

EVIE ROSE

Stolen

BY THE

MAFIA KING

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CONTENT NOTES

These content notes are made available so readers can inform themselves if they want to. They're based on movie classification notes. Some readers might consider these as 'spoilers'.

- Bad language: frequent
- Sex: fully described sex scenes with dirty talk
- Violence: on and off page
- Other: death of side characters, dubious consent, kidnap, bondage, age gap, primal play

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JESSA

I really think at your wedding rehearsal dinner there should be one person who loves you.

Doesn't have to be more than one, I'm not greedy. But as I look around the table, there isn't anyone who cares about me, never mind love. Surely impending nuptials should not be so entirely devoid of affection, even for a mafia princess?

The whole thing is bleak. The private dining room in an expensive London hotel is very old-world money. Shiny brown wood, red velvet, paintings of horses. I'd suggest updating it, if they asked for my professional opinion. Keep the dark luxury, since that's their brand, but simplify. Get rid of the judgey stag head staring down and the curtains with a busy pattern that is giving me a headache. Or maybe it's my nerves.

There's subtle and tasteful piano music and the plates are warm. The food is probably identical to what rich people ate in the 1890s. Same date my fiancé wishes he had been born.

David Bree-Fogg has a thin, gaunt face, a spindly physique, neatly combed dark blond hair, and wears a black double-breasted suit with a spotted scarlet cravat. He's like if a Chucky Doll was haunted by a Victorian man and stretched until he was six foot tall. And I'm supposed to be marrying him.

I have a white dress on and everything. Two white dresses for a wedding seems excessive, but the symbolism isn't lost on me. I am a virgin sacrifice to my brother's greed and stupidity.

This colourless dress is slinky and evening-ish, clinging to my curves, whereas there's a stiff, corseted meringue lined up for tomorrow. An engagement ring is on my finger, too. It's so "tastefully" modest, from a distance you'd think there was no stone in it at all, just a plain band.

Tonight is for our two families to have dinner together and get to know each other. What a joke. We've already done the walk through at the church, complete with formal group photographs with false smiles for posterity. But despite us now eating the main course, there's little more conversation than dusty comments about the food and weather. This marriage has nothing to do with the people involved. It is a financial and power transaction.

My fiancé raises his hand and clicks his fingers. One of the servers comes running. "More wine. And replace my fiancée's glass. There's a smear on it."

"Of course, sir." The waiter, in his late teens I'd guess, only a few years younger than my imperious fiancé, doesn't even justify a turn of David Bree-Fogg's head.

And though there is nothing wrong with my glass—looks perfectly clean to me—I murmur, "Thank you," and meet the boy's eyes with a tiny smile as he removes it. I stab a pile of French beans with my fork with more violence than necessary and they squish like overcooked watery green jelly. Gross.

At midnight I turn twenty-one and inherit a small fortune from my dead parents. Half of their ill-gotten mafia funds. My brother, Colin, thinks I don't know what happened to his half.

Ha.

I might be innocent in one way, but I'm not naive about his gambling debt. And my wannabe-mobster brother has a plan to pay David back: me.

Or rather, my inheritance, via marriage. He assumes that since he's my guardian, and I've had no control over my life for twenty-one years minus one day, that I'll be the banknote to settle what he owes David Bree-Fogg.

At first I argued. He lost the argument but wouldn't concede. Then he locked me in the house. I still argued. Then he hit me, and I realised he wasn't my big funny brother anymore. Finally, I pretended to accept his decree like a dutiful sister should.

He's the only family I have and he has traded me in for gambling chips.

But he doesn't know my plan.

"You really shouldn't be so familiar with the staff, Jessica. You'll give the boy ideas," David Bree-Fogg says, looking down his nose at me.

Jessa. And accurate ideas like, I'm not posh and rude? I bite my lip. I don't correct him, because none of it matters. The only reason I've acquiesced to this marriage is that tonight I am getting *out*.

"You'll be my wife tomorrow," David continues. "Everything you do and say will be a reflection of my taste and judgement."

I just have to hold on until five past eight. Then escape. Freedom. A waiting black cab taxi will have a bag containing my new identity. A ride to the airport, and when Colin's guardianship is over and control of my finances flips to me I'll be on my way to Australia. A country where I know no one, on the other side of the world. It cannot be any lonelier than I am now.

I'll start a new degree there with a new name—no point in crying that I won't graduate after over two years of study, there's no way David would have allowed me to finish—and launch an interior design business. I'll spend my life creating cosy, pretty, practical spaces. And even if it's a disaster, it will be on my terms. I won't have David Bree-Fogg telling me off for being polite to a kid who got shouted at earlier for bringing the wine two degrees too cold.

"What we do in private is different," David adds, grabbing my thigh under the table.

Grabs. Like my leg is a shopping bag. He's bought me and he'd delight in grinding me down in public and spitting on me at home. I'm nothing but a fleshy bank balance to David.

To either side, there is the gentle clink of silver knives and forks on bone china plates.

I look up into David's face and what I see there... My chest threatens to explode with anger even as disgust slides across my skin. I will never marry this man. He revolts me in every particular.

There's a bang and everyone's heads snap up to find Grant Lambeth strolling into the room, the door swinging on its hinges where it has splintered from the force of him slamming it open against the wall.

His titanium eyes glitter furiously as he takes in the scene, perusing us in a leisurely way like we're the statues we've become at this shocking intrusion.

"Am I too late for the wedding?" he drawls and his voice is a sweet smoky liquor that sends heat through my body.

Oh. Shit. This could derail everything.

He's the boss of the Lambeth mafia that controls the centre of London. Where my brother and David think they're powerful and rich, they're feudal lords, beholden to the king: Grant Lambeth.

"You're early," Colin says, so awkwardly it sounds like a lie. "This is the rehearsal dinner."

Grant's chin tilts arrogantly.

He's the most beautiful man I've ever seen. And dangerous. Inherited his father's failing territory at eighteen, before I was even born, and has built it into the most powerful in London.

What Grant Lambeth wants, he gets.

Which is why everyone in the room has stopped eating and is staring as he prowls towards us like a black panther through shadowed foliage. Perhaps this could work in my favour. No

one will bother with me when there's a hungry predator on the loose.

In a grey suit that fits so perfectly it must have been made for him, he's controlled but has a hint of the roughness that got him to the top of the ladder. His dark hair, with silver at his temples, has a slight curl that makes it seem a little mussed and invites touch like a lion's mane. An uncompromising square jaw is covered with masculine stubble, as though he was too busy with being a brutal and genius kingpin to shave this morning. His nose has a tiny kink where it was once broken.

Perfect imperfections.

I've only met him on a handful of occasions, and each time his eyes have gleamed and taken me in. He speaks with me at every event we've both attended. His deep rumbling voice makes me shy as he asks after my health and the progress of my studies, then passes on with only a brief sidelong glance. The person who regularly enquires about me is a stranger, not say, my brother or fiancé. Grant Lambeth's attention to detail—he remembers I've been doing a degree in interior design and I twisted my ankle last year—must be part of the all-knowing mafia boss persona. Even realising that, it's pathetic how his notice feels special. Because somehow the kingpin's face is familiar beyond those few interactions.

Honestly, I think there's something wrong with me. I see Grant Lambeth everywhere. Glimpses. It's not him, it can't be. My overactive brain notices his grey eyes in the wing mirror when I get into a car to be taken home, or thinks I recognise the outline of his shoulders, or the soft wave of his dark hair, when I'm out running in the park.

Delusional. As though the kingpin would have any interest in me. I'm so desperate for attention my brain makes up a stalker.

The young waiter from earlier slips inconspicuously around the table and replaces my glass. I don't dare look away from Grant, but murmur my thanks under my breath. Gotta be kind to the little guys, even when you might get murdered by

the kingpin. As the boy passes at a discreet distance, head lowered—smarter than he looks—Grant’s arm shoots out.

“Lay another place setting, please. I’ll be joining for dinner.” The words are a request, but his tone has the weight of an order that will be fulfilled or blood will flow. Grant releases the waiter, who scuttles off.

“Do continue eating,” he says as his gaze snaps to where David’s hand is still slack and moist now like a slug, as though he can see through the wood. A lightning strike of fury burns in his eyes, there and gone in an instant, leaving me wondering if I imagined it.

David slowly suction his hand from my thigh and, sweating at the brow, hands trembling, picks up his cutlery and cuts a slither of meat. Under the kingpin’s pointed look, David puts the food into his mouth and chews like it might kill him. Which is a serious consideration.

It’s not random that Lambeth is here. He wants something.

“There,” Lambeth indicates with a flick of his wrist, and in seconds the waiter has set a place for him right opposite me.

Everyone eyes him warily and I allow myself to look too. After all, I won’t see him again. I wonder if I will stop hallucinating him once I’m in Australia? He’s a compelling figure as he gracefully sits. Although big, and the width of his shoulders hints at muscles, he’s smooth in his movements. That door breakage earlier? Deliberate.

I subtly take a deep breath. Calming, like the videos show. Another. In goes the future. Out the past. In goes a woman in control. Out goes a scared little girl terrified the kingpin will disrupt all her plans.

Leaning across the table, Grant refills my water glass. It’s loud as a waterfall, even with the nondescript piano music, because no one says anything. Only David is valiantly trying to pretend this is all normal by doing as Grant told him, like a good underling. The sound of him eating next to me is awful. Grotesque. All clicking teeth, the scraping of metal on bone, tearing flesh, and moist noises that turn my stomach.

“Are you in love?” Grant asks abruptly. He doesn’t specify who he means, but he’s watching me like I’m a little grey fluffy rabbit he’s going to eat for supper.

I tremble under his scrutiny. What is the right answer here? I haven’t a clue. It’s a mafia marriage, what does he expect? And what does he *care*?

“A marriage brings a cornucopia of benefits to all parties involved,” Colin says with an edge of panic. Probably he’s worried I’ll say, *no*, or point out that all the benefits are to him. “Where one of those is love from the beginning, it’s a romantic extra.”

“That’s your view, is it?” There’s a pinch between Grant’s eyebrows and he hasn’t turned his head to look at my brother.

The waiter returns with a plate of food and leans over the kingpin as he fills his glass with red wine, splashing a little onto the inner side of the glass as his hand shakes. Poor bungling kid, anyone would be afraid of Grant Lambeth.

I watch it happen in slow motion. The waiter is trembling so hard, and desperate to get away, and I think that’s what causes the crisis.

As he retracts the bottle, it tips. Wine spills down the kingpin’s chest. Bright red splatters over his heart, stark on his white shirt. Like blood. Just like blood.

I hold my breath, waiting for the explosion.

The waiter is stammering an apology but Lambeth’s jacket is shucked off within a second, then his tie. Methodically he undoes his wine-covered shirt, button by button. First his neck, then the dip of his throat, then the top of his chest is revealed and I don’t think I’ve taken on any oxygen since that wine spilt. He strips the shirt off and I stare at his muscled shoulders, wide chest and hard stomach that tapers down to a light dusting of dark hair. His golden skin is crisscrossed with scars and his muscles are defined.

My mouth goes dry.

The waiter has fallen silent, backing away, eyes full of terror. We all wait for the consequences, but I am shamefully

entranced by Grant Lambeth's bare torso. I'm admittedly a bit sheltered, but I've never seen anything like him.

Lambeth looks up and brushes the waiter away with a satirical look and a drawl that he needs to be more careful. Then he transfers his observation back to me.

But he's partially unclothed. Aggressively naked. It ought to make him vulnerable to be without his suit, but it doesn't. It just underlines how utterly in control of this he is. Calm in the face of the provocation of wine being splashed over him, he doesn't need to overreact. He is the undisputed king.

The only way to cut the tension in this room would be with diamond-coated chainsaws. Despite my calming exercise earlier, I can barely breathe. My skin is tight. My limbs are stiff.

I cannot do this. My heart rate is galloping, as ungainly as the horse in that oil painting on the wall. The sight of him has ripped my nerves to shreds. With Grant watching me so intently, I've no hope of remaining composed and not screwing up. Fuck. I'll reveal myself and end up married to David Bree-Fogg and no. That must not happen.

"Please excuse me while I go to the ladies' room," I murmur. It's a little early, but I'll take my chances. Much more of Grant's eyes on me and his terrifying presence and I'll be shaking so hard I'll vibrate off my chair.

"Of course," Grant replies, like this is his event.

My brother keeps his head down. I thought I'd smile goodbye to him, but the last time he ever looked at me will be when he scowled because I used the wrong fork with the starter. Fine.

David though, he makes my skin crawl. He watches me stand with this look that says spying on girls in bathrooms is his thing. Gross.

The kingpin's gaze flickers to mine for no more than a quarter of a second as I sweep past him. It feels like a warm caress. But it's nothing. Fleeting. Careless. The merest

judgement of whether I am a threat to him and his enormous wealth and power. I'm not. I'm getting out.

I don't look back.

In the central stall, I tear off my shoes and toss them out the window. Then I hoik up my dress, grip the small window frame, and pull myself up. It's a lot bloody harder than I anticipated, wriggling through a gap this tiny. I guess I've been eating too many pies?

My dress is not designed for the job, and neither is my body. The frame pinches into my flesh. My legs dangle and flail like ill-placed curtains in a draughty window. By the time I'm dragging my hips through the small gap, I'm panting, my hair is absolutely everywhere and tangled, and my butt may never be rounded ever again. But I've planned well. Though the window is high inside, the ladies' loos are right at the back of the building, and the bin I'd seen the last time we had dinner here and hoped would still be, is present. Otherwise I'd have been risking falling onto my head.

Don't get me wrong, freedom would be worth it, but I'd prefer not to start my new life with concussion.

I half fall, half drop myself onto the closed lid of the big black dumpster bin, and take a second to catch my breath. The ground hits me with a crack up my legs when I jump, but there's no time to wince. I shove my feet into one shoe then hobble to the other, smooth down my dress and dart my gaze from side to side. I'm alone.

One yank and my finger is released from the engagement ring that has felt like a noose. I drop it carelessly onto the tarmac. Hopefully someone who needs the money will see it, and it'll bring them more joy and luck than it did me. I'm better off without it. With more confidence than I feel, I try to strut down the alleyway to the quiet end where I'm due to meet the London black cab. Once I find that taxi and I'm in, I'm good. I'm safe and away.

I spot the distinctive shape of a black cab and my chest almost heaves with relief. Nearly there.

Five steps. Three. One.

“Hi!” I say with false cheer to the driver, a middle-aged woman with a T-shirt that says *Bosslady*. “For Jessa, right?”

The woman nods and gestures to the back. I open the big black door and step hastily in. Then my blood turns to ice.

Sitting in the back of the cab is the kingpin.

GRANT

Jessa yelps and half scrambles, half falls into the door that I slam behind her. I pull her flush to my chest and she fights me, squirming, twisting and clawing like a wet sudsy wildcat kitten.

Moments later, the cab is taking us home and I'm sitting on the seat with Jessa held on my lap, still brawling, grasping at anything to escape, kicking and yelling.

"Stop it," I order softly. She redoubles her efforts and I release her with a sigh. Jessa lunges for the door, pumping the handle to no avail, then bangs on the window.

"Help! Somebody!"

"It's obscured bulletproof glass," I tell her. "You can't break it and no one can hear you."

Letting out a little sob, she turns. There's panic in her royal blue eyes and she flies at me. An uncoordinated attack of slaps and shouts and she tries to knee me in the balls. All the time I hear snippets of words and sentences. *You. I. Free. No. I don't... So close. Let me...* She's incoherent as she cries.

I block. I protect my balls. I make soothing noises, because I know she can't hear logic right now. She's terrified and furious that her plan failed. She knows she's caught and can't accept it.

I'm patient. I dodge her flailing, but it's easier for me. Being bigger and stronger, and frankly a lot more experienced at fighting, it's simple. Tears hit me as often as her fists. She's

a whirlwind, a hurricane, but one that loses energy quickly upon meeting solid ground. Me.

For the main part, I'm careful not to touch her anywhere that will cause my cock to respond more than it already has at the mere sight of her. A glimpse is all it takes for me to get an erection like a baseball bat.

Eventually, she begins to tire, the adrenaline draining away and her movements becoming uncoordinated. She hits the seat instead of me. I can see she'll need to fight to the end, that she can't give up, and she'll hurt herself if she continues. I'll not be her punchbag indefinitely.

"That's enough," I growl.

She ignores me.

I snatch her wrists and pin them at the small of her back, and trap both her thighs scissored between mine. Her body goes still as she realises she's pinned. Her chest heaves and jerks, as she tries to control herself.

"Shhh." I move her up so she's cradled into me, the top of her head just below my chin. "You're safe," I whisper.

This is the first time we've ever really touched, and my body flares with the rightness of it. I have to shift slightly so my hardening cock doesn't poke obviously into her side.

She's not relaxed against me, but she is... I don't know what the word is. Resting. Her limbs remain tense, as though at any moment she could snap back to clawing at me like a feral creature. But right now, she accepts the solidity of my presence and allows me to hold her.

We stay like that for long minutes, and although it's not the way I envisaged her first being in my arms, I'll take it. I had hoped she'd come to me willingly. Eventually, her gaze meets mine, and she writhes. Just the tiniest bit. Testing my strength and brushing one pebbled nipple on my arm. Through the thin silk of her dress, I feel her heat.

We're two magnets battling against each other when misaligned, but the moment there's a switch... She's turned on. I'm sure of it. A shaky breath escapes me.

She hears it and stops. Like my exhalation of relief that this isn't one-sided strengthened her resolve.

“Let me go.” And though the words are the same as she screamed at me only ten minutes ago, the tone is different. She's all brittle resignation. A trapped wild animal, having discovered the bounds of her prison, now bides her time.

“No more fighting.”

She nods, and the movement rubs the silk of her hair onto my sternum, setting me alight again.

Reluctantly, I uncurl my fingers from her wrists and slide my leg from over hers. The slide of her plump arse on my thighs is too delicious, but I tell my libido to get the fuck down. Now is not the moment, but my cock throbs anyway.

Stiffly, she moves to the opposite seat, collapsing back into it for half a second before the steel in her spine resolidifies and she straightens and raises her chin. The picture of a queen.

My queen. Fuck, but I'm proud of her. When Jessa Southwark sees that we're on the same side, she'll be as formidable a partner as she is an enemy.

“Are you returning me to my brother?” Her voice doesn't wobble.

“No.” I pull out my phone, click on a news site, and hold it out to her. Our fingers brush as she takes it warily, and that sets off my cock again, like there's a chain between her and me. I'm her slave and she has no idea.

Even as the black cab picks up pace leaving the city, Jessa is immovable as she looks at the news of a bomb being found where she had booked to stay at in Australia.

“I gave the assassin they hired updated orders to bring the date forwards. They will believe it's a mix-up due to the time difference. A maid at the hotel ‘happened’ to notice the bomb,” I explain. “She was well paid, don't worry.”

“Quite the coincidence,” she mutters, staring fixedly at the screen. As she flicks her thumb up and scrolls and takes in every detail, her mouth slopes down.

“Quite,” I agree. “They’ve failed on this attempt. But they’ll try again.”

She doesn’t ask who, because she’s a clever girl. Her fiancé and her brother. She blinks as though she has something in her eye as she can’t drag her gaze from the photo of the hotel and the text that shows it could have been her, dead.

“But why?” she whispers eventually.

“I wasn’t privy to that conversation.” Just the fall-out when David Bree-Fogg ordered one of his men to go to Australia. “I suppose they decided it would be easier to simply split the money between them. “

“No.” She shakes her head and tosses my phone onto the seat next to me. “They don’t have my money yet. The wedding was going to be tomorrow.”

“And yet they have photographs of you in a white wedding dress, at the church, with the select guest list. And at the wedding breakfast. All they needed was to fake your signature on the certificate and find a reason, like say, an essential work meeting for David, that means he was following you on honeymoon on a later flight.” I have to give them credit, it’s a solid plan.

She closes her eyes and her face crumples as she sees how their scheme makes sense of everything that has happened today. The strange insistence on two wedding dresses. All the formality. That discreet ring.

“They knew about my escape. And fuck... My brother. He wouldn’t even meet my eyes when I left. He knew I was...” She chokes and tails off and tears spill down her cheeks silently.

Her own brother planned to murder her for a trifling million pounds. The urge to pull her into my arms and comfort her is almost overpowering. But although that’s what my heart wants, my rational mind knows she needs time to take in this new reality.

“You saved my life.” Wiping away her tears with her fingers, she shakes her head. “How did you even know?”

“I’ve made it my business to protect you, Jessa.” It feels good to admit that, small part of what I feel for her though it is.

Her brow creases with confusion. She doesn’t understand that I love her and will do whatever is needed to make her happy, but she will. In time.

We travel in silence for a while. Jessa kicks off her heels and curls on the seat, arms folded over and around her knees, mouth pressed to her wrists. She’s like a pangolin, winding into herself to attempt to protect that soft underbelly.

It’s too late.

“Where are we going?” she asks after a while, unfurling herself and slipping her shoes back on. She looks stronger except for her throat undulating as she swallows, and I can tell it takes effort to keep her voice level.

“My house.”

“Where’s that?”

“You can’t escape, sweetheart.” Because I know that’s what she’s thinking now she’s processed the situation. How she can get the most information from me to serve her purpose. “But it’s in the home counties.”

Her mouth flattens and she looks me up and down.

I take the opportunity to regard her too. It’s not like I’ve never looked my fill before, but forever wouldn’t be long enough. She has blonde hair that falls in soft waves as far as her nipples, the colours in it ranging from the brightest palest sunshine white-yellow to deep caramel, and everything in between. Her hair is utterly beautiful. I’ve been longing to plunge my hands into the silken strands, and wrap my fist in it as she rides me. Or as I fuck her from behind. To begin with. So many things to do. There’s nothing I don’t want from Jessa.

Her face is sweet and heart shaped, with a snub nose, a little cupid’s bow mouth with dusky pink lips, and eyes the blue of the sky before the dark of night. A blue so shadowed you’d think her eyes were black from a distance. I can’t get

enough of looking at Jessa. Photographs or CCTV isn't enough. I have to glimpse her for real.

You'd broadly call what I've been doing for the past three years stalking. I like to follow my girl. Keep her in sight. Support her until she comes into her majority, old enough to have her own money and her own choices and be out of her guardian brother's clutches. Mature enough to *choose me*.

She's twenty-one in a few hours. Young, fresh and sweet, and, as I heard her prick of a brother boast to David Bree-Fogg, still a virgin.

Her virginity?

It's for *me*. It's her decision, but make no mistake, her first time is mine and so are all the others. I didn't expect her brother to try to sell her off like she was a show pony.

That asshole will pay for trying to take away my girl's choices, and for forcing my hand.

I first saw Jessa three years ago, across the room of a party where I'd felt as out of place as usual. I climbed the ladder of power and wealth too fast and violently to be comfortable with my peers. A wary blonde young lioness, all lean angles, straight hair and blue eyes that took everything in. Clever, but awkward. On her own, nobody to laugh with or rely on.

I wanted her. The connection was quick and visceral, a tug from every part of my body towards her.

A snapped question to my PA and I'd known: Jessica Southwark was eighteen years old.

Fuck. I felt sordid wanting Jessa when she was two decades my junior. Dirty. But I couldn't keep away. I had to know more. When I heard she was an orphan, daughter of two-bit mobsters who'd got caught in the wrong place at the wrong time and been killed in a shootout, under her brother's guardianship, all my protective instincts triggered. I resolved to care for her from afar until she was old enough. A few more years to make the age gap a little less filthy, and for her to be in charge of her life.

I intended to woo Jessa carefully, as softly as she deserves. I aimed to grow her love for me like a hothouse flower, tending her confidence into bloom, providing everything she wanted. I was going to allow her the space to be herself and recognise we're perfect for each other.

Not kidnap her with only a few hours' notice.

Her brother will pay for this. And fucking David Bree-Fogg too. I saw the angle of his arm disappearing beneath the table. He was dead the second I walked in and saw he was touching what is mine.

She's not. Jessa is my queen. Mine, yes, but everyone will give her the respect due.

It's a moment before I notice she's staring at my chest like the sight compels her against her will. She tracks her gaze over the muscles of my six-pack, down to where my trouser waistband meets skin. Then up to my pectorals. Does she like the smattering of dark hair there, and trailing from my belly button downwards, I wonder, or should I have waxed it for her? I'd take a little pain if she liked my body better as a result.

Her little breasts in that clinging silk white dress rise and fall a little quicker than before. Clasping her hands together like she's preventing herself from reaching for me, she looks away.

Seems she likes what she sees well enough.

Knuckles white, she keeps her face averted. "How did they know? About my Australia plan?"

"Spyware on your phone." It's low. I keep tabs on my girl, but not even I would do that. It's far beyond my need to see and protect her. It was an attempt to manipulate her in the crudest, most underhand way.

Her mouth presses into a hard line. "Figures. My brother always was a cheat."

Exactly. We understand each other. When she hands over control, it will be because she trusts me. It will be when, in a fair competition, I've shown my approach gives her more.

“I don’t get it,” she says eventually. “What do you gain from this situation? You’ve saved me, but why? What do you want?”

And because she’s my girl, I give her the unfiltered truth. I don’t think before I speak. I say what is in my heart, and has been since the beginning.

“I want *you*.”

JESSA

The sun is setting as we travel along an endless old dry stone wall, then pull off the road through an entrance with a snug little gatekeeper's house on one side, the windows lit, and high black metal electric gates that open noiselessly and close right behind us. The drive is lined with London plane trees, their patchy bark like camouflage in the evening light and the dangly earrings of young seeds hanging down.

Neither of us has spoken since Grant said the words that have been repeating through my head. Lyrics to a song I've never heard but seems familiar anyway. *I want you.*

That's too close. Too much. Somehow he's looked into my heart and seen that I long to be the centre of someone's universe.

But ultimately, it doesn't matter, because I don't believe him. I'm nothing. Just normal, a lower-tier mafia princess. More like a middle-class mafia girl. He's powerful and gorgeous and has experience and authority. Any woman would come running at his one lazy beckoning finger. Yes, he intervened when my own brother would have sent me to die alone on the other end of the earth. But who knows what mafia politics are at play here. There could be a host of financial and power game reasons Grant saved me.

He's still languidly topless on the opposite side of the limo. He has watched me the whole way, like doing so was a compulsion. His phone buzzed constantly, and though he glanced at it, taking in whatever the messages were with a

pinch of the eyebrows, he seemed content to simply be my jailor.

Or perhaps he expects me to try to escape. But I'm exhausted and beyond fighting. Seeing on the news a bomb was recovered in the hotel I was due to stay at chilled me into painful submission. I knew my brother was willing to sacrifice me, but the extent has cut me open. I'm truly alone.

So when the car stops and Grant offers me his hand, I accept it and tell myself I feel nothing as warm fingers clasp mine and his thumb smooths over my knuckles.

His house could be a set for a period drama film, all cream stone and enormous windows, and although I sneak a glance to both sides, I can't even see how big it is. He leads me up the wide steps like I'm a princess rather than a runaway bride he picked up off the street.

Inside is predictably amazing. The entrance hall has marble floors, high ceilings, and a double staircase flows down into it. One of those in movies, and the hero and heroine meet in the middle. Though part of me adores this and wants to run around squealing like a five-year-old.

But the fact is, this might be a beautiful house, but Lambeth could let me go. I've been in a prison my whole life. No more.

"I'll show you to your rooms," he says as he shuts the door with a click and turns the key in the lock.

"No." I stop, jolting out of his grasp as he tries to lead me to the stairs. He looks back and his brows lower into a scowl. "I'm going to Australia. Thank you for letting me know about my fiancé's plan, but I'd like to go now."

"I think you'll find you're not in a position to make demands," he drawls.

"Because you *kidnapped* me." He might have stopped me from being murdered, but I'm not conceding that he's the good guy here. Abduction is still—you know—a crime.

"Yes." He smirks. "Like I said. Not in a position to make demands."

I guess he's right. Gritting my teeth, I allow him to lead me up the stairs then down first one luxuriously wallpapered corridor then another, and already I'm a little lost. This house is enormous.

My gaze keeps skipping to Grant's bare shoulders. They look strong. Really strong, and I discovered that earlier, didn't I? As I fought him, he held me at bay effortlessly, never having to resort to hurting me.

"You're going to stay here." Grant opens a door and I step into a suite decorated in a pretty pale blue and white, with a carpet so plush my feet sink into it and a massive four-poster bed with soft floaty drapes. It is nearly perfect, and makes my fingers itch to fix the last details. He closes the door gently but firmly. "Give me a month to deal with your brother and fiancé and make you secure against their threats. Think of it like a little holiday before your trip. I'll provide everything you need to plan your new life in Australia, or wherever you want to go." I look around in time to see his mouth twist like he's tasting something bitter.

And I realise he's trying to trap me.

"What's really going on here? Does my brother owe you? I won't marry you so you can get my money for his debts." I guess the most obvious reason.

The bastard has the temerity to laugh. "I'm far richer than you, sweetheart. I have no need of your fortune. You have what, a couple of million? Enough for a nice house and a life of frugal leisure. I have a thousand times that."

"Well, don't think that means you can buy my body either," I say proudly. That's all men in our world ever want. Money or sex.

He tilts his head to the side. "Is that what you think? I merely want to slake my insatiable animal lust on your smooth virgin curves?"

Slake his lust. Quite honestly, when he puts it like that it makes my belly go warm and loose. I ignore his accurate guess about my virginity.

“Well why else would you have kidnapped me?” Because that nonsense about wanting me? Impossible.

“To protect you,” he replies simply.

“Sure,” I scoff. “I can defend myself, I don’t need an old man like you.” A lie. A total lie. I don’t even know why I’m baiting him. Trying to claw back some influence in this situation, maybe. I’m caught and at his whim.

His eyes are glittering now, with mirth yes, but with something menacing too. I’ve thrown out a challenge and a bad feeling skitters down my spine that he’s about to take me up on it.

“You think I’m past it, do you,” he says with terrifying softness.

“Yes. You locked me into that taxi. You’re going to lock me in here for a month. Not even giving me a chance to prove myself.” I’m proud of myself that my voice equals his for calm, even as my insides flutter. I’m trembling like a puppy dreaming of playing with leaves. “You couldn’t even give me a fair trial. An *opportunity* to escape.”

He smiles. “You think you can best me given an equal fight, do you? Okay. Choose a competition.”

I did not think this through. I taunted him about being old, but he’s bigger and stronger than me, for all he’s twenty years older. The only fight I would do better at is one where his muscle would be a disadvantage. I can’t think of any right now, but I’m not going to be totally screwed over either. “It can’t be a strength test. I’m not arm wrestling you.”

“Mmm.” The sound is a rumbling purr. “What about a chase?”

Oh. I... I can be fast. That doesn’t sound so bad. It seems quite fair. “What’s the trap?”

“You want to escape?” He reaches into his pocket and slides out a key. “A race for your freedom. Make it to the front door, and you can walk away.”

This sounds good. I’m nodding eagerly.

“But if it turns out I’m not so *old* that I can’t catch you...”

I go still. His eyes glitter and the moment draws out like the sun descending through a red-streaked horizon. What will he demand as his prize?

“You stay here with me for twenty-four hours and do *whatever I want*.”

The shock reverberates through me. If I lose, I’m his for the day. No control, no way to stop. Heat pools between my legs instantly and my nipples harden.

“If I prove I’m a match for you, I get to use that pretty body of yours. And since I’m so old, I’ve had plenty of time and experience to discover perverted acts that will make you squirm as you cry with pleasure.”

Oh god. A shudder like an earthquake goes through me and I go hot and liquid at my core.

“Or you don’t play the game, and you stay quietly under my protection until you’re safe. Your choice.”

My choice.

At least I have options, which is more than my brother gave me. Grant’s gaze doesn’t waver from my face. He’s intense, this man. Like facing burning metal.

I look away. I can’t think while he’s there, so handsome and focussed.

But I still feel his attention, unyielding. Unrelenting.

Think. I have to think.

It’s all or nothing if I take his bet. If I can outrun him, I’ll be out, finally. It’s been twenty-one years in captivity. Yes, I’ll be at risk of my brother catching me, but is that really a greater risk than being trapped with the kingpin?

I can see that waiting out his month is the logical way forward—but is it? A lot could happen in a month under his control. Either way, will he stick to his promises?

Yes. Whatever else the kingpin is, I think he’s a man of his word.

In which case... I sneak a look at him. He's fit. Muscled. Bulky even. But is he agile? I might have the edge there. And if I can escape...

If I get out now, I'm at a double advantage. I don't have to spend a miserable lonely month in yet another gilded cage. And I won't have to resist throwing myself at Grant and being humiliated. Because god knows, it will be resisting. He has a force around him, like he's one of those spaceships that draws in smaller ones. A planet pulling in a shining meteor to its orbit, only to burn it up upon entry to the atmosphere.

He is scary, and though there's a savage creature in me that likes that, I'm not under any illusion. This man would take what he wanted from me if I offered it, and break my heart.

So the race is better, right? I win and leave. I'll figure out how to make a new life and stay one step ahead of Colin and David. Or if I lose the competition, at least I'm only with Grant for one day, not a whole month where I'd drive myself nuts about what he meant when he said, *I want you*. For what? To be his maid? What could he want with a girl like me?

Besides, would it be so bad to be his for one day? I don't know what he'd demand, exactly. But a warm shiver goes through me at the thought of Grant being my first *everything*. The outer recesses of my mind acknowledge that I'm more than a little curious about what he'd make me do. What depravity he'd inflict on me.

I might enjoy it.

He's waiting stoically while these chaotic thoughts cascade through my head. His arms are crossed over his chest, like he's holding in all his power and strength.

I can do this. I'll win and be out of here. No long month knocking around his house like a single pinball. Even twenty-four hours at his mercy is better than that.

Lifting my gaze to his, immediately I'm drowning in that grey. Lost in it like he's a snowstorm at dusk.

I open my mouth and he reads the answer before I say the words. The flash is brief but I know I saw it. *Relief*. For a

game? Is my billionaire kingpin bored? Or... I see it in a strike of insight through those apparently cold eyes. Lonely?

My heart spasms in sympathy. "Yes. I accept."

GRANT

I've never wanted anything as badly as I do this. Her.

And she has just made it all the hotter by accepting a race she must know she can't win.

"How much of a head start do you want?" I ask as I strip off my shoes and socks. She flicks her heels onto the other side of the room. Sensible girl, they'd slow her down.

But the arch of her foot—so damn pretty. Everything about Jessa is sexy. The combined effect of the image in my mind of what I'm going to do to her when I catch her—because this is predetermined, I will catch her—and the allure of being the hunter, means my cock is rock hard.

"I don't know your house. Thirty seconds."

I chuckle. "Sounds like you think you're not fast enough to outrun an *old man*, sweetheart." Turning forty last year I did momentarily feel like I was on a downhill. Too many years of work to get to the top of the London mafias. But remembering Jessa was out there, just nearly at the age for me to claim? Seeing her in snaps and bursts when I can get away from my duties for an hour and replace her driver, or watch her while she goes for a run. That makes me feel eighteen again, but in a good way. Without the inexperience of being a new mafia boss, but with the all-out horniness, constant hard-on, and cockiness that luck is with you.

"I know I'm faster. I just don't trust you," she snaps, but I see how she can't help but be drawn to the sight of my body. She's noticed my erection and keeps flicking her gaze to the

bulge in my trousers then away, like she's repeatedly telling herself not to look. That thin silk dress is revealing and her chest has gone pink with... Is it arousal? I'll enjoy finding out.

"You will." There is nothing like overwhelming pleasure and multiple orgasms to prove good intentions. "Ten seconds."

"Thirty seconds, or no deal." Her throat bobs as she swallows and she scuffs the carpet with her bare toes.

My proud girl. I almost remind her that this was her idea and I wanted to woo her gently over a whole month, building her trust gradually until she begged me to fuck her. But she won't accept anything less than a man so much stronger than her that he can take her down with a ridiculous handicap. An impossible handicap. Alright. She needs a display of masculine power to make her feel safe. I'll do that. For her.

I can't deny that I'm turned on as fuck by this. And while her final capitulation—me thrusting inside her deep, breeding her as I've thought of every night for the past few years as I harshly fisted my cock until I came—will only be when she asks me for it, there are a lot of other things I can do to her in twenty-four hours.

I hold out the key to the front door. "One. Two."

Her eyes go wide.

"Three."

Snatching the key from my palm, she takes off at a run, a blur of blonde hair, white silk, and pink skin as she jerks the door to her suite open and flees into the hallway. Her fist holds the key, clenched. I follow to watch her from the hall as I continue counting aloud. I've watched her run before, but this is so much better. She reaches the end of the corridor as I get to ten.

A bolt of uncertainty goes through me. I'll have to be quick. Very quick to catch her before she gets out. And then what? She'll be taken by her murderous brother. Absolutely not.

She hesitates at the end of the passageway, and as I watch, my heart in my mouth, she bolts right, down the other corridor... Away from the front door.

I'm at fifteen when the thump of her footsteps slows. Sixteen and there's silence. Seventeen and a choking mew of realisation. There are stairs on that side of the house. But there is the library between her and those stairs, or several closed doors that lead to anterooms and further bedrooms. She doesn't know that. All she knows is this isn't familiar, and she went the wrong way.

I smile. Because she has just levelled the playing field for us. I keep counting, and at twenty-seven I'm twitching with the need to run after her. Twenty-eight and I see her flash past the end of the corridor. She looks down at me and I see bright eyes, but alongside the panic there's a curve of anticipation as she twists to hold me in sight for an extra split-second. This chase has got under her skin already. Running for her life is a game she never thought she'd get to play with anyone she trusted enough to enjoy it.

"Thirty." I take off at a sprint. My erection really shouldn't help with this, but the predator's instinct is engaged and I'm vibrating with need. My soft little prey is there, and I will get her before she can harm herself.

I reach the turn of the passage in time to see her only ten steps ahead in the wide corridor. Grabbing a chair and toppling it into my path, she keeps running.

Smart. She thinks I'm a big muscled clutz. I hurdle the chair in one bound. My landing is heavy but I pick back up my stride instantly.

She squeaks as she checks behind her and sees I cleared her obstacle.

She hitches up her white dress further to free her legs. Far more than is necessary. She's run so far with her skirt around her knees, but she drags it all the way almost to her nipped-in waist, revealing the full length of the legs I can't wait to run my hands down. If she's trying to distract me, it's no Atalanta's apple. All her actions do is spur me on.

That peek of her thigh and the curve of her arse focuses me. I can see the line of her white knickers against her soft and creamy-looking skin. She's delicious and I can't wait to make her mine. I'm going to enjoy every sweet part of her.

Everything is at stake. Not just my future with this enticing, innocent girl, but her protection. Her very life if I let her escape and put herself back in harm's way. It won't take her fiancé long to realise he's been conned, and his bride never stepped onto the plane.

And if she's vulnerable and alone at that point...

It's that thought that makes my legs pound furiously. I close the gap, faster than she is and more determined. My thighs burn with the effort, and my knees twinge with every step. I ignore all the pain and push harder.

She gets to the stairs and I'm only a second behind her as she bounds down. I almost shout for her to be careful. But she's swift and sure-footed.

She's going to reach the front door before I do. I'll catch her before she can unlock the door, but the moral victory will be hers. The minx. Despite her mistake, she's fast and nimble.

The thought of her arguing has me vaulting the bannister over the last flight of stairs and landing with a crunch that with all the adrenaline I barely feel, but know my knees will complain about later.

As I hit the floor and propel myself forwards she runs straight into me, unable to halt her momentum. The key clatters on the marble floor.

She's in my arms.

She's *mine*.

That doesn't stop her though.

JESSA

I shriek like a mouse picked up by the tail.

He jumped from halfway up the stairs like one of those French street runners and it's too late to stop. I throw up my hands and try to bounce off him, shove him away. My heart tries to beat its way out of my chest via any exit it can find. My throat. My rib cage. My spine. It's an animal fighting for freedom like I am.

I'm still going to escape. Grant hasn't quite got a firm hold of me, and I wriggle out from where he tried to pull me tight to his chest. Free.

But in using both fists to push Grant away, the silky fabric of my dress falls and tangles in my legs. I grab for it as I fend Grant off, but it's no use. My desperately scrabbling legs have snagged the silk on my thighs, the friction tightening, constricting, hobbling. For a moment I'm weightless, between running forwards and tripping. Then I'm falling, throwing out my hands to catch myself until the air is knocked from my lungs by an arm at my waist.

My back slams into a hot, muscled chest.

I failed. I'm done. I'm as trapped here as my heart is within the confines of my ribcage.

Grant is breathing hard, as I am. Pressing into the small of my back is a hot, solid length. That shouldn't be my first thought as my liberty slips away. But this is the first time I've ever felt a man's cock. Ever. It's intriguing and exciting even as my breath heaves and panic surges in my blood.

I thrash. I flail like a wild animal, and for a split second I think it's working. I'm twisting out of his grasp.

He ruthlessly pins me to him, but chest to chest this time. I can feel every part of him, including the hardness of his cock on my belly.

Our race has made him hard. He enjoyed it.

And... so did I.

The feeling of running for my life was primal. And knowing he was coming after me? Heat rushes to my cheeks.

Grabbing my hands, he keeps them hostage.

"You're mine." He lowers me to the floor, cupping the back of my head, careful that he eases me to the cool marble, and gripping my wrists. Then his hips are pressing in, and his ankles pin my shins and I'm helpless and exposed, my hands splayed in the small of my back and shoulders pressed onto the smooth floor. My front though, is on fire with the hold of his body.

I'm trapped.

He should secure me. I might run. Surely the game isn't over? But right now, I can't. There's nothing I can do.

He's going to take me here on this floor. His cock feels harder than the marble, it's a scorching brand on my belly. He said whatever depraved acts he wants, and my body is his to do with as he likes. I wish my nipples weren't puckering and my breasts heavy at the thought. He'll strip me of my innocence.

"I'm a—a virgin." I spit the word out. Like it's what? Protection? So he'll go easy on me? Is that even what I want?

"Uh-uh. For twenty-four hours," he rumbles into my ear. "You're *mine*."

What does that *mean*?

It means my v-plates are about to be burned to a crisp, for sure.

“Twenty-three hours and fifty-nine minutes, kingpin.” I’m proud I can be defiant after my silly confession. “After that, I’m leaving.” My breathlessness is just from running. Definitely.

“You’ll be free to leave, yes. But you won’t. You’ll be so addicted to the pleasure I give you that you won’t be able to tear yourself away. After you’ve come on my tongue and my fingers, felt me stroking you into madness, you won’t think of going anywhere.” His voice is deep and rough, resonating through me and the shift of his cheek against mine rubs his bristles on my softer face.

Oh god. As though that chase hadn’t got me hot enough, now this. I’m embarrassing myself. I can feel how swollen and wet my pussy is. Overflowing.

“I’m going to indulge every depraved and filthy fantasy with you, sweetheart. I’m going to make you dirty and you’ll love it.”

The blush of shame for being so inappropriately aroused—slutty is the only word—only makes it worse. Without my volition, my hips roll in a futile attempt to get some pressure on the spot between my legs that aches to be touched. My body desperately wants relief. To come. To have that void filled up with his cock and his... Oh god where the fuck is my feminism when I need it? His seed. To be bred by this alpha male.

Dirty. Filthy.

Yes.

He’s big and strong and powerful and he caught me. He saved my life. Now he’s going to do depraved things to me? My nipples tighten. My clit pulses without any stimulation. I shudder at the mere press of his body onto mine.

“I won’t stop. I’m going to make you ache and gasp and cry out. Tell me, did that chase turn you on as it did me? Did you like knowing I was coming for you? Are you needy, sweetheart?” he croons. “Are you wet?”

“No,” I lie.

“Then you won’t mind my checking that you’re telling the truth, will you?” He rears up, takes my delicate silk dress in both hands at the top of my thighs, and rips it.

I gasp as I see the tear from my navel to mid-thigh. A shocking intrusion on the white silk. Then before I can react, he’s over me again, his chest on mine, my hands caught in one of his above my head. I try to wriggle to get away but all it does is rub my pebbled nipples against his solid chest and the heat of his naked skin. He’s burning hot.

“Now, let’s see, shall we?” It’s a teasing statement but I feel my cheeks flush. Oh god. He’s going to find out what a little liar I am.

Because I bet...

There’s the barest featherlight brush of his finger against my pussy, and I jerk with the pleasure of it.

The bastard laughs. “You’ve soaked your knickers through, sweetheart. You say you don’t want this, but your body says otherwise, open and weeping for me. Just waiting for your man to claim.”

Late, far too late, I realise I should have pressed my knees together. I should have fought him. But I’m too wet and achy and hot to have thought of it. My brain is about as useful as putty. I’m a quivering pile of aroused flesh, desperate for his caress. Because I’m certain Grant can make me feel good. Make this amazing.

“Do you want me to touch you?” he asks in a deep rasp against my lips.

I’m just... Looking down, and then back up again. It’s not a nod, I tell myself. He’s taking his part of this bargain. I’m his for the day. I have no choice.

“Hmm.” He makes a sceptical sound from his throat. “That will do for now. But I’ll have more before the day is out. I’ll have you screaming and begging. I’ll have you thrashing as you come and digging your nails into my back as you’re overwhelmed with pleasure.”

A whine of sheer desire comes from me, without my say so. I really shouldn't want that. The floor is cold and hard and he's heavy and hot and pressing me down. The combination is electric. It's like he's flicked switches in my brain I didn't even realise I had. I have twice as many nerve endings everywhere than I used to; that's the only explanation for how I feel.

I tell myself I don't have a choice when his hand brushes over my knickers again. I honestly make an attempt to remember what I aimed to achieve only a few hours ago—freedom and to be on the opposite side of the world. But when he pushes the fabric aside, I arch into Grant's touch as finally—finally—he touches me.

“You feel so perfect.” He groans as his fingers slide through my folds slowly, as though both of us aren't panting. I'm shaking. He's barely done more than skim my clit, but that feels like more than any of my efforts alone in bed.

It's the forbiddenness and the taboo of the whole thing, I think. The way he's doing this, I don't have any responsibility. He's taking without my permission, right? That was the deal. I shouldn't like it, but I do. After all the planning of the past months and having to watch myself for my entire life, I'm loving that he is seizing control to *my benefit*. He's stroking me, gently at first, as though he's waiting for me to pull away and stop him, but I don't.

I don't because, fuck that feels amazing.

Then he strokes more and harder, keeping me pinned and helpless. I'm not fighting now. I'm mindlessly chasing his touch as best I can given how solid he is on me. Our skin only touches in a few places, scorching. His hand holding my wrists. The back of his forearm, with hair that treads the line between soft and wiry. And his fingers in my pussy.

“That's so good. You're so good,” he tells me in a rough voice. “The little noises you're making are sexy as fuck.”

I wasn't even aware I was making any noises. But it's true. Someone is mewling and whimpering, and someone is me.

The way he's touching me, my body is hardly my own. I'm a creature of his making, of pleasure and vibration and feelings both in my heart and between my legs. He's bolder than I would be with myself, but I'm wetter too, so it works. A synergy like sugar and butter, it sounds wrong, but it's magic. He's relentless. He strokes my clit in consistent patterns. Hard. Right over the nub that I would be tentative about, he pushes the pad of his fingers.

“My pretty girl.”

And then he kisses me. Soft lips and sandpaper stubble. I gasp. It's more surprising than his blatant sexuality, this kiss. He takes my parted lips as an invitation, invading my mouth. Then it's not subtle, it's deep and filthy and sending the good sort of shivers down my spine. He is thrusting his tongue all the way against my cheek in a bold mimicry of sex. His other hand is still holding my wrists as he steadily drives me higher and higher. I'm mindless and out of control. I'm shaking with his touches and all I can do is moan.

“That's it,” he says against my lips. “Give it up, sweetheart.”

It's nearly, so nearly enough... Then he thrusts a finger—or maybe two or maybe four, who knows—into my passage and I arch and come apart at the seams. I scream. I shake and thrash like I'm trying to get away but at the same time I'm pushing my mouth to his like that point of contact is the only thing keeping me on the planet.

I'm not even certain I exist out of the throbbing pleasure where his fingers are easing in and out of me, and stroking over my clit. It's only slowly, so slowly that I'm aware of my legs. Then my pleasantly curled toes and tingling calves. The heaviness in my torso. And then—more astonishing than my still having parts of my body in addition to my pussy, which is pretty shocking I can tell you—I notice my head. Specifically, my cheeks. My nose. My mouth and forehead. Each part of my face is being kissed by my captor. This is nothing like the claiming, possessive kiss while he stroked me to an orgasm so strong it might have caused concussion. Nope. These kisses are sweet and delicate as butterflies. They're as unexpected as

the way he effortlessly avoided everything I put in his path, and jumped over the side of the stairs to stop me from leaving.

He deserved that win. However desperate I was to get out, he wanted more for me to stay. What's baffling is why. I thought if he won he'd just take his pleasure and my virginity on the floor in the most animalistic manner.

Instead, he has given me an orgasm better than anything I've achieved on my own.

Part of me wants to pretend that's neither here nor there, but the way he pushed to the limits of sanity to win our competition? And then drank in my bliss like it was his own?

Yes. Yes.

I want to kiss him back. I want to return those delicate kisses.

But I'm so sated and exhausted. My eyes close. Sleepy. And... I belatedly realise that I feel... Safe. Because Grant might be a terrifying monster of a mafia boss, but he hasn't hurt me. Quite the opposite.

My head knows I still need to get out. However much my body likes this man, he's a merciless kingpin. So when he scoops me up, I should object.

"Where are we going?" I mumble instead.

"To my bedroom." He presses his lips to my temple. His arms band around my thighs and shoulders and his hands hold me tight.

"But I should... My rooms." I am incoherent.

"You're sleeping in my bed," he tells me and his gruff voice is a warm caress over my whole body. "You're mine. That means I will have you with me every minute of our one day together, even when we're asleep."

He sounds obsessed. Unhinged. And damn, but... I like it. A lot.

JESSA

I'm his captive.

It takes me a while to remember because I'm so comfortable as I wake, I find it impossible to feel any of the trepidation I ought to. I don't think I've ever been this happily snuggled, ever.

It's not that the bed I've slept in my whole life was uncomfortable. It was fine. But on my own, it's always a little too cold. Grant's bed though, it's like sleeping on a summer cloud. And although the night was all heated air, this morning is fresh and birdsong comes from an open window.

I've never lived outside of London. At the Southwark compound if you heard birds it would be pigeons plodding around on a roof. Here there're the chirps and fluting warbles of little feathered critters.

At my waist the cover that held me secure moves.

Not a cover. A hand. Grant's palm sweeps down my body, light but unmistakably possessive. To my knee, pause, then slowly back up.

A test maybe? I don't flinch. I can't even bring myself to tense up. Honestly, my body tries to get more, shifting slightly under his touch to continue the caress once he stills.

I open my eyes to find Grant watching me, a serious, tender expression on his face in the creamy morning light spilling into the room. It picks out the silver in his sideburns and reveals a tiny divot on his cheek. A small scar maybe. How would it feel under my fingers? And how did he get it?

My kingpin is a finely crafted puzzle box, and I want to explore him until I understand every facet.

Wait, he's not *mine*. That's ridiculous.

I should be aware by now, after twenty-one years, no one wants me for myself. Or not for long. David Bree-Fogg is just the latest in a long line of people who judged me insufficient. No doubt the kingpin will too, once he gets to know me. All I can do is desperately guard my heart until I leave and hope this day of being his isn't too memorable.

Grant brushes a strand of hair off my face and leans in to press a kiss to my mouth and whatever I was thinking about dissolves. It's a soft kiss. No tongues or any hint of the filthy sexy things he did last night.

It should be weird, or unnerving. But his grey eyes are so familiar, it's like coming home. I like him *way too much*. He is a dangerous kingpin twice my age and I'm falling for him like a penny tossed from the Eiffel tower.

I am going to Australia at the end of this day. I have to, before he tires of me.

"I need to go to the loo," I stammer. I have to get space.

He nods his permission and I almost fall out of bed with relief.

The bathroom is classic luxury and my heartbeat slows. Pristine black and white tiles are warm on my bare feet, chrome fittings gleam, and the morning light is a caress on my skin. There's a claw foot bath and a walk-in shower so big I've seen smaller bedrooms. I breathe in eucalyptus and sandalwood and it's so clean and fresh this room is basically a magic relaxing spell.

I comb my fingers through my hair uselessly, until, with more chutzpah than usual, I open a couple of the cupboards and find some essentials in one of them, on a single shelf. Cleanser, moisturiser, a toothbrush and toothpaste. And, ah-ha! A hairbrush. All seemingly brand-new.

I wash my face and work out the knots from my hair until it is straightened out, even if my thoughts aren't. Then I stare

at my reflection in the mirror. I'm still wearing that white silk dress from the rehearsal. Or wedding. Whatever it was. The honourable kingpin didn't undress me. Well, apart from tearing open said dress at the crotch, which gapes obscenely, revealing my knickers.

Even aside from the now grubby and ripped dress, I look different from usual. Haunted by my brother's betrayal, yes. But also, there's a new gleam of knowledge in my previously innocent eyes. My lips are reddened from kissing Grant. And—wait I didn't see it before because my hair covered it. There's a love bite on my neck. A dark pink oval mark.

I bring my fingers up to touch it, expecting a stab of pain, but none comes. The skin is still smooth but at some point last night the kingpin deliberately took advantage of my mindless pleasure to set a sign of his presence on my skin.

I suppose they fade after a few days like bruises, but this feels like a brand.

Twenty-four hours. I don't know what time it is now, but at a guess there are about seventeen left?

Then I'm going to Australia, I remind myself. An interior design business, a house in the country with birds outside the window in the morning, and perhaps eventually someone to love me.

Because when your only family tries to have you assassinated, the signs are clear. You're not loved.

But that love bite. My fingers gravitate back to it. Not loved maybe. But *owned*.

And right now that feels... Good. Special. Grant chose to save me from the grim fate I didn't realise I was stumbling towards. He selected me, even if it was just for his twisted game.

The kingpin is sitting up in bed when I return, a pair of reading glasses perched on his nose, all his focus on a tablet he's reading from with a scowl. He's like a sexy half-naked professor. All he needs are some dusty books and a stern voice about my assignment being due.

He looks up and brightens when he sees my face. Setting his glasses and tablet aside he smiles until his gaze drops to my dress. Then the scowl is back.

“Do my prison rations include coffee?” I joke, shifting awkwardly from foot to foot. I try not to look directly at him. He’s like the sun when he’s topless. Too beautiful to view straight on. Though obviously I do anyway, risking eye strain. And I covertly examined every scar that covers his chest while we were in the car.

“I thought...” He leans his forearms onto the sheets. They are very nice forearms. Muscled and with a light coating of black hair and with fewer scars than are on his chest. “I might eat first. I am very hungry.” His voice is dark and full of intent I don’t fully understand.

That assignment that I was thinking the sexy professor would tell me is due? Ope. Apparently it’s breakfast.

“Well, I can make you food...” I can’t. I have no idea how to cook. But I can burn toast, right?

“All you need to do is *let me eat*,” he corrects me. “Will you?”

It’s not a question. I am his to do with as he wants for the day.

What would happen if I said no? I haven’t a clue, and part of me would very much like to find out. But more wants what he promised—dirty and perverse—so I nod.

“Come here.” He pats the bed beside him.

Cautiously, I approach, my knees wobbling. In the light of morning, he’s more real than he was last night. This whole thing is unavoidably happening. I can’t pretend it’s a dream.

“Take off your clothes, sweetheart.” His smile is full of challenge. He knows I’m... not scared exactly. Nervous. I’ve never been naked with a man before.

“This is not food,” I say and it comes out not as a protest, but as soft surprise. At the same time, I tug the straps of my ruined dress from my shoulders because my body is inclined

to do whatever he says, regardless of my brain blinking and gesturing like a meme of a puzzled animal.

“It is nourishment,” he purrs, and he does seem to be taking sustenance from watching me shimmy out of the dress, letting it fall onto the floor.

I’m down to the white knickers and bra and I’m... shy. Struggling not to cover myself with my arms.

“And the rest,” he says implacably when I hesitate.

I bite my lip to stop it wobbling. It’s not like the scarce inches of flesh that are covered by my underwear are going to reveal something that surprises him. Just nipples. The triangle of my mons. But I’m afraid as I reach behind me to undo the clasp of my bra, and shake it off my arms. The drop of the straps down my shoulder wasn’t sexy, was it? I’m left with it in my hand, hanging like a bit of fluff I don’t know what to do with but can’t put down.

I peek at the kingpin and my tummy flutters.

He doesn’t look like revealing my nipples was nothing. If he thought my bra skills lacking, his demeanour doesn’t show it. He devours me with his eyes.

And when I cast my gaze “demurely” down, I see a tent in the bed covers. His erection.

Perhaps it’s the visible sign that I’m pleasing him and doing this right, more than his expression, that boosts my confidence. But it’s also the recollection that he’s in control here.

I’m caught. He kidnapped me. He chased me down. It’s not my responsibility to figure out what to do, just to obey. And funnily enough, that gives me the sauciness to shimmy my hips a little as I push my knickers down my thighs.

“Good girl.” He reaches forwards, pulling me onto the bed to sit between his knees, my legs over his. Tangling his fingers in my hair and watching my eyes, he slowly draws me in, the moment stretching.

“You are so gorgeous.” He skims a hand down my side, then back up to cup my breast, kissing across my jawline as he does so. “I’ve been dreaming of your beautiful tits. And finally I’m going to suck on them until you cry out from pleasure.”

I moan my assent and he takes it as such, lowering his head to my breasts.

The first touch of his mouth makes me twitch. I ... Oh my. I had no idea it could feel like this. So good. Then he’s sending sparks through me, like I’m a firework and he’s a match.

I writhe, trying to rub my thighs together to get a little relief, and the side of my knee touches a hard length. His cock, exposed by the bed covers having fallen away. I can’t help but press myself against him. There’s a frustrating layer of fabric between our skin, but his boxers are unexpectedly silky and he’s hot against my leg. And utterly unyielding.

I’m just Grant’s instrument and he’s playing me to both of our delights. He brings a hand to my other nipple, and suddenly it’s like the music is in stereo. It’s better, stronger, and working in tandem.

I’m sure if his cock was in me it would be mind-blowing. I can’t ask. Probably he wouldn’t even want to have the inconvenience of taking my virginity. He’s most likely used to women who have experience, not little innocents like me who wouldn’t know what to do to please him.

Because he certainly knows how to please me.

“I’m going to touch your pussy.”

I nod and he gives a growling sound of approval as he nudges me to lie back, and I’m exposed to him, over his lap.

“You’re all flushed.”

I expect his fingers like he did yesterday, but he’s shifting backwards. The next thing I feel is his breath on my inner thigh. Then his palms brush my knees in a light request. I let him push them apart.

“Spread your legs wider.” That demand in his rough voice sends a fresh wave of wetness to my core. I obey, opening up

completely to him, my thighs creaking with the strain of almost doing the splits.

“Very pretty,” he says approvingly. “Your pink folds soaked. I bet you’re aching for my touch, my good girl.”

He doesn’t seem to need a reply to that question, which—phew—because when his lips reach my slit there’s nothing but the new sensation rolling through me. And those words. *Good girl*. They’ve sent a shot of pleasure into my core.

I don’t get many compliments, or someone telling me I’m doing it right. I’m usually not enough. Not obedient enough, not docile enough. No one has ever made obeying better than rebelling, as my kingpin does. I must have been praised like this at some point, but I can’t recall when.

It’s gentle little kisses at first, but before long he is carefully escalating his kisses from soft to firm to hard. Then to greedy licks all the way up me, like I’m an ice cream and he is going to taste every bit. As though he won’t let even a drop of my arousal go.

I’ve never felt anything as good as Grant licking my pussy.

And, it would seem, neither has he. He’s making rumbling noises of approval as he feasts. There are occasional words that light me up.

“Delicious.”

“Yes.”

“Sweet, so sweet.”

He reaches up and tweaks my nipple, biting into my skin and sending sensation all down my torso to where he’s licking me.

I need him so much. There’s an itch deep inside me and I’m sure he’d be able to... I give in and collapse deeper into the bed. But that softness beneath my shoulder blades isn’t enough to keep me in reality. I reach down and touch Grant’s hair. So silky. He makes a sound of agreement and I lace my fingers in and grip the back of his head, holding him close. I

anchor myself to him as the pleasure threatens to knock me out.

He tongues me harder and slips a finger into my passage and I swear he beckons me, pulling against my inner wall. Whatever he does, it is exactly what I need.

I break apart.

I come so hard I think I might never be able to stop. My body jerks and pulses like I'm a leaf blown by a warm summer breeze. I can't do anything but ride it out, allowing the pleasure to control me.

When my brain is half functional again, I notice what Grant is doing. He smooths his hands across my inner thighs, thumb pressing in sweeping movements. Possessive, but there's also affection in every brush of his skin on mine and the tingling of my orgasm is replaced by a subtler warmth.

"Mmm." He sits back and licks his lips. They're glistening with my pussy juices. "Thank you for that," he rumbles.

The kingpin looks as though he found that as satisfying as I did. Which is saying quite a lot.

Except... I glance down and my gaze snags on the massive bulge in his boxers. Surely...?

"Thank *me*?" I echo, bewildered.

"Yep." He smirks. "Shower. Then I'll make you breakfast. Come on," he says, a little impatiently, when I don't immediately follow him to the bathroom.

I'm so confused. He got twenty-four hours of whatever he wants, and he hasn't taken anything for himself yet.

"Here." From the shower he points at the spot between his feet. A big golden creature, with water streaming over him, demanding my presence. He's thrilling and terrifying. Every fantasy I've ever had of a man who knows exactly what he wants, and what he says he wants is *me*. I step under the water hesitantly, but Grant isn't having any of that. He pulls me into his arms and kisses me, warm water sluicing across our skin, over our faces. It's like one of those shampoo adverts with a

waterfall, except, so much nicer. His tongue is hot in my mouth, and I'm moaning even before he shoves me up against the cold tiles and slides his hand between my legs.

The pleasure is more familiar this time. It's easier because my body is moulding to his will. When I've come, gasping and slumped, unable to hold myself up, he washes me. Which sounds ridiculous, doesn't it? I'm a grown adult. I can wash myself.

But it's reverent. Sweet and caring. I'm a puddle. His hands are so big, it's more efficient, that's what I tell myself. The shower gel smells like him, and now I'm covered in his scent, and I love that too. I want to rub myself all over him like a cat. A water-loving cat. A sexy pussy... Alright. I'm losing it.

Suffice to say, I don't stop him. And if my bottom and breasts get more than their fair share of washing? Well. As I said, his big hands make up for it. More efficient.

I try to touch him, and he clicks his tongue and murmurs, "Do I have to tie you up to make you behave, sweetheart?"

That sends a new flood of arousal between my legs even as doubt crowds in. Does he not want me to touch him? Does he not want to come with me? I don't understand, but my pleasure-addled brain can't pick out what is because I'm inexperienced, what is because of this weird deal we have, and what is that maybe he just doesn't fancy me that way?

He wraps me in a fluffy towel and I perch on the edge of his bed while he briskly dries himself and pulls on clothes.

I've never seen a man dress, and I'm fascinated. His big body is so different from mine. Yes, all the things work the same—sort of—but the way he moves and the size of him is fascinating. And his clothes are harsher. More starch and clunks. When he puts in a pair of simple gold cufflinks it draws my eyes to his strong wrists and there're two hard clicks as they seal the cotton. His trousers close differently too, with a stiff waistband like his clothes have to restrain him. Keep all that stark beauty contained, as though if he wore wafty dresses, his feral-self would escape.

I've never seen anyone put on a tie before, but Grant knots it effortlessly, not even looking at the result until he nudges it to the centre with his thumb. Definitely a leash. It's only when he shrugs into a jacket that I realise I'm still watching him like a maniac. Reluctantly, I pick up my ruined dress. What I'd do for a pair of jeans right now.

"You're not wearing that," the kingpin snaps.

And though half a second ago, I was wishing almost the exact same thing, I bristle.

"You destroyed my only clothes. I don't have anything else to wear." How are you going to solve this, all-powerful kingpin?

"There're some things in there." He flicks his fingers towards one of the wardrobes. "The fit should be close enough."

I open the door he casually indicated and blink in surprise. There's a dress. A gorgeous floor-length evening dress in my favourite dusky rose pink. I reach out and finger the silk. It's unspeakably lovely.

This. This is the type of dress I would've chosen as a wedding dress, if I had been able to make my own decisions. I know white is classic, but I adore this soft pink, and the style is elegant without being overly simple. I almost put it on to eat breakfast, but spot the rest of the clothes. There's a random assortment. Several sets of lingerie in what looks exactly my size, two bralettes with low-rise knickers in white lace in slightly different designs, another in sheer pale almond-pink. Cut-off jeans shorts just like the ones I wore all last summer, and a strappy top. The cutest Fair Isle knit woollen jumper, and a pair of soft cream trousers. A pretty dark blue dress with a floral print. There are even ballet flats in my size. They're for all seasons and exactly the sort of thing I would buy myself.

It's so entirely strange, like a fairy tale, and I'm baffled. Delighted, don't get me wrong. But why are they here?

I don't enjoy the reasons that come to mind.

I sneak a glance across at Grant. It's his turn to watch now, but there is something akin to trepidation in his expression. A tension around his mouth.

"Why are there women's clothes in your wardrobe?"

"You don't like them?" he asks calmly, one hand casually in his pocket as though it doesn't matter one way or the other. But he's unnaturally still.

Could the kingpin be embarrassed about being caught in playboy antics? I look back at the clothes so he won't see my face crumple. "Who is she?"

"Who is who?"

"You know," I practically hiss. "The woman who visits here often enough to have clothing in your wardrobe. For all seasons and occasions."

"Sweetheart." He's behind me in a second, forcing me roughly around. "You have nothing to be jealous of," he says in that deep voice that makes me want to believe him. "Trust me."

I don't. I stiffen in his arms, but I can't bring myself to move away. His touch feels too good. He's the first man to ever hold me, and the reminder that this is a temporary thing, whereas there are other women in his life, makes me pout.

He's *my* kingpin.

"I'm not jealous." I am such a liar. I am the colour of a forest on a summer's day. "But she has good taste. I'd like to meet her."

I'd claw her eyes out if I met her. I'd send her to the moon without a seatbelt. I'd tell her to get the fuck out of the country if she wants to keep all her fingers and toes.

I'm so jealous I could weep.

"Jessa." He grabs my chin and forces me to look at him.

My heart tumbles into those silver eyes of his. They're so beautiful, I've imagined them everywhere.

"Jessa, they are *your* clothes."

I don't understand but the creature in my chest likes that he uses my name right now. Nothing generic, like babe or angel. My name. Not Jessica Southwark, either. The name that feels like me. Jessa. His using my name might be the only thing preventing me from going into some kind of fit.

He takes a deep breath, like he's bracing himself. His fingers tighten on my chin. "I bought them for you. I knew you would come here. I arranged for it."

Oh. There's so much honesty in his raw tone, I don't doubt him. "They're all new then."

He nods.

No other woman and he *planned* for this. The jealous creature inside me purrs. "When you discovered the plot to kill me."

He half smiles. "Something like that."

"You bought these clothes? You went into a shop?" I can't imagine it.

Grant shrugs. "My PA did, on my instructions. He wasn't massively happy, but he knows better than to say so. And it pleased me to have things I thought you'd like."

It should feel creepy. But it doesn't. It feels warm and nurtured. All the time I was furious with the world, it was reading the secrets of my heart like fortune cookie papers and stashing them away for safekeeping.

"Nothing makes me happier than taking care of you." He frames my face with his hands and kisses me and the envious feeling dissipates like dew under the sunlight of his attention.

Downstairs, we walk through the lobby where last night he caught me, dragged me to floor, held me down, and tore an orgasm from me.

After everything that has happened already this morning, I blush even as I can't help but look at the room with my professional eyes. It's a beautiful space, but too cool and a little lifeless. It needs a mirror on each side, flowers on that table and a modern landscape on the wall behind the stairs to

bring the outside in. If you put a banana tree in a ceramic pot to the left at the bottom of stairs, or maybe a lemon, you'd see it as you came through the door—I turn, thinking through the visual path, to find Grant looking at me with indulgent amusement.

Ah. Right. I'm being weird.

“Does it meet your exacting standards?” he asks mildly.

“No.” Obviously, yes. Except it makes my fingers itch to sketch then acquire the few details that would make it welcoming and not just impressive.

“What would you change?” He sinks his hands into his pockets and though I shake my head, he silently outwaits me.

“You need...” I tap my finger on my chin. “Paintings to start with.”

He nods and makes an affirmative sound.

And that apparently is all the encouragement I need, because I'm off. Pointing at spaces and saying what I'd add. It's probably a ten-minute rant, but he doesn't seem to tune out, or tell me I'm ridiculous or boring. He just listens, the light of a smile in his eyes.

“And that's about it,” I finish eventually, running out of steam like a wind-up toy. I'm a smidge embarrassed. I shouldn't have rattled on from a polite question and a tiny bit of encouragement.

“You have a day to alter everything in this house to your taste. Since it is so clearly lacking,” he adds drolly.

Only one day. That's our deal. It's too easy to forget and think this is more than a fun diversion for a rich man. I don't want this to end at midnight, but what chance is there of a billionaire kingpin wanting *me*?

Young. Inexperienced. Not even rich compared to him. So naive I didn't realise my brother was tapping my phone. What do I have to offer a man like Grant Lambeth?

Nothing.

And that thought makes a thread of genuine fear go through me for the first time since my kidnap.

GRANT

She eats toast like she's filling her slim legs with it. I smirk a little that she's hungry. Yes, a lot has happened since dinner last night. But orgasms do make a person snackish.

I provide coffee that she drinks with milk and sugar. I sip my espresso rather than gulping it down in one as I usually do. Breakfast with my future wife. I savour it.

I'm quite enjoying the constant hard-on from her presence. I've jerked off night after night for years, thinking of her, trying to get relief. I roughly fisted my cock, the edge of pain a penance for my obsession, so many times after seeing her, as I envisioned her naked body, pliant and soft. I want the next time I come to be a bond between us. Preferably me coming deep inside her. Then nine months from now...

"What shall we do today?" I ask when she leans back after eating half a loaf of bread and I've had my usual eggs, spinach and toast that she side-eyed but didn't comment on as she slathered chocolate spread and marmalade onto yet more toast.

"I'm at your disposal, that was the deal," she points out. "And you're going to be my personal jailer, right?"

"Yes." I'll be anything she needs me to be.

"Glad I won't be locked up in solitary confinement again," she jokes, but I see the seriousness of the comment.

Her asshole brother. He's lucky I believe in the person most harmed choosing the punishment. Jessa will make the decision in due course.

“We can do whatever you like,” I tell her. We have the rest of the day. Time to spend together in and out of bed. Though I want to give her more orgasms and do dirty acts to and with her, I refuse to hurry.

“Well.” She pauses and thinks. “What about you show me your house? I studied interior design and it’s kinda my thing.” She scuffs her feet against the kitchen island where she’s sitting. Unsure.

“I know.” Soon she’ll be certain that this is her house, that I know everything about her, and she’s mine.

There’s a flash of shock on her face when I take her little hand and squeeze it. “Let’s go.”

I’m mesmerised by her talent and insight as she examines and talks me through the whole house. She’s full of ideas, they spill out and before long I’m moving pictures around at her command, holding them up for her to see in situ then calling my tattooed mobsters to put in fixings where she wants them. She pretends to be convincing me of her case every time. Even carrying a massive potted green thing—apparently it’s a banana plant—from the orangery to the hall, she checks with me if I like it.

I do.

She could paint my whole house fuchsia pink with custard yellow polka dots and clutter it with kitschy knickknacks and I’d love it if she loved it. But while she favours more colour and feminine flowery stuff, I genuinely prefer her changes. I’ve never really given much thought to my house. It’s big and grand and I employed someone to make it functional. But Jessa’s tweaks—her presence—make it a home.

I steal touches. A palm to the small of her back here. Fingertips over her shoulder there. She eases against me when I stand right behind her and lean in to see the sketch she makes of the library. Apparently my library doesn’t have enough reading books. They’re all leather-bound volumes for show, and that is not acceptable, even though I protest that I read on a tablet.

I arrange for lunch on the terrace and she eats the tapas greedily. Then we walk around the gardens and the lake. It takes forever because every two minutes I stop, pull her into my arms and kiss her. She tastes like vanilla and I'm obsessed. I can't get enough.

In the little gazebo on the far side of the lake I give in, pulling her onto my lap facing away from me. I press my aching cock into her rounded buttocks and hold her to me as I unzip her little shorts and touch her. She's soaked. It doesn't take long with my mouth nibbling at her ear and her head thrown back against me when she loses control. She gives up another orgasm to me as I whisper about how good she feels. I pinch her nipples through her top and she squirms against my erection. I tell her she's the most beautiful thing I've ever seen, that she's so sweet and wholesome I want to eat nothing but her forever. I tell her that she makes me so hard I can't think straight.

I bite and suck her neck, a need in me so desperate and savage it can only be satisfied by hard and blunt into soft. I sink my teeth in deep enough to hurt, as she breaks apart in my arms again. She shudders into a fresh wave of orgasm. Adding a second possessive mark beside the first makes me smile with primal glee when I lift my head and see it.

Mine.

In the late afternoon heat she wilts a bit, so we retire to the cool movie room in the basement to watch a film.

It starts off innocently enough. She curls herself next to me and I drape my arm over the back of the sofa behind her. Then like a boy in a bad teen film, my arm slips down until I'm clasping her over the shoulders, tucking her into my side. She snuggles further, her hair falling over my chest. And I swear she starts it. One minute her hand is on her lap, then it's tracing patterns on my thigh. Then I'm fully hard. Again. I'm in a continuous state of arousal for Jessa.

My cock is rigid and her breath catches when she notices. Tentatively, she brushes her knuckles over the bulge in my trousers.

In exploratory movements while we both keep our gazes on the screen, she revs me up. And though I swore I'd be the one giving orgasms for this day, it feels too good. I can't stop her as she haltingly frees my erection, peeling back one piece of clothing at a time. Mainly because she wants to touch me.

Voluntarily. I'm not ordering her because I'm her captor and I don't think she's seducing me to get away. We're well beyond either of those things.

She cups the length of my shaft, barely covering half. I can almost hear her thinking through what that means. How big I am and how I would fit. How my thick and long cock would feel in her tight virgin pussy.

I let her play for a while before beginning to get what I need. Her. Naked. I strip off her top and enjoy the moment when she's bared to me, her arms above her head, trapped by the fabric. She smiles teasingly when I groan as she removes the silk that covers her breasts, but I'm busy with the flies of those tiny denim shorts. I push my hand in and grunt with relief and anticipation when I find her wetness spilling from her slit. She's overflowing.

"Is this cream all for me, sweetheart?"

"Yes," she breathes, pressing forwards into my touch.

We're not even pretending to watch the film now. I half lift her, half encourage her to crawl onto my lap, pulling off her shorts and knickers in the process. Her thighs splayed either side of mine, and her dripping sex close—so close—to where I most want her. She'll look so pretty coming on my cock. We just have to get to the end of today with her understanding that she should stay with me. Forever. Then I'll claim her in truth, with no bargains to muddy the situation.

Then I'll push her tight pussy open, fill her up, and make her mine.

She runs her fingertip around the head of my cock and I hiss. Her little hand. Fuck. She's so lovely, my petite girl.

"I want you to come." She's got a determined glint in her eyes.

I look down at her pussy. That's where I want to come. Inside her. Right up as close to her womb as possible, where it's most likely I'll get her pregnant. But one-day bargains don't have lifelong consequences; that wouldn't be fair. Despite the insistent drumming of my blood that I must take her, I say, "I will, if you continue doing that."

Doubt clouds her face, even as fluid beads at the tip of my aching-hard cock. Desperate. My cock is painful, taking all my attention not to give in to the impulse to plunge into her wet pink folds.

"I want it to be as good as when you make me come. Show me how," she insists. "I want you to unravel."

She has no idea. But I'm nothing if not here to provide what my girl wants. I grip my hand over hers on my shaft and stroke up and down.

She watches voraciously, like a tigress and her prey. Soon, I promise myself, we'll both see my cock push into her slit. I'll see her take every inch of me.

In the meantime, her soft fingers are making me crazy.

"You like it tight," she says breathlessly, glancing between my face and our hands together rubbing my cock.

"Yes." Like her pussy will be. I love how surprised and delighted she is by my body, hers, and the way we work together. I'm going to relish teaching and discovering with her.

"And fast."

"Yes." Fuck. The pleasure is so intense I'm having difficulty breathing. Just her hand, without being inside her, not even with her mouth on me, and I'm losing it, as she intended.

"Lie back," I order, twisting us on the sofa so she can ease onto the cushions.

She does, and those pretty tits of hers fall to the side, so soft and ripe. Her legs are still around my thighs as I shift so I'm kneeling over her. Lying there, her pussy on display, her

hair cascading over her shoulders and her breasts bare, she's even better than every vivid dream I've had of her over the last three years.

"I'm going to mark you as mine, sweetheart," I grind out. "I'm going to come all over you."

She nods eagerly.

"Go on then." I tighten my fingers on hers and it almost tips me over just the feel and sight of her like this. I tilt our hands down. "Do it. Cover yourself with my come, my filthy girl."

She obeys, moving her hand with mine, an equal in this pursuit. I can't stop looking at her. Her pussy is wet and ready, her skin smooth. I'm going to paint both. She's like a virgin sacrifice to my lust.

"Grant," she whispers and laces our fingers. And though I've imagined this a thousand times and the reality of seeing her willing is better than anything, it's not her beauty that makes me come. Neither is it how sexy she is, or how turned on. It's not even how she's taken control and is jerking me off perfectly with her little hand.

It's her sweetness that tips me over into pulse after pulse of orgasm that shudders through me. Her palm on mine and her blue gaze trusting. She's pure sugar.

I come over her skin. It spurts over her flat stomach and her breasts. It coats her and the possessive part of me roars with primal satisfaction that she's accepting, maybe even revelling in my claim.

And I'm a beast. After she generously offered this, I take more. When a splash hits her throat, I lean forwards so the next hits her chin, reaching her pink lips.

The filthy taboo of my come on her face sends another bolt of pleasure through me. What did I do right to get so lucky? How will I ever deserve her?

As the aftershocks of my orgasm ebb away, my chest relaxes.

“Such a dirty girl.” I write my initials in my come on her skin. G.L. Mine. She’s mine.

She flushes at my teasing, but takes her hand from my cock, trails her forefinger through the coating on her chin and up to her lips. I groan and I swear I start to get hard again as her tongue darts out in a greedy lick.

“How does your man’s seed taste?”

Her eyes light up and my heart does somersaults. Does she like the idea of my being hers? Does she want to be mine forever yet? She may not get the choice.

“Delicious,” she says with a naughty smile.

We end up back in the shower. Coming once ought to have taken the edge off, but I’m worse. More desperate for her. I’m hard again almost immediately and it’s tempting to take up the offer inferred when Jessa’s tongue runs over her lips as she looks lasciviously at my cock. But when I next come, it’s going to be inside her pussy. Not her mouth, though we’ll get to that.

She puts on the cute summer dress this time. I manage not to promptly take it back off her, which is a feat of control I consider should get a medal. I feed her dinner and she sits on my lap. My girl is irresistible. It’s all soft kisses, breathing in her scent, and giving her orgasms with my fingers and mouth. I make it impossible for her to want to leave.

As we lounge outside, talking in the cooling air, the sky goes from pink to grey to navy. But when the light fades her expression darkens with it.

I pull her across the cushioned seat and stroke her hair, forcing her to look at me. “What is it, sweetheart?”

“Just thinking,” she mumbles.

I wait.

“The deal is nearly up. I’m going to Australia.”

Fuck. The pain. It’s worse than the time, aged fifteen, I was caught by the Camden mafia and they tore off eight of my nails. It’s like I’m being ripped apart. The most important part

of my soul is with Jessa. If she leaves she'll take all the light and hope.

I know I said that it was one day if she played my game. I told myself I could be the good guy here. So I try. "Do you want to go?"

She bites her lip and nods, but it reads like, "No".

"What do I have to do to persuade you to stay?"

If possible, that makes her look even more miserable. She shakes her head and looks at the ground.

"I'll employ you to redo the interior design of the whole house." That should keep her busy, and here, for a while. When she's finished, I'll say I don't like it and demand she does it again. And again. Whatever it takes to have her with me. I wish I was the sort of man who would just lock her up and not give a fuck about his promises or her happiness. If my heart was as cold as it was before I met her, I would shove her into her rooms, shut her in, and fuck her into submission.

I honestly can't rule out that I won't get to that point.

Can I really let her go? It seemed so inevitable that she'd want to stay with me once she had a taste of how it was between us.

I promised. I'm a man of my word, and I won—damn but that's the irony, I *won*—one day with my sweetheart. I just never imagined it would be the *only* day.

"Jessa, I'll help you leave if you really want." Letting her go will kill me. Or more likely, I'll slaughter anyone who crosses my path for as long as she's not with me.

She nods again, shoulders hunched.

"Twenty-four hours was the deal," she says, as though I could forget. She wants out, despite all the risks, and all the benefits of staying. "But thank you," she whispers, clasping and unclasping her hands. "For everything."

There's no reply I can give.

Breaking my word is out of the question, but so is allowing Jessa to go. And through the blackness, I see a path, even as a tear slides across the pad of my thumb.

Oh absolutely not. My girl doesn't cry. I'm clasping her to me before I can think through anything else. I hold her sweet butt tight. My heart splinters. My poor girl.

"You can leave, but it's not worth it. You won't be gone for long. We made a deal, and I'll honour it." She nods. "That was Plan A though. I'll put into motion Plan B."

"Plan B?" she whispers, raising her eyes to mine with a glimmer of hope.

"Another abduction, sweetheart." I press her closer, so the heat of my body seeps through our clothes and mingles with hers. "No deals this time. No escaping. If you leave at midnight, I'll just steal you back again. I have to have you with me."

"But..." She pushes against me a little and her bottom lip trembles. "I can't stay and be your interior designer. If you don't want me to be *with* you."

"What?" This is insane. "What on earth made you think I only want you to redecorate?" I wrap my arms around her so tightly she can't get away.

"I didn't think you wanted me," she says wretchedly.

"That's ridiculous. I have waited for you and wanted you for years. I told you that. I wasn't going to negotiate with your brother while you were under his guardianship, but Jessa, I was coming for you as soon as your decisions were your own."

Her eyes go wide and for a second I think I've convinced her.

"We haven't had sex!" The confession seems to break from her without her volition, and she looks a bit shocked. But now it's out, she doesn't stop. "I thought you might not want to because I didn't have any experience of it. You said, *anything you wanted*. You told me you'd do dirty and depraved acts. But I'm *still* a virgin. I gave you every

opportunity. I need it to be you, Grant. You... Cheated me out of what you promised. Dirty and depraved and *sex*.” She’s breathing hard and losing confidence by the second.

I have just enough rational mind to answer her question rather than simply kiss her, pull up that cute skirt, shove her against the wall of the house and take her. Cheated, indeed.

“We couldn’t, because if we did, you’d end up pregnant,” I reply baldly.

“You don’t want kids.” Her expression drops again. Sad. Disappointed. “We could have used a condom.” She clutches at my shirt but won’t meet my eyes.

“With you, I want kids,” I correct her. “The reason we didn’t have sex with a condom is this: I don’t want to use them with you. The first time I’m inside you, I want it to be you and me and no barriers between us. I have to breed you. When I fill you up with my come, I have to know you could be pregnant with my baby afterwards. That’s the real reason, sweetheart.”

“Right,” she scoffs, even as I think she might burst into more tears. And that strengthens my resolve. She belongs with me. Whatever misguided notions she has, we’re going to be together. “So you can have a boy to take over Lambeth and a girl to sell off in marriage. I should go.” But she doesn’t attempt to move from my arms.

“If that’s what they decide, sure. I want smart kids to follow in my footsteps,” I say. She scowls. “And I also want silly kids and sweet babies. I want rebellious kids who become lawyers or teachers. Funny kids who prank me and make me threaten to murder them. I want kids as brave and resourceful as their mother, and cunning as their father. I want innocent kids who read and play games and are a bit horrified by what their father does.”

Her head tilts towards me again and listens like I’m giving her air. Like this is a story she wants to read over and over. I let go of her butt and frame her face with my hands. Looking into those night-blue eyes, I urge her to understand everything in me.

“I bargained for whatever I wanted for one day, but if I took what I *most* wanted, it would leave your young body lush and ripe and pregnant,” I confess, voice raw. “I couldn’t make you mine and breed you for only one day, sweetheart. I didn’t know if you were ready. I love you and when I have you that way, I’ll never let you go.”

“You love me?” she breathes.

“Yes. I love you. But it’s a tepid word for what I feel for you, Jessa. It’s like saying the surface of the sun is hot, or the Atlantic Ocean is wet.” And fuck it, she hasn’t said no quickly enough. Plan B is still in action. “I love you beyond reason. And if what you need from me is sex and more dirty and depraved acts, believe me, I will deliver.”

JESSA

He scoops me up in his arms and I grasp at his shoulder with a squeak of surprise before I manage to get my hand to the back of his neck. Barging into the house, he takes the stairs two at a time.

“Grant, what are you doing?”

“What I should have yesterday.” He’s holding me so tightly, like he’ll never let me go. Like this is it for us, we’re going to be so close we’ll be conjoined before long. God, I hope we will be.

“I can walk,” I protest weakly as he heads to his bedroom.

“Consider this practice for tomorrow, when you’ll be so thoroughly fucked you won’t be able to,” he says with a wicked grin.

A thrill goes through me from my fingertips where I’m touching his skin to my dangling toes.

He kicks the door closed behind us and tosses me onto his bed. And yes, that takes my breath away, but not as much as Grant looming over me.

“Don’t. Move.”

The second he’s off me, of course I’m sitting up, watching as he stalks to his wardrobe. I wonder what’s going on but when he turns back he has a fistful of ties and my tummy flip-flops.

His brow darkens. “I told you not to move, sweetheart.”

“Sorry, kingpin.” I flash a naughty smile at him as I crawl over the bed on hands and knees towards him. “What can I do to make it up to you?”

“You.” He crosses to the bed in sure strides and clasps the back of my neck, pushing his fingers in, kneading. “You can be a good girl and lie down where I left you.”

My body is vibrating. I think it’s the contrast. I was so devastated I had lost him. That he didn’t want anything more than a game and a house renovation. From that nadir to the highest zenith: he loves me.

“I can be your good girl,” I say and he smiles.

His grey eyes. They’re brimming with love and lust and hard intent. I know now. I didn’t imagine it. I’m sure. His eyes are security. They’re home.

“Good. Then help me take off these clothes.” He’s peeling my dress up my body. I shimmy out of the white lace knickers, lifting my hips so he can drag them down my thighs. I try to get at his shirt but he pulls my dress over my head. Then he’s trailing his fingers up the sensitive part of my inner arm and I’m nudging into his touch.

“Not that I don’t trust you...” He takes my wrist in a firm grip and holds my gaze as he knots his tie on me and the bedstead.

I gasp with surprise, but good surprise. Hot and squirmy and toe curling.

A small tug and, ugh, I’m so twisted, I love the tension that puts pressure on my wrist.

“You’re not escaping.” My kingpin takes my other hand and traps it in place. The silk of his tie is smooth and cool and as it slips on my skin. Need skitters right from my fingers, down my spine to my clit.

Both of my hands pinned, he sits back, and makes a growling purr from his throat. “So pretty. Now.”

“Wait, no!” I kick out as he grasps my ankle. I’m not being spreadeagled, am I?

“Oh yes.” He’s stronger than me. Much stronger and I don’t stand a chance as he inexorably tugs my legs apart and secures me.

“Kingpin...” There’s a tremble in my voice.

He smooths his palm over my knee. “Sweetheart. You want me to release you? Just say my name. Say, *Lambeth*. And I’ll stop. Whatever I’m doing, I’ll stop.”

All the tension leaves my body. He won’t do anything I don’t want. “I understand, kingpin.”

He grins and kneels between my spread legs. “You are not leaving this bed until you’re full of my come and have agreed to marry me.”

He’s right. Now he’s said that, you’d have to scrape me off this bed with a spatula. You’d have to prise each limb up. If that’s what I get if I stay, I’m staying. You couldn’t get rid of me.

“Think you can do that?” I say brattily. “Don’t you think you’re a bit old?”

His laugh rumbles through me. “There’s my girl. You’ll beg, don’t you worry.”

“All talk, kingpin...” I grumble when he lowers his head instead of covering me with his body and taking me. “Make me.”

“Gotta get you ready.” He relaxes in like he’s enjoying getting comfy down there. The first lick is hard up my seam and I buck with the pleasure. “I’m going to split you open,” he says against my folds then slips a finger into me and I moan. So easy. Too easy. I’m already soaking wet from his attention.

“My cock is big, and you’re little. But you’re going to take it all. You’re going to be stuffed with my cock like a good girl.”

I nod frantically. Yes. I want to be his good girl, full of him.

“But first I want you all soft and boneless so when I push inside you for the first time you enjoy me stretching you out.

Love it.” He punctuates that speech with sucks on my clit and I’m writhing, tugging against my bonds, desperate for more. And commentary over, he delivers.

I had no idea he was holding back before, but he clearly was. The last time he was kissing and licking gently, easing me into pleasure like sliding into a hot tub. Now he throws me in. He goes after my orgasm like he chased me down. Hard. Determined. Fast.

He holds my hips when I move under his mouth, and being trapped and forced to endure the overwhelming pleasure makes this even hotter. I’m caught and spoiled. Cherished. He knows better than I do what I need, and is providing. I don’t have to think, or plan. He has everything under his control, including my whole body.

He understands me. I haven’t felt this safe and loved in... Forever.

The orgasm arrives so quickly it’s almost sharp. One moment I’m on the edge, then the next I’m shaking as I plummet down like Grant has pushed me off the peak of a swooping rollercoaster.

I’m still coming when he moves up and over me, the heat of him covering my naked skin. He’s so much bigger, and I’m spread out, utterly at his mercy. I can’t push him away or bring him closer. The head of his cock touches my clit, sending a fresh wave of orgasm through me.

“Look at me.”

I hadn’t even realised I’d shut my eyes until, opening them, Grant’s catch me like a shining silver hook.

“I want in.”

“Take me.” I flex my hips up, to the limited extent that’s possible. The tip of his cock slides against the excessive wetness and presses just inside. Hardly at all. Nudging at my entrance. We both moan.

“We’ll go slow,” he promises. He pushes and there’s resistance. A shadow crosses my kingpin’s face. “I don’t want to hurt you.”

“You won’t.” I have no idea if that’s true actually, only that I need him to fuck me and I won’t be satisfied until he does. Even if it’s agony there’s an ache deep in me that only he can fix. “Go on. Shove it in, all the way.”

“No,” he says between gritted teeth. “Slowly.”

I can’t pull him into me, tied up as I am. This is all on Grant’s schedule.

So I whimper and tip my hips to try to get more of him.

He groans and there’s a pinch that steals my breath.

“I’m sorry, I’m sorry, sweetheart.” He kisses my cheeks. Forehead. My lips. Even the tip of my nose as I get accustomed to the invasion of his body in mine.

“Further,” I demand when the burn has eased. Looking down I can see us joined and it’s deliciously hot. But most of his cock is still not inside me.

He slips in another inch and this time the pinch is less and the ease quicker. Watching me like a hawk, I don’t need to say with words that I’m ready for more. He sees. He knows.

He tells me I’m taking him just right and I’m the best thing he’s ever felt. Whispering in my ear, he soothes and comforts me even as he shakes with the effort of restraining himself. He rubs his cheek on mine and kisses my throat. As he withdraws and pushes deeper he takes a nipple into his mouth and sucks until I moan.

The beginnings of fullness bloom.

We continue like that, an inch at a time, until at last he’s all the way in. His pelvis flush with mine, the head of his cock firm at my limit. I’ve never had anything push on the top of my passage like that and it sends a fresh wave of arousal through my limbs like a button he’s keeping held down.

I’m pinned. His hard cock inside of me. Arms braced either side of my breasts, and his bonds holding my wrists and ankles. I should feel as exposed as a beautiful butterfly on display. And I do, but I’m also a powerful creature caught and imprisoned for her own good. Protected.

Grant slides out a little and I mewl with protest until he thrusts back in and I let out an unladylike grunt of pure sensation.

Then he does it again. Further, harder and it feels amazing.

“I love you. I’ve wanted this, to be inside of you, since the beginning. I’ve been obsessed, Jessa. I love you and I can’t let you go.”

I can’t speak for the overflow of the unfamiliar but wonderful feel of him sliding in and out with more and more confidence. There’s nothing easy about it even as he ups the pace again. He’s massive and stretching me. But I’m so wet it doesn’t matter and that combination makes every stroke bliss.

“You’re perfect, so perfect. I thought you’d feel good but I had no idea you would feel made for me, so soft and tight, and fuck, so wet. That’s the best part. You’re soaking wet for me so I know you want me too. You’re doing so well. My good girl.”

I didn’t know I needed to be his good girl before yesterday, but I, oh I do. Every day. All night. His praise knits closed wounds I didn’t even know I had. They’ve been sore for so long I wasn’t aware it’s not normal.

“More,” I beg. “Harder.”

“Jessa.” He sounds tortured.

“More,” I repeat, and as he complies I see the relief on his face and the pleasure spirals through me. I keep saying that. More. And more, until he’s slamming into me, stealing my heartbeat and my oxygen with each thrust of his unyielding body into my soaking hole.

“I’m never letting you go,” he growls. “I’ll have you every day. I can’t do without you now. I’m addicted to your vanilla scent and sweet taste.”

He’s split me open and now he’s stuffing me full, body and soul. He’s pounding into me, barely controlled. I’ve unleashed him and the way he’s owning my body is as hot as the words he keeps saying about how much he loves me and how this is

even better than he imagined when he jerked off thinking of me.

“Grant,” I gasp. “I won’t escape. Release me.” I have to touch him.

He stops instantly. I cry out when he slips from me.

“I won’t let you leave. You’re mine now sweetheart, forever.” He unties my ankles first and I wrap my legs around him. Yes. Yes this is what I want. I’ll steal him as surely as he did me. Then one hand is free and I use it to urge him closer.

“I’ll chase you down and take you back,” he says against my delicate inner arm, his stubble scraping. “You’re mine now and I’ll die without you. Don’t leave, Jessa.” He sounds undone, and I love that.

The silk falls away from my wrist and I pull him until his chest hair rubs my nipples.

“I won’t,” I whisper as he pushes his cock in where I need him. “I promise.”

GRANT

This time she's tight but takes me easily. She feels so good, not just around my cock but where she's trying to touch me everywhere all at once, like she's not certain that I'm real and has to keep proving it to herself. Meanwhile, I'm losing my grip on physical existence. All I have is Jessa, my beautiful girl. I want her beyond reason. Having her beneath me, small and lithe and panting, makes my chest roar and ache. This girl is my world. I caught her, she's mine.

And now my captive is free.

The keening sound that comes from her mouth gives me savage delight. The lack of control of her lungs is the best music. Because I did that. I drove her wild and made her shake uncontrollably.

Yes, I'm barely hanging onto sanity, but seeing that Jessa has lost it altogether is the proudest moment of my life.

Her eyes are glassy and flit everywhere. Now her limbs are free, she's making good use of them. She touches me with abandon, like she's trying to find a hidden key that will unlock me.

It's her. She's my secret weakness. Every sweep of her little hands sends sparks down my spine and tightens my balls. I'm going to come. I can't last much longer against the onslaught of Jessa. Her scent. Her tight wetness around my cock as I thrust in and out of her. She takes all of my length, which isn't a given being that I'm built on a larger scale. But we fit together perfectly. We were made for each other.

We kiss as I fuck her hard, right into the mattress, and she encourages me. Her heels dig into my buttocks and she settles her fingers in my hair, holding my face to hers.

“Come for me,” I demand against her lips, but my voice is hoarse. I grasp her thigh and spread her legs wider and she sobs at how I go deeper. I up my pace and shift the angle so my cock rubs hard against the side of her passage closest to her clit. That sensitive area.

“More. Please, more.” My girl begging is the most perfect sound imaginable. But she needs something a little extra to tip her into pleasure again.

The next time we do this will be sweet and slow. I’ll take my time enjoying her and exploring every painstaking and sensuous method of making her feel good. There will be whole days when I do nothing but patiently make her come time and time again on my cock.

But the primal need to fuck her in the most basic way is too strong. I have to pound into her as I drown in her eyes and *own* her. If I don’t feel her clench with pleasure, tight around my cock, I’m not sure I can withdraw.

I cram my hand down between our bodies and find her clit. It doesn’t take much. A circle over that firm little nub as I keep up a rhythm of my body into hers. There’s no space anywhere. She cries out and arches and where I thought she was beside herself before, she’s incandescent now.

Two deep thrusts with the touch to her clit and she’s coming, shaking so hard I have to catch her leg and hold her still to continue pumping into her.

“Grant.” My name on her lips as wave after wave of pleasure pulses through her and tries to tug me with her. I grit my teeth and resist. Just a little longer.

I’m harder than I’ve ever been, primed to explode.

Then she’s loose underneath me, even as her pussy still grips me. So fucking good.

“You feel amazing,” I tell her. “You’re so tight and perfect.”

“Come inside me,” she orders breathlessly, her nails digging into the muscles of my back. So demanding, my girl.

As I press my chest to her breasts and thrust harder, dragging open-mouthed kisses up her neck, and over her jaw and cheek, she lifts her bottom to bring me deeper.

“I’m going to fill you up, sweetheart.” I want her to be pregnant after this.

“To overflowing.” She’s writhing now, picking up my rhythm and pushing up again.

“So much you’ll never be able to wash it off,” I agree. I need her marked as mine. I have to have my scent on her skin, my ring on her finger, my seed dripping from her pussy, and my baby in her belly.

“Grant.” She buries her face into my neck and whispers onto my skin. “I love you.”

I break. My cock goes as deep and hard as possible right into her and I paint the inside of her passage. I jerk with the intensity of it. I’m wrecked. Ruined. A shell of a man having emptied myself into Jessa. There is no chance of recovery. It’s terminal.

I collapse onto my forearms and it’s only then I remember I should lift my weight from her. When I try, Jessa hums in dissent and grips on. Pointlessly, because I’m stronger than she is. I roll to the side and my mouth finds hers.

As my orgasm recedes I’m kissing her and saying all sorts of besotted things. That she’s the best thing that’s ever happened to me. That I love her beyond reason. That she’d better know that I’ll kill anyone who tries to touch her or take her from me. She giggles and snuggles into me as she agrees.

“There’s your come trickling down my thigh,” she eventually manages to tell me. “I need to clean up.”

“No. Why?” I reach between her legs and she’s right. She’s a mess. So am I. We’re both covered in the sticky combination of her cream and my come. It’s perfect.

“I’m going to wash off.” She goes to move away and I cage my arms around her. The shift has put enough space between us that I can look into her sparkling lapis lazuli eyes.

“I said you weren’t leaving this bed until you were mine. Full of my seed and you’d agreed to marry me,” I growl, low and menacing. “I meant it.”

She beams. “That’s a terrible marriage proposal. How am I going to tell our children about that?”

“Fine.” I shrug. No problem to me. “We’ll skip the engagement. I’ll kidnap you and take you straight to the church.”

I feel her laughter as her torso shakes as much as I hear it. Then we’re grinning at each other.

“Tell them whatever story you prefer, sweetheart,” I say between kisses to her cheek, and down her neck. “Tell them how I kidnapped you. Tell them I chased you. Tell them you hijacked my black cab and stole my heart, and that’s true too. So long as they exist, and you and they have my name, you can do anything you like.”

JESSA

The second time I wake in Grant's arms, I know I belong here. I'm his.

It's too easy. He pulls my knee over his legs and slips into me from behind and I'm in a haze of sleepy pleasure that only comes into focus when he strokes my clit and my breasts as he fucks me. I'm surrounded and overwhelmed by him.

I presume my whole life with Grant won't just be showers and sex, though I'm ready to admit this pattern is not one I'm in a hurry to change. Getting deliciously dirty then getting clean again.

But when I finish towelling my hair as I come out of the bathroom, I find Grant fully dressed and scowling at his phone.

"He's not as stupid as I thought in one way," Grant says grimly, understanding my unspoken question without me even asking. "But in another is surpassing every village idiot."

"What's happening?" I wrap the towel more closely around me.

"Your ex-fiancé, or as he wrongly terms it—husband—"

"What! No!" I rush to Grant and grip his arm.

"Is saying that I've stolen his wife and he's outside, waiting to talk. He's demanding restitution. Pretentious git." Grant's expression is dark and crackling like a night-time thunderstorm.

I'm shaking. No. No way. My very soul revolts at the idea of going back to that man who would revel in crushing me. "I'm not going back to him."

Grant pulls me to his chest and smooths his hand down my back. "Of course you're not. You're mine. You always were."

"Was I?" I whisper, because hearing him say that is a balm like I've never known.

"Yes," he replies firmly.

My mind is whirring. "Those clothes. They're exactly like ones I've worn. And it doesn't make sense you bought them when you heard about my brother's plan. That was only last month."

He nods slowly. "You're a clever girl. You know."

"You've been watching me. I wasn't going crazy seeing you everywhere. It *was* you." It's magic. Despite all my fears, nothing bad was ever going to happen, because Grant was protecting me.

"I've watched you for three years." He strokes my hair and there's a thread of anxiety as he confesses, as though he thinks I might disapprove. "Since I first saw you at a fundraiser for animals or something."

"The donkey sanctuary," I say. I was eighteen and I'd finally persuaded my brother I should be allowed to go to events. And that was when I began to notice careful, watchful grey eyes. First across the room, tangling with my gaze and making my toes curl. Then on odd occasions, like a warm palm on my hip.

"It spun me into an alternate dimension, Jessa. Nothing has been the same since. I knew I had to have you. But I wasn't going to negotiate with anyone else. Not your brother, certainly. I could have crushed him, but leaving you without a legal guardian was not ideal. So I've been waiting for you to be old enough to make your own decisions legally. And when you could, I intended to seduce and charm and win you over until you chose me." His mouth twists ruefully. "It wasn't

actually my idea to kidnap you. Not until I realised what those bastards were planning.”

“I’m glad you did.” Understatement of the year. Finding Grant is a thousand times better than being alone in Australia. Or worse.

“You don’t mind,” he states.

“I don’t mind,” I scoff. “I *like* it.” I do. His love is a cashmere robe. So light and soft I didn’t even realise I was wearing it and it was keeping me warm. I thought I was naked and vulnerable but all this time I was wrapped in the most luxurious care.

He exhales in sheer relief and his hands cup my jaw before he kisses me. “Good. Because I will look out for you for the rest of our lives. When you’re busy taking the world by storm as an interior designer, I’ll be watching you. Now, we’re going to talk to David together. Put on the dress.”

He tips his chin towards my wardrobe.

“That?” I ask doubtfully when I point at the soft pink dress. It’s floor-length evening wear. Not very practical, and I kinda hoped to save it as a wedding dress. Weird and presumptuous, I know.

“Yes. You’re my queen. And there are some accessories I’d like to add.”

My heart thumps wildly. I can’t believe... And yet I can. It’s quick but it’s like coming home.

He kneels and there’s the sound of friction as he draws a wooden box inset with mother of pearl I hadn’t noticed from the bottom of the wardrobe.

Opening it up, I admit I was expecting a velvet box. Shock clogs my throat when I see a leather strap and a small gun.

“But.”

“I’ll always be here to protect you, sweetheart. But you’re strong and brave and resourceful too. Come here.”

Like I'm on strings, I do. Kneeling at my feet, he buckles the leather strap around my thigh. I can still barely breathe.

"That's why you want me to wear the long flowing dress." I only realise when he drops my skirt and it perfectly covers everything. "It will hide a gun."

"And you can defend yourself if required. I want you to feel what I see in you. That you are powerful and beautiful and strong."

Powerful and beautiful and strong. With this amazing man kneeling before me, I do feel all those things.

"I've never used a gun," I confess in a whisper.

"You can do it," Grant replies with absolute confidence.

He guides me through each step, from taking it from the holster on my thigh to loading a bullet and taking off the safety.

"Like this." He readjusts my hands on the weapon as I hold it as he instructs, and immediately it feels better. "Never point it at anything you don't want to die a painful death."

I think of my murderous fiancé. Yeah. I wouldn't mind.

Grant's straightforward faith in me rubs off. I don't want to use this gun, I don't want to be in this situation. But where the choice is being by my future husband's side or cowardice, there will never be a question. I will be next to the man I love. Every single time.

I knew that violence was part of the mafia, but after an attempt on my life and seeing an actual gun, the reality is now vivid. It's all so much like something I might have watched on television.

And Grant? He's that morally grey, swoon-worthy hero. The man you're not supposed to want, but can't help but fall for.

"Oh, and one more thing."

He kneels back down and I'm so distracted by the weight of the gun on my leg that I don't notice at first that he's

holding a ring box open. Inside is a platinum band with a massive sapphire, facets glittering in the buttery morning light.

“Really?” A part of me still can’t believe this is all for me.

“You think I’d forget,” he chides gently. “You think I’d take you to face him without my ring on your finger?”

He takes my hand and slides the ring onto the fourth finger of my left hand. It slots over my knuckle and in place, it’s like when Grant and I joined this morning. This ring is lucky. I’m sure.

“It’s gorgeous. Amazing.”

He huffs with half laughter. “It’s nothing compared to your eyes. A pale imitation. Merely the best money can buy. Beauty like yours must be *stolen*.”

GRANT

She walks downstairs with her hand lightly on my arm and we grin at each other remembering all over again how she ran from me.

No more.

Well. I'm not averse to play chasing, but she'll never get to leave.

"Would you like to have breakfast before we see the despicable pencil?"

Jessa snorts with laughter, which is what I want. My girl shouldn't be tense over that asshole.

"He does look a bit like a pencil with his pinstripe suits, doesn't he?"

"Yep."

"Let's eat afterwards. No need to make ourselves sick and spoil a perfectly good breakfast."

I check with second in command that David Bree-Fogg has been thoroughly frisked for weapons and we enter the dining hall to find him sitting bolt upright at one end of the table like he owns the place. Interesting. Overconfident. I sit at the other end and pull Jessa onto my lap when she goes to take a chair. She comes easily and drapes her legs over mine and her arm over my shoulder.

The best possible ornament for me, my girl.

“Mr Lambeth,” he says formally, his top lip sweaty. “My apologies for the unsolicited meeting. I would like to speak with you about a business matter.” His watery gaze slides to Jessa. “Alone.”

“Anything you want to say can be said in front of my fiancée.”

David Bree-Fogg’s mouth tightens. A child getting angry when his toy is taken away.

“Unless you’d rather she not know that you and her brother tried to have her murdered.” Jessa grips my shoulder and I stroke her waist. My sweet girl. She doesn’t deserve this.

“How offensive. I don’t know what you’re talking about,” Bree-Fogg splutters. It’s obvious he’s lying. He’s going red at the neck.

“You do. What is it you want?”

“Respectfully,” he gulps. “I don’t think you’re aware of the whole context here, Mr Lambeth. Her brother owes me a considerable debt, and his sister is part of the payment.”

Pompous arse. As though a flesh and blood woman can be *payment*. “That’s no concern of mine.”

“Grant.” Jessa shifts on my knee. “Excuse me for a moment.”

Something isn’t right when our gazes meet. But I trust and don’t ask, just pulling her in for a long, dirty kiss. The sort of kiss that leads to filthy fucking on the table.

“I love you,” she whispers against my lips.

Then I release her. It’s better she doesn’t see me deal with this. Whether I pay the asshole off or shoot him, either can be difficult to accept the first time.

“I am appealing to your sense of fair play, Mr Lambeth,” the corrupt hatstand says once Jessa has left the room. “I understand a man such as yourself feels the need to *sully my property* before I have it. If you will return her to me once you are finished, in I suggest a week or so, I will be very happy to

recompense you for any inconvenience in finding a new companion—”

“How much do you want for her?” My stomach roils and soul rebels at the idea of returning my sweetheart to him. I can’t listen to any more of this shit, and I’m reaching under the table for the gun I know is stashed there. Fuck agreements and mafia precedents about not killing unarmed men in your own house. He needs to cough up a figure quickly and get the fuck out before I shoot him for disrespecting my future wife. The money is irrelevant. Jessa is worth everything to me.

“Two—”

A shot rings out and before my head knows what’s happening, I’ve pulled the gun from its hiding place, put a second shot in the polluted Long Island iced tea’s brain. Bree-Fogg slumps in his chair, instantly dead, as I run out, my heart in my throat, to find Jessa.

I bolt from room to room, my team arriving, guns out and faces grim. Bile rises.

“Find her!” I yell and they all scatter.

Jessa. Where is she?

The sound came from downstairs, maybe outside? But wouldn’t she have gone back to our bedroom?

I don’t know and on instinct I run to the front door, then around to outside the dining hall we were in and I see her.

Jessa stands with the gun I gave her hanging loosely from her fingers, staring down at her brother’s body on the floor.

He’s bleeding from the chest and muttering vile obscenities to a frozen Jessa.

“Sweetheart.” She looks up and seeing me breaks the stasis. She flies into my arms and I catch her as she clings to me.

I kick the gun from her brother’s hand and move Jessa away. He’ll bleed out soon enough.

The group of my staff who have come running at the sound of gunfire spring into action, trussing up her brother and checking the perimeter. My second in command isn't here. Not a surprise. But my softly spoken PA is.

“Ron.” My PA snaps to attention. “Do you want a job that doesn't require buying women's clothes?”

“Yes boss,” he replies promptly, a happy gleam in his eye.

“Good. Find my useless second in command, dispose of him, and as my new second in command deal with these two messes please. Ensure this sort of fuck up never happens again.”

My PA grins. He deserves a promotion, and clearly this is exactly what he enjoys.

Back inside, on a sofa with her legs over mine, it takes a while to coax from Jessa what happened. The shock has made her numb.

“He was going to shoot you,” she says eventually, face creased with horror and, I think, anger. “Through the window. I couldn't let him hurt you. Or take you from me.”

My heart swells to the size of a country. A continent. My heart is so full of Jessa it should have burst by all physical laws. But my love for her defies every rule. I don't tell her that it's bulletproof glass, because that's beside the point. He tried to hurt her, and I stopped him. He tried to hurt me, and she stopped him.

We're a team.

“Are you okay?” I ask.

“He scolded me for using the wrong fork and didn't even look up as he knew I was trying to escape. He knew I was going to die in a so-called accident and he couldn't even face me as he thought I left for the last time.” Despite her words, her face is conflicted. My sweetheart is loyal well beyond what her brother deserves. “He doesn't care about me. He sacrificed me for his own addiction. I could forgive all that. I've just learned about addiction myself. It's heady. But he tried to kill you. I can't forgive *that*.”

The exhalation of relief from my chest is almost a purr. She loves me. “Would you like to get married in Australia, sweetheart? A destination wedding.”

She squeezes tight on my hip. “Yes. Anywhere with you.”

EPILOGUE

2 years later

“I’m going to catch you!”

From the other side of the table on the terrace, she squeals and giggles and runs away from me as fast as she can. Admittedly, Holly’s “fast” is basically a walking pace, so I take small steps and open my eyes wide, stretching out my arms down to our toddler’s level to growl softly. She checks that I’m following with a big grin on her chubby little face.

We do four laps of the table on the terrace before I’m a little concerned that she’s looking over her shoulder so much she might face plant, and no one wants toddler tears before bedtime.

So I scoop our daughter up in my arms and blow raspberries onto her tummy until she’s giggling and thrashing like a little octopus.

“I want to chase now!” she demands petulantly, but simultaneously yawns so wide I can see her tonsils and all her little milk teeth.

“How about we read a story upstairs?” I suggest. Woe betide me to say nap, I’ve learned that lesson. But I bet if I do one round of that dinosaur book she’ll be fast asleep.

And I have an idea about what to do while our daughter naps. Surprising my wife and whisking her away is one of my favourite things to do.

I knew I'd love being with Jessa, helping her achieve her goal of a business in interior design. Of course I knew I'd love touching her whenever I wanted, and being in her sweet tight body every night. Ruining her over and over again. What I didn't expect was that she would be there for me too. When horrible decisions have to be made. When I'm as grumpy and fussy as our baby, Jessa is always at my side. Sometimes with a cup of tea and a cynical eyebrow. Other times with a saucy wink, toeing off her shoes and running, enticing me to catch her before she gets to our bed.

Holly snuggles into my chest as I carry her upstairs. I smooth her blonde curls. "Are you tired, little one?"

"No," she says, but around another yawn it comes out like a slow yowl.

I huff with laughter as I take my sleepy girl up to bed for a nap. Once she's settled, her breathing deep and even, I slip away and down to Jessa's office.

My wife works too hard. I'm going to distract her.

Thank you so much for reading, I hope you enjoyed *Stolen by the Mafia King*. Want more Grant and Jessa? [Get the exclusive extended epilogue straight to your inbox.](#)

Hey, could you do me a quick favour? If you liked Grant and Jessa's story, click to the next page and give a rating. It really helps! Thanks!

THANKS

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INSTALOVE BY EVIE ROSE

Captured by the Mafia Boss

He's powerful, gorgeous, twice my age... and obsessed with me?
I might be an innocent runaway, but I'm at my friend's funeral to avenge her
murder by the mafia boss: King.

He has other ideas.

I should have guessed he'd retaliate with kidnap. Now I'm under his control, still
intent on his demise, and honestly so turned on I could cry.

When he offers me pleasure, I can't refuse.

He promises he'll let me go, but what if I want to stay? With him.

Taken by the Kingpin

They call me the lost princess...

But I'm a normal girl, late for my first work evening-do. Sure, a mob boss is
watching me. Making my tummy flutter.

Tall, dark, older and dangerous, I shouldn't want him. When the clock ticks to
midnight and I officially turn eighteen, I tell him I'm done with my family's mafia.

But it's not done with me.

Snatched away and trapped in Sebastian's luxurious apartment, I have no choice but
to bargain. I won't try to escape, he'll teach me how to defend myself.

Then our lessons escalate, and soon I'm aching and needy and... What if I could be
his princess...?

Forbidden Appeal

I run to the one man who always made me feel safe: my father's best friend.

He's older and rich, and my teenage crush re-surfaces as I beg the former kingpin to
help me escape a mafia arranged marriage. He stares at me like I'm a temptress he
wants to banish, but we're snowed in at his Scottish castle.

One kiss and he's unleashed. He wants me too, but says he's too old, scarred, and
dangerous for a girl like me.

I've never done this before. But before the storm clears I'm going to entice him into
claiming me.

Captive Desires

He's filthy rich. Dangerous. Hot.

I'm untouched and pure. And I've been sent to kill him.

I creep into his bedroom late at night, knife in hand. The moonlight reveals the
beauty of the mafia kingpin's face, and I hesitate.

Mistake.

Now he's captured me, and I'm at his mercy. He says he'll let me go if I beg him to
take me...

I can't.

Partly from pride, but also... I don't want to leave. I want to be *his*.