her struggle to fight me, but they're there and, most of all, glorious.

"No... Please... Let's talk about this..." I can't take it much longer. She tries to take her hips away from me, bucking against me, but I don't let her. I flatten my hand on her lower belly, my thumb reaching her wicked batch of hair down there. Darker than the hair on her head, it's not too thick of a bush

but not little enough and most definitely not in a controlled triangle.

I don't do girls with hair. I prefer them shaved clean. It's what I expect, and I haven't backed down from this request in years.

But this girl, this forbidden little treasure, makes me appreciate her body the way it is.

The mere thought of having her waxed now gives me anxiety.

"Talk about what?" I ask as I dip the crown of my cock inside of her. I breathe hard. The blood left my brain. I can hear her anxious little breaths, her shudders.

"This." She rolls her hips, welcoming another inch of me inside of her tight wet pussy. She drips for me as much as she wants to deny it. "Your cock inside of me! I just met you!"

"Would you prefer Marcus to do this instead? A guy you know so well? You don't know me, but I'm here to stay. Better we get acquainted sooner rather than later, don't you think? Or do you want me to ship you to his place so that he can fuck you while you're unconscious?" I tease her with a bite in my voice. She better give me the correct answer here. My temperature rises as I wait for her response. I can't think straight with her sucking me into her body like this. "Do you want me to take back my money? Force you to work five jobs a week to make ends meet? I've got a long reach, Mae. I can blackball you with one phone call. All you have to do is ask for it."

"I'm not asking for it!" She gives in, her eyes dilating for me while I breathe her in. She quivers underneath me once again, helping my cock reach deeper inside of her.

"Mae." It's a warning. My temper is running wild. "You want Marcus to do this to you instead?"

"Please, don't yell at me while you're inside of me!" she squeaks, and her eyes well up with drops of pain. She tries to run away from me, but I grip her hips, and I hold her in position. This is mechanical, almost a duty. I'm taking her

virginity, and then, it's time for her to start anew. Reach her potential.

Because she can, now that I'm on her side.

I shove myself past her barriers until my balls connect with her ass. Her arms' attempts to push me away are pathetic and weak. If she wants to fight me, she better learn how to do it. This barely registers with me.

Since she's mine now, I'll have her learn how to use her strength better.

I breathe her in, needing a moment to myself. This changes everything.

Finally, I own her. Entirely.

"Answer my question, Mae," I insist. I encourage her by thrusting inside of her, giving her very little room to breathe. I'll bruise her insides if I push some more, but something about her blushed cheeks, her throbbing, and the treacherous heat she emanates tells me that this woman may end me.

I rub her clit. Not because she deserves it. She's being a tight-lipped little cunt right now, and it takes all my strength and patience not to flip her around and pound her from the back after I've spanked her ass red.

We have all summer for that to happen.

Right now, I intend to make a point.

I rub her clit, and she meowls for me like the naughty girl that she is. I'm inside of her, blocking her innocence. Once I start fucking her, it's over and done with. I display the patience that I don't usually allow myself to have.

My mouth finds her pointy little nipple, and I suck on her, flicking and licking her until she grinds herself against my cock. I make her fuck me to get the release that I'm building up inside of her.

It takes a lot of patience to twist a situation like this around.

She writhes on me like a hungry little slut, ready to reach her peak for the first time. Lucky me. She fucks me like she's on top, riding me. But she's not on top. I am. I get to control this body of hers from now on, and I decide that she's had enough.

I remove my mouth from her tit, my fingers from her clit, and I remove as much of my cock as I can tolerate. My crown remains engulfed inside of her, and her folds clasp on me, begging to take me back deeper.

I let out a low chuckle. I've got her now.

"I'm waiting," I remind her.

Mae pouts for me, and I reach for my nightstand. She gasps and struggles as I show her my long reach. Without removing my cock from inside of her, I grab my phone from the nightstand.

"August!" she yelps.

"Yes, Mae?" I unlock my phone, and I turn on the camera. I snap pictures of her blushed face and her parted lips. She's in shock. Next in line are her perky little tits.

"What are you doing?" she asks, her voice cracking.

"What would you like for me to be doing?" I ask in return. I zoom in on her pussy, her gorgeous lips, and how she connects with my cock. I'm strangling her with my size, and I'm not even sorry.

"Now, it matters what I want?" She pouts at me, but I ignore her.

"Do you think it mattered to Marcus?" I ask her. I click to record a video, and I gradually slide right back inside her pussy. I want to capture the sounds her sloppy pussy makes.

"No... It didn't...." She gives in. "Please, August."

"Please, what?"

"Don't send me back to him," she begs, and I sink back into her. I would never think of sending her back to that scumbag.

No more holding back. I pick up my rhythm, but I refuse to touch her in any other way. She needs to know that she's mine to use now.

Under my protection.

"And?" I ask, breaching her some more while I film our bodies connecting. I can see a couple drops of blood, but it's nothing to worry about. She's smeared with our combined juices. "What else?"

"What is it that I'm feeling right now? I'm confused," she says with a sigh.

"Don't evade the question, Mae."

"I don't want you to fuck me," Mae says. "But... But my body would die if you...."

I remove my cock from her swollen folds, and she gasps. "Yeah? Are you ready to die for me yet?"

"Please, August! Don't play with me...."

My cock drips with precum, eager to pierce into her. She gushes for me, for the camera. I don't ever want to look at the video if I have the real Mae in my bed, but... This is a special moment. Her first time, how she reluctantly invited me into her tight body.

"I would never want Marcus to... to fuck me," she defiantly reveals, and I reward her with a cruel thrust of my cock back inside of her. She gasps, and she reaches down between us to stop me from my violent invasion of her body.

"Keep your hand right there," I warn her. "Grab my cock, Mae. Do it now."

"No!" She pulls her arm, but I grab it. "No!"

"Grab my cock, or I'll do this all night long, and when you meet the rest of my family, you'll sit next to me like a dumb little cockwhore with a sore pussy and a clouded mind from exhaustion. Is that what you want?" I want her to defy me. Nothing would please me more than to see the guilt on my father's face. He'll know I fucked her, and it will kill him.

I can't wait.

“Are you... Are you going to come inside of me?” she asks, and her pussy convulses around me. She's into the idea of breeding? Fuck me.

When I don't respond, she grunts, taking matters into her own hands. She rolls her hips, meeting my thrusts. “Hand. Now.”

Reluctantly so, her hand dives between us. With an instinct to protect her decency, she cups her gushing pussy. It doesn't matter to me whether she hides. I've captured it with my phone, my own eyes.

When she grips the base of my cock, I pump into her. I find my rhythm while her moans turn into needy cries, begging me for more. “August... Please...”

“I'm going to come,” I warn her, piercing her more intensely. She can't keep up with my pace, and I don't want her to. I want her shattered, drained of any logical brain cell. I want her to want me as much as I want her at this moment, but I know it'll take time.

All I can see is her, her curious eyes. Confused at her body.

“Not inside of me....”

It's too late. Ropes of my cum fill her up, and I fuck it deeper, not ready to let go of her tight grip. Loud thuds ring in my ear, almost numbing out her spent moans. Her fingers drift from my shaft, and I encourage them to stay wrapped around my base by cupping her hand with mine. Teamwork.

“But... Ah...” She tightens around me, pulsing around my cock. Her eyes roll back, and she spasms below me. “August...”

I continue to stretch her while we settle down. Our breathing evens out. I let the phone drop off the bed as I bring Mae's body closer to mine. I shift on the bed to relax behind her, and to my surprise, she doesn't protest when I keep my cock inside of her.

In my profession, there are a lot of ways to trap my opponent into submission for me to land a strike that'll take them out of the fight.

She drifts in my arms, her head resting on my sleeve. I don't have to fight tonight. My cock's nestled inside of her as she falls asleep in my arms. I feel her chest rise and fall, brushing against the protective arm I embrace her from the back with.

"I'm sorry for your loss, Mae," I tell her, but she's fast asleep already.

Chapter 3

Isaac

WHY THE FUCK WOULD MY SON INVITE US OVER FOR *breakfast?*

Come over for breakfast next Sunday.

I kill the cigarette, and I take one last breath, listening in on the harsh waves of the ocean. It would be too dark to see the water, but I live in the shiny city center. Things don't quiet down around here. In the late hours, the moon sparkles in the dark blue water. "Bring Alfie and... Him."

August can't even say his brother's name.

This family of ours is broken.

Beyond repair.

Family celebrations? That's not us.

Our last get-together occurred six months ago. My youngest, Lake, was released from prison after serving a twenty-year sentence for murder. It wasn't a pleasant occasion, and I'm not looking for a repeat. Since we moved to Monaco because August wanted to expand his horizons, Lake had to join us on this side of the pond. It would be a difficult task for any other man, but August managed to bribe the right people. August flew Lake over to Monaco without any restrictions to his name.

Because he could.

Six months later, we're here. Not that I ever saw much of August, but now, we see each other in passing at events. He never calls and rarely responds when I ring him. Lake is

finally back after being away for twenty years, and we couldn't be further apart. It's almost as if August's avoiding his family on purpose.

My sons... They have a curious relationship.

"August?" I say as I climb back into the penthouse. Two things happen at once. My son hangs up on me without any further instruction or a fucking goodbye.

And some maniac rings the doorbell like it isn't almost midnight.

I shake off the smoke, the salty air, and I make my way to the door. I know it's Alfie before I even sling my hand over the doorknob. I don't have any friends, none that are insane enough to disturb me at this hour.

What I have is Alfie.

Lake's best friend.

August's numbers guy.

Blood runs thicker than water, but this boy is what I would call a transplant. He bleeds for us, for whatever reason.

He's knocking on my door at midnight when I'm fully aware that he has the access code because he lives downstairs, for fuck's sake. He could wander inside without anyone blinking an eye.

This family may be broken, but we're still a family. We run a tight ship.

I open the door, waiting by the elevator for Alfie. I can sense his tension, and the boy isn't even upstairs yet.

Fuck. I bet it's the girl August brought home. I hope he didn't get another one of the high-profile IG models that suck his soul out for a Chanel bag...

While I wait for Alfie to arrive, I scroll through my messages. Nothing captures my interest, so I click the screen off with a heavy heart. I shouldn't do this. I haven't had a serious relationship since... My wife.

Years have passed, and I'm still not over it.

So, I seek company on public profiles with kinky private desires.

I submerge myself in the filthiest of obscenities to forget.

To distract myself from the clusterfuck of a family I get to call myself the father of.

Fatherhood doesn't suit me. I wasn't born to be a father. *She* made me one. But she's gone now, and I'm left to pick up the shattered pieces.

I shove the phone in my jeans' pocket as Alfie surges through the elevator doors. He's in a worse state than I imagined. His ruffled hair is a major step away from his usually slicked-back dirty blonde hair. Where he is clean-shaven every day, I notice that he didn't pick up his razor today.

His exhausted almond-shaped eyes pain me. My son's return has broken his heart.

Alfie's slender figure hides under his wrinkled suit and an unbuttoned shirt. It makes me uneasy inside to see him this distraught over my son. He's out of breath like he ran up the seven sets of stairs, but the sneaky fucker didn't. He took my elevator, so he better calm down.

He should wipe that sweat off his face before it drops on my custom marble tiles. I cleaned that shit earlier, and I won't have him rain on my parade.

When Alfie doesn't kick off his shoes to enter my penthouse, I'm this close to telling him off. It's when I notice that he looks paler than usual that I stop myself. He's not even that healthy of a guy, not in a family of fighters. He never radiates bodily strength, but his fading color and the dark rings devouring his eyes alert me.

Alfie wouldn't be this upset about a girl August's fucking. The girls my son fucks are easy to get rid of. You stuff their mouth full of cash, and they tip-toe back out of the hole they crawled out of. Does that mean I can rest now? Fuck no.

You see, Alfie is a calm man. He's a man of logic. Numbers. They hum in his ears, stringing up more ways for us

to make a profit.

What derails this man of logic?

It's his fucking best friend and my youngest.

Lake.

He rushes past me, entering the penthouse. He quenches his thirsty curiosity by storming Lake's empty room, and he instantly goes into panic mode. "Where the fuck is he?"

"Who?" I ask, rubbing the back of my head. I'll play along with his paranoia. It's what I do best.

"Your son! Lake! Where is he? He isn't answering his phone!" Alfie says, and he doublechecks the ensuite bathroom, just in case Lake's taking a shit that we don't know about.

"He's a grown man, Alfie. He can go out. You don't have to babysit him," I advise him, but he doesn't register my words. He stares at Lake's empty bed, a bed that my housekeeper made earlier this morning.

A bed that rarely sees my son.

It's been six months since his return, and despite August warning Lake to stay out of trouble, Lake, as always, does whatever the fuck he wants to do.

After twenty years in prison?

I don't blame him.

"How can you stand here and act like you don't care what he's up to?" Alfie bickers. His face twitches in accusation.

"He knows what he's doing," I say, but it's a harsh lie. Lake is a bitter man, and he's got it far worse than anyone else in our cage of opulence. If I choose to care, I'll break. I'm already a shell of a man.

What more can I take?

Alfie takes out his phone and dials Lake's number. It's been six months since Lake's return, but he hasn't shown any interest in smartphones. Instead of attempting to use the old flip phone Lake owned as a teen, Alfie purchased a new phone

for Lake, one that's for people that don't understand modern technology just yet.

"What are you doing?" I ask.

"I'm going to keep calling until he answers," Alfie claims. He stomps into the living room and takes a seat on my sofa. While I can't ever ignore the beauty in the view from the large floor-to-ceiling windows, Alfie is almost desensitized.

He focuses on the phone, and he keeps his promise.

For thirty minutes, that boy tries to get my son to pick up his phone, growing desperate as the seconds pass right by us.

Alfie's about to cry out of frustration when Lake finally picks up. Only, it isn't Lake. "Pronto?"

It's a woman, accompanied by deafening snares and 808 drums. The torture doesn't last long. Alfie hangs up, taking one last look at me.

"Are you coming or not?" His voice spews venom at me, dipped in disappointment. If he weren't loyal to the bone, Alfie would have made sure I was back in the States, mopping dirty gym floors over my marble in a comfortable penthouse in Menton, France.

I follow Alfie all the way to one of my cars, a matte black Bentley Continental GT. He snaps his door shut, and I do the same. In silence, I sit next to him as he drives through my city in my car, heading for the border.

The Italian border.

We take the upper exit, the one on the hill. It's much quieter up here, and Menton tempts a man with its beauty. The old constructions shaded in pastel fascinate me. I reside in the modernized area of the city, the part without character, where money gets you a front seat to the splendor of the sea.

I don't have to ask Alfie where we're headed.

"Alfie, my boy? Isaac! How are you?" The officer at the lonesome border knows us by now. This isn't the first time that we come and go at more than suspicious hours. I click my window down while Alfie's knuckles go white around the

steering wheel. I accept the officer's handshake, sneakily handing him a green bill of one hundred euros. "Headed to pick up your son again, eh?"

"You know it," I say. The officer stuffs the bill in his pants while we roll away. Alfie picks up speed now that we're in Italian territory, and he gets us to my son's location.

Pronto, as they'd say here.

Instead of going down into the Italian city of Ventimiglia, Alfie expertly navigates through roads that become leaner the higher up we go.

Lake doesn't party in a club. He has made friends in his six months of freedom, dangerous friends that treat other people's property like it's their own. Alfie shuts the smooth engine of the Bentley once we reach a group of pastel houses. They look worn out, but what property doesn't in this area? It's part of their charm.

Parked behind three Maseratis and two Ferraris, I click the window down, and the music from the phone returns. Trap music blasts from the speakers inside the houses, the Italian version of it. It feels as if they deliberately spit at you with this music, and for some reason, kids these days enjoy being spat at. I'm not one to kink shame.

The women inside are loud, and loud equals Italian in these ends. Italian women fill the walls of these rural rental homes, their chatter, their laughter.

Their moans.

I don't understand a word of it, the women or the music.

"He can't do this," Alfie murmurs to himself. He's mad that my youngest has found a new best friend. Pills and liquor.

"He can, and he does," I reply.

"It needs to stop."

The pain in his voice should unsettle me, but it doesn't even scratch my armor. I reach for the unregistered gun that's below my seat, keeping the safety on. *For now*.

Alfie got us here, but as we exit the car, he retreats into his shell. He doesn't confront bad guys, our Alfie. He's a keyboard warrior with a brain that can't handle illogical things like *partying with neighboring mobsters*.

I find Alfie's shy gaze, and I give him a quick nod. *I got you*.

Funny how they all still trust me after I couldn't keep my own son safe... I can't think about that. Not right now. Alfie needs me, and I'll find my son for him. It's like they're both back in high school, and Alfie snitched on my boys for stealing my car to get the new Nintendo.

Alfie finds his spot behind me, falling in line with my steps.

I shake off the traumatized widower, the father of two estranged sons, and I turn into a better man. A tougher man.

We crash the party, but nobody pays us any mind. At this point, they're used to our presence after hours. Dark-haired girls in bodycon dresses paired with stilettos smirk at me, recognizing me from previous endeavors. I may have fucked one or two. Not my finest hour, I'm fully aware of it. If my son thinks he can act foolish, so can I. It's not the healthiest approach to our relationship, but what's healthy when you live with a convicted murderer?

Alfie clears his throat behind me, clearly uncomfortable.

He's sheltered, and parties give him anxiety. He doesn't date. He stays inside unless my sons drag him out for business or... This. Whatever this is.

I march on to the back of the house, where the music is the loudest. There's no surprise when I find my son there with a bottle in one hand and a set of dices in the other. He picked up Italian and Spanish in the pen, and he knows exactly how to communicate with his new friends.

A row of men sits on the sofa with beautiful women decorating their laps. Some make out with their trophies, others ignore the women to fumble with their phones. Then there are the ones hanging by the kitchen, pouring drinks.

They don't dress in suits. This is a younger crowd, twenties, early thirties. They wear expensive sneakers, white T-shirts, and satin sweatpants.

Lake and five other friends are huddled on the grimy floor, smoke filling the walls. They gamble with money. At first sight, I don't see any drugs. Why would there be drugs? If Lake hangs out with his Italian friends, there won't be any drugs.

They're not dumb. This particular friend group sells that shit. They don't consume it.

Meanwhile, if Lake happens to hang out in Monaco with spoiled rich brats, we definitely find drugs lurking around the tables or remnants powdered on girls' noses and ass cracks.

"Lake," I say, and at first, he pretends that he doesn't hear me.

Alfie freezes behind me. He's getting cold feet. Now that we're here, surrounded by evil, he wants to go back to his little apartment.

"Don't make me repeat myself, son," I warn him. His friends see my gun, but they don't bother with a reaction. It's my son that I want. I don't mean them any harm. Whatever my son's done with them, they trust him.

I don't want to think about why my son is friends with mobsters.

I want to forget that he spent twenty years in prison for murder.

But it's times like these when I realize that those twenty years will forever haunt us.

"Okay, okay!" Lake finally acknowledges my existence. He pours the emerald bottle's contents down his throat, and his friends cheer him on. "La festa è finita!"

They laugh with Lake, not at him, as he throws away the bottle, sending it flying over the television. My son turns toward me, and I can smell the alcohol on his breath before he

even opens his mouth. “Couldn’t hold back tonight, could you?”

“Fratelli miei, tornerò,” Lake says to his crowd, and then he leads the way outside. It takes longer than our entrance because he stops at every girl that he’s remotely interested in, and he chats with her, gropes her. They kiss on the cheeks here, even the men. He makes his exit like he’s one of the kings.

Much to Alfie’s dismay. Poor kid’s fuming behind me.

When we reach the car, I take the wheel while Lake slides into the backseat. He looks like a mess now that he’s out of that house. His glow is gone. What’s left behind is the nasty smell of sex, rum, and cigarettes.

And his empty pockets.

He plays and plays, gambling his brother’s money away without a care.

Alfie takes the passenger’s seat with a bowed head. He almost doesn’t put on his seatbelt, and he’s a stickler for that shit.

Lake lies down in the back with his dirty sneakers touching the roof of my Bentley. My son’s like a kid these days, acting out. Seeking our attention. I let him play because I’m aware of it. Alfie struggles to believe that Lake’s rebellion is another phase that he’ll get through.

Eventually.

The engine growls as I take us back down the mountain. I don’t drive as fast as Alfie did when we came up here because I know there’s a drunk man in the back.

A man that won’t hesitate to make a mess of my car just to prove a point.

As we get closer to the borders, I don’t slow down. The officer knows it’s us, and he waves us through while my son mumbles something along the line of, “Cazzo di merda!”

I take my time, devouring the view of Menton from up here. I’m the only one who’s mesmerized by the pastel colors

hiding in the night. Alfie can't look past his lap, caving in on himself.

And my thirty-four-year-old son?

He throws up in the back of the Bentley.

Chapter 4

Mae

WHAT THE FUCK IS HAPPENING HERE?

Before I can open my eyes to face a new day in my strange life, I realize that I can't move without August's permission. I can't escape his hold. His arms lock me in, clutching me tight. Keeping me close. I'm able to breathe because he *lets* me.

"Did you sleep well?" he asks with a raw edge, a crisp of dehydration hovering at the end of that sentence. I feel the same way, buddy.

I can't find it in me to speak, too aware of how he embraces me to form a logical sentence. Something hard pokes me from behind, and to my utter terror, I know what this hard thing feels like when it's inside of me.

Who?

Me.

I was curiously dusting off Marcus's pocket pussy toys up until yesterday, wondering why a boy with a girlfriend feels the need to fuck a plastic vagina.

I don't dare to open my mouth while August's got me where he wants me. In his arms, ready to twist and break my neck.

"You will call me August," he tells me, and I bite my tongue at the sound of his voice. He's right behind me. When he speaks, I feel the echo of his voice in the tingles across my spine.

“Are you going to send me home? August?” I ask. I clear my throat and gather every ounce of brazenness I can muster. “I’m not as shiny as you’re used to, right? Monaco. That sounds fancy. It’s close to Saint Tropez, am I right? I’ve seen the women that parade the streets here on television. That’s one thing reality TV is good for. I’m not like those women, unfortunately for me. I would formally request that you book me a flight so I can go home in peace and continue my life. Thank you for doing... whatever it is that you did last night. It surely gave me ideas on what may be expected from me when I go online to sell—”

“Now that I’ve caught you, I won’t let you go,” he reveals, and my throat clogs up. “You’re not going home, Mae.”

“But. Why!”

He withdraws his body from mine; momentarily, I fear I’ve done it. I’ve upset this stranger enough to react to my whining. I turn to watch him get dressed by the side of the bed. He buttons his pants, and my gaze lingers where it shouldn’t.

That... He had his cock inside of me.

All night.

That will be a good story to sell once I get back home! I doubt Rampage377 would appreciate that my virginity was stolen from me the first night a man showed interest. Then again, whatever this is, it’s not showing interest.

I don’t plan on romanticizing what this man did to me.

“I have work to do,” August announces. “Get cleaned up. I should’ve... No. Go to the bathroom. You’ll find everything you need there.”

My eyes widen in surprise. “You’re leaving me alone?”

August nods.

“You got any morning after—”

“No, I don’t. You won’t require any pills in the duration of your stay here.” My body is corded with fury. The emotion takes away my sense of self. I can’t open my mouth and

protest. Before August departs my room in his pants only, he says, “I dare you to try and escape, Mae. I dare you.”

His laughter echoes as he turns to leave. I stare after him for a couple of minutes. Once the sound of his voice subsides, the emptiness left behind begins to deafen me.

I rattle myself out of my funk, picking up the shirt August discarded last night. It’s sticky with his sweat, but I’ve done worse. I take a deep breath, and I inhale his scent. Why couldn’t it be a cheap department store cologne? Why does he have to smell like expensive leather?

I will myself to forget the tingling sensations between my thighs.

I exit my room, limping my way back to the route I did last night. I click on the elevator button, and I must stand there waiting for over ten minutes. Nothing moves.

Shrugging, I stroll down the hallway, eager to find a bathroom. I desperately need some time alone to wash this stranger off my body.

“You need a shower, dear.” I flinch at the sound of a woman’s voice coming from behind my back.

“Excuse me?” I gulp back my shock. I turn to face what could be a ticket to my way out of here.

Before I can muster a substantial amount of excitement, the hurricane walks up to me. She’s much older than me, perhaps even August. Parted in the middle, her light brown hair is straight and reaches her shoulders. It must be dyed. The wrinkles on her skin are smoothed out, her facial features too tight to be natural. Her face looks bleak, creamy white. No contouring whatsoever. A shade of mauve lipstick. She doesn’t paint her cheeks, but they’re there in perfect form. Her facial bone structure is almost too perfect.

Oh, she’s definitely older than August.

It’s too early in the morning, and she looks like she hopped out of her yacht on a hot midday where they eat freshly caught fish. If I look out of the window... She’s in the right place

with her long spaghetti-strapped white summer dress and thin heels.

“You stink, and his cum will glue itself to your thighs if you don’t wash it right away,” she sneers at me. “I’m Noémie, by the way.”

“His wife?” I scan her fingers for rings, but she doesn’t wear any.

“Don’t be silly. I’m his housekeeper,” Noémie says, but she’s not any housekeeper. She’s the hurricane that runs this place. She’s not an old hag or an innocent little cleaner that needs the money. “I’m in charge of you while he’s away on business, so make sure to behave.”

She holds the ropes that threaten to suffocate me.

Any hope I was about to harbor diminishes.

Noémie won’t be any help. In fact, she’ll loop more chains around my neck.

She struts in front of my face, presumably to show me the bathroom. I slow down my step as I follow her. I don’t want to crash into her this early in our acquaintance.

We stop by the room closest to the one I woke up in. “August picked this room for you because of the views. It doesn’t have an en suite bathroom, but this one is just as impressive. That should meet your expectations.”

“My expectations?” She ignores me as she pushes the door open. She steps inside, and I follow her. It’s bigger than my dorm. Twice as big, actually.

Gold leaf details decorate the bathroom, from the clawfoot bathtub’s exterior to the vanities, two of them in all their sparkling glory, down to the towels.

I don’t believe that I’m not back home until I see the view from the floor-to-ceiling window. It’s an endless blue that has me sick to my stomach. I’ve never seen a blue this lively, this eager to draw me in. Hesitant steps lead me to the edge, where my nose touches the glass. I look down, and I see the pressed buildings and the snaky roads.

At the end of it, there's the Mediterranean Sea.

"Can I have a little privacy?" I ask Noémie, who hovers by the door as I explore the bathroom.

"No, you can't. Not unless I grant it to you. You're a flight risk, dear," Noémie explains. Her smile is a forced contortion of rigid facial muscles.

Before I can barf down a toilet that probably costs more than my entire life is worth, I pee while she watches my every move. I do it without hesitation because my bladder is desperate.

Then, I limp over to the pristine and spacious walk-in shower in a rush, not giving a shit whether the water's hot or cold. "You don't want to see me naked."

"I don't, but I want to see what August meant when he said your pussy isn't bare," Noémie says, and my mouth drops.

"That's none of your business, really," I snap. I tear the dirty shirt off my back, and I show her what she wants to see. Her grimace upon the reveal of my skin irritates me, so I scrub myself with whatever oils and shampoos I can find.

"Cold water," Noémie suggests. "That will remove the cum."

I scowl at her, but I'm eager to get the dried cum off my inner thighs.

I'm not sure if I truly want to smell like a spa today, but at this point, I just want to get clean. My body aches. From the long-distance travels? The shock? The uncalled-for sex?

At the end of the shower, I linger under the hot spray, too shy to gaze out of the window. Like the view will eat me up.

"I don't have all day," she announces, and I curse under my breath. I don't want to get out of the shower, freshened up and ready for more of their revelations.

I want to go home.

I don't have a lot to my name but my jewelry. I wear my favorite ring everywhere, even in the shower. I take it off,

cleaning it and my finger. It may not cost millions, but it's durable. I kiss it before I slide it back on, thinking of my mom. She made it for me like she did the rest of my jewelry. Back when she had a little time to spare. Before our life got derailed by her numerous hospital visits.

Where is Marcus? Did he truly leave me behind? Why didn't he fight harder? August could have been a dangerous man. Marcus was my friend. He could've stopped August's men from taking me away.

But, of course, he had no leeway.

Stepping out of the shower, I almost stumble on the shiny marble on the floor. I grab the wall-mounted towel rack just in time, and Noémie chuckles darkly in the corner. After I dry myself, I gaze out the window, dazzled by the unfamiliar nature of this view. The sun coats the rooftops, the azure water sparkling.

Without much ado, I return to the room I woke up in, and I roam through the walk-in closet for something appropriate to wear. All the while smelling like a perfumery.

"I can't wear that stuff," I tell Noémie, but she ignores me. Pastel colors greet me in the closet. I don't pay attention to the prominent row of flowery dresses. I don't wear dresses. That's not me. Desperately so, I seek pants. Jeans. Comfy sweaters. Not that the sun outside requires sweaters...

I'm disappointed when I don't find anything but various skirts, plain white tees, blazers, cardigans, and tennis shoes.

"That's what you get," Noémie says. "I'll let you pick what you'll wear today, but don't get used to it. I have a call to make. Excuse me."

She disappears down the hall, leaving me with a closet I can't do much with.

The underwear is acceptable. Plain soft cotton panties are my jam. Although I can't find properly padded bras, I select a flowery lace bralette that is bound to make me itchy. What did I expect? This isn't my closet. Back home, all I have is oversized leather jackets and loose pants. Worn-out jeans. Old

sneakers. I don't get to have expectations from the person who abducted me. Right? That's absurd.

The panties hug me just right. The bralette is ambitious, but it works for now. When I try on the rest of my outfit, the darkest set of clothes I can find, a pleated skirt with a short-sleeved rose brown top, I'm startled by its fit.

Everything's in my size.

Coincidence doesn't even begin to cover it.



I'VE NEVER CONSIDERED MYSELF TO BE A GOOD GIRL.

But until I find a way back to my miserable dorm room, I will play the good girl. I'm not special. If it weren't me, another unfortunate girl would sit where I sit. I must remember that *I'm not special*. I'm another vulnerable girl, one of millions. Not one *in* a million.

The man that's taken me captive is obviously delusional and rich. Combining these traits doesn't end well.

I knew that I'd have to tread carefully when I began researching the girls online. Of course, they don't kiss and tell. That would be bad for business. However, there are enough statistics to enlighten the curious.

I should've known.

I'm an easy target. What I wanted to use for my benefit has been used against me. I'm alone. Nobody in my family will ostracize me for choosing to sell images of my body online because my family doesn't exist anymore. I'm alone, and therefore, I can disappear without a trace.

Marcus is most likely glad to be rid of me. What a prick.

I don't want to leave this bedroom because once I do, it becomes real. I've been kidnapped to play a role.

By the large windows, I sit on the floor. I don't have to think. I can sit and feel. When was the last time I did that without the pressure of what somebody else wanted from me?

I've lifted the blinders, revealing a twinkling night sky hovering above a lively city of riches. A gray sweeps in, a curtain covering the dark clouds outside, and with fascination, I observe the spray of rain. Droplets splash against the window. Clouds coat the city's skyscrapers.

I haven't moved in a while. It's better that way. When I shift, I feel him inside of me, and I can't deal with it yet. I need to come to terms with it first.

"Mae." I shouldn't hesitate when August says my name like this. It's intoxicating, and I must resist. He entered the room without me noticing.

"Have you come to collect?" I ask. I don't look at him, mesmerized by the city below me. The view draws me in, drawing me to the danger of the unknown. I should be careful, but I'm already lost, aren't I?

When he doesn't speak, I'm momentarily relieved. I don't expect him to touch me, but he does. He picks me up from the floor like I'm a bag of groceries. I refuse to hold him, but he wraps his arm around me strong enough to keep me in place. I kick and yelp against his crude grip on my body.

August deposits me on the bed like a doll.

He arranges my body in a way that pleases him, and any resistance that I show is futile. He paints the picture that he envisions in his head.

A doll that he can use to live out his fantasies.

I deadpan. "You're getting your Armani suit wrinkled."

He cringes, his features twisting in disgust. "I wouldn't touch that shit with a ten-foot pole. My tailor would disown me. Are you trying to make me fuck your ass as punishment tonight?"

"I'm not having my ass fucked, thank you very much." I clear my throat. I throw back my shoulders. Pull up a sour

face. I'd do anything to make him take me seriously, but I fear that I don't get through to him. His fingers trail paths on my body that lead directly to my ass. I turn and kick at him, but he isn't having none of it. "Leave my ass alone, please. I can't have you stealing from me again!"

"Are you sore?" he asks, completely ignoring my appeal. His wearied eyes dip to the triangle between my thighs, and I clench at his gaze.

"Do you care?" I bluntly ask. I am sore enough to remember how every inch of him felt inside of me.

"I could give you something for the pain, but..." He exhales.

"Will it always feel like this?" I pull my knees to my chest, but he puts a stop to it. His hand dips between my thighs, finding my heat. I gasp at the connection, embarrassed that I react to him. I can't stop replaying what happened the other night.

"I don't know," he says, slipping his hand deeper. He cups me above the fabric. "You should've rested today."

"I d-did." It comes out in a stutter because he fumbles with me, delving his fingers where they shouldn't be.

"Sitting on the floor isn't resting. Not when you've got the wrong posture for it."

"Is that so?" I roll my eyes. He's swapped numerous masks ever since we met, and I'm beginning to see that I have no idea what I've signed up for. Well. I haven't signed up for it, not really.

"Behave," he warns me as he sweeps my hair off my shoulders. His sticky hot fingers trace my collarbone after leaving my pussy alone. "I expect you to wear this."

A delicate cold string connects with my neck. Click. I ask, "What is it?"

"Your tag. That's how they know you belong. You're one of us. Nobody will harm you if you wear one of these," August explains, and I cross my arms in front of my chest. My

shoulders drop. This is the moment to fight, isn't it? But I can't. Not when I don't know the stakes. "Now, hand me the ring on your finger. Platinum necklaces don't go along with rose gold \$1 dollar rings."

I swallow, and he has the audacity to caress the veins on my neck. "I'm not taking my ring off."

"That was an order," he insists, and I shudder.

"I don't care. I value my ring more than your dirty necklace," I say. It bubbles inside of me, my audacity. Small wins.

"You're going to pay for the right to wear this ring," he says, and I can feel his amusement in the curious touches of his fingers.

"What's it going to cost me?" I ask. August doesn't respond with words. Instead, he hurls me off the bed. He encourages me to put on shoes, and I grab pair of tennis shoes. Once I'm finished, he leads me to the elevator. This time, the elevator works. In less than one minute, the doors open. Lavish mirrors and golden buttons greet us. August swipes his card, and then, the elevator moves. It's a swift and quiet ride to the lowest levels of this building.

"Your papers haven't arrived," August reveals. He tugs at his cuffs while he stares ahead. "That means you can't be seen outside yet."

"I can go back upstairs—"

"You're accompanying me for the night," he says. The doors open to a bleak tiny room with cream walls. He shoves open the heavy emergency exit door, revealing a row of cars that hurt my eyes. They sparkle in the dark, but once the lights go on, and they do so without August lifting a finger, I'm overcome by their cockiness. If I could steal one of those cars, I'd be set for life. My debt would be...

My debt's been paid off, and I'm stuck with a maniac who's too stubborn to let me go. Haven't his finance guys told him that he can write charity off? He doesn't need to keep me captive. He'll get his money back from the state!

“And what does that entail? I’m not a trained escort, you see. I wanted to sell pictures, not physical labor....” I murmur the final part of my statement to nobody in particular. Maybe myself. I talk to myself in the presence of a maniac who had my blood on his cock. Good job with the self-preservation there, Mae.

August ignores my panicked words, and he saunters away from me. I observe him from the back, and I honestly don’t think that this could be happening to me. His suit jacket enunciates his broad back, the wide shoulders. *I don’t stand a chance*. Marcus’s hips were as wide as this man’s upper arm, damn it.

Click. Click.

I tackle along, meeting him by the car he’s chosen for his nightly escapade slash business. I guess rich people don’t understand the concept of working hours?

I let out a frustrated moan at the sight of the car. Is it a Maserati? No. I have no idea what type of car it is. The interior lights go on, and my eyes flutter shut. Like the perfect gentleman that he is, August opens the passenger’s door for me, and he stuffs me on the seat before I can do it myself.

He runs the seatbelt over my body, clicking it in. The gesture touches me, and for a brief second and a half, I forget that this is the same man who seduced me into giving up something that I was planning to make money with.

My innocence.

I’m surprised by the car’s lack of interior glamour. No fancy display with elaborate maps. No glittery roof. The panels are made of leather which makes me dizzy. I feel like I’ve been abducted by an antiquated alien ship. Perhaps I’m too harsh.

488 Pista Spider. That’s the badge on the car’s dashboard.

When August joins me inside the car, he barely fits inside it. There are no backseats here, just us two in the front. August’s cut-throat posture never wavers as he turns on the

engine. That's when two screens light up behind the steering wheel.

The car stirs in a growl, unlike anything I've ever encountered. It reaches my insides, tingling me in treacherous spots. Fuck, I could get used to this growl. But I don't plan to. If sex is what it takes to get out of here, I will give it up.

I'll make my return, and I'll study my ass off to avoid a career in sex work. *Would that be okay, Mom? Can you hear me up there?* I'm kind of in a rough spot here. It's not as glitzy as it seems.

Without further ado, August rolls out of the parking spot. He navigates the car past his other objects, more fast cars, and limousines. Once the vehicle enters a spiral ramp, my eyes flutter shut. It's too much for me, and I almost barf inside his car. I keep my head high, and I pray that I don't dig a deeper grave than necessary for myself.

"You've got five minutes," he says, and the engine grunts in response once we're out of the garage. "Surprise me. If you don't, you'll throw that dirty ring out of the window. You can watch it sink down the Port Hercule."

"What—"

"Four minutes."

"No," I reply, and the needy whine that accompanies my voice embarrasses me. I blush. "I'm not doing that."

He clicks the window regulator, and my window rolls down. Wind thrashes my hair, assaulting my face. He drives fast, faster than he should on a road so quiet. We're not a highway. This is the inner city.

"Throw it away," he challenges me. "It's up to you."

I rub the ring on my finger. It's one of the only things in my possession that remind me of my mom. There's no way I'm throwing it out because a rude man asked me to. "I can pick what to do, how to pay this price?"

"Your time's running out," he warns me.

I stretch my arm over the center console, reaching out for his crotch. The engine's grunts ease when my open hand connects with his zipper.

Chapter 5

August

HER INNOCENT LIPS ARE WRAPPED AROUND MY COCK.

It's a good thing, really. *When it shouldn't be.*

I didn't want to deal with her sullen self because I forced her to separate from a cheap ring. I decorated her neck with a necklace worth two semesters at her school. She should pick her battles wisely, but she doesn't.

Mae doesn't know what she's dealing with here.

She has no idea what to do with her mouth, and my hands are busy now. I can't risk an accident while her mouth is on me. She bobs her head around my crown, and while I appreciate her attention, I can't help but want more.

When I shouldn't.

Is this regret? It would be the first time in a long time I've felt regret.

"Use your hands, Mae," I suggest. She groans around my cock, and I feel it on my skin. "Stroke me. If you want to succeed, you must learn to do as told. Stretch your filthy mouth and pay the price. Silly little sluts like you fight for dumb, dirty little rings on their fingers. Other sluts would suck a cock to get a diamond ring. You suck it for cheap shit...."

She removes her mouth from my cock, and she spits on my cock. Out of protest. But I chuckle. I love her attitude. "Good girl. Rub your spit all over me now. Make it sloppy, Mae. You have two minutes left."

I've taken a deliberate false turn that will take us down the boulevard that leads to the French borders. I'm in and out of the country every day. Monaco's borders are fluid like that. That's not the issue. It's just that Mae's papers haven't cleared yet, and... Fuck it. Instead of taking the first exit at the rotary intersection, I drive through it. We pass the border. I anticipate being stopped at any point. I've been driving too fast, my impatience getting the best of me. It would be a fun picture to explain. A woman that's not supposed to be in this country, much less France, is bent over the console, sucking my dick while I speed in the inner city.

Needless to say, don't try this at home.

Do I want trouble? I'm begging for it.

I've done the unspeakable to a girl that I should cherish as my own. I should protect her. I directed her way to Monaco, and now, I treat her like this. I shouldn't expose her to this or force her to show sides of herself that she's not ready to disclose. Do I want her to hate me? Am I punishing myself? Does any of this make sense? No, it doesn't.

I'm a spoiled prick in a fast car with a bitch on my dick. That's all.

Once we're back in Monaco on the same boulevard as before, Mae still has more than two minutes to finish the job, but I won't tell her.

She strokes me tentatively using one of her hands while her other hand grips the back of my seat. I encourage her, "Harder. You won't break me."

Mae obeys, and her strokes grow tighter. I continue, "Put your mouth on it. Try to take it as deep as it can go."

"But it hurts," she mutters with a whine. Her thumb brushes over the slit, picking up precum. She smears it and massages it back unto my skin.

"It's meant to hurt. I'm fucking your mouth, Mae. Everything comes at a cost in this world," I tell her. I can't see her face, only the lovely column of her neck. She's parted her

hair over her right shoulder, giving me the perfect view of what she's doing on my lap.

That's when Mae dives in and presses her mouth down on me. She wiggles her butt, but I doubt it's to make a show out of her first blowjob. She propels herself as far as she can go, and she gags.

Briefly, she removes herself to take a deep breath or two. She panics, her breathing too shallow. She rubs at her throat. "Is it over? Have I run out of time?"

She counted the seconds. This girl. "No, it's not over. Finish what you started."

When she wraps her lips around me this time, she takes me in with a vengeance. Her hands help her, stroking along her spit on my shaft.

I'd love to take her up the tunnels, to the highway. She could continue sucking on me until Cannes.

But I've got people to meet and a yacht to see.

This will be a quick affair. I pity the girl. The ring's not worth more than one lick of my cock. She's overpaid for it already, but who am I to stop her.

"Please..." A fleeting pause where she takes deep breaths. "Please, don't make me throw away this ring. I beg you..."

I feel her tears on my slacks.

She moans around my shaft. Tiny little sounds reveal her craving for this imbalance, the danger of it all. If we were caught right now, I'd have to explain myself. She hasn't officially crossed state borders yet.

I buzz for her and her charming attempt to please me. It's not the best I've ever received, judging by technique. But it's the most passionate, the most desperate.

She hates me. She wants to bite me. I can sense it in her curious teeth, how they slip with an occasional graze.

She'll learn to love me in time.

Her sinful heat enraptures me. I've ignored most red lights tonight, but at this crossing, I stop. We're one minute away from the yacht. She's stuck with me now. I'll find the time to enjoy her more detailed effort to blow me.

Tonight, I finish early. "Don't make a mess, Mae."

Furious spurts of cum meet her tongue, and she patiently waits for it. I groan at her eagerness. She does as told, and my cum disappears inside her mouth. No drop spills. It'll take a minute for her tears and spit to dry, but I don't care.

I don't want to read anything into this act. So, I distract myself. I avert the thoughts in my head. I get to taste and fuck Mae without any fear.

No guilt.

Absolutely no fucking guilt.

As she lifts her head, I see her pathetic little frown. She carries enough guilt for both of us.

"You don't speak tonight. You remain by my side. Those are your rules. Understood?" I tell her. I zip up, and then I continue our ride to Port Hercule.

"Why am I here?" she asks, wiping her mouth.

"To be my toy, Mae."

I can't tell her the truth. If I do, she might end up hating me a little less.

Chapter 6

Mae

I'M TIPSY.

I sit on August's lap, and I'm swaying, cheating my way out of the miserable thoughts in my head. I hate to admit it, but I'm glad that I don't have to go back to Mrs. Kovač and beg her for more shifts.

My debt's been paid off.

And I sold my soul for it to happen, as predicted.

It happened a little too fast.

August's hand mindlessly caresses the small of my back like we've been here before.

But we haven't.

This is my first public display of affection. This isn't affection. He displays his possession, not affection.

August chose a funny place to display that he owns me now. Before I cleared three shots and a Mimosa, I could feel the boat swinging. Now, all I feel is August's rigid cock pressed against my thigh.

August converses in fluid French with the two men who own the boat. Henry and Antoine. He hasn't spoken to me since we were welcomed aboard this boat. Would that be the correct term? Boat? Yacht? House on water? Whatever it is, it has three floors, one of them below us. Each floor is crowded, bursting with people in swimsuits, polo shirts, and undone button-ups.

Good girls go to bed early.

Good girls stay home where they're safe.

What would Rampage377 think of what happened to me? Would he chastise me for leaving the safe haven of my dorm?

Something tells me that August's men would've found me even if I'd stayed tucked in my bed that night. And if they hadn't come for me that specific night, another fateful day would've worked for them just fine.

August stalked me to get me here. I must have caught his eye on the internet, even if I don't remember his face or his dick from my messages or followers.

If I were one of the girls *I've* been stalking online, somebody, anybody, would recognize me at a party like this. But I'm not a model like that. I'm a nobody.

Not even my best friend cares about my whereabouts. I'm all alone at a party yacht full of rich predators, eager to show off their wealth. August's choice of clothes for me may cover most of my body, but it accentuates how much I don't fit in with this crowd.

The tech house music blasting from the speakers makes my heart race. It doesn't allow for a moment of peace. It's the DJ's fault. From where I sit, I see him in the corner. He scans the crowd, eager to keep the party going. The lights are centered on him while the rest of the boat works with moonlight.

Aren't they afraid someone's going to fall off the surface of the boat? I guess not.

"August," I mumble. He ignores me. I rub myself over his erection. It may be the only way to get his attention. "August, please. Por favor."

"That's Spanish," he chastises, and he shifts my hips on his lap, adjusting his erection below me. "S'il vous plaît. Say it with me."

Henry and Antoine, the boat owners, chuckle before I even attempt it.

“Still woo pea.” I butchered it. Blushing, I clear my throat. “I need to pee. Now.”

I don’t remember who’s who, whether Antoine is the button-up or polo-shirt guy, but one of them gestures at my necklace, speaking softly to August. I don’t understand a word of their exchange. August gives them a nod, and the polo shirt guy addresses me, “By the television, down the stairs to your right. Here’s the key for it.”

The man speaks in a British accent, the basic one you hear on television. I’m not shocked that they spoke in a different language to isolate me. Perfect-English-Polo-Shirt-Guy hands me the key, and I cling to it, observing its golden edges. I swallow.

August says, “You know your rules.”

I nod.

What were the rules again?

I remove myself from his lap, and I need a moment to center myself. My bladder shrieks at me, begging for my lazy ass to move. Finally, I sneak my way through the bouncing crowd. I reach the huge television by the stairs that displays imagery of topless models dancing around a beach. I’m overdressed in my pleated skirt with a short-sleeved top. Once again, I stick out in a crowd of bikinis.

At least, I hold the owner’s key. I roll back my shoulders, and I take a confident breath as I stroll down the stairs. I crash into three warm bodies in revealing bikinis. I swear I recognize one of them, but I wouldn’t know from where... It’s not like I spent a year researching jet-setting models.

They giggle as they pass me by, and I observe their smudged makeup. I make a mental note to ask August what kind of party this is.

Lucky for me, there is one door to my right as I reach the end of the stairs. I unlock it with my key, and inside I find what the twats upstairs surely call their master bathroom. I prefer the bathroom in August’s tower of excess. It has better views than this one, but both are spotless spots of redundancy.

I lift my skirt, shove my cotton panties down, and I freely pee. Then, I realize that there was no toilet paper, not because it's an unkempt toilet. No. This is a smart toilet. It cleans me, and I shudder at the uninvited invasion.

Quickly, I fix my clothes, and I wash my hands. I need to get out of here. My mind spins, beads of sweat tumbling down the length of my spine.

I slip out of the bathroom, locking the door behind me. When I turn, a man blocks my way. He towers above me. He's not as tall as August, not quite as broad. His eyes are more intense, his hair messier. Unlike the rest of the men on this boat, he wears a stubble, and he's proud of it. Like me, he doesn't fit in with the rest of the partygoers. He wears a plain T-shirt and dark jeans. Is he part of the crew?

I match his gaze, and we challenge each other to an awkward staredown where I cower at his piercing eyes. I slip the key into the waistband of my skirt, hiding it from the man's sight.

"How much?" he asks, but I don't hear his question. I gawk as his lips move, and I thirst over the soft corners of his mouth that twist with such vileness.

"For?" I retort with a dry throat. My cheeks blush at how his eyes scan my body, my unassuming, almost innocent body.

"Isaac?" the man in front of me yells, and I jump at the harsh tone of his voice. It's not loud enough for the people upstairs to hear him. The music is far too dominating, and the alcohol too strong.

I sway where I stand, holding on to the bathroom door. Did I lock it? Of course, I did. I've got the key sticking to my skin. Okay.

"Lake, wait for me—" An older man comes out of a room down the hall, and the man in front of me suddenly turns into a boy.

A hurting boy.

It's a brief moment where his mask slips, and his features tense. He swallows hard. A murky chill runs through his entire

body, and I capture every torturous wave.

A tiny, defenseless boy shines through. I see his pain, the looming promise of despair.

It takes one shallow breath, and the boy vanishes.

His eyes are bitter as he scrutinizes the man by the door.

Dark brown hair peppered with hints of his age decorates his head in a side part with loosely wavy hair. It's well-kept. It's not like I'm into older men, but I know what they say about girls like me. The ones with the daddy issues. We crave what boys our age can't grant us.

We want a man's undisputed attention. We want to be cherished and held, but we also want to be treated like dirt. Because that's what we *think* we deserve. Only a man of a certain age can fulfill both roles, caregiver and oppressor, and succeed.

The older gentleman freezes on the spot once he spots me squeezed next to who I presume they call Lake. "No."

His voice is as gentle as his eyes. The old man is softer around the edges than Lake. Their eyes have a similar shape, but I don't think much of it. He's in splendid shape, better than the Lake guy.

It's in his eyes that I see his protective streak. He scrutinizes me with his gaze, but in many ways, in the downturned pity of his eyes, he shows that he has read me.

I'm desperate.

And if I'm lucky, he won't take advantage of the fact. Lately, I've avoided luck like the plague.

"You lost, old man. It's time I collect my prize. You take her mouth while I fuck her pussy." That's when Lake turns to me, and I gasp in shock. "How much?"

"I..." I swallow.

That went south fast.

"If she has Antoine's key, she must be one of the good girls. Two thousand euros. Does that sound good for you?" the

older man asks, and I find myself nodding. I don't know a lot, but I know that this money may book me the flight I need to get back home.

The watch on the older man's wrist tells me that money isn't an issue, so I follow Lake down the hallway to the old man.

As we enter one of the bedrooms, the old man says, "I didn't lose a bet to Lake, but he's a cruel piece of shit... If you need to go, don't let us stop you. I'm Isaac, by the way."

"No, it's okay. Please, be fast. I'm needed... Upstairs," I plead. I shouldn't do this while I'm tipsy.

But Lake carries this uncanny familiarity, a pain I can relate to. For whatever reason. And the old man? He's hot.

"Of course. Wouldn't want to rob you of your income," Lake says, sneering at Isaac.

I'd expect them to be cruel to me, to tear my clothes off in a fury. They don't. As I take off my clothes because who gets paid in thousands to leave their clothes on, they chat with each other like they do this often.

"Do you think he's here tonight?"

"I doubt it. He's busy with his new girl."

"If they brought girls like her, he must be around. Maybe he got bored. He's got a wandering eye, Isaac. I know he's your favorite, but he's a scoundrel."

"Fuck off, Lake."

"That's no way to talk to a—"

"Don't do this. Fuck her and get it over with. You don't need to scare her."

"I think I'm ready," I blurt out. I've folded my clothes and hidden the key in the fabric of my top. I place the folded pile on the nightstand. The limited space down here doesn't allow for a lot of movement, but I manage.

"Fuck, you're gorgeous," Lake says, his body going still. My eyes bulge at his words, my skin tingling under his

probing gaze. He makes me want to giggle at his dirty mouth, but I bite my tongue.

I hold it together.

Lake asks, “What’s your name, pretty girl?”

I don’t respond, biting my lip instead. I fear that opening my mouth will end badly, so I remain quiet. Lake takes a step forward, inching closer toward me. He lifts his hand, and I’m too stunned to flinch. Lake cups my neck, and I stare at the extension of his arm, the warped muscles. I must alarm Isaac because he warns Lake, “Easy, son.”

Son?

Lake leans in, diving his nose through my hair. A tiny moan escapes me at his invading gesture. He inhales me, and I quiver at his curiosity. “You smell too good to be one of the whores. Are you sure you’re one of them?”

I nod like a fool. I need the money.

Lake’s hand leaves my neck, and he flips me on the bed. I bounce on the soft mattress. My legs dangle off the edge until he lifts me on all fours. Isaac climbs on the bed, meeting my front. His gentle eyes meet mine. I don’t like who I have become, and something tells me that the man knows.

I may not be a whore, but I did suck a dick on my way to this party. I’m experienced now, aren’t I? It’s funny what two extraordinary days can do to a person. Before I can lose myself in the eyes of the older man in this room, I reach for the buttons of his shorts. I stroke him above the fabric while Lake slides two fingers across my lips. Shamelessly so, I don’t mind being naked. For one year, I’ve tried to get to this point, not being ashamed of my body and its imperfections.

The thrill of the alcohol hasn’t subsided yet. Perhaps it’s liquid courage.

A pack of cigarettes falls out of Isaac’s pocket while I stroke his cock, but he doesn’t make an effort to pick it up.

“You like it deep?” I ask, and Isaac nods. His hand grabs a handful of my hair, tugging on it. He stretches my neck, and

my head rolls back.

He spits at my mouth. I shouldn't part my lips, but I do. I swallow his spit while he never looks away from me.

I ache to get out of here.

Lake says, "She's dripping."

"That's a nice ring you have there," Isaac says while I unbutton his shorts with trembling fingers, and I almost rip his pants. I can't decipher if it was a compliment or... Don't even think about it. I want my money at the end of this.

I can tolerate it if these rich pricks think they can offend what my mom created for me. It's not too much, but it's all she could do with what she was given. I refuse to be ashamed.

My hands snake their way down his underwear, finding his flesh. I rub the tip with my thumb while my other hand, the one with the ring, remains on his shorts, pulling them down. He groans for me as he springs free.

Lake strokes himself while fondling me from the back, but he's not in a hurry. I'm wet. I don't know if it's the money or the blowjob on the road, but my body reacts when it shouldn't.

"Thank you," I tell Isaac, and then I recklessly shove him down my moist mouth. My hands remain on his shaft. It's longer than August's but less thick. I can take it. I coat his skin with my tongue while Lake begins to probe me.

Lake sinks inside of me with ease. It feels different from August, less fleshy. Is he wearing a condom? Lake stretches me where I'm sore. "She's tight."

"I bet she is," Isaac says. His fingers curl the ring on my finger, and I shudder. He chuckles while I stroke him, where my mouth can't go yet. I can't take him in too deep, not when this is only my second time doing this. I could throw up on August. He'd probably love it, the sick fuck. But I can't fail this job.

I need the money.

Isaac's fingers stroke the cheap ring on my finger, the one that means the world to me. I don't want to think about what

this man sees in this ring. I don't want another lecture. I paid for the right to wear it, and I wear it proudly.

Isaac tugs on the handful of my hair in his hands. He directs me now, his power hovering above me while his son begins to fuck me from the back. Isaac doesn't move inside my mouth. I lick and bend my head to find him holding me in place.

I lose track of time with my mouth wrapped around this man's cock. Lake thrusts inside of me, clashing against my tight walls. It stings, and I'm fully aware that I'll be sore again tomorrow.

True to their word, Lake jerks inside of me, filling me up with his cum. When I don't feel his liquids, I breathe out in relief through my nose. He wore a condom.

Isaac removes himself from my mouth before I can take care of him.

I'm a naked puddle on a stranger's bed when Isaac pulls out his wallet and he presents me with six lavender bills with the number 500 on them. He gave me three thousand. He presses the bundle into my hand, and when he sees that I don't respond, he helps me stand up on my wobbly legs.

Isaac's warm fingers fasten my skirt around my hips. His thumb dips below the waistband, tracing the circumference of my waist. I quiver under his touch, bubbling with anxiety. He rolls my top on without groping my breasts, and I'm... Grateful? He swallows before glancing my way.

He hands me the key, and we exchange a knowing glance. I hide it swiftly.

This is bad.

I know it is.

August will know that it happened, and I'm not sure I can deal with the consequences of my actions. It's on the tip of my tongue to ask for help. More help. They need to get me out of here. *Send me back home.* I don't belong here.

But I can't drag these men down the rabbit hole with me. They gave me their money, and I will find my own way out of this. Consequences be damned.

"Hey." Isaac lures me back to my reality. "Did my son hurt you?"

"No!" I exclaim, and a wave of hurt crosses Isaac's face.

Lake observes the moment with a scowl, and a sudden pinch of pity rattles me. I can't blame him.

Isaac helps me deposit the money in my flowery lace bralette. "There you go."

"Thank you," I mouth. I keep my head down as I depart the room. Behind me, a verbal fight commences.

With my key, I slide back into the bathroom to fix my hair, and then I make my way back upstairs with enough money to finance my flight back home.

Now, I need to get away from August.

Chapter 7

Lake

Earlier

WATCHING MY DAD GET HIS DICK SUCKED NEVER GETS OLD.

Isaac knows I'm watching. His posture doesn't crumble. It never could. He's a proud, athletic man, my dad. I can see the pain in his eyes, though. While a beautiful blond nibbles on the tip of his cock, he looks like he'd rather be anywhere but here.

I like it.

I like it a lot.

It serves him fucking right.

Isaac attends parties with me like we're besties. He goes where his sons go, eager to babysit us. My older brother's upstairs, completely unaware that we're below the deck while he entertains his filthy business partners. August, my older brother, leader, protector, role model... He's upstairs on this boat, possibly getting his dick wet while discussing his wealth with other rich pricks. Alfie said August would be here to smoothen a deal with two cunts from Saint Tropez. For a retired fighter in his mid-thirties, he's booked and busy every day, running shady deals on the coastline. He does what he can to avoid us, and quite frankly, it works out for him. Most of the time.

You see, I'm the troubled one.

I've been convicted of a crime.

I served my time.

Twenty years of it.

It pains my dad that I'm back in their lives. That he has to pretend to care about what happens to me. I'm a constant reminder of what tore this family apart. I went to prison. It drives a knife through his shattered heart, one that I'm proud to wield. Six months ago, he was doing just fine. He was stalking my older brother from the comfort of his Menton penthouse. He had one of his seeds to worry about.

Now that I'm back, he has to play full-time Daddy again. My older brother shipped me to Monaco, only to deposit me in Menton, a neighboring French city where our dad lives. *My* dad. August's not even my dad's biological son.

I am.

Do they care?

Fuck no.

ALFIE:

Where are you

Lake?

Please reply

Why are you avoiding me

I ROLL MY EYES AT MY BEST FRIEND'S MESSAGES. IT FUCKS ME up that after all these years, he's the one who still cares. The rest of my family treats me like a nuisance, while Alfie, my one remaining childhood friend, still cares.

He would bleed for me.

He'd have done time for me.

He would die for me.

That's the extent of his loyalty.

But it's not his love that I need.

I was stripped bare of every inch of warmth while serving my sentence. Once upon a time, I was a warm boy. I left this

world as an innocent teenager with blood on my hands. I came out of my cell a changed man.

A shell of a man.

I once cherished my friendship with Alfie. We were the best of friends.

In the yard that my mother's college salary paid for, Dad taught us how to throw a ball. After we did our homework, because Alfie was the dork that insisted we do it, my dad taught us how to throw a punch. Fighting's always been my dad's number one priority. That's why he made his favorite son one of the best and wealthiest fighters of all time.

It was a rainy day in my small town, mom was home, and dad was away at a mixed martial arts conference in Wyoming when I accidentally broke Alfie's nose.

My best friend didn't even flinch. The next day, he came back to us like a lost little pet longing for attention. We were all Alfie had. His family didn't give a shit about him. We did. He was like a brother to me. It's a pity that I hate my own flesh and blood these days.

I can still recall the disgusted distortion of my mother's face when I brought a bleeding Alfie into our home. She growled at me, urging me to get his filth the fuck out of her home. My mother despised Alfie, but what's new? She hated anything that brought the men of the house a hint of pleasure.

I reread Alfie's messages, and I wave at one of the brunettes by the 98" flat-screen television. She's got her tits out, and a man of my father's age snorts a line of coke from her glistening skin.

Once she sees my signal, she rushes over to my side. I pull down my zipper, and she gawks at my hands as I pull out my cock. They take and take...

I don't have to say a word.

I'm August's brother. They know me.

I call Alfie, and I turn on the camera. Like the freak that he is, he picks up on the first ring. "Lake—"

“What is it, Alfie boy? I’m getting my dick sucked,” I say, plastering a fake grin on my face. He cringes as I turn the camera on the girl’s bobbing head, and I feel... Nothing. I wish I could feel satisfied while being this cruel to my best friend, but I don’t.

It’s something I must do, though.

We can never go back to what we used to be.

The girl moans around my cock, and it should wake me up. It should make me want to hang up, to focus on her. Give her the praise she deserves. It’s not a given to get good head.

But I keep my eyes on the screen, drinking in Alfie’s embarrassment.

While I became a monster, Alfie remained the same old. He’s never touched a woman or a man. He’s still the awkward kid I protected alongside my older brother in school.

“I... I-I wanted to check in with you. I didn’t know you’d be out again tonight,” Alfie says, and his face reddens. He’s doing late-night work for my bastard brother.

Alfie’s in August’s office, my brother’s pretentious expensive paintings sticking out behind Alfie’s head. The chair he sits on squeaks, and he bites his lip, looking away from the screen. Just in time, the girl on my cock moans again. She pretends, but don’t we all? She slurps down what she can, working hard for my cum.

“I go out every night,” I remind him. I groan when the girl on my cock depthroats me. I try to give her the reaction she deserves for her splendid performance, but I’m tough out of luck with intimacy. I don’t touch her. I don’t address her.

I wait for her to do her thing, and then, I’ll hand her a bill. She’ll give me her number to pass on to my brother. I never will. I don’t talk to my brother. I don’t want to see his face. I’d prefer it if he didn’t exist.

But he does.

And I do what I do to infuriate him.

As much as I hate him, I want his attention. I want him to know that I still exist. I'm here now. I didn't go away.

The old me died years ago, but Lake Scott is still here.

"We should hang out this week," Alfie suggests.

"I don't think so."

"Why?" His voice breaks, and it almost gets to me. I almost care that I'm breaking my best friend's heart. "You've been back for months. I don't see you as often as I should."

You chose a camp, brother. You made the wrong choice. "I know."

"Yeah, but why? We're friends—"

"I don't fraternize with my brother's slaves. Quit bothering me, will you?" I hang up on Alfie before he can muster a response.

"C'est bon. Comme ça," I tell her. She's one of the French girls, gorgeous and eager to please. Unfortunately, I don't let her finish me off.

I remove myself from her warm mouth. While I zip up, she takes a moment to herself. Her eyes flicker over my pants, my shoes. These people know more about us than we let on. They know that my brother's got us by the balls. He finances our lives, despite ignoring our existence.

That's our one and only secret.

We hate each other's guts.

And no blowjob in the world can save this family.

I pay the girl, and I make my way upstairs. My dad is bound to follow, but for now, I don't give a shit. It's a moody party dipped in darkness, not one for the glitz and glamor.

Once I'm on top of the stairs, I spot my brother for the first time tonight.

As expected, he sits with the owners of the yacht. I can't hear what they're discussing. They're too far away from me,

and the music's too loud, a distracting background noise I can't get rid of.

The girl on my older brother's lap would not interest me under normal circumstances. She's dressed in the clothes he likes his girls in. Timid colors. Long skirts. Boring blouses that hide tits.

He likes them younger than him, in their early twenties. They're easy to mold at that age.

I wouldn't spare her a second glance until she turns on his lap, her drunken gaze exploring the party. Her curiosity misses me by an inch. She doesn't notice that I'm hungrily staring at what my brother calls his today.

The girl...

There's something familiar about her.

Something I can't quite place.

It's too dark for me to see her entire face, the exact color of her hair. I want to see everything she has to offer.

She bats her lashes at my brother and his company. One of the Saint Tropez cunts hands her a key, and I immediately make my way back down the stairs.

She's coming this way.

And I'm going to snatch her right out of my big brother's hold.

I'll defile his innocent petal and send her back to him, dripping in my cum.

Chapter 8

Alfie

The Next Morning

THE THINGS I DO FOR THIS FAMILY...

“You know that I’m busy, right?” I tell August. I tug at the lapels of my Ralph Lauren suit jacket. “I need to fix the permit mess. I should—”

“You need to take a break,” August insists, but I know he doesn’t mean it. We don’t take breaks in this family. Not that I’m officially a part of it. I’m the help, aren’t I?

“You say that because you have to leave for the day,” I reply, rolling my eyes. August has a meeting in Saint Tropez, one he can’t cancel. I don’t understand why he won’t take his guest along and why I must be the one to watch her?

While August guides me through the penthouse, I notice that he shows a little stubble today, and I don’t like it. Once we’re up the stairs, Noémie, his housekeeper, is chatting with his chef and preparing for the day.

August remains quiet as he leads the way to the guest rooms. One of them is occupied with a skank that he wants me to babysit today. He’s set her up in one of the rooms with the best views. Without knocking, he barges into the room, and the girl moans when he clicks the button for the blinds to rise.

The sun brightens the room, but the stench of the night remains. I hurry over to the windows and pull them open. The girl hides underneath the covers, seeking protection from the unrelenting wind.

“Mae, I want you to meet Alfie.” I take a step back, colliding with the windows. What did he say? “He’s our numbers guy. Our glue. If it weren’t for this man, we’d be finished. Alfie holds my family together. He’s been my brother’s best friend forever and is a valuable asset to my businesses.”

The girl shuffles under the covers, but she doesn’t speak up. I hear muffled morning sounds of a complaint.

“Mae?” I address August, but he’s snuck into the walk-in closet. The hangers squeak at his hasty movements. He’s in a hurry, isn’t he? He wants to leave me alone with *Mae*.

For his sake, I hope it’s a different Mae than the one I’m thinking of.

“Get up, Mae. I won’t ask again,” he says, stepping out of the closet. He holds a puffy-sleeved ivory shirt and a peachy pleated skirt in one hand and espadrilles in his other. Patiently, he lays the clothes on the bed while the girl refuses to reveal herself.

“Can you... leave?” she asks. “I need to get dressed.”

“You slept bare again?” Disappointment coats his voice, and I wonder why. August isn’t the type to give his girls their own room. He keeps them in his master bedroom, even when he spends most of his time in the office. Why is this one granted more privacy than the others? Why does he get upset if she sleeps in the nude?

I take hasty steps toward the door. “Call me when you need me. I’ll be—”

“Stay, Alfie. She hasn’t introduced herself yet, has she?” August says, and his tone is one I can’t ignore. I freeze by the door. He’ll make me pay for leaving, so I stay. I don’t want to cause one of his rages. Not on the day of the Saint Tropez meeting.

The girl’s head slips from the covers, and I don’t like what I see.

I really don’t.

Her arms reach for the thin sheet. She covers herself as she rises from the bed, protecting her modesty from my prying eyes. I'm stuck observing her from afar as she saunters into the walk-in closet.

I don't like this.

"What have you done?" I ask August, who doesn't respond. "What... What the fuck, August? You know who she is, right?"

"I know," August finally replies.

Mae steps out of the walk-in closet without the sheet covering her body. She wears ordinary cotton panties and a lace bralette that matches her skin tone. She doesn't look half as pleased wearing sexy undies, scratching the delicate part of her skin that the bralette's straps touch. It's turned an itchy red, a vibrant exposure of her discomfort.

Lowering my gaze, I swallow at the sight of the bruises on her thighs, fingerprints that belong to August.

This can't be. August wouldn't do that. No.

"Don't you have anything darker?" she asks August, bouncing on the soles of her feet in front of August. They glare at each other, but from where I stand, August is about to tear her innocent cotton panties in two. He's fixated on her, and I don't understand how he can do this.

"That's what you're wearing today," he says, gesturing at the clothes he picked out for her. She hisses out a breath, but she bends over to collect her clothes. Reluctantly, she steps into them. They fit her curves, the length of her body. She's not tiny and helpless, but even her tall body doesn't help in August's presence. "Now, introduce yourself to Alfie."

She murmurs to herself while she slips into the espadrilles. "Hey, Alfie. My name is Mae Zito. Your friend August here has kidnapped me. It's nice to meet you."

"August?" My stomach rolls, but I remain stoic on the outside.

“She’s right. I kidnapped her, and I need you to watch her today,” August says, his eyes hungrily glowering at her semi-nude body as she buttons up. He observes her with a need that I don’t understand.

“Watch her?” I gulp in air. I grab the pristinely cleaned doorknob, smothering it with my sweaty fingerprints.

“Yeah,” August says.

My voice is dry when I remind him, “But I’m busy.”

“Keep her chained to your desk for all I care. Don’t let her out of your sight,” he says, like I’m supposed to know what to do with this information. I’m not a Scott. I don’t... I don’t entertain women like that.

I never have.

I don’t think I ever will.

“But you know who she is?” I ask him. No part of me believes that this is a coincidence. There’s no way. If I know August, and I know him too well, this is a thought-out plan.

For the love of god, I don’t know why he would do this to his own family.

“Don’t fucking lose her. Alfie, I mean it. She’s not even supposed to be here right now. Her papers are still in Washington D.C.,” August explains, and panic rises inside me. What the hell?

No, this can’t be.

Mae Zito shouldn’t be here.

I don’t want to give her the benefit of the doubt. I don’t plan on going soft on her. I will treat her however I deem fit. It’s a pep talk that doesn’t work. I wouldn’t know what to do with a brat. If August refuses to see that she’s another liability, I’ll make him see that she is.

With August on a jet to Saint Tropez, I’m stuck with a bratty girl in an almost see-through fluffy top and a naughty pleated skirt. With her espadrilles, she’s ready to be my arm candy for the day as I do my business outside.

But I'm not that guy.

I don't flash my trophies. I don't... I don't own any trophies.

I work in the shadows, the boy behind the man. Behind August and the Scott family. And to be completely honest, it suits me. I never leave my offices, my little apartment. I drive my electric blue Peugeot 208, a car I bought a decade ago when we moved to Monaco.

I've never wanted to stick out of the crowd.

I'm confident in the shadows.

In theory, I'm worth less than their assistant, but that's how I like it. I've never felt comfortable in the spotlight, and the Scott family allows me to live out my life how I want to. They've known me long enough.

They value what I bring to the table.

I make them money.

I... I try to keep the family together.

That's what keeps me around.

"Can you please take me to the airport so I can get back home?" Mae asks, and I notice that August has left us alone.

He *left*.

And I didn't even notice.

August's three-story luxury property on top of the most sought-after and highly scandalous skyscraper makes me uncomfortable on its own, and today, he decided it would be best to force me to stay here with his new guest.

The things I do for this family.



"ALFIE?"

I despise the sound of her voice.

“Alfie, hello? Are you there?”

I’m right there. I’ve locked the door leading to August’s office and left the blinds down. The only light in the room comes from my laptop.

The chains rattle and squeak. She pulls at them without any success.

I may not be a fighter, but I look innocent enough for girls like Mae to trust me not to hurt them. Betraying her trust, I chained her to my desk and sat by my desk to work.

I’m not a violent man.

Not like August.

Even Isaac when he lets go.

I drive my Peugeot 208, and I cook for myself. I don’t enjoy bragging. I don’t want a huge display of my masculinity. I’m content doing my work and going home.

That’s all.

But in crisis, I whip out tools I don’t frequently use. Chains. Ropes. I remember how to be violent. The Scott family taught me when I was younger. Isaac taught me. He taught his son and me before it all went to shit.

It was all good when we were kids.

Before Lake went to prison and his brother became one of the most famous fighters out there...

I maneuver myself out of the memories of the past, and I focus on the future. Mae Zito needs to go, and then, our lives can continue as planned. My best friend will finally acclimatize to the family, and we’ll be happy again.

Ten contracts await my attention today, from plumbing to leasing. They trust me to look over everything. I’m a jack of all trades. I’m the Chief Financial Advisor of August Scott’s estate, his wingman. On certain days, I’m a consultant. I’m the bridge between other businesses and August. I also read

contracts to look for flaws, aiding our legal team. That's the hat I wear today, but... But I can't.

It's one of those days where I can't focus.

Not even for one second.

I hear her every breath. Intentionally so, she keeps saying my name to grab my attention.

"Alfie, please."

But I ignore her.

"ALFIE!"

If we're being honest, I pretend to ignore her.

"Will you shut up, or do I have to zip your mouth shut?" I finally ask her after three hours of melodramatic torture.

"My wrists hurt," she complains with a pout. "Can you please let me out of these chains? Please?"

"No, I can't," I tell her, diverting my eyes back to the screen. If I look at her some more, I'll see things I don't want to see. Like how familiar she is to me. The pearls of sweat across her forehead, the anguish coating her eyes.

I'd be forced to help her if I looked at her some more.

Because despite what August has done, this girl is our family.

Well.

Their family.

Not mine.

I'm the help.

The bitter best friend.

"What's wrong?" Mae asks, and I hear sincerity in her tone for once today. Like she gives a shit what her captor's going through.

Stupid fucking girl.

“If you don’t shut up, I’ll zip your mouth shut. I meant it,” I warn her one last time. I reach below the desk, grabbing the stapler. Skin. Stapler. Upon its reveal, Mae freezes for a moment, and then she gazes back at me. She doesn’t know what this is.

She lets herself believe I’m normal.

I take the stapler, and I make my way around the desk. I’m tense, holding it together by an unstable thread. One little tear, and it’s all done.

I don’t want to go near her.

But I’m not like the others in this family.

I can’t smoothen this girl out with my words. I’ll have to frighten her with my actions.

Mae’s eyes drop to the ground as I approach her. I clear my throat when I reach her. I clog my nose. My mouth. I don’t want to inhale her.

I don’t want to know what would happen if...

What if I like this girl? I can’t. I must hate her. For August to be treating her like a prisoner, like a whore... Who knows what she’s done to deserve his wrath.

The stapler pokes at her screwed-shut lips. I poke and prod. She finally parts her lips with a disgruntled moan, and I shove the stapler inside. I’m this close to pressing the button.

I want her to bleed.

I want to see her true colors.

But I don’t.

“If you don’t shut up, I’ll zip your mouth with this stapler, and August will have no choice but to lock you up in his basement because your pretty face will be of no use to him while it’s bleeding ugly. Is that what you want?” I ask. She shudders, and I want to throw up for some peculiar reason. I don’t show her, of course.

It’s not within my nature to go against the family.

“Do you want to be locked up in a basement? Where no one can see you? Where you can’t plot your way out of Monaco? Where you can’t share your pussy—”

My phone rings, and as I reach for it while the stapler’s still in Mae’s mouth, I pray that it’s Lake.

When I seize the phone, and I read the screen’s contents, I breathe out in relief.

I pick up right away.

“Hello,” I say. I sound like the nervous, strangled cat that I am. Fuck.

“I need your help,” Lake replies. He sounds high. He’s not alone. Murmurs accompany him, whispers of seductive bodies.

“What do you need?” I ask, instantly feeling as pathetic as he thinks I am.

“There’s a new girl around August.” He clears his throat, and I almost choke on air. Not him, too? Perhaps I should staple this girl’s mouth and lock her up myself. “I need her name.”

Mae gawks up at me with tears in her eyes. I haven’t removed the stapler from her mouth, and I won’t do it while Lake’s on the phone with me. I can’t risk her calling out to him for help.

“A girl? What girl?” I ask, feigning innocence.

“Dad said August’s got a new girl. I... He and I fucked her, and I need her name. I want a repeat,” Lake says, and a lump forms in my throat. She can’t hear what’s being said on this call, but her sneaky eyes are on me.

Begging.

Pleading for a second chance to get into my good graces.

She fucked Lake and Isaac.

My toes tingle at what’s about to happen. August won’t appreciate his favorite new toy being soiled.

Mae's about to be sent home. She could fly back by tomorrow. This isn't the time for August to catch a charge for abducting a teenager. How old is this girl anyway? Eighteen? It's been twenty years since... Fuck. Forget it.

I'll drop her off at the Nice airport personally. I'll drive her there. I won't even charge the fuel I'll use on the company card. From Nice, she'll fly to Charles de Gaulle in Paris, and then, she's off to Washington D.C. I'll make the booking free of charge, too.

She'll be out of our hair.

I'm trying to be a good human being here. You see an abducted woman? You help her go back home. Isn't that what ordinary people do?

"Are you listening, Alfie-boy? I want to get my dick wet. Get me her name. Her fucking number. Get it now. Don't make me come up there and get it myself. You won't appreciate the consequences," Lake warns me like the punching bag I've become.

The last time the two brothers met, Lake spent a weekend under intensive care. August beat the shit out of him, and Lake couldn't find a way out of his hold to defend himself. To go on the offensive.

Lake wants August enraged.

Lake wants August to end his life.

But August won't grant him that wish.

Neither will we.

Just because Lake's suicidal, it doesn't mean that I will encourage him to drop by and get into another fight with his big brother.

"I-I can find out her name. She's... She's been living with him. I'm not sure you can meet her, though," I say, and Mae grunts around the stapler like she knows that she's the subject of the phone call. I'm one breath away from marring her. I want to staple her tongue.

Let her taste her own blood.

Make her throw up over my slacks.

“Why can’t I meet her, Alfie-boy? She’s another whore, isn’t she? I want to fuck her again. Make it happen, or I’m coming over, and it won’t end well. For her. For me. You know the drill, don’t you, Alfie-boy?” he says, and I grit my teeth. He hangs up on me, and I feel powerless.

I want to smash the phone.

“A... Fie...” Mae mumbles my name around the stapler, and I finally remove it from between her lips.

I meet her curious gaze, and I let her see it. All the pain this friendship is causing me.

My best friend, the man I’d consider my brother, blackmails me with his pain.

Because he knows I can’t take it.

He’s been in pain all his life.

What I want is for him to find peace.

With the way things are going, Lake never will.



AFTER A LONG DAY OF HARD-WON SILENCE BY MY DESK, Mae’s asleep on the bed August assigned her. August is nowhere to be found.

Every now and then, Noémie checks in on me. She offers me food. Drinks. Between the lines, she offers me head.

Sex.

But I’m sheltered, and she knows this. It doesn’t stop August’s housekeeper from harassing me.

I sit on the floor, contemplating my options.

August has gone mad. He must have. Why else would he abduct this girl? There’s not a lot that I can do to reverse this.

“Alfie, you should leave her alone now. You’ve done your duty,” Noémie says. She sticks to the doorframe, displaying her figure. It’s what other men would call gorgeous. She’s a mature woman who knows what she wants and who isn’t afraid to get it.

The wrinkles? She isn’t intimidated by age.

Or the fact that her belly isn’t that taught anymore.

“We should head into my quarters. I’ve always wanted to show you around—”

“I’m not leaving her. Go away,” I say. I don’t have anything better to say to her, and she knows. There’s no need to hide from her.

August’s housekeeper has been with him for years.

She knows the family almost as well as I do.

“She’s a boring little bitch,” Noémie comments, sneering at Mae’s innocently snoring presence. “I wonder what August’s plans are with her. It’s been a long time since his last girl.”

I’m afraid this isn’t another one of August’s girls.

She didn’t tumble out of a coffee shop and land on August’s lap.

August researched this girl. He stalked her. There’s no other way that he found her randomly.

She’s family.

And August’s determined to ruin the family.

Like his little brother.

Chapter 9

Mae

I DON'T BELONG HERE.

I could never belong. I'm here as a toy, and I'll be discarded at some point.

I'll be sent back to Marcus and his family, begging on my knees for them to take me back. Because I'm not worthy of anything else. I can't aspire to feel loved or appreciated.

I feel sticky, sweating unbearably. Everything about this new turn in my life smells like a sin.

Tears threaten to spill. Fuck it. They roll down my cheek as I struggle to breathe properly. Alfie frightens me, sending me into a panic like I haven't experienced it in a while.

I'm exposed, and Alfie reads me like an open book.

"What did I do to deserve this?" I whisper against his chest.

Alfie's quiet.

He hasn't said a word since I woke up, finding him sitting on the floor. I couldn't read his face. I don't know what he feels right now while I'm on the verge of a panic attack.

It's been days, and I'm stuck here, away from my life.

I don't have a phone.

Proper clothes.

A choice.

Everything's been taken away from me. I live by their rules and don't even know who they are and what they want from me.

I don't feel safe.

I haven't felt safe in a while, so it's nothing new to me. But I'd do anything to trust again. To feel loved.

This isn't it.

I need to find my way back home.

"It's a game we play, Mae. Deal with it," Alfie says, dryly so.

I lose the fight. The tears don't stop this time around. I don't want to cry about this. Not in front of Alfie. I twitch between the sheets, losing my breath.

His cold eyes wander over my exposed body. He leaves goosebumps behind everywhere his eyes connect with my skin.

My heart thunders, feeding me with guilt.

"You're scared," Alfie observes, and I curse under my breath. He sees more of me than I want him to.

"I'm not," I lie.

"If you lie one more time, you'll lick all my shoes clean while I spank your ass red. Do you understand?" Alfie warns me, and I numbly nod without a second thought. The image in my head doesn't fade. Me. On his lap. Licking his pairs of shoes clean while his hand smacks my ass.

I can't hide the tremor of curiosity that runs through my body.

I peer at Alfie, and he's as shocked as I am at the words that left his mouth.

He's a sweating mess.

I am, too. I'm clueless about how to use the A/C in this room. August hasn't come to my room since I woke up today,

and something tells me he's not around. If he were home, I'd feel his presence.

Alfie and I have been on our own for hours.

Noémie came and went with coffee and food, but she doesn't speak to me. She gawks at me, scrutinizes me, and then departs the room.

From the bed I can't leave because I'm naked underneath the sheets, I gaze out of the window. I can't get enough of the sun, how the light glistens on the water in the bay. "You want me gone, don't you."

"I do," Alfie grunts at me in disdain. Sweat coats his forehead. His shirt sticks to his upper body under his tight-fight jacket.

He hasn't changed his clothes. I doubt he left my side all night.

"But I can't do anything about it," Alfie admits, and I swallow as I watch him storm the closet. He rummages through the clothes that I can't stand to wear, and he rushes back out with one item draped over his arm and heels dangling from his fingers. "Put this dress on. These heels."

He presents the clothes, and I swallow as I accept them, careful not to let the sheets slip away from my skin.

The dress Alfie hands me is like a scarf, not long enough and too thin. It's another shade of rose. "Is this for real?"

Alfie nods. He grabs the dress, fishing out his phone. He sets the shoes right next to the dress and dials a number on his phone. I study the dress, and I don't see myself in it. I'm lowkey lurking in the shadows. I shouldn't present myself like this. This dress will hug every crevice of my body and present it to the world.

I much prefer the skirts in the closet, after all.

"Is this an appropriate dress?" Alfie asks, but he doesn't talk to me. He's addressing August, who's on a videocall with us.

“No, it’s not,” August says. Relief washes over me. “But it’ll do for the meeting. Have her ready at one. The driver will pick her up.”

They hang up on each other, and Alfie tosses his phone on my bed, barely missing my head.

“Get dressed,” Alfie instructs me.

“Alfie?” I ask. He tugs at his lapels, making sure that his outfit sits well. He doesn’t mind me. “Alfie, please. Can we please talk for one moment? I’ll put these clothes on. I just—”

“What is it?” he hisses.

“I apologize. For the other day,” I blurt out.

“You apologize?” Alfie asks. He squints his eyes at me. He may want to play with me, but I’m being real. I need allies. I’m not above begging. “To me? What for?”

“You wanted to work, and I annoyed you.” I blow out a breath. It feels like my last one, but I’m used to it at this point.

“You’re lying again, and I can’t stand it. Shut up, or I’ll do as I promised,” Alfie demands. “Put the dress on, and we can go ahead with our day.”

Quaking where I lay, I accept his request. He continues, “I want to see the dress on you. Now.”

“Where’s my underwear?” I ask, eager to put this task behind me. Alfie doesn’t reply. “Alfie, please. Panties? Anything?”

He doesn’t speak. His cold shoulder hurts, along with the absence of his darting gaze. He focuses on anything but me in this suddenly-icy room. “He said no underwear.”

“Oh.”

“Are you trying to mess with him?” Alfie asks. He raises his voice, and he steps closer to me. He’s close enough for me to feel his hot breath on my cleavage. I pull up the sheets, hiding behind the fabric.

Alfie is the closest to me in size, but he makes me feel like an insolent rat. “Is this your revenge plan? You want to seduce

him? Steal his money?"

"Revenge? For what? For taking my virginity?" I ask, and his eyes widen at my words. Oops. He wasn't aware.

"He did that? He's had sex with you?" Alfie asks, his voice shaking harder than my legs shook when August pierced me with his cock.

"Are you surprised? Isn't that what you're accusing me of? You think it's my fault that he couldn't hold back—"

"Shut up," Alfie hisses, but I see I've reached him. I didn't lie. I told my truth, the truth August forced upon me. "You're... You're a liar. August would never do that."

I climb out of bed and show Alfie exactly what his boss did to my body. It's right there for him to see. The nasty bruises.

I'm sore all over.

August's fingerprints on my skin tell an incriminating story. Alfie reads me like a book, but I'm not sure what he takes from my words, my body.

Does he believe me?

"Please, help me," I beg him.

It's of no use. Alfie believes that this is all an elaborate lie. He believes his friend, his boss. Why would he risk his peace for me?

I won't convince him to switch sides.

"Get dressed."

"I think I need a shower." My clothes are starting to stick on my skin, too, and I doubt that with the dress they want me to wear I'll be able to go unnoticed. August will be disappointed if I stink while I'm dressed like that. It's all about the image.

I sway on my toes. I snap out of it when Alfie departs my room. I follow him. When he begins unbuttoning his shirt, I look away.

I bite my tongue.

He says, “You can’t stay.”

“I know. Do you think I want to?” I ask in a whisper. “I don’t want to be here.”

“It sure doesn’t look like it to me.”

I growl, turning away from him.

“Take a shower with me for ten euros,” he suggests, and when I turn to meet his face, his grin frightens me. It’s a challenge. He wants to see me fall.

He wants me to prove that I’m here for the money.

“Ten euros? How much is that?” I ask, playing along.

“It’s nothing. It’s what a cheap whore gets. You do as I say for ten euros. Wipe yourself with it. Buy more stupid clothes. I don’t care what you do. It’s your allowance.” My mind spins. Whore? “That’s our exchange. Ten euros for doing what I ask of you.”

“And you want me to shower with you for ten euros? I’ll do it,” I say. It’s not a lot of money, but it’s money. I’ll stash it with the rest I earned the other day.

He may be my ticket out of here.

I hate myself for folding like this, but there’s nothing I can do with men that I don’t know.

To my surprise, the shower is uneventful.

Alfie climbs under the spray. His eyes spit venom, and I’m hungry to taste their death. We study each other’s bodies without invading each other’s personal space.

He doesn’t need to speak to tell me that he’ll slash my throat if I dare to hurt his family.

Alfie takes his time under scorching water. The glass around us blurs almost instantaneously. I trail his hands as they work his body, washing away the sweat of dealing with me today.

He saw me earlier and doesn't hide showing himself to me. I gulp at the sight of his cock. He's uncut and long. He gives himself a tug, and I gasp. It's not a sexual tug. He's not touching himself. He washes his body. That's different.

When it's my turn, I hurry with the task of freshening up. I can feel his eyes on my body, branding me with his distrust.

We dry ourselves like we're in a hurry. I wouldn't know. I don't have the schedule at hand. Once we're back in my room, I can't take my eyes away from the clothes he picked out for me. When I reach for the dress and the heels, Alfie stops me. "Get on the bed. It's time to collect payment."

"Huh?"

Alfie gestures at the bed. Fine. I climb on the bed with the towel if that's what he wants. I seek his gaze, but his eyes are fixed on the towel.

"Drop it." I let the towel drop. "Lie down. Here's your payment."

He strolls to his jacket and bends over to pick something up. I can't see what he does, but he takes his time. The shuffling of his clothes gives me goosebumps. The mere thought of his towel dropping has me on the edge.

But that's not his plan. He holds his towel tight when he returns to my side of the bed. "Spread your legs."

I obey. My knees quake. I should be mentally falling with how tense my anxiety is, but I'm not. In my chest, my heart hammers in curiosity. "Ten euros. All yours."

He trails the peachy bill around my belly button. I attempt to shut my legs, but he steps between my thighs. "Alfie, please."

"Take your money, Mae. Like a whore. By the summer's end, I never want to see your face again. I'll make sure you return home without a penny to your name. Remember that." With that, Alfie rubs the peachy bill against my clit. I don't know if I should be aroused or dying of disgust. "You like being treated like a dirty whore, Mae? Is that your thing? Is

that what you've become? Are you not the least bit ashamed of yourself?"

I twist, but I don't manage to get away from him. I don't fight hard enough. I'm in shock. He keeps rubbing the money on me. His fingers never touch me. My body responds, creaming the bill. I blush. I hate myself for how I react.

"You must lick the bill clean. You like cleaning things up with your tongue," Alfie says. I meowl. I kick at him, but even Alfie is stronger than me. The numbers guy.

Alfie stuffs my mouth with a crumpled ten-euro bill. Then he shuts my mouth, willing me to gag on the money. *Die on it, little bitch.*

"Get dressed."

That's all I hear him say before he storms out of my room

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Chapter 10

Isaac

I'M TOO OLD FOR THIS CROWD.

The mob leaps around me, cheering at the music with their flutes in hand. Expensive liquor floods this room, along with brands I can't bother to remember.

It's too early in the day for a booze party, but they don't care about that minor detail in this establishment. The windows are wide open, announcing the party to the neighbors and anyone who walks by.

Since I don't dance to this music or any music, I stand by the bar, squeezed next to two French girls from Antibes. They flirt with one of the Rolex-wearing cock-led new-money types, and he's ready to buy whatever they're selling.

It's getting old. All of it. But it's my life now. My son retired from fighting. He wanted to move down here while he was fighting, abandoning our life in the States. Our life back home distracted him. He needed out. He brought us here, and while he purchased prime real estate in one of the most expensive skyscrapers in Monaco, he set me up with a penthouse in Menton, a neighboring French city by the sea and the border to Italy. I'm five minutes away whenever he needs me.

But he never does.

Neither one of my sons needs me anymore.

I should enjoy this new life I've been granted. This could be my retirement haven.

It's a funny thing, being the old one in the group. It's been years since I took over that role, and I'm still not used to it. It hasn't sunk in.

The woman I married, who gave birth to our miracle son Lake, was much older than me. Sixteen years older, to be exact. She was a force to be reckoned with, a powerhouse. A law professor.

When I met her, she was in her thirties and about to begin her tenure at one of the bay area's most prestigious universities.

It happened randomly on a fun night out with friends. It was a night when I had no business being in a bar with my fake ID, not quite twenty-one years old yet, celebrating stupid shit that I don't even remember anymore. We must have celebrated surviving another week in a life of boredom. There wasn't anything else to it.

Morgan pranced around the bar with a beer in hand in her pencil skirt and cream blouse. I can still remember the sound of her pumps. It didn't matter that a Prince song blasted through the speakers or how loud the chatter around me was.

I heard the heels of those pumps, how they connected with the sticky floor, and I still do. They come to me in my dreams. That night changed my life.

We fucked in the restroom, away from prying eyes. She asked for my number, and I folded. I gave her everything she asked for that night.

In hindsight, it wasn't a good look to date me at the time. I had no prospects. I presented a threat to what she envisioned her life to be. Yet, she called me. More than once. We began a secret affair.

We fell for one another when it was too soon, too forbidden.

Because of Morgan, I applied for college. Not the one she'd teach at during her tenure, of course. Not that I'd ever be accepted to study there, as she'd often remind me in our little scuffles.

Those scuffles don't matter much to me anymore.

What I'd give to have Morgan Scott back. To show her what's become of our sons. She'd pull her hair out at the roots with how our family evolved. However, she'd be satisfied that we lost touch with Stevie. My wife could never stand my adopted sister.

When I told Morgan that once we moved in together, I'd be bringing my baby sister with me, who wasn't even five at the time, she threatened to end what we had.

Morgan made me feel small and insignificant. I didn't know who I was at the time. I chased after Morgan's pussy, and nowadays, I can finally acknowledge it. Not that I'd ever tell my sons. It would be too shameful.

If it weren't for her pussy, I'd have packed up my shit, taken my baby sister, and left Morgan high and dry.

But I didn't.

And that pussy that I loved so much? The pussy I was blinded with back when I shouldn't have been?

Fuck. I can't even think about it.

Back in the day, Morgan and I kept secrets from the outside world. That's the only reason why we were able to adopt August in the first place. Morgan micromanaged the adoption process, our life at home, and my development as a man.

There wasn't a thing that she didn't meddle with.

There were a lot of things that I never noticed, though. Those came back to bite me in the ass later.

As our relationship progressed, I discovered that she'd withheld information from me.

She's not with me anymore. She hasn't been in twenty years. Morgan Scott was stolen from me too early in our marriage, way before I could've handled our issues like a man. Like a father.

I'm too old for this crowd, yet, I'm still here.

I can barely hear the sound of my voice through the music, techno, or whatever they call it these days. It's too fast, and the hi-hat sounds give me headaches tonight.

The French girls have begun kissing and touching the new money prick. I need out. It's not that difficult to escape the crowd of a rooftop party when you know where the kitchen is. I'll slip out in the back and have a smoke there.

On my way to the kitchen, I scan the crowd.

And that's where I see him.

By the VIP area, my eldest son lounges next to Henry and Antoine. They're about to become business partners, so my son is forced to court these men to make them feel like they're special. He can't afford to lose their alcohol for his ventures. They're the only sons of one of the biggest wine empires in the Provence, the Côte d'Azur, otherwise known as the French Riviera. This is our new home, the region of France we reside and do business.

I'm not surprised to find him here, immersed in a tête-à-tête with Henry and Antoine.

If I'm honest with myself, I scout these parties to catch a glimpse of my son. To see whether he'll let me in again.

Although that ship has sailed.

My sons hate me in their own way, and I don't blame them for it.

August has a girl on his lap, but it's not just any girl. It's the girl from the yacht party. I should've known that Henry and Antoine would do this. They host parties. They find girls. They found my son the perfect girl.

Or so it seems.

Underneath her clothes, she didn't look nearly as put together. She must be new, innocent almost. She was innocent enough for us, easily lured into a dark room with two unknown men who could've abused her.

It's a pity that she didn't know that Lake's a felon who can't go around raping girls. She wouldn't have been half as

intimidated if she'd known that. My son's a felon, but... Yeah. Where do I even begin to explain what a mess my life is?

What we did the other day was a transaction. Alfie taught me that term. He says that kids these days fuck, but it's a transaction. He would know. He's a kid of today, but he's stuck working, making the family more money. He doesn't find a lot of time to relax.

Meanwhile, the rest of the family enjoys itself. This girl isn't the first I've shared with my sons, and it won't be the last. Lake's one floor below us, wasting his brother's money on backroom poker games. I cling to my phone, anticipating his call. He'll make another bet that he can't cash, and then, I'll need to go down there to help him out.

August doesn't know we're here, and it's better that way.

The girl presses her tight little body against him, but she doesn't look as drunk today. Perhaps it's too early for her, too.

I shouldn't stand here, staring at them from afar. I need a smoke. I turn around, and I make my way out of the crowd. The staff gapes at me with confusion, but I blank them out. I shove the door open, finding the quiet spot I crave. I've taken over a hidden section of the rooftop, the one in the back of the club area. We're only five floors up, a surprisingly low building for Monaco. Not that every place here grazes the sky, but the rich almost exclusively inhabit the skyscrapers here, towering over everyone else.

My pack of cigarettes is almost empty. Only one cigarette is left. I sigh. I light it up.

My wife would scold me if she could see me right now...

"You look like I feel right now." August's girl appears at the door, gently shutting it behind her. She tiptoes around the sun, finding me in the shadows. We're hidden here. Nobody will see us.

"And how do you feel right now?" I ask, taking a pull from the cigarette.

I observe her from her pretty head with her loose locks and the light makeup gracing her face down to her body. Her dress

presents a challenge for me. She was dressed for my son the other day, but today, she's dressed like one of the ordinary girls at an establishment like this. Skimpy dresses sticking to a woman's curves aren't new in our rounds. She must dress a certain way to attract the attention of the crowd. This is how she makes her money.

Why am I gazing at her curves like a starved beast?

When she restlessly rolls her ankles, trying to find relief from the heels she's stuck in, all I want is to draw her over my shoulder and carry her away from this establishment. It would cost me to take her away, but I wouldn't hesitate to pay the fee.

Even if it bankrupted me.

Echoes of the party inside reach us in waves, occasional drunk hurrahs, dirty basslines. She should be in there, but she chose to come out to see me.

"I feel like shit," she says.

"Tough day at work?" I ask.

Her brows draw together in confusion, and she plays with the fabric of her dress, rolling it between her fingers. "I guess... What about you?"

"I was thinking about my wife," I tell her as if she'd know what that means.

"You're married?" she asks. She takes a chunky step back with her eyes widened in a twist of shock and fear. If she thinks that her clients in this area come to her out of loneliness in their single existence, she's been fooled. Most are married, taken in an entanglement of obligations. I'm the lucky guy that's not taken.

I wouldn't call myself lucky, but when I meet taken men, that's what they tell me I am. They'd kill to be rich and single at my age. It's a magnet for many girls in their late teens and early twenties. There's a variety of women, men, and everything in between coming to places like Monaco. Saint Tropez. The money flows in these lands, and it attracts just about anyone.

I'm careful. I must be. I represent my son, and it doesn't matter that he keeps me at arm's length when the cameras aren't around. I can't waste my eldest's money. Not like Lake does.

Not after what happened with their mother...

"I'm a widower," I say. It's been a long time since I've spoken about this woman to anyone but the running thoughts in my head. My sons... They don't want to hear it. They shouldn't have to.

"Oh, I'm sorry. Is it too late to express my condolences?" Her words are genuine when they shouldn't be. I don't want anyone's condolences. I'd rather forget. Erase that woman from my memory.

We'd be better off that way.

"Twenty years too late," I tell her. I haven't drunk much today, but I'm feeling frisky. I take a hefty pull from the cigarette, relishing in the burn of it. I exhale. "You know the craziest thing about it?"

"What's that?" she asks.

"My son killed her."

Her shoulders go tight. I was inside her mouth the other day, robbing her of her much-needed air, and her face hadn't gone as red as it is now. Bright eyes blink fast at me, peering up at me like she's wondering whether I'm joking or not. "But... How? It can't be."

"It happened. It's not a lie. You can look up our family online. Lake's face was on the news for a while," I tell her. Does she not know whose lap she occupies? The other girls know. I swear that some of them come to us for that exact reason.

To fuck a fucked up family.

She shrugs, and I realize that I don't know her name. What does it say about me? I paid to fuck her mouth, for my son to fuck her pussy, and I don't know her name. I shouldn't judge her for not knowing my son's name.

This means that she doesn't know who I am. Either she's a good actress or receptive, an empathetic soul that craves connection.

"I'm sorry," she blurts out, paling. A cloud of grief covers her face, and I regret sharing my past with her. She's got a long day ahead if she's already at the club, dolled up and ready to go. I don't want to mess with her work schedule.

That's what this is to her, work. I don't judge her, and I'll compensate her. I don't want her to feel sad over something that happened twenty years ago.

Lake went to prison. He served his sentence. He's with us now. We're trying to work past it. We're failing, but a new day will always be had.

"I lost my mom over a year ago, and this hit me harder than expected," she explains, wiping her teary eyes. Her irrational breathing twists her face. She tugs at her dress, clearly uncomfortable in it. It's a beautiful dress, sultry and seductive enough to make big bucks. But I can tell that this isn't her.

"I'm sorry for your loss. I shouldn't have—"

"No, it's fine. She died from cancer," the girl says, and she gulps back her sorrow. Her knees wobble again, and she approaches the balcony edge to hold on to the balcony railing. "She was my entire world. It was always us two. I would never think of hurting her... What happened? Why would your son do what he did?"

Her question mutilates me. It took me years to reach a point where I wouldn't blame Lake for what he did to my wife.

"That's what you want to know? You had sex with a convicted murderer the other day, little girl," I tell her, reaching for her face. I swipe strands of her hair out of her vision and lift her jaw, inviting our eyes to meet.

"I want to understand," she softly replies, and I catch myself taking in the sight of her trembling lips.

“She molested him. He was our biological son, and she molested him. He had enough one day, and he took her life,” I say, and relief washes over me. I haven’t spoken about this in so long, and a savage wave of guilt swallows me whole. “We had a tough time conceiving, so we adopted at first. When we finally had Lake, he was our miracle baby. I should’ve known. I don’t know how I could have been so blind....”

I’m overcome with sincere anguish, and I turn away from her, not wanting her to see how I break. I shouldn’t have brought it up. It kills the mood. She most likely sought me out to make additional money to her duties for August, and here I am, whining about my bitch of a wife.

I expect the girl to leave. She’s not my therapist. She’s on a schedule, and August’s wondering where she is by now. But the girl remains. She comes closer, and she asks, “May I hug you? Please? Can I do that?”

When I hesitate, she blurts out, “Free of charge. I don’t want your money. You were very generous the other day. You... You saved my life with that money. I want to hug you.”

I saved her life? Three thousand euros are next to nothing in Monaco. Doesn’t my son pay her? Henry or Antoine? What the fuck?

Before I can confront her about her income, she wraps her arms around me, and her head presses against my chest. So do her breasts, and I’d be lying if I said I didn’t feel the weight of her breasts on me. The height difference worked in our favor when she sucked my dick, but for now, I wish I could dive my nose in her hair or bring her face to mine to kiss her dried tears away.

“I’m sorry you went through that,” she says, and it’s a sentence I want to remember. I hug her tighter than she does and savor her warm body pressed against mine. I could use a cigarette or ten right this moment, but she’ll do it for now. “I feel sorry for Lake.”

“Don’t tell him that. He’ll have an episode,” I say. She stills against my body, and I rub her shoulder blades, encouraging her to relax. “He came out of prison six months

ago. My eldest son, well, he... He managed to get Lake's parole officers to loosen up."

Her eyes go round. She's an American. She knows that parole officers don't just loosen up. It takes a lot of greasy work to achieve what my son achieved. I won't go into detail because this is a private matter.

I continue, "Lake's been living with me in Menton."

"Where's that?" she asks, cuddling into our embrace. I observe her head and her luscious curls. How come she doesn't know Menton? She must be new *new*. A lot of pervy old men allow their sugar candies or sugar babies, whatever that shit is called, to escort them to the restaurant on the hill of Menton, ten seconds away from the border to Italy.

It's one of the best in the world.

"It's five minutes away from here," I explain, and she nods against my chest. I don't want to let her go, not when speaking about my family comes this naturally in her presence. I shouldn't. She's, for lack of a better word, a hooker. "He's had a tough time adjusting to this life... He doesn't trust easily, and he takes our wealth for granted. Right now, he's downstairs, mixed up in some poker game where he's bound to lose another million. He's frustrated and confused. Overwhelmed by the life we lead."

I said too much. I don't enjoy bragging about my son's money or how my other son wastes his brother's money. It's tacky. It's exactly what a man my age, my status, would do. I may be new money, but I draw a line.

"And you're up here? Drowning your sorrows?" she says, a fragment of crooked amusement attached to her voice. "At least you don't stink like a drunk. Your shirt has that smoky tone to it. You smell like a smoker. You're smoking your life away...."

She spins her head to the floor, finding the butt of my cigarette with her eyes. "You should probably pick that up."

I should. But I won't.

I lift her pretty little face, her makeup-less eyes. There's a touch of lipstick on her lips, but the rest of her face is clear of the stuff the other girls wear. Is this a new thing? She's the first girl in her job that I meet that doesn't powder her face full of makeup or other things.

I'm not judging. I couldn't.

"Why are you here, little girl?" I ask her, discovering the warm column of her neck with both of my hands. She tilts her head back, giving me more access. Her hands are flat on my chest, and her gentle touch brightens my darkness. I can still feel her mouth on me, but I prefer this honest moment.

"I didn't choose to be," she whispers, but she doesn't grant me a moment to be upset for her. She lunges forward, peppering my mouth with an eager kiss that presses for me to open for her. For a woman in her business, her kiss is a frantic mess that I want more of. I pull her closer as if she's not already rammed against my front.

Her nose rubs against mine as she takes a deep breath. "Touch me, please... More."

"Where?" I ask, and I don't recognize myself, this dangerous need inside of me. A fluttery moan erupts from her, a tiny little sound that awakens sinful needs inside of me. Thoughts of tearing her dress in two, fucking her against the balcony's railing.

Coming inside of her. Claiming her up to the hilt. I want her dripping when she returns to my son, used up by his father.

Her eyes widen as she glances up at me, and I push those shameful thoughts away. She gulps. "What's on your mind?"

I lean in to kiss the side of her jaw, tasting the remnants of her salty tears. I trace a line down to her neck, and she bucks her hips in my direction. Not that she's distracted, though. She's a professional, after all. "Please... Tell me."

"How about I show you?" She quivers at my hot breath, nibbling on her skin.

"Please, do..." I grab her hand, and I lead her to the edge of the balcony. With my hands over hers, I lead them to the

balcony's rails, clasping hers over the cold metal. This can go either way... I don't care anymore. She's mine for this moment, and I'll enjoy her every touch. I have bills on me. I won't let her waste her time.

Brushing her hair over the left side of her shoulders, I incline my head. I inhale her hair, the scent of her skin's crevices, behind her ear, on the back of her neck. I advance forward, pressing her against the glass, pressing into her from behind. She joins me, rolling her hips back, moving more freely than when she was drunk on that bed with us on the yacht. "I'm going to pull up your dress now, little girl."

She hums in agreement. I take my time with the elastic fabric. The label on the back of her neck reads like money. It gives me peace of mind that she's at least granted fine clothes for her stunning body. "Did you shave or wax since the last time I saw you naked?"

She shakes her head, retreating from me, but I take her back in my arms. I glide her dress up her thighs, snaking a hand between her and the glass. "I love how your skin tastes on my tongue, little girl. I wish I could devour your body with my mouth, but today, my fingers will do. Tell me, where do you want me to touch you most?"

Heat emanates from her, and she wiggles her butt against my cock, causing friction. I tease her, my fingers never wavering from her expensive dress. Dangerously toying with the idea of ripping the dress, I grip it tightly with my fingers. If any curious man or woman were outside on their balcony on this sunny day, they'd catch a glimpse of her sweet pussy.

"Please..." Begging suits her, but I want to see how it'll sound when she's riding me. My cock strains against the zipper. "Touch me. My... Pussy. Please. I need your fingers on me."

I watch her squirm for me as I cup her pussy. It's untouched, still not bare. Fuck. It shouldn't mess with me. I shouldn't crave it as much. Fuck the should-nots. She's a human being, more than meat on a stick, a fucktoy to be molded into what I require from her body.

She's unapologetic in her womanhood, curling into my arms. She needs me, whatever I want to give her of me. I curve my fingers on her clit, and I run little circles over the tiny bud of pleasure, massaging her. I want to soothe her thirst.

Somewhere inside of me, I want to grab her. Take her home. Hide her from whatever demon serves her up on a platter while she looks like this, dressed in expensive textiles as a breathing decoration for the rich.

I plunge a finger inside of her, careful not to hurt her. She drips for me, but I remember what my son said the other day on the ride home. She was tight. Almost too tight. "You're drenched, little girl. You like showing off? You want to be seen, don't you?"

"I want to belong..." she mumbles in a moment of clarity. I take her words to heart. Don't we all want to belong?

"Can you take two fingers?" I ask her, thrusting in and out of her while my thumb plays with her clit. She writhes against me, pressing down on my cock. I'm hard for her, for this stranger I want to save.

She breathes out, "More... Please, Isaac."

With two fingers inside of her, I prepare her for what's to come. I stretch her, probing her, exploring her tight channel. "Come for me, little girl."

I pick up my pace, working her into a frenzy. Her shy moans impact me more than I lead on. I'm taking from a girl that's not meant for me. A girl that my son has already fucked.

My mouth trails the side of her neck. I can't leave behind any obvious signs of this moment, but I wish I could for one moment. I give her more of a bite, and she leaps for me. Her tight walls pull my fingers in, and I rub her clit until she's nothing but a gasping puddle in my arms.

I don't give her time to adjust. I undo my zipper, and I line the crown of my cock to her opening. She didn't put on any panties today, and it fucks with me. I slide back and forth, running her cream over my shaft. "Isaac? Can... Can you put on a condom? Please?"

“Of course.” It’s not disappointment that I feel. My cock grows harder, not losing momentum. I need inside of her. I’m proud of her for communicating her limits and for protecting herself.

While my hands fumble with my pockets, I kiss her neck, nibbling on her earlobe and back down, almost reaching her collarbone. A short necklace of diamonds decorates her neck, one that’s withheld from working girls like her.

This means more than the expensive dress. This is an elite gift. Perhaps she’s a sugar baby? A high-value escort that doesn’t do the things the girls at the bottom do? A famous model earning tips online? She doesn’t seem to know the area well. Perhaps she’s a temporary addition to the escort line-up in Henry and Antoine’s businesses. What she is or not is not my business right now. She’s right in front of me, panting, begging for my cock.

I sheath my cock for her, and I line myself back up her entrance. “You drive me crazy, little girl. If you hadn’t stopped me, I’d have fucked you bare. I’d have filled you up, you know that?”

I let myself drown inside of her, delving inside until there’s nothing left. I cup her pussy with my hand, but my other hand travels up to her breast. Her tight nipples are hard, and I roll them in my fingers before I knead her skin. I want them out of her dress, and she senses my need. She mewls for me. “Do it.”

I drag her dress down her tits, exposing her to anyone who wishes to see her. I massage the globes in my hand, almost too eager to protect her, even if she belongs to the world. She’s not mine. This is her job.

Each thrust inside of her is met by her eager response, her hips trying hard to keep up with my rhythm while I manipulate her clit. I provoke her, teasing her in every way that I can. I slam into her with less mercy with each push.

She takes it.

Her heart races for me. I feel her pulse on my lips while I scout her neck. “You take me so good, little girl. Such an eager

pussy you've got there."

She sucks me in, and I can't escape her. I want to keep this up for hours, touch her and stay inside of her until the sun comes down on us. I can't imagine growing tired of her. I flick her nipple, easing my other hand down her folds. She can give me one more.

I sweep her clit while I let her ride the tiny pings of pain on her nipples, and she bursts for me, bathing my cock in her juices. She throbs with me inside of her, taking me to her core. I'm soaked from her pleasure, and I don't give a fuck if it'll look funny as I exit this balcony.

Reluctantly, I remove my hand from her luscious tits. I grip her hips, rolling them for me. I hoist her off the floor, and she gasps in fear. Her tight pussy clasps around me. I grip her tight, letting her know that there's no way she's flying off that balcony.

I find the perfect angle for me to ravage her, and I don't hesitate to take what I want. I cup her while I fuck her, keen on feeling her throbbing pussy everywhere. I'd eat her. Fuck, I want it so bad.

Next time.

Will I see her again?

I bury myself inside of her. My twitching cock lays me bare, and she meowls some more for me, grinding on me, meeting every thrust, no matter the speed. I imagine doing this without a condom. spurts of cum fill the condom, and I breathe hard on her. She's out of breath, too, quivering in my arms.

As I come down from my high, I cover her breasts with her stretchy dress. I massage them one last time, and she responds with low chuckles and a wiggle of her butt.

I can't let her go. I don't want to.

I'm not my sons. At fifty-two, I can't go for another round just yet. I smoke too much.

She's serene in my arms, holding onto my arms. She doesn't move. It's her chest, caving in, thrusting out again. I thread a hand through her hair, and I lean down to inhale her one more time.

My cock slides out of her, and I discard the condom. I'll pick up the butt of the cigarette, and I'll throw both in the trashcan by the elevators. For now, with one hand, I fix her dress, and then, I button myself back up.

She doesn't leave my embrace, but I know that it's time for her to go. I know I'll replay what we did. I don't know for how long, but she'll stay with me.

It's there that I almost forget. My foggy brain messes with my plan, but I reach for my pants pocket in time. She whirls around in front of me, pressing her tight ass against the glass of the balcony's railing.

When her eyes find my hands, her face drops. I ruin the moment, but it's my responsibility. If she's not compensated enough, this is the least I can do. I've got 4K with me, and I pull it out for her.

Tears return to her down-turned eyes, her lower lip quaking. I hand her the money, hoping she can stash it in her purse. Did she leave it with my son? She shakes her head, refusing to accept the money. Her entire body tremors and I tug her back to my side, wrapping her in my heat. "It's okay. I want you to have it. Take the money."

"I don't...."

"Do it for me. Take it," I urge her.

"I c-can't be seen... I need to hide it," she reveals, and I understand the assignment. She wears no bralette today, making my job a little difficult. Thankfully, Alfie is a neat freak, and he disinfects any cash we touch in this family. I don't feel quite as guilty when I fold the money, squeezing it between her breasts. Her sweat will keep the bills in place until she finds a better solution. She breathes hard, her little sobs slashing me.

“Thank you,” she mumbles, and I pull her mouth over mine. I kiss her one last time, devouring her taste.

“What’s your name, little girl?” I ask her.

She removes herself from my hold, wiping her eyes. She gets her harsh breathing under control after trying so fucking hard that my heart breaks for her.

“Mae.” That’s the last thing she says to me before she disappears.

This can’t be. It’s a coincidence.

Is anything ever a coincidence when August’s involved?

I take the trash with me and throw it away by the elevator. Upon entering the elevator, my entire body convulses. What did I just do?

Nothing I’ve never done before.

I hooked up with a hooker.

And now, I gawk at my phone, skimming through messages I’ve sent to distract myself. It doesn’t work.

I wanted to protect her.

This can’t be. What is happening? I send out a batch of messages once I’m on Lake’s floor. The bouncers in front of the suite where the secret poker game is held stare me down, but I’m too busy with my phone.

Moments pass, and I stare at the screen, the horrors of my past returning to haunt me. I begin to panic. It’s not over, this quenching guilt inside of me.

Chapter 11

Mae

ISAAC DIDN'T COME INSIDE OF ME, BUT I WISH HE HAD.

It would erase the time that *he* did. The monster beside me in this car. I shut my eyes again as he enters the spiral ramp that leads down to his parking spaces.

My pussy throbs at every speed ramp August's smooth car rolls over in the garage. I squeeze my thighs and feel the delicious pain Isaac left behind.

When the growling engine finally quiets and the car stills, I click the belt off. I can't breathe with it sticking to my skin. I need a moment alone to understand what happened.

I fucked a stranger on a balcony.

And afterward, he paid me for it. Not that anything I gave him was worth paying for. I was lost in the moment, focused on his touch. How he felt inside of me. I was a lush mess.

August clears his throat, but he's not beside me in the car. He holds my door open, standing outside my side of the vehicle with his hand extended for me. Begrudgingly, I take it, and he helps me climb out of his car.

Once I stand outside, I pull on my dress. I straighten out any imperfections that may tip August off about my indiscretions. But I'm careful not to mess with my cleavage. I don't want him to take away the money that Isaac gave me. It's all I have left of him right now.

August locks his car on his way to the elevator, and I follow him, my heels announcing my hectic steps to catch up

with him. When I finally reach him, he's already inside the elevator. I barely make it inside, and the doors shut behind me.

That's when he grabs my hand.

I tug at his hand. I want to free myself from his hold. I want to sleep in Isaac's touch on my body for one night. Feel everything he left behind. I can still smell the ocean in his dark hair as he consumed the skin of my neck.

I can't win a physical fight with a man who's not only double my size but triple my everything. We reach the floor I reside on, and he rushes outside, headed for my bedroom. My hands ball into fists.

I don't want to do this. Not tonight.

August already stole from me once. He took my virtue like a selfish, spoiled prick.

Briefly, I consider my options. I don't know where the emergency exit is, although it would benefit me in a moment like this. I'd do anything to climb down forty-seven flights of stairs to get out of here.

I could look for Isaac in Menton. Then again, the first thing I'd need would be my passport. Because the moment that they leave me unattended, I'm out of here. Forget Isaac. I'll research his family and then consider whether I want anything to do with *that*.

"Don't make me wait in this state, Mae," August calls from inside my bedroom, and I shudder at his tone. Not that he's ever friendly. He never is.

But right now, I could use a hint of peace.

I'm in a good place. I was granted two mind-blowing orgasms by a man I barely know, a man who played my body like it was his.

After more hesitation, I finally enter my room. August's on my bed, and his hand strokes his naked cock, furiously so. It's much more aggressive than anything I've ever seen a man do to his cock. Like he's purposefully hurting himself.

I remain by the door, clutching at the door handle. I wish I could lock him inside this room, steal his keys and get the fuck out of here. But whatever this man did to bring me to Monaco, he'll do it again to bring me back wherever I escape.

Unfortunately, I'm one hundred percent confident of that fact.

"If you don't come here right now, I'm fucking your ass tonight." It's as subtle of a warning as he can deliver. There's no anger in his voice, unlike the rage in his movements. I almost feel sorry for his cock, but then I remember how it pierced me during my first time.

How it was stuck inside of my mouth to protect my mother's ring from ending up in the trash.

I pace over to him with my head bent down and my shoulders as stiff as they can. If he didn't know then that I fucked up, he surely knows now. My pinky finger tremors and I hide my hands behind my back.

"Over the edge of the bed with your head down," he instructs me, and I follow suit. Sick to my stomach, I bend over the bed. My knees touch the ground because my mattress in this room is not as high as I'm used to from home.

The trembling cushion of my folded hands provide a rigid pillow for my head while the tears flow silently. I keep my body still as he fists himself behind me. When he pulls up my dress, I feel more than exposed.

Betrayed by whoever's watching me up there. Why am I here? What's the purpose of this?

August's fingers grip a similar spot as Isaac occupied over an hour ago, and I shudder. Did he leave his marks on me? Do they keep me company in this miserable moment?

He kicks my thighs open like I'm a toy he's bored with, revealing my used pussy. Can he see that somebody has been there before him today? It's not like I can hide in the dark. The sun's still up, brightening up the room while I want to cower in one of the closet's dark corners.

The monster behind me grunts as he releases his cum unto my skin. Drops land on my pussy, my ass. The small of my back. It's an uncontrolled release, and I don't understand why he won't take what's available. All the girls at the party noticed him. They wanted him. Why does he have to come to me?

Why does he have to soil my skin with his release? Why does he have to erase what I just did with Isaac?

"Please, don't," I beg once his fingers begin massaging his cum unto the skin of my back. His fingers travel lower as I shiver under his touch. The room is warm and comfortable, but he sucks the life out of my lungs. I can't find it in me to breathe while my heart shatters into pieces.

I should've told Isaac. He could've helped me. He would want sex in exchange for his help, but at least I'd know that I asked for his help out of my own volition.

"Please, August. Stop this." But he doesn't listen to my whimpers. There's only one person this man obeys, and that's himself. He brushes his cum over my cheeks down to my holes. My knees wobble, and I clutch the sheets to hold myself in place.

I wouldn't want him to punish me.

Right?

His fingers glide his cum to my holes, where he pushes it inside. One finger inside of my pussy. The other forces its way through the tight ring of muscles blocking its path. He makes sure I bleed his cum, oozing with his fluids from my orifices.

I gulp down my shame and will myself to get out of here. The money I have will grant me a flight back home. It must. Next time August drags me along to a party, I'm leaving.

Where's the American embassy? I'll ask around.

I'll find my way.

"The cum inside your pussy will dribble out, but if you push the cum inside your ass out, I'll be forced to plant more inside you. Did you feel how tight you stretched around one

finger?” I nod against the sheet, damp from my snot and tears. “Imagine I take you with my cock tonight. You’ll bleed for me. Do you want that?”

When I don’t respond, he swats my ass, and I squeal out in shock at the harsh touch. The warmth his handprint leaves behind.

“No, I don’t,” I respond as dryly as possible. He can see my tears or smell my fear all he wants, but he’ll never watch me break.

Isn’t it a little too late? I’m already broken. I’m broken in. I walk around this city like I’m his kept whore.

“Show me the money you made today,” he says, and my stomach drops. I’m glad he can’t see my face because I’m quietly crying my eyes out on these sheets.

Heavy steps trail away from me, and I breathe out in relief. It comes out as desperate, panting, gagging for air while my body goes into panic mode.

“Here’s the rest of it, isn’t it? Three thousand shiny euros,” August says, and I want to die. How does he know? I hid the money in the cups of the sports bras in the back of the closet. “Get up, and show me the money, Mae. If you want to whore yourself out, you better show your pimp your money.”

“You’re not my pimp!” I yell at him, but it’s of no use. Why am I even upset? This is his home. He obviously suffers from some kind of control issue. If he doesn’t have each room bugged, then who would?

August pulls me from the bed by the zipper of my dress, and it tears in the process of his assault. I rock back and forth on my soles, my knees turning to butter. I don’t want to do this. But I will. I’ll do this dance for him. Stick it to him, right in his spoiled smug face.

I shimmy out of the dress, and he inhales sharply at the sight of my naked body. Some of the bills stick to my skin, but the rest rains down to the floor, pooling by my legs and the torn dress. I pick every bill, and I hand it to August. “Two men

fucked me. They wore condoms. One of them fucked my mouth, too.”

“Who fucked your mouth?” he asks, his expression hardening as he counts the money.

“Isa... The older man. I don’t remember their names,” I say. I stop myself before I reveal Isaac’s name. I don’t want him to get into any trouble. He thought I was a regular whore. He didn’t know that it was much more complicated than that.

“For a pathetic little virgin slut, you make good money selling your filthy body,” he spits at me. Some of his cum already drips out of me, but I do my best to keep some of it squeezed inside me. “I should’ve known that you couldn’t be saved. I could’ve saved myself the trouble of dropping you from your shitty school to get you into a better one—”

“You did what?” I shriek.

“If I’d known that spending some money on your body would be a better investment for your future, I would’ve done it.” He hasn’t tugged his cock back inside of his pants, and the sight of it all red and angry right after he has finished on my skin... It scares me. His cock isn’t done with me today. “I’d have arranged for a new pair of tits instead of a laptop or books. You want to be a whore, Mae?”

I shake my head.

“Give me your fucking words.”

“No, I don’t,” I hiss.

“Then why did you fuck Isaac and Lake? Out of curiosity?” he asks. Suddenly, his temper calms down, but I don’t pay it any mind. He knows their names. I take a couple of steps back, almost tripping over the dress on the floor.

“I wanted to get out of here,” I reveal. “I sacrificed a piece of myself to find a way to leave you.”

“Silly girl. Don’t you know that you’re mine now?” I scowl at him while he grins with savage satisfaction.

“I’m not yours,” I insist.

I'm one foot out of the door when he says, as calmly as ever, "Do you want me to fuck your ass in front of Noémie? She'd hold your hand. She does it for a lot of my girls. She's a hot housekeeper, isn't she? She's a watcher, that one, but I'll let her touch your pussy while I destroy your ass for trying to leave me."

My knees can't hold me anymore. I'm out of tears, out of venom. There's no sanity left to cling to. When he grabs me by my hair, I shut down. He'll fuck me now. I've been there. Done that. I'll think of Isaac and how he mastered me.

What his kiss felt like on my lips.

August sits back down on the bed, and he pulls me over his lap. His cum dribbles out of me from both orifices, and I can feel his heated gaze on my skin, judging me. He wants me to fail. Why would he go through everything that he went through to bring me here only to treat me like shit?

The girls at those parties that he takes me to would let him shit on them for a couple of bucks. They'd do anything for him. He doesn't have to force me to have sex with him.

August's cock is semi-hard, pressing into my belly while I'm splayed over his thick thigh. He doesn't prepare me for his heavy open palm. This is an intimate assault on my cheeks. He spanks each cheek interchangeably, fast blows that flame me wide open.

Reluctantly, I rub myself over his cock as I try to escape the lashes of his open palm against my skin. He lays his strokes out on the back of my thighs, between my thighs. My pussy stings from his rapid swats.

August holds me down with his arm weighing down on me. I whine on top of him, and he continues. Has he lost control of himself? My pulse skyrockets, and I shut my eyes, drowning out the noise of his slaps.

He chases me down, eager to let me know that he owns this body. If he wants to bruise it, he will do so without any remorse. Just when I thought that I've cried my tears away,

more surface. They blow as the intensity of the spanking diminishes.

August's fingers manipulate the hot skin of my ass to crave his soothing massage, and I cry because my body betrays me. When he slides a finger through my folds, he picks up my moisture, and he uses it to push past the barriers of my ass. He fucks his finger in and twists it. "No cum. What a pity. You won't rest until I've filled you with my cum, Mae."

"NOÉMIE!" He yells, and I twitch at the sound of his voice thrumming in my ears.

Her heels connect with the hardwood floors, her seductive stride announcing her arrival. Did he plan this? He has a monstrous penthouse, this fucking monster. And his housekeeper, the one I barely ever see, just happens to lurk around my room.

"Yes, sir," she says. I can't muster any strength to lift my head and scowl at the bitch.

"You look good today. How's your back treating you? Did you get a massage at George's parlor?" August asks while he swipes more of my juices inside of my ass. He twirls his finger, stretching me. This won't be enough, but neither of them hear me cry.

"I feel good, sir! I'm finally confident that I made the right choice. The massage felt so good. I'm going to make more appointments for sure. Thank you for my birthday gift, sir. It meant the world," she says, and her slimy words make me gag.

"Don't you want to know what I gave my lovely housekeeper for her birthday, Mae?" he asks, and he grinds another finger inside me while I try to catch my breath at the new sense of tightness that takes over my body.

"Sir gave me the best gift a girl could ask for! I got breast implants! Perfect size. So smooth... I'm in love," Noémie squirms while I squeal on August's lap.

"You should be, Noémie. They're beautiful tits," August says, and I scowl at the sheets. Fuck him for sticking his finger

in my ass while he compliments another woman. “I have a favor to ask you, Noémie.”

“Anything, sir,” she instantly says, and if I could, I’d throw up. But even that takes too much out of me.

“I need to fuck her ass. Will you help me, Noémie? She needs to be put in her place. She was a bad girl these past couple of days,” August says. His cock is now hard as steel against my belly. He’ll use it on me. Fuck him. “She fucked Isaac and Lake.”

How does he know their names already?!

Noémie gasps as if she knows something I don’t, and it’s starting to piss me off.

“I need to take her final virginity before they go and steal it from me,” August says, and I fume.

“Sir, that would be ludicrous. I fully understand. What do you need from me?” Noémie is so fucking eager to please him. Why doesn’t he fuck her instead? “Lube and toys, perhaps? I can bring some of mine—”

“No need for that. I’ve got some in the safe in her closet. You know the code,” he tells her, and the clack of her heels hurry away. August scoops me up from his lap, shifting my body on top of his cock. He’s not inside of me, merely rubbing against my folds. His thick thighs are spread, and he holds me where he wants me by my arms.

His fingers dig in, undoubtedly preparing a display of pain once this is over.

Noémie returns from my closet with her hands full. She wears a dress similar to the discarded one on the floor, but hers is a bright red that hurts my eyes. It looks too good on her, and I don’t want to admit it.

August instructs her, “Keep her company. Distract her while I fill her up, will you? Make her love it. Make her hate herself for loving my cock in her tight little ass.”

“Sir, can I take off my clothes?” Noémie asks, indulging in August’s nasty little play. I don’t want to look, but how can I

keep to myself when August tugs at my hair? I squirm for him while he manhandles me, forcing me to gaze at his housekeeper.

“For today, you can. She’ll be difficult to seduce.” Noémie smirks. Her sultry stride towards us makes my heart skip one too many beats. August’s heat engulfs me, and I cower in his embrace. I don’t want to enjoy this, but something tells me I’m about to feel things I never considered possible. “Keep your heels on. Show her what’s expected of good women in our circles.”

“Of course, sir.” She hands him the toys and the lube. My vision blurs while my body shuts down. I shut my eyes, begging for an escape.

My ears pick up on the shuffle of Noémie’s dress. Her red dress falls to the floor with her. The thud of her knees while August uncaps the lube unnerves me. He spurts the liquid on his hands. Next, he massages it on my warm skin, the skin he spanked a couple of moments ago. It burns for a hot minute before it cools my skin, relief crawling inside me.

I don’t want to be fooled into believing this is a good thing, whatever they do to me. But I can’t do much to fight them. Not when Noémie’s mouth descends upon my clit while August lines up his cruel cock to push past my barriers.

My eyes flutter open, and I’m taken aback by the sight of Noémie on her knees, with her hands on her thighs. Her nails bruise her skin, and I’m taken aback by the vicious sight, the taut skin ready to mark. Her back is straight, and her tits pushed out for everyone to see. She nibbles on my clit with her curious tongue. It’s different from August’s style. August would ravage me, but she holds back. I wonder why.

Her eyes tell me all I need to know. They bulge from their sockets, burning venom unto my flesh. She hates me as much as I hate her. “If you want his cock in your ass, beg for it, you bitch! Put me out of my misery!”

I feel red all over, my chest caving in. They’re suffocating me, and they’re not even touching my throat, messing with my lungs. He nudges the head of his cock against my ass; so what.

He could be sticking it down my throat again. I guess I'm lucky.

Fuck that!

Chapter 12

August

I BURY MYSELF IN MAE AS SHE TRIES TO CHASE AWAY FROM me.

I don't let her up. From where I sit, boldly so, Noémie's on her knees. She chokes herself with Mae's puffy pussy. Mae folds on top of my lap. With my intrusion of her ass and Noémie's lapping of her pussy, Mae is a plump little grape ready to burst.

She won't get what she wants, though. Noémie knows why I call her in, and she won't let Mae's bratty nature deviate us from the plan. Noémie won't finish with my cock inside her ass. Not tonight.

Tonight, I hold a grudge.

When she didn't return immediately after leaving the bathroom, I knew something had transpired. Henry and Antoine were so kind to lend me one of their phones, and I found Mae in a room with my father and younger brother.

Did I anticipate for them to meet Mae like this? Not exactly.

But I wasn't storming the room while Mae had her mouth on my father. My brother... he can do whatever the fuck he wants. I know that once he finds out who Mae is, he'll hate me for hiding her identity from him.

Lake should have recognized Mae. He was the one who had the privilege of seeing her before, quite often, if I may

add. Not that he could do anything about it since he was behind bars... Oh, he'll despise me for what I've done.

"Sir?" Noémie's voice barrels me back into what's going on in front of me. "She's leaking."

"You know what to do," I tell her, and she removes her mouth from Mae's warm pussy. She whimpers at the loss, grunting at the humiliating pleasure that drips from her.

I don't let Mae's tightness distract me from what's going on.

My patience is determined to run this marathon.

This isn't about fucking Mae. It's about taking something that nobody else, not even my family, can have. Patience is all I can have after one year of trailing this woman, waiting for her to slip so I could scoop her up and bring her home.

Because this is her home.

With me.

With... us. We're her family. She doesn't know it yet, but we are, and there's nothing she can do to escape me. Once she's aware of the shadows looming over this family, she won't be able to break away from us.

"Stop this..." Mae begs, but her pleas fall on deaf ears. "Please..."

She's on her own with my cock in her ass, and it's a fucking shame that I can't touch her. I don't want to. If I feel her up, a simple caress of her tender breasts, I'd fall for her, and I'd do what any sane man should do when they're fucking their girl in the ass.

I'd make her love it.

When all I want is to humiliate Mae in front of my housekeeper. Mae tried to scheme her way out of my hold. Doesn't she know that all roads lead right back to me? I haven't gone as far as to inject a tracker in her skin, but that necklace on her neck lets me know where she is. It's a tiny blip, but it's there.

Once she takes it off, I'll lose the immediate signal of her whereabouts, but that's where the rest of my crew comes into play.

I may not have been on that balcony where my father fucked Mae, but I had a person of trust watching them, reporting back to me while I entertained Henry and Antoine.

She can't fuck my father and expect me to let it pass like that.

"August, please..."

"What do you want, Mae?" I ask her. I grab a handful of her hair, and I tug her close to my chest. I wrap an arm over her stomach while I shift her on top of me. She now faces the bed again, and I'm on top of her, weighing heavy on her hole.

"Noémie," I warn her. I don't pay attention to my housekeeper, although Noémie would die for it. She's begged to take my cock in any orifice. She wants to service me in every way possible.

But I don't let her.

This is as far as I'll take it with Noémie. She's a part of a twisted game of humiliation, one I often play with girls I fuck. If she only thinks of making this about her, I'll fire her. She knows it.

It's just that when Noémie lines up her spread thighs and her pussy to Mae's mouth, a pinch of jealousy seizes me. Mae's mouth shouldn't be subjected to this. She's better than that, isn't she? But I'm too late in my protest.

When Noémie grinds her pussy into Mae's face, Mae's hole tightens up around me. Her sloppy tongue laps up whatever Noémie's pussy offers Mae.

Mae lets out a groan that vibrates through her entire body.

"You fucking piece of shit!"

I don't hear it at first. In my mind, I convince myself it's the voices I've been hearing since I was a little boy. A useless boy. Blinded by the world, my privileges as the eldest...

“Where the fuck are you?”

I don't hear it, but Noémie's alerted face warns me soon enough. “Sir!”

“What is it?” I hiss through my teeth as I grind into a subdued Mae. She doesn't remove her mouth from Noémie. My housekeeper should be pretending right about now. There's only one reason to use her in this scenario. She gets to humiliate Mae alongside me.

But there's no humiliation going on.

My housekeeper isn't shouting, demanding that Mae act like she means it. Where's the degradation? The part where she calls her a nasty dumb slut that's wrapped around my cock, fucked too dumb to use her mouth right.

Hello?

That's what I pay her for.

“Sir, your family!” Noémie blurts out. “They're here!”

At the mention of my family, I pump into Mae. Once. Twice. And again. It stops being sensual, and it becomes... What does Alfie call it again? A transaction. Her slippery walls tighten around me, but I don't care about her at this moment. Isaac and Lake intrude.

They're invading my privacy.

It's been a while since both showed up at my doorstep.

I'd originally planned to do the reveal over breakfast and dinner at most, but this is perfect. I finish inside Mae, and I discard the women as I zip up. Can't meet Dad with my cock out, now, can I?

Noémie's heels click as she nervously pulls her dress back on. Somebody should tell Mae that her punishment is over, but nobody does. Noémie gawks at me, awaiting her instructions. I don't give her any.

I gaze at Mae. She's lost, a sagged body on a bed that doesn't belong to her.

Deep inside, I pity her. I feel sorry for how I've treated her just now. I forget about this sentiment when I hear my family's enraged voices. They're on this very floor, looking for us.

"Lake, calm down!" Alfie begs my brother, but I'm sure that he was the one who let them in. Little snake.

As much as another fight gets my blood flowing in all the right places, I can't take my eyes off Mae. She can't catch her breath. She's pale as fuck, and for a second there, I worry about what Dad will think when he sees her on my bed like this.

I don't want him to think that I've neglected this girl.

I haven't. My staff provided her with nutrition. She has no reason to look like she's been running dry in the desert.

"You piece of shit!" That's Lake. His voice forces me to avert my gaze down to my knuckles. I stretch my fingers. I ball my fists. The delicious crack of my bones gives me shivers, and I close my eyes.

Once upon a time, my life was simple.

They let me loose in a cage. I made money. I went home. The next day, I did it again. Retirement has fucked up my habits and my well-oiled routines. It's been a clusterfuck of a year since I let go of my gloves, my shorts, and my fighting gear.

The rhythm has never let me go, and I catch myself breathing off-beat occasionally, calculating the next hit.

I'm still busy, but there's nothing like the hum of violence in my veins.

I can feel it rousing awake.

Lake storms Mae's room. Behind him, Isaac, our dear father, waltzes in. He's in shock, his eyes bulging red. If he was in his right mind, he'd knock me out. He may be the only one in this room who could pull it off. My younger brother is a passionate man, but he's weak.

Prison restricted his growth spurt. He found other ways of developing, charming his way into the hearts of the Italians

and the Mexican cartels. If Lake can do one thing I can't, it's making friends in unusual places. That's his fucking gift.

It's why Alfie remains loyal to him after twenty fucking years of absence.

My brother is barely dressed, his hair an untamed mess. I check my watch, and it's not even midday yet. He must have been asleep when Isaac informed him of who my guest is.

Lake stomps toward me, and he attempts to land a punch. He fails. I don't look at him. I'm fascinated by Mae. She doesn't move. She doesn't lift her head to meet whoever joined us in this room.

Is she ashamed?

Is she ashamed that she fucked my family for money?

Her family.

“What the fuck have you done now, August?” Lake thunders. Ah, I've hit a weak spot. I haven't moved my hands, but I've struck where it hurts him the most.

I expect another blow.

But it never comes.

My brother turns to inspect Mae with his eyes. There we stand, four men that have no business gawking at a girl that doesn't belong to... Fuck that, she belongs to me. I brought her here. I put in the work.

I get to keep her.

Do I?

For the first time in six months, something in Lake softens. Alfie notices it first, and relief washes over him. I observe my father, and he's lost in his own bubble, that fool. He doesn't say a word.

He's about to cry. I bet.

The girl on our bed? She's our long-lost family. A piece of our family history that we buried a long time ago.

“Salomae?” Lake calls her by her full name, the name on her birth certificate. The one her mother was in love with.

Mae stirs, and her amber eyes emerge from the dead. Her first instinct is to hide underneath the covers. She wrestles with the sheets, revealing every inch of the body I fucked a couple of minutes ago.

Drops of my cum smear her thighs, the sheets she trusts with her modesty. She attempts to hide, but my family saw every detail.

“How do you know my n-name?” Mae croaks.

Four men in the room, but nobody responds.

“Why would you do this?” Lake says, and he sounds soberer than I’ve heard him in six months. “Why the fuck would you dishonor her like that?”

“You fucked her on the yacht. You paid her. Don’t tell me about—”

“I had no idea who she was!” Lake roars with tightness in his face. Mae flinches like she’s been struck with a fist across her jaw.

Four men in the room, and we witness Mae’s reaction to Lake’s outburst. I don’t know what to think. Up until a couple of seconds ago, I was rough with her. Taking what I wanted without considering the consequences. I removed her from her home and brought her over to Monaco. I made her my little toy.

I displayed her beauty and showed her off. Waiting for anyone to find me out. I lured my family out of their comfort zone. It was fun up until now.

I never thought the old Lake would make another appearance in my lifetime. I’d convinced myself that his innocence was gone, stolen from him at such a young age.

“You hid her from me.” For one moment, the Lake I once knew returns. The little brother I vowed to protect is back.

And I’ve hurt him.

I've betrayed our family's promises.

"You hid her from me...."

"Lake—" I begin, but Mae wakes from her trance.

"What's going on with him?" she asks, gesturing at Lake. Her voice is as clear as day. She glares at me, fuming. Not because I hurt her earlier but because I did something to Lake. I hurt Lake. That's what she thinks.

When I've spent all my life trying to do what's best for him...

"You kidnapped Stevie's daughter?" Isaac asks into a deafening silence.

"Why do you know her name?" Mae asks, her brows furrowing.

My father runs a hand through his disheveled hair. "Your mother."

Mae reaches for the ring on her finger. She rubs the cheap item like it's a genie she wishes upon. While she connects with it, she dismisses her worries. It gives her comfort, this relic of the past. "Wait, how do you know my mom?"

"Stevie... Stevie Zito? She was my adopted sister. I raised her alongside my boys. You abducted her daughter, August?" Isaac asks again. His shoulders sag as he sways on his feet. He tumbles backward, reaching for the wall behind him.

"Don't speak of her name," Mae whisper-hisses. "What's going on here? August?"

"It's the truth," I confirm.

"You knew all along?" Mae's lower lip trembles. She grips the sheets, crumpling them. "August, care to explain why you kidnapped me if you're my family? You could've asked. I would've considered giving you a second chance. Why kidnap me like this? Why steal from me... You used me. What did my mother do to you? Why disgrace her like this?"

"He's a selfish idiot," Lake says. I wait for the Lake I've come to know to return. But he doesn't. Playtime is over. Lake

loved his aunt. She was like a big sister to him.

To us.

“It would’ve broken her heart that you fucked me like this, August.”

“You know that it’s over now, don’t you?” Lake informs me. It’s the tone of his voice that gets me. I bear the power in this family, but this man in front of me... He’s dangerous, not in a physical sense. Never.

He’s my blood, despite the facts claiming otherwise.

“Alfie, bring me her papers,” Lake demands. Mae studies him, not quite sure what to believe. She doesn’t trust what’s happening. She hasn’t arrived at the point of anger yet.

When Lake addresses her, she twitches. “Grab your stuff. You’re coming with us tonight.”

“I want to go home,” Mae murmurs. Tears roll down her cheeks, and she wipes them with trembling fingers. “I want to go home....”

“You will,” Lake promises her with his piercing eyes set on me. “Don’t you dare come after her.”

“You can’t tell me what to do,” I say to my younger brother, but we both know it’s a lie. The ties that bind us are wretched.

I don’t understand our relationship. I hold the ropes, but he manages to slip past them.

“Try me, you piece of shit. You should be ashamed of yourself. Her mother, my fucking aunt. Stevie was the only one who came to visit me when you both forgot about me.” Lake all but spits at me. He scoops up a gasping Mae, and he takes her away from me.

Isaac follows in silence, and Alfie, he’s torn between his two camps.

I relieve him. “Do as Lake tells you. Her papers and her phone are in my safe. You can take some days off. I’ll be in touch with you soon, Alfie.”

Without a reply, Alfie leaves the room. Noémie clears her throat. “Sir? What’s the next step?”

“Activate the cameras,” I tell her, and she nods like the obedient servant she is. She shakes off her ruffled hair, but it doesn’t help. I can smell Mae on her, the glossy shine to Noémie’s lips being the remnants of Mae’s juices. “Prepare the feeds.”

“Don’t you think Lake will send her home?” Noémie asks. “He loved his aunt. Your father will want to get to know her, but Lake will demand she’s sent home.”

I roll my shoulders back. “Prepare the feeds. I won’t repeat myself.”

Noémie nods, shuffling out of Mae’s room.

The bed Mae left behind is stripped. I take one last glance at the things she touched, and I step out of the space I confined her in. I shut the door behind me, eager to conserve her scent.

My father took one, two bites from his adopted niece, and he fell for her.

It’s not over.

This game has only just begun.

Chapter 13

Lake

A TAINTED THIN SHEET OF COTTON LINEN SEPARATES US.

I don't touch Mae's skin. She's on top of me, quivering like a fish out of water while Alfie drives his stupid blue car back down to Menton.

Unfortunately, the French and that lot are having their midday lunch breaks. While they're en route to dine on delicious snacks, we're stuck in traffic on the Avenue de France, a main road with two lanes. One heads to Monaco, the other to France. We're headed to Menton, France. Today, the lanes are packed with buzzing cars on both sides.

Houses and stone-built borders surround the road to protect drivers and residents.

I don't prefer taking these roads because they get busy. Congested roads, among other things, are the stuff my nightmares are made of.

I would rather get lost in the hills than waste my time in traffic, being yelled at and honked at. It's only been a couple of months since I received my driver's license in Menton. I fucked my instructor to speed up the process, but don't tell my brother. He'd claim that he paid extra for me to succeed.

After years of being restricted in my freedoms, the most basic rights stripped away, I struggle to get used to the open road.

It unnerves me.

There are too many fucking options, and none seem particularly exciting right now.

Alfie took my choice of roads away today. He picked the busiest road at the most unconventional moment. I doubt he did it intentionally. He's not a menacing guy like that.

"Fuck..." Isaac occupies the passenger's seat in the front. Dad's fuming. More than that, he's disappointed. He hasn't said a proper word since we got stuck in Alfie's ridiculous car. Not that anyone else would find the car ridiculous.

We blend in.

Alfie's car is a dime a dozen in this area. He drives it like a local, both in France and in Italy. And... Monaco. Naturally.

My childhood best friend excels at fitting in. He suits my family fine. They need an errand boy. They've always found his services useful.

Out of everyone who was supposed to care, Alfie tried. He never visited because how the fuck would he explain his absence to my brother. But he called. He sent me letters. I barely responded to any of it.

Even Stevie's attempts. When she came around, I couldn't resist her. She was the grown-up, and I couldn't refuse to see her after she'd driven hours on end with a baby in tow to see me.

That baby has grown up. She's become Mae, a troubled girl that got on my brother's radar.

I can't touch her.

I've been inside of her, but I can't touch her without the cotton protecting her from me.

Whatever August's endgame was when he brought our long-lost cousin here, it's over now. Stevie's dead. I have too many questions, but for now, I'm pleased that we managed to take Mae away from August.

"What d-do I do now?" Alfie asks. He grips the steering wheel with both hands, his nails digging in so hard I'm afraid

he'll either break the wheel or his nails. His breaths are frantic, and his tense posture displays a loss of control.

He knew.

Alfie knew.

It's been bugging him for days to hold our cousin hostage. August pays his bills, so it was a no-brainer to remain loyal to his boss.

"Little cousin, what would you like us to do with you?" I ask, and I don't let her see that I'm close to losing it. If everyone in this car is broken by what August did to us, I must step up and clear the air.

I should've recognized her.

My aunt snuck away from home to drive up to see me. Stevie brought Mae when she was a baby. She also brought her during her first week of school.

I'd been lucky enough to begin my sentence in a Virginia juvenile detention center on the other side of the country, away from my folks, but only three hours away from my aunt and my baby cousin.

I know her.

I should've fucking recognized her before I lured her into a room to use her with my father.

"I want to go home," she says, hiding her face from me. The cotton linen envelops her. She doesn't demand to sit next to me rather than lounge across my lap. I don't let her see my surprise.

"We can make that happen," I say, but I wonder... No. She goes home. Everyone returns to their lives unscathed. "Alfie, we can make that happen, right?"

"Eh... Yeah," he replies. He nods like the freak that he is, murmuring to himself. Fuck, I love this guy. I would never admit it. "I'll book the tickets once we're home. She..." He clears his throat. "She can be on her way home by tomorrow morning."

“Sounds brilliant,” I deadpan, eager for my father to show a response. “Don’t you agree, little cousin?”

“Yeah, just about brilliant,” she replies with a bite to her voice.

“Is there anything you’d like to get before you leave? Now that we’re out here, we could run an errand or two,” I tell her. Mae clutches the sheet, and I almost get a peek at her rosy skin. “Menton is known for its lemons. They’re juicy. It’s a pity you’re here in the fall because when winter ends, the locals host the Fête du Citron. It’s a week-long dedication to citrus fruits, and it’s their pride and joy—”

“I doubt she wants a reminder of where she was this fall,” Alfie mumbles.

“What did you say, Alfie-boy?” I raise my voice, and she twitches. Her reaction doesn’t go unnoticed. I stare at the sheet she’s covered by, willing her to come forward.

“This isn’t amusing, Lake,” Alfie claims. The cars ahead of us begin to move, and Alfie hits the gas pedal a little too harshly. “Lemons won’t heal what he did to her.”

“And who are you to tell me what’ll heal my family, Alfie-boy?” I ask. I can see my brother’s cum stains on the sheets. Who does Alfie think he is? He knew this was happening. My brother does a lot of questionable shit, but abducting women is a new addition to his repertoire. August’s women are willing victims. He doesn’t force them.

Why didn’t Alfie stop this sooner? That’s right. He’s pissed and scared of my big brother.

“Can you two stop nagging for one minute?” Mae blurts out. “Everything hurts. I want to go home. I-I know it’ll take a moment for that to happen, so how about you give me some time to rest? Excuse me if I’m not particularly interested in the local cuisine or its hot tourist spots. I’m tired. My body feels dead, and I want a moment of peace and quiet. Is that possible?”

Alfie nods briefly. His eyes fixed on the bustling road ahead.

My father is a column of ice right next to him.

“Fine, little cousin. I’ll shut up for now,” I tell her, and she lets out a breath of relief.

“Thank you,” she murmurs. Like a baby, she falls asleep in my arms as soon as Alfie has the green light to speed up.

In her sleep, Mae doesn’t let out a sound. She’s gone for good because when an Italian car honks at Alfie for overtaking him in one of the final curves ahead of Menton, she doesn’t rouse one bit. You know it’s bad when Alfie-goody-two-shoes upsets the Italians with his driving.

Fucking finally, after half an hour on the road, Alfie parks his car in the private underground facility below our building.

“Help me with her,” I say to my family, and they nod along, knowing what to do. I climb out of the car with Mae in my arms, covered in her stained sheets. I want to tear her away from August’s cum, but if I did that right now, she’d be naked.

They have surveillance in our building, and quite frankly, I don’t want a thirsty security guard to jerk off over her lifeless body. Enough damage has been done to her already.

Despite being a cold prick about it, my father opens the doors ahead of me. He clicks the button for the elevator while Alfie locks his precious car. Once everyone’s inside the elevator, Isaac types in the security code that sends us to the penthouse.

Careful not to hit her head, I carry Mae out of the elevator. Dad and Alfie follow closely behind me. With jittery hands, Alfie unlocks the door to the penthouse.

It’s a big home, with lots of empty, unoccupied rooms.

Without a second thought, I take my baby cousin to my room.

And I wait.

I wait until she wakes up.



IT'S THREE AM, AND MAE'S STILL ASLEEP ON MY BED.

She reeks of my brother and his disgusting housekeeper. I've used my imagination as to what exactly happened before we crashed their party, and I want to strangle the bitch for hurting my...

Mae may be my cousin, but we're not blood-related.

We didn't grow up together.

Stevie... When I was sent away to finish my sentence in California eight years ago, she stopped communicating with me. No visits. No phone calls. Not even letters.

I don't blame Stevie. I wouldn't want to go back to Cali either, but they sent me there because I was a good boy inside the pen. It granted me relocation privileges. Too bad that my family had already left me behind, moving to Monaco.

In fucking Europe.

I spent my life in prison for them, and they abandoned me to live the high life.

Who would ever believe such a clusterfuck?

Alfie tiptoes his way into my room, knowing not to knock. Our eyes meet, and I give him a nod. He's free to talk.

Mae... She won't wake up with a couple of whispers. Whatever my dipshit of a brother did to her burned her out for the night.

"I booked her flights. She flies to Paris in the morning, and from there, she'll catch a direct flight back home. I... I called her college, but they say she's been kicked out of her program. I can set aside some funds for her if you want me to—"

"Yeah, I do," I chime in.

"Consider it done. What if she presses charges?" Alfie asks. He gestures at her body. Mae's left leg is on display and

the fingerprints on her skin... They lead my eyes on a trail to more evidence that could harm my brother.

“Let her,” I say. “My brother will figure it out, won’t he? That’s what he does.”

“That’s unfair,” Alfie mutters. “You! You didn’t want our help. You can’t blame August for—”

“Twenty years of being pushed around from state to state? Growing up in a cell? Sure, I can,” I hiss at Alfie.

“That’s neither here nor there. August messed up. Badly,” Alfie says, rubbing his forehead. He wants to scratch that sweaty spot on his head, but he doesn’t. He shudders, powering through his compulsion. “I wanted her gone, but... I’m not sure she’s safe. If she leaves.”

“What do you mean?” I ask him. I can’t look away from her sleeping form.

“If she’s unattended, who’s to stop him from getting her back. He knows who she is now. She’ll always be on August’s radar,” Alfie says. He breathes, but I can see it weighing him down.

“She wants to go. She’ll go. I’m not keeping her here against her will. That’s what August did. I’ll offer her my number, and if she ever wants to get back into contact with the father and his two sons who all fucked her, she can. I doubt she will, though,” I tell him.

Alfie nods. “Fine.”

He takes one last glance at her, and he swallows. Hard.

“When are you going to wake her up?” he asks.

“Depends. What time do we need to be at the airport in Nice?”

“Ten.”

I nod, and Alfie takes a couple of steps back. His gaze falls on me, then back on Mae. I haven’t made it easy to trust me. I don’t blame him for double-checking.

I despise my family, but this... Mae is a piece of my past, one that I never wanted buried. I don't want her to leave us. We must get to know her better. I must apologize to her. I haven't apologized for shit in years.

There wouldn't be anything sweeter than apologizing to Stevie's daughter for how our family has treated her.

Something tells me that an apology won't fix shit.

Chapter 14

Mae

THESE PEOPLE KNEW MY MOM.

I sit in the back corner of a fast car that Isaac drives. He hasn't looked at me since he discovered who I was. How is it my fault that his son is a cruel piece of shit?

Gone is the blue Peugeot. A matte Bentley takes me to the airport.

They're all here.

Except for *him*. August Scott. Who the fuck knows where he is.

They're all here, but I feel more alone than I have in a while. And it's not like I ever feel anything other than the *pleasure* of being alone lately. I have zero friends. I once believed that I didn't have a family.

That's changed now.

I have a family. My mother used to know these men. She grew up around them. Why did she never mention them? Why did we spend our final years together in agony, grasping at straws?

If I'd known August, the guy who owns a three-story penthouse and a stocked garage of sportscars in Monaco, you bet your ass that I would have begged.

I'd have begged for his money to save my mother. I'd have done anything. I'd have given him my very soul to save her.

It's too late now.

My mom's gone, and all I have left of her is this ring on my finger, along with more relics of the past that August didn't bring along to Monaco when he had me abducted.

I sit in a speeding car with three other men, but I've never felt lonelier in my entire life. Lake occupies the seat next to me, but I don't see him there. He's miles away.

Whatever I do, I can't reach these people.

And I don't want to.

Before we climbed into the car, Alfie handed me my passport and a new phone with my checked-in tickets. I carry its charger and my deactivated old phone in a plastic bag. Other than that, I don't have any luggage.

I cling to my passport and my home tickets. I haven't let them out of my sight or my trembling fingers since Alfie handed them over.

"Are you sure that you don't want to... Stay? For a little while? No strings attached," Lake suggests. His voice tingles me. I'm not afraid of him. No, that's a sentiment reserved for his brother.

I'm not afraid of a murderer. There, I said it.

I'm afraid of his spoiled rich brother, who may be following this very car. I can't look outside the window. My eyes are fixed on the back of Isaac's stiff neck. I don't dare take in the outside environment.

What if August's following us?

What if...

"How far is the airport from here? Nice airport, right?" I ask, swallowing hard. I lower my gaze, finding the screen of the phone.

No new messages.

Marcus has forgotten about me. He was the only person I ever considered a friend, and he dropped me when I disappeared. Has he found another girl who'll easily take his patronizing tendencies?

I unlock the phone, and I gaze at the ticket. It must have been expensive. My salary from fucking Isaac and Lake didn't cover it. Not that they used that money. Alfie claims he has set up a bank account in my name with the filthy cash I earned during my stay. I suspect that they added their hush money there, too.

I can never pay them back.

Not for the ticket. Not for the debt.

\$501,349 in debt, and it's gone. Vanished from one day to the other because a rich man granted me a slice of mercy. What if... The what-ifs mutilate me. While I'm grateful that I get to remember this pleasant trip until the end of my days, at the same time, I'm appalled.

I didn't need this money.

Not now.

I would've figured out a way to save myself.

Eventually.

But my mom?

She didn't deserve to die in worry. She feared for my future in her final days; at the time, I didn't know how to comfort her. I was supposed to be at prom, celebrating with my friends. I'd graduated high school. I had an entire future ahead of me.

A future that she believed in more than anyone.

She passed away thinking that she'd ruined my future.

But it wasn't her fault.

"Ten more minutes," Alfie announces dryly. Eventually, Isaac pulls out of the motorway, and in silence, he continues one of the most uncomfortable rides I've ever experienced in my life.

"Can I install my number on your phone?" Lake asks, and the tension inside of me mellows. I can feel my heart pounce against my chest, beating heavily.

I clear my throat, and I hand him the phone.

A number to call can't harm me, right? I don't have a lot of contacts on my old phone, real faces, people I could consider my friends.

“One sec—” Lake tries to find the home button, but he fails. He grunts at the phone and then glares at Alfie. “What the fuck did you get her, Alfie? I don't understand this phone!”

“It's the most recent drop—” Alfie explains, but Lake interrupts him with a string of curses in three different languages.

I reach out for the phone before Lake destroys it, and he relaxes. Our eyes meet very briefly, and everything stops. My breath remains trapped inside my lungs, and a sudden hint of light-headedness envelops me.

“Let me help you,” I say, but it's almost a whisper. I can barely hear my own voice.

Expertly unlocking the phone, because there is no way that I would forget Alfie's instructions on how to view my plane tickets, I click on the app for contacts. I create a new profile for Lake.

My fingers shake as I type in the numbers Lake dictates. When I show him the phone number once we're done, he pulls the screen up close and inspects the numbers like he's short-sighted.

For a second, I slip, and I manage to smirk at Lake, who's not even that old, but he has issues comprehending a smartphone. He acts like he needs glasses, and to be fair, he'd look good in them.

“Alfie got me a Senior Cell Phone,” Lake explains, and he hands me the phone back. Our fingers brush over one another, and I don't pull back. “He thought that was pretty funny.”

“It's not funny,” Alfie begins to explain. “You had never seen a smartphone before, and you needed to start slow. All this information could get to your head...”

Alfie goes on a tirade, explaining how he intends to slowly introduce ex-con Lake to the wonders of the twenty-first century.

“We’re here,” Isaac announces at some point, and my departure becomes real.

Alfie and Lake quit bickering at each other, and their eyes turn to me. Isaac continues to pretend like I’m not there, and I don’t know what hurts worse. Knowing that he exists and that we did what we did on that yacht and the balcony, or him purposefully ignoring me.

Unable to find the right words to say, I mutter a brief, “Thank you.”

“No thank you needed, little cousin,” Lake claims. “Go home. Get settled in for your semester. When you’re ready to talk, call my Senior Cell. I’ll be waiting. I hate that this is how we reunited, but we can’t change what’s happened now. If my apology means anything to you, I would like to sincerely apologize for what my brother did to you, and I hope that you can forgive us for... One day. No rush. Like I said, call my Senior Cell. I’ll be waiting.”

“I’m not sure I can forgive you,” I say, my shoulders slumping. “But I’ll try to contact you soon. I’ve got uncomfortable questions for you, and I need the answers.”

“I respect that,” Lake says.

Behind us, two cars honk at the Bentley, and Lake twitches, whirling around to find the source of the noise. His shoulders tense, and I catch myself staring at him while he’s occupied with the outside world.

I reach out for Lake’s hand, and I squeeze it. This is a hand that’s taken a life. It’s not an alleged crime. He did it. He served his time. I shouldn’t crave to be near a murderer like this, but I do, and I can’t explain it.

His head flips in my direction, inspecting where our hands touch.

Our gazes meet, and I hold his attention for one moment too long.

“Thanks for the ride,” I say. Before Alfie can rush over to open my door, I’m out of the car, already heading into the airport’s departures.

One of them calls out my name, but it hurts too much to look back.

There’s too much to process.

They lose me to a rushing crowd of young tourists that are having a smoke outside of the airport. I almost stumble over a carriage with a dog cage, and I apologize to the growling owner sincerely as I venture further away from the Bentley.

I never let go of the phone. My passport.

Since I’m checked in already and I don’t carry any luggage, I head for security.

“Mae.”

I stop dead in my tracks.

August.

“Where are you headed?” August asks. His tone is relaxed, and so is his posture. He wears another one of his custom-tailored suits that wrap his body up like a Christmas gift for thirsty hoes. His usually combed-over brown hair is a wet mess today that reaches over his forehead. On him, it looks splendid. He’s fresh out of the shower, and he isn’t afraid to show it.

August carries a leather duffel bag that would scare the shit out of me if we weren’t in a heavily secured international airport. Right? Airports. Nothing could ever happen here.

I’m safe.

There are cameras everywhere.

“Home,” I say. I take a step back, and I clutch at my passport and the phone. I can see the line for airport security. It’s a couple steps away from me.

“I don’t think so, Mae,” August says. His leather duffel bag clashes with the floor, and before I can react, he

protectively wraps his body around me. His hands find their way to my behind, and he gropes me in front of everyone.

Like this is a reunion of sorts.

His hug is so tight, full of need. I almost believe that he missed me. I've been gone from his life for less than a day, and he couldn't stand the hours we spent apart. I don't know how to feel in his absence yet. Lake woke me up one and a half hours ago, in time for a quick shower and a hasty breakfast.

I didn't have any time to process missing August.

Why would I?

After he humiliated me in front of Noémie. With... Noémie.

"Hug me back, Mae," August encourages me. I can feel his breath on the side of my neck, and it makes me jolt upright. "Hug me back if you know what's good for you."

"Let me go," I hiss. My attempts to kick at him are futile. He's hoisted me up, locking my knees into an unchangeable position with his arms. He immobilizes me like he would immobilize one of his opponents.

Only here, in an airport full of clueless travelers, August's gesture resembles a slice of old romance. The possessive type.

Hungry.

When August kisses the side of my neck, I rock back and forth in his embrace. I want out. I don't want him anywhere near me. The more I move, the tighter his grip on me becomes.

"You'll go back to the car, and you'll sleep in Lake's room tonight, Mae. If you don't, I'll get you wherever you are," he says to me. I jerk in his embrace, and he kisses my mouth. I bite his lip, but he doesn't give up.

He bites back, and he sucks the blood from my lip.

"Do as told, Mae," he says. "You're not safe. Wherever you go, I'll find you, and I'll bring you back to my family. You belong to me now."

“I refuse.” I let out a whimper that he swallows whole with his mouth. Finally, he drops me back on the floor, and I must find my own balance. On wobbly feet, I stand my ground. “I’m going home, and there’s nothing you can do to stop me.”

Without sparing him a second glance, I remove myself from his vicinity. I turn, and I rush over to the cue for airport security. My heart thuds in my chest with enough bounce to cause me a headache.

The heaving in my chest warns me.

But I don’t listen. Distracted by the rustling of luggage and the crying baby being led through security, I lose myself in the murmurs of the surrounding mob. Anxiety flows through this part of the airport.

I take my place in the airport security cue, and I wait.

Thinking that I displayed bravery by leaving August behind.

“You want them to suffer for you?”

I gasp, tripping over myself at the sound of August’s voice behind me. Of course, I land in his arms. I shake my head, and I open my mouth to scream.

August twirls me around, and a wave of nausea hits me. I don’t notice that the heaving has intensified until I vomit all over the floor.

In shock, I try to catch my breath, bile decorating the inside of my mouth. My lips.

Like a good fake boyfriend, August picks me up, apologizing profusely for what has transpired. He holds me in his arms while the airport staff cleans up after me. He tips them generously, and then he pretends to escort me to the restrooms.

Once we’re out of sight, August corners me, pressing me up against the nearest wall. He plants an innocent kiss on top of my head for the cameras. We’re still in a public area, and I doubt that he’d let anyone catch sight of his indiscretions.

“You want to break my heart like this, Mae?” August asks, threading a hand through my hair that’s now stuck to my face. Sweat. Vomit. It’s a sweet cocktail of embarrassment. “You want to leave me?”

I stiffen when he tucks a sticky strain of my hair behind my ear.

“You broke mine first,” I sniffle. A shudder races through me when he touches the back of my neck.

If she’s unattended, who’s to stop him from getting her back.

“I brought you home,” he claims. His eyes glisten, his gaze a glazed maze of bliss. “You’ve finally met your family.”

“This isn’t my home!” My words don’t break through to him. He thrusts his knee between my legs, brushing his thigh between my thighs. I can’t breathe when he’s this close. Frantically, I survey the corridor we’re in. There’s not a soul here. Just my luck.

He rubs his thigh on me, working it further up. When his flesh connects with my pussy, I shudder. I’m grateful for the clothes that cover me, or else I’d lose my mind. “Why? Why do this now? You piece of shit could’ve come for me sooner! You ruined the only family I had. This isn’t my family. Everything I ever had died the day she died. Do you understand?”

He knows who she is now.

“Can you get that through that thick skull of yours?” He rocks himself into me, and the fight I display comes across as me rubbing myself over his thigh. His rigid cock digs into my thigh, ready to take some more from me.

“I understand, Mae. I’ve felt your loss,” August says. The rocking stops, but he never leaves my private space. Where you’d expect a moment of clarity in his eyes, I see none of that. I choke on air as he speaks about his dead mother. Because he’s right.

I’m not the only one to suffer this loss.

“Your brother took your mother from you. I get that.” I clear my throat, and I swallow my vomit. I retch some more. “Don’t ever insinuate that losing a psycho pedophile bitch of a mother is the same as losing my mom. She didn’t deserve any of this! And if you’d done whatever you did to me a little earlier, she may have survived.”

“Go back to my father’s car, Mae,” August says. He bends his head, our foreheads meeting. While I sweat my butt off, he’s dry and fresh. Not even my sweat and stink affect him. “I brought you over now because up until my aunt died, I didn’t know that she was in need. My father, the man you so thoroughly connected with on that balcony, insisted that we stay away from her. As a loyal son, I obeyed.”

My throat clogs up.

“Isaac doesn’t control much in my life, but I let him control that part. Our broken family was to remain broken. Your father knocked up your mother when she was living in our home, Mae. Stevie left us to be with him when my mother was murdered. Your father scooped her up, relocating her to the east coast. She had you. We never heard from her after that. My father never got over it. He felt betrayed,” August explains. My eyes are dry. I can’t find any more tears to cry. I’ve cried enough. Past August’s strong shoulders, I observe the corridor that could lead me away from him.

“I won’t apologize for reuniting our family,” August claims. “But I’ll apologize for being late.”

His hand brushes over my belly. It’s one of his softer gestures, and I’m taken aback by it. “I hope you can forgive me. If you go back to D.C., I can’t promise that you’ll ever be able to reach them again. I’ll find you, and I’ll keep you to myself. You’d never see the light of day. They should consider themselves lucky that I’m willing to share you.”

“I’m not a toy you can play with,” I remind him. “I had a life before you stole me from it. I had friends.”

“The best of friends,” he deadpans. “Make the right choice, Mae. I’ll leave you to it. Remember. It’s your choice this time. I gave you your options. Choose wisely.”

August slips away as easily as he crept up on me. He disappears into the crowd, leaving me a broken, achy mess. Panting against a nasty wall, I unlock my new phone.

She'll always be on August's radar.

What else do I have to lose? I can stay and finally get the answers that have been plaguing me. August threatened me in broad daylight. He would get away with another abduction if I let him. But if I stay... It makes no sense, and I know it.

But if I stay, I can keep him close. He wants me in his family's home because he'll know where I'll be. There's nothing more efficient than hiding in plain sight, is there? If I stayed with Isaac and Lake, they could at least *try* and keep me safe.

They owe me that much.

The number I call doesn't make me wait. Lake picks up on the first ring. "Little cousin?"

"I need you to come and get me. I... I didn't go through with it. I'm near the check-in counters," I tell Lake. "Let me know when you find your way back to departures, and I'll meet you outside. I—"

"We're right where you left us, little cousin. I'm coming to get you," Lake offers, but I promptly decline his offer.

Down the line, I croak, "I'll find you then."

"What's with the change of heart?" Lake asks, and anguish laces his curiosity.

"You know why, Lake. There's no need to beat around the bush about it," I sneer at him. The silence at the other end of the line tells me he knows exactly why. His brother. He didn't force me to stay, no.

August gave me a choice.

Cackling as I gather my senses, I take deep breaths to steady myself. I fail miserably. I hang up the phone, and I proceed to the exit.

Chapter 15

Alfie

“DID YOU TELL HIM I’D BE AT THE AIRPORT?” MAE ACCUSES me as soon as I slip inside the penthouse the morning after she decided to stay.

“Not really.”

“You’re lying,” she spits at me.

I snap, “And you’re asking too many questions.”

I couldn’t sleep, and judging by her pale face and gauging dry eyes, I doubt she had a good night’s sleep either.

The sun’s not even up yet. My apartment doesn’t face the sunrise, so I come up here in the mornings to have my coffee and check my emails.

I check on Lake as well, but I act like I don’t.

Ignoring Mae, I push past her and go about my routine. I can’t talk to her before I’ve had a cup of coffee. Is it guilt that I’m feeling?

To answer her question, no, I didn’t *tell* him.

There was no phone call where he forced the answer out of me. No secret meeting where he threatened me with a knife.

Unfortunately, August controls everything. He has access to *everything*.

All I had to do was book her flights through the company’s account. I paid for her tickets with money from August’s accounts.

It's not like I'm stupid.

If I wanted to, I could've kept her flights a secret. I could've diverted August using a random account with money from my personal accounts. I protect myself. I'm the only one who knows about my financial situation.

I could've insisted that we drive in my car instead of the Bentley. My old car can't be tracked. It barely has a radio, and it still plays CDs. No internet.

But I didn't.

For some reason, I allowed August to see what I did. I wanted him to find out that she was leaving.

Whatever he said to her at the airport worked.

She stayed.

Until a couple of days ago, I wanted her gone, and now, I'm happy that she chose to stay. I've got selfish reasons why. If she sticks around, we control her actions. What August did doesn't come back to bite us in the ass. We already have enough trouble with the law. We don't need to push it.

August may be rich, but his money is new. In the court of public opinion, he's the dirtbag who made his money knocking people out. They don't quite accept him in their ranks, and a scandal involving an abduction across borders...

Quite frankly, it could mess with our operation.

"You're safe when Lake's around," I tell Mae while I prepare my coffee. I get it all wrong today, messing up the amount of sugar I prefer. Which is none. But I poured three teaspoons of it over my steaming brew, and I cringe at the taste before I've drunk a single drop of it.

I glare at my cup, but I take it anyway. Heading toward the balcony that views the sunrise. With my cup and laptop in hand, I struggle to get outside, but Mae's here isn't she. She glares at me but opens the door, helping us both outside.

As I take a seat, I notice that Mae doesn't have a drink. How rude. I ask, "You want me to fix you a cup?"

“If you’re going to pepper it with salt, I’d rather not,” she says, and I glimpse down at my cup.

“Salt?”

“You grabbed the salt pot and gave your coffee three spoonfuls of salt,” she explains. I cringe. “Is that how you drink your coffee? Salty? Is that a thing here?”

I shake my head. I put aside my cup and glance ahead. The city’s woken up. Engines grunt. Busses honk. Menton’s residents are on their way to work in the early morning.

When I don’t respond, she says, “I don’t feel safe, Alfie. I could be home by now. Away from all of this. Instead, August threatened me to stay yesterday, and I did.”

I need my coffee. I gawk at the cup. Did she lie about the salt? I’d never pour salt in my coffee. Never. Impossible.

My curiosity gets the best of me. I grab the cup and take a burning sip to test her statement.

Unfortunately for me, she wasn’t lying.

My coffee tastes like shit.

She chuckles, and it’s such a carefree sound that I want to hear it again. When I peer up at her, the momentary distraction has faded away. Her furious eyes stare right back at me. “You’ll tell August everything that happens here, won’t you?”

Before I know it, she drops to her knees before me. I search for people spying on us, my eyes racing over the rooftops of Menton’s most exclusive buildings. But nobody gives a shit.

This is my balcony in Isaac’s penthouse, and nothing interesting ever happens here, so August doesn’t surveil this part of the penthouse.

Great.

“Alfie.” She breathes my name, and I feel her hot breath on my crotch. For the first time this early morning, I see what she wears. A thin shirt of Lake’s that reaches her knees. She must be cold because her pert nipples show. Since I’ve never

encountered this before, I'm almost tempted to reach out and touch her. Are they as soft as Lake claims women's breasts are? How hard are her nipples?

While I ask myself these silly questions, her eyes are pointed at my crotch. I stir for her curious gaze, but I don't know what to do with myself. Sure, August is willing to share her with his family, but Mae is not my toy to play with.

That's not the type of guy I am.

I stay away from... This. Whatever it is.

She glances up at me through hooded eyes while her lips are far too close to my crotch. "Tell August I'll spend my morning sucking his father's dick, will you. Just to piss him off."

She plants a kiss on my zipper with her poignant eyes sneering at me. *You made me do this*, they scream. "Now, excuse me. I have a date with my step-uncle."

Mae rises to her full height, which isn't intimidating. Not one bit. Yet, she looks down on me. She'd spit at me if she could. I can see it in her devious eyes.

When she turns to leave, I stare after her, taking in her luscious hair and swaying hips as she heads for Isaac's bedroom.

Long after she's gone, I can't divert my eyes from the route she took to get away from me. I miss the sunrise, and I forget to check my emails.

Chapter 16

Mae

I CAN TAKE IT BACK.

My pride?

I'm not so sure. As I reach Isaac, I can feel Alfie's eyes on me. Good. He needs to tell August every single detail of our encounter this morning. I'm on my way to suck dick. That's not something I ever thought I'd say about myself.

Not this way.

The closer I get to Isaac, the more my confidence fades. Things will never go back to the way they were. The truths I know have ruined me.

I need Alfie to follow me, but he doesn't. If he did, I wouldn't forget this anger inside of me. Something tells me that Alfie is not the pervert type.

He doesn't like to watch. Participate. Acknowledge that something is going on with that dick of his.

Honestly, sometimes, I feel like I'd prefer his way of life to go back to being the hidden girl in my dorm room. I can't stand being thrust out in the open, stolen from, or abused. I could cluelessly dream of a better day when I was another girl.

I'm not sure if I'll ever make it back home.

They say this place is beautiful, but I don't see any color, any ounce of life inside of me since August brought me here. Isaac was the only one to incite me.

He hasn't spoken to me since we found out who we were to each other.

I understand.

But him cutting me out like this doesn't help.

August's preferred lacy flowery bralettes have come in handy. I hide my phone there in case I need to make a grand escape. My hand reaches out for the doorknob to Isaac's room when I feel my phone vibrate against my chest. Before it can slip out of its hiding place because my boobs are not big enough to hide a phone, I catch it.

Not a lot of people miss me, apparently.

Marcus hasn't sent a single message since my abrupt departure.

August bombards my phone every day, but there is another man. Rampage. After weeks, he continues to reach out.

RAMPAGE377:

Please, let me know you're safe. That's all I want. Tell me you got back from your party.

That you're back home

TODAY

Rampage377:

Are you there

We need to talk

MY RESPONSE COMES NATURALLY. I SHOULDN'T LET A stranger in like this, especially a creepy online one. But I have no choice.

xMOONPRINCESSx:

I'm scared. I need your help

RAMPAGE377:

You need my help? I thought you hated me

xMOONPRINCESSX:

Why would I hate a stranger?

RAMPAGE377:

You don't know who I am?

xMOONPRINCESSX:

Why would I know who you are. I'm scared, and I need your help. Can you help me

RAMPAGE377:

Help you with what

xMOONPRINCESSX:

I need to leave

RAMPAGE377:

Your dorm?

xMOONPRINCESSX:

I'm not there anymore. That's why I need your help

RAMPAGE377:

I'm afraid I can't help you

XMOONPRINCESSX:

You haven't even heard what I need yet

RAMPAGE377:

I need to see proof that you're okay and then we can talk

XMOONPRINCESSX:

What kind of proof

RAMPAGE377:

Show me something

I LIFT MY GAZE FROM MY PHONE, BREATHLESS. MY CHEST heaves at Rampage's suggestion. I take it as it is. Dirty. Pulling up the shirt I wear, I snap a couple shots of my body. I'm not fully nude. Bras and panties are available to me, thanks to August's obsession with my body measurements.

Skimming through the pics, I don't recognize myself. In the days I've been here, I've gained weight despite losing my appetite. I'm bruised from my thighs to my hip bones. Above my breasts, where the bralette ends, there's a giant hickey.

A stamp of ownership.

I don't want Rampage to see me this way.

But I have no choice.

I press *send*.

He sees the picture as soon as it reaches him, but he doesn't respond immediately. Adrenaline rushes through me,

and I pace in front of Isaac's door.

RAMPAGE377:

They've used you up, haven't they

XMOONPRINCESSX:

Is that bad

Don't you want me anymore

RAMPAGE377:

We shouldn't be doing this

SIGHING HEAVILY, I LET MY FRUSTRATION GET THE BEST OF ME. I attempt to storm Isaac's room, but the door is already open, and I almost stumble. I avoid landing on my butt, but I lose grip of my phone that touches down on Isaac's plush bed.

He's not here.

But I hear the shower running from his private bathroom. Another opened door awaits me. Mist escapes from the bathroom with a masculine scent of cedarwood and rosemary.

Sounds erupt from the enclosed space, and I tread toward it, my curiosity ready to get me into trouble.

Isaac's been inside of me and seen me naked, but I have never encountered his body like that. I've seen his cock, sure. But... There's more to a man, and something inside me yearns to view the most intimate areas of Isaac's body.

Despite how fucked up this is.

The ring on my finger, the one I paid with my mouth to wear, burns me. I feel ashamed, but it's not enough to stop me from invading a space in which I have no right to be.

Before Isaac notices me, I find him stroking himself under the spray. The water trails over his toned body. He's older and more mature. His defined body antagonizes his son's rugged muscles. My mouth waters at the sight of his cock, heavy and meaty. He curses under his breath, talking to himself, but I don't understand what he says until I hear my name.

He jerks off to my name coming from his lips. His eyes are squeezed shut, and he's lost in the moment. So lost that he doesn't hear my loud gasp. It comes out of me with an urgency I can't stop.

Cum I didn't manage to taste before spurts from his throbbing cock, and I want to be there to lap it up.

But I'm not. I'm out here. I shouldn't want this, but I do. I should leave, but I fear I'm stuck here.

"Isaac?" I call his name, challenging him to see me as he calms down from his orgasm.

"What are you doing?" he hisses at me.

"I... You said my name," I remind him.

"Get out," he demands without even sparing me a glance.

For once, I won't do as he says. Even if it gets me into trouble.

Chapter 17

Isaac

MAE REFUSES TO LEAVE.

It's insane how I never made the connection before. I was drawn to this girl when I should've kept her at arm's length.

She's got my sister's eyes, her determination. My hopes for her while I raised that woman are right there in Mae's lost gaze. We've let this girl down. All of us. There is no coming back from that. I want to make up for hurting my sister and never reaching out to her when she had a baby. Once she left, I couldn't get over it. I let her go, and I let her live her life. We weren't blood-related, but she was my sister, and I should've looked her up. I missed my chance.

And now that woman's dead.

I wasn't even able to make amends with her, and here I am, jerking off to her daughter. My phone's next to my toothbrush near the sink, hopefully quiet now.

Mae had no idea who I was. She must be hoping that I will save her. Seeing my son's fingerprints on her pale skin makes me sick. I *am* sick. I saw her body, and it stirred a reaction out of me.

She can't hope that I'll save her.

No.

Because I want nothing but to keep her for myself.

As sick as that is.

Mae's been in my home for two days, and in those forty-eight hours, I haven't stopped thinking about her. What we did.

I avoid her because I can't stand my reaction to her.

Now she's in here, in one of Lake's shirts. Her face wears a blush that I can't stand. I hate her for what she's doing to me.

I used to be sane. I respected the vows I've made to my family. We were done with the fucked up shit. Done. With. It. I can't have Mae waltz in here, trying to disrupt us.

Mae should've left on that plane yesterday.

I'll make it my mission to send her away from us, even if it's not what I want. *Not what I need.*

I don't have any right to, but I stomp out of the shower and grab her by her hair. I drag her inside with me while she yelps and begs for me to stop. "Isaac, please..."

Under the shower, her shirt goes wet, clinging to her curves. Shallow, but they are there. Every crevice of her body, thick or thin, hurt or healed, is mine. For now. Until my sons take her away from me.

I take her in, and she tremors under my longing gaze. Goosebumps cover her skin, the cold water making her shake even more. We're out of hot water because I spent too long in here trying to wash this madness off me.

"Get out," I tell her one last time. Her bright, thin eyebrows draw together in frustration. She doesn't even know whether she should stay or not. She tortures me with her tight little body, challenging me to eat her up.

In a statement of defiance, Mae remains in my shower with her head held high. "Kick me out if you want me gone, but I'm not leaving."

"You don't want this," I tell her. Breathing becomes hard for me when it suddenly clicks. My eyes roam over her body, the explicit details of her skin that I shouldn't be allowed to gawk at. Her wet shirt clings to her, one last armor of protection.

What it doesn't hide is her finger.

The one with the ring.

It's cheap, and she wore it the first time we met on that yacht, the day my son lured her into a room with us. Gemstones wrapped in a wire circle her slim finger. If I forced her to take it off so that I could inspect it, I'd be able to crush it with two fingers. It's not durable. It doesn't fit the necklace that my son bought for her.

The necklace she hasn't taken off.

Perhaps she's forgotten that it decorates her neck. I won't remind her. I like it where it is. It shows me how filthy this thing between us is. A dirty exchange of money. Not that I plan on paying her after I fuck her this time.

With how she waltzed in here, she knows that the days of exchanging sex for money are over...

The ring, on the other hand?

That reminds me of her purity. I remember her doe eyes, the way she peered up at me before she brought out my cock to suck it in that tight room underwater. That day, the same doe eyes sharply turned bitter when I gazed at her ring for a moment. Her entire body stiffened.

Her clothes come and go, but the ring remains.

Stevie made the ring for her.

Beside my bed, hidden in an ugly wooden box, I keep things that hurt me. Every now and then, I pick them up and skim through them. Pictures of my wife. The white shirt I wore on our secret wedding day, the one I stained with red wine. August's adoption papers.

Some of the cheap little pearls and gemstones I purchased for Stevie when she was a freshman in high school, discovering her love for arts and crafts. Every time there was a new addition to the family, she made their jewelry. A manly necklace for each of the boys when they started high school, a badass biker ring for one of their birthdays... My wife threw Stevie's handmade gifts away, and it deeply hurt Stevie.

But she never stopped.

It wasn't like Stevie was particularly good at it. We didn't have too much money to invest in her favorite pastime. Still, her dedication outlived a lot of drama if she kept on making jewelry even after she left our family.

Whenever I want to hurt, I pick those items up, and I relish in what they do to me.

“She made that ring, didn't she,” I say. It's not even a question. She doesn't confirm my suspicion, but she swallows hard. Her eyes avoid my gaze. She's deeply ashamed that she wants to fuck her adopted uncle, but she decided to play with fire, and she'll get burned today.

I've been in a horrible mood since she stepped foot in my penthouse, and I can't wait to make her pay.

For years, I've been considerate of my sons. I've tried. I wanted to become a family.

But how could we become one when the most important piece was missing? I never got over my adopted sister's sudden departure.

I turn the silver faucet, and the water stops running. Mae begins to shiver in front of me. The sounds that come from her lush lips drive me insane. When I step closer to her, she says, “My mom wasn't a bad person. I don't understand what drove her to abandon you, but... She could've needed her family when....”

Her thoughts drift off when I push aside her sweet panties to slip my fingers through her folds. Her thighs clamp tightly around me, and I fight back a smirk. “When? Go on.”

“I can't talk about her when you touch me like this,” she says, and I dare to push a finger inside her tight heat. She tries to run from me, but she can't go anywhere. I've got her locked in underneath me. She can't leave me.

I flick her clit with my thumb while dipping my finger in and out of her pussy.

“When my father left us. She was devastated,” Mae blurts out. Her blushed face is a feast I can’t get enough of. I dive in on her, tasting the skin of her neck. I trace my eldest’s tracks on her skin, doubling down.

She twitches and moans, and I can’t get enough of that.

“Why did he leave your family? Stevie was a good woman for him. Too fucking good,” I murmur against Mae’s skin, intentionally tickling her. I face one of the bigger hickeys my stupid son left on her, and I’m tempted to shake my head and spit at the fucking thing.

A hickey? How dare he give her hickeys like she’s some frivolous teen under the bleachers? I dive further down, finding her perfect breasts. I grope her, and she stares down at me with wonder in her eyes as I touch her.

“He couldn’t cope with mom being sick. It got too real and too expensive, far too quick. He left... He left, and he left me to deal with everything. I-I had no idea what I was doing! I was a child. My mom was in and out of chemo, doing treatments we couldn’t afford for years, all the while being kicked out of our own home...” she explains right before I rip Lake’s shirt in two. I help her pretty breasts out of her see-through bra. She yelps when I take one of her breasts in my mouth. They’re less than a handful, Mae’s handful. Her breasts are tiny and firm, but I can’t get enough of them. I don’t stop fingering her while I taste her breast, and she rolls her hips on my hand.

Eager for more.

“You still speak to your dad?” I ask her when I switch over to her left breast. I can’t stick to one now, can I?

“N-No...” She clears her throat, but it comes out like a grunt of need. Bucking her hips, she allows my finger to sink deeper inside of her. “He never t-tried to c-contact us... Ever. I also... Fuck. I’d never talk to him again!”

She tightens around me, and I rub her clit a little harder. I bite her nipple just enough to give her a surprise. “Very good.

That pleases me. Your dad fucked over my family. He hurt my girls.”

“I’m not your girl,” she proclaims, but her treacherous hips say otherwise. She presses down on me like I own her like there isn’t much she wouldn’t let me do to her body.

“Oh, you are. But your mother meant the world to me, and it breaks me that her chosen husband ended up leaving her when she needed him the most,” I tell Mae, and then I leave her beautiful tits behind. I’ll play with them on another day.

The opportunity will arise at some point. It doesn’t seem like August is willing to let her leave anytime soon.

“Trust me, it fucks with me even more. He is part of my DNA. I’m forced to refer to him as my father,” she says, thinking that I’m done with her. But am I? No, never. I get down on my knees in front of her trembling body. She’s warm again.

Because I can’t stop staring at her body, I inspect her pussy while she’s throwing daggers at me with her doe eyes. She wants me to make her come, but I’ll take my time with it today.

I get to taste her pussy, and it’s a taste I want to savor.

“Please,” she begs, and my cock begs to fuck her. *Later.*

“How much do you hate this family now that you know who we are, Mae? I bet it hurts so much,” I say. My mouth finds her clit, and the first thing I do is breathe her in while she gasps in response.

“A lot,” she replies on a heavy exhale.

“How much would your mom despise me for having my mouth on her daughter’s pussy, huh?” I ask her, and I take a sip of the forbidden. I lick and suck on her, torturing her by not giving her just everything yet. I play with her. I tease her.

I want her on edge, begging.

“Fuck you!” she spits at me, and her legs kick up, eager to get her out of my hold. I pin her against the wet piles, and I keep her where I want her.

Right in front of my face. When my mouth descends upon her pussy once more, she whimpers for me, her hips twisting on me. I hold her tight, and I refuse to let her go. I taste her, and I can't even define what she tastes like. To me, she's as sweet as honey. She's forbidden, a girl I should never entertain.

Mae Zito is my adopted niece.

I should get her a job. Fix her up with her own apartment. Let her pick her desired college and pay her tuition.

But wouldn't it be much more fun if she sucked my dick while she was at it?

She's sucked it before, and I can't forget how her innocent lips and her curious mouth felt on me.

Mae grinds on my face. She pleads, "Please, Isaac...."

I smirk against her pussy, tracing her wet folds down to her cheeks. She stiffens once I reach her other hole. "What is it, little girl? Never had anything in here before?"

With her gushing all over my face, I pick up some of her juices and smear them over her other hole. She fights me again, but I ease her into it but nibbling on her little clit.

"Your son... He fucked me there already," she hisses in response, and I can't hold back my laughter. Oh, August's clever. He wouldn't let anyone else have any of this girl's firsts. It's not his fault that he's an overachiever.

I made him that way.

Because I failed at achieving my dreams.

If I'd found her first, I wouldn't have let her get out of the house until I had my fill.

"Is that why you look so hurt, little girl? Your hole, all puffy and used?" I ask her, and I curl up a finger inside her pussy until I remove it. It's time for my tongue to reach as deep as possible. She can't handle my warm mouth on her pussy, just as little as I can. I'd stroke myself for her, but I've had my fun.

I can suffer for now, but later, I'll replay this, and I won't be able to resist her.

"He fucked me while Noémie watched," Mae mumbles, her hair hugging her face, pearls of sweat keeping it as messy as it can be. "He stole from me...."

Having had enough, I tear her useless panties in two. Tomorrow, I'll throw out any underwear she took from August's closet for her. She doesn't get to walk around my home with panties on.

I grope her butt while I remove my tongue from her tight heat. I find her other hole, and I sweep it. I fondle it with my tongue until there are no more words from her mouth.

Just desperate sounds.

When she comes with my tongue on her ass, her eyes roll back, and her hands finally find my head, daring me to leave her. She writhes her hips on my face and pulls me closer by my hair. She wants this as much as I do, which will destroy us.

"Good, too fucking good," I tell her, never leaving her hole. I've teased her rim open enough for a shallow fuck, but I won't do it. Not while she's healing from my son. I want to destroy this girl's body, but I don't want to *actually destroy* her. I'll leave that to my son, who thinks women are his playthings. "One day, you'll take me inside of you here, won't you?"

"No..." she mewls, but she keeps on rocking against my tongue, begging me not to stop licking her wide open. I can glimpse inside of her. That's how open she is for me. I can stick three fingers inside, and she won't blink.

But I've got my fingers on her throbbing pussy, and my mouth on her ass.

I've had a taste of her now, and I doubt I'll ever be able to let go.

Her body convulses, and what was once water has turned into dirty old sweat for a man so far out of this girl's realm... This wasn't supposed to happen. I paid to fuck her twice, projecting my dreams of a good fuck on her.

I saw my new dream girl in her. A forgiving, curious young woman. I've never been the type to chase after young women. I date women my age, and I married a woman that was double my age and more.

She first met me when I was... Too young.

I rip myself away from Mae like she's burned me with her beautiful body. Her eyes go wide in fear as her chest caves in.

I was younger than Mae when I married my wife. Morgan... Those fucking heels. I'd do anything to get that sound out of my head. It haunts me. There's something in the sounds her heels used to make. They want to tell me something I'm missing.

But I ignore it, and I focus on the anger I feel inside when I think of my dead ex-wife that has made me a bitter widower that fucks younger women.

"Won't you let me taste you?" she asks once her panting slows down.

"Fuck no," I say, and I get the fuck out of the shower. Grabbing a towel, I ignore how her body slides to the floor in the shower. I've left her powerless, unable to move. I should kiss her better.

But instead, I work hard to put distance between us.

This... Whatever we just did.

It can't happen again. This was the last time. My rigid cock is highly disappointed with that decision, but it's what must happen for us to move on.

My sister, adopted, but still, my fucking sister, was my world once upon a time. My family was her family, and my sister's family is... Mine.

I recoil at how I've defiled her daughter. I can't keep my sons from fucking Mae, although I sense that Lake is the most mature about this out of the three of us. He took it upon himself to care for Mae these past couple of days when I couldn't stand to look her in the eyes.

“Screw you!” she cries, and she picks herself up. Her broken pieces are scattered across this bathroom. She whips past me, dripping small drops of water over the floor.

I must resist her.

It pains me, but it must be done.

Chapter 18

August

MAE DOESN'T KNOW THAT I'M HERE.

Neither do the others.

Isaac, Daddy Dearest, hasn't left his room since he messed with my girl. She bounced out of his room with tears in her eyes. Tears that only I am allowed to induce. Dad will pay for his indiscretions because Mae's pain belongs to me.

I've tasked Alfie with work in Monaco, and he won't be able to get back home for another ten hours. And Lake? He's giving Mae space. I don't know what he's up to, all quiet and subdued in his room.

This behavior is unlike my brother.

Lake doesn't stay inside his bedroom for too long. It's big like all rooms in this penthouse, but it's a room with four walls. He doesn't like to be confined in those lately. He prefers the outdoors, the parties with his friends where he can drink his anxiety away.

What's changed?

Is he trying to get back in bed with Mae? Is he trying to be a good boy for her? Pity that he'll get bored eventually, and he'll show her his wasted face, the one he carefully crafted in the last six months of his new life with us.

While the men remain in their rooms, Mae roams the rest of the penthouse. She wears my brother's shirt, but she sports no panties. From where I hide, I glimpsed at her pussy while she was bending over to grab the cereal.

She didn't even bother to notice.

I watch as she snacks and drinks throughout the day. Then, she picks up a book from the library, but it doesn't capture her attention, so she puts it back where it came from. She continues to read the spines of my dad's books.

Has he ever read any of them?

I doubt it. He must have had my interior designer set up his library like that.

He's not a reader, my dad. He prefers going to the gym or stalking me while I'm in public doing business.

Speaking of. Since my property moved without my permission, I have given myself a couple days off. Alfie can take over as I stay close to Mae while she gets accustomed to my dear dad's penthouse.

At some point in the evening, she finds a cozy spot on Isaac's sofa, where she can gaze outside to view the open sea. With longing eyes, she stares out into the open.

Her sneaky hand dips between her thighs, and she caresses herself. Her eyes fall shut, and she bites her lip, a sweet little moan escaping her. Before she continues, she twirls around to see if anyone's watching her.

I am, but she doesn't see me since I hide in the shadows where she'll never sense my presence.

Mae returns to the task at hand, touching herself without my explicit permission. She rubs her pussy impatiently, like a horny robot. She doesn't want to give herself time because she's scared of being caught by the other men in the house.

Scared, she'll let them inside her.

Again.

Because that's what my girl does. She lets my brother and father use her, then cries about it. Tough luck. She belongs to this family, and for now, I share Mae with Dad and Lake. This is a temporary solution until they get bored.

I'm counting on it.

Then, I can take her back home, and she'll be mine for good. I'll also put a ring on her finger and claim her in public. She'll look good by my side, and nobody will know the secrets that bind us.

Mae has no idea how to touch herself. Before she can even begin exploring her body, she finishes herself off by rubbing her clit too fast and without an ounce of curiosity about her body. Her temple. After she comes, three seconds after she *orgasms* on my father's sofa, she goes back to watching the ocean.

Like she wasn't fondling her pussy a moment ago.

I bet that she hasn't even made a mess of the sofa. Why finger herself in here where anyone could walk in and catch her in the act if she's not going to make a mess of the sofa? Leave a wet trail behind?

It's all I can envision. I want to see my father's face when he can't scrub the couch clean with his housekeeper. It would be glorious...

I fish the little plastic bag out of my pockets and roll it between my fingers. I didn't bring much of *it*, or else Noémie would start asking questions. She keeps my private pharmacy locked away from me because she knows that I occasionally lose control of myself and wish people harm.

Today, I brought just enough to have some fun.

I stare at the powdered substance, and I grin to myself. I don't need it. I can do whatever I want anyway, but it's more fun when you feel like you must fight for your prize.

Without my supervision and my home to keep her confined, Mae still chooses to remain inside. It's been hours of her mindlessly staring at the sea, and she hasn't moved. If her shoulders didn't move and that mouth of hers didn't announce her wicked murmurs to herself, I would think she'd have fallen asleep.

Mae could be strolling around the promenade. She could've reached the old part of town by now, sauntered in and out of the stores before they closed for the day. She could have

some ice cream. Actually, I'd prefer it if I bought her some ice cream. I want to see her eat it to the last drop.

But she chooses to stay inside.

She pulls her knees up close to her chest before she hugs them tightly to hide her growling stomach.

I'm infuriated at my family for leaving her to starve. I'm this close to sliding out of my hiding space to fix her with a plate. Not that I know how to cook. Fuck. I send Noémie a quick message to ask her how to do it...

While I'm busy with my phone, Mae gets up and snatches a bottle of homemade lemonade from Dad's fridge. Dad goes to the Marche des Halles every Tuesday. It's the market hall down by the beach, next to the Vieux Port de Menton, which is the old port at the edge of the town. That's where the buildings are a shade of tangerine with a hint of mustard.

He wanders across the market like one of the locals, but his bad accent gives him away. Weekly, that's where he buys two bottles of their local lemonade at the stand next to one of the fishermen offering their produce. The owner's Italian grandma makes them with lemons that grow in their backyard. I know that because... I'm a curious piece of shit.

Mae pours herself a generous glass, and she throws in a couple of ice cubes as well. She stares at her glass, and then she leaves the kitchen. The door to the nearest toilet snap shut, and I make my way to the kitchen with my eyes on her glass.

Before I do anything to her drink, I take a sip from it. It's not too sweet and not too bitter, just the way I like it. I'm careful not to drink too much. I don't want to raise any suspicions, don't I? I lick the rim of the glass so that she tastes me when she takes a sip.

Then, I tear the tiny plastic bag in two, and I mix the powder in with the tip of my finger. When Mae flushes the toilet, I bolt away from the kitchen.

Soon, she tiptoes back to her drink with exhausted eyes and slumped shoulders. She stretches her arms above her head,

revealing the lovely triangle of her pussy to me. Fuck, I want to touch her.

If curiosity kept me here all day, it's my dick that wishes she gulps down the contents of that glass so that I can do whatever I want to her.

But I'm also disappointed that she drinks lemonade instead of making herself a sandwich. Dad has all the ingredients in his fridge. Silly girl. If she were in my home, I'd have Noémie feed her every other hour. She already gained a bit of weight in her days with me. This trend could continue.

Mae enjoys the lemonade so much that she drinks two glasses of it, rubbing her belly at the end of it like she's too full. Yeah, she's full. Of the fucking sugar that the Italian grandma infested the lemonade with. I roll my eyes.

When she begins to yawn, I keep my content feelings to myself. She cleans after herself like she's another guest. She's not, and she shouldn't have to do it. She's my property, and my property gets taken care of. Fuck that.

Eventually, she returns to the sofa, but she lies down on it, facing the ocean still. I'm counting down until she's fast asleep, and I'm ready to come out of my hiding place.

Unfortunately, my father and brother appear suddenly, so I hold my position.

"Mae?" Lake calls out her name when he doesn't see her. "Where are you? We were thinking of grabbing dinner soon. What would you like to eat?"

Mae doesn't respond, and Isaac curses under his breath. Lake ventures further inside the living room, and he finds her passed out on the sofa. The smile that finds its way to his face makes me suspicious. Does he think he can save the girl from me?

He can't.

"Let's make a big order," Lake suggests, and Dad nods promptly. He pulls out his phone and rings one of the restaurants nearby. They don't deliver their food, but they make an exception for my family. It's one of the better

cuisines in the area. Their kitchen is preparing for the afternoon right now. They're officially closed until six, but they'll do it for my dad.

They know that he's *my* dad.

With an atrocious accent of an American that tries but fails to speak French, he orders everything on their menu. Lake nods along, grinning at Dad. Something inside me softens, this tension that I'm never able to let go of.

For a moment, Lake forgets how deeply he despises Dad.

The moment dissolves when Dad hangs up. Lake glances over at Mae's sleeping figure one last time, and then he disappears back into his room. Dad grips his phone, and he looks in Mae's direction with fury in his eyes. He doesn't move closer to her.

Isaac leaves us all alone.

I come forward into the light and out of the shadows. Enough hiding for one day. I don't care whether my family walks in on us. Not anymore.

Taking a seat by Mae's legs on the sofa, I take her feet in my hands. I massage them, pinching her little toe. She doesn't stir. I stretch my arm, and I reach for the shirt that covers her naughty ass. Pulling it up, I expose her skin to the room.

With two fingers, I examine her pussy. She's somewhat wet, but after touching herself earlier, there should be more evidence between her thighs. Do I have to teach this girl everything? Because I will do it.

Gladly.

I drag my fingers across her slit before I shove them inside. She whimpers in her sleep, not loud enough to raise alarms. She murmurs to herself, and I'd do anything to understand each word coming out of her mouth. What's troubling her in her sleep? What can I do to make her forget?

While I play with her pussy, pushing the buttons I know she appreciates, she gushes for me. I pick up her slickness, and

I stroke myself with it. I take my time, studying her relaxed body.

Isaac or Lake could come down here and ruin my plans, but I don't care.

I roll Mae over to her right side, careful not to pull her hair. She now faces the sofa, and I have perfect access to her body. I line myself up behind her while she's on her side. Before I sink in, I check on her again. I plunge my fingers inside her, and she flows for me. Splendid.

Without putting on a condom, I work my way inside her body.

She's as tight as I remembered. I don't move. I appreciate her heat, cherishing each moment that I get to spend inside the body that I broke into first.

Despite my dad and brother fucking her, I know that I was here first.

And they'll never take that away from me.

I press against her body from the back. We don't fit on this sofa, despite her smaller size. If she were to kick me, I'd land on my ass. But she won't kick, no. My brother's shirt rides up Mae's back, and I hold her close. One arm wraps around her torso as I slowly begin to move inside her.

With my other arm as a pillow for her head, I cup her chin with my hand. If I make one false move, I choke her, and she dies on me. Now that can't happen, can it?

Mae Zito hasn't lived long enough to die.

Because of today's gray skies, Mae's golden hair has lost its shine. She pales, her hair almost silver. I don't like seeing her like this.

While in my embrace, my sleeping beauty tries to pull away. Tight little moans erupt from her throat, once that barely leave her mouth. I don't let her go.

I'll never let her go.

I caress her belly, willing my wish to come true.

Perhaps it's already done... I've never used a condom on her. She knows it.

Merely the thought of her swelling with my kid makes me leak pre-cum inside her. I bury myself in her pussy up to the hilt. And I stay there. I roll my shoulders, and I decide. I can't prolong this.

It would be fun to be found out by Dad and Lake, but I prioritize finishing what I started. I lean into her some more. I can't get any closer. I dive my nose through her hair. She smells like my fucking father, but I'll take it. Someday soon, she'll return to the room I made for her. Her closet. The clothes I picked out for her. Her scent will convert to what I dream of for her.

I inch forward, and I whisper into her ear, "You're mine, Salomae Zito. Every part of you belongs to me."

I swear she purrs in response. "Good girl. Take my cock, Mae. You own me, too." I thrust inside her, and her hips tilt in her sleep. She's so fucking good, this girl. The perfect fit. "I can't stand anybody else's presence right now."

The hand on her belly dips lower. That naughty triangle of hair, now messier because she's had no time to trim it at all in the last week, meets me, and I brush my fingers over it. I don't even want to tell her to shave it anymore. It's a part of her, and I'll take it as it is.

"I don't want to fuck anybody else, Mae. You're it for me," I tell her, nibbling on her earlobe. On the helix of her ear, the lobe. There are tiny holes here, a memento of the past. She's a wild one, but I'll tame her. No earrings anywhere but on her earlobe. I'll make her look how she should. "I wish I'd known before...."

For now, I can share her. I don't want her ripped in two again because I took her away from her family. Adopted or not. Isaac and Lake deserve to get to know her like I have in the last year through my research on her.

Of course, now that she's in my arms, I find that data and hearsay aren't quite as pleasurable as holding her in the flesh,

sinking inside, and feeling her convulse around me. “Sweet, sweet girl. You’re perfect for me.”

My fingers explore her pussy some more, stroking her folds. She tightens around me, her beautiful lips parting with a gasp. I keep my eyes on her face, but I can’t resist glimpsing lower where we connect.

I kiss the side of her neck, and I beg for her forgiveness. “Soon, we’ll meet again, Mae. I promise you that. Whatever happens from now on is my father’s fault, not yours. You’re precious to me.”

Breaching her once more, I pick up my pace.

Mae stirs, and more words tumble out of her mouth. “Hmh...” I sink inside her with more force. “Argh...” I give her obedient pussy a playful slap, challenging her to open those beautiful eyes and meet me. But she doesn’t. She squirms instead. “Isa... Isaac...”

I finish inside her before I properly register what she just said. “Mae?”

“Isaac...”

My father’s name on her lips while my dick is inside her doesn’t sit well with me. I remove my now limp cock from her, and my cum swiftly pours out of her, dripping on the sofa. It’s the mess I like to see, but I don’t enjoy it quite as much.

Like she’s a beacon of poison, I distance myself from her.

I don’t bother to fix her shirt, to shut her legs. Let them see the cum dripping out of her hole when they come to tell her that dinner has arrived.

Zippering up, I glance at her one last time and make another plan.

It’s not only my father who needs punishment. It’s my pretty Mae, too. She doesn’t get to give away a heart that belongs to me.

Chapter 19

Lake

MAE TRADED IN MY T-SHIRT TO PUT ON ONE OF MY HOODIES.

The food has arrived, and we sit silently at the overflowing dining table. Dad doesn't touch his food, and neither does Mae.

I'm the only one who can't resist a splendid Lasagne al Pesto, a Ligurian recipe the restaurant excels in.

"Did you have a good nap?" I ask Mae.

I can't help but notice her flinch at my question, and I want to stab myself with my fork. It's too soon to ask silly questions to a serious girl.

"Why were you napping? You didn't do anything today," Dad chimes in, and I roll my eyes at his ignorant comment.

Mae is exhausted.

Her eyes drift shut as she sits with us, leaving her food untouched. I will start feeding her if she doesn't pick up her fork anytime soon.

"My body still isn't used to your time," Mae says, but it's a lie. I know why she's drained today. I smelled it on her when I entered the living room after accepting our order at the door.

My brother thinks he can get away with breaking in, but one of these days, I'll talk to him.

Face to face.

"Since you stayed, you'll have enough time to adjust in the future," Dad says, and he picks up his knife to stab at the steak

on his plate. It's cooked just how he asked for it, but his downturned face proves that his appetite has vanished.

"I guess so," Mae replies with a sneer. "Where's Alfie? Why is he still at work? It's getting late."

"That's his job. Being late. Not having a life," I tell Mae while I devour my creamy lasagna.

"Alfie has a job. Something you know nothing about," Dad hisses at me, always eager to defend anyone but his biological son.

It's been years, and I'm out of the pen, but I still think back to the day of my arrest.

Dad remained quiet. He didn't say a word.

When it was time for my trial, he again didn't say a word. Not to defend me. Not to defame his wife. Nothing. He wallowed in his shame, dragging the rest along with him.

"And you know, Mr. Scott? When was the last time you clocked in? Huh? Your son finances everything you do, so shut the fuck up," I reply, and Mae pushes back her chair with a horrifying shriek.

Mae glares at both of us. She grabs a piece of bread and disappears down the hall to my room.



SANDWICHED BETWEEN ALFIE AND ME, MAE LOOKS A TINY BIT disheveled.

In the back of a cab, we're on our way home from Ventimiglia, our neighboring Italian city. With our bellies full of pizza and ice cream, we're headed for the penthouse in Menton. Our driver took the road by the port, where we get to see the boats and the restaurants by the promenade.

Alfie makes himself as small as he can while he occupies the seat behind the driver. He doesn't want to be here, yet he was the one to ask whether he could accompany us.

Since Mae decided to stay, I offered to show her the cities that make the coast. We began our day by walking down the promenade until we reached the port and the old city, and then, it was the perfect timing for a day trip to Italy.

Hence, the cab.

I've had a drink or two, but it's nothing that I can't handle. Despite Alfie not being my number one priority today, he's the one that's most impressed by my behavior. I'm almost sober. In comparison to what I've been consuming on any other day of my recently gained freedom, almost nothing's in my system.

The desire's there. My throat aches for something, anything. I want to be distracted. Why the fuck not?

Because, unlike my freedom before the *prude-skirt-on-a-yacht girl* turned out to be my adopted cousin, I have a reason to breathe again. If there was ever any woman on this earth that tried to help me, it was this girl's mother.

And I can't disrespect her any more than I already have.

We took a cab, but I have no desire to get drunk. In the years I've spent locked up, I've learned to watch my back. Something tells me that we may be out in the world, mixing and socializing with strangers, but there is a person in the crowd that's watching *us*.

Alfie felt it, too. Perhaps he knew something I didn't.

Since the airport, I've felt my brother's shadow breathe down my neck.

I can't see him. He's got a fighter's step inside of him. Despite his enormous size, he moves in silence. You don't see him coming.

I wouldn't be surprised if he was inside the penthouse, hiding somewhere. If that were the case, Alfie would explode if he kept that secret. My best friend is a bad liar. If August was in our home, he'd blurt it out at some point. I'm sure he would...

No getting drunk for me. Unless I suddenly believe my drunken ass has a chance against a warrior champion.

I'm positively fine where I am, sitting next to Mae, sober as a nun. I watch her squirm every time one of us accidentally touches the other.

She's blushed so much today with her clear face that I'm tempted to ask her never to wear another bit of makeup. I smirk as I check my phone, clicking through various messages but barely reading one.

Something pops up that captures my interest. "Shit," I exclaim, and Alfie twists his head in my direction. "We should go to a party my friends are hosting up in the hills."

"I'm tired. I want to go home," Alfie announces instantly, adding a fake yawn to his statement for credibility. His eyes are wide open, and with his stiff posture, he doesn't look the least bit droopy.

"We could drop you off at home," I suggest.

"No!" Alfie replies. He licks his dry lips, and he gazes down at his lap. I can hear him think from where I sit. He deals with a different type of anxiety than I do. Unlike me, he doesn't have a drug of choice. "No! If you go, I'll come with."

"What type of party?" Mae asks, scratching the side of her head. Her bright hair is tied in a messy bun, and she refuses to wear anything but my clothes. She picks the darkest pieces I own, and today, she added a leather jacket I bought somewhere I don't remember anymore despite my new clothes.

I spend money recklessly when I'm high, so I forget the details.

"Eh..." I don't know how to explain it. "You'll see once we get there. They're good friends, and they know how to have fun."

Alfie rolls his eyes. Poor guy.

Mae doesn't look like one of the girls you'd see at such a party, the type my French friends host when they're feeling

bored. She's in a black t-shirt that almost reaches her knees and sweats that are baggy as fuck on her. These are my clothes, and I can't stop salivating over how they fit her. They don't fit her at all, not her body. But it looks good on her, wearing my clothes.

She should wear them more often.

Perhaps, she shouldn't wear anything. It would make me less possessive of hers.

That's a lie. I'd jump her if she paraded the streets naked. I'd steal her for myself, and I'd leave with her. I wouldn't give a fuck about the fact that I'm legally not allowed to leave Monaco. They let me come here because my brother claimed I'd live with him in his penthouse in Monaco. I'd never leave his home, the area where he lives. I'd be a perfect, good little brother for my family. I'd go to the meetings I've been assigned to. I'd meet with my lawyers to discuss my case.

You see, I'm a convicted murderer.

I'm guilty.

I served my time. I grew up in a cell. My brain doesn't function like it should. I'm a threat to society.

I shouldn't be out and about, but the local authorities in Monaco, France, and Italy all collectively have a boner for my brother. They let him do as he pleases.

And I take full advantage of it.

If my brother pushes me some more, if he messes with Mae, I'll take her and steal her from him. To save her.

Not because I have ulterior motives.

No. No. No.

Mae's fingers clutch at her phone and her new slim black cat-eye sunglasses. She fell in love with them when she saw them at one of the boutiques we walked by, and we had to buy them for her. She looks like a fierce little cousin with them protecting her eyes.

It's funny how I'm desperate to hide that I've fucked this girl. I feel it in my bones that I was inside of her. At the time, it didn't matter as much. The next day, I got wasted and lost my brother five million on a stupid bet I arranged with my new friends. I fucked Mae Zito, the girl I shouldn't touch, and I moved on with my life. But now that I know, I'm stuck.

I can't forget it. It's all I feel when I look at her. How tight she felt around my cock. How she had no fucking clue how to move with my cock inside her, but how she listened to my hands directing her. She was an eager fucking learner. Ready to please...

I want it erased from my memory. That day, my thoughts about her were vile.

They still are.

When I let them be.

Late at night.

When she's fast asleep next to me.

Why would she insist on sleeping in my room? Did she figure it out? That I'm the only one my brother respects? That I'm the only one that can keep my brother at bay?

He may have the money and the power, but I've got strings in my hands that I'm not afraid to pull.

If he hurts her again, I'll be the one he'll face. I ushered her to the airport once. I may be an ex-felon with restrictions, but I'll find a way to escort this woman out of the country myself if I have to.

If I sense that she's in danger, I'll send her packing.

She's here to get to know us.

That's all.

Yeah, right.

"Let's go home and change, then?" Alfie recommends, but I shake my head. I don't look at them. I can't look at them.

Alfie and Mae rely on me.

What will happen when they find out what a fraud I am?

Fuck.

“No, we’re going out now,” I insist. I turn to the driver, and I give him instructions in Italian. We’re headed out of the inner city, going up so close to the motorway that you can hear the humming cars racing by in the wind.

Silence leads the way.

We don’t speak.

Alfie can guess where we’re going. Over the past six months, he’s been playing catch with me in these homes. By now, he knows the owners by heart. There’s a party for everything with my new friends.

Friends.

It’s not a word that I fully understand, not after spending twenty years watching my back. Sure, I can charm my way into a conversation with anyone. Whether it’s my name, posture, or the way I look people in the eyes when they speak.

But I don’t have many friends.

Alfie is the only person I would trust my life with, and since I’ve been back, I’ve been determined to ruin our bond, the friendship we built over the years as children. I came out of prison believing that we had grown apart.

I still don’t trust him in regard to August.

But I can no longer deny that he’s invested in this family.

Whether he’s loyal to my older brother or not, Alfie wants the best for this family. That’s why he didn’t help Mae leave us. I know what he did. He didn’t tell August. He showed him. Which is just as bad of a betrayal, but...

Mae is here.

She sits right next to me as we pull up to the party.

For that, I thank Alfie. Twenty years had to pass for me to meet my adopted cousin in the flesh without any barriers separating us.

We still have secrets.

Not that they'll ever come to light if I have a say on it.

But she's here.

I reach over Mae's lap, taking her hand in mine. She peers up at me in surprise, and it does more to me than finding out that I'd be free six months ago. I haven't felt as deep of an emotion in years, perhaps ever. Alfie stares at the union of our hands, and I try to guess what's going through his mind, but I can't. I'm too distracted by Mae.

"Siamo arrivati," the cab driver announces in Italian. Distracted by the thrill awakening me at Mae's touch, I miss my chance to pay the driver. Alfie smoothly reaches over the console and hands the man two purple euro bills. "Grazie!"

"You never told us what type of party this is," Mae says, and she sounds as breathless as I feel.

"It's a sex party for poly couples," Alfie deadpans. He glimpses at the driver, who stashes away his cash. No, the driver doesn't speak our language, but Alfie is still embarrassed to talk about sex in public. He shoves the door open and climbs outside without looking back.

Mae turns to follow him, but I tug at her hand.

She gets out of the car with me for this one. "You stay close to us, okay? No wandering off on your own. These are my friends, but you don't know the language, and this is an invite-only party... You may become entangled in things you wouldn't enjoy. Unless..." She blushes, and I want to fucking kiss her. Wrong. I can't do that. "Just stay close. We can explore together."

"Okay," she says, giving me a firm nod.

I help her climb out of the car, and I never let her hand go. Alfie follows closely behind us, and I can sense his piercing gaze on my back.

I don't understand what he needs sometimes, but neither does he.

Chapter 20

Mae

LAKE HOLDS MY HAND WHILE WE WATCH A MAN GO DOWN ON another man while their woman pegs him. I wear one of Lake's t-shirts, a short-sleeved thin fabric t-shirt, but I sweat like I've been standing under direct sunlight with a sweater on for three hours straight.

The sounds the group makes in front of us fascinate me. From the lube to their clashing flesh and the grunts of the men, it's hard to find a point to focus on. The woman directs the scene, and the two men are happy to oblige. I can't see myself in that role, but I can't divert my attention from what's happening in front of me.

For once, I understand why Alfie was reluctant about coming here in the car.

With my free hand on Lake's chest, I lean into him, almost scared of the sight. I squint my eyes as I take deep breaths. It doesn't help calm me down. I inhale Lake's scent, and it makes me even dizzier.

Doing what these people do in this house takes a lot of confidence.

From the moment we stepped inside, I haven't heard a word of English. Sometimes, I understand when Lake switches languages, but that's that. With two drinks responsible for my mild inebriation, I sway where I lean against Lake.

He's popular with his friends.

I've counted ten women who have introduced themselves to us since we entered this house of sex. They come up to us, inspecting me first with a judgmental gaze. They follow it up with a quick pitiful scan of Alfie's, and then they address Lake.

I don't understand what these women say because they mumble and don't speak my language. They don't want me to understand them. It's frustrating.

"Can we go now?" Alfie asks. His jittery voice matches the sweat on his forehead. He didn't take off his suit jacket upon entering, and he's been sweating even worse than me. His troubled frown is a constant occurrence, and it doesn't matter how many pairs of naked tits or bobbing penises walk past him. He doesn't enjoy it.

Not like I do...

Lake doesn't respond to his friend. He grips the tumbler in his hand hard. It's half empty. This is his third drink tonight, and I can tell he wants to finish his drink, but he hesitates. I stick my neck out and put my lips on his tumbler, giving him another option.

With his hand gently caressing the back of my neck, he helps me remove the temptation that plagues him. My lips touch the same spot that his did a couple of minutes ago. I let that sink in, with a tingling sensation moving inside my belly. He tips the tumbler toward me.

The liquid burns my throat, and I cough after swallowing it. I'm not a heavy drinker, and I'm already tipsy.

"Alfie's uncomfortable," I tell Lake. I poke his side, and he chuckles at the gesture.

"Is he now?" Lake replies. He sets aside the now-empty tumbler and glances at me. But he addresses his friend. "You know where the door is, Alfie. You can leave at any time. Nobody's forcing you to stay."

"I'm not leaving you alone," Alfie insists. His voice breaks for a moment, and I'm almost curious enough to glimpse his

way. But I don't. Lake's pinning me down with his gaze, and I can't look away.

"Kiss him," a voice calls, and a shiver runs down my spine. Her voice comes out like smooth velvet but with a thorny undertone. It's the woman stuffing a man's butt with a silicone dildo. It's the first thing I understand in hours, and I'm tempted to do as she says.

She has a commanding voice. Like August does. I wish I was strong enough to stand up to it, but it breaks me down. The woman goes on, "You look like you want to eat each other. So kiss. Give us a little show, ma belle."

"It's complicated," I blurt out. Lake's eyes are on my lips, and he's thinking what I'm thinking. This can't happen.

Never.

"You've fucked her, haven't you? Give your woman a kiss. Lake, wasn't it?" the woman dares us. "I'm Chloé."

"How does she know your name?" I ask Lake in a whisper. "How does everyone in here know your name? August's supposed to be the famous one."

"I don't care where she knows my name from, little cousin," Lake says. He squeezes my hand, and I embrace our connection. "No offense."

"None taken," Chloé says. While she's conversing with us, her silicone dildo's still inside of her man. Talk about multitasking. "So. Can we get that kiss? Or is she not yours? If she's not, I'd like to show her around."

"She's ours," Alfie intercepts, and the spell is broken. I choke on air. He did *not* just say that. Collectively, we turn to face him.

Deep inside, I'm afraid of what it means to belong to them. To this family. My new family. I'd finally have someone to turn to, someone to trust... This past month my trust has been shattered to pieces. I live in fear of what's next.

But instead of cowering, I lash out. I tug my hand free of Lake, and it hurts me. The look in Lake's eyes pains me like

I've stuck my hand in a bucket of ice. With a scoff, I respond, "I'm not yours."

"Sure you are," Lake adds. He tilts his head to the side, his eyes glistening. It's the alcohol that grinds its way through our systems. "But it's not like that—"

"Come and give me a kiss, ma belle. You're such a pretty girl. You deserve it," Chloé says, and her voice hypnotizes me. Somehow, my feet move without a second thought. My eyes take in how she handles her men, and I want a piece.

I want to be handled.

No, I don't. What the fuck?

Before I can reach Chloé for the kiss she promised me, a scorching hand grabs me by my elbow, and I'm twirled around. Lake's mouth finds mine, and I gasp in response. I snake my arms around his neck, pulling him closer.

I open for him, letting him in.

Lake's mouth tastes like booze. He's a problem for me, one I can't forget. One I can't keep ignoring forever.

While my hands remain on his neck, Lake dares to reach lower. From my elbow, he moves to my hips. He pulls us as close as it gets, and I feel him. His length. He's the second man that I've let inside me.

I rub on him like I want a repeat, and Chloé responds with a knowing chuckle. Flesh continues to clash against flesh, but Chloé doesn't seem to focus on that. While her men are on the verge of coming, she pays attention to us, almost like she purposefully denies her men her attention.

Alfie doesn't make a sound, and I'm honestly worried. I don't want him to feel left out. I want to include him in this game of desperation, but I don't know how.

Lake gropes me in front of everyone. Unceremoniously, his hands reach below the loose sweatpants that cover my ass, and he kneads the flesh there. He doesn't reach below my panties, but I want him to.

Our tongues curl into one another. He leaves a bite on my lip, one that stings, and then he sucks on me, soothing the pain. “Lake...”

“Little cousin?” We’re both too drunk to realize what’s happening. I rock against him, and my hands reach for his t-shirt’s collar. I pull at it. I want to feel his skin on mine. “Little cousin, we shouldn’t.”

“No?” I whine. It’s a pathetic whine, a horny whine. I announce to the world that I’m dripping for this moment.

It’s a moment.

There’s nothing else to it.

“We really shouldn’t, little cousin. You’re too precious for this family. I shouldn’t spoil you with my dirt,” he says, kissing my forehead. Fuck my forehead. I steal a kiss from his lips to find the courage to go on.

“But it aches,” I tell him. My voice is so tiny that I feel swallowed by the earth. I don’t recognize myself.

“Where does it ache, little cousin? Tell me all about it,” Lake dares me. His eyes sparkle in mischief, but I can see that we’ll collectively regret this tomorrow.

I take one of Lake’s hands groping my ass, and I sneak it in from the front of my sweats. Once I get him past the waistband, I freeze.

August.

Just the thought of Lake’s older brother makes me want to scream.

“I don’t care how dirty you are, Lake. You deserve this second chance at life,” I tell him. His fingers brush my belly, but it’s not as possessive as August’s grip on my belly yesterday. “Please, use it wisely.”

“Thank you,” Alfie murmurs, and my heart breaks for him.

Lake attempts to pull his hand away, but I shake my head. I grip his wrist, and I take a deep breath. “It aches so bad. I need your help. Please?”

My thighs tremble in excitement as I guide Lake's hand below my panties. His fingers are longer than mine, and one hand encompasses me from the hood of my clit to my ass. But unlike Isaac, who insisted on touching my ass the other day, Lake doesn't take it that far.

He cups my pussy. "This is where it aches?"

I nod, gushing for him. He replies with a fond grin, and my heart melts. He asks, "Want me to fix it for you, little cousin? How much do you need? I can't give you too much. It's forbidden. You're..." He's about to say the word. Family. I'm his adopted cousin.

"Just the tip," I say on an exhale.

"I don't have any condoms on me," Lake says.

"Neither do I," Alfie quickly reveals, and I shudder. He's still here. He watches while Lake fondles my pussy. When I should be embarrassed, I feel suddenly liberated. I don't want him to go away.

I want him to stay.

I want to find out why he's as distant as he is. So shy. I recognize the cues. Up until a couple of weeks ago, that was me. I had no idea how to enter this dance, and now that I'm inside it, I can't get enough. I'm so disgustingly desperate for it that I don't care about Lake being inside of me without a condom. Who cares?

"We're exclusive. No condoms, I fear," Chloé announces with a naughty sigh. If she doesn't have any condoms, she knows where to get them. If I were sober, I'd ask. I'd make sure I was protected.

But I'm drunk and grinding my hips to rub my pussy all over Lake's hand. Just so he doesn't miss a spot. So that he can touch every inch I have to offer.

"It's time you left, Alfie," Lake tells his best friend. The fingers fondling me a second ago find their way to my necklace, the one August gave me. He rubs my juices all over the necklace, smearing my neck, too. "You don't want to see this."

His breath catches. Alfie insists, “I’m not leaving.”

“Why don’t you touch—”

Chloé tries to give an instruction to Alfie, but Lake intervenes. His attention fixates on her, and I’m left cold. In the corner, Alfie’s body shakes. Out of anger? Fear? Curiosity?

Lake says, “Leave him out of this.”

“My sincerest apologies,” Chloé responds. She exchanges a knowing glance with Lake, and as much as I try to read what they communicate with their gazes, I can’t.

“If Alfie wants to watch, you give him a show, little cousin,” Lake says, and I bloom at his words. “Careful not to give too much of a show, yeah? We don’t want my brother to jump out of the shadows. We have permission to fuck you, but I’m not sure if we can show you around like that to strangers.”

Lake grins at me, knowing that his words will trigger a reaction in me. I can taste the alcohol on his breath, but I want more.

I pull up the shirt I wear, and Lake’s hands help me remove it. He tugs at the bralette and gently removes it. When I give him a pout about it, he twirls me in front of him, spanking my ass over my sweatpants. He drags the fabric down so that it sits on the back of my thighs.

Lake kneels, and he digs his face in from behind. With my drenched panties still covering my pussy, he presses his nose in. He inhales with a satisfied grunt.

“How... How does she taste?” Alfie asks, and my mind goes places. He can’t be interested. He’s not that type of guy, right? He watches. He lurks. He works hard. That’s his life. I want no part of his life.

I belong to the family.

But so does Alfie.

“You can give it a go,” Lake tells him, rubbing his nose through my folds. He slides the panties aside, and I can feel his hot breath on me. “She’d let you. Wouldn’t you, little

cousin? You want to fuck the entire family. Get yourself a collection.”

“I... Argh...” Lake swipes his tongue through my folds, and then he tears my panties in two.

“Little cousin?” Lake insists. “Being part of this family means you learn how to share.”

“Share?” The word suddenly seems foreign to me. It’s then that I realize how the men view my moving in with them for the time being. They share me with August.

I’m a toy.

They share me with a tyrant.

Until the tyrant picks his toy up from recess.

Fuck. “Get off me.”

“Don’t be like that, little cousin,” Lake says before giving my clit a tight little rub with his nose. “You already fucked my father. You fucked August. Alfie will feel left out. That’s not how we do things in this family.”

“But... I don’t... I’m okay. You can have sex with them,” Alfie clarifies on a hasty breath. “Not offended. I’m truly okay! I’m fine where I am....”

Shaking my head, I try to pull up the sweatpants I borrowed from Lake earlier today. “So, you’ll keep sharing me if I stay? You’ll burn me out, turn my body to dust, and send me back home when you’re sated?”

Lake’s hand blocks me. He tugs at the fabric until I hear the seams crack, and I groan in frustration. The alcohol buzzes inside me, turning me into a regretful little bitch. I can’t come up with a clever way to get out of this. My entire body burns for Lake, for Alfie’s attention.

But my brain tells me I’m a stupid bitch who’ll regret what happened.

And like the fool that I am, I fall into another trap.

I wrestle against Lake, attempting to free my body from him, but he won’t let me. He grabs my wrists, and he joins

them behind my back, holding me hostage while he lines up his cock with his other hand. I see how he strokes his flesh, and then I peer up at him. Through hooded eyes, we gaze at each other.

“What are you doing?” I croak. My sweatpants meet the floor, as do my panties. Naked in front of him, I shudder. “Let me go.”

I want to resist, to bolt the fuck out of here.

But Lake subdues me when he pushes inside of me, the crown of his cock stretching me out. He doesn't delve any deeper. He gives me the tip just to tease me into submission. “In case you don't understand your current circumstances, little cousin, here's what's going on.”

Lake thrusts inside, and I twist my hips, afraid to meet him. He still finds his way inside of me, burying himself to the hilt. “My brother thinks he owns you. When I'm drunk, I can see why. Such a pretty little body you've got there, my sweet, so fucking sweet, little cousin.”

It's like he forgets that Chloé's right there. Her mouth gapes open for a moment before her mask of control falls back on her face.

“Alfie, can you hold her arms? Make sure she doesn't escape us?” Lake asks his friend.

“I... Uh...” Alfie murmurs to himself, but eventually, his hands replace Lake's. I tug again, trying to free myself, but I don't succeed.

“Such a tight little cunt, too. You let your Uncle Isaac fuck it. I heard he fucked you out in the open for everyone to see and that August was super pissed off,” Lake narrates my doom, and my walls clasp around his rigid cock. He doesn't move now that he's fully inside of me, skin to skin.

No protection.

“You like pissing off your other cousin?” Lake asks, and his mouth dives in, sucking on the skin of my collarbone. Not because he plans to leave behind a mark but because he knows

he can drive me crazy. “Guess what, little cousin. Me, too. Don’t you hate that piece of shit? Alfie, you must loathe him.”

“I don’t loathe your brother,” Alfie comments. “He’s difficult to work for. He’s very... demanding.”

“I hate him. So much,” I breathe out, and it makes my pussy pulse around Lake’s cock.

“You hate him so much that you let him fuck you last night, didn’t you. You let him think he was living out his fantasy of fucking his sleeping beauty of a cousin when you were conscious,” Lake says, and my face goes red. Heat surges inside of me.

Lake knows. He saw something that he shouldn’t have.

Hell, I saw something I shouldn’t have. On my way back from the toilet, where I went to wash my hands from being sticky, I saw August pouring powder into my drink. In a rush, I returned to the toilet and pretended I’d peed. I flushed it. When I came back, he was gone.

From that point on, I waited for my downfall.

Deciding on the spot, I drank the lemonade. And I waited.

But I never fell asleep.

“August doesn’t have access to real medicine,” Alfie explains while Lake’s cock rests inside me like it has the fucking right to be there. Doesn’t it? When it fits like a glove... “Noémie and I have put everything away in a safe that he doesn’t know the code to. He... He’s dangerous sometimes. When he was fighting, he used to abuse painkillers. Sometimes, he goes back for them. We hide everything. He thinks he knows where our in-home pharmacy is, but he doesn’t. Those are sugar pills.”

“He came inside of you,” Lake tells me. “And you didn’t push him away. Has he been fucking you bare this whole time, little cousin?”

I swallow. I don’t want to tell him the truth, but he already knows it.

“Don’t do it,” Alfie begs Lake, but Lake begins to move inside me. He drives inside like he’s in a hurry, and he is. “Please, Lake. This shouldn’t happen—”

“It may already have happened. If it does, we embrace it,” Lake says, and my heart fills with warmth before my brain injects us with terror.

What does he mean?

Embrace it?

What if... I don’t want to be pregnant. Not right now. I just found my family again. They’re a little intense, and they love to humiliate me. But it’s not a permanent fixture.

They just want to use my body.

Then, they’ll be done.

Babies? That would ruin everything. I’d be stuck forever.
Like my mom.

“I hope you let your Uncle Isaac hit it bare, too, little cousin. I’d love to battle it out with them over who impregnated you,” Lake says. He bears down on me, recklessly stabbing my body with his pleasure. This isn’t about me.

This is about his needs only.

When he cums, he focuses on my face. He finds my eyes, and he shoves his cock further inside of me just to prove a point. He fucks his cum into me while his eyes spear me. *You made me do this, little cousin.*

The last thing I remember is Alfie letting go of my wrists.

The cum dripping from between my thighs.

And then, it all goes black.

Chapter 21

Alfie

LAKE STARES AT MAE'S LIFELESS BODY.

Neither of us has bothered to touch her, to cover her up. Her naked breasts lie flat on her skin while she rests on her back on a sofa that I doubt is comfortable.

The rest of her body is on display, and while I can't get it out of my head, the innocence she resembled while Lake fucked her, Lake remains respectful. For now.

After degrading her with his penis.

For once, Lake doesn't focus on the cum spilling out of Mae, decorating her skin. His eyes are hollow. Sobered up.

"What did you do?" I ask him.

"If there's any chance that August hasn't fucked a kid into her already, I wanted to be the one who did it to her. It would protect her from him. I'd make sure of it," Lake explains, but none of this makes any sense.

"She can't be pregnant. Who would look after the baby?" I ask him. I can't look away from Mae. "She's too young. She's... Clueless. She's not made to be a mother. Not right now. Let her live her life. Maybe she can find something that interests—"

"Don't you understand, Alfie?" Lake thunders. He erupts, and I shudder. Still, after all this time, I'm scared. I'm not afraid of anything but losing Lake. Betraying him. Hurting his feelings.

Because after all this freaking time, Lake has kept my secret.

Like I kept all of his.

“August has decided that she belongs to him. That’s that. She’s not going anywhere. Unless she’s infertile, which I doubt that she is, he has brought her over to fuck a baby into her. And I’m absolutely sure that he’s been trying for a baby already,” Lake says with a scowl. “He wants to bind her to his side. Forever. If we don’t help—”

“You’ve changed your mind,” I blurt out.

And he freezes.

Like I caught him.

He swallows. “About?”

“You want to share her now. Up until a couple of hours ago, you didn’t. Why?” I ask. When I observe Mae, it’s not hard to find out why. She’s soft everywhere. She’s a beacon of light with her bright hair and glowing skin. She’s smooth everywhere and nowhere at once. She wears a scowl most of the time, which I find relatable.

“She’s hot for it. She wants to be shared. Even if she can’t admit it to herself,” Lake says on an exhale of desperation. “Why force her to live a life of escape with me when she can just stay here and—”

“Be fucked brainless by three men with raging boners for her?” I scoff.

“Four,” Lake says, gesturing at the dent in my pants. I try to shift, to hide it, but Lake knows. He always knows.

“No,” I say. My throat is dry.

“Just tell her,” Lake suggests. “She wants us. All of us. You, too.”

Lake wants me to make a move, but I could never. It’s not in my nature. “She wouldn’t understand.”

“Give her some credit. She found out we’re her family and hasn’t run for the hills yet. Instead, she stayed, and she kept

letting us fuck—”

“There’s no need to be crass about it,” I say, cringing. “I’m fine right here. You should go. Enjoy your party. I’ll take her back home. Maybe Uncle Isaac will know what to do with her when she wakes up.”

Lake’s lips move. He wants to say something, but in the end, he lets out an exasperated breath.

After I call for a cab, I fix Mae’s clothes. Lake studies me as my hands move over the girl’s body, and I fear I’ll do something to enrage him. He hasn’t kicked me out since she’s been around, and for that, I deeply appreciate her.

I carry Mae out of the party while Lake’s new friends gawk at me. I feel uncomfortable, to say the least, but I’ve stopped sweating. After watching Mae and Lake, I’m curious.

More than curious.

My body reacts in a way that I don’t understand.

This is not me.

In the middle of the night, the car arrives.

I lay Mae down in the back of the cab, leaving a tiny bit of space for me. Her comfort is my priority now. I caress her ankles to distract myself. I’d fondle her somewhere higher if I were them, August, Lake, or even Isaac. My body wants to explore hers, and I can’t stand it.

I don’t do this. I don’t want. I don’t need anyone.

Mae softens Lake, and people who can do that... Well, they’re special. I want her to stay.

I don’t want her to have their baby.

Do you want her to have yours? No. No. No. Never.

“Such a beautiful little cock you’ve got there, my cute boy. Here, let me caress it for you... See, that’s how your body responds when a real woman touches you. So good for me. Mommy loves her dear boy. Come, feed Mommy your cute cock....”

“Hey! Hey, mister!” the cab driver yells at me. I open my eyes, and I don’t see anything. It’s dark outside, and the cab doesn’t have a lot of lighting.

Once my eyes refocus, I see Mae on the side of the road. Where Mae’s feet touched my lap before, I now feel doomed. Mae’s gone, and her feet are planted on the ground next to the cab. She’s outside while I still sit inside, unmoving and cold. She sways in the ruthless wind, shivering. She rubs her arms to heat herself up.

Quickly, I hand the driver two purple euro bills.

I despise ordering cars. I have my own, thank you very much. But with Lake around, you can’t make any plans. He picks and chooses what he does next on the spot.

Rubbing my head, I exit the car and pray for this headache to disappear.

Out of the blue, Mae begs, “Can you help me, please?”

Her eyes glisten in the wind, and I rush to her side. She crumbles against me before I pick her up, fastening her to my body with my arms. I’m not as strong as the others, but Mae’s still much smaller.

“Why are you so warm...” she mumbles as she cuddles into me. I guide us through the building’s lobby and toward the elevator. I know that August is watching from somewhere, whether it is the comfort of his Monaco home or the thick shadows of this building that he knows all too well.

I should tell Mae off. She doesn’t get to touch me since she is August’s property. That’s what he regards her as.

But I don’t tell her off.

Mae holds on to me as we climb into the elevator, and I clutch her tight in response.

“Alfie, why don’t you take from me like they do? I’m just another body to them... It seems like that’s all I’ll ever be,” she murmurs to herself, and her voice drips in self-hatred. I want to soothe her. She needs to know that they don’t just view her as a body.

Mae's a part of their past.

Her sudden addition to the family has altered our way of life. Before Mae, August would barely keep up with his family. I'd have to force-feed him information.

When I don't click the code to take us upstairs, she stares at the numbers on the wall. I can't resist the way she holds me, but at the same time, it terrifies me. It's been a long time since anyone has been this close to me.

I haven't let anyone touch me in years.

Mae has her claws on me, and she digs them in deep. It's magic I don't understand. I say, "We should go."

"Should we?" she retorts. With saddened eyes, she glimpses at the floor. "You heard what he said, didn't you? About a baby? How could they? How..."

She chokes on her breath, coughing. Tears splutter from her eyes, and I don't know what to do. I don't deal with people who cry. I haven't seen tears in a long while. A couple of years ago, August had me work with the HR department of his estate, and I had to observe them while they let people go.

That was fine.

I could deal with strangers and their pitiful tears.

"I don't want or need a baby right now. You understand me, don't you, Alfie?" she asks. One of my fingers picks up a stray tear, and I examine it. It's as clear as day, warm and gushy.

I tell her, "I do."

"Can you... I need help, Alfie. Can you take me to a clinic? How do they do it here?" she says, and instead of sobbing, she dries her tears with calculation. Her eyes turn back up. She doesn't cry, but neither does she smile. She battles what she feels inside.

Being lost.

Being thrust into the life of an unusual family.

“I’ll do my best,” I vow. If the others don’t understand, I do. I’ll help her.

I guide Mae down to my car, where she takes the passenger’s seat. I help her with her seat belt, and she gazes at me with a need in her eyes that I don’t know how to deal with.

In silence, I figure out where the nearest gynecologist is, and I call them to announce that we’re coming. Let them figure out how they will service us at this hour.

It’s late, and we’ll most likely have to wait for the doctor to come in. But Mae’s papers haven’t fully cleared yet, so I must bribe people. It’ll give me enough time. I check my wallet for the purple bills. I’ve got enough to motivate a prolifer to do what we’re about to do.

When I turn the engine on to drive, Mae’s hand cups mine on the gear shifter.

The car bounces through the garage. Once we’re outside, I put my foot down on the pedal. We can’t afford to lose time. Mae’s fingers rub the top of my hand, and it tickles me in places that I’ve never felt tickled before.

“Thank you,” she says.

But we haven’t arrived yet.

No, we haven’t.

Indeed, we never do.

Because two blocks away from our building, on a quiet street that I take to save us time, a car crashes into us.

A man walks out of it with a gun in his hand and points it at us. More specifically, on Salomae Zito.

Chapter 22

August

WHEN ALFIE LEADS MAE DOWN TO HIS CAR, I BECOME AWARE of something being off.

The traitor.

Alfie doesn't have permission to be alone with Mae right now. He's supposed to usher her back and forth, but he doesn't get to spend a minute alone with her. Now, he's been gone for ten, and I can't find it in me to calm down.

That's it. I've had enough.

I'm going to kill him.

"Isaac," I yell, not giving a fuck that he'll find me in his penthouse uninvited. "Where the fuck are you, Dad?"

Stomping through the penthouse, I call out my father's name. I grip my phone so hard that the screen almost breaks. Perhaps it should. It did *not* show me what I wanted to see.

When Dad doesn't respond, I shove the door open to his bedroom, and I find him on his beloved balcony, smoking as always. I march toward him, and I'm this close to letting my frustrations out on the window.

I don't because I'll have to pay for it.

And these windows are pricy pieces of shit.

"I'm going to kill him," I tell my father, and then I remember that he doesn't know. He wasn't there when it happened. Well. I can't take the statement back now, can I?

“Kill who, son? Did Henry fuck you over? He’s known to be a lousy—”

“No!” I respond. Like an insolent child, my heart beats out of my chest with... Worry. I don’t trust Alfie on his own with my property. Mae is... Lake can protect her. He’s got experience in self-preservation. My father? He wanted to become what I ended up becoming. He’s strong enough to protect her should harm come our way.

But Alfie?

He’s sheltered and clueless.

If somebody shoots at his car, the bullets will go through, and they’ll hit their target.

“What’s going on?” Isaac asks, killing his cig for me. He stands up from his wooden chair and rises to his full height. I’m a couple of inches taller than him, but right now, I feel small.

Mae needs to be safe.

That’s my priority.

I can forget about everything else for the moment.

Mae... I need to find her.

“Alfie took Mae. I’m going to kill him,” I say, and I don’t regret it this time. We vowed that nobody would ever find out, but right now, I don’t give a shit.

“Where did he take her, son? They were out in Italy a couple of hours ago. Alfie sent me a message earlier. They went to a party uphill,” my father explains, but I don’t listen to him. I can’t read lips, but I wish I did.

Whatever Mae said to Alfie, it made him take her away.

And that look in his eyes while he guided her to his car?

It was filled with fear.

He’s scared of what I’ll do when I find him. Because I’ll find him. He can’t hide from me. I’ll find him, and I’ll kill him. I don’t care about the ties that bind him to this family.

Not anymore.

“They were downstairs. Without Lake. And... He took her away. It’s been... Twenty minutes now. Where are they?” I blurt out. Before Mae, I didn’t have much to care about. Ever since I discovered she’s someone I need to care about, I haven’t been able to let go of the pressure inside me.

It’s a weight on my chest that I can’t get rid of, caring about this girl.

I could let her go, but then, I’d drown. We have so many lost years to make up for.

Salomae Zito may despise me for relocating her life, but she’ll thank me once she’s settled in.

“Let’s call them, shall we?” Dad suggests, and he plants an arm on my shoulder. It’s a sign for me to simmer, but instead, fury cooks inside of me, boiling hot.

Dad takes out his phone and scrolls through his messages. I detect a name that I know in his contacts. *xMoonPrincessx*.

“It’s you?” I ask.

“What?” Dad replies, not giving me much attention. He clicks on Alfie’s chat with him, and he goes to press the call button.

“You’ve been talking to Mae? You’re Rampage377?” I ask him. I would add this information to the list of shit I despise about my father, but I’ve got more demanding issues right now.

“How do you know about—”

“I had her phone bugged a year ago when Stevie died,” I tell him, and his eyes widen. “She exchanged messages with a lot of anonymous men, so I never looked you up specifically. Did you know it was her?”

“Yes, I did,” Dad replies. “Like you have your sources, I have mine.”

Dad finally calls Alfie, and we wait for him to pick up.

When he doesn't, and my phone begins to ring, I pick up, and I'm ready to scream down the line.

I manage to get a hold of myself when I hear Marcus Kovač's voice. "Mr. Scott? I'm here with Mae's dad, and we really don't know what we should do. It's really late. Are you bringing Mae over sometime soon? Her father... He really wants to meet her. Perhaps we should go to sleep, and you bring her over for breakfast tomorrow?"

My dad hears every word that tiny prick utters, and unfortunately, he disapproves of my decision to have another family reunion.

"What did you do?" Isaac asks through grinding teeth.

"There's been a complication on my end," I tell Marcus. I use my soft voice to make people warm up to me. I don't need Marcus to discover things that should remain hidden. "I'll call you in the morning."

When I hang up, I receive a message from Noémie.

NOÉMIE:

Should I cancel the car

AUGUST:

Yes. Keep an eye on Marcus and Mae's dad. Make sure they don't leave the hotel

NOÉMIE

Of course, sir

THE PHONE SLIPS FROM MY HAND WHEN MY FATHER CATCHES me by surprise by putting his hands on me. He goes for the jugular, both of his hands wrapped around my neck like he wants to choke me.

It wouldn't be the first time a parent in our family harmed their offspring.

“You flew that piece of shit in? Her father?” Isaac asks, a little too loudly for my taste. We wouldn't want the cops to storm the building on a noise complaint, would we?

“I did. I'm going to ask him for permission to marry his daughter,” I tell my dad.

“Marry. His. Daughter? Have you lost your mind?” Isaac's eyes glisten in the dark, and the hold on my neck tightens. I don't fight him off. I could use the evidence on my skin to frame my father if needed.

“She'll need an official title if she stays. She'll become mine on paper, and if I'm kind enough, I'll share her with you, Dad. Now let me go. We must find her before Alfie sends her packing,” I tell my father, and he drops his hands.

Isaac curses under his breath, but he follows me back inside the penthouse. We find Lake in my father's bedroom with crumpled clothes and a pale face. He reeks of alcohol and weed, swaying where he stands.

“Where's Mae?” Lake asks, scratching the back of his head.

“That's the question of the hour.”

Chapter 23

Mae

MR. SCOTT? I'M HERE WITH MAE'S DAD, AND WE REALLY DON'T know what we should do. It's really late. Are you bringing Mae over sometime soon? Her father... He really wants to meet her. Perhaps we should go to sleep, and you bring her over for breakfast tomorrow?

I gnaw on my lip and taste the blood on my tongue.

Alfie's wide awake, but he doesn't communicate. His clothes are smeared with blood and dirt while the buttons of his shirt are undone, and his suit jacket is torn. Marcus tore it when he dragged Alfie out of the car at gunpoint.

Alfie collapsed on the floor of this nasty hotel room with mold growing on the walls, and he hasn't moved since. Marcus didn't bother fastening his hands and feet like he did mine.

With his phone in hand, Marcus gawks at me. August just hung up on him.

"Why did you bring us here?" I ask. There's no point in crying. My face is dry, although my eyeballs hurt. Blood drips from my forehead. Drop after drop, my blood dries on the clothes I wear. Lake's clothes.

On Marcus's phone call with August, I heard Isaac. He doesn't know what's going on either. Neither does Alfie. That's what I tell myself. The accident? It was *just* an accident. He was going to help me.

This isn't an elaborate plan to break my heart again.

“I heard you’ve been kidnapped,” Marcus announces with his chest puffed out. From where he stands, he appears much bigger than he is. His stiff posture, the pride he exerts... It makes me huff.

“You did? How funny,” I sneer. I gesture at the disgusting ropes that bind my wrists to my feet. They dig into my skin, cutting off the blood flow. “Took you long enough to come and get me.”

“I didn’t come here to rescue you,” Marcus says. His laser-focused gaze splinters me. It’s the satisfaction in his eyes that I can’t stand. “I came here solely because August Scott invited me. On the plane, I learned he extended the invitation to your father. It was a last-minute addition, but he’s such a lovely man. You’ve got two twin sisters, did you know? They’re about to graduate high school early. They’re geniuses! Seriously, you should take a page from their book.”

I flinch at his words. He’s the only one who’s known me for years, and he takes advantage of everything he knows about me to hurt me.

My father abandoned us to start anew. I don’t want to see him. I don’t want to know about his new life. He never contacted me, so I didn’t bother holding on to the hope of a reconciliation.

I swallow hard, and my insides tremor, but I don’t cry. I study the phone in Marcus’s hand instead. It may be our only way out of here.

“August Scott wanted to surprise you with your best friend. Apparently, he’s your fiancé now? Good for you, spreading your legs for an ex-athlete. That means you’re rich now. Is that why they took you away from my party that time and I never heard from you again? I was offended,” Marcus says. He always enjoyed hearing himself speak, and with my lack of reaction to his monologue, he goes on.

“What did you do to me at the party?” I ask him, having had enough.

“What do you mean?” he asks as he sits on the bed.

“You drugged me. You wanted to have your way with me,” I remind him. The details aren’t there. I see Marcus’s face in my dreams, hovering above me. But I don’t remember anything else that tells me something happened that day. Marcus stopped contacting me. It doesn’t hurt anymore. But I want to know why.

“I don’t recall. We were having a good time, and some random men came and picked you up,” Marcus deflects. The bed’s sheets are yellow, not because they were made that way, but because whoever cleaned up here didn’t do a good job. The bed reeks of rotten eggs and piss, and I hope that we won’t be the ones to sleep on it.

Alfie and I are more comfortable on the floor. I’d ask Alfie, but he doesn’t reply right now. He’s in shock.

“Why are you lying?” I ask. “You took me to your room, Marcus. They dragged me out of your room while you called me your girlfriend. Which I never was.”

“That’s right. Why would you be in my room while we’re having a party downstairs when you’re not my girlfriend, silly?” Marcus says, and I want to smack the smirk off his face.

“You never called or asked what happened,” I hiss. The blood on my skin smells like death. “I looked through the messages on my phone.”

“I didn’t? It must have slipped my mind. Anyway. I’m not here to rescue you. I don’t even understand what’s going on, not really. What’s up with him?” he gestures at Alfie with a grin on his face like he finds Alfie’s pain ridiculous.

“What’s up with *you*? Why did you bring us here, Marcus?” I ask, not appreciative of how he scrutinizes Alfie. He may be peculiar, but he’s a good guy. He shouldn’t be here. Not when it’s me that Marcus wants.

Right on time, the door behind him opens, shining bright light from the hotel’s corridor into the dark and dusty hotel room. I cover my eyes because it’s too bright.

“You can go now, dear,” Noémie says to Marcus. I rub my eyes open to find her patting him on the back. My gasp diverts their attention to me. “I see you did your job well. You can go back to Monaco now. Your hotel room’s waiting. Her father’s still unconscious in his suite.”

Click. Clack. Noémie walks over to Marcus’s side, and her red dress almost glows in the night.

“What do you intend to do with them?” Marcus asks Noémie. He gazes at her with big eyes filled with wonder. His curiosity surveys her entire body, from her magnificent hair down to the pointy heels covering her feet. In between, he stops to gawk at her chest for a little too long.

Noémie revels in his attention, puffing out her assets for Marcus.

“Oh, nothing you should worry about, dear. Thank you for your cooperation. I’ll wire the money once I’m done here, okay? Go now,” Noémie says, her voice drenched in a sultry undertone. She hushes him away, but Marcus doesn’t move an inch. He didn’t do it for the cash Noémie promised. He did it because he saw her and decided to fancy her.

“I want to stay and help you,” Marcus suggests. He begs to remain, but it’s not because he wants to *help*. There’s something sinister at play here.

“Then you’re not getting paid, I’m afraid. This goes beyond our little deal,” Noémie says, tilting her head to the side. She gives Marcus a good view of the luscious flesh on the column of her neck. It’s an explicit invite. *Come take a bite, fool.* “I don’t do this for free.”

“Do what for free?” Marcus asks, but Noémie has already moved on from him. Her slender arms reach behind her, finding the zipper of her red dress. She takes it off without help, revealing her bare breasts and a thong made from almost nothing.

Marcus’s audible shock fills the room. He’s enamored by older women. That boner sticking out of his pants? That’s enough proof.

Noémie flips her hair off her shoulder and turns around, away from me.

Just as I expect her to stroll toward me and force her tits in my face, she kneels down by Alfie's side and cups the side of his jaw. Noémie asks Marcus, "Did you give him anything? He looks drugged."

Marcus shakes his head. "N-No... I only waved around with the gun."

The said gun is on the bed, and Noémie glimpses at it briefly. "It's unloaded?"

"Yes? I didn't put anything in it. I don't even know how to use it," Marcus explains, and luckily, it's the truth. His parents aren't the type to go hunting with their son. They're more the golf and club variety of a family. Besides, Marcus spent most of his life with his nose stuck inside a book. He didn't have any patience left for guns.

Or manners.

"Can you hand me the gun, dear? Just to be safe," Noémie asks of Marcus, and like the lapdog he is for her, he does as told. Because he's insufferable, he stares at her tits while he hands her the gun. She inspects the weapon and discards it on the floor when she finds it all is well.

"You did well with Mae, but you brought another hostage along. I'm forced to improvise now," Noémie explains with an exasperated sigh. "Doesn't it suck when things get out of hand, Alfie?"

Alfie doesn't stir when Noémie caresses his shoulders. Bile rises in my throat at the sight of Noémie touching him. For some reason, my mind goes to dark places.

"I know you three have this elaborate secret holding you together, but you should know that I found you out," Noémie reveals. She sits on her heels, the naked globes of her ass pointing in my direction. I can't see her face, but I can envision her satisfaction.

What secret is she referring to?

“August is a horrendous sleeper, dear, so it’s not your fault that he mumbled the truth to me while he was in and out of nightmares,” Noémie says. Alfie’s eyes twitch, and tears prick at them. “I know that their mom took you first, dear. Lake was jealous, so he stepped in and stole your place as Mommy’s favorite boy.”

Numbness cloaks me as Alfie awakens. His entire body shakes at Noémie’s filthy words.

“You can be my favorite boy now. I’ll show you,” Noémie says to Alfie, and I want to strangle her. Alfie’s eyes are empty. He’s in a place where we can’t reach him, but he can hear us. This is bad. This changes everything. Isaac’s wife also abused Alfie? What the heck?

With a whip of her head in Marcus’s direction, she instructs him, “Can you come and hold him down for me, dear? He may not want to comply right away. Little Alfie doesn’t always know what’s good for him.”

“Don’t hurt him,” I call out. I tug at the ropes, but they don’t budge. “Take me. You can do whatever you want. Just do it to me!”

“Don’t worry, bitch. I will. It’s your turn soon,” Noémie promises. She doesn’t bother to look at me. She’s confident, perhaps even arrogant. “We must ensure that this good boy here keeps quiet.”

“What are you going to do to him?! Leave him alone!” I cry. Neither Marcus nor Noémie pay attention, so I’m free to rub my wrists. I need to find a way out of these nasty ropes that have turned dark from my head wound’s blood.

When Noémie reaches for Alfie’s zipper, I feel his pain. He begins to fight, but his fear makes him weak. Marcus isn’t that much bigger than Alfie in height or weight. If Alfie were to push a little harder, he could get away from Marcus.

But could he get past Noémie?

She holds the keys here.

Keys.

They left the door unlocked. It's a hotel room. If I scream... I do it. Noémie frees Alfie's flaccid cock, and I scream for him. I cry out until my throat itches.

"Shut her up, dear," Noémie says to Marcus. She removes her hands from Alfie's flesh and peels off her thong. "Here, take that."

I scream until Marcus comes for me. On his way to where I'm bound from head to toe, he sniffs the thong like a creep. When Noémie clears her throat, he launches forward and sticks his sticky fingers inside my mouth. I bite down, and he yelps out in pain. He removes his fingers, sucking on them.

Then, he tries again, and this time, he manages to stick the thong inside. I bite down again, and he gives me a slap across the cheek. He can't silence me. The thong doesn't shut me up because there isn't a lot of fabric to it. It muffles my voice. That's all.

"Marcus, dear, what's happening back there?" Noémie asks. She's back to rubbing Alfie. I have never seen the man naked before, and if that's how he reacts, I don't want it. His eyes are dead. His face is paler than I've ever seen, and I can taste vomit in the air.

Noémie forces a reaction out of an unwilling Alfie. He's hard because Noémie pressures him to be. That's how his body responds. He doesn't want it. He breathes hard like he's forgotten how to do it.

I continue to make more noise. Somebody is bound to hear me.

Before Marcus returns to Noémie, he removes his pants and his briefs. Something about his penis makes me want to go gag, but I'm too busy losing my voice with a thong in my mouth to care.

Marcus stuffs my mouth with his briefs. It takes me a moment to realize what just happened. It's enough time for Marcus to find his place next to Alfie, to hold him down while Noémie prepares to take him into her mouth.

I know what that feels like.

Alfie doesn't deserve this.

That's what does it for me. I throw up inside of my mouth, almost choking on my vomit. Nobody cares. I'm quiet now, so they're happy.

Marcus jerks himself off. He uses one of Alfie's reluctant hands to fist his filthy penis.

Thankfully, I had a lot to eat today. Lake... He fed me well. He took me everywhere, letting me have a taste of everything I desired. Therefore, my vomit generates enough power to push out the disgusting underwear stuck in my mouth.

Noémie manages to take Alfie into her mouth, and I watch him squirm uncomfortably. His shoulders sag, his spirit broken. If I let this continue, who knows what she'll do to Alfie.

This is all my fault.

I wanted to get rid of... My bound wrists caress my belly. Was it worth it? I'm not so sure anymore.

Lying down on the floor, I kick at the ropes on my feet. Then, I realize how Marcus tied me up to a bedside table. One that's mobile. With every ounce of will I can produce, I drag myself across the vomit on the floor.

I continue to be bound but snake my way to Noémie's naked behind. I throw my body down against hers, slamming her to the ground. Instantly, Marcus's arms come up behind me, trying to tear me away from Noémie. He tries to rub his cock on me, but I wiggle myself out of his perversions.

"Marcus! Get my things!" Noémie orders my former friend. Stupidly, I focus on shoving my elbow down her neck so I don't bother with Marcus. I let him get off me, and I only feel him there again when there's something pointy sticking into my skin.

It's not his pathetic penis.

It's a knife.

“Mae! Watch out!” Alfie warns me, and I slam myself into Noémie again, budding heads with her. My blood oozes out of me, and I can’t fight the dizziness I feel for much longer. I’m losing grip on reality when I try to choke Noémie. She reaches for the knife Marcus carries, and she cackles to herself.

“Where were you two headed at this hour?” Noémie asks, and she points the knife at me, challenging me to charge for her once more.

I don’t have a death wish, so I take a step back, landing on Marcus’s penis. Disgusting. He should put it away.

“That’s none of your business, *bitch*,” I retort.

“I’m making it my business. August flew your father in to tell him that you’re going to be his wife. That you’re carrying his child. Is that true?” Noémie asks. She dashes for me, and she digs the knife across my neck. I’m afraid to breathe. I’m afraid to move. I shiver, fully aware of the sharpness jabbing my skin.

“I have no idea what you’re talking about. I don’t know if I’m pregnant,” I lie as best as I can. The truth is that I truly don’t know. Alfie and I were about to find out for ourselves. It doesn’t take too much, though. August did what he did to me without bothering to protect me with a condom. I don’t take any type of pills.

The chances are very high.

But I’m not about to reveal that.

“We can’t risk it being true. So I’m going to cut it out of you,” Noémie claims, and I freeze. That’s what the knife is for.

Marcus steps in, “I don’t suggest you perform—”

“Quite frankly, dear, I don’t care if she dies while I cut that baby out of her. She can’t stay with August. She...” Noémie scowls at me. “She mellows August. She takes him away from me. Ever since she entered our lives, August has been so busy with her that he’s forgotten everything else. All that matters now is his dick and her pussy! He’s my boss. He can’t... He can’t be taken away from me!”

“Calm down,” Marcus suggests, but Noémie’s face blushes pink. Her pupils flare, and she cuts Marcus’s arm open instead of stabbing me. Deep enough for blood to gush out like a waterfall. He gasps as he falls to the floor. The wheels in his head spin. He can save himself. I’m sure. Such a brilliant man, he’ll find his way.

“It’s just us two now, isn’t it? Woman to woman. What do you have that I don’t, bitch?” she rages, and nervous laughter bubbles inside me. Briefly, I glimpse at Alfie. Shellshocked, he stares back at me.

It’s my responsibility to get us out of here.

Risking it all, I pounce on her with my weight. It’s not much, but she falls back on the nasty bed. The knife drops to the floor, and it’s up to one of us to snatch it. My bound wrists and ankles don’t help, but I sneak past her to grab the knife.

To my utter surprise, Alfie rises from the floor, and he grabs at Noémie’s hair to hold her steady. She kicks her heels into his legs, but he doesn’t budge. He doesn’t feel anything. I need to get him out of here before he breaks down some more and loses himself entirely.

I cut the rope from my wrists and ankles.

But then, I hesitate.

The look in Alfie’s eyes causes the delay. What do we do? How do we explain what happened here? Noémie cut Marcus somewhere that makes him lose a lot of blood too fast. He’s bleeding out. He may be dead soon, and we’re in this room with him.

Guilty by association.

Or simply guilty.

I stare down at the knife and then study Marcus’s wound.

“No. Don’t do it,” Alfie pleads. He drags Noémie away from me, but it’s nothing to me. Two steps and I reach them again. With the knife in hand and dots in my vision, I reach for Noémie. She wrestles Alfie, but his hold is strong. He doesn’t let her get away.

I try Noémie's belly, but the knife doesn't push through.
Bones? It may just be the blood I've lost.

"We can forget this ever happened. I'll quit. I'll leave you alone. Let me go," Noémie finally gives in, changing her tune.

But it's too late. I point at her neck, and I slice.

While she bleeds out, I lose control of my body.

Chapter 24

Mae

I OPEN MY EYES TO A ROOM I DON'T KNOW.

The smell of coffee invades my nostrils. I stretch my arms, and I discover a bedframe. Good. That's... good. Thick sheets that warm me cover my body, and I shift to find the window that illuminates the room.

That's where I detect Alfie in a plain tee and sweats, the most comfortable outfit I've ever encountered gracing his body. He sits on the edge of the bed with his back turned to me. I reach out to touch him, but I retract myself, Noémie's actions flickering in my mind.

"Good morning," Alfie says. His voice pierces through the ringing in my ears. He lifts a cup of coffee to his lips and gulps down a generous portion of the drink. It must taste better than the last time I encountered him with a coffee.

"Hey." I slide closer to him, but not enough to touch. "What happened?"

Alfie sets aside the cup of coffee. "We were involved in a car accident. We survived."

"No?" I croak.

"Yes, Mae," he insists.

"Don't leave me in the dark. Please," I beg. "Are we going to be arrested—"

"It's been handled," Alfie interrupts me with a tone that urges me not to question him. He turns, and in the dimmed morning light, his face looks like a broken canvas. Black and

blue, his eyes and lips are swollen. Dried blood cakes parts of his crooked nose.

I clutch at the sheets that cover me. I want to hide.

“Who did this to you?” I ask with a shaky breath.

“Who do you think?” Alfie replies. Instead of hostility, it’s as if he’s given up. “I handed in my two weeks’ notice, though. I’m out of a job. I paid for your stay at the hospital because you weren’t insured. I’ll change that immediately. I must—”

“Hospital?” I chew on the word, and that’s when I remember. I’ve been in and out of it for days, never too strong to stay awake long enough to get an explanation. The hospital was too bright for me, so I kept my eyes shut most of the time. I couldn’t hear anything but a numbed ringing in my ears. “But I’m okay, aren’t I?”

“You’re fine now. Both of you,” Alfie says, and my body tenses. “It’s early, but it’s there.”

“Oh,” I blurt out. Suddenly, my health becomes a subject I’d rather avoid. “But your job? Alfie, you loved it, didn’t you? How are you going to live—”

“I’ve got enough to take care of an entire family and more if I must. Don’t worry about me,” Alfie says, but I don’t know if I believe him. He assisted August, didn’t he? He never had much, not to my knowledge. “Do you still want to visit a doctor for your situation?”

If we both survived this, then perhaps it’s meant to be. “I don’t... I don’t think so. It’s not in the cards for us. I-I wouldn’t survive more loss right now.”

Alfie nods, gazing up at the roof. He makes plans in that busy head of his. He makes plans that involve me. He reaches out to touch the hand that clutches at the sheets. “Do you want to stay with me?”

“Who?” I swallow. “Me? With you?”

Alfie nods, and the confidence he displayed by touching me and asking that question fades. He pales.

“Are you sure you want me here?” I ask. Where are we anyway? The bedroom resembles Lake’s, but they told me Alfie lived in a small studio below them. “I’ll bring you tons of trouble in a couple of months.”

“I kind of want the trouble,” he admits before he can stop himself.

“You do?” My throat dries. “But we aren’t your responsibility.”

“Do you want to go with August? You can. He’s upstairs with the others, waiting for you. They never left your side at the hospital. I... I didn’t let them come into the room because I didn’t trust them, but I couldn’t keep them away entirely,” Alfie explains, scratching the back of his head.

“No,” I blurt out. “What are we going to do, Alfie?”

“We’ll live.”

“Without them?” I want to tend to his wounds, but I won’t touch him until he asks for it.

“Yes.”

“Will they accept that?”

“They must if that’s what you want,” Alfie declares. “From now on, we do what you want. We can go back home if you wish.”

Home? I don’t have a home. I have a grave that I visit. It’s the only thing keeping me rooted, that gravestone and the words on it. *Loving mother*. Other than that, I don’t have a home. Never had one.

“Can we make a home here?” I ask.

“We can.” He stands and treads around the bed to come to my side. With a helping hand, I sit up. My two feet wobble as I try to step away from the bed. I wrap my arm around Alfie’s arm, and we leave his bedroom.

He shows me his home and tells me that we’ll make a room for the little one next door to his bedroom. To my

surprise, this is not a studio. This is the exact same size as Isaac's home above us.

Before I can ask where he found the money to finance a place like this, he takes me to the kitchen, where he reveals numerous breakfast plates. "You did that?"

"For you," he says, and his cheeks blush under the swollen bruises.

"I don't like that he hit you," I say as I take a seat by the charming dining table and then cover my mouth.

"I don't like it either. He wanted to kill me. Isaac barely managed to get him off me," Alfie explains. He takes a loaf of bread and breaks it into little pieces. There's a bread knife on the counter, but he doesn't touch it.

"But you... You only tried to help me," I utter. He hands me a piece of bread, and I take it. "She hurt you... Alfie, I'm sorry."

"I'm sorry that she almost stabbed you with that knife. I'll make sure that doesn't happen again. I promise. They're *gone* now. It's handled. August... He paid the right people. He made sure it got swept under the rug. The authorities... They don't know what happened. I promise you. We'll be fine," Alfie tells me before he can hold himself back.

"I'm sorry that you know now. This secret burdens everyone involved," Alfie adds in the end. He picks up a knife and begins buttering the bread.

"Your truth isn't a burden," I tell him, and with that, I begin my breakfast. It's been too long since somebody cared enough to cook me breakfast, so I relish being cherished for the day.

At the end of our breakfast, I feel full. When I try to help Alfie clean up, he refuses my help. I can't stand watching his injured face flinch as he sorts everything back into its place in the fridge. August must have hurt other parts of his body as well.

Giving up after Alfie continuously refuses my help, I turn my back on him. Taking a nap doesn't sound too bad right

now.

“You can leave if you want to,” Alfie says. “I’d understand.”

“Where would I go, huh?” I take a deep breath. “Can you please tell August to tell my dad that he can fuck right back off? I don’t want to meet him,” I say, and I don’t wait for a response.

I march into his bedroom. Alfie has invited me to stay with him, but I’m not so sure that he knows what he’s done.

Maybe one day, he’ll grow tired of me and kick me out.

Let’s hope I don’t live to see that day.

I cuddle into Alfie’s sheets with a jittery arm across my belly. My thoughts begin to drift, and my eyes flutter shut when a phone vibrates somewhere in the room. Annoyed at the disturbing sound that makes my ears ring, I search for it.

Tucked in the drawer of my bedside table, I find my new phone. The screen announces numerous notifications from August and Lake.

And then, there’s my social media.

Rampage377 continues to reach out for contact. I open the chat.

xMOONPRINCESSX:

Please stop contacting me

I’m pregnant now and I want to focus on that

IT’S NOT A COMPLETE LIE, BUT IT ISN’T THE ENTIRE TRUTH either, but I still write the following:

xMOONPRINCESSX:

I'm in love with another man. It doesn't feel right to talk to you. Please, if you'd be so kind, delete my pictures from your phone. Thanks

THAT LAST PART... I CAN GUARANTEE THAT HE WOULD NEVER delete shit. But at least I tried. I delete my naughty social media channels because it will never work for me. I'm not strong enough to do sex work. It takes a certain person to withstand everything these pieces of shit throw at you, and I admit I'm unfit for the job. I got paid twice in my short career and fell too deep far too soon.

Now, I can finally start anew.

Chapter 25

Alfie

Four Months Later

I'M OBSESSED WITH SALOMAE ZITO.

She sits across from me with a seductive smirk on her face. It shouldn't work on me. August was surrounded by what society considers attractive women, and they threw themselves at anyone in his vicinity. But I never even spared them a glance.

It's different with Mae.

The old Alfie would consider her a roommate, another parasite disturbing my then-peaceful life.

It's a new day, and I'm surprised at how not only I've invited Mae into my life, but I've also accepted her. She's not a parasite.

Mae makes me smile. I'm getting used to it.

She urges me to feel. When she's excited, I join her excitement. Lately, since her morning sickness left us alone, she's been happier than ever.

Being happy.

In the past, I never stopped to consider my feelings. It was all about my job, pleasing August. I lived my life according to my friends' needs. Lake was in prison? I had to confine myself, keeping busy until I ran out of fuel to overwrite my guilty conscience. Ever since I quit and stopped looking for a new job, I've focused on Mae and her happiness.

It should bore me. I'm used to more demanding tasks in my everyday life. But with every day, I realize that none of

that ever mattered.

Plus, it helps that Mae's a complex human being that's easily maddened in her current state. It's not her fault. Every time we see Mae's doctor, she explains that her body is undergoing major changes. When she's angry, she's livid. But when she feels heard and understood, she's an angel.

It alarms how addictive her moods are.

So here I am, sitting across a pregnant woman in one of the most exclusive restaurants on the coast. She hates the food we've been served so far, but she snaps pictures of it from every angle before she shoves her plate in front of my face.

"Can we grab a pizza after this?" she asks. Her lips are fuller now. She wore make-up for our date and highlighted the plumpness of her lips with a red shade. It's an expensive lipstick we bought for her after visiting the doctor earlier this week.

"Of course," I tell her, and I quickly stuff my mouth with the tiny green fish paste on Mae's plate. She chuckles at my embarrassment. This place is so fancy; they should have a special menu for pregnant women with simple tastes. Mae took one look at the green dish that's made of fish, and she gagged.

"You look so good in pictures, and you're not even trying. How do you do it, Alfie?" she asks, snapping more pictures. She doesn't post them anywhere, not to my knowledge. She assembles albums on her phone and shows me the images every night before bed.

"I must be a natural," I respond, and she bites her lip, leaning forward with her body. I wish we didn't have a table separating us, but then again, what would I do? I've mastered her smiles, but her body... It's not mine to play with. I don't even know how to approach the need we both feel.

Since Mae's morning sickness begun to fade, she yields more to my embrace when we sleep. Her hands find my arms more often. Sometimes, when we watch something atrocious

that she picked out on television, her fingers drift across my face or thread through my hair.

In the mornings, I wake up with Mae on my mind, and she knows it. She rubs herself on me before she's fully awake, making those tiny noises that I can't forget.

Once she's fully conscious, she jumps like I've poisoned her.

Mae knows why I can't claim her like August, for example. Or Lake. Isaac. They *fucked* her, branded her. One of them impregnated her. I can't go about these things like they did.

I've never invited a woman or... anyone else into my bed.

Noémie forcefully giving me a blowjob was the first time a mouth had gone anywhere near me since Morgan Scott...

"Alfie? Are you okay?" Mae shoves her chair back and dashes over to my side of the table. "Hey. You're okay. I'm with you, do you hear me?"

"I'm okay," I tell her, but my voice cracks.

"Did my mom know?" she asks out of the blue.

I shake my head. "No, she didn't. She knew what Isaac and the court were aware of at the time, which is already disturbing enough. That Lake was the victim and... the murderer. In self-defense."

"Is that the truth?" she insists.

"Yes, it is. Nobody knew but us for a long time."

She bends her head, staring at the distance between us.

It's strange sharing this intimate secret with Mae. August was the only one aware of what had transpired for so long. When Lake returned, I fought so hard not to crumble. I sought out his familiarity, but he pushed me away. He almost broke me with how he treated me.

Our friendship had been tested once upon a time, and he took my side.

As Noémie explained it so carelessly, Lake took my place. He sacrificed himself so that I wouldn't continue to suffer. Morgan Scott... She took everything from me when I was too young to understand what was going on.

August ended up murdering his own mother to save his brother and me. When he wanted to go to jail for us as well, Lake intervened. August had a career ahead of him and so much promise. It would be devastating to waste his talent.

I knew how to treat numbers. I still do.

While I'm at home, *relaxing* with Mae, my money works for me. I don't have to sign another contract in my lifetime.

Lake saw what was ahead of us, and he surrendered his life for me because he was ashamed of what had gone down under his roof. When it wasn't his fault. Or August's. They were kids back then.

I was a kid. I hadn't even gone through puberty yet.

Mae takes my hand in hers and rubs the inside with her thumb. I don't want her to stand awkwardly next to our table, so I pull her over my lap. Her audible gasp turns heads, but she chuckles it off. "That's quite a naughty move, Alfie. Are you sure you can handle me on your lap?"

"I can handle you sleeping in our bed with nothing but the sheets covering you. I can take anything you throw at me," I tell her. My body goes still.

"Don't challenge me. I'll walk around naked until you decide you can't take it anymore," she teases me. She snuggles her head in the crook of my neck while she snakes her arm below my suit jacket to hug me closer.

"Can't take what anymore?"

"Alfie. You're going to kill me," she blurts out, and her body shakes with laughter. "That's what I'll do. No more clothes."

"Fine. Fewer expenses on my end," I tell her, grinning from ear to ear.

"Are we broke yet?" she jokingly asks.

I shake my head. “We’re decades away from being broke.”

“Good. That’s good.” Absentmindedly, she rubs her belly. Her anatomy is fascinating to study. As the baby grows, so does every other part of her body. Her skin glows now. Her hair has gone a shade darker without ever being taken care of at a hair salon. She doesn’t appreciate other people touching her head, and I can relate.

In addition to the curve of her belly, her breasts grow daily. Every day, I see them. It’s a matter of when and where, but I see them. Sometimes, they’re soft and full. Other times, when she stands, they appear hard. In bed next to me, it’s like her breasts aren’t there because they flatten when she’s on her back. I never knew somebody’s body could absorb my interest as much as hers does.

She would let me touch, but she knows I’m too afraid to ask.

“You’re staring again,” Mae reminds me, and I swallow. She presses her lips to my ears.

She whispers, “We should go home. I’m getting tired.”

I pay for our meal, which ended up being my meal after all. We hold hands as we approach my car, which the valet brought to the entrance. He doesn’t expect a huge tip, but I give one anyway.

My electric blue Peugeot 208 almost didn’t survive the crash. I fixed it, and it comes out to play every now and then. Like today. I enjoy confusing people, and this valet certainly doesn’t expect a tip worth as much as the car I drive. Two purple bills. That’s how much my blue baby is worth nowadays after the crash.

That’s why there’s a brand-new car in the garage next to Isaac’s matte Bentley. It’s a big car that I’d never drive on my own. But now, I’ve got a pregnant Mae. Once she’s not pregnant anymore, we’ll need an SUV.

August helped me pick one out.

But he didn’t pay for it, despite begging me to do so. I paid for my DS 7 Crossback upfront.

“Hi, baby,” Mae says as she climbs into my Peugeot. “Did that guy treat you well? Don’t worry if he looked at you strange. You’re still the cutest car I know.”

Mae’s fingers caress the dashboard on her side of the car. She talks to my belongings, and it’s silly, but it’s also adorable.

I drive us back home, and Mae’s hand never ceases to find an excuse to touch me.

“Pizza?” she asks while I park the car next to August’s Ferrari 488 Pista Spider. Momentarily, I forget about her needs and remember that the Scotts are always here. From what I understand, August has moved in with his family to be close to us.

Lake used to go out all the time, but in the months that Mae’s lived with me, he’s on standby. He remains inside with the other men in his family. Sometimes, I could swear that I hear them fighting while making Mae’s morning tea cup.

It’s none of my business what they do.

They can camp outside my door.

I refuse to let them in.

The bruises that August left on my body when he thought that I stole his property may have healed, but we’re not on good terms anymore. I’m not sure we ever were.

Mae feels safe with me, and that’s a sentiment that I crave. It’s my word that keeps us safe. I’m not strong enough to fight the Scott family off if it comes to that. I’ve accumulated wealth, but it’s not enough to run from August. And the guilt? It would kill me to leave Lake behind. It would break me more than anything.

When Mae declared my home her new home, I made a promise to the Scott family. I’d give them brief updates and remain in Menton, but I wouldn’t force Mae to face them.

So far, my plan works out.

“I need pizza. Now. We’re starving, Alfie,” Mae pokes my side, tickling me. I kill the engine, and I remove the keys.

“Are you good to take a short walk?”

“Is there a happy ending at the end?” she asks impatiently. Her stomach growls at me, and I swiftly climb out of the car to help her. When I open her door, she charges at me with her words. “A happy ending with a huge pizza? I want three pizzas, Alfie. Three. And a coke. I’d also do a milkshake, but that would be too much. Or not? Add a milkshake, please. Will you?”

“That’s too many pizzas,” I try to explain, but she shoots daggers at me like she would kill me if she could. It takes a lot not to chuckle at her blushing face, but I know what’s good for me. Pregnant women don’t take well to being laughed at, no matter the intent. “Okay, we’ll get everything you asked for.”

I’ll eat the two pizzas she can’t stuff herself with and finish her milkshake, but who am I to tell her that it’s her brain fantasizing about a food orgy. Not her actual stomach.

When she wraps her arms around me, pulling me as close as it gets to her body with a squeal, I close my eyes and try to memorize each detail of our embrace. Gone is the smell of August and Lake from her body. She washes in my bathtub, using my products. We’ve bought her hygiene products of the feminine variety, but she insists on using my shampoo. *Alfie, your shampoo kills my dandruff. Seriously. Can we get more? And it smells so good. It reminds me of you.*

“You smell fantastic,” I tell her, digging my nose in her hair.

“I smell like you, you mean,” she says, tugging me closer.

My mouth moves before I register it. “I like you, Mae.”

I expect her to remove herself from our embrace. We don’t discuss feelings. Mostly because her heart is broken. She doesn’t say it, but she’s hurt that her father left without insisting on seeing her. She told him to fuck off, but a little effort, just a tiny step toward her, would have sufficed. They could have had a conversation. Instead, he flew back to his new family and hasn’t reached out since.

Then, there are her feelings for the men upstairs. I don't fool myself into thinking that she doesn't want them. I can't give her everything she needs, so she touches herself. She does it when she thinks I'm asleep and murmurs to herself. I hear our names leave her lips, all our names. August. Isaac. Lake. Alfie.

"I like you more," she says, but her voice drifts in the end. Like she's embarrassed to admit it.

I grab Mae's hand, and I guide us outside. After a quick phone call with a nearby touristy restaurant that gladly cooks everything Mae's American heart truly desires, we make our way to pick up our order. She gleams when we get there, eagerly offering to carry the can of coke in one hand and, with the other, her chocolate sauce-sprinkled milkshake. She slurps on that paper straw like her life depends on it, and I catch myself staring.

Again.

The restaurant owner himself hands me the pizzas. He knows about us. The family, I mean. August... He insists on making sure everyone treats his pregnant property right. She's not his anymore, and he'd do well to remember that.

Mae and I go home.

As predicted, Mae's full after one pizza and half a milkshake. We're watching something she picked, lounging and dining on the sofa. She takes one sip of the coke and dozes off, her snores too soft to be considered a nuisance. I sit there for a while, letting it sink in.

I turn the television off and begin cleaning up after us. Reluctantly, she lets me go in her sleep. Once I'm done, I carry her to the bedroom. She doesn't know, but I've been hitting the gym lately. I want to be strong for her.

"Alfie?" she asks for me in her sleep while I lay her down on our bed.

"I'm here," I confirm.

"Hmh..." She falls asleep, and soon, I take my place next to her. She makes a lot of noises at night, be it the stress, the

pain, the exhaustion. In the past, it would have disturbed me. These days, it's what helps me sleep, her presence next to me. That she holds me while she's battling those demons in her head.

Her trust means the world to me.

In the middle of the night, Mae wakes me up. She doesn't mean to, but she does. She touches herself again. She's naked, writhing her delightful body on my sheets. Throughout the night, she strips off her clothes. It's what she does. I don't understand why she must sleep naked, but I don't complain.

"Mae?" I say her name, and she stops moving. She stops breathing, too, and I can't handle that.

She blurts out, "I'm sorry."

"Don't be," I tell her. "It's okay. I know you touch yourself."

"You do?" Mae gasps. She tugs at the sheets, eager to take them with her as she attempts to disappear. I don't let her leave the room. "I'm sorry. I couldn't contain myself. I should... Leave. I'll sleep on the sofa tonight."

"No, you won't," I say.

"But aren't you uncomfortable with..." She cringes.

"I can leave if *you* want me to." Her lack of response tells me what I need to know. "I'll stay, and we can try this again."

"What would you like to do?" she asks, curling into a ball on her side. Her belly protrudes but only a little. She's bound to start showing more soon, and I can't wait.

"Can we discuss this?" I suggest in the hope that she continues to touch herself. She makes the most delicious noises when her hand snakes its way down her body.

"Okay." She clears her throat. "I feel horny." She blushes. "There, I said it. I'm horny, and I don't have an outlet. You're gorgeous, and you're sweet. You like me, Alfie. We're in our honeymoon phase, and everything's perfect. I can't stop thinking about you or..."

The others. Mae misses them but doesn't want to see them yet. I offer a meeting every week, but she refuses.

"I understand," I tell her.

"I don't think you do. I don't expect you to. Not after what you've gone through," she says, but she forgets. She talks about me and my troubles, but she dismisses hers.

"What August did—"

"Was nonconsensual, but I was an adult, and if I fought harder, I could've broken his dick." August would never allow that, but she's pregnant, and I don't want to upset her by arguing with her. She believes it was her fault and she didn't fight hard enough. That's obviously not true, and sometime in the future, I'll let her know. "You were a child. I would never compare those two. I understand that you don't experience desire like I do—"

"But I do," I reveal, and my insides tumble upside down.

She swallows. "You do?"

"I'm just...." How do I say it? "Scared."

"Of me?" Her eyes widen.

"Not you. Just... You know."

Mae struggles with the sheets, but she scoots closer. "Okay. When something scares me, I like to talk it through. Are you comfortable when I touch you?"

I give her a firm nod. "You know where to touch me."

"Would it bother you if I groped you?" she asks, and a shiver runs down my spine. My body loves her question. My cock would do right about anything for a touch.

"Should we try?" I ask. "I don't know how I'd react. I want it, but I'm scared."

"Don't be. I won't crush you. August is a prick...." She emphasizes that last part, like she knows that August is close. "But he taught me how to grab someone's cock. We can work with that, okay? I'll come closer, and I'll give a brief touch. Tell me how it feels."

I sit up on the bed with my back against the headboard. Mae doesn't lift anything but her arm. She doesn't want to overwhelm me, which I appreciate.

Now that she sleeps next to me, it gets warm at night, but I still don't take off my silk pajama set. She covers herself with the sheets for the time being. We're not naked. Not yet. We both inhale sharply when her delicate fingers reach over my crotch. Her hand lands on my cock, and she works her fingers in, trying to grip my entire length with one go.

My ears feel hot, and I go still. It's pure misery that she doesn't reach under the fabric to touch me. Her eyes focus on my cock, and while the attention makes me eager for more, I want her eyes on mine.

"Mae?" She whips her head in my direction, and she goes to remove her hand. I stop her. "Can you reach underneath?"

"Of course!" She says the words in an uncontained squeal. Her fingers eagerly dip below the waistband of my silk trousers. When she finds my skin, she freezes. "You're so warm. I forget... Never mind. It's not like I've touched a lot of men in my life. It's just you and *them*."

She playfully rolls her eyes at the ceiling and then explores my length. I can't focus on anything but her hand moving on me. It's a little dry for now, but the simple touch has me stunned. I keep looking at her to make sure that it's her.

That it isn't a dream.

"How does it feel, Alfie? What if I put my mouth on you?" she asks, and despite loving her hand on my skin, I'm not sure her mouth is what I need right now. The memory of Noémie is too fresh. Everything else is blurry.

Everything else... That's what she can do to me.

"Not today." Her face falls, and my heart breaks. August would never refuse her mouth, but I'm not August, and she's not my toy. "Can we try something else? I want to be inside of you. If you'll have me."

Mae jumps on me, straddling my lap. Her mouth finds mine, and she expresses her excitement with a kiss that I don't

want to end. Against my lips, she eventually whispers, “Are you sure? We can go slow.”

“I want to know what it’s like,” I tell her.

“Do you have condoms?” she asks, tucking a strand of her hair behind her ear. She covers a hefty portion of my body with her heat, but I don’t want her like this. It’s not that she’s heavy. She’s not. Even if she were... It’s people sitting on me. That never ended well for me, and I don’t want to panic when she takes me inside of her.

“I’m clean. I got tested then... Funny story. August took me. He was there when I got my results after I got tested this time as well. You were in the hospital still.” I clear my throat. “I’m clean.”

Another kiss follows, and I don’t know what I’ve done to deserve her affection. “If I weren’t already pregnant, I’d wish for a baby by you, Alfie. A cute awkward little baby to love. Your baby. Even if we’re not yours, not fully....” Another eye roll at the ceiling. “I want you to know that I consider you the closest thing to family I have right now. You matter to me. If you want to stop at any time, please, tell me. I won’t be offended. You deserve a good time. You deserve to be happy.”

“I’m quite happy when you kiss me,” I tell her, and she eats me up with a follow-up. Her lips take the lead in a messy union of tongues, spit, and passion. Reluctantly, I part from her lips. “Can I be inside of you already?”

“Yes!” She tucks some more of her hair behind her ear. “Please. I want you.”

“Can you lie down on your back for me? I would like to do this at my speed,” I tell her, and she eagerly climbs off my lap. She takes her position on her side of the bed, and at first, she’s shy about spreading her legs. When I reach out to touch her knee, she parts her thighs.

Mae’s big eyes keenly gaze at me. I don’t know where to look first. Her body or her eyes. “Don’t be scared. Please. I’m scared enough for the both of us.”

“You can try touching me now,” she suggests with a little tilt of her head. “I trust you.”

I trace a line up her creamy thigh to her hips. I grab them to pull her closer to me. It feels right. There should be no distance between us. Not right now. She squeals and squirms under my touch, but her hips tilt.

Mae fits me like a glove. I could line myself up and enter her, but I decide to tease us both for a little longer. Her arm tries to sneak past me to direct my cock to her pussy with her naughty fingers, but I grab them.

I pin both of her hands above her head. She breathes, “Alfie.”

“Yes?” I climb on top of her and peer down at her big eyes that flicker in lust. “Anything you wish to say?”

“Fuck me. Please?” Mae bats her long lashes at me. Most of the time, it’s a move that works for me. “Pretty please?”

“You beg so nicely,” I tell her, and she blushes for me. I kiss the rose blush on her forehead, her cheeks. Her pretty nose. She gasps when our mouths meet. “I’m a patient man, Mae. Let me have a taste of you first. I want to remember this moment.”

“I like you, Alfie,” she confesses, and I’m this close to giving her what she wants right this second. “I like you and want you to have the best time. I’ll be your good girl. I won’t be moody about this tomorrow.”

“Is that a promise?” I double-check. Pregnant women with growly stomachs can hold a mean grudge. “Will you be my good girl for the night?”

“Yes, I promise,” she says, and I grab my cock. I trail the tip down her folds. I’m leaking for her already. I stroke myself while I gather her wetness on my cock. “I promise...”

I take my hand away because I know it won’t take much to just do it, to guide myself inside her tight heat. I grab her breasts instead and let Mae roll her hips to rub her eager pussy on me.

When I twist her nipples, she bites her bottom lip. Her face contorts, and I lean down to kiss each breast. Lately, she complains about her breasts feeling more irritated than usual. “You’re too soft. So sweet for me.”

“Please,” she breathes for me. I trail more kisses down to her belly. “Alfie, I’m begging you.”

“Just one taste. One little taste,” I promise, and I sweep my nose where my cock touched her a couple of seconds ago. I inhale Mae. Her scent impels me to taste her. I’m used to her body now. We cohabit well. But this? Knowing how addictive her most intimate scent is?

It will kill me not to dive my face between her legs every hour of every single day.

Greedily, I lap her up, and her legs jerk. She almost strangles me with her thighs, and I don’t want to tell her to stop. Her naughty hands don’t remain where I put them; they reach for my head.

Mae wants my mouth on her pussy, and with how she responds to my tongue, gushing for me at every turn, I never want to leave. “I’ll never get enough of you. How... How is this possible?”

She’s at a loss for words, purring like a kitten instead of replying to me. I explore this wicked part of her, her pussy. I rub her clit with my thumb while I dive my tongue inside her. “Please... Alfie, don’t stop...”

Mae pulls at my hair, urging me to dive even deeper. How deep? I can’t breathe. That’s how consumed I am by her pussy. She’s eating me up, and I don’t want to get away from her. I’d taste her for hours if I could, but my neck isn’t that strong, and Mae’s patience is running out.

She tenses, muttering curses under her breath. “Mae?”

I can feel her body grow warmer, but I don’t know what to do. She doesn’t let me up when I want to examine what’s wrong. She shoves my face back on her pussy, and she rides my face until she comes.

This must be it.

“Mae?” I’m clueless. Lost. “Mae?”

Her breathing quickens until she reaches her momentum. She relaxes, and something inside of me wants to find out what this feels like from the inside. “What was that, Mae?”

“That made me feel good,” she says softly.

“Do you still want me inside of you?” I ask. She massages my scalp, running her fingers through my hair like she does when we watch television. “Mae?”

“Use me, Alfie. I’m all yours.” She offers herself up to me, and I don’t hesitate this time. As much as she needs me, I need her more. Unfortunately, this won’t last too long. Not this time. We can practice together for more, but I need this.

I need it fast. I need to feel her coming on my cock.

And I also want to brand her.

I’m a little late. She’s already pregnant. But if she belongs to the family, she belongs to me, too. Our future is intertwined, and until she decides to face the maker of this mess, she stays with me.

Climbing back on top of her, I find the view from up here fantastic. I line myself up to her entrance, and she rolls her eyes back when my tip reaches inside.

I need to feel her mouth on mine for this part. I bend down to kiss her, and she reaches up to meet me halfway. Against her lush lips, I whisper, “I’m sorry.”

“For what?”

I drive inside, and my breath catches. I know what this feels like. I’ve done it before. I didn’t see things the way I see them today. I struggle to breathe as I remember that the last time I was inside someone, they were on top of me. Heavy. In a dark room on a turbulent night, I watched the lights of the cars driving by flash on the ceiling. A weight sat on top of me, crushing me.

For a long time, I’ve carried that weight. I’ve suppressed my needs in fear of facing that weight again.

As I thrust into Mae, I know that things must change.

“I want to wake up inside of you. Every day,” I tell her. Her eyes are wide open. She watches me. She knows when I disappear down memory lane. “Can we do that?”

“You see her, don’t you?” she asks, and her voice breaks.

“I do, but not for long,” I reassure Mae. “You’re all I feel. All I need to see.”

I bury myself inside her, and to my *horror*, she’s as tight as August and Lake described her to be. Before I flood her with my cum, I let us find a rhythm. I move, and she meets me halfway. She won’t let me leave. Her legs trap me, urging me forward. One day, I’ll tell her how needy she is. Maybe, I’ll compare notes with the others.

Maybe, I’ll be brave enough to watch while they defile her. If she ever lets them in again...

But for now, I drink in how she cries out for me.

Chapter 26

August

One Month Later

THEY'RE FUCKING LIKE RABBITS.

I don't have any other words to describe what's happening below this fucking penthouse. My father doesn't want to acknowledge it, but I know he jerks off to her in the shower. Lake? He walks around like he doesn't care, but I know he does. He's always around. That's how he shows his affection for the girl that Alfie's stolen from us.

Alfie stole Mae, and to top it off, he knows fucks her.

Regularly.

Every day. Sometimes, more than twice a day.

She's pregnant. In addition to Alfie's half-hearted updates, Mae's doctor keeps me updated with everything that goes on with Mae's body. This is her horny stage. The discomfort is right around the corner, but for now, she's horny as fuck.

And Alfie gets to fuck it out of her while we sit up here, listening to her noises as he pounds her.

For that, and only for that, I'm getting her pregnant again, and then, I'll take her away from all of them. She'll be mine for nine months. I'll take care of her every need from surface level down to that treacherous hole between her legs.

The one that so lovingly invited Alfie inside.

I don't blame the piece of shit. Mae belongs to us, and she awakens any man's appetite in her vicinity.

But I still hate him for this.

While he gets to take care of himself, we suffer.

“Where are you going?” Lake asks. He’s caught me leaving the penthouse in the middle of the night. We may not be blood-related, but he’s in tune with me, despite being away for so long. He’s my little brother, and he looks up to me.

Little brothers sneak around. Little brothers know things they shouldn’t know.

Lake knows I break into Alfie’s apartment every night to watch them sleep after they’ve fucked themselves into exhaustion.

“Downstairs,” I confess.

It’s not a surprise to him. Nonchalantly, Lake asks, “Can I come with?”

“If Alfie calls the cops on us—”

“I just need to see her.”

“You miss her?” I don’t have to ask the question, but it’s good for my ego. I’m not the only one stuck on a piece of forbidden pussy. She belongs to me. She’s not forbidden. Not. To. Me.

Fuck.

“What do you think?” Lake deadpans. “I can’t stand this. We need to sit down with Alfie and discuss this. It can’t go on for much longer—”

“We’re going downstairs to watch her sleep. Keep all those words to yourself,” I instruct my little brother. I won’t let him mess with my well-oiled machine. “We can discuss this on another day.”

“But I can’t wait much longer,” Lake says on a sharp exhale.

“You can, and you fucking will. Don’t you dare say a word while we’re down there,” I warn him, and I tear the door open. I take the stairs, and my brother reluctantly follows me. I can hear his mind spin, and it exhausts me.

“Do you ever regret what you did?” Lake asks as I reach for the key in my pocket.

“Do you?” I ask in return. I roll the key between my fingers. If Lake opens his mouth and wakes Mae, we’re fucked.

“I regret not finding out any sooner. I regret I couldn’t prevent it from the start,” Lake says. I don’t respond with words because there’s nothing to say. We exchange a knowing look among brothers. He did the time. I committed the crime and must live with it for the rest of my life.

I’d do it all over again if I had to, and the only thing I’d change is how I killed her.

Morgan Scott was there to destroy us. I just did everyone a favor and destroyed her first.

She was never a mother to anyone of us. She was never even a proper wife.

Dad won’t talk about it, but the years don’t add up.

He’s seventeen years older than me, and they adopted me when I was a one-year-old in need. I should’ve never questioned my angel of a mother, right? A proper, educated woman with charitable habits. She was a saint to our neighborhood, and my brother, who took the fall for the family, was vilified when the scandal first broke. Did nobody ever notice the age gap between my parents? Did they not gossip about the older woman sneaking around with a teenager who should have been in school and not in her bed?

When my father talks about our *mother*, he mentions that they dated for two years before any kids came around.

Isaac was an underage teen when a thirty-something cunt lured him into her nasty trap.

“I hate you,” Lake finally says. “I don’t know if I’ll ever get over it. Too much time has passed. But I hate you for doing what I wanted to do. I wanted to save Alfie.”

“I stole your glory. I get it.” I stare at the door, then at the key in my hand.

Lake breathes hard. “I hate you for doing this to us. You brought her here, and now, our life is a mess. She doesn’t... She can’t stand us. I wanted that choice for myself, August. You took it away from me.”

“If I hadn’t brought her here....” I turn to face him so that he can view the sincerity in my words. “You’d be dead in a couple of months. You came here with a death wish, brother. You may not want to admit it, but I saved your life for the second time in your miserable life. I reunited our family. I gave you a reason to live, not the booze, the money, or the drugs. Mae needs some time, and I’m willing to give it to her. If Marcus hadn’t tried to rape her at the party, I’d have introduced our family to her more subtly. But I ran out of time, and I had to act fast. So be grateful that I had eyes and ears on our woman and quit whining.”

“You’re unbelievable,” Lake blurts out. He stands still, so still that it doesn’t seem like he’s breathing properly.

“I get things done,” I remind him. “Now shut up and watch. Don’t fucking ruin this for us. She needs space, so we’re giving her space.”

Lake gestures at the key in my hand. “You’re about to stalk her in her sleep.”

“Whatever.”

With less preciseness than usual, I unlock the door, and we step inside. My cock hardens as soon as I pick up her scent in the air. Upstairs, her scent has faded, and when I come down here every night, I wish to drown in that scent.

I look back at my brother, and with a tortured look on his face, one that has so much to say to me, he follows me inside.

Mae’s little snores lead Lake and me to the bedroom. We find space to hide in the shadows, and we each take a seat as quietly as possible. Alfie stirs, that lucky piece of shit. I never wanted to see his cock, but I can’t help it when he sticks it inside her every night. They sleep arm in arm, and she warms his cock throughout the night.

I’m more than jealous.

I'm fuming.

One look at my brother by my side, and I know I'm not alone. It's just that Lake is more sensible. He's not angry. His eyes glisten in the night like he's about to cry.

Fuck this shit.

Chapter 27

Lake

I CAN'T TAKE THIS.

Mae's right there, and I can't touch her. I don't know what's worse. Being upstairs all day, knowing she's within reach but taken care of, or being down here and seeing her with Alfie. She's happy.

Sometimes, her laughter is so loud that I hear it in my bedroom upstairs. Alfie brings her joy, and that's what I want for her. Joy.

Somehow, Mae triggered the beast inside of August. It's not something she did. It's his obsession with innocence, and before anyone could taint Mae, he decided to do it himself.

I get it, but I also don't.

He's my brother, and our bond is the only reason I still speak to him.

Mae is pregnant. I wanted to be by her side while she went through the changes pregnancy brings a woman. She needs all of us right now.

But she only has Alfie.

And the fucked up thing is that Alfie doesn't want or need our help. He has never had a girlfriend before but treats Mae like his princess. Like he was the prick who impregnated her.

As much as I wish I was the one at fault or even my dad, we can't be the ones who got her pregnant. August fucked her without a condom from the moment she touched down in Monaco until she left for Menton.

And while she was in Menton, he fucked her, too.

The morning comes too soon. August urges me to leave Alfie's place, but I stand at the door like a fool, gazing at Mae while she sleeps with Alfie next to her.

"Lake," my brother hisses. "Come on."

But I don't listen to him.

Mae shifts on the bed, and instead of hurrying the fuck out of their bedroom, I remain rooted where I stand. August curses me to hell and back. Mae slides out of the covers, revealing her naked body to us.

It's hard to breathe at the sight of her.

Mae stretches while Alfie groans in his sleep. She kisses him on his fucking mouth and murmurs something about her bladder to him.

I should leave. August tugs at my arm, but even he's mesmerized by the sight of our girl.

When Mae fully opens her eyes and finds us standing by the doorframe, she freezes at sight.

"I'm sorry," I mouth at her. Ashamed, I turn away. August and I hurry the fuck outside, but Mae catches up to us.

Thankfully, she put on a silk robe that protects her from our prying eyes. Not that I can dismiss the sight of her hard nipples or her belly. She's beginning to show. I'm proud of her, but this feeling inside, it's not a friendly feeling, nor a family-friendly one.

"What the fuck?" she seethes at us. August is outside of the apartment already while I linger by the entrance.

"I'm sorry," I repeat.

"Sorry won't cut it," she remarks with a scowl. She begins to take deep breaths. Her eyes go wide, and her arm drops to her belly. She almost shuts us out of the apartment, but I hold the door open. "UGH! I hate you."

"What is it?" August asks. He sprints back to us.

“Touch it,” Mae offers, gesturing at her belly. August and I reach out, and when we feel the kick, something softens inside me. The tension eases, but the misery remains. I wish we didn’t have to do this in the middle of the night, hiding from our family.

“August? Have you been sneaking inside again?” Mae asks. The kicking has stopped, but August and I don’t move our hands from her belly.

“I never stopped,” he admits, like it means nothing to tell a woman that he doesn’t let her out of sight.

“You don’t touch me, though, do you?” she asks, and a cold shiver runs down my spine.

“No, I don’t. Not anymore,” he confesses. His perversions burn inside of him. He wants to degrade Mae. He’s convinced that she enjoys it. She belongs to him, and this waiting period tests his limits.

“Good,” Mae says. It’s a dry response. I can’t read whether she’s happy or sad about August’s confession. I’d bet on her being happy, but I can’t see the relief on her face. “We need to talk.”

Both August and I still.

Mae goes on, “Does this happen often? Do you both come down here to creep up on me?”

“It’s his first time,” August admits through gritted teeth. He’ll never forgive me for ruining it for him, but I couldn’t resist.

“And Isaac?” Mae asks.

“Dad doesn’t know,” I tell her. “He’s not doing too well...” Mae’s pregnant. She doesn’t need to know that our old man is lovesick for her. “But everything’s okay. He keeps his distance as promised.”

“Good,” she says again, and I decide to despise the word. She swallows hard before she continues. “I want you back in our lives. Officially. I’m not moving out. I’m not declaring any titles. Alfie is my priority.” I love her for that. “He makes me

happy. I don't want him to bear this load on his own. One of you did this to me, and you need to do the work. Alfie deserves some rest. He's been running errands, feeding me, and keeping me satisfied for months. You need to step up."

"Gladly," August blurts out, but Mae scowls at him.

"You don't get to touch me until I say so," she demands.

August lets out a simple: "No."

"I'll tell Alfie you're harassing us, and he'll move us to the States," Mae threatens, and my heart stops. If there's one thing August despises in this world, it's flying, but I can see him getting over it for her, and that's intense. "Is that what you want, August? More distance between us? Wait your turn, for once in your life. Wait. Your. Turn."

"I refuse—"

I intervene, "I'll get him to comply."

August growls at me like I'm pissing on his territory, but I don't let him stop me from fixing this mess. I ask, "What do you need?"

"I need August to apologize to Alfie for hitting him when all Alfie did was try to help his *property*," she spits at us. She knows that August refers to her as his property, and she seemingly doesn't appreciate the name. I can't blame her.

"It's within my rights—"

"Yes, he'll apologize," I say for my brother. I grab him before he pounces on Mae. "What else?"

"I need you to treat Alfie like your best friend again. Show him the respect he deserves," Mae says, and I give her a firm nod.

"I will," I tell her. "But what do you need?"

"What do you mean?" she asks with a frown.

"You've just told us what Alfie needs to amend our relationships. What about you? We love Alfie. He's like a brother. Fuck, he's our brother. But you're... I don't know what to call you, Mae. A girlfriend? That's not what you are.

You belong to the family. We want you. How can we get you back?" I ask, and August relaxes. He agrees with my statement, and that gives me peace.

"Do you want me to spell it out for you? Because I don't know—"

Mae's about to burst with emotion when August steps forward. "I apologize."

"You don't mean that," she blurts out, sniffing.

"Not really," August admits, and I want to kick his face in. "But I can learn to mean it. If that's what it takes."

"Now go," Mae says. She wipes at her eyes while her lips quiver. I want to give her a hug, to tell her that August... What? That he loves her? That would be a lie. He's obsessed with her, and that kind of obsession *warrants* his sickening behavior toward her. "My bladder is about to explode. I'm ready to see Isaac. Please, let him know."

Mae shuts the door, but for the first time in a long time, I don't feel left out anymore.

We're on the right track.

Chapter 28

Isaac

IT'S TIME TO TELL HER THE TRUTH.

To confess my sin.

My son may have stalked her for a year, but I've been inside her head for just as long. I clutch the phone in my hand and tread down the stairs to Alfie's apartment. The tightness in my chest expands as I approach the entrance.

I don't come down here often. If at all. Alfie's the guy who follows us around. My sons and I are there to let him in. We don't invade his privacy. At least, we shouldn't. My sons think I'm stupid, but I'm not. This past week, they've been in and out of this apartment at night.

They told me that Mae asked to see me.

Here I am.

I carry the evidence of my sins in my hands, and I'm about to come clean.

Before I can knock, Mae opens the door. Her hair glistens, droplets of water traveling down her shoulders to the white towel covering her. It's longer and darker than I remember. I want to reach out and touch it, feel that silky part of her slip beneath my fingers.

Like she's slipping away from me.

Mae's face has changed. Her cheeks have rounded out, and her lips are fuller than before. In another world, I'd grab that face, and I'd take a taste of her lips each morning to bless my day.

Where she used to be defensive and distant, she's now soft. When I take a step toward her, she doesn't flinch back. She comes up to me, wrapping her arms around me. It's a gentle gesture that I don't deserve. "You're early. I'm not even dressed."

"Do you want me to leave?" I ask, and I take a deep breath. She may never accept me inside Alfie's home after I come clean today. I'll cherish the feeling of holding her close for as long as I can.

"No, of course not," she says. "Come inside. Alfie's out running errands. He should be back soon, but he won't disturb us."

When Mae slides out of our hug, tension builds inside me. I can't do this to myself. I won't survive knowing she's down here, despising the very thought of me.

"Mae, we need to talk," I say, swallowing hard. She needs to know.

"Allow me to get dressed first?" she asks with a beaming face. She twirls before I can stop her, and her hair falls over her shoulders. She guides me to their bedroom and gestures for me to sit on their bed.

I smell both of them in this room. Alfie and Mae. I don't know much about Alfie's habits, but I know he never let anyone sleep in the same room as him before. He never allowed us to visit him, not even for a coffee. In a couple of months, he's begun anew with Mae.

My niece.

And from what I hear, she's as good to him as he is to her.

"Mae, please—"

She digs into the closet she shares with Alfie, picking out a black dress. Skin-tight. Stretchy. She observes the dress with a hum coming from her lips. "I love black. Don't you?"

"I've never seen you in black," I tell her. Not in person, I haven't. But I've seen her pictures. How the fuck do I go about explaining myself to her?

My words aren't an invitation for her to strip in front of me, but she does. It's unceremonious, *almost*. She knows I'm right there, but she either doesn't care or wants me to see her glistening skin.

My eyes bore into every available inch of her. If this is the last time I have the honor of seeing her like this, so be it.

She doesn't strip for me. I realize it when she pulls the dress over her head and slips it down her curves without any desire to tease me much further. She forgoes her underwear and slides her feet into her puffy slippers before she addresses me again. "Alfie took me shopping the other day, and I stocked up on vintage clothing from the nineties. All black. It was incredible. But now my pussy hurts, and I can't wear panties. Sorry about that."

"Your pussy hurts?" I ask, flabbergasted. My mouth is dry, and my cock is hard. I could heal her pussy. I know how to take away the ache.

"We walked too much. Now that I'm more sensitive than ever down there, I need to wear my cotton panties. I forgot, put on the wrong fabric, and now I'm achy," Mae explains. She steps in front of the mirror and tugs at the dress to make it sit right. I study her, unable to form a sentence. "Sorry. Alfie says I talk more than I used to now that the weeks keep passing. I overshare. I say things that sound strange."

"You do," I quietly reply. I'm glad that I sit on the bed. I wouldn't want to stand in front of her right now.

"I don't care anymore. About anything. Privacy? I don't know that bitch. The other day, I peed in front of Alfie, and he discovered that he enjoys seeing me pee. So now we do that. But... You're not here to find out how Alfie and I live our life." *Our life*. When did they become one? August was right. Alfie stole her from us right from under our noses.

But he treats her right, and we're the wrong men for her.

I need to tell her what I did.

When she finds out, she'll never want to see me again.

"What am I here for?" I ask.

“I miss you,” she blurts out, and the numbness in my chest stops. It’s tantalizing. This euphoric feeling she encouraged with three little words... It makes me want to keep quiet. It makes me want to keep lying to her.

But I’m not here to keep up the façade.

I’m here to come clean.

She’s carrying my blood inside her whether I impregnated her or not. It’s sickening that I don’t care anymore. I haven’t even grieved my dead sister properly. This girl’s mother. A year has passed, and I haven’t visited her grave.

Now, I wouldn’t even dare to disturb her peace.

If she didn’t want me in her life before when she needed me, she wouldn’t want me to bother her in the afterlife.

Stevie would laugh at my attempt to pay my respects. She’d feel more than betrayed. Disrespected.

It hurts that we find ourselves in this situation.

“I need to show you something,” I say, aware that her smile is about to fade. I pull out my phone from my pocket and unlock it.

“What is it?” Mae walks over to the bed and plumps down beside me with a sigh.

“When your mom’s illness got critical two years ago, I reached out to her over the phone,” I reveal, and Mae stills beside me. Her eyes stare at our feet. “Stevie let me speak to her. She heard me out, but she hung up on me in the end. She didn’t want to hear my excuses. She couldn’t get over my betrayal. I never tried to reach out before. So, when I offered to help, she refused.”

Mae takes deep breaths that become faster. “What... What the fuck are you saying?”

“She didn’t want to be my charity case. Or August’s. She refused my help, and she never picked up the phone again. One year later, I found out she died.” I go to my social media account, the one I made on a bad day.

The anniversary of my wife's death.

I was drunk, and I don't know what I was thinking. I let my investigator hand me the links to Mae's social media accounts, and I created accounts on every site I could catch a glimpse of her. I didn't want second-hand pictures of my niece. I wanted her story told from her perspective. Her sketchy social media accounts and her obsession with online models were my only way in.

Because Mae had some sense in her, she never showed her face.

I didn't know who she was when I first saw her face to face.

Mae's full-on sobbing by my side, and I need to fix this before Alfie returns to find her in an upset state. He'd take her away for good, and that can't happen. I'd rather she be angry than absent.

"xMoonPrincessx. That's you," I say, and she quiets. "I've saved everything you ever sent me, and I'll be frank with you, I could never delete any of it."

"Rampage? You're Rampage?" she croaks. Rampage, what I wanted to be known as when I was a kid spending full days and nights at the local gym, and Monaco's dialing code. 377.

I nod to answer her question, and she cries out.

"You knew who I was?" she asks.

"I knew you were xMoonPrincessx. I didn't know that my son decided to bring you to Monaco. When I found out who you were, I put two and two together," I explain. I tug at the lapels of my shirt, and I anticipate the moment when she'll kick me out.

But she doesn't.

We sit there, and eventually, her sobs quiet down. Silence engulfs us. Her irregular breathing worries me. She's sad. I wanted her anger. In my head, I'd envisioned her rage as she kicked me out of her life.

I pitied myself before I ever witnessed her reaction. Did I stop to think what it would do to Mae to find out what she just did?

I hurt her by lying to her about who Rampage377 is. Not that it ever went too far in our chats. We flirted. I patronized her. She bit back. That was that.

Seeing her crumble next to me right now? I did that. I fucked up again.

“I’m sorry,” I tell her. “I should go.”

My steps are heavy as I let myself out. It hurts to leave her behind. Surely, she needs some time to process what I’ve told her.

Mae catches up with me at the door.

“You were my friend, Isaac. You found out everything there was to know about me.” She adds, “But you asked. You didn’t take like your son did. You asked...”

“I lied to you, and I’m sorry,” I say.

“It’s not your lie that hurts the most right now, and you know it,” Mae says, and with that, she lets me go.

As I climb the staircase, her sobs ring in my ear.

Chapter 29

August

DAD HASN'T EATEN SINCE HE MET WITH MAE EARLIER TODAY.

Somewhat disturbingly, he chain-smokes on his balcony and refuses to come back inside. It's been raining all day, and it's not safe for him to lurk on the balcony while the winds are heavy. He doesn't give a shit.

It doesn't matter to me. He can do whatever he wants.

If he's gone, one less person is vying for Mae's attention.

Speaking of.

Mae doesn't seem to mind my nightly visits.

When the timing is right, I leave my dad's penthouse and sneak inside Alfie's apartment. My visits are a secret between Mae and me. She hasn't told Alfie. If she had, he'd be awake, staring me down with his judging eyes.

I let myself into their bedroom, and I take my usual seat.

Alfie's cum drips out of Mae, and I'm tempted to wake her so she can wash it away. If there is any cum that's allowed to be this messy on her skin, it's mine. Alfie's supposed to be the proper guy who buys her flowers and tells her he loves her while sinks into her cunt.

I'm the guy who fucks his property to let her know who she belongs to.

Love?

Nobody ever taught me what that was. My mother had a sick way of showing affection, so any warmth she ever carried

over to me died the day I learned how she was abusing my brothers.

Lake and Alfie are my brothers. I'd never change these two... I would. If Mae vowed to be mine and mine alone for the rest of our lives, I'd give my brothers away.

I would.

I'm not ashamed to admit it.

Mae is the only thing in this world that still fascinates me. Everything else is readily available. The women I used to meet saw what I could offer to them. They never saw me for who I was. Mae did.

I showed her exactly who I was.

She tried to run from me, and I caught her. If she were to run again, it wouldn't take me long to find her. It wouldn't matter that she'd have Alfie on her side. Alfie can fool himself and think that he has a chance in a fight against me, but he's lost already, and he doesn't even know it.

That swollen belly of Mae's?

I did that.

Alfie will never escape me if he takes away my seed.

When I'm in this room, and I see them enveloped in one another, I want to scream. But I decide not to. The face I wear is calm. Friendly. No tense features.

I'm going to be a father.

That's the thought that runs circles in my head.

I distract myself with that thought until the sun is about to rise. Mae wakes up to meet her morning needs. She needs the restroom. After a brief kiss for Alfie, she stretches her luscious body with a delicious yawn.

When she walks past her bed, she sees me in the corner.

It's been a couple of days since she found out, and she doesn't flinch when she sees me anymore.

Mae saunters out of the room, and I follow right behind her. It's time for me to leave. I must get on with another dull day.

"I hate you," Mae mutters as she passes by me to reach the bathroom.

"Don't I know it," I respond, and she scowls at me.

When the night comes, and Alfie and Mae have fucked themselves to sleep, I can come back and enjoy myself.

One of these days, she'll say *good morning*, and I'll melt for her.

That day isn't today.

Chapter 30

Lake

IT'S BEEN A LONG WEEK, AND I'M TIRED OF WAITING.

I'm ready to go downstairs.

"I don't want you coming along," August says as I join him by the door. He picks out the keys from the bowl in the hallway, rolling them between his fingers.

"Too bad," I reply with a shrug. "I miss her."

"You can see her on your own time," he tells me. His glare amuses me. I gaze at the keys in his hand, and he grips them tight, hiding them from me.

"It's not like she's taking appointments. You cheat your way inside when she's too tired to fight you," I tell him. Another man would take offense. Another man, a better man, would stare down at his feet, defeated. He'd show that he regrets his mistake.

But August doesn't regard his nightly visits as a *mistake*.

In his eyes, his restraint is enough to warrant a pat on the back. *You're being good, August. She should be glad you're not fucking her in her sleep every night, August...*

On the other hand, I am fully aware of the invasion that occurs every night.

"If you make a sound, you're dead," August threatens me.

"Please, you'd be doing me a favor," I deadpan. I stomp past him and drag the door open. As I step outside, I crash into Mae.

In her silky nightgown, a robe barely reaching mid-thigh.

With wide eyes, she clutches the fabric like she's lost the belt that keeps everything together. It's not the belt that has her digging her nails into the robe.

"Mae? What are—" She races past me before I finish my sentence. August stands there with a gaping mouth, and I scratch the back of my head.

"Did she just sneak into Dad's room in the middle of the night?" I ask August, and he nods. "Fuck."

"We should go—"

I interrupt my brother, "No, give them some privacy. Dad had a horrible week."

August shakes his head. Determined, he lunges down the hallway until we find a stop in front of Dad's room. The door's tilted open, and he can see inside.

My brother stands in my way, so I can't fully detect what's happening.

But I don't have to *see* it.

I hear it.

It's past midnight, and Mae came up here with Alfie's scent on her skin and a skimpy robe protecting her from our curious gazes. Now, the robe has slipped from her shoulder, and Dad's fingers trace lines on her collarbone.

Mae's breath catches in delight.

"I need you," she whispers to him. It's an intimate moment that August and I shouldn't barge in on, but here we are. Unmoving. Relentless. I refuse to leave, and with a scowl pointed at Dad, August will not return to his bedroom anytime soon. "I need you more than this."

"This can't happen," Dad says, but his mouth is closing in on Mae. He pulls her closer, locking her in against the wall. She wants to stay. Her eyes never leave his fucking face. Briefly, she glimpses at his mouth, and then with a blush on her cheek, she meets his eyes again.

Mae wants my father.

More than us.

“I’m your uncle,” Dad professes, his lips curling in disgust.

To our complete surprise, Mae dismisses Dad’s worry. “So what, my dear uncle? Had I ever seen you before August kidnapped me?”

Mae shoots a glare at August, then, with warm eyes, she turns her attention back toward my dad.

“I was there when you were in your mother’s belly,” Isaac tells her. It’s strange. I can’t deny it. I was too young, but not young enough not to know that Stevie was pregnant. By the time she left home, she’d been months into her pregnancy.

“Yet, you asked to see your niece’s nudes as Rampage377,” Mae tells my dad, and my eyes bulge.

“He did, what?” I ask.

“Before I brought Mae over, Dad chatted with Mae online,” August explains, and Dad cringes. “He’s worse than I am. He lied!”

“Shut up, August,” Mae blurts out. I’m proud of Mae, but I’m also mildly offended for my brother. *Mildly*. My dick wants more of this new Mae. “He got to know me first. He asked for a picture, not a nude when I was already living here. When he’d already fucked me. Does that please you? Are you satisfied?”

“No, I’m not,” August seethes.

“You should go back to Alfie. He treats you well. You deserve his love,” Isaac says, and I’m tired of my father’s attitude. He refuses to prioritize himself, and it annoys me.

“Alfie knows I’m here,” Mae reveals, and I back away.

With a cruel wink, she adds, “Alfie wants to share his property.”

“You’re not Alfie’s property. You’re mine!” August thunders, and he swings forward. He doesn’t get far because

Dad stops him before he can touch Mae. “You’re mine, Mae.” My brother breathes hard. “You’re carrying my offspring. Mine. I did that to you!”

“And I hate you for it,” Mae says, tilting her head to the side. She looks good behind Dad. She fits him. But if I open my mouth to speak about their relationship, August and my father will most likely smack me. Perhaps Mae could kiss it better?

“You call me your property. Don’t you feel any shame at all? I’m your *family* if I’m anything to you at all. I’m not your property, and I’m not touching you until you get that through your stubborn skull. You can come and go at night. As you please, dickhead. But you don’t get to touch me anymore! That’s reserved for those who love me like I’m their family and not some disposable cunt bag they get to play dress up with!”

“You’re not a disposable cunt bag,” August mutters with a frown, and I must admit that I feel sorry for him. It must be tiring, switching back and forth all the time. My brother spent his life wearing masks that concealed his true identity.

He’s a cold-blooded killer.

While I was away, I watched him in the cage at work.

August Scott has accumulated his wealth because he never bent down to anyone. He fought hard. He brought his opponents up to the verge of death, one blinking of their eyes away from fading.

All those years, he had to pretend he did it for the sport.

When in reality, August was ready to take a life every time he put on his gloves to fight. Not every man in those cages fights dirty like my brother, and that’s why August Scott is where he is, spending his early retirement in one of the most extravagant areas on earth.

It takes a lot for him not to unleash what he feels inside.

August is ready to snatch Mae right from under us. He could leave with her, and we’d never see her again.

But he restrains himself.

Because deep inside, under his wrath, his obsession... He's begun to care about Mae.

"You treat me like this dirty secret you get to fuck and dress up. How else am I supposed to feel? You humiliated me in front of your psycho housekeeper. You let her touch me." She croaks, and my dad cringes at her words. He doesn't want to hear about August's dick and Mae, but this is where we are right now, and he'll sit through it. "Do you know how much it hurt? When she started touching Alfie in front of me, I couldn't hold myself back. She had to pay for everything she'd done."

"You did great," August says, and Mae's shoulders soften. The room takes a collective deep breath at August's compliment. We agree on this. Mae showed up for Alfie. Something we did decades ago. She deserves our admiration. "I'm proud of you for how you handled it."

"It was your initiation into the family," I quickly say, and Isaac rolls his eyes at me. "You care about Alfie as much as we do? You're one of us."

"Then treat me like I am, and don't push me around like I'm your whore," she insists. The belt holding her robe slips, and I briefly catch a glimpse of her belly. Fuck, what I'd do to touch her right now.

"You are my—"

"Shut. Up," I tell my brother. "You can call her a whore when she's not pregnant, okay? Show some respect."

"It's a term of endearment—"

"On your planet, perhaps. Not on this earth," I sneer.

"I'm your cousin." Mae gestures at us, and then she glances at Isaac's back with a gloomy expression that I want to obliterate. "And your niece. But I never knew that you existed. I love my mom, but she took you away from me."

"It was for the better. Don't you see? He brought you here, and we've all defiled you like you don't deserve anything

better. I showed bills down your cleavage, Mae. I paid you for having sex with my son and me. Stevie knew what she was doing when she kept you away from us,” Dad says, and August narrows his eyes at him.

“She didn’t know that we’d have sex!” Mae cries out, and it stings me to see her in pain. Dad backs away from her when he should embrace her to calm her the fuck down. “She didn’t know. She kept me away because she couldn’t handle the pain you carried around for years. She didn’t know that this would happen. This thing between us... It would’ve never crossed her mind that August would sleep with me like this. I firmly believe that. She wasn’t that type of person. She sheltered me because I was all she had. She didn’t want to give me more family history trauma than I already had.”

“Well, we did, and I can’t deal with it. She was my sister. I can’t do this to her anymore,” Isaac claims, and I’m about to choke him to death. August fidgets, ready to combust. “You should go back upstairs. You’ll be safe with Alfie. He’s been waiting for someone like you to take care of his entire life.”

“I know. He’s doing a great job showing me how much he appreciates my presence in his life,” she tells my dad. Her glistening eyes and those full trembling lips don’t move him. She doesn’t hint at wanting to leave. She needs to be comforted. “I need you. Why is that so hard to understand?”

“The next time you see me, you refer to me as your uncle. I’m nothing more, nothing less to you,” Dad says. “You can’t have me. I’m your uncle. I’m not supposed to feel this way about you. These thoughts... They drive me mad. I can’t lose myself in you, Mae. I’ve lost everything else. I need to stay sane for this family.”

“You’re breaking me,” she says, her voice a cracked whisper.

August charges for Mae, but I intervene. I cocoon her in my arms and escort her out of Dad’s room. My big brother follows as I take her to my room. She cries in my arms, and I can’t stand it.

If this was another version of me, I'd try to convince her to get over my father. I'd list all the disgusting things I could think of about him. I'd beg her to fall for me, not for him.

But this is the new me.

And I understand that this thing between us? It's about the family. We each own a part of Mae now, and this ownership equals responsibility. Dad doesn't take it seriously. Neither does August.

Alfie's the frontrunner because he worships her.

Where do I fit in? I'll tend to her broken heart, the heart my daddy so cruelly shattered in pieces.

Epilogue

Mae

“ENJOY YOURSELF,” ALFIE SAYS TO ME. HE DOESN’T LOOK UP from his laptop, but his intoxicating grin is enough to make me jump on his lap one last time. I push the laptop away, and he groans in my mouth.

“Stop teasing me,” I tell him, tickling his side. He lets out a low chuckle that does things to my body that I can’t explain. He wears sweatpants I purchased for him with the money I earned from my brief escorting stunt.

Half the money’s gone now because Alfie has expensive taste, and I’m a broke girl living off his generosity. I should consider studying money management to make sure I invest my sex cash into profitable avenues.

What’s more profitable than gray sweatpants that make me horny as hell and him anxious as fuck? It’s the most casual thing he approves of wearing. He’s a silk pajama type of guy who doesn’t wear anything but suits throughout the day. He’s uncomfortable, but the eye candy... I can’t get enough of it.

“I’m not teasing you. I’m working,” Alfie claims, shrugging. He reaches for the laptop, but I thrust my body unto him.

“Working?” He doesn’t have a job anymore! He looks at pictures of us on his laptop. That’s what he does. “You call this work?”

“I’m trying to figure out which pictures I should frame,” Alfie says. He draws his eyebrows together, pursing his lips.

“I’d like to send Isaac one as well. He can see how well his sweet niece adapts to her new boyfriend.”

“No, please don’t!” I beg. With widened eyes, I peer up at him. He knows that it’s a touchy subject. It’s been a couple of weeks, and my uncle still refuses to meet with me.

I’ve found a temporary solution that satisfies Uncle Isaac’s sons.

“You having sex with his sons next door to his room is apparently not enough. I must add evidence of your new life with me to make it happen,” Alfie says. His fingers brush the baby hair off my forehead. “Are you sure you want this, Mae?”

“Yes, I do,” I state. I have never felt more alive. I control when I go upstairs, and when I do, Lake and August wait for me. They do what they want with me because I ask them to. I scream for them loud enough for my uncle to hear what he’s missing.

“You could stop if you didn’t want it,” Alfie says with soft eyes.

“I know what I want. I want you. Them. And Isaac. But Isaac won’t let me in, and I’m trying to brat at him,” I pout.

“You? A brat? Never,” he says with a chuckle.

“He’ll come around one day,” I say, praying for my words to become my reality before it’s too late.

“With this dress, I’d prefer not to let you leave my sight. Once you go upstairs like this....” Alfie’s eyes survey my cleavage, down to the curve of my belly.

“Like what?” I purr.

“Your body, Mae. You’re growing. Everywhere,” Alfie says, salivating. He’s new to this, just like I am.

Alfie may be older than me. We sat down the other day when discussing finances and discovered that fourteen years separate us.

At heart, we're much closer. Alfie never developed his sexuality like the rest of the family did. We explore each other as we go, and every day, Alfie discovers another thing that fascinates him about our bodies. After years of asexuality, he progresses and works on battling his demons with me.

"You've put yourself on display for them today," Alfie says like he's in pain. I can feel the pain he's in. I'm sitting on his healthy erection. "They'll see it all."

"That's what I want," I say, and his hand drifts lower.

"Be careful, yeah?" Alfie caresses my belly. "Don't go too crazy."

"I'll lie on my back while they fuck me, Daddy Alfie. Like a very good girl!" I say, and he captures my mouth with his for one last kiss before I go. "I'll be back by midnight."

"I wouldn't mind if you slept over upstairs," he gently suggests.

I lean forward, working my nose against his. "I don't sleep next to them, Alfie. You're the one I sleep next to. They fuck me. That's what they do. But you? You're my anchor."

"Go now before I decide to lock you in here and never let you leave," Alfie says, backing away from my mouth. His words test me. It's a devious test I almost fail.

Something about my eyes alerts him.

"You'd want that?" Alfie asks quietly. I freeze, blushing red. He senses the state of my non-existent panties, and he chuckles. "I won't tell August. He'll use it against us."

"Have fun with your hand tonight," I tell him as I climb off his lap.

"Have fun on your back," he says as I leave. "I'll miss you."

"Miss you more. I'll be back before midnight!"

Without the keys, I exit Alfie's penthouse. He'll wait for me, and we'll fall asleep together while I cry about my uncle not falling victim to my childish seduction techniques again.

The cold tiles of the stairs make me shiver because I don't wear shoes to go upstairs. Any shoes I can currently fit my feet into would downgrade my look, so I'm going barefooted.

Ideally, I'd ask Alfie to accompany me, but right now, that's impossible. I can't unite the entire group because Alfie can't handle it yet. He enjoys my company in the nude, but we haven't ventured outside of that.

I enjoy being the only one who's ever seen him unravel like this.

My heart swells with pride, knowing that we're taking it step by step together. One day, he may join in while Lake and August fuck me. For now, Alfie's satisfied with my retellings of what his best friends do to me.

The door's slightly ajar, and I push inside. I don't know how to tread lightly, even without heels. The first thing I do in my uncle's penthouse is stroll over to his room.

As I approach his door, I suddenly recoil. What have I done? I bend my head and glower at the tight dress covering my curves.

I beg for Isaac's love like the fool he thinks I am.

If he doesn't want me, he won't have me.

Instead of going inside my uncle's room like I do every day, I bulldoze past it and storm Lake's room. He's showing his big brother something on his grandma phone. When they see me, they do a doubletake.

"Mae?" Lake can't get enough of my name. He uses every opportunity to say it back to me, to feel it roll over his tongue. "Did you say hi to your beloved uncle in that dress?"

August and Lake's hungry eyes admire me, and I instantly regret wearing it. Lake detects the change in my mood, and he drops his phone to give me a welcoming kiss. "I asked you a question, little cousin."

"No," I say against his lips. "I did *not*."

"Are you over Dad?" August asks. He asks me about my feelings for his dad every time I see him, and my answer

remains the same much to his dismay.

“No, I’m not, but today, I’m furious at him,” I reveal, and Lake kisses me with a grin on his mouth.

“Is that why you came in here like this?” August asks. He’s dismissive, but it’s part of our game. “Showing off my property like this? Alfie should’ve locked you inside your room. You don’t get to show off this body.”

“You can’t stop me, August,” I tell him, and I plunge forward, wrapping my arms around Lake’s neck as I suck on his tongue in my mouth.

August knows how to move quietly, but my comment flipped a switch. He marches over to our side and wraps a hand around my neck. He pulls me away from Lake, who protests with a delicious groan. “Try me, Mae. You want to challenge me?”

“Fuck off,” I reply, and I scratch at his skin covering my neck. I don’t have enough strength to pull him away, but I grow my nails sharp now. He flinches when I cut him so deep that a line of blood trickles down his wrist.

August has had concussions at work, so one little line doesn’t force him to back off.

I pull Lake closer by his shirt, and I tug and pull to kiss his mouth. “You’re in such a bad mood tonight, little cousin.”

While I make out with Lake, August sinks to his knees. It takes little effort to rip my dress at the seams. I groan while August’s fingers find my bare pussy. He continues to tear at the dress until my tits begin to show.

August drops a kiss on my belly before he sinks lower. While I fumble with Lake’s shirt, August finds my clit with his eager mouth. His fingers play with my hole while his mouth explores my folds.

“Make some noise for your uncle, little cousin. Get him hard and ready for you,” Lake says. He dips two of his fingers in my mouth, and I suck on them with sloppy sounds, motivated by August’s filthy mouth. “Make sure he knows that he’s missing out.”

“I’m taking her pussy tonight,” August announces.

“It’s my turn,” Lake insists.

“No, it’s mine.”

“You’re unbelievable.”

They continue to banter above me while I sneak my hand down Lake’s pants. He’s semi-hard for me, and I stroke him to get him ready. I want him in my mouth while August fucks me. Since he started having sex with me again, August has been less... Aggressive about the act.

It may be the pregnancy.

It may be something else... But I don’t want to get my hopes up.

August shows that he can listen to my body without manipulating it to please himself only. With a sweep of his tongue, my hips buck to meet him. I writhe for him, eager to get him inside of me.

Lake escorts me to his bed, laying me down with care. August follows suit, and he dives in between my legs with ease. Before Lake lets me put my mouth on him, he gives me one last kiss. “You look good tonight, Mae. Too good. Like a forbidden treat that we’re not meant to devour.”

“But you will?” I beg. I squeeze my thighs around August’s head, gushing for him. He’s used to the headlocks. It’s not like my thighs can kill him. He’s experienced deadlier attacks. “You’ll devour me?”

August fumbles with his zipper, and the tingling sensation I crave most returns. He has messed with my head. I can’t deny it. I don’t want to deny it. I don’t even blame it on the pregnancy. We don’t even know if I’m carrying his offspring or somebody else’s... I’m a slut, you see.

I fucked my adopted uncle, cousins, and their best friend.

One of them is responsible for my body going into overload at the sight of them.

Thankfully, they never refuse me.

August knows not to tease me too much these days because our relationship continues to be strained outside of the bedroom. I can't deal with what he's done to me. He's changed my life forever, and I still don't know if it was for the better.

When I find Lake's cock with my mouth, licking him from the top to his very base, August sinks into me without worry. I yelp, and August pushes further inside.

That's when I feel him.

Isaac.

His eyes burn me where I lay degraded and pleased by his sons.

I shift to find him wherever he is. He's at the door, not even inside the room. His eyes are on me, and he's got an expression on his face that I can't quite grasp. He hates me. That's for sure. I'm rude to him. After he explicitly expressed his disinterest in continuing our sexual relationship, I went on to tease him with raunchy outfits for days.

"You didn't come to greet me today," Isaac says, but his sons don't stop what they do to my body. Lake grunts when I swallow the tip of his cock inside of my mouth. I avoid Isaac. I had my reasons today.

I realized that I won't continue to make a fool of myself.

"You're late," August says, his voice strained. He has exchanged the rapid fucks for deeper, more sensual movements that pleasure me more than his depraved urgency.

"If you're going to stand there like a bitch, you should leave," Lake tells his dad, and I swallow him down as deep as I can take him while I play with his balls with my fingers. "So leave."

But Isaac doesn't leave.

While August continues to thrust into my body, and I make a mess of Lake's cock and balls, Isaac stands there watching me take his sons inside of me. He hesitates, but eventually, Isaac comes closer.

His eyes zoom in on me, my ripped dress.

“It hurts, Mae,” he says.

Taking a deep breath after having Lake stuck in my mouth, I reply, “I know.”

“It hurts so much.”

“Let me make it feel better then,” I tell him, reaching for him with my hand. To my surprise, he doesn’t flinch back. When I sneak my hand down his pants and rub him, he doesn’t complain. He’s already hard for me, leaking precum.

“Mae, are you okay?” At the door, Alfie appears. He’s out of breath, like he sprinted down the stairs to find me.

I nod while I continue to suck on Lake. August’s carnal thrusts make me squirm.

The men don’t address Alfie. One could say that they don’t even see him.

But I do.

He’s right there, watching us.

It’s a big step for him to come down here, and I’m proud of him for doing it. However, I also appreciate that he takes his time. He doesn’t barge in, demanding to join the fun. He knows that he can’t do that just yet.

For now, Alfie watches me melt away while August unravels me. Lake needs eye contact and a tight grip on his balls, and he’s ready to explode. Isaac? I don’t know what he needs, but he’s shaking in my hands. He’s prepared, and I haven’t even touched him yet.

August circles my clit with his thumb, tormenting me with his devious touches. He rubs hard, and he impales me raw.

I couldn’t have chosen a better moment to fall.

They immobilize me at the peak of my freedom. I lie still, savoring that I’m their center, the core that drives them.

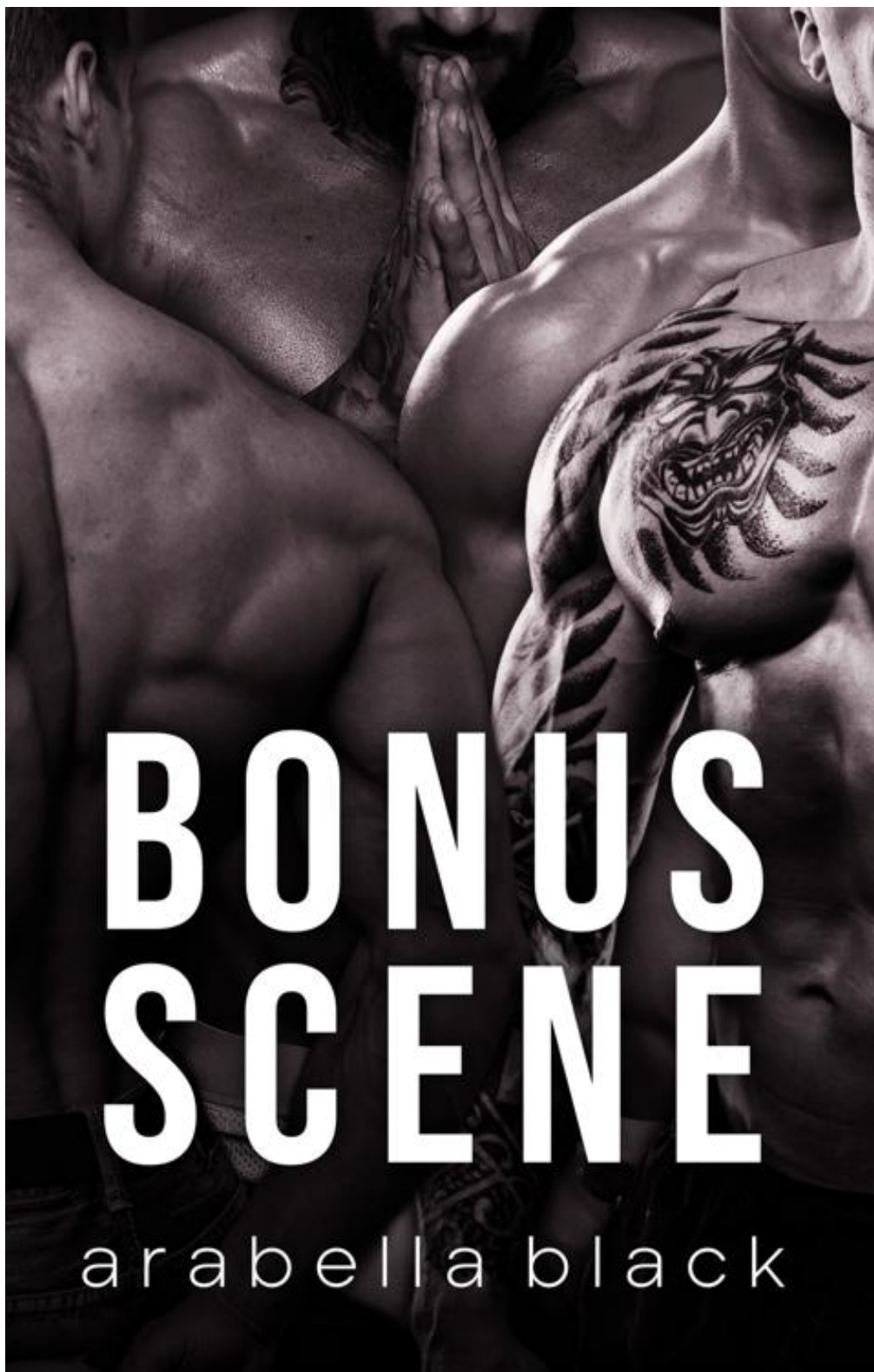
I fall and become aware that I’ve left behind the last inch of my sanity. It’s gone now.

August finishes inside of me first with punishing strokes, announcing that he unwaveringly owns me. I don't accept my title as August's property.

I'm not his property.

I'm not just their fuck buddy nor the mother of their future children.

I'm their family, and I'm unequivocally theirs to share.



BONUS SCENE

arabella black

Afterword

Please consider leaving a review.

Your reviews matter to me and to the other readers.

Thank you so much.

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TRANSLATIONS INTO GERMAN

CALIFORNIA LUST (REVERSE HAREM)

Her Dead Eyes - Band 1
His Cruel Eyes - Band 2
Their Filthy Eyes - Band 3

DIE WRAITH-ROYALS-SERIE

Exposed: Enthüllte Lust, #1
Wanted: Verschollene Prinzessin, #2
Obsessed: Verbotene Liebe, #3
Corrupted: Verdorbene Unterwerfung, #4

STANDALONES

When The Sun Goes Down: Du Gehörst Uns
Melt Away: Verboten

About the Author





WHEN THE
SUN
GOES DOWN

arabella black

Prologue

“NAUGHTY VIRGIN LOVES CREAMPIE.”

My throat is dry as I click on the video. The phone’s screen darkens before the production company’s short clip begins to play. Heavy bass. Neon colors. Lots of cock all around, stretching girls wide open. Liquid substances dribbling out of various orifices.

Starring Ari Bird and Jackson River.

I shouldn’t do this, but I don’t pause the video once it starts. Ari Bird strolls around out in the open. She’s in a dress that clings to her curves, ending where her panties begin right around her crotch. It’s hot out there, but Ari doesn’t sweat.

There are people in the video, random pedestrians whose faces have been blurred for the sake of this commercial video. Make no mistake. This is a commercial video, but I’m watching it on a sketchy site for free.

Forty-nine minutes and thirty-one seconds of work for free.

Ari Bird smirks at the camera. Finally, her walk ends. Not before she flashes her tits to the camera. It’s not like I haven’t seen them before, but in this context...

I pause the video, retching. I press play.

Cut. Next scene.

Jackson River awaits his little princess on his throne, a clean-cut leather couch that’s bound to squeak at all the fucking that’s about to happen. He lazily strokes his cock

above his jeans while Ari Bird crawls over to him, her dress riding up her hips.

I stink.

I can't feel my own heartbeat. I'm numb.

"You wanna suck some cock, little princess?" Jackson River's voice is an intoxicating mix of bourbon and leather. Rough. Deep. Penetrating.

The phone slips from my fingers once Ari Bird reaches Jackson River's crotch, pulling out his cock to lick it. My phone lands on my lap, hot and heavy. It stings me.

Jackson River groans. His voice overtakes this cold apartment, sucking me into his orbit. I don't want to be there. I fucking hate this man.

"Your cock is so big!"

A fleshy sound creeps into my ear canal, disgusting and sloppy. My vision is blurry, but I'm positive he spanked her. She gasps in melodramatic surprise.

"Choke on it, little princess."

And she does.

I cry.

I can't stop.

That's my sister right there. Ari Bird. Shooting star of the year. Bound to take over the number one spot on the internet. She's got my mother's smile, and it freaks me out.

That's my sister right there, and I?

I have to replace her.

Chapter 1

Loulou

DANGER PURRS AT ME, RUBBING HER TINY HEAD AGAINST MY nose.

“Good morning.” I stretch my legs, yawning into my pillow. It’s hard to turn away from my sister’s cat, and I can’t even hold the position for long. “Where’s your mommy?”

My morning breath doesn’t scare the cat away. That’s how a day’s supposed to start. Bless her.

She’s a silent little predator, Danger. She doesn’t look like it with her delicate paws and innocent eyes. Or when she licks at my exposed shoulder.

I get out of bed, and she follows me while I break out my morning routine. From the side of my eye, I see Danger roll around on the floor to get my attention. Without further ado, I promptly tip toe to the kitchen to get Danger a morning snack.

She’s a spoiled little cat, but she’s good company. Quiet. She minds her own business. My sister rescued her like she rescued me.

The stainless steel bowls of cat food are licked empty as I pass them by. Of course, they are. Mercy took care of it before she went to work.

My sister went to work again. Her schedule is... Curious, to say the least. She doesn’t have a 9-to-5 job.

I pick up the water bowl and fill it up. Danger isn’t interested in water, though, is she? With her tail held high, she

approaches me in curiosity. We haven't known each other for long, but I do believe we've become amicable.

We're morning breath buddies. What's better than that?

I open the white flat-panel cabinets on the right side of the undermount sink. I'm happy that I finally open the cat food cabinet, but I cringe when I notice that I've left fingerprints although I just washed my hands. I grab a rag and rub the evidence off the squeaky-clean surface.

Mercy bought this place a while ago. Two years ago? Everything inside of it looks and feels brand-new. I've only been here for the summer, but I'm not at home when she's not here. Without Mercy, this place is like a hotel. Cold. Clean. Minimalistic.

I live with the anxiety that a realtor is going to jump out of the corner and expose my messy self to a condescending client.

Danger strolls toward me like a little diva, rubbing around my leg to get in on the action as I look for a treat.

This cabinet hosts a gourmet of her food. I take out one of the snack bags, tearing it open. This tiny plastic bag costs more than the food I considered lunch when I was younger.

This is me now. I take care of my sister's cat while she's out there working. Doing whatever she does.

I don't stop to think about what she does. Mercy never went to college, but she insisted that I go if I wanted to. She can afford to send me, whatever that means.

I hand Danger her treat with a sigh. I'll miss her when I'm away. My school's an hour away from North Beach.

Mercy and I have had longer distances between us.

We'll manage.

Danger chews down her treat, satisfied. I wait for a burp, but hey. Danger's a classy lady.

The little predator wins this round, and I'm sure there'll be more. The snack bag ends up in the fridge, and I end up on the

balcony with a coffee in hand. A coffee I don't drink. I haven't yet got used to the taste, and it's been a whole summer.

Danger is by her pillows, gazing at the ocean and doing cat things. Licking and stretching. Purring. She doesn't need me right now, and I'm okay with that.

We make a great team.

Mercy has reassured me that Danger isn't in danger when on the balcony. There's a lot of space for her here, and a heavenly glass window view of the ocean. An occasional bird will fly by and distract Danger, but she gets over it.

The floor to ceiling netting protects Danger. Mercy had somebody cat-proof the balcony when she purchased the condo. Danger's cat corner has an outdoor scratching post and pillows that look like a little cat kingdom.

Danger paces over to me, jumping on my lap. She's sleepy today, less active than usual.

When we were younger, Mercy and I were separated. Our parents got divorced and to avoid a long custody battle, they decided to split their kids.

Mom got me.

Dad got Mercy. They moved to Miami where Dad got a big real estate job.

Mom and I stayed in Orlando.

I don't know why.

At this point, it doesn't even matter.

My sister's been trying hard to make me happy for the summer. I've never had to think of what would make me happy. It's always been about survival.

Making sure I have somewhere to stay. Something to eat.

I failed quite often.

I just turned eighteen, meaning that it was finally legal for me to move away from Orlando.

Mercy snatched me up, setting me up in this condo with her.

And Danger.

The cat purrs in my lap, and I cuddle her. She's adorable. She melts my heart. I'm glad that Mercy had Danger when she was alone.

When I was alone, I had nobody.

The guilt eats my sister up.

She's not like me. She's, for lack of a better word, a girl's girl. My sister is gorgeous. She's taller than me, skinnier, too. She's got long, lush, dark hair that she gets done every other day. When she moved away from Orlando, she had caramel hair and no tits whatsoever.

Now, she's a bombshell brunette with a figure to die for, and I'm... Well, I don't know what I am exactly.

I'm figuring it out.

I know that I've gained weight from all the desserts we've been having over the summer. I've never had so much ice cream in my life. I felt like a little kid. And now, I look younger again, too. My cheeks are chubbier than they were last year.

Danger meowls, demanding that I play with her. She reaches for my arm, wrapping her skinny leg around it. Her odd eyes meet mine, one green like the forest and the other blue like the ocean.

I don't have my sister's confidence, or her poise. She struts when she walks, throwing her hair back. She wears fine clothes and high heels, unafraid of her height.

She's a bad bitch if I ever knew one.

And I like that about her.



A COUPLE OF DAYS PASS, AND AS PROMISED, MERCY TAKES ME shopping.

All day long.

She's so charming that at times I begin to doubt if we're even related. Of course, there's no question that we are. Related, that is.

Mercy must have the week off because she's with me all day. Every day.

And because I spent so much time with her, I notice that something's off. I don't know much about her life at work, so I assume her recent mood swings are work-related.

It must be work-related.

It's not like she's sad that I'm leaving.

She can't be.

Not even Mom was sad when I left Orlando after turning eighteen.

More days pass, and we're back at the condo.

I run down my to-do list for move-in day, and she's cuddled up on the sofa with Danger. It's a beautiful day outside. That doesn't mean much in Miami, but a day of sun is a day of fucking sun. Mercy loves those more than I do.

We could go to the pool. Mercy has access to the building's pool, the gym, the spa. She's the first one to suggest we take a trip across the building to use all its amenities. Meet people. Make friends. She knows most of her neighbors, and there must be hundreds of them.

But today, she doesn't feel like exploring her apartment building.

There's this terrible gleam in her eye like she's about to cry, but she can't pull through it.

"Can't I take notes like a normal person?" I ask. I cross out another item off my list. *A laptop*. "With a pen?"

“Consider it a late birthday gift,” Mercy says. My new laptop’s in my backpack, waiting to be explored once I start my classes.

I don’t want to argue with Mercy when she’s sad.

It feels wrong to dig where I shouldn’t.

My sister makes me shy. Timid. She leads the way. Why isn’t she doing so today?

Danger notices her mommy’s switch in moods, and she gives her special attention. She sits on Mercy’s belly, rubbing against her. Her paws are all over Mercy’s belly.

There’s nobody in the world but Mercy for Danger right now. She’s hers, and it’s her responsibility to cheer her mommy up.

Distract Mommy with her cuteness.

Hell, I fall into the trap, too.

“Are you ready for move-in day?”

“Yes, I am.”

The truth is all I have is my backpack. I don’t own a lot of things. Mercy helped me prepare a suitcase, more bags with college essentials. She loves shopping, spending money. Indulging, that’s her thing. She stuffed her Mercedes G-Class full of my new stuff and called it a day.

We have one day left.

Then I move out.

Into my own space.

Alone.

I’ve been alone before, but it never felt as... freeing? Intimidating?

If it weren’t for the school’s rules, I’d stay with my sister.

And little Danger.

“You don’t sound ready, Lou,” Mercy says with a sneaky grin. She’s like a mother I never had.

“I’m not used to this,” I blurt out.

“Maybe we could watch a Bradley Cooper movie? To relax?” she suggests. She means to be funny.

“Never!” I proclaim, snickering. She giggles along, and it feels like the old times when we’d talk over the phone. It’s not a welcome feeling. I’ve always had a cell phone, a burner phone Mercy got me. One that wouldn’t get stolen. Something cheap.

My stomach churns at the memory.

When I got my period, and I got it very late, she was the one I called. I was staying at the Water Bridge Motel. Staying... That’s a generous term. Mom and I were *overstaying* our welcome at that motel, but that’s beside the point.

“We could stay in,” I suggest. “We don’t have to party. I told you. I’m not that kind of girl.”

Mercy’s head jerks up at me. “No, we’re going out!”

“Are you sure?” I insist. Mercy gives Danger a quick kiss, and then she rises from the sofa.

“Let’s do this.”

Danger watches us from her scratching post as we get ready. Translation. Mercy takes over, doing my make-up, hair. She picks up a dress for me from her closet.

She knows I hate heels, so she hands me stylish cream flats with thick soles. They go with my floral flare dress with spaghetti straps.

Mercy smiles when she’s done giving me a makeover, and it fills me with joy. I can do this more often.

Wear dresses.

If it’ll make her happy? I owe it to her. I don’t want her frowning. It reminds me of bad days.

It reminds me of Mom.

As luck would have it, I've got most of Dad's attributes. I'm short with bright hair. I've got Dad's crooked nose and his brows. That means I have virtually no brows. Meanwhile, Mercy? She's got Mom's long and slender body.

Her face is a carbon copy of Mom.

When Mercy's sad, I see my mom's face.

I don't want to see her face.

By the time we're ready to go, Danger realizes she'll be alone for the night. Our cab's downstairs, waiting. We're up here consoling the little predator.

Mercy doesn't seem to care that Danger's furry coat rubs all over her shiny dress. She cuddles with her cat, whispering to her. "We'll be back before you know it. I've set you up with your favorite dinner. Be good, will you? Protect our home while I'm away."

"She's a cat," I remind her. I've seen enough cuddling for the day. I don't want any part of that now, do I? "Not a dog."

"Danger's possessive. She's feral when she wants to be," Mercy proclaims and Danger purrs in agreement. "She may not bite like a dog, but she'll do what needs to be done, won't you? She's got sharp claws."

Don't I know that.

One last peck, and we're out.

Downstairs, the cab driver is about to throw a fit when he sees me climb into the car. He doesn't manage to open his mouth because Mercy slips in right behind me, showering the man with excuses.

She's a performer, my sister. Like mother, like daughter.

Her eyes are bleak, but she sits next to me, entertaining the cab driver with stories as he takes us down to Miami Beach.

Before we step out of the cab, Mercy makes sure to give the man a generous tip. Quietly, I sit there, waiting for my turn to climb out of the cab.

"You want to grab a bite?" Mercy asks out of the blue.

“I thought—”

“We’re early,” Mercy says, but I don’t believe it’s true. We coddled Danger for more than an hour before leaving. It’s late, and the streets burst with people. They’re all dressed like us, fancy dresses and good shoes. When men walk by, they almost stop and stare at my sister.

She’s not showing a lot of skin today which is unusual for her standards, but she wears killer heels that accentuate her long legs.

People die for that shit.

“There’s this doner kebab place that just opened not far from here...” Mercy grabs my hand, and she takes the lead.

“Doner kebab?” I’ve never had that before.

“I spent some time in Berlin a couple of years ago...” It doesn’t seem like a fond memory. Her lower lip trembles. “Down the street from my hotel, there was this tiny street food spot. I was having a bad day, and the man at the counter made me feel welcome. I appreciated that.”

She sobers up, blinking her eyes, stretching her neck. “We can have Cuban food on another day, yeah?”

I nod. I’m new to this.

Ten minutes later, we’re on a bench with greasy food in our hands. People stared at Mercy before, but now, she’s even more of a spectacle. She dives into her sandwich, not giving a shit that there are so many juices dripping from it.

“What if I mess up my dress?” I ask. I wouldn’t care on any other day, but she’s with me today, and I don’t want to embarrass her.

“Mess it up, Lou. Mess it the fuck up! This is too good,” Mercy cheers. She licks her lips. She makes love to the sandwich, eating it with a ferocity I’m not used to from her. My sister doesn’t curse. She eats like a lady. She doesn’t do this, whatever it is.

“Okay then.”

Just like that, I decide to do as I please. I bite down on that sandwich, and together, we make a mess of our appearances.

When we finish, and the only thing that's left is the white paper the food was wrapped in and the grease on our fingers, coupled with stains we pretend don't exist, Mercy finally speaks.

"I'm proud of you," my sister says. Her eyes glisten in the dark. I wish my mother had been proud of me. "Is this what you want? Going to college?"

I nod because what else is there to do?

"And I'm also sorry. I know you hate apologies. It sucks that I have to do this, but every day we spent apart was a day that I felt like shit for not getting you out of there," Mercy claims. She crumples up the white paper in her hand. "It won't go away. It doesn't matter what I do to make up for it."

"It's okay," I say.

"No, it's not," Mercy insists. "You mean the world to me. It's just us now, isn't it?"

Our parents are alive, but they're dead to us. I give my sister a nod.

"I've made a lot of money, Lou." I'm about to ask how and why. It's right there on my tongue. But I chicken out. "I've worked hard for it. I have. I don't... You're the only family I have. You. So, excuse me if I give you a laptop you don't want. You're my sister, and I'll take care of you. Always. Anything you need. My money is yours. Mom... She messed up. Bad. I want you to have opportunities, Lou."

"Thank you," I say because I don't know what else to say. My belly is full, and I can't focus. When Mom pops up in conversation, I lose a fragment of my sanity. I can't sit still.

"Don't ever say that again. You don't get to thank me." Mercy rises from the bench. "You're going to do great in college, okay? We've got tutoring lined up and everything else you need. We'll do this together."

I nod. I need help because I don't even understand how I got admitted to college. Sure, Mercy helped me with my applications. She pushed me hard, stayed up late with me to study for finals on the phone. I barely made it, but I'm here.

I don't know what I'm doing, but I'm here.

Chapter 2

Loulou

I HIDE BEHIND MY SISTER LIKE I'M HER SHADOW.

An ugly one, asocial. Not very talkative.

I've never been inside a club like this, and I can say that I'm overwhelmed by it. The air tastes like sin, so do the drinks in our hands. The bouncer at the door took one look at Mercy, called her his pretty bird, and then he let us in.

I'm underage—only eighteen, in no way allowed to touch alcohol. They don't care. Our lipsticks are smudged. When I look at Mercy, she looks so much like Mom that it makes me sick, but I keep it together. Mercy shed a tear or two on our way to the club, so her face is fucked up. My dress has stains on it.

Nobody gives a fuck.

Pretty bird, this. Pretty bird, that.

“You're a lucky bitch,” Amy tells my sister. Amy is a friend of Mercy's. So she says. Lots of people have introduced themselves as my sister's friends, but none of them feel like it. They don't call her Mercy.

She's their pretty bird.

Whatever that means.

Mercy doesn't like the nickname, and I wonder why.

“I still have that contract with—”

Mercy interrupts Amy, the girl in the red dress with cleavage that almost spills out of her dress. “Yeah, it's tough to

get out of it. I was relieved when I walked out. It felt good.”

“Why are you not taking advantage of the custom shit people want? I swear, Luna sent out panties, and she got a hefty check...”

I’ve had enough drinks for the night. Nobody bothers to check my ID. I’m not a drinker, so I sway on my feet. My world spins. I’m loose. Yet, I realize that Mercy hasn’t touched her drink.

She plays around with it, sucking on the straw. She doesn’t *drink*, though.

Funny.

We parade around the club, and I take in girls shaking their asses on poles, by the bar. I may not know how to use a smartphone, but I know strip clubs. They serve good food. The girls can be nice.

We’re not in a strip club. This is a high-end spot, no shady business. At least, that’s what it looks like from afar. It smells like expensive fragrance in here. It’s an overwhelming sensation for my nose, along with the thumping trap song in my ears.

The female guests are dressed funny. My sister usually wears revealing clothes, but she picked today as a day of chastity. She likes standing out, my Mercy. In a crowd of overexposed tits and ass cheeks, Mercy went with a conservative black dress. Clever!

We meet more of Mercy’s so-called friends, barging in on intimate moments. How intimate are they when they lick each other’s tongues in public, making a show out of it? Girls on girls. There are some boys, but Mercy doesn’t waste her time on them.

She is adamant on all the girls meeting *me*.

Mercy introduces me as her sister, and they all gawk at me in the dimmed lights. It tingles me, this amount of attention. I don’t know what to do with it.

They look at us as though Mercy is my mother, and I'm her asocial child, forced to be paraded around in front of her friends. To show off.

The mood shifts when a group of three men enters the club. All the girls my sister introduced me to, the ones in tiny fabrics of clothing, expensive perfume, and stiletto heels, they collectively gasp at this new development.

Their jaws drop to the floor.

Perhaps that's just my imagination. My vision is blurry, and I can't quite find my footing. I grasp my sister's arm who has turned cold.

She's an ice statue.

She doesn't glance at the three men that have entered the club with bravado and a healthy dose of BDE. Big dick energy. My sister taught me that. The first thing I learned in Miami.

"Are you okay?" Mercy asks. "You're grinning like crazy."

I open my mouth to reply, but the words come out slurred. "All... Gooooood. Purr... Purrfek!"

"Shit! Your drink!"



A NASTY GROWL WAKES ME.

I rub my eyes, and as I turn to my side, nausea whacks me in the gut. I empty my stomach all over the bed.

In shock, I stare at the mess I've created.

I swallow the bitter taste in my mouth.

It takes everything inside of me, every ounce of strength I can assemble, to get up from the bed and change the sheets. These may be my final days in this condo, but I won't leave my bedroom in chaos.

My sister deserves better.

Although my head hurts, and I can barely move my limbs, I change the sheets.

Danger growls some more, and I try to work faster. She's probably hungry.

Mercy must have gone to work already. She'll come home to drive me away later.

And that's where I take a step back. My mouth goes dry. What happened last night?

I grab the dirty sheets and I take them to Mercy's neatly organized laundry room.

We must have gone out?

My hangover confirms it.

"Danger? Where are you?" I call out once I reach the kitchen. I hold on to the kitchen island before I succumb, taking a seat. I can't stand up without feeling knots in my stomach.

Danger's stainless steel bowls are both empty. The residue is dry, meaning this bowl hasn't been cleaned since yesterday. Did Mercy forget to feed Danger? What the fuck? Quickly, I pick up the bowls, cleaning them and filling them up. This is the part where Danger usually strolls over to the kitchen. She can smell her food from afar.

She's nowhere in sight.

I take a deep breath, and I make my way through the condo, whispering the cat's name.

She's probably made a mess somewhere out of anger. I feel horrible for the empty bowls I faced earlier. She may be a spoiled cat, but she doesn't deserve to hunger because Mercy and I decided to get drunk last night.

Fucking hell.

"Dang—"

The words stay stuck in my mouth when I shove Mercy's door open.

I know something is wrong before I take another breath, a step inside the room. Quivering, I lean against the doorframe. I found Danger. She's right there, in front of Mercy's bed.

Hissing.

Growling.

She's rigid, her little body stiff. Her unblinking eyes glare at the bed. She doesn't pay any attention to me.

Mercy is all that matters.

But is that really Mercy on the bed?

It's not.

It can't be.

My sister's at work. She's not home. That's not her body on this fucking bed.

"Mercy?" I ask, but there is no response. She wears a dress that I don't recognize. She wouldn't go to bed in a dress. She brags about her silk pajamas, her night gowns. "Mercy? Wake up. Please."

I can't move my feet.

Danger can climb the bed. She does it every day. Today, she scratches the wooden bed base.

Mercy told me not to make any sudden moves when Danger's upset. She can lash out at me. Right now, this seems plausible.

I take shallow breaths, my insides hurting. I collapse. "Mercy... Wake up..."

I crawl over to the bed, tears stinging my eyes. I have to do this.

Mercy doesn't move. She doesn't twitch. Her eyes remain shut. She's cold. I don't have to touch her to know.

Something happened here.

I get up from the floor, and I stomp toward my room. After a quick search for my phone, I call 911.