

REBEL BLOOM



*Now only
for the*

BOSS

HOLE

NANNY FOR THE BOSSHOLE

REBEL BLOOM

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*****AGGIE*****

“You have boobs.”

I lifted my head slowly to face the small human standing mere inches from the front of my high heels. I’d been buried in my crossword puzzle and hadn’t noticed her sneaking up on me. Smiling at the tiny kid, I nodded, because her observation skills were on point. “Yep. I do have boobs.”

She giggled. “I learned in school that boobs feed babies. Isn’t that gross?”

Tilting my head to the side, I considered it. “I mean... It’s not my first choice of boob activity, but formula is expensive.”

“What’s boob activity?”

I grunted and closed my crossword book. “How old are you, kid?”

She sat in the high-backed chair next to me and folded her hands in her lap. “Six. How old are you?”

I'd give her the fact that she was cute, but no one was getting my age from me that easily. I'd just turned thirty-one and I was ashamed to admit that I wasn't gliding into my thirties with pride. As embarrassing as it was, I checked for gray hairs at least once a week while getting ready in the morning. So far, there were none, but I was still nervous. My dad had gone silver by thirty and while the look worked for him, I wasn't prepared to accept that fate. "Old enough."

She looked at my book and I watched the tip of her tongue poke out through a gap in her teeth where an adult tooth would come in eventually. "My uncle does those. He won't let me help him. He says they're *too hard for a little girl*."

I laughed at the way she mimicked her uncle's deeper voice. "No way. I started doing these when I was practically still in diapers. Want me to show you how they're done?"

Nodding eagerly, she scooted closer. "I'm not supposed to talk to strangers, but Beth isn't any fun. She just tells me to sit down and stay quiet."

I looked over at Beth sitting at the receptionist desk, who didn't seem to realize that her young charge wasn't at her side. "I'm Aggie."

She giggled while shaking my hand. "I'm Gracie."

"We're not strangers anymore, are we?" I opened my book to a new page and moved it closer to her. "Let's solve this puzzle, huh? I have an appointment with some big guys here, but I have a feeling they're going to keep me waiting. Such old school, boys' club bullsh-crap."

“What’s that?”

I crossed my legs and leaned into Gracie. “Boys’ club crap? It’s when boys get away with doing whatever they want because they’re boys. It’s unfair and silly. Some boys think they’re so important and special, just because they were born with a pe-peanut sized brain.”

The sweet little girl looked like she came from money, with a beautiful strand of real pearls hanging around her neck and matching earrings. The velvet bow in her hair looked impressive, too, as it matched her dress perfectly. She probably wasn’t used to people being crude around her and I wasn’t used to being around kids. If Beth didn’t take Gracie back to her corner soon, I was going to scar the poor kid.

“Boys at my school pull my hair.” She frowned down at her hands. “They laugh because my braids are never even. My uncle can’t braid hair, though.”

I gently patted her shoulder. “Screw ‘em. The next time those boys laugh at you, I want you to look at them and glare. Give them the meanest look you can manage. My dad and I always practiced my mean expressions, just in case.”

She made a face that was more confused than mean and then smiled wide. “Like that?”

“How about you practice it?” I wiggled the book under her face. “Now. *Crosswords*. Let me show you how my dad taught me.”

I lost myself in teaching Gracie how to work out a crossword and had plenty of time to do it. I'd been right about the Graves brothers yanking my chain. Of course they were making me wait. I'd heard all about their interview process from my ex. I knew their tricks and I was ready for them.

Being near Gracie had eased some of the fury that was fueling me those days, but not nearly enough to calm me completely. I felt like nothing would ever calm me completely, nothing except watching Monroe Blake crash and burn.

“Donkey?”

I saw the space and chuckled. “Jackass.”

“That’s a bad word, isn’t it?” She still giggled as she struggled to write the word in the small boxes, while I spelled it. “I can’t say that word.”

“I’ll say it enough for both of us, Gracie. Don’t you worry. Especially when I think about how these men are keeping me waiting. That’s the thing about boys and men, Gracie. No matter how much of an expert a girl becomes, there’s always a boy standing in the way. That’s why I’m here. One man stood in my way. Now, three more are. Don’t rush to grow up, kid. At least when the boys around you pull your hair, you can still get away with kicking them. When I do it, it’s suddenly assault.”

“*Gracie!* What did I say? You have to stay back here.” Beth had finally realized that there wasn’t a kid with her. “Come on. Now.”

I was about to argue that Gracie wasn't bothering me when Beth turned her cold expression my way.

"They're ready for you. Conference room C."

I stood up and straightened my skirt before kneeling in front of Gracie. "It was nice meeting you, Gracie. Maybe I'll see you around if I get this job. We can take our lunch breaks together and talk crap about everyone around us. Sound good?"

She threw her arms around my neck and hugged me tight before rushing back to Beth's desk of bore. I ignored the rush of emotion at the feeling of being hugged and went in search of conference room C.

The one good thing that had come from being with Monroe for five years was his constant need to hear himself speak. He'd ranted for the entire half decade about the Graves brothers and how they conducted business. He loved to talk about the rumors he'd heard and the things he knew from people he'd poached from their interview process. The brothers were notorious for making it hard on their applicants, even down to finding the correct conference room.

They were interviewing me for position of digital strategist, however. If I couldn't find the men, I didn't deserve to be hired. I solved problems. It was literally what I did for a living. Well, it had been until Monroe got a bug up his butt and fired me.

With a new wave of white-hot rage coursing through me, I stopped in the middle of the hall and studied the expressions

and glances of the people milling about. Finding the correct conference room was easy after I read the nervous glances of the employees. Despite it not being labeled and looking like a janitor's closet from the outside, I knocked lightly and let myself into the correct room before two minutes had passed on my watch. It was actually a minute and thirty seconds.

Unfortunately, my carefully laid plans and Monroe's gossip hadn't prepared me for the three men standing around the head of the small conference table. History would've called them charismatic. Even *I* had a moment of cult-like reverence when they turned to look at me, their dark expressions burning me alive.

*****AGGIE*****

“ *Wow* .” I whispered the single word under my breath and then did my best to regain my control. Sure, the Graves brothers were much better looking than their pictures did justice, but that didn’t matter. What mattered was that I needed a job. The job they were hiring for. There wasn’t another job in the country that would allow me to do what I needed to do; they were it.

Still, I couldn’t help noticing the height and strength of the men in front of me. I’d always been a sucker for well-built men and they didn’t lack in that area. The three of them all had the same thick, dark hair that reminded me of melted chocolate, and unfortunately, I loved chocolate. Their intense gazes were identical in the way they seemed to want to ignite me on the spot. Those dark gazes helped me refocus on why I was there. Arrogant men with attitude problems had to learn to play nice.

“Ms. Young. We’ve been waiting. Take a seat.” The oldest brother, Zander Graves, looked me over with the coolness of

an iceberg. “I’m not sure how you’re used to conducting business, but we run a tight ship here at The Graves Company. Punctuality is important.”

I smiled. “Of course, Sir. That’s why I knew something had to be wrong when my ten o’clock appointment came and went with no word. I hope everything is okay.”

His eyes flashed as he unbuttoned his suit jacket and folded his long body into the chair at the head of the table. I couldn’t see what color his eyes were from across the room, but I couldn’t mistake the fire in them. “Cute.”

I barely resisted making a face as I settled into the chair across from him. I had spent a decade of my life working at their biggest competitor. I’d bought into the narrative that Monroe’s family company was just that, a family company, and that TGC was a massive monster, built of new money and pompous egos. It was hard to let that go so easily.

Knight Graves sat next to his older brother and looked me over. “You spent ten years at Monroe Blake’s company and now you’re here. Why?”

I licked my lips at the utterly dry feeling his question left in my mouth. I hadn’t expected them to go for the jugular quite so quickly. “Things change. I worked my way to the top and found that my opportunities to grow shrank to nothing. I love my work and I love being challenged. I didn’t feel like more time at Blake Corp would’ve changed the level of opportunities.”

Zander twisted his fingers together on top of the table and stared me down. “It has nothing to do with the supposed breakup between yourself and Monroe Blake?”

I ground my teeth together as a renewed fury washed over me. What I’d known would happen had already happened, it seemed. No one would’ve known about our breakup without Monroe making it known. The only way the three men in front of me would’ve known was if Monroe was blacklisting me in our industry. I just hoped it worked in my favor. The Graves brothers hated Monroe. “My personal life should hold no bearing here. My work speaks for itself.”

Kyrin, Knight’s twin, shook his head and rested his fists on the table. “You honestly expect us to believe that Monroe Blake didn’t send his little girlfriend over here to play spy?”

I felt the top of my head tingle as the desire to punch the men seemed more and more like a valid option. “I am *not* Monroe Blake’s little girlfriend, Mr. Graves. My name is Aggie Young and I’m the best digital strategist you’ll ever have in this room. I understand that my past employer could cause some pause, but I trust that three men who grew a small company into what you have today are beyond rumors and speculation.”

Knight pulled his black framed glasses off and squeezed the bridge of his nose. His dark hair was slightly too long and it fell across his forehead as he put his glasses back on. With the shadow of a beard on his strong jaw, he could’ve been Clark Kent with those glasses and his strong body. “Some pause?”

You say like that we haven't been thwarting Blake's idiotic attempts at sabotage for the past decade. Why would we ever think this is anything different?"

Kyrin stood up and gripped the back of his chair. In just a button-down shirt and slacks, he looked the most down to earth, but when he spoke, it was more than clear that he was a Graves, through and through. "We've attended the same fundraisers over the years, Ms. Young. Blake kept a tight leash on you. Are we supposed to believe that he just let you go suddenly? And that you just showed up here?"

I interlocked my fingers in my lap and met each of their hard gazes. It was news to me that we'd attended the same events. I would've remembered seeing them. "He didn't *let me go suddenly*. He broke up with me and fired me when I wouldn't leave work to do his bidding. He cast my job away like I didn't save his company time and time again over the last five years, especially. I assure you, nothing about losing my job and my life's work was *sudden*. Not to me."

Zander held up his hand and leaned forward. "We take our hiring process very seriously. We only hire the best and we vet each and every hire. The things we do here are all top-secret and letting a fox in the henhouse, so to speak, would be one of the dumbest moves we could ever make. *I assure you*, Ms. Young, nothing about what we do could ever be labeled as dumb."

I straightened even farther. My back was a steel rod at that point of the conversation. I was fighting to keep my temper in

check as hard as I could. “Have you looked at my resume? I attached a portfolio of the projects I’ve led, minus identifying features, of course. I’m sure you won’t feel like hiring me would be a dumb mistake if you looked everything over.”

“Why do you want to work here? Honestly?” Knight stared me down with an intensity I’d never felt before. I would’ve sworn I could feel his gaze burning through my clothes and scorching my skin.

I took a deep breath. “Honestly?”

Zander nodded once. “It’s what we prefer.”

“I want to destroy Monroe Blake. I worked harder than anyone else in that company. I was the last one to leave every day. I bled for that company. I loved it. I made it better, too. I improved the company and I felt pride in that. I would’ve continued working there for as long as possible, even after the breakup.” I lowered my voice again when I realized I’d been speaking louder with my growing passion. “For Monroe to fire me over his hurt feelings is one of the most infuriating things to ever happen to me. I want to destroy him for it. The right way.”

“Your company is a stunning example of a thriving business, but I can make it better. Give me an hour with your marketing team and I’ll come back with ten different solutions for how to grow your reach. I want to make your company even larger than it already is so it slowly and systematically chokes the life out of Blake Corp. I could do it from anywhere,

but it would take too long at a smaller company. Not that they'd even hire me. I'm assuming I've been blacklisted."

Kyrin whistled. "Revenge. That's the first time we've ever heard that one."

Knight nodded. "No kidding. Revenge is not exactly something I'd stake our company on. This is our father's legacy. We would never leave it resting on the too narrow shoulders of an angry ex-girlfriend."

"I'll be honest. You're believable. And the idea of Monroe Blake screwing someone over adds up." Zander steepled his fingers in front of his chest as he sat forward. "You're not worth the risk, however, Ms. Young. There's not a chance in the world that we'd take a chance on you. Hiring a spy sounds about as fun as stapling my dick to this table. No, thank you."

I narrowed my eyes but kept my temper in check. "I'd urge you to reconsider. Please. Just look over my portfolio."

Zander Graves' answer was to slide his copy of my resume and portfolio across the table to me. Tilting his head, he studied me. "You can go now."

I slid my information back towards him as I stood up. Anger threatened to spill out at any second, so I kept my mouth shut as I strode out of conference room C, unsure of where I was going from there.

*****KYRIN*****

“Is Blake seriously so desperate that sending his woman to us seemed like a good idea? We could chew her up and spit her out before lunch.” I stared out the floor to ceiling windows in Zander’s office and shook my head. “I would have considered it if she didn’t look ready to rip our faces off.”

Zander tapped one of his favorite gold pens against his mouth and frowned. “The handful of times I’ve seen them together, he looked like he was clinging to her. I don’t know if I believe he’d send her to us.”

“So, what?” Knight tossed his glasses on the desk and sighed. “You think she was legit?”

“Not a chance in hell. You saw her portfolio. No way in hell is she as talented as she claims. Blake is a lot of things, but he’s not dumb enough to send away anyone so talented.” Zander dropped his pen and stood up. “If he had that kind of power in his pocket, he wouldn’t be pulling his idiotic spy shit so often.”

I focused across the skyline at the Blake Corp building and scowled at the modern monstrosity. “I’m still a big fan of the idea of just handling this the old way. Give me two minutes with that piece of shit on the back forty of our property and I’ll set him straight.”

“You can have your time with the man, if I can have some time with his woman.” Knight surprised both of us with his crude honesty. “It’s been a long time for me and there’s something about the hard set of her jaw that makes me want to bend her over. She’ll be a pain in the ass of anyone she ends up with, that much is clear.”

My mind snapped back to the angry look on Ms. Young’s face and I nearly groaned at the memory of her green eyes burning with fury. Eyes as big as hers were usually innocent, at least in appearance, but hers were anything but. There was a challenge in every glance, a demand for the object of her focus to explain themselves or feel her wrath. With full cheeks and a cute little nose, she had all the makings of a Disney princess. I’d bet her hair flowed down her back in gentle waves and she’d fit perfectly in a glass slipper, but with anger like hers, there weren’t going to be any birds circling around her to lend a hand anytime soon. She’d strike fear in an alligator with one look.

I shook my head. Having a kid around was fucking with the way I thought. Why the hell was I thinking about princesses and glass slippers?

I gave myself a moment more to fondly recall the way her pencil skirt had hugged her ass and showcased a killer pair of legs. Seeing her leave in a huff had been enjoyable in more ways than one. “Speaking of asses...”

Zander grunted and rapped his knuckles against his desk. “She’s with Blake. No matter how fucking perfect her ass is, she’s off-limits.”

I chuckled. “I was going to say that we need to find another donkey. A female one. Chuck’s orders.”

Knight grabbed his glasses while laughing. “Glad to know I wasn’t the only one thinking about the curves of Ms. Young’s body.”

The intercom system buzzed and Beth’s frantic voice filled the office, followed shortly by the sound of Gracie screaming. “We need you down here now!”

I didn’t take the moment I needed to gather myself before running out to find Gracie. Zander and Knight were at my heels, the three of us taking the stairs to the floor below where Gracie was supposed to be hanging out with Beth at the executive level reception desk. My heart raced painfully, the same way it did every time I heard Gracie scream. I wasn’t sure my heart had ever settled back down fully after the first time we’d heard Gracie scream that night in the hospital. She’d been hurt in the accident that killed her parents, but her screams hadn’t been over the pain she felt.

The three of us had never looked less professional as we slid to a stop in front of Beth’s desk. Gracie was on her back in the

middle of the lobby, throwing the tantrum of all tantrums. Her legs and arms were flying about and her face was bright red. Her screams were so shrill that my head instantly throbbed painfully.

Gracie's tantrums were exactly why we'd been going through nannies. No one could handle her. Least of all me. I could break a wild stallion in less time than it took to calm Gracie down.

Standing over her, I frowned. "What's wrong, Gracie?"

She screamed something unintelligible and kicked her legs harder. I was uncomfortably aware of the people milling about, staring in at our private life. I hated exposing Gracie to it when she'd already been through so much.

She squeaked when I grabbed her by the front of her dress and lifted her off the ground. "Put me down, Uncle Ky!"

I carried her flailing body to the stairwell and winced as her screams bounced around the smaller space. "Not until we get up to our office."

Zander moved around me on the stairs and opened the door for us. "I've got to say, I was having a better time discussing Ms. Young."

Gracie continued to scream until I dropped her on the couch in Zander's office. Then, she curled up and glared at the three of us.

"Look here, Gracie. You can't keep screaming in the office like that. If you're upset, you have to use your words. We can't

read your mind.” I sat on the coffee table in front of her and rested my forearms on my legs. “We’re going to find you a new nanny as soon as possible. Someone who will work for the next month. So, they don’t even have to be perfect.”

“I don’t want a new nanny! I want Aggie!” Gracie sat up and crossed her arms over her chest. “I only want Aggie!”

Zander grunted. “Excuse me?”

“I like Aggie! I want her to be my nanny!” With a look of stubbornness on her face that came straight from her mother, Gracie laid out her demands in a way that wasn’t unlike a bank robber. “Aggie can be my nanny and I won’t ever have to stay with Beth again. I don’t like Beth. She’s mean and boring and just tells me to sit still and be quiet.”

The three of us, the adults, stayed silent and looked at each other in concern. She wanted Aggie. The only Aggie I knew was the Aggie we’d just interviewed. Agatha Young, ex-girlfriend of Monroe Blake and latest person to be turned down for a job at TGC. Agatha Young, suspected spy.

Knight sank into the couch next to Gracie after grabbing his laptop from Zander’s desk. He tapped a few buttons and then stared at his screen with a scowl morphing his features. “Gracie approached Ms. Young while she was waiting for us to see her.”

Zander moved around to see the screen and frowned. “What are they doing?”

With another tap of a button, Gracie and Aggie's conversation could be heard. Aggie was speaking animatedly to Gracie while simultaneously teaching her how to work out a crossword puzzle. "Show me the face once more. The one you'll make when that punk pulls your hair again."

Gracie from the past made a funny face and giggled. It'd been so long since I'd heard her giggle that I felt the air leave my lungs.

"Oh, lord, kid. No, not like that. You don't want this bully to think you have to pee, do you? You want him to be scared of you. You want him to take one look at you and run away crying." Aggie watched Gracie run through a series of faces and then gasped. "Yes! That one! The next time that kid touches you, you show him that face. And tell him that if he does it again, you know an adult who isn't against hitting mean little boys. Don't get me wrong. I know I'm not supposed to hit kids, but I just feel like if more men had been knocked down a peg when they were just mean little boys, I wouldn't be sitting here as a pawn in three rich dudes' power play."

"Fucking hell." Zander shook his head and sent a sharp look Gracie's way. "You want that insane woman as your nanny?"

Gracie made the face Aggie had encouraged her to make and narrowed her eyes. "Aggie is nice. I don't want anyone else."

"You don't always get what you want, Gracie." Zander stood up and paced to his desk and back. "That woman is nuts."

She told you she'd hit a child!"

"This is boys' club bull-crap, Uncle Zander."

I pressed my fist to my mouth and fought the urge to laugh as our tiny niece railroaded us. We needed a nanny. Desperately. The idea of Aggie Young in our house, spending all her time with our niece, though? It was insane. There was no way it would work. Gracie would be beating up kids in no time under Aggie's guidance.

"Gracie. You're the kid. We're the adults. You don't get to scream and kick to get your way. We know that you've been having a hard—"

As if to prove a point, Gracie started screaming again. There were no tears, just sheer determination and willingness to rip her throat to shreds to get what she wanted.

Knight groaned. "Remember the time Zella didn't shower for a week straight to prove a point to Mom? She went to prom with greasy hair. This kid has her mother's ability to wreck us. Let's just do it."

I shrugged. "I can't listen to this screaming."

Zander knelt in front of Gracie and gave her a hard stare. "This is not how you get things you want from now on, Gracie. If we let you grow into a brat who throws tantrums to get what she wants, we'll never forgive ourselves. We'll ask Ms. Young if she'd be interested in the job, but she isn't a nanny, Gracie. She probably won't want to work as one."

Gracie threw her arms around Zander's neck and screamed, this time in excitement. "Thank you! Aggie is so cool! She taught me how to do a crossword puzzle, Uncle Knight. Even though you said I was too little."

Knight sighed and muttered under his breath as he walked away. "Fuck me."

*****AGGIE*****

When my phone had rung just an hour after I had left TGC, I'd figured it would be my dad, asking me how it went. I hadn't had the heart to tell him the sordid details so I'd been preparing to ignore the call when I'd seen it was Maggie Holcomb, the HR employee who'd been in contact with me about my interview with the Graves brothers. I'd answered, expecting an immediate rejection, or some other cruel move. Instead, I'd been invited to the brothers' personal lawyer's office for a job offer.

I had no clue what the hell that meant, but there was no way I was going to miss it. Especially not after I'd made a few calls in the short amount of time since leaving my interview and found out for sure that I'd been blacklisted. I couldn't afford to ignore any communication from the Graveses. Even if I wanted to shove their job offer up their rude backsides and laugh in their stupidly handsome faces.

I was surprised to find their lawyer's office on the outskirts of Dallas, in a small residential area. Nestled between two

suburbs was a small cluster of beautiful homes that had been turned into offices. The law office of Henry J. Kuller was situated between a dentist office and a pediatrician's office, both quaint and peaceful in the middle of a busy workday. I could see the allure of the offices after just leaving downtown Dallas, where I'd been honked at a dozen times and nearly run over almost as much.

I parked my aging car behind a giant pickup truck and stepped out just as Kyrin Graves exited the truck. I ran my eyes over the truck and then the man, hoping to find the two at odds. I liked the truck; I didn't want to find anything alluring about the man. Unfortunately, Kyrin had found the time to change into a pair of blue jeans that looked worn perfectly to his body and a T-shirt that fit the same. Gone was the businessman. Standing in front of me was a man who might've fit in just fine at one of the rodeos I'd gone to as a teen.

There was a reason I'd stopped going to those rodeos. Cowboys were a weakness of mine. After finding myself boots up on the back of a mechanical bull when I should've been taking an important test at school, I swore to avoid cowboys until I was finished going where I needed to go. There was something about the snug denim and lazy gazes that melted my brain.

Kyrin reached back into his truck and pulled out a cowboy hat, settling it over his head while staring at me. "Ma'am."

I let out a low swear and lifted my hair off the back of my neck to cool off. It was hot out and even hotter standing within

a mile of a man who looked like Kyrin Graves in a cowboy hat. With my brain scrambling, my attitude had nothing to keep it in check. “Don’t call me ma’am.”

“I don’t think you’d like the other things I could call you. Ma’am.” He tipped his hat at me and left me staring after him while he loped towards the front door of the lawyer’s office.

I crossed my arms under my chest and felt my blood pressure increasing. “Who lopes? What is this? A western? Jackass man.”

Without a reason to stay outside for longer, I followed him inside and was greeted by his wide back standing right in my way. I inched around him while telling myself not to mention it.

“Miss Young. Thank you for coming on such short notice.” Zander stood from a beautiful leather side chair and buttoned his suit jacket. “I’m sure you’re wondering what this is about.”

I shifted farther away from Kyrin and nodded. “I am. It didn’t seem like any of you were interested in having me work for you just an hour ago.”

Knight joined our little group, laptop in hand. He motioned to the room he’d come from. “Ready.”

Zander nodded. “We have a job offer for you, but it’s...a little unconventional. Come in and sit. Our lawyer is finishing up the offer now.”

I stepped into a lush room with thick carpet, velvet drapes, and a sitting area with two couches facing each other. It was an

intimate setting, much too intimate for my comfort while surrounded by three men I'd been groomed to think of as the enemy. Not to say that they weren't doing an excellent job of convincing me that they were in fact the enemy all by themselves.

Kyrin settled on the couch next to where I stood, legs spread in the way that men do to take up all the room around them. Knight and Zander took the couch across from me, their eyes on me as I continued to hover. It was Kyrin who finally groaned. "Do you need an invitation to sit, ma'am?"

I cut my eyes at him and dropped to the couch, thighs clenched together and turned away from him. "Do you need an invitation to close your legs, sir?"

My stomach dropped as fire ignited behind his hazel eyes. I couldn't help noticing they were the same color as Knight's, except for a smudge of dark green that broke through a ring of gold near his pupil. His lazy gaze had shifted into something predatory, but it was gone just as fast as it appeared. I dropped my eyes to my hands in my lap and bit my tongue, confused about what I'd seen and even more confused about what I was doing there when it was so obvious the three of them didn't trust me.

"The job offer we have for you isn't one you applied for. It's not something we've listed through the company, even. It's something personal." Zander's deep voice drew my gaze to his. When he seemed happy he had my full attention, he

continued. “We gained guardianship of our niece a little over a year ago. You met her this morning. Gracie.”

I didn’t bother hiding my shocked expression. “*Gracie* is your niece? But she’s so...*sweet*.”

“It seems that whatever personality flaws you might see in us weren’t inherited by Gracie. She does seem to be a poor judge of character, however.” Zander sat forward and rested his elbows on his knees as he stared at me. “We’ve gone through fifteen nannies in the year we’ve had her. No one stays. The reason Gracie was at the office today is that her current nanny quit suddenly and the agency has no one else to send until the end of the month.”

I made the mistake of relaxing in my curiosity, letting my guard down as I tried to imagine the sweet girl I’d met causing a fuss. I crossed my legs and leaned forward. “*Gracie* is running off nannies? How? She was as sweet as pie this morning.”

“That’s the crux of it all. Gracie was behaved with you. She liked you. The other nannies... Let’s just say that she has figured out how to get rid of the women the agency has sent so far. She’s been through a lot and she’s more than just the sweet girl you saw this morning.”

I looked between the three men, confused about why I was involved in the conversation. “I’m really sorry she’s had a tough go of it. She seems like an angel. I’m sure my dad would’ve loved it if I’d been more like her as a girl. I’m just a bit confused about how this concerns me.”

“Gracie threw a tantrum this morning, screaming until we all wanted to stab ourselves in the ears. She’s demanding her new friend be her nanny.” Zander sighed heavily. “Trust us when we say, this was not our idea. This isn’t anything we want or think is a good plan. We still think you’re dirty.”

A flash of heat streaked through my body and left my face flushed. Leave it to my body to ignore all the rude shit the man was saying to pick up on the word ‘dirty’. I gripped my thighs and smoothed out my skirt while forcing my foot to stop bouncing.

“She wants you to be her nanny.” Zander put the idea out there and didn’t wait for me to catch up. “She screamed for it and we don’t have time to talk her down from this tantrum. We’re in the middle of several huge deals and she needs a nanny. We’ll pay you the amount you made in a year at Blake’s.”

I laughed, thinking it was a joke. “That’s funny. You’re funny. I didn’t peg you as someone who had even the smallest sense of humor, but I was wrong. Good one.”

Kyrin tilted his head to stare at me. “Are we really considering hiring this woman?”

I snapped my head around to face him and scowled. “*This woman* has a name.”

He leaned into my space and raised his eyebrows. “You have a lot of attitude for someone who was begging for a job just an hour ago.”

“I never beg.” I looked back at Zander. “Is this seriously the job offer? I’ve spent a decade honing my skills and being the best at what I do, and you are seriously offering me a job as your *nanny*?”

“It’s the only job offer you’ll ever get from us.” Knight sat back and stretched his legs out in front of him, resting his feet on either side of mine. “We don’t make a habit of sleeping with the enemy, Aggie.”

I stood up suddenly. “And you won’t be starting with me.”

“Sit down, Miss Young.” The demand from Zander, and it was very clearly a demand, sent a *zing* of energy up my spine and left me breathless. His whiskey-colored eyes burned through me as I lowered my body back to the couch, much to my surprise. “The job will last one month. You’ll stay at our home so you can be with Gracie full-time. You’ll have Sundays off. We’ll pay you your yearly salary from Blake’s, like I stated earlier. You’ll spend your time with Gracie, taking care of her in whatever ways she needs. You’ll mind your business and sign an NDA that would sink the rest of your life down the toilet if you ever shared a single thing about our lives with anyone outside of our family. Am I clear?”

Kyrin cleared his throat. “Zan...”

“Miss Young? Am I clear?” Zander stood and moved to stand next to me. He towered over me and I had to tip my head back to look up at him, a move he seemed to like, judging by the slight lift of one side of his mouth. “It’s this, or nothing.”

My body was in a state of chaos unlike anything I'd ever felt. I'd never been spoken to as directly as he was speaking to me, with the look of intensity in his eyes what it was. I could feel my panties grow damp and goosebumps raise all over my arms and legs. I had to fight to hold down a shiver as I held his gaze. I had the distinct feeling that I was supposed to look down and nod my agreement to him, but I wasn't so far out of control that I wasn't myself.

My mind raced as I tried to make sense of what was happening. I was being offered a job, albeit one that I didn't want, wasn't qualified for, and was insulted to be offered. I had to leverage my position. I had to make the most of it. They needed me. "If I agree to do it, you'll give me a chance doing the work I'm meant to do."

Knight laughed. "Oh?"

I lowered my gaze to him and nodded once. "If you want a happy niece, you'll agree to let me show you my work. You'll give me a chance. Test me, hook me up to a lie-detector, I don't care. I won't take this job unless you put it in the contract that I'll be allowed to complete a week of work for TGC."

Zander hooked his thumb under my chin and lifted my face to his once more. The roughness of his thumb was surprising; it wasn't the touch of a man who spent all of his time in an office. If the man felt like he was crossing boundaries in any way by touching me, he didn't show it. He searched my face and narrowed his gaze. "One chance."

“Five days.” I licked my lips, as close to begging as I would ever be for them. I needed a chance to show them I was the right person for the job. The real job, not the nanny job. “Give me five days.”

“Miss Young, you don’t seem to understand who holds the power here.” Zander’s gaze had zeroed in on my mouth and he didn’t bother shifting his gaze away to be polite. “We’ll give you three opportunities. Not one more. If you take the job, you move in tonight. You start tomorrow morning and you’ll be the best goddamn nanny our niece could ever hope for. Understood?”

With my heart in my throat, feeling distinctly like I was signing a deal with the devil, I swallowed down my fear and nodded. “Understood. I’ll do it.”

Kyrin grunted from beside me. “This should be completely problem-free. I can’t see why anything would possibly go wrong with this plan.”

I wanted to glare at him, but the older brother had captured my gaze again and I felt like turning my face away from him would be the equivalent of turning my back to a lion. “I don’t see why there would be any problems. I’ll be the best *goddamn* nanny Gracie could ever want and you three will give me the chance you should’ve given me earlier to prove my worth.”

Knight sighed. “None of the other nannies talked back.”

Chancing my throat being ripped out, I lowered a glare at Knight. “I’m not a nanny. I’m a digital strategist and a damn

good one. There's not a problem you could shove at me that I couldn't tackle in less time that it takes you to put on your pompous attitude each morning. I talk back, especially when what I hear is garbage."

Knight's lips twisted into a dark smile as he sat forward and rested his chin on his hand. "You're wrong, Aggie. I wake up like this. This pompous attitude is all natural."

"Good for you." I leaned away from Zander and crossed my arms. "Well? Let's get a move on."

We had to move fast before the irony of my situation smothered me to death. I'd been dumped and fired for refusing to push out a baby for Monroe. Yet, there I was, taking a job caring for a child. It was hard as hell to hold on to my dignity when it was a quickly deflating balloon spiraling around the room.

*****AGGIE*****

“No, Dad, don’t be silly. These men already dislike me. I can’t imagine what having my dad show up to fight my battles would make them think of me.” I shuddered at the very thought. “It’ll be okay. I promise. This is just for a month. Once they see my work, they’ll see that I’m worth the chance.”

“I don’t want to fight your battles. I want to fight the men in your life who hurt you.” Mark Young, self-proclaimed hippie and father-of-the-year, suddenly shouted into the line. “Brenda! Brenda, no! Get your ass away from that fence and stop messing with me!”

“You and Brenda still haven’t made up?”

“You know I don’t like to use this word, Ag, but Brenda is a flagrant bitch!” He swore and then sighed in defeat. “If I ever see the man who sold me this cow, I’ll make him wish I’d given up my gun when I left the NRA.”

“Good Lord, Dad. Play nice with Brenda. She’s the only woman besides me who will put up with you.” I pulled off to the side of the country road I was on and looked at my phone to see the map once more. “I’m trying to find this house, but I’ve never been out here before. It’s like a never-ending stretch of two-lane highway.”

“You’d think rich people like them would be able to afford a house closer to town, huh?”

I pulled back on the highway and kept driving in the same direction. “Or at least a few signs. What would it hurt to give a woman some clues?”

“If you get there and it’s not a safe environment, you’re going to leave, right? Please tell me that I raised you right and that you’ll take note of any creepiness and let it guide you the hell out of there.” Dad grunted and swore. “This damn cow is going to be a steak on my dinner plate if she doesn’t get with the program.”

I didn’t bother reminding him that he was a vegetarian. I drove up a hill that made my stomach ache and once I crested the top, I saw the start of a beautiful white fence. “I think I found the start of the yellow brick road.”

“You can still turn around and come live with your old man, Ag. I always have a place for you. These men sound like a bunch of jackasses. It’s never too late to leave them high and dry.”

It was too late. I’d packed a box of Monroe’s things in with a pile of my neighbor’s dog’s poo. I’d had help by my

neighbor. He'd even scooped the poo for me. I hadn't just gone crazy and found random poo to grab and throw in. I'd mailed that box to Monroe's desk at work with the special instructions that it was only for him to open, to save his assistant from the trauma. A couple of days of that poo sitting in the Texas heat and that box was going to knock Monroe on his ass when he opened it. I had to be out of my apartment and away from any places he would know to look for me before he got that gift.

"Agatha?" Dad's voice grew tighter, the way it did when he was preparing to be my father the way the books had taught him. "I love you, honey. You have to do whatever it is that makes you happy."

"It's hard to remember that this is supposed to make me feel happy. I just want to do the job I'm good at and these ignorant men keep getting in my way. Dad, I just... I lost everything because I wasn't willing to quit my job and give Monroe a kid and now look at me! I'm basically what he wanted. I'm just going to be taking care of someone else's kid, instead of his. I have to get a real job out of this. I don't know what I'll do if I don't."

"Being a nanny is a real job, honey. I understand what you mean, though. Just try to remember this is a stepping stone to where you want to be." He grunted. "Or you could just come home. There's no shame in taking a break."

"I mailed a box of dog shit to Monroe, Dad. I have to get out of town. This is the best way." I giggled after I said it,

because it was insane, and because I felt close to losing my mind. I wasn't sure what I'd been thinking, but I'd laughed and laughed with my neighbor, John. "As much as I appreciate your speeches, I made this bed for myself and now I have to get in and sleep in it. I don't want Monroe to be able to find me until after he calms down. He'd never look at the Graves' home. Plus, I need to do this. Once they see my work, they'll hire me, Dad. I know it."

"I'm sorry. Did you just say you mailed a box of dog shit to Monroe Blake?"

I arrived at the gate to the home and sighed in relief when I saw a small metal sign over the speaker box that read Graves. "I did. I did say that and I did mail it. I don't know what I was thinking, but it felt good. I'm just so pissed off, Dad. I've never been so angry. For a few minutes, I felt peace knowing that Monroe is going to open that box and have shit explode at him. At least, I hope that's what happens. I don't pray often, but this might be a case when I do."

"Do not pray to have shit explode at your ex, Ag. That just seems like something God wouldn't be into."

I pressed the speaker button after rolling my window down and smiled. "I don't know, Dad. I think God might be into seeing Monroe Blake suffer. Since he's the devil."

"Graves Residence." The voice of an older woman crackled from the intercom.

"Yes, ma'am. I'm Aggie Young, the new nanny. I believe I'm expected."

“Oh, yes. Please, drive up to the main house.”

Dad whistled. “The main house? Wow. How loaded did you say these guys were?”

I drove through the gate and felt my eyes go wide as the property stretched out in front of me. The sun was setting in the distance and it created a magical aura over the land. “Whoa.”

“Take pictures!” Dad grunted and swore at Brenda. “Remember to run if anything seems creepy. I’ve got to go, honey. Brenda just made off with my watch.”

I didn’t even get a chance to say goodbye. I was too floored by what I was seeing. There was a large lake to my left that stretched as far as I could see towards the west. On the east side of my car, there were rolling hills and more white fencing that separated the land. I could see several horses trotting along one of the fence lines and up ahead, a huge red barn stood proudly.

Trucks, tractors, ATVs, and even a motorcycle were parked around the barn, a clear epicenter of the property. I could see men inside the barn, but I made it a point not to look too closely. I wasn’t ready to see any of the Graves brothers just yet. I continued on and after driving under a line of trees, I finally got to see the mansion that they called a ranch. The home was made to look like a log cabin, but only if that log cabin had been made for the queen. It was huge, with at least three stories. I could see several balconies from where I sat in my car. The front porch was larger than any house I’d ever

lived in. It probably had more furniture, too. There were more rocking chairs than any family could ever need and beautiful planters hanging with full plants spilling out.

I parked and turned off my car, too stunned to get out just yet. Monroe lived in a penthouse that had always felt like the lap of luxury. His parents lived just outside of the city in a mansion that made me nervous to breathe. The Graves home made both of those places look like my dad's RV. It wasn't just huge, it was beautiful and special. It was warm. It fit the three men I'd met that day in no way at all.

I was only able to force myself out of the car when a woman appeared at the top steps of the porch and smiled at me. Her polite wave reeked of impatience and I instantly felt like a kid who was tardy. I jumped out of my car and grabbed my suitcase.

“Miss Young, leave your bags and your keys with Kevin. He'll take care of everything while I show you around the home.” The woman gestured towards a man rushing towards me, hand outstretched. “I'm Mary Garnet. I've taken care of this property for the last thirty years and my mother took care of it before me. I take this job very seriously and I expect the same from you.”

I found myself racing up the stairs and struggling to catch up to the woman. She was short and petite, but her legs ate up distance like her life depended on it. It wasn't easy to keep up. “Yes, ma'am. And please, call me Aggie.”

She cast a long look at me before pursing her lips and looking away. “Miss Young will do for now.”

*****ZANDER*****

I checked my watch for the fifth time. Day one on the job and Agatha Young already had me waiting around for her. I wasn't a fan of waiting on anything, much less the likely spy turned nanny. It'd been thirty minutes since I'd arrived on her wing of the house. I'd paced, I'd checked emails, I'd done everything I could to fill my time. I had things to do and waiting on the nanny wasn't one of them.

I gripped the door handle to her bedroom and knocked with my other hand before twisting the handle. Irritation grew when it twisted and the door swung open. She hadn't even locked the door. She'd just gone to sleep in a house with strangers and not bothered to lock the door. What was wrong with her?

"Miss Young?" I stepped farther into her room and frowned at the lump on the far side of the bed. I could just make out a few wild strands of hair sticking out of the top of the blanket. I ground my teeth together as I walked across the room and stopped at the foot of the bed.

Aggie was burrowed in her blanket, her head and face completely covered. The only part of her sticking out of the covers, besides her hair, was one long, bare leg. From hip to toes, her leg was exposed, revealing what felt like a never-ending length of silky-smooth skin and a small tattoo over her hip bone.

Against my better judgement, I moved closer to see that her tattoo was of a magnifying glass. I smiled before backing away. I got the joke. I even liked it. Her name was Agatha, she had a tattoo of a magnifying glass, and she supposedly worked in a career that basically was just her solving puzzles all day long. I shook my head and forced my eyes away from that bare leg. It was too enticing.

Standing safely at the end of the bed, I straightened my face and crossed my arms over my chest. “Miss Young! Will you be starting the day with my niece or should I tell her that you’ve already been fired?”

Aggie jerked upright, startled awake by my booming voice. She fought with her blanket momentarily before she managed to get her head free and face me. With wild brown hair sticking out in every direction and two mossy green eyes as wide as saucers, she looked like a confused pixie staring at me. It was almost sweet until her brain kicked on and her attitude caught up with the rest of her.

“What the hell are you doing in my room?” She clutched the blanket to her chest and went up on her knees as she glared at me. “I read your petty contract in full yesterday, Zander, and

there was nothing in it about being woken up via screaming asshole!”

I was honestly impressed with her ability to go from dead asleep to fighting mad in less time than it took me to check my watch again. Her spirit, that fire, called to me in a way she would probably sue me if she knew about, but I kept my reaction to myself. I stared at her with an expression of boredom on my face, even as she crawled to the end of the bed, right up to where I stood, and poked me in the chest.

“Get out of my room. Now!”

I raised an eyebrow and stared at her finger. “Your workday started half an hour ago. I don’t like being kept waiting, Miss Young. I expect you to be on time from now on. I don’t like fetching the nanny.”

She poked me again and then crawled off the bed. The blanket dropped to her feet and I watched her shudder as I ran my eyes down her barely covered body. She was dressed in an oversized tank top with a questionable quote across her full tits.

“Free mustache rides?” I took my time reading the words, going over them with my eyes until I could guess the weight of each of her breasts accurately. “Is this something I need to worry about you wearing in front of our niece?”

Aggie stepped closer to me, the anger freer in her first thing in the morning. “I wasn’t planning on wearing my sleep shirt in front of your niece, and since you seem to like it so much,

maybe I'll frame it to remember the time the great Zander Graves gave me his sole attention.”

“Your tits.” I slowly met her gaze and smirked. “Just to be correct. I find accuracy to be very important in my business. Your *tits* had the great Zander Graves’ full attention, Miss Young.”

Her hands met my chest and shoved, the force behind her anger enough to send me back a few steps. She didn't stop there, though. She kept pushing me towards the door, her face set in a beautiful display of fury. “Out. Out of my room, you overgrown man-child. If I wanted someone to scream me awake and focus on my tits, I'd have a baby. Get out and don't come back. I won't be so nice next time.”

I realized I was having fun about the same time the door slammed shut in my face. I couldn't help myself. I leaned against it and called out to her. “You're setting a terrible impression with the CEO of the company you want to work for, Miss Young.”

“You'll be lucky if I don't set the CEO on fire. The nerve of this man, honestly. I should call Dad and have him come take this asshole out.” She'd transitioned to talking to herself it seemed. “What's wrong with God? What kind of joke is it to give a man that looks like *that* the personality of a jagged piece of metal? Like women don't go through enough bullshit?”

I grinned and turned away, pleased with myself. It'd been a long time since I'd had any fun and unfortunately for Aggie,

riling her up was a lot of fun for me. She was a spitfire and it was even better because I hadn't expected it. When I'd watched her with Blake from afar at the events we'd all attended, she'd seemed the picture of serenity. She was all reserved smiles and politeness. She'd been Blake's perfect trophy.

While walking down to the kitchen, I found myself thinking about them together. Had she shown him her fire? Had he ever been shoved out of her bedroom by a wild-haired woman with murder in her eyes? More importantly, I wanted to know if he'd ever taken her over his knee and spanked that sass into control. I wanted to know if she'd even worn another man's handprints over her ass while smiling serenely. Had she ever been taken as roughly as she clearly needed?

By the time I reached the kitchen, my dick was uncomfortably stiff and I had to stop just outside of the room to regain my composure. I could hear my brothers talking to Gracie at the breakfast table and their loud conversation helped me focus on what was important. The nanny didn't matter. She'd be gone in no time. Making sure Gracie was okay was what mattered.

AGGIE

“Are you just going to let her swim all day long?” Knight appeared next to me on the back patio, shockingly silent for such a large man. “Have you even applied sunscreen?”

I gritted my teeth and stood up. “I’ve put sunscreen on her. Which she hated. I didn’t realize that kids hate sunscreen, so that’s a hot tip for the next nanny.”

“Two things. I meant have *you* applied sunscreen? To yourself? You won’t be of much use to us if you can’t move from being burnt to a crisp.” He looked me over and frowned. “And I hope to God the next nanny knows more about kids than you do. She needs more sunscreen. Every ninety minutes. It needs to dry before she gets back in the water.”

I put my hands on my hips and glared up at him. He was taller than both his brothers and the extra few inches really had me wishing for a pair of heels. “Okay. That’s all you had to say. More sunscreen.”

He shook his head and placed a single fingertip on my bare shoulder. “You’re burning. It’ll be a bitch to take care of Gracie if you’re in excruciating pain. That’s something even a non-nanny should know.”

I brushed his finger away and left him standing there. “Gracie? Come on out. It’s time for more sunscreen.”

“No, Miss Aggie! Come in!” She paddled across the pool to me, her life vest making it slower. “Please?”

“I told you, Gracie. I didn’t pack a swimsuit. I’ll get one for tomorrow, though. Okay?” I forced a smile, already tired from a day of failing at knowing how to handle a kid. “Do you need help getting out?”

I should’ve seen the mischief in her eyes, but I didn’t realize it was something I had to be wary of. She seemed so sweet. The moment I grabbed her hand and she tightened her little fingers around mine, I knew I was in trouble.

“Gracie, no!” The end of my scream was swallowed by the pool. As I took my time coming up to the surface, I replayed the way she’d braced her feet against the side of the pool to get leverage to yank me in. The little brat.

I surfaced and worked on shoving my hair out of my face while listening to her cackling about her trick. When her laughter was cut off abruptly, I looked up to see Knight holding the back of her life vest and lifting her from the pool like she weighed nothing.

“You know better, Gracie. What if Aggie couldn’t swim? Like Miranda, your last nanny?” He frowned as he knelt in front of her and glanced over at me. “You good?”

I swam to the side of the pool and braced my arms on the edge. Before I could lift myself out of the water, he was there, lifting me just as easily as he’d lifted Gracie. I swayed when he put me down, caught off guard by being picked up so easily.

Knight put one large hand on my shoulder and cut his eyes at me. “This isn’t going to work if she can outsmart you at every turn.”

“Uncle Knight! Do you want to swim with me?” Gracie was unbothered by the vibe in the air. I guess murder was hard to pick up on as a kid.

I squeezed the water out of my shirt, watching as his eyes predictably moved to my breasts. Despite knowing it was a bad plan and knowing that I was playing with my career, I put instant gratification first. I shifted and planted my hands on his chest, giving him one firm shove before stepping back. Watching his arms windmill as he tried to avoid falling into the pool soothed my ruffled feathers at him insinuating I was dumb.

Gracie grabbed my hand and giggled. “You’re going to be in so much trouble, Miss Aggie.”

The look on Knight’s face when he came up told me that Gracie’s assertion was right. I just didn’t know what kind of trouble I was going to be in with Knight. I wanted to kick

myself, but I refused to back down in front of the man. There was something about the brothers that set my teeth on edge and pushed every single one of my buttons. I lost almost all self-control over my temper with them.

“I think we should run.” Gracie tugged me backwards as Knight planted his hands on the pool edge. “Now!”

A real nanny would’ve known that running through the house soaking wet was a bad idea. A real nanny wouldn’t have been caught dead sliding across the entrance of the house with her young charge by another of her bosses. Most of all, a real nanny would have known that wet feet on marble floors create disasters.

Gracie slipped and landed on her butt, instantly screaming and crying. I wiped out and took down a table with my knee. I felt like crying, the pain instant and intense, but I crawled over to Gracie instead. She saw my knee and I watched her face go green before she leaned forward and threw up all over my lap.

I gagged and leaned as far away from the vomit as I could. “Oh, god. Oh, god. I mean, it’s fine. This is fine. Everything’s fine.”

“Never in my life have I witnessed someone create chaos by just existing!” Kyrin grabbed my upper arm and dragged me to my feet. “Jesus Christ, woman. It’s been less than six hours and there’s already blood and vomit all over the place. This has to be a record!”

I twisted in his grip until he wrapped an arm around my waist to hold me up, but I tipped forward and grabbed Gracie,

pulling her up with us. “It’s okay, Gracie. Just a little fall. Just a little...throw up. Nothing we can’t handle. Right?”

Gracie sobbed, her little body shaking. She latched onto me, clinging with her arms around my neck. “I’m sorry!”

I didn’t understand why she was apologizing, but I did what I always did when someone needed comforting. I just talked. “Oh, Gracie. Don’t apologize. We girls are always apologizing too much. You didn’t do anything. It’s not your fault you wanted me as a nanny and I’m better equipped in a basement full of computers. You didn’t know. You’re okay, butterfly. You’re probably going to have a bruise on that butt, though. This floor is too hard. Think we should sue your silly uncles? Who puts such a hard floor in a place where people are going to be falling? What kind of dorks do that?”

She giggled through her tears, but didn’t loosen her grip on me. I was very aware of the vomit on me, the throbbing pain in my knee, and the furious man still holding me up. I felt like crying along with Gracie, honestly.

“You have got to be the worst nanny in the world.” Kyrin groaned. “And of course, the kid took to you. Just our luck.”

I twisted my head to glare at him. “I’m *not* a nanny.”

Knight chose that moment to show up, his shoes *squishing* as he walked closer. When I met his angry gaze, he all but bared his teeth at me. “You’re a menace. If you’re not working for Blake, he’s getting free labor, because you’re doing more damage than any of his previous failed attempts.”

I couldn't help lashing back out at him. "You were saying something about being outsmarted?"

As if two brothers weren't enough, Zander showed up, his nose scrunched. "Good God. What in the hell happened?"

"I'm starting to feel bad for Blake. He dated this disaster for years." Knight kicked his wet shoes off. "No wonder he could never touch our sales. He was probably on fire half the time."

I seethed and tried to shake free of Kyrin. "You want to go back in the pool?"

Gracie lifted her head. "Yeah!"

*****AGGIE*****

I nodded off while putting Gracie to bed. It'd been the most aggravating day I'd ever had and I was exhausted from not losing my mind. When I woke up, I saw only a few minutes had passed, but Gracie had fallen asleep with me. She was curled around an impressive collection of teddy bears and had her thumb planted firmly in her mouth. I quietly and slowly stood up and walked out of her room, leaving the door cracked the way the guys had so helpfully lectured me about.

The power nap had recharged my batteries and I was going through the day in my head, getting angrier by the moment. I slowly made my way downstairs, planning on getting ice for my knee before finding the guys. Something had to change. The day had been hell. It'd been bad before the fall, but after? I wanted to actually murder them. I'd never been so angry in my life. Not even Monroe had managed to invoke a reaction like the one the Graves brothers raised in me.

They'd hovered the rest of the day. They'd watched every moment of my interactions with Gracie, commenting and

critiquing them the entire time. I didn't tell her to sit to eat her lunch in the right place. I didn't make her nap fast enough. I was too nice when she didn't want to nap. I was too this, too that, not enough this or that. It was like they'd glued themselves to my back to try to make me quit.

I felt like my blood pressure had reached record highs throughout the day and my ego had taken a beating like no other. I was thoroughly convinced that I wasn't made for dealing with children, and it pissed me off even more that they'd managed to cut me down so far. They were reinforcing my stance to not have children with each remark they made. It was clear that we didn't like each other, but if they were going to continue being assholes, I'd have to do something drastic. Like drown them all in the pool.

I grabbed a premade bag of ice that Mary had left for me. She'd been disgusted and disgruntled by my bloody mess, but she'd still made sure to leave supplies for me before going home for the night. I grabbed a popsicle and opened it over the sink. The house was huge and I figured a snack for the trip to find the guys would be nice.

Limping through the first floor, I ate the popsicle and looked around, running through calming techniques in my head. When I heard muffled voices coming from behind a closed door at the far side of the house, I was almost calm from my long walk and the delicious pineapple popsicle. Rich people's popsicles were made differently, I realized while biting off another chunk.

Knocking on the door, I waited to hear a muffled command to enter before pushing it open. The three brothers were all settled around a coffee table on low couches in the middle of a library unlike any I'd ever seen outside of movies. Dark wood encased what had to be thousands of books and there was even a massive wooden desk at the back of the room that called to me. The work that could be done at that desk made my mouth water.

The deep leather couches the three brothers sat on complemented the masculine feel of the room and made the men sitting on them look even more distinguished somehow. Whiskey glasses were in different states of being emptied and there was a cigar resting on an ash tray in the middle of the coffee table.

“To what do we owe this pleasure?” Knight’s dry question went ignored as I limped to the closest wall of books.

I whistled to myself and shook my head. The sheer impressiveness of the library had stolen my attention and anger. “This is amazing.”

Kyrin gripped my arm, surprising me, and tugged me towards the couches. “You have the ice in your hand. It’s not going to do shit unless you put it on your knee.”

I grunted as he pushed me down next to Zander. “You do realize that I can walk and sit down all by myself? Or maybe you don’t, judging by how you treated me today.”

Kyrin glared at me even as he lifted my leg onto the couch, resting my foot and ankle across Zander’s lap. When I tried to

pull back, he grabbed my calf and stopped me. “You’re putting ice on this knee. You let me help like this or I’ll dunk your ass in an ice bath.”

I bit off a chunk of popsicle angrily and glared at him. “Fine.”

Zander cupped the bottom of my foot and leaned forward, letting my toes press into his hard abs. It wasn’t a move that should’ve made my body flutter, but it did. He looked at my knee and clicked his tongue. “For a problem solver, you sure did find yourself in several problems today. Ones that could’ve been avoided. Easily. I think today counts as one of your tests.”

I gritted my teeth as Kyrin settled the ice over my knee. It helped me stay relatively calm in the face of Zander’s bullshit high-handedness, though. I even managed to finish my popsicle before responding. “Has anyone ever told you that you have a personality that would make the devil pray for mercy?”

Kyrin settled on his couch next to Knight and grunted. “A few people have.”

Zander pressed his thumb into the arch of my foot and smirked when my eyes fluttered at the sensation. “There’s plenty more than personality to a man, Miss Young.”

I licked my lips and nodded. “And yet I can’t get past your personality. This isn’t what I came to talk about, though.”

He continued rubbing my foot like it was nothing for his hands to be on my body. “Then enlighten us.”

“You’re all horrible assholes.” I gasped when he rubbed a spot that made my back arch with pleasure. As soon as he moved from the spot, I cleared my throat and tried to salvage my point. “I know you don’t think very highly of me. It’s blatantly obvious. If this is how this month is going to go, I can tell you’re not going to give me a fair chance to prove myself. So there’s no point to my being here.”

“You mean, besides a hefty paycheck?” Knight held his whiskey glass to his lips and hesitated before drinking. “The point, Aggie, is that our niece wants you here.”

“I don’t care about the money. I have savings I could live off for a while. I can go to a bigger city and get work easily. As far as Gracie goes, I like her. I want to be able to keep her happy for the month. At the end of the day, however, I’m not a nanny and I have no interest in playing house with your niece for a month if the three of you are going to act like you did today. When it’s so clear that you think I’m absolute garbage, I can’t pretend like I have a real chance to work for your company. *That’s* the reason I’m here. A job at The Graves Company.”

“I thought we made it clear that we have no interest in hiring Blake’s girlfriend.” Zander narrowed his eyes, even as he continued massaging my foot. “You’re only ever going to play nanny for us.”

I tried to kick him, but he didn't let my foot go. Instead, I settled on stretching forward and grabbing his whiskey glass. I threw back the contents and pointed at him with the glass in my hand. "I am no one's girlfriend. I am my own woman and you're a fool for not seeing that."

He took the glass from me and set it down roughly on the table. "We don't believe you."

In a move that was pure emotion and no thought, I knocked the ice off my knee and sat up to glare at him. I angrily swatted his hands away from my foot and pulled it under me. "What do I have to do to get it through your thick skull that I'm not some secret spy for Monroe?"

He grabbed my waist and pulled me into his lap, his grip bruising. Keeping me at the edge of his knees, he dropped his hand to my thigh and looked my knee over. "It doesn't matter what you do. You sat pretty by Blake's side for half a decade. You can't be trusted."

I pushed his hand away. "Don't touch me."

"Why? Your boyfriend wouldn't like it?" He rested his arms on the couch behind him as he smirked at me.

I felt my control slipping and growled under my breath. "I'll prove it to you, asshole."

Ignoring the pain in my knee, I grabbed his collar in my hands and yanked him closer. My anger crested as I met his fiery gaze just before crushing my mouth into his. I had control of the kiss for maybe half a second before I lost it and

realized that my impulsiveness might've gotten me in trouble again.

Zander gripped the hair at the back of my head and used it to tug my head where he wanted me. He stroked his tongue over mine and bit my lip before kissing me deep again. His hand didn't cup the side of my face or even drop to my breasts like I expected. Instead, he settled his palm over my throat and wrapped his fingers around my neck, holding me in a way I'd never been held. I went still, my body naturally pausing to see what he'd do next. My pulse raced against his hand and I knew he could feel it. He kissed my parted lips, sucked my lower lip between his teeth, and bit down until I whimpered.

When he spoke, it was against my open mouth. "You think women with boyfriends don't kiss other men?"

My eyes fluttered open and I met his honey gaze. "Not me. I was as loyal as an old hunting dog, even when he wasn't."

From behind me, I heard Knight stand up. "Is that what this is about? Poor little girlfriend got cheated on and now she's lashing out?"

When I tried to turn a glare on Knight, Zander kept his grip on my throat and hair. His eyes burned into mine. "You keep your eyes on me."

"I don't care that he cheated on me. I care that he stole my career, all because I wouldn't play egg incubator for him!" I swallowed nervously and felt myself unraveling under the force of Zander's intensity. "It doesn't matter. I told you I'm not his girlfriend and now I've shown you."

Warmth breath kissed the base of my neck as Kyrin spoke from directly behind me. “You think that Zander will trust you now? Because he tasted this hot mouth? None of us believe you aren’t still under Blake’s thumb. I will say I’m impressed at how he got you to act so normal and sane in public at those events, though.”

I tried to elbow Kyrin, but he caught my arm and held it against his chest. “You’re an asshole!”

The sensation of his teeth dragging across my shoulder scorched through my body. I rocked my hips forward, desperate to get any bit of relief for the need I felt building in me.

“You seemed like such a good girl while you posed next to Blake. Did he know what was hiding under the surface? Did you let him feel you wild and desperate?” Kyrin bit my ear and gripped my hips, pulling them away from any relief I might’ve found. When I moaned, he sucked at the sensitive skin at the back of my neck. “You didn’t, did you? Blake never tasted your fire, did he?”

Zander ran his tongue over my lips and then turned my head to face Knight. “What do you think, Knight? Think she pretended to be a good girl for Blake?”

Knight puffed at the cigar before putting it out and looking me over. “It would’ve had to be pretend, because I’ve never seen a good girl pant for three brothers at the same time before.”

I sucked in a sharp breath. “I’m...not.”

He arched an eyebrow and moved closer. “Baby. You’re wearing Zander’s hands like a necklace and Kyrin is leaving marks on the back of your neck that are going to make it look like you were fucked like a dog from behind while your man held on by his teeth. All the while, your hips are dancing to get to Zander’s dick. You are not a good girl.”

My body shuddered as a desperate need crashed into me. I felt myself slipping into something that I didn’t understand, but I didn’t want to stop it. I lifted my chin as much as I could and held Knight’s stare. I decided to let my surliness direct my actions. “And?”

*****KNIGHT*****

I bit back a grin. The little siren in front of me was pushing every one of my buttons. She was dancing on Zander's, I knew. Her defiance, even when facing the three of us, was as sexy as it was infuriating. I wanted to indulge her and break that stubborn streak at the same time. She was dangerous. It didn't take a smart man to see that. A woman made of fire with the touch of silk could destroy worlds.

“*And?*” I stepped closer, pushing my control. “You don't want to be a good girl, do you?”

Aggie's thoughts played across her face as she made her choice. Her cheeks flushed red as she held my gaze. “No.”

Zander groaned from under her, his own impeccable control weak. “What do you want to be, Aggie?”

Kyrin's hands were white knuckled on her hips. “You want to be our bad girl, don't you? You want to be ours for tonight and have us show you just how far you can be pushed?”

Zander turned her to face him. “You want to be ours? Just say the word.”

She swallowed and searched Zander’s face. Her breath came quicker and I held my own as I waited.

“The thing about bad girls, Aggie? They become good girls for the right men.” Zander lowered his voice and his fingers fluttered over her throat. “Somewhere between getting fucked hard enough to make you sore for days and licking our dicks clean, you’re going to take our come deep. You’ll be our good girl then, won’t you?”

Her tongue stole out to wet her lips and she lifted that chin again. “I’m not *yours* just because you fuck me.”

Kyrin growled and dipped his hand forward to cup her sex. “We’ll see.”

She moaned and sank her teeth into her full bottom lip. Just when I thought she might crack, her eyes narrowed and a smile tugged at the corners of her mouth as Kyrin grunted. She’d stretched the arm that was pinned behind her enough so that she could grip the bulge at the front of Kyrin’s jeans. “I’ll never be yours. Get that through your heads now.”

Zander sat forward on the couch, pinning Aggie’s body between himself and Kyrin. “The thing is, Miss Young, you were ours when you walked into this house. Just because you haven’t come on our cocks yet doesn’t mean you aren’t. It was only a matter of time. And here we are. You’re dripping wet between two brothers, unfazed by hearing that we’re all three going to fuck you deep soon. If not ours, then what are you?”

I watched her eyes flutter and could see her pulse racing in her throat. She was excited, ready to be taken. I knew that her stubbornness would take her away from us if we gave her the chance, though. I didn't want her slipping through our fingers. "Have you ever done anything like this?"

Aggie looked at me and shook her head. Her eyes flew back to Zander's when his fingers danced over her throat. "No."

He granted her a small smile. "Sir."

I held my breath and waited, willing to put aside Zander's desires for a chance to bury myself inside of Aggie. I wanted her. We all did. It'd been a long time since we'd agreed on a woman, but Aggie yanked at all of us. The moment I'd felt her hands on my chest just before she shoved me into the pool, I'd known I was fucked.

"No, Sir." Aggie lowered her eyes and released a shuddering breath. "I don't even know what *this* is. It's not the first time my mouth has taken me to unusual places, but this is the most extreme position I've found myself in."

Kyrin ran his hands up her stomach and paused just under her breasts. I flicked my eyes to him and saw him take in a deep breath, fighting to stay calm. "*This*, Aggie, is you being spread out and devoured by the three of us. We're going to fuck you with our fingers, mouths, and finally our dicks until you're limp and can't open your mouth to talk back to us."

Her hips rocked forward as his words melted over her. Zander nodded to Kyrin and stood up with her in his arms. His eyes flashed when she wrapped her thighs around his waist

and her arms around his neck. I could imagine the way her plush body felt against his and I had to ball my hands into fists to stay where I was.

“Or would you rather have just one of us?” Zander’s question filled the air and left tension sizzling between the three of us brothers. His eyes stayed on hers, his gaze hard. When she hesitated, he planted a firm spank on her ass, the sound resonating around the room. “Answer me, Aggie.”

She hissed and tugged at his hair hard enough to make him bare his teeth at her. “You spanked me. I’m not a child.”

“No, but you are wet enough that I can feel you soaking my pants. Answer my question. One of us or all of us.” He walked her into Kyrin’s chest and Kyrin reached under her thighs to grip her legs and keep them spread. Zander unlatched her arms from around his neck and led her to lock her arms behind her, around Kyrin instead. “One of us will make you come and it’ll still be the best orgasm you’ve ever had. Three of us will ruin you for any other man.”

Aggie’s fight had come back. “Uh huh. I’ve heard that before.”

I stepped closer. “When you’re with us, Aggie, there is no one else. There’s never been anyone before and no one after. You think about us and us alone. Understand?”

She opened her mouth to argue but Kyrin sank his teeth into the side of her neck and teased her tender skin. Her breath stuttered out and Zander and I could both see the way her thigh muscles worked against Kyrin’s grip.

“What’s it going to be? There’s always the other option. You can walk out of here like nothing happened.” Zander gripped her chin and held it firm. “I won’t ask again.”

Her jaw clenched and her eyes flared with fury. I prepared myself for her to walk away and was shocked when she nodded. “Everything.”

I groaned. “Put her down, Ky.”

Zander gripped her throat once she was on her own feet and leaned down to kiss her. He stopped just before touching her mouth. “I’m going to have fun teaching you to play nice, Aggie.”

She gasped when he turned and pushed her over so she was gripping the coffee table with her ass in the air. Zander gave her no time before landing a solid slap across her ass. Her loud swear made me grin, the fire in her scorching hot.

“I like things a little rougher. I get off knowing that the next time you sit down, you’re going to remember my hand on your ass. I like pushing. How much can I tighten my hand on this pretty throat and still have you leaking juices all over me? How far can I get my dick down your throat before you tap out? I want to leave my mark. I want to fuck you up as much as I want to fuck you, Aggie.”

I moved to stand behind her, pressing my thighs into hers. Gripping the waist band of her pants, I tugged them lower. “I’d be lying if I said I haven’t been thinking of getting inside you since the moment you walked into our office. The idea of sinking into your pussy drove me to distraction. I don’t like

being distracted, Aggie. I'm going to use your body until I get you out of my head. You're going to scream for more, aren't you? Because you're a bad girl. *Our* bad girl."

Her hand slapped the table even as she pushed her hips back into mine. "Fuck you."

Kyrin leaned down so he was eye to eye with her. "Fuck you, *Sir*."

Her hips rolled against mine. "Fuck you, *Sir*."

*****KYRIN*****

Knight yanked Aggie's tight shorts down to her knees and whistled as he looked down at her full ass being separated by a thin white thong. He trailed his fingers down her crack and then ripped the material off her body. She shot him a dirty look and he sent her a bored look in return. He could pretend to look anything but ravenous, but we could read through his expression. She'd pushed us all to the brink by merely existing in our vicinity.

Zander pushed her shirt up her back and then dragged it over her head. Her bra matched her panties and disappeared just as fast. He sat on the table in front of her and ran his hands into her hair. "Let's see how you really feel. Knight."

Knight ran his hands down her back and cupped both of her ass cheeks, separating them and groaning at what he saw. "So pretty. And wet. So, so wet."

I shifted closer and ran my lips over her shoulder. Her arm muscles flexed as I tasted them and the breathy sound she made was like a beacon of light in the dark for me. I couldn't

remember a time when I'd needed to taste a woman's mouth more. I wasn't usually all that into kissing, but as I hovered with my mouth just over hers, I knew she was an exception to all the rules.

Our eyes met and I saw her gaze soften and flutter closed before she pressed forward and kissed me. Her pillow soft lips felt too good. Bracing myself on the table, I felt a jolt of desire when her fingers stretched out to brush against mine. Something in that touch felt bigger than anything that'd happened so far and I leaned into it. I kissed her fully, stroking my tongue past her lips to taste whiskey and sweetness.

Aggie gasped into my mouth and I broke our kiss to look down her body. Knight was stroking the outside of her pussy, spreading her wetness over his hand and swearing through his pleasure.

“She liked that kiss.” He parted her lower lips and growled while slowly pushing his finger into her core. “Still tight. Even with all this wetness. We're going to have to stretch this pussy out.”

Zander stretched forward and landed a hard spank against Aggie's ass. He rubbed the spot while glancing up at Knight, the question clear. He wanted to know if her body responded to his treatment. He'd always been rougher, more desperate for control.

Knight grinned and leaned over to kiss the middle of Aggie's back. “Our bad girl, indeed.”

Zander growled and stood up. “How many times do you think you’ve lashed out at us since meeting us?”

Aggie’s eyes widened. “Why?”

Moving to stand behind her, Zander replaced Knight’s finger with two of his own. His other hand landed a firm spank on her ass. “You have an ass made for this, Aggie. Watching your skin turn pink and seeing your ass bounce with each slap... It’s intoxicating. I can feel your pussy clenching down on my fingers. Your walls are pulsing. Are you close with just a few kisses and spanks, baby? If I dropped to my knees and ate your ass like I want to, how long do you think it would take you to come?”

I watched her face as she struggled to keep up with what he was saying while I cupped her breasts and squeezed them together, loving the weight in my hands. Knight’s open-mouthed kisses up her spine didn’t help her.

“There’s only one way to see.” Zander did exactly as he said. He went to his knees behind Aggie and gripped her hips in his hands. Tugging her core back into his face, he groaned happily and landed one more slap to her pink ass as he spread her out.

Aggie’s eyes fluttered and her mouth dropped open. I watched as her face turned red and the flush moved down her neck and back. Her body arched and her fingers bit into the table. She snapped her head back and met my eyes. “*Loud*. Don’t want her to hear.”

Knight raised an eyebrow at me. “You heard her. Give her something to keep her quiet, Ky.”

I straightened and yanked my belt off. Watching her face to judge if we were pushing too far, too fast, the only thing I saw was desire and pleasure. I unbuttoned my pants and pushed the zipper down, tormenting myself by pretending like I wasn't eager to rip my jeans off like a teenager. The sound of Zander growling from his position between her cheeks had me shoving the denim down my hips faster. We'd done too much talking. All our control was pushed to the limit.

“*Kyrin.*” Aggie's desperate plea had my pants and briefs around my knees almost instantaneously.

We shifted in unison so Aggie could reach me. I gripped the base of my dick and her hair with my other hand. Our eyes connected for a beat before her face pinched with the start of her orgasm. Her mouth opened and I cut off the beginning of her scream by sliding my length to the back of her throat.

Knight grunted as she gagged and stroked her back. “There's nothing sexier than the sound of your mouth stuffed full of dick, baby.”

Staring down at Aggie, I watched her lips stretch around the girth of me and her cheeks hollow as she sucked. Her eyes flared open and she screamed, the sound muffled. Her throat nursed at my dick head as she orgasmed for Zander and thanks to him, it went on and on. I gripped her hair harder and growled while pulling out of her mouth. Precum and spit coated my dick and I had to grip myself hard to fight back the

urge to come already. There was no way I was coming that fast.

With her mouth free, Aggie let out a wild scream and slapped the table. “In me. More. I need one of you in me.”

Zander lifted his face and wiped his mouth, revealing a dark grin. “You don’t make the rules, Aggie.”

“Zander, please!” Her knees weak and her body bowing from the pleasure, Aggie tilted her head and looked up at me. “I’ve never... I don’t come more than once. It’s too much.”

She might as well have waved a red flag in a bull’s face. Zander growled low in his throat and bit his lip as he watched her core stretch around another of his fingers. She yelped as he shocked her with another hard slap across the ass, but I could tell by the look on Zander’s face that her body had responded like he’d wanted. Her inner thighs were shiny with her fluids leaking down her legs. She was losing herself to us and I just hoped she caved before we did.

*****ZANDER*****

Aggie twisted her head to look at me and I met her defiance with another slap to her perfect ass. The way her pussy clenched down on my fingers and leaked more of her sweet juices down my wrist had me on edge. I put my hand over her ass and hooked my thumb lower to tease her asshole. I watched her nostrils flare and ran my tongue over my lips.

“No one’s been here, have they?” I flicked my tongue below my thumb and then sat back while I pressed into her ass. The tip of my thumb disappeared and then the entire digit up to the knuckle followed. I curled my fingers in her core and dropped my other thumb to rub her clit. “We’re going to be the first to take this ass, aren’t we? And you’re going to beg for it.”

The telling flush washed over her beautiful body again and I nodded to Kyrin. The next second had Aggie stuffed in every way. His moan of pleasure was telling as he withdrew from her mouth and then thrust back in. The muffled sounds of her screams had precum leaking from my dick.

Her walls clenched around my fingers, squeezing tight and fluttering as she came for the second time. Watching the way her body twisted and tightened with pleasure while feeling her come made every bit of her attitude worth it. I would've listened to her scream at me for hours and hours straight if it meant I got to feel her come.

Aggie's knees buckled and I had to pull my fingers free to catch her. Seeing the way my fingers painted her thighs and hips with her juices had me in agony. I wanted to give in and bury myself inside of her, but I'd never lost control of myself.

Kyrin backed away and sank down on the couch. "You've got a mouth like a fucking goddess, Aggie. If I didn't already hate your boyfriend, knowing he's been getting this sweet mouth for years would really push me over the edge."

Panting from her second orgasm, the one she didn't think she could have, Aggie slowly lifted her head and glared at Kyrin. "Not my boyfriend."

Knight freed himself from his pants before settling on the couch. "Come here, Aggie."

She turned to him and swayed at the sight he made. Her legs shook as she straightened and moved to stand in front of him. Kyrin and I watched with our own hunger barely leashed.

"You're a Texan, baby. Surely, you know how to ride." Knight smirked even as he gripped her hips and pulled her forward. The sight of her straddling him and hovering over his dick was stunning and Knight slipped. "Fuck, you're beautiful."

Aggie held onto his shoulders and gasped when Knight pulled her onto his length. She reached between them and gripped him. “Just shut up for a minute. Just...shut up. Oh, my God. Oh, God.”

I bit my knuckle to keep quiet as I watched her slowly lower herself until her ass rested on Knight’s thighs. With his dick fully buried inside her, she crumbled. It seemed like none of us could keep our shit together.

“Shit, shit, shit. *Knight*. So big. I’ve never... You’re everywhere. Oh, God, you’re so deep.” She dropped her head back and moaned. “I’d be good for this.”

Control vanquished into bits, I gripped the front of her throat with a gentle but firm hand. Staring into her heavy eyes, I growled before lowering my mouth to hers and kissing her. When I pulled back, we were both panting. I knew I probably looked wild as I stared down at her, but she reached for me, unafraid. “Ride him. Ride him while I watch. Ride him while Ky watches. Show us what a good girl you can be.”

She slapped her hand over mine when she felt me pulling away. “Don’t let go.”

My entire body clenched with need at those words. I tightened my fingers and watched her mouth fall open. “You’d better make him come soon, baby, or I’m going to have to stretch this ass while he’s still inside your pussy.”

Her entire body shuddered at my filthy words, but she didn’t pull away. She leaned forward with my hand still around her

throat and kissed Knight. I could feel the muscles in her throat move as he deepened the kiss and gripped her hips.

Aggie rolled her hips, slowly grinding herself on Knight. She leaned back and he immediately lowered his mouth to her breasts and took turns sucking and teasing each nipple. She turned her head to me and held my gaze as she lifted herself and dropped back down on his dick. Her hands wound their way into her hair as she found her rhythm riding Knight's dick and I felt pure and raw jealousy over my brother for the first time in my life. Even as she watched me, I wanted more.

Kyrin knelt on the other side of her and ran his hand down her spine. "Faster, Aggie."

Knight cursed. "Fucking hell."

As she bounced faster, I leaned in and kissed her again, dragging it out. I felt her shudder and heard Knight struggling to keep himself together. Still, I kissed her deeper and demanded the very breath she breathed. I wanted it all. I'd never wanted to possess a woman more.

"Zander." Kyrin's rough tone drew my attention. "Not too far, brother."

I shifted back enough to study Aggie's face and saw her gasp for breath. My body went cold as I panicked that I'd pushed her too far, but when she opened her mouth and screamed as an orgasm racked her body, I couldn't help staring in amazement. With my hand still around her throat, her chest heaving, and her face bright red, she rode Knight roughly with one hand holding his head to her chest and the other hand

gripping my wrist. She came like an explosion, loud and messy, with limbs twitching and sounds that could've been from an animal. It was the hottest thing I'd ever seen.

Knight's grip on her hips was bruising and I knew the moment he was lost. Aggie opened her eyes and met his gaze, her expression so sated. There was something about fucking a woman happy that did all of us in. With a loud growl, Knight tugged her even closer and lost one hand in her hair as he came.

Kyryn was practically purring next to us, his own desire turning him more animal than man. Watching Aggie come was too much for the most controlled of us. "Decide now, Zan."

I met his eye and then slowly eased Aggie off Knight. I pulled her to her feet and wrapped my arms around her while staring hard at her face, searching for her lines. "I want your ass, baby. I want to be the first man to take you there. I won't lie and say that I'll be a gentleman about it. I'll ease in and let you get use to my size, but then I'm going to fuck you hard, the way you need to be fucked. If you let me have what I want, you won't sit tomorrow without feeling the way my dick stretched you. I want to ruin you and do things that should be illegal, but I'll never leave you unsatisfied. Have you ever played with your ass? Made yourself come with a toy here?"

Her eyes widened when I teased my fingers between her cheeks and dipped the tip of one into her ass. She shook her head. "Never."

“You’ll come like never before. I won’t stop until you do.” I lifted her leg around my hip and flashed her a wicked grin as I pushed my fingertip deeper. “Be a good girl, baby. Give yourself to me.”

She pulled one of my hands away from her ass and I accepted that she wasn’t ready for that. Instead of pushing me away, though, she lifted my hand to her long neck and wrapped my fingers around her throat. I felt her swallow and watched her lift her chin. Defiant even as she prepared to let me fuck her ass. “You can have me. Sir.”

*****ZANDER*****

I lifted her other leg and held her against me as I kissed her. Nipping her lip, I growled into her mouth. “Say it again.”

She searched my eyes and ran her tongue over my lips. “You can have me, Sir.”

I carried her to the couch and put her down next to Knight, facing the back of the couch with her ass in the air. I looked at Kyrin and without me saying a word, he came closer and sat next to her. I lifted her leg and motioned him to move over so that he was sitting under her. She hovered over him, her grip changing from the couch to his shoulders. Her tits hung in his face and he marked them with his mouth even as he found her clit and circled it with his fingers.

I gripped her ass as I stared down at her and spread her cheeks. Baring her virgin asshole, I felt my heart race like it was my first time. I wanted it to be good for her. Better than good. I wanted her to need it again and again, from me.

I freed myself from my pants and gathered a mixture of her wetness and Knight's come from her pussy. Rubbing it into her ass, I slid my dick into her core and a finger into her ass at the same time. She tossed her head back and moaned, revealing her perfect neck and shoulders to me.

Kyrin looked at me and nodded. "I'm barely hanging on here."

I pumped into her wetness slowly as I pushed in another finger, stretching her ass out to take me. Listening to the sounds she made, I pushed her farther, inch by inch. When I had three fingers inside her and she was tossing her head around and mewling like a cat in heat, I slapped her ass with my other hand and growled.

"Tell Kyrin what I'm doing to you as I do it, baby. Everything. Tell him how it feels." I slapped her ass again and felt her core clench down hard on me. "If you're good, we'll give you everything, Aggie."

As I pulled my fingers out of her, she gasped and reached back to grab my hip. Her voice was husky with need as she spoke. "He pulled his fingers out of me."

"Out of you where?" Kyrin gripped her face with his free hand and held her gaze. "Where were his fingers, baby?"

"In my ass. He pulled his fingers out of my ass," she stammered. "I feel empty."

He grunted. "Not for long."

I pulled out of her core and pressed the tip of my dick against her tight asshole. “Tell him where I am.”

“He’s- His dick is pressing against my-” She let out a loud hiss and her fingernails bit into my hip. “My ass. It’s inside me.”

“How’s it feel?” Kyrin kissed her chin and over to her ear. “How’s it feel to have your ass stretched by a real man’s dick, baby?”

Aggie gasped and dropped her head to pant as I worked the first half of my length into her. Her muscles never stopped fluttering around me. “Big. Too big. Not enough. I don’t know. I want... I want it all.”

I gripped her ass firmly and thrust the rest of my length into her. Her shout filled the library and called to the most primal part of me. I gripped the back of her hair and held tight as I stayed buried as deep as possible.

“Oh, my god!” She drew blood as her nails bit into my hip. Her ass clenched down on my length hard, making me feel twice as big as I was. When I used my grip on her hair to pull her upright, she spread her thighs as much as possible, in an attempt to make more room inside her ass.

“Tell Kyrin, baby.” I moved my hand to her throat and pressed my mouth to her ear. “Tell him what I’m doing.”

Her voice was shrill as she spoke. “He’s in my ass! His big dick is all the way inside me! He’s fucking my ass!”

Kyrin shifted forward and hooked two fingers into her core. “He’s going to fuck your ass hard, Aggie. And when you think you can’t take anymore? That’s when I’m going to pull you down on my cock. You’re going to take both of us inside. You walked into this house a woman who’d never been fucked in the ass. You’ll walk out a woman who’s had her body fucked in every way imaginable, including taking the two of us at the same time.”

I shifted my hips and slowly slid out of her ass. Every inch took effort, with the suction of her newly deflowered ass trying to keep me deep. Then, I did what I said I would do. With one hand on her throat and the other wrapped around her stomach, I fucked her. I punished her sweet ass with hard, deep strokes. I fucked her hard and fast, knocking the wind from her lungs so the only sounds she made were tiny gasps.

“Now, Zander. For the love of God, *now*.”

Knight shifted from the couch and made room for Kyrin to stretch out. Without ever pulling out of Aggie’s perfect ass, I shifted our bodies so Kyrin and I could ease her hips down over his. The moment his dick pressed into her core, Aggie cried out as a massive orgasm rocked her. I slipped my hand over her mouth to cover some of the sound and growled as her teeth sank into my palm.

The sting pushed me even farther. I fucked her down onto Kyrin’s length and he let the force of my thrusts rock her up and down his shaft. Aggie dug her nails into his chest, through his shirt, as her orgasm kept building.

Knight stood next to us and pulled Aggie's mouth down to his dick. Already hard again, he thrust into her mouth once before pulling out and lowering his face to hers. "I'm going to have this image burned into my brain for the rest of my life. Seeing you impaled on two cocks and so eager to take another down your throat, it's fucking beautiful. Every single time I fuck my hand in the future, it'll be you I'm thinking of."

Aggie dipped her head forward, taking him into her mouth again. She was twisted and none of us were being gentle with her, but her pleasure seemed to stretch on and on. The sounds she made around Knight's dick were vulgar and left each of us teetering on the edge.

I stroked my hands down her back and slapped her ass again, loving the tone change in her sounds when I did. I lost myself to fucking her, happy to spend forever doing just that. It was only the tingling at the base of my spine that signaled my end was near.

Kyryn was being milked by her lasting orgasm and he was the first to snap. He growled her name and came with his mouth latched onto her shoulder. The dog in me wanted to see my own mark on her body. I pulled out of her ass for long enough to sink my teeth into her ass and suck hard enough to leave a lasting mark. I barely got inside her ass again before I came, staring at her bruised ass.

I shouted her name and curled around her body, letting the sounds of her pleasure roll over me as I filled her ass with jet after jet of come.

Knight came last, his dick lodged deep in her mouth as he unloaded for the second time. He never took his eyes off her face and only pulled out when he saw that she'd swallowed his come.

Aggie continued to shake as she collapsed on Kyrin's chest, the aftershocks of her orgasm almost as strong as the first orgasms she'd had. Her soft moans quieted down and became soft, breathy snores shockingly fast. With Kyrin and I still buried deep in her body, she passed out.

Kyrin lifted his head and looked up at me. "Did she...?"

I scrubbed my hand down my face as I slowly pulled out of her ass. Unable to help myself, I watched my seed leak out of her body and grunted. "She did. We put her right to sleep."

Knight stood next to me and tucked his length back into his pants. "Fuck, that's hot."

Kyrin lifted her hips enough to ease out of her and gently shifted from under her. Standing next to us, he watched her with us. The marks we'd left all over her body made it glaringly obvious that we'd lost control. There'd never been another time when I'd stood by after fucking a woman and worried about how far we'd pushed her. I knew she'd liked everything we did, but seeing the aftermath let a sense of guilt bubbling up in me.

"She's definitely quitting after that." Kyrin sighed. "Do you think she'll visit again? I want more."

I zipped myself away and fought the urge to pick her up and carry her up to bed. “I have a feeling that Aggie Young will be long gone by tomorrow morning.”

“I could find her.” Knight felt me give him a look and shrugged. “I’m not sorry. I could. I might.”

Kyrin rubbed at his face and shook his head. “I have to be at the barn by six in the morning. I don’t have time to talk you off the ledge.”

“No one is on any ledge. We’re all in control. She’ll be gone in the morning. We’ll find another nanny for Gracie and we’ll forget Aggie Young ever existed. End of story.”

Knight grunted out an answer before leaving. I didn’t have a clue what it meant and I was too exhausted to care in that moment. It’d been months since I’d lost myself in a woman and I’d never lost myself so thoroughly. I just wanted to sleep for a few hours and then go to work. I wanted to do *zero* thinking in the middle.

“Put a blanket over her. We can lock the door so no one can come in. It’s as good as being in her room.” I inched away from her, casting one last look at the way she curled into the back of the couch, her hands tucked under her chin. “Come on.”

*****AGGIE*****

“Eat your breakfast, Gracie. As soon as you finish, we can go for an early morning swim.” I sat across from my little charge, being the perfect example of calm as I bit into a peach. “If you let me put sunscreen on you without too much of a fight, I’ll let you choose what we have for lunch. How’s that sound?”

For a little girl who had almost everything, the idea of choice went a long way. “I’ll be so good, Aggie! I won’t fight.”

I smiled at her and took another bite of my peach to keep from whimpering at hearing her say she’d be good. I never wanted to hear the word good again. Ignoring the way my body shivered at the direction of my thoughts, I stood up and finished my peach on the way to the countertop composter that sat inside the butler’s pantry. Each step was yet another reminder of my night.

“Well, good morning, Gracie. What are you doing in here all by yourself?” Mary’s voice lacked her full kindness as she

spoke to the sweet child. She wasn't exactly harsh, but I got the feeling that she wasn't exactly used to children.

“Oh, Mary, I'll need to discuss that with you.” Zander's deep voice filled the other room and I braced myself against the counter. “There's been a change.”

After waking up alone, naked, on the library couch that morning, I'd considered running for around two seconds. I was sore, covered in bites and bruises that had taken me an hour to cover up, and my ego was dented at being left on the couch by myself. At the same time, I'd never felt my body so limp in the moments before I stood up. I was relaxed from the biggest and best orgasms I'd ever had. I'd had needs met that I hadn't even known were needs. I'd had every kinky desire I'd ever had fulfilled. I couldn't be *that* upset.

I'd also known that the guys would assume the worst of me. Of course they'd think that I wouldn't be able to face them after sex, as if I would naturally feel ashamed of something they wouldn't. They thought I was weak. They were wrong.

I tossed my peach in the composter and walked out of the pantry with a smile on my face. “That's the first indoor composter I've ever seen that feels clean. You'll have to tell me where you found it, Mary.”

Zander's eyes locked on me, but I paid him no mind. He was frozen halfway to the table with a full plate of food.

“You know, I never knew I loved being complimented on the gadgets I've found for this kitchen. I really do, though.”

Mary sent me a rare smile and then looked at my knee. “You’re moving all stiff. How’s your knee?”

“Sore. I’ve learned my lesson about running in the house. Thankfully, Gracie managed to learn through me and didn’t have to have her own wounds.” I winked at the girl. “Isn’t that right?”

“Sit down and let me look at that knee. If you get it infected and have to go to the ER, you’ll be doing no one any favors.” Mary patted the chair next to her. “Now, please. I’ve got a ton of chores to do and I don’t have all day.”

I grinned at Gracie as I sat in the chair and slowly pulled my loose yoga pants over my knee. “Mary doesn’t want me to know she likes me, but I know she does.”

Gracie chomped on a piece of bacon and leaned over to look at my knee. “Is that more boy’s club crap?”

I laughed. “Maybe. We’d have to get into Mary’s head to know that, butterfly.”

“No one’s getting into my head. Now, stop wiggling around. This knee looks even more irritated today. What’d you do to it last night?” Mary wasn’t looking up at me to see the blush that stole across my cheeks, thankfully. “You didn’t ice, did you?”

Knight strolled into the kitchen and stopped cold when he saw me. His eyes moved down to my knee and he frowned before turning away to fix himself a plate. Between the two of them and the way they were acting, I knew I’d been right about the brothers assuming I’d run away.

“I set out with full intentions to ice it. I got distracted, though, and then I passed out before I could take care of it. It’s nothing, though. I once worked through my appendix slowly rupturing. I just thought it was the flu and I had a big project I wanted to finish.”

“And your shitty boss just let you do that?” Zander’s scowl was dark enough to darken even the brightest of doorways.

I licked my lips and grinned at Mary. “Like you’ve never worked while sick.”

Zander turned his glare on his property manager. “Of course, you haven’t. You have enough sick time to take the next two years off.”

Mary cleared her throat. “Well, I can see this conversation is going nowhere good. I have chores to do. Is the lunch menu Jamie sent over okay with you ladies today?”

“Wait a second, Mary.” Zander pushed his plate away, clearly bothered.

I ignored him the same way Mary did. “Actually, I was hoping to make a little change.”

“I own this house and I expect to be answered when I speak.” Zander stood up and made a perfect picture of frustration with his hands on his hips.

“I promised Gracie that she could choose our lunch menu if she was good about letting me put sunscreen on her.” I tapped the girl on the nose as I walked past. “Do you think that’d be

okay with Jamie? If it's an issue, I can take over lunch today for the two of us."

Knight grunted. "You cook?"

"I...microwave and order in with the best of them." I turned my back to him, as well, and focused on Mary. "I don't want to be a burden."

"I'd fire you both if I could." Zander tossed his napkin down on his plate and walked over to me. He gripped my upper arm and met my gaze with fire in his eyes. "We need to talk."

I grinned and pretended to pick a piece of lint off his shirt. "You forgot your plate at the table. Gracie should see an example of cleaning up after yourself."

Mary actually laughed, and I was pretty sure that was the only thing that stopped Zander from tossing me over his shoulder and hauling me out the front door. While he was staring incredulously at his property manager, I slipped free and moved to Gracie's side. "Let's think about lunch and then we'll go swimming. Put your plate in the sink if you're finished."

She pouted, but did as I said. Stopping next to Mary, she looked up at the older woman and smiled shyly. "Cake and ice cream."

I felt three pairs of adult eyes turn on me and I cringed. Yeah, I hadn't perfected the nanny thing, clearly. "Real food, too, Gracie."

“Cake and ice cream are real food, Aggie. My mommy said so.” Tears filled Gracie’s eyes and she crossed her arms over her chest.

I knew next to nothing about kids, but I could feel a tantrum coming. “Well, then. We’ll eat cake and ice cream for lunch. I can’t argue with Mommy logic.”

Every adult in the room had gone still and I could feel a heaviness in the room that took all the fun out of my poking the guys. I didn’t know the story of Gracie’s parents, but I knew the signs. It felt like not all that long ago that I was the little girl standing with my arms crossed, angry that someone might’ve disrespected my dead mother.

Mary stepped in once again. “Jamie will be fine with changing the menu.”

*****AGGIE*****

Instead of swimming, Gracie retreated to her room. I followed her and settled on the floor next to her bed. She grabbed a book and held it in front of her face while little sniffles escaped her. I grabbed a book and pretended to be engrossed in it, letting her decide to talk when, and if, she wanted to. We sat there until my legs went to sleep and even after.

After what felt like hours of silence, her tiny voice finally came from behind the book. “My mommy is in heaven.”

I stared down at my book. “Mine, too. I was around your age when my mom died, Gracie. I’m sorry that it happened to you. I know how hard it is to be so sad when you’re too little to do anything about it.”

“My daddy went with my mommy.” Her voice was even quieter. “Did your daddy go to heaven?”

I gripped the book so hard that the pages came loose from the binding. “No. My dad is still here with me.”

She was quiet for a while longer and then she put her book down. “I miss my room.”

Turning to face her, I nodded. “Tell me about it?”

She did. She described her house with her parents and made it sound so magical and special that I had tears in my eyes when she finished. It sounded like she’d had amazing parents.

“When your mommy went to heaven, did you have to move?”

I cleared my throat and sat up straighter. “I did. We all lived in this tiny apartment in the city before my mom died. She was sick and we had to stay close to the hospital. When she went to heaven, my dad took me to a little town where all my aunts and uncles lived. I had about a million cousins who were all loud and crazy. They always wrestled and broke things everywhere they went. They were a lot of fun, but I was too angry to have fun with them at first.”

“Why?”

I turned to face her and took her hand in mine. “They all had their moms still. I was mad that I didn’t get to keep my mom when they all got to keep theirs. It took me a long time to be happy for them instead of angry. We’re in a special club, Gracie. Girls who lose their moms too young, we have to stick together. We have big feelings and it’s easy to get lost in them. Together, we can always find our way.”

She stared at our hands linked together and nodded. “Okay.”

I smiled like I wasn't panicking internally at the responsibility of the promise I'd just made her. I didn't know what the hell I was doing. I was in no way the right person to take care of a sad little girl. I still felt like a sad little girl myself some days. Who was I to tell her anything?

"Can we swim now?" She scooted to the edge of the bed and swung her feet. "I like swimming the most."

I nodded. "Sure. Let's pick out your swimsuit and then we'll find something for me, too."

Gracie seemed to cheer up as we both readied ourselves for the pool. She picked out a brand-new pink bathing suit to wear and I found my most decent bra and panties to wear under an oversized T-shirt. I'd need to find a bathing suit soon, but not until the marks on my body faded. They were covered, but I didn't want to take any chances with the water wearing the coverage off.

Downstairs, we grabbed water bottles and stood at the edge of the patio to apply sunscreen. Gracie ran around the patio to dry hers faster and I chose to sit on the edge of the pool while I waited.

"You missed the entire back of your neck." Knight squatted next to me with the sunscreen bottle in his hands, already squeezing a dollop into his hands. "Lift your hair."

I looked up at him and sighed before doing as he said. "I'm sure I put enough on."

He rubbed the lotion over my neck and under the collar of my shirt, digging his fingers into the tense muscles of my neck as he moved. “Thought you’d be gone today.”

I snorted but didn’t dare move. His hands were working magic on my neck. “Why? Because facing you three after last night would be too much for me? Hardly.”

He shifted closer, his inner knee brushing against my back. “So, you have no problem looking me in the eye after letting me come inside you last night? Unprotected, by the way.”

I glared at him. “I’m on the pill.”

“We didn’t know that last night and yet, we still didn’t think twice about feeding you our seed. What is it about you, Aggie, that got under our skin enough to have us losing our heads like that?”

I shrugged his hands off my neck and stood up. I didn’t like the direction of the conversation or even having the conversation. I put my hands on my hips and stared down at him. It was a nice change, but even with him squatting, our height difference wasn’t drastic. “I hardly believe that you three don’t regularly do that. Which makes me think I should get tested.”

He slowly stood up and ran his knuckles over my jaw. “Why do I feel like the truth scares you more than the idea of needing to be tested?”

I tilted my chin higher and narrowed my eyes. “Don’t you have something to do?”

Nodding back at a laptop on top of the closest patio table, he winked. “I’ll be working from home for the next few days.”

Feeling truly shaken, I backed away from him and would’ve tumbled into the pool if he hadn’t been there to grab me. “Shit!”

He tugged me against his chest and grunted. “Such a naughty mouth, Aggie.”

I twisted out of his arms and walked to the end of the pool, needing a moment to catch my breath. I wanted to strangle and ride the man all at the same time. It nagged at my brain that I couldn’t put him in a category for sure. I liked solving problems and it felt like Knight wasn’t someone I’d be able to categorize easily. Friend or foe, I wasn’t sure, and that ate at me.

“I got my vest on, Aggie!”

I turned to see Gracie hurrying towards me with her life vest on backwards. I could see by the grin on her face that she was being silly on purpose. “I guess we should toss you in and see if it works, huh?”

She laughed and ran from me as I chased after her, desperate to get my mind off Knight. In the soft grass of the yard, I wasn’t worried about us falling and hurting ourselves, so I played with her for a while like that. We ran back and forth in the yard until we were both breathing hard and laughing. Only then did she let me fix her vest.

“Let’s jump in together!” She grabbed my hand and tugged me towards the deep end. “Please!”

“Okay, okay!” I stood at the edge of the pool with her and grinned down at her. “Last one in is a rotten egg!”

*****KNIGHT*****

My computer alerted me to an incoming video call from Zander and I answered it with the tap of a key without taking my eyes off Aggie. The T-shirt she wore over her bra and panties was suctioned to her body and I'd been watching her bounce around in the pool for half an hour with a hard-on that only softened when Zander's voice filled my ears through my ear pods.

“Where are you?” His voice was full of irritation and I knew the source immediately. “You're watching her, aren't you?”

I smiled and snapped a quick picture to send to him. I heard his phone buzz and then listened as he swore. “Yep.”

“Fuck.” He was silent for a minute and then he groaned. “Security footage is better than your phone. What's that say about your piece of shit phone?”

I looked up at the unobtrusive security camera overhead and shrugged. “Says that I had a very good system installed.”

“Shit. You haven’t done anything, have you?” The intercom in his office buzzed and his assistant said something I didn’t catch. “Give me ten minutes.”

I sighed as Aggie climbed out of the pool and immediately wrapped a towel around her body. “Damn.”

“Don’t expect me to feel sorry for you, asshole. I’m working while you’re drooling over the nanny. The nanny we fucked and thought would quit, by the way. Seems getting fucked just gave her more attitude, though.” Sounding truly disgruntled, Zander sighed. “You should’ve seen Kyrin’s face when I told him she was still here, all smiles.”

Aggie walked over to the table I was at and ignored me while she began a slow process of drying herself off. I cleared my throat and shifted in my seat.

“Try to be less obvious about your boner, would you?” Zander sounded happier then, taking joy in my discomfort. “She’s just ignoring you, isn’t she?”

“Yep.” I narrowed my eyes at Aggie and gritted my teeth. “Hey, Zan? Would you find it insulting if a woman said she needed to get tested after sleeping with you?”

“What the fuck? She said that? We’re clean and she should know that. We wouldn’t chance something that big.” Zander hesitated. “Is she on the pill?”

Aggie rolled her eyes at me. “You and Zander can both kick rocks.”

I unpaired my ear pods so Zander's angry voice traveled straight to Aggie. He growled and swore between clenched teeth. "How can a woman who came so pretty and listened like an angel be such a pain in the ass in the light of day? Kick rocks? Really? I should bend her over that table and turn her ass bright red."

Aggie's eyes went round and her cheeks turned bright red before she dropped her towel and leaned over the table, much like Zander wanted. With her face a picture of fury, she spoke quietly as Gracie slowly got out of the pool behind her. "A better question is how can men so utterly annoying ever give *any* woman pleasure? Honestly, it's a miracle that your personalities don't inspire dryness that only deserts could compete with. As for bending me over this table? I'd like to see you try. The next time you lay a hand on me, I'll flip you onto your back and throat punch you into next Tuesday."

Zander's laughter boomed through the speakers and I found myself grinning. I couldn't remember the last time I'd heard him laugh so fully. "One of us does like a little throat and breath play, baby, but we both know that isn't me. Save your feistiness for the library. Be a good nanny, Aggie."

I watched as she straightened and forced a smile as Gracie appeared next to her. "Ready for lunch, butterfly?"

"Yeah! Can Uncle Knight eat with us? And can we eat out here?" Gracie hopped where she stood, her happiness shining bright.

“Hey, Gracie. Uncle Knight is working.” Zander was still trying to stop laughing. “He’s been slacking off, too.”

“Oh, I know. He’s been watching Aggie.” Unaware of what she’d just said having any weight to it, Gracie continued. “I don’t think he thinks she can swim.”

I hung up on Zander as his laughter spilled out of my laptop speakers. Looking up at Aggie, I saw her fighting a laugh of her own. That quickly, she was past her anger, it seemed. I closed my laptop and found myself fighting to hide a smile. “I think lunch with you two sounds great. I hear we’re having cake and ice cream. My favorite.”

Gracie held her hands up to me and I picked her up the way I’d seen her parents do a thousand times. With Zella on my mind that morning, the memories were close to the surface. I turned away from Aggie and carried a wet Gracie into the house, all while she wiggled and sang one of her made up songs.

I found Jamie in the kitchen and nodded at the man. He’d been our chef for two years and I’d gotten used to him being around. When I watched his eyes roam over Aggie’s body, though, I felt an indescribable urge to kick his ass.

She was so focused on Gracie that she didn’t see the man checking her out. When she did look up, Jamie had corrected his face into something polite. “Hey! I hope it was okay that we changed the menu on you. I bribed this one with her choice of food, so you really helped me out in the end. Putting

sunscreen on her was about two million times easier today than it was yesterday.”

Jamie took a few steps closer and smiled with nearly every single one of his teeth showing. I’d never noticed that I hated his smile before that moment. “It was no problem. If it would make it easier for you, you could just text me the menu that you and Gracie want. Or just come find me in here. I never mind the company.”

Aggie nodded and looked back at Gracie. “I’ll probably need your number. I have a feeling I’m going to use bribery a lot. Which is why I’m not a real nanny, because that has to be wrong on so many levels.”

Jamie leaned against the counter and took the chance to run his eyes over Aggie again. “You’re not a real nanny? That sounds like a story I’ll need to hear.”

“Ask him.” Aggie carelessly jerked her hand in my direction. “Apparently, the Graves brothers don’t take career women seriously.”

I gritted my teeth and stepped closer to her. “Jamie, we’re going to eat lunch on the patio.”

“Um, sure.” He looked back at Aggie. “I’d still love to hear the story from you. It’s always nicer to hear things from a pretty woman.”

Gracie gasped. “Mr. Jamie called you pretty! Oh, my gosh!”

I gripped the back of Aggie’s neck and stared down at her, searching for any sign of a positive reaction to Jamie. All I

saw was frustration at me, which didn't bother me in the slightest. I lightly squeezed her neck and smiled. "Cake awaits us, ladies."

*****AGGIE*****

It occurred to me that I hadn't seen any of the guys with their shirts off right around the time Knight was taking his shirt off. After eating his weight in cake and ice cream, he'd decided to join me and Gracie in the pool. I'd felt his strength the day before, but I was still floored when he dropped his shirt on the back of his chair and stood before me with the body of a professional athlete. His chest and abs instantly had my mouth watering and I had to turn away to hide the look on my face.

I'd already applied sunscreen to Gracie and most of my body, but I couldn't force my legs to carry me to the pool, not when Knight was going to have to apply sunscreen and I was close enough to see it smooth over each divot of his abs. I was hovering, something I had no business doing.

“Are you coming, Aggie?” Gracie splashed in the shallow end, entertaining herself with a pool float.

“Um, in just a minute, Gracie. I'm just letting my sunscreen dry.”

Knight moved closer to me and scoffed. “Liar.”

I chanced looking over at him and had to lean against the table. He was working sunscreen into his chest and my body went weak. My brain, too, apparently. “You work behind a computer as much as me, if not more. How?”

He quirked an eyebrow. “How what?”

“How do you look like you work out every day? How do you not have the same softness that I have? Working in an office doesn’t exactly make for a super tight ass typically. At least not for me.”

Turning completely to me, Knight narrowed his eyes at me. “You’re talking to a man who saw you completely naked last night, Aggie. I know exactly what your ass looks like and every place you’re soft. It’s all the good places, by the way.”

I bit my lip and looked back at the pool. “You still didn’t answer how you look like that.”

He lowered his mouth to my ear. “I swim. I run. And I fuck.”

“Good to know.” I hated how breathy my voice sounded. “Are you as good at the first two as you are at the last one?”

A surprised laugh stopped him in his tracks. “Wow.”

I looked up at him and grinned. “What? I’m not going to deny it. Would you believe me if I did?”

His pupils dilated as he slowly shook his head. “Not a fucking chance.”

“Aggie! Uncle Knight! Come on!” Gracie was growing bored and it wouldn’t be long before she was out of the pool and coming for us.

“Did you know he was checking you out in the kitchen?” Knight looked away from me and finished rubbing sunscreen on his abs. The stiffness of his shoulders told me he was uncomfortable with the topic, despite being the one to bring it up.

“Jamie?” I took the bottle and squirted some out in my hands, damning myself to an afternoon of being turned on with no end in sight. I pulled him around so I could reach his back and sighed at the feeling of his muscles rippling under my hands. “I figured it out in the end. When you grabbed my neck and all but pissed on me.”

“I didn’t—I just didn’t like the way he was acting.” He shuddered when I rubbed his sides and down to his hips. “There was no pissing.”

I couldn’t help leaning in close to him and letting the warmth of his body sink into me. My hands moved slower and slower, my movements distracted as I inhaled and let my chest graze his back. “I’m not enjoying this, by the way. I just...like being a decent person who doesn’t want others to burn in the sun. So, don’t think anything else.”

“If we didn’t have an audience, I’d ‘not enjoy’ bending you over this table and taking you right now.” His voice was pure gravel as he spoke and he growled under his breath when I fully pressed myself into his back. “Goddammit, Aggie.”

“You guys are slow!” Gracie’s drawn out declaration shook me from my lust haze.

Pulling away from Knight, I rubbed my hands down my shirt to wipe off the excess sunscreen and muttered to myself. “Worst fucking nanny in the history of nannies.”

Knight caught my hand. “Best nanny to fuck, though.”

I smacked his hand. “That’s not a compliment. How many came before me?”

“None! I mean, there were nannies, but none that we...” He trailed off once we were in hearing distance of Gracie. “You are the only one.”

“Want to see my flips, Uncle Knight? I can flip better than Aggie, but only because she’s got boobs.”

Knight slowly turned his head to face me, a giant smile transforming his already handsome face into something that should’ve been illegal. “Oh, yeah?”

I grunted and walked towards the deep end. “Worst nanny ever.”

Gracie spent forever forcing us to watch her pool moves, but I realized that I was having fun. Knight wasn’t so bad to be around when he wasn’t being an asshole and standing in the way of my career. In another time and place, I would’ve loved to pick his brain about the work he did.

It was only when Kyrin showed up in a dusty pair of jeans and a cowboy hat that we all knew it was time to get out of the

pool. We'd been in for too long and I still wanted to show Gracie a movie from my childhood before dinner.

Kyryn stood next to the pool with a couple of towels in his hands, raised eyebrows and tired eyes focused on me. He handed Gracie her towel and nodded at her to go inside and find Mary to ask about a snack. When I got out, he didn't let go of the towel he handed to me. He stepped into my space and looked me over slowly. "Thought you'd be gone."

"You thought wrong." I held up my arms sarcastically. "You going to dry me off?"

A hint of a smile touched his lips. Instead of laughing me off, though, he unfolded the towel and slowly worked at drying me off. "Arms up. The shirt has to go. It'll never dry enough."

I looked over at Knight and saw he was waiting to see what I'd do. Not wanting to back down, I lifted my arms in the air and held my breath as Kyryn pulled the wet shirt over my head, leaving me in just my wet bra and panties. He continued drying me, even going down to one knee so he could dry my legs. Staring down at his cowboy hat, I chewed on my lip. It wasn't fair for them to start playing nice.

Kyryn stood up and gently squeezed my hair with the towel. His face was pinched with frustration as he worked and it was impossible to not see that something was bothering him. The lines across his forehead were etched deep, even as he forced a smile when my hair was dry. "All done."

I was a sucker because I couldn't ignore his mood. I touched his arm and stared up at him, eyes protected from the sun by his hat. "Are you okay?"

His shoulders sagged and he pulled his hat off, revealing matted hair and even more dirt. "We lost a mare today."

Knight blew out a harsh breath. "Shit. I'm sorry, Ky."

I wrapped my arms around his waist and hugged him tight. "I'm sorry, too."

He accepted my hug for less than five full seconds and then pulled away roughly, shoving his hat back on his head and turning towards the house. "I'll be down for dinner."

Knight stared after his twin with a deep frown on his face. He glanced over at me once before walking after his brother. I stood there, feeling rejected for no reason and pissed at myself for feeling that way.

*****KNIGHT*****

Dinner was tense. Kyrin was upset about losing the mare and Zander was stuck at work. I was worried about both my brothers and my mood transferred into anger at Jamie when he stared at Aggie for too long again. I didn't want to show how petty I was being, so I just acted angry in general. By the time dinner was over, Gracie was cranky and refusing to talk to anyone. Aggie was quiet and picked at her food. It was an overall shitty experience. We couldn't get out of there fast enough.

Kyrin retreated to his rooms while Aggie and Gracie went up to get Gracie ready for bed. I stayed at the dinner table, considering how stabbing myself in the hand with my fork would be more fun than repeating the night.

A sense of loneliness crept in the way it did sometimes. The house was too big, our family nearly decimated. When we all lost ourselves in our own thing for too long, I started to understand just how small our family had become. It was just

the four of us. There was no one else. We didn't even have friends, really, just the people who worked for us.

Since Zella passed, we'd all retreated into ourselves more. We spent more time apart than ever. I knew we were each mourning our sister's passing, but I wanted to lose my mind and tear the walls of the house down some nights. It was hard to sleep when the house was so quiet because it made me think of what it would be like one day, when the rest of us went. It was a depressing thought, but I wasn't above them from time to time.

When I left the table, I went up to my room and took a shower before settling at my desk. There was always work I could do, but I didn't want to do work. I wanted human interaction. I wanted more of the time I'd had in the pool with Aggie and Gracie.

Even though I knew it was wrong, I didn't stop myself from pulling up the security system and clicking on the set of cameras in Gracie's side of the house. I panned through each camera until I found Gracie and Aggie sitting on Gracie's bed, reading a book. I turned on the sound and listened in.

"And then Princess Gracie kicked the frog's butt and realized she didn't need to kiss him because she wasn't interested in a prince with frog breath at that moment in her life."

Gracie giggled. "That's not what it says, Aggie."

Aggie pretended to strain to see the words on the page. "I don't know. I'm pretty sure it does say that. Can you read

already?”

“Yes!”

“Darn.” Aggie closed the book and put it away. “Of course, I find the smartest six-year-old ever to nanny.”

“Will you tell me a story about the place you moved to? After your mommy went to heaven?”

My stomach dropped and I sat up, torn between listening in to learn more about Aggie and giving her the privacy she deserved. Ultimately, I couldn't force myself to walk away from a chance to hear her talk about herself.

“Sure.” Aggie wrapped her arms around herself. “So, I told you we moved to live close to my aunts, uncles, and what felt like hundreds of cousins. We lived on a farm, but it wasn't a big farm. It was tiny. Dad and I started with three chickens that just wandered onto the farm one day and never left. We started selling eggs after a while. It was my job to go out and collect the eggs each morning.”

“Uncle Ky showed me the chickens here.”

Aggie grinned. “I bet Uncle Ky doesn't have a chicken anywhere near as mean as the one we had. I called her Mean Gene. Want to know why?”

Gracie giggled. “Yeah.”

“I had an Uncle Gene. I thought he was such an old fart. He was always yelling at the kids to be quiet. When my dad heard what I'd named that chicken, he just laughed and laughed. Especially since the chickens were girls and I named her after

a boy.” Aggie brushed Gracie’s hair out of her face and continued quietly. “Mean Gene would hide at the back of the chicken coop and wait for me to come gather the eggs. She was so quiet and sneaky. I never expected her to be there and she always was, waiting to peck my hands when I reached in to grab the eggs.”

“Why didn’t you stop getting the eggs?” Gracie yawned. “I wouldn’t have gone to get them.”

Aggie shrugged. “Sometimes, you have to do things that aren’t your favorite to get what you want. I wanted fresh eggs for breakfast and for Dad to not gripe at me. Eventually, I learned to wear oven mitts to gather the eggs. Mean Gene couldn’t get me after that and eventually she got bored of her game.”

“Where is she now?”

I smiled to myself as I watched Aggie’s eyes go wide in panic.

“...She’s...at another farm. Yep.” When Gracie looked away, Aggie made a face. “We definitely didn’t make chicken nuggets out of her.”

I laughed and kept watching Aggie, even once Gracie was asleep. I watched as she tucked Gracie in and went through the process of turning off lights and pulling the door mostly closed. I switched cameras and watched her walk through the house, into the kitchen, and then back up to her room with a bag of ice and a popsicle.

There were no cameras in her room and I sat there, itching to see more of her. I eventually gave up and settled on top of my bed. Staring at the ceiling, I played out scenarios that could possibly end with me in Aggie's bed. When nothing seemed like a good plan, I finally gave up on the idea completely and got back up to do some of the work I'd ignored during the day.

Only, when I sat down and rewound the footage from outside of Aggie's room to be sure I hadn't missed anything, I saw that I had. I'd missed her stepping into the hallway outside of her room, completely naked and staring directly into the camera. I jerked out of my chair and tried not to break into a sprint as I left my wing and headed across the house to her room.

When I got to her room, I braced myself with my hands on either side of the frame and was about to knock when the door was yanked open and Aggie was there, grabbing my shirt and pulling me into her room.

I lifted her into my arms and kicked the door shut behind me, groaning as she wrapped herself around me and kissed me. I cupped her naked ass and stumbled a few feet, instantly drunk on the taste of her. "How'd you know?"

She kissed my jaw and nibbled on my ear before kissing my mouth again. Her tongue danced against mine as her hands tangled in my hair. "I'm really good at computers, Knight. I was in the security system the first night before I fell asleep."

I dropped her on top of her bed and yanked at my shirt. Staring down at her body, I swore and kicked out of my

joggers. “Jesus, that’s sexy. Tell me how you did it.”

She grabbed my hand and pulled me down on top of her, cradling me between her soft thighs. I reached down to make sure she was ready before sinking my length into her in one hard stroke. We both moaned and then I fucked her as she described to me how she’d hacked my system and watched me watching her.

“I told you. I’m good at computers.” She rolled over under me and braced herself as I thrust into her from behind. Between panting breaths, she told me off. “Your system was a joke. Holes as big as this fucking state. I could show you how to make it better.”

I held onto her shoulders and fucked her harder. “Nothing wrong with my system. No one else could crack it.”

Her core squeezed down on my length as she got closer to her orgasm. “Then appreciate how damn good I am.”

I reached around her hip to rub her clit and growled. “I’m fucking trying to!”

She jerked forward and I nearly dislocated my shoulder trying to get her back under me. She pushed me onto my back and crawled on top, taking me even deeper and leaned forward to press her breasts into my chest and kiss me. “Just want to see you when I come. So ridiculously hot.”

I gripped her ass in one hand and her hair in the other so I could hold her steady while I drove us both over the edge. With our mouths hovering a breath apart, we both came hard

together. I watched her face twist in pleasure and then soften into something proud and happy. I kissed her then, even as I was trying to catch my breath.

Holding her on top of me, I dropped my head back on her bed and let out a pleasure filled groan. “Holy shit.”

Aggie braced her hands on either side of my neck and bit her lip while staring down at me. “I was right to watch.”

I rolled us over and pinned her to the bed. “No one likes a braggart.”

She clenched her core around my still hard dick and grinned. “*Someone* likes me.”

I smiled down at her and dropped my mouth to softly kiss her. “He doesn’t have a brain. Makes sense.”

Laughing, she slapped my shoulder and then locked her arms around my neck. “I hate that you’re not completely terrible.”

“You’re not completely terrible yourself.” I kissed her again and something shifted between us. The teasing gave way to something softer, more intense. It was something much harder to ignore when we finished and it was time for me to go back to my own room. It was something that left me lingering just outside her door, making out with her when we should’ve been done.

It was that strange feeling that kept me up after I made it back to my room that night and it was that strange feeling that sent me running to the office the next day.

*****AGGIE*****

“I don’t want to ever leave!” Gracie spun around in a circle and laughed happily. “Promise that we can come back! Please, Aggie!”

I took her hand and nodded. “Of course, we can come back. I can’t believe your uncles never brought you here before. It’s one of the most famous doll stores ever.”

Gracie sighed dreamily and clutched her new doll to her chest with her free arm. “I want to come every week.”

I led us out onto the street and grinned down at her. “You’ll have to talk to your uncles about that. While I’m your nanny, I’ll take you every week, as long as you’re kind and try your best to be nice around the house.”

“Oh, I will be.” Clinging to my hand, she started listing all the ways she was going to be kind around the house.

I watched the sidewalk ahead and mentally calculated where I’d parked. I gasped as someone stepped in front of me and I

crashed into them. I would've gone down hard if two familiar arms hadn't grabbed me and held me steady.

Monroe Blake looked down at me with a shocked expression on his face, his hands still holding my arms. He looked from me to Gracie and then back at me. "Agatha?"

My stomach sank and every part of my being cringed away from the jerk in front of me. "Excuse us."

He scoffed and held me tighter. "No, sorry, you can't just excuse yourself from this. What the hell is this?"

I glared at him and pulled Gracie closer. "Please let me go. I have nothing to say to you and I'd appreciate it if you didn't block our way."

"Aggie? What's wrong?" Gracie stared up at me with her eyes as wide as saucers. "I want to go home."

"Who's the kid? Why are you with a kid at all? What is going on here?" Monroe glared down at Gracie when she pushed at his hand to try and make him let go of me. "Beat it, kid."

"No, *you* beat it. Get out of my way, Monroe." I bent down and scooped Gracie into my arms. "Excuse us."

He stepped into my path again and scowled. "I deserve to know why the hell you have a kid. You threw away five years of our life because you didn't want a kid and now you have a fucking kid?"

"Watch your mouth!" I shoved past him and tried to remember where the car was. It was nearly impossible with

my mind racing and my stomach turning. “It’s okay, Gracie. No need to worry about him.”

“You’d better start explaining, Agatha!” Monroe wasn’t giving up and I knew him. He was like a dog with a bone when he set his mind to something. “Now!”

I stopped moving and held Gracie closer. “I’m her nanny. Okay? Now, leave us alone.”

He let out a loud laugh. “You’re kidding, right?”

When I tried to say something back, he just laughed louder. My heart raced. I felt like I was going to throw up.

“Wow! Just wow. You broke up our relationship and ruined your life because you were too hung up on not having kids right now and now you’re a nanny! You can’t make this shit up. Oh, my god. This is amazing. Wait until I tell Mom. She’ll love this.”

“Aggie, I want to go home!” Gracie buried her face in my neck and started to cry.

“I love this. I’m so glad I ran into you, Agatha. Getting to see you at this pathetic low really makes me glad that I made the choices I did. You’re a fucking loser and I’m only sorry I didn’t see it sooner.” Monroe laughed again. “Good luck with the brat. You’re both going to need it.”

I stood there after he left and took deep breaths. I counted to fifty before I was able to move again. The moment I spotted the car, I had to fight back my own tears. I wanted to run home to my dad and cry on his shoulder for a few hours. Instead, I

put Gracie in her seat and buckled her in before getting behind the wheel and driving us back to the Graves' mansion.

If I thought I would get a break when we got back to the home, I was wrong. Zander was standing in the driveway, waiting on us with murder written all over his face. Before I could even get my door open, he was there, reaching in to unbuckle me and pull me out.

I was sick of men pushing me around that day and I yanked free of him to stand in front of the car. I wrapped my arms around myself and glared at him with every ounce of my self-control focused on not crying. "What's your problem?"

"My problem is that you had no right to take Gracie into the city!" He slammed the car door shut and approached me. "Who the fuck do you think you are, taking that kind of risk with our niece?"

I stumbled back a step and shook my head. "The notes said-"

"The notes are for a *real* nanny! Not some ex-girlfriend of a business enemy! *You* don't get to take her out. We can't trust you to keep her safe! You took her out and anything could've happened! What would you have done if someone tried to grab her? She's the only heir to a billion-dollar fortune, dammit!"

I was done being yelled at. "You're an asshole. You don't get to scream at me because you didn't take the time to explain your version of the rules to me. I went through that book of rules and demands back and forth, at least five times. I could recite it to you right now. How was I supposed to know that

I'm not trusted enough to put her in a car and drive her to town?"

"The only asshole here is you for putting our niece at risk. I'm done with you. You didn't stop to think for one second that you could've gotten her killed!" He spun away from me and shoved his hands into his hair. "You're fired. You don't deserve to be anywhere near her."

"No! I want Aggie!" Gracie had gotten out of the car silently and she ran around Zander to throw herself at me. "Don't leave, Aggie! Don't go! Please!"

I closed my eyes and sucked in what I hoped was a stabilizing breath before kneeling in front of Gracie and grasping her little shoulders. "Hey, it's okay. Look at me. Breathe, Gracie. Just breathe."

She scream-cried and locked her arms around my neck, clinging to me. I stood up and held her in my arms, staring over her head at Zander. I didn't know what the hell to do. I was lost and when I saw his face, for a second I felt like maybe he was, too.

Any human emotion I saw on his face vanished, though, and a mask of anger replaced it. "I won't take chances with her. You're out."

"No!" Gracie held me so tight that she was making it hard for me to breathe. "Stop! I hate you, Uncle Zander! I hate you! You can't take Aggie!"

“What the hell is going on? I could hear screaming from the barn!” Kyrin strode towards us, his boots leaving clouds of dust in their wake. “What happened?”

Zander turned away from us, leaving me to explain. I stroked Gracie’s hair in an attempt to calm her down and met Kyrin’s angry gaze. “I didn’t know I wasn’t supposed to take her out. Zander wants me to leave. I... I don’t know what to do.”

Kyrin glared at the back of his brother’s head and rubbed his stubble covered jaw. “You’re not going anywhere. We make decisions by majority in this family, not by angry dictatorship.”

Zander swung around to face us. “She could’ve gotten Gracie hurt! You’re okay with that?”

Kyrin ignored his brother. “Gracie, you need to apologize to Uncle Zander. We don’t tell family that we hate them. If you’d said that to me, I’d be really sad.”

Gracie’s sobs turned to quiet sniffles and she loosened her grip marginally so she could look at Zander. “Sorry.”

“Now, go with Uncle Zander while I talk to Aggie. You two need to make up.” Kyrin saw me stiffen and sighed. “Relax, Aggie. I’m just trying to give you some breathing room. You look like you’re ready to break down.”

With that remark, I stiffened my jaw and straightened my back. No man was going to break me. I knelt down and

cupped Gracie's face in my hands. "Everything's okay. I'll be back soon."

She looked up at Kyrin with large, tear-filled eyes. "Promise?"

Kyrin nodded. "I promise. Now, go on. I don't want to come back to the house and find out that you and Uncle Zander are still fighting."

Zander stood back with his hands on his hips, staring at me. His jaw worked as he thought, but instead of speaking, he just picked Gracie up and carried her inside.

I felt brittle as I turned to Kyrin. "I'm ready to breathe now."

*****KYRIN*****

I walked in silence with Aggie. She didn't look like she was ready to talk and that was fine with me. I wasn't sure I wanted to talk, either. I just knew that she was either going to murder my brother or cry and I didn't want either to happen. I studied her on the long trail back to the barn and frowned when I couldn't make sense of her.

Normally, it was Knight who couldn't leave a puzzle unsolved, but there was something about Aggie that made my brain feel itchy. I wanted to scratch that itch and figure out what went on behind her expressive eyes. The red flags that waved all around her didn't stop me. I needed to understand.

She was wearing another T-shirt, a worn-out tie-dye one with a faded picture of a peace sign on the front. With her honey brown hair trailing down her back and her brown strappy sandals, she looked more like a child of the sixties than modern times. All she was missing was a big pair of glasses and a flower in her hair. Normally the women I went for were more...typical. I couldn't remember a woman who

hadn't shown up in a sundress and boots on any of the dates I'd been on.

"You're staring." Aggie turned to face me and sighed. "I'm fine, Kyrin. You really don't have to worry about me."

Standing in the middle of a cluster of woods between the house and barn, the smell of honeysuckle filled the air around us. In the shade, her green eyes looked less like vibrant moss and more like the thick foliage around us.

"I beg to differ. You and Zander were going at each other in front of Gracie. He was wrong for trying to fire you and I understand you being pissed, but there was something more. I haven't known you for long, but I got the impression that something was wrong. More than Zander's attitude, I mean."

She looked up at the trees and tucked her hair behind her ears before looking back at me. "I took Gracie to this amazing doll store downtown. She loved it, by the way. She was so excited, but even so, she didn't demand a million dolls. There was a kid in there, screaming to get one more doll added to their growing stack and I was terrified I'd miscalculated in taking Gracie there. She's great, though. Your sister and her husband must've been really amazing to raise to be the girl she is."

A hard lump formed in my throat and I had to look away. It was always hard to talk about Zella, but being surprised by the mention of her was always like a punch in the chest those days.

“I’m sorry.” Aggie started walking again. “When we walked out of the store, we ran into Monroe. You know what they say about the best revenge being showing your ex how amazing you’re doing without them? Or whatever the saying is. I don’t know... What I do know is that no one says run into your ex while you’re at your lowest to give them more than enough ammunition to rip your ego to shreds.”

A chill ran down my spine at the idea of her meeting up with Blake. She’d proven to be good with Gracie, but that didn’t mean she wasn’t still working for that piece of shit. “You just *ran* into him?”

Her shoulders stiffened and she stopped moving. “No, Kyrin, I made plans to meet up with him while out with your niece. I thought it would be amazing to be shouted at in front of her and the rest of Dallas. You want proof of the nature of my relationship with Monroe Blake? Go ask anyone in downtown Dallas today. I’m sure his laughter could be heard from blocks away.”

“What was he laughing about?”

“Maybe the fact that I was one of the top players at his company and now I’m a nanny. He’s funny that way.” She stomped towards the barn, but I had a feeling she didn’t have a clue where she was going, nor did she care.

“Being a nanny isn’t an embarrassing job. You know that, right?”

“Do you understand what I did just a few weeks ago, Kyrin? I worked as the top digital strategist in one of the top

companies in Texas. I spent my days solving problems that could've cost the company millions of dollars. I was appreciated for my brain, for my skills, and for being a goddamn shark. In no time at all, less than a handful of men have taken me down to a place where my brain doesn't matter at all. So, no, being a nanny isn't an embarrassing job, but it's not the job I want. It's not the job I signed up for, worked my ass off for, or deserve."

I winced and shoved my hands in my pockets. "I'm sorry, Aggie."

She took a deep breath. "I'm over having men shout at me and treat me like shit today, Kyrin. If whatever is waiting at the end of this trail is anything like the day I've already had, I'm going to go back to the house and spend some time alone in a hot bath."

"I'm not going to yell or treat you like shit. You're safe." Anger bubbled to life inside me as I thought about what all she'd said, about being shouted at. I was going to hand Zander his ass for being another screaming asshole. "Zander was wrong in his approach, but he was right in idea. If there are going to be assholes shouting at you on the street, you should have someone with you who could kick their teeth in."

She snorted. "If I still have a job, I will not be leaving this house again. I had so much energy to take Monroe down. I wanted to destroy him and his repugnant company. Even in just the few days since being here as a nanny, I've already grown tired, though. Nothing is going to happen for me. I will

be leaving this job with more money, but less opportunities to do what I want in life and in revenge. Now Monroe has taken me down another peg and I'm just...over it. There are only so many seats at this table in Dallas and no matter how hard I push, I can't make room for myself."

"You want to know the shitty part? If there is just one, I mean. You three are so worried about me being some secret spy, but the truth is so much more humiliating. I didn't get sent here. I didn't even choose to leave my job at his company. He implied that my time at his company, at the top spot, was basically an egg warming spot. He wanted me close until it was time to knock me up. He didn't appreciate my skill, either. He clearly isn't missing my work. I was just a hole with the means to make a kid to him. And when he realized that I was serious when I told him I wasn't ready to start a family with him, much less leave the job I loved, he dumped me. I wasn't even enough to wait for."

I stopped moving and caught her arm. "Aggie..."

She blinked rapidly until it was like her eyes had never watered. "So, really, the idea you guys have of me being some important person to him is just preposterous. I'm no one. And now that he's seen me being so pathetic, *his* words, I'm even less."

"You know that you're-"

"Save it, Kyrin. If this is your time to make some declaration that I'm worth something or that I mean something, just...don't. I know that you three think even less

of me than Monroe does. Honestly, I don't care. I know that I'm smarter than all four of you and if given the chance, I'd run both companies in less than two years. Even when all of you see me as nothing more than warm holes and a babysitter, I know better. It'll be all your downfalls in the end." She sighed. "If I ever find my energy again."

I found myself smiling for some ungodly reason. She was threatening us and showing the real strength of her backbone, but I liked it. I was glad she hadn't let any of us break her. There was even something in the set of her jaw that made me believe her. I just didn't care. If she took over the companies or if she babysat Gracie, her strength was impressive. It was incredibly sexy, too, but I felt too guilty to go down that road after what she'd just said.

*****AGGIE*****

After spilling my guts to Kyrin and then seeing the beautiful state-of-the-art barn, I was ready to retreat to the house. Kyrin had other ideas, though. He led me to his horse, a huge beast of an animal that he called Lucy, short for Lucifer. While I lost myself in watching Kyrin's muscles and daydreaming about the bath I was going to take, I missed the part of the conversation where it was decided that I'd be going for a ride. I felt drained, but as soon as Kyrin nodded to Lucy and held out his hand, a surge of adrenaline shot through my tired body. Mostly fear-based adrenaline.

No matter the amount of protesting I did, I was eventually picked up and settled on the back of Lucy, wedged just in front of Kyrin. Once I was on top of the horse, I was too scared to wiggle around because we weren't in a saddle. I sat frozen in front of him, hands clenched on his thighs.

"I'm going to fall off and do a head trauma!" I whisper-yelled at Kyrin as he squeezed his thighs and we started moving.

He laughed and held the reins with one hand while holding me with the other. His hand spanned my stomach and dipped low enough that I would've shivered had I not been scared for my life. "Do a head trauma?"

"Shut up! I'm panicking." I grasped at his wrist and squeaked when he squeezed his thighs again and we started bouncing forward. I was instantly aware of the motion of his body rubbing against my ass and easily forgot that I'd been scared seconds before. "Oh."

He pressed his mouth against my neck and let out a shaky breath. "Just relax into me. Let your body move with mine. Like that. Good girl."

I did as he said and listened to his breathing grow faster the longer we rode. His hand had slipped lower and each rock of our hips had his pinky and index finger rubbing me through my leggings. I'd forgotten all about my crappy day and all I wanted was for him to pull his horse over so we could get off and *get off*.

"There, Aggie." Kyrin nudged my shoulder and nodded ahead. "When we stop, let me get off and help you, okay?"

I nodded eagerly. "Sure. Yep. Anything."

He groaned and held me even tighter. "I pray to god we're on the same page, woman."

I reached behind me to grab a handful of his hair sticking out under his cowboy hat and moaned when his teeth raked down my neck. "Same page. Same line if you hurry."

He led Lucy into a cluster of trees with a clearing in the middle and hopped off like it was nothing. Then, his hands were around my waist and he was pulling me off the horse and into his arms. I wrapped my thighs around him and we met in the middle for a kiss that scorched and burned hot.

His lips moved across my jaw and then back to my mouth, only stopping to speak against the corner of my mouth. The gold inner ring of his eyes almost glowed in the sunshine as he broke away briefly to hold my gaze. “I see you as more than warm holes or a babysitter, I swear to god, but having you bounce around against me like that just fried my brain.”

I tugged at his hair, knocking off his hat, and breathed in harshly when his teeth snagged my bottom lip I tangled my hands in his thick, chocolate hair. “Doesn’t count when we’re doing this. That conversation, I mean. This is different.”

He gripped my ass tight as he lowered us to the ground. Running his hand up my side, he cupped my breast and growled. The hard muscles in his shoulders flexed under my needy grasp and his body covered mine, making me feel small. “You’ve got the best set of tits I’ve ever seen. I’m going to watch you ride Lucy by yourself later, just so I can see them bounce.”

I planted my feet on the ground and arched my back into him, the feel of his denim covered erection grinding against my core electric. “Never going to happen. You can just watch me ride you.”

Kissing me deep, his grip on my breast tightened when I sucked the tip of his tongue. With a deep groan, he sat up and reached down to grab the hem of his shirt and yank it over his head. Skin tanned from years of working under the sun shirtless and a dark dusting of chest hair that led down to a thin trail that disappeared into his jeans greeted me and left me even hungrier. Before his shirt hit the ground, I was pressed against his chest in its place, my mouth leaving open kisses on his warm skin.

Kyrin broke away long enough to reach down and pull my shirt up. “Cute shirt. Help me get it off or I’m ripping it.”

I wiggled out of it and grunted when my face and hair got tangled for a moment. “It’s my dad’s. Don’t rip it!”

He was staring at me with both thick brows raised when he got my head freed. “Don’t talk about your dad right now, Aggie. I shouldn’t have to say that.”

I grabbed his hands and pulled them both to my breasts. “Is it going to be a problem still?”

He pressed them together and buried his face between the two, moaning incoherent words against the lace of my bra. “Off. Or is this your dad’s, too?”

I laughed and pushed at his shoulders until he shifted to sit back on his heels. I unhooked my bra and tossed it aside, leaving myself bare under his heated gaze. “Well?”

“Just fucking beautiful. Come here.”

I gasped as Kyrin gripped my waist and lifted me so I was standing in front of him. Bracing myself on his shoulders, I looked down at him and bit my lip. His face was stern as he hooked his hands in my leggings and pushed them down. He didn't care about drawing it out or checking out my underwear. He just wanted access to me.

After he removed the rest of my clothing, he sat back and grabbed his hat from the ground nearby. "I've been thinking about something for a bit now. Put this on."

My stomach fluttered with excitement as I did what he said. Dropping his cowboy hat on my head, I smiled wide as the scent of him washed over me. "You've been thinking about me wearing your hat?"

He lifted one of my thighs over his shoulder and ran his lips up my leg. "I've been thinking about you wearing my hat while I have your pussy for breakfast, lunch, and dinner."

"Oh, god!" My voice broke as he buried his face against my core and stroked my clit with his nose.

He lifted his head and grinned at me with a look on his face that could've ignited panties everywhere. "When you're with me alone, baby, you're damn well going to be screaming my name and my name alone."

"*Kyrin!*" I gripped his hair and held him close as he used his mouth, nose, chin, and even teeth to bring me to the edge of a massive orgasm. My body shook and pulsed around him, but just when I thought I'd come, he pulled back and took long, lazy strokes with his tongue.

He lifted his eyes to mine as I whined and held my gaze as he flicked his tongue over my clit harder. The hazel pools were eaten up by his pupils and just when I was closing in on my orgasm again, he winked and pulled away.

“No, Kyrin, *please*.”

He let go of my leg and slowly stood up, taking his hat back as he did and dropping it on top of his hair that I’d made a mess of. “That sounded a lot like begging, baby.”

I watched closely as his big hands went to his belt and slowly removed it before undoing his pants and pushing them open. My mouth watered. “I don’t beg.”

He stopped with his pants gathered at his knees and raised an eyebrow at me. “I’ve got time.”

*****AGGIE*****

A shiver went down my back. Before I could say anything smart back to Kyrin, he had me flat on the ground with my arms held above my head. His hot length pressed against my lower lips and I gritted my teeth as he lined his body up with mine slowly and inched inside. I wanted it all, but he tormented me by giving me an inch at a time.

“I want nothing more than to fuck you hard and leave an impression of your ass on the ground under you, baby, but if there’s one thing breaking horses has taught me, it’s that rushing might feel good in the moment, but it doesn’t get the job done as well.”

I tilted my hips to get control of the pace, but Kyrin stretched his knees wider, spreading my thighs wide enough apart that all I could do was lie under him and take what he gave me. As much as I wanted to take whatever I wanted, having him take the power into his own hands was exhilarating. Still, I wouldn’t give in completely. “I’m not a fucking horse, Ky.”

He stared down at me with his eyes narrowed and that hat tipped back on his head like he had all the time in the world. “No, ma’am. If you were a fucking horse, I’d have had you doing what I wanted days ago. I’ll make this easier for you, baby. Tell me how much you want every inch of me and I’ll give you what you want.”

I struggled against his hold and sank my teeth into my lip at the feeling of his big hands firmly holding my arms in place. I was completely at his mercy. “I... I want all of you inside of me, Kyrin. I’m going to lose my mind if you don’t fuck me.”

He lowered his mouth to mine and ran his tongue over my lips. “Ky. Call me Ky again.”

I growled and stretched my neck up so I could bite his lip. His responding warning sound vibrated through his chest and made me whimper. “Ky, do it.”

Pressing his forehead to mine, he held my gaze as he sank his thickness deep inside me, impaling me so thoroughly that I wasn’t sure I wouldn’t be nailed to the ground when he was done with me. He rolled his hips, grinding his pelvis bone against my clit, and bared his teeth at me. “So tight and hot, Aggie. Enough to make a man forget his plans.”

I cried out in frustration when I couldn’t grab him. I wanted to sink my nails into his ass and demand he move. I wanted to drag my nails down his back and see my mark on his skin. I felt primal as I watched his face twist in concentration. “*More.*”

His jaw muscles rippled and he squeezed his eyes shut. “Not until you open that smart mouth and say please again, baby.”

I screamed in frustration and used my inner muscles to work his cock. He stretched me enough that each pulse of my inner walls around him was hard, but I was desperate for him to crack first. “I. Won’t. Beg.”

His eyes flared wide and he withdrew until just his tip remained. “I saw you hid my marks. It crossed my mind to bend you over and fuck you until you screamed my name loud enough for everyone to know this body is mine without needing to see the marks. When I leave you covered in the evidence of our fucking, you wear it. For that reason alone, I’m going to make you beg.”

Arousal slammed through me and I felt like I was going to die if he didn’t fuck me. His mouth was dirty, his possessiveness wrong, but it set my blood on fire. I opened my mouth to argue, despite that, but all that came out was a wild moan when he sank deep inside me.

“Just say please.” He lowered his mouth to my collar bone and sucked my skin red. “Let me show you that bending can feel fucking fantastic, baby.”

I twisted my face so I could sink my teeth into his neck and leave a mark of my own. I felt his length throb when I sucked his earlobe into my mouth and moaned. “Ky, if you don’t move soon, I’m going to murder you. I can’t wait anymore. I can’t... I need you to move. *Please*, Ky. Make me come, please!”

He lifted his hips and thrust inside hard, knocking my breath from my lungs. Still, it wasn't enough. He hammered his hips forward, roughly taking me while I gasped for more. He gripped my wrists with one hand and wrapped his other hand behind my neck and over my shoulder, holding me in place. His thrusts were harder and faster, driving us both towards a powerful release.

Mouth open in a silent scream, I was helpless to do anything other than let him take me. I was splayed out and being fucked like an animal, but I was racing towards my orgasm.

Just before my pleasure tipped over into an orgasm, Kyrin pulled out and stared down at me with wild eyes. Panting, he kissed me, bruising my lips and leaving marks on my face from his beard that I'd find later. My heart hammered away as I whined for more.

"I want you to remember this moment, baby. Remember the way I own your body and how badly you need me to feel this way. I've never been a possessive man, but I'd brand this ass if I thought I'd get away with it, Aggie." He sank into me slowly. His eyes glazed over, pleasure so strong for both of us.

I gasped as he released my hands and locked my arms around his neck, holding on as he set a slower, more maddening pace. "Would I get to brand you? The part I like so much?"

He growled. "Fuck if you haven't already."

My next thoughts were driven away as he increased his pace and buried his face against my neck. I dug my nails into his

shoulders and stretched my neck to the side to give him more of my unmarred skin. Insanity had won. Rough and filthy, he fucked me to finish me then. His grunts and growls of pleasure were only drowned out by my screams.

His name on my lips was a mix between a prayer and curse as he shoved me over the edge of pleasure. I came with what felt like a lightning bolt of electricity charging every nerve in my body. My limbs shook, my body squeezed around him until it hurt, and then everything released in a flood of euphoria.

Kyrin came with me, filling me with his seed until it pumped out around his length, leaving a mess. He held me tight, as lost as I was. When the noose of pleasure finally loosened, we both went limp.

He laid on top of me and I lay spread out on the ground like I'd been run over. My chest rose and fell quickly, lifting and lowering his head until I could finally breathe normally. I blinked up at the sky, feeling that I might've been screwed to death.

A snorting sound from next to us was what finally garnered action from our limp bodies. Kyrin turned his head and I moved my eyes in the general direction of the sound.

“Good Lucy.” Kyrin let out what might've been a chuckle. “He let us finish. I'm going to give him whatever he wants later.”

I flung one weak arm around his back and sighed. “I second that idea. I don't think I can ride him back to the barn,

though.”

“Sore?” He lifted his head and looked down at me, his hazel eyes fully in display, including the dark green spot in his right eye that set him apart from Knight. They were softer, gentler, and full of warmth as he brushed my hair out of my face.

I felt my cheeks flush when my core fluttered around his softening length, the look in his eyes just as sexy as his intensity. I saw his eyebrows lift at the sensation and groaned. “I can’t feel my lower half all that well, so I don’t know if I’m sore. I can’t ride him back because of what he just saw. It feels like animal abuse to make him watch that and then use him for a lift.”

“I’d rename him Lucky if I thought he would ever listen again. Getting to see you come is a beautiful thing.” He pressed a slow kiss to my lips and gently stroked my cheek. “Let me take you back to the house. You’re going to need a warm bath to ease what I just did.”

I found myself pouting and quickly corrected my face. That was not what I was doing. I wasn’t going to ask for more. We weren’t in a cuddling situation. I had to remember that. “A warm bath and a few fingers of whiskey might work. When Gracie falls asleep tonight, I’m going to get a buzz and sleep like a baby. Thanks for that.”

“If you need help relaxing, I give a good massage.” He winked and kissed me once more before easing out of me and standing up. Looking down at where I was still lying, he shook

his head. “You need to get up before I decide to come back down there.”

“You cured any self-doubt I might’ve felt after running into my ex around the same time you denied me my first orgasm. You don’t need to keep flattering me.” I took his hand and let him tug me up. When he tugged me straight into his chest, I grunted. “I do like when you do things that make me feel like I weigh nothing, though. Feel free to keep that up.”

He gripped my ass and sent me a hard look. “Two things. One. Don’t mention your ex while my come is still inside you. Two. I don’t flatter. Never have. If I say something you think is flattering, it’s how I feel. I’m not a snake charmer, Aggie. I break wild horses. Nothing pretty words could ever do there.”

Breathless, I nodded like a silly girl instead of the strong woman I was. “I beg to differ about pretty words. Whether you know it or not, you’ve got them in spades, Ky. And I bet they go a long way towards breaking some wild things.”

*****ZANDER*****

Dinner had never been a group activity before Gracie came to live with us. I usually ate whatever my assistant brought me while working. I knew Kyrin ate with a few of his ranch hands a few times a week and Knight often didn't eat until someone reminded him. Sitting around the dining room table had gotten more comfortable over time, but it still wasn't the most natural thing. It seemed the ritual was still precariously balanced between weird and acceptable. It also seemed that upsetting Aggie had tipped the scales past weird and into painfully awkward territory.

I expected her to be fine after several hours away from the incident, but if the look she'd given me upon seeing me at the table was any indication, she wasn't over it. She had nothing to say to me and was making a point of not looking at me. Gracie had forgiven me after I'd spent an hour playing dolls with her and painfully trying to explain why I'd been so upset in the first place. She still managed to read the room and had reverted back to staring into her plate and frowning at me.

I didn't know what was wrong with Knight, but he'd snapped at Jamie when Jamie asked if the meal was okay. He was usually so lost in his tech that he didn't have time to get pissed about anything small, but somehow it looked like Jamie had pissed him off. It was a question for another time. Kyrin had been the only one of us in a good mood and I could guess why he was in that good mood, of course. After sitting at the table with everyone else acting sour, his mood had slipped into something more neutral, however.

Of course, we chose the night that Jamie served a four-course meal to crumble. There was no escaping the awkwardness. For the first time in months, my phone didn't ring once, giving me a chance to run. I was forced to sit in the discomfort I'd helped create.

I looked down the table at Aggie and frowned. She wasn't a terrible nanny, despite her lack of training and knowledge. She would never make the cut permanently, because she just let Gracie do whatever she wanted, but she was filling a much-needed position for the time being and doing it well enough. Gracie loved her. Mary liked her. She'd fucked up in taking Gracie to town, but I had to admit that I hadn't clarified that she wasn't allowed to do what a trained nanny could.

When I'd come home and found her shitty car missing, though, I'd panicked. Since Zella...I didn't like chancing people I cared for. I didn't know Aggie enough to know if she could keep Gracie safe in a car. Anything could happen. It only took seconds for life to end. I'd lost my cool and I knew that I owed Aggie an explanation, maybe even an apology, but

it wasn't easy. I'd made it my job to be right. I was good at my job, good at being right. Being wrong felt pretty shit.

Playing fair wasn't something I was all that concerned with when it came to saving face, so I used everything I could in my effort to end the tension with Aggie. "You're coming to the office with me tomorrow, Aggie. Gracie will stay with Mary for the morning."

Aggie's eyes lasered in on me. "Why?"

I ground my teeth and took a drink of my whiskey. "It's time for your first performance test."

Knight frowned at me, but kept silent. He'd prepared a few scenarios to test her with when we'd first hired her, scenarios that were meant to stump her. I wasn't the expert that Knight was, but I'd gone in and looked at the tests to make sure she wouldn't figure them out. It wasn't that I wanted her to fail for my own pleasure. I just didn't trust her. I couldn't let her into our company.

"Are you serious?" Aggie watched me nod, and her expression slightly softened. "This is amazing! Thank you!"

Gracie pouted. "I want to come."

"Oh, butterfly. I promise I won't be gone for too long. I'm going to be working at my other job and when I do that work, I'm like a robot. You don't want a robot as a nanny, do you?" Aggie scooted her chair closer to Gracie, her excitement pouring out of her. "So, you know how I showed you how to do crossword puzzles? My job is sort of like that. I study a

whole bunch of factors and I solve a puzzle that most people don't even see. Each puzzle is different and there's never a specific way to solve it. I love it so much that I get lost in it."

I watched my brothers lean into Aggie as she spoke, both of them as lost in her as she was in her work. I looked at her and felt a kinship in how passionate she was about her work. Her eyes lit up and she spoke faster, growing animated the more she talked about puzzles and solutions. It was impossible not to feel something while watching her.

Gracie forgot that she wasn't going and let Aggie's infectious excitement take over her little body. "Do you think you're better than Uncle Knight at puzzles?"

Without missing a beat, Aggie waved her hand and nodded. "Yeah! I mean, I know that Uncle Knight is good at what he does, but I'm better. Remember how I told you about my dad moving me to live near my aunts and uncles after my mom died? He always wanted to live in the country because he had all these wild ideas about the government and privacy. He got carried away when we first lived on the farm and I was so angry at the world that I made it my mission to prove him wrong at all times. I got so good at working out puzzles in my head because living with Dad was like living in a giant puzzle. So, while Uncle Knight is really good and you should be so proud of him, I could work circles around him."

I fought back a laugh at Knight's facial expression and rested my chin on my fist. "Your dad's a conspiracy theorist?"

Some of Aggie's excitement faded when she met my gaze and I watched her reel herself back in. "Um, not anymore. After having his kid prove him wrong time and time again, he got bored with conspiracies. Though, he still believes in aliens and could discuss election fraud until blue in the face."

My mood darkened at seeing her dim her shine when facing me. I wanted her to smile just as wide at me as she did at everyone else. As quickly as I had her attention, I lost it, though. She went straight back to talking to Gracie, ignoring my presence unless I spoke directly to her with a question.

I finally sat back and just watched. Kyrin's good mood was back, and he teased Aggie like they'd been best friends for a lifetime. Knight even joined in, until Jamie brought out dessert with a special plate for Aggie.

Aggie smiled kindly and continued to charm everyone around her while pretending I was nothing more than a piece of furniture. Dinner ended with a big yawn from Gracie and a hesitant anticipation from both of my brothers. It all just pissed me off, but I fought to hide it.

"Will one of you guys take Gracie upstairs while I have a word with Aggie?" I hadn't meant to open my mouth, but I found that I couldn't stand being ignored a second longer.

"If it's about earlier, don't worry about it." Aggie forced a smile and stood up.

"Sit down, Aggie. It won't take long." I shot a look at my brothers and pressed my fists against my thighs as I waited for them to leave.

Aggie crossed her arms and leaned back in her chair, the picture of petulance. The moment we were alone, she cocked her head to the side and started in on me. “Unless you’re going to apologize to me, I don’t have-”

“I’m sorry.” The two words surprised both of us and I shifted in my chair as discomfort washed over my spine. I had to clear my throat before continuing. “I wasn’t as angry as I was...scared. Losing my twin, Zella... It’s taken a toll on all of us.”

She sat forward and rested her arms on the table. I studied her softening face and felt my own body relax in response.

“No one drives Gracie that hasn’t been trained. It’s one of the requirements we stated for the job.” I steepled my fingers in front of me and stared at the connection. “It was my responsibility to tell you that I wasn’t comfortable with you taking her out. In all the excitement, I didn’t do that. I’m sorry for the way I acted this afternoon, Aggie.”

She stood up and walked around the table. When she got to my side, my pulse had sped up in preparation for what she’d do. Resting her hand on my shoulder, she smiled softly at me. “Thanks for explaining. That makes sense and I wouldn’t have taken her anywhere if I’d known it would scare you. I’m not interested in doing any damage while here, Zander.”

I held my breath as she moved around the back of the chair, waiting for her touch again. “So, we can put that behind us now?”

She stopped on her way out of the room and glanced back at me. “Sure. I’ll see you in the morning.”

I stared at the spot she’d disappeared from and frowned. Disappointment felt like a snake crawling over my skin, rough and slimy. She’d blown me off. I rubbed my hands down my face and shook my head. It was what I deserved, but that didn’t mean I had to like it. I sat there, overthinking things for far too long. By the time I carried myself to bed, I was beyond frustrated and torn between who to be more pissed at, myself or Aggie.

*****AGGIE*****

Sitting next to Zander in his truck was an act of self-control. After seeing the desire in his eyes the night before and going to bed alone, I was helpless against the attraction I felt for him. I was just glad he wasn't like Monroe, who believed the CEO of the company had to drive a tiny sports car that cost more than most people ever made in their lifetime. I didn't think sitting so close to Zander was a good idea. Not after he'd apologized. Not when he was dressed in an impeccable pair of dress pants and a crisp white button-down.

I chanced another look in his direction and gave into my curiosity. "Why aren't you dressed like normal?"

He didn't take his eyes off the road, but I saw his brows furrow. "How do you know this isn't normal for me?"

"Really?" I scoffed. "Well, I may be new to working for you, but I've seen pictures through the years. I used to hear the women in the office whispering about whether you even slept and screwed in your suits. You're a suit man. Three piece, not

a jacket missing. Yet, today, you have no jacket and you rolled up the sleeves of your shirt.”

He let out a rough laugh. “I didn’t know you paid so much attention to me, Aggie.”

Chills rolled down my spine at the bite in his voice. I didn’t know what was wrong with me, though, because they weren’t bad chills. My body just responded to the stupid man, it seemed. “It’s also strange that you drive this big truck to work. Monroe insisted on driving this expensive little car. Supposedly, it was really nice, but I tried to get in with my hair in a bun one time... I didn’t fit. Do you know what’s the fastest way to hurt my feelings? Try to put me in things that I don’t fit in.”

He stopped at the end of the road leading away from their property and looked at me. “Are you always so talkative in the morning?”

“I’m excited.” It wasn’t a total lie. I *was* excited. I was getting a chance to show off my skills. However, I was mostly rambling because I was feeling nervous about my desire for him. I’d spent the night dreaming of his deep voice ordering me to do whatever he wanted. I didn’t exactly understand my desire for both of his brothers, but it was easier to accept desiring them. *They* were easier.

“If I drove a car, I’d spend too many mornings stuck in mud or unable to get through flooding. We chose to live out of the city and that comes at a price.” He carefully passed a tractor

on the highway and grunted. “And I don’t fit in those cars, either.”

I bit my lip and smiled at him. “And the mystery of the missing suit?”

“I had a shitty night’s sleep.” Zander hesitated for a minute and then cleared his throat. “Since we’re playing twenty questions, I have one for you.”

“Okay.” I turned to face him as much as the seatbelt would allow. “Go for it.”

“You’ve been with both my brothers since the night in the library. You’ve barely looked at me, though.” His grip on the steering wheel tightened. “Were my interests too much?”

I felt blood rush to my face as I stammered to think of a response that didn’t make me sound like a freak. I hadn’t expected him to ask anything near that. My heart raced and I made the decision to joke instead of answering honestly. “Do you not think it’s possible that a woman could be attracted to both of your brothers, but not you?”

The muscles in his forearms flexed. “I think it’s possible with any other woman.”

“Meaning?”

“I’ve been inside you, Aggie. I’ve felt you dripping wet for me.” He glanced at me and then returned his focus to the road. “I’m not terrible enough to assume that all women want me, but when I’ve felt a woman come for me while I fucked her ass, I don’t think it’s wrong to assume she’s attracted to me.”

I looked out my window and pressed my knuckles to my mouth. I was so far out of my league, even talking to him. He had the ability to speak so filthy that I blushed and ruined my panties all at the same time. “Right.”

“So, tell me, Aggie. Did I push too far? I lost control with you and if I went too far, I need you to tell me.” His voice took on a rougher edge. “I... I don’t lose control. Normally. Seems like I’m breaking a lot of my patterns lately.”

I didn’t like the hesitation I heard in his voice and I didn’t want him to think he’d hurt me. Risking embarrassing myself, I spoke honestly to him. “You didn’t push too far. Nothing you did was unwanted or unwelcome. I liked it.”

“You liked it?” He stopped at a four-way stop and turned to face me.

I sucked in a deep breath and blew it out quickly. “A lot. It was my first time doing anything like that, like any of that. No one had ever held me like you did. It...it worked for me.”

“But?” He ignored a truck that honked from behind us.

I shifted in my seat. “You hate me, Zander. I can accept that I like you doing that to me, holding me that way, but I can’t accept that you look at me like I’m trash. That first night, it happened and I didn’t want to stop it. I’m not sad about it. I don’t regret it. If I slept with you again when you so clearly think so little of me, I would feel like shit. Sleeping with a man who doesn’t respect me in any way at all just...feels gross.”

The truck behind us honked again and still Zander ignored it. “I don’t...I don’t think you’re trash, Aggie.”

I waved him off. “It’s fine. I can’t win over everyone. You’d better go before this guy gets out, looking for a fight.”

He glanced behind us and scowled. “It might be nice to hit something right now.”

I rolled my eyes. “Drive, please. I’m ready to take this performance test. If you’re in jail, I won’t be able to rub it in your face when I embarrass you and Knight with how easy I make it look.”

After another moment of studying me, he pulled away. He stayed silent the rest of the drive to the office.

*****AGGIE*****

I stared at my reflection in the elevator wall and tilted my head as I wondered if my skirt was tighter than it'd been the last time I wore it. Monroe had always suggested going to the gym to work out together and I hadn't lifted a weight since he'd dumped me. I turned to the side and frowned. I couldn't be sure, but I was pretty sure my ass was slightly larger. Was it possible for an ass to grow in that little time?

I adjusted my blouse and ran my hands over my professional bun. With my hair slicked back like it was, I felt boring, but if I wore my hair down, I felt like I wasn't taken as seriously. Every part of my outfits for work had been planned with a reason in mind when I'd worked for Monroe. The shirts were loose and showed no cleavage, so no one would accuse me of sleeping around. That had been before I started seeing Monroe and people thought that anyway. My skirts were long enough to be modest, but short enough to be interesting. I didn't want to look like a senior citizen before my time. My power move had always been the heels, though. I never wore

heels shorter than five inches to work. With my already above average height, the heels made me tower over most men.

Working for Monroe had been terrible at first. I didn't think of those times very often, because nearly a decade had passed, but I'd been through hell trying to be taken seriously. Down to the makeup I still wore, I'd had to curate every part of myself to make sure the men around me didn't find me too appealing, but also not too unappealing. I'd watched women who deserved spots at the top be ruined because a man had found them attractive.

Standing next to Zander in the private executive elevator, I felt like a sad version of myself. Whatever job I ended up with, I was going to make sure I dressed the way I wanted. The atmosphere of Monroe's company wouldn't hold me in any way. Once I was done cutting the bastard down, I was done with him in every way. Him and his toxic company.

The elevator came to a stop suddenly and I stumbled in my heels. I caught myself against that same elevator wall and looked back at Zander. "What happened? Why'd we stop?"

He took his hand off the button that'd stopped the elevator and tapped out something on his phone before putting it away and looking up at me. "I don't hate you. I don't think you're trash. I don't think little of you."

I swallowed under his intense focus. "You really stopped the elevator to tell me that?"

"I was standing there, watching you frown at yourself, and I realized something." He pursed his lips and held out his hands.

“I own this building and I have the power to stop time, at least for me and you, right now.”

I crossed my arms over my chest and backed up a step. “You decided to use your superpower to talk to me because I was frowning?”

“I decided to stop time for us right now because the idea of you thinking I hate you didn’t sit right with me.” He never took his eyes off mine as he stepped closer. “As for respecting you, I looked over your previous projects last night. If you’re the one who did the work, Blake is a fucking jackass for getting rid of you. I don’t know you professionally, though, Aggie. I can’t say one way or another what I think about you in that way yet. As a person, however? I respect the hell out of the woman I’ve seen so far.”

I backed up another step. “You’ll see soon what I can do.”

He nodded. “I will.”

“I’m good.” I winced as I heard myself, hiding behind such a childish sounding explanation for what I could do.

“But you were wrong.” He stepped closer.

I bumped into the wall behind me. “About what?”

“You thought I felt a certain way about you. You were wrong.” He planted his hands on either side of my head and boxed me in. “You liked what I did to you and you were wrong about your reasoning for staying away from me, Aggie.”

I sucked in a breath that smelled like him and searched his face for any sign that he was teasing me. All I found was heat in his light brown eyes. Licking my lips, I pressed my head into the wall and waited for his next move. I was too unsure of what was happening to chance doing the wrong thing.

“You spent your time this morning putting on your makeup to hide the beard burn from my brother.” He gripped my shoulders and spun me so I was facing the wall. “I don’t want to mess up your pretty face, Aggie.”

The mirrored wall was cold under my palms and it allowed me to watch Zander’s face as he gripped my hips and pulled my ass back into his body. I melted under the desire I saw reflecting back at me. “The elevator...”

“Will be ignored until I unfreeze it. Remember my superpower, baby.” His hands pulled my shirt free from my skirt and let the silky material gather at his wrists as he continued working it up until my breasts were in his palms. “Turns out I’m a jealous man. Knowing my brothers were in you while I couldn’t touch you made me crazy. I had to stop myself from coming into your bedroom at night and waking you up with my mouth between your thighs.”

I shuddered as he pinched my nipples through my bra and pressed my hips against him harder. The feeling of his hard length was like a promise I’d always been waiting on. “Zander...”

He ran one hand down to my thighs and worked my skirt higher. “For a man who needs control, you’re a ticking time

bomb. You test my ability to stay calm, baby.”

At the first feeling of his fingers on my thighs, I spread my legs wider. “I...like you having control.”

“You will. When I finally take it completely.” He slipped his fingers into my panties and tested my wetness. “Tell me something, baby. Did you let both of my brothers come inside you?”

I held my breath as his hand slowly moved higher, until it was cupping my throat. I nodded and felt his fingers tighten just the slightest bit.

“I’ve never come inside a woman before you.” He curled his fingers as he slid two of them inside me. “I’ve shared women with my brothers before and it never bothered me to not be involved for weeks at a time. I’m a busy man. I don’t have time to chase after women. The fact that I haven’t come inside your pussy and they have is all I can think of, though, Aggie. I feel like chasing you and I’m not sure what to think about that.”

It was hard to think clearly when his fingers were rubbing a magical spot inside me and his hand was tightening around my neck. I let out a breathy whimper and rolled my hips against him, inviting him to do whatever he wanted.

“Stay still, baby.” He pressed his mouth against the side of my head and circled his thumb over my clit. “I’m not going to fuck you inside an elevator. I’m going to take my time when I do fuck you, Aggie. Plus, there’s a camera behind me. If I

moved at all, the men in the security room would get to see things that don't belong to them.”

My pulse rocketed higher and my breathing sped up at the added threat of being seen. His body was the only thing protecting me. I moaned his name and fought to stay still like he'd demanded.

“Come for me, baby. We can't have you this wound up before your performance test, can we?” He lowered his voice and spoke against my ear as his hand tightened on my throat. “They aren't allowed to see you, but I want them to hear you come on my fingers. I want them to hear me own you.”

I came instantly as he released my throat and cried out his name as his fingers gave me more pleasure than any lover before I met him and his brothers.

ZANDER

I stared across the dining room table at Aggie for the second night in a row. Instead of the awkward state of the night before, there was a different type of tension. Aggie was in the middle of it, unconcerned with the mayhem she'd caused. She was too proud of herself to care if she started a war. More likely, she was too elated with herself to even notice that anything was going on.

“When I heard the guys talking about how amazing you did on whatever test you took, I wanted to celebrate you, Aggie.” Jamie smiled down at Aggie, crossing so many different lines that I would've needed a notebook to keep up with them. “Beautiful *and* smart? This woman has it all!”

Aggie pumped her fists in the air, nearly punching Jamie in the face without realizing it, and grinned as wide as she'd been grinning since making Knight's test look like a kindergarten word search. “Tell me again how fast I finished the test, Zan.”

I raised an eyebrow at her and laughed when her cheeks turned red. “Fine. You finished the test in twenty minutes and

you found solutions that neither of us had thought of.”

Knight tore his eyes away from glaring at Jamie to frown at Aggie. “I want to see it myself. I should’ve been there.”

“Oh, come on, Knight. Don’t you believe in our girl?” Jamie leaned down and slung an arm around Aggie’s shoulders. “You’re not the only brain on the block, man.”

Kyryn stood up and braced his fists on the table as he sent a dark look at Jamie. “He believes in *our* girl just fine. Thank you for the cake, Jamie. Why don’t you head home for the night?”

“I could’ve been there. I should’ve been there. You might’ve missed something, Zan.” Knight, clearly feeling stunned by the way Aggie had made good on her promise of being smarter than all of us, was focusing his glare on me.

Aggie stood up and put her hands on her hips. “What could he have missed, Knight? What would you being there have done? Except for forced you to watch me destroy your work. That clearly would’ve just hurt your feelings. Or your ego. Whichever one it is that’s stopping you from being happy for me.”

“I’m good to stay and celebrate Aggie for a bit longer. She deserves to feel good about what she did.” Jamie was working his way towards a beating if he wasn’t careful.

“You’ve got to get the hell out of here, Jamie, or I’m going to lose my shit.” Knight stood up, his face pinched in anger.

“I’m trying to be nice, but if you keep hitting on Aggie, I’m going to fucking snap.”

“Maybe this is another puzzle that you’re not that good at, Knight, because he’s not hitting on me. He’s just being a nice guy. Unlike you.” Aggie stood up and glared up at Knight, unfazed by the anger radiating off him.

“There’s no way, woman. No way you’re that blind.” Kyrin shook his head and looked at me. “Are you sure you did the test right?”

Gracie screamed and in the middle of all the adults fighting in the room, the sound was still jarring. We all froze and turned to her. She was standing in her chair, her face red from screaming. “You guys are acting like babies! Why are you fighting? I don’t want you to fight! You’re going to make Aggie leave!”

Jamie slipped out of the room, which made him a lot smarter than I’d previously thought. Everyone else settled in their chairs with varying degrees of shame on their faces.

“Apologize!”

I was starting to regret the book we’d bought Gracie about apologizing. Still, I nodded to my niece. “I’m sorry, Gracie.”

“Not to me! To each other!” She crossed her arms over her chest and glared at all of us. “Or no one eats cake!”

Kyrin laughed but immediately covered it with a cough. “I’m sorry to everyone for shouting.”

I grinned into my fist. “I’m sorry for not having you sit in on the test, Knight. I assure you, it was accurate, but I understand your feelings.”

Aggie and Knight sat in a stare down, neither of them wanting to go first. When Gracie made a sound that bordered on a scream and growl, Aggie sat up. “I’m sorry for gloating. I already knew I was that good and I should’ve just let it go. I’m sorry for saying you’re bad at puzzles, Knight. I know you’re not. Also, sorry for saying you’re not a nice guy.”

Knight looked at her and finally sighed. “I’m sorry...I wasn’t being very nice.”

Aggie grunted. “You’re basically accusing me of cheating, Knight. There’s no way to cheat at a test like that. You know that.”

Jamie came back into the room like nothing had happened, erasing my previous thoughts about his intelligence. “I’m going home. I was hoping I could speak to you in private for a moment, Aggie.”

Kyryn and Knight pulled a true twin moment by glaring at Jamie and telling him off in unison. “She’s unavailable, Jamie!”

Aggie squeezed her eyes shut and then blew out a breath and stood up. “Of course, we can chat. I wanted to get some ice cream to eat with the cake you made, anyway. It looks delicious, by the way.”

I watched as she moved out of the dining room with our soon-to-be-fired cook and then looked at my brothers. “Well, we’re proving to be great at dinners.”

Gracie sighed dramatically. “I’m only staying for the cake. Everyone’s acting crazy.”

Knight waited for a few minutes, looking at the doorway out of the dining room constantly. Finally, he stood up like he was going to go after Aggie, but she walked back through the doorway at the same moment and he sat back down. She smiled at him and walked straight to his side. He looked up at her with confusion written all over on his face.

She leaned down and whispered something that brought a wide smile to his face. Then, she moved back to her chair and silently started passing out slices of cake. When she realized we were all staring at her, she looked up and played innocent. “What?”

I took my slice of cake. “You’re being strange. And where’s the ice cream?”

She pointed at me with the serving knife. “There’s no ice cream.”

“There’s so much ice cream in the freezer. What are you talking about?” Kyrin was a sweets man. The cake was fine, but he would be the one of us most upset about the missing ice cream.

“There’s no ice cream!” Aggie dropped the knife and groaned. “There might be ice cream. I couldn’t check.”

“Why couldn’t you check, Aggie?” Knight’s smile was still as wide as ever as he reached over and swiped his finger through Aggie’s icing.

She sank back in her chair and groaned. “I might’ve been wrong about one of the things I said earlier.”

Kyrin, still focused on the ice cream, stood up and headed towards the kitchen. “I’ll just get it myself.”

Aggie’s face turned red and she shot out of her chair to block him. “No! I mean...no. So, I may have made a small mess in the kitchen.”

I rested my chin on my fist and smiled. “Oh, yeah?”

“I just...” She pouted. “I can’t even describe it. I can just say that I flailed and things were spilled.”

AGGIE

I knew when I joined the guys in the TV room later that night that they'd watched the security footage of what'd happened in the kitchen. I could tell by the way they seemed to shift back and forth between anger and chuckling. I dropped heavily into one of the many recliners that faced a massive wall-sized TV. A baseball game was muted on the screen.

“It wasn't all that funny, you know?” I sighed and twisted my head to face Zander. “I feel really bad about what happened.”

Kyrin stood up and walked over to the bar. “You shouldn't feel bad. *He* should feel bad.”

I winced. “I think he feels bad enough.”

Walking back over to me with a glass of amber liquid, Kyrin shook his head. “He's lucky I didn't finish what you started.”

I stroked his fingers as I took the glass. “Thank you for this. After that mess in the kitchen and then hearing what Gracie just said to me, I need it. She doesn't like it when we fight and

she told me it scares her. Is this what having kids is like? Just feeling like shit all the time because you accidentally scared a child? I just have to say, I never felt this worried when I was making decisions that had millions on the line.”

“She’s scared?” Zander sat up, a deep frown twisting his mouth.

“That we’ll leave. That I’ll leave because of the fighting, or that you guys will leave because you’re unhappy. She’s scared that the security she has with you guys could be lost because we’ve been fighting like a bunch of jackasses.”

Knight turned off the TV. “Yeah, that’s unacceptable.”

Kyrin watched me finish my whiskey and took my glass back. “We’re all going to need refills.”

“Obviously, we have to stop fighting.” I pulled my feet under me in the chair and looked at the three men around me. “Truce?”

“Let’s move this conversation somewhere where we can face each other.” Zander stood up and took my hand. “Sorry. You just got comfortable. Don’t hit me.”

I gently smacked his arm as I let him pull me up. “I didn’t mean to hit him! I’m never going to live this down.”

“Baby, you turned into an MMA fighter when he leaned into your space.” Kyrin pretended to throw a few punches. “I’ve never seen a man bleed so much from his nose.”

I groaned and followed them through the house. “He tried to kiss me. I just reacted without thinking. I didn’t mean to hit

him, though! I swear. I feel terrible. I didn't even know a nose *could* bleed like that.”

“The kitchen looked like a crime scene. I'm not sure I'll ever be able to look at it the same way.” Knight shuddered. “Jamie's lucky. I still think we should fire his ass.”

“I said no.” I prepared for a fight, despite just trying to offer a truce. “He apologized a thousand times. He thought I was on the same page and didn't mean to offend me. I believe him and I'm not letting you fire him. You're all going to play nice, too.”

Zander opened a door that led to his side of the house and wrapped his arm around my waist. “When did you become our boss?”

I made a face at him. “I'm not the boss. I just want you three to be nice to him.”

Kyryn snorted. “I think she thinks she's the boss.”

Knight made a noise of agreement. “She definitely thinks she's the boss.”

Pulling me into the sitting room just before his bedroom, Zander settled me in his lap on one of the two couches that faced each other. The sight of his bed through a set of double doors gave me butterflies, but I ignored them.

“Y'all must have the record for most couches in a house.” I ran my hand over the cognac-colored leather and smiled down at Zander when I saw he was watching me. “What?”

“We have some thoughts on the truce plan.” He nodded to Knight and rubbed my neck while I turned to his brother.

“We were discussing something else earlier, while you were putting Gracie to bed. We have an idea about how to solve some of the problems we’ve been having. Tell us what you’re thinking first. With your truce.” Knight sat on the couch across from us and rested his elbows on his knees, his full attention on me.

“Oh, um...” I ran my tongue over my suddenly dry lips. “I was just going to suggest a truce. No more fighting, especially in front of Gracie. I’m willing to play nice if you three are. We get along some of the time. Surely, we can extend that energy.”

Kyrin stood behind Knight and nodded. “We were thinking the same thing. The playing nice part sounds perfect, actually.”

Zander’s fingers dug into the tense muscles in my shoulders. “We think that we’d all be less tense if we *did* extend the energy from the times we get along.”

I moaned as his fingers worked their magic and sank farther into his lap. “What exactly did you have in mind?”

“You stay here with us at night.” Knight met my surprised gaze without wavering. “We want you. It seems like we’re a little tense when we can’t spend time with you. It doesn’t have to be every night, if you need space or time to recover.”

I looked from him to Kyrin and then to Zander. “You all want that? For me to stay here at night? With all three of you? Every night?”

Nodding, Zander turned me in his lap so I was straddling him, face to face. “We talked about it and we think this is the best plan. No one gets left out. We all get time with you. As far as being nice to each other, I don’t think it gets nicer than this.”

“You know this is crazy, right? You should all three get your heads checked. Me, too. How is the most logical solution to us fighting to have me move in and sleep with all three of you? Why doesn’t it sound wrong? Why am I not breaking out my surprise boxing moves?” I tucked my hair behind my ears and shook my head. “It hasn’t crossed my mind *once* that sleeping with all three of you isn’t normal.”

“We learned a long time ago that there are some women that we all want. Sometimes, a woman is horrified by the idea. Sometimes, she only likes one of us. Other times, we’ve had short experiences with women who were okay with it. Everyone is different. It’s worked for us at times before. We’ve never had an arrangement like this, though. No one has ever stayed with us.” Knight moved to sit next to us, his hand resting on my thigh. “We all want you, Aggie. It doesn’t have to be anything you don’t want it to be.”

Kyryn moved behind Zander and caressed my cheek. “Maybe it doesn’t sound wrong because it isn’t? We’re all adults.”

I licked my lips and felt the tension grow between us. “As long as Gracie doesn’t find out. I don’t want to do anything else to hurt her.”

Zander nodded. “Are you sure you can handle us? There’s something about you...I don’t want to take too much.”

I rolled my eyes and laughed when Zander’s hand landed on my ass. “I can handle you. I can handle all of you. I just hope you three can handle me.”

*****KNIGHT*****

*****Knight*****

I watched Aggie on her knees in the shower, taking Kyrin's dick down her throat like an angel. The sounds she made while sucking cock were insanelly hot and the way it made her so wet was pure perfection. I could see her fingers between her thighs and swore. I needed to be inside her.

I pushed my boxers down and stepped in the shower behind her. Kyrin nodded at me and I stroked Aggie's head. "I could wake up to a sight like this for the rest of my life."

Aggie purred her approval around my brother's dick and he gave a responding groan. I pulled her up so she was standing, bent forward with her mouth still bobbing up and down Kyrin's length. I reached between her legs and stroked her wetness, making sure she was ready for me. When I knew she was, I lined my dick up with her pussy and slid deep.

Kyrin swore as he watched. "Never seen a prettier pussy. The way it stretches to take us is beautiful."

I gripped her hips and fucked her with hard, slow strokes. Each one sent her deeper on Kyrin's dick. Her core gripped me tight, squeezing and milking me like she was hungry for my come. I ran my hands over her ass and spread her cheeks, watching the way her little asshole puckered when I ran my finger over it.

"She's sucking harder each time you do that." Kyrin held Aggie's hair at the back of her head and pulled her mouth off his length. "You want it, baby? You want Knight to fuck your ass?"

Her core pulsed hard around my dick. She nodded and that was all I needed to start stretching her ass with my fingers, readying her for my size.

Kyrin grunted. "Say please, baby. Be a good girl for me."

I narrowed my eyes at my brother, sure he was fucking up my time with Aggie. I was seconds from kicking his ass out of the shower when Aggie lifted her head to look back at me.

"Please, Knight."

"Fuck." I stroked her back and nodded at her. "So fucking perfect, Aggie. We don't deserve you."

She reached back and sighed happily when I held her hand and Kyrin directed her mouth back to his cock. Her back arched as I pulled my fingers out of her ass and pressed the tip of my dick in their place. She squeezed my hand and the sounds she made around Kyrin grew louder.

“Look at you, baby. Your ass is taking my dick so beautifully.” I reached under her to circle her clit while I thrust the rest of my dick deep inside her ass. The feeling was intense as her body clenched around my width. “You’re taking my dick like a good girl, Aggie. It’s so sexy to see your little asshole clinging to my dick. It’s fucking everything to know that you’d never taken anyone here before Zander. Now, you’re taking me and you’re sucking Kyrin at the same time. You know that we’d sign the business over to you right now, don’t you? You own us.”

Kyrin bent forward, feeding her more of his length and spread her ass cheeks so he could see more of her body opening for me. He pulled out of her mouth and pulled her upright. “Legs up, baby. I need to be inside you like this when I come.”

I went even deeper as he held her off the ground and slowly impaled her on his length. It made her ass even tighter around me and I knew I wasn’t going to last long. “You’re going to be full of come soon, baby.”

Aggie dropped her head back on my shoulder and clutched at my hair while Kyrin set a hard pace, fucking her by lifting her off both our lengths and then dropping her on them again. I cupped her breasts and teased her nipples while we all raced towards our release.

“Please, please, please! Come in me!” Aggie’s husky voice was broken as her body clamped down on me. “I’m coming! I’m coming! Oh, Ky! Knight!”

I held her tight and swore viciously as my balls tightened and I filled her ass with come. Kyrin growled out his release almost simultaneously, but he continued using her body to milk both of our cocks until she'd taken everything we had and was weak in our arms.

“Put her down.” Zander stood just outside of the shower, stroking himself as he stared at Aggie. When she was on her knees in front of him, he held her chin and opened her mouth. “Tongue out, baby. Watching you have your pretty holes fucked like that has me too far gone.”

I leaned against the shower wall and watched as Aggie stuck her tongue out for my older brother. He fucked his fist faster, stroking her hair as he held her gaze. What should've been something dirty felt special as I watched them connect. Aggie rested her hands on his thighs and stayed just as he wanted her, giving herself to him even as come leaked from her other holes and her chest rose and fell with her exertion.

“I'm going to come all over your pretty face and mouth, baby. Don't swallow until I tell you to.” He gripped her hair harder and growled as he came. Come streaked across her face as he decorated her in his own way. The last sprays, he directed onto her tongue.

I moved closer, drawn to her painted face, and watched as she held his come on her tongue and held his gaze still. “Fucking perfect.”

Kyrin grunted his agreement. “Next time.”

Zander slowly pushed his length into her mouth and didn't stop until he reached the back of her throat. "Swallow."

Seeing her throat bob as she did as he said had blood rushing to my dick that fast. "Such a good girl. The best."

Zander eased out of her mouth and gathered the rest of his come just to have her swallow it around his dick again. When he finished, he pulled her to her feet and leaned forward to kiss her throat. "The best girl ever."

She made happy noises as the three of us shifted her under the hot water and washed her. When the washing turned to lingering touches and she pressed her thighs together in her need, we took turns making her come, teasing her each time about how she thought she couldn't come more than once.

A loud knock on the bedroom door finally broke up the party. Zander wrapped himself in a towel and went to see what was up while Kyrin and I dried Aggie off. She'd brought a bag of essentials in the night before and she was opening it, getting ready to start her morning, when Zander came back in and leaned against the bathroom door.

"Well, we have company."

Aggie stood in front of us naked, applying cream that hid the marks we'd left all over her. She didn't realize Zander was staring at her and seemed content to let us handle what she assumed was our business.

I grinned and patted her ass. "I think he's talking to you, baby."

She looked over at him and frowned. “Company? What do you mean?”

“That was Mary. Apparently, an older man with long gray hair, wearing tie-dye, is threatening to climb the gate if his daughter doesn’t show her face.”

Aggie’s face went ghostly white. “Oh, my God.”

“I told Mary to bring him in and give him some coffee. It’s not even seven in the morning and the man’s already storming the gates. He’s going to need refueling soon.” Zander shrugged at the horror he saw on her face. “I wasn’t going to leave him outside, baby. It’s your father. We’re assholes, but we’re not that awful.”

“You...I can’t talk to my dad after what we just did!” She rushed around in a tight circle as she panicked. “Oh, God. He’s going to know. Oh, God. He’s going to judge me so hard! He’s never explicitly expressed his feelings on what we just did, but I’m pretty sure I’m going to die of embarrassment if he even thinks about it!

I snorted. “How’s he feel about ass fucking?”

She screamed and swatted at me. “Don’t even!”

Zander pulled her into his arms and laughed, though he only did that once he had her arms pinned. “He won’t know. Just get dressed and come down when you’re ready. I’ll go tell him that you’re coming.”

“Not that word!” She whined into his chest and stomped her foot. “What is he doing here? I think I’ll just go ahead and die

from the mortification.”

Kyrin pulled her into his chest so Zander could get dressed. “Pull it together, baby, or he’s definitely going to know that you just got Eiffel-Towered in the shower.”

I grinned. “Think he’ll like us?”

She whined again and kept her face buried in Kyrin’s chest. “I’m quitting and moving to another planet.”

*****AGGIE*****

I hovered outside of the kitchen, listening to my dad talking to Zander. Kyrin and Knight had offered to get Gracie up for me, so that I could get to my dad faster, but I was too nervous to cross the threshold. I couldn't believe he was in their kitchen. I was still having a small heart attack, to say the least.

“Ag, I can feel you lurking.” Dad's raised voice was filled with humor. “Come on in.”

I slowly slipped around the corner, my hands clasped in front of me. I flashed a guilty smile at him and winced. “Hey, Dad.”

He shook his head at me and reached over to pat Zander on the shoulder. “She never was good at being in trouble. She'd do something sneaky as a kid and then walk in with that exact face on. How was I supposed to parent that face?”

Zander laughed and hid his face behind his coffee cup as he spoke. “I can't imagine Aggie being sneaky. She's been the best.”

Dad stared at my reddening cheeks and beckoned me closer. When I was in arms reach, he gripped my shoulders and studied me. Having his pale blue eyes search my face made me squirm and he knew it. “Here I was thinking that you’d been murdered, since you haven’t called me once, and you’re here, getting your kicks. Shame on you for worrying your old man when you’ve been here, playing footsy with the boss.”

I gasped. “Dad!”

Zander choked on his coffee and put the mug down. “Sir, I-”

Dad rolled his eyes. “You think I care that you’re getting it on? Ag, you should know better. I don’t care who you let melt the magic snowman, just as long as you’re happy. And call me Mark. I never liked being called sir. Never felt old enough.”

Knight’s laughter filled the kitchen. “Melt the magic snowman?”

Dad looked between Zander and Knight, then stared at me again. He slapped his knee and let out a belting laugh. “I’ll be damned, Ag. Wait until your cousins hear about this.”

Kyrin walked in, wearing his cowboy hat and a confused expression. He looked around at all of us and then he held his hand out to my dad. “Um, nice to meet you, sir. Kyrin Graves.”

Dad was in a full on fit of laughter. He knocked Kyrin’s hand away and wiped tears from his eyes. “Forgive me for not shaking that hand, son. Unfortunately, I’m pretty sure I know where it’s been.”

“Dad!” I buried my face in my hands and let out a frustrated scream. “This is just like the time you accused me of going all the way with Steven Mallory in front of his parents! You can’t just blurt stuff out!”

“You *did* go all the way with Steven Mallory. In the backseat of his mom’s minivan, of all places. He couldn’t spill it fast enough.” Dad wiped even more tears away. “It’s not my fault I can read you like a book, honey. This one is surprising me, I’ll admit.”

Kyrin cleared his throat. “I’m unsure of what all is happening here. I feel like I missed a lot. I just know I hate Steven Mallory and like your dad.”

I palmed my forehead. “I’m going to jump into a volcano.”

Dad was as happy as a clam. “I’ll catch you up. I’m Mark, Ag’s dad. You three are all dancing the pokey with my daughter. None of you are very good at hiding it.”

Zander whistled. “Does this magic trick extend to other people, or is it just for Aggie? I’d hire you in a second, sir. Hell, you could run the company with this skill.”

I glared at Zander. “Oh, really? You offer *him* a job? Pig.”

“Sorry, son, it’s just a trick I have with Ag. I can read this girl better than any book I’ve ever crossed paths with. I just know things. She could never hide a single thing from me.” Dad winked at me. “Of course, it helped that the three of you each looked at her like she was the last cupcake on the earth and she blushed like a schoolgirl.”

Knight pulled up a stool. “I need to talk to you about the witch you raised. The puzzles, sir. I don’t know how you did it, but you raised a woman who almost made me cry yesterday. She made some of my best work look pathetic.”

I swayed closer to him and bit my lip. Yeah, he’d called me a witch, but he’d also admitted that I’d trashed his test. “That’s really sweet.”

He scowled at me. “Of course, you think it’s sweet that you crushed my spirit. Witch.”

Dad slapped his knee again and laughed harder. He was having a great time, clearly. “It figures that it’d take three men to meet her on her level. I shouldn’t be surprised, at all. She’s great, isn’t she? Takes after her mother, this one. Even down to the way she forgot to call and check in. She couldn’t go to college out of state because she missed her old man, but she can go a whole week without talking to me. Make it make sense.”

“Dad!” I groaned and walked over to the eat-in nook. Sinking into it, I gave into pouting. “I could’ve stayed at school, but there was that thing with the forest fire, remember?”

“No. I don’t remember a forest fire because there wasn’t one. I remember you saying something about starting a fire if I didn’t let you come home.” Dad smiled and I could tell he was reminiscing. “Truth be told, I hated the idea of her that far away. When you go through what we went through, losing her

mother, and then spend the next decade as your own little family against the world, it's hard to lose that."

"*You're* Aggie's dad?" Gracie's voice was quiet but full of awe. She looked up at him from behind Kyrin. "You don't look like Aggie."

Dad's face lit up and he groaned as he knelt in front of her. "You must be Gracie. Nice to meet you, sweetheart. I *am* Aggie's dad. She got her looks from her mother, thankfully. She'd look pretty silly if she had my face, wouldn't she?"

Hugging Kyrin's thigh, Gracie slowly moved out to face Dad. She studied his hair the most, even reached out and touched it. "My daddy died."

Dad never missed a beat. "I'm sorry to hear that. Has Aggie talked to you about losing her mom when she was your age?"

"Mommy died, too." She looked over at me. "Aggie talks to me about her mom."

"Did you move here after that happened?" Dad took Gracie's hand and cleared his throat. "Did Aggie tell you about what she did after I moved her to a farm? It has a barn almost like the one you have here."

My bottom lip wobbled as emotion rolled over me. I had whiplash from the change of topic and hearing Dad talk about the time right after Mom's death always got to me. I bit my tongue and ground my teeth together, doing everything to keep myself in check.

“She said she was mad.” Gracie inched closer to my dad.
“What did she do?”

“She snuck into the barn at night and slept with the animals. When I first saw that she wasn’t in her bed, I almost had a heart attack. I thought she’d run away. I ran around that farm, screaming her name for hours. I called all of my brothers and sisters, any neighbors I could think of, and we all stayed out all night looking for her.” Dad glanced over me and I saw that his eyes were glossy. “When the sun rose that next morning, she walked out of the barn with her blanket and messy hair, yawning like she’d just had the best sleep of her life.”

Gracie gasped. “Did she get in trouble?”

I wiped away a stray tear and shook my head. “No. Dad told me that he liked sleeping outside when he felt like screaming, too. He said that sleeping outside when your feelings are too big gives them room to stretch out their long legs and relax some.”

Dad let out a watery laugh. “And that’s how I spent the summer sleeping in a barn that year. We did what we had to, to make sure we were okay. I’m really glad that my Aggie is with you, Gracie. She has secrets to help little girls like you feel better.”

“Aggie said we’re in a special club.” Gracie looked up at her uncles and sniffed. “Can Aggie’s dad stay today?”

Zander was suspiciously quiet as he welcomed Dad to stay. “We’d love it if you stayed. I think we have some tents in this

house somewhere. What do you think, Gracie? Want to make a day of it?"

I didn't get to hear her answer. I quietly slipped out of the room and hurried to the closest bathroom. Locking myself in, I sat on the toilet lid and silently cried. I stabbed wads of toilet paper into my eyes, desperate to stop the tears, but I hadn't cried in longer than I could remember. I'd gone through the breakup, losing my job, and more without shedding more than a single tear, maybe two. Thinking about the time after Mom died, the way Dad saved me, and feeling that grief through Gracie, it brought everything rushing to the surface.

My chest ached as I desperately tried to shove everything back inside the box I kept locked in my head, but it was useless. I crumbled and wiped snot on my shirt in a bathroom that probably cost more than the farm when Dad first bought it. I'd never been so thankful to have Dad nearby, despite having wished him far, far away just a while earlier. When no one came near that bathroom and I was left alone with myself, I knew it was because Dad was there and because he knew me better than I knew myself. He'd know that I wouldn't want anyone to see me at my weakest.

All I could do was let those giant emotions out to stretch their legs. I was at their mercy.

*****ZANDER*****

I glanced down the hallway for the hundredth time, wondering how Mark could be right about giving Aggie her space when it felt so wrong to just leave her. I'd heard the whimpers coming from the bathroom and it took every ounce of control I had to walk away.

I rubbed my jaw, feeling the stubble that was quickly becoming a beard. "Are you—"

Mark put his hand on my shoulder and squeezed. "I'm sure. Now, I can keep telling you that I'm sure and we can stand here, staring off into space, or you can trust me and we can start doing something that will help."

I blew out a deep sigh and shook my head. I was no one's hero. It wasn't like I'd even know what to do if I got into that bathroom. I didn't do the whole comfort thing. Even growing up with Zella, I'd been shit at it. She'd sworn that I had the emotional depth of a puddle.

“Son, I’m telling you that if you knock on that bathroom door, my daughter will chew her way out the opposite wall if it means not showing you that she’s crying. She’s scrappy by nature, but then she grew up with so many boy cousins that she taught herself not to cry. She used to hobble into the house with cuts and bruises, gritting her teeth and swearing like a sailor when she thought I couldn’t hear her. She took tough to a new level.”

I crossed my arms over my chest and grunted. Staring at the man who’d helped create the woman who was slowly driving me mad, I couldn’t tell if I wanted to hug him or thump him for letting his daughter be so infuriating. “Should’ve sent her ass to a compliance camp.”

He let out a deep belly laugh and shook his head. “That stubborn streak is all her mother. That woman used to worry me to death. She’d go against everything I said, just to fight, I swear. It was like being married to an evil tyrant some days. You know the thing about women like them, though?”

I scoffed. “They leave you with migraines, stacks of leftover paperwork you haven’t done in days, and the sudden desire to have your head checked?”

“All that, sure. The thing, though, son, is that when a woman like my daughter softens to you...it’s special. Her mother was a cactus until she wasn’t and then I would’ve murdered entire villages to get one more second with her. There’s nothing to make you feel like a bigger man than when a strong woman leans into you. So let her have her time to cry.

She'll come out soon and pretend like nothing happened. If you're smart, you will too."

Kyrin stopped next to us, a deep frown darkening his face as he stared down the hallway towards Aggie's off-limits area. "Anything?"

Shaking my head, I cracked my knuckles. "Since we can't do shit right now, what do we do in the meantime to make things better later?"

"I found the tents and a bunch of other camping stuff. We really camping out?" Kyrin looked at Mark. "There's a lot of daylight left before camping time."

"I have an idea, but I'm not sure how a couple of rich boys like yourselves are going to take to it." Mark grinned. "I'm pretty sure it's not your normal Friday."

"We weren't always rich boys, sir. Try us." Kyrin nodded down the hall and worked his cowboy hat between his hands. "Honestly, if you told me that letting Gracie and Aggie run me over with a truck would make them feel better, I'd probably go for it."

"My idea won't be nearly as painful." Leading both of us away from his daughter, Mark told us his plan and then started making calls to make it happen. He'd made us promise to leave Aggie alone before he'd go outside to work.

I busied myself finishing as much work as I could from the kitchen island. Jamie, black eyes and all, worked silently as I tapped away at my computer. Knight and Kyrin were taking

turns keeping Gracie busy, but when Mary showed up, she offered to take Gracie upstairs to get dressed for the day we were planning.

Knight sat beside me, working with a scowl on his face. I could tell by the tension radiating off him that he was working on creating a new test. Kyrin went outside and started setting up the tents, always more comfortable with manual labor.

As the older brother, I felt a sense of responsibility over my brothers. Losing Zella had woken every protective instinct I'd never known I had. I worried about them and I wanted them to be happy. It was why I'd taken on more work in the company so Kyrin could stay away more. It was why I fought so hard against men like Monroe Blake, and why I'd been so hard on Aggie.

We'd all lost so much. I didn't think we could go through more loss. Knowing that Aggie had her own story of loss and pain made my decisions regarding her work going forward that much harder. I didn't want to be responsible for her losing more. After seeing the way Knight had reacted to having Aggie best his work the night before, though, I worried that adding Aggie to the team would end up doing more damage than good.

Since becoming CEO of TGC, nothing had been easy. I'd taken our dad's company and created a powerhouse. We were a Fortune 500 company, all three of us recognized as some of the youngest billionaires in the world, and considered the top of the top in our field. That all came at a cost. We'd missed so

much of Zella's life in the end. We'd missed Gracie's life. We'd skipped so much of our own life.

My life had been one giant cluster of regret and grief since Zella's death. There were so many things I wanted to do differently, things I imagined doing with Zella and Gracie together. Zella was gone, though, and all I'd managed to do since she'd died was work longer hours and lose more of myself to the job. Watching Gracie with Mark that morning made it beyond clear to me that my own connection to my niece was pathetic.

Things had to change. For Gracie. For my brothers. For me. We deserved something other than the same old pattern of work and sleep. Gracie deserved the life that Mark had given Aggie after her mom died. She deserved men who were willing to be uncomfortable for her, who were willing to make sacrifices. We all deserved a chance to be happy, some of us for the first time.

I looked over at Knight as I shut my computer. "You know that the only reason we are where we are right now is because of you, right?"

His face turned red as he cleared his throat. "What are you talking about?"

"The company. Your brain and the things it can do are the only reason we were able to grow Dad's company into what it is now. You're fucking brilliant, Knight. Have I ever told you how impressed I am by you? If I could half the shit you do with a computer, I'd have taken over the world or some other

evil shit by now.” I smiled and shrugged like I wasn’t stretching outside of our comfort zone by a mile. “I know that you could’ve done bigger things. I know that you had job offers better than the one I gave you in the beginning. You stayed with us and I appreciate you, Knight. God knows I wasn’t always easy to work with.”

He swallowed audibly and sat back. “Are you sick?”

I laughed and punched him in the arm, needing the roughness to balance the soft. “No, asshole. I’m not sick. No one’s dying. I just wanted you to know.”

He nodded slowly, obviously confused. “Well, thanks...”

“I think it’s time for things to change around here. Don’t you?”

*****AGGIE*****

“Have you lost your minds?” I felt a sense of dread wash over me as I listened to the guys talk about the day they had planned like it was going to be the best day ever. “Dad! Why would you do this?”

Kyryn tipped his hat back as he stared down at me. “It’s a barbecue, Aggie. What’s the big deal?”

I looked around him to glare at Dad. “You did this on purpose. I can’t believe you.”

“I feel like we’re missing something.” Knight looked between me and my dad. “I thought the whole family barbecue and camping thing was supposed to be a good thing.”

“Maybe with a normal family!” I groaned and grabbed Zander’s arm to check his watch. “Is it too late to call back and uninvite them?”

“Agatha Bailey Young, that’s not very nice. Your cousins are crazy about you and you always have fun with them. Why am I still having to tell you to play nice at your age?” Dad

wagged his finger at me, but I could see he was fighting a smile. “I think it’s a good idea to let your suitors see where you come from. Plus, the kids will love Gracie and she’ll have a blast.”

I could feel my face burning red and glared at Dad. “Suitors? Dad!”

Kyrin shrugged. “I don’t hate being called a suitor.”

Zander’s eyes were bright as he grinned at me. “Sorry, baby. You know I love suits. Suits, suitors, I’m good with it.”

Pressing my fingertips into my cheeks, I tugged my skin down and groaned pitifully. “You can’t call me baby in front of my cousins. You can’t act sweet. If you show any sign of not hating me, they’ll be impossible to deal with.”

“Oh, Ag. Your cousins have grown up. You don’t have to worry about them teasing you anymore.” Dad saw my eyes go wide and laughed. “Much.”

“Maybe I should leave. I could just go to town for the day.” I glanced outside at the yard and saw tents. “And night.”

Knight lightly pressed his hand to my lower back. “Nope.”

I leaned into his touch. “Yep.”

“You’d better go and get changed, Ag. Everyone should be here soon. Gracie is very excited and that alone should cheer you up.” With a final laugh, Dad left us standing in informal living room. He slipped out of one of the folding doors that made the space indoor/outdoor.

“Before you start ranting at us about throwing a family day for *your family*, just listen to me for one second.” Zander cupped my face in his hand and drew me closer. “Your dad told us all to stay away while you were indisposed and we did. The chances of us not checking on you, though, are laughable. Are you okay?”

I bit my lip and searched his face for signs of teasing. The energy between us all had shifted so quickly with our truce that I was feeling more than a little confused.

“Aggie?” He stroked his hand down to my throat and raised his eyebrows. “Talk.”

“Are you not freaking out? My dad is acting like you three are going to be asking me to marry you soon and he’s forcing you to meet my family! We just agreed to play nice last night and now you’re acting all sweet and holding my face like you want to take care of me. It’s confusing, okay? I’m confused and it’s not fair that you can make me share because of the throat thing. I feel like you’re abusing a power.” I was breathless after spilling everything in one breath.

Kyrin took off his hat and moved into my space so he was shielding me from the yard beyond the wall of glass. He wrapped his arm around me and looked down at me with a soft smile that turned his face into something boyish and charming. “I’m not freaking out.”

Knight stood at my other side and pressed a kiss to the side of my head. “I was freaking out when I thought your dad was going to murder us for defiling his daughter. I was freaking out

when I realized that your dad is probably one of the best dads in the world and we're just sitting here, failing Gracie. I was even freaking out when I saw your face as you were running to the bathroom earlier because even though I've only known you for a little bit of time, seeing you upset felt wrong. The rest, though? Nope. I'm good."

Zander stroked my throat and winked. "We're men of decision, baby. We decided to play nice and that's what we're doing. You maybe didn't realize that playing nice is so encompassing, but it is. It can mean anything from making you come a dozen times tonight or holding your hand when you're sad. Or it can mean meeting your family in a crazy attempt to make you stop crying."

I squeezed my eyes closed and tried to remember that the three men around me were the same jerks who'd refused to give me a job. "It doesn't mean I like any of you. Okay? I'm still in control here."

Zander's fingers tightened on my throat and then disappeared completely. "Sure. Whatever you say, baby."

I opened my eyes and watched them as they left me standing there. My body thrummed with energy and I felt desperate to call them back to my side. I was just all confused, though. That was all. With a little space from them, I'd be fine.

I dressed knowing how my cousins were going to be when they showed up. The t-shirt and jean shorts I pulled on had seen better days and my old tennis shoes would stand up to whatever we ended up doing. My hair went up in a tight

ponytail and all jewelry was removed. Growing up with mostly boys who wrestled to make every single point they had to make, I'd learned to not wear nice things or leave in things that could be ripped out. They'd always been rough and some things never changed.

Knight raised his eyebrows at me when I came outside. "When Mark said to change, I assumed he meant into a dress or something."

I snorted. "Not a chance I'd be caught dead in a dress around my cousins. The only time I ever even tried to wear a skirt in front of them, I ended up with it tucked over my head while they rolled me down a hill. In front of my crush."

He wagged his eyebrows. "I don't hate the idea, Aggie. You should learn to be more open."

I was mid-swat to his arm when I sensed movement to my right. I barely got a chance to turn my head before the wind was knocked out of me as my cousin, Donnie, ran into me and squeezed me into a bearhug. My legs dangled and flew around under me as he shook me.

"Scoot! Man, I've missed you!" Donnie put me down and held me out by my shoulders as he looked me over. "You been eating? You're looking a little thin, honey. Don't worry. Maggie made her Better Than Sex pie and it'll put some meat on those bones."

My grin stretched wide as happiness bubbled out of me. Were my cousins humiliating and rough? Yes. Did I want them forcing me out of whatever shell I had up around the guys?

No. Was I over the moon to see them as they showed up, one by one? Absolutely.

Smacking Donnie in the arm, I automatically reached up to rub the top of his head with my knuckles. “Don’t call me Scoot, Donnie! You know I don’t go by that anymore.”

He tossed me over his wide shoulder and spun me around. “Your daddy said you were shacking up with three rich fellas. Point me in their direction so I can tell them all about ole Scoot.”

*****KYRIN*****

“She wasn’t much bigger than little Gracie over there and she was such a little spitfire already. The third day on the farm, she’d punched Donnie in the nose and told Matt that his momma couldn’t cook a can of beans if they fell in a pot. I mean, she was mean as a snake!” Johnny, one of Aggie’s many cousins, sat across from me at the table we’d set up on the lawn. He wasn’t even the most animated of the bunch and he had the whole table’s attention. We were all hanging onto his every word.

“To be fair, my momma couldn’t cook a can of beans. God rest her soul, she wasn’t blessed with the cooking gene.” Matt shook his head and then narrowed his eyes at his wife, Sadie. “Don’t you say anything, woman. I can see you thinking bad thoughts about my momma.”

Johnny waved them off and leaned into his story. “All us boys got together and we decided that we had to do something. We thought it was our God-given responsibility to correct that little girl’s attitude. It was Jenny’s idea that we used, though.”

Jenny covered her face with her hands and groaned. “I have never forgiven myself for that!”

“Jenny saw a book at school about worms and her teacher told her about how they can get inside people. Poor Jenny wouldn’t step foot in the dirt for months after that. When we heard about butt worms, though, we knew we were going to use it someday.” He held his belly as he laughed and enjoyed torturing his cousin, who wasn’t even aware of the story being told. “Donnie hung around Scoot’s house for days, waiting on her to go to the bathroom. We all started to believe that maybe girls didn’t poop.”

I looked across the yard at Aggie and grinned into my beer as she glanced over at our table and put her hands on her hips. She was suspicious of the raucous laughter, but she was tied up in a game of kickball with the kids and couldn’t get away.

“Anyway, shit happens, Donnie pretends that he went in after her and she didn’t flush. He runs out of the house, screaming about worms and shit. Boy put on a damn good show that day. He had tears in his eyes as he yelled about what he’d seen in the toilet.” Johnny laughed so hard that he wheezed and had to take a puff of his inhaler to continue. “We all pretend to panic and try to figure out who had worms. It was the great mystery of who shit before Donnie? Finally, Donnie points the finger at Scoot and she stood there with this slow-building horror on her face. By the time we got done talking about the worms in her body, she was willing to light herself on fire if it would’ve killed those worms.”

Matt stood up and swore. “Incoming. You’d better hurry, J.”

Johnny spotted Aggie coming our way and rushed out the end of his story. “We convinced her that to get rid of butt worms you had to scoot around on your ass for twenty-four hours.”

Aggie, kickball in hand, heard the end of what Johnny was saying and threw the ball at his head with impeccable precision. “You shut your mouth, Johnny!”

Johnny clutched his forehead while standing up and scurrying to get away from his little cousin. “She made it to hour seven before Uncle Mark found her and made her stop! And that’s how Scoot was born!”

My stomach hurt from laughing so hard and I couldn’t hide my amusement as Aggie’s head snapped in my direction. I held up my hands and tried earnestly to stop laughing. “Sorry, Scoot.”

She growled and changed directions, zeroing in on me instead of Johnny. She shoved at my chair, doing her best to tip me over. I’d had a few beers and wasn’t all that worried about her strength until I felt the world shift under me. Her look of pride was short lived as I wrapped my arms around her waist and took her down with me.

I didn’t think twice about rolling us over so I was on top of her, staring down at her with a wide smile stretching my lips. Her carefree smile as she looked back at me sent a bolt of awareness down my back and I leaned down to steal a kiss.

She tasted like beer and pickles, a combination that should've been terrible, but I liked it.

Whistling and cheering from her family broke through my Aggie-induced fog. Lifting my lips from hers, I rolled to my side and sighed before tossing my arm over my eyes. I silently lectured myself about keeping my mouth to myself and staying in control, thinking that Aggie would be embarrassed at being caught kissing me.

Aggie pressed her lips to my ear and her breathy voice gave away her excitement. "If I thought there was a bathroom in this house that wasn't being christened by my family right now, I'd drag you to it."

I groaned. "That's not fair, baby. I- Wait. What?"

She patted my chest and kissed the tip of my nose. "All freaks, every single one of them. Why do you think there are so many kids?"

"Scoot's not being a lady, Uncle Mark!" Donnie's loud voice filled the air a second before he grabbed Aggie and lifted her off me. "Keep it in your pants, rich boy!"

It had to be the energy around the rowdy bunch, but all my normal sense was replaced by true Texas macho-ness. "Rich boy? Who are you calling rich boy?"

Donnie spun around and grinned at me. "You, rich boy. You want to prove you're more than that?"

Aggie smacked Donnie's back and kicked her legs. "No! Don't do it!"

“Honestly, I thought you’d never ask.” I found my beer and finished it. “So, what do we call you when I wipe the floor with you?”

“Oh, god, Ky! You don’t know what you’re getting into!” Aggie lifted her head and looked around. “Dad! Donnie’s trying to get Kyrin to wrestle!”

A cheer went up as I heard the word wrestle. Looking at Donnie’s massive chest, I shrugged, figuring my odds of breaking something were high, but it still sounded like fun.

“Don’t be a snitch, Scoot!” Donnie lifted a wriggling Aggie over his head and held her there like she was a stuffed doll. “I promise I won’t hurt your boyfriend’s pretty face.”

I stared up at Aggie dangling in the air and shook my head. Donnie was going to break more than a few bones of mine, but there was no way I was backing out. “Alright, come on, *Donna*. Let’s go.”

Sadie and Jenny just sighed and rolled their eyes. Sadie stood up and narrowed her eyes at her husband. “We’ll take the kids inside to paint the rocks they found earlier. If you break something, Matt, I’m not taking care of you.”

*****KNIGHT*****

Standing next to Mark and a few of Aggie's uncles, I couldn't quite believe what I was seeing. "Is that...?"

Mark sighed. "An inflatable kiddie pool being filled with oil? Yeah. It's the only way we would let the kids fight when they were little and it stuck."

James, a retired rodeo rider, slapped his hat against his thigh. "These damn kids never grow up. I thought them having kids of their own would make them act better when we take them out, but nope. It seems maturity never caught on. I wonder what two idiots from our bunch are going first."

When I saw Kyrin marching towards the pool, a stupid grin on his face, I laughed. "Looks like you can only claim one of the idiots, sir."

"Oh, well, that's nice." Amy, the man's wife, leaned into him and smiled into her giant cup of peach liqueur. When she'd offered me a drink, I'd thought I'd heard her wrong until

she shoved it under my nose. “I think I’m going to go use the powder room, honey.”

“Looks like Sadie and Jenny are taking all the kids inside. You head in there now, you’ll be trapped watching them.” James glanced at her cup of alcohol and grinned. “I don’t think the kids need to see Aunt Amy sloshed.”

She ran her hand down his chest. “I’m not planning on being around the kids, honey.”

Ignoring the suggestive wink she sent her husband was impossible, but I managed to hold in my chuckle over James’ comical eagerness when he understood what his wife was suggesting until the pair had stumbled away. I sought out my own honey in the midst of her family and found her dangling from the hands of her giant cousin, Donnie.

“She’s different around them, huh?” Mark nodded at his daughter and smiled. “She needs them to show up and calm her down every so often.”

I took a long pull from my beer as I watched her. “The more I get to know her, the better she gets. I never expected her to be so...sweet.”

Mark laughed and elbowed me. “Oh, you’ve got it bad. Sweet? I don’t know if I’d say sweet, son. She’s a live wire. Why do you think I didn’t even bat an eye when I realized my baby girl is shacking up with three men? She’s...fierce. If she became president through a coup one day, I wouldn’t be surprised.”

I couldn't take my eyes off her as she laughed wildly and fought like a feral cat to get down. "Call me crazy, but I still think she's sweet."

"I'll call you sucker." He clapped me on the shoulder. "People called me insane when I told them her momma was an angel. Maybe the ones who are supposed to see through the fire do, even when everyone else thinks they're insane. I don't know. Right now, we'd better go make sure Donnie doesn't hurt your brother. You've got that twin thing, right? If Donnie snaps Kyrin's arm, will you feel it?"

It took me a second to follow his change of subject after his first thoughts. When I did manage to catch up, I laughed out loud. "I hope not, sir."

When we got closer to the group gathered around the kiddie pool, Donnie made a show of passing Aggie off to his brother, Danny. Both men were massive, somehow making even Kyrin's large size look average. I grinned when Aggie grabbed Danny's face and pulled at each side of his mouth with her hooked fingers. He dropped her as soon as he'd gotten her.

She tried to leap on Donnie's back, but another of her cousins, Hank, got in the way. He blocked her in an attempt to let Donnie and Kyrin wrestle, but Aggie had other plans. She took a few steps back and then charged Hank, tackling him into the pool. A cheer went up as she stood up and flexed while baring her teeth.

"You can really tell she was raised on a farm right about now, can't you?" Mark crossed his arms over his chest and

watched his daughter with pride beaming from his every cell.

I had to bite back a moan at the sight of Aggie covered in oil with her clothes plastered to her body. I shifted my weight from one foot to the other, battling the urge to just grab her and steal her away.

As we watched, she disappeared, having her legs taken out from under her by Hank. He immediately tried to pin her while Danny counted, but she wiggled out from under him and then climbed on his back like a little monkey. Hank couldn't get his arms out from under him with her on his back and the oil making everything slick. Danny must've decided it counted as a pin and started counting. When he reached three, everyone went wild cheering for Aggie.

Danny grabbed her arm as she climbed to her feet and held it high. "Scoot wins again! She's still undefeated!"

I cleared my throat as I watched her dance around. "I think I'm going to go celebrate with the champ, sir."

"Keep it clean, son. Knowing and seeing are two different things. I'd had to have to show off my wrestling skills."

I nodded and backed away, worried my shit-eating grin would give away my intentions. "We wouldn't want that."

He rolled his eyes. "Just go, son."

I turned around and jogged the short distance to Aggie. When she saw me, she threw her arms around my neck and plastered her body to mine. I held her tight and lowered my

voice so only she would hear me. “Let me congratulate you on your win, champ.”

Her eyes sparkled with mischief as she met my gaze. With her lip caught between her teeth, she nodded and took my hand.

I saw Kyrin and Donnie getting into the pool and Zander standing close by. I could at least trust that my twin brother wouldn't be killed while I was stealing away with our woman.

Slipping on the grass as I led her away from the house and towards the driveway, Aggie held onto my hand with both of hers, her breath coming out in warm puffs against my arm. “Where are we going?”

I glanced behind us to make sure no one was looking and then quietly opened the back door of Zander's truck. Unfortunately for him, he'd left it out and unlocked. I slapped Aggie's ass playfully as she climbed in and hurried in behind her, shutting the door just as silently behind me.

“You're going to get us caught.” Even as she said the words, Aggie pulled me down on top of her and pulled my mouth to hers. Kissing me hurriedly, she reached her hand down and cupped me through my jeans. “You're wearing too many clothes, Knight.”

I pushed her shirt and bra up enough suck her nipples until she whined and lifted her hips. I quietly thanked her family for grabbing the good oil from the kitchen to wrestle in. It mixed with Aggie's natural taste and the way it made her body slide against mine was fucking perfect. Moving back to her mouth, I

growled as she jerked open the button of my pants and forced her hand inside so she could wrap her hand around my painfully hard dick. “Pull me out, baby. I need to be in you right now.”

She fought my pants low enough to pull me free and then stroked my length once before stretching her shorts and panties to the side. Her grip on my dick was firm as she rubbed me against her clit and then held me at her opening. “Fuck me, Knight.”

The space was awkward, I was cramped and the rub of her shorts on the side of my dick was rough, but I’d never needed to fuck her more. I drove us both crazy with short, quick strokes, strokes that didn’t rock the truck. It was good, but I needed more. I needed to fuck her deep, make her cry out.

“Up and over the console, baby. Now.” I pulled out and helped her stretch her upper body over the console, into the front of the truck. Jerking her shorts and panties down to her thighs pinned her legs together and when I forced my dick inside her, it was with that added tightness that made us both moan. “Jesus, your body never stops. So goddamn sexy. Seeing you rolling around in that pool made me hard as steel, baby. I was standing next to your father with a fucking hard on. You did that to me.”

She gasped and pushed her ass back against my thrusts. “You can’t say that! Oh, God, Knight!”

I reached forward and gripped her shoulders so I could fuck her harder. “I can’t say that you’re a bad girl for making me

hard while I was talking to your father? I couldn't think of anything but slamming my cock into your sweet pussy and I had to pretend to be a boy scout so he didn't murder me."

She grabbed onto Zander's steering wheel and arched her hips, letting me hit deeper. "Knight! Oh, Knight! I'm close!"

I gripped her back of her neck and slammed my dick into her harder and faster. It was rough and the sounds filling the truck were filthy. I slapped her perfect ass once, twice, and then growled as her walls clamped down on me. She screamed into her arm and came hard as I filled her with my come.

We both slumped where we were, breathing heavily and leaving a mess in Zander's truck. I pressed a kiss to my handprint on Aggie's ass and gently pulled her panties and shorts back up. She pushed herself backwards and dropped into the backseat with a giggle. Her tits were out, her shorts were already stained with our mixed come leaking out of her, and she looked like she'd just been thoroughly fucked.

"Zander's going to be mad." She giggled again and then gently helped me tuck my length away. "I hope Kyrin's okay."

I pulled her into my chest and kicked my feet up on the console. We were both sticky and the truck was hot, but I didn't want to move. "I'm sure he's fine. I didn't feel him die or anything."

She lightly slapped my arm and curled her thigh over mine. "Knight?"

I kissed the top of her head. "Yeah?"

“I’ve never been happier than tonight.” She yawned and tucked her head under my chin. “I hope Gracie had as much fun with the kids. My Aunt Lauren said Gracie was the belle of the ball earlier. They’re having a sleepover in the movie room tonight.”

My heart thumped harder and I closed my eyes against the feelings that threatened to show themselves. “You checked in on her?”

Aggie wrapped her arm around my waist, fully wrapped around me. “Of course. I love her and want to make sure she’s happy. I know my family can be a lot.”

“You love her?”

“How could I not?” She nuzzled her face into my chest and yawned again. “I’m just going to take a little nap. Don’t tell the cousins.”

I held her tighter and stared at the way her long legs draped over mine so naturally while I waited for my heart to slow down. It took much longer than it should’ve that night. My mind raced with thoughts of the sweet woman on top of me, of the way she loved Gracie, of the way she let go and had fun with her family. She was special and it terrified me that the ties that held her to us weren’t stronger, or more permanent.

*****AGGIE*****

Barely a week after the party with my family, another party was happening, but it wasn't one I wanted to be at. It wasn't one I'd been prepared for and I was so far out of my league that I was sweating harder than I could ever remember. I was having a hard time processing how two drastically different groups of people could exist in the same space, separated only by a few days. The people standing around the pool outside made my family look like a WWE crowd, after a few rounds of free drinks.

I paced by the front door, waiting on help to arrive after the SOS I'd sent out. It'd never been clearer that I wasn't a nanny for a rich family. I had no business standing around while a woman wearing a twenty-thousand dollar purse asked me for sparkling water from a French brand I couldn't even pronounce. When I finally heard a car roar to a stop outside, I let out a shaky breath. Help had arrived.

“What's happening?” Zander strode into the house, mouth set in a hard line, looking every bit like an angry god. “Start

from the beginning and don't stop until I say."

I narrowed my eyes at his high-handedness, but I was far too panicked to take the time to correct him. "People just started showing up. I was swimming with Gracie and the next thing I know, there are twenty other kids splashing in the pool while their parents stared at me, waiting for me to do a trick or something. One of the other nannies invited everyone in Gracie's class for a pool party with their parents and then didn't cancel the party or put it on the calendar when she left!"

"Don't even think of mentioning that Gracie doesn't have a class because it's summer, either, because those parents will murder you with their judgmental expressions. Because, *duh*, they're talking about her upcoming class for the fall. They're just out there, scowling and waiting on me to bring out snacks? I don't know what rich parents do with other rich parents, Zan. This was the worst day for all three of you to be gone."

He pulled me into his chest and rested his chin on top of my head. "I'll handle it. They can all get the fuck out."

I gasped and pulled away from him. "No, Zander! Gracie is fragile right now. She needs friends. If you kick those awful people out, she'll be the weird kid who had the terrible pool party. They stay. I'll just... whip up some... cucumbers? I'm in over my head here. I need Mary. Or Jamie. Or my dad. My dad would know what to do."

Zander growled and pulled me back into his chest. "You don't need anyone else. I'll help. If you won't let me kick

them out, will you at least let me call in reinforcements so you're not responsible for whipping up *cucumbers*?"

"God, yes. I know my strengths, and this is not one of them. I tried, Zander. I tried to solve the problem and no matter what, I couldn't do it. I couldn't get past one of the moms telling me she'd like a plate of organic vegetables with some sort of yogurt sauce. I found some carrots and a bottle of ranch. Where the hell is Jamie?"

"We gave him the day off because we were going to take you out tonight. Your dad was going to come over and watch Gracie. So much for that plan." With a sigh, Zander pulled his phone out of his pocket and held me with one arm while he tapped away with the other hand. "Kyrin's on his way back from picking up a mare and Knight will be here in half an hour. I'll have a caterer here with prepared food before Knight. The bar's stocked, which is what these people want more than anything. It's fine. We won't let Gracie become a social pariah."

I narrowed my eyes. "You're laughing at me, aren't you?"

"Of course, not." He leaned down and kissed me. "I'll come out and explain what's happening. Where do you want to be?"

I shuddered. "Away from those parents. I'll just stay in the pool with the kids."

"Come on, then." He ran his eyes over my coverup and opened his mouth to say something when a high voice rang out through the house.

“Hello? Are you hiding in here? We’re thirsty.”

I blew out a deep breath and pasted on a smile. “Coming!”

Of course, when the parents saw Zander, they were all smiles and sugary sweetness. They immediately perked up and I watched in annoyance as more than one woman lifted her breasts before facing him. I turned my back to all of them and joined the kids at the pool.

Gracie waved at me and swam over. “Are you getting in, Aggie? We’re going to play Marco Polo!”

I shrugged out of my coverup and nodded. “Of course. That sounds like a blast! Who’s going to be Marco first?”

Ten games of Marco Polo later, all of which I was Marco, I heard a commotion and opened my eyes to see food being set up at a table on the patio. My stomach growled, reminding me that I hadn’t eaten anything since breakfast. Seeing the parents moving towards the food gave me enough reason to wait to eat, though, and I played several more games before sitting on the side of the pool and refereeing.

“You’re really great with the kids.”

I looked up and shielded my eyes from the sun as one of the dads stood over me. “Thank you.”

“The line just died down for the food. You should grab some before Sharon goes back.” He held out his hand and smiled. “She’s been on a diet for the past few months and it just ended. So I heard, anyway.”

Slipping into my polite professional mode, I forced my face into a subdued smile and stood up without the help of his hand. “Sorry, my hands are all wet.”

“I wouldn’t have minded. I’m always eager to help.” He fell into step beside me as I moved towards the food. “I’m Bo Fox. Lilah’s dad.”

“Lilah is the cute little red head? She seems to be getting along great with Gracie.” I grabbed a plate and looked back at the pool. “They’re still together right now, tucked over by the slide. They’re both sweet as can be, but terrible cheats at Marco Polo.”

He laughed and rested his hand on my back. “I heard you’ll be leaving the Graveses soon. I could always use a nanny like yourself.”

I stepped away from him and busied myself with stacking food on my plate. Had Zander been telling people I was leaving soon? Why? “Hmm. Sorry. I’ll be going back into my actual field when I leave here.”

“Which is?” He stepped closer to me again. “I promise I pay well. I’d make it worth your while.”

“I really am not interested in being a nanny after this.” I bit into a carrot and edged around him. “Thanks, though.”

“What about the other thing?” He raked his eyes down my body, no longer bothering to hide his interest.

My entire body felt like I’d stepped into an oven. “What other thing?”

He leaned in and gave me a crooked smile while stroking my upper arm with his finger. “Don’t make me say it. You know what I’m talking about. Whatever these guys are paying, I’ll double it. I have a couple friends who’d die of jealousy-”

My fist connected with his nose and I made a man bleed in the Graves’ home for the second time, only on purpose that time. I didn’t bother sticking around to explain to him why he was being punished. I doubted he had the processing skills to understand.

Unfortunately, his shouts and moans of pain drew everyone’s attention. I snatched my coverup off the back of a chair and stormed inside. I was done. My knuckles hurt horribly, already, and my feelings were cracking and bleeding all over the place. The weak little things hadn’t expected anything like that and the shock of it made the pain even worse.

I rushed up the stairs, going straight to Zander’s wing to find my clothes. I wanted to leave. I needed to leave.

“Aggie!”

I didn’t look back at Zander as he chased after me, calling my name. I couldn’t think about whether or not he’d somehow implied to that asshole that I was his paid whore, not until I was alone and safe to cry, but I still didn’t want anything to do with him in that moment. I slammed his bedroom door closed behind me and went into the closet.

“Goddammit, Aggie!” Zander threw open the door and followed me into the closet. “What the hell happened? What’d

he say to you?”

I tried to jerk away from him as he grabbed me and spun me around to face him, but he gripped my arms tight and forced me to look at him. “What did *you* say to *him*?”

*****KYRIN*****

I dropped my hat in the mudroom, stretching my stiff muscles before kicking my boots off. I was covered in mud from a long day with a wild mare. The last thing I wanted to do was entertain anyone, but Zander's message made it clear that Aggie didn't want us kicking the parents out. Something about making sure Gracie had friends. I didn't know how us feeding a bunch of people expensive food got her friends, but I was sure Aggie would explain it to me later.

I pulled my shirt off and groaned. My ribs were still sore from the drunken wrestling match with Donnie over a week earlier. I'd heard from him that he still had a black eye and couldn't sit down without cursing my name, though, so I didn't feel so bad about my ribs. I'd just been glad to hold my own against that giant. I'd impressed Aggie's family and made a life-long friend in Donnie. Worth it.

My pants were halfway down my legs when I heard shouting from somewhere else in the house. It didn't sound good so I pulled my pants back up and rushed out to find out

what was happening. I passed Mary ushering Gracie to the stairs and frowned at the look on Gracie's face.

Mary scowled. "I'm taking her to her room to dry off and play. Those adults ruined her pool party and she's upset about it."

"Where's Aggie? I want Aggie." Gracie crossed her arms over her chest and pouted. "She was sad. They made her sad, Uncle Ky."

"Upstairs, little lady. Aggie will come find you as soon as this mess is cleared up. You'll have to settle with me for now." Mary nodded towards the back of the house. "Give them hell."

Knight stood at the back of the house, his face twisted in confusion while several people shouted at him and one man stood back, holding a bloody nose. I just assumed Knight had hit the asshole until I heard what one woman in particular was shouting at Knight.

"You need to call the cops and have her charged with assault! She hit my husband! Your so-called nanny is out of control. I don't know what kind of things you let happen in your home, but I won't have my husband assaulted by that... that tramp!"

Knight and I had the same reaction. We each turned furious glares at the man with the bloody nose. "What the fuck did you do to her?"

"What? Me? I didn't do anything! She just hit me!" His voice was strained from what I was assuming was a broken

nose. “She’s nuts! She came onto me and when I politely turned her down, she lashed out! She said y’all are replacing her and she needs a new job. She seemed to believe I’d ever be interested in the kind of arrangement you all have here.”

I stepped closer and saw him flinch. “I suggest you stay close. I’m going to check on Aggie and if there’s a hair on her fucking head out of place, I’m beating your ass. One of y’all had better call the cops now if you’re worried about that asshole.”

Knight followed me up the stairs and frowned when we got closer to Zander’s room and heard shouting. We rushed in and saw Aggie raging around the room in a bikini that I would’ve liked to appreciate at another time. Zander was leaning back on the bed, watching her with a dark expression on his face.

I recognized the look and immediately settled into checking on Aggie. Zander would handle whatever else had happened. He had murder written all over his face, so I hoped the idiots downstairs did call the cops before we finished with Aggie.

“Why the hell would he think that I’m a prostitute, Zander? No one else knows anything about us, about me working for you! It’s not a matter of me believing him over you! It’s a matter of how the fuck else did he know even the basic information, like the fact that you’re getting rid of me soon? Is that my reputation now? I gave myself to you because we *work* together, not because you’re paying me, and now I’m going to be known as a whore?”

“You just let me know when it’s my turn to speak.” Zander’s voice was eerily calm and I could see the way his hands shook as he balled them into fists on his thighs.

“Just tell me the truth! Did you tell them that? Do you feel that way about me?” Her voice broke and she spun away from us, her body so stiff it looked like she would shatter at any moment.

Zander was on his feet, pressed against her back immediately. He wrapped his arms around her and held her, even while she struggled at first. When she went still, he spoke quietly against her shoulder. “The way I feel about you isn’t something I want you hearing this way. I’m not going to be forced into rushing this thing between us because some fucker spoke out of turn. I mentioned that you’re only doing us a favor for the month and then we’d have another nanny from the same service they use. If that asshole saw the way I looked at you and jumped to conclusions, I’m sorry. Never in a million years would I talk about you with any man outside of this room, Aggie. You’re no one’s business but ours. You don’t need my words to know, though, do you? You fucking know better. Do you feel my heart pounding against your back right now? Do you feel how crazy I feel at the thought of you trying to pack your stuff?”

Her shoulders dropped slowly and then the rest of her body sagged against Zander as she let go of her tension. “I don’t like this feeling.”

“Which feeling, baby?” Zander lifted her into his arms and carried her to the bed.

“Sadness. I let people make me angry, not sad. It’s scary to care so much about what you might’ve said about me.” She settled into his lap and curled into his chest. “I never felt sad over what Monroe might’ve said about me. Not once.”

“I second that caring is fucking scary.” Knight sat next to them and held her hand. “I can’t help feeling like if I’m going to care about someone, though, I’m fucking glad it’s someone so strong.”

I chuckled and knelt in front of her. “Not just physically. Though, that’s pretty impressive.”

She squeezed her eyes shut tight and took a deep breath. “We have to talk about something else. I can’t... I’m not going to cry.”

I stood up and kicked my jeans off. “I’m going to put on a clean shirt and jeans and then I’m going downstairs to find out who I’m going to punch.”

Aggie jerked upright. “I left the kids in the pool!”

Zander pulled her back against his chest. “They’re fine. Mary happened to be running in to help with the party when I chased after you. She’s taking care of the kids. Or at least Gracie. I don’t give a fuck about those other kids. They have assholes for parents.”

Knight nodded. “Gracie isn’t going to that school, right? Those people are awful.”

“After I’m finished with them, there may not be anything to worry about.” I cupped Aggie’s face and kissed her forehead.
“Stay up here, baby.”

*****AGGIE*****

I sat at the top of the stairs and listened to Zander tear multiple parents to shreds for gossiping about us. He was a force when he was angry and I realized quickly that he'd never truly been angry at me. The way he spoke to them was so cutting that I wasn't sure how they were going to be able to sleep that night. Not that I cared about how they slept.

Any given moment not filled with Zander reaming them was filled with either Kyrin or Knight going off. It was a beautiful display of them standing up for me. As I eavesdropped with my arms wrapped around my knees and one of Knight's shirts swallowing me, I felt my heart rate finally slow down. The burning at the back of my eyes faded and the lump in my throat slid back to the hell it came from.

With the knowledge that I wasn't near tears making me feel strong again, I walked down the stairs and slowly moved to stand off to the side of the guys. Still facing the parents that remained, I looked at each of them, disgusted that they would say the things they'd said. The jerk, Bo, was sitting in the

middle of them all, his shirt clutched to his nose. I noticed the woman next to him clutching his arm with a large diamond on her ring finger and shook my head. Of course, he was married.

“Believe me when I tell you that if any of you open your mouth and think to say anything about my family, including Aggie, you’ll be left with nothing to your name. I’ll make sure that no one ever remembers anything about you, or your family. Do you understand me?” Zander didn’t wait on an answer before turning to me. “Anything to add?”

I crossed my arms over my chest and pointed to Bo. “Your wife deserves more respect than what you showed her today. Your daughter deserves more respect than this, too. You should be ashamed that your daughter might’ve internalized in any way that a man sexually harassing a woman is acceptable. You should make sure she knows to expect better from her own partner in the future so she doesn’t end up in the same ugly cycle as her parents.”

“You’re all dismissed.” Zander stepped forward when Bo tried to pass. “You should know that my brothers and I don’t forget. The only reason you’re walking out of here today is that little girl waiting on her father outside. You may not be so lucky next time.”

The sound of the front door shutting left the house in a tense state of silence that made my skin crawl. Shaking out my hands, I looked around at the mess that had been left and started picking up.

“Stop, Aggie. Someone else will get that.” Knight pulled a glass out of my hand and put it back where I’d gotten it. “We’re going out.”

I took a deep breath and looked at them. “Do you think it would be okay if we stayed in tonight? I just want to feel normal for a little bit. I miss cleaning my apartment. I know it sounds silly, but I do.”

“As long as you let us help you. And promise to go swimming with us tonight. Just the four of us.” Zander gently pulled the neck of my shirt out and looked down at it. “Before all this shit happened, I was working my way to a jealous fit. Seeing you out there in this bikini was killing me.”

I bit my lip and smiled while rolling my eyes at him. “A jealous fit?”

“Let me spell it out for you.” He grabbed my hips and pulled me close. “I didn’t like that those men were getting to see you. It may not be gentlemanly of me, but I feel more than a little possessive of you. I’m not saying I grab your ass every night before I go to bed and tell myself that I own that ass, but I’m not saying I don’t, either. Seeing other people looking at *my* ass, it was making me angry. Since I can’t beat the shit out of every man who glances at you, I was going to self-soothe in my favorite way.”

“What way is that?” I rested my hands on his chest and toyed with the buttons on his shirt. “I’m just ignoring the rest of that, by the way.”

“My absolute favorite way to self-soothe is to bend you over and spank your ass until it’s red and hot and decorated with my fingerprints.” He palmed my ass and slowly ran his nose up the side of my neck. “Seeing my handprints on this ass makes me feel calm, because I know that anyone who saw them would know that you’re taken. You belong to men who aren’t afraid to use their hands. For pleasure on their woman and for wreckage on anyone else.”

I tried to calm my breathing. “So problematic…”

“Should we check how problematic you truly find it, baby?” He nodded to Kyrin and grinned when I gasped at feeling Kyrin’s hand between my thighs. “Tell me, Ky, how wet is our woman?”

I gripped his shirt tighter as Kyrin slid his fingers through my wetness. “*Your* woman? I told you, I’ll never be-”

Zander quirked his eyebrow at me. “You sure you want to finish that sentence, baby?”

Knight *tsked* at me. “Good girls don’t lie, Aggie.”

Knocking at the front door saved me from having to lie. Even if they knew that I was theirs, that didn’t mean *I* had to say it. I slipped out of their embrace and laughed at the frustration on their faces. “Don’t pout, boys.”

“Her attitude is out of control. I think she needs to be tied up and taught a lesson.” Kyrin licked his lips. “I can have ropes here in less than five minutes, baby.”

I knew my face was red as I thought of what being tied up by Kyrin would be like. Heat swarmed my whole body and I stumbled over my own feet.

Kyrin caught me and kissed me gently before letting me go. “Later.”

He opened the door and my dad was on the other side, a big smile on his face. “I’m ready to be Grandpa Marky Mark!”

I shuddered. “God, Dad. We talked about you calling yourself Marky Mark.”

“You talked about it. I ignored you. Where’s Gracie?” He winked at Kyrin. “Notice how she didn’t revolt at the part where I called myself a grandpa? Big things are happening, aren’t they?”

“She’s upstairs with Mary. Thanks for coming even though we keep changing the plans.” Pulling me under his arm, Zander went on talking to Dad like they were the best of friends. “You’re sure Brenda and Gracie will get along?”

I scowled up at Zander and then at Dad. “You two have talked about Brenda?”

Dad rolled his eyes. “Yeah, Ag, we’ve talked about Brenda. She’s kind of a big deal. The farm is her playground and we just exist around her. Kyrin’s giving me some pointers on how to make her less of a bitch.”

“You’re talking to Kyrin about Brenda, too?” I looked at Knight. “Are you also have secret conversations with my dad about his pet cow?”

Knight shook his head. “Nope. We don’t talk about cows.”

“I’m sorry. Are you implying that you talk about other things?” I threw up my hands and headed upstairs. “You’re all weird and I don’t know how I feel about it. I’ll get Gracie. I owe her an apology anyway. I think I ruined her first friendship here.”

“We’re not the ones who mailed shit to our ex.” Dad had always been sensitive to being called weird and he was clearly throwing me under the bus because of it. “You call *me* weird? I’m original. Nothing weird about me.”

“Stop right there, baby.” Zander saw me start up the stairs faster and gave chase. “I just want to know about this shit you mailed!”

I let out a laughing scream and ran faster. “My dad’s a filthy liar! Chase him!”

Dad’s grunt followed me up the stairs. “Ungrateful brat.”

*****AGGIE*****

I chewed on my lip as I hovered outside the library, curiosity driving me insane. Mary stood next to me, her arms crossed over her chest and a deep frown on her face. The new nanny was sitting on the other side of the door, meeting with the guys and Gracie. I had so many feelings happening inside my head that some of them were leaking into other parts of my body. My stomach cramped painfully and I hadn't been able to stop moving.

“She'd better be good. I've got to tell you, I'm tired of meeting new nannies.” Mary saw my face drop and rolled her eyes. “You're hardly a nanny, Agatha.”

For some reason, that made me sad. It wasn't that I wanted to be a nanny in any way. I wanted to get back to work, but I wanted to have left my mark on the household. The new nanny was going to start and I felt like I was just going to fade away.

“You know what I mean, hon. You've been more than a nanny here. We both know that. This house is a labyrinth, but sound travels. You fulfilled needs that no nanny ever has in

this home.” She patted my arm. “You’ve been so much more than those fools could’ve ever hoped for when they lured you here.”

I faked a smile and ran the hem of my T-shirt through my fingers. I hadn’t known the new woman was showing up that afternoon. I was dressed in some of my slouchiest clothes. It’d been impossible not to compare myself to her when she stood next to me in a beautiful dress and kitten heels that made her look so damn professional. I could tell by the way she knelt so gracefully in front of Gracie that she was used to kids and being ladylike in dresses. I couldn’t compete with that.

“I thought the company couldn’t send a new nanny for another week?” I paced away from the library and twisted the end of my ponytail. “She’s early.”

“This is just the interview, Agatha. She won’t be available to start work for another few days, but this is just the process.” Mary glanced behind me and nodded. “Jamie has their drinks ready. Do you want me to carry them in?”

I glanced back at Jamie and shook my head. “I can do it. I’m great at carrying drinks and not being weird when feeling stressed. Right, Jamie?”

He grinned and held the tray closer to his chest. “We made up and I consider you a friend now, Aggie. That makes lying to you hard.”

“No, I’m fine. This isn’t a big deal. I don’t even know why I’m feeling so nervous. Gracie needs someone and I’m leaving to go back to work.” If I had a job. I wiped my sweaty palms

on my shirt and took the tray. “I’ve led multi-million dollar meetings. I can handle this. I’m just being silly.”

Mary walked ahead of me. “I’ll open the door. If you drop everything, at least you’ll get in the library before you do. The carpet in there is easier to clean.”

My stomach knotted but I forced myself to move slowly and carefully. Just because I wasn’t in my profession didn’t mean I couldn’t be professional. I was sure the new nanny was being professional. With a silent curse at myself, I entered the library and smiled politely.

“Aggie!” Gracie called to me with an excited smile stretching her face. “Miss Olivia sings! She’s going to teach me some of her favorite songs! Isn’t that so neat?”

“Do you sing, Aggie?” Olivia looked up at me from where she sat next to Kyrin on *the* couches.

I lowered the tray to the coffee table, my face burning red at being so close to the scene of the crime, so to speak. I half expected Zander to reach forward and stroke the back of my thigh, the way he normally did when Gracie was around, when he couldn’t touch me the way he wanted. When he didn’t touch me, I straightened and backed away. “Not even a little bit.”

“Olivia’s previous job wrapped up a few days early, Aggie. She’s able to start two days from now.” Zander nodded at Olivia and barely glanced my way. “We’ll keep you on for the entire month we’d arranged, however. You can help Olivia adjust to Gracie’s specific needs.”

I swallowed another devil lump in my throat and rested my hands on my hips. I dug my fingers into my skin, hoping the focused sting would save me from any unwanted display of emotion. “Of course. I’m sure Olivia doesn’t need much help, though. She’s a professional.”

Olivia granted me a megawatt smile. “I would never turn down help. You could show me around. Help a single gal get adjusted to a place like this. I’ll need to know all the secrets.”

I laughed along with her joking, but it sounded robotic. Her mentioning she was single made the hairs on the back of my neck stand on end and I felt sick with jealousy. She was letting the guys know she was available. I backed up another step and clasped my hands in front of me. “I’ll let y’all get back to it.”

Before I could get out, I saw Olivia rest her hand on Kyrin’s arm as she smiled up at him. “She seems nice. I’m glad you’re hiring a professional, though. I’ve worked with kids who came from similar situations. It truly is necessary to have someone trained or kids fall behind so quickly. Do you know if she’s done any reading work with Gracie since coming here?”

Knight laughed, dismissing the idea completely. “That’s not Aggie’s area of focus.”

I closed the door and leaned against it, feeling the weight of the world on my shoulders. I’d gotten to the end of my time with the Graveses and I had nothing to show for it. I had no job, no offers, no Gracie, and I knew the moment I walked out of their front door, I’d have no men. I’d even lost my burning

anger to exact revenge on Monroe. I just felt numb as I walked to the back yard.

Desperately ignoring the end being near had felt great while spending every night wrapped around all three of the brothers, but we still hadn't discussed our feelings. Hearing them talk about me leaving so nonchalantly gave the impression that they were fine with it. They were just going to let me leave and I had nowhere to go.

I'd gotten so caught up in their lives that I'd forgotten about my own. I hadn't insisted on more tests, hadn't worried about sending out applications for other jobs, and I hadn't bothered to protect myself from getting attached to the idea that I belonged to the Graves family as much as I felt like they belonged to me.

Rubbing my temples, I stared out at the vast property and sighed. I hadn't even thought about reading with Gracie. Olivia was going to make me look so painfully bad at childcare. With her mention of her being single and the way she'd touched Kyrin, I wondered how long it would take before I was forgotten in every way.

*****ZANDER*****

“I’m sorry, sir. I didn’t mean to interrupt.” Olivia walked into the library and looked around the couches at where I’d just sat down with my brothers and Aggie. “I was hoping that we could discuss Gracie.”

I placed my whiskey on the coffee table and held in a sigh. Olivia had been in the house for two days and there’d been zero privacy since she’d strolled in. “Is everything okay?”

She nodded and cast a glance at Aggie. It was fast and barely noticeable, but it’d been there. Judging by the slight furrowing of her brows, she wasn’t going anywhere until she got out her thoughts. “I was hoping we could talk in private.”

The tension in the room simmered higher. I knew that something was going through Aggie’s head, but there’d been no time to force it out of her. She’d hadn’t been in my bed since Olivia arrived and her excuses were wearing thin. My patience was wearing thin.

“Here.” Aggie stood up and motioned for Olivia to take her spot. “I was just going to slip upstairs to tell Gracie goodnight anyway.”

Olivia hesitated and winced. “I’m sorry, Aggie. She’s already asleep and it’s so important for her to get uninterrupted sleep.”

Kyrin shifted forward in his seat, frowning. “Aggie’s been taking care of Gracie just fine. If she wants to pop in on Gracie, she can pop in.”

“Oh, of course! I’m sorry.” Olivia moved past Aggie and patted Kyrin’s knee. “I didn’t mean to imply anything by what I said. I think I just have something else on my mind and it’s making me sound like a brat. I promise that this will only take a few minutes.”

I studied Aggie, frustrated that I couldn’t just pick her brain. “You can stay, Aggie.”

Aggie caught the way Olivia sighed and pressed her fingers to her mouth. Patting the back of my couch, but nowhere near touching me, Aggie didn’t even bother faking a smile. “This seems like a private conversation. I’ll see everyone in the morning.”

Knight stood up. “I was heading up to bed. I’ll walk with you.”

“Actually, I was hoping to speak to all three of you.” Olivia turned to face Aggie and clasped her hands in her lap. “Sorry, Aggie.”

Aggie laughed, the sound flat. “Don’t worry about it, Olivia. You’re the nanny. I’m not exactly a part of this after tomorrow. What’s that they say about need to know and all that?”

“Oh, Aggie, you’re the nicest. When I’m done here, I’ll join you in your room. I want to finish picking your brain before you leave.” Olivia turned back to me, dismissing Aggie. “It’s about Gracie’s reading level. I really worry that she’s fallen behind.”

I looked between Aggie and Olivia, but Aggie didn’t hesitate in leaving and shutting the door behind her. Sighing, I turned my focus on our new nanny and drummed my fingers on my leg while I listened to her. Time felt like it stopped as she went on, but I was responsible for Gracie’s education. I didn’t feel like I could leave in good conscience.

“I really appreciate Aggie’s help in adjusting, but I think it’s important to set a new standard.” Olivia took a sip from her tea and frowned. “I understand that this is new to you three. You weren’t parents and then you were. There’s a lot that goes into making sure a child of Gracie’s standing is raised right. She needs structure and focus. If she’s allowed to do whatever *feels right*, or whatever she’s doing now, she’ll stall out in this phase. I’m afraid Aggie has encouraged her to sit in her grief.”

I shook my head firmly. “No. Aggie has been great. Gracie has flourished under her care.”

Nodding quickly, Olivia clasped her hands to her chest. “I’m sure she has, Zander. Aggie is wonderful. She’s been so kind to me. She even listened to me ramble on and on the past

two nights until she just passed right out. I don't doubt her heart. It's just that... I went to a school similar to the school Gracie will attend in the fall. I have a feeling that Aggie didn't. The children can be cruel. I just want to make sure Gracie has the best chance at success."

Knight grunted as he stood up and grabbed his whiskey. "I'm going to bed."

Kyrin stared hard at me. "Same. I assume you can handle this."

I got the message. They both wanted me to set Olivia straight. I pinched the bridge of my nose. I'd gone over Olivia's resume enough to know that she was well-respected. Her references swore by her talent to offer childcare that prepared their children for their futures in ways they'd never seen done before. She was the most sought after nanny from the most sought after company in the state. There were no red flags in her professional career.

On the other hand, Aggie wasn't a nanny. It was something she'd shouted at me more than once. She'd never wanted to be a nanny and she had no interest in ever doing it again. She'd even said she didn't want kids. She could look at a marketing problem and solve it faster than anyone I'd ever known, while giving multiple solutions to improve profits, but she hadn't known if Gracie would be able to go to the bathroom on her own when she first arrived.

I was a logical man. I'd gotten to where I was in my life because I made smart decisions. It didn't make sense to doubt

Olivia as a nanny. I worked the options over in my head and came up with the one that would be the least problematic. “I’ll relieve Aggie of her duties. Do whatever you need to do to make sure Gracie can assimilate into her new school. I want it to be as easy as possible for her.”

Olivia clapped her hands together and smiled. Crossing her legs, she leaned forward, looking up at me through her lashes. “I respect you so much, Zander. I look forward to working with you.”

“We won’t be working together, Olivia. My brothers and I have a close relationship with Aggie, but we don’t intend to become friends with you, or any other nannies.” I saw her face fall and drained the last of my whiskey. “Don’t take it personally. While checking your references, I saw that you’re more than capable at your job. I respect that. I *expect* that same level of professionalism from you while working for us.”

Her face went crimson as she stood up and clasped her hands together. “Of course. I’m sorry, sir.”

“Email me with anything you need for Gracie. When you have her schedule finalized, I’d appreciate a copy of it, as well.” I nodded to the door. “Leave the door open when you leave, please.”

“Yes, sir.” She hurried out and I could hear the sound of her shoes as she went up the stairs, disappearing into the house.

I groaned and pressed my empty glass against my eye sockets. The cool glass felt nice against the headache that was quickly forming. I was going to kick my brothers’ asses. As

soon as I found Aggie and figured out what was going through her head.

Then I was going to kick my own ass after I told Aggie we didn't need her to act as nanny any longer.

*****AGGIE*****

“I don’t know, Dad.” I sat in my bathroom, hiding from Olivia. It was Sunday, our day off, and despite that, she was all but glued to me. All I wanted in the world was for her to leave me alone. I’d been a hostage in my own room for the third time the night before and then I’d sat across from Zander in the kitchen while he told me that I didn’t need to worry about nannying anymore. “You’re not allowed to say anything to them. Do you understand me? If you mention a single word, I’ll disown you.”

Dad snorted. “I’m just going to ignore that hostile threat. I won’t say anything, though, Ag. I know this is something you have to figure out on your own. I just wish you’d talk to them. Tell them how you feel.”

“And how’s that, Dad?” I was pretty sure my feelings were all negative after getting the boot over breakfast from Zander, in the gentlest way possible. He’d used kid gloves on me, speaking to me like I was younger than Gracie. I’d wanted to

stab him in the eye with my fork while he acted as sweet as a spoonful of sugar.

“You want me to explain it to you? Your feelings for those boys? I could, you know. I’m good at it. I just don’t know if you’re ready for that.” He laughed and I could hear the sound of the sliding glass door to his porch opening. “I can tell you’re hurting and angry right now, Aggie, but it sounds like none of you have had more than five seconds to talk to each other since the new nanny showed up. You need to talk to them and figure out what they’re thinking.”

“You want to know what he said to me? He said that Olivia was setting a schedule for Gracie and that it seemed she didn’t need my help anymore. Then, and I swear on your silver hair, he looked me dead in the eye and said that I could use the last couple of days of my nannying job to get some sun.” I lowered my voice after having raised it to shout that last part. “Like I’m some sun bunny who just exists for tanning by their pool. Did he mention another job? No. Of course, not. Why hire me for the job I’m perfect for when he can just fire me from the one I apparently suck at?”

“Talk to them, Ag. That’s all I can tell you. I never got the impression that they were ready to send you packing.” Dad’s voice trailed off as he spoke to someone in the background. When he came back on the line, he was distracted. “Sorry, sweetheart, but Mick just showed up with his tractor. We’re going to clear our that back few acres.”

I rested my head on my knees and resisted the urge to keep him on the phone with me. “Okay, Dad. Have fun. Tell Mick I say hello.”

“Love you, kid. Talk to your fellas.” Before he hung up, I heard him shout. “Scoot says hello!”

I stayed in the bathtub for a little while longer, having an existential crisis. Dad made it sound so easy. Just talk to the guys. No big deal, it was just talking. Except it was talking about emotional stuff and I was scared of the outcome. I knew it was pathetic that I couldn’t just have a conversation with the men I’d been sleeping with for a month. I’d let them do things to me that were probably illegal in some places, yet talking about my feelings seemed *way* too far out there to even try it.

The sad truth was that I wanted to stay. I wanted to stay with them, not as their nanny, but as their person. I wanted it so deeply that it was like my very bones were attempting to settle into the house. I felt so heavy and defeated. Monroe had never made me feel such large emotions. He didn’t make me feel anything. He’d been safe, like all the men I’d been with before. He’d made me angry, but so did people who merged too slowly. The things I was feeling for Zander, Knight, and Kyrin were things I’d never felt for another soul. I wanted them so much that I almost wanted to punch them for making me feel that way.

I thought they were on the same page. I thought they cared enough to want more. There I was, though, coming up on the end of my month with them, and nothing had changed. They

still didn't believe in me enough to offer me the job. They didn't want me as their person. They seemed fine to say goodbye and move on.

Dad's voice in my head was just as annoying as when it wasn't in my head. I could hear him saying that I'd never know if I didn't talk to them. I had nothing to lose.

Another voice spoke up. I had my dignity and sanity to lose. All my strength felt superficial when it came to emotional things. I was like a newborn baby, as helpless as they came. At least, that's how it felt.

“Aggie?”

I sat up at the sound of Knight's voice. Climbing out of the bathtub, I pulled open the door and felt my smile slide right off my face when I saw Olivia walk in behind Knight. It was like she had a sense for when any of the guys were going to be alone with me.

“Oh, hey! I was just coming in to find Aggie.” Olivia walked over and looped her arm through mine. “We're having a girls' day before she leaves. I have to get in all the girl time I can now. Pretty soon, it'll just be me and all you men here.”

I looked down at my bare feet and cleared my throat. “And Gracie.”

“I need to talk to Aggie, Olivia.” Knight's voice was rougher than normal and he looked tense when I glanced up at him. “Now, please.”

Olivia poked me in the side and giggled. “Looks like you’re in trouble. I’ll be waiting just outside for you.”

I stood frozen even after she left the room and Knight closed the door. My heart hammered in my chest as I argued with myself in my head about whether I needed to talk to Knight about my feelings, or not.

“Did you get into the security system again?”

I frowned, thrown off course by his question. “What?”

He moved closer. “Did you hack the system again?”

“No, I’ve been a little busy.” I sat on my bed and waited to see if he would take our time alone to hug me, or even touch me. “What happened?”

“I noticed something in the system that I didn’t like.” He stared at me for a full ten seconds longer, not saying anything. Then, he sighed and reached for the door handle.

I jumped up, seeing an opportunity. “I could look. If you want me to, I mean. I could use the reason to stretch those muscles.”

He shook his head and cast one last look at me. “No. Thanks, though.”

I stared after him when he left and felt a wall start to crack inside me. There didn’t seem to be a reason to talk to them. It looked like they’d all already turned off whatever connection we’d had.

“I’m only saying this to you because you’re leaving and no one would believe you if you told, but I would climb that man in twenty different ways if I could. He is *hot*.” Olivia fanned herself and giggled. “They all are. It’s against the rules to sleep with clients, but things happen. I wouldn’t even care which one I got. They’re all so, so hot.”

My stomach soured and I stumbled back a step. “I’m going to be sick.”

*****ZANDER*****

“Can you trace the bug?” I swallowed half a glass of water and set it down rougher than necessary. I needed something harder, something to dull the throbbing ache in my head.

Knight cut his eyes at me, his anger threatening to breach the surface. “What do you think I’m fucking doing?”

“Alright. Both of you, take a breath.” Kyrin looked around the private room we occupied in the middle of the lunch rush. The restaurant was the closest to our office and we’d needed somewhere away from other eyes and ears.

“We need to find out what day it started and every time it happened.” I was seething. While nothing in our company had been leaked, the fact that we’d somehow let a fox in the henhouse was unacceptable. We vetted our employees so thoroughly that I knew each of us were thinking of one possible fox we’d let in. A little fox who’d been pulling away from us.

“It wasn’t her.” Kyrin proved my point, that we were all thinking about Aggie. “I know we questioned her in the beginning, but come on. We’ve met her entire family and we’ve spent the last few weeks fucking her to sleep every night. We know her.”

Our waiter cleared his throat as he refilled my water glass. “Would you like anything else?”

Knight lifted his eyes from his laptop and pushed his glasses on top of his head. “A horse tranquilizer, if you’ve got it.”

I shook my head at the waiter and glared at my brother. “Keep it together, Knight.”

“No, this is why I should’ve been there when you gave her that goddamn test. I would’ve been able to say with complete confidence that she didn’t do anything while you glanced away.” He rubbed at his eyes and groaned. “She’s been so off. If she wanted to come to us, she would’ve. Right? She’s just using Olivia as an excuse.”

“Motherfucker.” Kyrin’s anger was nearly palpable as he looked over my shoulder. “This is great timing.”

I glanced back and saw none other than Monroe Blake walking towards our private room. Rage immediately tinged the edge of my vision red. I’d hated the man before meeting Aggie. Knowing he’d been inside her at some point made me want to break his face.

“Well, well, well. Look who we have here! The Graves boys. How lucky am I to run into you three?” Blake stood

beside our table with his hands in his pockets, a smug smile on his face.

“Blake.” I lifted my eyebrows at him. “Can we help you with something?”

His smile grew larger. “Nope. There’s nothing you can do for me. Plenty I could do for you, though.”

Knight groaned. “For the last time, we’re not interested, Blake. Not our type.”

“No, I’m not, am I?” Rocking back on his heels, Blake chuckled. “You all seem to be more interested in dirty blondes with big green eyes.”

The need to strangle him washed over me in waves, but I sat perfectly still. Every sense of foreboding in my body was flashing and I knew whatever he was going to say was going to fucking suck.

“Seriously, what do you want? We’ve got places to be.” Kyrin sounded bored, but I could feel his anger.

“How long did it take you to fuck her?” Blake’s smile slipped, but only for a fraction of a second. “I knew she’d do whatever needed to be done, but I didn’t realize just how committed she was. I hope you at least made her come. She deserved it.”

Silence met Blake’s little speech. Even as I told my brain to do something, my mouth stayed shut as dread soaked into every dark corner of my being.

“What? Are you three going to pretend like you already knew my special Aggie girl was playing you? From what I hear, you three acted like you were ready to give her the world.” He laughed louder. “Sorry. I’m just trying to imagine how dumb you must feel right now. Don’t be too hard on yourselves, though. Aggie’s good. There’s a reason she holds one of the top positions at my company.”

His words slammed through my head like a bullet. I couldn’t think clearly.

“You’re full of shit.” Kyrin’s voice shook with anger. “And you should walk away before you say something that makes me jump this table to take your head off.”

“Did you know that Price Holden is thinking about moving his account to my company? Yeah, it seems like he isn’t interested in the drama that might come from you all letting your girlfriend sort through private client intel. Plus, I was able to offer him a better contract price. Isn’t that something?”

I sat up straighter and glanced at Knight. He’d been sure we hadn’t lost any information, but what Blake was saying made it clear that information had been leaked. Our company had a reputation for providing privacy and security to our clients. A leak could do major damage.

“Don’t be so sad, boys. Agatha Young is a shark.”

I could hear Aggie’s voice saying the same thing. She’d told us she was a shark and we’d invited her inside.

“She’s been such an asset.” Blake groaned. “I have missed that ass, though. It’s been a few weeks since I got to sink deep inside her. I didn’t even get to take my time and enjoy it that day. The bathroom of a doll store isn’t exactly the best space for fucking. Plus, the kid was waiting for her.”

Kyrin threw his body across the table and was only stopped from wrapping his hands around Blake’s throat by Knight and I holding him back. “You’re a fucking monster. Walk outside and keep talking to me. I’ll fucking end you, you pathetic piece of shit!”

I struggled to hold Kyrin away from Blake and only managed it to keep my brother out of jail. Blake was the type to instigate something and then press charges. We had things to do besides waiting on Kyrin to be released. “Not worth it, Ky. We’ll handle it.”

Blake backed away, still smug. “Is it weird that I can’t wait to get Agatha back into my bed? I’m just so damn proud of her.”

As soon as Kyrin had calmed down enough to sit back down and not chase after Blake, I yanked out my phone and dialed our security team. I glanced at my brothers and saw they both looked shellshocked. Rage directed me as I made the decisions I did. I didn’t have time to feel anything other than the fury coursing through my body.

“Jim? I need you to gather Miss Young and her possessions and get them the fuck out of my house. Right now. She’s not to

be allowed back on the property. If she won't leave, call the cops and let them handle it."

Knight looked up at me as he absently rubbed his chest. He opened his mouth and then changed his mind about whatever he was about to say. Looking away, he sighed and shook his head.

"She's not to be allowed near Gracie before leaving. Just get her out." I hung up and dropped my phone on the table. Lifting my water to my lips, I saw the way my hand shook and let out a violent growl before throwing the glass across the room.

*****AGGIE*****

“I can’t believe you’re leaving tomorrow.” Jamie finished the last dish from lunch and dried it while studying my face. “I got the impression that you’d be staying around.”

I ducked my head to hide my shame. “No. It’s okay, though. You know? It was a nice change for a month. Now I’ll go back to the real world.”

“Aggie, you...don’t take this the wrong way, but you sound like your dog just died. If you want to stay, I’m pretty damn sure the guys would have you settled on top of a throne in no time at all.” He laughed easily. “They’re all googly-eyed over you.”

My eyes burned, but I fought the emotion that built larger with every second. “Things aren’t always what they seem. It doesn’t matter what I want. They’re moving on. I’m moving on. Everyone is moving on. It’s great. Honestly, I’m going to be great.”

“Shit, Aggie...” Jamie sighed and gave me a look that was too close to pity for my comfort. “You have my number. I’m always down to hang out, you know. I think we might even be able to get Mary to go out with us.”

I smiled. “I—”

Loud footsteps quickly approached the kitchen and I sat up, thinking it was the guys rushing to see me. That was the level of pathetic I’d reached. Instead, five men I’d never seen before filled the kitchen, their eyes all narrowed in on me. I gasped and nearly fell off my stool as I stumbled away from them, unsure of what was happening.

“Miss Young? Jim Rune, head of security for Mr. Graves. I’ve been instructed to remove you from the property.” A mountain of a man, Jim Rune stared down at me. “Now.”

Jamie held up his hands and came around the island. “Wait a second, guys. This has to be some kind of mistake.”

“No mistake. Mr. Graves wants you and your things out, Miss Young. If you don’t cooperate, we’ll be forced to call the cops and have you charged with trespassing.” The man winced. “Also Mr. Graves’ orders.”

I stared back at them, unable to make sense of what I was hearing. “Sorry... what did you say?”

“Call him back. Call Mr. Graves and get your orders straight.” Jamie wrapped his arm around my shoulders and held me close. “Call him.”

“No. Mr. Graves was very clear. You have thirty minutes, Miss Young. If you’re not finished packing in that time, we’ll finish for you.” Jim stepped aside. “Twenty-nine minutes and forty-five seconds.”

I looked at Jamie and then at Jim. My heart had already cracked open, even without my brain fully processing everything. I pressed my fist to my chest and wiped my face with my other hand. “Um. Okay. I’ll...I’ll pack.”

Jamie swore. “This is fucked up, Aggie. I’ll call them and fix this.”

I put my hand over his and shook my head once. I was holding on by a thread. “No. I’m going. Just...find Gracie so I can say goodbye?”

“No, ma’am.” Jim sighed. “You’re not to see Gracie. You’re to pack your things and leave.”

I became a statue as a crushing pain, unlike any I could remember feeling, settled throughout my body. Dragging in my next breath hurt. I wasn’t sure if I exhaled before I tried sucking in more oxygen.

“Fuck this. Give her some space. Fuck your thirty minutes. I’ll help her, if this is how it’s going to be. Just back up and leave her alone.” Jamie pulled me into his side. “We all work for fucking monsters.”

I didn’t remember climbing the stairs or sitting on my bed, but there I was, sitting on it while Jamie packed my clothes. I could see him folding my shirts like it mattered. He was

muttering to himself, but I couldn't hear him. I couldn't hear anything over the pounding of my heart in my ears.

They were having me removed from the property. I was no more to them than a piece of broken furniture. Once I'd served my purpose, they had someone come take me away to wherever broken things went. I'd spent so much time worrying about being without them that I'd never considered how we'd part ways.

Jamie's face appeared in my vision, concern etched deep. "I'm so sorry, Aggie. I don't understand what's happening, but I'll call you. You'll be okay."

I blinked as I felt myself being lifted from the bed. Looking over, I saw one of the security guys holding my arm. The rest of them were shoving my things in trash bags without care. They had a job to do and nothing else mattered.

"Come on." Jim grabbed my other arm and they led me out to the stairs.

"Aggie!" Gracie's voice rang out, confused but happy. "Where are you going? Do you want to swim?"

I tried to pull away from the men holding me, but they refused to release me. I realized that they really weren't going to let me say goodbye to Gracie, even though she was standing right in front of me.

"Aggie?" She looked up at me with fear in her eyes. "Aggie, where are you going?"

“Please, please. Just stop and let me tell her goodbye. For her sake. Please, just let me tell her goodbye.” I whispered urgently at Jim, but he didn’t even glance at me. With no other choice, I twisted as far as I could and raised my voice. “I have to go, Gracie. It’s okay. I...I love you. Remember our secret club and keep your chin up, butterfly.”

Gracie ran after us, latching onto my legs. “You can’t go! Why are they taking you? You have to stay!”

The sound of her screaming drew Olivia into the mess. She looked horrified and immediately grabbed Gracie. “Let her go, Gracie! Now!”

“No! No, no, no!” Gracie screamed at the top of her lungs and held onto my tighter. “Aggie, stay with me!”

I struggled against the men holding me. “Gracie, it’s okay. Gracie, butterfly, you have to let go.”

Olivia yanked harder at Gracie. “Stop this, Gracie!”

One of the men carrying my things dropped my bags and moved at Gracie like he was going to grab her. I struggled harder and shouted at him. “Don’t touch her! If you’ll just stop! Just *stop* and give her a second!”

Olivia motioned to the man. “Grab her.”

Gracie’s screams as the man pried her fingers off my legs continued to echo in my head even after the men dragged me out to my car and shoved me into the passenger seat. Even after Jim drove me off the property and far enough away that he felt it was safe to leave me, I heard those screams.

In a blissful change of pace, my anguish turned to anger. Anger, I could handle. Anger, I welcomed.

As soon as Jim stepped out of my car, I slid across to the driver's seat and yanked my door shut. I broke every speed limit getting away from there. With Gracie's screams fueling my fury, I directed the car towards downtown Dallas. Maybe the Graves brothers thought it would be easier for them to have me kicked out like trash, but I wasn't interested in easy.

*****AGGIE*****

I strode into the executive floor of TGC with one purpose and one purpose alone. Find them. A receptionist stood up as she saw me and clutched her pearls. I didn't stop as I moved past her.

“Ma'am? Ma'am! You can't go in there!” She rushed after me, her heels slowing her down on the carpeted floor. “Stop her!”

Moving past the clueless man she'd directed to stop me, I marched towards Zander's office. I was halfway down the hall when a hand grabbed my arm. I spun on whoever had the nerve to grab me and came face to face with another security guard. Unfortunately for him, I'd hit my limit of being passive.

“Let go of me right now or I'll make you wish you'd been born a woman. I'm not here for you.” I spit the words out through clenched teeth and yanked my arm away hard enough to surprise the large man. He stumbled forward a step and I yanked hard again, freeing myself while he tried not to fall.

I looked up as I prepared to continue my search and locked eyes with Zander. A jolt of pain threatened to take me down, but all I had to do was replay Gracie's screams to gather my strength. Standing inside a conference room at the head of the table, Zander stared at me through the clear glass separating us. His face hardened by the time I got inside and stood at the other end of the table.

"You need to leave, right now." His voice was gravel and the look on his face promised war if I didn't listen.

Unfortunately for him, I wasn't afraid of him. I looked around at the suited men gathered at the table. Another jolt of pain struck me when I saw Kyrin and Knight at the seats on either side of Zander. "I think we should do this alone, don't you?"

Zander glanced behind me and shook his head. "No, gentlemen. I think we'll hear Miss Young out. After all, she came in so prepared."

I could feel people behind me and knew without looking that security had caught up to me. I listened to a few of the men snicker at Zander's joke and moved closer to the table. "Alone."

Zander casually sank into his chair and steepled his fingers in front of his chest. "No."

Pain warred with anger as I stared down at my feet and realized they were bare. Letting out a bitter laugh, I looked back up at the three men I'd given too much of myself to. "They dragged me out without shoes."

“Forgive us if we don’t cry for you.” Knight stared at me with disgust all over his face. “You’ve come to the wrong place if you’re expecting pity, Aggie.”

“I don’t expect anything from you anymore. I know better. You’ve shown me that I was an idiot for even thinking for one second that any of you had hearts. You want to know what just happened? Because of your orders, *Mr. Graves?*”

Zander sighed like he was bored. “They were *my* orders. I think I know what happened.”

“Then your security team told you that Gracie saw them carrying me out? They told you that instead of stopping and letting me explain to her that things were okay, they ignored her. They told you that she threw herself at me and screamed like her life depended on it? They fucking told you that Olivia and one of your goons yanked her off me and dragged her away while she screamed and cried? Did they fucking tell you that you just scarred your niece and left her in pain because you’re all cowards?” I sucked in a sharp breath. “They pried her fingers off of my legs, one by one, and I could see her nails breaking, you fucking assholes!

“You didn’t have to do that. I’m an adult and I can handle being rejected. If only you three had searched your tiny little balls for one ounce of courage to kick me out in person, Gracie wouldn’t be traumatized at seeing someone she loves dragged away like a common criminal. I thought you were different. I thought I knew you. You’re even worse than Monroe, though. You didn’t just hurt me.”

“How much did you get paid for fucking us, Miss Young? Other than what we paid you, I mean.” Zander stood up and braced his hands on the table, leaning into his own anger.

I shook my head and screwed up my nose. “Are you serious? Are you really asking me that? Do you think that pretending I was a whore will make your conscience clean?”

“Who’s pretending?” He looked around the table and then back at me. “She’s expensive, but I can’t say she isn’t good, gentlemen.”

I stumbled back a step. “Why would you say that? Have you felt this way about me the whole time? I don’t fucking get it, Zander. I don’t understand what happened.”

Knight stood up. “You’re just going to stand there and act innocent?”

I held my arms out. “What do you want me to say? I didn’t leave fast enough? I thought bad thoughts about the new nanny? I don’t know what you think I’m guilty of!”

“You’re a good liar, Aggie.” Kyrin laughed. “Blake should be careful with you. I can’t imagine you staying loyal to him if a bigger fish came along.”

The wheels in my brain turned slowly, too bogged down with sorrow. “You...you think I’m still with Monroe? After being with you for a month, giving you everything, you still think I’m some kind of spy?”

Zander slammed his hand on the table. “Look around you, Aggie! This is damage control because we fucked Blake’s

plaything and let you get too close! That information you took? It wasn't enough to take us down, but you tried, didn't you? No wonder you were so upset about Olivia coming early. You needed more time to finish stealing from us, didn't you?"

I shook my head. "What are you talking about? I didn't take any information. I've been babysitting for a month."

"Just stop lying. I don't want to hear anything else. When you crawl back to Blake's tonight, let him know this stunt did nothing. All he did was give us three holes to fuck for a month. And now we've taken everything we could ever want from you." Zander sat back in his chair and sighed. "You're dismissed, Miss Young. None of us are interested in what you have to offer."

The backs of my eyes burned and I dug my nails into my palms, fighting the tears. "I didn't do what you're accusing me of."

"Blake told us everything!" Knight walked away from the table, obviously finished with me.

The dots slowly started to connect in my head. "Monroe talked to you. And you believed him."

"We've been over this." Zander's voice was lower as he stared at me. "It's done."

I felt wetness on my cheeks and wiped my face quickly. More tears came, my pain too defeating. "Monroe Blake, your biggest competition, told you things about me and you believed him...I guess you never really cared about me. You

kicked me out so easily and so quickly came to the conclusion that I'm a useless whore. Without ever talking to me to find out if it was true."

The room had grown increasingly silent and uncomfortable as my tears continued to fall. I eventually gave up fighting them and stared at them through blurry eyes.

"I didn't do anything to hurt any of you. I would never do anything to hurt you. It doesn't matter, though." I forced a smile through my pain and held up my hands. "All that matters is that you think I did. You don't know me. You met my dad, met my family, and learned all my secrets. None of it was enough to show you who I am, though, because you were never interested. I'll admit it. You three finally gave me a problem I can't work out."

A security guard behind me gently took my arm and spoke to me softly. "Ma'am? Let's get you out of here."

I nodded at him but looked back at the guys one more time. "Whatever you tell Gracie about me, I want you to know that I love that little girl. Remember that when you tell her whatever you tell her to make your actions okay."

The security guard offered me a pack of tissues as he led me out of the room. "We could probably find you some shoes somewhere."

I laughed humorlessly. "It's okay. Everything I own in the world is in trash bags in my car. There's got to be shoes in one of the bags."

*****KYRIN*****

“Meeting’s over. Get out.” Zander stared down at his hands until the last person left and it was just the three of us in the conference room. When he looked up at us, I could see pain in his eyes. “We know she did it.”

I looked away and let my own pain roll through. We’d never seen her cry. No matter what, I knew that her tears were real. My chest tightened. “That sucked.”

“You can prove that it was her, right? I mean, we know it was her, but still.” Zander shifted in his chair. “For our peace of mind, we should just have the proof on hand.”

Knight cleared his throat and I didn’t miss the thickness of his voice as he spoke. “Sure, I can. I will.”

“So, it’s fine. It feels bad right now, but that’s probably what she wanted. She’s a pro.” Zander sounded less and less sure.

“I’m going home.” I stood up and rubbed my face. “I’ll check on Gracie.”

“I’m coming, too.” Knight grabbed his laptop and I could see his mind working through something as he walked towards the door. “I’ll work better there.”

Zander followed us. “I should check on Gracie, too.”

I didn’t miss the tension in the office as we walked out. It was impossible to miss, with everyone staring and whispering. We’d always presented a professional front and in one day, that’d been shot to shit. We couldn’t even blame Aggie for that. She’d asked to speak to us alone.

The three of us took the elevator down to the garage and the silence was deafening. It was nothing compared to the sound we heard when the elevator doors opened, though. Broken sobs echoed through the underground garage like my own personal hell. On the other side of the garage, a member of our security team was helping Aggie into her car.

I ground my teeth and looked away. “Doesn’t feel right.”

Zander growled and slammed his hand into the cement wall behind us. “*She* did this, goddammit.”

Knight watched her pull away and shook his head. Without saying anything else, he walked to his truck left us standing there.

I looked over at Zander and saw that his hand was dripping blood. “Let’s go home. I’ll wrap that up.”

He looked down at it like he hadn’t noticed it before. Yanking his jacket off, he wrapped it around his busted

knuckles and pulled his keys out with his other hand. “This was *her*. Knight will prove it.”

I got in my truck and drove home in silence, going through a thousand scenarios in my head. No matter what, the ending was always the same. There was no Aggie. If she was a spy, she was gone, and for good reason. If she wasn't a spy, she was gone, because of our actions and words. And she'd be gone for good reason, if I was being honest. What we'd done to her wasn't anything I'd ever be proud of. No matter what Knight's proof was.

Sick of my thoughts, I turned the radio on and was immediately blasted with sad country songs about lost love. Punching the power button, I turned it back off and rolled my windows down.

Pulling through the gate at the house, I struggled not to think about Aggie being thrown out of the house. I drove up to the main house and didn't even get to park before I saw the next problem of the day. I opened my door and could hear Jamie shouting at Knight and Zander from a football field away.

“Pull it up on your fucking security system and watch it. It's the least you could do. Watch what you put her through.” Jamie spotted me and he came at me, chef's hat in hand. “You! I thought you were better than these two, at least, with your cowboy hat and *ma'am* bullshit. You're just as fucked up as your brothers. You all deserve each other. Growing old together in this fucking tomb of a house and dying with no one

around that you haven't paid to be there. Fuck all three of you. I quit."

I stood stock still, staring after a man I'd known for years after having him rip me a new one. I looked over at Knight and Zander and blew out a deep sigh. The sound of Jamie burning rubber as he left would've been the icing on the cake if the front door of the house hadn't opened at the exact moment, with Olivia hurrying out with her bags.

She took one look at us and held up her hands. "I'm sorry, but I can't work with that child. She hasn't stopped screaming since you tossed out the last nanny."

I lifted my hand in a slow wave as she raced out of the driveway after Jamie. Something snapped in my head and I started laughing. The whole thing was so fucked up that I didn't know what else to do. "Let's go see if anyone else wants to quit, I guess."

Zander thrust his hands in his hair and groaned. "She did it. We're right. Maybe it was harsh, but we were right."

I kept laughing. "Doesn't even matter, does it? She's gone, we're assholes, and everyone hates us."

Gracie's screams filled the house and we found her on the stairs, watching the front door. When she saw us, she wrapped her arms around herself and turned away. Her screaming at least quieted down a bit.

Mary hurried into the entryway and spotted us. Her worry instantly turned to anger. "Good. You're home. I have a

previous engagement to attend tonight.”

Knight groaned loudly. “Great! Good! Are you quitting, too?”

Narrowing her eyes at him, she walked closer and pointed her finger at each of us. “I have known you boys for a long time. I’ve known you as rowdy boys and then as troubled men, but I have never questioned your character before today. I’m so disappointed in each of you that it hurts. I’m no quitter, though. I’ll be back in the morning, but I don’t know what you’ll do for breakfast. Hopefully, eat crow.”

I walked over and sat next to Gracie on the stairs. When I held my hand out to her, she shoved it away and scooted away from me. I nodded to myself, because why not add my niece hating me to the top of the shit pile?

“Gracie, can we talk?” Zander came closer and knelt in front of her. “I want-”

“I hate you! I hate all of you! I wish Mommy and Daddy were here! I don’t want to live with you anymore! I want to go with Aggie!” Gracie stood up and raced up the stairs, leaving the three of us gutted.

Zander sank down next to me and dropped his head between his knees. “Fuck.”

Knight sat on the other side of Zander and slumped against the railing. “I think I hate us, too.”

*****ZANDER*****

My brain revolted at what I was looking at, sending mixed signals to rage and run at the same time. Playing across Knight's computer screen was the security footage of our security team removing Aggie. They'd been rough with her. I knew from our time together how much her body could take before it bruised and I knew that she probably had hand shaped bruises on her arms. I'd requested it. I'd made the call that led to those bruises, bruises not left from desperation for her during sex, but during violence.

"Turn it off." I jerkily turned away. "Just turn it the fuck off, Knight."

"Jamie should've hit us." Knight shut his laptop and swore. "I want those guys fired. I want Olivia reported to her company. Most of all, I want our asses kicked."

"Did you find anything?" I already knew. Deep down, I knew he wouldn't find evidence of Aggie's betrayal.

"No."

Kyrin laughed as he stood up and tossed his hat down on the table. “So, tell me, brothers. Did we get played by Aggie? Or did we get played by Monroe Blake?”

My headache was becoming a migraine. “I don’t know.”

“Someone tried to hack the system. Someone gave that information to Blake.” Knight rubbed the back of his neck and groaned. “It was either Aggie or someone in our office, someone on the inside. There’s no way to get what Blake got without an inside connection. Someone would’ve had to connect on the executive floor.”

“Would Aggie have had the time to get that information while performing that test?” I swore as my phone vibrated in my pocket and pulled it out. “It’s security. Yeah?”

“It’s Jim, sir. I’m not sure if you’d want to know this, but I heard on the blotter that Miss Young was arrested.” He cleared his throat. “That’s all I know.”

“Which jail?” I typed the jail into my phone and then hung up on him. “Aggie was arrested.”

Knight stood up and looked upstairs. “Which one of us is going to stay with Gracie?”

Kyrin grunted. “You know none of us are. I’ll grab her.”

The fifty-minute drive to the jail was silent, as we were each lost in our own thoughts. Gracie was asleep, thankfully, so her screaming had come to a stop for the time being. Kyrin carried her in his arms when we reached the jail and stormed inside.

Unsure of what we'd find, we were all anxious to find out anything regarding Aggie.

The officer at the front desk took one look at us and shook his head. "You here for the smart-mouthed one with hate in her eyes?"

I narrowed my eyes. "Aggie Young. Where is she?"

"Yep. Just what I thought. Only a woman with money can look at a police office while wearing rags and tell him to get fucked with that much haughtiness." He pushed a button and spoke into his phone. "Young's fan club is here."

"What'd she get arrested for?" Knight tapped his knuckles on the counter, his anxiety unwilling to make small talk.

"Destruction of property and assault. I don't know what the DA will charge her with, but she's going to be sitting in lockup for a while." He looked at our rumpled suits and shrugged. "Maybe not, though."

Kyrin was good friends with the DA after selling the woman a horse for her daughter. He was already pulling his phone out with his free hand. "Not."

"Who'd she assault?" I looked up as another office pushed open a door to the back and held it for us. "Do you know?"

The second officer looked us over and chuckled. "This lady is surrounded by rich men, huh? The guy she beat the shit out of was some big wig, too."

My stomach twisted. "Monroe Blake?"

“Yes, sir. She trashed his car and when he came out to stop her, she trashed him. When we got there, she had that grown man on the ground, pushing his face into dirt and screaming at him. You know the story there?” The officer led us through a maze of offices and down a set of stairs. “She’s lucky she didn’t get tased. She calmed down as soon as she was in the car, but she’s got a mouth on her. Tough, too. More than half the fights we break up usually have one or more titties just out there, man. Women’s clothes aren’t made for fighting. Not Miss Young, though. She was classy when she wasn’t trying to murder that man.”

I looked back at Kyrin. “Make the call. She’s not staying the night here.”

Knight wiped his hands on his shirt, his nerves showing. “She was telling the truth, wasn’t she?”

I ground my teeth together so hard it felt like I’d break them all. “Which means we have a leak in our office. That’s something we’ll handle. Swiftly.”

The officer opened a heavy metal door and looked back at us. “Normally, I’d keep you guys in the visiting area, but it’s a slow night. Plus, your lady’s been holding court since she got in the cell. I think the other women would riot if I took their new leader away.”

I heard her long before I saw her. Her raised voice was a far cry from the woman who’d left our office earlier in the day. She sounded fierce and ready for battle.

“I am done with men after this. Let me tell you, it took me three decades to find men who could make me orgasm like it was their job and they turned out to be the absolute worst. I’m just going to buy one of those really nice vibrators and a stuffed animal to cuddle. It’s not like I need a man for anything else.”

“I like my man because he’s so strong. I feel so safe with him.” Another woman called back.

“I just beat up a man twice my size. I’ll keep myself safe.” Aggie scoffed. “Try again.”

“Sometimes they open things for you. That’s nice.”

“I would literally rather smash a jar of pickles on the ground to open it every single time I want a pickle than have to listen to a man talk to me for one more second of my life.” Aggie’s voice rang out louder. “Men suck. They just take and take and take and then call you a whore when you do the freaky shit *they* wanted to begin with.”

A few women cheered her on.

“I knew that men were terrible when I got into this situation. I’d just been dumped and fired by the same dumbass, at the same time, because I wouldn’t quit my job and give him two point five children to impress his country club parents. I knew that these three were jerks. They didn’t care that I was smart, talented, and the top strategist in the state. Do you know what kind of arrogance you have to have to dismiss talented employees? So, really, I’m the idiot for falling in love with them.

“I knew better and I still walked right into it. How dumb do I have to be to have let myself be made into such a fool for three men? It’s impressive, really.” Aggie groaned. “I’m so angry that I cried in front of them. Stupid.”

“Honey, you’re getting sad. Focus on angry.”

Aggie swore loudly. “You’re right! It’s not the time to think about stupid emotions and feelings. It’s the time to think about how they offered me up to their conference room Connies! It’s time to think about how they had me dragged out of their house. In front of that sweet little girl. Assholes.”

Kyryn joined us and looked at our faces while putting his cellphone away. “What’s going on?”

“I mean, what even *is* love? It’s just another stupid feeling I can shove inside and lock up. I freaked out for a minute there, because I’ve never loved anyone who wasn’t family. It doesn’t have to mean anything, though. It took me less than a month to fall in love, so what? It’ll take around that to get over them? You’re shaking your head. Why are you shaking your head?”

I walked closer and gripped the bars that separated me from Aggie. Her back was to me, but as she turned and I saw her, I almost wished she’d kept her back to me so I wouldn’t have to see her red-rimmed eyes. The evidence of her crying staring right back at me was a deserved punch to the gut.

Aggie took a deep breath and then turned away from me. “Anyway, I think I’ll be fine. Who else wants to give me a reason they think they need a man so I can tell them why they don’t?”

The women were all staring at me and my brothers, their eyes wide. There were ten of them sitting on a bench on the back wall, watching Aggie pace in front of them like she was a lecturer at school.

Knight looked back at the officer. “Open the door.”

Aggie looked over her shoulder at the officer. “Don’t open the door.”

Kyryn swore and moved closer, juggling Gracie as he grabbed the bars. “Don’t do that, Aggie. You’re not staying. The order to release you will be coming down any second. You’re coming with us.”

“Gracie shouldn’t be here. You should all take her home and apologize to her that you suck so much.” Without even looking back at us, Aggie flipped her hair over her shoulders and kept talking like we weren’t there. “The only man I know who I don’t hate right now? My dad. Y’all would love him.”

“Aggie, I’m sorry.” I pushed through the awkwardness of having an audience. “I fucked up and I’m sorrier than I can even explain right now. You should hate me and trash whatever of mine you want to, but please don’t be stubborn about leaving. You can’t stay here.”

She went still. “I’ve always heard that love and hate are separated by such a fine line and I never got it until now. Because as much as I care about each of you, I hate you even more right now. I’m not leaving with you. I don’t want anything to do with you ever again. I know that probably

sounds dramatic, but as men who so easily made the big decision to throw me away, I assume you'll understand."

"Just listen to me, Aggie. Blake got to us and made us think... It doesn't matter. We were fucking stupid to ever listen to a thing he said. This whole thing was just a terrible mistake. Please, hear me when I tell you that I am sorrier than I can say. I hate myself for hurting you and I just need you to look at me and give me a second to show you how sorry I am." I felt my sanity crumbling. "I'm begging you, Aggie."

"No."

"You're so much better than us, Aggie. Be good for us one more time, baby, and just talk to us." I sucked in a harsh breath and felt pain travel up my arms as my grip on the metal bars tightened. "Please."

When she didn't budge Knight shook the cell door. "Goddammit, Aggie, you're not staying in a jail cell."

"Let us do this one thing for you, at least, Aggie. Let us get you out of here. You don't have to go home with us. We'll have a car take you wherever you want to go, but please, just accept this." Kyrin's voice broke and he cursed. "Aggie, *please*."

Her head dropped and her shoulders slumped, but she didn't budge. "Officer, I'm not leaving with them. You shouldn't waste your time by standing down here, waiting on a miracle."

"Alright, guys. You heard her. I'm sorry, but you can't stay." The officer moved like he was going to touch Knight and held

up his hands when Knight growled at him. “Don’t get yourselves in trouble. The men’s holding cell is full and on the other side of the jail.”

“Aggie, for the love of god, just-”

She cut me off by continuing her rant at her audience. As I dragged myself back up the stairs, though, I could hear the sadness in her voice. Sadness that I’d caused the woman who loved me.

*****AGGIE*****

I stared out the bathroom window at the land Dad owned and beyond. I'd never expected to be back home at my age. I'd never expected to feel so bitter and heartbroken, either. My stomach soured as I rested my elbows on the sill and squeezed my eyes shut. Weeks had passed without a word from the guys. I hadn't seen them since the night I'd been arrested, since the night they'd pulled whatever strings they'd pulled to get me out of trouble.

It was hard to hold onto every bit of my anger when they'd saved me from facing serious charges. With a wave of their magic wand, they'd erased any evidence of what I'd done. Monroe couldn't make me pay for beating him up when the DA laughed in his face and accused him of faking the entire thing. They'd saved me from myself that night, but it didn't erase the things they'd done and said.

When I opened my eyes, the land blurred in my vision and I stared past it, seeing their faces as they begged me to leave the jail with them that night. I told myself over and over again that

it wasn't real, that they didn't care about me, but their expressions haunted my dreams. I wanted to blame them for my life being what it was, even if Monroe had to shoulder most of the blame. I wanted to truly hate them, the way I'd told them I did. It just wasn't so. Even through the anger and pain I missed them.

The timer on my phone dinged and I jumped before grabbing it to shut it off. I didn't turn back to the bathroom, unwilling to face the truth waiting on me. My heart raced and nausea rolled over me. Like a monster creeping up behind me, the rest of my life rested precariously on the edge of the bathroom counter that I shared with Dad. I didn't want to look.

The missed periods could've been stress. The rolling nausea that lasted most of the day could've been stress. There were explanations for why my body was being strange. It had to be anything but what I feared the most. There was no way that life had been so cruel to me, as to tie me permanently to the three men who'd crushed my heart so easily.

I hated who I was in those days. Full of angst and fear, I was acting like a shell of myself. I'd never let emotions control me so thoroughly, but that was all I'd done since meeting the guys. I'd made one decision after another, all based on emotions and feelings. I'd given into every whim I'd had and let myself get lost in a dream.

Well. It was time to wake up and there was no one in the bathroom to face my real life monsters but me.

I forced my body to turn around and it felt like I was moving through sludge the whole time. Moving my eyes down to the pregnancy test, I felt my world shift and tilt off its axis. Gravity ceased to exist as I felt like I was floating away. I was brought back down hard by the display of the test. I knew the rules, what two pink lines meant. I knew what it was going to be before I even looked.

Denial struck hard, however. I grabbed the test and glared at it. It didn't understand what it was doing to me. It didn't know the life sentence it was attempting to cast on me. Single, living with my dad, jobless, and more depressed than I'd felt in decades, the idea of a positive result couldn't even break through the true mental fog. Things ceased to make sense and I did the one thing I knew to do when that happened.

"Dad!" I stared down at the pink lines and shook the little tester, convinced it would fix itself. "Dad, get in here!"

"What is it, Ag? You scared Brenda with all your screaming. We were just getting to the next phase of our meditation." Dad came into the bathroom and froze when he saw what I was holding. "What is that?"

"It's broken. It has to be broken, because it has the pink lines. I'm not pregnant, so clearly, it's broken. We should buy more. Do you have any lying around here? Of course, not! What am I even saying? Oh, I know. I'll just ignore it! If I ignore it, it'll just...go away. Because the test is broken and I'm not pregnant. Right? Dad?"

He came over and embraced me in a tight hug. With the pee stick between us, he stroked my hair and gently rocked me. “Oh, sweetheart. It’s going to be okay.”

“Because the test is broken?”

“Because I love you and I’ll do whatever you need me to do to make sure you’re happy.” He kissed the side of my head and sighed. “Tell me when I can freak out and jump for joy.”

“Not yet.” I swallowed the lump that seemed to be forever present in my throat those days. “Maybe not for a little while.”

“Okay, fine. I’m going to call Sarah and schedule an appointment, though.” He kissed my head again and then held me at arm’s length. “Agatha Bailey Young, I just want you to know that if you are pregnant, you’re grounded. Remember when we talked about safe sex? I told you. Unplanned pregnancies lead to being grounded until you’re forty.”

I faked a smile through tears and pushed him away. “Get out of here.”

For three more days, I clutched that little test in my pocket, periodically taking it out to check to see if it’d fixed itself since the last time I’d looked. Then, when Sarah, our family doctor, confirmed that I was pregnant, I tucked the test into a box of memories I’d kept from childhood. Wrapped in plastic, my first pregnancy test was kept between a photo of my mom and the movie stub I got from the movie I’d had my first kiss at.

During my next visit with Sarah, she asked about the baby's father. I cried while trying to explain. Between my apologies for crying, because as I told her, I never cry, she assured me that my crying was normal and that I'd probably do it a lot more in the coming months. She talked me through my fears about taking birth control daily before I'd found out I was pregnant and the few drinks of whiskey I'd had. She gave me prenatal vitamins and suggested a book for me to read. Then she sent me on my way with a follow-up appointment in a month.

Two months pregnant and jobless, I sat on Dad's couch a lot. I was paralyzed with fear, sure that I wasn't ready. I didn't know what I was doing. I'd only had a mother for a few years of my life. I had no business trying to raise a child. Then, there were the thoughts that left me a total wreck. Thoughts about the guys and how we were going to have a kid to raise together. While *not* together.

No matter how much I'd sworn to shove my feelings for them away and forget them, it hadn't happened. I reassured myself that only a few months had passed. Any day, I was going to wake up and open my eyes without thinking about them. When that didn't happen, day after day, I finally admitted that maybe love was more complicated than I understood.

At night, Dad joined me on the couch and we talked. Eventually, when I was ready to talk about the life growing in me, we talked about how scared he'd been when he and Mom found out they were expecting. "Your mother had just gotten a

job at this vet's office. She was so excited about it and then we found out you were coming and she realized that job wasn't going to work for her."

"So, I ruined Mom's dream career?"

"God, no. She actually hated it after she finished training. Finding out she was pregnant ended up being what saved her from squeezing the anal glands of massive dogs." He laughed. "Ruined her dream career. She would've loved that."

"My career is over, anyway, so the kid won't have any of that burden to shoulder." I tucked my legs under me. "All of this started because I didn't want to have a kid with Monroe. I had bigger and better ideas than getting pregnant and being a wife and mom. Now, here I am, having a kid by myself."

"First of all, you're not alone. You've got me, your cousins, their families, and every neighbor around here. Second of all, I'm hitting my limit on how much I can let you mope." Dad took my hands in his and squeezed them. "Ag, nothing is over. You're young and have your whole life ahead of you. You could go out tomorrow and get a job."

"I physically assaulted my ex-boss, Dad. You think anyone is going to hire me after that? The day after I got here, I sent my resume out. I got nothing back but an email from a headhunter in New York suggesting I change my name if I ever wanted to work in the business world again." I pulled my hands back into my lap and frowned. "I'm poisoned in the industry."

“Nothing lasts forever. Maybe you needed this break to heal from everything. It won’t always feel like this, though. You’re stronger than you’re acting. You’re my fierce daughter who wrestles men and wins. You’re the same woman who worked her way up at Monroe Blake’s company, despite all the odds being against you. You’re a badass, Ag.” He cupped my face in his hands and smiled. “Now you’ll be a badass with a baby. I’ve let you sit around and do nothing for a month because I trust that you’ll figure it out. You’ll get back on your feet, sweetheart. I’m not worried about that.”

I blinked back tears and sighed. “No? Then why the pep talk?”

He patted my cheek and stood up. “I’m worried about my couch. You’re going to leave an impression in it if you don’t get up soon.”

I tossed a pillow at him and rested my chin on my knees, thinking about what he’d said as he went to the kitchen to make himself a snack. “I’m not ready to get back into the real world, Dad. I just need a little bit more time. I think I could handle a vacation, though.”

Looking at me over his shoulder, he grinned. “What were you thinking?”

Anything to get me away from Dallas for a while. “You always talked about that road trip. Has there ever been a better time for both of us to get up and go?”

“What about the baby?”

I stared down at my belly. “I’m assuming it’ll be fine.”

Dad sighed and paused at the threshold of the living room. “Honey, I mean... I haven’t wanted to push or make you feel like I’m judging anything you choose to do, but when are you going to tell them? A road trip would make me the happiest dad ever, but not if it’s just so you can avoid facing reality.”

I nodded to the notebook on the coffee table. “I’m trying. I’m not ready to see them. I’m going to send them a letter, explaining everything. I just have to figure out what to write.”

“I’d pay to be a fly on the wall when they open that letter.”

I hesitated in asking my next question, because Dad and I had drawn an invisible line in the sand when I first arrived on his doorstep, fresh out of jail and sobbing. I didn’t want to talk about the Graves brothers. Except, we were talking about them and I had to know. “Have you heard from them?”

Dad sighed. “Do you know which answer would hurt more?”

I looked away. “No.”

“When you do, let me know and I’ll answer that question.” He sank into the couch beside me and grabbed the remote. “I’ll have to get someone to look after the farm if you’re serious about a road trip.”

Staring at my notebook, I worked up the nerve to grab it and stand. “I’m serious.”

*****KNIGHT*****

“Are we all going to take Gracie for her first day of school?” Kyrin sat behind Gracie on her bed, his face pinched in annoyance as he redid her braid for the third time.

“Of course, you are, silly.” Gracie played with a couple of dolls, making them walk along her legs as she failed to sit still for Kyrin. “That’s how you do it. Mommy and Daddy took me before. Mommy cried. Do you think Uncle Zander will cry?”

I laughed at the expression on Zander’s face. He shook his head and went back to reading the handbook for her new school.

“I bet if he does cry, he’ll hide it so well that you’ll never know.” I sat down in front of her and put her fuzzy socks on for her. “What about you? How are you feeling about it?”

The dolls stilled as Gracie thought hard about my question. She’d learned to make a cute face while thinking and the scrunched up nose, pursed lips always made my chest ache with missing Aggie. She’d made the same face and Gracie had

picked it up in their short time together. “I don’t know. I thought it would be different.”

Zander sat forward and dangled the book between his knees. “What do you mean?”

“First, I thought Mommy and Daddy would be here.” She dropped the dolls entirely and rested her tiny hand on Kyrin’s leg. “Then, I thought Aggie would be here. She never told me about her first day at her new school. After her mommy died, she moved like me. I want to ask her about stuff. I know I’m not supposed to talk about her, though.”

“Gracie, you can talk about Aggie.” I cleared my throat and smiled. “Anytime you want, you talk about her.”

“It makes you sad.” She looked around at all three of us. “Everyone’s sad.”

Kyrin gently turned her so she could see his face as he spoke to her. “We are sad, but that’s adult stuff. We talked about adult stuff, remember? You don’t have to worry about it until you’re older.”

“Gracie, if you want to talk to us about Aggie, you should. We don’t want you to have things you hold inside. We’re all trying to be better uncles and we want to listen to everything you’re thinking about.” Zander tossed the book aside and walked over to scoop Gracie into his arms. “Agree?”

She giggled when he dipped her upside down. “Uncle Zan! Okay, okay!”

“How about we stop by the special donut shop in the morning? You can get whatever you want.” He hugged her close and then dropped her on the bed, smiling as she bounced.

“Even a unicorn donut with mermaid sprinkles?” Gracie giggled. “I love you, Uncle Zan.”

Kyryn scoffed and tickled her. “What about me, munchkin? You love me?”

She squealed and laughed. “I love you! I love you, too, Uncle Knight!”

Kyryn grunted and patted her belly. “That’s what I thought.”

“Call me butterfly.” Gracie grabbed her dolls and dragged them under the covers with her. “Like Aggie.”

I forced my face to stay neutral. “Why’d she call you that?”

“She said it’s ‘cause I’m pretty like one and cause I can change the world with my wings.” Gracie smiled so wide that we could see the back tooth she’d lost the week before. “Aggie said I can be president if I want.”

I looked at my brothers, waiting on one of them to say something. My insides were twisted up as I thought of the way we’d treated the woman who’d done nothing but build our niece up and care about her so deeply that Gracie couldn’t forget her.

“She also said I can run your company one day and that I’d do it better, cause I’m a girl.”

The surprise bit of Aggie that seemed so present in the room with us made us laugh, despite the weight on our chests. Zander made quick work of tucking Gracie in and tapped her nose. “Aggie’s a very smart woman. She knows what she’s talking about.”

“I know. She told me.”

I was still torn between laughing and giving into the need to drink myself numb when we got downstairs. The house was too much like the tomb Jamie had called it those days. Once Gracie was out of earshot, we all resorted back to letting the silence and missing Aggie win.

Not even the pleasure of firing the man who’d caused some of the mess we were in had cheered us up. Our top strategist, Brian Vance, hadn’t been as loyal as we’d thought. All it had taken was Blake flashing a bigger salary to get him to go to the dark side. I still didn’t get it. The man already made more than most of the other CEOs in the state, but greed had led him to betray our company and hurt Aggie in the process.

Sniffing him out hadn’t been hard after I knew to look for the deception. It gutted me to know that it would’ve taken Aggie mere seconds to see it, most likely. Even things like that, thinking of her being better than me, made my gut churn with a deep ache for her.

Watching Brian be dragged out by security in a public display of shame after nearly getting his life ended by the three of us hadn’t even brought a smile to my face. The snake was out of the hen house, but the hen was already gone, so what

did it matter? If I was being honest with myself, I hadn't even been able to muster up all that much anger at Brian. He'd laid the trap for Blake, but we'd taken the bait. We'd said those things to Aggie and we'd thrown her out of the house.

I sighed and dragged my hands over my face. Alcohol it was. I needed to numb myself or I'd spent another sleepless night thinking about Aggie's pain filled eyes.

Halfway to the bar, I stopped short when Mary screamed from the front of the house. Not knowing what to expect, I ran towards her voice. "Mary? What's wrong?"

She was gripping a sheet of notebook paper in one hand and an envelope in the other. Big tears had formed in her eyes and she looked like she was going to break down at any moment, but then she screamed again and jumped up and down. "It happened!"

Kyrin leaned against the kitchen counter. "Jesus, Mary. You gave me a heart attack. What happened?"

"She's pregnant!" Realizing she'd blurted out too much, she slapped the paper over her mouth. "Sorry! I just... I open all the mail for the house and I didn't see that this one was special. I opened it and I couldn't stop reading it once I saw it was from her. It's amazing, though. I prayed that she'd stay and it all worked out in a weird way, but she has to come back now!"

Zander grabbed the paper from Mary's shaking hands and scanned it. The blood drained from his face and he sat heavily on the stool behind him.

“What’s it say?” My stomach was already sinking. If it was good news, Zander was burying the lede, because he looked like death warmed over. “Zander?”

Kyrin took the paper and read aloud. “I couldn’t find a card anywhere that fit this exact situation. Maybe I’ll write to Hallmark next to suggest they flesh out their knocked-up announcement section. How else am I supposed to do this? It seems like I’m clueless when it comes to you three. I’m pregnant.”

I snatched the paper as he stopped reading. “I didn’t mean for it to happen. God knows I’m not ready. That doesn’t matter now, though. Turns out fear and self-pity don’t slow down pregnancy. I don’t need anything from you. I’m not asking for anything. If you decide you don’t want this, your responsibility can end there. I would never take away your chance to know your child, if that’s what you want, though. I won’t pretend like it wouldn’t be hard, but it’s the right thing. I’m due in seven months, give or take. Maybe by then, things won’t be awkward if we see each other.”

Zander absently spoke the next lines, the lines that seemed to be playing over and over in his head. “I’m not sure how to end this. If you decide you want to be a part of this, you have time to prepare. There’s no reason for you three to be involved until there’s an actual living thing to share between us. See you in seven months. Or not.”

“She signed it yours, Aggie, and then crossed out *yours*.” I slapped the letter down on the island and scowled at Mary.

“What about that made you think she would be coming back?”

Mary rolled her eyes. “I know you three. I got to know Aggie, too, and I saw the way she looked at each of you. She loves you. You were all dumb shits, but love can be bigger than anything, if you let it be.”

*****AGGIE*****

I scurried out of the gas station bathroom and scrunched up my face when Dad spotted me. “No. That’s terrible. There’s a smell in there that I can only imagine rivals Donnie’s insides after Taco Tuesday. I’ll just hold it.”

Dad laughed and shook his head. “You’re pregnant, Ag. You’ll piss yourself and then I’ll be forced to sit next to you while you reek of pee. Go on.”

“I’m not doing it. I’ll go on the side of the highway before I go in that bathroom.” I noticed a couple at the gas station counter staring at me and whispering to each other. I glanced down at my outfit and frowned. “Is there something on my butt?”

“Don’t ask me that, Ag. I don’t want to look at your butt.” Dad sighed and did it anyway. “No, there’s nothing on your butt. Why?”

I glanced back at the couple and watched as they pointed at me through the front window. “What the hell? Those people

are making fun of me.”

Dad followed my gaze and grunted. “What’d you do?”

I opened the truck door and climbed in. “That’s rude, Dad. I didn’t do anything.”

He finished cleaning off the windshield and got in beside me. “Maybe they just really hate vintage tie-dye and Crocs.”

I put my feet on the dashboard and smiled at the little charms I’d added. They were my first pregnancy purchase for myself. Gone were my sky-high heels. “I know you’re judging me, but wait until you try yours on.”

“Get your feet down. Do you want to break all your bones if we crash?”

“I want to not crash.”

“Well, you don’t always get what you want.” Dad flashed his blinker to turn out of the parking lot and laughed. “I win.”

I put my feet down and stared at my reflection in the sideview mirror. Despite washing my face in questionable locations for the last two weeks, my skin was glowing. Pregnancy was agreeing with me, it seemed. I knotted my bun tighter and rested my chin on my arm. The wind whipped past my face as Dad sped up and I sighed happily.

The freedom of being on the road with Dad, without a thing to do but live, had eased some of the tension in my heart. It’d also helped me accept that I could get through anything, as long as I had Dad on my side. We’d made it through plenty of awkward situations at campgrounds and had even managed to

avoid getting eaten when a bear decided to rob our campsite. We were a solid team, just like always.

Hiking and enjoying nature made me feel strong again. Being able to hike a three mile trail up a mountain while nearly three months pregnant reminded me of what Dad had tried to remind me. I was a badass. I could do whatever I wanted to. My plans were going to look different when we got back to Dallas, but I wasn't panicking. I was taking my time to recalibrate and decide what I wanted to do.

Each morning when I opened my eyes, I still thought of Zander, Knight, and Kyrin first thing. They were the last thing I thought about at night, too. When the bear had come out of nowhere to steal my Pop Tarts, I'd had the craziest moment. I'd been half asleep and in the panic of waking up to a bear so suddenly, I'd reached out to protect the guys. At least I'd been able to play off my sad tears as tears of relief that we hadn't been mauled.

I found myself thinking of them throughout the day, wondering if they'd read my letter, what they thought, what they were doing. At the top of that three-mile trail, I'd looked out at the most beautiful view of the valley below and considered what co-parenting would be like. When Dad got drunk and danced around our fire at night, I laughed and imagined the guys there with us, enjoying our trip.

"You're sighing a lot." Dad called out over the rush of the wind blowing through the truck. Stevie Knicks was playing on the radio and Dad didn't bother turning her down to talk.

I rolled my eyes at him. “You can’t hear me sighing over all this noise, old man.”

“I’m your father. I can tell when you’re sighing. Thinking about the guys?”

I stuck my head farther out the window. “Nope!”

He laughed. “Get your head back in here and pick out a place to stop for dinner. Liar.”

Fighting with an old-fashioned map against the wind, I found where we were and then moved my finger up the road we were traveling on. The next town was pretty close, so I moved past it. “What about Evansdale?”

“Does it have a good diner?”

“This is a map, Dad. It doesn’t have a local listing of places to eat.” I folded the map as best as I could while Dad rambled at me.

“You know what would’ve had a list of local eateries? Google. But, no, our cellphones would’ve ruined the experience.” He reached over and patted my hand. “It has been nice to have you all to myself, though. So maybe I don’t need Google.”

“Told you so.” I pointed at the radio and grinned. “I’m turning this up now. It’s time that I forced you to listen to me sing.”

The moment we pulled into the Little Red Diner in Evansdale later that day, Dad was so over my singing that he dramatically climbed out of the truck and made a big show of

pretending to not be able to hear. People were staring at us, but he didn't care. He just ruffled my hair and tucked me into his side.

“Let's eat, kid. I'm starving.” He opened the door to the old-fashioned diner and ushered me in. “Remind me to get an extra slice of pie. I woke up in my tent last night and I would've murdered you for a slice.”

“Good to know, Dad.” I smiled at the waitress who approached us. “Just two, please.”

She stared at me for a few seconds in silence before nodding quickly and rushing through the diner to seat us at a booth in the back. “I'll be back!”

Dad raised his eyebrows at her retreating back as he slid into the seat across from me. The old vinyl squeaked as he slid across it. “Are we giving off weird vibes? Ginger cleansed my chakras before we left, but I'm sure yours are all over the place.”

I gave him a hard stare. “You need to get your chakras cleansed again to fix this rotten attitude.”

He grinned. “Oh, here we go. She's coming back. Remind me, Ag. Pie.”

The waitress bounced excitedly at our table, her eyes wide. “A drink?”

I leaned back slightly and nodded. “Sure, thanks. Um, I'll have a-”

“You’re Aggie, aren’t you?” She sat next to me and her ponytail bounced around as she excitedly motioned with her hands. “You look just like the pictures. Oh, my gosh. You’re the luckiest woman in the world.”

*****AGGIE*****

I looked at Dad in a panic. “Um, I’m sorry? How do you know my name?”

“You don’t know?” She gasped. “Guys, she doesn’t know!”

It was the bear attack all over again as nearly every head in the restaurant turned to me. A couple of girls around the same age as our waitress rushed over and leaned on the table to get closer. I was trying to remember what to do in a case of a cult, but I knew I’d never learned that, so I was half under the table when one of the girls shoved her phone in my face.

“Look! Isn’t it so romantic?”

Seeing my face on her phone screen, I grabbed her hand and yanked her closer so I could make sense of what I was seeing. It was a wanted poster. I gasped even harder and nearly choked. “What the hell?”

“Read it, honey!” An older woman called out from the other side of the diner. “Read it and swoon!”

“Oh, I wish I had a boyfriend who would do this for me!” Our waitress leaned into my space and read through the poster aloud. “It says you were last seen breaking hearts at a jail in Dallas and that you’re wanted for theft. Theft of their sanity and happiness! Oh, my gosh. I’m going to cry.”

I read the rest of the poster and felt my eyes going wider and wider until I was sure they’d pop right out of my head. I could hear Dad’s laughter growing louder as he read from someone else’s phone.

“If anyone sees the wanted person, do not contact. This woman is very dangerous and will suck you in with her siren song. Siren songs include reaming us about everything, telling us how much we suck, and being right about everything. She’s beautiful and appears sweet, but much like an enraged cat, she will humble you, even when you don’t want to be humbled. Taking your chances with this woman could lead to you falling in love, starting a family, and being forced to beg in the most dramatic way you can think of.”

Dad wiped his eyes as he guffawed and slapped the table. “Oh, sweetheart. They pegged you.”

I cast a dark look at him before looking back at the phone.

“Her crimes are very serious and punishments will be considered as such. When caught, she will be held accountable, over a knee, and punishments will continue until she accepts a life sentence with the men whose hearts she has in her possession.”

“Oh, look at this! It gets even better.” One of the girls shoved another phone at me. “It’s like a romance novel!”

I stared at a still image of Zander, dressed in one of his suits, until I tapped the screen and a video started. Zander, with longer hair and desperately needing a shave, looked into the camera and I felt like he was right there, staring into my soul. It was no wonder all the women were swooning.

The screen split and a pretty blonde smiled warmly. “You and your brothers have caused quite the commotion, Mr. Graves. For men who kept to themselves for so long, why this? Why now?”

Zander didn’t shift. “We want Aggie to come home to us. We found that love is more important than privacy or pride.”

“Why the wanted poster?”

The corner of his mouth lifted just enough to make my heart race. “To anyone who knows Aggie, they understand. She’s a force. In another life, she was probably a gun-toting crusader for good. A wanted poster felt right for a woman like her. Plus, we thought it would spur her into action.”

“Have you heard from her yet? We heard from a source inside her family that she’s on a road trip with her father.” The screen shifted to a video outside of Dad’s farm and Donnie’s face appeared.

“Oh, God, no.” I looked up at Dad and shook my head. “No, not Donnie!”

It was indeed Donnie who grinned into the camera and spoke while flexing his muscles. “Oh, Scoot’s gonna go nuts over this. She’ll probably murder all three of those boys and end up on a wanted poster for real. It’s pretty cool, though. My baby cousin is all famous for stealing hearts. Scoot, if you’re watching this, love you, girl!”

Zander’s face was strained when the screen returned to him. He was trying not to laugh, I could tell. “We haven’t heard from her, but I have a feeling we will soon.”

“Are you and your brothers worried about this embarrassing Aggie?” The reporter, bless her, sounded reproachful. “Her cousin seemed to think she wouldn’t like all this attention.”

“Well, she should’ve come home then.” Zander shrugged. “Aggie belongs with us. We’re ready for her to come storming in.”

“To put her over your knee?” The table giggled around me at the reporters teasing question.

Zander looked down at his hands and up at the camera through his lashes. “Aggie knows what’s waiting for her.”

My nipples hardened and my panties became uncomfortably damp, both things that left me feeling horrified while sharing a table with a horde of teenage girls and my father. I handed the phone back to the hand reaching for it and leaned over until my forehead was resting on the tabletop.

“He’s so hot. Are you going to go back home to them? You have to, right? I mean... They’re all so hot and they love you.”

The girl giggled. “Plus, it sounds like he’s into spanking!”

Dad choked on a glass of water he’d found somewhere and waved his hand in the air. “Dad here! We are not talking about spanking. That’s my daughter’s butt you’re talking about on the other end of that hand and I was wiping that butt not too long ago, so it’s too awful for me to think about.”

I screeched as I yelled at him. “Dad! Don’t say that!”

“So, is spanking as good as they make it sound in the books?” Another of the girls leaned in, her attempt at whispering as quiet as a jet engine. “I was thinking about it, but I’m dating the quarterback and his hands are huge. I didn’t like getting spanked as a kid, so I just don’t know.”

I pointed at Dad and jabbed my thumb towards the exit. “Get us out of here. I’ve got murders to commit.”

*****AGGIE*****

“I’m not driving you any farther unless you agree to at least take a fast shower and brush your hair before you see them.” Dad cast a long look at me and made a face. “You’re not winning anyone over right now.”

I scoffed. “I’m not trying to win anyone over. I’m going there to kill them, one by one, for turning my face into a news story!”

“Uh huh.” Dad turned away from the city, towards home. “Donnie took your car to the shop a few days ago, so your only way into the city is looking at you right now.”

“This is insane.” I crossed my arms over my chest and shook my head at his antics. “This isn’t some sweet love story, Dad. This is humiliating!”

He hummed along with the radio. “Yep. Humiliating. Sure.”

“You should want to strangle them, too!”

“Why?” He laughed at the frustrated scream I let out. “Are you ready to hear the answer to your question?”

I bit my lip and paused. Had the guys reached out to him?
“Yes.”

“Shower and brush your hair? You look like hell. Promise me that and I’ll tell you.”

I glared at him. “Fine. I promise. Maybe I’ll even put on a pretty dress and curl my hair, for God’s sake.”

“I’m changing the promise. You have to wear a pretty dress and curl your hair.” Dad grinned like the cat who ate the canary and turned onto the road to the farm. “I’m brilliant.”

“I’m not wearing a dress.”

“Do you want to know if they called? Maybe even some details?”

I hissed out a breath and agreed to his demands. “Now, just tell me.”

“They messaged me every day.” He chuckled. “Persistent little shits.”

Staring at my dad, I felt a wave of heat hit me. The anger that had slacked with exhaustion came raging back to the surface. “You spoke to them every day?”

He parked in front of the house and turned the truck off. “Not at first. I wanted to knock their heads together for being so stupid. Seeing you so hurt wasn’t easy to sit back and let go.”

“But?”

“They love you, Ag. I could feel it in every message they sent me. Those are messages I’ll keep forever, so if I ever worry about you, I can see them and feel comforted.” He reached over and patted my knee. “They made mistakes. They’ve paid for them, in my opinion.”

I shoved the truck door open and got out, just to lean back in and jab a finger at him. “How could you keep that from me?”

“They didn’t want me to tell you, Ag. They wanted to respect your choice and I was inclined to agree with them. Your mother was never great at being led in a certain direction, either. I hoped you’d forgive them eventually and I knew that my pushing you to do it wouldn’t help.”

“Did you tell them things? Did you tell them I was pregnant before I could?”

“Hell no. That wasn’t my place. I haven’t spoken to them since we left for our trip and you conveniently had us pretend to not own cellphones. Whatever you wrote to them in that letter must’ve pushed them to act. Last I spoke to them, they were still sad sacks, all three of them depressed and moping.”

I frowned. “Did they ask about me?”

Dad laughed easily, unfazed by my anger. “God, yes. Daily. I’ll be glad when you go back to them so I can quit giving them daily reports of how you are, what you ate, if you cried. Honestly, if you don’t see that they love you, Agatha Bailey, you’re trying not to see it.”

“They asked if I cried?” My heart thumped painfully in my chest. “And what I ate?”

“I’ll show you some day, Ag. But for now, I need you to go get showered and dressed. I’m dying to get back home and sleep in a real bed tonight. Next time I think a road trip is a good vacation, remind me that my back is too old to sleep on the ground.”

I stared at him for a moment more, debating what he was saying, but I could see he wasn’t budging. I grunted and shut the door, talking to him through the open window. “I’ll be back in less than ten minutes.”

“If you’re not in a dress, this truck isn’t moving.”

Moving through the motions of showering and getting dressed felt like moving through quicksand. I didn’t care about anything except confronting the guys. Everything agitated me as I tried to rush and ended up taking longer than if I’d just moved around normally. When I did make it back to the truck, I was so frustrated that I wanted to hit something.

“Wow, Ag. You look...”

“Dumb? Yeah, I’m aware.”

Dad didn’t take his eyes off me. “You look stunning. Just like your mom when she was pregnant with you.”

I blinked away tears and flashed him a quick smile. “My stomach is sticking out a little, but the other dresses I owned made it look even worse.”

He wiped his own eyes and started the truck. “You’re beautiful. You’re going to make those men the happiest men in the world, honey. They’re lucky to have you.”

I crossed my arms over my belly and sighed. “I’m not theirs. I’m just going to tell them to stop their ad campaign.”

“Is that perfume you put on?”

“You’re a pain in the ass, Dad.” I huffed and turned away from him. “It’s just the body wash I used.”

The smile on his face could be heard so clearly in his voice. “And the mascara?”

“Shut up.” I blew out a controlled breath and squeezed my shaking hands between my thighs. I didn’t know what to expect when I saw them. I was nervous. “What if it’s all a joke?”

“You shut up.” Dad chuckled, not a care in the world. “I can’t wait to tell you I told you so.”

“You’re insufferable.”

“You’re stubborn.”

I stared out the windshield and swallowed past the lump in my throat. There was no more swallowing it down. It was too big for that. Any minute, it was going to turn into a sob, but there was nothing I could do about it. Pregnancy made me weak.

The closer we got to the city, the more I shook. I was driving myself crazy, going through a million scenarios. Like

always with them, though, I couldn't work out any solutions. I got to a certain point of the imagined conversation and just... froze.

"If you do lose your mind and decide to beat up another rich guy, do you have my number memorized?" Dad asked with a giant smile as he pulled to the curb in front of TGC.

"I can't deal with you anymore, old man. Go home."

"So, you don't think you'll need me for a ride home, then?" He laughed and waved out the window. "You're being spotted, honey. You'd better hurry."

I glanced back and saw people pointing at me and pulling out their phones. Renewed anger filled me as I got out of the truck. "Well, I guess the baby is about to be out of the bag. There's no hiding it in this dress. Tell the cousins before they read it somewhere else."

Dad tipped his imaginary hat at me and winked. "Love you!"

"Love you, too, Dad."

*****AGGIE*****

The ride up to the executive floor felt like it took a hundred years. I fidgeted, staring at my reflection in the mirrored walls. Cupping my belly, I looked at it from the side and winced. It wasn't huge, but it seemed bigger than it should've been. I added it to my mental list of questions to ask Sarah.

I tugged at my bun to make sure it looked okay and glanced down the full length of my body, just to see I'd left my Crocs on. I groaned and gave myself a moment to throw a bit of a tantrum. The bright pink Crocs didn't exactly match the button-front navy blue dress I had on.

The doors opened to the executive floor and I had to pretend like I wasn't freaking out. Too aware of my body, I stepped out of the elevator and looked at the receptionist. I knew I owed her an apology when I could think clearly, from my last run through.

Her bright smile when she saw me was unexpected. Her eyes caught on my stomach and she covered her mouth with her manicured hand. "Oh, this is so amazing!"

I resisted the urge to tell her that it wasn't, that having strangers staring at me and talking about me sucked, but I couldn't be mean to her when she was smiling like a maniac at me. "Are they here?"

She nodded eagerly and pointed down the hallway. "Same conference room."

Gulping down a wave of nausea, I slowly made my way down the hall. I still had a lot of anger and frustration, but my nerves were killing me. Shaking like a leaf didn't scream *in control*, but I kept walking. My Crocs had charms that jingled as I walked and the sound was especially loud to me in those seconds before I reached the glass wall outside of the conference room.

Time stood still as I lifted my eyes and saw them. My heart felt too big for my body and I felt like I was breathing... wrong.

Knight's eyes lifted first and when they locked on me, he stood up fast enough to send his chair crashing backwards. The sound made me flinch, even from outside the room. He looked bigger than I remembered, which was silly, but I couldn't stop thinking about how tall he was.

I stepped into the room and locked gazes with Kyrin next. He stood up slower, his hands braced on the table as he studied me. His eyes caught on my middle and I rested my hand there without thinking. Seeing the way his eyes grew red at the simple gesture, I sucked in a sharp breath. His pain was all

over his face and seeing it, seeing the way he didn't hide it, it dragged me forward a foot.

Zander stood up silently and put his chair between us. His knuckles were white as he gripped the back of it. His body radiated with a predatory energy as he stared at me. "Did you come to yell?"

I nodded and forced my hands to my sides, forced myself to do what I hadn't been able to do for anyone but them. I let them see me, let them see the way I trembled, let them see the wobble of my lip, and let them see the way I lifted my chin to spite the wobble of my lip. "Did you mean it?"

"When we said we want you home? Or when we said we love you?" Kyrin's voice was husky as he spoke. "The answer is yes to both."

I sank my teeth into my lip to stop the impending tears and looked to Knight. My stomach fluttered as he let out a dark laugh.

"We mean it, Aggie." He glared down at the men sitting between us, but stayed where he was.

"You're not yelling, baby." Zander's gaze was scorching. "It doesn't feel like you're very mad at us."

My stupid mouth twitched with what might've been a smile, but I wasn't finished. "Did you mean it?"

He swore. "More than I've ever meant a single fucking thing I've uttered, Aggie. I love you. I want you home with us. It's where you're supposed to be. I've been patient. Tell me

what else you need right now. There's only so long I can pretend like I'm not dying inside with every second I'm not touching you."

"Trust." I raised my hand to my throat, the gesture meant to self-soothe. When I saw Zander's face tighten, I gasped and dropped my hand. "Um...I want you to trust me. The way I trust you."

"Done." The leather chair under his hands groaned. "What else?"

"I'm going to work. I can't be a stay-at-home mom. There's nothing wrong with it, but I need to work. I'm not a trophy for the country club members to poke and prod at."

Kyrin growled. "Never been a member of a country club before now and I don't plan on joining, baby. What else?"

"I want a real interview. I want a chance here. Pick someone else to do the interview and if they say no, I'll accept it and look somewhere else." I rushed the words out, feeling myself unraveling under their gazes. I hadn't planned any demands, I was coming up with them on the spot. Being so close to risking my heart again, I suddenly couldn't stop babbling. "I don't like Olivia."

"She quit the day you left, baby." Knight nodded, looking every bit an impatient billionaire right then. "And?"

"Never keep Gracie from me again. I love her."

Zander shifted his chair to the side. "She loves you, too. Fine. We're going to agree to whatever you want, Aggie."

Nothing you could ask for would change a single thing about the way we feel about you. Write up a list of demands, we'll sign off on whatever. We don't care. We just want you."

I gripped my hands in front of my stomach. "If you decide you don't want me, I—"

"Never happening." Knight slowly moved towards me, his movement hindered by the men in his way. "I love you. I *love* you, Aggie. Tell me you understand that."

"But if you don't one day, just—"

Kyryn moved towards me from his side of the table. "I love you. Today, tomorrow, and fifty years from now."

"Are you done delaying the inevitable?" Zander pushed his chair behind him. "Tell us how you feel, Aggie. You know our hearts now. You own them. Stop torturing us and tell us."

"I...I was going to yell..."

Knight inched closer. "There's time for that later."

"I was mad and I had reasons"

Kyryn was just feet away. "No one is saying you can't still be mad. You're just going to be ours when you're mad now."

Zander leaned forward and planted one big hand on the table. "Give us what we need, Aggie."

"I love you." The chokehold on my chest loosened. "I love each of you. I might have more to say later, but I just...I love you."

Zander slammed his other hand down on the table and didn't look away from me as he yelled at the men who'd been watching us the whole time. "Out!"

Kyrin grabbed me before the first person could clear the room. His hands gripped my ass as he lifted me into his arms. "You know what else we need to hear, baby."

Knight pressed into my back and inhaled deeply against my neck. "The thing you said you'd never be."

Zander slammed the door shut and growled. "Tell us."

I moaned desperately as my body came alive between them. Fire ignited in my core and I rocked against Kyrin's hard length. "*Yours.*"

Zander slid his hand over my throat and turned my face to his. "Goddamn right, Aggie. You're *ours*. You belong to us."

I stared up at him, nearly lost in my need. "Mine?"

His eyes softened before he leaned in and kissed me. "Yours."

*****ZANDER*****

“Clear the floor.” My harshly barked order was met with no questions, thankfully. I didn’t have many brain cells that weren’t focused on getting inside the little siren pinned between my brothers.

Aggie gasped when Kyrin moved her to the conference table and laid her across it. His hands were clumsy as he tried to get the buttons of her dress open and gave up, ripping the material open instead. He stood between her thighs and lowered his mouth to her chest. “Buy you a new one.”

I looked down at her and watched the way her face twisted in pleasure as Kyrin sucked her nipples through her bra. I trailed my fingers down her throat and nodded at her when her eyes snapped to mine. “Good girl. Keep those eyes on mine.”

Knight pulled her bra off and we all groaned as her tits bounced free. He cupped her breasts and ran his thumbs over her nipples, seeing the way her hips bucked. “So sensitive.”

“Have you touched *our* nipples since our last time?” I saw her flush dark red and smiled as she nodded. “What else did you touch, baby?”

Kyrin pulled her panties down her thighs and held them to his nose. “You’re fucking soaked, baby.”

She licked her lips and spoke quietly. “I... I’ve been so needy. The... The hormones. I have to touch myself to make it feel better.”

My body stilled as I thought of her, touching herself to ease the ache between her thighs, an ache that she had us to take care of. “Show us.”

Her blush grew darker, but she kept her eyes on mine as she cupped her breasts and pinched her nipples. Her back arched off the table and she moaned. The scent of her sex filled the air around us, drawing us all deeper. We all stood quietly by, barely restrained, as we watched one of her hands move down her body, over her barely rounded belly, and through the small patch of hair she kept neatly trimmed. Her fingers slid over her lower lips and slowly parted them to reveal her wet and waiting clit at the top of her sex. Dark red and swollen, it was more sensitive than normal. Two of her fingers circled the little button and a scream flew from her mouth as she came almost instantly.

Kyrin wrapped his hands around her thighs and spread her legs wider. “Need to drink these sweet pussy juices. *Fuck.*”

Aggie writhed on the table as he growled into her core before lapping at her wetness. She gripped his hair and rode

his face to a second and third orgasm. Her nipples were swollen and dark pink from her fingers clenching down on them and when Knight took one between his teeth and tugged at it, she let out a wild scream and flooded the table under her ass. Kyrin lifted her hips and drove his tongue lower, eating her ass like a starved man. The sounds he made left no question that he'd missed eating our woman's pussy.

Knight reached down and pushed two fingers into her while Kyrin stayed at her ass. The sound of her wetness pushing out around his fingers drew moans from all of us. He added a third finger and tugged at her nipple again. "Your body remembers it has to open wide for our dicks, Aggie. It was made for us to use and come deep inside of. It was made to grow our baby and still beg for more."

I ran two fingers over her lips and groaned my approval as she opened her lips and sucked them inside. "We're going to spend so much of our lives buried inside you, baby. When you're working here, buried in work, we'll be buried in you. Think you can bounce on my dick and still get work done?"

Kyrin pulled back and stood up. "Turn her over."

Aggie moaned and stretched out along the table as Kyrin moved behind her and pushed his dick into her core. She sucked harder on my fingers reached out to her other side for Knight. He'd already pushed his pants down and didn't hesitate to fuck her hand.

Kyrin gripped both of her ass cheeks and held on tight as he moved his hips like a piston, in and out of her. His eyes were

focused on her ass and I could tell he wanted it. We were all hurtling towards our releases and I hadn't even taken my dick out. The moans and growls filling the room were like cattle prods, demanding we move faster and harder.

Kyryn pulled out of her dripping sex and held her ass cheeks apart as he rubbed the wet head of his dick over her asshole. He toyed with her, pushing her deeper in her need.

I pulled my fingers from her mouth and slipped my hand under her neck to grip her throat. "Tell him what you want."

"Fuck my ass, Ky! Please! I need it!" She let out a hoarse scream as he gave her what she wanted and sank every inch of his dick as deep as he could go. Her body flushed red as another orgasm grew larger. "Oh! Oh, god! Right there!"

Kyryn gripped the back of her neck and hammered his dick deep. "That's not my name, baby."

She came with his name on her lips, her orgasm ripping Kyryn's from his. He reached under her and stroked her clit fast as he filled her ass, drawing out her orgasm. Her head jerked up as he played her clit faster and she tensed even harder until her body reached new highs. Her come came out in a rush all at once, her juices splashing over Kyryn's thighs, the table, and floor.

Knight swore with reverence. "Fuck."

I leaned down as I stroked her throat. "If you're only a squirter while pregnant, we're going to keep you knocked-up,

baby. I'm going to enjoy showering in your come while eating that pussy."

She moaned and dropped her head to the table. Her breathing was labored as Kyrin eased out of her ass and held her open so he could watch his come leak out. "I didn't know..."

Knight looked at me and raised an eyebrow. I nodded at him, torturing myself by waiting longer to have her. He stroked her back and took his place behind her. "So beautiful messy with our come, Aggie. Lean up. Show Zan how much you missed him."

I surprised them both by leaning down to capture her mouth with mine. Kissing her deep, I could feel the moment Knight entered her by the moans she fed me. I pressed my dick against the table, using the pressure to hold off my need.

"Fuck, Aggie. I've missed you too much. Never going to last."

I pulled away from her mouth and watched as Knight's strokes became less coordinated. My blood ran hot as I got closer to being inside Aggie. A dark desire filled my head and I growled. "Come in her ass, Knight. I need..."

Knight pulled out of her core and got the tip of his dick inside her ass before he came hard. "Fuck, fuck, fuck, Aggie. *Yes.*"

Aggie gasped when I barely let Knight finish before I pulled her onto my lap in one of the big leather chairs. I sank her

pulsing core onto my length in one stroke and held her there, as connected as we could get. She pressed herself into my chest and gave me her mouth when I demanded it.

I lost myself in kissing her, tasting her. Her core tightened and released around my dick, drawing breathy moans from both of us. I just needed to be inside her, to have my come coating her walls, and to feel like she wasn't slipping away again.

Reaching between us, I pressed my fingers into her clit and tipped my head back to watch her. "I missed you. I don't sleep right without you in my arms. Come home with us, Aggie. I love you and I'm going to love you forever. I'll never let you go again."

Her eyes filled with tears even as her body tightened around me. "I love you, Zan."

Pulling her mouth back to mine, I kissed her as I let her orgasm milk the come from me. Coming together without moving, having her breath mingling with mine, it was the soothing I needed to feel stable again. I held her close and stroked her hair, finding both of my brothers watching us with knowing looks on their faces.

We would all have times when we needed more of Aggie, when we needed to devour her love selfishly. They understood that I'd been lost without her and full of so much self-hatred that I could barely breathe most days.

"I'm sorry, Aggie. I'll never hurt you like that again." I held her tighter as she tried to look at me. "Just let me hold you. I

don't know if it'll ever be enough. I can't... I can't lose you again.”

She peppered gentle kisses along my neck. “I'm yours. All of yours.”

Knight and Kyrin met my gaze again and the smiles on their faces were relaxed for the first time in over a month. Knight nodded. “She's ours.”

I blew out a shaky breath. “Ours.”

EPILOGUE 1

One Year Later

Aggie

“You’re fired. No, don’t argue with me. I’m your boss. Oh, my gosh, I will have my uncles kick your butt for that!” Gracie’s playtime at the desk across from mine had taken on an interesting aspect. She’d just fired her fifth teddy bear of the day.

“Butterfly? I’m not sure what Jimmy Jam did to you, but your uncles aren’t here today. If you need a butt to be kicked, you’re going to have to ask me, or Max.” I turned so she could see Max strapped to my back, probably drooling everywhere.

“He’s just a baby, Aggie. He won’t be able to kick butt for another couple of years.” She giggled. “He’s chewing on your hair.”

I pulled my hair away from my son and offered him one of his teething toys instead. Looking over the work in front of

me, I tapped my pen on my desk and narrowed my eyes. “If you were a problem, where would you hide, Gracie?”

“Uncle Knight was talking about problems this morning. Maybe he’s hiding them?” She jabbed her finger at her favorite doll. “You’re hired, Jane!”

I looked up from my work. “What kind of problems was he talking about?”

“He said it was a secret.” She looked up as the door to my office opened. “Uncle Knight!”

Studying Knight, I immediately knew there was something he was hiding. He fiddled with his glasses more than ever when he was trying to keep something from me. The night they’d asked me to marry them, he’d snapped them in half.

“Hey, kid. Ready to go?” He walked over and planted a slow kiss on my lips that left me breathless. When he finished with me, he leaned down to plant a kiss on top of Max’s head. “Let me take him? He weighs almost as much as Gracie already. It can’t be good for your back to have him strapped to you for so long.”

I smiled at him and held my arms over my head. “Go ahead.”

His eyes darkened as he read my mood. “You’re playing with fire, baby.”

“You’re not supposed to play with fire. Uncle Kyrin told me.” Gracie sighed dramatically. “Can I go to Grandpa Mark’s now? I’ve been waiting all day.”

Knight cleared his throat and turned to Gracie. “What are you talking about, kid?”

She giggled and started picking up her toys. “Nothing.”

I rested my hands on his stomach as he eased Max out of his sling. “You know you’re terrible at hiding things from me, right?”

He grumbled. “Hush, witch.”

I stretched up to kiss him again and smiled against his lips. “I love you.”

“Not as much as I love you. Now, it’s quitting time. Are you coming quietly, or do I need to clear the floor, call the nanny, and have Zander come all the way up here to work on your compliance?” He nipped at my lips. “Think long and hard about your answer.”

I brushed my hand over his lower stomach and bit my lip when his muscles jumped. “I will. I’ll think very long and very hard.”

“Miss Young?” My assistant stuck her head into my office and immediately apologized. She’d unfortunately gotten used to finding me and my men pressed against each other.

Knight kissed me once more before moving away with Max. “Not Miss for much longer, Bree.”

She all but melted as she watched Knight baby talk our son. Coming closer to me, she handed me a file and sighed. “You’re so lucky.”

Gracie grabbed Bree's hand and grinned up at her. "I was practicing my firing all day today. I even hired Jane!"

Bree's cheeks turned red. "I'm sorry, Aggie. I mentioned how my boss before you got fired for cheating. I saw Brian's name on an old letterhead that was shoved into the black hole that is my desk. It was on my mind, I guess. I didn't mean for it to have a lasting impression."

Knight bounced Max and shook his head. "We should've let her fire that asshole."

"You didn't do anything wrong, Bree. You even finally admitted that your desk is a travesty! I'm proud of you!" I rolled my eyes and waved Bree away. "Now get out of here. You have a big date this weekend, from what I hear. The water cooler gossip has been juicy."

She groaned and rushed to the door. "Thank you! See you next week, Gracie!"

Bree's old boss had been the top strategist at TGC, a trusted employee, until he was offered a big pay out to steal important information and move to my position at Monroe's company. When the guys found out their employee was the source of the leak and part of the reason we'd fallen apart for a little while, they'd wanted his blood. To hear them tell the story, though, they'd simply fired the man and moved on. To hear anyone else in the building tell the story, Brian Vance had been lucky to walk out of the building with all of his organs still working.

I'd proven my worth ten times over in the year I'd worked at TGC, though, and my promise to the guys that Monroe and

his dirty employees would suffer had been kept beautifully. TGC had blown the gap between our companies into space. Monroe Blake would have to have a magic genie in his pocket to ever touch TGC again. Unfortunately for him, Brian Vance was no magic genie.

“Okay, ladies. It’s time for quitting.” Knight put his hand on top of Gracie’s head. “Tell her, Gracie.”

“Grandpa Mark has a girlfriend!”

My mouth fell open as Knight tried and failed to cover Gracie’s mouth before her words were out. I stared at Knight and grabbed my purse. He looked like he was going to deny it, but thought better of it.

“Damn, Gracie. I meant tell her that it was quitting time.” He sighed. “We were going to talk about it tonight. Over dinner. We asked your dad to watch the kids while we talked about it? Does that help?”

I frowned. “Where are we having dinner?”

“Bob’s.” He held out Max and wiggled our son at me. “Doesn’t that make you a little less angry?”

I pointed at him. “Don’t weaponize our son’s cuteness.”

Gracie followed me out of my office, her toys shoved into her own oversized purse. “I’m mad, too, Aggie.”

Knight growled. “Stop it, you two.”

Gracie and I cast matching dark looks back at him. I put my hand on her back and stuck my tongue out at him. “Don’t tell

us what to do. We're the bosses here.”

“Yeah! Girls rule!”

Knight sighed and looked down at Max. “Get ready for a special kind of hell, kid. We outnumber them four to two, but does that matter? Not even a little bit.”

EPILOGUE 2

My mouth watered as I watched Aggie dancing by herself on the dance floor of Bob's. The woman had perfected the art of torturing us. We might be able to control her orgasms and spank her magnificent ass when she was especially mouthy at times, but she'd worked her way into our hearts and learned every way to rule us.

"Jesus." Knight ran his hand down his face and shifted in his chair. "She's the devil, I swear."

Aggie bit her lip and rolled her hips as she watched us. In a tight red dress and heels that I couldn't wait to fuck her in, she was a goddess on the dance floor. Her body moved seductively to the beat of the music, the hem of the dress flirting dangerously around her thighs.

Zander adjusted himself under the table and took a long pull of his beer. "I'm going to spank her ass raw later."

"Fuck it. I'm going in." I stood up and made my way to the dance floor. Standing in front of my fiancé, I towered over her

and watched as she turned her back to me and backed her ass up against my cock perfectly. She rolled her hips again and reached up to tug at my hair.

“First to crack, huh?” Her fire engine red nails trailed down my neck. “I would’ve bet it would be Zan. He’s a sucker for this dress.”

I palmed her stomach and controlled the motion of her hips, slowing her movements down and letting her feel my length as deep as I could get it through our clothes. “I’m a sucker for this ass.”

Her hand settled over mine and she stroked my skin. “I’m already so wet, Ky.”

I growled into her neck and bit her hard enough to make her whimper. “We’re about to put on a show for the patrons of Bob’s, baby. I’m seconds from unzipping and fucking you just like this.”

She spun in my arms and pressed into my chest. Looking up at me with her big eyes and pouty lips, she was already flushed, like she could come with just the lightest of touches. “For a man who shares his woman with his brothers, you go feral at the thought of any other man even looking at me. Even if I told you that I took my panties off in the bathroom earlier, you still wouldn’t chance anyone seeing me when I come.”

Where we were dancing, our right sides faced a wall with no one there to see a thing. I wedged my hand between our bodies and glanced around before working my hand under her

dress. When my fingers touched the lace of her panties, I chuckled into her neck. “Fucking tease.”

She raked her teeth over my chest and locked her hands in my hair. “Ky...”

I curled my fingers around the edge of her panties and ran the rough pads on them directly over her clit. “Baby, you’re all wet. Now, you’re going to come for me and you’re going to do it silently. Understand?”

She nodded and lifted her mouth in a silent offering. “Keep me quiet?”

I kissed her deeply as I pinched her clit between my fingers and flicked it one time before she was coming in my arms. I held her tight and continued flicking her clit, taking her pleasure past comfort and demanding one more hard orgasm from her body. She sucked hard on my tongue, whining as she went weak in my arms.

I pulled her panties into place again and lifted my fingers to her mouth. “Clean them, siren.”

Her eyes held mine as she sucked my fingers into her mouth one at a time and licked them clean. She kissed the tips of them each when she finished and smiled up at me, no sign of the devil woman left in her gentle expression. “I love you.”

I kissed her, chasing the taste of her pussy, and pulled back when I felt someone’s hand on her back. I lifted my head, snarl in place, and saw that it was Knight.

He grinned and shook his head. “Relax, brother. I think it’s time we go.”

I looked over his shoulder and saw Zander holding Aggie’s purse in one hand and her leftovers in the other. His eyes were heated as he nodded at me and then at the front door.

“We’ll be lucky if we make it out of the parking lot before he’s inside you, baby.” Knight nipped Aggie’s ear and growled playfully. “You two put on quite the show.”

Aggie gasped. “Did anyone see?”

“No one who wouldn’t recognize the flush that washes over your body when you come, baby.” He grinned at me. “Cracking paid off.”

I kept Aggie in front of me as we made our way to the door. “I could put someone’s eye out right now. Don’t even say the word off.”

Knight laughed and held open the front door. The night air was thick with the scent of flowers as he led us through a crowd gathered outside the door and farther up the sidewalk. Downtown was buzzing with life but I spotted our car waiting on the sidewalk.

Zander’s eyes devoured Aggie and when she was close enough, he tugged her into his arms and kissed her hard. Knight caught the food before it hit the ground and put it on the roof of the car.

“In the car. Unless you want pictures of this in the news tomorrow.” I looked around, aware that while in Bob’s, we

were safe, the street outside wasn't protected by Bob's security. My eyes caught on a figure across the street coming our way and I swore when I saw who it was. "Put Aggie in the car."

The tone of my voice had Zander pushing Aggie behind him right away. He followed my glare and growled. "Get in the car, baby. We'll handle this."

Aggie grumbled but was half inside when she heard Blake's pathetic voice calling her name. All signs of our blissed out woman vanished in a second and I watched fire ignite in her eyes. In moments like that, I swore she might've actually had a little devil in her. She came out of the car like a wildcat and then stood calmly next to us, her arms crossed over her chest as she glared at Blake.

"I thought that was you, Agatha. I heard there was someone sleeping their way up the corporate ladder out here." Blake scowled coldly at Aggie, ignoring the fact that she had three pit bulls at her side who were ready and willing to tear him limb from limb.

Aggie sighed like she was bored and looked down at her nails. "Did you just scurry across the street like a rat to say that? That's cute, but no, thank you."

"I-" He tried to speak to her again, but she cut him off.

"I said no, thank you. Take a hint."

EPILOGUE 3

Aggie's eyes flared at Blake's. "You cried when I hit you, Monroe. What do you think you'd do if my men laid a finger on you?"

Knight laughed and pressed a kiss to Aggie's shoulder. "You tell him, baby."

"Were you always such a bitch?" Blake shrank back when he saw the reaction his words had on us.

I grabbed the neck of his shirt and lifted him to his toes, letting my knuckles press into his airway. "You'd better rethink that, Blake. Aggie is a fucking queen and you should be grateful you ever got to exist anywhere near her. Call her out of her name again and they'll be finding bits of you in Mexico for years to come."

He stumbled and fell when I let him go. Glaring up at us, he scrambled to his feet and backed away. "You never deserved me. My family comes from money and you were always just the trash I brought home for Thanksgiving."

Aggie held out her hands, knowing that was all it took to keep us from murdering the asshole in front of us. She smiled, but I could tell it gave Blake a chill down his spine. “Are you acting out because you’ve been steadily losing Daddy’s money over the last year? Is Daddy threatening to cut you off? The way I see it, Monroe, is that you should enjoy saying things like that while you can. The funny thing is that I’m not even trying to ruin your company. You just suck and we’re just that good.”

He took a step closer, but Zander let out a warning sound that stopped him in his tracks. Blake looked at each of us and I watched as he realized he’d lost. His cheeks turned a sickly shade of red and his chin wobbled. “I don’t even know why I bothered. You’re all trash.”

Aggie giggled as he hurried away and pretended to shine her nails. “And that’s how you take down a little man.”

My heart grew even fuller with love for her. “Are you sure? The last time, I believe an elbow was involved.”

She climbed in the backseat of our car and stretched out on the bench behind the driver. The partition was already up and Aggie wasted no time in messing with us. She was ready to tease again. Working her dress up her hips, she looked at each of us. “Tell me again whose idea it was to keep my dad’s relationship from me.”

Knight and I looked at Zander. He glared back at us. “We all decided to tell you at a later time. We wanted to make sure your dad was sure before we rocked the boat.”

I threw him a life preserver. “Mark was worried about how you’d handle it. He mentioned you dying a previous girlfriend’s hair green.”

“I was ten!” She took a deep breath and shook her head. “You’re all lucky that I’m feeling so forgiving.”

I bit my knuckles as she worked the dress completely over her head and spread her legs. In her heels and lingerie, she was so damn sexy it hurt. “Not that you’re not always forgiving, baby, but what’s up?”

She cupped her breasts and moaned. “While you and my father were keeping secrets from me, I was maybe keeping one of my own.”

Knight subtly moved closer to her. “Oh, yeah?”

“I was planning on telling y’all next week, at Max’s birthday. I think you’re going to catch on before that, though.” She moved one of her hands down her stomach and into her panties. “When I beg for you in inappropriate places, at inappropriate times...”

Zander sat up. “Aggie?”

She grinned and moved to her knees in front of us. “Sit back and let me thank you properly.”

“Thank us?” Knight’s voice was rough as Aggie’s hands went to his pants.

“Mm-hmm.” She pulled him out of his pants and stroked him once, her red nails teasing him. “You three are very good

at knocking me up. Top tier. Someone should give you an award.”

Zander shouted and dragged her into his lap. “You’re pregnant?”

She laughed and nodded. “Now put me back down. I’m working here.”

I snorted and grabbed her, pinning her with her back to my chest. “If you think you’re going to say something like that and not let us watch you come right away, you’re out of your damn mind.”

Zander knelt in front of us, pulled her thighs over his shoulders, and nodded at me. “Let’s see if our baby can come like a firehose yet.”

Knight settled next to us and gripped her face. “You haven’t learned yet, have you?”

Aggie was already writhing and moaning, even though she hadn’t been touched yet. “What?”

“You don’t need to thank us. It’s us who thank you. Over and over and over again. For giving us the world every single day, baby.” He kissed her hard and then pulled back. “Now pretend you listen to us for a little while and let us see how many times we can make you come before we get home.”

As Zander’s mouth settled over her sex, she cried out. “I love you guys so much.”

Little did Aggie know we’d already told our driver to take the long way home. By the time we got to our driveway, she

was a puddle in my lap. Somehow, she still managed to find the strength to fuss, though.

“Tomorrow. Tomorrow, we sit down with my dad and I tell you all off for trying to shut me out. If my dad’s dating, I should be a part of it. He needs help and to make sure that no one takes advantage of him. What if someone saw him with Brenda and thought he’d be an easy target? Or what if they only want him for his body? I need to help him.”

Zander shook his head as he opened the door and took Aggie from my arms. He tossed her naked body over his shoulder, knowing there’d be no one around to see her. The driver knew not to get out. “I can’t imagine why Mark would want to keep it a secret from you, nutty.”

Knight crawled out of the car behind me, his face as blissed out as I felt. “Let her go. If she works herself up, I sacrifice myself to her mouth again.”

Aggie sighed and then went silent. The three of us stayed quiet, wondering what her next form of attack would be. We made it all the way to the bedroom.

Zander grunted. “I think she’s asleep.”

I helped him lay her out on our bed and smiled down at her beautiful face. “She tuckered herself out.”

Knight sat down next to her and brushed her hair out of her face. “Being crazy can do that.”

Aggie popped one eye open and glared at us. “Tomorrow. Tomorrow, I’m going to handle all of you.”

I laughed and crawled into bed next to her. “Whatever you say, baby.”

“I can do it. I’m a-” She yawned so wide her jaw popped. “badass.”

FREE PREVIEW OF DADDIES NEXT DOOR

Chapter 1:

“Actually, the purple cow character has more power than all the other characters. So, my friend Johnny called me a sissy for picking the purple cow and then I kicked his ass. Of course. Actually, I’ve won a championship for how great I play.”

Barry stopped to take a breath, and then forged on like he’d never spoken to anyone before and he was finally getting his chance to get all of his words out.

“Actually, I came in third place, but I think the girl in first was cheating. And the guy in second is such a loser that he doesn’t count. So, I say I won. Because I basically did.”

I took a deep breath while pretending to drink from my cheap glass of wine. Upon seeing Barry, I’d had a feeling that I would be paying for my own dinner, and I was closer to broke than I’d ever been. I didn’t know how much longer I could sit in my best dress and high heels listening to my date

ramble on about video games. I was seconds from bashing my head into the corner of the table and praying for a quick death.

“I’m going to design my own game. A friend of mine is going to college for it, but I don’t think I need it. I’ve been gaming since I was like three. I’m good with computers and I think I can do it. I just have to find time between everything else I’m doing. Did I mention that I’m writing a TV show? It’s going to be based off this graphic novel I love.”

My eyes were burning from straining to keep them alert and on Barry. I didn’t want to be rude. He seemed like a perfectly nice guy. Well, he seemed like a perfectly nice child, if I was being honest. My first date in four years and suddenly I was discussing video games and talking to a guy with no job or ambition to get one. It was like being back in high school all over again.

“Um, yeah. You mentioned it once.” Or a thousand times.

I tuned out while he dove into another explanation of the show he was writing. I’d already heard him explain it in so much detail that I felt like *I* was writing the show. I took another pretend drink from my wine and smiled politely while cursing the worst tasting wine I’d ever had and the fact that I’d let Barry being a writer make me think he’d be mature. *Stupid call, SJ. Stupid, stupid call.*

Since moving back home to my dad’s house, I’d made a point of joining dating apps. Being brutally dumped by my fiancé of two years (boyfriend of two before that) wasn’t going

to knock me down permanently. I was determined. I was strong. And already, I was regretting joining dating apps.

It really wasn't fair that Barry had turned out to be such a man-child. I had turned down almost fifty men in search of a man. Not just any man, but *a man*.

I was sick of immature boys who led me on for four years and then dumped me outside of our apartment in front of a parade of people celebrating St. Patrick's Day. A parade of drunk people who didn't move on from the crying woman and the toe-shuffling asshole who was dumping the woman by mansplaining relationships and love to her.

Have you ever been shouted at by a crowd of drunks celebrating in *Kiss me, I'm Irish* shirts? If not, you haven't truly lived the same sad, pathetic life that I have. Congrats on that.

“And then the red lord would rise up from the ashes because the sexual healing from his harem would've revived him. He would be victorious because of the women. It's a super progressive idea.”

Barry had seemed so much more normal than the other guys on the dating apps. He hadn't sent me a picture of his dick or even asked if I was DTF. He'd seemed like a hero amongst oddly curving dicks. He'd even picked a nice restaurant and that never failed to impress me. As a food lover, the restaurant choice could've outweighed a crooked dick pic. I was kind of pissed that Barry had led me to believe that he was a mature, normal guy.

I'd shaved. Not just my legs. I'd crawled out of my pajamas and washed my body until it was smooth and smelled like a freaking tropical vacation. I'd pulled on the tiniest panties I owned. I had a wedgie that I was pretty sure was going to give me a yeast infection and the nipple pasties I had on were a set of knockoff ones from some shady store online. The one time I'd worn them before, I'd nearly ripped a nipple off. I'd risked life and nipple for mature Barry and all I'd gotten was a night of defeat and boredom.

“The women in the show will all wear these tiny Princess Leia bikini type things and it'll be super hot.”

I sat back in my chair after putting my wine down. My stepmom had been full of advice about online dating. As if living with my stepmom at twenty-five wasn't bad enough, she was eager to let me know exactly why everything I was doing was wrong. She was only eight years older than me, and the idea of her being right about Barry was enough to make me stay seated even when I wanted to run. After everything that had gone wrong in my life since St. Patrick's Day, I couldn't handle it if Reba was right, too. She was already impossible to deal with.

The fact that I was a fully grown adult still struggling to navigate her relationship with her stepmom had sent me into a full-blown crisis. I'd never been under the assumption that I had my life together, but there was only so low I could get before I just started screaming. Add in the fact that she was starting to circle ads for apartments in the paper and I was committed to seeing the date with Barry through.

Would I enjoy myself? Hell no. Would I win anything by not coming home crying about a bad date to Reba? Also no. Would I somehow stick it to her by never admitting that she'd been right about online dating? No. Never. It wasn't like Reba was involved in the silent battle we were having in my head. I kept things professionally polite with her.

“You know...you could wear one of the bikinis. I have one at home.”

I narrowed my eyes at Barry. I'd been willing to forgive him for showing up late, being underdressed, and smelling faintly of body odor. I wouldn't forgive him for thinking he could show up, put in zero effort, and then fuck me.

“I need to run to the restroom. I'll be back.”

He winked. “Of course.”

I felt him staring at my ass as I strolled across the restaurant. I considered the logistics of grabbing a fork from a table as I passed so I could throw it dart-style and pluck an eye out of his head. Before I could fantasize about how good it would feel to shut Barry up, I recognized a few familiar faces.

Dominic Rose, Holden Notaro, and Barrett Taylor. Talk about real men. Barrett was my best friend's father, but he'd been divorced from Samantha's mother for almost a decade, and I hadn't seen him in almost that long. Dominic and Holden were Barrett's best friends. They were inseparable. They lived in my dad's neighborhood, but I hadn't spotted them since being home. I hadn't thought about them in years,

despite the fact that I'd had a crush on Samantha's dad back when we used to hang out at his house when we were younger.

Seeing them sitting at a table together, each of them as handsome as any man I'd ever seen, I felt a jealous flutter deep in my stomach at the thought that there were three women somewhere out there who got to claim the three of them. Real men. Men who didn't show up to a date at a nice restaurant in ripped cargo shorts and a Pokémon t-shirt.

Barrett looked up and our eyes met. A zap of awareness sliced right through me, and I couldn't help the extra sway to my hips as I redirected myself toward their table.

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