

THE LIES WE KEEP #3

A man with dark hair, wearing a black leather motorcycle jacket over a grey hoodie, is shown from the chest up. He is looking down and to the right with a serious expression, his hands near his chest. The background is dark with many small, bright white stars, suggesting a night sky or space. The overall mood is dramatic and intense.

# RECKLESSLY DAMAGED

A DARK REVERSE HAREM ROMANCE

STEPH MACCA

# Recklessly Damaged

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Steph Macca



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Thanks for Reading!

Author Note

The Lies We Keep #4

Other Books by Steph Macca

# Stalk the Author

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## Triggers and All Things Filthy

If you've made it to book 3, you know I'm twisted. And not just because I'm Australian.

Dark Romance is the God Tier of smut. We love our dark, wicked stuff. Nothing quite gets our hearts racing like dirty, hot smut with all the coatings.

That being said, I'm a good girl and I always seek consent beforehand.

Like the other books, the characters are toxic and morally grey, sprinkled with fuckery. There's hot-ass sex scenes, violence, blood and drama.

I'm sorry for what you are about to read, but let's be honest... you know what you're in for. And you love it!

Enjoy my perves x

Steph Macca



*To all the good girls who live vicariously through these  
books.*

*The ones who read about double penetration in public with  
a straight face.*

*And don't even bat an eyelash at someone's insides being  
rearranged by four guys at the same time.*

*This one is for you.*

# Chapter 1

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## Prologue

**L**ife is cruel all around.

There's no escaping it. It's a fact that you'll be shit on, even if you do everything right. The sad reality is eventually everyone becomes a villain. You can only take and take so much from someone before things reach the point of no return. Society is fueled by greed and even if you surround yourself with roses, someone will dump manure on them and taint it with shit. It's like that experiment where you put rotten fruit with good – no matter how fresh the good fruit is, the rotting flesh of the others will eventually consume it and turn it into one of its own.

Even with the seemingly best intentions, selfishness can drive a person mad. It can make them spiral, lose control...

*It can make them recklessly damaged.*

We are not all built the same, and not all storms are the same. Some people are on boats, some in canoes and some are already in the water being pulled under by the depths of the

watery hell below. And some... well some of us fuckers are on the goddamn Titanic.

My father's death broke me in a way I never knew possible. And instead of helping me pick up the broken pieces, I was seen as the outcast.

It went from '*that poor girl*' to '*she's out of control – how disgusting*'. No in between, no support ... just nothing.

People are quick to point fingers and judge. They are quick to label you and turn a blind eye to your pain if it means they don't have to face it themselves.

Maybe I could have escaped this hell long ago, if only someone had just cared.

I wanted to be normal. What I wouldn't give to have the pain go away, even just for a day. But the truth is the only time the pain ever goes away, is when I allow myself to spiral. It makes me feel alive and invincible, even though I know I'm not.

For the first time in my life, I found something that made me feel alive. Well, rather... some people.

The Taylor brothers made me feel alive. Sure... they made me angry too, but they also made me laugh.

And worst of all, they made me feel new emotions that I didn't think my cold, dead soul was capable of.

I wasn't ready to give all that up, even though I know it's wrong. Like *Sheryl Crow* said – if it makes you happy, it can't be that bad.

So many times the past few years I had thought about death. Not just my dad's, but my own too. In a few dark moments, I considered the possibility that I could end all the pain. But life can be such a beautiful thing.

The tree coming towards me was life's way of going full circle. The very thing that broke me with my dad's death, that I had tried so hard to fight and survive against, would be the thing that finally killed me.

Ironic.

A few months ago, I would have welcomed death with open arms, accepting it. But that was then, and this is now.

As my world went black and my body numb, all I could think was one thing...

*"Please don't let me die. I think I just finally found happiness and love..."*

## Chapter 2

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## Asher

**M**y mind is a dark void, wrapped in anger. Rylee's screams and pleas repeat in my head over and over. I can still hear the terror in her voice, almost see the tears in her eyes from the fear. But around that, I feel rage. It's burning me like an inferno. I want to protect her, I want to make those assholes suffer.

I'm torn between sheer gut-wrenching panic and murderous fury.

The bikes head straight for us, gaining speed as they drive away from the scene. My body instantly tenses up, fueled with blind, fucking rage. I want to kill them - make them hurt for what they have done to my family.

My knuckles grip the steering wheel so tight that they go pale white. My mind screams to swerve at them, to put them down like the fucking dogs they are.

There's no rational thoughts now, only the primal rage that demands retribution and revenge. Instinctively, my arms start

to move as they get closer. I wait, not wanting to give them any opportunity to dodge. I jerk the wheel, only to have Blake grab it and shove it back the other way.

My car fish-tails as I quickly rush to correct it. Just as I finally get full control, the sound of the bikes revving past the car reach my ears as they get away.

“What the fuck, Blake?!” I yell angrily.

“We need to get to Rylee,” he responds with a stern tone, but there’s a desperate underlining plea too. “Now is not the time to do anything harsh, Asher. Rylee comes first!”

Zayn’s hand on my shoulder gives a reassuring squeeze, a silent warning to calm down. I don’t say anything as Rylee’s face appears in my head, putting out the fire-like rage with the cold chill that sweeps through me. I’m terrified of what I’m going to find. Scared shitless that she’s hurt. Or worse...

I let out a rough breath, slamming on the brakes as I stop in line with a gap in the road barrier, the mangled metal a deadly reminder of the events that will now haunt my nightmares forever.

I jump out of the car quickly as my brothers follow close behind. Standing on the side of the road in the middle of the barrier wreckage is who I assume to be the truck driver Rylee was yelling about. The abandoned truck is stopped in the middle of the road as he yells down the phone, calling for an ambulance.

The three of us push past him, staring down the steep embankment. Shrubs and grass have been mowed down and knocked out of the way, a clear path leading right to the remains of Rylee's beloved car.

"Rylee!" I scream, the air whooshing out of my lungs as I stare in horror at the wheels of the Chevy, which are pointing towards the sky. The hood is warped around a tree trunk, broken glass everywhere as small puffs of smoke and steam billow from the wreck below.

"I'm going down," Zayn says, stepping off the road onto the top of the hill.

"I'm fucking going with you," I snap, launching off the side of the road. I nearly lose my step, just managing to catch myself before I go ass over head down the hill.

I hear two sets of footsteps on the ground behind me as the three of us carefully climb down the embankment towards Rylee's car. It's easily 50 feet off the road, a short distance in reality but fuck it feels like a life time before we start to reach the wreckage.

My heart is beating rapidly, and I blink back tears as we rush to get the Chevy.

I can't lose her... I just can't.

The three of us get to the car at the same time, instantly throwing ourselves onto the ground over broken glass and leaking oil. I can't feel any pain as shards start pushing into

my skin. I'm only focused on checking on Rylee and getting her out of there.

The driver's window is shattered, little pieces of glass still attached to the frame. Steam filters out through the gap, but through it, long blonde hair hangs lifelessly as Rylee sits upside down in the cabin, her seatbelt clinging to her torso and holding her in place.

"Fuck, Rylee!" Zayn yells, his hand finding the door handle and trying to give it a good pull. We watch as nothing happens, the crumpled frame making it impossible to open.

Blake shoves his hand through the broken window, his fingers brushing aside her hair to find her neck.

I wait with bated breath, for what seems like an eternity as we wait for him to speak. I even hold my breath, terrified that any noise will hinder him finding what we are all begging for.

"Blake!" I snap finally, staring at his blank face. My older brother was always too good at hiding his emotions, determined to take charge and keep us all in check. But this isn't the time for guessing games.

"She has a pulse," he finally says, and I breathe in relief.

Zayn, however, doesn't seem to have the same reaction. "But?" he asks, staring at Blake.

He looks over at us, his eyes starting to give away his thoughts as he struggles not to crack. "It's weak, really weak."

"What do you mean weak?" I urgently press.

Blake doesn't answer, instead staring up the hill to the truck driver who is pacing anxiously, looking down at us. I know Blake's looking for answers, checking to see if help has arrived.

But it's not here yet.

He doesn't need to say it. I can see it on his face.

*Rylee is going to die.*

"No..." I shove his arm out of the way, not caring that it gets pushed into the shards and cuts his forearm. I reach in, shoving Rylee's blonde hair back from her face so I can see her.

I just want her to look at me, give me a sign that she's okay. I'd give anything to hear some sarcastic comment slip from her lips or just say my name.

My fingers brush something wet and warm, and in my mind, I instantly realize my fingers are covered in blood. It's dripping down the side of her face and staining her light hair.

I can't get over how surreal the situation is. Her face looks so peaceful, her eyes closed as if she's just sleeping.

I was *only* just talking to her. I was only just connected with her... and now, here we are.

Rylee's arms dangle lifelessly by her head, her fingers grazing the roof. In the distance, the sound of sirens grows louder and for a brief moment, hope fills me.

“Ash, you’re going to have to move,” Zayn says, placing his hand over my arm. My fingers are still pressed against Rylee’s face, my eyes locked on her.

“No,” I growl, using my free hand to push him back.

Zayn wraps an arm around my chest, slowly moving me back. “I know, Ash. I know. But we need to let them in. They are the only ones who can help her.”

I look around wildly at his words, snapping out of my thoughts. Coming down the hill are several emergency workers. Flashing lights on the top of the hill illuminate behind them as they rush to reach us.

“I can’t leave her,” I slowly quiet, my voice breaking.

Blake grabs my arm, pulling it away from Rylee. “We know. We’re not going anywhere. We just need to give them some space. Come on, it’s all right.”

The two of them pull me back from the vehicle as the first responders arrive. They immediately start assessing her through the window and jiggling the door.

One of the rescue workers pulls Blake aside, gathering information while another starts pulling out tools.

The noise is deafening – the sound of tools whirling, paramedics talking to each other, sirens blaring from the top of the hill.

And all I can do is wait. Wait and pray to whoever the fuck will listen that they save my girl.

Because if anything happens to Rylee, I'm as good as dead.

Without her, I'm nothing.

## Chapter 3

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## Zayn

**H**ospitals can suck my perfectly symmetrical balls.

In any other situation, I would have refused to be here. I've hated hospitals ever since my mom went into one and never came back home. Even when I came off my motorcycle a few years ago and dislocated my shoulder, I refused to get checked. But I'm a problem solver. A frozen rag to bite down on and a twin brother who has no issue with giving me pain, and I was all fixed up.

Except the problem here is there's nothing I can do to fix the current situation.

The rescue crew managed to cut Rylee out of the car and get her into the back of an ambulance quickly. The three of us followed closely behind in the car since we wouldn't all fit in the ambulance. We silently decided it wasn't fair to let one go and not the others, as much as it pained us.

Personally, I would have let Ash go with her, but he's a ticking time bomb. And Blake... for once, I don't know what

he's even thinking. But we also need each other right now.

There's a foul lingering smell clinging around the hospital waiting room. It's some mixture of disinfectant, bodily fluids and the smell of death.

In the corner of the room there's a coffee machine that looks like it's been here since the 80s. I'm not entirely convinced that it's not a money gimmick designed to give people violent diarrhea so they can be shackled up with their loved ones for more financial benefit to the hospital.

I look over at my younger brother, who is rapidly pacing the room. "You're going to make yourself dizzy," I say, trying to keep a playful tone, even though inside I'm breaking down.

"I don't give a shit," Asher snaps back but reluctantly sits down in a nearby chair.

"Zayn's right," Blake chimes in. "Right now, the best thing we can do is look after ourselves while we wait."

Asher folds his arms, shaking his head. "I don't give a fuck about myself. I just want to know how she's doing. I won't be okay until she is."

In his defense, I agree with him. I don't care about anything else either. But I know this whole thing is out of our control. All we can do is wait and hope that she pulls through. So my job at the moment is to keep my brothers under control as best as possible. Asher is likely to go storming through the doors, demanding answers if we don't.

I stand up, walk over to Asher and sit down next to him. I give his shoulder a comforting squeeze, feeling him tense up beneath me.

“I get it, bro. She’s going to pull through. Then we’ll make those fuckers pay.”

Blake gives me a warning look but he can fuck right off. He can act all high and mighty but I know him, probably as well as he knows himself. People look at my twin and think he’s emotionless and poised, but the truth is, he is just a master of control.

He burns with the same rage as all the other Taylors, except he hides it the best. I will eat my own shit if for even a second he hasn’t thought about going after the Norsemen. He can pretend he’s above it all, but deep down, he’s probably already planned their painful deaths in at least four different ways.

Asher nods at my words, but his face is tight as he fights back the undeniable devastation inside. I’ve known from the moment we came back that he had it bad for her but I guess I never really thought about it until now.

Asher is head over heels in *love* with Rylee - the kind you see in shitty romance movies. Except, Asher has a temper instead of a romantic edge. He’s likely to do something stupid because of it.

I get it though. Rylee is out of this world unique. Most girls throw themselves at our feet - not her. She’d rather crush our souls with her fiery attitude and stand in front of us.

And God fucking damnit, I'd let her.

I've fallen for her hard. She's constantly in my mind, taunting and challenging me. It's hard to imagine that the girl we all adore so much is lying somewhere helpless.

Because we couldn't protect her like I promised myself I would.

The waiting room doors open, a gust of wind coming in. I look up, not surprised by the new arrivals, but that doesn't stop Asher jumping out of his seat and cursing.

"What the fuck are you doing here?" he snaps, staring at the three tall men.

"Ash," I start, letting my tone tell him to take it down a notch.

Butch ignores him, heading over to me. I stand to greet him, but I'm not a fucking gentleman and neither are they. I shove my hands into my pockets and just give a simple nod in acknowledgement.

"Thanks for contacting us," Butch says, ignoring the glares from Asher.

Blake looks at me accusingly but I shrug it off. They might be our rivals, but I'm willing to put everything aside right now for Rylee. These are the people who looked out for her when no one else did. They are her best friends, and truthfully, the only ones who can really help us right now.

"You called them?" Asher spits out.

I nod. “Yes. Calm down, little brother. Rylee needs all the support and help right now. You know that, as well as I do.”

He scoffs in reply but shuts up. The middle guy leans against the wall, his face a look of deep concern.

“How is she?”

I swing my gaze over to him, looking at him up and down. I don’t trust them but I trust Rylee.

“We don’t know yet,” I quietly say, a little worried that Asher will start an all out brawl in the waiting room if he gets triggered.

Blake stands and walks over next to me. He tips his chin at the guy.

“Vito, right?”

The man nods in agreement, all of us just recently have met, giving him a tight smile. “That’s right. And Chuck,” he says, nodding towards their third hanging behind them.

My eyes filter over the dark haired man. I don’t know much about him, other than the fact he and Rylee were fucking. I don’t really like that he ran away with her or that he’s been inside of her. But I’ll let it go if it makes her happy.

I don’t mind sharing with my brothers because fuck, that’s what siblings do; they share shit. Usually toys and clothes instead of girls, but we’ve never been the stereotypical types.

Chuck is staring darkly at Asher, and I have no doubt in mind that Ash is probably having similar thoughts to me. But

it's not the time to go all caveman ape-shit. If Rylee gets out of this, she will have our necks if we cause any problems.

“What happened to Lee?” Butch asks, folding his arms.

Blake, in a blatant attempt to take charge, interjects the conversation, cutting me off. He tells the three Rebels about Rylee's phone call and the accident. As he continues explaining the situation, their faces get darker and darker, a familiar rage burning in their eyes. It's amazing how something can turn rivals into allies, especially when it's in the form of another rival. I guess that's the thing about making enemies. You shouldn't do it to people who might end up banding together for your sweet demise.

“We have to do something about this,” I say when Blake finishes bringing them up to speed.

“Agreed,” Chuck mutters aggressively.

Butch nods. “I'll let our prez know. I suspect the Norsemen won't hesitate to start attacking. I hope you're prepared for that, because we're not going to have your back if it's going to put us at risk. We will do whatever possible to protect Rylee because she's our friend but you're not one of us.”

“That's fine,” I hit back, rolling my eyes. “We don't need your protection. We're more than capable of managing on our own.”

“Are you though?” Chuck says sharply. “Because she's been in your care for all of five minutes, and now she's in a hospital bed because you couldn't manage your shit.”

Asher barges through Blake and I, heading straight for the Rebels. “Watch your fucking mouth. At least we didn’t abandon her.”

“Didn’t you though?” Butch responds coolly. “Because it seems to me you did exactly that. You can’t even control yourself, let alone handle big boy business.”

“You fucking cunt-”

I grab Asher’s arm and pull him back. “Asher, sit the hell down,” I order, noting a nurse behind the reception desk, looking at us wearily with her hand perched on the phone. The last thing we need is the police to turn up right now. I’m surprised they haven’t yet, given the accident.

Blake takes a step forward. “We’re here for one reason, and one reason only. This whole situation that’s brewing in the background is bigger than all of us. And right now, someone we all care about paid the price because of it. Let’s be honest, the Norsemen are not targeting her just because of some stupid poker game. It’s more than that now. All of us,” he motions around the room, “are the reason she’s hurt right now. They are trying to prove a point. Standing here arguing is not going to help.”

He shoots Asher a look, making the youngest Taylor turn away in disgust. I clear my throat, grabbing everyone’s attention.

“Blake’s right. This is getting out of control. The Norsemen know who we all are and they are using that to their advantage. We need a plan.”

The three men in front of me nod in agreement. Before anyone else can speak, the door next to reception opens, revealing a doctor in scrubs.

“Are you here for Rylee Selwood?” he says, looking at all six of us.

“Yes,” we all say simultaneously.

The doctor pulls down his mask, giving us all a cold look. His salt and pepper hair and wrinkled face tells me that he’s seen all kinds of bullshit in this hospital. He’s not the slightest bit intimidated by us. In fact, if anything, he looks pissed off and judgmental as hell.

“Ms. Selwood is in recovery at the moment. We had to rush her in for emergency surgery due to the nature of her injuries. She had some internal bleeding which we successfully stopped during an emergency laparoscopy. It’s likely she also has a concussion as well. Her heart was weak when she arrived, but we ordered a blood transfusion which stabilized her. All in all, she is one lucky girl. With the information provided to us by the paramedics, it’s a miracle she survived the accident, let alone with minimal significant injuries.”

The six of us stay silent, his words cutting into me like a knife. I’m beyond relieved to hear she’s alright, but knowing she was so close to death, pains me deeply.

“When can we see her?” I ask.

The doctor turns his attention to me. “She needs a few hours in recovery before she is taken to the ward. At this stage, she



doesn't require the ICU, but we will be monitoring her closely. As long as she remains stable, you can see her when she is taken from recovery."

"Thank you," Blake says, putting a hand on Asher's shoulder.

The doctor doesn't say anything further, his eyes expressing his inner thoughts as he glances over all of us once more before turning and exiting the room.

You can cut the tension with a knife in the waiting room, as we all stand looking at his retreating figure.

None of us will rest until we see our girl awake and safe. And so, the wait continues.

## Chapter 4

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## Rylee

**T**his must be Hell.

I'm not naive enough to believe I would actually make it into Heaven. All the bad and stupid stuff I've done over the years has surely put a few crosses against my name. So, I must be on my way to meet Lucifer. As long as he looks like Tom Ellis, I can deal with it. It's honestly the only explanation as to why it feels like my body has been stabbed with a thousand knives and smashed with a meat tenderizer.

Light burns as I pry my opens eyes, whining as the brightness causes my head to throb. It takes a few seconds before things come into focus, and for a brief period, I'm left in utter confusion.

This is a hospital room. Not the fiery pits below ready to consume my black soul with a good-looking English man.

I'm so bewildered by the mere fact that I'm alive, that I don't even notice the nurse next to me, tugging on a blood pressure cuff.

“Oh, good. You’re awake.”

I jump slightly, my neck letting out a crack as I whip my head violently to my left. I groan, blinking at the nurse in blue scrubs, watching as she presses some buttons on a machine.

“The cuff is about to inflat. Keep your arm still, sweetheart.”

“Are you even real?” I ask in disbelief.

She lets out a small chuckle, grabbing a chart and begins making some notes. “I sure hope so. Otherwise we’re both in trouble.”

I let out a small hiss as the cuff reaches it’s squeezing peak, cutting off the circulation in my arm before deflating quickly. “Sorry. I’m just ... not really with it.”

“That’s understandable,” she says, taking the cuff off me. “How do you feel?”

Her words prompt me to focus on my body, and instantly I feel the pain all over again.

“I’m really sore.”

The nurse nods, pulling a portable IV machine closer to the bed. “Now that you’re awake, we can get you started on some pain relief. Have you used a PCA machine before?”

She hands me a button, a long cord between it and the machine. She doesn’t wait for me to answer, instead launching into a perfect speech about timers and self-administering pain relief that she’s obviously given countless times.

“Click it whenever you need. The machine resets every fifteen minutes. If your pain is not completely under control within an hour, let me know and we can adjust the time or dose.”

I give the button a hesitant click, hearing the machine whirl, followed by the rush of cool liquid into the canula that’s sticking out of the top of my hand. It doesn’t do much yet, but I make a mental note of the countdown timer, so I can hit it again when it reaches zero.

“How am I even alive?” I blurt out under my breath.

The nurse puts my chart in the holder at the end of the bed before giving me a soft smile. “Life acts in funny ways. But it’s a good thing you’re alright. You seem to have a lot of people that care about you.”

That’s news to me. All I’ve done is continuously fuck up all my relationships. Making stupid decisions is becoming a hobby of mine, and part of me wonders if this is the wake up call I need to get my life back on track.

I don’t voice those thoughts, obviously. The last thing I need is yet another person giving me some pitying look. “What do you mean?” I ask instead.

“You have a group of people who have been waiting for you to wake up. Interesting bunch,” she responds, the last bit like an afterthought that slipped out.

“I do?”

She laughs. “Yes. I’ll let them know they can come in. They might have to take in turns though. Is there anyone you want to see first, or should we let them work it out?”

I run through the list of possibilities. Asher, Zayn and Blake pop into my mind first, followed by my mother. But that would involve her leaving her beloved ranch. God, the last thing I need right now is a lecture from her since she assumes I’m still in Rosevale. She’ll give me some huge guilt trip about coming home, spinning some crap about how could I do it and not tell her, followed by a triumphant motion that I failed in my mission to run away from home.

Maybe it’s my old roommates. Or Phoebe if she’s back from Hawaii.

I look over the nurse, who is waiting on me. I shrug at her. “Up to them, I guess.”

She nods before heading out of the room, and I’m left guessing as to who will come through the door.

I’m not left waiting for long as heavy footsteps approach outside, briefly pausing outside the closed door. I stare at it before it’s suddenly opened with a force, making me jump.

“Rylee.”

My heart does some weird flutter as I stare at the brunette with a surprised look. I pretend it’s the drugs kicking in finally, but I’m still hurting like a bitch.

“Asher,” I mumble, watching his face sag in relief as he rushes into the room.

The door starts to close behind him, but before it can latch, it's pushed open again and I gaze at Zayn and Blake as they stroll in. Their faces match Asher's and despite my best efforts, I'm so overcome with emotion that I just burst into tears.

"Fuck," I mumble through shaky sobs, trying to hide my face as I quickly wipe away tears.

"Hey, pretty girl. Come on now, none of that," Zayn says, moving to the side of the bed and pulling my head against his abdomen.

Asher stands on the other side of the bed opposite Zayn, while Blake takes a spot at the end. They all look at me carefully, concern etched over their faces and I'm not sure if it's because I was in a car accident, or because I'm crying uncharacteristically like baby.

"It's the drugs," I sniffle, waving my hand carelessly at the PCA machine.

The machine beeps, making us all look. I'm relieved to see the timer back at zero so I fumble around for the button, pressing it.

"They have you on some good stuff," Zayn laughs, breaking the tension as he flicks the plastic bag on top of the machine.

I'm grateful for the light-hearted distraction, nodding. "Yeah. It's not working yet, though."

"It takes a bit of time to build up," Blake replies.

“That’s what the nurse said,” I respond, giving him a small smile. It’s still in the back of my mind that the whole reason I even left the house in the first place was because I was so torn up by the fact I kissed him. I have to wonder if Zayn or Asher know, but it’s not the time to bring it up. I’m not sure I’m ready to have that conversation now... if ever. Maybe we can just pretend it never happened.

I force myself to look away from Blake, scared if I stare too long they will all suspect something is up. I glance over at Asher, taken back by how quiet he is for once. “Ash?”

Asher lets out a ragged breath, slouching over as he hangs his head. “Fuck, Rylee. You have no idea how worried I’ve been.”

“I’m sorry.”

He looks at up, his eyes widening in disbelief. “You’re sorry? You’ve done nothing wrong. It’s those fucking bastards.”

Even though I know he’s right, I still hang my head in shame. “I shouldn’t have left the house. It’s my fault they saw me.”

“Fuck off. It’s not your fault those unhinged assholes did this. Don’t you dare take any blame,” Blake cuts in.

I nod to appease them, but in honesty, I’m still beating myself up. It was a stupid decision, one I have to live with now.



“Is the Chevy gone?” I ask finally, but the answer is perfectly clear.

“Sorry, Rylee,” Asher says, reaching to grab my hand gently. His fingers gently caress over the top of the IV canula. “She’s a write-off.”

Fresh tears slip out, but at least I manage to stay silent this time. The most important piece of my dad is gone forever. It was the only thing I had left to remember him by and now it’s gone for good, just like him.

Asher brushes some loose strands of hair away from my face. “I’m sorry,” he says again.

“It’s fine,” I mutter. “It’s just a car.”

The three of them shift awkwardly, the entire room knowing that the Chevy was not *just* a car. No one says anything, and soon enough, the PCA machine beeps again. I hastily press for more painkillers, desperate to numb both my body and my mind. Everything is too painful and I don’t know if it’s my body or my mind that’s in more agony right now.

The third dose of morphine must have started to do the trick as before I know it, I’ve dozed off into a world of nightmares involving the sound of screeching metal and breaking glass.



“You need to stop pressing the button whilst she’s asleep.”

“No.”

“I’m serious. If you don’t obey our instructions, we will have you removed from the hospital.”

“I’d like to see you fucking try.”

Arguing continues, bringing me out of my slumber. I’m drowsy as fuck, my vision a mess as I squint to find out what’s going on.

“What are you yelling about?” I slur, rubbing my eyes.

The voices die down. I push myself more upright on the bed, leaning back against a pillow. The new angle helps with the dizziness and I look around to find Asher standing by the PCA machine with the button in his hand, glaring daggers at the doctor in the doorway. The twins are nowhere to be seen but I’m able to piece together what’s going on.

“Ms. Selwood, please ask your friend to stop interfering with medical equipment and treatment,” the doctor hisses at me sternly.

I look over at Asher, who scowls at him. “I’m doing it for her benefit. How will she keep on top of the pain if it’s not being administered regularly?”

“The patient needs to control it herself, based on *her* pain level. You cannot know this and you don’t want to make her too drowsy. We need to be able to assess her, particularly in a coherent state.”

“Asher,” I say, cutting off the steaming brunette. I can see more swear words forming on his lips and the last thing I need is him kicked out. “It’s okay.”

The doctor raises an eyebrow at him before exiting the room, leaving us alone. I can see the faint victorious tug of his lips but the moment he's out of view, Asher clicks the button repeatedly.

"The timer isn't ready yet," I muse.

Asher sighs, sitting down in a seat next to me. "I just don't want you to be in pain."

"I appreciate that, but I'm okay. I'm alive and that's all that matters right now," I comfort him, reaching for his hand. He brings it within my reach willingly, letting our fingers entwine.

"I was so fucking scared. You have no idea. We found you in the car. I thought you were ... you looked... anyway," he trails off, lowering his head. "Rylee, I can't lose you. *We* can't lose you."

I smile softly at him in a bid to reassure him. His words hit me hard though, weakening that spot inside me. "I'm not going anywhere. Besides I remember everything. You answered when I needed you. You found me. It's because of you guys that I'm alive."

"Hm."

Shaking my head, I give his hand a little squeeze as I adjust my sitting position. I'm no longer physically sore, thanks to the painkillers. Or should I say, thanks to Asher's insistent need to push the drug button despite getting his ass scolded by the doctor.

"Where's Zayn and Blake?" I ask, changing the subject.

Asher looks towards the door, his face tight with disdain. “They went to speak to their president about the situation.”

I’m taken back by his blunt honesty, the reminder of the twins’ rebellious activities washing away any drowsiness. “Oh.”

“Yeah. They will be back soon. They haven’t wanted to leave your side, but time is of the essence. It’s probably only a matter of time before those assholes try something else and we want to be ready for them. Your little buddies are also looking into it.”

My ears perk up. “Butch?”

Asher nods, his face darkening. “Zayn called them. They were here when you were in surgery. He’s been keeping them in the loop.”

He rolls his eyes at this and a snort breaks out before I can control it. Asher glares at me, but then his words trigger something in my mind.

“They?”

“Yep, the three of them.”

My eyes widen as I stiffen up straighter. “Who?”

Asher sighs again. “Butch, Vito and your little boyfriend.”

“Chuck was here?”

I can see the hurt in his eyes but he doesn’t say anything to my surprise. He merely nods, releasing my hand as he folds his arms and looks away. I expected him to make some snide

remark or get angry, but I guess we are all growing in our own ways.

The two of us fall into silence. We're comfortable in each other's presence, but yet there's miles between us now. We're stuck at a crossroads, torn by decisions that eventually need to be made.

I just hope I can fix it.

## Chapter 5

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## Rylee

**A**fter getting stabbed multiple times and forced into giant metal tubes, I'm finally given the green light to leave this shithole. It's been a week, but if I'm being honest, it feels more like a year.

I'm completely supportive of hospitals, but if I have to eat another soggy turkey sandwich or some brick that pretends to be meatloaf, I'm going to projectile vomit like the girl from *'The Exorcist'* all over these walls.

The three guys have been amazing the past few days, constantly checking on me and helping whenever they could. They have also assured me that my mother doesn't know about the accident, which helps. I do feel extremely guilty about her not knowing, but I also cannot deal with the questions and accusations that would come with it. Just once I wish she'd see me as her daughter, and not as a problem that needs fixing.

I don't think she's ever understood the whole situation with losing dad. I know she grieved him too, but the reality is she

wasn't there. Her grief is different to mine, and while hers is not any less significant than my own, I have to live with the constant reminder in my mind of his final moments. I grieved his death and accepted it a long time ago, but I still hold the trauma inside. I'm not sure I'll ever heal from it, certainly not now that I'm recovering from another serious car accident.

My nightmares are getting worse; a mixture of the one with my dad, and flashbacks of being chased by bikes. Sometimes my mind changes things up and I dream of dad being chased by bikes, and Leo's face sneering at me as he stands over dad's body.

I'm too terrified to tell anyone of the nightmares, scared of receiving pity. I don't want sleeping pills or to be forced to see a therapist. I'm just hoping that with time, my mind will heal enough for me to function and that I'll stop feeling like an exhausted zombie all day, every day.

I wave goodbye to the staff at the nurses station as I walk out of the hospital with Asher, Blake and Zayn. I still haven't seen Butch, Chuck or Vito, but Zayn has been kind enough to let me text them from his phone. They have promised to come see me one day soon at home.

Blake has been in touch with the local towing company to try to see if he can retrieve my belongings from the Chevy. I can't bring myself to do it or see the car. I have a suspicion my phone is probably fried though. That's if they manage to find it. For all I know, it's stuck in a tree somewhere.



“Of course, it’s raining,” I say as we step outside the hospital doors.

The sky is light grey with small rumbles of thunder as massive pellets of rain hammer down. I wrap my arms around myself as I start to shiver from the cold breeze that’s accompanying it. I feel a jacket get draped on my shoulders and look over to find Blake. His leather jacket hugs my body and I smile as I pull it around me.

“Thanks.”

“Don’t mention it,” he says dismissively as he steps out into the rain.

Asher moves closer to my side. “Wait here while he gets the car. We don’t want you to get sick.”

“It’s just rain,” I argue but Zayn readjusts the jacket on my shoulders, making me slip it on properly.

“Ssh. Do as you’re told for once, pretty girl,” he lectures, zipping up the jacket.

I look like a child who’s raided their parents’ closet in the oversized material. I roll my eyes at him, unable to stop the grin forming on my face.

We don’t have to wait long as Blake pulls up in Asher’s car. Asher steps forward, opening the back door for me and as I lift my foot, I suddenly find myself paralyzed.

Zayn stops himself next to me, looking at me questioningly. At the car, Asher does the same, confusion on his face.

“What’s wrong?” he asks, rain drenching his hair and body.

“I... I....”

Blake rolls down the window, looking at me attentively. After a few seconds, he unclips his seatbelt and gets out of the car, walking to stand in front of me.

“Rylee,” he draws out, his hands gripping my shoulders. “Look at me.”

I obey him, my eyes wide as I stare back at him in panic. His eyes search my face, but he already knows.

*He always does.*

“It’s okay,” he says in a soothing voice, rubbing the tops of my arms through the jacket. “You’re completely safe. It’s just a short drive home.”

Zayn and Asher huddle around me, their faces wearing matching expressions of concern. I shake my head.

“I don’t want to get in the car. I’ll walk,” I respond with desperation.

I feel someone grab my hand and I look at Zayn, his light eyes softening as his expression changes to one of calm and relaxed.

“I’ll be in the back with you the whole time, baby girl. Nothing can hurt you. It’s only a ten minute drive.”

Despite the fact I want to argue, my fear gripping me in place, it’s their drenched bodies in the rain that give me the strength to move towards the car. I hurriedly slip into the back

seat before I can change my mind, holding my breath as they clamber in after me.

Zayn moves into place beside me, buckling me into the middle seat, whilst Blake gets back into the driver's seat. A warm hand holds mine as the car moves off and I do my best to compose myself.

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

Asher turns in the passenger seat to watch me. "You've got this, Rylee."

I give a curt nod in acknowledgement, but it feels like my throat is closed up. All I can do is look at the passing streets, mentally calculating in my mind how far it is to go. Maybe drugs wouldn't have been such a bad idea, after all.

Finally, we pull into the driveway and I suck in air, my body visibly relaxing and slumping in the seat. Zayn gives me another little squeeze as Blake parks the car close to the steps in front of the house.

"Let's get you into bed to rest," Blake says, turning the car off.

"All I've done is rest for the past few days. I don't want to lay down," I respond.

He scoffs. "Too bad."

Zayn helps me from the back of the car, holding onto me as we quickly climb the slippery steps and head inside the house. Everything is exactly the same, yet it feels almost different.

There's a silence lingering in the house, broken by our footsteps and suddenly I'm bombarded with memories of everything that happened before the accident. The threesome in Asher's mancave, kissing Blake in my bedroom...

The boys head towards the stairs but I try to divert to the kitchen, desperate for real food. I complain as someone lifts me bridal-style.

"Hey!"

"Nope. Get the fuck into bed."

I growl at Asher, shoving my hand weakly against his chest. "I just want food. I'm not going out to run a marathon."

"Good to see your attitude is improving," Blake says from somewhere behind.

I'm already growing frustrated at their possessiveness, but I have to admit, part of me likes it. I definitely need drugs.

"I don't need you three to baby me," I retort.

"Apparently you do," Asher replies dryly. "Because otherwise you're going to injure yourself further."

We reach the top of the stairs and I expect Asher to take me to my bedroom, but instead he turns in the opposite direction of my door and opens his.

"What are you doing?" I ask.

"Putting you somewhere where I can keep an eye on you."

I try to look behind me to Zayn and Blake, hoping for some support. "Guys?"

Zayn grins at me, making my stomach sink in defeat. “Sorry, baby girl. Those are the rules. Besides you like Ash’s bed, don’t you?”

“I’m going to throw my shoe at you.”

He laughs, standing at the end of the bed with Blake as Asher lowers me onto the mattress like I’m some fucking invalid. Before I can give them a piece of my mind, Blake cuts me off.

“What would you like to eat?”

It’s music to my ears. I’m annoyed at them, but food is life.

“I want a cheeseburger... and a brownie.”

Blake raises an eyebrow at me as we share a look. I’m not insinuating a pot brownie - I just have a craving for chocolate. But I also wouldn’t say no to the last of my special sweets in my bedroom.

“Zayn, go fetch her a cheeseburger,” he commands.

His twin looks at him incredulously. “I’m not your dog, B. Why don’t you get it?”

I’ve rarely seen the twins have any hostile interactions so it’s amusing. But still... it’s delaying the food.

“I can get it,” I offer.

“Stay.”

The three of them glare at me in unison and I roll my eyes, letting myself sink into Asher’s silky pillow.

“Well someone needs to feed us and you three are as useless as a wet paper bag.”

I'm met with three different expressions - offence, amusement and annoyance. Asher turns to Zayn, crossing his arms. “Get her painkillers too. She's getting cranky and needs to mellow the fuck out.”

“You can't just drug me to shut me up,” I snap.

Asher glowers at me. “Well the other way I would normally do it is off the cards at the moment.”

My mouth pops open, ready to fire a reply back when his message hits me. Instantly, I close my mouth, looking away as my cheeks turn pink. Normally I don't get awkward off such trivial things. But then again, I'm hot for all three of them and they all happen to be related. It makes for awkward dinner conversations sometimes.

Zayn holds his hands up in defeat. “I'll be back. But if you two fuckers think I'm feeding you too, you are sadly mistaken.”

He stalks out of the room, throwing me a wink before disappearing from view.

Asher stands from the bed. “I'm going to grab the rest of your stuff. I'll be back.”

I'm thrown off as he leans down and places a gentle kiss to my forehead. I'm still in shock as he leaves the room, making me wonder if the concussion is causing me to hallucinate.

Shaking my head, I look at the last of the brothers, noting Blake is watching me closely with a blank expression.

“What?” I finally ask, caving under his examination.

“Nothing.”

“Don’t bullshit me, Blake.”

He pulls a look of annoyance and disgust. “Just get some sleep after you eat. You need to rest.”

The rain is starting to ease outside, but the storm is building inside me. I’m sick of these hot and cold games. Maybe it’s the pain making me snappy or the near death experience making me brave, but I’m too restless to deal with any level of bullshit right now.

“Yeah, whatever,” I snipe at him sarcastically.

It gets the reaction I expected, his eyes firing up as he glares down at me.

“You’re such a brat, Rylee. A pain in the ass.”

“So you’ve said before,” I point out. “But it takes one to know one.”

“Real mature. Just because you’re injured doesn’t give you the right to be a raging bitch,” Blake says coolly, and I want to smack him in the face.

I sit up, trying to look as intimidating as possible, which is damn hard when you are confined to your stepbrother’s bed. “You know, I thought we were getting somewhere. But you’re

still just an asshole who is acting like you are only here because it's your brotherly job."

Anger crosses Blake's face and he heatedly walks over to the side of the bed, leaning down over me.

"I am not here just for *civil duty*, Rylee. Quit the 'pick me girl' attitude and grow up. None of us are here just because we feel obligated. We're here because we care about you," he says in a sharp tone.

My little bubble bursts and I look away. "Then why did you walk away from me?" I ask quietly.

Blake falls quiet, and I know he knows what I'm asking. It's been weighing on my mind for days, fueling my anxiety and shitty self-worth. I just feel like I need answers, even though he technically already gave it to me.

"I told you. I don't want to do that. And you shouldn't either. I'm willing to forget it happened if you are. But if you're going to keep bringing it up and making it an issue, I'll stay away. We don't need the drama."

My head whips towards him, hurt filling me. "That's what you think of me, is it? Drama llama? God, I can't believe for even a second, I thought we could have some civil relationship. But I'm never going to be good enough for you, am I? Not as a sister or as a person. Nothing."

An unfamiliar expression flashes across his face, almost like a look of pain in his eyes. Before he can respond, Asher walks in, carrying a bag.



“The weather is forecast to be stinking hot tomorrow. It’s really humid outside now that the rain has fucked off.”

Blake takes a step back, turning to Asher. “Stay here with Rylee. I have to go take care of something.”

Asher nods in reply, too dense at the moment to feel the tension in the room. I watch Blake leave, immediate guilt wrecking my mind.

I’ve just fucked it up again.

## Chapter 6

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## Blake

*O*ne... two... three... four.

I count the stairs as I stomp down them, trying to center myself. My fists are curled by my sides, my knuckles cracking slightly as I tighten the joints.

*Seven... eight... nine... ten.*

Zayn is prancing around the kitchen when I enter, his cell on the counter as his Spotify tunes play. It reeks of onion and garlic in here, the pan on the stove sizzling. He did always like to cook, ever since we were kids. He's gotten a bit lazy these days, especially when it was just us on our own. But I guess now that we are home again, he's back in his element. Especially since he can use his skills to impress Rylee. At least, other skills that don't involve whipping out his dick.

I rip open the fridge, grabbing a beer. The noise prompts Zayn to turn to face me, a grin on his stupid face.

"It's barely lunchtime, B. Really?"

"I don't give a shit," I reply, twisting the top off.

Zayn laughs. *Prick.*

“Whatever you say. She’s already getting to you, ay?”

I stiffen. “I don’t know what you are talking about.”

“Sure you don’t,” Zayn replies tauntingly. “So we’re just going to pretend that nothing happened.”

I grind my teeth. I know Zayn and what he’s trying to do. He’s trying to trap me or get me to confess something. The asshole wants to call my bluff, pretending he knows which cards are in my hand.

“You’re spewing shit again,” I say dryly, reaching for his phone and turning down the music. I don’t mind *Neffex* but you can only listen to *Rumors* so many times before you want to gauge your eyes out.

Zayn pulls a plate out of the cupboard before using a spatula to flip the patty in the pan. “You know you shouldn’t avoid emotion. It bottles up and comes out as shitty words.”

“You’re one to talk,” I argue.

Everyone thinks Zayn is carefree and collected, like a happy little puppy dog. And he is for the most part; mainly because he avoids any type of angry emotion. Sure, it’s great to be positive all the time, but anger is a normal human emotion, and eventually if you hold it in long enough, you’ll crack.

I’ve seen him reach his boiling point only twice - once when mom died and then after we ran away. And if he thinks he’s fooling me that he’s not feeling some type of pent up rage over what happened to Rylee, he’s a dickhead.

“What do you mean by that?” he asks lazily, shoving a piece of cheese in his mouth.

“You’ve been awfully quiet about the whole situation,” I point out.

Zayn shrugs. “We’ll get the fuckers. No big deal. Besides it will be nice to have someone to cuddle again.”

He’s deflecting, trying to get me jealous or riled up. In so many ways, we are very similar. We just handle things differently. But on the same token, we can be lightyears apart.

“You’ll have to share with Asher.”

He laughs in response, heading to the fridge to grab a beer for himself. “I don’t mind sharing.”

“So I’ve heard,” I say through clenched teeth.

My control is starting to slip a little, but then again, Zayn is the only one I’ve ever felt comfortable being open with. Not really because he’s my twin, but mainly because he already knows what I’m thinking anyway. It’s both a pro and a con of being a twin.

“Hmm,” Zayn hums, taking a sip of beer. “But I guess sharing isn’t your forte?”

I sigh. “Stop fishing, Zayn. I’m not in the mood.”

“Oh, please. Spare me the theatrics, brother. I’m not stupid. I already know something happened between you pair.”

He can’t possibly know that. We tell each other everything, well - most things, but I haven’t disclosed that. But still, I’m

intrigued so I'll play his little game.

“And why is that?” I muse.

Zayn stands across from me, his eyes dancing like he's about to make some exciting discovery.

“Because I can see the way she's looking at you now.”

I snort, a laugh ripping from my throat at the absurdity. “You're delusional and reading into things too much, Z.”

“She's looking at you like she looks at me and Ash.”

Okay. He's officially caught me off-guard. But I keep my face blank, neither confirming nor denying his allegation.

“Rylee looks at everyone that way. She can't help it.”

Zayn shakes his head. “Nah. See, this is what I think. Something shifted between you pair, and you fucked up. Now she's trying to figure it out and you're pulling back. Classic case of your avoidant tendencies.”

“Okay, Dr. Freud.”

He shrugs half-heartedly. “Plus she might have murmured something when she was half asleep after Ash tampered with her morphine.”

I pause, checking his face for confirmation. The idiot just stands there grinning at me. He was fucking with me all along.

*That damn stumbling beautiful pain in the fucking ass.*

“Wild dream?” I offer as a last resort.

Zayn raises an eyebrow at me. “It’s possible. Pot brownies and smooches does seem a bit far-fetched. But I did find a pot brownie in her bedroom when I was getting some belongings for her, so...”

Sighing in defeat, I rub my temple. “Don’t say anything. I’m fucking serious.”

He lets out a *gotcha* “AHA!” and swings back around to pull the patty and melted cheese off the stove. “I fucking knew it,” he says, sliding the patty onto a bun.

“I don’t want to hear it. Save the lecture and victory dance.”

Zayn finishes assembling the burger and picks up the plate. He winks at me as he starts to exit the kitchen, a dumb-ass knowing grin planted on his face.

“Welcome to the Rylee ride, brother. Buckle up, it gets a little bumpy.”



I avoid Rylee for the rest of the day. It almost pains me to do so, but I know she’s in good hands - even if Ash is an emotional moron who thinks with his dick.

The chat with our prez went as well as expected. We’re still a bit rocky for wanting to leave but thankfully, we left on good terms. People can bitch about motorcycle clubs all they like, but when it comes down to it, genuine clubs are about brotherhood.

Our biker brothers aren't in this area, but there's a chapter of the Norsemen near them who have been causing problems for years. We wouldn't put it past them to try to take over multiple areas. In fact, I never forget a face.

That slimy asshole Jimmy who beat up Rylee in the carpark has been causing drama everywhere. I first encountered him about two years ago when he came into our area. Of course, at the time, we didn't know who they were. But they were quick to brag about their chapter as they were passing through. They put several innocent people in hospital when they started a brawl in a shopping center.

His smug face showed he lacked any ounce of humanity and even after they left, we kept tabs on them to make sure they didn't come back. To my surprise, I found out they lived in the same area as dad and Asher. Talk about a small world.

The prez eventually came around to the idea of letting us go from the chapter after we made a deal to keep an eye on things here. When the talk of takeovers hit our ears, we were let go. Normally we just stick to our usual areas and don't pay attention to other clubs and their zones, but this was our family here. And like I said, clubs hold brotherhood high on their lists.

I still remember the day we met Rylee at the house. All I could think was Asher is still chasing skirt. But she's no innocent floozy - she turned out to be my goddamn stepsister who has a talent for trouble and likes hanging out at biker bars.



Rylee has certainly kept us on our toes. It fucking drove me insane at the beginning to think someone was so stupid and reckless. But then I got to know her. Like poison, she got into my system, weakening me until finally I had no choice but to just give in. I promised myself I would keep a solid distance but every chance she got, she landed herself in trouble.

I can't stand seeing people in trouble, let alone women. Call me old-fashioned but I just can't help but step in, even as hard as I try not to. I guess it all comes down to the fact I felt so helpless with my mom. I was so close to her and it broke my heart as a kid when I couldn't save her.

In a way, Rylee reminds me of her. Mom was fierce and independent too, always adamant she could handle herself and never needed anyone. Our father is fine, but he has always doted on his baby boy. Asher would ask for anything and he would get it. He was everything dad had wanted Zayn and I to be, whereas mom just natured our differences.

Asher wasn't kidding when he said it was humid. I decide to go and hang by the pool and enjoy the warmth while I can. Unlike a lot of people, I like the humidity. And there's something relaxing about laying in the quiet and soaking up the sun.

“Figured I'd find you out here.”

I grunt in acknowledgement, hearing the chair next to me scrape on the concrete ground as fresh weight falls on it.

“How is she?” I ask.

“In and out of consciousness. For someone who argued she didn’t want to sleep, she sure is enjoying it. Ash is laying with her,” Zayn replies.

I gaze over at him lazily. He’s got his head thrown back, sunglasses on as he hums to himself.

“Shouldn’t you be there too? You said you wanted cuddles,” I taunt.

Zayn smirks, turning his head to look at me. “I had some cuddles earlier. You should try it sometime. Maybe it would help loosen up that stick wedged in your asshole.”

“Funny,” I spit back, looking away.

“You know,” he says slowly, “it would just be easier if you stopped pretending. You’re going to give us all whiplash with your changing moods.”

I flick him the finger without looking at him. “I’m not in the habit of fucking my stepsister, unlike you pair. One of us needs to be responsible here.”

Most people would be triggered by the comment, but not him.

“Life’s too short not to have fun. Besides we’re not even related. Stop being so anal about it.”

“It’s still wrong,” I argue.

“Maybe. But to who? Society?” He snorts. “When have you ever given a shit about what other people think?”

I let out a ‘*hmp*’, frustrated by his lack of arguing. Sometimes you just want to piss people off and argue for the sake of it. But you’ll never get that from Zayn. He’s far too chill.

He sits up, turning to face me. “At the end of it, B, you’re just hurting yourself. And her. You’re entitled to do what you want. Have whatever type of relationship you want with her, but shoving her away isn’t going to make either of you happy. It’s okay to care about her. Just don’t be a dick about it.”

Without waiting for my reply, he stands and heads back to the house, his words striking their mark. I have half a mind to throw something at him but he’s already gone. The bastard has a way of getting to me better than anyone.

Well, almost anyone.

## Chapter 7

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## Rylee

“**W**hen is Netflix going to put new shows on? There’s nothing to watch,” I grumble, flicking through Zayn’s phone.

It’s been four days since I got home from hospital, and nearly two weeks since the accident. I’ve watched so much Netflix that my brain is now desperate for something new and stimulating.

Thankfully, my pain is gone and my concussion seems to have vanished. I’m sure it’s not completely healed, but I no longer feel like the room is spinning at random intervals or the need to projectile vomit. Keyhole surgery was also a godsend, making recovery faster than I expected.

Despite the fact I feel *almost* fine, the guys still won’t let me move too much. But if they don’t let me get out of this bed soon, I might commit mass murder.

I’ve begged them for days, and finally this morning, Asher agreed to call the charge nurse at the hospital for advice. I’ve

been sitting in his bed waiting, not convinced he's even going to call them, when he finally struts back in.

“So, what's the verdict?” I ask quickly, my fingers already gripping the blankets in anticipation.

Asher crosses his arms at the end of the bed, raising an eyebrow at me. “They said you need to remain on bedrest for another week.”

My mouth drops open and I'm ready to start spitting fire when Zayn walks in behind him, laughing.

“He's just fucking with you, babe. Apparently you should have already been up and walking. In fact, it's recommended to help with recovery.”

I glare at Asher, who looks like he's sucking on a sour lemon. I fling back the blankets and climb out of bed. “So all this time and I could have been doing exactly what I've been asking for. For fuck sake.”

“I still think you should rest,” Asher grumbles but steps out of the way to give me clearance.

“I've rested enough. I feel fine. If anything I feel trapped and my legs are sore from lack of movement. I'm not going to go crazy, but damnit just let me explore the house and find something to do other than surf the internet.”

The two of them follow me out of the room, Asher like a sulking child and Zayn almost bouncing with excitement. I have no idea where Blake is – he's barely been near me since our argument the other day. I've finally accepted the fact that I

fucked things up and that I need to give him space. Maybe he'll come around one day, but for now, I need to respect his decision.

I head straight for the living room. I've been cooped up for so long that I just want to sit on a couch and be able to sit up without my tailbone getting annoyed.

I'm surprised to find Blake in there when I enter, reading a book.

"You read?" I blurt out, letting out a pleased groan when I sit down across from him.

Blake raises an eyebrow at me, putting a book mark in between the pages and closing the book. "Reading is an art that people these days lack the skill for."

"I don't disagree," I mumble, letting my head fall back. I stretch out my arms, letting my hands feel the couch. "This is so good."

The couch sinks next to me and I peer open an eye to look at Zayn. He grabs my hand closest to him on the top of the couch and traces my palm with his finger.

"This lucky duck has been freed from her chains."

Blake lets out a dry laugh. "I told Asher days ago that she should be moving around."

I snap my head forward to look at Blake, before turning to glare at Asher. "What?!"

Asher offers me a sheepish smile. "I was worried?"

Grabbing a cushion, I throw it at him. “I’ve been going mental in there!”

He catches it, setting it aside. “Well excuse me for not taking the advice of my non-doctor brother. Besides it’s all done and dusted now.”

“Asshole,” I murmur under my breath, knowing full well he can hear. Zayn laughs, shifting closer to me.

“What do you want to do then, Ry?”

I tilt my head back and forth in thought before looking at him eagerly. “Can we invite over Butch, V and Chuck?”

I can feel the tension seeping from Asher already but I ignore him and his testosterone issues. Zayn nods, pulling out his phone.

“Do you want to message them?” he asks, offering me the phone.

Taking it from his palm, I open the screen and head for the messages. Asher sits down next to Blake, watching me closely.

“I don’t mind Butch and Vito coming, but do you have to invite the other one?”

I slowly look up, my eyes piercing daggers at him. “You need to get over this jealousy, Ash. It’s getting old.”

“I just don’t like sharing you,” he says quietly.

I put the phone in my lap and sit up. “Let’s get one thing straight. You don’t *share* me. I’m not a possession. *I share me.*”



It's my body and my right to do so. You *get to have* me. And you best remember that can be lost at any time."

The three of them stare at me silently. A fired up retort sits on the tip of my tongue but for once, no one says anything. So I pick up the phone and finish sending off my text message.

I hope my words have the desired effect I want. Because truthfully, I want them all. But I can't lead a horse to water and make it drink unless it wants it too.



When the knock on the door comes, I leap off the couch. I can almost hear Asher's thoughts telling me to slow down, but I'm too excited for new company. Don't get me wrong, I like hanging with Asher, Zayn and Blake, but I do need my other friends too.

I rip open the door expecting to see three faces, but to my surprise, there's only one.

"Chuck!"

I leap through the doorway and pull him into a hug. He wraps his arms around me, laughing in my ear.

"Miss me, did you?"

God, it's been so long since we've been able to hang normally that I nearly want to cry. I'm so elated that he's here and not just a figment of my imagination.

Pulling back, I give him a smile before my face tightens and I smack his chest.

“Ow, what was that for?” he asks.

“You asshat. I’ve been so mad at you. Of course, I missed you!” I nearly yell, pulling him back in for another hug.

Chuck laughs warmly again. “I missed you too. Just remember it wasn’t my choice to go.”

“I know,” I mumble into his chest. “But still... I’m glad you’re here.”

We head inside and I deliberate where to go. I’d be most comfortable in my bedroom, but I know that will probably upset the masses. I think all of us hanging in the living room would be a little awkward, so I’m stuck standing near the stairs trying to make a decision.

The three brothers walk out of the living room, looking at us carefully. Chuck gives them a small wave.

“Hi again,” he says, a little more friendly than usual.

Asher’s jaw ticks but he nods back. “Hello.”

I watch as Zayn grins, elbowing Asher in the side. “Be nice, Ash.”

“This is me being nice.”

Blake steps forward, nodding towards the stairs. “I’ll be in my room if you need me.”

We move out of the way as he heads upstairs, and when he disappears from view, I look back at the others.

“So...?”

Zayn seems to catch on to what I am asking. “Why don’t we go down to the mancave? Or we can hang in the living room if you like?”

Asher glares at his brother in disgusted shock. “My mancave? Really?”

“The living room is fine,” I say, grabbing Chuck’s hand. I lead him in between Zayn and Asher, noticing the latter tense up.

“I’m going to go for a run,” Asher says quietly, heading towards the stairs.

Zayn shakes his head, following us into the living room. “Ignore him, Ry. He’s just sulking.”

“Oh, don’t I know it?” I mumble.

Chuck takes a seat on the couch, patting the spot next to him. I happily sit down, scooting close to him. I lean my head onto his shoulder, taking a moment to breathe in his familiar scent. It’s been so long that I’m content just being in his presence.

The last standing brother sits opposite us, watching me with a smile on his face. “All good there?” he asks teasingly.

“Yep,” I murmur, linking my arm through Chuck’s.

Chuck leans down and passes a kiss on my cheek. I look up at him, the pressing question finally coming out.

“Where’s Butch and V?”

He gives me a tight smile in reply. “Club business. They send their apologies and have promised to come as soon as they can another day.”

Disappointment fills me but I nod, understanding. “That’s okay. You smell nice, by the way. Kind of like grape.”

Chuck laughs, fishing into his pocket. “New vape. Want a taste?” he offers smoothly, his eyebrow twitching slightly.

The double meaning isn’t lost on me. It’s been roughly a fortnight since I’ve had sex, a catastrophic dry spell for me. You’d think having several willing participants would help that issue, but I guess the car accident cock blocked me.

I can’t deny I haven’t thought about it, but I’ve been ignored or treated like glass the past two weeks, so I know any requests for relief would have fallen on deaf ears.

But not Chuck... he’s never treated me like a fragile coochie that needs a gatekeeper.

There was only one problem...

“Are you going to have a taste?” Zayn smirks. I’m surprised by his words, but also intrigued. It’s almost like he’s giving me permission.

“I’m trying to be good,” I mumble, but continue eyeing off the vape. I’ve gone this long without nicotine, maybe I should try and ditch the habit while I am ahead.

Chuck pockets the vape. “Since when have you ever been good?”

“I can think of many times you’ve told me I’ve been good,” I tease back.

The two of them laugh, the sound of footsteps cutting us off. Asher walks past the doorway without a glance, the front door opening and closing as he takes off for his run.

A few seconds pass before Chuck leans down closer to my ear. “You’re still my good girl.”

It’s so difficult when you have a connection with someone. It is intense, breathtaking, and above all - makes it hard to deny. You can’t even be in the same room as them without wanting to touch them, kiss them...

My body shivers slightly and I shift in my spot. I cautiously look over to Zayn, who appears to be enjoying himself way too much. He’s grinning at me, not at all fazed as usual.

“Don’t mind me,” he says, leaning back into his chair with his hands behind his head. “I don’t mind a good show.”

## Chapter 8

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## Rylee

“Do you have some type of voyeurism fetish or something?” I ask, deflecting from the tension in the room.

Zayn shrugs half-heartedly. “Who knows? Isn’t that just the same as every person that watches porn?”

“No,” I argue. “It’s different.”

“How is it different? It’s still watching people fuck. And I enjoy it. Live shows can be even better since there’s a chance of *audience participation*.”

I gape at him, lost for words. I’m still staring in disbelief when Chuck’s hand slides up my stomach and comes to rest on my breast. The action shocks me back to reality and I turn my attention to him.

“And what are *you* doing?”

Chuck smirks at me. “It’s been so long since I’ve been able to touch you that at this point we could have a whole army watching and I wouldn’t give a shit.”

“It’s just a little weird,” I strike back, not making any effort to move his hand which has now slipped under my shirt.

Zayn chuckles. “I think you’re past that point. Should I remind you of what happened downstairs?”

I shoot him a warning look but it’s cut off when Chuck squeezes my nipple through my bra. A moan slips out before I can stop it, the sound triggering something in him as well.

I let out a low squeal as my body is flung flat on the couch and Chuck stretches out over the top of me. His lips crash into mine, sucking in the moans from my throat as his hand grabs my breasts harder.

*Fuck.*

Against my hip I can feel just how excited Chuck is to see me and the thought shoots through me so quickly that any hesitation is wiped away. My hands reach for the bottom of his shirt, ripping it upwards as I desperately try to pry the material from his body. It slips off and I fling it to the side, my fingers greedily feeling his bare skin.

I’ve almost forgotten that Zayn is still in the room, if not for the hum of approval that comes from the opposite couch.

“If you could dispose of her clothes, I’d really appreciate it,” he directs at Chuck.

“Great idea,” he replies, leaning up to strip me of my shirt before tugging my shorts and underwear off in a swift motion.

Chuck pulls back, grabbing my hands to sit me up. I let him maneuver me, a surprised gasp falling from my lips when he



turns me to face Zayn.

“Let him see you, babe,” he orders, his fingers digging into my thighs as he spreads my legs open.

My breathing starts to become irregular as I lock eyes with Zayn. He leans forward, resting his elbows on his knees as he watches me intensely.

“More,” he commands.

I blink in confusion, but Chuck’s hand slides down my inner thigh, his finger teasing my slit.

“Oh, fuck,” I murmur as I force my eyes to stay open. I’m too fascinated by Zayn’s face that I want to see everything.

Apparently so does he.

Chuck’s fingers gently spread me apart, exposing my glistening pink flesh. Zayn nods in approval.

“So fucking perfect. Do you want him to finger you, baby girl?”

I nod eagerly. “Yes, please.”

“Such good manners from my good girl,” Chuck murmurs, his middle finger slipping inside me.

I’m so lost in the sensation and the words that I can’t fight my eyes closing. My head dips back as his finger slowly slides in and out.

“I can’t wait to be inside you again,” says Chuck, adding another finger. “This perfect little pussy needs to be filled.”

“Then do it,” I challenge.

Chuck pauses for a brief moment, before stepping back. He stands next to the couch, slowly unzipping his jeans.

“No.”

I gawk at him. “No?” I repeat.

“Where did those good manners go? Only good girls get rewards.”

My eyes narrow as I hold his gaze, doing my best to avoid watching his hands as he pushes open the top of his jeans. “I *am* good.”

“See, I don’t think you are. Maybe you need to prove it.”

“How?” I ask.

Chuck nods his head towards Zayn. “Maybe you need to suck his cock like a good little girl.”

My eyes flutter in surprise and I look at Zayn for his reaction. He’s sitting lazily on the couch, his hand resting near the obvious bulge in his pants as he smirks back at me knowingly.

*So... they want to play games, do they?*

I think they’ve forgotten just who I am. I’m not going to slink away from a challenge or lose to the likes of them. If it’s a game they want, it’s a game they’ll get.

Standing up from the couch, I saunter over to Zayn, his heated eyes watching me casually. I lean over him, waiting until the last second to press my hand on top of his, the tips of

my finger slightly grazing against his straining cock as I let my weight fall onto the top of his hand.

“Is that what you want?” I ask, cocking an eyebrow.

Zayn licks his lips suggestively. “Always.”

“Tit for tat, Zayn. We give and take, remember?”

His eyebrows shoot up in surprise and I waste no time grabbing the back of his head with my other hand. I grip his hair, pulling his head back to look up at me further. “Fucking eat me first.”

Chuck lets out an amused laugh behind me, enjoying the view. My ass is pointing towards him and I make sure he knows it. Zayn smirks at me, letting me have the brief moment of power over him.

He gives me a few seconds of empowerment before growing impatient, throwing me onto the couch next to him hard. Before I can even stop bouncing from the momentum, Zayn is on his knees in front of me, shoving my thighs apart. His fingers dig into my leg, hard enough to leave red marks as he looks up at me.

“It’s cute you think you’re in charge here, baby girl. But let’s not forget who this body belongs to.”

I go to argue, but his mouth latches over my clit, his tongue instantly swishing around feverishly. His fingers push inside, curling and stroking me. It’s been too long for me that it doesn’t take much at all to bring me to the brink of orgasm. I moan loudly, ready and willing to fall over the edge. My body

tenses up, the waves starting to crash when suddenly Zayn pulls his mouth back.

The movement halts my orgasm, but his fingers inside me leave me hanging in a dangerous manner.

“Zayn,” I growl, protesting by trying to push my hips up.

“Rylee,” he responds, his tongue flicking more than usual on the last syllable.

I squeeze down around his fingers. “Finish me.”

He removes his fingers in reply, snapping the wet digits at Chuck behind him. I watch as Chuck turns and sits down on the couch, his pants now discarded on the ground.

Zayn pushes his hands under my thighs, looping around to grab my back before lifting me off the couch. My hands grab his shoulders for balance as he carries me over to Chuck.

I look behind me to see Chuck stroking his length. My stomach drops as I’m suddenly lowered quickly over him.

“All yours,” Zayn says, hovering me over Chuck’s lap.

Chuck’s hands grip my waist and together, they lower me down. One hand lets go of my side to line us up and straight away I’m being stretched as I’m impaled onto Chuck’s shaft.

“Fuck,” I moan, letting my body fall back against Chuck’s chest.

Beneath me, he starts moving his hips, spearing up into me. I’m helpless, unable to do anything but hold on to the couch

on either side of me. Chuck suddenly grabs my arms, locking his around them and pulling me back tighter against him.

My body shakes with pleasure as I'm pinned against him. The angle of my locked arms has my head stuck against his shoulder and I don't notice Zayn dropping to his knees in front of me.

A tongue swipes over my clit and realization hits me. I force my neck to bend down, desperate to see.

Zayn looks up at me, his tongue flicking against my clit as his eyes dance with playful heat.

My eyes widen, my stomach clenching as Chuck thrusts upwards into me deeper while Zayn sucks my clit into his mouth. The simultaneous tag-team movement sends me over the edge, my climax ripping through me. A scream breaks from my throat as needed sweet relief rocks me.

"Turn her around," Chuck says next to my ear.

Zayn picks me up, spinning me around before putting me back down facing Chuck. I let out a gasp as Chuck slides his fingers into me, swirling them around before pulling them out. I'm still reeling from the sensation when I feel his drenched fingers prodding at my ass.

"What are you doing?" I ask nervously.

"Relax," he responds, his fingers grazing over it. He smears my wetness over my ass, his finger gently prodding as he starts slowly sliding inside. Chuck continues stretching me as I grip his shoulders tight with nerves.

Zayn's hand comes to rest on the bottom of my back, gently easing me forward. "Lean forward, Ry."

I let myself fall against Chuck as Zayn lines up his cock with my pussy. He pushes in, the two of us groaning in unison.

"Always so wet and perfect," he murmurs, going slow and deep with his movements.

I try to push back against him, but he slips out, his hands resting on my hips.

"Slide down onto Chuck," he whispers, the two of them working together until I'm filled again.

I expect Chuck to start thrusting again, but he holds still, his lips kissing my neck. I tense up when I feel Zayn's cock pressing against my ass.

"I'll go slow. If you need me to stop, tell me," he says, waiting for my response.

I'm so shell-shocked by what's happening that all I can do is nod in reply. He slowly pushes the head of his cock, dripping with my juices, into my ass. Pausing, he checks on me again and I give him the green light, my fingers digging into Chuck.

Inch by inch, I hold my breath until they are both fully inside me.

"Look at that," Zayn breathes out with an air of wonder. "You fucking amazing woman."

Chuck grips my chin and turns my face towards him. "We're going to start moving now, babe." His lips find mine

and I kiss him back, trying to relax as the two of them start a slow rhythm.

It's a strange sensation, almost like my body is being ripped in two, but at the same time, exploding with foreign pleasure.

Zayn brushes my hair to the side, grabbing it lightly in his hands as he kisses the back of my neck. They start moving faster, my body held firm between theirs as they slide in and out.

Fingers find my clit, but I'm so tangled up in them that I don't even know whose they are. I can't even see straight, my vision a blurred mess as I feel my body tensing around them.

"Come for us," Chuck whispers against my mouth, his hand grabbing my throat and squeezing.

A silent scream falls from my mouth as my orgasm rips through me, my body clenching down around them until they both fall over the edge as well.

My mind is a jumbled mess as they slowly ease themselves out of me, my body slumping forward. Hands wrap around me and lift me up, and I'm vaguely aware of someone carrying me through the house.

The seconds tick by but I have no sense of time, my body buzzing as my mind desperately tries to form coherent thoughts.

I feel a soft mattress beneath me, my eyes still shut, as my brain gives up and slips into the heavy fog.

## Chapter 9

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## Rylee

“So what’s the plan for today?” I ask, looking around the table the next morning.

The four of us are having breakfast – well, Zayn and I are. Blake is sipping on a cup of coffee and Asher is too engrossed in some sports match on his phone. I’ve been spoiled lately with lots of delicious cooking from Zayn. I’m clearly the favorite though as Ash and Blake have been made to fend for themselves.

“Football,” Asher mumbles without looking up from his phone.

I roll my eyes, holding back a laugh. Typical male...

Zayn bites down on a piece of French toast like a savage. “I have to run some errands. What are you up to today?”

Like the sophisticated lady I am, I cut my French toast with a fork and knife. “Phoebe is dropping by to hang later this morning. After that, I’ll probably just chill around the house.”

He nods. “Blake will be here to keep you company. It’s supposed to be a nice day. You could hang out by the pool or go for a walk.”

Blake stares at his twin over the top of his cup. “Yeah, I’ll be around.”

They share a look I can’t quite figure out but smile appreciatively. “Thanks. Company sounds good. Eventually I’ll need to leave the house when I stop being such a scared little shit.”

“It’s understandable. Take all the time you need,” Asher chimes in, looking up from his phone. “You know we’ve got your back, Rylee.”

“I know,” I smile. “Have you heard back from the towing company yet?” I ask, looking at Blake.

He shakes his head. “I’ll follow up with them today. If there’s no answer, we’ll sort out a new phone for you tomorrow.”

“Sounds good.”

Asher slams his fist on the table. “For fuck sake, you moron. Go *around*.”

I push back my chair and rise from the table. “That’s it, I’m out of here. I draw the line at vocal commentary.”



“I can’t even leave you for five minutes without you finding yourself in some type of trouble,” Phoebe grumbles as she strolls in past me.

I close the door, giving her a sheepish smile. “In my defense, it wasn’t planned.”

Phoebe rolls her eyes at me. “Car accidents rarely are planned, Ry. At least you’re okay.”

We head upstairs to my bedroom. The house is quiet, with only the occasional sounds coming from Asher’s mancave. Random yells and bangs have been keeping me entertained the past hour.

“Where are your *brothers*?” Phoebe asks, making herself comfortable on my bed.

“Argh, please don’t call them that,” I groan in disgust.

She looks at me amused. “Uh-oh. I know what that means.”

“It doesn’t mean anything,” I argue, sitting on the other side.

Phoebe snorts. “Bullshit. It means you’re still banging at least one of them. Have you jumped all of them yet?”

“What the hell do you mean all of them?”

She shrugs. “Well, we know you have a thing for Asher. And then you banged one of the twins. They are identical so I can only assume you have the hots for the other one too.”

I blink at her, lost for words. “I like personalities too.”

“Dick personalities, sure. And just dicks in general. So... have you?”

“No!” I yell a little too loudly. “I mean... no. We’re kind of friends though.”

Phoebe narrows her eyes at me. “Friends with benefits?”

“Why does everything revolve around sex with you?” I mutter.

“Why does it *with you?*”

We enter into a stare-off, the two of us bursting into laughter after a few seconds. I raise a hand in defeat.

“Look, there’s been some chemistry between us, but he’s set the boundary that he’s not willing to go there. So, I need to respect that. Besides... speaking of sex, I want to hear all about Hawaii.”

Phoebe fills me in on her honeymoon, including all the dirty details. I am even blessed enough to have gifts from her trip including a light-up pineapple keychain and a whistle like device that if you suck, tastes like dole whip.

We spend a few hours catching up before she heads off home. After she leaves, I wander off to the kitchen to grab some lunch.

I pass the entrance to Asher’s mancave, noting it’s a little bit more quiet than earlier, but sounds of the television can still be heard creeping up the staircase.

I search the kitchen for some food, feeling a little lazy since Zayn isn't around to cook something delicious. A girl could get used to such treats. Finally, I decide to just grab some fruit from the bowl and head upstairs to find Blake.

I haven't been in his bedroom before but like the rest of the house, I know exactly where it is. Before the twins came home, it was used as a hobby-like room – mainly extra space for my mother's extensive clothing collection. It's at the opposite end of the hall to mine and Asher's rooms, and across from his is Zayn's little hiding hole.

Knocking on the door hesitantly, I listen for sounds from the inside. Footsteps grow louder before the door opens.

“Hey,” Blake greets. His tone is somewhat friendly but his face is still so blank that it always throws me off.

“Hey,” I say back, standing awkwardly in the hall. “I figured I'd see what you were up to.”

He takes a step back, opening the door to let me in. “I'm just reading and enjoying the quiet for once.”

I don't make any effort to step in, worried that I'm also part of the reason he is relishing in the silence. Blake looks at me questioningly before letting out a dry laugh.

“I mean from Zayn and Ash. You can come in.”

“Oh,” I mutter, stepping inside. “I'm a bit of rollercoaster. I always say I'm fun to be around but eventually everyone needs to get off and have a break or they will spew their guts up.”

Blake closes the door behind us. “It’s true. You are a handful and make people want to puke. But that just means those people aren’t your people.”

“Everyone needs a break sometimes, even from the ones they love.”

His room seems almost *normal* in comparison to what I’d expect it to be. The walls are a pale grey color with hints of cream. His queen size bed sits adjacent to the door in the center of the wall, with a night stand on each side. Next to the door a television is mounted to the wall and in the corner there’s a bean bag with a pile of books beside it. I guess he hasn’t had a lot of time to redecorate since returning home.

He throws himself back on the bed, putting his book on the night stand next to him. “Have you ever tried self-compassion?”

I laugh sarcastically. “In case you haven’t noticed, I don’t really think self-compassion is something I was taught. Mom was too preoccupied taking me to pep-rallies and wanting me to dress in pretty, frilly things.”

“Your mother is a strange one. If you didn’t look so alike, I’d be hard-pressed to believe you were actually related.”

“You know, that’s just about the nicest thing anyone has ever said to me,” I chuckle.

Blake shakes his head, an unusual smile on his face. I sit down next to him and point to the stand. “What are you reading?”

“A book.”

I roll my eyes. “No shit. Let me guess? Dirty ass smut?”

“Do I really look like the type who reads dirty ass smut?”

I shrug. “You could. Even worse, you could be one of those who do it with a straight face in public. People like that are scary. They could rule the world.”

Blake picks up the book to show me the cover. “It’s a Stephen King novel. Not exactly the type that screams ‘*Fifty Shades*’ shit.”

“Fair enough,” I murmur in defeat. “You’d be a lot more interesting if you did read a dirty book once in awhile.”

“You’d be interesting if you read anything in awhile.”

I feign being hurt. “I’m interesting.”

“And yet, here you are. Do you have any hobbies or is annoying people the game?”

Smirking, I lay back on his pillow. “I do it so well though.”

Blake hums in agreement and lays down next to me. “So, I called the towing company.”

“And?” I ask, looking over at him.

He points his finger down. “Negative on the phone situation. We’ll go into town tomorrow to the cell company and organise a replacement. They should hopefully be able to deactivate the sim card and transfer your details to a new one so you don’t have to get a new number.”

“Sounds ... fine.”

Blake turns his head to look at me. “Only fine?”

I purse my lips. “It means I need to get into a car to go into town. I’m not sure I’m ready again, but I’m going insane without technology.”

“Modern day problems.”

Sighing, I run my hand over my face. “Maybe I should get drunk beforehand. You know, shake the nerves.”

“Oh, yes. Great solution. Is ‘becoming an alcoholic’ on your bingo card for this year? You must nearly have a winning card with all the shit you keep doing,” he mumbles.

I sit up, my joking persona dropping. “I’m serious. I really don’t know how to fix this. Maybe I’m just unfixable.”

Blake looks at me with a serious expression. “We’ll figure it out. Without the alcohol preferably.”

“If you say so.”

“Hey,” he says, sitting up. “You’ve survived worst things and come out the other side. How many times have you ever thought to yourself you couldn’t survive something and did anyway? Your achievement rate is one hundred percent. Give yourself some credit.”

I’m taken back by his kindness. The only way to combat the awkward feelings of praise is to obviously ignore it.

“And yet I failed college. You’re making far too much sense, Blake. It’s confusing. Be a dick again.”

“You’re deflecting, Rylee.”



I snort. “It’s what I do best. But thanks... I think.”

The two of us go quiet, the conversation turning an uncomfortable and unfamiliar direction. Finally, I break the silence, terrified it will swallow me up whole or I’ll do something stupid.

“So, want to play a game?”

He raises an eyebrow at me. “A game? Really?”

“Not one of those games,” I quickly add. “Like a board game or something.”

Blake stares at me incredulously. “You want to play fucking Monopoly? Or Uno?”

“I don’t know! I’m a bit lost here. Help me out.”

He continues watching me before climbing off the bed. “Get your shoes on. We’re going for a walk.”

I stand up, following him out of the room. We detour briefly to my bedroom so I can slip my sneakers on before heading outside.

I expect him to lead us down the driveway, but instead, he walks around the side of the house towards the back. The grounds are quite big, but empty. However, further along the boundary, there’s some shallow woods. I haven’t explored them before but they don’t look too difficult to master.

“Please don’t get us lost,” I mumble, following him through shrubs and grass.

“We won’t get lost. Have a little trust,” he responds, weaving through some trees.

He only gets a snort in reply, but ignores me. I continue following him and eventually, maybe about 100 feet into the trees, a dirt path appears. I’m pleasantly surprised that it exists and also grateful that I can now see where I am walking. I don’t like things that slither or crawl and God knows what’s hiding in the grass.

“Zayn and I used to come out here all the time with our bicycles. It’s a nice little trek. It will take us to a clearing.”

Given how busy the town is, it’s almost hard to believe something like this exists on the suburban outskirts. I know outside town there’s heaps of forestry, but this is like a little home away from home adventure.

The sun is nice and warm, the trees providing shade over and around us as we walk through the path. I’m actually enjoying myself, the two of us walking in a comfortable silence.

Twenty or so minutes later, we reach a meadow in the middle of the trees. The trees stretch around the small area, the green grass and random boulders the only things in the clearing.

“Welcome to our secret spot,” Blake murmurs, stepping over to one of the large stones and sitting on it. “Our escape from the madness.”

## Chapter 10

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## Blake

**I**t's been ages since I've visited our little hiding spot. Zayn and I used to come out here at least twice a week. It used to drive Asher mad to know we were sneaking off to some secret spot that he wasn't invited to.

Whenever he was insufferable, we'd leave him to have his moods, grab some snacks or beers, and come chill in the sun.

I had been itching to come out here again recently, but it's been too difficult with all the chaos in the house. Plus it's a bit hard to sneak off these days when I have Asher and Rylee always in my face.

Zayn and I had made a pact that it would always just be our little secret spot, so I'm not sure what's possessed me to bring her here. But something tells me that Zayn won't care. Hell, I know about his little cabin outside of town. And I sure as shit know that Rylee's been there. So, tit for tat.

She's breaking all the rules and we scold her for it. Yet, we still let her do it.

“Wow,” Rylee breathes out, looking around. “It’s really nice.”

“Yep. A nice little peace of quiet from the assholes of the world,” I mumble.

Rylee walks over and sits down on the rock next to me. “I bet you guys used to bring all your old girlfriends here.”

I snort. “Just the psychotic ones.”

She pulls a look of disgust before leaning her head back to catch the sun’s rays. Her blonde hair soaks it up, making it appear almost golden. It’s nice to see her looking relaxed for once, a peaceful expression on her face as she enjoys the warmth.

A sense of accomplishment and pride makes me feel uneasy as I fight back the urge to relish in the fact I’ve made her feel this way. I don’t like people having control over my emotions or the ability to make me feel things that are uncomfortable.

It’s easier to just deal with the normal emotions – anger, boredom, happiness...

These new feelings are foreign. But they feel almost *decent*. The only concern is once you let those types of feelings in, it’s so much easier to get hurt. And being hurt leads to a loss of control and power.

“Do you think things will ever be normal again?” Rylee quietly asks.

I’m confused at what she’s referring to. Part of me wonders if she’s asking about us. But I suspect she’s talking about life

in general.

“Normal doesn’t exist. Best not to give it too much thought,” I reply. “But for what it’s worth, yes. Things will get better.”

Blue eyes open and peer over to me, almost assessing me for the truth. I love that she holds my opinion so high that she trusts what I say. But it’s a dangerous power, one I know I could easily abuse if I’m not careful.

I’ve never been one to sugar coat shit. But I tread carefully anyway, wanting to give her some type of hope after all that’s happened recently.

“Everything is fixable to an extent. Sometimes it just takes a little longer to find solutions. The shit that’s happened lately – you’ll get through it. Just take it one day at a time,” I offer.

*There. A nice, supportive approach.*

Rylee lets out a soft chuckle. “Yeah, I guess you’re right. All we can do is try. Worst case scenario... there’s alcohol.”

“Jesus Christ. What is it with you and drinking? Or any type of substance that allows you to let loose? Like I said, you need to find a hobby. Take up knitting or some shit.”

She snorts, folding her legs underneath her on the rock. “Do I look like the type of girl who wants to knit?”

“You look like the type of girl who wants to have fun. Could I suggest cliff diving instead of dick taking? It’s less risky.”

I wait for a sarcastic reply, but she just smiles at me. Fucking smiles.

My heart does some weird flippy shit which I immediately hate. She contemplates an answer before nodding.

“It would be less risky. Apparently going to biker bars is also out of the question. What do *you* do for fun? Besides reading.”

I ponder the question, caught off guard. Free time is a luxury these days as an adult. I hate being asked that question, as I never really have an answer.

For a brief period after we left town, Zayn and I got drunk one night and downloaded *Tinder*. The amount of times I got asked “What do you do for fun?” or “Tell me about yourself” was so off-putting that the app was deleted within a week. I found it beyond annoying being pestered by generic questions, but in Rylee’s defense, it’s a legitimate one. Especially since I am telling her to do that.

“I like music,” I finally answer. “Listening to different types of music and lyrical composition. I like getting lost in the lyrics, especially when a song tells a story. I also like watching documentaries. Mysteries, mainly. It’s intriguing to try to solve shit.”

“I like songs too. It’s easy to connect with music when you feel like you’re alone and drowning.”

I laugh dryly. “I’m almost afraid to ask, but what have you been listening to recently?”

Rylee grins, not an ounce of shame on her face. “This week I’ve been listening to Taylor Swift.”

“Ugh. Are you a *Swiftie*?” I ask, giving her a look of disgust to rile her up.

“A little bit. Not an obsessed die-hard fan. But there’s no denying her lyrics are next level. Have you listened to her ten minute version of ‘*All Too Well*’? It’s a story, a masterpiece. You can hear her heart break and her recovery all in one. I like that. I like knowing that other people can get over such hurt and loss, and use it to inspire other people too.”

It’s such a mature, logical response that I just nod, speechless. It’s not often that people leave me lost for words, but Rylee is often proving that she’s got more to her than she leads people to believe. Despite the fact she’s a hot mess that seems to forever be losing her shit, I think she secretly has a level of control that’s disregarded.

But I don’t think it’s based on years of practice or power. It’s trauma... tucked away deep, making her closed off to the world. She’s probably so used to being portrayed in such a way, that her mind just lives that made-up persona now. But inside, there’s more to her that’s desperate to come out.

I have to wonder what she was like before she experienced all the loss in her life. Whether she was always this way or if she’s just the product of generational trauma, forced to fit into some box.

“I like Queen,” I say, watching for her reaction.



Rylee's eyes light up and she sits up a little straighter. "Favorite song? And don't say 'Bohemian Rhapsody'."

"That song is a masterpiece," I argue.

"It is. But it's also so common that a lot of people only know that one. Give me something else."

I smirk at her lack of confidence in me. "'The Show Must Go On'. Not only is it deep in meaning, Freddie Mercury actually lived the meaning. He recorded that song when he was suffering, despite all the odds against him. You want to talk about inspiration? That's a masterpiece."

I pull out my cell, scrolling and clicking until the song stays playing. The two of us just stare at each other with knowingness, as the song plays around us, echoing in the meadow.

As I watch her sway to the sound, her eyes lighting up with fight, I realize something very fucked up.

*I think I'm falling for her more than I can control.*



By the time we get back to the house, Zayn is home from running his errands. He's sitting by the pool, chilling on his cell as we approach. He gazes up, tipping his sunglasses down to look at us, his lips tugging every so slightly at me. He knows – and he just smirks at me with a smugness that makes me want to push him into the pool.

Rylee's oblivious to his thoughts and glances, and I hate the feeling that sinks inside me when I watch her head over to him for a hug.

With her back to me, Zayn winks in my direction, his arms wrapping around her waist. My face hardens and I give him a bored look, like I couldn't care less.

The competitiveness practically seeps out of his pores. But he's not trying to compete with me, he's trying to get me to rise to his level. AKA – *he wants me to admit I want Rylee too.*

“So, where did you come from, pretty girl?” Zayn asks Rylee, sitting back on the chair with her in his lap.

She looks at him suspiciously, before quickly glancing at me. I can see her mind ticking, wondering if she's about to get me in trouble. I wait for her to throw me under the bus, even though I know he won't give a shit.

I'm surprised when she just shrugs casually, playing it cool. “We just went for a walk.”

“A walk?” Zayn repeats. “Did you end up anywhere in particular?”

“Nope,” she says, and it's so perfectly executed that I almost believe her.

Rylee might be good at acting, but Zayn can read me like a book. His eyes glint playfully but he pretends to believe her bullshit, boosting her ego as he so often does to butter her up.

“Well, I’m happy you’re back. Are you hungry? I’m thinking of making pasta.”

Her face lights up, and fucking damnit, I’m mad at myself again for the weird ass feeling inside.

I quickly turn and head to the house, my body tensing as I quickly work on calming myself before shit gets out of hand.

I want her, probably more than I’ve ever wanted anything else before.

## Chapter 11

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## Rylee

“Come on, you chicken shit. Pull it together,” I mutter to myself.

I’m standing in front of the mirror in my bedroom, trying to give myself the pep talk of a lifetime. I need to go into town to get a new phone, which means getting into a metal death box.

I barely slept at all last night. My mind was fueled with anxiety and the nightmares were even worse than usual knowing it was coming today.

I returned to my own bedroom to sleep a few days ago, much to the protests of Asher. I admit, cuddles are nice and all, but I don’t want to get dependent on someone. I also don’t want to accidentally punch someone in my sleep.

Zayn was kind enough to offer his bed as well, but that seems like a risky move. I can’t imagine we’d get much sleep and I know Asher would get jealous. So, I’m back to sleeping alone now that I have the choice.

I'm kind of surprised that Asher hasn't tried any moves on me recently. Ever since our little threesome in his mancave with Zayn, he's seemingly switched off his attraction to me – at least, that's what it feels like. I can't deny it's made me a little sad, my stressing brain telling me that he's over me or something. Maybe the novelty has worn off, or that he's just so disgusted with what he did that he can't look at me anymore.

I pretend to not let it bother me, but it is. What the fuck is wrong with me?

Turning away from the mirror, I'm done with looking at myself. The pep talk is failing miserably but I'm not giving up yet.

Heading downstairs, I can hear voices in the kitchen, and I make my way in, finding the three brothers hovering around the bench. They're so deep in conversation that they don't hear me enter. I take the opportunity to sneak up behind them, my hand slapping Zayn's delicious ass.

“Whoa,” he says, turning around as they fall silent. “Good morning to you.”

His grin is infectious and I can't help but return the gesture. “Morning. How did you all sleep?”

Asher leans down, kissing my cheek quickly. “I was up late watching the playoffs. Regretting it today.”

A little bubble of hope blossoms in the pit of my stomach and I motion my head towards the coffee machine. “You might need some caffeine. I think I could use one today too.”

Zayn switches on the machine. “On it, boss.”

I give him a thankful smile. “You’re amazing. Extra strong – enough to buzz me for several hours preferably.”

Blake leans against the bench, his own coffee cup in his hand. “Ready for today?”

This was the conversation I was dreading. They all know I’m shitting myself about it but I just shrug half-heartedly. “No time like the present.”

“Speaking of presents, I have one for you later,” Asher says. I look at him confused.

“Present? What present?”

He grins at me, pushing his hair back. “You’ll just have to wait and see. I have to head off to campus but I’ll be back this afternoon.”

I watch as he leaves the kitchen, suspicion written all over my face. I immediately turn to the twins.

“Do you know anything about this?”

Zayn hands me a cup of coffee, shaking his head. “Who even knows with that kid? Maybe it’s not a material present.” He winks at me and I jokingly slap his arm, before taking the cup.

“Enough of that. Where are you off to today?”

“More errands,” he says simply, reaching around to swat my ass. “Behave yourself.”

He laughs to himself as he walks out of the room.

“I always behave!” I yell after him, his cackles echoing down the hall.

Blake downs the rest of his coffee, putting his empty cup in the sink. “I’d be scared if I was you. Last time Asher gave me a present, it was a spider.”

“How is that scary?”

He snorts, remembering back. “On my pillow. We couldn’t find it afterwards. Don’t worry, I got him back.”

“I’m afraid to ask how,” I mutter, letting out a low moan as I drink the coffee.

“Better not to know,” Blake says. “Anyway, I just need to grab some things from my room. We’ll leave in about ten minutes.”

I sigh. “Wonderful. Can’t wait.”



Standing outside on the front steps, I move around impatiently as I wait. I feel like I’m going to projectile hurl my guts everywhere and paint the ground with coffee.

“Ready?” Blake asks, stepping outside and closing the door behind him.

“Nope,” I answer honestly.

He heads down the steps and I wearily follow. I expect him to go towards the Jeep or one of the other cars parked out



front, but instead he leads me towards the garage.

“What are we doing?” I question as he opens the roller door.

I haven't been in the garage for months. It's full of tools and Gareth's random belongings like fishing rods. Except now there's also a few new additions in there.

Bikes.

Two shiny black motorcycles are parked side by side, helmets laid neatly on the ground. I'm amazed I didn't see them before but it makes sense.

“Yours, I'm assuming?” I ask, walking around the bikes.

Blake nods. “Zayn's is the one in front of you. This beauty here is mine.”

I have little knowledge of bikes, other than they are loud, fast and sometimes driven by assholes. I try not to let the thought drown me as Blake slides his hand along the handle bars.

“It's a Harley-Davidson Road Glide. I've been keen to take her for a spin again.”

“She's beautiful,” I agree. “But what does that have to do with me?”

He stands next to the seat, looking at me carefully. “I know bikes are also a sore point at the moment. But maybe less scary than a car. Especially if you are with someone you know.”

“You want us to take the bike?” I ask in disbelief.

Blake leans down, inspecting the engine. “I thought we’d just have a little test run. See how you feel about it. Try sitting on the seat.”

I blink at him, unsure how I feel about the whole situation. But I promised myself I would try, and honestly, I do see his logic.

Walking slowly around to him, I put my hand cautiously on the seat. He doesn’t rush me, instead letting me get a feel for the beast.

“It’s taking back the power, Rylee. We’ll take it slow. There’s no rush to get into town. We can just sit on it or even take a short cruise down the driveway.”

I’m a little touched that he’s put so much thought into this. It’s like he knows how my mind is ticking – which is amazing, because *I* don’t know how my mind is ticking.

I swing my leg over, shuffling until I’m in the seat. Blake holds the bike steady by the handle bars, watching me.

“How does it feel?”

My hands lay flat in front of me as I look at the instrument panel. “I’m feeling okay so far. Except I’m wearing a skirt which is a little awkward.” I gesture to the flowy blue skirt which levels with my finger tips.

“If we decide the bike is a go-er, you can change before we leave. The back has been modified so you’ll be able to sit comfortably behind me but I do recommend pants. Can I switch her on?”

Nodding, I watch as he inserts the key, pushing a button as he turns the barrel. The bike roars to life, shaking underneath me. I grip it firmly, shifting in my spot.

“She sounds nice,” I offer.

Blake’s face lights up with a small smile. “She sounds fucking amazing.”

I hold back a laugh, completely enchanted by the pleasure on his face. He looks proud of his machine and it hits differently.

“Want to take me for a little drive to the entrance and back?” I ask.

Blake grins, making my heart flip. “Yeah. Hop off for a second.”

I do as I’m asked, watching as he takes my place on the bike. He scoots forward, motioning for me to slip in behind him.

My arms wrap around him and he balances the bike up, kicking the stand back.

“I can put the helmet on you, if you like. But we’ll just be going slow,” he says.

“I trust you,” I respond, resting my chin on his back.

The bike roars as he touches the throttle, and slowly, it creeps forward. We go just fast enough that the bike holds steady, but I could power walk faster than the speed.

Flashbacks of riding with the Rebels come into my mind, reminding me of better days. I remember how free it felt to fly down the road, the wind in my hair.

I can't stop the smile from forming on my face, my nerves dissipating with each passing second.

When we reach the entrance, Blake slows the bike, turning the handles and using his feet to guide us around. We head back towards the garage at the same speed, and by the time we reach our distance, I'm completely at ease.

"How was that?" Blake asks, killing the engine.

"It was really good," I breathe out, my arms still wrapped around him.

He looks over his shoulder at me, a smile on his face. He looks so carefree and relaxed, and I quickly realize I love this look on him.

The two of us lock eyes for a few seconds before Blake looks away. I can see the gears turning in his head but I have no idea what they are thinking.

He carefully climbs off the bike before tapping my leg. "Scoot back."

I frown, awkwardly moving back as far as I can. He waits for me before swinging his leg back open, this time facing me.

My legs ache as I try to give him space, confused at what's going on.

"Blake?" I ask.

He doesn't answer, instead reaching around my back with his right arm, pulling me forward. I've got nowhere to go except on his lap.

My legs hang over the top of his, my eyes wide. "What's going on?"

Blake holds onto me, our faces inches from each other. "Thank you."

"For what?"

He smiles again. "I've been dying to get the bike out for ages. And seeing how relaxed you are, makes me really happy."

I've entered some alternate universe, my brain short-circuiting. I look down at his arm to check for his tattoo, partly convinced that perhaps this is Zayn playing a trick on me. The tattoo checks out and I look back at him.

"Are you... okay?" I ask.

Blake nods. "I forgot what it felt like to be happy. Pure happiness. It's incredible, don't you think?"

"Well, yeah. But I'm confused at what's going on right now," I murmur softly.

He's made it clear on a number of occasions that he doesn't want me. Yet, I can't help but feel like me sitting in his lap, his arm protectively around me, is not a normal sibling thing.

*Except we're not fucking siblings.*

Blake's smile fades, internal thoughts forming on his features. "I don't either. All I know is I like it. And right now, I'm not ready to let that feeling go."

I force myself to hold his gaze, a different type of nerves taking over now. "And this is making you happy?"

"Yes," he answers. "And there's something else I've been dying to do too."

## Chapter 12

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## Rylee

**B**lake's other hand grabs the back of my head and pulls me forward. I have no time to react, our mouths meeting in the middle.

His lips move against mine and I kiss him back, letting myself enjoy the moment before he inevitably realizes what we are doing and panic bolts.

The hand in my hair tightens slightly as the kiss deepens. I gasp when I feel his teeth nip my bottom lip, and he slides his tongue in my mouth. It's warm and the faint taste of coffee lingers on his breath. It's honestly the best thing I've ever tasted.

Our tongues gently glide against each other and I shift forward, desperate to get closer to him. He senses what I'm trying to do, his arm pulling me flush against his chest.

Beneath me, I feel his cock against my ass. There's nothing between us except my underwear, my skirt hanging off the seat around me.



My body instinctively grinds against him, trying to find friction. He groans into my mouth and I freeze, thinking this is where the fairy tale ends.

His face is unreadable as we lock eyes, and slowly, I start to lift myself up so I can move away. He lets go of my hair and my heart sinks as I go to run away with my tail between my legs.

Except something *does* unexpectedly appear between my legs. I gasp in disbelief and shock when I feel his fingers sliding up my inner thighs. His fingertips touch me through my underwear gently, bolts of electricity racing through me.

“Blake?” My mouth is dry as he rubs me slowly.

“Shut up,” he says quietly, silencing me with his mouth. His fingers pull my underwear aside at the same time, prodding at my soaking wet heat.

I feel his fingers slide inside me, my mouth forming an ‘O’ against his, as euphoria hits. I’m being finger fucked by Blake on his bike, a scenario I never imagined would happen in a million years, let alone right now.

All rational thoughts, and fears, quickly vanish, the pleasure fueling me. I reach down in front of me, hastily ripping open his pants. I slide my hand inside, grabbing his cock before he can change his mind.

I no longer care that we might fuck it up again. Just as long as we don’t stop.

I need him more than I need air right now.

Gripping him hard, I stroke his length, loving the way he throws his head back and groans. It's music to my ears, a symphony of pleasure and ecstasy, one I'll never tire of hearing.

I'm still terrified he'll change his mind, so I make a rash decision. One I might regret in the morning, but fuck it... I miss living in the moment.

Pulling his cock out, I tighten my legs over his, using my core strength to lift myself up. His mask falls as he watches me with wonder, and I guide him to my entrance.

Using my other hand to balance myself, I shove his hand out of the way, doing my best to hold my underwear aside so I can take him in. He doesn't stop me, his breathing stuttering as the head pushes into my body.

We both let out a moan as I gently let myself slide down until my body has swallowed him whole. Our gazes stay on each other the whole time, and I wait, frozen in place, relishing the feel of him filling me up.

Blake grabs my hips, and I follow suit, my hands wrapping around his neck. Leaning forward, I press my lips to his as I start rocking against him.

The kiss is slow, matching the rhythm of our hips as they grind against each other. I start pushing myself up, sliding up his length as much as I can with this angle, before letting my body fall down again.

I alternate between going up and down, and rocking back and forth, moaning as my pelvis grinds against his warm skin. The friction of our joined bodies slowly starts to build inside me, forcing me to grind harder, chasing release.

Our pace picks up and Blake helps guide my hips, his fingers holding me securely as we smash together.

As my orgasm starts to approach, my body tenses up, slowing down as I lose myself in the sensation. He takes over, grinding himself against me as his hips drive upwards.

I look at him pleadingly, silently begging for release. He kisses me hard, his mouth giving me a silent command to let go.

My climax rushes through me, a cry escaping my mouth. Blake holds onto me, letting me ride it out as I shake against him. As I come down from the peak, he wraps an arm around me again, thrusting up into me hard and fast. I dig my fingers into his shoulders, crying out, until his own release spills into me.

I collapse against him, my head perched on his shoulder. His chest heaves against me with exertion, his face buried into the crook of my neck.

I cling to him, not wanting the moment to end, even though the rush is starting to fade away. We stay on top of the bike, entwined with each other, until finally, he pulls back.

“I suppose you better go put on some pants,” he says casually in a quiet tone.

Bewildered, I pull back. “We’re still going into town?”

“Of course,” he says. “We need to get your cell. Do you feel comfortable to take the bike?”

It’s like the moment never existed, like time was paused and we’re just picking up where we left off before he kissed me. I clear my throat, at least semi-pleased that he’s not running off this time.

“Yeah. I’m happy to take the bike. I’ll just go... change.”

Dragging my legs down, I carefully hop off him. My knees shake, threatening to buckle as I flatten my skirt.

Blake tucks himself away, doing his pants up as he climbs off the bike. I can feel his essence starting to move down my thighs so I quickly head inside and go straight to my room.

Thankfully, I don’t come across his brothers on the way.

I spend a few minutes in the bathroom, staring off into space, replaying the events over in my mind. Not wanting to keep him waiting, I clean myself up and change into a pair of jeans and fresh underwear.

When I arrive back to the garage, Blake is leaning against the wall, phone in hand. He notices me coming and puts the phone in his back pocket, before bending down to pick up a helmet.

“Here you go,” he says politely, passing it to me.

“Thanks,” I reply. I fix my hair up, before slipping it on.

I pretend to ignore the sweat patches on the bike seat as we climb on again, my arms wrapping around his waist. The bike revs loudly before Blake kicks the stand up, and heads down the driveway.

I'm so engrossed in my post-orgasmic state of confusion that I feel no fear at all as we head into town.

I guess there's a method to the madness. And I'm not complaining one bit.



“Ooh, shiny,” Zayn teases as I show him my new Samsung S23.

“It’s pretty cool, huh?” I say, downloading my old apps.

Gone are the days of old brick Nokias, though I wouldn’t mind a good game of snake. Let’s be honest though, if I had a Nokia, it probably would have survived the crash without a single scratch and still had enough battery to last three months.

Zayn spoons out some mashed potato onto my plate. “You did it too – went into town. I’m proud of you.”

“Thanks,” I murmur, lowering my head to hide my cheeks.

The entire trip into town, Blake was completely blasé. I was starting to wonder if I’d perhaps passed out on the bike and imagined the whole thing as some dissociation episode. The only reminder of it was the ache between my legs, which at

least gave me some hope that I wasn't completely fucking mental.

I look up as footsteps enter the kitchen. Asher gives me a smile before sitting down next to me.

"Oh, mash," he says excitedly, dragging his finger through the pile of potato and putting it into his mouth.

I watch him with amusement, happy to share. Zayn on the other hand, stomps over and slaps Asher's hand away.

"Not yours, little bro. Make your own."

Asher's eyes narrow, challenging him. "Rylee likes to share. Don't you, Ry?"

I choke on air, before turning it into a cough. "I don't mind sharing. Let him have a little bit, Zayn. Sharing is caring."

Asher grins victoriously, grabbing my fork and shoving a mouthful of potatoes in. "See. Tastes good, Z. You should cook for us every night."

"Not bloody likely. You're more than capable of cooking, Ash. Though, now that Rylee has had *my taste*, yours wouldn't hold up."

I spread my hands out, one towards each of them. "Okay. Break it up. Let's not fight in front of the potatoes."

The two of them laugh, and when Zayn turns away, I grab the fork off Asher and scoop up some more. I hold it out to him with a playful grin.

Asher swallows the potatoes before reaching under the table and putting his hand on my knee. “We should do something tomorrow. Feels like ages since we’ve hung out, just us.”

“Yeah, it has been ages. Don’t you have classes?” I ask.

He shakes his head. “Day off tomorrow. So, what do you say?”

“Sounds good,” I smile. “Let me know if you think of any ideas on what to do.”

I catch movement out of the corner of my eye and glance up as Blake walks in. He has his phone in his hand and an unreadable expression on his face. I’m puzzled by it, especially when Zayn immediately stops in the kitchen.

“What’s wrong?” he asks, stepping closer to Blake.

Blake looks at him, before turning back towards me. “That was Fetch. There’s been an attack.”

## Chapter 13

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## Rylee

“An attack? What attack?” I ask quickly, looking between the twins.

I have no idea who Fetch is, but clearly Zayn does.

“Fuck,” Zayn breathes out.

Blake grips the phone in his hand as he sits down opposite me. “Norsemen attacked a rival club just on the border of ours. It’s not looking good.”

My blood runs cold as I slowly put the fork down. Asher tenses up next to me, his hand squeezing my leg.

“What kind of attack?” he demands, his eyes darkening.

“Smaller group of older men called The Iron Maidens. They usually keep to themselves but Norsemen attacked them. It was a huge brawl apparently. According to Fetch, a few people were killed.”

“Killed?!” I yell.

Asher mutters something that sounds like “*fucking bikers*” under his breath, but I’m too distracted by the random news to take it in. Blake crosses his arms, looking at Zayn.

“Bill wants a meeting as soon as possible. I think we should take Rylee with us.”

Zayn raises an eyebrow. “Do you think that’s a good idea?”

“Not particularly. But it involves her now. Besides she can handle it.”

I slam my hand onto the table. “Can you please stop speaking about me as if I’m not here? Who’s Fetch? And Bill?”

Zayn walks over and stands behind me, his fingers rubbing the back of my neck. “Fetch is a buddy in the club. Bill is our president.”

The information immediately sets off the brunette next to me. Asher shoves his chair back, standing up.

“You’re out of your fucking mind. You’re not taking Rylee to your goddamn clubhouse. She doesn’t need to be involved with your stupid biker club.”

His voice is full of so much anger and disgust that I physically recoil. I’ve seen Asher mad many times, but never this level.

Blake and Zayn, however, are unfazed by their brother’s outburst.

“Chill the fuck out, Ash,” Blake says dryly.

Asher's fists curl into balls. "I don't give a shit what you pair do, but leave her out of it. She's already been hurt because of her involvement in this. She doesn't need to be dragged in deeper."

"Ash..." I say, reaching out for his hand. "I think having more information would be good. I don't want to be kept in the dark."

He shoots an angry glare in my direction, his face firm as he realizes I'm not siding with him. "Rylee, you've been through enough. Maybe we need to go back to Rosevale until this all blows over. Let them sort it out."

"I know you mean well, but I'm done running away. If there's a chance that the Norsemen are going to do the same here, then I want to help. I don't want to live life scared. My friends are here and they are in danger too. I think we just need to accept the fact we're all stuck in this now, whether we like it or not."

I squeeze his fist, but he just shakes his head.

"You two," he growls, looking at his brothers. "should never have gotten mixed up in this club business in the first place."

Zayn plays with my hair behind me. "I agree. But like Rylee said, it's too late now. We're a target and running away is just going to leave others in the firing line to cop it."

"We should tell Butch," I interject, watching Asher's face fall in defeat.

“I don’t want you to get hurt again,” he says quietly, sitting back down.

Blake leans forward, tapping his fingers on the table to get Asher’s attention. “We’re not going to let that happen. In fact, the whole reason we are doing this is so we can drive those bastards out of town and shit can go back to normal. They aren’t going to stop, Asher. It’s a power trip for them. This is just how some clubs are.”

“So, what now then?” Asher asks.

Zayn tugs my head back and I look up at him. He leans down and kisses the top of my head before turning to his brother.

“Simple. We do exactly what you said in the hospital, Asher. We make them pay. It’s time someone gets rid of them for good.”



Asher was so fired up at dinner that I was sure he was going to take off and do something stupid. I did notice that all of our car keys had mysteriously vanished, but I have a suspicion we won’t find them in the bathroom cabinet again. Asher disappeared into his bedroom after dinner, slamming his door in frustration after realizing he was being outvoted.

To be honest, I’m a little taken back by his protectiveness. It’s been a long time since I’ve had people stand up for me like

that. It's making me feel weird shit again. Like the sun is going to shine extra bright and birds will chirp and shit. Disgusting, I know. Something inside of me wants to comfort him and I think it's what we both need right now.

Grabbing my pillow from my room, I cross the hall and knock on his door softly. There's no reply from the other side, but I know he's in there, so I turn the knob and poke my head in.

Asher's laying on his bed, hands under his head, staring at the ceiling. He doesn't make an effort to look at me, but he knows I'm there.

"I was wondering if you'd come," he murmurs quietly.

I step inside, closing the door behind me. "Well, you did say some pretty nice things about me so I felt obligated. Plus I couldn't find my car keys," I joke.

His lips twitch slightly. Not a full-blown smile, but it's a win regardless – so I'll take it.

Walking over, I throw my pillow on the bed and reach for the blanket. Asher helps pull it back so I can climb in. He shuffles himself under before immediately reaching for me. I tuck myself under his arm, laying my head on his chest.

"I'm sorry for overreacting," he says, his fingers grazing my back gently.

"I don't think it was overreacting," I admit. "I think you're just worried. And that's okay."

Asher turns his head to look at me. “I promised myself when you were in surgery that I would do whatever it took to protect you. Except, I’m not sure how to do that when you are walking into a biker club.”

“I’ll have Zayn and Blake,” I offer. “They won’t let anything happen. Besides, something tells me I’ll be safe there.”

“I don’t like clubs. When they left all those years ago, I spent months thinking they would just end up dead or disappear completely. I hate to admit it, but I was relieved when they came home. I thought it was finally over. And now... now this shit is happening.”

I grab his chin gently. “Hey – I know it’s stressful. I don’t like it either. But we can’t let them win.”

“You shouldn’t be caught up in this. None of us should. We’re supposed to be off at college and getting jobs. Not trying to stop sadistic biker clubs and ending up in hospital.”

He has a point. The ridiculousness of the current events feels like something from a poorly written book. But I guess actions have consequences and these are mine. It just so happens to be the case that Zayn and Blake are tied up in it too.

“We have some pretty amazing friends who are going to help. And when it’s over... it will be over. And we can go back to living our lives,” I say quietly.

Asher sighs under his breath. “I hope so. I’ve been trying to sort things out the past few weeks.”

“What things?” I ask.

Without missing a beat, he laughs dryly. “I’ve been harassing Dean Richmond to let you go back to Brightmore.”

“What?!” I yell, sitting up. “Why?”

Asher pushes himself up on his side lazily. “Because it’s not fair what happened. You deserve a chance to do something meaningful.”

“Have you lost your mind?” I stutter. “Even if I did go back, imagine it. It’s not worth the drama in all our lives.”

“I’ve also tried to push to have them issue a recommendation or something to another college so you can start fresh.”

I look at him for a few seconds before bursting into hysterical laughter. “Oh, that’s stupid, Ash. I appreciate the effort but it’s done.”

Asher looks at me with annoyance. “So you’re just going to sit back and take it? That’s not the Rylee I know.”

“No, the Rylee you know blows staff members under desks and fucks her old best friend’s boyfriend.”

He scoffs. “Be nice to yourself. Besides that was my fault too. You wouldn’t have done any of that if it wasn’t for me. It’s not fair that I didn’t wear any of the blame.”

I nod. “You’re right. It’s not fair. But life isn’t about fairness. I fucked up. I have to accept that.”

“I just want you to have a chance to make it right. It’s why I told the Dean that I had a part in that. Oh, and that Jenny technically recorded pornographic material on school grounds.”

“Asher!”

He fully sits up, looking at me challengingly. “What? It’s all true, isn’t it? Nah, fuck it. We all did something wrong, so if you go down, we should all go down.”

I stare at him incredulously. “Great. The last thing I need is Jenny coming after me again.”

“She won’t.”

“You can’t be so sure.”

Asher snorts. “I can. I’ve spoken to her as well.”

A shooting pain hits me in the chest, my old jealous feelings resurfacing. Asher quickly grabs my hand, giving it a squeeze.

“It’s not like that. I’m trying to help you. I’m done with her. This is about *you*.”

I swallow hard. “I’m almost afraid to ask for more information,” I mutter quietly.

He reaches over and flicks some of my hair behind my ear. “The Dean wasn’t happy. Said it was coercion,” he rolls his eyes. “But that he’s going to look into it. It probably helped that I had my brothers with me at the time.”



“Oh my fucking God. You took Blake and Zayn there?”

Asher laughs – a genuine, amused laugh. “Yep. It caused quite a stir. Anyway, they are trying to figure out what to do now. As for Jenny – well, she wants to meet to chat. To both of us.”

I feel like I might pass out from the horror of it all.

“Please tell me you’re joking. I’m not comfortable with that.”

“There’s a lot of things we aren’t comfortable with, but sometimes we just have to suck it up, princess.”

I glare at him. “Easy for you to say.”

“Is it?” he draws out, raising an eyebrow at me. “You think it’s been easy for me to watch you with other people.”

He catches me off guard with his admission. “I thought we were past that. You know, after the whole thing with Zayn downstairs,” I say.

Asher laughs sarcastically. “Yeah, I was fine with *that*. But you’re not exactly quiet, remember? I heard you the other day.”

My mouth goes dry. Internally I start panicking, because I’m not quite sure *what* situation he is referring to.

“When?” I finally ask, trying not to give too much away.

“When your boyfriend came over. I heard the three of you.”

“Oh.”

He nods. “Oh,” he repeats. “It kills me that I’m not enough for you.”

“You *are* enough,” I argue. “It’s just that... I don’t know, I have a lot of love to give. Or maybe I’m just so fucked up from neglect and trauma that I need multiple people to fill the voids.”

“You’re not fucked up,” Asher says, cupping the side of my face.

I feel like I might vomit. I can feel the words already forming before my brain has a chance to stop them.

“You won’t think that after I tell you something else.”

He tenses up slightly but does his best to hide it. “Tell me what?”

I swallow painfully, turning to look away. “I had sex with Blake.”

## Chapter 14

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## Rylee

I close my eyes tight, waiting for the outburst and the anger. It's quiet for a few seconds, before Asher erupts into laughter.

My eyes fly open as he falls back onto the bed in hysterics.

Great – he's having a nervous breakdown.

“Asher?” I inquire quietly, staring at him in mass confusion and concern.

Finally, he stops laughing just enough to form words.

“Well, that checks out.”

“Huh?”

He sits back up, wiping his eye. “I was wondering why the fucker seemed different tonight. He might think he's good at hiding it, but not this time. God... just wow.”

“Are you... mad?” I ask.

Asher looks at me, his face unsure. “I don't know, Rylee. Maybe I'm just becoming indifferent to it now. Or maybe I

expected it.”

Hurt crosses my face but he quickly grabs my hand. “I don’t mean it like *that*. It’s not you. It’s just ... the tension has been there for weeks. I can see that he cares about you. So, I guess in a way, I just figured it was coming. You just have a way of getting to all of us.”

“You make it sound like a bad thing,” I mutter.

He shrugs. “I don’t know, honestly. But I do know we all care about you. Besides, me getting angry about it is just going to drive a wedge between us. And I don’t want that. Does it suck? Of course it does. I want you all to myself. But I’d rather have any of you that I can get. So if that means dealing with that, I guess I’ll learn to live with it. Anyway,” he huffs, “I know I’m better in bed than those fuckers.”

I stare at him in disbelief before laughing at his macho-ego. “Well, okay. I’m glad that’s out in the air. I guess I’ll have to tell Zayn too.”

Asher waves his hand carelessly. “He probably already knows. They tell each other everything. And let’s be honest, he won’t care anyway. The asshole is the most unfazed person ever.”

“Right?” I say with a laugh. “I wish I was that chilled about everything.”

He pulls me back down onto the bed, under his arm again. “And even if it does hurt a little,” he says, stroking my side, “you’re here with me right now. And that’s all that matters.”



I spent the night in Asher's room, cuddled up with him. It felt like a weight had been lifted off my shoulders, like I could stop pretending or stop feeling guilty about my feelings for them all.

I have to give him credit, he's really starting to grow up – not an easy task for a pig-headed bastard like himself.

He was still passed out when I woke up, so I decided to let him rest. Sneaking out of the room, I'm surprised to find Zayn standing in the hallway, waiting for me.

“Good morning, baby,” he says, giving me a grin. “Sleep well?”

I roll my eyes. “I slept well. Like a baby.”

“So, you were up every two hours then? Sounds about right.”

“We didn't have sex,” I snap.

Zayn laughs. “I know. I would have heard you, no doubt. You hungry?”

*The most unfazed person ever.*

Nodding, I wrap my arms around my stomach. “Actually, yes.”

“Good,” he says, motioning for me to follow. “I just finished making breakfast.”

We head to the kitchen, and I'm surprised to see enough food on the table for not just me and Zayn, but his brothers too. Blake is nowhere to be seen yet, but I have a feeling he's lurking around somewhere.

"What's with all the food?" I ask amused as I sit down.

Zayn shrugs, slipping into the chair next to me. "I figured we all need our energy. We're a *family*, after all."

I glance at him suspiciously. He's watching me with a playful grin, like he knows *everything*. I remember what Asher said, about the twins sharing all the details of their lives, but I'm not convinced just yet.

I have trust issues. And mommy issues. And daddy issues.

I just have *all* the issues.

"Yeah, we're a family," I say, grabbing a pancake from a stack and pulling it onto my plate. "Families look out for each other."

"Families that fuck together, stay together."

I pause, doing my best to not react. I continue grabbing more food – some scrambled eggs, chopped watermelon and a random hashbrown.

"That's called incest, Zayn," I finally respond coolly.

"It's only incest if blood relatives fuck," he points out.

I laugh. "Okay? So, still thinking of the other day with Chuck? Or perhaps with Asher downstairs?"

Zayn reaches over me to grab some food. “I was thinking more about Blake, actually.”

Once again, I hold strong, pretending to be stupid. There’s a chance he doesn’t actually know. At least, I think there is.

“What’s up with Blake?” I ask.

“What do you mean what’s up with me?” comes a voice from behind. I turn my neck to look at him as he enters. He immediately heads for the table, sitting across from me.

He’s the master of deception, his face just as controlled and blank as mine.

“Oh, we were just talking about what happened with you and Rylee,” Zayn says casually.

Blake looks up at me as my eyes widen.

“We weren’t talking about what happened,” I argue.

Zayn bursts out laughing as Blake throws him a cranky glare. I look at them both quickly. “What? I didn’t tell him at all,” I say to Blake.

It takes me all of about three seconds to realize I’ve fucked up.

*He tricked me. That motherfucking asshole tricked me. And I let him.*

“Oh, so something happened then?” Zayn asks offhandedly, a smile tugging at his lips.

“You’re a bastard,” Blake directs at him.

I bury my face into my hands. “Fuck.”



“There, there,” Zayn comforts, putting his arm around my shoulders. “Don’t feel bad.”

I shove his arm off me. “You tricked me.”

“He’s good like that,” Blake says with an air of disgust.

Zayn points his fork towards Blake playfully. “Oh, I can’t take all the credit. I’ve just had lots of practice on you. Now come on, you pair. I want all the details.”

“No,” I snap before shoving some eggs into my mouth.

“Aww,” he teases. “Was it in the meadow? I didn’t picture you as a nature-loving type of girl?”

Blake kicks Zayn under the table. “Let it go. It’s none of your business.”

“I’m being supportive. It’s better to get these things off your chest – no pun intended.”

I choke on my food, trying to stutter out a retort but Blake cuts me off. I don’t even touch on the fact he knows we went to the meadow.

“It’s between me and Rylee. Leave it alone.”

Zayn leans over, whispering in my ear. “Come on, pretty girl. Give me all the juicy details.”

“I will punch you in the ball sack if you don’t move away,” I growl.

“Why are you punching him in the ball sack?” Asher asks, walking into the kitchen.

The twins fall quiet, watching as their younger brother sits next to Blake. Asher looks at the food in surprise. “Wow, you must be in a good mood. Either that or Rylee is suddenly eating twice her body weight.”

“I am,” Zayn muses. “I was just getting caught up to speed on things.”

Asher looks at me as he grabs a plate. “As in Rylee and Blake finally fucking?”

The room falls silent and I resist the urge to laugh awkwardly. I’m so completely and utterly mortified. Asher’s blunt, casual comment has well and truly shocked his brothers. I want to slink under the table and hide – it’s way too early for my indiscretions to be discussed over pancakes and eggs.

“Oh, shit,” Zayn breathes out. “Even Asher knows?”

It’s one of the only times I’ve seen Blake caught off guard. He’s watching Asher carefully, as if assessing the threat of danger. Asher, however, just shrugs.

“Yeah. It’s not our business, Zayn, so leave them alone.”

Blake’s eyebrows shoot up in surprise as Zayn leans back in his chair.

“Who are you and what have you done with my brother?”

Asher looks at me, a small smile on his face. “Rylee and I have plans after breakfast so you’ll have to find someone else to taunt.”

I slowly gaze over to Blake, who's switching his stare between Asher and I. I have no idea how he feels about the whole thing – if he regrets it or if he's mad that our incident is out in the open. I make a mental note to talk to him later about it and go back to pretending shit isn't weird.

“Right,” Zayn says finally. “Well, eat up everyone. Something tells me we're going to need our energy today.”



“I can't believe that happened,” I mutter as I head out the front door with Asher.

“Did you see their faces?” he laughs. “They are really fucking confused.”

I shove him. “It's not funny, Ash. Blake and I haven't even had a chance to talk about it, and now our dirty laundry has been aired.”

Asher stops as he reaches the Aston Martin, twirling his keys around his index finger. “Blake's a big boy, Rylee. Besides what's done is done. Talk it out with him later. But at least everyone knows and we can just all deal with it and focus on the things that matter.”

I sigh, dropping the subject. “I'm not sure how I feel about getting in the car.”

“You went into town with Blake,” he points out.

My cheeks flush. “We went on the bike. I find it easier than the car.”

Asher nods. “I can’t ride. And I don’t have a motorcycle license. What can I do to help?”

I look at the car wearily. “I don’t know. Drive slow and maybe hold my hand.”

“I will. If it gets too much, let me know and I’ll pull over. But the only way to get past it is to face your fears. I promise I won’t let anything happen to you.”

Surprisingly, I believe him. His voice was the beacon that got me through the chase. And he’s right – I need to just *try*.

“Okay,” I say softly, heading to the passenger door.

We climb into the car, my heart racing as I pull my seatbelt on, making sure it’s snug against my torso. Asher turns on the car, reaching over to grab my hand in my lap.

“You are honestly one of the strongest people I know, Ry. You can do anything you put your mind to.”

I squeeze his hand back, not saying anything. Nausea hits me like a ton of bricks as we cruise off into town.

Thankfully, it’s a short trip and an uneventful one. When we pull up in front of a park, I look around.

“What are we doing here?” I ask.

Asher kills the engine, patting my leg. “We’re meeting Jenny.”

“Already?!” I panic. “This was just sprung on me last night.”

“I know. But I was already planning on seeing her today. The timing just worked out. Come on,” he directs, opening the door.

I have half a mind to strangle him, but having a charge for homicide on my record is not recommended. Begrudgingly, I follow suit.

Instantly, I spot Jenny on a nearby park bench, her slender legs crossed as she stares at her phone. As we approach, she looks up, her face cold as she takes us in.

“Asher. Rylee,” she says, her tone as icy as her features.

“Jenny,” Asher greets back.

I put a little distance between us all, trying not to make things more awkward than they already are. I don’t want to rub it in her face. She’s likely to fire up, which will hurt whatever it is Asher is trying to do.

Jenny stands up from the bench, folding her arms. “You insinuated to the Dean that I recorded pornography. What the hell is wrong with you?” she snaps at Asher.

I look at him slowly, completely understanding her point. He just shrugs, putting his hands in his pockets.

“It was just a suggestion. I think it’s time we all move on from this. Don’t you agree, Jenny?”

Jenny scoffs. “I’m not sure I agree, Asher. I don’t understand why I’m being made out to be the bully in all this. You cheated on me.”

“I know, and I’m sorry,” he says with a sincerity that makes us both look at him in disbelief. “I shouldn’t have done that. I apologize for hurting you.”

My heart kind of aches as I watch unshed tears form in her eyes. She blinks them back, holding onto her anger.

“I accept your apology. But I don’t understand why you wanted to meet,” she says sternly.

Asher glances over to me. “Rylee has taken the brunt of the punishment. She knows she fucked up too, but she lost her future. We still get ours. It’s not fair – we are all in the wrong here.”

“How am I in the wrong?” Jenny asks defensively. “I did nothing to you.”

“Cut the bullshit, Jen,” Asher snaps. “You could have handled the situation a hell of a lot better. Instead, you were so caught up in wanting revenge, you went too far. You guys hate each other now, fine. But leave the high school rivalries in the past. We’re adults now.”

Jenny’s cheeks turn red as she looks over at me. “You really fucking hurt me.”

“You really hurt me too,” I respond dryly.

She shakes her head. “You always got everything. I was always second best. I finally felt like I had something over you

for once, and you ended up with that too.” She glares at Asher briefly before looking back at me.

“You’re wrong,” I say confidently, making her look surprised. “I’m sorry it was a competition between us, but you won. I left all that behind and you got to be number one. I think you just liked the competition so much, that when I stopped competing, it made you mad.”

Jenny huffs but I continue on. “You need to realize that me stepping away from cheerleading or our group of friends, had nothing to do with you. It was me. I was done with it all, and I was hurting. You know how close I was with dad. But you were all supposed to be my friends. And you weren’t there when I needed any of you.”

She at least has the gall to look guilty. I point to Asher. “This thing - I didn’t plan this. This wasn’t a revenge tactic that was designed to hurt you. It just happened. It was wrong that it did, but you went too far. Brightmore was my chance for redemption, a chance to fix everything and I lost that. I’ve made mistakes but I was really trying, Jenny. I wanted to have a better life.”

“I knew you were hurting, Rylee. But you didn’t just lose your dad. You lost me too. How was I supposed to feel when you just walked away? It felt like you shoved me aside. All those years of friendship down the drain like it meant nothing to you.”

I sigh. “It wasn’t like that. I needed to figure out what I wanted.”

Jenny lets out a laugh, running her hand through her hair. “Yeah, well... the whole reason I started dating Asher in the first place was because he was your brother. Well, stepbrother.”

Asher looks offended by her confession but I just laugh sarcastically. “I’m not surprised, but it is what it is. At least you didn’t fuck your stepbrother.”

A smile breaks out on her face as she shakes her head. “You never did like social norms. Ah, well. Are you at least happy together?”

I shift awkwardly, avoiding Asher’s questioning stare. “It’s complicated. But, yeah I guess so.”

Jenny nods. “Good. At least this all wasn’t for nothing.”

Asher finally chimes in, waving his hand at us like he’s trying to calm down a wild bear. “Okay. Anyway, I need you to back off, Jenny. I’ve asked the Dean to consider letting Rylee come back to Brightmore. It would be good if I had your support on this.”

“You want me to tell the Dean, that despite all the drama and the mess, that I want her to come back?” she asks bewildered.

“Yes,” he says simply. “I think you owe her that much.”

Jenny turns to me, her face pained as she takes in his request. “I’ll think about it.”

“That’s all I ask for the moment,” Asher responds, reaching for my hand. “You know, it might be nice to have an amicable



relationship. We're too old for this bullshit. I'll touch base in a few days."

I let him lead me away, but I'm still looking back at her. For a split second, I see my old best friend staring back at me. Jenny turns away, walking in the opposite direction as I let everything sink in.

"What just happened?" I ask Asher as we reach the car.

He gently pushes me back against the car door, towering over me. "We acted like adults for once. Weird, isn't it?"

Laughing, I shake my head. "I don't know how I feel about this new side of you. It's confusing. I can deal with asshole Asher fine. But this shit is difficult."

"Oh, well," he says, shrugging it off. "Funny the shit we do when we're in love."

His mouth falls onto mine, silencing any further sarcastic responses. I kiss him back, letting myself believe that maybe things can be fixed.

Hope is a weird thing, but it's all I have right now.

Well, that and an army of lovers ready to fight for me. What a fucking strange turn of events.

## Chapter 15

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## Rylee

**M**y phone buzzes, an unsaved number flashing on the screen.

I'm kicking myself because I accidentally saved most of my contacts to my old phone's storage, rather than my sim card, so now I had the horrible task of chasing down new details for people.

"Hello?" I answer, hoping it's not a scammer trying to sell me random card investments.

"Hi, doll. Long time, no speak," the female voice says.

My face lights up in a grin as I clutch the phone tighter. "It's so good to hear a familiar voice. Miss me that much?"

Tara laughs, the sound of bottles clinking in the background. "It's certainly been quiet without you here. How's life back home?"

"Argh, don't get me started," I mutter. "Some days I'd rather be at the bar, guarding your office while you have 'meetings'."

“Ah, yes. There’s that attitude I miss,” Tara responds warmly. “Speaking of the bar, that’s why I’m calling.”

I kick my legs out on my bed, stretching. “Oh?”

“There’s a wedding invitation here for you.”

My mouth drops open. “Please tell me you and Devin are getting married.”

Tara makes a sound of disgust. “Weddings are not my gig, doll. If, and it’s a huge if, I ever get married, it will probably just be at the courthouse. No, this is for George.”

“George is getting married!?” I scream down the phone.

“Jesus, my ear drums,” she groans. “Yes, he is. And he said he owes you a lot so he wants to invite you to his big day. We just didn’t have a forwarding address for you.”

I flail my legs in excitement. “Holy shit, that horndog. That’s amazing.”

“The best part is he’s hired out the entire bar for the after party. Or reception – if you can call it that,” Tara mutters. “Do you want me to post it to you?”

Sitting up, I ponder the question. Posting the invitation would be the easiest option, but hearing her voice has made me realize how much I miss my friends back in Rosevale. I consider the possibility of driving there, so I can also see my old roommates. I feel terrible for ditching them and if I’m being honest, I also want fried chicken.

“I might be able to make a trip there,” I say finally, my stomach sinking at the thought of a four hour drive. “I’ll have to chat to my ... my people here and see.”

What the hell do I even call the brothers now? Family? People? Lovers? Assholes who make me orgasm harder than anyone else?

“We’d love to see you. Just let me know.”

“I will,” I promise. “And Tara? Tell George I’m proud of him.”



“I have a question,” I say, slipping into Blake’s room. He looks up from his bean bag with a bored expression.

“Ask away.”

I sit on the end of his bed, my feet tapping the carpet. “Road trip?”

Blake raises an eyebrow at me. “To where?”

“Rosevale.”

He turns back to his book. “It’s not a good idea.”

“I know, but I want to go. I figured maybe you three could come with me.”

I watch as he tucks his bookmark in the center and closes the novel. “You want to be alone in a car, a *car* of all things, with the three of us for four hours. Are you feeling okay?”

“Don’t give yourselves too much credit, you aren’t *that* annoying.”

Blake drops the book onto the floor before pushing himself up, his black shirt and jeans hugging his frame. “Wish I could say the same about you. Did you even stop to think how it would effect me being in a car with you for four hours?” he teases.

“I’m a hoot,” I argue. “Plus, it could be nice... the four of us hanging out for once without someone yelling or threatening the others.”

“Asher is an emotional one,” Blake smirks. “Even if he is going through some type of epiphany right now.”

I laugh. “I believe kids these days call it a ‘glow-up’.”

“No, a glow-up is a physical thing. You mean, growing up.”

“I said what I said,” I grin.

Blake walks over to me, standing in front with his arms folded. “Did you really come in here just to ask about a road trip?”

Looking away, I shrug slightly. “I thought we could also talk about the other day. If you don’t mind.”

“What is there to talk about?” he says casually. “We had sex.”

My cheeks burn with embarrassment, and I quickly realize that his blasé attitude to it all, is worse than him running away. At least when he does that, he gives me some type of emotion.

“Don’t worry about it,” I mutter, standing up.

I go to walk past him but he grabs my wrist, halting me.

“We can talk about it, if you like.”

I can’t bring myself to look at him, so I just nod, my eyes on the carpet. Blake still has hold of my wrist, but I don’t make an effort to move away. Him touching me is the only thing stopping me from falling apart right now.

“Are we okay?” I finally ask, working up the courage to deal with the ever-lasting anxiety in my mind.

“Of course we are. Why wouldn’t we be?” he replies.

“Because every time we’ve ever gotten close, you’ve run away. And now, we got as close as possible, literally. So, I just assumed you were going to shut me out again.”

Blake hums in thought, before grabbing my waist and walking me back towards the bed. He sits me down, standing in front of me.

“Rylee,” he starts, “I didn’t want to complicate things before. But honestly, they are still just as complicated. I don’t think they will ever be *not* complicated. I’ve just come to accept that now.”

I look up at him, my eyes uneasy as I force myself to stay focused on him. “You said you didn’t want me.”

“I said we shouldn’t. Not that I didn’t want you. You’re like a plague – hard to get rid of once you have it.”

Scoffing, I shuffle back on the bed to create some distance. “Can you stop with the insults for just two fucking minutes? This whole thing is fucking with my head. I’m sick of worrying that you’ll just shove me aside again.”

Blake leans down onto the bed, hovering over me. I slip back onto my elbows, looking up at him in shock.

“I wouldn’t have had sex with you if I planned on doing that. Despite what everyone thinks, I’m not some heartless monster. Do I still think this is wrong? Sure. But I still wanted it.”

“Wanted? As in past tense?” I murmur quietly.

He lets out a half-laugh, his lips twitching. “Maybe this will help answer your questions.”

Blake closes the gap between our faces, his lips pressing against mine in a soft kiss. A whimper catches in my throat as I kiss him back, my eyes fluttering shut. My arms give out behind me, my back hitting the mattress. Our lips never break apart though, Blake pushing us closer together.

Relief washes over me and I wrap my arms around his neck, holding him in place. Our kisses stay the same pace – slow, sensual... everything the two of us usually aren’t. But I like it.

It feels like I’ve finally reached the end of battle – at least with the one inside of me.

Slowly, Blake pulls back and my eyes open to peer up at him. He watches me carefully, and for once, I can actually see



what he's thinking on his face. It's as if I've finally broken down that hard exterior to reach inside.

"I like you," he says softly. "I still think it's going to be difficult navigating this, especially with Ash and Z. But I'm done fighting."

"Me too," I murmur.

He brushes my hair from my face, his hand still cupping my jaw. "I don't know how this will work. But we'll take it slow. We've all gotten this far. We just need to make sure that we are all being honest and communicate everything."

I nod. "Communication and trust is key."

Blake leans down, kissing me once before moving off me. "We can do the road trip. I think it would do us all some good. Just let us know when you want to go."

"Okay," I whisper, sitting up. "I'll chat to the others."

He nods firmly, heading towards the bean bag again. "The four of us on a trip together. What could go wrong?" he laughs.



"Fuck yes, I'm excited," Zayn grins, throwing his bag into the trunk of the car.

"I'm almost afraid to ask why," I laugh, handing him my bag to put in.

He moves the luggage tetris-style, giving me a wink. “It’s our first trip together.”

I wrinkle my nose up at him, looking behind as Asher stalks over. He stares at the back of his brother, rolling his eyes.

“I swear he’s like a man child, sometimes,” Asher grunts to himself.

“Now, now. I know *you* did not just call me that,” Zayn says, reaching for me. He grabs my wrist, ripping me forward.

I let out a little squeal as I stumble forward into his chest. “Can you two just behave for five minutes?” I mutter.

Zayn leans down, grabbing the back of my neck. “No,” he responds, before kissing me.

Asher tenses up next to us, shooting his brother an annoyed look. “I’m not falling for your games, Z. I’ll just kiss her right back.”

“You better,” he replies. “Nothing less for my girl. I hope you packed the things I told you to bring.”

“What things?” I ask breathlessly, as I pull back to look at both of them.

Asher’s face tightens as he bites back a grin. “Nothing for you to worry about right now.”

My eyes narrow suspiciously, but I know they won’t tell me if I pry. I can only imagine what sneaky shit they are planning. In fact, I’m not even sure I want to know.

The front door slams shut as Blake heads down the steps. “I hope you have all your shit because I’m not opening the house back up.”

“I’m all set,” Zayn says, wrapping his arm around my waist. “I have all I need right now.”

I can’t help but laugh, letting him swoop down to kiss me again before I finally step back. “I’m all packed,” I tell Blake.

Asher shoves Zayn out of the way to put his bag in. “You better have organized a decent room because I’m not sharing a bed with anyone except Rylee.”

“Aw, it used to be so fun in our bunk beds though,” Zayn taunts.

Blake stands beside Asher, putting his bag in before closing the trunk. “I think everyone should have their own bed so there’s no fighting. I don’t want to wake up in the middle of the night and see some pearly pale ass in the air on top of Rylee.”

I gape at the three of them. “You disgust me. No one is getting anything. God, control yourselves.”

Zayn pouts at me, before opening the back passenger door. “You break my heart, baby girl. Here, get in. I’m sitting in the back with you.”

Asher looks like he wants to argue, but since we’re taking his car, he begrudgingly slips into the driver’s seat.

As the car comes to life, Asher throws a dirty glare at his brother next to him.

“For the record, my ass is not pale.”

## Chapter 16

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## Rylee

**F**ebri's still looks exactly the same as I remember.

It hasn't been all that long, but with everything that's happened, it may as well be a lifetime ago.

It's a quiet Thursday afternoon and most of the bar is empty, except for a few patrons perched on stools, sipping drinks. I can't see anyone around as we approach, but I know where they will be.

"It smells like leather and tequila," Asher remarks as the three of them walk behind me.

"I know. Great, isn't it?" I say with a grin.

I've always loved the scent of bars, even Wheels. It makes you feel carefree, knowing that in a short, sweet amount of time, you're going to be shit-faced and possibly passed out on the bathroom floor.

None of the patrons look familiar which is a shame. I was hoping to see George in person, so I can tell him how proud I am for smashing the online dating world. Even people in their

20s and 30s struggle with it, and my boy was out here, getting hitched.

Whistling reaches my ears and I look over as Mike emerges from the back office. He stops in his tracks, staring at me like he's seen a ghost.

"Ay, here's fucking trouble!" he grins, near jumping over the bar to get to me.

I laugh as he pulls me in for a hug. "I knew you fuckers missed me," I mumble against his shoulder.

Mike holds me at arms-length, eyeing me. "With every bullet. Nah, it's good to see you again. It hasn't been the same since you left."

"You're too sweet," I tease, jabbing him in the chest. "Where's boss woman?"

He jerks his thumb towards the office door. "Usual place."

"Is she alone this time?" I ask with suggestive eyebrows.

"I'll leave that with you to determine," he says with a hearty laugh.

I motion for the guys to stay put. "Get a drink or something."

Zayn slips onto a bar stool. "Don't mind if I do."

Mike looks at the three of them. "Friends of yours?"

"You could say that," I mutter, slipping away to avoid any further questions.

I knock on the office door, waiting. Tara's voice comes from the other side and I creep open the door slowly, putting my head in. She's staring at the computer, a scowl on her face. She looks over, annoyed, until she spots me.

"Doll! What a surprise. I wasn't expecting you so soon."

"I just couldn't wait to get back," I laugh, stepping inside.

She reaches into her drawer, pulling out an envelope. "Here you go. A formal invitation to the wedding of the year."

"To be celebrated in the best damn bar," I add.

"Damn fucking straight," Tara responds, walking over to give me a hug. "You are staying for a drink, right?"

She leads us out to the bar, where Mike has just finished serving my three guys. I stand opposite them behind the bar, and point to them.

"These are my friends – Zayn, Blake and Asher."

Tara reaches over, taking turns at shaking each of their hands. "Are these the ones responsible for stealing away my best employee?"

"Ay, baby girl. I'm right here," Mike says, putting a hand on his chest.

She laughs, looking at the guys. "It was always chaos with the two of them here."

"I remember us covering for you, if you get my drift," I taunt, causing Mike to snort next to me.



Tara gives me her best death-stare, though it holds no merit. She knows we love to give her shit about Devin.

Zayn grins at me. “Chaos you say? I believe it.”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about,” I say, feigning innocence. “I’m a hard worker.”

Asher tries his best to contain his laughter. “Rightio. You’re not fooling anyone, Rylee.”

Tara puts her arm around me. “Nah, she was a good girl. We miss her.”

“I miss you too,” I admit. “It’s still my home away from home here.”

“Well,” Tara says, “you are always welcome back. God knows we could use the help since Mike doesn’t do anything.”

He gives her a playful heartbroken look as he walks down the bar to serve some patrons. But not before he slips her the finger behind his back, reminding me that sometimes family is not blood, but the one you create.



“You’re going to love it, I promise.”

“I don’t want to put that in my mouth.”

“Don’t be such a baby. It will change your life.”

We’re standing outside my beloved fried chicken shop, causing a bit of a scene as I argue with Blake.

The sweet smell of fried goodness wafts out from the doors, making my stomach grumble with need. Zayn steps forward, putting a hand on Blake's shoulder.

"It smells pretty awesome to me, brother. Come on, just give it a try. Rylee *wants you* to try it."

Blake shrugs his hand off. "It's a lot of grease."

"My God, you must be fun at parties," I grumble. "Just live a little. One piece of fried chicken will not end your existence. But if you continue to argue with me, I might."

I walk inside, drooling as I approach the counter. Since I know best, I order for all of us – basically getting everything I can think of. Asher stands next to me, gazing at the menu, before adding his own additions to the order. I grin at him, excited as hell for it.

"I just want to see you happy and enjoying yourself. I bet you moan when you eat it," Asher says with a straight face.

The person behind the till, looks at us in shock before hurrying away to the kitchen with our order.

"Great, now I'll never be able to show my face here again," I mumble.

"It's okay. You can sit on mine later if you like."

I do my best to keep myself from reacting, my cheeks turning a faint shade of pink, which I pretend is from the fryer heat. "I'll be busy eating chicken and then passed out in a food coma," I respond casually.

“Well, after you wake from your coma, you’ll have energy to do things... like *ride my face*.”

“Who’s riding whose face?” Zayn asks from behind me. “Oh, they have jalapeno cheese poppers. Please tell me you ordered some.”

I nod. “I sure did. I’ll pay you to make Blake eat one.”

“Oh, ignore the sour puss. He loves spicy things. He’s just being difficult. We all love spicy things in this family,” Zayn grins.

The three of us step back from the counter to let a couple in to order. Blake hovers outside the doors, watching the passing traffic. Every now and then, I see him look inside, and I’m not completely convinced that he doesn’t want to eat it. How could he not when it smells so good?

The food takes approximately fifteen minutes to be prepared and cooked, the cashier handing over the bags.

“Thanks!” I grin, distributing some bags between Zayn and Asher.

We start walking back towards the car, my hands full with food too. Asher and Zayn walk a little in front, and I’m taken by surprise when Blake holds back, taking the bags in my hands.

“I can do it,” I argue but he doesn’t listen.

“It’s fine, I got it.”

I wish I knew what was going on in his head sometimes. It's a mystery, wrapped up in a bundle of non stop *fun* action.

Well, it was kind of a lot of fun...

"Are you going to eat any of it?" I ask, walking by his side.

Blake's eyes shift towards me as he keeps following his brothers. "I will have to eat something. Hopefully you made some good choices."

"Are you saying I don't usually make those?"

"They are usually questionable," he says, lips tugging up.

I scoff playfully. "I chose you."

"Exactly. Questionable."

The two of us smile like idiots, trying to hide our grins as we catch up to Asher and Zayn as they reach the car. I slip into the front passenger seat before Blake can, giving him a smirk.

Asher looks at me in surprise, before smugly hopping into the driver's seat and reaching for my hand. "You continue to surprise me."

"Do I?" I ask genuinely.

He nods, starting the car as he flicks his gaze to the backseat briefly to check the twins are in the vehicle. "This is the first time you've gotten into the front of a car."

I look down at my lap, squeezing his hand. It's a horrible reminder of the accident, but a tribute to how far I've come in such a short amount of time.

It scares me to think that I just made this enormous decision without even thinking back to the crash. That's got to be some type of healing or growth, right?

I don't know what it is, but something about the four of us together on the road trip is putting me in a good mood. And at the risk of sounding like a total loser, for once, I want to be better.

"What can I say?" I respond, putting my seatbelt on. "I'm feeling inspired."



Considering the lack of motels or hotels in the area, I'm surprised at our room.

We're at the same tiny motel I first stayed at, but in a much bigger room. In fact, this room is somewhat nicer too.

It doesn't quite click straight away as to why it's nicer, the smell of my chicken distracting me, but as I shove a piece in my mouth and stare at the walls, it hits me.

"Is that ... a sex painting?" I gasp, looking at the portrait across the room in front of the bed.

Hanging on the wall directly across from me is a faded painting of two people embracing... very naked.

The three guys look over, squinting before Zayn casually replies. "Yep."

I look around for other subtle clues, quickly realizing that I'm a moron. The color scheme is different to the other room I stayed in - pale reds and pinks. The pillows on the bed behind my back are frilly, like my grandma's old dusty collection.

I stare at the second double bed on the other side of the room, thrown off by its mere existence.

"Is this ... a honeymoon suite?"

Blake laughs, poking a small bowl of macaroni and cheese with his plastic spoon. "It is."

"Why are we in a honeymoon suite?" I groan, confused. "And why is there two beds in here?"

"It was the biggest room they had. I paid them extra to put another bed in," he says, sniffing the contents of his meal before taking a bite.

Asher looks up from his chicken wing, a snort breaking loose. "Kinky. That painting has caused the conception of many children, I imagine."

I put my food down, climbing off the bed as I look around slowly. I head to the bathroom, looking inside, my mouth popping open in surprise.

"There's a giant bath in here."

"It's basically a hot tub," Zayn's voice floats in behind me. "For *lovers*."

I quickly back out of the bathroom, my nose wrinkled in disgust. "Ew. We're in a honeymoon suite. Imagine how many

people have fucked in here.”

“People fuck in all types of motel rooms. Even the one we stayed in before,” Blake points out.

“But this is different,” I mutter, taking my spot back on the bed.

Thankfully, I’m not so turned off by the discovery that I can’t eat. I take a sad, tiny bite of my chicken, looking down at the bed sheets. “I hope they have been thoroughly washed.”

“There’s a stain near your right ankle,” Zayn taunts, laughing as I pull my legs under my body further.

“Of course they would be,” Asher says, reaching over to grab some more food. “You’ve fucked in worse places than this.”

I think back to some of the more questionable experiences the last few years - cars, dodgy frat boy apartments, and even one incident where I banged a random guy from the college bar in someone’s side garden. It took nearly a week to fully remove the dirt from my ass crack.

“I suppose that’s true,” I begrudgingly admit. “But still... don’t you find this weird?”

“It’s only weird if you make it weird, Rylee,” Blake says.

I look at the second bed. “And how are we going to decide sleeping arrangements?”

“I take dibs on sleeping next to you,” Zayn chimes in, winking at me.

“I don’t think so,” Asher argues.

Blake nods to the cuck chair in the corner. “I’ll sleep there if need be. It’s just two nights.”

“How about this: Blake sleeps in the chair, Zayn and Asher share the bed and I sleep alone in the other double?” I murmur with a cheeky smile.

I’m immediately met with offended stares from the latter two. I realize we’re going to be in for a long night of this stage, with lots of negotiation and arguing. Maybe I should take the cuck chair and make the three of them battle it out for bed space. I’d pay good money to watch them physically fight. Sure, I’d also be worried about injuries but it would be entertaining and hot as hell. Who needs to watch the UFC when I could have three brothers in a cage battling for dominance?

I zone out, my mind growing perverted as I picture it while eating my delicious dinner. I’m not sure what’s better to be honest.



## Chapter 17

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## Rylee

If the NCIS team ever needed an additional member, I'd be perfect for the job. Hell, Gibbs could boss me around any day and I'd gladly ask for more. Put me down in the labs with Abby and I reckon I'd be a kick-ass forensic analyst.

Through my awesome detective work, I manage to get ahold of Jeremy. Turns out being in a small town has its benefits, especially when you come from a large family. A few questions at the local shops, and it was easy to find a friend of a friend.

I deliberately put my phone on no-caller ID before giving him a call, amused at myself as I stir him up.

“Sir, if you join our club, it has exclusive benefits,” I say in a higher than normal pitch.

Jeremy's voice stutters down the phone, unsure how to navigate this shitty mess. “I... uh, I'm sorry but I'm not just interested.”

“But you haven't heard our benefits!”

“Well... what are they?” he asks hesitantly.

I grin. “Exclusive access to the mile high club and annual passes to the haunted lake to get a mud massage in your anus.”

I hear him pause on the other end of the line and I can practically see the gears turning in his head.

“Wha-... Rylee, is this you?!” he yells, his voice climbing in excitement with each syllable.

Laughing, I double over holding my stomach, my voice dropping back to normal. “Fuck me, you’re hilarious, Jer.”

“You son of a biscuit! Do you have any idea how much anxiety I had? I hate scam calls.”

“But who wouldn’t want to join the mile high club?” I snort.

I look over as Zayn steps outside the motel room, watching me as I pace the front of the building. He raises an eyebrow before waggling them suggestively. I wave my hand at him, turning away.

“I swear to God, you’re going to age me,” Jeremy murmurs. “Anyway, how have you been?!”

“Fabulous,” I lie. “I have news.”

“Oh? Tell me,” he says.

I nearly jump out of my skin when arms wrap around me from behind. I tense up before relaxing against Zayn as his hand strokes my stomach.

“I’m in Rosevale,” I murmur in a sing-song voice, leaning into his touch.

“We have to meet up! How long are you here for?” he asks.

“Just until Saturday. I came to pick up something. But I can’t leave without catching up with you guys.”

I hear Jeremy let out some sound that resembles a cat being strangled. “Does Jasmine know? I’ll tell her shortly. We’re meeting up for lunch.”

“I’m so glad you guys are still in touch,” I mumble, playfully slapping away Zayn’s creeping hand as it approaches my breast. He’s unfazed, instead just going straight for the grope.

“Well, uh... we’re actually dating now,” Jeremy replies sheepishly.

“Shut the fuck up!” I yell excitedly. “Not going to be lie. I thought you might have been gay.”

He laughs. “I’m pansexual. But I think connections are important. Anyway, she’ll be super excited to see you. Is Chuck with you?”

Zayn leans down, kissing my neck. I tilt my head, granting him further access. I do my best to hold in any weird noises that threaten to emerge. “No, but I have some friends I’d like you to meet.”

“Sounds good,” Jer says. “I’ll text you this afternoon.”

We say goodbye and I manage to just hang up the phone in time for Zayn to bite my neck, making me gasp.

“Seriously?” I playfully scold, shoving my phone in my pocket.

”*Friend?* Am I your friend?” he asks, pulling me flush against him.

I reach my arms up so I can grab his neck. “I still don’t know what to call this,” I admit.

“Hm,” he hums against my neck, sending shivers down my body. “I call it ‘fun’.”

Turning around to face him, I put my hands on his chest. “Is that all I am to you?” I laugh. “A bundle of fun?”

“You know you are more than that, pretty girl. Besides, I just go with the flow.”

I’m just about ready to jump him in the carpark when the room door opens and Asher walks out. “Can you pair get back inside before you get arrested for indecent exposure?”

I give Zayn a saucy little wink before stepping around him and heading back inside the room. I think all the guys are a bit tense at the moment. None of us really got any sleep last night.

I wanted to call their bluff on the whole bed situation. So, I actually did manage to spend the night on the cuck chair. I was hoping they would start fighting over the beds or someone would pull me forcefully into one, but it didn’t happen. Blake and Zayn ended up sharing one of the beds, whilst Asher took the other. He did try to coax me into the bed, but I refused, determined to get them frustrated.

Unfortunately, Asher is pig-headed, and as soon as he realized I was trying to play a game with him, he pushed back. Calling my bluff, he spent the night spaced out on the bed, hugging the pillows and moaning about how comfortable it was.

Needless to say, my neck is aching like a bitch today. But I'm proud of myself for standing my ground. This old girl still has it.

They should know by now that I'm not going to give in or lose. Hell, that's what got me into this mess in the first place.

To be fair, I am trying to think of a strategy for tonight because I'm not sure my spine can handle another night in the chair.

But if they think I'll give in so easily, even now, then they have another thing coming.



“Rylee!” Jasmine yells, barreling her weight into me.

“Oof,” I groan, the wind being knocked out of me. “Miss me?”

I barely have time to recover before a second body slams into me. Jeremy picks me up, spinning me around as he squeezes me so tight, my ribs threaten to pop.

“You haven't changed a bit!” he says excitedly.

I stumble a little as he puts me down. “It hasn’t been that long, Jer.”

The six of us are at the lake, of course. I couldn’t think of a better and more fitting place to catch up.

The weather is turning it on for us, and I had so many amazing memories here with my friends. Plus, I had a feeling that the guys would not share my sentiments.

I hold back laughter as I peer over at Blake, Asher and Zayn. The three of them are standing at the edge of the water, looking hesitantly at the mud trap.

“Are you coming in?” I yell, my finger tips splashing some water around.

Jeremy tells me that there’s been a fair bit of rain recently. It’s obvious – the lake is fuller than I’ve seen. It’s heaven to us who are familiar with the area, but for out of towners, it still seems... questionable.

“Hell, no,” Asher says, shaking his head. “I don’t trust the water. Plus, there’s mud everywhere. Don’t bodies of water normally have sand?”

Jasmine waddles through the water next to me. “It’s not a beach. Besides, the water is lovely.”

The two of us squeal as Jeremy does a cannon ball into the water, drenching us with water. He emerges from underneath the murky water, flicking his hair back.

“Seriously, they are such buzz kills,” he mutters to me jokingly. “Chuck was heaps of fun.”

I bite my lip, my eyes trying to look over at them sneakingly. I know what the mention of his name will do to them.

Zayn gives me a look that says *'Oh, please. I've seen his cock in you'* while Blake seems to look unfazed. He looks normal, except for once, there's a slight glint in his eye that suggests there's a bit of an internal thought process happening as we speak.

Asher, however, immediately pulls his shirt over his head, flinging it to the grass behind him. "I'm coming in."

I watch amused as he steps into the water, balancing carefully as he makes his way through the shallow, muddy water.

Jasmine leans over to me, whispering in my ear. "Do I sense some jealousy?"

"You have no idea," I mutter back.

Asher looks like he's stepping in shit, his face scrunched up as he makes his way further into the water. Once he's about waist deep, he stops, his face changing into one of surprise.

"Oh, there is some sand here. At least, I hope that's sand."

"It's seed," Jeremy taunts and I resist the urge to gag.

"You're disgusting. That word is vomit-worthy. Shame on you. I'm judging so hard," I mock.

He cracks up laughing, diving into the water again. Jasmine watches on in amusement, her body completely submerged



except her head.

“So, they are all brothers?” she asks, nodding towards the three of them.

I give her a sheepish, almost embarrassed smile. “Yeah.”

“I had no idea Blake was an identical twin. It’s hard to tell them apart,” she says quietly so only us two can hear. “Okay, I can’t tell them apart at all.”

I float next to her, our heads nearly touching. “Zayn has the tattoos on his arm, if that helps.”

“Oh, yeah,” she says, peering at them casually. “On the plus side, it seems like things are more relaxed between you and Blake. It was pretty hostile when he was here last time.”

“Hostile is definitely the right word.”

As if sensing he is being spoken about, Blake looks over at me, a small smile on his lips. I smile back, unable to help it. Jasmine looks between us, before laughing quietly under her breath.

“You’ve got it bad for him. For all of them.”

“I guess I do,” I admit.

She tilts her head back, letting her hair get wet. “Do you still see Chuck too?”

“Yeah,” I murmur. “We’re still in touch.”

I fall silent, not sure how to deal with the feelings. At least before, sex was just sex. I was so good at separating it from

emotion. I never expected to let in someone – let alone more than one.

“I think it’s okay to like more than one person,” Jasmine says, watching me closely. “Hell, half the movies and tv shows could have had their drama solved by polyamory. I don’t get why people should have to choose if they love more than one person. As long as everyone is on board.”

“I don’t love them,” I say quickly, immediately hating the feeling of guilt I get inside.

Jasmine rolls her eyes. “Oh, please. Ry, you are completely head over heels in love with all of them. It’s so obvious. You may as well have a huge neon sign plastered on your forehead.”

“Have you spoken to Carmen?” I ask, deflecting. I’m so torn by how I feel and Jasmine’s observations. It’s almost heart breaking because that’s exactly what’s going to happen. Society has planted a grain in our lives with the *acceptable* standard of a relationship. And it doesn’t involve loving multiple people *or* your stepbrothers.

“Yeah, I have. She’s doing good. Work is keeping her busy,” Jasmine replies, letting me change the subject.

I nod. “I miss you guys. We will have to do this again. Next time I’ll give more of a heads up so Carmen can be here too.”

“She’ll love that,” she says. “And you definitely need to come back again. Jeremy is amazing and I’m falling for that boy more and more every day. But he still can’t cook to save

his life. Please come back. I need someone to teach him basic life skills – like how to cook a pancake without burning it to a shade of black only recognizable by aliens.”

## Chapter 18

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## Rylee

“I have mud up my ass, I swear to God,” Asher groans as we head back inside the motel room.

I snifle a laugh, watching as he hurriedly makes his way to the bathroom, closing the door behind him.

Dropping the bundle of wet clothes at the front door, I pull the towel tighter around my body. I’m a veteran of the haunted lake, a queen of the mud realm.

I made sure to strip to my undergarments before getting in the water and rode home in only a towel. Asher failed to remove his shorts before getting in the water, the material soaking up everything. I hear the shower turn on, a moan of enjoyment echoing from the bathroom as Asher no doubt got under the stream of water to clean the many crevices that the mud seems to find.

“I’m as dry as a desert,” Zayn grins, flinging himself onto the bed. “But I did think the view was spectacular.”

“I bet you did,” I mutter, sitting in the cuck chair and crossing my legs.

I’m keen for a shower too, but more than content sitting here, relaxing, as I wait.

Blake comes in the front door, a bag in his hand. On the way home, we decided to stop at the liquor store. It’s our last night in Rosevale before we drive home tomorrow, and decided that a drink would be nice.

He pulls out several single serve bottles of beer and bourbon, placing them in the mini fridge.

“I can’t believe how cheap it is here compared to back home,” he mutters. “It’s ridiculous.”

I nod. “It is. Are we going to order the pizza soon?”

Blake reaches into his pocket, pulling out his phone. He throws it to me before kicking off his shoes.

“I have a phone now,” I say confused, holding his.

He walks over to the second bed, sitting down. “My credit card details are saved in the phone. It will pre-populate in the payment box when you order online so you can pay.”

“I can give you some money,” I start but he cuts me off.

“No.”

Zayn muffles a laugh, staring at the ceiling. “Classic Blake. Don’t try to argue with him on this, Ry. You won’t win.”

“I think you underestimate me,” I say.

He shakes his head. “Sorry, but have you met my brother over there? Stubborn mule.”

“I can hear you,” Blake growls, glaring at his twin.

The shower turns off and I quickly decide to concede defeat, opening up Blake’s phone to search for the local pizza place. I want to order before I get in the shower, so that hopefully by the time I am done, the food will nearly be here.

I go through the app, selecting a few different types of pizza, some soda and some garlic bread before organizing delivery to our room. Just as I finish, Asher emerges from the shower, dressed only in a towel, low on his hips.

“I’m not confident I got it all,” he grumbles, walking towards me.

My mouth dries as I stare at him, his muscular body still partially damp. The water glistens on his skin, highlighting his muscles.

“Give it a few weeks,” I quickly say, standing up. “Think of it like a spa day. Mud is supposed to be good for the skin.”

Asher stops in front of me and it takes all my will power to maintain eye contact. He looks collected, but there’s a wicked glint in his eyes that also says he knows exactly what he’s doing to me.

*Right. Two can play that game.*

I let go of my towel, the soft material hitting the floor as I stand in my bra and underwear. “I’m going to have a shower now.”

Asher's eyes don't waver from my face but his jaw twitches. "It's all yours."

I step past him, feeling the eyes of all three of them on my back as I make my way into the bathroom. I take my time closing the door, making sure that they get a good look before I vanish from sight.

Turning on the shower, I rest my head against the wall. I know playing these games is dangerous, but frankly, part of me just doesn't care. Life's too short not to enjoy yourself.

The water pressure and heat feels like heaven on my skin as I step under the stream. I tip my head back, letting the water run through my hair, relaxing as I enjoy the moment. I know as soon as we head home tomorrow, things are going to be intense again. The past few days here have reminded me of old times, the one period in my life where I felt free and in control. And even now, with different circumstances, and different company, I still feel the same.

It was nice to get away from all the chaos and nightmares, to pretend that shit isn't weird in my life.

I never expected a normal life or one without challenges, but if this is what it feels like to have one, then I like it.

There's a small part of me that whispers I deserve it. I think they call that self-compassion, something I've just never been good at. I've always just resigned myself to believe that I would have a shit show of a life and that I deserved all the hurt I received.



But deep down, it's shifting. I know I'm not a bad person. I've made bad choices, sure. But I did what I had to do to survive. I made do to the best of my ability with the tools I had available. Shouldn't I be allowed to be happy? To feel normal?

I hear faint noises from outside the bathroom and I pull out of my thoughts, listening. I can hear voices and it dawns on me that the pizza must have arrived.

My stomach grumbles so I quickly turn off the shower, reaching for my towel. I'm keen for food and a drink, and perhaps an early night before our long drive home tomorrow.

Drying off my hair and body, I wrap the towel around my body, tugging it snug against me before heading out. Three pizza boxes are sprawled out on one of the beds and I smile appreciatively as Blake hands me a beer.

"We thought you might have fallen asleep in there," he says.

"Just relaxing and contemplating life," I reply, heading over to the food.

I'm too hungry to bother getting dressed first, the cheesy pizzas taunting me with their deliciousness. I take a sip of beer before immediately following it with a large bite of food.

"Oh, this is so good," I groan.

Zayn puts his hand on my knee as he engulfs a piece of pizza with the other. "It's really great quality, actually. Good pick."

I look over at Blake, who is also devouring his food. "So, you had a tantrum about the fried chicken claiming it was too

greasy, but you're all good with smashing that down?" I ask amused.

He pauses before giving a little shrug. "Some days I like to indulge."

"You mean some days you just like to be a dick about things and be difficult," Asher mumbles.

I nod. "I agree. Definitely just being difficult."

"You're one to talk, Ry. Difficulty is your middle name," Blake fires back.

I try not to notice Zayn's hand creeping further up my leg, his fingers nearly at the bottom of my towel. "I'm not disagreeing. At least I own up to my shit."

Asher snorts, giving me a '*yeah right*' glare. I ignore him, finishing my piece of pizza and taking a generous gulp of beer.

It's been awhile since I've had a drink, and as I near the bottom of the bottle, I can already feel myself getting relaxed and happy.

I'm really glad that I'm not a sloppy or sad drinker. I spent too many years in my teens, comforting light-weight cheerleaders in bathrooms as they drunkenly sobbed about their boyfriends or vomited chunks into the toilet.

Travelling fingers disappear under the bottom of the towel, distracting me from my food. "Do you mind?" I ask Zayn, nodding down to his hand that has vanished under the towel.

His fingers are dangerously close to my center and he digs them into my thigh to prove a point. “Oh, I’m fine. Don’t mind me at all,” he says.

I sneak a glance towards Blake and Asher, unsure of their reaction to Zayn’s playfulness. This trip has been so good, I don’t want to make tonight awkward for anyone.

Asher seems perfectly relaxed, watching amused as he drinks his bourbon. His older brother pretends to be ignoring the situation, but I can see his body tensing. But I’m not really sure what type of tension it is.

I shoot Zayn a warning look, shaking my head slightly. I don’t want to risk it, even though I love this side of him.

Zayn looks at me curiously, trying to gauge my thoughts. He turns to look at Blake, who is staring at the painting on the wall. Zayn puts two and two together, tilting his head back as he hums thoughtfully.

“Hey, Blake,” he says, getting the attention.

“What?” Blake responds, still not looking over.

Zayn doesn’t respond straight away, instead looking back at me. My heart starts to race as his lips pull into a smirk.

We’re about to enter danger territory. I can sense it, like an animal being hunted in the dark.

“What, Zayn?” Blake snaps again when Zayn doesn’t respond.

I hold my breath, freezing any movement. It's like all the air has been sucked out of the room. Goosebumps form on my legs under his touch as Zayn holds my gaze, daring me to look away.

“Blake... truth or dare?”

## Chapter 19

---

## Rylee

“Zayn!” I growl quietly, eyes widening.

He grins in response, his fingers tightening around my thigh to the point of pain. But it doesn't faze me at all – if anything, it's *effecting* me.

I snap my head to look at Blake, panic and alarm bells filling me as each second passes.

Blake finally looks away from the painting, ignoring Zayn as he gazes at me. We lock eyes, and I search his face, trying desperately to read his thoughts. He's not giving anything away, his control perfect as we await his answer.

“Truth.”

My lips part, complete and utter surprise silencing the alarm bells.

*What the fuck is going on?*

Out of the corner of my eye, I see Zayn straighten up, his face a picture of victory. He looks over at Blake, his hand not

releasing any pressure from my leg.

“Do you want to see me eat Rylee’s pretty pussy?”

I shove Zayn’s hand away, scooting back. “No, Zayn. Stop it.”

He looks at me, his eyes darkening. “Now, now. What have I told you about the rules of the game, Rylee? Blake picked so now we have to wait for his answer.”

My gaze shoots over to Asher, hoping for some reinforcement in case shit hits the fan, but he’s watching on in amusement. If anything, I think he’s relishing over the fact that Blake’s control may be getting broken down.

*Tit for tat.*

“Yeah,” Blake answers, and it’s so casual that the conversation may as well have been about the taste of the pizza.

“What?” I stutter out, but before I can say anything further, my body is flung to the top of the bed, landing on the pillows.

I grab the towel protectively, jamming my legs shut as Zayn descends on me. He grabs my ankle, raising an eyebrow.

“Are you interfering with the game? Rylee, rules are rules. We give and take, remember?”

He grips my ankle tight, pulling me towards him. The towel rises higher and I rush to grab it, but he beats me to it. He rips it open, exposing my naked body to the eyes in the room.

I don't bother trying to cover up, not at all ashamed of my body, but I do try to argue. I barely manage to get a single sound out of my mouth before Zayn's hand clamps around my neck, silencing me.

"Hush, baby. You'll get your turn. But for now, you're going to lay there and let me feel you with my tongue. If you continue to fight me, I'll get Asher to come help hold you down."

Asher moves closer to me. "I'll do it anyway. I want to feel her struggle as she fights the pleasure."

"Good," Zayn says, pushing my legs apart and hooking his arms around my knees to pull me further towards him. "You can silence her any way you like, if she continues with that smart mouth of hers."

"Zayn..." I plead, but Asher is already at the head of the bed behind me, lifting my head into his lap. Instinctively, I look up at him, and he gently grabs my wrists, pulling them onto his chest.

"Are you going to behave or do I need to keep that mouth quiet too?" he murmurs, tightening his grip on my wrists to prove his point.

I fall silent, my body feeling warmer and warmer with each passing second. "I'll behave... for now," I finally reply with a challenging tone.

Fingers gently touch my inner thighs, reminding me that Zayn's head is between my legs. I look down, watching as he



lazily runs his finger up and down my slit.

“Don’t pretend you’re mortified, Ry. You’re already dripping.”

He raises his finger, showing everyone how turned on I clearly am. Without breaking eye contact, he slips his finger between his lips, tasting me.

My legs part further, desperate for him to hurry up and touch me. “You’re talking a lot of game for someone who is taking their sweet ass time,” I tease.

Zayn smirks. “Such attitude for someone who thinks they are in control here.”

“I am in control,” I argue.

“I highly doubt that, baby girl. Tell me – *are you in control?*”

He drops his face into my pussy, his tongue pressing against my clit as he attacks it hungrily. I accidentally throw myself further against Asher, my back arching as I cry out loudly.

“I don’t think she’s in control,” Asher comments, and to be honest, he’s fucking correct.

My head is spinning fast, my eyes shut as pleasure rips through my body. I can’t move, my arms pinned down against Asher and my legs held tight by Zayn around his head as he eats me like he’s trying to devour my soul.

I’m beyond saving at this point, my body pleading for more. I cry out in equal relief and desperation when Zayn slides his

fingers into my pussy, pumping them in and out slowly as he sucks my clit into his mouth.

My nails dig into Asher's chest leaving angry, red welts, but neither of us care. My body tenses, my release fast approaching... when they do exactly what I feared.

Zayn pushes back, releasing my legs and letting them fall onto the mattress with a thud. I yell out in frustration, ready to lash out, but Asher still has me pinned down against him.

"Zayn!" I snap. "Don't you dare. Not again."

He stands at the end of the bed, arms folded as he looks down at me. "I'm sorry," he says in a tone that clearly indicates he's not fucking sorry at all. "Did you want to come?"

"Yes!"

"Ah," he responds, nodding in understanding. "But, that wasn't part of the stipulation. It was just for Blake to observe your pussy being eaten - not you coming all over my face."

Asher tightens his grip on me as I struggle against him. "I'm going to pin you down and sit on your god damn fucking face Zayn until you suffocate."

"I'd die a happy man," he taunts back with a grin. "But nevertheless, we must continue the game. Blake," he says, looking at him. "You can ask Asher now."

They ignore my curses and pleas, infuriating me more. Blake looks at Asher. "Truth or dare?"

“Oh, definitely dare,” Asher responds quickly.

I wouldn't expect anything less from the king of the game himself. Curiosity gets the better of me, and I slow down my struggling, realizing that it's a losing battle. I want to hear what comes next.

*I need to know.*

Blake thinks for a moment, watching me closely. “I dare you to fuck Rylee until she's about to come, then stop.”

“Are you fucking kidding me?” I yell.

Unfazed, Blake nods towards Zayn. “You should probably hold her down, brother. I have a feeling she's going to get feisty.”

Asher lets me go as Zayn moves towards me, and I quickly take the chance to try to fight back. But I'm quickly shoved back by Zayn as he leans over me, pinning my arms down into the bed. I go to shout and curse at him, but he quickly kisses me hard, making me taste myself, as he bruises my lips.

I moan into the kiss, momentarily forgetting to struggle as his tongue pushes into my mouth. I'm so distracted by him that I don't realize Asher is already kneeling on the bed between my legs until I feel his cock pressing against my entrance.

Pausing the kiss, I gasp into Zayn's mouth as Asher spears his cock into me. My moans are captured in his mouth before he pulls back, moving his body off the bed without releasing my arms so Asher has more room.

There's no time to argue or comprehend what's happening as Asher fucks me furiously, his hips slapping into mine. Zayn watches on above my head, his eyes glued to my face.

“You're so fucking good, Rylee. Exquisite.”

Asher reaches between us, his fingers rubbing my clit as he continues thrusting into me. I'm still so worked up from Zayn's oral attack, that I feel my orgasm approaching quickly.

You have to believe, I try so hard to hide the fact I'm about to explode. I bite the inside of my cheek, fighting back moans as I pretend I'm not on the edge. Maybe, just maybe, if I hide it... I can trick them into letting me come.

“Ash,” Blake calls out from somewhere beside us.

“I know,” he responds, slowing his movements.

What?!

*No, no, no.*

Zayn laughs against my cheek, kissing the side of my mouth. “Oh, baby. You think we don't know you? We can see it written all over you.”

“It's all over your face, in your body language. You're like a book, Rylee. You just have to know how to read you,” Blake adds.

Asher pulls out, making me cry out. I struggle against Zayn's grip, turning my head to look at Asher and Blake.

“Please,” I beg. “Just let me come. I'll do anything.”

Zayn lets me go, but I can't fight. I'm on the cusp of exploding, my body aching in a way I never knew possible. It's the worst type of ache, painful as it throbs and craves relief.

"Truth or dare, Zayn?" asks Asher, and I immediately try to sit up.

"Wait! What about me? When is it my turn?"

Asher leans forward, pushing his hand against my sternum so I fall back. "Oh... sorry, didn't we tell you? You're not playing the game. You *are* the game."

"Hmm... what to choose?" Zayn muses, tapping his chin in thought. "Hard decision, but I think I'll go dare."

There's no other option. We all know the stakes now, and they've made it perfectly clear what their intention is.

Without missing a beat because he was ready for this, Asher leans against the wall. "Zayn, your dare is to hang Rylee off the edge of the bed and fuck her mouth whilst Blake plays with her pussy."

"Oh, come on," I argue. "You can't have two players doing a dare at once."

"You don't make the rules," Zayn says, grabbing my hair in his fist. "Now are you going to be a good girl and lay down off the edge, or am I going to have to force you?"

I narrow my eyes at him. "Make me."

His lips twitch dangerously and he wastes no time, grabbing my arm and dragging me to the edge. His hand is still firmly in my hair, but the majority of his pull is against my arm so it doesn't hurt.

The room flips upside down, my eyes suddenly seeing the roof, before I'm quickly angled back. Out of the corner of my eye, I can see Blake moving around the bed towards my legs.

I want to give them a mouthful, but I keep my mouth clamped shut. If these assholes want it, then they will just have to take it.

Zayn's thighs fall into my line of vision, his clothes gone as he strokes his length. "Rylee... open your mouth."

I shake my head. He raises an eyebrow, his free hand caressing my cheek. "Open your mouth. Now."

The mattress moves near my legs, and I know Blake is there. Without looking, I can sense him. But I don't break my eye contact with Zayn, determined not to give in or give them a chance to take the power.

Blake's hands slide up my thighs and I squeeze them together too, imagining I'm a human steel statue.

"She's being difficult again," Blake laughs, his fingers digging into the middle of my legs.

"Always so difficult," Asher echoes. "Maybe I need to help relax her."

I tense up, unsure what he could be planning. I already have Zayn at my head and Blake at my legs.

He moves onto the bed beside me, his hand lightly stroking my lower abdomen.

“Come on, Ry. You know the harder you fight us, the more it makes us want to play the game *longer... drawing it out,*” Asher murmurs. “Just relax a little.”

His hand moves up my ribcage, trailing soft touches under my breasts. I fight against his touch, proud of myself, when suddenly he grabs my nipple between his thumb and index finger, tugging at it sharply.

It’s such a contrast from his soft touch that I jolt in shock. Blake uses the moment, forcing open my legs.

And like an idiot without a filter or brain, I accidentally let loose.

“Hey!” I snap at him.

Before I can finish yelling the word at him, Zayn’s cock pushes past my lips into my mouth. I muffle against his length, forcing myself to relax as his hands grip the sides of my face.

“There we go,” he groans. “That wasn’t so hard, was it?”

I mumble an insult against his cock, which swiftly turns into a moan as I feel Blake’s fingers slide inside my pussy. He curls his fingers up in a *come-hither* motion, his movements a calculated action as he presses against my g-spot.

All I can do is lay there, helpless, as Zayn slowly pushes himself in and out of my mouth. Asher’s fingers continue tugging at my nipples until I feel his hot breath on one. His

mouth closes around the pink tip, his tongue flicking and lapping at it.

Blake's free hand runs up my leg, resting against my hip. His thumb strokes down, finding my clit as he lightly presses against me, adding pressure as he strokes.

I've long stopped fighting, the pleasure too much as the three of them work my body. I feel like there's a fire inside my nerves, burning hotter and hotter, ready to combust and explode.

But inside, I know this isn't over yet. I can sense it – in their movements, in their watching eyes.

I'm the game *and* the prize. But they want to work for it.

There's a different pressure building in my body – it's a release... I know it is. But it's not the usual climatic feel.

I'm mentally preparing myself for them, ready for them to stop. It's going to hurt, and ache, so I try the old mind over matter technique.

Maybe I can beat them at their own game with good old mind power.

No one is saying anything, but I feel as though they are having a silent conversation, one I am not privy to.

As the pressure builds higher and higher, I've accepted my fate, mentally fought back the inevitable feelings of disappointment and frustration, when Blake's thumb suddenly picks up speed against my clit.



My back arches, pushing me further into Asher's mouth, his teeth tugging at my nipple. His hand is working my other breast, squeezing it and playing with the hard peak.

The build up is too much, too intense and I have no idea how to fight it. Zayn slows down, holding his cock still in my mouth.

I wait for them to all pull back, my body tight and tense as the build up reaches the peak, when Blake's fingers inside my pussy apply pressure to my g-spot at the same time his thumb firmly jerks against my clit.

I explode. Literally.

A scream breaks from my throat, muffled by Zayn's hard cock, at the same time I feel a gush between my legs. My orgasm rips through me, tearing me to shreds, and my spine curves dangerously to the point where it feels like it may snap.

It's like nothing I've ever experienced before – relief and release flood my body. And I quickly realize, it's not the only thing that's *flooded*.

“Holy fuck,” Asher breathes out.

“Amazing, isn't it?” Blake muses.

Zayn laughs quietly, slowly drawing back his cock from my mouth. “Absolutely fucking beautiful. Our good little girl.”

My mind is spinning. Or the room. I'm not even sure anymore.

I'm struggling to open my eyes, their voices sounding a million miles away.

A hand strokes my face gently before Zayn's voice fills my ears.

“Oh, baby. If you think we're done with you, you are sadly mistaken.”

## Chapter 20

---

## Rylee

I force my eyes open, wrecked, but not out for the count.  
“You can’t break me,” I murmur.

The three of them laugh, amused by my utter defiance and obvious attitude problem.

“We’re not trying to break you,” Asher says from beside me. “We just want to see how much you can take.”

I take a deep breath, doing my best to stay focused. “Oh, yeah? And what are we going to do now? More dares?”

Zayn grabs my throat, pushing my neck into the side of the mattress. “You talk a big game, Rylee Selwood. Can you take it?”

My eyes narrow at him, despite my mind being in a foggy state, surrounded by haze. “Of course I can,” I mutter out.

He releases me, nodding to his brothers.

I have no idea what’s coming, but if it’s anything like I just experienced, then game on.

Zayn moves away from me, giving Asher the chance to swoop down and kiss me. I'm shocked by the action, given his brother just had his cock in my mouth, but I kiss him back. It's hot as hell, and I'm forever surprised at just how far Asher has come in the last few months.

I hear Blake and Zayn talking in low voices, but I can't make out what they are saying. I wrap my arms around Asher's neck, enjoying our brief intimate moment. It stings a little when he pulls back, breaking the kiss.

"Pretty girl, I have a dare for you," says Zayn, walking back over.

"Hm?"

I look over at him, my eyes carelessly admiring his naked body. He leans down, kissing me abruptly before pulling back.

"I dare you to ride Asher."

I let out a low laugh. "Is that all? Seems too easy."

"That's not all," Blake adds, and I notice his clothes have now vanished too.

"Hit me with it," I say confidently.

The twins share a look, their eyes darkening with vicious intent. Blake walks over, tipping my chin up to look at him.

"We dare you to take all of us. At once."

My mind flashes back to the living room the other day, the intensity I felt taking both Chuck and Zayn at the same time.

My stomach clenches at the thought, and I eagerly nod. “Challenge accepted.”

“Good,” Blake says, quickly kissing me before Asher grabs my hips and pulls me towards him.

He lays on the bed, dragging my body on top of his. I throw my leg over his hips, brushing against his erection as I straddle him.

We’re laying near the edge, my body facing the side. I can feel Asher’s cock in between my thighs and I grind against it, teasing him. His eyes flash as his fingers dig into my hips – a warning.

I continue swaying my hips in a back and forth motion, letting the tip of his cock get wet with my arousal. I smirk at him, enjoying the feeling of both pleasure and control. He does nothing, merely waiting patiently, and when I think I’m getting to him, he thrusts up, impaling me in one perfect motion.

“Fuck!” I gasp, my knees buckling out from under me, making me slide down until our hips meet.

“You might be the queen of these little games, Rylee,” he says, holding me still. “But just remember... we’re the fucking masters.”

He drives his point home with the thrust of his hips, slamming into me deep. I cry out, my hands on his chest as I push my hips into his.

Blake picks up the shopping bag, reaching inside. I turn my attention from Asher to watch him, confused as all the alcohol was put in the fridge. My lips part in shock as he extracts a bottle of lube from the bag.

“You got lube from the liquor store?” I gape.

I’m too shocked by the item to even ponder the possibility that this was planned in advance. He tightens his fingers around the clear bottle, smirking.

“Amazing some of the things they sell in stores with alcohol. Genius marketing. And it’s better quality than the one we packed.”

I open my mouth to respond, but Zayn grabs my face, appearing in front of me.

“Excuse me. I believe I have some unfinished business with this mouth.”

“And yet, I’m still talking,” I taunt.

“Not for long,” Zayn says, pulling me forward against Asher. He stands to the side of Asher’s head, knees against the mattress as he guides my face towards his cock.

I gaze at it, fascinated by the pre-cum glistening on the tip. My tongue flicks out, lapping it up.

My body is already positioned perfectly for Blake, his fingers trailing over my ass cheeks as he kneels behind me. I hear the bottle pop open and I gasp as I feel cold lube hit my skin and ass. His fingers spread it carefully, pushing inside as he begins preparing me for his cock.

Underneath me, Asher is slowly thrusting into my pussy, his deep movements almost sensual as he waits for his brothers to take me too.

“You first,” Zayn mutters to Blake, and I feel Blake’s fingers disappear. They are replaced seconds later with the head of his cock, the tip slowly pushing in as he tests me.

“You okay?” Asher asks me, his hands easing up on my hips as he caresses them.

I nod. “Yeah, I think so. I’m ready.”

Blake takes my words as his signal to inch his way into my body. Asher continues holding me still, his hip movements ceased as he supports me.

“You’re doing so well, pretty girl,” Zayn murmurs, cupping my face. He leans down to my ear, whispering into it. “But I already knew you could.”

I moan at his words, fueled by Blake entering me. I’m completely filled, my body taking a few seconds to adjust as they both stay still.

“You feel amazing,” Blake mutters, running his hand over my ass and lower back.

Asher pushes his hips up slightly, allowing me to test the movement. “Are you ready to take us, Ry? All of us?”

I rock my hips, earning a groan from both Asher and Blake. “Fuck me... please.”



Blake pulls out slightly, starting a slow rhythm as he begins fucking my ass. My eyes roll back as Asher joins in, his hands holding my hips as he pushes his cock into me. The two of them find a pace, taking it into turns as they enter me.

When they find their partnered rhythm, Zayn pulls my face forward again. "I'm feeling a bit left out. Indulge me, please?"

"Happily," I moan, letting him guide his cock to my mouth. I part my lips eagerly this time, groaning as he pushes his length inside.

There's not much I can do other than sit back and enjoy the ride.

The three of them fuck me in unison, the sounds of our moans and pants filling the room as we let all the recent tension out with our bodies. The angle of my body and movement rubs my hips against Asher's, the sweat making our bodies glide easily. The friction of our skin to skin connection sets my clit ablaze, my body feeling intense as the build up begins.

I'm lost in the pleasure, the feeling of the four of us connecting in such an intimate way. It's like we've come full circle, finally ending where we were always meant to be at the start.

Zayn starts thrusting faster, his hand tightening in my hair as he moans my name. "Fuck, Ry. I'm going to come."

I moan in response against him, letting him know I want him to do it. He groans loudly, pulling my hair tightly as he

goes a little too deep, making me choke. He quickly pulls back, his hand furiously stroking his length.

“Open your mouth,” he demands. I obey, the urge to see him find relief greater than my need to give him attitude right now.

This is what I want. I want them to feel good – as good as they make me do. I want to be the reason they lose control, the reason they feel pleasure. I want them to think of me and know that I did that to them.

He jerks a few more times before leaning forward, sliding his cock onto my tongue. I hear him mutter ‘*fuck*’ as I immediately feel his release hit the back of my throat. He holds my head tight, keeping me still as he shoots ribbons of white into my mouth.

As he pulls back, I swallow, gazing up at him in wonder. Zayn looks down at me, his face a sweet mess, scrunched up as he falls down from his pleasure. Sensing my stare, he opens his eyes, smiling at me.

He leans down, kissing me, as Asher and Blake continue to fuck my body, their movements getting more frantic as they chase their end too.

“Fuck, Rylee,” Zayn mutters against my mouth. “I’ve never loved anyone more than how much I love you right now.”

I’m not sure if it’s Zayn’s words or the friction between Asher and my hips, but my orgasm suddenly hits me, making me cry out. I clench down, my body trembling as I ride out the waves that crash through me.

Behind me, Blake lets out a curse, followed by a groan as he thrusts deep then stills. I feel him in me, pulsing as he climaxes, his fingernails digging into the pale skin of my thighs.

“Holy fuck,” Asher growls, his hips spearing into me with such force that Blake falls from my body, leaving the two of us together.

Asher’s pace is almost demonic, his cock hitting me so deep that my lower stomach aches. I’m bounced around from the force, a gap appearing between our bodies with each thrust, but he never leaves me.

I’m almost about to fall off him, like I’m being bucked by a raging bull, but he holds me tight before ripping me back down so fast that our chests slam together. His lips find mine as his hips drive into me one last time as he groans into my mouth, his own climax finally finding him.

Asher keeps kissing me, his chest panting as we lay still. He wraps his arms around my back, holding me close.

“You’re mine forever. I swear to God, if anyone ever lays a finger on you again, I’ll fucking kill them,” he murmurs between kisses.

I whimper softly, kissing him back as I feel tears prick the corners of my eyes.

This is right where I belong – with the three of them. I was stupid to think I could ever fight these feelings or pretend they don’t exist.

Blake gently helps me off Asher, laying me on the bed. I'm absolutely wrecked but it's the best feeling in the world.

Zayn brushes my hair off my face, telling me he's going to run a bath for me and I watch as he disappears into the bathroom, the sound of the bath echoing through the door.

And as I lay waiting, I realize that Jasmine was right. I'm absolutely crazy in love with the three Taylor brothers.

## Chapter 21

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## Rylee

I slept so well that there could have been a war break out in Rosevale around us, and I wouldn't have heard it.

After the bath, I had crawled straight into the other bed and passed out. I have no idea what time the guys went to sleep or if any sleeping discussions were had, but when I woke up this morning, I was sandwiched by Zayn and Asher.

Blake had woken before the rest of us, ducking out for coffee. I am extremely grateful for the gesture; the flimsy, tarnished coffee machine in the room would not have been up for the job after our night. Not to mention, I still remember the taste of the coffee from last time. If my tongue could recoil and leap out of my body, it probably would at the memory of it.

We decided to head back home fairly early. Coming back from a trip is always a little morbid, but there was a change in the air as we drove back.

I decided to sit in the back with Zayn for our ride home, letting Blake have the front passenger seat. For the most part, no one mentioned the events of last night...

I have to admit, it kind of gave me anxiety.

Did they regret it?

Were they disgusted?

What if they don't love me too and everything was said in the heat of the moment?

I shake away the thoughts as we head back into familiar territory, the trees lining the side of the road a reminder of what I survived.

"Hey," Zayn whispers, squeezing my hand.

"Yeah?" I reply, looking over, welcoming the distracting.

He tilts his head towards the window at the trees. I watch them fly by, confused, until a familiar gap between them appears.

"I'm definitely taking you back to the cabin soon," he grins, shooting me a wink.

I smile back, resisting the urge to grin like a maniac.

It seems so long ago that I was a victim of hot wax. I still remember how horrified I felt after the visit, the fact I had banged another Taylor after Asher.

The thought seems ridiculous now that I've upped the ante. Not only have I had sex with all three of them – I did it *at the same time*.

*Phoebe's going to kill me.*

There's still the sting of uncertainty resting in my chest, wondering how long this whirlwind romance with the three of them will last before something blows up in our faces. Not to mention, our parents could head back any time from the ranch.

I'll still have to deal with my mother at some point, especially when she finds out I'm living here again. I imagine if they ever found out about the four of us it would go down as well as a lead balloon.

"I can't wait to stretch my legs," Asher groans from the driver's seat. "Four hours is a long time."

"Are you going to go for a run?" I ask.

He shrugs. "I haven't decided. I did do a lot of cardio yesterday."

Zayn snorts next to me, reaching forward to slap his brother on the shoulder. "Atta boy. I'm proud of you."

Blake shoots Zayn a disgusted look, but it's not fully believable, especially with the twisted smile that appears on his lips. I muffle a laugh, sitting back in my seat.

The last leg of my drive goes by in silence and I'm relieved when we pass through the front gates of the house. I'm keen to lay down and sleep some more, my body aching and sore.

The four of us climb out of the car, the bags forgotten in the trunk for now as we trudge into the house.

"Are you hungry?" Zayn asks me once we are inside.



I shake my head. “Not at the moment. I’m actually thinking of taking a nap.”

“Do you want some company?” he asks suggestively.

Laughing, I walk in front of them, looking over my shoulder as I start to head up the stairs. “No, thanks. I have a feeling I won’t get sleep if I let you in my room. But if I’m not awake in a few hours, feel free to come find me.”



I have the sweetest dream.

I’m at the haunted lake, my eyes closed as I take in the sun and bask in the warmth. I’m naked, being fed cheese by three faceless people.

The sun shifts behind a cloud and I peer open my eyes. The three faceless people are exactly who I thought they were. But suddenly, the sky opens up, pouring rain onto us.

I run and duck for cover under an old metal structure. I turn around, looking for the brothers, when suddenly they are no longer there.

I’m staring at Leo, Jimmy and the other Norseman from the poker table. Their guns are in my face as they laugh, taunting me.

A strike of thunder sounds before lightning hits the ground nearby. The four of us flinch, and as they look over at the smouldering ground, I take the chance to run.

I bolt through the rain, my feet dragging in mud. I don't get very far before I'm tackled to the ground. I do my best to fight back, but it's useless. It always is.

I'm flipped onto my back, the rain hitting my face like tiny, little knives. And I'm staring down the barrel of a gun.

Their distorted voices ring in my ears as they request my last words. I can't speak, frozen... but I won't give them the satisfaction of begging for my life.

*Bang.*

“Jesus, Rylee. Wake up.”

Warm hands shake my shoulders, pulling me out of my slumber. I'm so confused, my heart racing from the images in my mind. I can't remember where I am and it's so dark that I can't see.

“She's shaking!”

Someone touches me again and I scream, my fist flying out and connecting with flesh.

“Ow! The fuck?!”

I hear the switch of a light, the room illuminating as I squirm on the bed. My limbs are caught up in the blankets, and slowly, I come to my senses.

Blake is standing over me, hand on my wrist as Zayn hovers to the side, rubbing his chest. My gaze swings to the other side of the bed and I spot Asher, staring at me with concern.

It takes a moment to realize what's going on, and despite my panic, I start to calm down and stop moving.

“Are you alright?” Blake asks quietly.

“What happened?” I respond, my voice hoarse.

Zayn steps forward, sitting on the edge of the bed. “You had a nightmare. You were screaming. Then you punched me.”

I look at him in horror. “Oh, my God. Are you okay?”

He smiles at me, rubbing his chest. “I’m so proud of you. You’ve got a damn good right hook.”

Hanging my head in shame, I mutter an apology a few more times, rubbing my face. “Sorry. I tend to have bad dreams if I don’t sleep enough.”

“I guess that’s our fault then,” Asher says jokingly. I know he’s trying to lighten the mood but I feel horrible.

I look at him sadly. “It’s not your fault. I’m just still dealing with some things. It’s fine though.”

“Don’t worry about it,” Blake says, running his hand up and down my arm. “We were just worried. You’ve been asleep for hours. You obviously need the rest.”

Throwing myself back onto the messed up pillows, I groan sadly. “I need mental help.”

“How long have the nightmares been going on for?” Asher asks.

I shrug. “Months... years. On and off since dad died. But they got worse after the crash. They were better recently, so I

stupidly thought maybe it was all good.”

“Trauma stays in the body. It doesn’t just hang in your brain until it decides to leave one day. Stress can manifest in different ways – nightmares is just the common one,” Blake replies in a soothing voice.

“I’ll be okay,” I mutter, trying not to worry them.

Asher climbs onto the bed, pushing himself up next to me. “You don’t have to do this alone, Ry. You’ve got us. We can get you help. That’s all we want to do.”

I shake my head. “I don’t want to see a shrink. I don’t need to spend good money to know I’m fucked up.”

“We’re all a little fucked up, baby girl,” Zayn muses. “It’s what makes us unique.”

“I’m beyond help. I know I’m fucked up. I just accept it now,” I mutter quietly, pulling the blanket over my body.

The three of them watch me with concern and pity. I don’t want it. I don’t want anyone looking down on me.

I knew years ago that I was fucked up. Sure, I can blame it on the trauma or the shitty parenting. But it’s also my own fault. I did nothing to help myself with the choices I made.

It’s always the same vicious cycle. The moment I feel any type of happiness, it gets ripped away. And if it doesn’t get ripped away, then I spiral and self-sabotage.

I wish I knew better. I wish I knew how to stop it.

But I don’t.

“Rylee,” Asher says, reaching for me.

I push his hand away. “Please, don’t. I just want to be alone right now.”

“You’re not alone. You don’t have to do this. Come on, let us help you. We want to help you.”

I feel tears form in my eyes, the unfamiliarity of help making me hurt even more. So many times in the past I tried to ask for help, just to get told no. Eventually, I just stopped asking.

“I want space. Please just get out of my face,” I snap.

The pain stabs me in the chest, the lies of my own words stinging. I don’t want them to go, if anything, I want them to stay and continue to tell me it’s okay.

But I don’t want to get my hopes up. Not now, not ever. If I let people give me hope, just to have it ripped away later, I’ll never recover.

I can’t handle the disappointment. Faith gets you nowhere sometimes. And hope is even more useless.

Out of the corner of my eye, I watch the three of them share a look before slowly exiting the room, confirming my belief that no one genuinely wants to help me. I am alone, and once they grow tired of me, I’ll be thrown aside like trash.

When the door closes shut behind them, the tears fall and I hug the blanket to my body as silent sobs shake my body.

It's better this way, I tell myself. You can't be hurt or disappointed if you never let anyone in. Sometimes you have to let people go to save yourself more future pain.

*Yes. It's better this way.*



I don't know how much time passes as I stare at the wall. I finally managed to stop crying, and now my eyes feel like they have been rubbed with sandpaper.

I probably need to eat eventually, but I'm just not hungry.

I don't know what I want. And the things I *think* I want, I tell myself I don't need.

There's a small, quiet creak as the bedroom door clicks open, before closing again. I squeeze my eyes shut, not ready to deal with them again.

Soft footsteps make their way over towards the bed. They are so quiet that I can't place who they belong to.

I pretend to sleep, hoping they will just go away.

The footsteps stop, the only sounds being the faint breathing from someone at the end of the bed. They don't say anything, so I just wait, hoping they will leave.

Minutes pass and I don't hear anything. I squirm under the blanket, feeling overheated, when suddenly, a pillow crashes into my head.

“What the fuck?” I grumble, flinging it aside.

I sit up, ready to give a mouthful to my attacker when I’m faced with someone I didn’t expect to see.

Phoebe.

“Seriously? What’s with the pity party, Ry?”

“What are you doing here?” I ask, kicking the blankets down to my knees.

She crosses her arms, raising an eyebrow at me. “I got a very concerned phone call from Asher.”

“You what?” I mumble, shaking my head in disbelief.

Phoebe walks over to the side of the bed, ripping the blanket off my legs. “Come on. Get up. We’re going out or doing something.”

“No,” I argue, reaching for the blanket.

She beats me to it, grabbing my calf and tugging me unsuccessfully. “You need alcohol and food. Girls night. Don’t make me drag you.”

“I don’t want to go out.”

“I’m sorry. I don’t remember giving you a choice. We’re doing tough love. Suck it up,” she laughs, pulling my leg again for good measure.

I’m honestly so baffled by the situation that I just start laughing. I can’t help it.

“No, seriously. Why are you here?”

Phoebe groans. “I told you, Asher called me. He’s really worried, Ry. They all are. And now I am too. I’m not going to let you fall into a spiral again.”

Part of me wants to kill Asher. Another part wants to kiss him. I’m not sure what part is bigger.

“Just let me spiral. I’m good at it,” I mumble.

“Oh, please. Give me a break. You’ve come so far the past few months. Give yourself some credit, Rylee.”

I blink at her slowly. “I’ve made more bad decisions the past few months than I have the past few years. Let’s be honest here.”

Phoebe jumps onto the bed, crossing her legs under her body. “Sure, you’ve made some dumb choices. But look at all you’ve survived too. This is the first time in a long time that I’ve actually seen you try though. Don’t take steps back when you’ve worked so hard to move forward.”

“I’m just going to end up miserable again. I always do.”

“What if you don’t? What if you take the chance and you actually end up happy? What if this was all meant to be?”

I laugh sarcastically. “Babe, you don’t even know what I’m referring to. Trust me, it’s a mess.”

“Oh, cut me a break,” Phoebe groans. “I’m your best friend. I’ve been your friend for so long. I know this is about those men out there. Why are you so afraid of love?”



There's that word again. I don't try to deny it though. I've come to terms with it, but it doesn't mean I have to accept it.

“Where can it honestly go, Phoebes? They are my stepbrothers. What if something falls apart with one of them and I come between them? What if my mother hates me more than she already does? I will do nothing but hold everyone back. I have no job, no career prospects, no degree. I'm going to be the town scandal yet again. I tried to get a fresh start, and I still ended up back here.”

She purses her lips, pondering my words. “Rylee... it's never too late to start over. And who cares if they are your stepbrothers? I went to middle school with two kids who ended up getting married. They were step-siblings. Granted, they got together before their parents did. But even after that awkwardness of their parents banging it on while they were dating, they still said ‘fuck it’. Society is a judgemental bitch. But I've never known you to give a shit what other people think.”

“I don't,” I argue. “But I don't want *them* to get caught in the cross fire. Asher... he has a future. And Blake and Zayn, I'm sure they do too. What can I offer, really?”

Phoebe's mouth drops open. “Holy shit, you really believe that, don't you? Your self-worth is literally crap.”

I gape at her. “I just know the truth.”

“It's bullshit. You don't see what we do, Ry. And if it doesn't work out, so what? You'll figure it out, you always do.”

But why the hell should you sacrifice your happiness, when it's taken you so long to find it?"

I don't have an answer. I really don't.

I look away. "I just don't think I should bring anyone down, even for my own happiness."

We're so caught up in our conversation that I don't hear the door open. I don't realize that my words have travelled, and I certainly don't see the person standing by the door until it's too late.

"That's not just your decision to make, Rylee."

## Chapter 22

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## Rylee

I look up in shock at the voice. Blake is standing in the doorway, gazing at me with an almost angry expression.

“What?” I mutter in disbelief.

He steps further into the room, crossing his arms. “I said, it’s not just your decision. You don’t get to decide on your own when other people are involved. You get to decide your own happiness. But not Zayn’s, not Asher’s... and sure as hell, not mine.”

“I don’t mean it like that,” I start but he cuts me off.

“Bullshit. You think you have the right to decide what we want. Have you even asked any of us what we want?”

Falling silent, I look at Phoebe. She’s staring at Blake thoughtfully. There’s a look in her eyes at him... it’s admiration, respect.

“You should listen to him, Ry,” she murmurs, giving me a smile. “Sounds like he doesn’t sugar coat shit. I’m going to duck downstairs for a moment so you can talk. But when I get

back, you're getting out of that damn bed or else, I'll drag you out. I'm sure he will help," she adds, nodding towards Blake.

Blake glares at me, nodding. I'm honestly thrown by the whole situation.

Phoebe climbs off the bed, heading out of the room. She gives Blake a small nod on her way past before disappearing from sight.

I cautiously peer back at Blake, a little scared at the confrontation. He looks back at me, his eyes softening as he approaches.

"We're just worried, Rylee. Your feelings are valid – one hundred percent. But you have to realize that feelings are also in your head and are subjective. It's not always an accurate reflection of the situation at hand. You think you are protecting us by trying to push us away. That says a lot about your caring nature. But we're not going anywhere. You can't make us leave, even if you are a stubborn pain in the ass."

A small laugh breaks from my throat. "You'll get sick of me."

"Have you met my brother? He's the most pig-headed stubborn asshole on the face of the planet. If I can handle him, I can handle anything. Sorry to burst your little bubble."

"Don't let Asher hear you say that."

Blake chuckles. "You're tough, Rylee. Have your little pity party, but don't stay there. Parties are meant to end. Last night

happened because we all wanted it. Stop trying to make it into something it's not."

"So you don't regret it?" I ask nervously.

He puts his hands in his pockets. "It was different. But no, I don't regret it. I don't know what else we need to do to prove to you that we believe in this connection. But like I said, I'm done fighting. It's up to you to decide what *you* want. But the three of us, Rylee... we're all in."



Several shots of vodka later, a vape I found under my bed and some of Zayn's cooking and I was feeling on top of the world.

I managed to negotiate with Phoebe that we stay at the house. I was too exhausted to go into town and thankfully, she conceded.

The guys left us to our own devices, but it was nice knowing they weren't far away.

After Blake's little pep talk, if you can call it that, I crawled out of bed, feeling much better about things.

I still had doubts about the whole situation, but knowing they care about me, and that they went to such lengths to get Phoebe over knowing I needed her, meant a lot to me.

I always thought that expectations lead to disappointment, but it's nice considering the possibility that maybe, as fucked up as I am, people still love me.

Maybe I am loveable after all.

I headed back to my room after Phoebe left in a cab, needing to lay down for a bit. I start thinking about Asher's recent suggestion to me about going back to college.

I suck at it. Badly. But if I'm being honest with myself, I don't really think I was trying. I was just going through the motions of doing the bare minimum.

Weirdly enough, I was starting to believe in myself. I know I shouldn't put my own self-worth weight into the hands of others, but there was something about *them* believing in me, that made me want to do better.

I open my phone, going to the notes app and start jotting down ideas for my future – possible jobs, aspirations, and just things that I truly want in life. Almost like a bucket list of sorts.

After I finish making the list, I start thinking about what I want right now. And as sappy as it was... I wanted to hug someone.

Grabbing my pillow off the bed, I sneak out of my room and tiptoe across the hallway. I don't bother knocking, it feels like there's no point anymore.

Turning the handle, I open the door and head in. The familiar scent of Asher's room instantly relaxes me, but I'm confused when he's not in plain sight.

The sound of the shower coming from his ensuite draws my attention and I smile.

Throwing my pillow on his bed, I start undressing, leaving my discarded clothes on the floor in a pile.

I head towards the mini bathroom, slipping inside. Asher is in the shower, leaning against the wall with his eyes closed. I stand and admire him for a few seconds, watching the water cascade down his body, the steam warming my skin.

“Room for me?” I ask, watching him jump slightly as he opens his eyes to find me.

He looks tired, his eyes heavy, but he smiles anyway. “Of course. There’s always room.”

Asher opens the door for me, standing back so I can step in. I head straight from the stream of hot water, letting it hit my head and fall down my face.

“Did you have fun tonight?” Asher asks.

I flick the water off my face, pushing my wet hair back. “I surprisingly did. Even if I am now a little tipsy from the alcohol.”

He laughs softly, reaching for my hand. His fingers circle my wrist before pulling me towards him.

“Sometimes we forget how amazing we actually are.”

I gaze up at him, my body just barely touching his. “Are you talking about yourself, Ash? A little full of yourself, don’t you think?”

“If I’m being honest, Rylee, you far exceed any expectations than I have on myself.”



“Don’t put me on a pedestal,” I murmur. “I don’t deserve it.”

Asher runs his hand down my side, his palm flattening along the curve of my waist. “I always put you above me. I always have, even if you never saw it. I think you’re incredible.”

I lean into him, resting my head on his chest. “You’re amazing, Asher. Even if you were a fucked up wanker who defiled a nun.”

“And whose fault was that, I wonder?” he muses.

I laugh. “I didn’t think you’d actually manage to do it. But as always, you manage to surprise me.”

He tilts his head down, kissing the apex between my neck and shoulder. “I’d say you surprised me, but to be honest, I always knew you’d do anything you put your mind to. You’re defiant, but it’s not a bad thing. I like that you march to the beat of your own drum.”

“You’re going to make me blush. Just know, it’s because of the alcohol.”

Asher laughs. “Are you sure it’s not because I’m doing this?” He wraps his arm around my back, gently kissing his way up my neck.

I mew softly, tilting my head to the side to grant him more access. His lips travel along my jaw line, stopping once he reaches my lips. His hand grabs the side of my face, his mouth pressing against mine.

My arms slide around his torso, my lips moving against his as I push myself against him further. The water splashes onto my back, and as my teeth nip his bottom lip, Asher grabs my waist, spinning me and pressing me back against the tiled wall.

My eyes close as his kisses move away from my mouth, heading down my collarbone and to my chest. He plants a few soft kisses on my breasts before his warm mouth encases my nipple. It's gentle, sensual... so different to the Asher I've been used to lately.

Asher's tongue glides over the peak, his tongue swirling around as he teases me. But he doesn't spend very long at my chest, his mouth trailing down my stomach, kissing inch after inch of my skin.

I mumble his name as his mouth reaches my hips, his lips grazing over the tops of my thighs. I feel his hand slide up my calf, lifting the back of my knee to sling it over his shoulder.

Curiosity gets the better of me, and I look down, watching as he gazes at my body like it's his favorite thing on Earth. He's kneeling on the shower floor, like he's at a shrine and I'm his Goddess.

He leans forward, kissing the top of my sex before his tongue slides inside my slit. He finds my clit immediately, circling the sensitive area, teasing me.

"Ash, please," I beg, but I'm not quite sure what I'm asking for. I'm pretty sure it's just him in general. I need him, right now.

“Hm,” he hums in response, his finger finding my wet entrance and slipping inside. He drags it in and out slowly, matching the pace of his tongue. It’s torturous, my body desperate and impatient.

“I need you, please,” I mutter, pushing my hips into him.

Asher ignores me, sucking my clit into his mouth as his finger pumps into me. I’m about ready to drag him up, when he slowly pulls back. Standing up, he grabs my face, smashing his lips to mine in a passionate kiss. I wrap one arm around his neck while the other snakes down between us. My hand circles around his cock, stroking him slowly.

I’m torn up by the little moans that escape his mouth. They are the most amazing sounds I’ve ever heard, and I start moving my hand faster, determined to hear him make more.

Disappointment rips through me when his hand grabs my wrist, stopping me. I pull back from the kiss, looking at him as I search for answers.

“I need to be inside you,” he murmurs, reaching behind me to grab my ass.

Before I can respond, he lifts me up, dropping me on his waist. I let out a surprised gasp, wrapping my legs around his waist.

My back is still pressed against the wall as Asher reaches down, grabbing his cock. I watch as he guides it towards me, the head rubbing against my slit as he teases me for a brief moment before finding my entrance.

Slowly, he pushes forward, sinking into me at an agonizing pace. The two of us groan in unison, relishing in the feeling of our bodies joining.

Holding onto me, Asher starts rolling his hips, his length gliding in and out.

There's no rush between us, no race to the finish. We're lost in the moment, enjoying the sweet feeling of ecstasy as he fills me with his cock.

Slow, sensual kisses take our breath away as we make love under the shower head, our bodies dancing and moving in sync.

We fall over the edge together at the same time, Asher capturing my quiet cries in his mouth as I clench around him. We take our time leaving the shower, washing each other slowly, before drying off.

Clothes don't come to mind at all, the two of us crawling into his bed naked as Asher holds me from behind.

It doesn't take long for us to fall asleep, and I finally find peace, my mind clear as I enjoy a deep, dreamless sleep for what feels like the first time in forever.

## Chapter 23

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## Zayn

“Are you sure you want me to come?” Rylee asks softly, looking up at me.

We’re sitting at the table, a plate of amazing waffles and bacon cooked by yours truly in front of us.

“Of course we do,” I say happily, stabbing a piece of bacon onto my fork. “But only if you feel comfortable coming.”

There’s a perk in her step again this morning, something I am very glad to see. We knew yesterday after seeing her shut down that something was wrong. I’m kicking myself that we didn’t see it coming sooner.

After the car accident, she handled it so well. Too well, in fact.

With all the past trauma, and the whole situation going on, it honestly wasn’t a surprise to see her break down. I just wish we had noticed the signs sooner and helped her deal with it before it got to that point.

I don't like seeing her struggle or hurt, even if it's a normal part of life.

Maybe that's what love is – hurting when someone you love hurts.

All I know now is I'm not keen to let her out of my sight, not unless I know she's safe.

“When are we leaving?” she questions, shovelling a large piece of waffle into her mouth. I watch mesmerized as she lets out a little moan without realizing. I could listen to her do that all day. It's part of the reason I love cooking for her.

“In an hour or two. Blake is just checking we are good to head there.”

Now that we're back home, it's time to sort out the big boy shit. After the attack on the Iron Maidens, we decided it was time to head back to the club and get them involved. In a way, they already are.

The Norsemen are growing in size all the time, and with their new found mentality of wanting to be the biggest bullies in the playground, we needed to put a stop to that. Blake and I spoke in great length about how to handle it. Neither of us were overly keen to take Rylee to the clubhouse, but she would be with us. We have absolutely no concerns about her safety there – we trust our brothers. But it's just another hole she's being put into. But she's already in deep, involved with not only the Norsemen but the Rebels too.

But I've seen her with the Rebels and she can handle her own. It's not a foreign area for her, and besides, she's family. The Nomads are all about family. The brotherhood extends beyond just those in the club, but to our families as well. Rylee will be well protected because she's one of us by default.

We don't fraternize with other clubs, but we also don't hold unnecessary vendettas against them either. Some biker clubs will start shit just for the sake of it. Not us. We acknowledge the existence of others, but keep to ourselves. Besides, if we can come together to bring peace for the ones who aren't raging dickheads, then it's a win-win really.

"Are you nervous?" I probe, watching her pause.

"Not really," she admits, and my heart swells in pride. That's my girl.

I nod. "You'll love them. And no doubt they will love you, just like we do."

She smiles, and it sets off something inside me. I'm about three seconds away from flinging her onto the waffles and eating her for breakfast, but then we'll be late for the meeting. Plus, she needs her energy.

The last few weeks have been tough on her, despite how well she appears to handle it most of the time. But she's exhausted – we all are.

I'm just glad that things are settled at the house now. Blake has finally removed the stick from his asshole and gotten onboard the Rylee train. I think it will be good for him. No – I



*know* it will. Despite whatever he thinks about himself, he has so much to give. But he fights himself, content with being in control so he can protect himself and those around him.

But we all deserve to love. Even if it just so happens to be the same girl.

Ah, well. Weirder shit has happened. I think it's quite nice, actually. Monogamy and society standards are very 1999. Besides, there's something thrilling about watching the most important people in my life, my brothers, love and pleasure the girl I adore.

Even more so, there's something magical about watching her change them for the better. Blake is finally coming out of his shell, opening up for the first time... well, ever.

And Asher... that idiot is actually growing up. I couldn't be prouder.

I hear the footsteps coming before Rylee does, a skill I've had since I was a kid. I can recognize Blake's footsteps anywhere. We used to try to sneak up on each other, but we never could.

"We're all set," he says, walking into the kitchen.

Rylee looks up, her eyes softening as she smiles at him. "Do you want some food before we go?"

He shakes his head, walking to the fridge. "I ate earlier. Besides, Zayn won't let me touch it. He's very protective of his bacon."

“It’s true,” I confirm. “I only share my bacon with special people.”

Rylee laughs, the sound being music to my ears. Blake fetches a water bottle from the fridge before taking a seat beside her. They both visibly relax in each other’s presence, even if they don’t realize it.

“Is Ash coming?” Rylee asks.

“Nah. He’s not keen on it. Just you and a twin sandwich today,” I joke, watching her cough as her cheeks flush at the thought.

Blake’s face twitches as he tries to keep himself from snickering. One day he’ll loosen up more and actually laugh at my awesome jokes. I know deep down he thinks I’m hilarious.

“Hurry up and finish stuffing your hole,” he says, pushing back his chair while looking at me.

I stab another piece of bacon, waving it at him. “I’d love to stuff something of Rylee’s but I guess time is of the essence.”

Rylee snorts, standing up as well. “Maybe if you’re lucky later.”



“Ay! There’s my boys!” Fetch yells loudly as the three of us walk into the clubhouse.

Smoke lingers around the room, the sound of old rock quietly playing from the jukebox in the corner of the room.

The worn out green velvet chairs are mostly empty, save for a few members enjoying a quiet chat and drink. Most are probably at their day jobs, the majority of the members working to provide for their families.

“Fetch, you old dog!” I grin, shaking his hand before pulling him in for a bear hug.

He hasn’t aged a day – ever. He won’t admit his age, but why would you when you’re in your 50s but able to pull off late 30s. His dark red hair is slicked back, sticking out against the dark black vest he’s wearing. His blue eyes turn to Blake, greeting him the same before looking at Rylee.

“This is our friend, Rylee,” Blake introduces.

“Hey, nice to meet you,” Rylee says, stepping forward with her hand out.

Fetch looks her up and down, but not in a disrespectful way, before shaking her hand gently. “Well, it’s a pleasure. I’m glad to see the boys have finally found themselves a nice young lady. Especially this one,” he adds, nodding at Blake.

Blake scoffs. “You say it like it’s a bad thing.”

“Oh, come on. Nothing gets past me. You know that,” Fetch grins, motioning to Phalo behind the bar. “Phal! Get some beers for B and Z! And whatever the young lady wants.”

“Oh, I’m okay, thank you,” Rylee smiles. “Honestly, don’t go to any trouble.”

Fetch blinks at her before breaking out in a smile. “Humble, I like that. But I get the feeling you’re being polite. Feel free to make yourself at home here. We don’t bite.”

“Much,” I whisper to Rylee, grabbing her ass. She whips her head towards me, shooting me a look that says I need to behave. Not bloody likely.

“I’ll go let Bill know you’re here,” Fetch says, heading towards the office doors. He disappears just as Phal walks over with our drinks.

He hands us each a beer, slapping our shoulders. “It’s good to see you.”

Rylee looks around the room, taking in the surroundings. It’s not much, but it was home to us. A haven from all the chaos from teen life after mom died. I’ve spent countless nights in here, and for some reason, it makes me happy that she’s here. It’s like she gets to see a little piece of us, one that we’ve never shared before.

The office door opens and I gaze over as Bill strolls out. His dirty blonde hair is in its usual bun and he’s dressed casually in jeans and the club vest.

“Blake. Zayn,” he says as he approaches, reaching out.

We shake hands, and before we can say anything, he turns to Rylee.

“And you must be the infamous Rylee.”

It’s a stark contrast from Fetch, but as expected, Rylee’s prepared and well-equipped to handle it.

“In the flesh,” she says politely, offering her hand. Bill grabs it, giving it a stern shake before motioning to the office.

“Come in. We have a lot to discuss.”

Blake steps around as Rylee walks past, following on her left so we are on either side of her as we cross the room. He thinks he’s being sneaky, but I see his fingers brush against hers, a small gesture of comfort just in case she needs it.

Bill’s office is the exact same as it’s been forever. The dark green paint is peeling in small patches, the liquor shelf behind his mahogany desk still full of half empty bottles. Bill sits down on the leather chair behind the desk, motioning for us to take a seat on the torn leather couch in front of the desk.

The three of us sit down, Rylee in the middle. It almost feels like we’re in the principal’s office, waiting for a lecture.

“So,” Bill starts, turning his chair so he can prop his legs up on the side of the desk. “The Norsemen are starting shit in your neck of the woods too.”

Blake nods. “James is still as obnoxious as ever.”

“Oh, yes. Old Jimmy. Biggest cunt I’ve ever had the displeasure of meeting.”

Rylee’s shoulders shake slightly as she holds in laughter. I shoot her a grin, putting my hand on her knee. It’s not missed by Bill, his gaze immediately drawn to it as he watches the three of us.

“We’ve spoken to the Rebels chapter in our area. They are willing to collaborate if need be,” I say, noticing Rylee’s leg

tense up beneath me.

I'm sure we're going to get questioned about it later, but it's not really unexpected. In fact, when we raised the suggestion to Butch when Rylee was in the hospital, he seemed to already be on the same page. I feel bad about going behind her back to her friends, but ultimately, it's about her protection now.

Bill tips his head back, his face stern. "I'll reach out to their prez. The threat of two clubs coming together might be enough to get the Norsemen to back down. They might be growing in numbers, but we and the Rebels are still larger in size."

"That was our thought," Blake says. "Call their bluff, issue a threat and see if they rethink this takeover plan. They aren't strong enough to take on all of us if we threaten to rally together."

"I don't like it though. Just so you are aware," Bill states. "I don't like being dragged into a mess that's not ours."

I nod, understanding. "We know. But at the rate things are progressing, it's only a matter of time before it becomes our problem anyway. Better to be prepared and on the offence, rather than scrambling for defence later."

Bill's dark eyes turn to me. "I'll let you know when I've spoken to the Rebels. In the meantime, keep me updated if anything else happens. If it's a war the Norsemen want, then it's a war they will get."

## Chapter 24

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## Rylee

I wait until we are nearly back to the car, out of earshot of the clubhouse before I round on Zayn and Blake.

“You spoke to the Rebels?!”

Blake sighs, unlocking the car. “Get in, we’ll explain it on the way home.”

I stare at him for a second before deciding it’s best to have this conversation away from potential prying ears. I climb into the front passenger seat, watching as Blake slips in beside me.

Zayn jumps into the middle back seat, clicking on his seatbelt. “I *knew* this conversation was coming.”

“Of course it was,” I groan. “I thought you were all supposed to be mortal enemies or some shit.”

Blake snorts. “You watch too many movies. Not all clubs are like that. We don’t normally get involved with other clubs, but it came up when you were in hospital. We all care about you, so sue us.”



I cross my arms, peering into the back seat at Zayn. “And what do you have to say for yourself?”

“I love this dominating bossy side of you. It’s turning me on a little bit.”

I stutter, shaking my head. “Stop making everything about sex. Who did you even speak to?”

“Butch,” Zayn answers casually. “Nice guy.”

I growl in frustration. “I don’t want everyone involved. Too many people could get hurt.”

“Says the girl who got rammed off the road,” Blake grumbles as he drives out of the carpark.

I open my mouth to speak, but Zayn cuts me off. “Pretty girl, it’s more than you now. In fact, it probably never was about you. Clubs have a history of trying to take over territory, gain power and get more tuff. The Norsemen have probably been sourcing the areas for months, if not years, getting ready to make their mark. If that’s the case, then this was always going to be the outcome. It’s not the first time we’ve dealt with this, and it’s probably not going to be the last.”

An uneasy feeling pits in my stomach. “Is this how it’s always going to be? Everyone going to be tied up in clubs? Will you get called away too?”

They both look at me in confusion but I shake my head. I can’t stand the thought of losing Zayn and Blake, like how I lost Chuck when he got taken away from me.

Blake reaches over, grabbing my hand. “Rylee, we’re not active members anymore. There’s a difference. You’re not going to lose us.”

I nod, looking out the window so they don’t see my face and how upset I’m feeling. Zayn’s hand sneaks up from behind, caressing the side of my neck.

“You need to relax. We’re going to get this taken care of. Just focus on you, alright?” he says.

“I can’t relax. I don’t know how,” I admit.

“We know,” Blake responds. “But we’ve got this. Trust us.”

I don’t say anything. I don’t need to. They know how I feel, but they are right.

All I can do is trust them.



“It’s awfully quiet here,” I comment, walking into the house.

Asher’s car is still outside, but he’s nowhere to be seen. There’s no sounds coming from the mancave so I go to check the bedroom.

He’s not in his room, but as if he predicted me searching for him here, he’s left a note on the end of his bed.

*“Gone for a run. Be back for dinner. A xx”*

I smile at his messy handwriting and sign off, pocketing the note as I head out of the room. I bypass my bedroom door,

heading down the hallway to Blake's bedroom where the sounds of movement and chatter are coming from.

The door is open as I approach, the twins in the room having a conversation, which is cut short by my appearance.

"Where's Ash?" Blake asks, standing near the bed.

"Run," I say, throwing myself onto the mattress. "He'll be back for dinner apparently."

Zayn pushes himself off the beanbag, making a bee line for me. "Still mad at me, baby?"

I look at him with a raised eyebrow. "I was never mad. Just shocked, really."

"Good," he says, leaning over to kiss me. "But I did love that bossy side of you."

"So you said," I point out.

I let out a squeal as he jumps on top of me, his lips finding my neck. He kisses it eagerly, his hands digging into my hips.

"And I don't know what it was but seeing you in the clubhouse did something for me," he says in between kisses.

I'm struggling to concentrate, my mind hazy as my skin lights up from his touch. "I'm just that good."

"Aha," he agrees, sucking my neck as he holds my head still.

I squirm underneath him, my fingers digging into the duvet below. Blake stands off to the side of us, watching in amusement.

“Zayn, you’re going to wreck her.”

“I plan on it. But I was thinking it would be even better to wreck her with that twin sandwich we were talking about earlier.”

Gasping, I weakly try to push him back. Zayn grabs my hands, pinning them beside my head.

“You’re an animal,” I taunt.

He grins at me, letting go of my hands to pull his shirt off. “Tell me you don’t need or want us to spit roast you seven ways to Sunday.”

My stomach clenches at the thought, my mouth tightening as my silence confirms his suggestion. He looks up at Blake.

“Come on, brother. Our girl needs us. And we should make sure she *always* gets what she needs.”

I look back to find Blake, his light eyes watching me with heated lust. I’ll never get over seeing this new side of him, the one he keeps hidden from the rest of the world.

It’s empowering to know that I make him feel like that... that I’m the one he’s choosing to let his guard down with.

Blake pulls his shirt off, tossing it aside as he crosses the short distance to reach me on the bed. He leans down, kissing me hard.

“I need to fuck your mouth. If it sucks as good as it unleashes insults and sarcasm, then I’ll be in heaven.”

I raise an eyebrow at him. “Maybe I’ll make you watch in the corner on your beanbag. Zayn can show you how it’s done.”

Blake’s eyes darken at the challenge, and I know I’ve just set the benchmark. I’ve thrown down the gauntlet and he’s going to make sure he wins no matter what.

He reaches for his pants, undoing them. “Zayn, get her clothes off. That pretty little mouth needs an attitude adjustment.”

I expect Zayn to fire back some witty remark. But instead, he grabs my shirt ripping it down the middle.

“Hey!” I yell in surprise, only to be met with a hand on my throat pushing me into the bed.

“Don’t argue back, Ry. It’s only going to make us fuck you harder.”

The torn shreds of my shirt are plucked from my body as hands shove down my jeans and underwear. I’m naked faster than I can blink, and before I can even react, arms are pulling me to the edge of the bed.

I try to grab something for support, but Zayn grabs my hands, using my torn shirt to bind them together.

“B, gag her, please.”

Blake grabs the side of my face with his hands as he eases my head back. “Open up, princess.”

My eyes narrow at him, my mouth twitching as I slowly open it. He smirks at me, grabbing his cock and smearing the tip over my tongue. The taste of pre-cum hits me and he guides his length into my mouth.

“Lucky you,” Zayn remarks as he kneels between my legs. “She made me work a lot harder for that.”

“That’s just because she prefers me,” Blake comments back, letting out a groan as I suck his cock.

Zayn lets out a dry laugh. “We’ll see about that,” he says, slamming his hips into me.

I let out a muffled cry as he fills me, his cock spearing into my pussy. Blake reaches down, grabbing my bound hands and pulls them up to his stomach. He pins them down on his hard muscles, his hips rolling as he fucks my mouth.

The two of them start some heated competition, determined to fuck me equally as hard as the other. I try my best to concentrate on Blake’s cock, but his brother ramming me is making it difficult. My moans, however, spur Blake on, the vibrations against his length sending him crazy.

“Z, touch her. I want to hear her moan more.”

Zayn reaches down, his fingers expertly fondling my clit, sending wave after wave of pleasure through my body. Blake gets his wish, my cries and moans coming non-stop against him, and his movements start to become more erratic as I get louder.

I'm close to falling over the edge and I try to raise my hips, desperate for more. Zayn thrusts harder, his fingers gaining speed as he senses my impending release.

“Come on, baby. Let it out for us.”

I can't fight it, even if I wanted to. My orgasm hits me hard, my whole body shuddering as I scream against Blake's cock. I'm seeing stars, the two of them still fucking me like tomorrow's not coming.

Blake and Zayn pull out at the same time, the two of them furiously stroking their lengths as I'm left panting on the bed as I take in air now that my mouth is vacant.

I see something fly over my face and I focus on it. The feeling of warm liquid hits my skin and I gaze in wonder as I watch the two of them climax at the same time, their releases pooling on my stomach.

“Good girl,” Zayn says after he's finished, reaching forward to undo my wrist restraint. “I love feeling you come all over me.”

“Safe to say I feel the same,” I respond amused, gazing down at my abdomen.

Blake walks over to his laundry basket, grabbing a dirty towel. He heads over to the bed, wiping my stomach. I give him a surprised look and he pauses.

“What? I'm a gentleman when I want to be.”

Laughing, I sit up when he finishes. “Yeah, I'm not sure I believe that for even a second. But hey, that's fine. I'm not a

fucking lady, that's for sure. So we're perfect for each other."



## Chapter 25

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## Rylee

**B**y the time Asher returns, we're all cleaned up and relaxing in the living room. He walks in, sweaty, but glowing from exercise endorphins.

"Miss me?" he asks, giving me a quick kiss.

"Always," I respond, smiling.

He sits down next to me, letting out a groan of approval. "I ran ten miles. What did you guys get up to?"

Zayn smirks at me. "About the same."

Asher looks at the three of us, realization dawning on him. "Assholes," he mutters. "Couldn't even wait for your brother to get home."

"You snooze, you lose," Blake fires back.

We're all too exhausted to cook, so we order Chinese takeout. As we wait for it to arrive, the twins fill Asher in on our trip to the clubhouse.

There's less tension now, the promise of a better looking tomorrow lurking on the horizon.

After stuffing ourselves to the brim with food, I vote for an early night. The three guys agree, all of us exhausted from today's activities.

As we head upstairs, I start to head to my bedroom but I'm grabbed by Zayn, my body flung over his shoulder as he starts heading to his room.

"You're mine for the night," he muses. "Be prepared for hugs."

Laughing, I hold onto him as best as I can, my body nearly upside down. "I'm always prepared for you," I say as we vanish into his room for the night.



I wake the next morning, feeling refreshed and oddly enough, full of life.

I'm alone in Zayn's room, a disappointment for sure, but I stretch out, enjoying the bed to myself. Eventually, curiosity gets the better of me and I head downstairs to look for my guys.

I'm surprised to find them in the mancave, sitting around the coffee table.

"Good morning, sleepyhead," Zayn says as he spots me coming through the door.

“Morning to you too,” I reply with a groan as I sit down between him and Asher.

Blake looks over from the one-seater chair. “We have some news for you.”

“Oh?” I mumble, resting my head on Asher’s shoulder.

I’m caught off guard when Blake grins, my head shooting back up. “You’re ... oddly happy.”

Zayn bursts out laughing next to me. “It’s concerning, isn’t it? Weird seeing him smile.”

A snort breaks from Asher but I keep my gaze on Blake. “What’s the news?”

He lifts the phone in his hand. “Apparently Bill laid down the threat to the Norsemen. They agreed to back off from the two territories.”

“That’s great!” I yell, looking at the three of them. “So, it worked?”

Zayn nods. “Apparently so. The Rebels even made a call too so that our claims were backed up. It’s over, baby.”

I stare in disbelief, the weird feeling of relief and happiness sending me into a buzz.

Asher lets out a half-sigh, grabbing my hand. “We also have a surprise for you. It’s out the back.”

“A surprise?” I echo. “What type of surprise?”

“You’ll have to go see,” he says, letting my hand go so I can stand.

Wasting no time, I spring to my feet and dash towards the stairs. I hear them follow as I make my way towards the back of the house.

As I open the back door, I peer out, not seeing anything out of the ordinary.

“Is it a dip in the pool?” I ask confused as they approach behind me.

“I think it might be around the corner,” Zayn says, giving my ass a little pat to usher me out the door.

I step outside, trying to cover my eyes from the sun as I squint through the light. Movement to my right catches my attention and my heart skips a beat as I spot leather.

“Chuck!” I gasp.

The dark-haired man gives me a wide smile, arms open as I rush towards him. “Hey, babe.”

I near send both of us to the ground as I throw myself into his arms. He picks me up, spinning me around.

“God, I’ve missed you.”

“I’ve missed you too. What are you doing here?” I ask, looking back at the brothers for clarification.

Zayn steps forward, giving a nod to Chuck. “We figured you’d want to see some people and celebrate. Chuck’s here to take you to Wheels.”

I look at Chuck. “Wheels? What’s going on?”

“Rebels are putting on a bit of a party. It’s been too long since we’ve been together there. Everyone is keen to see you and relax for a bit. Maybe play some poker.”

“Yes, yes... a thousand times yes,” I grin, hugging him again.

Chuck laughs, squeezing me back. “Well, go get ready then. I don’t have a problem with your pjs,” he says, looking at my shorts and oversized shirt. “But you’d probably prefer something more comfortable.”

I tug at my shirt. “What’s wrong with my shirt?”

Asher scoffs. “Put pants on, Rylee.”

Spinning around, I give them all a grateful look. “You guys helped do this, didn’t you?”

None of them confirm it, but Zayn’s smile is enough to convince me. I give them all a kiss, touched by the gesture considering I know how difficult it is for them.

“I’ll be right back,” I yell to Chuck as I dash inside. “Don’t leave without me.”



“Ry!” Volts yells from behind the bar, giving me a huge wave hello.

I wave back, grinning as the door swings closed behind us.

It's busier at Wheels than I've seen in a long time. Most of the tables are occupied, drinks flowing as the jukebox booms.

Judging from the jackets, most of the patrons seem to be Rebels. A lot of old familiar faces give me nods and say hi, and I can't help but feel like I'm floating. It feels like the old days again, but it's better.

As I approach the bar, Volts jumps the counter, crashing into me.

"God, I've missed ya."

Laughing, I hug him back, looking at his hair. "You changed color."

"Yep. Decided to put some pink in it. I don't care what anyone says."

"I love it," I say back, squeezing closer to the bar so some bikers can get past.

Volts heads back to the other side of the counter. "The usual?"

"Please," I nod eagerly. "Are Butch and V here?"

"Yeah! Back room, Ry. I told them I'd send you down when you got here."

I wait for my drink with Chuck, before the two of us weave through the tables towards the door at the back. I take a deep breath, enjoying the smell of smoke, liquor and leather.

As I push open the door, it's like I've travelled back in time. Butch and Vito are sitting at the poker table, cards in hand as

they throw chips into the center. I wait for them to notice me, their gazes drawn to their cards.

“Call it,” Butch says, putting in more chips.

“You’re bluffing,” I state, leaning against the door frame.

The two of them look over, grins forming on their faces.

“Lee, about time you got here. We saved you a seat, love,” Butch says.

Chuck and I head over to the table, and I sit down. I run my fingers over the green cloth, enjoying the feel.

“God, I’ve missed you guys,” I murmur.

Vito pushes some chips towards me. “We’ve missed you too, Lee. Glad you’re here.”

“Me too, V,” I admit, grabbing cards as they are dealt to me.

Chuck puts his hand on my knee under the table, his fingers stroking my skin as he watches the game.

I’m feeling the adrenaline, the rush, as I bask in the moment of normality. It feels like we’ve finally come out the other side.

We did it. We survived.

This is the start of better things, a better life.

“Two pair,” I grin, flipping my cards.

“Fuck,” Vito groans, tossing his into the center. “You win.”

“Always do,” I laugh, reaching for the chips and pulling them towards me.



Butch chuckles. “You still have it, Lee.”

I stack the chips into neat piles. “Once a winner, always a winner. Just as long as no one pulls a gun on me again, we’re good.”

Vito snorts. “These fuckers are gone. Your boys did a good job.”

“You guys helped,” I add, giving them both a smile. “Thank you.”

“Always our pleasure, love,” Butch says, downing the rest of his drink. “I’m going to head to the bar before we start the next round. Volts is run off his feet tonight so we’ll save him the trouble.”

I stand up. “I’ll come with. If I don’t keep checking in, he’ll get mad at me. Chuck, do you want anything?”

Chuck pushes his chair back. “I need to run to the bathroom. I’ll come out too.”

Vito shuffles the desk, nodding towards his drink. “Just grab me another of these, Butch. I’ll mind the table until you get back. Gotta make sure Lee gets some shitty cards for the next round.”

Snorting, I give him a playful grin. “I’d still beat you. This face isn’t just pretty. It’s a great poker face too.”

He pretends to disagree and I laugh, heading towards the door.

We head to the bar, Chuck's hand on the small of my back, helping me navigate through the crowd of people.

The atmosphere is electric, magical. I reach for Chuck's arm, guiding his hand from my back to mine. We link fingers as we stop at the bar.

"What do you want me to get you? I'll order for you while you duck to the bathroom."

Chuck looks at the taps and kegs. "Surprise me, babe," he says, leaning down to kiss me.

I kiss him back happily, our hands still together. I have no idea how I'm going to make it work with all four of them, but right now, I consider myself to be the luckiest girl in the world.

As we reach the front of the line, Volts leans down on his elbows. "I'm so wrecked. If you need a job, Ry, I reckon I could get you in here."

"That's not a bad idea," I say. "Imagine us, killing it together. Serving drinks, talking about music."

Volts grins. "Hell yes. I have so much to fill you in on. Oh, sounds like it's about to get busier."

I listen, the sounds of bikes approaching the bar. "Are we going to be over capacity?" I laugh. "I'm not sure we can fit many more people in here."

"Ah, it will be fine," Volts says. "What's a few more people?"

Chuck squeezes my hand, lifting it up to plant a kiss on my knuckles. I watch him, smiling as butterflies race in my stomach at the gesture.

“Ry, there’s something I’ve been wanting to tell you. I wanted to wait until later but fuck it, I don’t want to.”

“Yeah?” I ask.

“Now that things are sorted and I’m home again, I want you to know that I fucking lo-”

*Bang bang bang bang bang.*

My eardrums explode as the sound of bullets whiz through the air. All hell breaks loose as people scream, glasses shatter and debris starts flying everywhere.

I’m thrown to the ground, Chuck’s body on top of mine as he covers me.

I roll into a semi-ball, my eyes squeezing shut as the sound of bullets ring in my ears. I hear thuds and I open my eyes to see bodies dropping to the floor.

Blood seeps over the ground, splattering tables and chairs. People are crawling, scrambling to find cover as things are knocked over, blasted by bullets or bodies. Crashes and yells echo around the room and I spot a biker in front of me on the floor. His pale blue eyes are open wide, staring at me lifelessly as a pool of crimson flows underneath him.

Seconds pass but it feels like hours until finally it falls quiet, the only sounds being groans and the disappearing revs of bikes in the distance.

I'm breathing heavily, panic setting in as I look around from my position on the floor.

"Oh my God... oh my fucking God," I cry out, trying to move but unable.

I realize Chuck is still on top of me, pinning me down. I push some fallen hair out of my face so I can see better, my fingers slipping along my temple. Confused, I look at them, gasping when I see blood coating them.

*Have I been hit? Whose blood is that?*

I can't feel any pain except for the pressure on my back which I hope is a good sign. I wiggle my toes, relieved when they move.

"Chuck?! Chuck... we need to get up," I beg, turning my head to look at him.

His dark hair has fallen over his face, blocking him from view. I twist my body as best as possible, tapping his arm.

"Chuck?"

I put my hand on the ground to try to push myself up. It slips, and I look in horror as I realize I've put my hand in a pool of blood.

Gasping, I struggle until I finally manage to free myself. I crawl on my knees, my eyes glued to the red floor as I reach for Chuck.

My heart stops, my body frozen as my eyes follow the pool of blood.

It's coming from him. And he's not moving.

*It's Chuck's blood.*

Thanks for Reading!

Thanks for reading Recklessly Damaged! If you enjoyed reading this book, I would love love love for you to consider leaving a review on Amazon, Goodreads or Book Bub. And as always tell your friends and social media sisters!

## Author Note

This book was brought to you by the power of caffeine and anxiety.

Jokes aside, we always say things like it takes a village to raise a baby. Well, in the case of bringing books to life – same goes.

I'm blessed to have such an amazing support circle to help me through it. To my friends, my beta team, my ARC squad and my author family – thank you.

I couldn't do this without you and you mean the world to me.

## The Lies We Keep #4

Pre-order book four **SWEET ANARCHY** here:

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## Other Books by Steph Macca

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