

CARNAL
EXPECTATIONS
SERIES

PRIMAL URGES

BEX DAWN

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Primal Urges

Carnal Expectations Series

Bex Dawn

Trigger Warnings

Alright, everyone. Buckle in. Please read these warnings and take them seriously. This book is nothing like any you've seen from me yet. There are scenes in this book that are... *extra*. Proceed with caution and remember to practice self-care before, during, and after reading. Enjoy!

This is a stalker romance. Our FMC is into it. She has a fear kink, as well as *many* others that are gritty and raw. Our MMC is a bit unhinged and continues to become worse and worse over time, all in the name of his woman. Please note: Everything that happens between the fmc and mc is consensual.

- Triggers:
- OTT-possessive Anti-Hero with psycho tendencies.
- Strong FMC who is struggling to find someone accepting of her *interests*.
- Past experience of attempted rape that is recounted but not explicitly.
- Past rape of side characters (multiple due to a serial rapist) mentioned but not described.
- Murder and attempted murder. Sexual assault.

- Loss of family member.
- Alzheimer's/parent.
- Stalking.
- Kinks include: Degradation, slapping, praise, primal play, stalking, fluid play, spitting, biting, blood play, period play, somnophilia, CNC, Dub-con, knife/gun play, mask play, bondage, BDSM, power play, fear kink.

Seriously guys, this one's doozy but oh so hot. *Insert drooling emoji here*

If you have a specific trigger and are unsure if it's in this book or one of my others, please do not hesitate to reach out and ask. The best way is through email or Instagram.

Maybe she needed someone to show her how to live, and he needed someone to show him how to love.

-N.R. Hart

Unlike the rest of my books, this one does not have an
integrated playlist.

This book was written with

Flesh by Simon Curtis

in mind.

To all my filthy readers.

Buckle in bitches. Shit's about to get real.



Prologue

*W*elcome to Rumble, the dating app to help you find love.

Welcome to Rumble, the dating app to help....

Welcome to Rumble, the dating...

Welcome to Rumble....

Welcome....

Welcome to Kinksters, the app that connects you to like-minded people seeking sexual encounters that meet your needs.

Please choose a screen name: RavynJay10

Please choose a screen name: Ravyn...

Please choose a screen name: FoxBabe20

Please select your interests:

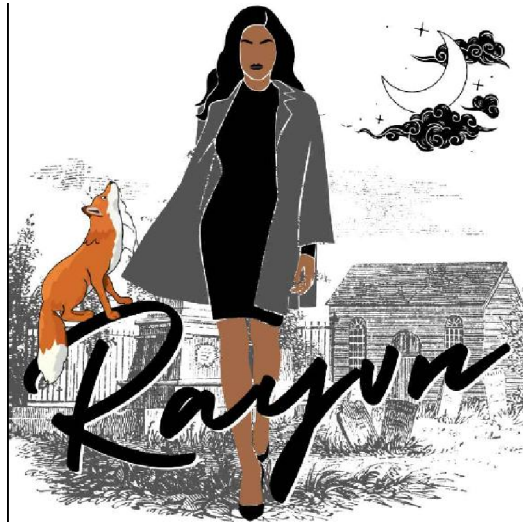
Primal Play, Fear Play, Abduction, Consensual Nonconsent, Dubious Consent, Breath Play, Helplessness,

Knife Play, Bite Play, Blood Play, BDSM, Bondage, Role Play

*Congratulations! You have matched with a Kinkster!
Would you like to message them now?*

FoxBabe20: Hey!

KillerClown4u has entered the chat.



Chapter One

JULY

“**T**hat’s not what he said,” I comment absently as my eyes trail around the wine bar once again.

“Ray,” Addy sighs, ignoring my words completely. “You’re not even paying attention.”

I scoff, rolling my eyes. I pay more attention to my surroundings and the conversations happening around me than anyone even realizes.

I know our waiter keeps disappearing into the back to check the score of the college football game happening right now. His favorite team must be losing because he’s getting progressively more agitated every time he returns.

I know Addy chose the wrong bra when she got dressed this morning. Not only is it pinching on the left side, but it’s scratchy and probably new. She won’t stop fidgeting and discretely tugging at the material. I told her she needs a higher quality bra than that offered at the mainstream lingerie store she insists on shopping from, but they keep dragging her in with every well-curated ad.

Hell, I even know what's happening between the couple three tables away. They're fighting over the nanny. Apparently, *Scotty* won't stop checking out *Lisa's* ass. Here's the kicker. *Lisa's* only 17. *Freshly* 17, at that. No doubt, *Scotty's* trying to do way more than just look at the underage girl.

I shoot another disapproving look in the perv's direction. His eyes rake down my body, completely missing the withering glare I'm giving him. When he finally reaches my face, he tugs his lip between his teeth and winks. The motherfucker *winks* while sitting across from his literal wife.

Leaning forward, I press my palms to the table and push to stand, more than ready to lay this fuck-twat out despite the nerves in my belly. *I can do this. Someone has to.*

"Don't!" Addy hisses, her wide blue eyes darting between *Scotty* and me. The poor wife looks five seconds from falling into hysterics at her husband's behavior, which only further enrages me. I hate...*hate* men like him.

Correction. I hate men. Period.

Dropping back down, I force myself to breathe through my anger. Going to their table to tell him off, or better yet, break his nose, won't be good for anyone. Especially me. I'm pretty sure that I'm one public argument away from winding up on the news, and I really don't want that.

As satisfying as it would be to take all 250 pounds of him down with a well-aimed kick from me and my Louboutin, it's

not worth it. I've worked too hard for too long to waste my career on the likes of his pedophile ass.

With one last murderous glare, I turn my attention back to my good friend, Addison Hughes. She goes by Addy for short, or, if you're the media, *Paddy Wagon Addy*, as she's been rudely but accurately dubbed. They aren't wrong.

She and I work together at the same law firm and have for years. Addy is one of the top prosecutors in the state. She has the highest imprisonment rate Colorado has ever seen. She's *that* good. Our relationship is a bit of a dichotomy, honestly, considering we work opposite ends of the law for the most part.

I'm primarily a criminal defense attorney. A damn good one at that. Where she excels with the prosecution, I excel with the defense. I represent the accused, both wrongly and not. I'm in it for the *wrongly* part. It happens more frequently than you'd think. The only exception is that I refuse to defend rapists.

Refuse.

Past experiences with asshole men taking what's not freely given have probably fueled that opinion. Or, it could just be the fact that I was raised by one of the most incredible, strong, fierce men I have ever known. My father taught me wrong from right. A lesson many are clearly lacking. I draw the line at representing them. Let's call rapists my hard limit.

Probably the only hard limit I have in life, if we're being honest.

I silently scoff and roll my eyes at the direction my thoughts have taken. Addy doesn't miss it, and apparently, it pisses her off.

“See,” she groans, throwing herself back in her chair dramatically. Bringing her wine glass up, she swishes it around, sniffs it, and takes a dainty, cultured sip. “You wouldn't be smirking if you were actually listening to what I've been saying for the last ten minutes.”

Locking eyes with her, I pick up my white wine, making sure to wrap my fingers around the top portion of the glass instead of the stem, just to further irritate her. Her eyes widen. I don't swirl. I don't sniff. I don't *sip*. If I'm spending one of my only free nights in a month at a bar, I'm getting drunk. Never breaking eye contact, I take a large gulp of the overpriced yet delicious nectar of the gods. Her wide eyes dart around the room as if to check and see if anyone notices my faux pas.

Setting the glass back down, I continue holding it incorrectly as I lean forward. “Brandt wants me to drop the Snow case. He wants me to walk away from it. He and the rest of the partners are afraid it's bringing in too much negative attention. Harrison agrees. Lowell doesn't, but he's so far up Brandt's ass that he'll nod and smile just to keep himself in his good graces. Royale doesn't care either way. She's flippant. She'll go whichever way the more powerful, influential wind blows her.”

I take another healthy swig before continuing, telling my friend all the things she thinks I'm unaware of. Just because I wasn't nodding along like a puppy while she prattled on about the firm and how they're five seconds from kicking me to the curb doesn't mean I wasn't listening. It means I can multitask. It also means I couldn't give a single fuck what the firm thinks. Not only am I a partner in the large company, but I'm also tied with Addy for the highest-paid position.

Look at us. Women on top. Hashtag winning.

“The thing is, Addison—” I break off, waiting for her to acknowledge me. She takes another delicate sip and gestures for me to continue, an irritated but proud look on her pretty face. “They can huff and puff all they want, but I will *not* leave that girl alone. I will not abandon her case, no matter who she's up against. I will not stop looking for answers. I will not stop trying to put that motherfucker away. The partners can cry and bitch all they want, and I will lose neither check nor sleep from this shit.”

She barks a laugh, finally losing the sour, pinched expression that's been glued to her face all night. She matches my position, leaning forward across the small bistro table, bringing us nearly face to face. Sighing, she shakes her head and glances away, focusing distantly over my shoulder.

“Look, Ray,” she murmurs, her voice serious. “I know you want to help her. I do. I get it. And I couldn't be happier that you've joined my side of the law for this one, you know that. But—” she breaks off, meeting my eyes once more. “This

could end badly. He's powerful. The most powerful man in law enforcement in Colorado. The evidence was lost, and while we all know that's bullshit, you can't exactly make it reappear. Even if you could, he can't be tried for the same thing twice. I don't understand what your game plan is here."

My smile is so wide I can feel my large dimples stretching across my face. Her eyes narrow, filling with a calculating gleam. She cocks her head to the side, giving me *the look* she reserves for court when she catches on to something no one else has.

"You have something," she mummurs. I say nothing, my smile never wavering. "Something big."

I shrug a shoulder, and my white blazer tugs with the movement. I'd much rather be drinking at home, on my couch, and in sweats, while I watch the latest horror flick, but she'd insisted on after-work drinks.

"Maybe," I say noncommittally, though we both know I do, in fact, have something excellent hiding up my well-tailored sleeve.

Two months ago, Vincent Sutton, Colorado's Police Commissioner, raped his 20-year-old office assistant, Tinsley Snow. Due to his position, she held back on reporting the crime. However, a chance encounter between her and another female, who had previously worked for Sutton, proved that what had happened was not an isolated incident. The first woman, Georgia Kingsley, *had* gone to the hospital where

DNA evidence was collected, but ‘somehow’ no arrests were made.

When the two girls shared their stories, there were an extreme number of similarities between the two. They decided to go to a police station a few towns away to report the crimes committed by the Chief. They were terrified, but together they were brave. Due to the evidence collected at Georgia’s exam, Sutton was finally arrested.

Enter: Me.

Vincent Sutton is a 56-year-old creep. Actually, he’s worse than that. He’s an abusive, gaslighting, misogynistic, chauvinistic rapist. He’s also an idiot. This fact was proven when he came to *me*, demanding that I be his attorney for the trial.

I told him where to shove it. He let loose a string of insults so vile that it almost had me going to prison for murder. Knowing that there was no way I could take him down from behind bars; I swallowed my rebuttal, tossed him a middle finger, and told him I’d see him in court. I left straight from that meeting, sought out Miss Snow, and told her I’d take her case pro-bono.

We bonded immediately. She may be 14 years younger than I am, but I saw something familiar in her that day. She’s a fighter. She may have been too scared, and rightfully so, to report the assault to begin with, but once she knew she wasn’t alone, she became a force to be reckoned with. And I will be

damned if I let her down, even now when it seems all odds are stacked against us.

The first week of the trial, everything went to absolute and utter shit. Every single ounce of evidence we'd compiled, including timestamped recordings, particulates from the clothing worn during both assaults, and DNA evidence from Georgia, all disappeared. In the blink of an eye, they were just *gone*.

Given that every shred of evidence was digital, it's not a far stretch to assume it was the work of a paid hacker. No doubt hired by Sutton himself. He's a powerful man, as Addy unnecessarily reminded me. I've known from the moment the news was released that he was behind it. The case was ultimately thrown out when we couldn't come up with any new evidence at the drop of a hat. Every single person in that courtroom knew there was foul play, including Tinsley and Georgia, but there wasn't a damn thing we could do about it.

Since then, it's been a constant battle with the media, as well as my firm, to keep the case going. The news wants to brush it under the rug, no doubt being paid off by Sutton. My firm wants me to leave the case alone, given the politics surrounding it. Even Georgia was so disheartened by the way things turned out that she's given up and walked away. And maybe I would have also if it hadn't been for Tinsley. But, as I said, we bonded. She got under my skin, and now there is no way in fuck I'll leave her to fend for herself.

Especially given the new turn of events. Tinsley called me two weeks ago and gave me the unfortunate and devastating news that will change her future irreparably but will also give us a leg to stand on when I go up against Sutton again.

Tinsley Snow is pregnant with her rapist's baby.

“Fuck, Ray.” The heavy breath Addy lets out draws me back to the present. I pull my gaze from the wine glass I'd been unknowingly staring at for who knows how long and meet her eyes. “You know I'm with you 100%. Whatever you need. You and Tinsley. I just want you to be careful.”

My brows lift. “Careful?”

She nods, swirling her finger around the edge of her empty glass. “I just don't want anything to happen to you.”

A tingle of awareness that feels a lot like a premonition passes over me. My spine straightens as goosebumps break out along my skin. It takes a lot to bother me or make me worried. Especially when it comes to my job. If I were one to spook easily, I wouldn't work with the accused and, oftentimes, criminals. It's not a career for the faint of heart. Luckily for me, I'm typically unbothered. However, Addy's words give me pause.

What could Sutton do? Have me fired? My firm would have to be daft to lose me, and though they may be a bunch of pricks, they aren't stupid. Would he come after me? For simply doing my job?

No. No way. He may be a horrible person, but he has to know where to draw the line.

Regardless. I'm not dropping Tinsley's case. She's had a horrible life, and I'm not letting anything else spoil her future.

"Let's talk about something else," I groan, shaking the worry from my mind. "This is girls' night. If I wanted to talk about work, I would have accepted one of Brandt's twenty offers to go on a date."

She gives me a knowing look as her hand darts out, gripping a waiter's arm as he passes. "Excuse me—" Her gaze trails over his young, handsome face, then to his nametag. She gives him a sultry smile that has me rolling my eyes. "*Jason*," she purrs. The waiter's eyes go comically wide, and I swear I see him almost faint from the power of her attention solely focused on him. "Please bring us another bottle of the *Pieropan Soave* and," she glances at me, lifting a perfectly manicured brow. I nod once, and she smiles, turning back to her toy. "And a charcuterie board, please."

"Y-e-s-s," he stutters. Swallowing thickly, his eyes dart to mine before homing back in on the blonde beauty before him. "Of course, ma'a—"

She scowls, shaking her head rapidly before tutting him like a child. "Don't you dare finish that word Jason, or you'll ruin all our fun before we've even had a chance."

"A chance?" he squeaks.

I barely stifle my laughter as I watch my friend bring this poor young man to his knees. Though he's been checking her out all night, he hasn't made a move. Not that his lack of aggression bothers her. In fact, it's probably why she's set her sights on him. This is her thing. She's a *domme* and can spot a willing and ready submissive with just a look. She loves younger men, but honestly, I think anyone willing to give in to her desires is on the table, as long as they're tall and sweet.

"Are you single, Jace?" she murmurs, shortening his name like they're old friends. His head bobs up and down mechanically as though he's in a trance. "That's good. Now run along." Again, he responds without thought, a heavy breath whooshing from his lungs as he jogs back to the kitchen.

"Must you?"

Addy cackles, her eyes still on Jason's retreating ass. "What? He didn't seem bothered, did he?"

My phone vibrates on the table. It's face down, and though I have the urge to flip it over and check my messages and emails, I ignore the impulse, focusing on my friend. "No, and judging by the very prominent tent in his slacks, I'd say you stand a good chance," I sigh, my nails drumming along the wood.

She grins, showing no sign of remorse for using our girls' night, which was *her idea*, to score men. "You could follow my lead, you know? Use me as your wing woman." My mouth opens before snapping shut once more. I glare at her, noticing

the calculating gleam in her eyes as she zeros in on something or *someone* behind me.

“Addison Hughes,” I hiss, sitting up straighter. “Absolutely not.”

“What is your deal, Rayvn? You’re fucking stunning. You’re built like a model. You’re brilliant and accomplished. What in the world do you have to be awkward about?”

The fingers of my left hand tighten around the stem of my empty glass, and I barely stop myself before snapping it in half. “I’m not awkward,” I growl. “That’s not why—” I break off, exhaling heavily. Shaking my head, I lean back in my chair. “That’s not why, Addy, and you know it.

“Look,” she breathes, “I know you have...” she pauses, her eyes bouncing around like she’s actually searching for the word she needs before continuing. “*Odd* tastes where men are concerned, but fuck Ray, at this point, you’re practically a virgin again. Just get laid. You don’t need to look for Mr. Forever, just Mr. Rearrange-My-Pussy-Please.”

Groaning, I rub the space between my eyes even as my lips tip up in a half-smirk at her word selection. “I’ve tried. There’s just no point, and no, not because I’m looking for a husband. I just don’t see the need to sleep around for subpar sex.”

She scoffs. “How do you know it’ll be subpar? That guy over there looks like he could rail you into next month. Sure, he’s balding, but look at his size. He’s definitely got a massive cock.”

“Jesus Christ,” I whisper, searching for some divine intervention or angel to pick me up and rescue me from this woman. “I’m not going to look.” Shaking my head, I resist every single impulse to do exactly that, knowing it will only give her permission to further her mission to score me a *massive cock*. Not that I wouldn’t love one, but— “How bald are we talking?”

Addison claps like an excited toddler, dancing in her chair with glee. “Yes!” She wiggles in her seat, her hand flapping about as she tries to get Mr. Big and Bald’s attention. I sink deeper into my chair, regretting every decision I’ve ever had which led me to this point. Am I seriously going to give her permission to pick my next lay? My first in—*shit*—how many years has it been? 3? 4?

Well, fuck. Time sure does fly when you’re climbing the law-infused ladder.

Addison’s smile widens as she begins to wave like a lunatic, clearly having caught his attention. My phone vibrates again, and though it’s against our rules, I flip it over, if for no other reason than to distract myself.

Logan Huxley-Shiloh’s Man: Meet your nephews

Logan Huxley-Shiloh’s Man: (Photo)

Logan Huxley-Shiloh’s Man: Asher on the left with the big feet, Archer on the right with the glare.

“Holy shit!” I screech, my fingers smashing against the phone screen as I attempt to zoom in on the photo sloppily.

Oh my god, they're incredible. My heart gives a pang. Not at the babies. I don't want them. Ever. But at momma holding them both, one in each arm. Shiloh is glowing, even if she looks ten seconds from passing the hell out. Her eyes are hazy, her cheeks red and tear-stained as she looks down at her boys with all the love in the world.

Logan Huxley-Shiloh's Man: (photo)

Logan Huxley-Shiloh's Man: The Huxley's

Another pang hits me right in the center of my chest. This time, I understand why. It's not the babies or the very attractive Lumbersnack that they so very clearly take after. It's the picture. The *whole* picture.

The family. The love. The connection. The lack of loneliness. The partner and friendship she's found with him.

Logan Huxley-Shiloh's Man: Logan says he can't wait any longer. Our wedding is in one month. You're the Maid of Honor. See you in Blue River on August 4th. Xoxo Shiloh

Rayvn: That's a month from today, you psychopaths.

Rayvn: They're perfect. You did good, momma. :)

Logan Huxley-Shiloh's Man: They look more like me than her. Where's my credit?

I scoff, barely containing a burst of laughter. Over the last few months, I've gotten to know my best friend's man pretty well. We spent Christmas together, and they finally shared the news of the pregnancy to close friends and family. Logan's

great. He really is. His family is lovely and kind. They made me feel like one of them immediately.

But despite that, I still felt out of place. It's hard to fit in with people who were raised with an understanding of what a large, close-knit family feels like. I've never had that, nor has Shiloh, which is one of the reasons we hit it off immediately in college when we'd been paired together as roommates. We are incredibly similar in a lot of ways, especially where family is concerned. We both come from messy childhoods. However, she seems to have taken to the big sitcom-style family like a fish to water. I doubt I'll ever have that ability.

I guess that's what happens when a single father raises you.

Harris Porter has been my role model and best friend since I was five. My mom died of cancer when I was a toddler. I barely remember her. But I do remember my dad, who was a committed firefighter, gave up his freedom for me.

He'd doted on me. Spent his every available minute making sure that I was taken care of, often putting his wants and needs aside. He never dated. Never fell in love again. He also never talked about my mom. I have no idea what a happy, functioning relationship looks like. I have no grand examples of how to be a wife or a partner. Honestly, I'm just winging it.

"What is it?" Addy asks or maybe asks again. I have no idea if she's been talking to me. For a moment, I'd completely forgotten where I even was.

Smiling at the screen, I type out another message, congratulating the happy family and letting them know I'll be

there in a few weeks for the wedding. I lock the screen and look back at my friend. I'm surprised when I find the vision of her a little foggy. What the hell? Blinking, I realize my eyes are misted over with tears.

Shit. Not here.

“What the hell?” Addison sucks in a sharp breath and leans forward, practically lying on the table. I notice then the food and drinks have been delivered, and her uncomfortable tits are swaying precariously closely to the cheddar.

Shaking my head, I drop my phone back into my purse and smile. “Nothing. Everything is perfect.”

Just not for me.



Chapter Two

JULY

My computer pings with an incoming message alert. I click over from one screen, to the next, and open up the chat feature on my website. Everything is anonymous, though my name is pretty well known, especially on the dark web.

The message is a request to have some sex videos removed from a few smaller porn sites that were taken without the person's consent. I message back asking for a hyperlink to the video, and within seconds I'm in.

Jesus.

As I watch the woman with her hands, eyes, and mouth bound, her blissed-out face clearly in the shot, I can't help the fact that my dick is interested. The way the dude's railing her from behind, his fingers digging into her thick thighs without mercy, has heat flaring through me in a way most things these days don't.

The video plays on one screen while I work on another, using one of the programs I coded to search the web for any other sites the video might be on. The person who sent the

request, the woman I presume, says she only found it on three, but in less than 30 seconds my program finds it on eight. After a minute, the search is done and as suspected, it's been sent to over forty porn sites.

What a piece of shit.

I'm in the process of removing it when the sounds from the video playing through my speakers change. My fingers pause on my keyboard as my eyes flick to the opposite screen. The woman's head moves slowly from side to side, and through his never-ending grunts, I can barely make out a whimper. I quickly turn the volume up and give the video my full attention. She shakes her head again, this time with more strength. I zoom in. Her body's shaking, and from the way she's sloppily trying to pull away, I don't think it's from pleasure.

Anger fills me, and in an instant, I'm ready to smash not only my screen but my hard dick. Fucking hell, she's drugged. I click back over to the original chat and respond, hoping for honesty, but knowing it doesn't matter one way or the other. I know what I see, and she doesn't *have* to confirm it to solidify my decision.

KillerClown666: Is the filming the only part that was not consensual?

Anonymous: *typing...*

She types and erases multiple times, dragging out the suspense and irritating me even more. It doesn't take a genius

to figure out the answer, especially with her reluctance to tell me. Finally, she responds, giving me just one word.

Anonymous: No.

KillerClown666: What's his name?

She doesn't need to tell me. I can figure it out. It will just take more time than I currently have, especially since the video was uploaded using an encrypted browser with a bogus IP address. Not only that, the fucker only posted her face, keeping all of his identifying features out of the shot.

Again, there's a lengthy pause while I wait for her response. Leaning back in my office chair, the leather creaks beneath my weight. I run a hand through my black hair. My fingers get caught in the strands with a tug. I grimace. My eyes dart to the window. The curtains are blackout and drawn tight. I can just barely make out a peak of sunlight, telling me it's daytime. Standing, I make my way to the coffee table, shoving aside the stacks of paperwork and books in search of my phone. My hand connects with the device just as an old pizza box clatters to the floor, spilling rotten food across the hardwood.

Fucking hell. How many days has it been since I've left here? Or eaten something that's not trash or taken a shower, for that matter?

Sighing, I go to check the time on my phone but find the piece of shit dead. "Christ," I mutter. Time to rejoin the land of the living.

Glancing around my filthy office, I cringe. *Fuck it.* Already regretting my decision, I squeeze my eyes shut and preemptively rub the space between my brows before yanking the curtains open. Sunlight spills into the room, temporarily blinding me and nearly sending me on my ass. It's then that I realize I'm dizzy and exhausted as shit. I guess the better question is, how long has it been since I've slept?

I make my way back to my desk and plug in my phone. Looking up at the screen, I find a few messages from the client.

Anonymous: It doesn't matter.

Anonymous: I just want the videos taken down, please.

Anonymous: I want to pretend this never happened.

The organ in my chest I thought had long since stopped working, gives a painful squeeze. What the hell? Narrowing my eyes at the chat, I rub the sore spot to eliminate the ache.

Killerclown666: I'll find out either way. You're just saving me the trouble of searching.

KillerClown666: The videos are gone. Let me take care of him.

Anonymous: I can't afford that. I only have enough for the video removal fee.

Christ. She's worried about money when she was drugged, raped, filmed, and exposed for everyone to see? My opinion of the world and its contents only worsens with the painful reminder. People are shitty, and the economy is trash.

KillerClown666: Don't worry about the cost.

KillerClown666: Seriously. Tell me his name, and you won't need to pay for the video removal.

Anonymous: I don't understand why you'd do that for me.

KillerClown666: It's not for you. Men like him don't deserve to get away with shit like this.

KillerClown666: Do it for all the rest of the women he's probably going to do this to after you...Or the ones before you.

It's a low blow and borderline manipulative, but I don't care. My mouth is already salivating for the hunt. My brain begins to work through all the different ways I can ruin a person without even having to leave my office. I may have started off hacking as a way to make money quickly, using a skill I've perfected over the years, but this is why I stuck with it. I've made millions in the last fifteen years doing this job, but taking down pieces of shit like this one? That's the real prize.

Anonymous: If you're sure...Lawrence Jacobs. From Jacksonville, Florida.

Anonymous: What are you going to do to him?

I disconnect the chat, blocking her ability to message me again. I have everything I need. My lips tip up in a smile, causing my cheeks to throb instantly. Apparently, my phone isn't the only thing that's gone unused for...

I swipe the screen on my now partly charged phone and check the date and time. “Holy shit,” I grunt. I’ve been holed up here for four and a half days. No wonder I feel disgusting. I’ve barely been eating and only napping at my desk in between jobs. Suffice it to say, I’m a workaholic. As was just demonstrated, I have a hard time saying no to clients and often take on more than necessary.

The most common jobs I usually take are hacking corporate sites, infiltration of social media accounts, breaking into cell phones to permanently delete shit, money laundering, and financial absorption. I’ve even been hired by the random spoiled rich kids to change their grades before mommy and daddy find out they’re tanking their Ivy League education.

But my highest requested jobs are those of the ‘*personal attack*’ nature. Most of the time, that includes financial sabotage, legal issues, and public defamation. They’re also my highest-paying gigs. They aren’t my favorite. I don’t generally relish the idea of destroying someone, especially a stranger, for unknown reasons, but the gain is usually too much to pass up.

Thirty minutes later, Lawrence Jacobs, a 23-year-old frat boy from Jacksonville, Florida who’s been living off of his late grandmother’s funds and pissing away his education, is effectively *ruined*.

He’s on his way to being homeless, broke, carless, and friendless. Not to mention, I swapped out his Ritalin prescription for estrogen, so that’ll be fun.

Grinning from ear to ear, I push up from my desk, deciding I've earned a little mini vacation. By that, I mean a shit, shower, and shave. Maybe a steak. Stepping toward the door, my eyes catch on my reflection in the tempered glass. I grimace.

My short black hair is slightly grown out and disgustingly greasy. Beneath my glasses, the dark circles under my eyes stand out starkly against my paler-than-usual white skin. My eyes rake down my body as I slide my phone into the pocket of my grimy jeans. My white t-shirt has a few stains down the front of it. The material is hanging loosely and stretched out everywhere except the sleeves, which still cling tightly across the large swell of my tattooed biceps.

Usually, I keep my tattoos and piercings hidden. I made sure every single one of them is in a place easily concealed with my clothing. My body is etched with so much ink, sometimes I forget which tattoo is which. They all blend together seamlessly, hiding scars, both physical and mental. Some are better than others, depending on their location. I was young when I first started getting them, using the process as a way to simply *feel* something...anything. Now, it's just become a habit.

They line my thighs, front and back, up to my hips and ass. My torso, chest, and back are fully covered, barely leaving an inch of blank space. My biceps are the newest additions, but they end just above my elbows. As much as I'd love to add to my collar and neck, I can't risk it. I've created an outward appearance that's meant to blend in. No distinguishing

features. Nothing crazy or eye-catching that could easily be recalled. In my line of work, which often goes beyond digital hacking, I have to become *no one*. Nothing but a shadow. A silent fixture on the wall. Someone who can become anyone and then fade back into nothingness.

But when I'm alone, in my office and on my own property—I can be myself.

Still, a no one, the annoying and ever-present voice in my head supplies, making my gut clench. Growling, I shake off the annoyance and reach for the door handle, ready to breathe in fresh air for the first time in days. I'm just about to step out when the request alert goes off once more.

“God fucking dammit,” I bark, shaking my head. My body twitches toward the sound as if it already knows what I'll do before my brain can catch up. Indecision wars within me. I should walk away. Should do exactly what I said I'd do and fuck off, get some fresh air, but—

Exhaling heavily, I turn back around and make my way to my computer. The three screens are all blank and on rest mode, but unfortunately, my notifications are on. I open my website and pull up the email app. Nothing comes through on my main account or my instant chat. Both are used by smaller paying clients, or those who found me through a simple search on the dark web. Clicking over to my alternate site, the one reserved for high-profile clients and costly requests, I find the new message.

My ass drops back onto my chair, knowing there's no way I'll be leaving now. I skim through the short message, my eyes narrowing as I take in the vague information.

Attn: Immediate request.

I need this woman defamed and no longer able to work within the state of Colorado. In fact, I'd prefer she be disbarred completely. Remove her notoriety and reputation by any means necessary. I will pay triple your fees.

Re: Rayvn Porter

That's it. The entire message. One name, a few context clues, and a request for absolute destruction. My heart rate picks up in my chest at the mention of my fees. They're already high as it is. I have the ability to charge whatever the hell I want, being the best at what I do, but triple? *Shit.*

I don't *need* the money, but—

My eyes flick over to the photo sitting on my desk. The only personal touch in my entire office. The only person who means a single fucking thing to me. *For her*, I can take on another job, ruin another life. For her, I'd do it. For her, I'd do anything because I owe her everything.

It's not enough, the voice whispers again. *Will it ever be?*

I stare at the photo for countless minutes. For some reason, I feel like the woman staring back at me is questioning me and my career choice. Something similar to disappointment

washes over me. It's brief. There and gone in an instant, so quick that I'm unsure if it's real or if I've just imagined it.

What would she think about all this? Would she be angry with me for trading my soul and my conscience for money? Would she hate what I do? Or, would she be proud of how far I've come? I get lost in an endless loop of questions and self-deprecation, for a ridiculous amount of time. Time that I don't have.

Another ping finally pulls me from my thoughts, though it's more of a struggle to face reality than usual. My eyes find the chat box, and everything comes back like a sucker punch to the gut. I'd been so lost in the void that the memories of her always inspires, that I'd completely forgotten about the new job.

The user sent another email. This time, only containing two words. Two words phrased as a question.

Anonymous: You in?

But when a message like this comes from someone with the type of money this person is referencing, I'd be a fool to believe it's anything other than a demand. There is no choice. There is no question as to whether or not I'll take the job. There are no morals too high or souls too pure.

What's one more life in the grand scheme of things when you've already ruined so many? What's one more shadow in my chest where my soul used to exist, when it's been gone for so long already?

Nothing. It's nothing.

With that thought in mind, I reply.

Killerc clown666: Send half the payment upfront. You'll know when it's done.

I send over the banking details, then close out of my site. I swap over to begin the search for my new target. For some reason, my palms start to sweat uncharacteristically. My fingers click against the keyboard as I type in her name.

Results pop up instantly, and it only takes a moment of searching to narrow it down to the correct person. Her information coincides with the few details left by the sender, confirming my suspicions.

Rayvn Porter.

34-year-old, female.

Criminal Defense Attorney at Attenborough Law in Denver, Colorado.

Graduated top of her class from the University of Colorado at Boulder.

Grew up in a middle-class neighborhood less than an hour from her current residence.

Raised by a single father, Harris Porter, who was a fireman for the majority of his adult life. Harris retired ten years ago and still lives in their family home.

Though she doesn't have any social media accounts, and a lot of her information is blocked more than likely due to her

high profile/high-risk job, it's not hard to find what I need. In fact, in less than an hour, I could have access to every single facet of not only her life, but everyone she cares about as well.

A few more clicks and I gain access to her banking details. It seems Ms. Porter makes a significant amount of money at her job, and is using a large portion of it to take care of her father. My brows furrow. Is he ill? Why would she give him more than half of her income?

I pull up the official site for her law office and get my first look at her. It's a standard photo in a long line-up of employees and partners, putting a face to the high-priced name. However, Rayvn is anything *but* standard.

She's perfect.

The image is nothing more than a professional headshot, but it's enough. Enough to give me a glimpse—a taste, of *her*. I do a cursory once over, noting every detail in rapid succession, committing her traits to memory.

Her—no...*Rayvn's* skin is rich brown and smooth like polished moonstone. Her inky black hair is in tiny braids and pulled up into a tight bun, showing off her slender, regal neck. My mouth waters at the sight of it. She sits tall in her seat with an air of superiority, like she wants everyone to know she's the shit, but at second glance, it's easy to see it's a façade. A well-perfected mask, much like my own.

Leaning in, I take her features apart, piece by tantalizing piece. Her eyes capture me first, making my breath stutter and catch in my chest. They're large, almost disproportionately so.

Wide and animal-like. They're dark, nearing pitch black, though it could just be the lighting in the photo. They smolder like hot coals, burning so hot I can damn near feel the flames licking up my skin. There's a curiosity to them, almost as though she's trying to figure me out.

Her full, red lips are tipped up at the corners, and if I didn't know any better, I'd say she's mocking me. Through miles of space, and unfathomable time, between myself and her picture, it still feels like she knows something I don't. My skin prickles with irritation as though I've been insulted. It makes my gut clench with the need to defend myself against her attack, her vitriol. I ignore it, knowing the knee-jerk reaction has far more to do with my past than with her. Still, anger and agitation claw against my skin like a crow digging its talons in.

"*Ray—vn,*" I breathe, testing the name on my tongue as my eyes rake over her miniaturized features on the screen.

For some reason, the sight of her inspires images of a dark forest, illuminated only by the soft white glow of the moon. The sound of branches snapping beneath my feet and heavy panting breaths fill my ears. My muscles tense and burn as though they're depleted and crying out for oxygen from overuse. My heart thumps erratically in my chest, pounding painfully against my ribcage.

The vision is so visceral, so real, that I don't realize I'm standing, my hands braced on the edge of my desk until the wood creaks beneath my clenched fists. Shaking my head, I suck in a gasping breath.

It wasn't my imagination. Not fully, anyway. Whatever *that* was, caused a very real reaction from my body.

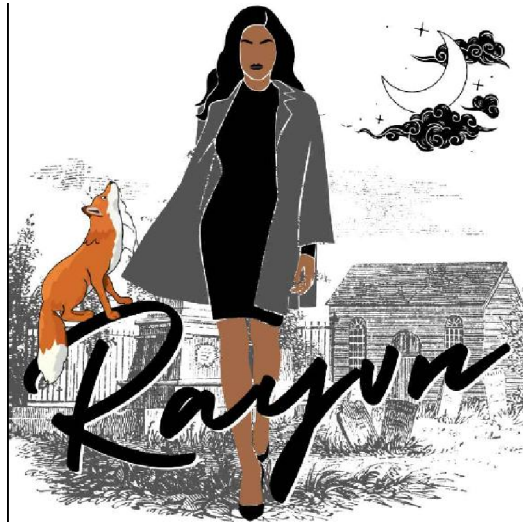
"Fuck," I grunt, wiping my sweaty palms down the front of my jeans. My thumb brushes against my solid, stiff cock, and the sensation has my knees buckling. What the hell is happening to me? I have to get out of here. Clearly, I need sleep way more than I'd realized.

My eyes flit up to the screen once more, grazing across her photo. My body jolts forward in an effort to get closer. I feel like an addict getting a hit, but it's not enough. I need more. Why? Sure she's beautiful, but why am I having this reaction to her?

Nerves pool low in my stomach, further solidifying my decision to abandon the project for now. I don't get nervous. More than that, I don't have *feelings* when it comes to my work or my marks. They're irrelevant and nothing more than a means to an end, but as I stare into her soulful, endless, wide eyes, I know without a shadow of a doubt, this time is different.

She's getting to me, but I can't let her. This job is too big, too important. Too much weighs on the outcome. No matter what the sight of her does to me, I can't let one woman stop me when I'm so close to finally reaching my goal.

I have to end this, and that means—I also have to end Rayvn Porter.



Chapter Three

AUGUST

Shit. Shit. Shit. I'm going to be so freaking late.

I internally chastise myself for the twentieth time in as many minutes as I slam my palm on the elevator call button again. My feet dance back and forth on the tile floor, my heels clacking with every irritated shift. When thirty seconds have passed without change, I smack it again, barely resisting the urge to punch the thing. Glancing down at my watch, I groan. At this rate, there's no way I'll beat the evening traffic.

When the ancient elevator still hasn't moved after a solid minute, I say fuck it, and head for the stairwell. Already loathing the decision with every fiber of my being. I may be an avid runner, but I've never completed a marathon in 6-inch heels. The door reverberates off the wall behind me as I jog up the steps. My hand squeezes the railing in a death grip, praying I don't trip and sprain an ankle or break my face.

"William Fucking Grover," I grit out, rounding the corner as I hit the second flight. "Self-righteous, mouthy, argumentative, prick," I grumble, expelling all the pent-up words I've had to keep in for the last seven hours of my life.

This trial has been a nightmare which is one hundred percent due to the opposing counsel, William Grover, and nothing to do with the actual case. I've known the self-entitled asshole since grad school, and unfortunately, he hasn't lost even an ounce of his condescending personality over the years. Not only that, but the man also loves to hear himself speak. Today, for example, he drawled on and on, basically turning what should have been a short closing statement into the reading of *War and Peace*.

Of course, of all the days I'd have to be stuck in a courtroom well past quitting time, it had to be today. The day I'm supposed to leave for Shiloh's wedding festivities. Somehow, despite the fact that she's a new mom to twins, she's bounced back enough to plan an entire wedding weekend with no one to help her besides Logan's mom and me—*from a distance*. Countless FaceTime calls, carrier packages, virtual dress fittings, and recorded food tastings later, and *wa-la*, it's wedding time.

The couple has decided to marry on The Huxley family's land. After seeing it in person over the Christmas holiday, I can say I fully stand behind the decision. It will be stunning, I have no doubt, but it will also be very...*sweet*. I cringe at the thought, my mouth filling with bitterness. Event after event, and tons of family members crammed together over the course of three days, is a lot for anyone to handle. But for someone like me who generally dislikes people and crowds? It's too much. If it weren't for Shiloh being my best friend, I'd make

up some lame but well-orchestrated excuse for not attending at all.

Finally, I hit the eighth floor, panting and out of breath as I barrel into the reception area. It's after five, and the office is closed, so I'm surprised when I find Carly, our secretary, cursing at her computer. I skid to a halt, barely catching myself when my shiny shoes continue to slide across the slick floor, clearly missing the memo to stop. I crash into the tall desk, gripping the ledge for balance as I catch my breath.

Carly slowly and reluctantly drags her angry gaze from her computer screen to look up at me. Her eyes do a double take, probably noticing my sweaty forehead.

"What's wrong?" We both ask, words tumbling over one another. I grin, shaking my head and gesturing for her to go first. She sighs and turns her glare back to the offending device.

"Damn thing crashed again," she mumbles, dropping her head into her hands with an exasperated breath. "I have to get out the timecards today. Otherwise, no one will get paid on Monday, and the whole system is down."

"Again?" I ask, my brows furrowed. Standing up tall, I shake off the last of the adrenaline from the fast, vertical run and exhale heavily. My feet are throbbing, and my silk shirt is clinging to my sticky body, but I feel more awake than I've felt all day. *Still*— "That's like the sixth time in the last few weeks. I don't understand why the computers keep crashing."

“I don’t either,” she groans, fingers digging beneath her wire-thin glasses to scrub her eyes. “The tech guy is here fixing it, but he’s already been here for over an hour, and it’s still down.” She drops her hands, leaving mascara smeared down her full cheeks. I fight a grimace at the sight, biting my tongue, so I don’t make her feel worse right now. “Sandra is going to be *so mad*.”

I scoff and roll my eyes as I straighten the folded sleeves of my button-down. “Royale can go fuck herself.”

She barks out a laugh, then slaps her hand over her mouth, stifling the sound with a gasp. Her cheeks turn a rosy shade of pink, and her eyes dart around the open waiting area as though Sandra Royale is going to pop out of the shadows and fire her. I cut a hand through the air, dismissing her silent panic.

“If she has anything to say to you Carly, come to me. She’s just another partner here, not the person in charge, and certainly not your boss. Besides,” I add, stepping away from the desk and heading for my office. Walking backward, I smile, hoping to calm her anxieties, though I likely look like a psychopath. “It’s not your fault the computers suck. Go home and get some rest. We’ll handle it on Monday.”

She jumps up, nearly knocking her chair down. “Are you sure?” she cries, already bundling her belongings into her arms. “Ridge made plans for dinner, and I’m already la—”

“Go,” I nod, pointing toward the elevator. I chuckle at her antics, watching her scramble out from behind the desk in

excitement. “At least someone’s going to enjoy their night,” I murmur.

Sighing, I step into my office and dart to my desk to pack up for the weekend. I debate bringing my laptop and case files with me for a solid two minutes, picking them up and placing them into my travel bag before depositing them back onto my desk once more.

Back and forth, back and forth.

My reluctance to show up without a task to keep my brain busy has nothing to do with work and everything to do with the fact that I *hate* hanging out with people. I’m that girl who brings her books to bars and reads in the corner. The one who sneaks onto her phone at events, feigning work-related emails but plays Candy Crush instead of socializing. Not only do I prefer the quiet, but I’m also shit at small talk.

However, this weekend is important to Shiloh, and Shiloh is important to me. I agreed to be her Maid of Honor, and there’s no way that I could get away with hiding in a corner. With that thought in mind, I reluctantly empty my briefcase. I set my laptop back on my desk and tuck the case files into my locked desk drawer until Monday. I drop my purse down and dig out my lipstick for a touch-up, even as my brain scrambles for an excuse not to go this weekend.

I could say I have the flu or maybe chicken pox. Oh, chicken pox would be good. No one wants a bumpy, scratchy Maid of Honor. No. Shiloh will never believe that. Maybe I could say my dad is sic—

I cut that thought off before I can finish it. What the hell is wrong with me? I'm literally wishing illness upon me and my already sick father, just so I don't have to go to this wedding and pretend I'm happy when really...

When really...I'm dying inside. Dying to just feel something—*anything*.

My phone picks that exact moment to buzz, pulling me from my downward spiral. "Shit," I whisper. I don't even need to look at the message to know it's from Shiloh, but being the masochist I am, I pull it from my purse and check my notifications. As expected, it's my bestie asking for my ETA, which at this point is next Tuesday. Groaning, I quickly respond with a simple *soon*, and toss the device onto my desk. We both know I'm a dirty little liar.

Before she can respond, or likely call and shout at me, I run to the bathroom down the hall to freshen up before my two-hour drive to Blue River. Once inside, I take care of my needs and wash my hands. Looking up, I glance at my reflection in the mirror and grimace at what I see.

It's not the outfit or the way I look that has me sighing heavily. It's not my hair, makeup, or clothing. In fact, the burgundy jumpsuit is one of my favorite articles of clothing I own. It has cap sleeves, showing off my long, toned arms. It reaches high up on my neck, elongating it in a way that makes me look and feel elegant. The material clings to my thin body, showing off my slight curves and small waist, before flaring out into a wide leg that skims just above my black heels,

making my 5'4 frame look much taller. The gold jewelry I always wear pops against my brown skin and accents the outfit perfectly.

It's also not the long, black hair I've recently had straightened, knowing I'd want to wear it in a sleek chignon for the wedding. It's naturally densely curled, but today, it's shiny and straight as it glides down my back, grazing just above the swell of my ass. My makeup is on point, if not a little dewy from my recent exertion.

I look *good*. I know I do. Physically, I'm a fucking catch. Mentally? I'm a goddamned disaster.

As I take in my reflection, I find that I don't recognize myself in the stranger staring back at me. I see a woman who spends all day, every day, pretending. Pretending to be something she's not. Pretending to be happy and outgoing. Someone who spends her life standing up for those who can't do it themselves. Holds their hands when their demons get too big, and advocates for the voiceless.

I see a woman who is supporting an elderly, ill father, who sacrificed his own happiness to make sure I never went without. I could give him everything, and it still wouldn't be enough to repay him for what he's done. I'm happy to do it, but that doesn't change the fact that it's fucking exhausting.

Pretending is exhausting.

I see all of those pieces of me, and yet, they don't feel like *me*. They feel fake. Manufactured. An artificially happy,

acceptable representation of myself that won't upset the world or make others uncomfortable.

If they really knew who I am and what lives in me, would they still respect me? Would my father still look at me with eyes full of love and appreciation? Would Addy continue to work with me? Would Shiloh still want me in her wedding? Would I still be successful?

No. Definitely not. No one trusts crazy.

The chaos that lives inside me is buried down so deep, no one would even know it exists, let alone where to look for it. It's a loud, painful ache that scrapes against my organs like it's trying to claw its way out. It's a roar in my ears that refuses to be silent, and *it's constant*.

That's what I see when I look in the mirror. I see the chaos bleeding through my skin. It lives behind my dark brown eyes, making them appear black and demonic. It's the cause for the dark circles expertly hidden beneath my concealer. The reason behind the muscles that cover my body—a result of pushing myself too far when I try and run from the never-ending anarchy that is *me*.

It's no wonder I hate crowds, preferring quiet solitude above all else. It's the only time I can truly be myself.

There is nothing from my past that should cause me to be this *fucked up*. Yes, I lost my mom when I was little. Yes, I was raised by a single father. But he was wonderful. I wasn't abused or traumatized. Nothing crazy happened in my life to make me this way.

I feel dead inside, and I don't know why. I seek out adrenaline in the form of roller-coasters and haunted houses just to *feel* something. I enjoy rough, painful sex because the thrill of it makes me feel alive. It helps me let go and just *exist* in the moment. I like to role-play. Biting. Chasing. Running. I like to be slapped around and degraded. I just plain *like it*. It turns me on more than anything else I've ever experienced, and I don't have a goddamned reason for why. It's just another thing about myself that makes no sense, but I've stopped questioning it.

I once saw a therapist in my early twenties. She said I was struggling with survivor's guilt, which is ridiculous because I didn't survive anything. My mom died, and my dad paid the price. I got out unscathed. What do I have to be sad about? Nothing.

When I told the therapist this, she said I was suffering from emotional detachment. She said, oftentimes, children in high-stress environments can shut their emotions off to protect themselves. Again, I said this was stupid because I wasn't *emotionless*. I feel apathy and sadness for others. I love and love hard. I smile and laugh. I'm not empty all the time. Just... sometimes.

Then she said, maybe I was an empath, and the only way to protect myself from feeling too much was to shut it all off until I felt safe in the quiet reprieve of my home.

So, I told her she was nuts.

A door slamming down the hall jars me from my thoughts, pulling me back to the present. *Fuck*, I really need to go. I quickly lean forward and reapply my lipstick. The blush color is subtle against my skin but compliments my outfit well. I knew I'd need something chic, comfortable, and professional since I spent all day in court and will have a lengthy drive followed by an even longer rehearsal dinner tonight. Stepping back, I force my face into the vague resemblance of happiness, my cheeks dimpling with a smile, and shove all of my muddled thoughts away.

If I keep doing that, will they eventually disappear altogether?

Shaking my head, I exit the bathroom and make my way back to my office, my hand clenching the tube of lipstick tightly in frustration. When I reach my desk, I snag my jacket from the back of my chair and slide it on, drop my lipstick back into my purse and toss my bag over my shoulder. My eyes slide over my desk in search of my phone. I could have sworn I left it next to my laptop. I rummage through a few documents and folders and come up short. My brows furrow in confusion. I pull my bag from my shoulder and quickly dig through it, finding it on the first pass. That's weird...

It vibrates again, this time with a voicemail notification. I groan, seeing three missed calls from Shiloh and one from my dad's phone number. My gut clenches painfully, but I shove the feeling down.. Forgetting everything else, I grab my shit and head out, rushing toward the elevator. This time it dings immediately, and I swear, it's like the gods are shining down

on me for once. Now, if only we can keep that up when it comes to traffic.

The doors slide open, and I rush in, only to stumble to a halt seconds before colliding with someone. My mouth drops open, ready to tell the man off for rudely standing right in front of the doorway, but my words die on my tongue as we lock eyes. In an instant, all of the air in the elevator gets sucked from the small box making my knees buckle.

His energy is so potent, so intense, that I'm unable to move. My brain misfires and then blanks out, going offline as I gape at him in shock. Everything around me disappears but him. For a moment in time, it feels as though I'm a bug caught in a spider's sticky web, unable to flee or save myself. Except, instead of feeling like tiny, insignificant prey, I feel like the most delicious meal the starving predator has ever consumed.

He's consuming me like a motherfucking Death Eater right now. What in the fresh hell is this shit?

As though he knows exactly how much power he's wielding over me, a complete stranger, he smirks in satisfaction. *He likes his power.* I suck in a sharp breath at the realization, and his smile widens as he crosses his arms over his chest. Still unable to move or speak, my eyes track the movement, watching as his strong biceps flex beneath his sweater. He chuckles, and the deep, dark sound intensifies the spell I'm under. I suck in a sharp, heaving breath that makes him laugh again. It's a violent sound that goes straight to my clit.

Correction. He doesn't just *like* his power. He fucking loves it.

The elevator crackles with a potent, heady concoction of feelings that I can't quite put a name to, but it's overwhelming in the best way. My skin is covered in goosebumps, my heart is pounding, and my palms are sweating. My body feels like a fuse box, ready to explode in the midst of a storm. I don't know if I should run for my life or drop my eyes and submit.

He's a predator. There is no doubt about it. I should be scared. I should be screaming or, at the very least, moving as far away from him as possible until I have the opportunity to flee. I shouldn't be standing within reaching distance, watching with rapt attention as he decides what to do with me.

I've stood in the presence of murderers and criminals...true, honest-to-goodness villains...and I've *never* felt this way before. My brows pinch together, and I forcibly shake my head, trying to gain some composure. I take a step back, needing the distance between us so I can think clearly. My back slams into the now-closed elevator doors, and the few feet I'd just gained suddenly feel like mere inches. Swallowing thickly as we stand in a silent stare-off, I use my newfound position to really take him in.

The man is tall, at least 6'2 or maybe a bit bigger. He's not overly thin, nor is he bulky. His build is medium, but through his clothing, I can tell he's fit. He's wearing dark jeans that mold to his long legs like a glove. The collar and cuffs of a white button-down are peeking out from beneath his tight,

black sweater. He has a brown leather computer bag slung across his chest that only adds to his overall nerdy vibe. My eyes rake up his body without thought, and it confuses me. I feel out of control, as though I can't help but commit every ounce of him to memory, and I genuinely have no idea why.

Finally reaching his face, I barely stifle a gasp. His skin is pale, especially next to his black, shaggy hair that's definitely in need of a trim. His full, pink lips are still turned upwards in a cocky smirk that for some unknown reason, has my heart thudding in my chest. He's beautiful. Hands down, one of the most beautiful men I have ever seen. He's average by all counts. No tattoos or piercings to add to the violent, dominant energy he emits. It's like his appearance purposefully contradicts...*him*. I'm not sure what exactly it is about him that makes me think that, but at this moment, it doesn't even matter.

Is it his strong jaw that looks as though it was chiseled from stone? His cheekbones are high, his bone structure is reminiscent of a Greek statue. His sharp nose has a tiny bump on it as though it was maybe broken and then repaired. His thick, black brows poke out from the tops of his rectangular glasses, which do absolutely *nothing* to hide his incredible eyes.

His eyes....

They're so blue, they look clear like the ocean.

Such a paradox to my own black, beastly eyes, my mind unhelpfully supplies. What is happening to me? Why can't I

speak or form any coherent thoughts? I may hate people, but fuck, even I know how to fake it in the presence of a hot man...and holy shit...is he hot.

Maybe that's why I'm behaving so absurdly. Or maybe it's because despite his dickish posture and overwhelming energy, he's drinking me in with just as much vigor as I am him. Our eyes meet once more, and whatever he sees on my face has his cocky expression dropping instantly. His thick lips flatten into a tight line. I catch his Adam's apple bobbing in my periphery. His hands slide across his chest and latch onto the strap of his bag. They clench and unclench repeatedly, turning his knuckles white. He bows his head as he shifts on his feet. The movement seems to make him smaller somehow like he's shrinking in on himself. My head cocks to the side in consideration.

It's like all of a sudden; he's reigning himself in. The explosive, stiflingly powerful energy he had previously been emitting dissolves into thin air. My body unconsciously leans forward as if to chase it, hunt it down, and cling to it. *I want it back.*

"Hi," he murmurs, his voice quiet and shy, though still just as deep as his rumbling chuckle had hinted at. My eyes widen as the last remnants of the spell I'd been under wash away completely, granting me freedom. Though only a minute or so has passed, it feels like we've been trapped in this small space, caught in each other's orbits, for hours, maybe even days.

“Hi,” I say back, shocked at how breathy my voice sounds. I clear my throat, straighten my spine, and slide my hands into the pockets of my peacoat. *Fake it, Ray. You’re the queen at that shit.* “Why are you here?” I demand. *Jesus*, I scoff silently and internally slap myself. This is a twenty-floor public building. He can be wherever he wants.

He smiles softly, and it’s nothing like his previous cocky smirk. “I-I’m here to fix the computers,” he stutters. A pang of sadness fills me, and for some odd reason, I crave the stifling power he was emitting just minutes ago. What the fuck happened to turn him into this meek, shy man that now stands before me, and how do I get the other one back? Did I do something wrong? “What’s your name?”

He looks so sweet and innocent that I find myself answering despite the confusion swirling through me. “Rayvn,” I mumble, my eyes narrowing as I try to figure him out. “What’s your name?” He twitches and looks down, averting his gaze and focusing on his feet that are scuffing the carpeted floor.

He peers up at me, stabbing me in my soul with his piercing clear blue eyes from beneath his glasses. My breath wooshes out of me. He opens his mouth, looking wildly uncomfortable at the question but is saved by the door sliding open. A group rushes in, grunting about *the slow fucking elevator*, and pushes past me. The mystery man gets pressed against the far wall but doesn’t try and fight the angry mob. I, on the other hand, am forced out, luckily onto the bottom floor of the parking garage where my car is waiting. I take a step back, my eyes never leaving his, even in the midst of the crowd.

I want to demand his name. I want to ask for more information. I want the first *him* back. I want to be trapped in his web again. I want...

His eyes shutter and shift. His head tilts to the side in a predatory move as his lip kicks back up into a smirk. My heart squeezes in my chest. My muscles tense. In the span of one second to the next, he's someone else completely. My fight-or-flight instincts kick in, knowing this behavior isn't normal. *He's* not normal. How is he doing this? One foot moves without thought as I take a step back. His smirk turns into a full-blown, dazzling white-toothed grin.

It's equal parts beautiful and terrifying.

The rickety door clangs shut, cutting off our connection, and the loud whirl of the belts sets the car in motion. I stand there, staring at the silver doors for countless minutes as the chaos in my brain comes back to life. It's then I realize that the ever-present static in my head had been silent for the first time in I don't even know how long.

There, in that small metal box trapped under his suppressive, stifling energy, *I was free*.

Shaking my head, I make my way to my car and get situated for the long drive. I type the address into the GPS system, hoping it will give me some backroads to get me to Shiloh's before it's too late.

It takes me half the trip to convince myself to make the call, and another ten minutes to actually do it. My hands clench and unclench on the steering wheel as I wait for it to connect.

“Hello, Mr. Porter’s phone, this is Urma speaking,” the sweet voice chirps, making me smile instantly. Urma has been my father’s nurse for the last year. She’s a very kind woman, even if I kind of hate talking to her.

“Hi, Urma. It’s Rayvn.” I exhale a shaky breath, pushing past the immediate urge to hang up. Before I can, I continue, getting straight to the point. “How is he?”

She hums out a sound of displeasure, then coughs to cover it. She fails. “Nice to hear from you, it’s been a while. Is work busy lately or something?”

I barely contain a growl even as pain lances in my chest. She’s not wrong to be mad. I haven’t been showing up for my dad the way he deserves. I’ve been avoiding him. It’s just so damn hard. “I know, Urma. I suck,” I sigh. “I promise to visit him next week. I have to go out of town this weekend, but I’ll come see him when I get back.”

Urma pauses. A door clicks shut in the background, and she releases a breath that sounds a lot like she’s deflating. “He’s okay, Rayvn. He has his moments where he forgets where he is, but he asks about you every day. He knows who his daughter is, and he misses you.”

Tears well up behind my eyes at her words, and I don’t stop them from spilling out onto my cheeks. I am such a shitty daughter. Too caught up in her own shit, her own depressing existence to be there for the man who raised her...*Fuck*. I choke back a sob at the thought of my father lying in his bed, asking his homecare nurse what’s going on and where his

daughter is. The vision is so visceral I actually have to pull off the road when I begin to shake with the force of the tears I'm keeping at bay.

Urma must hear my quiet sniffles because her voice instantly changes from the cool, chastising one she usually uses with me, to the softer one she uses with my dad. "I'm not trying to make you feel guilty, Honey. I just don't want you to miss this time with him. You never know how many days he'll have where he's aware. This disease is a tricky bastard like that. Sometimes it takes a while to set in. Sometimes it happens fast. Unfortunately, your dad's has been pretty quick. It's only been a year since he was diagnosed, but his lucid days are still a gift."

"I know," I choke out. I breathe through the tears, needing more than anything to tell my daddy I love him. "Is he awake?"

"I'm sorry, Ray. He had a fitful night, and he finally fell asleep an hour ago." I nod, even though she can't see me.

"Yeah, don't worry about it. He needs his rest. But hey, the next time he asks about me—"

"We'll call you right away," she cuts in, a smile in her voice. "You just have to promise to answer."

A quiet huff of laughter escapes me. "Oh, don't worry, I will."

"You take care of yourself. Your daddy wouldn't want you wasting away at that job of yours, you know. He'd want you to

live your life. That's all parents really want for their kids. Have a good weekend, Rayvn." She disconnects before I can respond, and I finally let the tears and broken shards of my heart out as I cry for the father I'm slowly, yet surely, losing.

As a kid, they don't tell you how hard it will be to lose a parent. To watch them disappear before your very eyes, whether from age or illness. I may be a fractured soul but grieving the loss of a person who is still alive is by far the most difficult thing I have ever done.



Chapter Four

“Holy shit, I can’t believe you’re getting married tomorrow,” I gush. My excitement is mostly because this is *Shiloh* we’re talking about and partly because I’m three-quarters of my way through a bottle of red. She scoffs, but it quickly turns into a giggle as she rolls over to face me on the bed. She props her head up on a fist and looks down at me, a drunkenly happy expression on her pretty face.

“Aww, you really do love me, don’t you?” she laughs. My brow lifts up in question as I flip to my side, mirroring her posture. My sleep shorts ride up high on my ass, and I blindly tug the material from between my cheeks in a vague attempt at modesty. My ass is facing the bedroom door, after all. I don’t need to moon anyone who might show up. She takes in my expression and shrugs. “What? You must really love me if you’re willing to pretend to be happy for my sake.”

My smile wilts, and my face scrunches up. “I am happy for you, babe.” She gives me a look that says she clearly doesn’t believe me. *Ah, she knows me well.* I roll my eyes and release a heavy breath. “Look, Shiloh. You remember how you once

told me that you can be insanely happy for someone else, and still sad for yourself?”

Shiloh’s happy expression drops just as quickly as mine had, and I immediately feel horrible for running her pre-wedding bliss. My gut clenches with guilt. I hadn’t meant to bring her down to my level of misery. I should have known better. Of course, bringing that up would make her sad. That’s what she told me after losing the baby and receiving a baby shower invitation from one of our friends. I know she was happy for Gia, but the broken look in her eyes told me that friendly joy only went so deep.

“Shit, I’m sorry,” I murmur, petting her head comfortingly. Or at least, that’s my intention, but it comes out a bit aggressive when my floppy, drunk hand slaps her in the ear. She winces and pulls away, shooting me a glare. Her big lips tip up in a smile that soon becomes a laugh, and before I know it, we’re both lying on our backs, cackling hysterically.

We laugh until we’re wheezing, and then we laugh some more. Eventually, it dies down, and we’re both left breathing heavily in the otherwise silent guest suite in her log castle. I still can’t believe she found herself a lumber-snack with a daddy brain who would literally do anything to make her happy. And I do mean *anything*. She told me all about their sex life, leaving nothing out, as besties do. Almost a year later, and I’m still drooling over what happened when Logan found the smutty shifter books on her Kindle. If I wasn’t already at my limits with kinks, I’d definitely be adding knotting to it after her many filthy stories.

Sighing, she reaches down and finds my hand, giving it a firm squeeze. “I didn’t mean to get all mopey. Yes, I know exactly what you’re talking about. I know you’re happy for me, Ray, I’m just sad that you’re not happy for *you*.”

Staring up at the ceiling, I blink away the burning behind my eyes. Shiloh is one of the only people who can get to me in this way. Maybe it’s because, other than my dad, she’s the only other person I’ve really ever let in. She’s so far in, that sometimes I worry she knows more about me than I even know myself.

“I hope you know that I am beyond happy for you, Shi,” I mumble, squeezing her hand tightly. Keeping my gaze locked onto the slow circles the ceiling fan is making, I find it easier to open up. “I honestly cannot picture a person better suited for you, than Logan is. He’s wonderful to you and your boys, who are equally incredible, by the way.”

She snuffles, and I can feel her nod as she shifts on the fluffy down comforter next to me. “I know.”

“My heart is so full for you guys. You deserve every ounce of happiness in your life after everything you’ve been through. I don’t want to bring you down, especially not this weekend. This wedding is everything your first wedding never was, and that is one hundred percent due to the fact that Logan is right for you and his love is real.” Turning to face her, I watch as she smiles softly, even while batting her persistent tears away.

“He really is perfect,” she sighs, a note of awe in her voice. We lock eyes, and the utter pure elation and love on her face

cause an intense stabbing pain in my chest. “You’ll have that too, Rayvn. If you want it, you’ll have it too. You just have to be open to it.”

Groaning, I slap the stupid tear that spills down my cheek at her words. dammit. “It’s not as easy for me,” I start, my voice raspy. I’m going to pretend it’s from the alcohol and not from the torrent of emotions climbing up my throat.

Shiloh cuts a hand through the air sloppily as her cute chubby cheeks turn pink in anger. “You know that’s bullshit. My family situation sucked way worse than yours did. At least you have an awesome dad that loves you more than life.” My mouth opens and snaps shut as I glare at her. My family isn’t at all what I was referring to nor do I want to talk about them.

“No, seriously Ray. I understand that this isn’t about your dad or your mom,” she pauses, noticing my flinch. She drops my hand and tugs me forward, pulling me into a tight embrace. My body tenses immediately, not being used to cuddles and physical contact the way she is. It takes me a moment, but I finally relax into her embrace. I wrap my arm around her, returning the hug. This definitely wouldn’t be happening if we weren’t both three sheets to the wind.

“Your dad will love you no matter who you bring home someday. I know you’re afraid to disappoint him, but Harris is a good man. He doesn’t need to know about your sex life, and you’d be surprised that even normal people can be into kinky shit. When you find the love of your life, they will be

accepting of your wants and needs, and if they aren't, then they aren't who you're meant to be with."

I tense again, wanting to pull away. *She has no idea what she's talking about. My dad likely won't say anything. Hell, he might not even recognize me at that point.* Oblivious to my own mental spiral, Shiloh hugs me harder before finally releasing me. I sit up, crossing my legs and bundling my arms around a pillow as I fight the urge to run from this conversation. She mirrors my posture, our knees touching as we face one another.

"Rayvn, what Ma—*he*," she corrects, knowing I despise his name. "What he did was horrible. There is no other way to spin it. He's a selfish, misogynistic, judgmental, entitled son-of-a-bitch that deserves to have a dick shoved up his tight, prude asshole." My eyes are as wide as saucers as I gape at her. Completely unbothered, she shrugs, tipping her shoulders up high. "What? The way that you hate Cole is the way that I have he who shall not be named. He's a piece of crap, and he deserves to burn in the fiery pits of *Mordor*."

"Holy fucking shit. What has Logan done to my sweet best friend?" I shriek.

She grins, releasing a slightly maniacal cackle. "Oh, trust me. My man has a filthy mouth, but this," she gestures to herself, "is all me. Well...all me and the alcohol. I can't even remember the last time I drank this much," she mumbles, a contemplative look on her face. She taps her chin for a moment while she thinks. "Oh wait!" She grins, nodding her

head. “The last time I was this drunk was the night I got my job with Huxley Homes!”

I shake my head, but my smile stays firmly planted on my face as I recall her early days in this family. She’d met Logan’s middle brother, Stephen, and his on-again, off-again boyfriend, Dom, at a restaurant when she’d been stood up for a date. She got completely shit-faced, made besties with Dom, who was bartending, and somehow got hired at Stephen’s family’s construction company. She’s still friends with Dom, who I’ve met a few times. He’s a great guy and super hilarious. In fact, Logan’s whole family is wonderful. And his brothers... we’ll... let’s say the Huxley genes are excellent.

Shiloh pulls herself from her reminiscent thoughts and gives me a serious look. “My whole point was that what Mark did was awful. Really and truly fucked up. But he doesn’t represent all men. He’s one limp-dicked jerk in a sea of majorly perfect fish-dicks. Don’t let him keep you from getting back out there and trying again.”

“Fish-dicks? Are you serious?” I murmur, my nose scrunched up in distaste. I shake my head in exasperation. “Please, for the love of all that is holy, do not *ever* refer to a cock as a fish-dick again. Especially if your goal is to get me back out into the dating world again. That’s literally the least sexy term I’ve ever heard.”

She tosses her hands up in the air. The quick movement sends her drunken, clumsy self backward, and she narrowly avoids rolling off the bed. I snatch her foot, saving her from

having to explain any bruises on her wedding day tomorrow. She barks out a laugh as she regains her spot.

“Anyways,” she drawls through her laughter. *She laughs more now than I think she has the entire time I’ve known her*, I realize. A soft, genuine smile creeps up my face. I honestly am so damn happy for her. “Promise me that you’ll get back out there. It’s been like four years since you’ve seen anyone. I know he fucked with your head, but seriously, Ray, the shit you like isn’t that weird. I bet you could find someone who likes the things you do on a dating app or something.”

“Of course, it is,” I groan, ignoring the rest of her statement. Covering my face with my hands, I sigh heavily. “He wasn’t wrong, Shiloh. I am a freak.”

“No!” she cries out, her loud volume making me wince. “Hell no, absolutely not.” When I don’t respond, only burying my face deeper into my hiding place, she scoffs. *“God, I am so fat.”*

My head whips up in her direction as hot, red anger consumes me in an instant. “What the fuck did you just say?” I hiss.

She nods her head, a sad, forlorn expression replacing her previous joy. “I am. Big girls aren’t worthy of love and affection. And we’re definitely not sexy, or deserving of a good sex life.”

My eyes narrow on her in confusion. “Where is this shit coming from? You don’t believe that. That’s the kind of shit Cole would spout at—” She lifts a perfectly arched, thick

brown brow at me, looking smug as fuck. “You sneaky little bitch,” I murmur.

“Who? Me?” she gasps, feigning shock like some award-winning actress putting on a show. “I have no idea what you’re talking about.”

I shove her back, secretly hoping she falls off the bed this time. “Okay, I get it.”

Shiloh nods once. “Good. If it’s not okay for me to believe the disgusting lies Cole put in my head about my body, then it’s not okay for you to believe the lies Mark told you about your sexual interests. You like rough fucking, Ray, that isn’t a crime, and as much as your shitty ex liked to tell you, it also isn’t abnormal.”

“But it’s not just rough sex, is it, Shi?” I snap back. Why? I have no idea. Mark’s hateful comments swirl through my brain on repeat almost daily. Every time I have an urge or desire to act on my wants, he pops up like a bad STD, refusing to leave me be. “I have fantasies about being hunted. Chased down and taken in the dirt. I have these insatiable cravings to be torn into, to be bitten and made bleed.” I say, my breathless voice going up an octave as my hands flail about. “And I don’t even have a good reason to want it. I wasn’t traumatized. I wasn’t assaulted—” At her sharp glare, I amend. “I mean, before I became interested in this stuff. I just like it, and it’s weird! I want to be *forced*. Who the fuck wants that?”

I’m panting by the time I finish, and my hands are shaking. I clasp them in my lap, fisting them so tightly my nails dig into

my palms. Shiloh doesn't even bat an eye, and it honestly astounds me.

“And I want a big ass dick with a thick knot shoved up my pussy until I'm practically impaled and split in half,” she supplies causally. “To me, it sounds like you have a primal kink. You want to be chased down by a beast and torn into by a vampire. Sounds hot.”

I gape at her. My mouth is so dry my tongue is stuck to the roof of my mouth. I peel it away and lick my dry lips. “You make it sound like I have a *Twilight* kink,” I murmur. “I don't.”

She rolls her eyes. “I mean—don't you though? You've loved horror movies your entire life.” She ticks off a finger, counting down my indiscretions like she's making a grocery list. “Your first crush was Jason Voorhees, and your second was Michael Myers. You got turned on every time Dracula bit someone. You're the only person I've ever met who liked *The Grudge* and wished that bitch would chase your ass down some stairs. And every year since we met, you drag me to that creepy haunted house in the cornfield for Halloween.”

I cringe. She's not wrong...about any of it. Shiloh releases a heavy breath and continues. “You're an adrenaline junky with a serious thing for villains. It's not a big deal. You're also open to all sorts of sexual pleasure. You used to embrace this with Oscar before Mark had you questioning yourself. You need to let his words go. Better yet, you need to find someone new who proves him wrong.”

Groaning, I rub my face letting her words sink in. I know she's right. I'm not opposed to dating it's just a pain in the ass. I've had so much else going on the last few years, it hasn't been a priority. And yeah, the situation with my ex did fuck me up a bit...okay, a lot...

"Could you imagine that shit?" Shiloh says, drawing my attention back to her. I find her staring at me with a wistful expression. My brow arches in question. "The *Twilight* thing. If Edward and Jacob didn't make her choose? If they both hunted her down in those stormy, foggy woods late at night."

Her voice takes on a haunted, spooky tone as she recounts one of her favorite movies. My eyes widen in realization. Maybe this is where her shifter fascination came from before she got her hands on those damn books.

"Remember that scene where she's like running through the forest being chased? Come on. That was hot. Of course, it's meant for kids, so like, she got away, but can you imagine if she didn't?" she breathes. A dreamy, excited look fills her innocent cherub-like face as she prattles on. Meanwhile, my heart rate is increasing with every single word as I picture it. She continues on, clapping her hands with glee.

"What if the guys teamed up and both chased her? Oh my god! What if Jacob was in his wolf form, and Edward was all blood-hungry with his teeth out? Shit, that would be sexy. Then, they'd catch her and fuck her at the same time. It would be brutal and painful and scary but like, holy crap." She breaks off, shifting on the bed and wiggling like she's turned on.

She's not the only one. When she says it like that, it is hot and doesn't sound nearly as crazy.

"And the force part?" I whisper. Shiloh struggles to pull herself from her lusty *Twilight* fantasy, but when she does, she gives me a reassuring smile.

"Do you want to be raped against your will, Ray?"

My head rears back in shock. Is that what she thinks? "No," I say quickly, shaking my head. "No, not at all. That's not what I want."

She nods like she knew my answer all along. "I know. You want to give someone consent to take you when you aren't expecting it. It's hot as long as it's safe. Make sure you set up some safe words and talk about your boundaries. Also, make sure it's with someone you really trust."

"Jesus Christ, Shi. How did you learn about all of this?" I ask her, my brain struggling to put two and two together. This is not at all the semi-nerdy, quiet girl I met in college. Sure, we both went out and drank and had our fair share of sexual partners, but for the most part, Shiloh was the more reserved between the two of us.

She gives me a knowing look. "You have no idea how much crap I've learned from reading smut. I could probably open up a BDSM club at this point, or maybe even a sex store. I've had to Google hundreds of things over the years just so I understand what they're talking about. I'm practically an expert now."

We stare at each other for a few moments as I process everything she said, especially where my ex is concerned.

Mark was another attorney I'd met 5 years ago when I was fresh from college. We hit it off right away and quickly began dating. I'd trusted him. Hell, I'd even loved him. We were together and sexually active for over six months before I finally got the courage to tell him about my fantasies. I started off slowly, sharing the smaller, more basic wants. He was excited and reciprocated all of them, never missing a beat. It took me another six months before I felt confident enough to spill my soul. I thought his eagerness about everything else we'd done meant he'd be okay knowing the rest...

I was wrong.

So completely wrong.

It's one thing to know your girl likes her hair pulled, ass slapped, or to be bitten and choked during sex. Those things are honestly pretty basic, in my opinion. Like Shiloh said. As long as it's discussed, consensual, and safe, there is nothing wrong with rough sex. I know that I honestly do. However, my kinks and desires go far beyond those things. I love the feeling that comes with putting your trust and pleasure in someone else's hands and just *letting go*. Knowing that they have you fully and completely. That they will give you exactly what you want, know your limits, and test them. It's powerful.

I've only ever met one man who was down to experiment with me. His name was Oscar, and we met in grad school. We were close friends who got drunk and stumbled into an

inadvertent and very personal conversation. One thing led to another, and before I knew it, we were fucking six ways to Sunday.

We learned together. Tested our limits and boundaries, and it was seriously just *fun*. With him, it was easy. If one of us had a desire, there was no judgment. We would just simply say okay and try it out. If it didn't sit well with one of us or didn't turn us on, we forgot about it and moved on to the next thing we wanted to explore.

I learned all about safe words and hard limits. I learned that I love the adrenaline and fear that comes with not knowing exactly what's going to happen next. I enjoy being afraid while still knowing I'm safe. It puts me in a mental space where I can finally let go of everything, including the chaos inside me. I can just *be*.

Unfortunately, Oscar and I were only good friends. Besides our sexual compatibility, there was nothing else between us. No way we'd work out long-term. I don't regret our relationship, and I knew exactly what it was going into it. The part that sucks most is that our time of experimentation opened up an aching chasm inside of me that's yet to be filled since we parted ways. I thought Mark was going to be the one to change that.

Fuck, I was so wrong.

When I finally told him about my darker desires, his immediate reaction was to be *repulsed*. The vile things that spilled from his mouth still hurt my soul to this day. I may be a

strong independent woman, but I loved him, and his judgment hurt deeply. He ended up leaving that night and going out with friends to blow off steam.

He showed up at my apartment in the middle of the night, completely wasted, claiming he was sorry and ready to talk. My stomach clenches as I think about what came next. I squeeze the pillow to my chest letting the cold material ground me. That night, my boyfriend, an attorney and respectable member of the community, tried to take what was *not* freely given. What was worse is that he claimed it was what I wanted. My skin crawls at the memory.

For a moment, he had me questioning myself. I had told him I wanted it to be rough and brutal. I wanted it to be exciting and scary. He believed that because I wanted those things, it gave him free rein and ownership over my body.

He was wrong.

When I finally shook myself from my shock, confusion, and utter betrayal of my boyfriend attempting to rape me, despite the fact that I was literally screaming *no*, I kicked his ass. Luckily he was drunk, and despite the fact that he was much larger than me, I was able to knock him out. However, his words and repeated claims that I'd asked for it, that I wanted it, made me too scared to report the assault. I allowed him to get in my head, and apparently, I'm still giving him that power years later. We ended up parting ways, never speaking again.

I know the situation with Mark is what has kept me from getting back out there. My urges haven't gone anywhere, if

anything, they've increased tenfold. Which is crazy considering what almost happened to me. The desire to experience those things is almost too much sometimes, but the fear of judgment and someone taking it too far keeps me from acting on them.

"I'm thirsty," Shiloh sighs, pulling me from my thoughts. It takes a few blinks to bring me back to the present, but when I do, I find her gazing at the fireplace. A dreamy, sleepy look on her face. She's definitely wasted. "I love him so much. He's so perfect," she murmurs. I smile, watching my best friend melt into a pile of loved-up goo before my eyes. "His cock is like fucking spectacular. Have I ever told you that? And oh my lord, when he puts one of our knots on, it's like I'm fucking a massive, plaid-wearing werewolf."

I leave her to dick-dreams and crawl to my knees to grab the wine bottle and glasses from the nightstand. I'm aware the position is putting my full ass, wedgie and all, on display, but I could care less at the moment. I need alcohol to wash away the memories of Mark. I've just grabbed the wine bottle when a hard slap lands on my ass cheek, making me jump.

"Damn girl, you got cakes," she cries out before slapping the other cheek. My head snaps in Shiloh's direction, and I'm pretty sure my brows are touching my hairline. I open my mouth to respond when a low whistle from the bedroom door sounds through the quiet room.

"She's not wrong," Charlie, Logan's youngest brother, chuckles, his eyes zeroed in on said *cakes*. "Slap her ass again,

Shiloh,” he groans, adjusting his dick in his sweats. My eyes track the movement without my permission.

“Don’t tell my woman what to do, fucker. And don’t you dare bring your hard cock anywhere near her,” Logan growls, stomping his way into the room. It shakes me from the trance I’d been in, and I quickly scramble from my hands and knees, dropping onto my ass.

“Babydoll, it’s bedtime.” Logan doesn’t wait for Shiloh to respond; he just bends down and plucks her from my bed. She smiles up at him adoringly, clinging to his neck. He murmurs something in her ear that sounds a lot like *You’re gonna be knocked up again by the time you say I do*. Her cheeks turn pink, but she doesn’t disagree. Jesus, those two are going to wind up with fifty kids, I swear. Logan spins on his heel, his eyes never leaving Shiloh’s, as they leave the room.

“I love you, Ray Ray,” Shiloh calls out from down the hall. I chuckle, shaking my head. They’re fucking adorable together.

“Love you too, Shi Shi!” I yell back. I start to pour myself another glass of wine but say fuck it and bring the bottle straight to my mouth. The bed jostles next to me, and I pause mid-drink, glancing to my left, only to find Charlie sitting next to me.

His hands are braced behind his neck, causing his shirt to ride up, exposing his toned Adonis belt. His grey sweats are doing absolutely nothing to hide his impressive erection. I take

a deep gulp of wine, focusing on the sweet, bitter taste instead of the way Logan's baby brother looks sitting in my bed.

I slowly bring the bottle back down and arch a brow at him. "Can I help you?" I murmur. Charlie grins, putting his deep dimples on display as he snatches the bottle from my hands.

"You sure can," he murmurs back, his voice thick with desire as his eyes rake down my body. My tank top and tiny shorts leave just about everything on display, and he clearly likes what he sees. My pussy clenches in response, and I have to mentally chastise myself. Shit, it really has been a long time if all it takes is a hot guy and the slight hint of hard dick in my presence to have me wet and achy.

I force myself to calm down and reach to grab my bottle back. Charlie's grin turns mischievous as he moves the wine from my reach. His eyes never leave mine as he slowly brings the bottle to his lips. His tongue darts out, tracing where my mouth had just been. He savors it as though he can actually taste my flavor.

I sit there in a trance as I watch him practically tongue the opening like it's a pussy. He groans, his eyes sliding shut as his mouth closes over the bottle. My cunt is practically throbbing, but I still have the good sense to extract myself from this situation. Charlie is hot as hell, but there is *no way* we'd be compatible. Not only is he way younger than me, but he's Logan's baby brother.

Nope. Not happening. He will not be the one to break my dry spell.

“You must suck cock like a pro,” I quip, hiding the deep swallow I have to take at the thought of Charlie sucking a dick. That would be hella hot to watch. My sexual fuck-it-list just got longer.

His eyes fly open, and he chokes on his mouthful of wine, barely keeping it from spraying across the pretty white comforter. I wink and snatch my bottle back. For all of three seconds, I consider showing him how it’s really done, but I resist, knowing it will just egg him on.

Stop it, Ray. You can’t fuck the brother, I remind myself. The little voice in the back of my head scoffs. *Just a little fuck won’t hurt anyone.*

I roll my eyes at the little angel and devil situation I’ve got going on. There is no such thing as a little fuck, and I sure as hell would hurt poor, sweet, innocent Charlie Huxley. He may be watching me as though he’d like to eat me alive, but he has absolutely no idea what a night with me would really be like.

“Excuse me?” he sputters, his green eyes wide. His adorable, freckled cheeks are somehow both pink and pale all at once. I chuckle at his reaction. Yeah, he definitely couldn’t handle me if the idea of sucking a dick has him nearly passing out. “That’s not—that’s not what I meant.” He sits up and runs a hand through his red, curly hair. “I was—I—I,” he stutters.

I sigh, taking pity on the poor kid. “I know, Charlie,” I groan, shaking my head. “I was kidding. Calm down.”

He blanches, looking everywhere but at me. He pushes off the bed and adjusts his pants. My eyes flick to check out his

dick situation, and sure enough, his boner is gone. Ah, nothing freaks a straight man out more than the thought of a dick in his mouth. *Boring.*

Nodding, he steps away from the bed. “Right, right. Okay then. Well, uh, night Rayvn.” Turning, he bolts for the door before I can even say goodnight back. It clicks shut in his wake, and less than a minute later, I hear the front door slam. Apparently, he’s going home.

Smiling at myself, I lift the bottle for another drink and sigh when I realize it’s empty. I drop it onto the nightstand next to our abandoned glasses and flick the lamp off. Flopping onto my back, I stare out of the floor-to-ceiling windows that frame the fireplace, watching the stars dance in the sky. This house really is beautiful. I never thought I’d enjoy being so far away from the city, but the country sure has its perks. I can’t remember the last time I saw the night sky without all the light pollution.

It doesn’t take long before my eyes are winking shut as sleep begins to claim me. Darkness is immediately replaced with crystal-clear blue eyes and a devious grin. My skin prickles with awareness and anticipation. Keeping my eyes closed, I focus on the memory of the nameless man from the elevator who has consumed my thoughts since the moment we met. All throughout my drive here, and then dinner, the vision of him standing before me, radiating that powerful, intense energy, stayed with me. I tried to shake him from my thoughts. Tried to ignore the pull between us, but it was useless.

Something about the dark-haired enigma called to me, and even with the distance between us, I *still* feel the tug. I don't understand it, but here, in this dark room, I can ignore the questions and just go with the insane craving he ignited inside me.

Before I know what I'm doing, my hand is sliding down my body and beneath my shorts and panties. My pussy is already soaked, and I can admit, it has a hell of a lot more to do with the scary, blue-eyed man than with Charlie. I swirl my fingers around my throbbing clit as I replay the vision of running into him and the way his muscular body felt against mine. I wish I knew his name. I wish I could have heard him speak more in that deep, rumbling voice. Shit, I wish I could bottle up his powerful dominance and savor it.

The more I think of our limited interaction, the more my brain runs with the idea of my mystery man and all the wicked things he could do to me. Something about his potent power and cocky energy combined with his deep voice has me imagining all sorts of fucked up scenarios. The way he made me feel trapped. The urge to run and the knowledge that he would absolutely chase me like the predator he is.

My clit throbs in time with my rapidly increasing heartbeat. I coat my fingers in my sticky wetness and glide down, swirling around my entrance before dipping one finger in. It's not enough, it never is. I shove in a second finger as I replay the deep sound of his chuckle again and again. God, I can only imagine how fucking sexy that voice would sound as he called my name while balls deep in my pussy.

Would he say dirty shit as he pounded into my aching cunt from behind? Would he pull my hair and force me down onto the ground, or would he take me against a tree, using it to hold me up while he fucked my soul from my body?

My fingers pick up their pace, curving in search of that elusive spot that never fails to make me gush when I can find it. My fingers fumble around, twisting and bending without success. I quickly grow frustrated, losing my grasp on my fantasy. I wish I would have brought my toys with me. My tiny hands and fingers are never enough by themselves. I always, *always* need something else. Something deeper, more solid. Something with that sharp bite of pain.

My eyes flick open, and the pounding of my heart becomes damn near painful as it rattles my bones. The moonlight and dull flame in the fireplace cast a warm glow through the spacious room. I glance to my right, and a wave of nerves swirls through me as my mind takes a dark, needy turn. A turn that I happen to love.

I grin into the quiet darkness and shimmy out of my bottoms as excitement replaces nervousness. My hand darts out, snatching the empty wine bottle. My finger runs along the edge, collecting the small amounts of residual wine. I suck the droplets into my mouth and smile around my finger when I notice it still tastes like my pussy. I replace my fingers with the bottleneck, running my wet tongue along the cool glass, making sure it's fully saturated with my saliva. Before the air can dry the bottle, I bring it down between my legs and spread

my thighs wide. I exhale a ragged breath, focusing back on my mystery man as I coat it in my wetness.

I imagine the filthy things he'd say to me as he pinned me against the wall of the elevator. He'd circle one of his hands around my throat and lean into my ear. I imagine the way his hot breath would skitter across my cheek as he squeezed the air from my lungs.

"You want my cock, slut?" he'd murmur. I'd nod, my hands wrapped around his wrist, not to pull him away, but to keep him there as I clung to the sensation of his hot body against mine. *"Take it then,"* he'd grunt before slamming into me in one hard thrust.

I mimic the motion, shoving the neck of the bottle deep into my sopping-wet pussy. I suck in a sharp, silent breath at the too-full feeling and the sharp bite pain, but I don't stop. I focus on *him* as I fuck myself fast and hard. I'm relentless. My other hand comes down on my clit, and I barely stop myself from slapping it, needing the extra sensation but knowing I can't be loud. I settle for pinching the throbbing bud while thrusting the glass deep.

"That's it. Scream for me, baby. Cry for my cock." His deep voice in my head has my legs shaking as I close in on my release.

I shift my grip on the bottle, tilting it upward to hit my g-spot. I picture the way he'd fuck me so hard and so fast, not caring about my pleasure as he chased his own release. The way he'd use me. The way his blue eyes would shutter at the

way I feel wrapped around him. The way he'd treat me like a toy but look at me like I'm precious.

"Cum for me, Ray," he'd murmur softly, his lips ghosting over mine.

I'd be so out of breath my lungs would ache and burn, but still, he wouldn't stop pounding into me. *Fuck.* My pussy clenches around the bottle so hard I can barely move it an inch. My arm flies up to my mouth, and I bite down on my flesh just in time to muffle my screams of pleasure as I cum all over the wine bottle. I dig my teeth in so hard, I know I'm breaking through the skin. The pain spurs me on, pushing me into a second orgasm. I gush enough that my release trickles down between my ass cheeks and all over the sheets.

I lay there panting and shaking, my eyes staring blindly up at the ceiling. *Holy shit,* that was insane. I've never cum like that before. Especially never by myself.

When I can finally breathe properly, I pull the bottle from between my thighs. Sitting up, I flick on the light to inspect the damage on the sheets. My release coats the glass bottle and the bed. It's tinged with red, and for a second, I worry I made myself bleed. Surprisingly, the thought only turns me on more. Glancing down, I take in the perfect red teeth marks on my arm. A dopey smile crosses my face. *Shit.* I almost forgot what it was like to have battle wounds from a good fucking.

Soon, the little voice in my head supplies. *You'll have it again soon.*

Psh. One can only hope.



Chapter Five

“I choose you, Logan Huxley,” Shiloh whispers, her voice thick and raspy as she cries. “I choose you as my friend, my partner, my husband. You are the father of my children, my future. I choose you now, and I’ll choose you, again and again, every day for the rest of our lives.” Tears stream down her cheeks, but they do nothing to dim her glow.

My heart squeezes as I watch my best friend of over ten years marry her new best friend. I know Logan’s not replacing me, and I honestly could not be happier that she’s found her other half. Shiloh deserves this, and from what she’s told me so does Logan. I have no doubt they will be together for the rest of their long, blissfully happy, lives. Logan grins, a tear streaking down his face as he stares at his bride. It’s that tiny little thing that breaks my composure.

You said you wouldn’t cry, Rayvn.

Shit, I can’t help it. Something about seeing a big, hulking, rough man like Logan Huxley crying as he stares at the love of his life is enough to crack even the toughest of hearts. I tear my gaze from them and glance around the crowded backyard.

Sure enough, there's hardly a dry eye in the bunch. Everyone is riveted by the open and honest display of true love before them. My heart squeezes in my chest, and my hands clench both mine and Shiloh's bouquets in response.

I will not think of myself. I will not worry about myself and my future. *I will not, I will not, I will not*, I chant.

To distract myself, I seek out Charlie, knowing he's probably one of the few people here who's not trapped under the happy couple's spell. He stands behind Logan, next to Stephen. Like I'd assumed, Charlie has his usual grin plastered across his face, but he's teetering to the left just enough to make me pretty positive that he's likely tipsy, if not full-on buzzed. He winks at me, and I smile softly in return, aware of our audience.

Apparently, he's over his silly embarrassment from the night before. If anyone should be feeling weird, it's me. Not even five minutes after he'd left my room, I shoved a wine bottle up my pussy and fucked myself stupid. My thighs clench at the memory, and my eyes dart from Charlie's, hoping he didn't catch the movement. How cringy am I? I can't be thinking about *that shit* while standing in front of a hundred people at my best friend's wedding.

Fucking hell, Rayvn. Get it together.

I force myself to focus back in on the nuptials and find Logan sliding a ring onto Shiloh's offered hand. They're both grinning like loons, and it's clear they are giddy with happiness. It's beautiful, it really is, but damn I seriously hate

weddings. My skin crawls with the reminder of how many people I'm currently standing in front of and how many of them will likely try to talk to me after this. It'll be like the rehearsal dinner on steroids.

I keep my *happy for the couple* smile plastered to my face as I glance around the yard. The Huxley property is mostly hundreds of acres of Pinetree's, which makes the entire place smell like Christmas year-round. I bet Shiloh loves that. She's a fan of the holidays. They set up the huge backyard area for both the ceremony and reception with an elegant, boho theme that fits them perfectly.

There are cream pillar candles in clear glass hurricanes on tree stumps lining the aisle, which is made up of eclectic rugs. Logan and his brothers built a geometric archway to stand beneath, and his mom crocheted a beautiful tapestry to hang from it as their backdrop. The reception tables are simple exposed wood with baby's breath and hydrangea centerpieces, complete with gold accents. Somehow, everything looks thoroughly planned out and cohesive, despite the borderline shotgun wedding.

It's beautiful, but the crown jewel is my best friend. The wedding party is all wearing black from head to toe, allowing the bride to stand out beautifully. Not that she wouldn't anyways, but her floor-length, lace, form-fitting gown is a showstopper, as is the woman inside it. The dress is tight, showing off her generous curves and ample chest. Not to mention her killer ass that Logan's barely restraining himself from grabbing. The sleeves are long and flowy, as is the train.

Her hair is up in messy curls, showing off her simple makeup and long, chandelier earrings.

She's stunning. Hands down the center of this entire event. My heart squeezes in my chest as I take in her glowing, tear-stained cheeks that match Logan's.

Fuck. Shiloh is one lucky bitch.

A quiet whimper drags my attention to Logan's parents, who are holding Asher and Archer. Logan and Shiloh's one-month-old twins. The squeeze turns into a stabbing sensation. Shiloh tried to conceive for years with her piece of shit ex-husband Cole. They were only successful once but lost the baby right before she entered the second trimester. It was heart-wrenching, as was the way Cole handled the situation. I'd already hated him, but the way he treated the loss so callously had me downright murderous.

Now, looking at how happy she is with Logan and their boys, I know without a shadow of a doubt that everything happens for a reason. It may have been a horribly painful journey, but she ended up exactly where she was always meant to be.



Hours later the speeches are done, the cake's been cut, and the happy couple is mingling and thanking their guests. My ass is firmly planted at the wedding party table, where I've been nursing my fourth glass of wine for the last ten minutes. The wedding was beautiful, and the reception's been a mix of sweet and fun, but my heart is aching nearly as bad as my feet are at this point. The urge to find a quiet place to hunker down has my reclusive self practically salivating.

My eyes flick up when I hear Logan's boisterous laughter spilling out through the open yard. He's standing at the bar, chatting with his brothers and dad, a massive grin spread across his handsome face. I smile as I take in the four matching red-headed Huxley men. Even in his old age, their dad is still a good-looking man, and it's clear to see the apple doesn't fall far from the tree. Shiloh's boys are going to be lookers, for sure.

"Hot, aren't they?" A lilting voice chuckles next to my ear, making me jump. My heart pounds in my chest from the small splash of fear, and I hold onto the emotion like it's my final breath. My head whips to the side, and I find Dom dropping

into the vacant chair next to me. I give him a knowing grin and shrug. He laughs, taking a quick drink from his beer as he settles in the chair. “The Huxley blood runs deep. No doubt every single one of those boys will produce a horde of ginger babies.”

A bark of laughter escapes me at the thought. Archer and Asher were both born bald, but I have every confidence that their hair will sprout out in red tufts despite Shiloh’s nearly black hair. We fall into a calm, contented silence as we watch the partygoers and sip our drinks. Dom is a nice guy, and he’s easy to like. I can see why Shiloh took to him so quickly.

“No date?” he murmurs, his eyes still scanning the crowd.

I groan and shake my head. “Nope. Forever dateless, it seems. Are you here with Stephen?” I ask, then immediately cringe when I see him wince. “Shit, sorry. It’s not my business.”

Dom sighs and runs his fingers through his thick brown hair. “It’s fine. Technically yes, but you’d never know by the way he’s avoided me since I got here.”

“What the hell?” I murmur, leaning forward. I brace an elbow on the table and turn to fully face him, though he’s still looking anywhere but at me. “That’s fucked up.” I don’t push for more information, just leave it at that.

Dom sits in silence for so long I think he won’t say anything in return. When he finally does, his words are heavy and full of pain and longing. “Three years, I’ve been unofficially dating the love of my life. Three messy, complicated, beautiful

years of back-and-forth commitment and breakups. Three years of unbelievable love and equally intense heartache.”

I say nothing as I let him unload his feelings in his own time. I fight the urge to send a glare in Stephen’s direction even though I have no idea what the problems in their relationship actually consist of. If nothing else, the devastation on Dom’s face tells me it’s likely Stephen’s fault.

“Stephen is the love of my life. My one and only. He’s my past, present, and future,” he says sadly.

“So, what’s the problem?” I whisper, my heart clenching uncharacteristically.

Dom shakes his head and squeezes his beer bottle tightly. “He’s all of those things for me, but I’m not the same for him.”

My head rears back in shock. “What are you talking about? I’ve seen the way that man looks at you when his head’s not in his ass. He’s utterly in love with you, and judging by the way he follows you whenever you share space, I’d say he’s borderline obsessed .”

Dom chuckles and grins at that. “It’s a Huxley quality. The obsessive thing.” He shakes his head, his smile wilting. “I know he loves me, but I’m just not enough for him and what he wants in order to make our relationship complete...I just —” he shakes his head again, this time harder, like he’s trying to physically clear the thoughts from his mind.

I reach out, grab his hand and give it a squeeze meant to reassure him. “What? Does he like want kids or something?” I

ask gently. I know sometimes that's a bone of contention with couples. Not everyone sees the same future, and it can ultimately end relationships. Like with Shiloh and her ex-husband.

Dom scoffs. He shoots me an unidentifiable look. "Fuck, I wish kids were all he wanted. I'm as bad as Logan. I want a whole zoo of them." Leaning forward, he braces his hands on his knees and takes a deep, slow pull from his beer. My eyes zero in on the long, glass bottle, and my cheeks burn, and lust pools low in my belly as I remember what I'd done with the wine bottle last night. Shit, that was hot. "He has particular..." he breaks off with a heavy exhale. "He has certain kinks that I'm not sure I can handle."

"Kinks?" I murmur, my brows lifted.

He nods. "Yep. Stephen is into power exchange."

My head cocks to the side as I take him in. My eyes flit to Stephen, who's still leaning against the bar. He's a big guy. Not quite as wide or large as Logan, but close. He's masculine but clean-cut. Like a fancy lumberjack. Looking back at Dom, I realize he's much smaller and has a very polished look about him. He looks like a GQ model. I know size difference and masculinity have nothing to do with bedroom or relationship roles, despite what some people think. Being larger doesn't necessarily make someone a top, and in a lot of relationships, no matter the gender, things sexually can be fluid. That's the beauty of sexual exploration. But with what Dom is describing

and his aversion to it, I assume he means Stephen wants to give up control.

“Like he wants you to top him? Tie him up and slap his ass?” I giggle, my face scrunching up. I playfully tip my shoulder into his and smile up at him. “I didn’t take you for vanilla, Dom.”

He barks a laugh and shoves me away. “Fuck no. If all he wanted was for me to cuff his ass to the bed and slap his perfect cheeks, I’d do that shit in a heartbeat. I’ll be his top, bottom, or fucking sideways if he wants.” Shaking his head, he finishes off his beer and drops the glass onto the table. “Stephen is bisexual, and I’m not.”

I slowly sip my wine as his words sink in. He’d said their relationship wasn’t complete with just the two of them...

“He wants to bring a woman into the picture? Like a poly thing?” I mumble around my glass. Dom’s face closes off, his open easygoing mood disappearing instantly. *Well, shit.* “Fuck, I’m sorry, Dom. Honestly, I’m probably too drunk for this conversation. I keep shoving my stiletto into my mouth.”

Dom offers me a weak smile and tips his shoulders in a fake display of nonchalance. “No worries. I’m okay.” His eyes scan over the crowd and settle on a wildly dancing Shiloh, who is very clearly drunk. She’s letting loose since her in-laws have the boys for the night. Dom barks a laugh and pushes to his feet. “I’m going to check on our girl.” He squeezes my hand. “We’ll chat again soon, Ray. Take care.” And then, he’s literally bolting away from me.

See. This is exactly why I don't talk to people.



Chapter Six

A few hours later, I'm standing on the front porch of Logan and Shiloh's house, staring at the ominous front door as though it's likely to eat me. My friends are very kind people to allow me to stay with them, but in no way shape or form, do I want to sleep in a house with a newly married couple who can barely stop fucking long enough to say I do. Hell to the no.

Sighing, I spin on my heel and head for a late-night walk, needing to clear my thoughts before I can even consider finding somewhere else to sleep. I'm not worried. It's a warm night, and a comfy hammock on the deck has been calling my name since yesterday.

A short time later, I realize I've wound up in the quiet, thick forest. Moonlight spills through the heavy tree cover, illuminating the ground enough to give me a clear path to walk. I breathe deeply, inhaling the heady pine smell that carries on the wind like a Christmas candle. It's seriously beautiful out here. I can understand why Logan's family chose this property to build their futures on.

As I walk, I try to sort out the jumbled mess inside my head. I'm stuck between thoughts of my conversation with Shiloh last night. Mark, Oscar, and...*him*.

All throughout the wedding tonight, my mind kept flitting back to the man from yesterday. I genuinely don't understand what it was about him that captivated me so much. His overall appearance was nerdy and shy, which is definitely not my usual type. Yes, his face was beautiful and okay, yeah, his eyes could literally incinerate a person's soul, but damn. My body reacted to him as though he was our God and I was his willing flock, ready to do his bidding.

I'm not immune to hot men. I know it's been a long time since I've gotten laid, but I've been on dates. I've been to clubs and danced with strange men. I've enjoyed their company over the years, but I've never taken the next step with any of them. Not because I'm a prude, but because they've just never turned me on enough to tempt fate. Why fuck someone who can't even get my pussy wet? No thanks.

But for some strange reason, two minutes in the presence of his piercing clear-blue eyes and a smirk that could bring a nun to her knees and I'm in a constant state of arousal. I sigh, shaking my head. It's pointless to worry about the man. I'm probably never going to see him again.

Branches rustling in the wind, crickets chirping, and an owl cooing in the distance is like a soundtrack to my tumultuous thoughts. A loud crack behind me causes me to stumble over my feet. I freeze, my ears perking up as I listen for any other

noises. A strong gust of wind blows, sending the loose sleeves of my dress fluttering. The scent of pine, dirt and something else fills my nose. My brows furrow. It smells less like Christmas trees and more like—is that smoke?

I spin in place, my eyes searching the darkness for whatever caused that sound and the new scent that's filling my lungs. The hairs on the back of my neck stand up, and a shiver works its way up my spine. Another snap echoes through the forest, this time it's to my left and much closer. Anticipation and fear swirl through my gut in an instant. *I'm not alone out here.* My heartbeat picks up in my chest. My previous contemplative calm is now being overshadowed by the knowledge that someone is watching me.

My hands twitch, sliding down my thighs. I slowly grab the flowing chiffon dress and clutch the material in my fists. I hike it up inch by inch, preparing myself to run if I need to. My breathing picks up, turning to a shaky, silent pant. I squeeze my dress hard enough that my fingers begin to tremble. Which way is the house? Shit, I was so caught up in my thoughts I hadn't been paying attention at all.

You're so stupid, Rayvn. This is exactly what happens in horror movies. The idiot chick who runs into the woods instead of jumping into the car always dies first.

The unmistakable crunch of leaves beneath heavy feet sends a zing of adrenaline surging through my body, and I take off like a fucking rocket. In an instant, I'm kicking my brand new, after-wedding sandals off. Despite my fear, a tendril of

irritation runs through. *Those things were cute as hell.* The hammering organ in my chest works overtime, pumping blood through my body so rapidly my fingertips begin to pulse with an echo of my heartbeat.

My head snaps over my shoulder as my feet continue to pound along the dirt trail. My eyes search the darkness behind me, finding absolutely nothing out of the ordinary. My brows furrow, but I ignore the little voice in my head telling me I made it all up. It's the goosebumps on my skin and the deep sensation of not being alone that are enough to have me telling the voice to get fucked. Something is chasing me, there is no doubt about it. Whatever that sound was, combined with the primal flight reaction, caused a massive flood of adrenaline to shoot through my body. It's intoxicating.

The shifting of my thighs rubbing together beneath my dress tell me that adrenaline isn't the only thing flooding my body right now. My attention zeros in on my clit like a moth to a flame, and I'm surprised when I find it needy and throbbing.

Jesus, Ray. You're so fucked up.

Looking forward, I see the bright lights from the cleanup crew at Shiloh's coming into view. I pick up my pace, relishing in the heady waves of fear and excitement coursing through my veins. *I feel alive.* I smile at myself, knowing it's a ridiculous notion to enjoy, but shit, when your existence is as boring and mediocre as my own, a hit of adrenaline is equivalent to a line of coke.

I break through the tree line, my feet finally hitting the lush, dewy grass instead of the punishing dirt path. I glance over my shoulder just in time to catch a tall, shadowy figure turning away from me and disappearing back into the darkness. My heart lodges itself in my throat, and my eyes widen as the realization that I'd been right, jolts through me. *Holy shit.* Someone was really following me...*No, chasing me.*

My body slams into something hard, causing a shrill shriek to fly through my lips. My head snaps forward just as large hands grip my shoulders, steadying me. My heart is fluttering like a hummingbird, and my body sways left and right as I try to catch my breath. Looking up, I lock eyes with a concerned Charlie.

“Everything okay,” he grunts, his eyes flicking between my face and the heavy tree line behind me. “Why were you out there?”

I stare blankly at his chest, but my eyes see nothing as the last few minutes catch up to me. My breathing finally begins to even out. The overall anxious awareness from being chased through the damn forest is still coating me like sticky tar, but I feel amped up as though I could run a marathon. I don't know if it's the adrenaline pumping through my veins, but it's a feeling equivalent to a shot of epinephrine, but there is a constant buzz beneath my skin that feels a hell of a lot like electricity.

That was...

That was *amazing*.

“Rayvn?” Charlie calls, rubbing my shoulders. It snaps me out of the trance-like state I’d fallen into, and finally, my eyes flicker back into focus.

“Huh?” I murmur. His brows furrow. I shake my head, clearing the cobwebby feeling away. “Sorry. I’m okay.”

He gives me a disbelieving look before glancing over my shoulder again. “Did something scare you? Hurt you?”

“Hurt me?” I ask, swallowing thickly. “Why would you ask that?” Does he know? Did he see them too? The fear swarming my insides spikes at the thought.

Charlie’s eyes drop back down to mine. He chuckles and shakes his head as his hands slide down to give my biceps a squeeze. “This is the country, Ray. There are bears and mountain lions out here. They could have mistaken your tiny footsteps for a little fox or some shit.”

Little fox? I scoff. Bears aren’t stupid. They’re apex predators. Surely, they know the difference between a full-grown woman and a tiny fox, even if both are...prey. Shit. Why do I like the sound of that so much? I roll my eyes, ignoring the far too enjoyable reaction, and bat his hands away. “I’m not an idiot, *Charles*,” I grit out. “I’m perfectly aware I’m not in the city right now.”

“Are you? Because wandering around in the dark in the middle of the fucking Colorado woods sounds pretty damn stupid to me.” I glare daggers at the self-righteous prick, even as the little voice in my head reminds me that he’s not wrong. When did my inner self become such a chatty bitch?

I grunt a sound of dismissal and push past him, heading back toward the house. The urge to look behind me, checking for the person who had been in the woods with me, is almost all-consuming. I force one foot in front of the next, ignoring the impulse. I try and focus on the sensations coursing through me instead. I'm surprised when I find my head completely clear, and though I'm still hyped up, I'm not freaking out. Not at all. I'm actually...disappointed? *What the hell?*

Footsteps sound behind me, and if it weren't for the fact that I can clearly hear Charlie's huffs of irritation, I'd think it was—well, whoever that was.

He grips my shoulder, forcing me to stop, and spins me around. I cross my arms over my chest and scowl up at him. He's tall. Not quite as tall as Logan, but definitely above 6'0. Charlie is the leanest of the brothers. However, he's buff as hell. I'd bet every single one of his muscles is chiseled to perfection from spending so much time out on job sites. Not only does he prefer manual labor more than his brothers, but from what Shiloh's told me, he also used to play college football.

Charlie releases an exasperated breath and runs a hand through his short red hair. His freckles are less noticeable right now, but his pale skin glistens beneath the full moon. "Look, Rayvn. I'm sorry."

"For?" I drawl, tapping my fingernails along my arm as I take in his sweet, innocent face. He really is pretty damn cute. When he's not being a douchebag.

He grimaces and rubs the back of his neck. “Fuck. Look. I’m sorry for being such a dick. I’m—” he breaks off and steps a few feet away, putting some distance between us. “I’m a mess. I’m all over the place, and I know I’ve been acting weird. I don’t mean to, I just—” Again, he pauses, looking physically pained to be having this conversation. I have to admit, I’m a little uncomfortable myself. I have no idea where this is going. “I suck at this. I guess what I’m trying to say is, I like you, Ravyn.”

My eyes widen, and my brows lift to my hairline. I suck in a sharp breath and then proceed to cough and sputter on my own saliva. What the hell? That is *not* what I was expecting to come out of his mouth. Charlie’s cheeks turn pink, and he immediately looks like he’s ready to bolt. Shit. The poor guy just said he likes me, and I’m choking like his words make me physically ill.

I breathe deeply, gaining control of my windpipe, and step into his side. Reaching out, I grip his hand, giving it a firm squeeze. “Sorry,” I whisper. “I just wasn’t expecting that. I can’t remember the last time a guy was so open and upfront with me.” His lip tilts up with the vague hint of his usual wide smile. “I just,” I groan, dropping my gaze to my feet. It’s then that I notice they’re super fucked up from my barefoot run in the woods. *Opps.*

“What?” he mumbles, his voice a deep rasp as he steps closer.

Keeping my gaze locked on my polished pink toenails, I wiggle my feet nervously in the dirt. “I don’t know what to do with that information.” Why am I feeling so fucking weird right now? I barely know Charlie. We’ve only met a few times, and yeah, he’s super hot and sweet, but this is awkward as hell.

A finger tips my chin up in a surprisingly adorable gesture. *Adorable, not panty-meltingly hot.* I meet his bright green stare and am shocked by the heat in his eyes. “Just give me a chance,” he whispers. My brows dip in confusion.

“A cha—” I don’t get to finish my sentence before Charlie’s lips are crashing into mine. The force of the collision has me stumbling back a step and gasping. His hands lock onto my hips, tugging me forward and keeping me in my place. He uses my surprise to thrust his tongue into my mouth. It’s a desperate kiss that tastes strongly of beer and maybe even tequila. I want to pull away, but that annoying voice in my head is screaming *just go with it*. What did Shiloh say? Get back out there? *Shit*.

My hands reach up, tangling in the material of his shirt. I yank him closer, and the move causes Charlie to groan into my mouth. Our teeth clash, and tongues duel for dominance. We make out like teenagers there in the dark, in the middle of my best friend’s lawn, and while it should be hot, or at least exciting...

I feel *nothing*.

In fact, it's one of those kisses where your chemistry and pheromones are so off you notice everything you don't like about that person. Usually, I enjoy tequila. Right now? I'm finding it repulsive. His heavy scent of pepper and bergamot is distinctly masculine, yet I feel like I'd prefer just about any other scent than his. In short, I'm turned the hell off.

A pang of sadness rushes through my body, so intently my knees wobble. Will it always be like this for me? Will no one ever turn me on again after Mark? Am I destined to be alone because my brain tells me that I need adrenaline, fear, and maybe even pain to get off?

Fuck. What the absolute hell is wrong with me? My eyes burn, and instead of being an active participant, I feel myself shutting down. It takes him a minute to catch on, but when he does, Charlie is quick to pull away. Our foreheads collide softly as we both catch our breath. His eyes squeeze shut, but his lips tip up in a soft smile.

"It's okay," he whispers. "Even if that's all I ever get, it's okay."

God dammit. He's so freaking nice. Why can't I just go for the good, nice, funny guy? The one who will dote on me and love me. The one that will make me laugh and probably make me feel much younger than I do these days.

Because you're messed up, Rayvn. You're damaged goods. You're abnormal.

That voice? It's not mine. It's not even the little annoying brat that lives in my head. It's Mark's, and as wrong as I know

he is, right now, he's feeling pretty fucking right.

Charlie pulls his face away and stands to his full height. Smiling down at me, he wraps his arm around my shoulder and spins me toward the driveway. "I came out here for a reason. *The Huxley's* sent me to pick you up. Seems you're spending the night at Casa De La Charlie tonight so the newlyweds can fuck like bunnies."

"Jesus Christ," I mutter, but some of my previous sadness dissipates with his easygoing attitude. "That actually works for me, but my stuff is still at their house, and I will *not* be going in there to retrieve it."

"Guess you'll just have to sleep naked," he jokes. My arm reaches out and slaps his firm stomach. He grunts and squeezes me tighter. "Seriously. Whatever you need, I'm your guy. If you can only sleep with your perfect ass grinding into me, I'll take one for the team."

"Oh, fuck off," I snap, but fall into a fit of giggles as he directs me into a golf cart. He climbs in behind the wheel next to me, and I point in the direction of his house that's a mile down the road. "Take me to your castle, Good Sir."

"Oh, I'll take you somewhere, all right," he laughs. I scoff and roll my eyes.

"That wasn't even a good one, Charles. Do better."

We both fall into a fit of laughter, and just like that, the rest of my shitty and confusing night disappears.

When we arrive at Charlie's, he takes me to a guest room on the second floor. Surprisingly, after dropping off a change of clothes, he leaves me to it without another word. He really is sweet as hell.

Sighing, I click the door closed and spin in place, taking in the room. It's not nearly as lavishly decorated as Shiloh and Logan's house, but I assume that has more to do with the fact that Shi has put her feminine touches throughout the place.

Charlie's house is similar to the rest of the Huxley homes, but it's way more rustic and simple. Still, it has floor to ceiling windows and killer views. Taking a quick look around, I find a huge en-suite bathroom with a tub that is legit to die for. Instantly, I feel giddy and decide a long bath is priority number one. My feet scrunch up on the wood floor in excitement, and the crusty mud tugging on my skin reminds me of my evening activities.

Okay, so maybe a quick rinse is priority number one.

I hastily strip out of my dress and drop it on the vanity before removing my bra and panties. I glance up in the mirror and am once again glad my hair is up and in a tight bun. It seems to have survived my harrowing night, though I can't say the same for my makeup. I quickly jump in the shower to rinse off, using the detachable shower head so that I can avoid getting my hair wet. When I'm confident I won't be bathing in my own filth, I fill up the huge jacuzzi tub. I'm surprised when I find both bath salts and bath bombs beneath the sink. Either

Charlie has a soft side, or he's had his fair share of women use this room.

I grimace at the realization that I'm likely spending the night in his fuck pad.

I relax in the tub, allowing it to soothe my tense muscles until my skin is clean, and wrinkled from the water. I'm still riding the post-adrenaline high as thoughts of this weekend's events roll through my mind. I've had a great time with Shiloh and her new family, and though I'm a little reluctant to leave and return to my solo existence, it's for the best. I don't want to be the sinking ship in a sea of stupidly happy.

My head tips back over the edge of the tub as I stare at the soft moonlight pouring in through the large window next to me. I've lived in the city my entire life, but with views like this, I could definitely get into country life. Maybe I need to buy a vacation home. The small thought brings on bigger and deeper ones that I'd rather ignore for the time being. Instead, I divert my brain to more important things. Like the man chasing me tonight...

Was it even a man? It could have been a woman, though, the tiny peek I got before they took off proved they were really tall and definitely wide. A large man, then. Were they a wedding guest? Maybe someone else was just as lost out there in the woods as I had been. Maybe they weren't chasing me at all. The hairs on my body perk up, standing on end as I replay the memory as if to prove me wrong. No. He was definitely

chasing me. There is no doubt about it. But, why? And better yet—why did I like it so fucking much?

The feeling of my feet pounding on the dirt, sinking into the earth as I ran for safety, causes my skin to flush hotter than the water did. My breathing picks up as I remember the way the wind felt against my face. An excited and nervous ball of energy starts to build inside of me, growing with every second. I think of the way the owls and crickets sang their nighttime song, oblivious to what was happening around them. I shift restlessly in the tub, the water sloshing with every move. My fingers dance along the porcelain edge as my skin begins to feel too tight. More than anything, I think about the way his footsteps sounded as he closed the distance between us.

He was so close. What would he have done if he caught me? Would he have hurt me? Would I have liked it?

And then, I remember the way I smashed into Charlie and everything that happened after...

As though I've been doused with a bucket of ice water, the fire coursing through my veins is extinguished. My eyes squeeze shut, and I have to swallow deeply to keep the onslaught of shameful tears at bay. Not because I rejected Charlie, but because, for the thousandth time, I wish I could just be normal.

Shiloh's words reverberate through my brain, replacing the self-deprecating and, frankly, annoying thoughts. Maybe she was right. Maybe I just need to get back out there and find someone who wants what I want. Surely, I can't be the only

person alive who is otherwise normal and well-adapted with—odd interests.

There has to be a man out there who has his shit together and still likes to fuck hard and rough. Someone who understands that just because I want to be forced, doesn't mean I want my choices taken from me. There has to be...I refuse to believe that I'll be alone for the rest of my life. If Shiloh can find Logan, the magical unicorn of all lumberjacks, then I can find a normal guy who will fuck me into the dirt like his little slut, then love me like his good girl.

Decision made, I stand from the tub and rush to get dressed before the effects of my pep-talk wear off. When I'm dry and warm, bundled in Charlie's huge sweatshirt and loose pajama bottoms, I grab my phone and pad out onto the attached balcony. The air is cool and refreshing as I drop down onto the chaise lounge. I check through my emails, deleting the twenty new notifications and stalling, if I'm being honest with myself.

Shit, just do it, Ray. I quickly pull up the app search on my phone and download the number one recommended dating site, ignoring the way it makes my gut turn watery with nerves.

I can do this. I can do this. I can do this.

I repeat the mantra, reminding myself again and again that not everyone is as shitty a person as Mark. Not all men will judge me or—

“No, Ray. Move on.” I murmur. “It's time.”



Chapter Seven

My fists clench at my sides as I watch Rayvn-Fucking-Porter step into that piece of shit's front door. His arm is tossed casually over her perfect, thin shoulders as he smiles down at her. He's looking at Rayvn like he wants nothing more than to devour her, and trust me, I get it. If she was mine—I shut that line of thinking down before it can even form.

I saw them kiss, so I have no doubt in my mind about what he wants from her. Too bad he doesn't know her the way I do. Rayvn wasn't into that kiss. She was bored out of her mind. In fact, the only time this entire weekend she looked even remotely alive was in the forest...

When I chased her.

I hadn't meant to. Fuck, I hadn't even meant to show up here this weekend in this bumfuck country town, either. Seems to be happening a lot lately. It also seems I can't fucking control myself where Rayvn is concerned. It's like an impulse to be near her. No, more than that...it's a craving. A deep, primal urge inside of me that demands I keep her in my sights.

It's ridiculous and a complete waste of my time. Time that I don't have. There are so many other things I should be doing right now like taking her down remotely, just as I'd planned. Instead, I continue to stand in the darkness. The same darkness I've been shrouded in since I arrived last night. I can't stop. More than that, I don't think I want to. Except, I really need to take a piss. Not to mention, I'm exhausted and starving.

I wait as long as I can. Every cell in my body is fighting the urge to storm inside and break up their fuck-fest. I'm not jealous. She can fuck whomever she wants, but the fact that she's with him means she won't be spending the night alone as I'd prepared for. Gaining access to her is going to be a hell of a lot more difficult now.

Sighing, I step away from the spot where I've been holed up with a perfect view of Charles Huxley's house and make my way to the back so I can find a place to relieve myself. I'm not this guy. I'm a hacker. A damn good one at that. I go undercover when I need to in order to plant cameras or bugs, maybe steal physical files when necessary, but this? This shit is next fucking level. I've completely lost my mind at this point.

I don't know what's happening to me. From the first moment I saw her photo on my computer screen, it was like I was possessed. I could have had this job done a month ago. I could have destroyed her from the privacy of my office in less than a day. I could have had her disbarred, broke, and homeless. My stomach burns at the thought, but I ignore it.

I don't care about Rayvn. She isn't my problem or my concern. What happens to her has nothing to do with me. I just need more time and more intel. She's a high-priority case for me, and the client who hired me is willing to pay over a million dollars to see her destroyed. I just need to do this right. I can't fuck it up.

She's brilliant, powerful, and determined, not to mention a *fucking criminal defense attorney*. If I just deleted her entire life in one day, there is no way in hell she wouldn't be able to prove foul play. She'd have her well-connected friends and business partners hunting for my ass within minutes, all with the goal to see whoever fucked her over behind bars. Not that she'd ever find me, but still...it doesn't hurt to be careful.

That's why I've planned this out so slowly. That's why I needed access to her devices. I remotely crashed their computers then knocked out the real tech guy in the parking lot. I swiped a guard's keycard in the lobby so I could get into her office building from the stairwell. I easily bugged her devices while she was in the bathroom, granting me the ability to monitor every little thing she does and every place she goes.

That's why I purposefully waited for her in the elevator. So I could confirm the planted chip on her phone worked. Except...I could have done that from anywhere.

Fuck. See what I mean? Completely lost the fucking plot.

I huff out a silent breath and run a hand through my hair as I trudge through the dark yard. This shit is insane. There is seriously something wrong with me at this point. I don't know

why I had to see her. After a month of following her, both online and from a distance in person, I just had to know what she looks like up close. Had to hear her voice. *Smell her*. Clearly, it was a stupid idea. Now, Rayvn Porter is ingrained in my motherfucking brain.

Her stunning brown skin is so damn smooth, and I *ache* to tarnish it. I want to run my tongue down her lithe body, ingest her flavor, and then cover her in mine. She smelled like lilacs and roses, which has fucked me up in the worst ways. I can't even walk down the street without swearing she's near me. The huge doe eyes I was drawn to in her photo are just as dark and wide as I'd known they would be, especially when she looked up at me from beneath her black lashes as though she wanted me to rip her apart.

And God, did I want to.

She had me so thrown off kilter I'd forgotten everything else as she stared up at me. My eyes had zeroed in on the erratic pulse in her elegant neck. My ears homed in on her heavy panting breaths. My nose caught her strong scent that I could have sworn was tinged with fear, and I was fucking done for.

I forgot who I was supposed to be. I forgot I was meant to be invisible, nothing more than a quiet, shy tech nerd. I forgot everything *but her*, and then—then she *saw* me. The real me. The me that I've kept buried so fucking deep, no one even knows he exists.

She saw the monster, and she *liked it*.

Rayvn Porter started off as a feeling slithering beneath my skin. Like an ache that I couldn't heal, or an itch I couldn't scratch. A constant, persistent irritation. It was driving me insane. The woman somehow infiltrated my senses and I hadn't even met her yet. I told myself that if I just saw her once, let myself sate the annoying craving, it would be done. I'd be free of her.

Fuck, did that shit ever backfire?

The irritation beneath my tattooed skin has morphed into an obsession. With one hit, I'm an addict. The only thing that will end this ever-persistent need is to do my fucking job and sever all ties with her. I'll take her down, systematically and completely. I'll get paid. I'll take care of the shit I need to handle, and then I'll walk the fuck away without a backward glance.

That's what I tell myself as I pull my cock from my jeans and piss all over the fuckers deck. A small tendril of joy fills me at the thought of destroying his huge house. Maybe I could light it on fire. Fuck, it would be so satisfying to stand hidden in the trees and watch it burn to the ground. Would he scream and cry as his home turned to ash? Would I even let him leave before I lit the match?

Would I let her leave?

Are they still fucking or is he a one-pump-chump? I grin as I think about burning the house down while they're naked and his tiny, shitty cock is shoved in her cunt. God, I bet she's miserable right now.

Good.

I shake my dick off and tuck it back in my jeans, pulling myself from my chaotic and destructive thoughts. My finger glides over the lighter in my pocket as if my body is pulling me to make my dreams a reality. It would be so quick. The house is a log cabin in the middle of the fucking forest, of course, it would burn fast. The flames would lick up the side, from one floor to the next, before they even had time to get dressed.

My head cocks to the side as I pull my lighter out and flick the trigger. My eyes watch as the tiny flame dances in the wind for a moment before it's snuffed out. The darkness I try so hard to keep at bay presses against its confines in my brain. It scratches and claws, begging to be released. I let it, just for a moment. My body goes into a state of numbness that I find far too enjoyable. It's like my tense muscles can relax for the first time in years.

My thumb presses down, ready to make my thoughts a reality, just as the quiet click of a door being closed fills the night air. I drop the lighter and slide it back into my pocket before adjusting my black hoodie and making sure I'm completely covered. I don't make any sudden movements as my eyes search the darkness for the origin of the sound. The slapping of feet on wood above me draws my gaze to the suspended deck on the second floor. In an instant, my eyes lock on the woman who has consumed my thoughts for far too long.

My body leans forward as if it's trying to get closer to her. The tension in my muscles returns with a vengeance as I try to rein myself in. Rayvn huffs out a breath and drops down onto a lounge. It's dark, and I can barely make out her form, but from where I'm standing I can tell she's wrapped up in heavy, thick clothing that hides her killer body. My brow furrows as I glance down at my watch. She's barely been inside for half an hour.

A bubble of laughter crawls up my throat and I have to tuck my lips in to stifle it. *Charlie must suck in bed.* Part of me hopes he at least got her off before he blew prematurely, but the rest of me hopes it was fucking awful for her. She doesn't deserve pleasure.

Yes, she does. Just not from him.

I scoff internally and shove the idiotic thoughts away as I focus on Rayvn. She pulls her phone out, and the bright glow from the screen grants me a clear view of her beautiful face. It's perfect...*too perfect.* It pisses me off. Anger fills me in an instant. All the thoughts of her and him wrapped around each other's bodies swirl around in a bitter cacophony until I'm practically choking on it.

My irritation at the situation, at having to give up *my* valuable time to stand out here and hunt this bitch down just to be able to do my job, turns the anger into fury. My fists clench so hard that my knuckles pop. Her head darts up, and she quickly scans the empty yard. She's afraid, maybe more so after our little run in the woods earlier. A thrill of excitement

rolls through me as I watch her search for the sound...*for me*. Her wide, black eyes blink once and then twice before she shakes her head and looks back at her phone.

Fuck, is it wrong that I want to see her smooth skin covered in cum and tears? I want her messy and begging when I take her down. I want her to feel as reckless and out of control as I am. I want her to know why she's being destroyed. I want her to pay.

I just want *her*—*No. No. Shit.*

My blood is on fire, and the darkness is quickly taking over with every bitter, resentful thought. Hatred for her and everything she's doing to me replaces all other emotions. I work so fucking hard to keep myself in check. To stay calm and steady. I think things through. I'm methodical. I have to be. It's how I keep my job, how I stay safe and don't get caught. It's a way for me to channel my cravings for destruction and pain into something profitable. I cannot—*will not*—lose that now.

It takes great effort, but I force myself to walk away, finding solace in the darkness once more so I can pull my phone out without being spotted. As much as I'd like to keep watching the mouse freak out over being hunted, I need to focus on my work, and my work is her.

I open the tracking app I installed on her phone that clones her display and projects it onto mine so I can watch what she's doing in real-time. I installed the same thing on her computer with the added software that allows me to dig into all of her

content. I barely had time to set up the tiny, discrete cameras in her office before having to run out into the stairwell to avoid getting caught. I should have just left after that. I should have walked away, sight unseen, but I couldn't.

Had to see her.

She probably thinks I have multiple personalities with that show I put on in the elevator. I grunt, my fist tightening around my phone. It doesn't matter what she thinks of me. I'm no one. Nothing. Invisible, as I should be. Except...I don't want to be.

Shaking my head, I turn my attention back to the screen as I watch Rayvn flick through her emails. She closes out of everything, leaving her home screen blank for a moment before opening the app store. My brows furrow in confusion.

"What are you doing, Sweetling?" I whisper. I watch with rapt attention as she clicks on the search bar and types in one word that has my heart pounding.

Dating.

Dating? She's installing a dating app? My eyes flick in the direction of the deck where she's still lounging. Shit. Charlie must have been worse than I thought if she's immediately searching for someone else right after leaving his bed. Yeah, he definitely didn't get her off. A grin creeps up my face as I picture him passed out in his bed and her aching with need.

I'd never leave her wanting. "Fuck," I murmur. "Knock that shit off." Shaking my head, I look down and watch in real-

time as Rayvn fills out the application form for a popular dating app.

Welcome to Rumble, the dating site that helps you find true love in your zip code.

I scoff. So fucking stupid. These apps don't work for shit. How is anyone meant to find their 'soulmate' this way? Not that I believe in that antiquated and idealistic crap anyways, but an app? Seriously? You choose a radius, like Rayvn is right now, pick a few characteristics, and suddenly, the love of your life winds up in your DMs? Right.

I watch as she fills out the first two pages, and then the screen stalls. My eyes glance up at her again, and though I can barely see her now, I can tell her face is looking away from the phone. I watch her as she stares off into nothing for countless minutes. What is she doing? Finally, she looks back down, and I watch as the words, and eventually, the app, disappear.

Welcome to Rumble, the dating site to help....

Welcome to Rumble, the dating...

Welcome to Rumble....

Welcome....

She exits the app and then deletes it altogether. I'm surprised at the amount of relief I feel with that one small action. It's ridiculous, I know. I shouldn't have an opinion one way or the other. She can do whatever the fuck she wants. If Rayvn wants to find a shitty imitation of her Prince Charming, who am I to care? I don't.

I don't.

But then, she's back in the app store, and this time her search makes my heart pound.

Alternative Dating

A long list of kink, fetish, swinger, threesome and poly dating apps pop up, along with a few random hookup sites. What the fuck? What kinds of shit are you into, Miss Porter? My palms begin to sweat as I watch her click on an app for Kink and BDSM matchmaking.

My throat aches with how dry my mouth has become. This is an unexpected turn of events. At every step, Rayvn keeps finding new ways to surprise me.

Welcome to Kinksters, the app that connects you to like-minded people seeking sexual encounters that meet your needs.

Please choose a screen name: RavynJay10

I roll my eyes. What a basic name. And one that will most definitely not hide her identity from all the creeps that are no doubt on the site. As if she heard me, Rayvn deletes her first choice.

Please choose a screen name: Ravyn...

Please choose a screen name: FoxBabe20

Fox? She is a fox. A tiny little fox who ran so prettily from the big bad wolf. Fuck, she did, too. As soon as she figured out she wasn't alone, she bolted. She didn't even hesitate, and that

—shit. *It turned me the hell on.* The way she looked over her shoulder, knowing the predator was right behind her. The way her breathing increased with every pounding footstep. It was beautiful and exhilarating. I couldn't let her get away, and with every second that I hunted her, the beast inside me grew.

Please select your interests:

Primal Play, Fear Play, Abduction, Consensual Nonconsent, Dubious Consent, Breath Play, Helplessness, Knife Play, Bite Play, Blood Play, BDSM, Bondage, Role Play, Mask Play

Holy shit, she's perfect. So fucking perfect. *For me.* I smile as nerves and excitement fill me. Maybe she won't be afraid to play with my beast if I let him out? We'd be so good together. We'd be—

My eyes widen as I stare at the screen. Fuck. She won't be perfect with *me*, she'll be perfect with some other random fucker. I run a hand through my hair, tugging on the strands as indecision fills me. I look back up at the deck and find it empty. The immediate and overpowering need to chase her, find her, and get her back in my sights, nearly has me doubling over.

dammit. *dammit.*

If I do this—if I cross this line, I can't pretend anymore. If I give into my need, my urge, to have her...I won't come back. I won't let her go until she's ruined. And I don't mean financially or career-wise. I mean, completely and utterly

destroyed by me because once my beast gets his claws in her, she'll be begging for the sweet freedom of death.

Fuck it. Her problem, not mine.

I swap screens and create an account before pulling out my second phone and working the backend to make sure we match. When I get home, I'll use my computer to hack the system so I can program her username to not match with anyone else.

My heart races as I press the *confirm* button on my account.

***Congratulations! You have matched with a Kinkster!
Would you like to message them now?***

Before I can even respond, my phone is pinging with a message.

FoxBabe20: Hey!

Well, fuck.

KillerClown4u has entered the chat.



Chapter Eight

A ugust 5th

FoxBabe20: Hey

KillerClown4u: Hi

FoxBabe20: Umm, I'm new here. Idk how to do this. Lol.

KillerClown4u: I'm new here too, no worries.

FoxBabe20: How are you tonight?

KillerClown4u: I'm great. How are you?

FoxBabe20: Oh, you know. Drunk and creating a dating profile on a kink site at 2:00 am so...awesome.

KillerClown4u: You're drunk? Bad night?

FoxBabe20: Ha. You could say that.

KillerClown4u: Bad date or something?

FoxBabe20: Oh, no. Not even. My best friend got married tonight, and her new husband's brother tried to hook up with me, but...

KillerClown4u: But?

FoxBabe20: Well, he's not my type. Hence, the reason I'm here. It's hard to meet people who like what I like.

KillerClown4u: Gotcha. I'm here for the same reason. Sorry about the brother.

KillerClown4u: He didn't hurt you, did he?

FoxBabe20: Who? Charlie? No, he's great. Super sweet guy. Just got our signals mixed.

KillerClown4u: You don't like sweet men?

FoxBabe20: I mean, I do, just not that sweet..and not all the time. So, what's your name?

KillerClown4u is offline.



August 6th

FoxBabe20: Hey, so sorry about the drunken texts last night.

KillerClown4u is offline.



August 8th

FoxBabe20: So, is this where I move on to someone else?
Lol

KillerClown4u: Sorry Fox. I've been away for work. I should have said something.

FoxBabe20: No, it's fine. You don't owe me anything. Just not sure how this whole thing works. Never been on a dating app before.

KillerClown4u: I'm a virgin too. We'll get through it together. ;)

FoxBabe20: This isn't the best app for virgins...

KillerClown4u: Oh. I was kidding.

FoxBabe20: Lol, obviously, so was I. See, this is why I hate texts. Context gets lost so easily. Maybe we should exchange numbers.

KillerClown4u: Not yet, Fox.

KillerClown4u is offline.



August 9th

KillerClown4u: “I do not suffer from insanity, I enjoy every minute of it.”

KillerClown4u: Goodnight, Fox.



August 10th

FoxBabe20: Hey, sorry, I've been working like crazy lately. Hope you're having a great day. Got your message last night. Is that a quote or something?

KillerClown4u: Tell me about your work and look it up ;)

FoxBabe20: Edgar Allen Poe fan? Can't say I've read his work before, but obviously, he's popular for a reason. I'm an attorney. What do you do?

KillerClown4u: I work with computers. I guess you could say I'm a new fan of Poe. Tell me more, Fox. I like hearing about you.

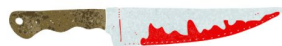
FoxBabe20: I mean, I'm not sure what there is to say. Lol. Kind of putting me on the spot here, Kill.

KillerClown4u: Kill? That's cute.

FoxBabe20: Well, I'd say your name if you'd share it with me. What is your name, Kill?

KillerClown4u: Not yet.

FoxBabe20 is offline



August 13th

KillerClown4u: *“Men have called me mad; but the question is not yet settled, whether madness is or is not the*

loftiest intelligence.” Goodnight, Fox.

FoxBabe20: Poe? Maybe I should just start calling you that since you won't tell me your name.

KillerClown4u: There are all sorts of other things I can tell you besides my name. I'm an open book.

FoxBabe20: Where do you live?

KillerClown4u is offline.



August 14th

FoxBabe20: I'm not sure this is working out. The whole silence and refusal to respond thing...not a fan of it.

KillerClown4u: I'm sorry.

FoxBabe20: I know I'm new to dating apps, but I'm not new to dating. Both parties have to be interested and willing to get to know one another. If not, I mean...we're kind of just wasting each other's time.

KillerClown4u: Are you okay, Fox?

FoxBabe20: Are you being serious?

KillerClown4u: Where you're concerned, very serious. Talk to me.

FoxBabe20: I am talking to you. I'm trying to get to know you.

KillerClown4u: And I you. I'm asking if you're okay, and when I ask you something—when I tell you something, know that I mean it. You're not okay, so be a good girl and tell me what the problem is.

FoxBabe20: I'm working on a case that's breaking my heart, and I don't know what to do. I can't win. I won't win. The enemy is too big, too powerful, and I'm not enough. Is that fucking honest enough for you?

KillerClown4u: God, the things I want to do to you and your fucking mouth right now.

FoxBabe20: Excuse me?

KillerClown4u: Fuck, no, you aren't excused.

FoxBabe20: I'm sorry. Did you or did you not tell me to be honest about what's bothering me?

KillerClown4u: And I appreciate that but who told you it was okay to say that kind of bullshit about yourself?

FoxBabe20: What?

KillerClown4u: Who said you aren't enough, Little Fox?

FoxBabe20:....

KillerClown4u: Are you alone?

FoxBabe20: Yes, I'm in my office.

KillerClown4u: Slide your hand into your panties and tell me how wet your cunt is.

FoxBabe20: What the fuck? I can't.

KillerClown4u: Of course, you can. Leave the door unlocked. Be my good little slut and touch your pussy for me.

FoxBabe20: Kill...I might get caught.

KillerClown4u: Good. Then everyone will know what a horny bitch you are. Close your pretty eyes, spread your thighs wide on your chair and play with yourself. Imagine it's me, on my knees beneath you, fucking your sweet cunt. What would you have me use? My fingers? Tongue?

FoxBabe20: Oh fuck. All of it.

KillerClown4u: Right now, my fist is wrapped around my cock, and I'm picturing you laid out on your desk, tied down, and spread open wide for me.

KillerClown4u: I'm imagining the way my knife would look, sliding down your pretty clothes, slicing your dress down the middle, and exposing your perfect fucking body for me to devour. I'd cut you up, then lick the blood away. I bet you'd taste so good, so sweet.

FoxBabe20: I want you to fuck me with your knife.

KillerClown4u: Fuck. You're a filthy girl, aren't you? My cock is throbbing for you. I'd have your cunt so fucking wet, you'd be making a mess all over your desk for me.

FoxBabe20: I'm already so wet for you, Kill.

KillerClown4u: That's because you're a good pet, doing exactly what your master tells you to. Fuck your cunt, now.

Use three fingers. Stretch your pussy wide for me. You need to start practicing if you wanna take my cock someday.

FoxBabe20: I want to see you so bad. I want to see your cock. Show me.

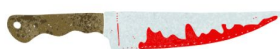
KillerClown4u: Not yet. Fuck yourself harder. Cum for me, baby. Right fucking now. I'm cumming with you.

FoxBabe20: Shit, Kill. Damn it. I can't believe I just did that.

KillerClown4u: I can. You're such a perfect girl for me. Feel better?

FoxBabe20: What? You did that to make me feel better?

KillerClown4u: Of course I did. Now go back to work and stop telling yourself you can't do it. As you can tell, you can do any fucking thing you want to. The world is yours, Little Fox.

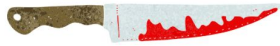


August 19th

KillerClown4u: “I became insane with long intervals of insanity.”

FoxBabe20: Should I be concerned that every Poe quote you send me is about being crazy?

KillerClown4u: Absolutely. Goodnight, Sweetling.



August 20th

KillerClown4u: Let's talk about sex, baby.

FoxBabe20: Wow. Funny boy, are we?

KillerClown4u: I don't know about that, and I'm definitely not a boy. But I do think it's an important conversation. We did meet on a kink app, so it's relevant, right?

FoxBabe20: You're right. Okay, Kill. Let's talk.

KillerClown4u: What are your limits? Be honest with me.

FoxBabe20: I don't know if I have any. I've only been in one extreme BDSM relationship before, and we just experimented. Nothing was off the table until we tried it, and if we didn't like it, we'd use our safeword and be done. I think that's how safe, sane, sexual relationships should be. Open conversation and trust.

KillerClown4u: I agree with you. What about fantasies. Do you have any?

FoxBabe20: Wait. Why is this all about me? What about you?

KillerClown4u: We can talk about me later, Little Fox. Right now, I want to know what you like. I want to know

everything about you.

FoxBabe20: That's kind of sweet, actually.

FoxBabe20: I don't know if I have any particular, singular fantasy. I like the mental release I get from giving up power. I like knowing that my partner has my safety and pleasure in their hands. I like adrenaline and being scared. I like to play and explore.

KillerClown4u: Your profile says you're interested in dubious and consent/non-consent. What do those mean to you?

FoxBabe20: It means I'm giving consent to receive things within my limits at times when I may be unaware, unexpected, or times when I might fight or say no. As long as I don't use my safeword, I'm still in it.

KillerClown4u: Good. I just wanted to make sure you understood. Are you giving me your consent, Little Fox? To play with you when the time comes? To take your safety and pleasure in my hands?

FoxBabe20: Can we come back to that?

KillerClown4u: Yes. But, while we're on the topic. You have mine, Sweetling. You have my consent to do whatever you want to me, whenever you want.

FoxBabe20: That feels...powerful. And like an honor. Why would you give that to me so soon? We've never even met. I don't even know your name.

KillerClown4u is offline.



August 21st

KillerClown4u: I have to go out of town for a few days for work. Won't have service. Be a good girl for me.

FoxBabe20: Really? How long?

KillerClown4u is offline.



August 26th

KillerClown4u: *“I remained too much in my head, I ended up losing my mind.”*

KillerClown4u: *“I was never insane, except for on occasions when my heart was touched.”*

KillerClown4u: *“And so being young and dipped in folly, I fell in love with melancholy.”*

KillerClown4u: *“And all I loved, I loved alone.”*

KillerClown4u: *“All that we see or seem is but a dream within a dream.”*

KillerClown4u: One for every night that I was away. Goodnight, Little Fox.

KillerClown4u is offline.



Chapter Nine

SEPTEMBER

“Are you fucking kidding me?” My hand snaps out, sending the piles of well-organized paperwork on my desk, skittering across the floor. “Motherfucker!”

My office door slams open, and a wide-eyed and frantic Addison runs in with Jackson Lowell, another partner at the firm, hot on her heels. “What the hell, Ray?” she cries out, stopping short as she takes in the state of my office.

My hands flatten on my desk, and I drop my head, suddenly feeling the weight of the world resting on my ill-equipped shoulders. *Fuck, I can't do this anymore.* My eyes burn with shame and embarrassment, but it's quickly replaced with a deep, painful heartache. My ass hits my chair just as I lose the battle with the first wave of tears. A hand cups my shoulder, but I barely feel it. I'm sure Addy and Jackson are worried, yet I can't find it in me to care.

“Seriously, Rayvn, what happened?” Addy murmurs, her usually booming voice much softer than I think I've ever heard it. I can't look at her or speak, so instead, I blindly turn my laptop toward her, showing her the email I just received.

A heavy silence fills the space, followed by soft footsteps that I assume mean Jackson's joined her. A minute later, Addison sucks in a sharp breath, and Jack lets out a string of curses. "Motherfucker," Addy hisses.

Nodding, I peel my hazy eyes open and look up at her. "My thoughts exactly."

"They can't do this. He can't just throw his power around like that," she snaps, shoving an accusing finger at my laptop. I nod again and then shrug as I lean back in my chair. A tissue dangles in front of my face, and I tilt my neck back finding Jackson standing behind me, a soft smile on his handsome face. I snatch the tissue and blot my wet cheeks with a murmured *thanks*.

"He already did it, though, Addy," I sigh heavily. "Sutton may not be acting Chief of Police right now, but he still has connections in high places."

Jackson leans against the edge of my desk and looks down at me. I loathe the look of pity that crosses his face, but I push down the annoyance, knowing it's coming from a good place. Despite his perpetual ass-kissing, he is a good man and an excellent attorney. We're friends, for the most part, and I know he's just as worried about this failing shit show of a case as I am.

"Not to mention his family background," he adds. Addy scoffs and begins to pace in frustration. As irritating as the reminder is, Jack's not wrong. "What? Vincent Sutton has been the Chief for ten years. Before that, his father was, as was

his grandfather. The Suttons practically own Denver at this point. They're so fucking connected, they practically own the state. They come from old money. They're richer than God and as powerful as the Devil. That's why—"

He breaks off, but I already know what he was going to say. "That's why the firm wanted me to drop Tinsley's case." Jack has the good decency to cringe at my words but jerks a nod in agreement. I don't have the energy or mental capacity for a bitchy comeback, so I just sink deeper into my chair. "I understand the firm's reluctance with this case, I'm not an idiot, but I couldn't just leave her alone in this. She needed someone to fight for her when the world was so hellbent on keeping her silent."

"Ray," Addy sighs. I shake my head, not willing to hear her '*you can't save everyone*' speech again.

Pushing out of my seat, I step away, putting distance between the three of us. "No, Addison. This isn't about me saving Tinsley Snow. This isn't some misguided hero complex. She's had a hard life. She has no one and nothing, and that sick son of a bitch saw it. He *knew* she was alone in the world, and like the predator he is, he took advantage of her and then threw her out on her ass to pick up the pieces alone. Except, now she isn't alone. In a few short months, she'll be a single twenty-year-old mom. Can you imagine how terrified she is?"

I'm panting and shaking by the time I finish my rant, but I can't help it. I've worked on hundreds of cases over the years.

Most of the time, I defend those accused of huge crimes, such as murder or extortion. It's part of my job, and yes a lot of times I work with the rightly accused. Some of my clients are terrifying humans, and I'd definitely prefer to avoid them, but unfortunately, it's what keeps my place here at the firm. High-paying jobs with a lot of press and clout.

The other half of my cases are the ones I enjoy, where I'm defending small-time criminals, most of them being adolescents. You'd be surprised how often the law comes after kids and teens with petty criminal records like shoplifting for food, graffiti, or even stealing a car. It's not that I don't think those things warrant a correction or punishment, but fuck they're just *children*.

Most of the time, they're like Tinsley. Born on the wrong side of the tracks, with no one to have their back and nothing to their names. Broken homes, abusive parents, rapists, and alcoholics. Those who were meant to show them how to survive instead further destroyed them. Then, all of the sudden they're 18 and told they have to figure shit out themselves... it's disgusting and quite honestly, a back-asswards system.

How is anyone meant to survive that way, let alone thrive? They can't, and if they do, they'll likely give up a big chunk of themselves in return. Why would I let a kid flounder alone in this world if I have the power to help? The answer is simple; I won't. Hence, my refusal to abandon Tinsley.

Her story is just as sad, if not more so than most of the young people I work with. Her first big, independent step out

into the world, and she landed right in the grubby fingers of another sick fuck who not only sank his claws into her flesh but ripped her sweet soul and body to shreds. Something that he is continuing to do, even today, months after he tossed her aside like she was yesterday's trash.

“I get it! It's fucked up,” Addy shouts, equally angry on Tinsley's behalf. “But, Rayvn, sometimes you have to know when to call it. There's nothing more you can do for her. Sutton is burying this case, and if you don't stop he will bury her also.”

My head jolts back as though I've been slapped. “What's that supposed to mean?”

She scoffs, folding her lithe arms over the tight fabric clinging to her fake boobs. I snarl at her blasé attitude. I'm surprised when she doesn't do the quintessential cheerleader hair flip in response.

“Come on, girl. I love you, but even you have to know she can't come back from this. She's twenty-five weeks pregnant, she said she'd get the amnio after the baby was born, and suddenly Sutton's decided it's now or never? Her and her baby's health or the case disappears?” She shakes her head and looks away. “It's over.”

“You don't know that. I can come up with another angle. I have to,” I protest weakly.

Even I know it's not looking good for Tinsley. When I first decided to take her case, we had no idea she was pregnant and since she hadn't gone to the hospital following the assault

there were no samples taken or proof. All we had were Georgia Kingsley, the other victim's, rape kits and the photo evidence of her attack, but even that disappeared. I know Sutton is well-connected, but I was sure DNA proof in the form of an actual living child would be irrefutable. Apparently not.

"I can't believe the judge agreed to the ultimatum," I choke out, feeling vomit crawl up my esophagus.

"Of course, you can. Judge Yaris was best friends with Sutton's father. You'll be hard-pressed to find an official in all of Colorado who *isn't* in his pocket. He's had this shit in the bag from the moment Yaris was appointed to oversee the trial," Addy interjects, looking at me as though I'm an idiot. Anger flares to life inside me, not just at her but at the entire situation and everyone involved. Sadly for my friend, she's the only one within slapping distance.

"Let's think about this reasonably," Jackson cuts in, looking between Addy and me like he's ready to intervene if this gets physical. I roll my eyes and drop down onto the velvet couch in the seating area of my office. As much as I'd like to hit *something*, I'd never actually hit her.

Well, probably not.

Addison takes my cue and straightens her white leather jacket before primly sitting down next to me. "We're not going to fight, Jack," she says softly. "This is all just friendly fire. Be a dear and grab us some coffee so we can brainstorm this

together, would ya?” She bats her eyes at him coyly, and I barely contain a bark of laughter.

Jackson blinks a few times in surprise, then shoots her a glare as if he’s just woken up from her spell. “*Adds,*” he grunts with a *tsk* that surprises me. “Enough.” His low growl of warning makes Addison immediately straighten up and drop the flirty manipulation she wears like a second skin. Jack smirks and nods. “Good girl,” he murmurs, causing both of us to rear back, a move he misses as he spins on his heel and leaves my office.

“What the hell was that?” I whisper-shout, watching his retreating form. Addison seems to have to shake herself from her own fog before turning a wide-eyed stare at me.

“Seriously. You saw that, right? Did he just—” she breathes.

I nod, squeezing her hand. “He did.”

“Dear Lord, I think I’ve met my match.” Our eyes are huge as we gape at each other before finally falling into a fit of laughter. “Oh, fuck, my panties are soaked.”

“I think mine are, too,” I giggle, crossing one leg over the other just for a fact check. My panties are dry as can be, but I enjoy her possessive glower all the same. When I’m pretty sure she’s only seconds from pulling a *Gollum* and shouting *my precious*, I give her a friendly shove and fess up. “Jesus, Addison. Calm down. As much as I love a grunty and growly man barking orders at me, Jackson’s not my type. You can have him.”

She nods and breathes through her brand-new possessive instincts. I watch as her pale cheeks turn pink with embarrassment. She tucks her clasped hands between her thighs as her gaze darts to my door. She stares at the empty hall longingly. “That’s never happened to me,” she whispers, her voice taking on a tone of awe. “I’ve never let one of them boss me around before.”

“Men,” I correct. “Not *them*.”

She pays me no mind as she continues her love-sick diatribe. “I’ve definitely never gotten turned on by one of them barking at me, either. I don’t like to be put in my place.” Finally looking at me, she shakes her head and swallows thickly. “How did he do it, Ray?”

“I assume he’s more Alpha than you, which is surprising to be honest. I was pretty sure you were hiding a massive set of balls beneath your pretty dresses this whole time.” She swats me across the chest, smacking me right in the boob. I grin and rub the throbbing flesh as I continue. “It’s not a big deal, though I have to admit, I never expected that from Jackson out of all people. Apparently, you bring something primal out in the man, *Adds*,” I drawl his nickname for her and barely dodge the second blow before she strikes my other boob.

“Anyways,” she hisses. “I’m not worried about you going after Jackson. I know your fifty shades of fucked up over your little online boyfriend.”

Now it’s my turn to blush and swallow my emotions back. Just the thought of him...*Kill*...has me needing to lock

everyone out of my office so I can see just how wet my panties can get. Especially since that day. Shit, I haven't been able to look at my desk the same. Whatever she sees on my face spurs her on. Addy claps her hands with glee and turns to face me fully. She kicks her heels off and bundles her long legs beneath her.

“Spill,” she demands, her face oddly reminiscent of a rabid dog. I swear, I see a drop of saliva forming at the corner of her botoxed lips. “Tell me *everything*, and leave nothing out.”

Groaning, I kick my feet up on my coffee table and drop my head onto the back of the couch. Staring at the charcoal grey ceiling of my office, I let my mind wander for the first time today. I try—I really fucking try not to let myself go there when I'm at work. If I did, I wouldn't get a damn thing done, and I'd probably spend the entire day with my hand between my thighs. I don't know what it is about him, but one word, and I'm a puddle of goo. It makes no sense. Beyond the cursory conversation about what led us both to the Kinksters app, our conversations have been everything *but* sexual. *Except that once.* I've never even seen the man's photo.

“What do you want me to say?” I mumble, my voice slightly more petulant than I'd intended. I like to keep mine and Kill's life private. Not that we have a life together or anything, but he's mine and I don't like to share what's mine.

I blink rapidly, shocked by my own possessive thoughts. I hadn't even realized I felt that way about anything, let alone him.

Shit. I'm so fucked.

Addy leans forward, placing her perfectly made-up face right in front of mine. Her long platinum blonde curls spill out over her shoulder and dangle in my eyes. I bat them away, then shove her out of my bubble. “You like him,” she states, reclaiming her spot.

“I do,” I say softly, a wave of nerves pooling low in my belly. In all honesty, liking him is the least of my offenses where he’s concerned. Obsessed is more like it. Greedy, hungry...fucking *starving* for the man. Starving for more of his time, his words, his late-night musings. All of it.

I want to hear his voice, see his face, play with him—*have him play with me*. I’m so obsessed that everywhere I go I feel like I see him. I feel his presence, like he’s watching me. It’s ridiculous since I have no idea what he looks like. In my head, he’s tall, tattooed and brutish. He’s ominous and beautiful. Like a real angel, not the fictionalized kind. The dark ones who look more demon than anything, yet, they’re so beautiful it physically hurts to look upon them.

Yes. Definitely obsessed.

It’s more than that, though. I want to get to know him and hang out with him. Fuck, I just want to meet the man.

“So,” Addy says, drawing out the word in a way that makes me want to crawl into a hole. “What’s the problem? Why do you look like someone stabbed your cat?”

I open my mouth to respond, unsure what I'm even supposed to say when we're interrupted by a very domesticated-looking Jackson. My brows furrow and I have to tug my bottom lip between my teeth and bite down to avoid laughing hysterically. Jackson Lowell, the rich, pristinely dressed, suit-wearing, blonde beefcake, is currently carrying a silver tray with three cups of coffee, creamer, and a dish of sugar like a well-trained butler.

"Jack," Addy murmurs, looking just as perplexed as I am. "Where the fuck did you get a tea tray?"

He shrugs, not meeting either of our gazes as he sets the spread out before us, making my coffee table look like high tea at the Palace instead of an Ikea clearance item. He must feel our penetrating stares because he awkwardly shifts before coughing out *my office*. And that's the exact moment I lose it. We laugh at poor Jackson's expense until tears are streaming down our cheeks and I'm feeling slightly better about the depressing situation.

"Whatever," Jackson grumbles as he doctors up a cup of coffee with scientific precision. When he's done, he silently sets it in front of Addison. Her laughter dies an abrupt death, causing an awkward tension to fill the room. He ignores it and slides a black cup of coffee in front of me before making his own and taking a seat across from us.

Eager to clear the air, I arch a brow in his direction. "What? I'm just expected to make my own coffee, now? What ever

will I do?" I bring my hand to my chest and gasp in mock horror. "I can't possibly be expected to ma—"

"Shut it!" he barks. "You're lucky I even brought either of your ungrateful asses anything." His lip tips up with the hint of a smirk, giving himself away. I crack a smile and dump a splash of cream in my drink before sitting back in my seat. Addy, however, is still staring at her drink like she was just gifted a Maserati. "Just drink the damn coffee, Adds."

She jolts like she's been shocked, then does as he commanded and sips her drink slowly. With a hum of satisfaction, she turns to me and nods. "You were just about to tell me all about your boyfriend. Go on."

I sputter and choke on the hot liquid, shooting her a wide-eyed look. My gaze flits between her and Jackson, who's looking mighty smug right now. Maybe I should call it a day? I have a shit ton of PTO I could be using right now instead of dealing with their insufferable asses.

"Oh, yes, Rayvn. Please, do tell all," he murmurs, crossing a leg over the opposite knee and gesturing for me to continue. I flip him off but sigh, resigning myself to just get it out. Maybe talking it through will help me come to terms with my... situation.

"Shit," I groan. "I can't believe I'm doing this. You're both sworn to secrecy. You got it?" They nod their heads, and I'm surprised when I find Jackson giving me a serious look of understanding. "We met three weeks ago on a—" I pause, shifting uncomfortably. "*Dating app.*"

Jackson's brows lift but he says nothing. Addison nods eagerly, her tiny little fists clenching her coffee cup tightly. I'm assuming she's trying to hold herself back from going full-on postal right now. I've only told her a few details, none of them including what kind of app I met him on, not that I think she'd judge. She knows all about my interests, and let's face it she's a freak too.

"It's all been very—" I break off searching for the word. "Simple? I mean, we matched the night I signed up. Pretty immediately, actually. I messaged him first, and we've been chatting back and forth regularly, but there just hasn't been any..." I shrug, taking a deep swallow of my coffee. "Forward progression." If you don't count him sending me famous quotes and telling me to fuck myself at work...but, those are small victories, really.

"What do you mean?" Jackson asks before Addy can. I let out a heavy breath. I don't know how to ask for advice without giving explicit details.

Shooting Addison a hard look, I continue. "It's an app geared toward people with certain kinks."

"Oh! Kinksters?" she blurts, grinning like a maniac. Slowly, I nod, my eyes darting to see Jackson's reaction. His cheeks are a tad pink, but other than that his face is stoic and understanding, like the good lawyer he is. "I love that app," she gushes. "I bet you've had a hard time weeding through all the creeps, huh?" she asks, cocking her head to the side.

She's on the app? *Well, shit.* I can't say it's completely unexpected, but—a thought rattles through my brain, making my gut clench painfully. What if she's talking to him? *Fuck.* What if he's talking to other women?

I can't believe I hadn't thought about that before. Kill is the only person I've talked to on Kinksters. In fact, he's the only person I've matched with, which is fine. I'm sure there aren't many people who are down with my long list of interests. Addy must not have been as specific if she's receiving that many messages.

I shake my head, focusing back on the room. “No, actually. He's the only person I've matched with. Don't you find it odd that there aren't any photos or locations?” I ask, voicing one of the details that's been bothering me.

She tips a delicate shoulder up, her mouth latched around her coffee mug. “If you like someone, then you share those details. It's supposed to keep everyone safe. Even if you haven't talked to anyone else, trust me when I say, there are a shit ton of creeps and pervs on that app. If you match with someone and decide to pursue things, you can exchange numbers and private information.” She considers me for a moment, a look of calm calculation crossing her face. “You haven't done that.”

“No,” I say, my voice heavy and despondent. I may not date much, but even I know it's not a good sign that he's reluctant to tell me anything personal about himself. “I don't even know his name,” I whisper, feeling extremely embarrassed all of the

sudden. Shit. I'm pretending like I have a relationship with a fucking stranger who clearly isn't all that interested in me.

"You call him Kill, though," she says, her brows dipping together. I nod. "I thought that was short for Killian or something." *Psh, I wish.*

"Nope," I say, popping the 'p'. *This is about to get real awkward.* "When I asked for his name, he said *not yet*, so I've just taken to referring to him by a shorter version of his screen name."

"Which is?" Jack drawls. I fiddle with my cup and swallow thickly. Looking up from beneath my lashes, I watch Addy seeing how she reacts to this information. *Is she chatting with him too?*

"KillerClown4u," I murmur. Her eyes widen, and Jackson coughs to cover a snort but fails.

Addison smirks. "If you were worried I was also talking to your man, I assure you, I'm not. In fact, I don't even think we're on the same side of Kinksters. You know what I like, I know what you like. We're not attracting the same men."

"And what is it you like?" Jackson asks, though his gaze is locked on Addison. I don't miss his tense jaw or slight flexing of his fists. I'm sure my friend doesn't miss it either. We're both observant as hell.

She tilts her head to the side, her eyes boring into his. "I'm a Domme, Jack. I like men who submit to me, in and out of the bedroom. That a problem?" His pupils dilate and his knee

begins to bob up and down, but he doesn't break eye contact. They stare at each other so intensely and for so long that I consider standing up to give them privacy.

“Not at all,” he mutters, sounding one hundred percent like it is, in fact, a problem. Finally, he pulls his gaze from Addison and locks it onto me. “And you?”

Ah, shit. I was hoping to avoid this question. My hands develop a slight tremble in the space of one second to the next, and my previous nausea comes back with vengeance. I don't like telling men this part. They're quicker to judge than women are, that's for sure.

“She's a dirty, dirty girl,” Addy jokes, taking the choice from me. My head snaps in her direction, but she's too locked onto Jack to notice. “Rayvn likes it rough, painful and degrading. She can't get turned on unless she's scared for her life and being called a little slut, apparently.”

Not for the first time, I wonder why Addison and I are even friends. Everything around me blanks out, except for the staticky chaos inside my head. It's louder than ever, and it's screaming at me to run. To shut down. To get somewhere quiet and peaceful. *Alone*. My muscles twitch, my teeth gnash together, and an intense throbbing picks up behind my eyes. I feel seconds from snapping.

Jackson immediately looks pissed off, and at first I think it's at me, or maybe my tastes, but am quickly proven wrong when he barks at Addy. “Enough, Addison. That was not your information to share.”

Addy freezes in place, her eyes wide and panicked. They dart to me, and regret washes over her features. She opens her mouth, to no doubt apologize, but I'm already shaking my head. "It's fine." I stand up, set my coffee cup on the table, and step away. It takes everything inside me not to run for the bathroom and hide.

She jumps to her feet and moves toward me. She stops when I retreat. "Shit, I didn't mean that. I'm sorry, Ray."

"It's fine, seriously. I uh," I cough awkwardly, then realize this is one of those times when the meek Rayvn Porter won't cut it. My mask slides into place, and I stand up tall, looking at them both head-on. "I have to get back to work. I have to call Tinsley and see what she wants to do." *Please just go, please just go.*

She seems like she wants to protest, but Jack steps in, placing a gentle hand on her arm and tugging her away. He pushes her stumbling and gaping form through the door, whispering something too quietly for me to hear. With one last regretful look in my direction, she nods at Jackson and leaves.

Exhaling heavily, he turns toward me and whatever he sees on my face has him closing the distance in a few short strides. His arms wrap around me in a tight hug that is both uncomfortable and comforting. He's never hugged me before. We don't have this kind of relationship, but I would be lying if I said it didn't feel nice right now. I return the hug, relaxing for the first time since I received that email.

In the span of a minute, I'm proven why my theory about people sucking is both right and wrong.

"I know it's not the same coming from me, but I'm sorry on her behalf. Don't let her words shame you, Rayvn. Everyone's entitled to like what they like, and as long as it's safe and consensual, nothing else matters." Jack says gently. I nod into his chest before stepping away.

"Thanks," I murmur, taking a seat behind my desk while trying to keep it together. *Just another minute. You can do it.*

He jerks a nod, takes the hint, and moves to leave. Before closing the door behind him, he turns, sticking his head back in. "By the way. Three weeks is nothing. Give him some time. Us men are a little—slow." He shoots me a devilish wink and clicks the door closed.

My eyes burn, and my hands are still shaking, but I know I can't break down at work. Everyone is already questioning my capabilities with the Snow case. Me having tantrums and breakdowns won't make it any better.

I fight the urge to do what I know will make me feel better for a solid five minutes before finally caving. Picking up my phone, I open the Kinkster app and send a message.



Chapter Ten

FoxBabe20: Hi.

Jesus, Ray. Real fucking original. No wonder he's—

KillerClown4u: What's wrong?

My brows furrow. Not only did he respond immediately, but he somehow knows I'm not okay. Unsure how honest to be, I avoid answering.

FoxBabe20: What makes you think something is wrong?

KillerClown4u: You never text me while you're at work.

KillerClown4u: And you never just say *hi*.

FoxBabe20: Oh. I'm fine. Just wanted to say hi. :)

KillerClown4u: Little Fox. Don't lie to me.

My heart gives a painful squeeze the same way it does every time he calls me that.

KillerClown4u: Seriously. Don't lie. You won't like the consequences.

What? Does he think that's a deterrent? Feeling slightly better already, I grin and lean back in my chair. I feel like a teenage girl texting her first crush. It's ridiculous, but oh well, there it is.

FoxBabe20: That depends on what the consequences are...

KillerClown4u: I'm not playing with you, Little Fox. Tell me what's bothering you. Now.

My pussy clenches as I read his text. See, this is what I'm talking about. It's just a text. He could be anyone, anywhere. He could be a woman for crying out loud! I could be getting catfished. Yet, one vague threat, and I'm in a pile of goo for him. Shaking my head, I decide to just try honesty for once. Maybe if I give him this, he'll be more forthcoming with me.

FoxBabe20: Let's play a game. I promise to give you what you want, but you have to play with me first.

This time, his message doesn't come right away, and the immediate bout of regret that fills me makes me woozy. I shouldn't have tried to be cute and quippy. I shouldn't have tried to get information out of him. I shouldn't have—

KillerClown4u: I'll play with you anytime you want, Little Fox.

Ah, hell. Now my hard nipples have joined the chat. My heartbeat picks up as I type out my reply, unsure where this is going to go.

FoxBabe20: A question for a question. I'll answer whatever you want to ask, but you have to do the same. And given your history of brushing me off, I get to go first.

Again, his pause is lengthy. The overwhelming anxious reaction that pause causes inside of me, should have me questioning my sanity. It's too soon for me to care what he has to say or what he thinks. *He's a stranger*; I repeat, hoping to force some sense into myself. I've just gotten the majority of my faculties back when he replies, and just like that I'm back to being the nervous, loved-up preteen again.

KillerClown4u: I accept your terms, but you have to accept mine in return.

FoxBabe: Okay....I'll bite.

KillerClown4u: Don't talk about biting, Little Fox, you'll distract me.

KillerClown4u: A question for a question, a fact for a fact, but with limits. Tell me, sweetling. What's your safe word?

I swallow thickly, and I swear, my eyes bug out of my head as I read and reread his text. For one, he sounds like a lawyer when he speaks. I've yet to decide if I like it or not, since I don't date lawyers for a reason. For two...this just went from zero to motherfucking sixty *real quick*.

What do I say? The only safeword I've ever used was with Oscar, and it was red but for some reason, that just doesn't feel right. With him, I feel like it should be different—special.

KillerClown4u: Don't overthink it. What makes you feel safe?

I answer without thought or pause.

FoxBabe20: You.

Oh, no. Why? Why did I even say that? Oh my god, this is humiliating. He probably thinks I'm insane.

I'm five seconds from throwing my phone out of the window when he responds, and I'm not too proud to admit that I squeal like a little girl and flip my phone over so I can't see what he's said. Holy crap, I have never, and I mean *never*, been on such an emotional rollercoaster over a man, especially not one that I've literally never fucking met.

After counting to fifty and breathing so deeply, I almost make myself pass out. I slowly flip my phone back over and read the message with one eye.

KillerClown4u: Then it's settled. Your safeword is Kill. If you want or have to skip a question, use your word. Mine is Poe.

Just like that. No questions, no complaints, no, *you're a clingy psychopath, get lost*. Just...okay. Already, I'm spotting the differences between this stranger and my ex, whom I spent over a year loving. My heart slows to a semi-normal pace, and a wide, giddy smile practically splits my face in half.

FoxBabe20: But I already call you Kill since I don't know your name. How many skips do we get?

KillerClown4u: Let's say ten skips. If we need to reevaluate down the road, we will.

Down the road? My breath catches in my throat. He's planning on there being a later. Something about that settles my nerves more than anything else has up until this point.

FoxBabe20: Okay. I agree.

KillerClown4u: Such a perfect girl. Ask your question. I know you're dying to.

Shit. I'm definitely dying after that. Dying of blood loss, considering 90% of mine just went straight to my throbbing clit. Talk about swoon material.

FoxBabe20: What's your name?

KillerClown4u: Wolfe. What's yours?

Just. Like. That.

Wolfe. My grin widens. It's perfect. I love it, but can I really tell him my name? It's not a usual name, especially with the spelling, and once I tell him where I live, I won't be hard to track down. Does that matter, though? I want to meet him. Sooner rather than later, hopefully. Is my name really worth one of my skips? No.

FoxBabe20: Rayvn.

KillerClown4u: What a beautiful name. It's a pleasure to meet you, Rayvn.

FoxBabe20: It's nice to meet you, too, Wolfe.

I sit on the edge of my seat, waiting for his question, all the while grinning like a loon. I can't remember the last time a guy gave me butterflies from simply just talking.

KillerClown4u: Now tell me what's bothering you.

Swallowing the ball of emotions in my throat, I decide to just go for it. I want to be honest with him. I want to know him, and more than that, I want him to know me. I want to see where this goes.

FoxBabe20: A lot. I got some really bad news about the big case I'm working on. I honestly don't know where to go from here. The client is young and alone. I want to win this for her, but really, I just want her to feel safe.

KillerClown4u: What else?

FoxBabe20: I kind of got into a conversation about being on the Kinksters app. My good friend shared my sexual interests with a coworker without my permission, and well... apparently, she's not a fan of my kinks. Her words were just hurtful, is all.

KillerClown4u: What's your friend's name?

FoxBabe20: Addison. Why?

KillerClown4u: Just wondering, Sweetling. I wish there was something I could do to help you with your case. I have every confidence that you'll pull through, though. You're a very strong woman, Rayvn.

FoxBabe20: I like you knowing my name.

KillerClown4u: I like saying your name. Your turn.

There are thousands of things I want to ask him, but given that I want to know all there is to know about Wolfe, it's best to just start at the beginning.

FoxBabe20: Where do you live?

KillerClown4u: New Mexico. Tell me, Little Fox. Do you enjoy being afraid?

I'm pretty sure I choke on my tongue. *Wow. Okay.* He's really going for it, isn't he? I thought this was going to be like a 'get-to-know-you' sort of thing. Maybe he'd ask where I grew up and my favorite color, but no. That's fine. I'm cool. I can do this. *Sweet, casual, flirty.*

Nope. Try again, Rayvn, you're a 33-year-old, badass, successful lawyer. You're not a high schooler with braces anymore. *Correction: Confident, sexy, slutty.*

FoxBabe20: I do. I like scary movies and haunted houses. Things that go bump in the night.

I almost put a winky face but refrain. *Slutty. Slutty, slutty.* Why is that so hard for me?

KillerClown4u: And do these things that go bump in the night make your pussy throb? Does your cunt cry out at the thought of being hunted and taken while you beg for mercy?

Oh my god. I jolt up from my desk. My phone clatters to the floor as I stare wide-eyed at the device. My heart is beating out of my chest, and my ears are thrumming in response. My eyes

dark around like he can see me, which is insane. He obviously can't, but holy shit. That was insanely accurate.

Inhaling and exhaling a few times, I bend down and pick up my phone, and read his second message.

KillerClown4u: Don't panic, Sweetling. It was on your profile.

Fuck, of course, it was. Adrenaline is coursing through my veins so quickly my fight or flight responses are tugging at my limbs, and his response is doing little to settle that. I know he's right. Logically, I know that, but *damn*. I feel...I feel seen. He gets me, and he's not judging. The way he's talking, he's probably turned on. *Duh, Ray. You met on a site for kinky freaks. He's just like you.*

FoxBabe20: Yes.

KillerClown4u: Yes, what? Say it.

FoxBabe20: I get wet just thinking about those things. About being chased and forced.

Be honest.

FoxBabe20: I want it so bad.

KillerClown4u: So do I, Little Fox. Will you let me play with you? Hunt you down and fuck you till you can't walk?

Yes. Yes, please. God yes.

Shit. This is getting out of hand. I want that, of course, I do, but he's missing the whole purpose of this game. More than

that, he's taking control of the situation, and while I want that, I also *need* to know him first. At least a little. With all the regret in the world, I type the words that will pump the breaks on this rapidly shifting conversation, despite my throbbing core's protests.

FoxBabe20: You seem to like rules. I have some of my own.

KillerClown4u: Go on...

FoxBabe20: I want to be afraid, and I want to be taken when I'm not expecting it, but I need to know you. To trust you. I can't do this without that. I'm sorry.

With bated breath, I wait for him to tell me to fuck off. After weeks, the only piece of information I'll ever know about the man who's consumed my thoughts and dreams will have been his name. Maybe it's not too late to take it back. Maybe...

KillerClown4u: Never apologize for what you need, Little Fox. I accept your terms with a caveat. You have until October 1st to get to know me, and then you're mine.

FoxBabe20: Yours?

KillerClown4u: Yes. So we're not getting our signals crossed, let me clarify that for you. By mine, I mean mine to play with, fuck, torment, hunt, and ruin because, make no mistake, once you let me in I won't let go until you're well and truly destroyed. But I promise to make sure you'll love every fucking second of it. Deal?

I have no idea what's wrong with me. What happened to me and my brain to make me answer the way that I do? Without thought of the repercussions, barely heeding his warning or considering his words. Honestly? I don't know.

But within seconds, my fingers are flying over the keyboard as my body fills with a heady cocktail of emotions, the main ones being *elation and arousal*.

FoxBabe20: Deal.

KillerClown4u: Does this mean what I think it does? Are you giving me your consent, Little Fox?

FoxBabe20: Yes.

Pretty sure I just made a deal with the Devil.



Chapter Eleven

Y^{es.}

What and the ever-loving fuck is wrong with me? I reread her reply for the hundredth time, willing the answer to change. Willing her to tell me to get fucked and to end this thing because clearly, I can't. I don't understand how it's happened so quickly, but I'm obsessed with Rayvn Porter. I've only known of her existence for a short time, yet, it's as though I'm linked to her. I have this all-consuming need to watch her, smell her, touch her, *consume her*.

It's irrational, basically psychopathic behavior, but I can't stop.

I've tried. Fuck, I've tried. At first, it started with basic recon. Knowing she's as high profile and well-connected as she is, I told myself I was just doing a deeper background check than usual to be safe. To make sure nothing could get tied back to me. I may do duplicitous and illegal shit, but I'm always profoundly careful about my tactics. I never go too far, too public, or too extreme. I hide in the shadows, both online and in the real world.

I'm a ghost.

But with Rayvn...I've become something else entirely. For starters, I'm now officially a stalker, apparently. My social skills have always been shit, but this is a new level of weirdness, even for me. No matter how shitty my life has been at times, I never resorted to this kind of insanity, and honestly, I'm not sure what to do about it.

After a life of pain and suffering, have I finally cracked? Is this what it feels like to lose yourself?

I never had friends growing up. Par for the course of being a poor kid with no family and a massive stutter. I was the laughing stock of the playground, and the only reason my adolescence got incrementally better is that I tested out of all my subjects and graduated early. I may not have spoken well, but I made up for it with borderline genius tendencies. I spent all my time in my room coding, gaming, reading, and learning. By 13, I could rebuild computers from scratch. By 16, I could program complex gaming systems and was getting paid for online gigs in the cyber world. By 18, my hacking programs were created and turned into a well-oiled and profitable machine. Out of desperation, I upped my game, and took on high paying clients, needing every cent I could make.

I was the scrawny kid, the one whose junky parents were too high to realize they had a baby until they needed more drugs. One day, they were so high they tried to sell me on the streets. Luckily, a cop intercepted their shady shit. He saved me, arrested them, and a week later I wound up with an

incredible woman who raised me like her own. A woman that I owe every fucking thing to.

She saved me, then saved me again and again. Every time life got too hard, every time my world got too dark, she was there. And when it came time to save her in return, I couldn't. I was too young, too weak, too poor, and insignificant. I made a vow to never be that helpless kid again, and despite my current bout with insanity, that promise hasn't disappeared. *I have to focus on my job.*

Yet, here I am once again, standing outside the window of Rayvn's quaint suburban apartment. The carport and few trees littering the parking lot are shit for cover, but the area is so vacant, no one ever notices me, including my Little Fox. I've been here countless times since I began my recon, too many to count, and it's always the same. Empty.

Something about that irritates me. She shouldn't be living in such a shitty place as a young, single woman. Fuck. She shouldn't be single.

Get it together, Nash. You're losing it.

At first, I started following her because I was studying her habits. Where she goes—*work, the apartment gym, the grocery store on Third*. How many visitors she has—*none*. Who her friends are—*Shiloh in Blue River, Addison at the law firm*...and that's it. Travel—*none*. Hobbies—*gym, binging reality tv and horror flicks, especially the classics, some sort of needle-art thing, running, running some more, cooking,*

working...the list of solitary, quiet activities goes on but are there any true hobbies in there? Doubtful.

Her only living family member is her father, and though she gives him most of her money, I've yet to see her visit the man. I track her phone and he calls her regularly. She answers almost every time, but without fail, keeps the calls under two minutes.

Over the months that I've observed her from a distance, I've found myself growing more and more...*attached*. I'm drawn to every aspect of her being, and now that we're communicating it's only gotten worse. Something about Rayvn calls to me. She's like a dark force in the night, moving silently through the world. Even when you can't see her coming, you can *feel* her power.

When she's around people, she's a force to be reckoned with. She's commanding and captivating. She grabs your attention the moment she enters a room but when she's alone, like now, she's quiet and reserved. Solitude suits her. She flourishes when she's alone. It's as though it's the only time she gives herself permission to *exist*, which is something I am all too familiar with.

As I stare in her window, watching her simply just be—I find myself enthralled. It's as though she's Michelangelo, and I've been granted the gift of watching the Sistine Chapel come to life. My Little Fox is curled up on her pink couch, nibbling away at a bag of pretzels as she works on some sort of art

project on her lap. *We're both artists. Another thing we have in common.*

The thought has my fingers twitching with the need to access my paints. I'd love to sit for days on end, devouring her naked flesh. Feasting upon her beauty with my eyes, while I try time and time again to capture her grace on my canvas. It would be impossible. It would take days on end, and I have no doubt she'd fight me every step of the way, hiding her body from me in a shitty attempt at modesty. I'd have to tie her up. Chain her to the bed. Hands and feet bound so she'd have no choice but to submit for me and my paintbrush.

Fuck. She'd make a stunning canvas. I could paint her dark skin in my cum and blood, claiming her in the most primal of ways. I'd take my time, too. Draw it out until she was thrashing and crying with need. Until she was sobbing, trembling, from how badly she needed to get off. My already aching cock pulses at the thought, and I barely stop myself from pulling the painful appendage out and fucking my fist to the sight of her.

Rayvn stands from her couch, a small smile gracing her gorgeous face as something on the tv catches her eye. Her gaze never leaves the movie, even as she slides her curtains shut, obstructing my view and pissing me off.

My Little Fox lives on the bottom floor of a middle-class apartment complex, which I find both annoying and appealing. Annoying because anyone could easily break into her home and harm her before she even realizes what's happening.

Appealing because that's exactly what I'm going to do...when I can finally touch her.

October 1st. That's only 19 days away. I can wait. Maybe.

Earn her trust.

My fists clench, and it's not until I hear the crack of metal and plastic that I remember my phone in my hand. Sighing, I lean against the car next to me and open my emails to kill time. I haven't been home in a week, and I desperately need to get back, but every time I get on my bike something inside of me spasms and thrashes violently. It's like a macabre rendition of an old slasher film where the villain hacks away brutally at the poor victim's guts until nothing remains but a bloody mess.

That's what leaving Rayvn feels like. That's why I've stayed. I tell myself it's because the discomfort isn't conducive to a healthy work environment. Then I tell myself I'm a fucking liar.

Over a hundred new requests have popped up for hacking gigs on both my public site and the higher-end dark web form. My stomach drops to my feet in an instant as reality comes crashing back in with all the force of a Mack truck. For the first time in a decade, I don't want to go back to my basic reclusive existence. Back to my fancy office in the guest house behind my too-large home. Back to the quiet desolation. Back to the memories and constant chasm of pain that awaits me.

I don't want to take on another menial job for a moderate payday, nor do I want to take on the more explicit, well-paying

jobs that guarantee my goals will be fulfilled sooner rather than later. For the first time.... *ever*, I want more.

Looking up, I stare at the grey blackout curtains that prevent me from seeing the object of my obsession, and I realize with startling clarity that what I want. What's keeping me from my depressing existence, is her. Not because I was hired to ruin her. Not under the guise of this being some work project. Not because I want...no, *need*, the paycheck her demise will deliver. But because I just flat out want *her*.

My Little Fox.

Fuck. I need to see her, hear her voice. Touch her. Wrap my body around hers. Shackle her to me. Keep her. Claim her. Own her.

Well, shit. That accelerated quickly.

I've yet to decide how to handle any of this. My mind is in a constant battle with the rest of me. I want to pursue her in the darkest of ways, but more than that, I just *want* her. Could this ever go beyond sex and depravity? Does she even want more than that? Do I?

As a nerdy recluse, my life has been lackluster, to say the least. I've never been in a relationship. Never even fucked a woman, so it's safe to say I've never done a single one of the things Rayvn's requested. But I'll do them because that's what she needs, and I'm finding it's impossible for me to deny her anything.

I may be fucked up in the head from my less-than-stellar start in life and years of bullying, both mental and physical, but I've never looked for an outlet like this. My cravings tend to be more in the realm of...punishment. However, I've channeled those needs into my work online. I stay hidden, operating like an all-powerful, invisible force behind a screen, enacting my revenge one shitty human at a time.

You're a coward. Weak. Pathetic. No one.

My fist smashes into the window of the red Honda next to me, setting the alarm off in a blaring cacophony of sounds that mirror the screaming in my head.

Always so fucking loud.

Clearly, I also have no control. I'm impatient and impulsive. Another reason I hide. The turmoil that lives inside me has grown and evolved over the years. Now, it's practically enveloped me whole. I say that the beast lives inside me, hidden deep down, but really...we're one and the same. It's getting harder to control.

I used to hate this version of myself. The one that would come home and cry when things got too hard. When people got too mean. When I got too sad and lonely. When I got too angry and violent. I hated it so much that I found a way to bury it all deep down. For years, I've enjoyed the simple, emotionless existence. However, it seems the presence of Rayvn has dug it out of me whether I wanted her to or not, and surprisingly, I've found myself embracing the chaos.

Now that she's in my life, this beast of mine...the anger, frustration, sadness, desolation—*the fucking guilt*...slithers on my skin like one of my many tattoos. Maybe it's because she sought out a monster, and my black soul decided to deliver. Rayvn Porter asked for a Devil, not realizing one was already in her midst.

As I walk back to my bike, escaping the annoying car alarm, my phone pings with another message. Reluctantly I open it, disregarding the rest.

Re: Rayvn Porter

My request was made two months ago. You have received half of the money, yet she is still pursuing me. I need her taken care of. Do your job, or send the money back, and I will find someone who can.

My brows furrow as anger fills me. It's hot and burning, like lava beneath my skin. Who the fuck is this person? I never even researched the source of the request beyond the barest of glances. It came from a bogus IP address, as most dark web requests do. More than that, a scrambler was used, making it more difficult to find the original sender. I didn't care at the time because the money the client was referring to blinded me.

Rayvn was just another job, one of many. Most of the time, I investigate the claims against a person for cases like this. I don't make it a habit of ruining good people or the wrongly accused, but all I saw in that moment was the end goal...

It's enough money to finally finish what I started all those years ago. To finally redeem myself.

But now that I know her, I can't imagine what would inspire such an insane, lofty request. The sender said she's pursuing them. My jaw clenches at the thought. Why would she be going after someone to such an extreme level that they'd seek out my help? And why does it bother me so fucking much?

Though it hasn't escaped me that Rayvn started off as a job and that I have responsibilities where she's concerned, I've let myself pretend. Pretend that I could exist this way. That I could prolong the inevitable. But while doing that, I stopped enjoying the chase for my usual reasons and started enjoying it because *she* is my prey.

I reread the message countless times as though more information will appear. I could respond to the sender, asking for more details, but something tells me that would raise red flags. This person, who I assume is a man, seems like someone who is used to getting what they want. And what they want is *My Little Fox* destroyed. No one, and I mean no one, will destroy her but me.

A plan quickly forms in my mind. I need a way to keep Rayvn, get paid, and find out who's after her without giving them a reason to question me. I'll eliminate the threat against my girl, and then I'll make sure she's so fucking blissed out on me and my cock, that she never questions where I came from or why I'm never giving her back.

Rayvn Porter started out as a job, but she's quickly becoming my life, and I'll be fucked if anyone's taking her from me.



Chapter Twelve

KillerClown4u: What's your favorite food?

Foxbabe20: Pad Thai. You?

KillerClown4u: Promise you won't make fun of me?

I grin, barely suppressing the giddy giggle bubbling up my throat at his playfulness. Since we made the pact a week ago, *Wolfe* has been different. More present and chatty than ever before. I actually feel like I'm getting to know him, and that maybe we might end up...somewhere.

Foxbabe20: I promise no such thing.

KillerClown4u: You laugh, you get punished.

Foxbabe20: Don't threaten me with a good time. Besides, you aren't here to make good on your threat. Fav food. Out with it.

KillerClown4u: Mac and Cheese.

KillerClown4u: From the box.

The giggle I'd been keeping at bay flies my mouth, gaining me a few questioning looks that I completely ignore. He's

adorable. *I want to keep him.*

We've been playing this question game for 8 days, and neither of us has had to use our *safeword* escape clause yet. Maybe it's because we've both avoided any difficult questions, but every day, it gets harder for me to not demand every single piece of information about him. I want to know everything about Wolfe. He's quickly becoming my favorite part of the day.

I know his age—28, which I thought would be hard for me, or maybe my age would be a no go for him, but we both accepted it like it was no big deal. I know he lives a state south of me. He knows I'm in Denver. He's told me very vague things about his childhood, but we've yet to exchange the dirty details. That's a conversation I'm definitely not looking forward to.

He says he works in tech and does computer repair. I want to ask what he looks like, but don't want to come across as being superficial. Surprisingly, he hasn't brought up anything sexual or kink-related. He has, however, peppered me with Edgar Allan Poe quotes and ghost stories. Apparently, he's as much of a horror buff as I am.

Foxbabe20: I find that adorably funny.

KillerClown4u: I find you adorable. What are your plans this weekend?

A loud screech has me practically falling out of my chair and onto the conference room floor. My phone damn near flies from my hands, shocking me from my blissed-out happiness.

My eyes shoot up just as a very frazzled and pissed-off Addison marches through the door. Her eyes are frantic and wide, her face is red with anger, but what has my mouth dropping open is the state of her clothing. The normally pristine, proper Addison Hughes is covered in...*is that baby powder?*

My head cocks to the side as I take her in. Her purple two-piece suit is form-fitting and borderline inappropriate but clearly made to enhance her enhancements. However, right now, the expensive suit is caked in a white dusting of powder that looks as though it's been smeared with her attempts to remove it. She plants her hands on her hips as she glowers at me and the two other staff members sitting around the table, Carly, the secretary, and Joella, Brandt's assistant.

My lip twitches with an impending smile, but I fight with everything I have to contain it. I open my mouth to ask what happened, but Carly beats me to it.

“What the hell is that?” she squeals before blushing like crazy and slapping a hand over her mouth. I shoot her an approving grin and a subtle nod. She needs to have more confidence in herself.

You're one to talk, my brain chides. I barely contain an eye-roll as I internally chastise myself. *Shut up, bitch. We aren't doing this today.*

Addy stomps her foot indignantly and flaps her hands at her side as though that's answer enough. When I cock a questioning brow, she huffs out a sigh. “I turned on the heater

in my car on my way here and *this*,” she gestures to her outfit or the substance on it. “Blew all over me.”

“Yes, but *what is it?*” Joella hisses, eyeing the powder like it’s cocaine, and she’s one sniff from being arrested.

Addison cringes and slowly brings her arm up to her nose. She gives the fastest sniff I’ve ever seen before glaring at the sleeve as though it’s personally offended her. “*Baby powder.*” The way she grits out that one word has visions of an old-time mafia film flitting through my brain. I swear, she’s five seconds from going all Marlon Brando in the middle of the conference room.

“So,” I drawl, bringing us back to the important question at hand. “Who did you piss off so I can avoid them?” The hiss that flies from her mouth is one hundred percent feral animal and it has my eyes bugging out of my head.

“Woah, what’s got you all pissed off, Pussycat?” Roy Brandt chuckles as he steps through the doorway, a smug grin plastered across his cheeks.

Slowly, like a scene from a slasher film, Addy turns around, giving him the first glimpse of the manic, baby-powdered version of her usual put-together self. I know the second he notices the tense situation because he practically chokes on his tongue. His eyes rake over her body and instead of the usual lascivious perusal he’s known for, he tuts in distaste. I breathe out a huff of laughter.

Idiot.

When we started Attenborough Law, we were all equal partners, except for Jonah Attenborough, who had been a mentor to all of us. He held two shares of the company, while the rest of us held one. Unfortunately, when he passed two years back, Brandt, his nephew, took on the role of unofficial leader since Jonah had left him his shares. It was... unexpected, to say the least. But, with the grief of losing Jonah so suddenly, none of us had the energy or mental capacity to fight our new reality. Since then, the situation has kind of just —*evolved*.

The problem is, Roy Brandt is an insufferable piece of shit.

“Don’t call me that, you arrogant, pig-headed mothe—” Addison shouts, drawing my attention back to where she’s still in a heated stand-off with Brandt.

“You can’t speak to me that way!” he barks, interrupting her tirade. His face has turned a beautiful shade of red, barely concealed by the fake tan on his sun-aged skin. He’s only 38, but he looks at least 50, in my humble opinion.

Addison steps forward and opens her mouth, jutting a pointed nail into his chest, but is once again, interrupted.

“Fucking low life, wanna-be gangster, ass hole little pricks,” Jackson bellows, storming into the conference room where the rest of the crew has slowly filtered in and taken their seats to watch the showdown. Sandra Royale, another partner who I used to like but have come to hate over the years, is practically cumming all over her seat from all the drama. “Fuck Mondays. Fuck cars. Fuck rideshare apps. Fuck—”

“Jesus, Mother and Joseph, someone needs to wash your mouth out, young man,” Margie, Jackson’s elderly secretary, cries out as she sends an appalled look in the accused’s direction. Jackson has the decency to look well-chastised as he takes his seat across from her. “Now, why don’t you try telling us what the problem is like a civilized human instead of—” she tosses a wrinkled hand at him, “*that*.”

Jackson cringes and drops his head on the table. “Sorry, Margie,” he mumbles, sounding petulant as all fuck. Meanwhile, I’m getting dizzy from how quickly my head is volleying between everyone as I take in the shit show that used to be my quiet Monday morning. “I came out this morning to get into my car, and all of my tires were slashed.”

Margie gasps, placing the same angry hand across her chest in shock. Jackson’s head whips up, and he glowers, meeting each of our gazes as he continues. “Oh, that’s not all.”

“Did they put baby powder in your vents, too?” Carly shouts, leaning in like she’s immersed in the best telenovela she’s ever seen.

His brows furrow in confusion for a moment before his head snaps in Addy’s direction, finally noticing he’s not the only person who’s had a shitty morning. “Fuck. Did they leave a note on your car?” She shakes her head as she gingerly takes her seat, as though she’s afraid the big bad baby power will come to life and attack her if she so much as jostles it.

Jackson groans and runs a hand through his hair, messing up the slicked-back locks in a way that looks almost intentional.

“They keyed the side of my car, broke in and cut up the leather seats, took what I can only assume was a bat to both my headlights, and then slashed all four of my tires.”

A bark of laughter escapes me as his words sink in. Oh, this is just too good. “Maybe next time you’ll think before you cheat.” Again, everyone turns in my direction, confusion written all over their faces. My brows hit my hairline. “What? Did no one else catch the reference?”

Carly and Joella cast long glances at each other as they try and figure out the riddle. Surprisingly, it’s Scott Harrison, the final partner in our unconventional, slightly toxic crew, that gets it first. “Holy shit. You got *Carrie*’d.”

“What the fuck does that mean?” Jack growls, clearly fed up with the conversation. Meanwhile, Scott and I are laughing our asses off. Finally, Carly and Joella must catch on because they join in on the chaos.

Wiping her tear-stained cheeks, Joella jerks her chin at Jackson and smirks. “Carrie Underwood wrote a song about finding her man cheating. She fucked up his car in the same exact way you described.”

“So, who’d you cheat on?” I ask, wagging my brows, only because I know he’s single. Jackson heaves out an annoyed breath, ignoring my question completely, which is more telling than any lie he could have come up with.

“Focus! You said they left a note?” Sandra asks, practically frothing at the mouth. *Drama queen.*

He nods. “In red paint on my windshield, it just says ‘*Mine*’.” He darts a nervous glance in Addy’s direction.

“Are you sure it wasn’t blood?” Carly whispers, her eyes wide behind her glasses as she stares at Jack. He rears back as though he’s been slapped, his face paling at the thought.

“Holy fucking hell,” I groan, apparently louder than I’d intended, when everyone’s eyes snap to mine. I give an uncaring shrug because, honestly, I’m the least dramatic of the bunch right now. “What? This feels like a bad episode of Punk’d.” I say the words even as a weird sinking feeling forms in the pit of my stomach.

Swallowing thickly, the word *mine* reverberates through my head. Sounds more like payback or punishment than anything. *Punishment...no. No way.*

“Or the best book plot of my life,” Carly says. “This is better than any true-crime show I’ve ever seen, and it’s happening right in front of my face.”

“Carly, calm down. Yes, those were all criminal offenses, but I’d hardly consider them true-crime worthy.” I roll my eyes, tapping my pen on the table. “It’s probably just some kids playing pre-Halloween pranks.”

“It’s September,” Sandra deadpans unhelpfully, as though I’m an illiterate fool. “We’re two weeks from October. That makes your theory unlikely.”

“Holy shit, Sandra. Shut up,” Jackson snaps in exasperation. “No one wants to hear you talk, especially not this morning.”

I'm pretty sure the sound that comes out of her mouth is equivalent to a banshee's cry. "How dar—"

"Enough!" Brandt barks, *finally* stepping in. What a great fucking leader we have, ladies and gentlemen. My eyes meet his, and he smirks at me before winking, and I literally want to crawl into a hole.

I hate people. I hate people. I hate people.

I knew it. I should have never gotten out of bed this morning.

"Before we get started, does anyone have any announcements for this upcoming week?" Brandt asks, hefting his left ass cheek onto the table instead of using his chair like a normal person.

I hope he gets a hernia.

The weekly announcements go off as normal, everyone catching each other up on their cases and client requests. When it's my turn, all eyes land on me, some laced with pity, some with cold calculation. I'm not sure which I hate more.

Deciding to just get it over with, I exhale heavily. "Tinsley Snow has decided to follow Georgia Kingsley's lead and drop her case against Sutton." Crickets follow my heart-wrenching declaration. The silence and weighted stares make me itchy.

Last week, when I'd called Tinsley to let her know about Sutton and his legal team's demands regarding the DNA test, she'd understandably had a meltdown. My soul shattered for her. I wish there was more I could do, and technically, there is.

I could go higher than the state. I could reach out to larger, more powerful entities to help me take down those who have wronged her. But, when I suggested this, she was adamant about just being done. She said the stress wasn't good for her and the baby, which I totally understand, and that she wanted to move on with her life. I suggested that she take a week to think about it, which she did. This morning she called me and gave me her final answer.

Tinsley Snow is done, but I'm not.

One way or another, I will take down Sutton. Her backing out is exactly what he wanted. Not only did he and his cohorts dissolve all of the evidence, but they paid off a high-ranking judge to take their side. Hell, they paid off the entire police department, techs, and hospital staff. I can't even imagine how deep the conspiracy and their pockets go.

What power do I have against all that? When I have an entire government and law enforcement branch swearing under oath that my client is lying, it feels impossible. So impossible that Tinsley's not only decided not to pursue the case but has also decided to uproot her entire life and move somewhere new. I can't blame her for wanting to run far away from this town and its corruption. Fuck, I wouldn't blame her for leaving the entire state if she wanted to. Regardless, I will find a way to keep fighting, and I'll do it for her, Georgia, and the rest of the women he's no doubt assaulted.

"Oh, one more announcement," Addy says, clapping with excitement. A puff of white power wafts in the air from the

movement, making her sneeze. She waves the cloud away and grins at the table. “My birthday is this Friday, and I’m having a thing at *Noboo*. I want you all there, 10:00 pm sharp.”

“Yeah, I’ll be in bed,” I say, shaking my head as I respond to an email on my phone. “Sorry, girl. I don’t do clubs, and I don’t do late nights.”

“Fuck, Ray. You’re acting like your Margie’s age,” she scoffs, turning an apologetic glance at the woman herself. “No offense, Marge.”

Margie pauses in her notetaking to wave her off. “If I had an ass like yours, I’d be shakin’ it out on the dancefloor till 2:00 am every night.” Gasps and chuckles ring out around the table. She ignores us all as she continues to take minutes for the meeting.

“Please, Rayvn. I want you there,” Addy begs. She grabs my arm, making my phone clatter to the table. She gives my hand a death squeeze and turns a puppy dog look in my direction. “Please, please, please.”

My stomach clenches with a mixture of emotions. The main one is irritation. The second is the overwhelming need to scream *no, leave me to my knitting and cats*. I don’t even have cats, but my soul does. It has many...and quilts, purse peppermints, and reading glasses. Basically, my soul is a 94-year-old biddy with a bad hip and dentures.

But Addison is my friend, even if she annoys the fuck out of me sometimes and it is her birthday...

She must see me wavering because she amps up her pathetic-ness by ten. “*Fine,*” I groan, already regretting the decision. “Seriously, though. A club? You’re turning 35, not 25.”

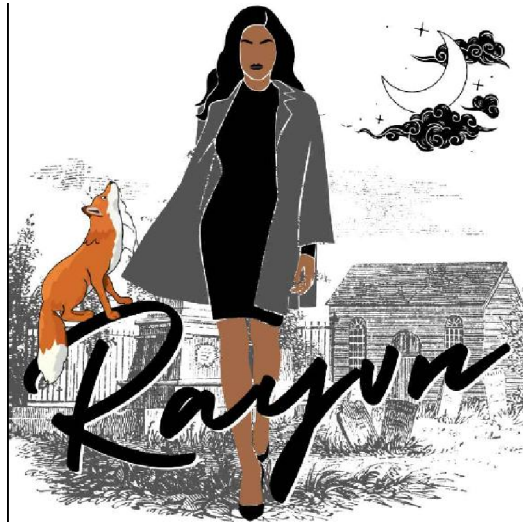
“I’m turning 30,” she hisses, tossing my hand aside now that she’s gotten what she wants. I roll my eyes. *Liar.*

“Can we move the fuck on?” Scott murmurs. “I’m getting rather annoyed with your girl talk, and I have a golf game to get to.”

“Oh? With Carrie Underwood?” Carly bites out, and I decide then and there that Carly deserves a raise.

Picking up my phone, I finally respond to Wolfe’s message.

Foxbabe20: Going to a nightclub, apparently.



Chapter Thirteen

“Holy shit, this place is amazing!” Joella beams. She grabs Carly’s hand, dragging her through the crowded nightclub and making a beeline for the dance floor. Addy shoots me an excited grin, tipping her chin after them in question.

“Nope,” I shout, shaking my head. “I need alcohol first.”

I’m not a prude or against having a good time by any means, but this place is so packed you can barely move, and it’s already grating on my anxiety. She nods and pulls me toward the bar. My eyes take in the popular new nightclub as nerves flit through me. Surprisingly, there are all sorts of people here. I was worried the crowd would be made up of barely legals trying to grind on my ass.

We make it to the bar, and order shots of tequila. Apparently, we’re going big tonight. Fuck it. It’s Friday, and I officially have no more obligations, at least for now. The reminder of Tinsley has me taking the shot and then another, drinking until I’m well and truly not giving a shit about the crowded club. I grab Addison’s hand and practically sprint to

the dancefloor to find our friends. She cackles loudly but appeases me.

Once we find the girls who are already grinding on each other, I lose myself to the thumping bass in a way I haven't in years. I close my eyes and tilt my head back, enjoying the burn of the liquor coursing through my system as it numbs me both physically and mentally. We laugh and dance until we're sticky with sweat, and then we dance some more. At some point, one of the girls leaves and returns with a tray of shots that I gladly dive into.

It's not until Carly and Joella beg to take a break that I finally come back to my body. My red bodycon dress is clinging to my skin as though I was caught in a rainstorm. My thighs are irritated from rubbing together, and my feet are screaming in protest, but...I don't care. For the first time in I don't even know how long, I'm not thinking about *anything*.

I'm not thinking about work or how badly I let down Tinsley and Georgia. I'm not thinking about my dad, my best friend and only living relative, who is disappearing slowly in front of me. I'm not thinking about my mom, who died from cancer when I was just a kid, and the sacrifices my dad made. The guilt that I feel for not being able to return his generosity. I'm not thinking about any of that. I am, however, thinking about *him*. Wolfe.

My Wolfe.

Even thinking his name has my face aching from how big my smile is. My eyes scan the heavy, thick crowd in search of

a man I know won't be here. A man I've never even met but still manages to consume my every waking thought. Fuck, he even consumes my dreams. Addison waves at me, shouting that she's going to the bathroom. I debate following her so I won't be left alone on the dancefloor, but before I can, she disappears into the crowd.

Shaking the nerves away, I continue dancing on my own. I close my eyes and force myself back to that place of numbness and bliss. My hips move in time with the slower beat of *I Feel Like I'm Drowning by Two Feet*. I get lost in the bodies pressing in on me from all sides, and surprisingly, I find that I don't hate the feeling. That is, until my skin prickles with awareness.

There's a distinct difference between people being near you, and people actively watching you. Even with your eyes closed, it's easy to feel the change. Right now? Someone's eyes are burning a hole into my flesh. A normal person would be reasonable and choose to ignore it. A paranoid person would panic. Apparently, I'm neither because my first response is to *relish* in the sensation. I don't know if it's someone else on the dancefloor or someone standing right next to me, nor do I care.

My eyes remain closed, and I don't miss a fucking beat as I put on the best, most sensual show of my life for whoever's decided to watch me. It doesn't take long before hands land on my hips, giving them a rough squeeze. My throat bobs, and suddenly, I don't know what to do with my body. Do I keep dancing? What do I do with my hands? *Just enjoy it, Ray*. I want to, I do, but for some reason—I can't.

They aren't the hands you want.

There it is. My unhealthy obsession with a faceless man is making me feel all kinds of wrong. I feel like I'm cheating, which is absolutely absurd. I can do whatever the fuck I want. For all I know, Wolfe could be doing the same. With that irritating and vomit-inducing thought, I sink into the stranger's body, pushing the odd feeling to the wayside. I feel the rough texture of a beard scrape against my cheek and I cringe. He chuckles into my ear, and the sound is all wrong. I don't know why, but in my soul I just know. *It's not his voice.*

The stranger's hands slide up my ribcage, palming my flesh as he grinds his hard cock into my ass. I shift, wanting to pull away as the touches go from *potential* to *get me the fuck out of here* in an instant. Not even a song in, and I'm already regretting every decision that led me to this exact moment. Deciding I've had enough, I pull away. The man grips me harder, tugging me back into his chest and making me stumble.

“Where the fuck are you going? Don't be a cock tease,” he laughs, moving to squeeze my boob. Absolutely fucking not. My foot rears back, ready to do maximum damage, when suddenly, he's ripped away from me. He shouts, and I turn to see what the hell is going on when another set of hands lands on the same hips the creep had just felt up, except this time...

It feels right. So fucking right. Something inside of me screams, *he's here*. Butterflies pour from my gut to my throat, causing a warm, fluttering sensation. Hundreds of questions

flit through my brain at such a rapid speed I start to get dizzy, but then, he's leaning in and wrapping his arms around my body from behind, blanketing *me* with *him*, and everything else disappears.

"Little Fox," he rasps, his hot breath fanning across my cheek as he nuzzles into my neck. My head tilts back as I try to look up at him, but his hold on me tightens. "Ah, ah, ah," he tsks. "Don't fucking move. Just feel."

I gasp out a sharp breath at his words and my body's instant acceptance of them as I melt into him. I keep my eyes trained forward, enjoying the way we feel *together*. We move as one, our bodies fully aligned, completely in sync. My eyes close of their own accord. I tilt my head back, leaning it against his chest, noticing how much taller he is than me. I focus on everything I can feel in this position, committing his traits to memory.

With my 4-inch heels on, he still towers over my naturally short stature, which means he's got to be at least 6'3, give or take an inch. His chest and biceps are lean but muscular. I can tell from the scratchy material grazing my thighs that he's wearing jeans. The feeling of leather sliding across my slick arms however, has my eyes opening. I look down to where he's wrapped around my waist in a hold that's distinctly possessive and am surprised when I see a black leather jacket. His hands flex against my ribs before sliding down, *exploring*. I notice then his skin is white. His fingers are long and unblemished. Delicate almost.

Without a word, Wolfe's hands get to know my body similarly to the way I was. Except...I want to touch him, too. I drop my arms and reach behind myself, finding the coarse material of his jeans beneath my palms. His body freezes completely, then shudders in acceptance, allowing me to continue. I squeeze, noticing the long, lean strength of his thighs. He's not a bulky man or overly muscular. Just toned.

Perfect.

Wolfe's hot breaths coast over my face and neck as he breathes. I can *feel* rather than hear him inhaling my scent. He groans, and the sound goes straight to my already wet pussy. It throbs for him. Craves him. Needs him.

"Fuck," he grunts. "You feel so good in my arms." His voice is a deep rasp, somewhere between a choked sound and a whisper, like he's just as enamored as I am. My core pulses in time with the beat, or maybe it's my heart pounding against my ribs that has set the tone for the rest of me.

He's here. My heart squeezes. "Wolfe," I gasp, saying his name out loud for the first time. Giving myself permission to admit he's real.

He's real, I didn't make him up out of loneliness and depression. He's touching me. He's real. He's real. He's real.

"I know, Little Fox. I've got you, baby," he breathes, and I know without question that he has me, in more ways than one.

The goosebumps covering every inch of my skin intensify as my body begins to tremble. His hands slowly graze every

available inch of me in a way that's probably inappropriate for the public eye, but I can't find a single fuck to give. In fact, the reminder that hundreds of people could be watching our slow seduction and getting turned on by it, forced to find their own partners, only turns me on more.

I sink deeper into his body, the warmth of him pressed against me. We fit together like a broken and shattered soul. We're battered. Bruised. Jagged. But we meld together in a way that I'd be stupid to question. His every sharp angle slots seamlessly into my soft curves.

Perfect.

A loud shout from somewhere near us causes me to jolt. He instantly soothes me, gripping my body tightly and dragging me infinitely closer until I have no idea where he ends, and I begin. Loud cheers follow the shout, dismissing any concerns, but it's too late. Reality has started to trickle in, breaking the spell. He must feel my body tense because his movements stutter.

"How are you here? How did you know who and where I was?" I ask, swallowing thickly. The goosebumps covering my skin are quickly replaced with an ice bath that sends shivers down my spine.

Why hadn't I thought of that before? How did I get so caught up under the magic that is...him? He knows I'm from Denver and my name, so I guess it's not a far cry to figure out exactly *who* I am, but due to the nature of my job I have no social media. Par for the course when working with criminals.

Some go to jail, and the last thing I want is an inmate I helped put away, finding me upon their release to enact revenge.

“Don’t,” he grunts, squeezing me painfully. It should terrify me. I should run or scream, but the pressure of *him*, is too much. Too good. His hand travels up my body, this time much faster than before. He finds my throat and collars it, sending a wave of panic through me. “Don’t question me, Little Fox. Don’t push me away just because you can’t rationalize this.”

“Wolfe—” I start but am quickly cut off when he applies pressure. I struggle to breathe, and instinctually, my own hands fly up to peel him away from me. His grip is relentless. I claw and scratch at the small bit of exposed skin on his hand and forearm, causing him to laugh. It’s a dark sound. A frightening one. A beautiful one.

Perfect.

He squeezes once, then gives me a small reprieve for oxygen that I greedily swallow down. Wolfe never skips a beat, doesn’t stop moving to the intoxicating trance song blaring through the speakers. The lights are down low enough that no one would know what’s happening unless they really came close to observe us. To anyone else, we’d look like a passionate couple getting ready to leave the dancefloor to fuck.

I want that.

“Feel me, Rayvn. Feel me against you. We feel so fucking good together, don’t we?” he murmurs, restricting my air once more. His other hand leaves my hip and travels down my

body, finding the hem of my dress. My eyes widen, and I squeeze my thighs together as I shake my head rapidly.

“No, don’t,” I rasp.

He can’t be serious. He’s not going to touch me. Not here. Not now. Not when I’ve never even seen his face. Never kissed him. But then, he’s pulling my dress up unabashedly, leaving the tight hem just above my pussy, putting my measly lace thong on display. He wastes no time cupping my cunt in a possessive, firm grip. I scream, but nothing comes out beyond a loud puff of air. I claw at his hands harder, but he ignores me.

“That’s it, Little Fox. Make me bleed for you. Cut me up. I’ll wear every mark proudly. Every time I look at the way you raked your sharp claws down my skin, I’ll remember the way you screamed for me in front of all these people. The way you came all over my fucking hand like the horny little bitch you are.” His growled words have my knees giving out, but he’s there, holding me up by his grip on my neck.

Fear, excitement, arousal, and anticipation replace the numb state the alcohol had granted me. The emotions are so strong, so heady, that I feel high. It’s better than anything else I’ve ever felt in my entire life. Is this how people who do drugs feel? Like they could do anything, be anything? Like they own the world and everything in it? Under Wolfe’s tight, terrifying grip, I feel powerful.

Perfect.

His fingers dance along my panties, which are already embarrassingly wet. Not just from the feel of him but his filthy words. “Look at you, *Pet*, already soaking wet for your master.” *Oh, fuck yes.*

He roughly tugs my panties aside and swipes one finger down the center of my core. Even I can feel how wet I am as he chuckles against my skin mockingly. The pad of his pointer finger rubs teasingly slow circles around my clit as he releases his hold on my throat a fraction, once again allowing me the desperate air that I need. I suck in a massive lungful as Wolfe continues to play with my clit as though it’s his own personal toy.

“It’s not October 1st,” he comments, reminding me of our deal that we wouldn’t cross any lines until I felt that I well and truly knew him enough to trust him this way. “Are you going to stop me?” He restricts my air once more, squeezing my throat in a deathly strong grip before I can respond. “Actually, I don’t think it matters. I couldn’t stop even if I tried. I *won’t* stop. Not until you’re gushing all over my hand. I need the scent of you on me. I need to remember that this was real when I go home and use the same fist to fuck myself.”

His words cause an alarming amount of wetness to trickle from my aching pussy. At this point, I think he could do anything he wanted to me, and I wouldn’t stop him. So, I don’t. I close my eyes, resting my head on his chest, and let go. I stop thinking about the burning in my lungs, screaming out, begging me to take a breath. To fill my body with its life force.

I don't think about the fact that we're in public, and so many people could be watching us right now as Wolfe roughly shoves two fingers into my throbbing cunt. I don't think about the fact that my friends could be near, could be seeing me get off with a stranger on the dance floor.

I don't think about anything except the way that his body moves with mine. The way his fingers feel as they thrust in and out of my body. I don't think about anything except the way his hand fits so perfectly around my throat—controlling me, owning me, consuming me. He releases his hold slightly, giving me the moment I need to breathe, but never stops fucking me. Never stops playing with me. Never stops torturing me.

Never stops. Never stops. Never stops.

“I knew from the moment I saw you that I'd be your ruin, Little Fox. I had no idea that you'd also be mine.” With that ominous statement, he cuts off my oxygen again.

Ripping his fingers from my cunt, he slaps my pussy, once, twice, before shoving them back in, except this time, he uses four fingers instead of two. I immediately feel the stretch and burn. I feel the tear. I feel the pain—and I fucking love it. It's everything.

Perfect.

My hips thrust forward, fucking myself on him as my ass arches backward, rubbing on his cock. A cock that is massive and solid against me. It spurs me on, bringing me closer and closer to that elusive space where I find pure bliss and

pleasure. Where I really let go. Where I allow myself the freedom to just fucking *be*.

I can feel myself soaking Wolfe's hand as my body trembles and responds to his. I can feel myself relenting—giving—excepting. I am his. At this moment, he owns me wholly and completely.

“That's it, Little Fox. Fuck yourself on my hand. Take everything you want, you greedy little slut. You can have it. You can have it all.” His voice is a pain-filled, throaty rasp. He sounds just as needy as I feel. He sounds like he's the one being deprived of oxygen.

He's right I must be a greedy slut, because even with four fingers lodged inside me, splitting me at the seams, I still want more. He releases my throat, and I gasp out that one word, “*More.*”

I expect him to laugh. I expect a condescending sound to echo through my ear in that deep, tortured voice of his, but instead, he releases something that sounds a whole fuck of a lot like a moan. His hips are now actively rubbing against my ass, fucking me through our clothes. It's not enough. I want to feel him. *Need* to feel him. I'm going to die if I don't feel Wolfe moving inside my body

He collars my throat again. This time, his hold on me is so punishing I can already feel the bruises forming in my flesh. I can *feel* my breath seeping from me as I teeter on the edge of passing out. But I don't stop him because I'm also on the edge of so much more.

More, more, more.

Mentally, I'm begging and it comes out, in a wordless chant. My lips move, repeating that one word again and again, even though he can't hear me. But, I can't stop and it's not because I need *more*...it's because I need *every fucking thing*.

"That's it. My brave girl, trusting the Devil with your life in his hands. Such a good fucking girl for me," he praises causing me to jolt in his grasp. "I can't wait until I can explore every inch of your delectable body. I can't wait until I can fuck this pussy raw, Little Fox."

He releases my throat and curves his fingers upwards inside of me while he continues those maddening soft circles against my clit with his thumb. Wolfe's tongue licks up the side of my abused neck before placing a surprisingly gentle kiss beneath my ear. My pussy flutters around his fingers in response. He laves open mouth kisses over my skin before clamping down on my flesh.

"Harder," I pant, shaking with the force of my impending orgasm. It's there, it's so close. So close. So— "Make me bleed."

"My pleasure," he murmurs, his lips moving against my skin. He bites down harder, and the sharp flash of pain sends me barreling over the edge into the most potent, life-altering release I've ever experienced.

This time, I do scream and Wolfe lets me. I feel his smirk ghost over the bite before the distinct sensation of him sucking on the wound. *On my blood*. It's filthy. Completely vile and so

fucking hot. He's swallowing my blood, and something about that singular act sends me over the edge again. I cum all over Wolfe's fingers and hand until I'm shaking and dizzy. He lets me ride out the aftershocks, pumping into me gently, sweetly, before ripping his hand from my sopping wet pussy.

I gasp in shock, and before I know what's happening, he shoves his dripping fingers into my open mouth, forcing me to consume my own release. His long digits push into my throat, making me gag and sputter, but I take it. I suck and lick every drop of myself from him, hoping to please him. Hoping for just one hit of his personal flavor beneath my own.

"My perfect little whore," he rasps. "So beautiful. *Mine.*" His voice is laced with so much possession and anger, yet there is something distinctly familiar about it. And that word—*mine*. My heart skips a beat and my breath catches. "Make no mistake, Little Fox. *You are mine.* The next time you let someone else's hands touch you, I will remove them and punish you. I'm a selfish bastard, Rayvn. I'm possessive with my things. No one touches my property."

With every word, my racing heart picks up its pace, and my vision becomes spotty. I open my mouth to respond, but then all at once, *he's gone*.

I stumble forward, tripping over my heels as my weak legs fight to support me. A man catches me before I fall. He smiles sweetly but his hands gripping the exposed flesh of my arms burn like a fire licking up my skin. Wolfe's words reverberate

through my mind as pure terror sets in, intermingling with the all-consuming ecstasy from multiple life-altering orgasms.

There, on that dance floor I let go, and instead of falling, I flew. In the hands of the Devil himself, I became something and someone else completely. It was exhilarating. It was terrifying. It was everything.

He was everything.

My Wolfe.

Perfect.



Chapter Fourteen

“I don’t understand, man. What’s your fucking deal?” the douchebag barks as I roughly shove him against the wall, sending his drink to the ground. The glass shatters, and the heady scent of vodka permeates the air. He grunts, but I pay him no mind, pressing my forearm harder into his throat. I cut off his oxygen in a much less sexy way than I did to my girl before dragging this fucker from the bar.

The reminder of Rayvn and the way his hands looked against her body instantly fills me with rage. Anger, like I’ve never felt before, consumes me to the point that I’m no longer seeing *him*. I’m seeing his hands on her. His cock grinding against her ass. His mouth on her neck.

Him touching what belongs to me.

When she’d told me she was going out tonight, I tried to be fine with it. I tried to ignore the pulsing behind my eyes, and the tug in my gut. The need to follow her the way I have been for months. The bone-deep urge to have my sights on her at all fucking times. I tried, and clearly, I failed. A fact I’m

immensely thankful for now that I have this piece of shit pinned and gasping for breath before me.

His tan skin has a red hue to it that I honestly didn't think was possible. When they say someone *sees red*, I thought it was just a metaphor, but I've quickly come to learn when it comes to my Little Fox, I see in all sorts of new colors.

Black often closes in around me when I don't have her in my sights, caused by a mixture of panic and anxiety. I get dizzy, and my heart pounds in a way that should more than likely warrant a trip to a hospital, and it probably would if the problem didn't immediately cease once I had her in my sights again.

When I fuck my fist to thoughts of her. To stolen images and pilfered videos of her working, breathing, *existing*—I see white. Pleasure, like I've never known, consumes me every single time. It's gotten to the point that I know, without question, when I finally have my dick inside her...I'll likely fucking pass out. And now, I can add a new color to my Rayvn spectrum.

Red.

The color of blood. The color of *his* blood.

A gurgling gasp rings through the abandoned, dark alley, bringing me back to the present. I blink, then blink again, focusing my eyes. The man's face is dark purple, and his eyes are bulging. Apparently, I blacked out thinking about my Little Fox. My dick is pulsing and aching in my jeans. Thoughts of

her, combined with the damage I'm about to do to this guy have me seconds from blowing my load.

Violence makes me want to cum, now? My head cocks to the side as I consider the odd sensation.

That's new.

“What should I do with you?” I murmur. I'm asking because I honestly have no idea. I've never been in this situation before. I may have violent thoughts, but I've never acted on them. Well, that's not true. I acted on them a week ago when I destroyed that fucks car for putting his hands on my girl.

The blonde, dimpled idiot who plays golf and drives a Mercedes. How cliché can you be? Doesn't matter. Cliché or not, he still crossed a line when he wrapped his arms around Rayvn in her office the other day. I don't care if he was comforting her or saving her life; she's not his to touch.

It took everything in me to not drive the 6 hours it would take me to get to her and blow up his fucking house—with him in it. Luckily for him, *Jackson*, I'd cooled off tremendously by the time I got to his sprawling home in his fancy gated community. *Gated my ass*. It took me less than a minute to hack the gate code and even less time to access his garage.

The song *Before He Cheats* had been on my radio as I pulled in like some sort of divine intervention granting me the inspiration to do what needed to be done. Hopefully, he gets the idea and stays the hell away from her. I will say, slicing my

finger open to leave my message was a bit macabre, but I figured my horror-flick-loving girl would find it intriguing.

Originally, I'd only driven to Denver to send a warning to Jackson, but then I remembered how upset Ray was over that bitch, Addison, and her comments. That shit didn't sit well with me. I considered fucking with her a bit more, but after observing her for only a short time, it was clear to see that nothing would piss the chick off more than messing up her pristine appearance. If I'd done what I did to Jackson's car, she'd probably just buy a new one.

Women like her are all the same. It's one of the reasons why I've never fucked with them before. She's a conceited, stuck-up bitch who looks like a cheerleader and behaves like the campus mean girl. She's the representation of everything I hate and the antithesis of everything I stand for. Everything I want in a partner. *Fuck*. Now that I think about it, I should have just killed her.

Damn, Nash. Calm the fuck down. You can't go killing everyone who hurts Ray.

I scoff. Can't I?

No. She's a lawyer. She won't want you if you leave a pile of bodies in her wake.

Shit. I release the guy from my grasp like he's burned me, knowing my brain is right. I can't draw attention to myself, and I can't fuck this up with Rayvn. He drops to the ground like a sack of shit. His face is mottled purple and red. His lips are pale, and his body still. An intense wave of satisfaction

surges through me at the thought that I killed him. That I defended what's *mine*. I did what needed to be done. I'm not the same defenseless, weak kid anymore that gets picked on and beat up. I'm not that baby that was worth nothing more than a hit of crack.

I'm rich. I'm brilliant. I'm successful. I'm stronger than ever before. More than that, I'm not alone, and I have something worth fighting for. *I'm not him anymore.*

Swallowing thickly at the realization, I bend down and bring a steady hand up to the guy's throat, searching for a pulse. It takes a moment to find it, but when I do, I'm surprised by the disappointment that fills the pit of my gut like heavy rocks. Well, hell. All I did was knock him out cold. That won't do. It's not enough.

He needs to know. They all need to know. She's mine.

The bitter, furious words swirl through my mind on repeat. The possession I feel for Rayvn Porter is unhealthy. It's toxic, and apparently, it's fucking dangerous. It's also addictive, and I find myself leaning into it. Embracing it.

If this is the man I need to become to own her—to *have her*, then so be it. I'll light her enemies on fire and burn them to the ground if that's what it takes. I'll be the Devil I told her I was and drag everyone down to hell in her honor.

I drag my gaze from the still passed-out idiot and scan the alley. Still empty. My eyes trail the surrounding area, seeking an answer or some sort of inspiration on what to do with him. I have to make him pay, but I can't kill him. Besides my pocket

knife, I don't have any weapons on me. Unfortunately, I have other plans for that particular tool, and I'll be damned if I sully it with his blood. My eyes land on a puddle of liquid, and an idea forms, causing a manic grin to spread across my face and my leaking cock to throb.

Pulling my lighter and joint from my pocket, I drop to my knees between his meaty thighs. I tuck the joint behind my ear for safekeeping and the lighter in my mouth, clenching it with my teeth. I pick his hands up and gently place them in the vodka, making sure not to jostle him or wake him up while I coat his palms in the liquid. Once satisfied, I drop them back on his lap and smile when his eyes twitch with restful awareness. You'll be awake soon enough, motherfucker. Let's see you touch what doesn't belong to you when you no longer have working hands.

Tugging the lighter from between my lips, I give it a good luck kiss before flicking the trigger. I watch the tiny orange flame dance in the dark, reveling in the happy memories it inspires. The night this all began. The night my Little Fox reached out *to me*. Granted, I orchestrated the shit out of that but fuck it. Got what I want, didn't I?

Smiling from ear to ear, I bring the flame down, hovering it just above his hands as I enjoy the anticipation. It's like standing on the edge of a cliff, waiting for a strong wind to make your decision for you. Will you fall and plummet to your death, or will mother nature grant you another day on this fucked up planet?

As if brought on by my unspoken thoughts, a strong wind blows through the alley, forcing my hand forward and setting his ugly hands alight. Or, maybe that was just me being impatient. Either way, the results are everything I imagined and so much more. His hands light up like a stake on a pyre, and within seconds, he's awake and screaming.

Before he gets carried away with his theatrics, I grab my joint and use his hand torches to light up. His wide, terrified eyes fly from his hands to me, and I have to admit, the complete and utter *horror* on his face brings me more joy than I thought humanly possible.

“Sorry about this. There was no other way to remove her from your undeserving skin, so,” I shrug, taking a deep inhale from my joint. I slowly blow the smoke in his face, letting the heavy pause sink in. “I had to remove it from your body.”

His once colorful face is now a beautiful sickly shade of white as tears streak down his chubby cheeks. It makes me downright giddy. Pushing to my feet, I take another drag and step away. Jerking my chin at him, I grunt, “Better take care of that before they burn to the bone.”

My words snap him from his shocked state. His head swivels down to find his hands, just merely smoldering now, but still...they don't look good.

That's gotta hurt.

He flails, trying to put the embers out on his jeans. He's making a mess of himself, but I honestly think he's in shock

and maybe even drunk, so clearly, he's not of sound mind. As I unzip my jeans I smile. He's not the only one.

"Here, I've got something that'll help with that," I grunt, wrapping the hand still coated in Rayvn's cum around my cock. The realization that she's coating my flesh, spurs me on. He releases a sob, his eyes locked on my cock in confusion, or, like I said—shock. Either way, my dick's been pusling with need from the second I touched my Little Fox tonight.

Get rid of her scent on him. Ruin him. Defile him. Protect her.

The words swirl through my head like a chant, a prayer, as I stroke my cock in long, fast pumps. One of my hands is braced against the brick wall as I lean over the sobbing, trembling man. My spine tingles with every pump, sending me closer to the edge.

I focus on the feelings coursing through my body. The pride that I protected my girl. The vengeance. The violence. The breathtaking power surging through me as I look down on my victim. It takes less than a minute before I'm shooting hot ropes of my cum across the motherfuckers burnt hands. He screams and my cock spurts out another shot at the sound. I wonder if Rayvn's screams will be just as pretty? No. They'll be better.

I tuck my still throbbing dick back in my jeans and step away, leaving him to it. "Call the cops, you die. And that's not a threat I make lightly. Never go near her again." With that, I spin on my heel, barely suppressing the urge to skip.

The acrid smell of piss and burning flesh fills my nostrils. It's disgusting and vomit-inducing, yet I find myself chuckling as I walk away from the last man to ever get away with touching my Little Fox.



KillerClown4u: I have to go out of town for work, Sweetling. Be my good girl and remember my warning.

KillerClown4u: For tonight. *Believe only half of what you see and nothing that you hear.* Sweet dreams, Pet.

KillerClown4u is offline.

I slide my phone back into my pocket after sending the fourth message that's gone unread. If it weren't for the fact that I can see from the tracking software on her phone that she's safe and tucked in her apartment, I'd be losing my shit.

I get it. She's freaking out. I showed up unexpectedly. I blew my cover and the well-laid out plan to watch from a distance. I fucked it all up, and then, I fucked her. With my fingers. On a public dancefloor. I choked her throat and destroyed her pussy until she shattered all over my hand...then

I left her. Burned a guy's hands off then fucked my fist with the scent of her cum staining my skin.

Yeah. I'm a real fucking winner. I may be slightly insane when it comes to her, but I'm personally *not* insane. At least, I don't think so. Honestly, I spend so much time alone and working, I very well could be. However, I hadn't intended to do a single one of those things. I had honorable intentions to let her enjoy her girl's night and keep her safe from the shadows. Then I saw her, looking like a fucking snack in that tight, tiny dress, tall heels with her hair up on top of her head, exposing that swan-like neck I love so much, and everything went to shit.

Part of me wanted to stand in the background and watch her dance all night. I probably would have if not for that cunt touching her. I wanted to punish her. Wanted her to feel even a small amount of the fury and betrayal I was feeling, but then, she pushed him away, and he refused. The fucker forced my hand, and quite frankly, so did she. So, maybe in a way, I did punish her. And now...she's punishing me.

Fuck. Relationships are hard work.

Scoffing at the ridiculous thought, I climb off my bike and head into the building that both fuels my dreams and haunts my nightmares. *Remény*. I scan my badge, and the tiny red light pings green before the doors slide open. My heart rate picks up a few notches, the same way it always does when I enter.

The smell hits me first. It's not your average medical facility smell. The combination of bleach, sadness, and death. Instead, the automatic room fresheners give the place a heady, artificial lemon-orange scent that I think is supposed to be refreshing or calming or some shit. For me, it's like a sucker punch to my trachea, and I have to stifle the urge to gag.

I drop my helmet onto the welcome counter, giving Ophelia a quick smile as I pass. I ignore the way she blushes and fawns at the sight of me. My leather jacket covers all of my tattoos, but my glasses are nowhere in sight. My hair is fucked up from my helmet, and I'm sure I've got some sort of rich, bad-boy vibe going on right now that has women sending me furtive glances. I ignore them all the same way I did Ophelia. Not only am I not interested because Ray consumes my every thought, but this place is the opposite of boner-inducing. It's skin-crawling, balls crawling back up into your body, scare the shit out of you, inducing.

"Mr. Nash. We weren't expecting you today, Sir," Dr. Kohli says, his brows lifting in surprise as he drops the charts he's working on and dashes to greet me. I extend my hand, offering it to him along with a kind smile. He's not my favorite doctor here, mostly due to his incensent fawning, but he's brilliant and a good man.

"Dr. Kohli, how many times do I have to tell you to call me Wolfe?" I chuckle, sliding my hand into my pocket. His cheeks perk up in a grin beneath his gray beard. His dark skin is wrinkled with age but his smile is earnest, if not a little twitchy with nerves.

“About as many times as I have to tell you to call me Rohan, apparently.” He laughs and tilts his head down the long corridor that leads us to our destination. The white walls are clinical and pristine, as always, but the artwork lining the walls makes the space feel warm and inviting despite everything. “When are you going to bring us more of your work? The patients love seeing new pieces.”

I grin, shaking my head. “You’re hellbent on insisting they’re mine, aren’t you?” I joke, eyeing one of the larger pieces. It took me three months to complete it during one of my uninspired seasons. Fuck, most of my life is uninspired at this point. It’s hard to want to create when your muse no longer exists. Except...I have been painting again recently. In fact, I’ve been painting a lot. Not that I’d ever share those pieces with anyone except maybe the woman who inspired them.

He rolls his eyes and huffs a sound of annoyance at what he perceives as an act of modesty. Really, I just don’t want to be an artist. I don’t want the praise and faux appreciation. I don’t want the notoriety. More than that, I don’t want the questions.

*What is this one? What does it mean? What inspired it?
Who is the woman? Why does it look so sad?*

Yeah, no thanks.

“How are things? Any updates on the new drug? I received a call from Jorgenson last week confirming the recent transaction was enough to finally put us where we need to be.

He said he'd call you if anything changed," I say, keeping my eyes trained on the floor as we enter the patient wing.

The sounds of people laughing and crying are almost drowned out by the persistent beeping of countless heart rate monitors. It's almost as though they're trying to sync up just to annoy me. My teeth grind together, and my jaw aches from the force of it.

He sighs, and at first a wave of anger tinged with desperation washes over me, but then he pauses and turns to face me. Finally, I look up, meeting the gaze of the doctor who has worked for me for a decade. I almost jolt back when I catch the tears in his eyes. In all the years I've known him, through death and loss, I've never seen him cry. *Never.*

"We got it," he breathes, his smile widening. My eyes widen in shock as the organ in my chest skips a beat and then another. For a second, I think it will quit on me all together. I suck in a sharp breath as Rohan nods excitedly. "The money you sent funded the paperwork and government drabble, allowing Jorgensen's team to finish the last steps of the required process. The final tests were completed yesterday. We're ready to begin the new drug."

It takes me a moment to process his words, and when I do, my knees go weak. *This.* This is what I've been working so hard for. What we all have been working for, working *toward.* This drug, this medication, that will save so many fucking lives. Restore so many minds. Reunite so many families and

loved ones. It's hope. *Remény*. Hope is how this whole thing started, and now, we finally have some.

“When will you begin?” I ask, surprised by how choked up my voice is. I cough, clearing my throat. Rohan is now openly crying, though, he's trying to wipe his tears away before I see them.

He takes a few seconds to compose himself before answering. “Within the month. We're going to start contacting patients that meet the criteria next week.”

“That soon?” I ask, surprised that things are moving so quickly. He nods as we continue on our way to Room 82. With the news he just shared, I find myself more excited to enter it than I've been in a long time. The underlying feeling of dread still pools in my stomach, but I'm able to ignore it, focusing on the positive. “How has she been?” I ask quietly, stopping outside her door.

The nerves kick in as the room number comes into view. I disregard the small window in the large white door, knowing nothing good comes from peaking in before I'm ready to step inside. Rohan shifts nervously, his previous excitement now completely gone.

He clears his throat and looks away. *Bad news, then*. I stand taller, fisting my hands inside my pockets, preparing for the worst. It's been a long time coming, so it's not unexpected. “Not great,” he starts, his hands twitching nervously at his sides. He inhales deeply and releases a heavy breath before

meeting my gaze. “It will be soon, Wolfe. You need to prepare yourself.”

“How long?” I ask immediately, needing to know.

He nods once, seeing the resolve on my face. His hand moves toward me, and I already know he wants to comfort me as he speaks. I step back, hoping not to offend him but really, I don’t give a fuck right now. He nods again, sliding his hand into his lab coat. “Two weeks, maybe four at most. She’s completely unaware. No new moments of lucidity. Her vitals are stable at the moment, but she’s been fighting a new infection.”

The heart that had just started to learn how to work again squeezes painfully. The soul that had just recently shown itself for the first time in my life flickers a few times as though it’s trying to wink out of existence once more. Every muscle in my body wants to turn around and bolt. Every joint is locked in a vain attempt at keeping me upright. My mind is somehow both screaming and silent.

Every piece of me is at war.

But I ignore it. I do what I do best, and I shove my newfound emotions way down deep where they belong. I cut off the person who *feels* and become the beast who simply *exists*.

I smile thanking Rohan, and turn away. My hand hits the doorknob, and before I can follow through on my need to run, I step inside Room 82.

The monitors greet me first. The beeping. The quiet whir from the oxygen pump. And then, her labored breathing. Her heavy sighs behind the mask that helps her breathe. Then there are the sounds that I know aren't real. The rustling of sheets. Her angelic, sweet laughter. The soap operas she loves to watch playing in the background. Her yelling at me over fucking up, yet again. The blender grinding and screeching in the kitchen as she makes a round of special '*peace-peach milkshakes*' to soften the grounding she's about to dole out.

Those are the sounds I long to hear. When it's silent in my vast, empty home, I miss hers. When I'm tucked away, hiding from the world in my office, I find myself wishing, *begging*, for the phone to ring. For just one more conversation. One more argument. One more reminder that I'm not the piece of shit my brain thinks I am. One more..*always just one more*.

Exhaling a shaking breath, I take a seat in the chair I've sat at every Saturday for as long as I can remember, and look down at the sleeping woman who saved me.

Katarina Farkas. *Kat*. A Hungarian widow who took me in as a baby, purely for the fact that she could and I needed a home. She raised me, gave me everything, and then got sick before I could repay the favor. For the majority of my life, Kat was all I had in the world. She was my mother. My friend. My angel. My namesake. I smile at the thought.

When I came to her, I was nameless. My parents couldn't be bothered to give their own child a name, or maybe they were just too high to remember it when the police had asked. Kat

said I came to her snapping and snarling, even as a baby. She named me Wolfe, after not only my *bestly behavior* but as the direct English definition of her last name.

Eventually, I changed my last name to Nash, but I grew up Wolfe Wolf. Which is actually funny, considering I was way more prey than predator for most of my life.

Until now. Now, I'm the beast in the night, hunting my sweet prey.

I smile, thinking of Rayvn, and decide to start there today. “I met a woman,” I say softly, squeezing her too-still hand. “She’s beautiful, and yes, before you say it, I know. There is more to a woman than her looks. She’s perfect. Sweet, fiery. A fighter. She’s got this darkness inside of her that calls to me. It’s like, I knew from the moment I saw her that she could handle me. She wouldn’t balk or run at my sharp edges.”

I sit, giving her a moment to process that. She doesn’t respond. She never does, but that doesn’t mean I need to treat her like she’s dead. She’s not. She’s just...resting. Or, so I like to tell myself. It helps me get through these awkward, one-sided conversations.

“Her name is Rayvn Porter. She’s an attorney from Denver. We met in—” I break off, cringing. Do I tell her? If she could hear me, would she judge me? “We met under odd circumstances. I was hired to do a job that involved her. I tried. I really did, but she captivated me. She claimed me, and I can’t give her back, Kat, but once she finds out who I am and how she came into my life, she’ll hate me.”

Emotions well up inside me swiftly and suddenly I just feel exhausted. It's the kind of tired that aches deep in your bones. I feel like that lost little kid again, begging for his mommy and asking why he's unlovable. It throbs and thrums deep in my chest like a festering wound. It's maddening. But, once again, I find myself holding Kat's hand and asking her for answers she can't give me.

"Honestly, I don't know what to do. I feel lost. I think I really care about her, Kat. Maybe even more. I have this need, this *urge* to give her the world. To be anything and everything she wants. I just want to make her happy, but I can't do that if everything she knows about me is a lie."

Then tell her who you are, Kat would say. I swear I can almost hear her scoff at me as she demands my honesty.

"I know," I groan, dropping my head in defeat. "It's not that easy."

Of course, it is. Just open your mouth, boy.

"She's never even seen my face, Kat. I fucked up. I pretended to be someone I wasn't a few months ago. It was the first time we met, and I fucking blew it. So now, I've been hiding away like a coward,"

Watch your mouth. I roll my eyes. *It's never too late for honesty, Wolfe. Do something grand for her. A gesture. Tell her how you feel. Be direct. Something that can't be misconstrued. The only time you can't fix a mistake is when you're dead..*

“A grand gesture?” I murmur, my brows furrowed. “You think she’d go for that? She doesn’t seem like a jewelry girl.” Although, she did look beautiful wearing my hand as a necklace the other night. I smile at the memory as my cock pulses to life. I drop Kat’s hand like it’s burned me and shift away from her. How fucking awkward.

Pig, she’d say, before slapping the back of my head.

I shake all inappropriate thoughts of Rayvn from my head and change the subject, telling her all about Rohan’s news.

They say Alzheimer’s is a silent killer, and they aren’t wrong. It’s one of the scariest diseases I’ve ever seen. One day you’re fine, and the next, you’re not. For some people, like Kat, it progresses slowly. For others, it’s a whirlwind experience that brings you face to face with not only mortality but losing a loved one right before you while you stand by helplessly and watch.

I was 18 when Kat was diagnosed. We did everything the doctors told us to. I became a full-time caretaker, one I would have gladly continued to be. But when things got too difficult for me to handle alone, Kat insisted I take her to a care facility. I refused to give up. I refused to stand by and watch the only person I loved be taken from me without a fight. There were no answers. No cures. No magic pills that would fix her and bring her back to me. There was no place I could send her where I knew without question, she’d be safe and cared for when I couldn’t be there.

So—I made one.

I worked my ass off to make enough money to fund a company. I found investors and doctors. I found a pharmaceutical company and vetted the fuck out of them. We built an incredible facility, staffed it, and then...I opened *Remény*.

Remény is the Hungarian word for *Hope*. The one emotion that I clung to when I buried the rest of them away so deep, I couldn't find them if I tried. I became a machine. Ruin lives. Make money. Donate money. Try to save Kat. Rinse and repeat. I went through the same cycle hundreds of times until finally, we had enough to start the drug research and formulation.

Two years ago, Kat took a turn for the worst and was moved into *Remény*, which is the day-to-day medical facility for patients with Alzheimer's. We have a full staff of wonderful doctors and nurses, a board that oversees operations and finances. The company is a well-oiled machine and a prominent facility in the medical world. The money that comes in from patients' families and insurance fund *Remény* and keep the doors open, but the money I bring in goes directly to the research lab.

It may be too late for Kat, but I will do everything in my power to prevent other families from going through what we have.



Chapter Fifteen

OCTOBER

“My coffee mug is in the wrong place,” I say slowly.

Silence greets my declaration as I stare at the offending cup with my head cocked to the side. “Your coffee cup,” Shiloh drawls, confusion clear in her voice.

I nod, pointing at it. “It’s not to the right of my Keurig on the drying mat, where I leave it every single night. It’s on the left, next to the banana hammock.”

“The banana hammock?” she asks, and this time I can hear a hint of humor in her voice, but I ignore it, refusing to deviate from my thoughts. I know I’m not wrong.

Spinning, I open the fridge and show her the evidence. “Now, normally, this wouldn’t be a big deal, but the creamer was on the second shelf instead of the first. My toothbrush wasn’t on the charger, like usual. My panty drawer was open an inch and my tank top was askew.” *Leaving my meager tits hanging out for the world to see*, but she doesn’t need to know that.

“Askew.” She says the one word so slowly that I swear it takes a solid ten seconds, and I quickly grow impatient. Turning the screen back to my face, I find myself nodding so hard I look like a bobblehead.

“*A-fucking-skew.*” Shiloh lifts Asher up and over her shoulder, patting his tiny little diapered tush while staring at me like I’ve grown a second head or put my tits on display as proof. “I’m pretty sure someone was here.”

That gets her attention. Her eyes bug out of her head. She opens her mouth to say something, but just then, the perfect little baby vomits all over his momma. She screeches and bolts up before running out of view, screaming for Logan. I sigh and drop my phone on the counter as I wait for her to come back.

Turning around, I close the distance between myself and the coffee maker once more. I don’t consider myself particularly methodical or anal about my stuff, but when you live alone and have for years, you develop a system. And when you spend as much time in your home as I do...

Yeah. That’s definitely not where I left my coffee cup. My brows furrow as I take a tentative step away. I slowly drag my gaze from the offending scene and look around the rest of my small apartment, checking for any other discrepancies. Not that I need more proof. I’m pretty solid in my theory at this point.

I’d be lying if I said a small thrill didn’t race through me at the thought of someone being in my house. I know it’s fucked up, and I’d probably benefit from a shit ton of therapy, but—

the intrigue, the mystery. It's as exciting as it is terrifying. As I walk around, taking in every inch of my apartment, I find one of my yellow throw pillows on the floor next to my couch. I bring it up to my nose and sniff the soft material. Smoke. Smoke and exhaust, along with something else. Something soft and spicy. *Citrus*. Orange and lemon? My heart pounds in my chest, and my palms grow clammy. The pillow slides from my hands, landing softly on the couch.

I whip around, this time scanning everything frantically. My eyes zero in on my front door, and I run to it, tripping over the rug in my haste. My palms slam against the wood as I test the doorknob and chain link.

Locked.

Everything feels heavy and weighed down as I drop my head forward onto the door and breathe through the panic. It takes me a few minutes to calm down and rational to seep it. Everything I found, everything that moved...I could have done those things. I could have walked in my sleep or could have still been out of it when I first woke up.

Yesterday, I took sleeping pills for the first time in my life, and it's safe to say they knocked me the hell out. I slept solidly through the night, never waking once. When my alarm went off this morning, I had to physically force myself out of bed. The stress of everything going on with my dad and the Snow case has left me restless and sleep-deprived. Not to mention what happened at the club the other night with Wolfe. That was insane. And I was insane to let it happen.

It's not the exhibitionism that bothered me or his roughness. In fact, I loved both of those things. *A lot*. I woke up the next morning, my throat so covered in bruises I had to wear a turtleneck to work. Lucky for me, I happen to love those restricting fuckers and wear them often, so no one even questioned my off-season wardrobe choice.

Wolfe's harsh words and aggression didn't scare me. The fact that he followed me there or sought me out, did cause me to freak out a bit, but not nearly as much as it should have. No...what bothered me the most—what is *still* bothering me about the entire damn situation, is how completely *unbothered* I am.

My life feels like it's tilting on its axis. My once boring and plain existence has now become so much more in such a short time. I barely know Wolfe. I don't even know his last name. I've never seen his face. But I feel a connection with him that's indescribable. I like him. I like him a lot.

I'm so fucked.

“Ray! Answer me right now!” Shiloh cries, pulling me from my thoughts. Sighing, I make my way back to the kitchen. I drop down into a chair at the island and prop the phone up next to a stack of books. “What happened?”

Her cheeks are flushed and sweaty. Her hair's messed up and she's wearing a new shirt. My brows hitch up to my hairline. “What happened to you?” She blushes even further and shrugs, her lips tilting up in a smirk. “Here I was, freaking out about my house being broken into and you're gettin' it on

with your lumberjack,” I tut in disapproval, though, I’m not really mad. How could I be when my bestie is literally glowing?

She blanches and I immediately regret my words. Sometimes I forget how deep Shiloh’s guilt runs when it comes to those she loves. *You’re one to talk*, my brain chimes in. “Shit, I’m so sorry.”

I hold a hand up, shushing her. “I was kidding. At least one of us is getting some and I’m fine. Honestly. I took a sleeping pill last night, so I’m probably just imagining shit.”

“A sleeping pill? Are you okay?” She shifts, lifting Archer up higher on his nursing pillow when he spits her boob out. “Eat, please. Mommy needs a nap,” she groans, encouraging him to latch back on.

I watch the scene with rapt attention. I’ve never wanted kids. I’ve known from the time I was a kid myself that the mommy gig just wasn’t for me. When all my friends were playing make-believe mommies and daddies, I was pretending to be their queen. Maybe it’s because I saw how hard my dad struggled to be a single parent. He gave up all of his freedom to support me and be everything I could have ever wanted or needed, and then some. He worked a physically demanding and emotional job all day, then spent his nights making sure I never felt like I was missing out. He tried to hide how exhausted and lonely he was, but I saw it. Especially as I got older. He loves me, but he was miserable. That’s not something I ever wanted for myself.

But as I watch Shiloh tend to one of her sons, I realize that there's more to it than that. It's not just that I don't want to risk being a single parent and not being *enough* for my children, but it's that I'm lacking a big piece of motherhood. An example. I didn't grow up with a mom. I grew up with a strong father who taught me how to change tires and mow the lawn. I have no idea how to be delicate or soothing. I don't know how to sew on buttons or tend boobos. I'm not sure there is a maternal bone in my body, and that's more terrifying than the idea of possibly having a stalker.

Stalker. Because, at this point, that's what Wolfe is. He found me when he shouldn't have been able to. He threatened anyone who touches me. He claimed me. He fucked me. He soothed me. He...would he be a good dad? Would we make a good team as a couple and as parents? Can a relationship and future even come from such a twisted beginning? The bigger question is; why am I even thinking about this right now? Holy shit, I've lost it.

"Ray. Are you okay? You're staring at my boobs." My eyes snap up to find Shiloh's on the screen of my phone, and I realize with a slight tinge of mortification that I was indeed staring at her tits. *Jesus, get it together, Ray.*

Smiling, I shake the residual fog off. "I'm fine. Just zoned out. I'm probably going to take a nap after this. Sleep off the rest of the meds." *Lies. I'm going to Google the fuck out of stalkers.* "What's new?"

She narrows her eyes at me, studying me in a way that makes my skin crawl. Finally, she accepts whatever she sees and grins at me. “We’re having the first ever official Huxley Halloween Party and you’re invited. You’re also expected to bring a date.” My mouth opens to argue, but she shoots me a disapproving glare. “Nope. Find someone on that dating app you signed up for and bring them, or invite someone from the office. I don’t care, but you’re bringing a man and that’s that.”

“Shit,” I groan. “Fine, *mom*.”

She scoffs. “If I was your mother, I’d put you over my knee, young lady. You have an attitude problem.” I gape at her, and she has the decency to blush. “Sorry. I think I’ve been spending too much time with Logan.”

“Fuck, if that’s what he does when you misbehave, I’m surprised you can sit at all. He must not be doing it right.”

She gives me a smug look and tosses her hair over her shoulder, being careful not to jostle the baby. “Where do you think I just was?” she deadpans.

We stare at each other as her declaration sinks in before, finally, we both bust up laughing, which of course, sets the baby off. Shiloh quickly has to disconnect to take care of a fussy Archer. Meanwhile, I do exactly what I shouldn’t and spend my morning Googling all things stalker.



It's official.

Wolfe and I need to have a serious conversation. I honestly didn't make any headway when looking up stalkers beyond the fact that they have unhealthy obsessions and, oftentimes, mental illnesses. While I'd like to say I don't think that's the case with him, he regularly sends me ominous Edgar Allen Poe quotes about insanity. Part of me is now beginning to think that the quotes are less about romanticism and more about him covertly sending me a message.

A message I've been too blind to see, apparently.

A lot of the articles also said that I should:

- 1: Fear for my life.
- 2: File a police report.

Instead, I Googled therapists because my instant reaction to that advice was anger and defensiveness. Anger at the suggestion of being genuinely afraid of him and defensiveness at the thought of him being arrested.

I'm a well-educated woman. A woman who literally works with criminals and the law. I, out of all people, should be

taking this seriously. I should report him. I should cease communication with him, yet the need to protect this fragile relationship and connection we've created is intense and all-consuming. I don't want anything to happen to Wolfe, and I don't want to lose him.

But—we still need to talk. I need answers, and maybe once I have them I'll make a decision. At least, that's what I tell myself as I type out a message to him. My first since that night at the club.

FoxBabe20: We need to talk. Call me tonight.

KillerClown4u: So you're talking to me now?

FoxBabe20: So you're stalking me now?

KillerClown4u: I don't know what you're talking about, Little Fox. Has something happened?

The nerve of this prick. I grit my teeth, practically breaking my screen with the force of my angry taps. Arrogant asshole.

FoxBabe20: Did you actually drink my coffee or fuck with my shit just for fun? What's your end goal here, Wolfe? What do you want?

This time, his reply takes longer than before. I bite my nail and sink deeper into the couch, clutching the pillow that smells decidedly like him, closer to my chest. Once my panic had dissolved, things began to click into place. The night at the club, I'd been too shocked to really pay attention to how he smelled and then too turned on to care. But when I came

home, my dress and skin smelled strongly of smoke and motor oil.

The combination should be gross and illicit visions of overweight truck drivers and mechanics shops. Instead, I find it comforting, like a weighted blanket. It's the same smell I found on my pillow and my couch, which confirmed my suspicions. Wolfe somehow broke into my house last night and helped himself to my crap. *Let's not forget about your boobs being out this morning.* Definitely can't forget about that. I did a physical check and didn't feel violated in any other way, and surprisingly, or maybe unsurprisingly, at this point I was disappointed by that.

Where is that therapist's number again?

KillerClown4u: You know what I want.

FoxBabe20: Spell it out for me, Wolfe, because clearly, I don't. I don't even know you.

KillerClown4u: I don't like liars, Rayvn, so don't start now. We've been talking for months. Just because you haven't seen my face doesn't mean you don't know me. Do you also invalidate couples who have long-distance relationships or meet online? Is their love not real?

What the fuck? My hands begin to shake so hard, holding my phone becomes difficult. My stomach climbs up my throat so rapidly that I almost double over and vomit on the floor. *Love? Relationships?* What is he talking about?

We aren't...we don't...

I pause, looking away from my phone. I don't even know what to say. I'm speechless. On one hand, I want to argue. I want to tell him he's nuts and imagining things. I want to tell him to get lost. But...a sweet, almost giddy sensation is wrapping itself around my heart. Is that what he thinks? Are we...*together*? My phone vibrating on my lap has me jumping a few inches in the air. I press a hand to my chest, willing my heart to calm down as I read his message.

KillerClown4u: Don't get upset, Sweetling. Let me make it clear to you since you seem to be struggling.

KillerClown4u: I want you in a way I've never wanted anything else in my entire life. I find you breathtaking, Rayvn Porter. Everything about you captivates me. I'm addicted. When I'm not with you, I ache for you. My feelings are not sane. They aren't safe. They aren't normal. I've lived in darkness for a very long time, Little Fox. So long, I don't think I'll ever get out, and now, I don't think I want to. I may be the Devil, but you're the Reaper who's claimed my soul.

KillerClown4u: Do you understand now? I can't give you up. I won't. So, find a way to get good with me being in your life because this is your new normal.

Holy fucking shit. Was that a psychopath's version of a declaration of love?

I fly from the couch and chuck my phone across the room in a blind panic as his words trickle through all at once. What am I supposed to say to that? Do I run? Now would be the time to

go to the police station. I have evidence. He's basically just admitted to stalking me. To his obsession and feelings...

Do I care for Wolfe? Yes.

Do I want to get rid of him? No.

Am I safe with him? I have no fucking idea, and that's the problem, isn't it?

I may be an adrenaline junky who finds masked stalkers like Jason hot in theory, but in real life...I don't want to die. I don't want to be murdered and chopped up by a serial killer. But, he came into my house and didn't hurt me. He defended me at the club, if not in his own way. He cares for me, and I—I care for him. A lot.

Shit. Am I insane to even be considering this? Definitely. Maybe Wolfe isn't the only one with questionable morals and intentions because my body is currently at war over this whole thing. Despite the resounding fight-or-flight instincts swirling through my limbs and the chaotic mess in my head, my heart is a puddle of fucking *goo* over his words.

It takes me ten minutes of manic pacing before I can convince myself to respond.

FoxBabe20: I need time. This is a lot.

KillerClown4u: Are you scared of me, Little Fox? In your gut, do you think I will honestly hurt you?

Wow. He really just went for it, didn't he? My indecision and hesitation to respond is likely all the answer we both need.

No. I don't think he will. Instead of saying that, I turn the tables, gaining some much-needed control.

FoxBabe20: We need to meet and talk, Wolfe. I can't keep doing this over text. I need to talk to you, see your face. Have a real conversation with you.

KillerClown4u: What's the date today, Rayvn?

My brows furrow in confusion. That's not the response I was expecting at all. I swap screens and check the date. Surprise filters through me, as does understanding.

FoxBabe20: It's October 1st.

KillerClown4u: Are you in?

KillerClown4u: Don't overthink it. Don't question it. Trust your heart. Are you in?

I stop thinking. Stop questioning. Stop everything and just *feel*.

My body is pumped full of so much adrenaline I feel high. My head is still a chaotic mess, but if I really focus on individual thoughts, I find most of them leaning *toward* Wolfe instead of away from him. I picture the way his hands felt on my body. The way his deep voice rasped his demands in my ear. The way he controlled my every breath. The comforting presence of him at my back.

I think of the way his quirky comments and quotes make me feel happy and content. The way he makes me smile. The excitement that pours into me every morning when I wake up, knowing I'll get to talk to him again. The sadness that

consumes me when he goes away for work. I think about the way his scent not only grounded me but stopped my anxiety in its tracks.

Above all else, I think of the way my heart is tugging toward him, calling out to him, squeezing *for him*.

This may be the stupidest decision I ever make in my life. I may regret this until my dying breath, but God help me, I've already fallen for the Devil and I'm ready to join him in Hell.

FoxBabe20: I'm in.



Chapter Sixteen

KillerClown4u: Meet me at 7449 Shady Oak Street at 10:00 pm. Wear a dress. Don't disappoint me, Little Fox.

I received that message a few hours ago, and now here I am, standing in the middle of Denver's oldest cemetery. I really should have looked the address up before I blindly accepted his so-called invitation. But when I said I was in, I meant it. So here I am, at 10 PM sharp, wearing a dress that is better suited for a hot summer day at the lake. At least I had a good sense to wear a sweater and my *Keds* so my feet wouldn't get cold.

I'm not stupid. Wolfe chose a cemetery for a reason. This isn't just a place to talk and get to know each other. It's a place to play. I told him I needed a month, and he gave me exactly that.

As I step through the rusted metal gate, I find myself swathed in darkness. Only a few lights shine through the cemetery from ancient-looking light poles. Much like the heavily forested areas around Shiloh's property, the cemetery is covered in a dense thicket of trees. Colorado doesn't adhere

to normal weather laws, and winter can come just as quickly as it leaves. Tonight, it's cold. More than that—it's foggy, creating an ominous setting for our first official...*date*.

I'm unbelievably aware that I could be walking into a trap. I know this could be my last night on earth. I know Wolfe could be more than just the Devil. He could be a real-life serial killer. Yet even with all that knowledge, it's still not enough to stop me as I take my first step into the cemetery and then my second and then my third. I don't stop, I don't falter, I just keep going.

I adjust my cross-body purse on my shoulder, my phone in one hand, my mace in the other. I may trust him. I may even care about him, but I'm not an idiot. I also know mace can't do shit if he has a weapon or is really intent on hurting me beyond what I crave. But I've decided to lean into the chaos that consumes me. I've decided to embrace the urges that have been dormant and unsatisfied since Oscar.

Oscar and I played in a cemetery once. It was the first time I'd ever tried primal play, and it was incredible. The exhilaration of being hunted. The chase, the adrenaline—there's nothing else like it. Except, of course, the catch. Oscar enjoyed primal, but it wasn't his favorite. I'm a firm believer in the fact that all parties involved have to be just as interested in the kink as their partners. If not, it comes off as uncomfortable and forced.

My eyes flit down to my phone to check the time, and I find that it's ten after. I open up the messaging app to see if he's

said anything, but there's nothing new. I slide my phone into my purse along with the mace, *for now*, as I step deeper into the cemetery. The wind blows, sending a wave of goosebumps along my skin. All my senses are alive and aware right now as I try to figure out if I'm alone or not.

The sound of leaves falling from the trees mix with the song of the night. Crickets chirp throughout the dead grass and tombstones. Streaks of pale light cast down from the moon, creating shadows along the ground. Every time the wind blows it causes the branches of the surrounding trees to move, the shadows dance, and I jump. A ball of emotion lodges itself in my throat, a mixture of fear and elation. The elation that this is finally happening. That I'm finally going to see him. Fear that I've been an idiot and gotten this all wrong.

"Are you afraid, Little Fox?" His deep voice echoes through the cemetery, bouncing off the tombstones and trees. My heartbeat goes from a steady, quick thump to a rapid pounding drum in an instant. I spin in a circle, looking, seeking, needing to finally lay eyes on him. My breath catches in my throat when I come up empty-handed.

"Where are you?" I ask, my voice surprisingly even. "Come out, Wolfe."

His chuckle is dark and mocking. Sending another wave of chills skittering across my exposed flesh. A wave of awareness prickles down my back, letting me know someone is behind me. I spin again, a wide smile plastered across my face. *Gotcha*. My eyes widen when I find...nothing.

“You don’t make the rules tonight, *Sweetling*,” he growls. I may be afraid. I may be nervous. But nothing compares to the way I feel hearing that word for the first time in his beautiful voice. I melt a little inside, and some of the coldness coating my body turns to warmth. “Why are you smiling like that?”

“What?” I mumble, my brows furrowed. Where is he? I just need to keep him talking so I can narrow down where his voice is coming from. Right now, it sounds like he’s everywhere and nowhere all at once.

A long pause follows my question, making my nerves ramp up a few notches. “I must not be doing a very good job at this if you’re smiling and laughing.”

I almost do bark out a laugh at that. He sounds utterly offended. “Do you want to scare me, Wolfe?” I ask, my voice a breathy pant. I’m so fucking turned on right now, I’m questioning if I’ll be able to get through whatever this is without begging for his cock. I wonder what his plans are for me. I wonder if he’s going to fuck me tonight against a cold tombstone. I should have told him I’m on—

“No,” he grunts, sounding much closer now. “I want to *terrify* you.” My heart lurches at his words, and a wave of arousal washes over me. My clit is throbbing. My pussy is soaking wet. My hands are trembling. My senses are heightened to the extreme, making everything feel like so much *more*.

More. More. More.

As if in answer to my unspoken words, the sound of something clattering to the ground next to me has me bolting for my life. Footsteps pound the ground behind me. I propel myself forward, my arms and legs working in perfect synchronization. Years of training, running marathons and trails come narrowing to this exact moment when I need it the most. My breaths come in rapid pants as I weave my way between tombstones and grave sites.

“I’m sorry,” I cry out, apologizing to the deceased for such blatant disrespect as I stumble over one of their plots.

Wolfe takes advantage, gaining on me in my moment of distraction. “You’re not, but you will be,” he snaps, his voice more animal than anything else. I grin to myself, fighting the urge to correct his assumption, but I use the extra breath in my lungs to push harder.

The cemetery is a massive collection of hills and valleys, trees, and open land. Since it’s the oldest one in the city, it’s not maintained as well as it should be. There are tall weeds, keeping the ground hidden in some areas and the terrain rough. I trip multiple times, barely catching myself before faceplanting. I need to come up with a plan. Do I hide? Do I escape? Climb a tree?

The bigger question is...what does Wolfe want? He wants to hunt me like a predator. Based on the other night at the club, he likes control. The way he held my life, my breath in his hands so easily, it’s clear to tell he likes *power*. Force, then. He’ll force me. He’ll take what he wants and demand my

submission. He told me he wanted me to claw him up, make him bleed. *Fight*. He likes the struggle.

Hide. I need to hide. And then, I'll need to fight.

I've barely finished the thought when I trip over a large rock hidden beneath the tall weeds at the top of a small hill. A scream pierces the air, disrupting the quiet night as I crash into the ground. My hands break my fall, but the impact still burns my arms. I brace myself for the unforgiving, painful tumble down the hill I'm about to experience. I hit the ground, crying out in pain. I wrap my arms around my body protectively, and just as I begin to roll, something grips my long braids and pulls.

"Fuck," I scream as the pain pulses through my scalp. Arms wrap around my body and tug me back up the few feet I'd fallen. Wolfe picks me up and drops me haphazardly on my knees. I brace my hands on the ground, feeling every burn and stabbing ache throughout my body as I stare at the ground woozily. I pant and gasp for breath in an attempt to gather my bearings and calm my erratic heart.

"Are you done?" he growls. It's then that I notice his large feet planted just before me.

Time freezes. The wind dies. The world goes silent as though even mother nature knows this is a pivotal moment. *I'm finally going to see him*. Excitement replaces everything else until nothing exists but Wolfe and me. Slowly, I drag my hazy eyes up to meet the man who has consumed me for months. The man who fills my dreams. The man whose voice

rings out in my ears even when I'm alone. The man who wants to make my fantasies a reality and so much more.

And come face to face...with a mask.

A terrifying fucking clown mask. It's one of the creepiest things I've ever seen in real life. Or maybe, it's the man. Wolfe's head is cocked to the side, his eyes almost transparent in the dark. He's shirtless, wearing only jeans and Docs. I exhale a harsh breath that comes out in a high-pitched moan as I take in his body.

He's beautiful.

His chest, stomach, and shoulders are completely covered in tattoos. Colorful ink in varying shades of blues and reds and greens cover him like a living, breathing work of art. His tattoos blend from one to the next, almost looking like an elbow-length t-shirt. His stomach is toned and muscular, as are his arms, but he's long and lean. His Adonis belt is chiseled and has a long line of black hair right in the center, trailing beneath the low-slung waist of his pants like an arrow pointing to my treat.

"You're perfect," I breathe, meeting his gaze. There's something familiar about his icy eyes but before I can contemplate it, he steps forward and releases a deep, animalist growl.

"I asked you a fucking question," he barks. I jolt, shooting him a glare as I slowly climb to my feet. Our eyes remain locked on each other, and even though I can't see his face beneath that creepy as hell mask, I see the exact moment he

catches onto my intent. There's a calculating gleam in his eyes. An understanding. A challenge. One I give back with just as much venom and heat.

I strike out faster than should be possible, given how sore I already am, and land a knee in his balls. I don't miss the massively hard cock in his jeans, but I don't have time to think about it as I spin on my heel and take off. "Fuck no. Come and get me, asshole!"

"Shit," he shouts, making me laugh. Shit is right. Things are about to get extremely wild.

I take off toward a structure that looks like an old mausoleum as I go back to my original plan. Hide and then fight. If Wolfe wants to play, he'll quickly learn that even though I want to give up control, he's going to have to fight like hell to take it from me.

By the time I reach the dilapidated stone building, I feel as though I've been running for a lifetime. I know it's the adrenaline and the sense of being chased. It all adds to the excitement and knowledge that soon, I'll be caught. Soon, I'll be in his hands, willingly forced to do whatever he wants.

"Fuck," I whisper as my cunt clenches around nothing. I feel empty. So, *so* empty.

As I round the building, I realize it's actually a row of them. I find a space between two of the bigger structures and squeeze myself between them, praying with all that is holy, there are no snakes or spiders already using the hiding space. I

just need to catch my breath for a second. Need to wrap my head around this.

I stand in the quiet darkness, breathing slowly as I revel in the freedom the hunt makes me feel. There is nothing like it. There's a reason kids run and play. They chase each other and beg for hide and seek. It's the anticipation. Not knowing when someone's going to pop out and scare you or grab you. Not knowing what's coming next. Living on the edge of something spectacular. Except with this, there's the reward of immense, earth-shattering pleasure at the end of it all.

"Come out, come out, Little Pet," Wolfe taunts. My head snaps to the left, where I find him staring at me, head cocked to the side in that predatory way of his. My eyes widen in shock. I hadn't even heard him sneak up on me. "*Out.*"

"Fuck off," I snap as I inch backward, my eyes tracking his every move. My chest rises and falls rapidly with every slow, methodical step. He watches me just as intently. The clown mask has a wide grin painted where his mouth should be, but I swear, I can tell he's smirking at me just as harshly.

When my back finally clears the tight gap between buildings, I make sure my footing is stable, shoot him a middle finger and take off like a bat out of hell. He cackles into the night air, a sound so demonic, so evil, chills race down my spine. I bolt down the path behind the various-sized stone buildings, my eyes flicking between straight ahead and to my right, where Wolfe is matching my every step.

I can see him watching me every time a gap opens up between buildings. It's dizzying, like staring at a forest when you're driving in the car. I look forward again, finding just three more buildings before the field opens up again. *Shit*. I glance back to my right at the next opening and find the space where Wolfe should be...empty.

My eyes snap forward just as my body slams into something hard, sending me flying backward on my ass. This time, there is no reprieve. There is no question as to whether or not I'm still in this. The fog is heavy around us as Wolfe straddles my body with his. His heavy weight lands on top of my pelvis, and his hands drop down onto my arms, pinning me to the cold, damp earth.

"Got you now, Little Fox," he pants with a raspy chuckle. Leaning forward, he presses into me harder as we come face-to-face for the first time. I can't see him, but I can feel him. He's hot and hard as he grinds his cock into my belly. "Look how beautiful you are when you're frightened."

"I'm not scared," I grunt, shoving him off with all my might. I barely knock him to the side. He regains his position immediately, not granting me a reprieve.

"Liar," he whispers, leaning in further and inhaling the sweaty scent along my neck. "You smell like lilacs and sin, baby." I start to moan at his words, then cut myself off, tucking my lips into my mouth. Wolfe chuckles again as he shifts his hips, lining his cock up with my aching core. He grinds down harder, and this time, I can't keep the moan at

bay. “There she is. My greedy little whore. Tell me how wet this pussy is for me right now?”

“I’m not,” I protest, shaking my head from side to side. “You’re delusional.”

We both know I’m lying, but it’s all part of the fun, part of the scene. Sinking in deeper and deeper into the role-play, knowing it will pay off. He throws his head back and laughs maniacally. I use his distraction to rip my arms free from his hold, catching him off guard. I shove his chest, but he has me pinned solidly into the earth. I scratch and claw, raking my fingernails down his exposed skin. My nails drag across his pecs and catch on...nipple piercings?

Fuck. That’s so sexy.I want to bite.

“Goddammit,” he barks, snatching my wrists and binding them together against his muscled abdomen. “Will you fight me this hard when I fuck your greedy cunt?”

My eyes widen and meet his as a breathy moan leaves my lips. Reflectively, my hips buck up, seeking him out, needing him to fill me. “Are you going to fuck me now, Wolfe?” I whisper. My tongue darts out, wetting my dry lips as I wait for his response. His eyes track the movement like a cat hunting a mouse.

He falls under my spell for a moment. Just one second. I tear my arms away but only successfully free one. I rear back, slapping his face. My palm meets hard plastic, but it’s enough to have his head wiping to the side and the mask shifting, leaving his mouth exposed. Slowly, his neck turns back to me,

looking like every horror flick where the killer is about to take out his prey. The look in his eyes is so feral, it has me freezing, and for the first time tonight, I feel genuine fear. His eyes scream murder and punishment.

His grin—mania. Maybe some of that insanity he tried to warn me about.

“No, Pet. You got your pleasure the other night when you deserved punishment. Now it’s my turn.” With lightning speed, he shoves my arms into the dirt and shuffles forward, pinning them with his knees. “I’m going to fuck your throat until your choking for air, and then I’m going to fuck you harder until you can’t breathe.”

My heart is slamming so hard, I’m sure he can feel it under his ass. One hand darts out, collaring my throat, much like the other night. He glares at me, mask tilted sideways, leaving his plump, pink lips and white teeth on display. With the moon casting barely there flickers of light across us, he truly does look like The Devil. He squeezes my throat and bends over me, shifting his knees to free my hands.

“Take my cock out, slut,” he demands. I can’t speak. Can’t scream. Can’t protest. I can barely breathe under his tight grip, so I do as he says. Never breaking eye contact, I unbutton and unzip his jeans. He lifts enough to help me free his cock. When it bobs against his cut abs, I finally glance down. I choke on my tongue. *Holy pierced anaconda*. “You like that?” he murmurs.

I expect a cocky smirk or goading tone, so I'm surprised when I find a slight flicker of nerves beneath his words. I can't respond, so I jerk the tiniest nod and open my mouth, showing him just how much I like it. Approval washes over the features that I can see, along with something else. Relief, maybe? Pride?

Bending over, he locks eyes with me and purses his lips, showing me his intent. He spits into my mouth, letting a long trail of saliva connect us before licking it and severing our momentary connection. "Swallow, Pet." I do. I greedily swallow, savoring his flavor. *Smoke*. But not cigarettes. *Weed*? I smile softly.

He releases his hold enough to allow me to breathe for a moment before shoving his massive cock down my throat. My eyes widen, and I choke on the first thrust. My lips barely wrap around his girth, and my teeth scrap his many piercings with each deep shove. My tongue lashes out, wanting to give him as much pleasure as I can without any control. Wolfe snarls. His hands grip mine in a tight hold, pinning them on either side of my face. His thrusts are rough, out of control, feral, but his hands...they're kind. His thumbs stroke mine as if he's trying to apologize and reassure me, all while choking me on his fat cock.

"That's it, bitch. Take it. Swallow my cock like the good little whore you are," he grunts.

I suck *harder*.

Lick *faster*.

Swallow *deeper*.

His eyes close in bliss. His thighs shake. But he doesn't stop, and neither do I. I find one of many barbells and tug it with my teeth. He stutters and growls. His eyes open and shoot to mine. Wolfe releases one of my hands and grips my hair, yanking my neck backward.

"Fuck, baby. You're so pretty when you can't breathe." Tears are now steadily leaking down my cheeks from the force of his punishing thrusts. He's right, I can't breathe. His cock is so deep down my throat he's actually gagging me. "I love the way you look when you cry for me," he pants.

His eyes are wild. He's lost to the hunt. To the chase. The freedom and exhilaration it grants you when you truly let go. I understand the feeling. Wolfe may be the one forcing me, fucking me, and taking my power, but right now? I feel free. I feel powerful. I feel in control.

His pleasure is mine.

His orgasm is controlled by me.

His cum, is *for me*.

His pace picks up as black dots dance around my vision. My eyes flutter closed as my lungs scream out for air. With all the remaining breath I have, I give all I've got. I give him more pleasure than he could imagine with my mouth alone. I let him *have me*, fully and completely.

"Fuck, Rayvn," he groans. "I'm honored, baby. You knowingly let me hold your life in my hands. That's so

fucking hot. *Shit.*” His words are breathless—like he’s dying from lack of oxygen alongside me. “I know I should stop. Know I should let you breathe, but I can’t and I don’t even care.” He pounds harder, his balls slapping against my chin roughly.

“Can’t stop *taking.*” *Thrust.*

“Can’t stop *fucking you.*” *Thrust.*

“*Owning you.*” *Thrust.*

My hands go limp as I lose my battle with consciousness. The last thing I hear before passing out is the word, *mine.*

“Wake up.” A soft slap to my cheek has me jolting awake. I blink and blink again before sputtering on a mouth full of warm liquid. “Welcome back, Little Fox. You worried me for a minute there.”

Wolfe is bending over my body, panting heavily, murmuring words of praise that make me tingle. “*Shit. So good. So, fucking perfect for me. Such a good fucking girl.*” His weight’s been lifted from my limbs, but he hasn’t left yet. I swallow his cum, and it burns the entire way down. My face is covered in tears that are cold and itchy from the wind. I’m sticky from cum and spit. My mouth feels like I’ve had the shit kicked out of me, but...

The static in my head is gone. My muscles are limp, and my body is exhausted. A good exhausted. I feel—*perfect.* I smile a wobbly, pained smile, watching as he catches his breath. His body is twitching from the force of his release. His semi-hard

cock is laying against my chest, red and pulsing. His skin is sweaty and bloody from my fingernails. But the smile on his face...it's pure, undeniable happiness.

I did that.

“Hi,” I croak out. His eyes snap to mine. His smile wavers but flickers back to life when he sees mine. “Thanks.”

I can't see his whole face, but I know his brows are furrowed from the upturn of his eyes. “Why the fuck are *you* thanking *me*? That was incredible, Rayvn.”

Something in his words makes me pause. My heart skips a beat. “Was that your first time?” His head jolts back at my question, and his eyes flit away. A pregnant pause builds between us. Finally, he nods. “Your first primal scene?”

“My first any scene,” he scoffs quietly. I open my mouth to respond, to ask questions. So many questions, but then, he's rising to his feet and tucking his dick away. He settles the mask on his face properly and bends down, lifting me into his arms. “Are you okay? Was I too rough? Did I hurt you?”

I suck in a breath at the way it feels to be in his arms. He carries me so easily like I weigh nothing. He begins the long trek toward the parking lot, and finally, I find my words. “I'm amazing, Wolfe. You did so well.” Everyone likes praise. Even men. They're basically just overgrown children waiting for you to put their drawings on the fridge.

“Do you need me to—” he breaks off, looking around awkwardly. “Take care of you?”

I laugh quietly, shrugging off the way that offer gives me butterflies. “If you’re asking if I need aftercare, I don’t. It’s not something I ever needed before. I just like to go home and relax.”

He smirks down at me. At least, that’s what I think he’s doing. “You did so good, Sweetling. That was one of the best experiences of my life. It’s—” he breaks off, searching for the word. I cling tightly to his shoulders, waiting with bated breath to hear his every thought. *He’s here. I’m in his arms. Finally. He’s mine. Woah, calm down with the possession, Ray. “Freeing.”*

I grin, nodding my agreement. “I feel the same way.” We fall into silence, both of us riding the adrenaline high. Soon, the exhaustion will come. I feel like there are so many things I want to say, to ask, but right now, I can’t, so I settle for simply *feeling*.

I’m half asleep when we reach my car. Reluctantly, he releases me. I slide down his body, gripping him along the way, relishing the way his skin feels beneath mine. I cringe when my feet hit the ground. Yeah, I’m going to be sore. Wolfe’s hands are still banded around my waist, mine are around his neck as we stare at each other.

“Are you going to take it off?” I whisper.

Slowly, he shakes his head. “Not yet, Little Fox.” Disappointment fills me, replacing some of my previous high. I go to pull away, but he tightens his grip.

“Are you stalking me, Wolfe?” I ask.

He barks out a laugh and shrugs. “Does that bother you?” I gape at him, but he goes on, unbothered. “I meant it when I said you’re mine, Little Fox. I told you how I feel. I told you that I want to possess you. That when it comes to you, I’m not in my right mind. I told you, and I asked if you wanted this. You said yes. You made the deal, now you have to suffer the consequences.”

“But—” I protest, unsure what I even want to say. My hands flail about in exasperation. “But *why* stalking?”

“Because you like it.” His statement is simple and matter of fact. He says it as though it makes all the sense in the world. “Because you want it, and I want to make you happy.”

He’s right. I do like it. I like the fear, the not knowing, the anticipation. It’s half the fun. And he’s willing to do it for me because he feels *that* strongly for me. Happiness fills me in surprising and unusual amounts. The only emotion I ever feel to the extreme is fear, and adrenaline. Sadness, of course, if something really tragic happens, but I can’t remember the last time in my depressing, mediocre existence I felt this happy.

“But if I know you’re following me, how will it be the same?” I ask dumbly, my mind still circling over his words. *He’d do anything to make me happy.* “I want to make you happy, too,” I blurt.

He leans forward, pressing his forehead to mine. The plastic mask is uncomfortable between us, and at this moment, I loathe the thing that just brought me so much rapture. “You make me happy. Everything you do. Simply breathing in my

direction. I'm gone for you, Rayvn. Utterly obsessed. Just let me in, and let me give you myself in my own time. That's what will make me happy. And to answer your other question —" he breaks off, pulling away.

My brows furrow as I wait for him to reply. He leans forward, bending into the curve of my neck. One hand grips my jaw tightly, tilting me where he wants me and keeping me in place. He lifts the mask up enough that I can feel his hot breath against my skin. I shiver with need and arousal. My thighs clench together, and I find myself a wet, sticky mess.

"Go home, take a hot bath, and take the sleeping pills again, Little Fox." He presses his lips sweetly to the place beneath my ear that still aches from his bite at the club. He laves his tongue over it like he's remembering it just as fondly as I do. "Don't disappoint me."

And then, he's gone, and I realize just how fucked I truly am because the first thought that crosses my mind is—*I can't wait to see what he does to me while I sleep.*



Chapter Seventeen

*C*hrist, she's so pretty when she sleeps.

Her skin is smooth and hot beneath my fingers. She smells sweet, like chocolate and sin. I want to devour her. Eat her alive. Suck her dry. Fucking consume her until neither of us knows where one ends, and the other begins.

All in good time.

For now, playing with my Little Fox is enough.

It's in the chase, the games. She loves them as much as I do. That's why we're perfect together. Perfect for each other. She just doesn't know it yet. That's okay. I'll show her. I'm going to teach her so many things.

Teach her how fun it can be to let go and give in to your baser needs, your *instincts*. I didn't even know mine existed in such a capacity until she came along. She upended my world. My calm, peaceful existence. At first, I was angry with her for it. So fucking angry. How dare she come into my life and change things—change *me*?

I silently scoff at the thought. I was ignorant. Blind.

My Little Fox didn't fuck up my world, she created it. It's as though her acceptance gave me permission to just *be*. To let go of society's expectations and become the beast that I worked so hard to suppress. He's not buried anymore, though. No, he's awake and free, and he's a possessive bastard. He knows Rayvn belongs to us, and he's refusing to give her back.

It's unhealthy, this...*need* I have for her. It's a complex, living, breathing thing. I may want to own her, keep her to myself for the rest of our days. Tie her to me implicitly, but I don't want to break her down and destroy her. I don't want to stifle all that is *her*. Everything that drew me in from the beginning, enraptured my soul and knitted it with hers. I want to propel her forward. Push her to be everything she's meant to be.

I just want to be by her side while she does it.

Rayvn twitches in her sleep, and my body mirrors the movement. My hand hovering over her arm freezes, and my head cocks to the side. Did my Little Fox disobey me? I pause, watching her for any more movements or signs that she's awake. She's still as can be. Her breathing is deep and even. Asleep. Perfect.

Standing, I walk on silent feet to her ensuite bathroom, closing the door with a barely audible *click* behind me. I flick on the light and take in the room, noting the layout and design. I hadn't explored in here yesterday when I'd broken in for the first time. Even though I've been watching her for months, I

pushed off this last step. Sadly, it wasn't to grant her privacy. No, it was for a much more selfish reason.

I knew if I allowed myself inside her space, the place she sleeps and spends time, the bed she fucks her sweet cunt in, I'd never want to leave. Or I'd burn the place to the ground. Surely, if she had no other place to go, she'd be stuck with me. From what she's explained of her best friend Shiloh, that situation worked out for her and her husband Logan. Maybe I could do some structural damage to the apartment building, rendering her homeless. Then I'd sweep in like a knight in shining whatever and save the day. She'd cry into my chest and cling to me, thanking me for saving her. She'd drop to her knees, knowing the best way to say *thank you* is with my cock shoved deep down her elegant throat again. And then I'd...

Fuck.

Shaking my head, I chuckle quietly so as to not wake my sleeping beauty. I really need to get these fantasies under control before I start acting on them. She may have dug her claws in and ripped my sanity from my body, but I have to at least pretend to be somewhat normal in her presence. My Little Fox loves to be scared, but I don't want her genuinely terrified of me. Except for tonight...but that was fake. Maybe. For a moment there, when I'd choked her with my cock until she passed out, I thought I'd ruined everything. Thought she'd run for the hills, but no. My girl is brave. Strong. *Perfect.*

A big meaty fist wraps around my barely functioning, black heart and squeezes roughly. No, I definitely don't want her

genuinely *scared* of me. There is a difference between the games that we play and actual terror. Rayvn once called me her safe space, and I refuse to be anything but. I can indulge in her fantasies and dreams. I can make them a reality for her, but that only works if she trusts me enough to give herself to me.

It's an honor to be that for her, to have her, and I won't fuck it up. So, I'll keep my crazy in check...*for now*.

I make quick work of washing my hands, making sure I've gotten all the debris from our tryst in the cemetery off of my skin. I want to sully My Little Fox. Dirty her up in the worst ways, but not tonight.

No. Tonight, I've got other plans for her.

My eyes roam over the counter as I dry my hands, looking for proof of the demand I gave her this evening. Let's see how well she follows instructions. I find nothing where I'd expected, causing my brows to furrow. I open the medicine cabinet and am surprised by what I find. I pick up the little silver packet, noting all the empty pill slots. She has three white pills left in the tray, and while I may be a man, I'm not an idiot. I know what they are and what they mean.

For all of five seconds, I debate taking them. Throwing them away. Burning them. My brain and beast work together, calculating how we replace next month's prescription with placebos. What better way to lock her to me for life than to knock her up? My already hard cock throbs at the thought. A bead of precum leaks out onto my boxers, and my balls pulse with need.

My gaze darts to the bedroom, even though I can't see her through the door. I can picture her there, laid out and unaware. An offering. *For me.*

A visceral, intense fantasy plays out in my head, spurred on by the scent of *her* surrounding me like a warm blanket. Lilacs. Chocolate. Sin. It's an odd combination, but together, on her, it's mouth-watering. My mind goes back to the vision of Rayvn, naked and spread wide. Her cunt was glistening and puffy, just waiting for me fuck her hard, deep. Just waiting for my seed. *Shit.*

The thought of filling Rayvn so full of my cum while she sleeps that she wakes up dripping and sticky has me damn near fucking my fist right here and now. She'd look stunning—big, and round with my baby. She'd be stuck with me for life. She'd never escape me, not for a second. Nothing, and I mean *nothing*, will take her from me except death himself.

Swallowing thickly, I blink back to reality only to find my hand down my pants and wrapped around my aching, stiff length. Fuck, I got off once tonight down her pretty throat, and my dick is already begging for more.

No. Not yet.

The same can be said for tampering with her birth control. I want to knock her up, but more than that, I want to fill her with my seed. I want her stuffed full of me, carrying me with her all day. I want her as infected with me as I am with her. That thought causes a realization to settle deep in my gut. I want a future with Rayvn, but I'm not ready to share her, even

with a baby we'd create together. I don't know if I'll ever be ready to. I want to be selfish with her. I want every aspect of my Little Fox's life centered around me because mine is already orbiting her.

Sighing, I shake the wayward thoughts away and turn the light off before exiting the bathroom. I pad quietly to her bedside, finding her in the exact same position I left her. *Good.* I quickly search her room for what I need and grin to myself when I find it on her nightstand next to a mostly empty bottle of water. I check the pill case, and a swell of pride fills me instantly. It's open and clearly tampered with. The cap is off, and I swear, it's like she's leaving me a sign. Another layer of trust and consent. She wants me to know she took the sleeping pills, and she did it... for me.

She wants to play.

She did so good for me tonight in the cemetery. I didn't go into tonight with any sort of plan. I just knew from her profile and some conversations that she likes primal play. After a ton of research and hours watching videos, I learned what it was. I will say she surprised me when she said she had no limits. Especially where consent is concerned. At first, I wasn't sure if I was okay with taking her blindly without permission. Forcing her to submit, even if she's fighting me every step of the way like she did tonight. But, after researching it, I can see where the appeal comes from. And after experiencing it with her tonight...

Yeah. It's pretty fucking hot.

I slowly slide the blanket from her body and find her in a tiny lacy nighty. I grin to myself as I pull out my phone and snap a bunch of photos, the same way I did last night. Her tits were already practically spilling from her tiny top, and it was easy to pull it down the rest of the way, granting me access. I sucked on her nipples like a starving man seeking milk. I couldn't help it. It was my first time having a breast in my mouth and hers were there for the taking. Getting to explore a woman's body like this, without having to worry about if I'm doing something right or wrong, is a good way for me to gain experience. If anything, I'm looking at it scientifically.

My throbbing cock disagrees. I tell the fucker to shut it while I lift her little nighty up, exposing her long, sleek thighs. Her dark skin glistens in the pale moonlight, creating the perfect canvas for me. I watch Rayvn's face as I shift her legs, spreading them wide for me.

No panties. Fuck. She really did want me to play with her, didn't she? My perfect fucking girl.

I barely stifle a groan as I take in her glistening, hairless cunt. I knew she was smooth when I fingered her in the club, but now...I'm finally getting my first look. It's so tiny and puffy. So perfect. I want to devour it. Devour her. If I eat her out, suck her sweet juices into my mouth, will she wake up? No. She slept solidly last night. Maybe just a taste.

My mind is a single-track thing as I crawl between her perfect thighs and settle myself on my stomach. I watch for any signs that she's woken up while sliding her legs over my

shoulders. When she still doesn't move, I dive in. I inhale her sweet cunt and groan against her flesh. She smells tangy and sweet. Not floral like the rest of her body, but there's that hint of chocolate that I've come to associate with her. I have to find out what she wears to make her smell like this. I'll stock my entire fucking house with it, so she feels at home when she moves in.

No, calm down Nash. Not yet. I stifle a scoff. Fuck, at this point, I'm ready to marry the woman. *Don't forget your job, Nash.* I growl quietly, telling my inner voice to shut the hell up. This isn't the time for that shit. My mouth is literally inches from a pussy for the first time in my life. I need to practice while she sleeps. Need to make sure I'm perfect for her.

My nose traces a path up her wet cunt, inhaling deeply as I go. My tongue lashes out, following the trail and getting my first hit of *her*. It's intoxicating. She tastes exactly how I imagined and yet, so much better. Slowly, I eat her pretty pussy, taking my time learning her every fold and curve. Finding her clit and committing its location to memory.

She shifts and twitches throughout, groaning and mumbling in her slumber, but her eyes never open. The more I eat her out, the wetter she gets. Her perfect, tiny little opening forces more and more liquid as though even in her sleep, it knows she'll need to be wet to accommodate my cock. *Her cock, because she owns it now. Owns me.* With every gush of liquid, her flavor changes to something new. Something...irony.

My eyes widen as realization washes over me. My eyes flick up, locking on her face as I slowly insert a finger into her soaking wet pussy. I work it in, making sure not to jostle her. *Fuck, she's so wet.* My eyes close and my hips thrust against the bed, despite my best efforts to stay still. My finger nudges against something that has my eyes snapping open. I may be new to cunts, but *that* doesn't belong. It certainly wasn't there the last time I fingered her.

Slowly, I sit up, bracing myself on my knees as I continue to leisurely finger fuck her, stretching her out. I add in a second finger, and then a third, scissoring them as I go. It's not until I've worked four fingers into her cunt, practically fisting her, and she's shifting restlessly, that I curve them upward and play with her clit. I want her to cum. Want to see if I can make her gush while she's asleep and dead to the world.

I pick up the pace with one hand and press the other down on her low belly. I flatten my hand and push down, and a sharp pang of lust goes straight to my cock when I realize I can feel myself inside of her, fucking her.

Holy shit, that's hot.

My fingers bump the plastic thing inside her with every thrust, but she doesn't seem bothered so I ignore it—*for now*. I press down harder on her clit and belly and rub her g-spot all at once. Her back arches off the bed and her pussy squeezes my fingers in a death grip as she rides out an intense orgasm with a breathy moan. My eyes slide down her body and lock

onto her fluttering pussy. I'm in a trance as I watch her release gush out around my hand. Clear cum tinged with blood.

Her blood.

Something about the sight of it has me almost cumming in my jeans. Her blood is so pretty, especially as it stains her white sheets. I know it's fucked up, but it brings on dreams of me taking her virginity, popping her cherry. The possession that flows through me, for her, increases tenfold. I want to be her only, the way she'll be mine. I want to own her in such an intense way, that I'm the only one who ever crosses her mind, past, present, and future.

More than that, I want my cock covered in her bloody cum. I want her to mark me the same way I've marked her.

When she finally settles again without incident, I slowly remove my fingers. My mouth waters at the sight of her release dripping from my hand. I give into the desire. The primal urge to consume my mate. To devour her fluids like the monster that crawls beneath my skin demands. I suck my fingers dry, licking my hand, wrist to palm, making sure I don't miss a drop. It's a heady taste. It's *her* taste.

Mine.

It's not enough though. I need more. Want more. Want everything.

Mark her, claim her, keep her. *Ruin her.*

Mine. Mine. Mine.

I close my eyes, fighting the fucked up thoughts. The cravings. I try, but I just can't. When it comes to Rayvn, I honestly don't think it will ever be enough. I want to mark her. Fill her with my cum. I want to fuck her right here, right now, while she sleeps. Shaking my head, I look back down at her pussy and see the small trickle of blood leaking between her thighs. All other thoughts dissolve. I want to coat myself in her, blood and all.

Fuck.

I slip my fingers inside her and grip the plastic device. I have no idea what it is, nor do I care. I just need it out of the way. I want to fill her fully with nothing between us. A small stem sticks out, giving me something to tug on. I carefully remove the device from her body. It slides out with a pop, and I notice it's a small flexible cup, full of my girl's blood. I lift it, staring at the contents, unsure what the fuck to do with them.

Do women dump it down the drain? The toilet? Toss the whole device? Confusion and concern fill me. I don't want to have to wake her up, nor do I want her to know I fucked this up...our little game. She'll forgive me for the mess, right?

Shit. Looking around, my eyes land on her nightstand, and an idea forms.

God, you really are insane, Nash.

Don't care.

Holding the cup steady, I reach over her body and grab the open, half-finished water bottle from her nightstand. Though I

loathe the idea of ridding her intoxicating flavor from my mouth, I drink the rest of the water, emptying the bottle. Carefully, I pour the contents of the cup into the bottle and set it on the nightstand. I drop her plastic device on the bed for later. Looking down, I find my hand covered in her bloody cum, and my cock jolts in my jeans.

Need her. Need her. Need her.

Fuck. Is this really how you want it to be, Nash? You want to lose your v-card while she's asleep and unaware? You don't want her to remember you fucking her sweet cunt for the first time? Goddammit. I groan, tilting my head back. I'm so fucking turned on, so hard for her, but I don't want that.

My bloody hand slides down my pants and wraps around my cock as if to call me a liar. The sticky fluid coats my flesh, and a spurt of precum shoots from my throbbing tip. My other hand unbuttons my jeans, freeing me before I even realize what I'm doing. My eyes find Rayvn's bloody pussy, and it spurs me on. I fuck my fist to the vision of my Little Fox sprawled out before me.

Perfect. So fucking perfect.

I rip the top of her nighty down, exposing her tits to me. *Beautiful.* I squeeze my cock, picking up pace. My fingers run over my reverse Prince Albert and Jacobs Ladder as I remember the way she stared at my cock with fucking hearts in her perfect, pitch-black eyes.

My Little Demon.

Mine. Mine. Mine.

Precum spurts from my dick as my balls draw up tight. Tingles shoot up and down my spine as my climax barrels in on me. My eyes zero in on my bloody cock, and the sight of it sends me to the finish line. I bend forward, shoving my cock deep inside Rayvn's cunt in one swift thrust, wiping my fragile virginity and good intentions away in an instant. Her body jolts and she cries out silently with the intrusion. My hips stutter and pulse as jet after jet explodes from me in the strongest orgasm of my life.

I have to bite my cheek to stifle my scream of pleasure as her cunt flutters around me in another orgasm. I did that. Just the mere fact that my cock was inside her, filling her up, claiming her, sent her over the edge.

Mine. She's mine now.

I stay inside her hot, tight pussy, letting the aftershocks send sparks through the both of us until my dick is completely limp. Slowly and regretfully, I pull myself from her body. I want to stay inside her all-fucking night.

Soon. I will soon.

I watch as a thick gush of our combined fluids follows my retreating shaft. I hate it. I want my cum back inside her where it belongs. My fingers scoop up as much as I can, and I shove it back in, fingering her deeply, pressing it into her womb. When I'm satisfied, I decide to put her period cup thing back in, keeping *me* exactly where I belong. It's a struggle, but I'm a smart guy, and after ten minutes, I figure that shit out. I

straighten her nighty, kissing each thigh lovingly before climbing from the bed.

Her sheets are a disaster. It looks like a fucking crime scene but there's nothing I can do about that right now. I move to cover her again, only to realize my hands are still bloody. So is my limp cock hanging between my thighs. I never want to shower again.

I smile as I leave her a bloody love note across her exposed chest. One word, letting her know that I didn't stand her up. Bending down, I give in to one last urge. One I've had since the first time I saw her. I press my lips to Rayvn Porter's.

My obsession. My woman. My future. Mine.

Standing, I tuck my dick away, wiping my hands on my jeans, so I don't look so insane if I run into anyone on the way home. I cap the water bottle full of my woman's sweet life force and head back to my new apartment, two floors up. There may be a skip in my step as I leave her place, but hey, every dude who loses his virginity gets a little giddy.



Chapter Eighteen

I woke up bloody and sore. Every inch of me hurt. I have bruises and scrapes covering most of my body. My pussy feels like someone shoved a fist in it. My sheets look like a murder took place while I slept. Yet, my Divacup is still in place. My clothes were on and relatively unscathed. There was no sticky cum residue down my thighs like I thought there might be. There was, however, a note...

Mine.

One word. In blood. My blood, I assume. Written across my chest.

What a fucking psychopath.

My psychopath.

I smile at my naked, marked-up body in the mirror before snapping a picture. I love the way I look. I look like someone devoured me. Destroyed me. I look like someone *enjoyed* me. And I fucking love it.

I open up the Kinksters app and decide to toy with my... whatever he is. If he can come play with me, then I can play

with him.

FoxBabe20: Good morning, Sunshine. I want your phone number. I want to text you like a normal person. I want to call you. I want to video chat. I want normalcy. Give me what I want, and I'll give you a present.

I close out of the app and snap a few more photos while the tub fills up with scalding, delightful water. I make sure to capture all of my battle wounds like the trophies they are. I open my photos app and put them all in a hidden folder for safekeeping. Grinning like an idiot, I walk naked to the kitchen and make myself a cup of coffee. I send a text to my dad's phone, hoping Urma gets it while waiting for Wolfe to reply.

It's Sunday, and I have to go back to work tomorrow, but I'm hoping to visit my dad today. It's time. He deserves a daughter who will show up for him, even when it's hard. Even when it's scary. My only regret is that I can't bring Wolfe with me. I know I'd feel better if I didn't have to face this alone. I don't know what's happened in the last few months, but he's kind of become my person. Shiloh is off having her new life with her new family, and *yes*, I am exceedingly happy for her. But, I'm also more alone than I have been in a long time, especially with my dad being—*absent*.

My phone vibrates just as my coffee finishes brewing. I add a splash of creamer and grab the cup, heading back to my bath as I open the message.

Unknown Number: Good morning, Little Fox. Give me my present.

I grin into my cup like a fool. A wave of confusion washes over me as I realize he didn't even have to ask for my number, but then I remember I'm dating a crazy, stalker tech genius. Shit. We're really going to have to draw some boundaries eventually, aren't we?

Except, I kind of love his crazy. A lot. I cackle to myself as I type out my response, knowing my alpha-possessive-bossy-psycho won't like my dominance. Maybe he'll punish me, but oh well. He needs to learn I'm only submissive when his dick's out.

Me: Good boy.

Me: *Image*

Me: If you want more, I have another request.

I quickly save his number and climb into the steaming hot bath, groaning at the intense sensation. Every one of my muscles immediately melt into the water. Damn, I really needed this. I settle my coffee on the wooden bath tray that spans from one edge of my tub to the other. My current read and a candle are already settled on top, waiting for me to dive in. I set my phone down and sink into the water, letting it wash away my sins...and Wolfe's.

I soak for a while, enjoying the peaceful calm that I haven't felt in so long. There is a distinct quiet in my mind. A happiness that I thought stopped existing a long time ago. I

never even felt this content and...*complete* when I was with Oscar. And I definitely didn't feel it with Mark, not that we ever successfully accomplished any scenes like Wolfe and I did last night.

Just thinking of it sends a shiver down my spine and zap to my clit. I'm sore, not broken. I could absolutely go for a rough fuck right now. I have no idea if Wolfe had sex with me while I was passed out. I took two pills just to be sure I'd stay asleep. Once he suggested it, I couldn't get rid of the idea. I've never messed around with somnophilia before, maybe because I'm such a light sleeper naturally. I can see the draw to it. There's something about being completely helpless and vulnerable while you sleep. Consensually giving up your body, your autonomy, for someone else's pleasure is intensely satisfying. You well and truly become someone's fucktoy, and that idea is unbelievably sexy to me.

Part of me wants to ask what he did to me, part of me wants that memory to be his and his alone. Another part of me wishes he'd do it again and record it so we can watch it together.

My pussy flutters at the thought. I groan, tilting my head back on the edge of the tub. My hair is wrapped tightly in a silk scarf, preventing my braids from getting wet, but my neck is killing me. I'd do anything to be able to fully submerge myself in the steaming hot water right now. I wonder if Wolfe would give me a massage?

I scoff. “Wonder if he’ll ever show me his face,” I mutter. As hot as the mask is, I don’t want to stare at it all the time. I want his face. My phone vibrating pulls my attention back to the present. I find a few missed messages and sit up to respond.

Wolfey: You’re stunning, Sweetling. My little whore wears her marks proudly, doesn’t she? She makes her master so proud.

God, the way he talks about me in third person is sexy as fuck. Shit, why is that so hot?

Me: I want more, Wolfey. Play with me again, please.

Wolfey: *Wolfey?* Lol. You’re adorable. Is that your request?

Me: One of them. Say yes. Play with me tonight. I’ll take the pills again if that’s what you want.

I lean forward, anticipation thrumming through me. I feel like an addict, needing another hit. I’m pushing, pressing for more, but it’s only because I have a plan. I grin to myself, feeling lighter than I have in forever as we share flirty messages, openly discussing kink like it’s no big deal.

I swallow thickly as a ball of emotion clogs my throat. Is that why I feel so happy? He’s accepted me? Simply and unabashedly, without question? Not only that, he admitted that he’d do it all for me, no matter what. And he did. He delivered, and *he meant it*. He was into it, every second of it.

Then again when he played with me in my bed while I was passed out.

He didn't question it or make fun of me. He didn't say I'm disgusting or mental. He just said yes. He toyed with my body, even though I'm on my period. The blood didn't even freak him out, and I honestly thought that would be his hard limit. He went a step further and played with it...touched it...Did he lick it? Eat me out? Suck his bloody fingers?

Jesus Christ. My pussy throbs as wetness seeps out between my thighs and into the bathwater.

Wolfey: I can't, Little Fox. I have to get some work done. Why don't I make you a deal? You keep taking your pills for the next week if it's safe, and I'll play with you when you're least expecting it.

Dammit. Disappointment flickers through me, but I bat the silly emotion away. I'm a grown-ass, independent woman. I have a career I need to focus on. A father to spend time with. A case to wrap up. I can't spend all of my time fawning over him, even if that's exactly what I want to do. Sighing, I agree to his terms.

Me: Fine.

I snap a photo of me in the bathtub pouting. My skin is on display, but my boobs are covered by my floral-scented bubbles, giving him just a tease.

Me: *Image*

Wolfey: More.

Me: No. Send me one of you first. I want to see you. All of you.

Silence greets my request, and I barely contain the urge to toss my phone across the bathroom. So freaking annoying. I swipe to respond to my other messages, finding one from Shiloh checking on me and another from Urma confirming that my dad is up for visitors today.

I drop my phone on the stand and set about scrubbing my body with my chocolate sugar body scrub. It's from Italy, and it smells like fucking Heaven. I use the matching shaving cream and shave my legs and clean up my bikini line. I'll need to set another wax appointment now that I might be having regular dick visits. I chuckle at the thought. I rush through the rest of my bath, ignoring the achingly loud silence coming from my phone. Guess that's a no, then.

Prick.



“Hi, Daddy,” I murmur softly, sitting down next to him on the sofa. He still lives in my childhood home, but it looks completely different with all the modifications we’ve had to

make in the last year. His eyes widen as he takes me in before a wide smile breaks out over his handsome face.

“My girl! My Ray-Jay,” he beams. My eyes burn with hot tears that I couldn’t stop if I tried. I surge forward, throwing myself in his arms. He holds me just as tightly, squeezing the breath from my lungs. “I’ve missed you.”

I sob into his neck, hugging him for dear life. Hoping that if I cling tight enough, he’ll stay with me. It’s been months since he remembered me on one of my visits. That’s the reason I haven’t shown up as much lately. It’s so much harder to see him and have him ask who I am again and again. Even worse was when he started referring to me by my mom’s name. I know I should suck it up, but shit, a person can only take so much.

You’re selfish, Rayvn.

I am. I really fucking am. But as my dad and I hold each other, I push those thoughts away for a later time, knowing I need to enjoy every second of this.

He chuckles, releasing me with a snuffle. “How have you been? Working real hard, I assume?”

I smile, wiping my cheeks as I take my seat again. My eyes dart around the living room, homing in on the family photos. Pictures of my entire life span the white wall like a beautiful timeline. They begin with my birth and cover every major event after. My mom started the tradition, and when she passed, my dad continued with it. I’ve thought about taking them down a few times, worried they might cause him

confusion. Urma says that when he loses himself, he stares at them, and they seem to keep him calm, so, for now, they've stayed.

Turning to face my dad, I smile and nod. "Yeah, Daddy. Working hard. It's a busy job, but I love it. How are you? Doing any gardening lately?" Gardening is something my dad used to love, but as far as I know, hasn't done it in months. He still loves to talk about his plants, though.

He chuckles, slapping his hand on his knee. "Sure am. Those petunias won't get away from me this year. They're comin' in great. Not as good as the marigolds, though. Those suckers are taking over half the fuckin' yard."

A burst of laughter escapes me. This is the man who taught me everything he knows, including my extensive dictionary of swear words. We spend the next few hours catching up over lunch, and surprisingly, it goes without incident. I consider talking to him about the Snow case and asking for advice, but I try to keep everything neutral. I want more than anything to tell him about Wolfe. Fuck, I want him to meet Wolfe, but... it's not time. Not yet.

My dad stays lucid our entire visit, for the most part. He forgets a fair amount of words and dates, occasionally mixing up the day or time, but all and all, he was him. My dad. My best friend. The one who took me to buy pads and my first bra. The one who held me when I got dumped for the first, second, and third time. The one who gave up everything for me...

“Don’t wait so long to come around again next time,” Urma chides as she walks me to the door. I smile and nod, hugging her goodbye. I take one last look at my dad and find him standing in front of a picture of him and my mom with a sad look on his face.

My heart breaks for him. He loved my mom dearly, and losing her devastated him. I always thought that he’d finally get back out there once I was grown and left the house. That’s one of the reasons I worked so hard to get good grades and into college. I knew if I left, he’d have his life back. Little did I know it would be stolen from him again so quickly.



Chapter Nineteen

I didn't actually have to go anywhere, but I did have to work. Luckily, I've set up a second office space in my new apartment where I can work remotely if need be. I spent the better part of two days getting lost in menial jobs for no other reason than to give Ray some space. It killed me. Legit drove me insane. But I knew it was important.

Rayvn isn't as insane for me as I am for her. Not yet, at least. She needs time to process, time to miss me. She likes her solitude. Quiet evenings in her apartment with her crime shows and what I've now learned is knitting and needlepoint. She needs time to decompress. From how closely I've observed her these past few months, I think she actually uses that time to disassociate, whether she's aware of it or not. I don't blame her. I hate people too. Except her. And Kat. Everyone else can fuck right off, for all I care.

After the fuck up of me getting sidetracked and not responding to the request for a picture of me, I made it up to her by FaceTiming her while naked and stroking my cock. I kept my face from the shot but let her see every inch of my

body while encouraging her to show me her pretty pussy. And fuck, did she ever. That was one of the hottest experiences of my life. My Little Fox is a dirty little slut for me. She's perfect. So fucking perfect.

Every day, I fall deeper and deeper down the hole that is Rayvn Porter.

My obsession is quickly developing into something else. Something more potent and firey. I know what it is...at least, I think I do. But I'm not ready to put a name to it. More than that—*she's* not ready for me to put a name to it.

Today, I mailed her a gift. To her work. A claiming, if you will. It should be arriving any minute. I eagerly watch the camera feed in her office on one screen as I work on the other. She's been in a staff meeting for the last few hours, and it royally pisses me off that I didn't have the foresight to bug the entire building. I will eventually. Better yet, I'll convince her to work from home. Her new home. When I move her in with me. If she doesn't like my house in New Mexico and decides she wants to stay here, then I'll buy her a new one. Or, we can share her apartment, I don't really give a fuck where we live, as long as she's coming home to me every night. *Soon.*

"Ms. Porter, a package was just delivered for you," a kind voice rings through my speakers and a wide grin splits over my face.

Showtime.

Rayvn smiles at the woman, who I believe is named Carly and accepts the large, wrapped gift. Her eyes widen as notices

the name on the gift tag and she quickly ushers the woman out before locking the door. A nervous energy begins to fill my body, one limb at a time. What if she doesn't like it? This is new for me. I've never given one of my paintings to someone before, not like this. Is it good enough? Will she find it repulsive? Will she know what it is?

"Holy shit," she gasps, tossing the paper onto the floor in a balled-up heap.

She stands the 18x24 painting up on her desk so she can fully take in the image. I have a perfect shot of her face and I find myself leaning in so close I'm practically licking my computer screen. Brows furrowed, her head tilts from side to side in discovery and observation. My nerves ramp up to a painfully uncomfortable level as regret begins to seep in.

Finally, after what feels like forever, she flips it over, realizing the thing was upside down, and immediately screeches. "Oh my god. Oh my god. Oh my god."

She gently sets the painting down on her desk and picks up her phone. Seconds later, mine is ringing. I debate not answering. I'm not even sure what I'll say or how I'll say it with my heart jammed in my fucking esophagus. Groaning, I accept the call, placing it on speaker so I can continue to watch her as she paces the length of her office.

"Hello, Sweetling," I murmur. My tongue swipes my dry bottom lip, and I have the worst case of cotton mouth despite how utterly sober I am. "How are you?"

“Did you paint my pussy?” she whisper-shouts. I grin into my fist, barely containing a bark of laughter. “Did you paint my,” she clears her throat before whispering, “my *bloody* pussy?”

I have to say, I’m extremely impressed she can tell what the abstract painting is, especially considering the entire thing was painted in various shades of red. Her blood diluted with my cum. It took days. And a lot of paint thinner. And a heavy topcoat of lacquer to preserve it. But it’s one of my best and most prized pieces yet.

“Yes,” I say simply. “Do you like it, Little Fox?”

She exhales a shaky breath before walking over to her desk. I watch with rapt attention as she stares down at the painting. She makes a choked sound but tries to cover it with a cough. My brows furrow. Did I upset her? She leans forward, tracing her fingers over the delicate edges reverently. Unlike my usual acrylic works, this painting is smooth. The medium was difficult to work with, almost like watercolor, due to how thin it was. But it came out beautifully.

“It’s incredible, Wolfe,” she breathes. On camera, I watch as she swipes tears from her eyes. My heart clenches painfully. She’s crying?

I clear my throat, wanting to make sure I didn’t fuck this up. “You really like it?”

“I love y—it,” she sucks in a breath. *Did she just almost? No, surely not.* “I love it. It’s the sweetest thing anyone’s ever

given me. I mean, I can't hang it in my office, but," she chuckles. "Thank you, Wolfe."

On camera, I see her shrug as her fingers continue to trace the lines. I wonder how she'd react if she knew what it was made of? I smile to myself. I'll never fucking tell her. I don't want to ruin this moment, even years down the road. I'll know, and that's enough. It's as much for me as it is for her. It's a memory, frozen forever in time. Her hairless cunt leaking a combination of my cum and her blood after I'd pulled out. It was one of the single most erotic moments of my life. The night I gave her my first and took her last.

I ignore her thanks. She has nothing to thank me for. It's me who should be thanking her. "Take the pills tonight, Rayvn. I already miss being inside of you." With that, I hang up, knowing there's something I need to do immediately.

I close out of the screen with her office, needing a moment to compose myself before I do this. Watching her cry over something that meant so fucking much to me shifted something inside of my soul. Whether she knew it or not, that one small, sweet act proved how gone she is for me. She may not be ready to admit it, but she's right there with me.

I pull up my high-profile client email account and open the latest message received. Flicking over to the opposite screen, I open up my bank account and pull up the wire transfer tab. In the blink of an eye, I'm half a million dollars poorer, but my conscious is clearer than it has been in months. I go back to the email and type out the long overdue message.

Regarding: Rayvn Porter

I have refunded your money and will not be taking on this client. Do not pursue her. Do not touch her. Do not speak to her, or I will destroy you. Your vendetta against Ms. Porter is done, as is our communication.

I would do anything for Rayvn, even if it means working my ass off to cover the funds I just lost. I have more money, I can make more money. Nothing is as important to me as she is. I did what needed to be done. All I can do is pray I'm not too late.



Chapter Twenty

Tonight, I'm wearing a t-shirt and panties. The pill bottle is open on my nightstand like last time. My room is dark, except for the moonlight spilling in through my open curtains, casting a warm glow over my bed. Everything is the same as that night, except tonight, I didn't obey my master's command. I lied. I didn't take the pills because I want to be awake for what he does to me. I also went out and bought a tiny nanny cam and set it up in the corner to record us together. I want to know what he does to me. All of it.

A thrill of excitement passes through me as the front door clicks shut. Does he have a key? A question for another time. I curl up on my side, digging my face into the pillow as I force myself to breathe evenly. My heart is racing in time with my pulsing clit, and my body is trying to shake, but I refuse to allow it.

Calm down, Ray. It's just a scene.

I hear his slow, methodical footsteps through the house, clicking against the hardwood floors. He doesn't come straight to my room. I track his movements through my house, using

my drawn attention to focus on something other than how fucking horny I am. He walks through my living room, pausing in my hallway. He turns, heading toward my empty spare room. My brows furrow. Where are you going, Wolfey? Come hunt your willing prey.

What feels like hours but is probably only minutes later, he steps into my bedroom. The door clicks softly behind him. I don't move, don't think, barely breathe. Wolfe moves deeper into my room, stopping next to my bed. I can tell the difference in his footsteps between the wood flooring and the rug, which tells me he's right next to me. He's silent. Shockingly so. I can hardly make out the quiet sounds of his breathing. He's watching me. Checking to see if I'm awake. I can sense him bending over me, and my heart begins to beat so loudly I'm shocked he can't hear it. His breath fans over my cheek. Smoke and mint with a hint of weed.

His hand slides up the exposed flesh of my bare arm, eliciting a trail of goosebumps in his wake. My clit throbs and pulses. My stomach clenches. Is he wearing a mask? If I opened my eyes right now, would I finally see him? It's almost worth it just to find out, but I ignore the thought, focusing on my fake slumber.

His hand trails back down, this time, just the tips of his fingers in a gentle caress. "My sweet, sweet Little Fox." My heart squeezes at the reverence in his whispered words. "So beautiful. So perfect."

Then, he steps away. I hear him rifle through my drawers quietly. I want to look so badly it's becoming nearly impossible to ignore. After a moment, he returns. He picks up my exposed hand and lifts it slowly in an attempt to not wake me up. He kisses my knuckles, then he ties something around my wrist before attaching it to my bed post.

Oh, fuck.

I stay still as fear starts to creep in. My pussy throbs painfully in response. He removes the blanket from my body, and I hear his quiet inhale as he takes me in. I can tell my shirt is rucked up, exposing my lacy thong. It's sexy and simple, and he apparently likes the look of them. Wolfe repeats the process, binding all of my limbs to my bed posts with some sort of stretchy, smooth material. Nylons, maybe? When he's done, I'm still in my clothes but now fully sprawled out for his viewing pleasure. I almost smile at the thought.

I hear the sound of jostling clothes and then the distinct sound of a belt being removed. I feel the cool leather land between my thighs, and my soaking wet pussy clenches around nothing. The room falls silent for a moment, building my anticipation to an unfathomable height. I feel as though I'm riding a rollercoaster, and I'm at that bit where you're slowly clicking up, up, up, and waiting for it to send you shooting over the edge into a downward spiral.

Wolfe crawls onto the bed, straddling one of my thighs. I suck in a nearly inaudible breath when I feel the heavy weight

of his cock on my skin. *He's naked.* Then a flick. It's a quiet sound, but in the tense, silent room, it sounds like a gunshot.

What was that? My heart clatters against my ribs.

Something cold and harsh presses against my chest. It glides down between my breasts, my stomach, my pelvis, moving in a straight line directly to my aching core. It stops, then starts again, moving *lower, lower, lower*, before pressing in softly against my wet hole. My breathing is rapid now, and as much as I'm trying to calm the rise and fall of my chest, I know he sees it.

The pressure against my pussy disappears before returning to the neckline of my shirt. This time, it's much sharper, and I know without looking that it's a knife. *Holy shit.* He presses down softly and pauses. When I do nothing, say nothing—he presses down harder. A quiet gasp leaves my lips as the sharp prick of the knife penetrates my skin. It's not overly painful, more like the quick sting of a paper cut.

Wolfe tuts, and I know I've fucked up. "Dirty little bitch," he breathes. "Such a lying whore, aren't you?" His voice is darker, edgier than I've ever heard it before. "Do you know what happens to liars, Little Fox?"

I remain silent, though my heaving breaths are now filling the quiet room. He presses the knife in harder, and I cry out. "Answer me," he barks.

My eyes fly open, finding Wolfe before me *in a mask*. This one is similar to the last, but it only covers the top portion of his face, leaving his strong jaw and full lips on display.

“W-what?” I stutter. All of my attention is currently focused on the place where a long, sharp blade is pointing directly over the center of my chest.

“They get punished,” he snaps before sliding the blade clean down the front of my body. He loosens his grip enough that he’s not splitting me in half. His aim and pressure are methodical and precise as he cuts my shirt and then panties down the center. He uses his other hand to bat the tattered clothing to the sides, leaving my entire body on display for him. Red blood wells from a small cut on my chest, but other than that, my skin is unmarred. “As badly as I want your screams, I don’t want our time to end too soon. Can you keep your filthy mouth shut, or do you need to be gagged?”

“Wh-what are you going to d-do?” I mumble, my eyes still locked on the knife that’s now poised over my heart as genuine fear fills my body. I’m shaking in earnest now as I watch Wolfe cock his head to the side and grin down at me. *He’s insane. Why do I keep forgetting that?*

“Did I say you were allowed to ask me questions?” I shake my head rapidly. “Do you need a gag?” I eye the leather belt sitting next to him, then the knife, and nod once. He smiles down at me approvingly and strokes a finger down my jaw tenderly. I lean into the touch, my eyes closing as I soak in his affection.

I don’t even see it coming—the backhand across my jaw. My eyes fly open as my cheek burns in the wake of his cruel presence. My mouth flies open, then snaps shut. Wolfe leans

forward and runs his tongue up the abused flesh sending a hot, fiery burn through me and straight to my clit.

“What’s your safeword, baby?” he whispers, pressing kisses across my cheek.

“Kill,” I murmur.

I feel him nod against my skin. “Such a good fucking girl. Use it if it’s too much. Promise?” I nod again. “This is the last kind thing I’ll do for you tonight, you dirty lying bitch. Don’t forget it.” And then, his lips are on mine.

I gasp into his mouth in shock. It takes me a moment to realize what’s happening, but when I do, I eagerly soak him in. I inhale his scent and devour his flavor. I kiss him with as much passion, as much feeling as I possibly can in this position. He gives everything back, just as roughly, just as emotionally. We pour all of our feelings, our connection, our bond into that kiss. *Our first kiss.*

It goes on and on, and it’s everything. *Everything.* I whimper and beg into his mouth. I tug on his thick lips. I greedily suck on his tongue, trying to *pull him into me.* Trying to *consume* him. When he finally pulls away, we’re both breathing heavily, and I have tears in my eyes. I don’t know why, but I don’t fight them or hide them. I let them slip down my cheeks, silently telling him how much he means to me.

Everything.

Wolfe whispers something incoherent when he sees them before leaning in and licking them from my skin. When he’s

cleaned them all, he sits up and grabs the belt before harshly shoving it between my teeth, in the direct opposite of the kindness he'd just shown me.

“When I ask you a question, you answer it. Do you understand me, Pet?” he barks, brandishing his knife once more. My eyes follow the weapon with every single breath. I nod my understanding.

Out of the corner of my eye, I see him smile before making a quick, sharp cut across my left breast. I gasp, clenching my teeth down on the leather belt. He pinches my flesh, watching as blood wells and then spills over the small cut. He leans in, locking eyes with me, and licks the wound before latching onto it and *sucking*. His eyes close, and he moans like I'm the best thing he's ever tasted. Pain-filled pleasure ignites a fire low in my belly that intensifies as he repeats the process on my right breast, and then my sternum, my clavicle, my hip, and then the other.

He slices.

He licks.

He sucks.

The nicks are tiny, not much bigger than a thick paper cut, but they burn like hell. Especially when he licks them. But the sucking...that's where the pleasure comes from. It feels like he has a direct line to my clit. By the time he reaches my pussy, I'm soaking wet and trembling from head to toe. Tears are coursing down my cheeks rapidly, but we both ignore them. Wolfe sits up, locking gazes with me. His lips and chin are

stained red, and his eyes are glossed over. He looks like a vampire.

He looks like Edward.

I barely contain a grin at the thought. Only the knowledge that Wolfe is pointing a sharp blade at my cunt has me acting right.

“You don’t deserve to cum, Pet, do you?” I nod as a pitiful whimper escapes me. His jaw tenses, and the tip of the knife connects with my clit. I change my mind, shaking my head rapidly as a sob gets caught in my throat. “No? Does that mean you lied to me...*again?*”

My eyes widen as I continue to shake my head, mumbling *no, no, no*, but it comes out muffled beneath the belt.

“I think you just lied to me, Pet. What happens to liars?” I sob at his question, clenching my jaw so hard against the belt the leather cracks. He presses forward, nicking my clit with the sharp tip of the knife. “They get punished like the bad girls they are.” And then, he’s tossing the knife in the air in a practiced move. I scream as he catches it by the blade and thrusts the wide, long handle into my pussy. “Don’t you dare cum, Rayvn. If you do, this will be so much fucking worse for you. Do you understand me?”

I sob harder but nod, even though that one thrust had me already on the edge of all-consuming bliss. Wolfe pulls the knife free and drops it on the bed, leaving me achingly empty. He leans forward and clamps his teeth around my nipple.

“I own you, Little Fox,” he growls against my flesh as he begins to suck sweetly on my burning, bruised nipple. “Nod your head if you agree. I own you.” When I don’t immediately respond, too consumed by the maelstrom of emotions and pain-filled pleasure filling my body, he bites down again, harder. I scream and flail, getting absolutely nowhere. “Say it!” he snaps, slapping my other breast before gripping it roughly and squeezing.

I nod. “Yes, Wolfe,” I cry out. He smiles and begins to massage and kiss every inch of both breasts, soothing the pain and bruises as he mumbles what a good, sweet girl I am, again and again.

“That’s right. *Mine*.” He kisses down my body, paying extra attention to the cuts. “You don’t deserve this, do you? You’re nothing but a fucktoy for my pleasure. Mine to use. Mine to fuck. My to play with. My filthy little cumdumpster doesn’t deserve pleasure. Say it.” He growls the words, sounding slightly possessed, as his mouth hovers inches over my aching cunt. My hips thrust up as I try to force him closer. He reaches up and slaps me in response.

My head snaps to the side and even though my cheek burns, I’m more turned on than ever before. I scream in frustration, spitting out the belt, “I don’t deserve it,” I cry out. “I’m your fucktoy, Wolfe. *Yours*. You can do whatever you want to me, but please, *please*, just do something.” I’m sobbing, panting, trembling. I’ve been on the edge for so long, I’m in physical pain, and it’s not from the cuts or the bruises. It’s from him. “Please let me cum.”

He barks out a harsh laugh and slaps me again, this time on my dripping pussy. It's too rough to feel good, and he somehow manages to avoid my clit altogether.

“Fuck. You are desperate, aren't you? Begging me like a bitch in heat, greedy for whatever I'll give you.” He picks the knife back up and pauses with it suspended mid-air. “I wonder,” he murmurs, his masked face tilted to the side, a wry grin spread across his full mouth. “Are you so hard up for it that you'd let me fuck you anyway I see fit? Are you so strung out that anything shoved up your gaping cunt would do?”

Everything stills inside me as I force my frantic thrashing to subside. My eyes lock on his, and I see it then...the intent. The insanity that lurks beneath his tattooed skin. Wolfe's gaze never leaves mine as he slowly lowers the knife to my pussy, blade first. I want to run. I want to scream and cry. My legs tremble with the force of how hard I'm tugging against the bindings in an effort to hide my sensitive flesh. I freeze when I feel the cold metal glide down my slit. There's no pressure, no pain, but the threat is there.

“What would you do if I shoved this knife into your soaking wet hole? Would you cry so prettily for me, Sweetling? Would you scream for me to stop?” The tip rests against my opening, and my heart tries to escape my body in response. My head grows weary and foggy as unparalleled fear fills me. “Or would you beg and bargain to any god who will listen, for me you give you more? How greedy is my dirty little bitch, exactly?”

“Wolfe,” I breathe, my eyes locked onto his familiar, odd clear blues. Something passes between us as I try to figure out if he’s being serious or not. He says nothing as he slips it in an inch. I feel the pressure then, the tiny sting from a nick at my opening. My mouth opens, my safe word sitting on the tip of my tongue, but for some reason, I don’t say it. Instead, what comes out is the real, honest truth. It feels like both a prayer and a sin as the words slip from my mouth. *“I trust you.”*

Wolfe’s eyes widen in shock as a choked sound escapes him. He blinks a few times as though my declaration has pulled him from somewhere else. He yanks the knife from my entrance, flips it around, and roughly shoves it back in. This time, there is no controlling the orgasm. I try. I try so fucking hard, but it’s impossible. I scream as my back and ass fly from the bed.

“I’m sorry, I’m sorry,” I cry out, repeating the words again and again as I clench around the knife handle. He fucks me through it, not stopping or pausing even for a second. He says nothing, but as I come down from the high and feel Wolfe continuing to fuck me with the knife, I realize what my punishment is.

He doesn’t stop. Doesn’t falter. Doesn’t slow down as he wrings orgasm after orgasm from my exhausted body. It goes on and on and on.

“I told you I’d ruin you, Rayvn. I told you,” he murmurs, his eyes transfixed on my gushing and throbbing cunt. At this point, I feel like I’ve got to be bleeding. I’m numb and tingling all over. My brain is foggy, and my vision is spotty.

“Please,” I gasp, shaking my head. Still, I don’t use my safeword. Maybe because I want to know how far he’ll take this. I want to continue to watch him control me and demand things from my body. It’s intoxicating to watch, even if I feel like I’m dying from pleasure overload.

He rips the knife from my pussy and throws it against the wall. It clatters to the floor, but I’m too busy watching Wolfe as he leans forward and thrusts his massive cock into me. I scream, my head snapping back with the force of my orgasm. Every single vein and barbell feels like ecstasy as they scrape across my too-sensitive insides.

“Fuck,” he bellows as he rides out my orgasm with me. His head’s thrown back, and beneath his mask, his face is scrunched up in pleasure, but he doesn’t cum.

When my pussy releases its death grip on his magnificent thick cock, he pulls out to the tip before thrusting forward, impaling me to the hilt. He bends over my body and slides both his hands around my throat, using his grip on my neck as leverage. He squeezes tightly, cutting off my oxygen without any preamble.

“My perfect girl,” he growls. “My Rayvn. My Little Fox.” His eyes are manic. His thrusts are painful, brutal, and demanding. “My little cock hungry whore. Do you want your master’s cum?” I whimper, my lungs burning for air, my fists fighting against my restraints. I can’t respond, and unlike the cemetery, the wild look in his eyes has me worried this time.

“Wolfe,” I croak, though it comes out a mouthed rasp. He immediately releases my neck, his manic gaze zeroing in on my flesh as I choke in a lungful of air. His pace slows but doesn’t stop as he continues to fuck me. I meet his gaze finding so much emotion in his bright blue crystal eyes. It’s the devotion, the trust, the need, and dare I say it *love*, that has me nodding my head and offering him my throat once more.

His pace slows, and a shuddering breath leaves him. His hands wrap around my neck, this time softer but still controlling. His pace picks back up until he’s fucking me so hard I’d be flush with the headboard if not for my restraints. He shifts his hips a few times. Switches the angles at which he hits my aching insides. It’s as though he’s trying to learn my body, memorize the feel of me and what I do and don’t like. All the while, he holds my neck. It’s possessive and sweet instead of stifling.

Wolfe fucks me for what feels like hours, resisting the urge to cum. He goes between weighted and heavy silence and murmuring sweet and filthy words. He rolls his hips, milking orgasm after orgasm from my body until I’m a soaking, sweaty, sobbing mess. I’ve never felt such pleasure in my life. It’s like straddling the line between life and death while consuming the best drugs money can offer.

“Wolfe,” I breathe again, “Wolfe, please. *Please*,” I beg, not sure how much more I can take.

He leans forward, crashing his mouth against mine. His hands leave my throat and grip my hips. He squeezes them

roughly before sliding under me and palming my ass. He kneads the flesh and then uses his grip to pound into me once, twice, three times. His lips never leave mine, even when he fills me with his cum.

The first splash sets me off once more in an orgasm that *burns*. It's so intense my body shakes as though I'm having a seizure. It's painful. My release gushes out with his in a heavy flood of hot liquid. Wolfe shoves deep, forcing his seed as far as he can. He *cums* and *cums*, moaning and grunting into my mouth.

"Fuck, Little Fox. *Fuck.*" Our sweaty, sated bodies slide against each other as we catch our breath. His throbbing, twitching cock sends aftershocks through my body until I'm positive I'll never be able to walk again. Wolfe kisses me once before sitting up. Slowly, he pulls out, watching as our combined fluids trail after him.

"Shit, Sweetling. That's so fucking hot." He bends down between my thighs and licks up our combined fluids in the single most erotic gesture I've ever seen.

He's drinking his own cum, oh my god.

He doesn't linger, just sucks and cleans, scooping his tongue inside my gaping hole. He crawls back up my body and kisses me. His tongue pries my mouth open, and he spits our combined orgasms into my mouth. Wolfe pulls away, grinning as he watches me swallow. "That's a good fucking girl."

He unties my bonds and rubs my sore flesh back to life before kissing me and climbing from the bed. I'm half asleep,

dead to the world when I hear the bathtub running. He wakes me when he picks me up, cradling me to his chest. My heavy eyes peel open, and I find his masked face staring down at me.

“I’m going to bathe you now. Are you okay?” I smile and nod once. “You did so fucking good, Sweetling. I’m so proud of you.” He presses a sweet kiss to my forehead before depositing me into the hot bath.

“Not my hair,” I whisper, leaning my head over the edge to keep my braided bun dry. He nods as he grabs my chocolate body scrub. He flicks the cap and groans.

“Chocolate,” he murmurs. “I knew you smelled like chocolate. So fucking sweet.”

Wolfe lovingly washes every inch of my body, rubbing my sore muscles as he goes. It’s so relaxing that I must end up falling asleep at some point. The feeling of his lips on mine wakes me up. I smile into the darkness, finding his crystal blue eyes.

“Go with me to a Halloween party next week at Shiloh’s.” He smiles at my demand, releasing a chuckle as he plucks me from the draining tub.

“What should I wear?” he murmurs, setting me on the vanity before beginning to dry me off. I shrug, still half asleep.

“Probably something with a mask.” He barks out a laugh but doesn’t respond as he picks me up and carries me to bed.

He settles me on the crisp, cold sheets and tucks me in. “I changed your sheets. I have to go, but I’ll call you tomorrow.

We need to have a talk. Goodnight, baby.”



Chapter Twenty-One

Kat died.

She died, and though I was mentally prepared for the inevitability of that happening, I had no idea it would be so soon after Rohan's warning. A week ago, I was tying my girl to her bed and devouring her like the sweet morsel she is, and twenty-four hours later, I was planning a funeral.

Not even an hour after I'd left her apartment and gone upstairs to mine, I received a phone call from Rohan saying that I needed to get to *Remény* immediately. I hired a private helicopter, cutting my trip to Santa Fe to only an hour. I made it there just in time to catch Kat in her final moments, where she was surprisingly lucid. My heart throbs in my chest as I remember our conversation. I hadn't wanted to talk about my job or my life. I hadn't wanted to talk about myself at all. But Kat, being the pushy woman she is, forced the information from me.



“Tell me, boy. Is your life everything you ever dreamed of?” she asked, her voice pained as she struggled to speak.

I wanted to tell her to stop talking, to rest, to get better. But I knew it was useless just as much as I knew this moment, this time with her, was a gift. So, I smiled and told her all about my work, leaving the savory bits out. When she told me Rohan had informed her about the creation of Remény and my role in it, she begged for more details, despite the fact that she’d been there when I created the company. She cried and smiled behind her oxygen mask. She asked where I lived and about the world. She wanted to know if there had been any changes in Alzheimer’s treatment in the last few years. I told her about the clinical trial and the drug.

We talked and laughed. We both cried and held each other. We enjoyed our time, knowing it was our last, knowing it would be over soon. She was so weak, her fever high from the lung infection her body couldn’t fight. She’d cough and sputter, denying the water or ice I’d offer. She’d wave me off with a weak gesture. She was Kat, but not.

And then, she'd asked me the easiest and hardest question of them all.

"Are you in love, Wolfe?" Yes, I knew my answer right away, and it shocked me to my core. I didn't think love, especially the kind of love I feel for Rayvn, would be possible for me.

When I'd smiled and nodded, she cried harder before saying, "And what are you going to do about it?"

Then, my laughter and smiles died. Her concern and care caused me to spill my darkest secrets. There in that cold, sterile room, I left my heart on the floor, begging the woman who saved me to do it again.

"You need to follow your heart, boy. If it's telling you this is love and she's the one, then you need to have trust."

"Trust in what?" I'd asked her, confused by her simple statement. She merely smirked before saying one word.

"Her."

Trust in her. Trust Rayvn. I do trust Rayvn, possibly more than anyone. I'd opened my mouth to ask what she meant, but before I could, the blaring sound of her monitors screaming filled the room. And then, she was gone.



Now, I'm back home in New Mexico after an exhausting and emotional week. I left so abruptly that I didn't have time to tell Ray what was going on. As much as it pained me to leave her, I knew I had to. I had to choose between the two women who mean the most to me, and at that moment, I chose the one who I knew I'd never see again. I'll see Rayvn every day for the rest of my life if I have things my way.

I told her I was going out of town for a last-minute work thing, not wanting to worry her. I know she was mad, I could tell, and I don't blame her. Leaving after the night we shared, especially when I'd promised to finally have a serious conversation with her was low, but necessary. All I can do is hope she understands when I explain things.

Tonight. I'll call her tonight to make plans.

I haven't talked to her in the last few days. Partly due to how crazy things have been. Mostly because I knew this next conversation needs to happen in person, and it needs to be face-to-face. No masks. No lies. No games. Just me and my Little Fox, the woman I love.

But first, I have shit to take care of. I flick on my office light but come to an abrupt halt as I take in the space. The dark, desolate room doesn't look nearly as intriguing as it used to. In fact—it looks stifling. Charging forward, I rip the blackout curtains open, allowing the early afternoon sunlight to spill in. It burns my eyes, worsening my already throbbing headache, but after spending so much time with Rayvn, I find I don't enjoy the darkness as much as I used to.

Sighing heavily, I drop down at my desk and flick on my monitors. My head falls backward on my chair as the weight of the last week really begins to sink in. I rub the aching space between my eyes, hoping for some sort of miracle. There are so many things I'd have changed about this week, including telling Ray everything so I wouldn't have had to deal with it all alone. I know it was better this way, but *fuck*, it was heavy.

While I was in Santa Fe dealing with things, I had a lot of time to think. Losing Kat was tragic, but it put a lot of things into perspective for me. Over the years, I've made a ton of money doing what I do. I have enough in various accounts to last me multiple lifetimes, but I always felt like I needed more. When you're born on the streets, it fucks with you. I know where I came from, and I saw how Kat struggled to take care of me by herself. Maybe that's where the insatiable need for *more* comes from.

On top of that, I knew the funding for *Remény* and the lab's costs would be continuous, and I never wanted their income source, *me*, to dry up. But, as I thought back to why I started *Remény* in the first place, I realized it was never because I

have a passion for the industry or the clinical side of things. It was born purely out of selfish panic. I had the means to do something, and the person I loved most needed a miracle. So, I made one. Now that she's gone, I still want that to continue for other people. However, I don't want to be the person behind it anymore. I don't need the notoriety or credit. I don't want to deal with the politics of it. I don't want to watch the heartbreak any longer. *I can't*. So, I've decided to sell *Remény*.

Additionally, I've decided to close all of my KillerClown666 accounts. I don't need the money, and I don't want to be the cause of anyone's ruin besides Rayvn's. Only now, I don't want to ruin her, I just want to defile her in the best ways. Losing Kat hasn't changed me, suddenly making me become a better person. I'm still the same man I've always been, but my priorities have shifted. Watching someone, you care about die a slow death in front of you will do that to a person. I don't want to waste time. I don't want to miss out on moments and experiences. I don't want to live a half-life anymore. I want the whole damn thing, and I want it with *her*.

Rayvn Porter.

No—*Rayvn Nash*.

I smile at the thought. My eyes flick down to my left hand as I take in my new tattoo. Once I'd decided to join the free world, I no longer needed to hide. My tattoos and piercings, my glasses...my face. I can openly be me again, and for the first time in my life, I'm ready to step out of the shadows.

My inbox pings with thousands of new requests, making my gut watery. I'd be lying if I said this was an easy decision. It's not. This job is something I've done for over ten years now.

It will be so fucking worth it.

It will be. It *has* to be.

It takes me a few hours to shut everything on my public sites down, mostly because I wanted to skim the emails and reach out to anyone who asked for something of extreme importance. You'd be surprised by the number of messages I get from young kids asking me to take out their abuser or people reaching out for actual help. I may not be a good man, but I'm not heartless, and I've never let a single one of those messages go without a response. Once that's done, I send out a mass message on the web, letting everyone know who might come looking for me that KillerClown666 is no longer in business.

Then, I switch to the dark web page and start the process over. It doesn't take me as long to filter through the messages since this account doesn't get the same volume of requests. I've just made it to the top of my inbox when I notice an unopened but flagged message. My brows furrow, and my heart rate picks up as I open it.

**Since you won't take care of her, I will, motherfucker.
Consider yourself relieved from your duties. Rayvn Porter
will pay for fucking with the wrong person. If you
intervene, I'll kill you next. Before you question if I'll get
away with it, just know, I have before.**

My rapid heartbeat freezes in my chest as I fly from my chair. Panic consumes me to the point that I know I'm seconds from passing out. I focus on the questions, the puzzle, knowing that solving this will steady me the fastest.

Think, Nash. Think, dammit.

What the fuck does that mean? He's done it before. He's killed before? Who is this son of a bitch, and what does he want with my girl?

Fuck. *Fuck.* Rayvn.

I scramble for my phone, finding the stupid fucking thing dead. Shit. What is it about this office and my phone being dead? I plug it in as fast as possible, wondering when the last time I even used it was.

Two days ago? Maybe three?

God, I'd fallen into my old ways, too caught up in my own shit to pay attention to anything else. When is the last time I spoke to Rayvn? Fucking hell, Nash. While I wait for my phone to power up, I start the process of looking into whoever sent this message. I need to figure out who has it out bad enough for her that they not only hired me but then threatened me when I refused.

I lose myself in the hunt, tearing his complex coding apart as I ruthlessly search for the person who dared come after my Little Fox.



“Fuck!” I roar, throwing my keyboard across the office. It smashes into the wall and clatters to the floor. Keys go flying, but I pay them no mind as I stare at the information pouring across my screens. This is bad. *So fucking bad.*

How could I not have looked into him? How could I have been so fucking blinded by the money that I didn’t even think to...*Shit.*

I barely make it to the trashcan next to my desk before I heave up the meager contents of my stomach. Again and again, I retch as my body tries to purge everything I just saw from my memory. When I’m sure I’m done, and there’s nothing left in my stomach, I shove the trashcan aside and wipe my mouth on my sleeve.

Get it together, Nash. Focus.

My eyes skim all of the files once more, nausea continuing to whirl through my gut. Hacking this guy took an insane amount of time. Whatever firewalls he’s installed are professional but not impenetrable. I don’t know what I was expecting, but it certainly wasn’t this.

Vincent Sutton. 52 years old. Previously the Chief of Police in Denver but was elected the commissioner for the state of Colorado last year. For the last six months, he's been in and out of court after allegations of sexual assault and rape were filed against him by two women. The lawyer representing the women was none other than Rayvn Porter. Evidence disappeared, and the case was forgotten. Months later, a new case was opened, taking a different angle when new evidence was found. The most recent suit was once again dropped when Rayvn's clients decided to pull out.

After digging into Sutton's personal computer files, I discovered how all of that illegal and insane bullshit happened without the public or news channels catching on despite all of the evident foul play.

Blackmail.

So. Much. Blackmail.

Sutton has files on almost everyone, and every single piece of it is highly incriminating. I'm talking; photos of judges cheating on their wives, lieutenants doing drugs, lab technician's with prostitutes, and jury members beating their children. There is shit on *everyone*.

More than that, Sutton also has proof of his own indiscretions. It seems he likes to take photos of the women he assaults—his own little trophies. According to the hidden file on his computer, he's assaulted 11 women. After digging deeper, I discovered only 10 of them are still alive. One of them, a minor named Irina Pavlova, died in a tragic car

accident four months after the photos of him assaulting her were uploaded to his hard drive. She was fifteen, and her autopsy says she was four months pregnant when she died.

It gets worse.

Irina wasn't an isolated incident. I found *thousands* of records of child pornography saved to his computer. Like I said, sick motherfucking bastard.

If all of that weren't enough, the one file I found on his computer that resulted in my shattered keyboard, vomiting, and the blackout rage that has taken over my vision, is the one he has on *my woman*. More specifically, *my woman and me*.

Photo after photo of us. In the club, as I finger fucked her on the dancefloor, her panties on display as she gushed for me. The day she fucked herself in her office when I told her to. Our night in the cemetery. The night I fucked her while she was passed out on sleeping pills. The night I tied her up.

I had no idea we, or *she* more likely, was being followed. I had no idea there was another camera in her office beside mine or that someone had been in that cemetery with us. I didn't even realize her blinds were open when we'd been together in her room. I was too distracted by *her*. Too consumed by *her*.

Everything that he has photos of is enough to take her down. If he released them, he'd ruin her public appearance and kill her career. They'd shatter what little progress she's made concerning her insecurities about her sexual interests. They'd break her spirit, and I'll be damned if I let that happen. I don't know what his endgame is, but I do know it won't involve her.

No matter what I do, I'll make sure she stays out of it and safe, even if it means I go down in her place.

I quickly download all of the information to my computer, ensuring I have proof of all that I've uncovered just in case he gets wise and deletes his stash. I transfer everything from my computer to a flash drive and then print out hard copies of the evidence. This guy must have another high-level hacker on his team because the amount of shit that disappears in his presence is insane. Their skill rivals mine, if not beats it, and I'm not taking any chance. I need as many verifiable copies of his paper and digital trail as I can get my hands on.

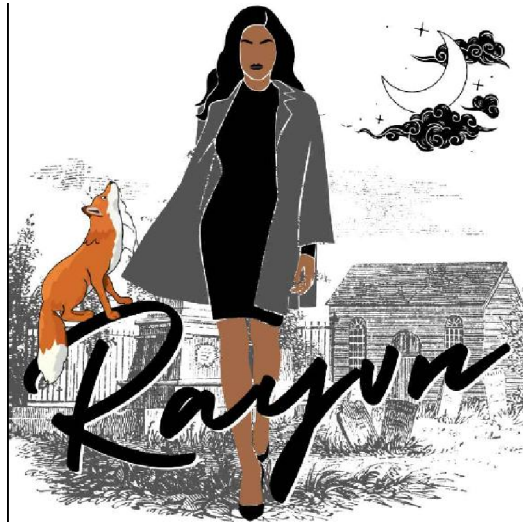
While everything is processing, I check my phone again, only to realize I'd gotten so distracted with hunting for this bastard I lost six hours. I open up my messages and go straight to Ray's, ignoring everything else. The organ in my chest that hasn't stopped working overtime since I saw that email, skips a beat and then sinks. She's texted me over fifty times in the last week, each one more panicked than the last. They started off sweet, and it went progressively downhill after that. I scan through them, feeling like the lowest piece of shit. I'm pretty sure it can't get any worse until I see the last message that came through only an hour ago.

My Little Fox: I guess I'm going to this party by myself tonight. I wish you would have just had the balls to tell me you were done with me. I get it, my tastes are extreme, and I'm not someone people usually want. I really thought you'd be the exception. I thought you liked me, maybe even more. I guess I was wrong. Have a good life, Wolfey.

Tonight? Fuck. The Halloween party at her friend's house in Blue River. Shit. It's already 5, and it starts in three hours. I won't make it in time, but hopefully, I'll catch her before she leaves. My eyes dart around the room as though I'm searching for answers which is stupid because I already know what I need to do. I can't stand her up. I have to fix things. I have to tell her everything and make sure she's okay.

I quickly make sure everything's transferred before ripping the flash drive from my computer and run from my office. I have a girl to get to and a sick bastard to take down. I just hope I haven't fucked this up too badly, and she gives me a chance to prove just how wrong she is.

Rayvn Porter's tastes aren't too extreme, and she isn't too much for me. If anything, I'm not enough for her. That doesn't change the fact that she's mine, and I'm never letting her go—even if she tries to make me.



Chapter Twenty-Two

He's not coming. It's clear as day, yet the realization still burns me to my core. I don't want to be here. I didn't want to come in the first place, but the idea of having Wolfe here with me, by my side, encouraged me. For the first time, I was excited about a big public event. Now, I just want to go home.

As I look around the great room of Shiloh and Logan's sprawling cabin home, I cringe and sink further against the wall. *It's packed.* I had no idea Shiloh even knew this many people. There have to be at least two hundred people here tonight. Everyone is wearing their best costumes and enjoying the holiday with friends and family. The front and back doors are open, allowing partygoers to spill out onto the decks and lawn, which are also done up for the event.

I have to admit, it's incredible. Shiloh really does know how to throw a party. The lights are dimmed low, allowing a purple and green glow from the string lights to bounce off the fog filling the air. Spooky music plays through the surround sound system, both inside and out. There are fires going in every one

of their many firepits and stone fireplaces, with real cauldrons perched overtop.

Somehow, she hung battery-operated candlesticks from the vaulted ceiling, making it feel like the great hall at Hogwarts. The food and drinks are over the top and in keeping with the theme. Suffice it to say; she fucking nailed it. I may not like the fact that I can barely move without being jostled about like a marble in a Pinball machine, but I can admit that my bestie did a fantastic job.

I force myself to step away from the punch bowl, where I'd resigned myself to wait for him. I said I'd give Wolfe ten more minutes forty minutes ago, and he's still not here, so I guess it's time to move on. *In more ways than one.* I ignore how my eyes burn at the thought as I push through the crowd, seeking out Shiloh to say my goodbyes. I need to go home; I can't be here anymore.

My heart has cried out for him all week. Every text and call that went unanswered created another crack in my heart. At first, I was worried I'd upset him. Then, I was worried something terrible had happened, but after five days of nothing but silence, I just felt—*sad*.

I've tried to talk myself off the ledge. Tried to be rational and consider all the possibilities, but it just doesn't add up. Wolfe has been stalking me for who knows how long. He has no boundaries. He's possessive and obsessive over me, yet somehow, he *still* walked away. That knowledge fucks with a girl's mind.

And heart.

I step into the backyard and scan the horde of people but come up empty. My brows furrow. Where the Hell is she? Maybe I missed her inside? Or maybe she's out front? Shit, I don't want to have to push through the insanity inside again.

Groaning, I make my way down the few steps of the deck and decide to take the long way around their house to avoid everyone. My legs are freezing from the cold, and not for the first time; I regret my outfit. In a moment of inspiration and giddy excitement, I decided to dress up as a killer clown. An ode to the man who has consumed my mind for the better part of three months. I knew Wolfe would get a kick out of it as much as it would turn him on—if only he were here to see it.

I picked out a simple, tight black bodysuit with long sleeves. A black leather jacket that looks like his. I'm wearing the same Doc's he wore that night in the cemetery. My hair is down and crimped from my braids. The only difference is I decided to paint my face instead of wearing a mask. I figured it would be symbolic. I don't want plastic or boundaries between us. I want everything that we are on display for one another. I want him to know me. The real me. And I want the same thing in return.

Who lies behind Wolfe's mask, and why does he feel the need to hide from me? Doesn't he know I would love him no matter what? Doesn't he know I already do?

Shit. The tears I've been trying so hard to keep under wraps finally spill over with the realization that I'll probably never

be able to tell him.

As I walk through the cold, foggy field and make my way to the front yard, I try not to think about all the experiences I shared with Wolfe and how there won't be anymore. I may have more experience than he does with kink play, but I still gave him a few of my firsts.

Even with all the experimenting Oscar and I did over our time together, I never truly *gave* myself to him. I trusted him and surrendered to him, but it wasn't until the night in the cemetery with Wolfe that I discovered what true submission is. There, in the dirt, I gave myself to him wholly and completely. I handed over full control and allowed him to use me in whatever ways he wanted. It was as freeing as it was powerful. The feeling was unlike anything I'd ever experienced. That was, until the night in my bedroom when he tied me up.

The last time I saw him.

My body is still healing from that night, but every time I see the small cuts lining my skin, or the bruising around my throat, I smile, remembering the way he dominated my body. He took as much as he gave and then some. That night, I came so many times I blacked out. It was the closest thing to a religious experience that I've ever been party to. Wolfe and I connected that night in a way I didn't know was possible. We became one.

"Fuck," I choke out, wiping my steadily flowing tears from my cheeks and likely smearing paint everywhere. The sound

of people laughing and drinking fills the air as I come around the corner, rounding their large property.

The three-story house blocks out the lights from the front and back yards, swathing me in a darkness that has my skin crawling. I pick up my pace as the feeling of being watched sets in for the first time in a week. My head swivels side to side as excitement and nerves fill me. *He's here.* I can't help but smile into the darkness as my heart begins to beat wildly in my chest. I may be upset with him, but I missed him more than I care to admit.

I knew he'd come. I knew he wouldn't leave me.

Speaking out into the darkness, I call out, "I knew you'd co—" My words get cut off as a meaty hand wraps around my mouth and nose from behind. My eyes widen, and I suck in a sharp breath. A second arm clenches my gut, restraining me and tugging me into a tall, hard body.

Adrenaline courses through me so rapidly my immediate reaction is to freeze, but then, I remember, he likes the fight. Wolfe squeezes me harder, hauling me off my feet as he marches toward the heavy covering of trees that surround the Huxley property. The same trees someone chased me in all those months ago before I'd met him. My arms are tucked tightly against my sides, but I keep fighting. I try to pull them free, so I can give into the need to claw at the hand, preventing me from breathing. My lungs burn with every muffled scream and cry for help.

He grunts at how I flail and thrash but remains silent as he carries me into the woods. I focus on everything around me, knowing how important the facts are for the game. Which direction do I run? How much of a head start will he give me? Does he want me to fight or hide?

The questions begin to slow with my breathing as he continues to deprive me of oxygen. He's never done this before, never been this aggressive and extreme right off the bat. Normally, he would say something, taunt me, praise me, call me a name and then kiss my neck. This feels different. I know it does. He's different.

Something registers in my brain, but as my eyes begin to close and my breathing stutters in my chest, I lose the fight against the sudden wave of exhaustion. I fight it with everything I have, forcing my eyes open one more time. The last thing I notice before passing out is a fancy sports car parked in the woods.

But Wolfe has a motorcycle.



My eyes feel heavy and weighted, as though I took the sleeping pills. Did I? I blink and blink again as I try to figure

out what the fuck happened. Something under me thumps, sending me rolling to my side. I try to press onto my back, but I can't. My hands won't work. Everything is dark. So dark. I suck in a sharp breath, and my lungs *burn*. I open my mouth, but my lips are stuck together.

What? Where am I? Everything is so hazy, and my brain feels...mushy. Am I drunk? Did I get roofied?

Something thuds and I roll to my side again, hitting my forehead on hard metal. And then, reality sinks in, and the fog clears. I was abducted from Shiloh's backyard by Wolfe. He came for me, and then...he made another one of my fantasies come true.

I try to open my mouth and realize it's duct-taped shut. My hands are bound in front of my body, with a rope, from the feel of it. I test my legs, finding them free from the bindings. I smile beneath the tape. He wants me to run. He wants to chase me, hunt me, and then, god willing, fuck me. My pussy flutters as if in agreement.

Excitement fills me at the thought. Adrenaline is already rushing through my body, replacing the disorientation. It doesn't take long before I feel the car come to a stop and the driver's door slams shut. Seconds later, the trunk is flung open, and light spills into the car. I have to blink against the burning sensation and the throbbing in my head. When my eyes focus, I find a masked man staring down at me. His head cocked to the side like usual. It takes a tremendous amount of effort not to smile.

He's wearing a wolf mask. My wolf.

If my mouth was free, I'd tell him that before covering his stupid face with kisses. He grunts and bends down, lifting me up. He tosses me onto the ground, and I land on my back with a hard thud. My eyes widen as pain lances up my spine. Okay, that was a bit much, but I am tied up and just spent an unknown amount of time in a trunk. I guess he's trying something new tonight.

"Up," he barks, his voice higher and sharper than his usual deep rasp.

I whimper behind my tape as I roll to my side and push to my knees. Wolfe gets impatient when I stumble and fall back on my ass a few times. He snarls and wraps his hand around my hair before yanking me to my feet. I cry out, but the sound is muffled. He ignores me and steps back once I'm steady. It's then that I finally take him in.

He's wearing light jeans and a black hoodie that obscures his size. But I'm an observant bitch, and I know what my man looks like, and it's not this. This man isn't as tall as Wolfe. He's maybe 5'11 at most. He's wider and thicker than my narrow, toned Devil. His hair is peaking out from beneath the mask, and as the moonlight hits him just right, I can make out the graying brown hair that juts out around his jaw. I take a step back as true panic and fear fill me.

He's not my Wolfe.

He's not my Devil.

He's...this...*this isn't a scene.*

Everything comes crashing into me with the force of a freight train as genuine terror sets in, replacing everything else. The man falls into a fit of throaty laughter that sounds straight from Hell. I will *never* say Wolfe's laugh is demonic again. I had no idea what true evil sounded like until this moment.

His laughter finally dies down as he notices me slowly retreating. When I've made it about ten feet, he takes a step forward. I double my pace, trusting the path blindly, refusing to take my eyes off him even for a second.

"Run," he barks, and I don't second guess him, don't question the command as I spin on my heel and run for my life.

I reach my arms up and rip the tape from my mouth, allowing me to breathe deeply. Idiot should have known you never bind someone's hands in front of them. I make quick work of shimming the loose ropes from my arms, using my teeth to tug on a knot. They fall off within minutes which tells me he's probably not a pro at this.

Well, that's one positive.

All the scenes, all the chases, and all the hunts are *nothing* compared to the real thing. There is no excitement. No anticipation or heady intoxication. There is nothing but him and me. The predator and his prey. My body knows nothing but the need to escape. The deep, primal urge to put as much distance between him and me. To save myself. To protect

myself at all costs. I have no idea who he is or what he wants, but he isn't mine, and this isn't pretend, which means this is a real life-and-death situation. And I refuse to die today.

Heavy footsteps sound behind me, gaining with every second as I navigate the heavily wooded area. My endurance isn't what it usually is, and I'm guessing it's from him choking me until I passed out and then tossing me into a trunk. It could also be the stifling fear filling my veins. My head is a ugly, terrifying place right now, filled with anxiety, terror, and questions. So many questions.

Who is this man? What does he want? Do I know him? Is he just and random crazy person who was out looking for someone to terrorize? Does he want to scare me or hurt me? That last one is easy to answer. This isn't a silly Halloween prank, intended to frighten a random young woman. He bound me, gagged me, and threw me on the ground. The look in his eyes as he lifted me from the ground by my hair proves that assumption. He's violent, and he's hungry for my pain.

The heavy weight of my cell phone in my pocket, as it smacks against my hip, calls to me like a siren in the night. I want to pull it out. Want to call for help, but I know I probably don't have service out here, and the distraction will likely cost me greatly.

My lungs are on fire with every panting gasp. The harsh October wind burns my face and makes me aware of the tears that are freely traveling down my cheeks. I ignore them as I bob and weave between trees, frantically looking for

something, *anything*, to give me a location or a hiding place. I force myself to focus on my surroundings, using my inept observation skills to figure out my next move.

Everything is so dark and quiet. There are no shouts or cries from partygoers and drunks. There is no loud music or bright lights from the yard. There's just...*nothing*. We must be far away from Shiloh's house then. The woods look similar, so maybe we're still on their property. It's big, though. Sprawling, even. What had Shiloh said? The Huxley's land is hundreds of acres. There are supposedly lakes and waterfalls out here. According to Charlie, there's also bears and mountain lions.

Fuck.

I hear the man behind me stumble and shout a curse. I take advantage of his distraction and veer to the right, hoping to find somewhere to hide so I can catch my breath for even just a moment. No sooner has the thought crossed my mind, than I hear the unmistakable *crack* of a gun being fired. I scream into the darkness as bark explodes from a tree to my left. I gape in shock but continue, my pace picking up even more as I push my body to its limits. Terror mounts with every heavy thud against the dirt. My heart is lodged in my throat, making my already struggling breaths heave with exhaustion. *Keep going, Ray, don't stop now.*

Another shot rings out, this one just barely missing my foot. I tuck my lips into my mouth and bite down, stifling another scream. I can't give my position away. I can't. I have to hide.

Have to get away. Another shot hits the dirt in front of me, and I whimper in response. My limbs are trembling, and with every step, I grow more exhausted and dizzy. Everything around me blurs from the intensity of my tears. I'm seconds from falling to my knees when suddenly, everything goes silent. I can no longer hear his heavy footsteps or thick, rasping breaths. I can't hear anything except the muffled thumping in my ears, an echo from my erratic heart.

I stop, inhaling sharp, pained breaths as I spin in a circle. My brows furrow. Where is he? Another gust of freezing wind blows through the trees, setting my sweaty skin on fire. My hand inches up toward my pocket, needing to check, just to be sure, that I haven't been holding onto my escape this entire time. My hand wraps around the cold, metal device just as a crushing weight barrels into my side. I go flying before hitting the unforgiving ground with a thud. My head smacks onto something hard, making my teeth rattle in my mouth. I don't even have time to worry about the pain or injury before the stranger is straddling my hips, much like Wolfe did in the cemetery. But this time is different. *So fucking different.* I cry and sob, unable to fight the immobilizing fear any longer as I look up at the man who wants to hurt me. Truly and seriously cause me damage...or worse.

He pins me down, restricting my thrashing limbs with his heavy weight. He's *so* heavy, or maybe, I'm just that exhausted. His head cocks to the side, ugly wolf mask and all, in a poor imitation of *my Wolfe*. He stares down at me, saying

nothing as he pants heavily. I can feel his thick, hard length grinding into my gut, and revulsion fills me.

“What do you want?” I cry out, pushing against him. He chuckles, and the vile sound grates on my every nerve.

“You,” he says simply. I freeze, a whimper escaping my lips. He laughs harder, squeezing my wrists to the point that I’m worried they’ll snap. “Oh, don’t worry, *Little Fox*. I don’t want you like that.” My breath catches at his use of my nickname. My brows furrow. He must see the confusion on my face because he merely shrugs. “I’ll definitely fuck you, make no mistake, but what I really want is to see you dead.”

I gasp as blind terror claws at my lungs and chest. Everything inside of me turns ice cold. Colder than my freezing skin. It’s bone-deep, and unlike anything, I’ve ever felt before. I force myself to breathe through the panic, knowing I need to stay aware, present if I’m going to survive this.

“But, why?” I choke out. “Who are you?”

The man pauses for a second like he’s considering my words. He nods once as though coming to a decision for ripping his hand from my wrist and wrapping it around my throat. The pressure is forceful but not restricting. Not yet, anyway. He gives one blindly squeeze before relaxing his grip.

“You move, you die.” He slips his other hand into the back of his pants, producing his gun. He presses the barrel beneath my chin and releases my throat. “I want to play with you

before I splatter your brains out across the ground, so be a good girl and stay still.”

I say nothing. Do nothing. I barely even breathe. Even though it kills me inside, I drop my hands to my sides limply, showing him my submission. Keeping the gun trained on me, he lifts his other hand and whips his mask off. Suddenly, everything I thought I knew about the world and the true terrors that exist in it, dissolves. *I knew nothing.*

“Vincent,” I breathe. Confusion and fear fight for dominance inside of me as I stare up into the eyes of the worst human I’ve ever come across. I see the intent in his eyes as he grins down at me.

“Surprise,” he murmurs, his eyes raking down my body. My jacket’s hanging haphazardly off of me, but the bodysuit prevents anything from being exposed. It doesn’t stop him from taking his fill, though. His hand comes down, and he roughly palms my breasts. I bite the inside of my cheek to keep from screaming, knowing that’s what he wants. He wants my pain and my fear and though that’s something I’ve enjoyed sexually, this is completely different.

Sutton watches me as he grips and tugs at my flesh. I jolt in pain but remain silent, never breaking eye contact as I glare up at him. His lips press into a firm line. He pinches my nipples, and I squeeze my eyes shut as the searing pain shoots through me.

“What the fuck is wrong with you? I thought you liked this shit?” he barks. My eyes fly open and he cackles again at

whatever he sees. “I know everything about you, Little Fox. I know what filthy things you like to do in the dark. I know about the way you like to be fucked rough and hard. The way you like to have the choice taken from you.” He continues to fondle and squeeze me everywhere he can before reaching up and slapping my face.

“Who would have thought that professional Ms. Porter would have a rape kink, hmm? You like your men to make you bleed? Can’t get off unless you’re crying for them to stop?”

His hateful words rattle me to my core. I shake my head, fighting against the need to claw at him. To rake my nails down his ugly, smug face. To punch him. To destroy him. But the heavy weight of the gun remains solid against my throat. So I remain still, cursing him internally with everything I’ve got.

“Nothing to say to that?” he grunts. I tuck my lips into my mouth. He sighs heavily as though I’ve disappointed him. “You know, Rayvn. We have more in common than you’d think. While you were busy trying to take me down, you missed the fact that we’re the same.”

My head rears back at his statement, only to hit that same hard object again. I think it’s a rock. My eyes blur, and pain lances through me. “You like to be raped, and I,” he pauses and grins. “I like what I like. We’re a match made in Heaven.”

Losing my battle against remaining silent, I scream in outrage. “It’s not rape unless consent isn’t given. I’ve consented to everything I’ve done. The girls you assaulted

didn't. There's a difference, you sick son of a bitch. We aren't the fucking same!"

He backhands me again, this time harder. The gun digs into my flesh, and my jaw screams in protest. "You little bitch. You're just like them. A lying, manipulative cunt. All of you women are the same. You're greedy for our cocks, but when we give them to you, you run and call it abuse. You say we took without permission, but that's a fucking lie. Your pussy is probably already soaking wet for my big dick, just like they were."

"Just because a woman is wet doesn't mean she wants you. If she says no, it means no," I cry out, injustice and rage filling me in a second as visions of poor, sweet, and innocent Tinsley race through my mind. "She didn't want it. None of them did."

His eyes narrow on me as he leans in, bringing us face to face. His jaw is ticking wildly and his face has turned a bright shade of red. "Every single one of them wanted it. Even that bitch I knocked up. She was begging and gagging for my cock so I fucking gave it to her. It's not my fault she got pregnant. She should have gotten rid of it like I fucking told her to, but no. She wanted to keep it. Run away and raise the bastard somewhere else. I couldn't risk her talking. Couldn't risk her having a DNA test done when the kid came, so I got rid of her. She was a lying cunt, just like you."

My breath gets stuck in my throat as his words replay in my mind. "You killed Tinsley?"

He sits up and shakes his head, rage still pouring off him in waves. “No, that Pavlova girl.” His eyes take on a wistful look as he remembers the poor girl. Meanwhile, I’m trying to commit every single word uttered from his mouth to memory, knowing I’ll need to relay it all when I get out of here. “She was perfect. Tight, virgin cunt. The young ones are always the best. Nothing beats watching them cry and scream as you strip their innocence from their bodies.” Bile flies up my throat at his sickening words. He looks back down at me and smirks. “She got what she deserved, and so will you.”

He releases the safety on the gun and shimmies down my body. He glares up at me and digs the barrel in deeper, until it’s practically breaking my trachea. “Move and die. I have no problem fucking your cunt with your brain gaping open.”

I swallow thickly, the motion causing the gun to shift. Sutton’s hands hit the buttons between my thighs that will release my bodysuit. I close my eyes, resigning myself to my fate. *They all survived. Except...whoever he was talking about. She didn't. He raped her, impregnated her and then killed her. I have to live though, i have to save the rest that will come after me. Have to save Tinsley.*

I focus on everything I have to accomplish once I make it out of one of the worst moments of my life. The buttons unsnapping are just as loud as the gunshots earlier. I try to ignore Sutton and his sickening touch as he slides his fingers through my dry folds. Vomit climbs up my throat and into my mouth, and I barely turn to the side in time to expel the contents of my stomach. Sutton barks a laugh but doesn’t stop.

I hear him preparing to spit on my core, and my eyes fly back to him just in time to see...

A half-face killer clown mask.

My Devil.

My Stalker.

My Love.

My Wolfe.

Wolfe stands behind Sutton, who is completely unaware as he spits onto my flesh, wetting my dry core for his assault. I lock eyes with the man who owns my heart, wholly and completely, and utter the one word I know he'll understand.

I once told him he was my safe space. Before I even knew him, I knew he would protect me. I knew he would guard me, body, mind, and soul.

“Kill.”



Chapter Twenty-Three

Where the fuck is she?

I climb off my bike and follow the trail on foot, knowing it will be easier with the rough terrain. My feet pound through the wooded area of the vast Huxley property, the last place I saw her location from the tracking device on her phone before it winked out of existence. Why would she be out here? I swallow down the sinking feeling rising up in my gut as I trudge forward.

From the moment I left my house, I've been calling her nonstop. I pushed my bike to its absolute limits, knowing I needed to get to her. An ache was deep in my chest, tugging and pulling me, demanding I find her. I don't know if it's the distance between us the last few days or how we left things, but I need to see my girl. Need to hold her, comfort her, *love her*. And I do. I love Rayvn Porter with all that I am. Every dark, broken, ugly shard of my soul is hers if she'll have me. Not that I'll let her go.

I rush through the densely covered forest in the direction she was headed. Is she running? No, she wouldn't do that. Not

alone, this late and this far out. Months ago, I did research when I knew she'd be spending time out here. I accessed the public records and deeds for the land, saving maps to my phone just in case. A fact I'm glad about now.

We're close to the large lake, about three miles south of Logan Huxley's parent's home. All three brothers and their parents have a custom-built home on the 300 hundred acre plot, but they're well spaced out. There are trails for walking and a web of roads that weave throughout the land for vehicles. Maybe she's in her car or wanted to come out to the lake?

Maybe she's doing a scene with someone else. Anger fills me at the thought. Fuck no, she wouldn't. *You fucked up. She deserves someone better.* I use the rage that thought causes to propel me forward, pushing my muscles to the limit. I open my mouth to call out her name but freeze when a loud sound rings out through the night, followed by a scream. My breaths heave in and out as I listen intently. Was that a—

It rings out again, and this time, I'm sure. A gunshot.

Panic fills me, replacing everything else, and I take off like a rocket, heading toward the sound. Another shot. No scream follows it this time, and I almost throw up at the implications. I find myself praying to a God I don't believe in as I weave through the thick forest.

Please, no. Please let her be okay.

Another scream has me veering to the left. Then a shout, this one male. Fuck no. It's him, I just know it. Sutton's here,

and he has my girl. Every vile thing I read about him today filters through my brain like a macabre slideshow. He's a rapist. A murderer. The worst of the worst and *he has her*.

Violence like I've never known fills me so fast and so quickly my vision flickers. A red haze coats the forest, and I know I've lost myself to the beast.

Protect. Kill. Claim. Mine.

The words mingle with my panting breaths, the crunching of leaves beneath my boots and the wind blowing through the trees, creating a sick and twisted soundtrack to my mania. I will kill him. There is no question. If he lays a finger on her, I will destroy him.

It doesn't take me long before their voices come in clearer. I can hear him taunting her. I can hear her crying and whimpering, but she doesn't speak. She doesn't beg or break. My brave, strong girl. Pride replaces some of the destruction coursing through me, allowing reason to seep in through the fog. I slow my pace, knowing he has a gun and I'll need to be careful. The last thing I want is to spook him and have Ray get caught in the middle of a fight.

I step into a small clearing, and the sight before me has me ready to go back on everything I just said. Vincent Sutton is pinning *my woman* to the ground. He's grinding his cock into her perfect flesh and groping her body. As I step forward, silently closing the distance between us, I realize that's not all he's doing. He's admitting his sins to her like every stereotypical villain does before they die. He thinks he's going

to kill Rayvn and that she'll take his confession to her grave alongside her.

He's so fucking wrong.

I pull my phone out and hit record before sliding it back into my pocket. I pull my knife from my jacket and flick the blade open as I step in behind him. He's so distracted from the sight of my girl beneath him, he doesn't even see me. He's freely touching what does not belong to him, and the need to remove his hands from his body had me shaking with rage.

But then, I see the gun. Sutton laughs at her, and I lean forward, lifting the knife. I watch Ray turn her head to the side and vomit, causing me to freeze as he digs the gun in deeper. Sutton does something that has her head snapping back to him, and finally, *finally*, my girl sees me. The relief in her eyes has my knees shaking and damn near giving out. My heart races, and my fist flexes against the knife.

What will she do if I kill him here and now? Will she be relieved? Will she hate me? My frantic thoughts are cut off when My Little Fox opens her mouth and whispers the one word that has my control snapping.

"Kill,"

It's a command as much as it is an omission. I'm still hers. Her safe space. Her love. *Her Wolfe*.

"Oh, I will, bitch. Just as soon as I get a taste of this filthy cunt," Sutton barks out a laugh. My body trembles as possession and anger like I've never felt before consumes me.

My eyes never leave hers as I slowly bring the knife up, letting her see my intent. The same knife that brought her so much pleasure and ecstasy. It's kismet, really. I smile beneath my mask as I use the knife coated in my woman's cum and blood to slay her demons. Rayvn's eyes widen a fraction, but then, my little demon's lip tilts up in the faintest hint of a smirk. I can see Sutton's arm pumping, and I know what he's doing to her, yet, she's smiling at me, confident in what's about to happen. Knowing it's almost over.

Not waiting another second, I grip his hair tightly in one hand and bring the knife down on his throat with the other, slicing clean and deep. My eyes are locked on Rayvn's as blood spurts out between us. I don't know what I expect to see, but it's not her pupils dilating and her smile widening. I toss the sick fuck to side by my grip on his hair, removing his body from hers.

It's not enough. He touched her.

Mine. Claim. Fill. Fuck.

"Are you here to save me, Wolfey?" she whispers, her tone reverent. I bend down slowly, my mind no longer my own.

"No," I murmur, wiping the bloody knife across her cheeks, painting her in her enemies blood. She sucks in a sharp breath but doesn't move or protest. *My Little Fox. Mine.* "I'm here to ruin you. Prepare yourself."

It's the truth. The honest, heartfelt truth. Because even if I can find a way to love her with all that I have, I'm still not the good guy. I'm still less than she deserves, and as the ugly thing

that lives inside of me is proving at this very second, a life with me is a life with him. There will never be sunshine and rainbows. There won't be flowers and easy affection. It will be dark and gritty and oh so fucking hot. I'll love her till my dying breath, but it's not the kind of love Rayvn Porter deserves.

It's a one-way ticket to Hell with the motherfucking Devil.

Bending down, I pick up Sutton's abandoned gun as I push to my feet. Towering over her, I cock my head to the side. This is it. "I knew you would consume me the moment I set my eyes on you, Little Fox. But it's too late for me to stop it. I can't. This is your last chance to escape me. To change your mind. Run, and run hard because when I catch you—" I break off, stepping away and giving her space to move. "It's game fucking over. *I will own you.*"

She stares at me, a mixture of fear and shock filling her perfect tear-stained face. She looks beautiful like this, except it's not *my* handprint on her cheek and neck. It's not *my* touch lingering on her skin and between her thighs. It's not my spit dripping down her perfect pussy.

It will be. Need to replace his touch. His scent.

Claim. Take. Fill. Fuck. Ruin. Brand. Mine.

When she doesn't move, I lift the gun and fire a warning shot. The tree next to us explodes in a flurry of bark and dirt. She screams and scrambles to her feet. I wait for her to find her footing, and then I watch. I watch as she bolts in the direction of the lake. I watch as she looks over her shoulder

and fucking *smiles* at me. I watch as my world, my future, embraces my beast and taunts him, knowing what waits for her at the end of this.

I give her less than a minute's head start, unable to take my eyes off her so soon after what just happened. My primal instincts are riding me hard. Harder than ever before. I already know that when I get my hands on her, it will be rough and brutal. It doesn't stop me from picking up pace and hunting her down. Adrenaline rushes through me, mixing the high from taking a life. It's a heady, otherworldly combination, and it causes my throbbing cock to leak continuously in my boxers.

"Run, Run, Little Fox," I taunt, picking up pace as I watch her dart behind a tree. She laughs quietly, trying to remain hidden, but it's too late. She's already in my sights. I grin manically behind my mask as I pump my limbs harder, pushing to my limit. "I'm going to fuck you like the dirty slut you are."

I follow her path, turning when she does. The tree line is thinning now, allowing the moonlight to spill in freely. It illuminates the path with a warm glow. I can hear her footsteps, her panting breaths. I can also hear the quiet trickle of water in the distance, letting me know we're nearing one of the ponds or maybe the lake. She pushes through a final set of trees before stepping right into an open clearing.

"There's nowhere to run, nowhere to hide, Sweetling," I coo, watching as she spins in a circle, frantically looking for

an exit. “Give up. Drop to your knees, and open your mouth like the perfect little cocksucker you are.”

“Fuck you,” she screams as she attempts to dart away. It’s too late. I’m done chasing her. I need her. Now. I dive for her, catching her off guard. My arms wrap around her sweet body as we fall to the ground. I soften her fall, taking the brunt of it, before rolling her over. I don’t want to pin her to the ground after what just happened with Sutton, though, so I grip her jacket and flip her to her stomach.

“Hands and knees,” I snap. She claws at the ground like a wild animal, fighting me and ignoring my command. I grip her hips and yank her up. I kick her knees apart, spreading her open wide for me. She’s wearing a tiny, skintight thing that fits her like a one-piece bathing suit. That sick fuck undid the buttons between her legs, leaving her puffy, glistening cunt on display for me. “So wet for me, aren’t you?”

“No!” she cries out. I chuckle darkly as Ray continues to buck and thrash. My bruising grip on her hips is relentless, preventing her from leaving. “I don’t want you.”

My hand darts out, slapping her soaking pussy and proving she’s a liar. “What did I tell you about lying to me, slut?” she moans but doesn’t respond. I slap it again, this time harder. “Answer me.”

“No!” she screams, shaking her head back and forth. I rub my fingers across her pussy, coating them in her sweet arousal before thrusting two of them inside her. I pump once, twice, then rip them back out. Ray cries out at the loss, but I ignore

her as I yank her outfit up, exposing her full ass and pussy to me. “Wolfe.”

“Tell me you want this,” I demand as my hand lands a harsh blow against one of her juicy cheeks. She grunts but continues to remain silent. It pisses me the Hell off.

I rain down blow after punishing blow. I’m relentless and brutal. She moans and cries out with every slap, but she doesn’t give me what I want, and she doesn’t tell me to stop. My cock is aching to be inside her, but I won’t, not yet. Not until she admits that she wants me. This is bigger than our usual games. It’s more. It *means* more.

I grip the back of her jacket and haul her up to me. We’re both on her knees, her back to my chest as we pant heavily. The clouds intermittently covering the moon clear, giving us our first full glimpse of each other. I wrap my fist around her long hair, using the hold to tilt her head back harshly. She whimpers as she looks up at me. I bend down, running my nose across her neck. I barely get a hint of her chocolatey floral smell, making me loathe this mask more than ever before.

“Tell me what I want to know,” I whisper against her throat. “Tell me you want me.” I pull back, and for a moment, we just stare at each other. A tear leaks down her cheek as she slowly shakes her head once. A low laugh escapes me. She’s fighting this so hard, but I see her. I see how badly she wants to say yes. “Fucktoys don’t get to say no.”

Her mouth drops open in shock, and I use the opening to shove the barrel of Sutton's gun into her mouth. I press in deep, hitting her throat. Ray gags and trembles in my hold, but I don't stop. I can't. I'm too far gone.

"Suck," I murmur. Her tears steam down her cheeks rapidly, but the fire in her eyes promises all sorts of punishments for this. I grin, though she can't see it beneath the stupid clown mask. "How does it feel to know I hold your life in my hands, Little Fox? Are you terrified that with one slip, I could end it all? Or is your whore cunt dripping for me?"

I watch, transfixed, as she sucks the gun like it's my cock, moving it in and out of her perfect mouth. I slowly remove it, watching the thick streams of saliva that connect her to her attacker's weapon.

"So fucking pretty," I whisper in awe of her. She's perfect. I lower the gun and bring it between her spread thighs. I slap her throbbing core with the barrel. She whimpers but doesn't stop me as I thrust the gun into her pussy. Our eyes stay locked, my hand gripping her hair harshly as I slowly fuck her. "How does it feel to know the gun he was going to take your life with now brings you ecstasy while he lies bleeding out on the forest floor?"

"So fucking good," she whispers, not skipping a beat. I flick off the safety, and the sound slams through the air making her gasp. I increase my pace, shoving the weapon deep inside her cunt until she's writhing before me. "Fuck, Wolfe. I'm going to cum."

I yank the gun from her cunt, and she screams in frustration. “Say it,” I demand. “Say it, and you can have what you want.”

“Fuck me. *Please,*” she cries out, her chest rising and falling with the force of her breaths. It’s not what I wanted, not what I needed her to say, but fuck if I’ll ever deny her my cock.

I shove her to her forward, and she barely catches herself on her hands. She watches me as I lower my zipper and pull my leaking cock out. I wrap my hand around my thick length, pumping my dick while she stares. Her breath catches, and her eyes narrow.

“You got a new tattoo.” It’s a statement. Almost accusatory. I nod, grinning beneath my mask. “Why did you get your name tattooed on your hand, Wolfe?” There’s almost a hint of humor beneath her words that has my heart stuttering in my chest. *I love this girl.*

I move forward on my knees, shoving her into the ground. I rub the head of my cock, up and down her dripping pussy, soaking myself in her and removing another piece of that bastard’s touch. She moans and shakes, digging her face into the dirt. I line myself up with her entrance and bend forward, wrapping my hand around the back of her neck and smashing her cheek into the harsh ground.

“Because,” I breathe, pushing my cock in just an inch. She tries to push back but I increase the pressure on her delicate neck. A warning. “Every pet’s collar needs their owner’s name on it.”

She sucks in a breath, and I shove forward, impaling her cunt in one brutal thrust. She cries out, cumming hard around my dick. She's so warm, so tight, as she squeezes and flutters around me. Releasing her neck, I lean back and grip her hips.

Then...*I fuck her.*

I fuck Rayvn Porter like she's nothing more than a dirty little fucktoy that means nothing to me. I fuck her hard and savagely. I rut into her like a beast claiming their mate because that's exactly what I am and exactly what I'm doing.

"Won't stop until I own you," I bark. She whimpers and cries in response to my every thrust, but her hips press back, meeting me halfway every time. "You're mine, Rayvn. Mine. I don't fucking care what you want, I'm not letting you go. Even if you hate me. Even if you can't stand to look at me. Even if you report me for killing that bastard. I won't stop. I won't leave you."

She screams, cumming around my cock again. I shift my hips to a new angle, fucking her through it, loving the way my possessive words spur her on.

"You like that, bitch?" I growl. "You like knowing your master is obsessed with you? Kills for you? Won't stop until you're so fucking connected to me, we bleed the same blood."

"Wolfe," she screams, scraping her nails into the dirt. She chants my name as she sobs and shakes beneath me. Still, I don't stop. "Please."

“Please what, little slut?” I grip her hair and tug her upright, needing her close. Rayvn screeches and tries to pull away. I band my arm around her chest, pinning her arms down. My other hand finds her clit. I rub it in fast, tight circles the way she loves. Her head tilts back, resting on my shoulder and making my heart squeeze. “That’s it, baby. That’s my good girl. Such a perfect, pretty whore for me, huh? Squeezing my cock like that. So fucking good.”

I groan into her throat, picking up my pace. I fuck up into her cunt with a brutality that’s probably hurting her but I don’t care. I can’t stop. Not until she’s full of my cum. “One more,” I murmur. Her head thrashes side to side but I don’t stop. “One more and then I’ll fill your greedy cunt with my seed. I’ll mark my property. Claim you from the inside out. You want that, don’t you? Tell me, Little Fox.”

“Please,” she begs. “Please, Wolfe. Cum for me. I wanna feel you fill me up. I need it.” Her words are almost incoherent as she whimpers, leaning heavily against me.

“I know, baby. You’re my cum thirsty girl. I’ve got you,” I rasp. I shove up deep, not stopping until I hit her cervix. My balls pull up tight. My spine tingles, telling me I’m close.

“Please, Wolfey,” she whispers, and it’s the broken sound that sends me over the edge. My heart swells for this woman as I release inside her, filling her hungry pussy with my cum. I growl as she screams, following me into oblivion. She squeezes tightly around my cock, milking me for all I’m

worth. I cum more than I ever have before, filling her to the brim.

“That’s it. Milk my cock,” I groan. “You’re Devil’s marking you with his demon seed, Sweetling. Claiming you for life. Infecting you with my insanity.”

She moans but says nothing as we catch our breath. I keep my girl in my arms and cock in her fluttering pussy, refusing to let her go in any way, shape or form. We stay like that, neither of us moving or speaking. She comes to first and tries to pull away. I growl, banding my arms tighter around her.

“Say it,” I whisper.

Choose me. Say you know I’m insane and want me anyways.

“I can’t.” Ray releases a choked sob and shakes her head, tearing a few hairs from my grip. “You left me,” she cries. The words penetrate through some of my animalistic desire. “You left me.”

I exhale heavily, my body shuddering with the force of it. The moon is so bright, I can see her every feature as she cries. It’s like mother nature knew we needed this right now and granted us a gift. Light in the dark. Her and me. I drop my forehead to hers and nod.

“I left, but I didn’t *leave you.*” She sucks in a breath and tries to pull away but I refuse to let her go. “Listen to me, Rayvn.” She shakes her head again, pushing against my arms. “Stop,” I snap.

She turns an accusing glare at me and even with the tears covering her beautiful face, she looks more fierce than ever. “Take off your mask, you coward.”

My heart slams against my chest at her demand. Everything in me is screaming *no, not yet*. I know once she recognizes me, she’ll try to push me away. She’ll try to run. *It’s time*, I remind myself. I have to do this for us. I release her limbs, then tighten my arms around her waist in a grip hard enough to snap her in half. She heaves out a breath but says nothing. I nod my head once, leaning forward for her. She understands the request and reaches up slowly, as though she’s suddenly nervous about what she might find.

My cock is still buried deep inside her, holding on to her and our connection for as long as possible as she removes my mask. She throws it on the ground and stares up at me, confusion on her beautiful face. I see when it happens. When she recognizes me. She gasps and tries to pull away, hurt and betrayal replacing the confusion.

“You’re the man from the elevator,” she demands. I nod. She shifts again, and my cock slips free, making me release a feral-sounding growl. It takes a great amount of force but I finally let her go, allowing her to put distance between us. It kills me. She scrambles away and pushes to her feet, wincing in pain. “But, I don’t understand.”

I nod again as I stand up, needing to be on a level playing field for this conversation. “I know you don’t. I’ll tell you

everything, but I need you to listen, Ray. Really listen. Can you do that?"

She stares at me for a long time. I'm sure she's scared and confused right now. I understand that, and I don't blame her. I'm pretty fucking scared myself. Finally, she exhales a shaky breath and nods. She makes quick work of closing the crotch of her outfit before tugging her jacket together tightly. She's closing in on herself. Protecting herself. I sigh and tuck my cock away before moving to sit on a large boulder a few feet away. She turns to face me but stands planted to the earth, her arms crossed over her chest.

I take a deep breath, and then...I tell her everything. Or, at least, I try to.

I start at the beginning. I tell her about my parents, and the woman who took me in. I tell her about my stutter and the bullying. I tell her what that kind of childhood did to me. I tell her about my love for computers and hacking. I tell her that I started an online business at a young age as a way to make fast money to support Kat. I don't know why, but I leave out her illness. At least for now. I don't want this to be my sob story. This isn't about that. This is about how I came to be in her life. That's what she needs to know right now.

"I was hired by an unknown entity to ruin you," I say, my entire body tensed and ready for her anger. She shifts, squeezing her eyes closed, but says nothing. *My brave fucking girl.*

“It’s not uncommon for me. It’s actually highly requested. Anything from financial sabotage to slander to—” I break off, shaking my head. *Jesus, I am a piece of shit.* “It doesn’t matter. Someone wanted to pay me a million dollars to ruin you. Take you down, have you disbarred and destroyed in the public eye. They wanted your credibility removed. I didn’t know who they were, or why. That’s not part of my job. The mistake I made, was not looking into who made the request sooner.”

“Sutton,” she breathes. I nod. “But, why?”

“Because he’s a piece of shit, Rayvn. He’s a fucking pig. Worse than that, he’s a pedophile. A rapist and a murderer. I didn’t know that when I agreed.” She flinches as though I’ve slapped her. “I should have looked him up.” I run a hand through my hair, disgust filling me at my idiotic decisions.

She stands stock-still, thinking through my words before suddenly, she whirls on me, eyes wide. “Are you the one who got rid of all the evidence against Tinsley and the other women?”

Fuck. She already thinks that low of me? I’m screwed. I shake my head adamantly. “No, Sweetling. That wasn’t me. I hacked his computer, though. I found all of the evidence and so much more. I can probably figure out who he used to fuck with the files with a bit more time.” I hope that offer placates her. She doesn’t even acknowledge me as she continues.

“So, you just ruin people’s lives without a care in the world. You don’t ask questions or verify claims before you destroy

them?” She scoffs and turns away, unable to look at me any longer. My heart falls to the ground. I’m going to lose her.

“I do,” I say weakly. I clear my throat, then say louder. “I do. Normally, I do. I vet them all. Make sure the claims are real. But, this time, I didn’t and I almost lost you because of that.”

“You’d have to have me to lose me, Wolfe,” she snaps, spinning back to glare at me. I growl at her statement, but she shakes her head. “No. You don’t have me. Not anymore.”

“Anymore?” I breathe, my heart beating out of my chest.

She laughs but there’s no humor in it. “You know what’s funny? You’ve had me all along. Even when you were a nameless man in an elevator, you had me. I couldn’t stop thinking about you. I pictured your face for *months*. Even after I met—” she gestures to me with a snarl. “*You*, on the app. I still pictured *him*. You had me all along but now, you don’t.”

I fly to my feet, charging forward and closing the distance between us. My hands palm her cheeks, and I smash my mouth to hers. The urgency to prove her wrong. To prove that I’m still hers. That I’m the same man she couldn’t stop thinking about, slams against my bones. She doesn’t kiss me back. She fights and thrashes like the little beast she is. She drags her nails down my skin, ripping me to shreds. I don’t stop. Don’t let go. Just keep kissing her. Forcing her to *feel* me. To *understand*. I don’t stop until her hands drop to her sides, and she starts to sob against me. I rip myself free from her lips and begin to kiss away her tears.

“You have to let me finish, Rayvn.” I beg. “You have to hear me. Let me explain, plea—”

“Kill.”

And just like that, I’ve lost her.

She spoke the one word that she knew I’d never ignore. Never. We may fight like feral animals in the woods. She may let me chase her down and hunt her like a predator ready to take its prey. She may want me to fuck her while she sleeps and slap her around until she cries. But the one thing I will never do, is ignore her safeword and risk losing her trust. Because without it, none of the other shit matters.

Trust. Kat had told me to trust Rayvn. And she needs to trust me back.

I drop my hands and step away from her. I expect to feel anger. Rage. Betrayal. What I don’t expect is deep, brutal *heartbreak.*

“Take me home, and then leave me the fuck alone.”

With that, she turns and leaves me and my shattered heart in the same forest where it all began.



Chapter Twenty-Four

3 WEEKS LATER

“I just can’t believe he’s actually dead,” Addy murmurs, leaning in further to watch the news report as they announce Vincent Sutton’s untimely death.

Murder.

His body was found a week ago inside his sprawling Nevada vacation home. Next to his body, a hard drive with every single one of his offenses laid out for the world to see. On top of that, an encrypted message was sent to all of the national news stations with the voice recording from that night when he’d kidnapped me and admitted his sins.

I have no idea how *W—he* accomplished all of it. My voice wasn’t in the recording at all. No one knows who killed him or sent in the information, but after a weeks investigation, inside sources have stated that the case will likely remain unsolved. Apparently, Wolfe knows people in high places. Not a scrap of evidence was found, which is...unbelievable.

I don’t know what or how to feel about all of it. On one hand, knowing Sutton is dead, especially with all the new evidence, is a *massive* relief. *He* went to a great deal of effort

to make sure that even with Sutton dead, the world would know what he did. He took the time to make sure no one would ever become aware of my involvement. He gave the women who survived at Sutton's hands, like Georgia and Tinsley, a fresh start.

He did a lot for them.

For me.

On the other—witnessing a murder was not something I ever expected to see. I've had a few nightmares about it, but they aren't the ones that plague my mind or keep me awake at night. No. Those are laced with bone-deep betrayal and pain. They are monsters chasing me through forests wearing masks. Every time I remove the mask, it's a smiling beast, telling me I'm a fool for believing the Devil. *For loving him.*

And God, how I love him. Even with the pain and the betrayal, I still love him. I love him so much, I cry myself to sleep every night from missing him. I love him so much, I hope and pray that he breaks into my home and crawls into my bed to hold me while I mourn him.

At some point in the last three months, Wolfe became my best friend. My partner. My safe place. And when your heart is hurting the way mine does, you want your best friend. Even when they're the person who hurt you so badly.

A part of me thinks I should have listened to him the way he'd begged me to instead of demanding he took me home. Surprisingly, he did. We silently made our way back to the bike. I wordlessly climbed on behind him as the adrenaline

from my night dissolved and turned into a chasm of numbness. He took me home, walked me to my door, and watched as I quietly closed it in his face. He didn't fight, didn't demand or shove his way in after me. Nothing.

I saw the blind acceptance all over his face, though. He knew he fucked up and there would be no coming back from it. He honored my safe word as though it was a holy command and for that, I respect him.

I'd be lying if I said I hadn't assumed he'd break in that night, demanding I take him back. I'd be lying if I said I didn't hope he still did. I haven't heard from him once, but that could be because I blocked his number the moment I stepped into my house that night.

I miss him.

"Ray?" Addy calls, drawing my attention back to her. We're sitting in the breakroom at work with a few co-workers who all wanted to stay for the big announcement.

I sigh, offering her a weak smile. She knows *Kill*, and I broke up, but nothing more than that. I had to tell her something so she'd understand that I needed to be left alone. Surprisingly, she'd been good about not digging for information. "What did you say?"

She tilts her head to the side and offers me a knowing look. "It doesn't matter." She looks down at her watch and grimaces. "You have to get going, girl. You're going to miss your appointment."

My heart sinks as I check the time on my phone. Shit, she's right. I stand up and accept the hug she gives me, despite the way my skin prickles from the contact. *She's not the person I want hugging me.* "I'll call you later. Don't forget I won't be in for a few days."

She gives me a sympathetic look. "Are you sure you don't want me to come with you? You don't have to do this alone."

My stomach gives a painful squeeze. I wish I didn't have to do this alone either, but again, Addy isn't the person I want. She doesn't have the reassuring touch I crave and need. I give her a big, fake smile and nod as I pull away. "Yep. No worries. I've got this. It will all be fine."

"I know it will. You're strong, Ray. I know I don't say sweet things very often—" I scoff at that, making her roll her eyes. "Okay...*ever*. But I am proud of you and how you're handling all of this. You're one of the strongest people I know. You'll get through this just like you have everything else. It's just another bump in the road, you'll see."

I offer her a smile of thanks despite the fact that her words literally kill me inside. This isn't simple, and it's not a bump in the road. Nothing will ever be the same after this. All I can do is hope for the best possible outcome. I wave and say my goodbyes before practically sprinting from the room.



I stand outside the gray and white medical building, my heart in my throat and my stomach in knots. It's a nice building. To the public, it's unassuming. There is no description or obvious name. No decals on the windows explaining what they do here or what kind of people are inside. It's just a plain building.

So why do I feel like I'm going to puke?

"Are we going in, or what?" Urma asks, her brows knitted together. "I know I don't look it, but I'm old. I don't want to spend my remaining years wasting away in a parking lot."

I roll my eyes, but her easy humor has a small smile tipping up the corner of my lips.

"Yeah, Jaynie-Baby. Listen to the nice lady."

Another piece of my heart fractures at hearing my dad call me his nickname for my mom. Jayne. My middle namesake. My momma. The person who my dad thinks I am more and more these days. His words solidify my resolve and I nod, knowing this is the right thing to do. I turn back and look at the sign one more time before stepping through the front door.

Remény.

The only Alzihemers trial accepting new patients and my dad's last hope. Two weeks ago, we received a call from his doctors saying they'd been contacted by a company seeking patients who fit the criteria for their new clinical trial. His doctors assured me this place was the best of the best and that he'd be in excellent hands. It kills me to do this. To bring him here, to leave him. To not know if this drug will save him or—

Swallowing the lump in my throat at the thought of a world without my daddy, I push forward. A sweet nurse greets us and directs my dad and Urma to his new room down a long hallway. They both smile at me reassuringly before another nurse asks me to follow her so I can fill out his intake paperwork.

“I'll catch up with you in a minute, dad,” I say, watching as he smiles and flirts with the nurse. “Be good!” He waves me off, ignoring me completely.

Thank God I'm not actually my mom. Geeze.

“It shouldn't take long. Your father's doctor filled out most of it before you arrived and faxed it over. It's mostly just the insurance paperwork.” She says sweetly and points to a hall going the opposite direction. “Billing and intake are right through that door and then you'll meet with Mr. Nash for the tour.”

Right. Mr. Nash. The man who funded this company from the ground up. When my dad's doctor had called us to arrange this whole thing, he'd told us Mr. Nash's story. It broke my heart. I couldn't help but feel for the guy and his heartbreaking

story. To me, he sounds like a hero. I wish I would have had even half the courage and strength that he did when my dad was diagnosed.

Apparently, his mom got sick when he was still a teenager, and he worked his ass off to have enough money and clout to find investors and start *Remény*. I guess it was a last ditch effort to save her, and after ten years of battling the disease, she lost her fight just when they'd received the funding for the drug. I guess Mr. Nash has since sold the company, but he still comes in to help with tours and new client intakes for now until the new owners take over.

“Are you sure insurance covers all of this?” I ask, my eyes flying around the massive state of the art building. Her brows furrow in confusion, and she opens her mouth to say something but gets pulled away by someone wearing a lab coat. “Okay, guess I’m on my own,” I murmur, following the vague directions she’d given me.

I step through a set of doors and find myself in another clinical, sterile space, but there is something about it that tugs at my mind. Confused, I pause at the threshold. I know I’ve never been here before. What is it about this place that has me thinking of...*home*.

I inhale deeply and almost choke when I get a strong whiff of lemon and citrus. What the hell? I spin in a circle, my heart lodged in my throat. My skin prickles with awareness. That feeling I’d grown so used to sweeping over me like a weighted blanket.

I hear his warm, deep voice first. Then, his scent hits me. Smoke, motor oil, *citrus*.

What the fuck is going on? I charge toward the sound of his voice, finding him just inside the doorway speaking to another man. I don't know what comes over me but suddenly, I'm stomping toward him as weeks of heartache crashes into me with the force of a freight train.

My hand flies out, meeting his thick, muscled bicep as I shove him to the side. Wolfe stumbles, his shocked eyes swiveling to find mine. I almost swallow my fucking tongue as I get my first full glimpse of him in the daylight.

No mask. No barriers. No hiding. Just *him*.

My Wolfe.

Except... he's not.

“How dare you show up *here*?” I hiss. “This is a hard enough day as it is without you following me!” I snap, anger, sadness, and longing warring for dominance inside me. I feel dizzy and sick, like I'm going to puke then pass out.

Wolfe's brows meet his hairline as he stares at me in shock. His black hair is shorter than it was before and styled artfully. His black framed glasses are nowhere to be seen. His pink, full lips are there, just begging for mine. His perfect, angular features are harsh in the bright, fluorescent light. His face is covered in a small amount of black stubble, and there are noticeable dark circles beneath his eyes.

Yet—he's more beautiful than I could have ever imagined.

His eyes...Just like that first time I saw him in the elevator, they pierce through my soul. So blue, they look clear, like the ocean. I should have known. This whole time, I should have known.

You did know a little voice whispers. You knew. You just didn't want to admit it.

My eyes burn as the words sink in. Did I know?

“Excuse me, Rohan,” Wolfe says, smiling kindly at the other man who I now see is a doctor. I grimace in embarrassment.

“Of course, Mr. Nash. I’ll catch up with you later.” He smiles at Wolfe, giving him a knowing look, but I’m too confused, too *panicked* to pay attention to it. Wolfe’s smile drops from his face as he notices what I’m sure is a very sickly-looking Rayvn.

He nods once, grabs my hand and tugs me through the halls. I’m too shocked to stop him. Too confused to speak as I blindly follow him, just like always. He drags me outside and to a bench sitting beneath a tree out front. He drops down and pulls me with him before turning to face me. We stare at each other for countless weighted minutes. My heart is pounding so hard in my chest, I’m surprised he can’t hear it. There are so many things I want to say, but I have no idea where to start.

I want to tell him I love him, that I’m sorry for not listening. I want to tell him that he’s amazing and brave, and strong and that I know what he did for his mom. That he’s braver than I could ever hope to be. I want to thank him for all that he did

for me and the girls with Sutton. I want to tell him I'm mad and hurt and I don't know how to forgive him, but I want to try.

Instead, I say *nothing*.

"I miss you," he chokes out, his face showing far more vulnerability than I'd ever expect to see from my Devil.

Not mine. I chastise. Yes, he is.

I stare blankly at him as I tuck my trembling hands under my thighs.

"Did you get my texts?" he asks. My brows furrow, and I shake my head once.

He texted me? Shit.

"I blocked your number," I murmur. His brows lift and a small smirk crawls up his face. It causes a sharp pain to lance through my aching heart. "Wh-what did you say?" My voice comes out a thick rasp. "In the texts?"

There are so many other things I need to ask, to know. But for some reason, this feels more important.

He shrugs as his cheeks turn pink and suddenly, I want to unblock his number and read all of his thoughts.

"A lot." Sighing, he runs a hand through his hair, making black locks fall over his forehead. My hand twitches with the need to brush them away from his beautiful eyes. "Rayvn, I need to tell you the rest of my story. You need to understand."

I shake my head, not needing him to go through what I'm sure is a very painful story. "I know about your mom," I whisper. His brows crease together. "The woman you opened this place for. The doctors told us."

He grunts and looks away, falling into silence once more. I worry he won't speak, but when he finally does, his words cause my eyes to burn. "Kat wasn't my mom. I told you my parents were druggies who abandoned me. Kat is the woman who took me in. She saved me, raised me and cared for me like I was her own. She was the only person who ever cared about me." He looks back at me, his blue eyes glazed over with a sheen of tears. "Until you."

My broken man.

Tears slide down my cheeks as my already shattered heart finds a way to fracture even more. Testing the waters, he slowly raises his hand, waiting to see if I'll pull away. When I don't, he brushes his thumb across my cheek, capturing my tears. His eyes stay locked on mine as he brings the finger to his mouth and sucks my tears away. My core clenches. I should feel ashamed of that right now, but I can't find it in me to care.

"Tell me everything terrible thing you did, and let me love you anyway," he whispers. My breath catches, recognizing the quote. After the first five times he quoted Poe, I started to research and read his work, trying to figure out what Wolfe's fascination with the man was. I never figured it out.

“Years of love have been forgotten in the hatred of a minute.” My heart rate picks up as he leans forward, reciting another famous quote.

He leans his forehead against mine as his hands land on my thighs. He squeezes firmly and I gasp. *“Sometimes I’m terrified of my heart; of its constant hunger for whatever it wants. The way it stops and starts.”*

“What are you doing?” I choke out, my eyes blurring with emotion.

“Reciting all the texts I sent you since the day you left me,” he breathes. *“The scariest monsters are the ones that lurk within our souls.”*

I close my eyes, my hands trembling as I grasp his t-shirt and hold him firmly in place. “I don’t understand, Wolfe.”

“That’s because you’re not listening,” he murmurs.

My eyes fly open, meeting his once more. The emotion there knocks the breath from my lungs. My head shakes back and forth as confusion consumes me. “I am listening. *I am,*” I protest.

“But are you *hearing me*, Little Fox?” he grunts. *“Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered weak and weary. Nevermore.”*

His hand slides up my chest, grazing the space between my breasts. He collars my throat and flexes his hand before using his hold to tilt my neck back. It’s the hand with the tattoo, I notice, his name. *Every pet’s collar needs their owner’s name,*

he'd said. He got a tattoo on his hand to show the world his ownership *over me*.

"I don't—" I start, shaking my head rapidly. He tilts my head back even more as he pushes to stands and bends, looking down at me. *The predator and his prey*.

His eyes bore into mine, a silent command. I focus on his words, the quotes he's been giving me since the very beginning. Since day one, when I had no idea who he was. I had no idea he was the man from the elevator, or a stalker, or a monster. I had no idea who he'd become. My best friend. My lover. My everything.

Poe. He quoted Poe. My mind races over every line, every word. I'd thought they were admittances of insanity, and maybe they were, but more than that, they were...

My eyes widen as realization settles in, hard and heavy, almost sending me on my ass.

His hand flexes and squeezes. He nods, understanding washing over both of us. *"Deep into the darkness peering, long I stood there wondering, fearing, doubting, dreaming dreams no mortal ever dared dream before."*

Poe. His safeword. It was...me.

I'm his safe place, just like he's mine.

"The Raven," I gasp. He smiles softly, pressing his forehead to mine. "You were trying to tell me from the beginning. You knew who I was. You knew my name. You were—"

“An idiot,” he breathes. “But you, my Sweetling, captivated me from the very first moment I saw your photo. I knew then, but was too scared to admit it. You pulled me from my bleak existence and brought me color and emotions. You brought me life. I couldn’t give you up even when I tried. I still can’t.”

Everything he’s ever done. Everything he’s ever said. It’s all been real, if not, in his own way. Wolfe Nash is a good man, an incredible man. *And he’s mine.*

“Did you get my dad in the trial?” I whisper, my heart thrashing against my chest.

Wolfe smiles softly. “When will you realize, Little Fox? There’s not a damn thing in this world I wouldn’t do for you. Nothing.”

As I stare up into his clear-blue eyes, I let everything wash away but *him*. The man who has demons bigger than my own, yet still found a way to make sure I was cared for and looked after from the moment he found me.

My stalker.

My monster.

My hunter.

My Devil.

My Wolfe.

And I just *know*.

“I love you, Wolfe Nash,” I breathe, meaning it with every fiber of my being. Wolfe releases a heavy, pained breath. His

eyes dilate as he uses his possessive hold on my neck to tug me up to my feet. He cranes my head back, closing the few inches between our bodies and aligning us fully.

“I don’t know if I’m capable of love,” he says softly. “But what I feel for you is all-consuming obsession. Need. Desire. It’s everything. *You* are everything to me, and you will be until the day I die. If that’s what love is,” he exhales a ragged breath as he hovers his lips above mine, “Then I love you, Little Fox. More than life itself.”

And then—he’s kissing me. There, in the middle of the day, for anyone to see, with no masks or barriers between us, Wolfe Nash gives into his beast, his most primal urges, and claims me.

His prey.

His Little Fox.



Thank You

SO DAMN MUCH.

MY PA!!!

Brittany at Bound To Please PA....

You are EVERYTHING! I literally would die without you.

*I've said it before, I'll say it a hundred times over: THANK
YOU SO FUCKING MUCH.*

*You've been my biggest fan, cheerleader, reality check,
Alpha reader, PA, and so much more.*

ARCS & Street Team

Basically....My hype squad

*Thank you all so much for everything that you've done and
continue to do for me.*

*Whether you've been a part of my team since the beginning,
you're new to my team, or just here for this book....YOU
ROCK!*

*ARC's, Beta's, and Hype members are essential to our
careers as Authors.*

*You hold so much power in not only your opinions but your
voice as well.*

I adore and appreciate all of you more than you know!

My Mother-Fucking Readers

YOU-ARE-EVERYTHING!

About Author

BEX DAWN

*H*i there smut fan!
Welcome to my world.

My name is Bex, and I am a 30-something bibliophile from California. I own a beauty salon, five rescue animals, and a shit ton of books. I have been writing since I could hold a pencil. My mom used to love to tell stories about the “books” I would write as a child. I would apparently scribble nonsense on paper and then proceed to “read” my books to everyone who would listen. Not much has changed since other than the fact that I’ve changed out the pencil and paper for a fancy laptop.

Writing and creative arts have always held a place close to my heart, but it wasn’t until an extremely dark time in my life recently, that I really pushed myself to fulfill my lifelong dream of publishing.

In the darkest days of my life, books saved me. Other people’s written words dragged me out of my depression, kicking and screaming. And for that, I will forever be grateful.

My dream is that my words will have a similar impact on even one person out there.

So, here's to sexy, possessive, alpha holes and kinky fuckery!

Follow me on social media!

www.authorbexdawn.com

TikTok: @bexdawnwrites

Instagram: @bexdawnwrites

Amazon: Bex Dawn

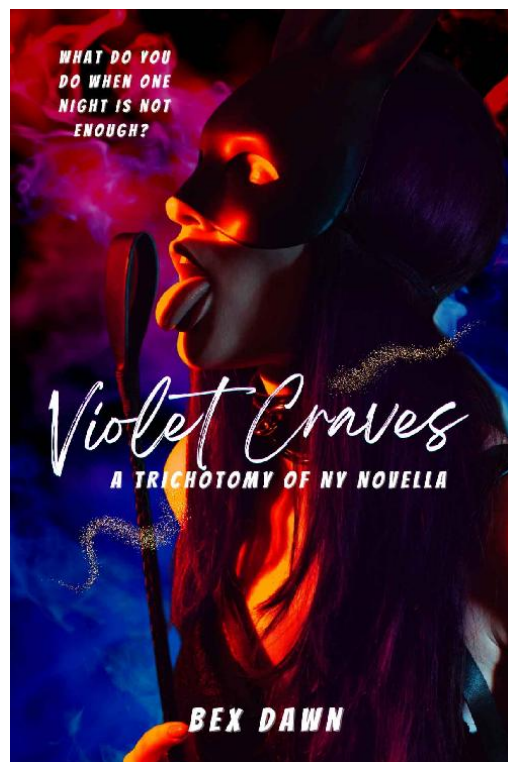
Facebook: Author Bex Dawn

Also By

BEX DAWN

Violet Craves

The Trichotomy of New York Prequel Novella



I walked in on my husband of six years as he cheated on me
with his business partner, Lucy.

Honestly, I wasn't even surprised that he was cheating.

He certainly wasn't giving it up to me.

No. I was surprised at *how* he was cheating.

He was giving this woman everything that I wanted.

Everything that I *craved*.

I walked out, filed for divorce, and packed my shit.

Moving to New York with my sister was supposed to be my
clean break, my fresh start.

I changed my appearance and my career.

I decided to write a book series.

My inspiration?

The three sexy as hell men who go to my gym.

They don't speak to me, I don't talk to them.

But we watch each other, for months.

Until one night, fate brings us together.

They know about my cravings and they want to satisfy me.

One night only, no names, no numbers.

But what happens when one night isn't enough?

Join Violet on her sexual journey of discovery and pleasure
and the three men who give it to her.

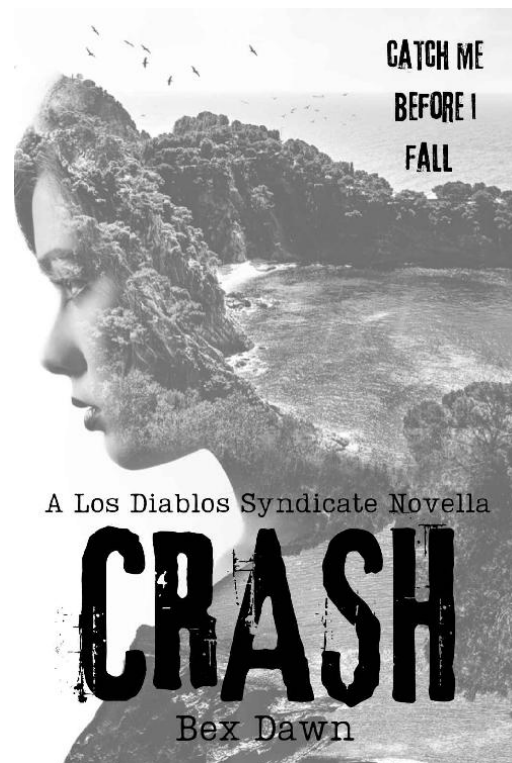
*This is a dirty, sexy, smutty novella with moments that are
downright depraved. Read at your own discretion and head
trigger warnings!

This is a Novella that kicks off the Interconnecting series, The
Trichotomy of New York.

To get a little taste of Renz and his boys, read The Los Diablos
Syndicate series beginning with *Crash*.

Crash

Los Diablos Syndicate Series Prequel Novella



“But God, those days when I would wake up to one of the more horrific nightmares, days that would leave me riddled with such pain, anger, and guilt. Days when not only the nightmares clung to me, but the memories I have worked so hard to bury, come out to play. They dance through my brain taunting me, reminding me of my worth, my brokenness, my failures. They follow me all day, leaving me in a fog of nothingness. Those days are the worst. They are days of choices. Choose to wrap my car around a tree, or not. To take too many of those sleeping pills or throw them all away. To slice, or not to slice. Days when I would do anything at all to make the pain stop. To physically remove the memories from my brain. There’s no other way to purge them from my system.

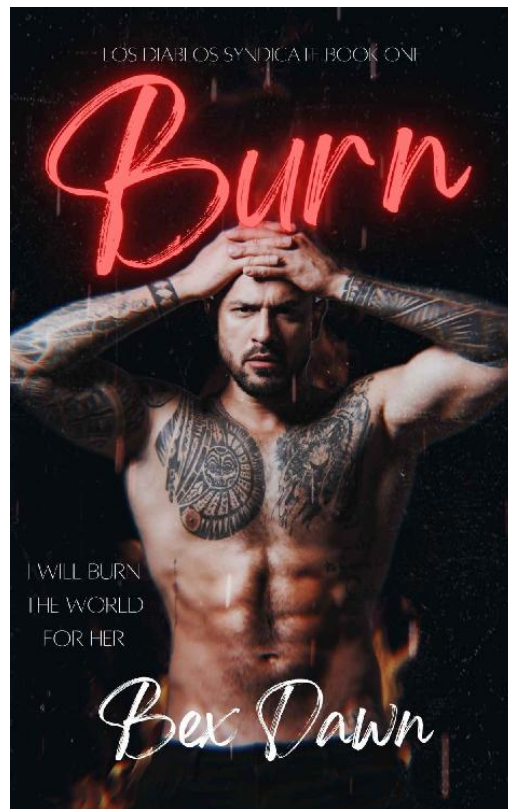
Today is a day of choices. To jump, or not to jump.”

This is the heartbreaking short story of Ella's struggles with her mental health, anxiety, and severe depression. She hits rock bottom, finds a lifeline, and fights tooth and nail to get better. Will she find her happily ever after?

This is a short Prequel/Novella that sets the reader up for the series, Los Diablos Syndicate. Please read this Novella FIRST, in order for the next book to make sense.

Burn

Los Diablos Syndicate Series Book One



Ella

Ever since that day on the bridge two years ago, I've done

everything in my power to change my life for the better. I have fought tooth and nail to climb out of the dark hole of depression that I had been living in. Finally, I found myself in a good place, until one day, I made a mistake that had repercussions I never saw coming.

I said yes.

Now, I'm once again in a difficult situation that I don't know how to escape. I'm alone, scared, and broken. I'm doing everything I can to hold onto the good pieces of my life, small as they may be. But what am I supposed to do when no matter how hard I fight, outside forces keep knocking me back down? How much worse can things get? And how and the world will I save myself this time when it's not me I'm fighting against? My ex is doing everything he can to destroy me and I have no idea how to escape to jerk. Until one day, I meet *him*, Gage Luna. He's gorgeous, powerful, domineering and he makes me feel things I've never felt before. He introduces me to a world I never knew existed. It's full of murder, mayhem, and his three hot as hell brothers.

Now torn between the demons of my past and the future that is begging for me to take it, I'm realizing there is no turning back from what's in front of me.

I want it, and I'm damn well going to take it.

Gage

She's unlike anyone I've ever met before. She's a stunning little hellion and she's got me in a chokehold.

From the moment I laid eyes on her, I knew she had the potential to bring me to my knees, and it seems my brother feels the same way.

We've allowed ourselves to get close to her and it's never something either of us thought we would do. We don't have relationships and women don't fit in with our insane lives. But I find that I'm drawn to her and no matter how much I tell myself that it's not a good idea, I can't seem to let her go.

Neither can Maddox.

Ella has secrets and it's clear as day that she's fighting a downhill battle. She has demons in her life that she's doing her best to hide, but when they come out and seek to destroy her, she can't keep her secret any longer.

She thinks she's alone in all of this. She thinks there is no one more powerful than her enemies.

The problem is, she has no idea who I really am. Who *we* are.

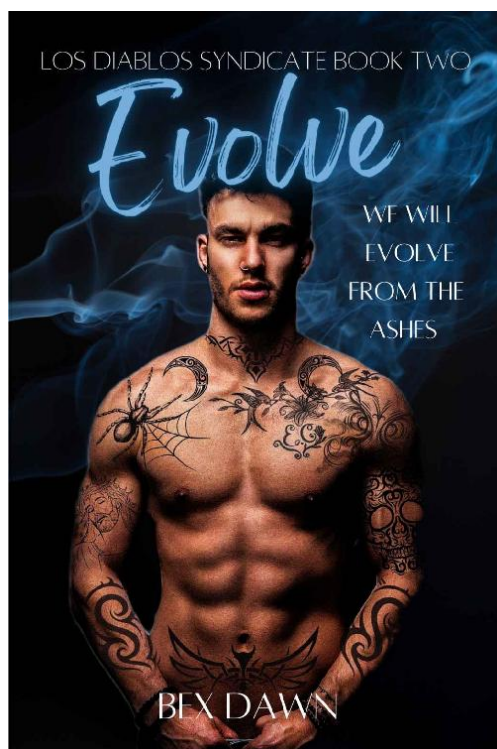
Maddox, my brother, and our two best friends, Stone and Nyxon and myself, are the biggest monsters out there. And now that we've got Ella in our lives, no one will touch her but

us.

We will burn the world for her.

Evolve

Los Diablos Syndicate Series Book Two



Ella

What do you do when everywhere you turn, your world is filled with secrets and lies?

When it feels like everyone you care about is hiding something for you, waiting for their opportunity to stab you in the back and betray you?

No, seriously, I'm asking. Because that's what my life feels like right now.

My roommate isn't who I thought she was. She went behind my back and betrayed me, cutting deeply.

My best friend abandoned me when I needed him the most and he refuses to tell me where he's been.

My boyfriend lied, cheated, and broke me in the worst way imaginable. He spilled his deep, dark secrets, thinking I would

be taking them with me to an early grave.

He left me for dead.

Unfortunately for him, I didn't only survive his brutal attack, but I remember every single word he said.

And the men who have bulldozed their way into my life. The ones who saved me, nursed me back to health, and have cared for me every step of the way.

Their deception somehow hurts the very worst.

Who am I supposed to trust now and what the hell am I supposed to do when I've got enemies coming at me from every direction?

The answer is simple.

Find the biggest monsters out there, and make them *mine*.

Maddox

I don't care what she thinks she's doing, but she's not going anywhere.

Over my dead damn body.

She's ours now.

She became ours when she walked into our business, our home, our lives.

The world of Los Diablos may be full of crime, murder, and mayhem, but it doesn't scare us.

We are bigger and badder than even her biggest nightmares and if slaying her demons is what it takes to keep her, then

we'll do it.

My brothers and I are ready to fight for her, even if it means
blowing up our own world in the process.

We will burn it all down for her, and evolve from the ashes.

Brass

Sons of Satan MC Book One



Welcome to the **Sons of Satan MC** where the sun always
shines and blood splatters frequently, especially by my hands.

My entire life I've been on the outside.

Unwanted. Unloved. Different. *Other.*

My mother always used to tell me that I was swapped at birth
with a demon. I grew up believing this to be true.

Why else would a boy's own mother treat them the way she
treated me? Why else would I grow up feeling the way I felt?

No, she had to be right.

There is no other explanation.

So, I decided to embrace the demon inside of me.

It took a long time until I was able to find a place where I fit
in. People who would accept me for me, demon and all.

Who knew that Orange County, California held all the answers
for me?

A home. A family. Brothers.

People who would die to protect me. People who don't look at
me like I'm unworthy. People who embrace all parts of me.

I finally found everything I had always wanted. They taught
me how to harness the crazy. How to accept not only my urges
but also myself.

It worked. I'm happy now and I've never once looked back.

The Sons of Satan are my life, my brothers, my everything and
I will never leave them. I don't need anything else but them,
my job, and my dungeon.

Or so I thought.

Until **she** walked into my life.

Trixie.

Big, crazy red hair and an even crazier mouth.

Trixie is everything I never knew I needed. She's a stripper.

A dancer. A vision.

And she's every bit as crazy as I am.

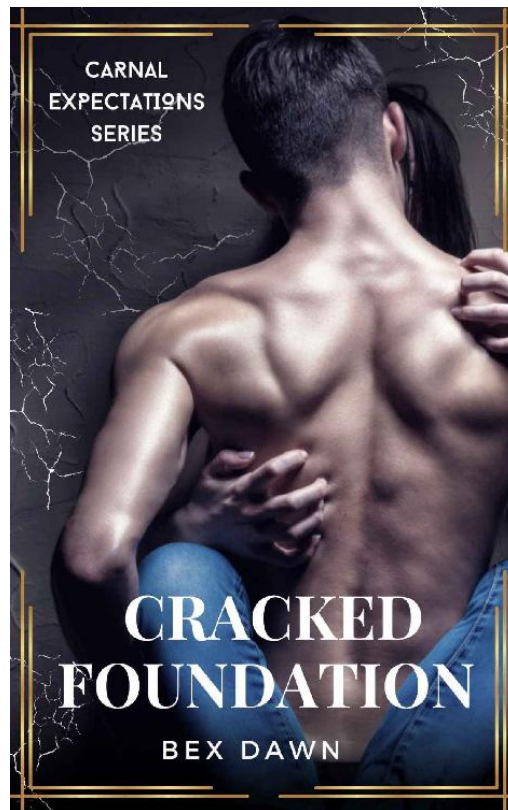
My name is Leon Ortiz but everyone calls me Brass.

I'm the Sergeant at Arms for the Sons of Satan MC.

*And I am a **psychopath**.*

Cracked Foundation

Carnal Expectations Novella Series



I had dreams.

Plans.

Things I had hoped to do, accomplish. No. More than hoped. I had expected.

Now, look at me. I'm nowhere near where I thought I would be. I am nothing like the person I dreamt I would become and the life, the *vision*, I had for myself, is dead.

As dead as my marriage.

As dead as a lot of things.

My name is Shiloh and the only thing I've ever wanted more than true love is a family. But now I'm a 33-year-old divorcee with no job, no prospects, and no babies.

Until *him*.....Logan.

A drunken night at a bar after being stood up, *again*, turns things around for me in more ways than one.

My grumpy new boss is an asshole with a short fuse, commitment issues, and a killer ass in faded blue jeans.

He hates everyone and everything, except me.

Logan doesn't just want to date me, he wants to keep me, love me, *breed me*.

The question is....

Can the perpetual single guy really fall for the girl who dreams of happily ever afters?

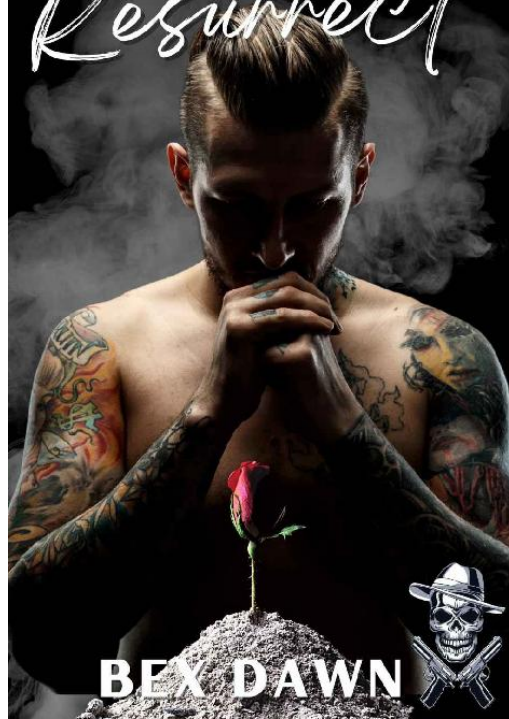
PREORDER HERE!

Resurrect

Los Diablos Syndicate Series Book Three

LOS DIABLOS SYNDICATE BOOK 3

Resurrect



BEX DAWN

