

Rock
Roll.
Fall.

Band Desire

Kali Decker

Bad Desire

a rock star romance short

by

Kali Decker

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About This Book

Lily DeSilva's been hearing the same song about rock star Mick Lange her entire life. *He's the best. He's the greatest. No other lover could possibly compare.* There's only one way to get that toxic earworm out of her head—tracking down her mother's famous ex-boyfriend and seducing him. But no amount of mythology has prepared her for the man.

At fifty-four, with more than three decades of fame behind him, Michael Lange is no stranger to being wanted. Not even to groupies showing up on his doorstep and taking whatever he has to give. But when his ex-girlfriend's gorgeous young daughter steps over his threshold, he's not sure if he's being used...or if he's found his true muse.

Can Michael and Lily write a new song together...or will the past just keep playing on repeat?

Content note: *Bad Desire* is a 14,000-word celebrity age-gap romance novella featuring a consensual and sensual journey between full-grown adults. It features m/f oral sex and PIV sex. There is also on-page discussion of an emotionally and verbally abusive parent. No cheating. HEA/HFN guaranteed.

One

There's a full-color mural of Mick Lange on a building in downtown Jersey City. Stretching a couple of stories high. Him and his red and white Stratocaster in front of a splotchy microphone that needs repainting. Lily's passed it enough times on the way to the PATH train that she's memorized every brushstroke. The reality of him is somehow even bigger, taller, though her first view of the man himself is strangely bleached of color. He leans in the doorway of the rental cabin, half in shadow. Dark hair all tousled like he's been running his fingers through it. Ripped jeans riding low. Faded gray work shirt pulled on quick and still unbuttoned.

"Yeah?" His gaze flickers from the top of her head to her feet, not unfriendly but not welcoming either. Assessing. Like being scanned at the airport, except by a pair of flinty blue eyes.

She's used to that look, from all kinds of people. The suspicion in it. The caution. The automatic appraisal of how hot she might be. But it's never really turned her on before. Not until now. As this man just stands there watching her. The longer he stares, the more the back of her neck prickles. The more wet she gets between the legs. What an inconvenient time to be horny. Or possibly the best time. She'll probably—hopefully—find out soon enough.

"I'm Sheila Mistry's daughter," she says, holding her backpack in front of her knees so he can't see them suddenly shaking. *I'm Sheila's daughter. Love me like you loved her. Love me so hard I'll never forget you and compare everything else in my life to what we had.* "Lily DeSilva."

He doesn't react to her name. Playing his cards close to his half-bared chest. And when he replies, it's a miracle it's more than one syllable. "You look just like her," he says in that gravelly voice she's never heard live until now.

She can't tell if it's a good thing or a condemnation—her looking like Sheila. Her mother has always inspired strong emotions in people—mostly negative—but Mick gives

nothing away. Maybe he thinks she's beautiful. Maybe he's not moved by the resemblance at all. Or he barely remembers Sheila Mistry and is bullshitting her.

It's a little infuriating, honestly. After everything she's heard over the past twenty-eight years. After the boxes full of CDs and backstage passes and ticket stubs in the back of Sheila's walk-in closet. The poison in the back of Sheila's mind and heavy on her tongue. The canonization of this man above all else. The caustic sniping of "I wish you were his."

Is that what Lily's here for? To finally be his? She's asked herself that ever since she hopped a short flight into the regional airport. And in the rideshare all the way here. Maybe she shouldn't've let it drive away before she even made it up to the house. But the time for "maybe" is long gone. So she sets her jaw and stares right back at Mick Lange, complete with pervy once-over. "You look older than your press pictures," she lies blatantly, because he looks like sex on a stick. "But I can see the appeal."

A smile or something like it tugs at the corner of his mouth. He's shifted enough that he's standing wholly in the fading daylight. *Great*. Now he's sex on a stick with a halo. Like a gorgeous archangel on a teen supernatural show. "Remind me to give my publicist a raise," he says dryly.

"Your security, on the other hand..." She makes a show of looking around the carefully kept front lawn and the expansive porch lined with rocking chairs and a swing on shining chains. There's not another soul in sight. They're the only ones out here. That should be an alarm bell. And it does send a warning shiver up her spine. But another, stronger, shiver follows it. It's finally happening. The thing she's been imagining for years. Like pulling back the curtain and meeting the Wizard of Oz. *I'm alone with him. Alone with Mick Lange*. He has three platinum albums, four Grammys, and a spot in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. And a permanent room in her mother's head. She can't forget that. She's never allowed to.

"I'll be sure to send them to bed without supper," Mick quips. "It's so hard to find good help these days."

He's funny. She didn't expect that. Mostly because Sheila doesn't have a sense of humor and can't stand it when she sends memes and GIFs to the group chat with Dad. What could Sheila and Mick possibly have had in common all those years ago besides sex? Which Lily already knows entirely too much about. Apparently, the man in front of her pioneered the female orgasm. The fact that she knows this from *her mother* should be the grossest thing since Lifetime made all those *Flowers in the Attic* movies. But when you're raised in dysfunction, the bar for "icky" is really low. So, she's still turned on. Still intrigued. She started this journey. She has to see it through.

If she sees him naked in the process, so be it. All the better, in fact.

###

He's been out near Lake Placid for two months with no visitors except the housekeeper who comes in twice a week to clean and drop off supplies. Cases of Red Bull and Boost and fresh produce. It suits him just fine. Solitude. Silence. Songwriting. Portrait of a Dedicated Musician at Work. But then the doorbell rings late one afternoon, out of the blue and unexpected. And he answers it to find his past's come knocking. Five-foot-five and furious.

Sheila Mistry's little girl wants to fuck him. Probably she wants to ruin him. Take her pound of flesh however which way she can. Punish him for something he doesn't even know he did. Or just for existing. He's used to this. Husbands, brothers, sisters, mothers, tracking him down for a reckoning. But it hasn't really happened since he stopped touring regularly. Since he's stopped drinking and snorting coke and sticking his dick in anyone who asked for it. But they still find him every once and again. Like Mick Lange's the horned and hooved leader of all their demons. This girl, with her big green eyes and her cut-off shorts and a chip on her shoulder, wants to exorcise him the only way she knows how. It's there in the stubborn set of her jaw, in how she's glaring and eating him up at the same time.

She really does look like Sheila. It's been almost three decades, but Michael can see the resemblance. Wavy dark hair spilling to her waist. Long sun-kissed legs that her bulky bag can't quite hide. Same lush mouth, same sharp nose. But even with just a few words spoken, he knows his ex and her daughter don't sound alike. This pretty young woman in her college logo t-shirt has a voice like whiskey and smoke. Like a twenty-year bad habit. She's no teenager, but she still sounds way older than she should.

"You wanna come in?" He steps back from the door he should've shut in her face five minutes ago and gestures her forward.

"Yes," she says firmly, though her hesitation on the threshold speaks to the exact opposite. "Yes, I do."

Again with the voice. She's too young to hold that much cynicism and heartbreak. She needs to pour it into a mic, soak guitar strings. She should drown him in it. She probably *will* drown him in it. Lucky for her, it's been a long time since he's participated in his own ruination, and he's about due for a fall.

Two

They were involved for a year or so sometime before she was born, Mick and her mom. Practically a lifetime on the rock star/groupie circuit but not long in the grand scheme of things. And somehow, he became the standard by which everything else in Sheila's life was judged. By which *Lily's* been judged. As if a toddler, or an awkward adolescent or a high-school student can measure up to a myth and a legend. To the ghost of a relationship that wasn't meant to last.

So, is it any wonder she wants to haunt Mick Lange like he's haunted her family? Maybe she can sink under his skin and twist around his bones. Fill his blood. She has to settle for a cold beer from his fridge and an uneasy seat on a brown leather couch. The bottle sweats and drips onto her thighs. Lily probably should be wearing longer jeans. Or a dress. Something that doesn't leave her quite so exposed and looking like she's fifteen and on the way to summer camp. But she can't be sorry for the way he keeps looking at her legs.

He leans against the wall, studying her with hooded dark blue eyes. It's an album cover pose come to life. Brooding and full of promises he'll never keep. They must teach it at rock star school along with how to trash a hotel room and how to cut a perfect line of cocaine. He's long out of the beginner classes but he clearly remembers the lessons. He practically smolders at her. *Talk*, she wants to demand of him. *Tell me what's so goddamned special about you*. Even as the answer thrums in her pulse and catches in her throat. *Everything. It's everything*. Presence. Charisma. Star power. Good genes.

He's got some silver in his hair now and in his beard stubble. But he's still the Jersey bad boy with a dirty dare in the curve of his mouth. So much hotter in person than in those grainy, decades-old music videos on YouTube. Like she noticed before, his unbuttoned shirt displays a chest and belly that are still defined. Lightly hairy in shades of brown and gray. He's narrow hipped, lazy and lanky. That casual lean

pushing his left leg out like an invitation to ride it until she makes herself come.

Her cheeks go hot just thinking about it. *God*, she hasn't even been here a half-hour. It's already out of control, this thing inside her. Sure, she's had late-night fantasies about him. The same way she would about a famous movie star or the hot bartender at her favorite wine bar. But she's never considered herself susceptible to lust at first sight—even factoring in the Mick Lange mythology that's threaded through her life. Maybe it's the wrongness of this whole situation turning her crank right now. Visiting her mom's "one that got away." Seeing him up close and personal. This mysterious ex who just happens to be a famous rock musician up there with Jersey's patron saint, Bruce Springsteen. And she's here for what? Explanations? Closure? An exorcism? All of the above? *Ugh*.

He doesn't ask how she found him. He doesn't ask what she wants. Maybe he already knows—better than she does. "How long you sticking around?" he asks instead. Like it's a foregone conclusion that she's not leaving when her beer is done.

"I don't know. For as long as it takes." *For as long as what takes?* He doesn't say it, but the question is there in how he's studying her. She doesn't have an answer. Not yet. But it probably involves their clothes coming off.

"Then I guess I better get started on dinner." He pushes off the wall, and doesn't look back. Just expects Lily to follow. And of course she does. Where else does she have to be?

The first floor is open plan for the most part. A sunken living room, a fireplace, bookshelves and flat-screen TVs lining the walls. The lack of taxidermy deer heads is a huge relief. Stairs lead up to a mezzanine with hallways splitting off from either side. Everything is logs or hardwood. But the kitchen at the back of the premises is tiled, with gleaming stainless steel fixtures and copper pots hanging from hooks on the ceiling. Like something out of a home and living magazine. She recognizes the aesthetic from the house she grew up in. The kitchen was a showplace that her parents rarely bothered to enter.

They relinquished the task of cooking to Mrs. Singh, the housekeeper they hired when Lily was nine. And to Lily's grandmother, who came to live with them after Grandfather died. They relinquished care of Lily to the two older women, too. Gran and Mrs. S are probably why she's not a total sociopathic narcissist. She learned what it is to be cared for without strings. But only so far as Sheila allowed.

"Mrs. Singh is paid to be here. You think she'd indulge you otherwise, Lily-bee?"

"Granny was never so permissive with me. She is just trying to make up for it with you."

Never mind that her grandparents had to be pretty damn liberal to let their only child fuck off to parts unknown with Mick Lange. God forbid anyone like Lily for herself.

"How'd you find me anyway?" Mick's voice pulls her from the bitter reverie.

He moves around, grabbing this and that from the various cabinets. Dry pasta, spices, and seasonings. "Who do I need to fire?" He clearly cooks for himself a lot. The cabin is huge, but there's no on-site staff. None of it adds up to a man who likes being catered to and waited on, coddled or protected from public view. Despite his gruff threat of firing whoever sold him out.

"Everyone knows you go away to the mountains to work on new material. As for the specific address..." She mimes zipping her lips, locking them, and tossing the key.

Lily's not about to hang her contact out to dry. Uncle Pike's a former roadie turned record producer, and one of the few people Sheila didn't ditch after she finished her rock groupie Rumspringa. Maybe because he comes from money, too—James Danforth Pike IV. He and her mom have their wild past in common...and there the resemblance ends. Because Uncle Pike is a nice person, generous to a fault, and has plenty of bridges in the music industry that he didn't burn.

Mick lets her have the secret, rummaging around in the massive stainless steel fridge and emerging with tomatoes and

fresh basil. He let her in. He gave her a beer. And now he's making dinner for them both. *Why?* She repeats the query out loud. "You didn't have to let me stay," she points out. "You could've told me to go back home."

He pauses mid-chop, setting aside the shiny chef's blade that probably costs more than all her silverware put together. Tomato pulp clings to his skin. He meets her steady gaze with a penetrating look of his own. "Would you have left?"

Her answer is obvious and automatic. "No."

"Well, there you go." He chuckles dryly. "More efficient to just accept the inevitable."

"Is it?" Lily glances back at his hands. His strong, capable, guitar-calloused fingers. She's not a huge fan of tomatoes but she'd lick those fingers clean in a heartbeat. She'd fuck him in a heartbeat. Isn't that inevitable, too?

The moment stretches between them. The kitchen suddenly feels small and stuffy and hot. He doesn't answer her right away. He goes back to dicing, making a neat little pile in the upper corner of his cutting board. The knife slips in his fingers, his movements not as fluid as before. And then... "You think I don't know what you're here for, sweetheart?" His voice is a rasp, barely above a whisper. "You want to know just how memorable your mother's lover is. See if I'll get under your skin the same way."

Yes. No. Maybe. "That's where you're wrong, Mick." She shakes her head. "You're already under my skin. Like a tattoo. You've been there for years." Itching like brand-new ink with not enough Neosporin in the world to make it stop.

"It can't happen." The denial is swift. The knife flashes over the basil so fast she's surprised he doesn't take a fingertip off.

Can't it? Won't it? "You literally just said it's easier to accept the inevitable."

"Efficient," he corrects. "But not one bit smart."

"Being smart is overrated," she says without missing a beat.

He's trying not to indulge her flirting, but the speed of that line gets a laugh out of him. The corners of his eyes crinkle and his shoulders shake. If he's hot when he's mysterious and broody in the shadows, he's absolutely gorgeous like this. At ease and amused under the bright track lighting.

She tries not to stare. She fails. And he takes the opportunity to change the subject. "You a musician, Lily?"

"Five years of violin lessons and I hated every minute. And I sing in the shower." *Which you are welcome to discover for yourself*, she doesn't add. Instead, she comes around the counter and starts filling up the pasta pot from the farmhouse-style sink. "But I do love music. Classic rock. Pop." She picks up the thread of conversation once the water is set to boil on the stovetop. "My best friend and I saw Devon Show do a private club gig a few months back in LA."

She braces for a dismissal of her taste from a rocker of his generation. But Mick just nods as he puts a pan on the opposite burner. Moving with her like they've shared cooking duties for years. "Show is a good name for him. He knows how to put one on. Has a whole brand and a vision for himself. When I was starting out, they'd just shove you onto a stage with your blue jeans and your t-shirts and let you sink or swim."

There's an old clipping in one of Sheila's scrapbooks of Mick in a print ad, declaring nothing comes between him and his Calvins. Some throwback-to-the-1980s campaign. His blue jeans and t-shirts were pretty lucrative there for a minute. She wisely keeps that observation to herself. "Not everyone can be Bowie or Prince, huh?"

"I was never the kind of talent they were," he acknowledges with a note of obvious reverence. "Not that kind of showman either. And no one expected me to be. Good thing, too, because I looked terrible in high heels and assless pants."

"You should let me be the judge of that." She waggles her eyebrows, which makes him laugh again.

From what she remembers and what Wikipedia has to say, Mick's part of that quintessential 1980s-1990s Americana rock era that included guys like Springsteen, John Mellencamp, and Richard Marx. She thought Richard Marx was just some guy with a really popular Twitter account. *Who knew?* But Mick has no social media presence beyond official accounts run by his people and a website that gets updated once every few months. Not that it matters. His popularity is still the kind that can fill arenas, even though he doesn't tour more than once every few years now.

He might not be David Bowie, but Mick's still a legend. Still a star. To more than just her mom. And here she is standing barefoot in his kitchen with every intention of getting him into bed. She'd say she's bananas for even considering it. Except she's pretty sure she's going to succeed.

###

Michael makes a mental note to wring Jimmy Pike's neck for telling Lily where he's staying. She can be as cagey as she likes, but there are very few people he and her mom still have in common. And what Pike could possibly have to gain by setting Sheila's kid on him, he doesn't know. Maybe it's for kicks. Or maybe Lily turned the same big-eyed stare on him that she's using on Mick now. Like she's utterly fascinated by how he makes spaghetti. He's got more platinum records than he has Michelin stars, but you wouldn't know it by how she plays sous chef. Putting the noodles on while he cooks up the gravy and just waiting to say "Yes, Chef!"

"You call it gravy?" She frowns at him, cute little lines between her eyebrows. "I thought it was sauce."

"No real Italian calls it sauce," he assures. "My ma would kill me."

Her eyes light up, and she parks her elbows on the counter, folding her hands beneath her chin. "What's she like, your mother?"

He can't remember the last time anyone asked about his family. It's always his last album or his next album or his next tour. His ex-wife's latest season judging that modeling

competition show. Maybe if he's seeing anybody. Talking about Ma is a nice change. "Eighty-three and feisty as hell. She'd kill me for saying that, too," he laughs. "I tried to get her to move out to Alpine with me—hell, it's only forty-five minutes away. But she lives in the same brownstone she and Pop raised me and my sisters in. Goes to the same church for Sunday Mass."

Lily shakes her head, her smile full of dimples. "Tell me you at least bought the building."

She's teasing, but he did. He bought the brownstone and installed his niece Natalie on the top floor to keep an eye on Ma and the property. He poured money into local park and school development, too. Sometimes he goes back and does a little show for his old high school. Once, he even sat in with the jazz band.

They set plates and wineglasses on the dinette just off the kitchen. A "breakfast nook," the owners told his manager. The recording studio in the basement is the real selling point, but he can see the appeal of the floor-to-ceiling windows that look out across the back of the house. There's a gorgeous view of the woods and the mountains. And the view across from him's pretty fucking stunning, too.

Lily didn't come dressed for seduction, he'll give her that. Maybe she knows she's seductive enough already. She's not showing all that much skin, but every bit bared looks obscene somehow. Her wide-neck t-shirt's slipping down one shoulder. He can't stop staring at her legs in those cut-off jeans. She takes a sip of pinot noir and a drop clings to the corner of her lips. Michael wants to lick it almost as much as he wants to lick her pussy. The need is sudden and sharp. And he could blame not getting any for a while, but he won't.

She wants it, too. *Bad. Fuck.* "You literally just said it's easier to accept the inevitable." All that challenge in her saucy voice and sparkling eyes. She'd spread for him on this table if he let her. And he can't let her. He can't let himself. She's young enough to be his daughter—apparently all Sheila ever wanted for her—and he just has to let her curiosity run its

course. Too bad that doesn't help one goddamn bit with his own.

Michael stays downstairs for as long as he possibly can after dinner. Locked in the studio, going over simple vocal tracks he'll play for the session musicians and PJ when they get here in a month or so. Like that'll drown out his imagination. What Lily might be doing to get ready for bed. Pulling that t-shirt up over her head. Dropping her shorts. Showering. All that water stroking her sweet, soft, skin. Jesus, it's more pornographic than whatever he last beat off to.

He slouches in the leather chair, pulling off his headset and giving up any pretense that he's not thinking about her. About everything she has on offer. There's that excuse again of being alone for too long. But he's had plenty of dry spells since he and Teri divorced. Months of solo time without any female companionship. Without turning into a dirty old horndog over someone not old enough to recognize "Let's Stay Together."

Goddamn. He grabs his phone off the soundboard and finds the number he should've called right after Lily showed up today. "What the fuck were you thinking?" he barks, because who needs greetings?

Pike's sleepy laugh answers him. "Hello to you, too, Lange."

"Don't 'hello,' me," Michael barks back. "Why is Lily DeSilva here?"

The smug smile that's got to be on the other man's face is practically audible. "You need *me* to tell you that? Didn't she make it obvious?"

Jesus Christ. It's not like she showed up wearing a trenchcoat and a smile. "Jim."

A sigh as loud his own comes across the line. "I'm not trying to fuck with you. I...I thought it'd be good for you both."

"*How?*" He drags a hand through his hair, trying not to sputter and hem and haw and tack on every swear word he knows.

“Man. Come on.” Jimmy’s calm in the face of his frustration. A quality that made him a damn good roadie back in the day and makes him an even better producer now. “She needs to put all that shit Sheila put in her head about you to bed. And you...well, when’s the last time *you* put someone to bed?”

“Since when is my sex life your problem?” Michael scowls, even though Pike can’t see it. *Fuckin’ armchair therapist*. “You gonna up my Viagra prescription, too, motherfucker?”

“Hell no. I’m hoarding that shit for myself.” After they stop cracking up at that, a serious note comes back into his old friend’s voice. “She’s a good girl, Mick. You’re a good guy. That’s all I was thinking.”

A good girl. Such a good and *beautiful* girl. He shouldn’t do this. He can’t do this. He should kick her out tomorrow. *But I won’t*. He can’t say any of that to Pike, so he just says the bottom line. “I don’t want to hurt her.”

Jimmy lets a few seconds tick by. The silence says more than the two words that follow. “Then don’t.”

Three

Mick's mountain retreat is a seven-bedroom and three-bath vacation home with a loose interpretation of "rustic." The owners spared no expense in making it look like Ma and Pa Ingalls went shopping at Pottery Barn. Lily's second-floor room is down the other end of a long hallway from the main suite. Mick's suite. *Michael*. Over dinner he said to call him Michael. "*Mick Lange's out there. Hope you weren't expecting to find him here, darlin'.*" She's honestly not sure what she expected to find. But she's enjoying each discovery.

Like how Michael hums and sings while he cooks. Little snatches of songs—not his own. Classic soul and R&B. Sam Cooke. Marvin Gaye. Teddy Pendergrass. He tells her before she can whip out her phone and Google lyrics and doesn't mock her for not knowing every reference. He poured wine for her—compliments of the owner's private stock. But he doesn't drink himself. Not anymore. He likes old jeans and half-sleeve shirts. Like he'd be more comfortable under the hood of a car than holding an electric guitar or leading a band.

And he wants her. Whatever it was that she felt when she first saw him at the door...he feels it, too. It coils hot in her belly, makes her a little lightheaded. And it makes *him* hard. He tried to hide it, adjust himself under the table, but Lily can't forget the sight of that tent in his pants. Or the way he watched her sipping her pinot. Not because he was craving a drink but because he's craving *her*. Not some '80s video vixen with teased hair or a gorgeous Hollywood actress. His ex-wife Teri Austin was a supermodel and she still does the occasional throwback commercial for L'Oréal. But it's *Lily* he had his eyes on tonight.

She's not a blushing virgin or a nun. Her dating life's on par with other Millennial city girls and she's had her share of Tinder hookups. But very little of it compares to Mick Lange just watching her from across the room. God, if it's this hot before anything even happens, what will it be like *during*? She goes into the en suite bathroom and splashes some water on

her face. But she doesn't feel any less flushed after, and her pulse is still racing.

Lily riffles through her bulky backpack until she finds her vape pen. She takes a hit of indica before she can give in to the urge to pull out her bullet vibe instead. *There's no reason you can't do both*, says that little voice at the back of her mind. The weed buzzes through her system quickly, way faster than gummies. And as much as she loves getting off while stoned, getting off to Mick—*Michael*—feels dangerous. At least while they're under the same roof but not in the same bed. She's done it a few times to the fantasy of him in her bed at home. Something her therapist had a field day with.

"Are you using him to avoid directly engaging with your conflict with your mother?" Who gives a shit if she is? It's not like she can *do* anything about Sheila. Besides try and live her life on her own terms. She's graduated college. Done with her Master's. She's got degrees under her belt and a good job in Manhattan. The place she just moved into in Washington Heights. Friends that Sheila hasn't met and never will. So Lily's never been able to have a healthy long-term romantic relationship? So what? She's here to put some of those demons to rest. Stare that conflict in the face. No matter that the face is devastatingly handsome. Or that the body is fifty-four years' worth of fuckable.

Damn. The calming, easy, haze suffuses her. Her bones are heavy and loose at the same time. And she's horny as hell. But Michael Lange isn't the one to help navigate that right now. Not yet. Not tonight. So she brushes her teeth and does her skincare routine. Then she gets into her sleep shirt and slides under the sheets unfulfilled.

###

He has no business letting her stay the night. It's a mistake. Just like dinner was a mistake. But it's been too long since Michael made any significant ones and apparently, he's been missing the fix. Lily is his shot of Jameson's, his line of cocaine, and he hasn't even tasted her yet.

The thought turns into a lyric and he grabs a sticky note off the counter and scribbles it down. The new album needs two more songs to finish it off, and maybe it's a sign that Sheila Mistry's kid is inspiring one. The song that got him a Record of the Year award in 1992, "Wicked Little Girl," is supposedly about his ex. At least, that's what Sheila and the rest of the world assume. Truthfully, he's never bothered to correct the story because how can he tell anyone it's really about the cat who used to visit his fire escape? But now? Now, this time, he's legitimately got words and bars for a naughty young woman.

A vice in cotton and denim who shows up at his door with one bag and no plan except maybe fucking him. He could inject her directly into his veins. Lick salt and knock her back. Put her cunt on his tongue like a tab of acid. She's a bad decision just waiting to be made.

He groans and shifts his dick in his shorts. *Put it in the music. Put it all in the music.* Not that the reminder does any good. She'll be downstairs any minute. Lured by the smell of fresh coffee and the vague sketch of her agenda.

"I thought it'd be good for you both."

What the fuck, Pike? Good for what exactly? Except regrets? Except this itch in his palm and his dick begging for relief? He shouldn't unbutton his fly and reach under his waistband. Can't touch himself while thinking of her. Not Sheila Mistry's girl. There be dragons...

But he loved chasing dragons once upon a time, didn't he? Go figure, the first time he shot up heroin was the same night he met Sheila. In hindsight, that should've been a massive warning sign. Nothing good came from either thing. Well, nothing except the pretty girl upstairs. But Michael can't claim any involvement in that particular miracle. And he's eternally grateful for that. He's only just met her, but his feelings about Lily aren't one bit paternal.

"I don't want to hurt her."

"Then don't."

He doesn't want to hurt her. He doesn't want to want her.
One of those ships has already sailed. And both are going to be
dashed on the rocks.

Four

Michael's the perfect picture of a rocker in repose as they lounge on the porch with morning coffee. He didn't bother with a chair, sitting on the floor with one leg out in front of him. His talented and tormenting fingers dance along the fretboard as he tunes an acoustic guitar. His hair's not that long anymore, but a few silver-flecked waves fall over his forehead as he bends and strums and turns the knobs, listening for whatever it is that's just right.

The whole picture is breathtaking. She could watch him for hours, and maybe that's why he speaks. Breaking the spell.

"I don't know what Sheila told you, but there was never a chance. Not even a possibility." For him to have fathered her, Mick means. "We were over two years before she got married. And I wrapped it up every time. We were losing people left and right back then. I might've drank too much and snorted too much, but that's one thing I never budged on."

Lily's always known who her father is. A solid, dependable, dear man who likes golf and constantly monitors his stock portfolio. But Sheila's version of her past cast a toxic shadow over all their lives. As if what might have been could erase what was and what is. So it's a weird mix of dissonance and relief to have Mick confirm the reality.

And her feelings about him, for him, have never ever been filial. She should probably make that clear. She's not looking for a dad or a Daddy. "It was more like she had this idea that her life would've been better with you," she explains. "She met my father. Had the big dream wedding. They had me. And then she got buyer's remorse. Nothing we did could compare to partying with The Great Mick Lange."

He laughs, wry amusement crinkling the corners of his eyes. "Nothing *I* do can compare to The Great Mick Lange."

Au contraire. "I think there's plenty you could do. I have a whole list of ideas." A list she's had for a very long time. She

might as well share it. Isn't that what she's here for?

"*Lily.*" Mick growls her name, the register going straight to her core. The warning in his eyes, too. It's too much smolder, not enough *no*. And he's aroused. Knuckles white as he grips his guitar, trying to position it over the rise in his jeans.

"What?" She'd feign innocence, except she left that behind in the backseat of a finance major's Audi when she was nineteen. "I'm not some starry-eyed kid you're taking advantage of. You just did the math yourself."

He sets the Gibson aside, all pretense of tuning and playing gone. And that's when she knows she's going to get her way no matter what he says. "Just 'cause I did the math doesn't mean we need to move on to sex ed."

"But I have so much to teach you." It's a joke and it isn't. He's frozen in place, even though he's perfectly capable of getting up and going inside. His throat moves as he swallows his next argument. And he just watches her come to him. She crawls. Out of efficiency more than servitude. It's easier to place her palms on his thighs. To put her face right there against the evidence of his want for her. To kiss the taut denim.

"Sweetheart, what did I say?" He grabs her ponytail, makes to tug her away. But then he's gripping it tighter, winding the length of it around his fist for purchase. Because she's got his zipper down and his cock out and she's tasting musky skin and rubbing her cheek along his bristly pubic hair. He's wider than he is long. Thick as she strokes him and licks his circumcised crown. He smells like need and precum.

"Lily...stop." It's a weak protest. For show. Because his head drops back against the balusters, and his legs fall open to give her more room between them. The furthest thing from *stop*. And his hand cradling her head, twisting in her hair, tells her *go on. Go on, take it all.*

Not that she needs the encouragement. She takes him down to the hilt right there on the porch in broad daylight. Where anybody walking by could see—if he has neighbors, which he doesn't. But even just the idea of discovery makes it

better. Look at her. With Mick Lange's dick in her mouth, fucking her throat. *Her*. Lily DeSilva. No one else. No ghosts of groupies past. She's the one wringing hoarse groans and swears from his lips like music.

It's not *for* him, though. Maybe that imaginary neighbor walking by would think that. But this moment is Lily's. She's wet, rubbing her thighs together as she bobs on his cock. She could get off just like this. Making him fall apart. His balls tighten as she brushes her thumb across them, cupping his heavy sac. "Fuck," he gasps out. "Sweetheart, I'm gonna cum."

Good. She'll drink it up. Every drop. And she increases the pressure until he gets there. He cries out, her name a hoarse groan. And then he's bucking up and shooting, filling her mouth with sour, salty seed.

"You happy now?" he asks as he slumps, spent and boneless.

"No," Lily admits softly, sitting back and wiping her lips with the back of her hand. "Not nearly."

Fuck. *Fuck*. She stumbles upstairs and into her room, shoves her hand down her shorts and takes the orgasm she denied herself last night. With the taste of Michael Lange still on her tongue.

###

Fuck. *Fuck*. A beautiful girl just sucked his brains out through his dick and all Michael can do is lay there in a heap on his porch. She goes back into the cabin as he tucks himself back into his boxers and jeans and zips up. Leaves him sitting there like *what the fuck just happened*. Is it okay because he doesn't remember what Sheila's blowjobs were like? Because Lily is well past legal age? Does it make it alright because her mouth is the hottest, sweetest, that he's ever known? He should follow her. Return the favor. Eat her pussy until she's mindless. But Michael stays exactly where he is. Like Samson after Delilah cut his hair, he's drained of any and all strength. His every sense is full of Lily. Her scent and her touch and the

vision of her swallowing his cum. Goddamn. It's not he's like a stranger to blowjobs, but hers...hers destroys him.

He thunks his head against the porch rail a couple more times like that'll knock some sense into it. But there's no replacing what Lily took so easily. And not just because she deep-throats like a champ. *Christ*, the way she looks at him. That mix of wonder and wiles. Like he's a god and her man and next time it'll be him on his knees.

He'll bet anything she's upstairs right now finishing herself off. She was so close just from blowing him. He could smell it on her. That ripe musk of someone right on the edge and ready to go over it. If his dick were a beast it would howl at the injustice of not being involved.

You're too involved already. After barely a day of knowing her. He's known *of* her. Just through the grapevine. For the first few years, friends and enemies alike reveled in giving him updates about what his diva ex was up to. The big society wedding. The bouncing baby girl. But Lily all grown up, a person in her own right, is a totally different thing. A beautiful thing. A beautiful woman.

She's too young for him by normal standards. By industry standards, she's too old. Fucking hilarious. Maybe this is Pike's idea of a joke. Shoving them at each other like a Ninja Turtle and a Barbie and going "Kiss!" Christ. He rubs at his face and tacks on a few more swear words. Might as well earn the knuckle rap from Sister Mary Agnes at Sunday school.

It doesn't make much sense beyond the physical. What red-blooded straight man wouldn't want a gorgeous girl sucking them off? That and a cold beer is practically the American Dream. But there's something else here, too. Like a half-written song and an unfinished album. Something Michael wants to see through to its completion. Whatever that might be. Whatever Lily has in mind.

He stands up on unsteady legs, still fuck-struck. Hard again. Which hasn't happened without his little blue friend in a long-ass time. But just the thought of her writhing on the bed, fingers deep in sweetness, is enough to get him going again.

The Mick Lange of twenty or thirty years ago would've had his mouth on her already. The man he is now is at least attempting to be honorable. Being honorable sucks balls way, way, worse than Lily does.

He laughs wearily at his own terrible dad joke and heads back down to the studio. Music won't change what just happened, but maybe it'll drown out the memory of how she sounded moaning and whimpering around his dick. Maybe it'll cool this wild need to take her and have her and make her his.

And maybe I'll sprout wings and fly.

Five

Lily's not surprised to find Michael AWOL when she gets back from brushing his cum off her teeth. He's hiding from her. Maybe taking a cold shower. She's tempted to go back to her room and get off again. And again. Because taking that chance with him, it wasn't enough. And her vibrator wasn't enough. She already wants more.

Her cell buzzes in her pocket. A reminder that she needs to send her bestie proof of life. Sabrina's obsessed with murder podcasts and convinced Mick Lange has gone recluse "so he can chop you up and cannibalize you and feed what's left to his pigs." *All good, he doesn't have pigs lol*, she thumbs out, adding three pig emoji for emphasis.

Michael wants to eat her, but not in the way Sabrina's afraid of. Lily's seen the hunger in his eyes. And something like jealousy, too. Because she swallowed him down but he didn't, couldn't, return the favor. He was trembling beneath her, trying to stay in control, and if she hadn't pulled away maybe he'd be feasting on her right now. Head between her thighs. Stubble brushing her skin as he licks and strokes her folds. She's turned on all over again just thinking about it. While she's still sensitive and sore from cumming once already.

Does he know that's what she was doing upstairs? Spreading her legs on his guest room mattress and teasing her clit with the bullet vibe while she replayed every second of making him spill? Probably. He's known why she's here from the beginning. It's not like she showed up with a bunch of photo albums from the '90s to rehash Sheila's good ol' days of touring with Mick and his band. The only things in her bag are clothes and essentials, an e-reader, a laptop, and her little BOB. *Everything a girl on the go could need.*

She flips open the notebook computer she brought downstairs with her. Her browser is still up on the screen, a million tabs lined up for her to click through. Half of them relate to Mick Lange. His career. Image searches. Videos. It's

a little stalker-y, even if most of it's information she already knows. The other half are work-related. From that part of her life where nobody cares that her mother was a high-profile groupie during her gap year some thirty years ago.

It's like living two lives. She even has costume changes to go with it. Lily glances down at her denim skirt and dark green t-shirt and grins. Not exactly office attire. That side of her wardrobe is all wide-leg linen pants and skinny jeans and blouses in bright colors. It didn't even occur to her to dress up to finally meet Michael. Because it's this Lily, the one without pinned-up hair and statement necklaces for armor, who needs to face the past. So she can go back to being that put-together woman who has a future waiting.

A woman without Mick Lange's shadow stretching across her. That's the goal. Isn't it? To exorcise him, purge him, banish him from her life? But now that she's here...it feels like the exact opposite. More and more, she wants to bind him, anchor him, feel every part of him. She wants another chance to suck his dick and make him cum. She wants him inside her.

The man is so much more interesting than the myth. There's so much more to learn.

###

Enough. Lily's breaching the artist's inner sanctum. Taking the basement stairs two at a time until she reaches a game room and the glassed-in recording studio beyond it. There's only so many work emails she can answer and scrolling Twitter and TikTok are never a good use of her time. This, though? This is high priority. Making sure Mick Lange is actually still in the building. That he didn't hightail it back to Alpine, New Jersey, just because she gave him the best blowjob he's had in years. She's been alone most of the day. He didn't make an appearance for lunch, so she helped herself to leftover pasta and a beer. But it's afternoon now and a welfare call is definitely in order.

Lily skirts the pool table and the foosball. One look and she knows Michael's not in the sound booth but in the recording space. He's bent over an electric guitar, huge

headphones like Princess Leia buns on the side of his head. He doesn't look up when she slips into the booth and sits down in front of the board. Too focused on whatever he's working on. In the zone.

Empty protein shake cans and Clif bar wrappers litter the area around a small trashcan. Like he tossed them there and they didn't quite make it in. *Whew*. At least he's not starving for his art. And art is what it is.

Plaintive strains of something vaguely rock and vaguely country, dragged from the amplified guitar strings. Flooding the studio and flowing over her body. It's like being stroked all over by the notes. By his voice. Rough and husky. Not the smooth soul he likes to listen to, but it definitely works for her. Mick Lange sounds like dirty sex against a wall with a stranger. Like being pressed down on the still- warm hood of a muscle car and eaten until you beg for mercy. Like the memory of it all after the bad boy walks out of your life.

Baby you're a shot.

A line and a hit.

Gimme what I need.

Gimme a fix.

Gimme that heat.

Gimme that tongue.

I want that rush.

I want to feel that young.

You're every bad desire

and every good thing.

Should I give you my soul

or give you my ring?

When Lily opens her eyes, he's watching her through the glass. Eyes dark and intense. From here, they look more black than blue. His headphones are hooked around his neck. He's stopped singing, but the echo is still under her skin.

I wanna taste you.

I want you in my veins.

One wrong decision,

we'll never be the same.

A wellness check wasn't necessary. He's not dead. He's no ghost. Michael Lange is gloriously, viscerally, alive. So is she. And living people can grow and change and move forward. They can want and need and have. They can *choose*.

Lily goes back upstairs without saying a word to him. They've had an entire conversation already. She just needs to process what it means.

Six

Lily takes it upon herself to fix dinner that night, in the hopes Mick will finally emerge from his self-exile and share it with her. She might not know the difference between sauce and gravy, but Mrs. S and Gran made sure she knows the basics from their respective repertoires. And living on her own for the past decade has made her more self-sufficient than life with her parents ever did. Ivy League school or no, she still had to make cheap packs of ramen and leftover takeout stretch for days.

She pokes around in the fridge and the cabinets, eyeballing the spice rack and the produce drawers. By the time her handsome host appears, she has a basic lentil stew simmering and spiced eggs and potatoes almost ready to plate. He inhales the rich scents with appreciation, brows rising with surprise. “Well, look at you with the hidden talents. Never a daal moment, huh?”

It’s a dad joke of the groan-worthiest kind, but Lily laughs anyway. Because Michael’s at ease, and it’s infectious. That blazing look in his eyes down in the studio has been replaced with a twinkle of good humor. She doesn’t want to rock the boat...and at the same time she wants to tip it over and submerge them both. Her whole life’s been a mess of warring impulses.

“How’s the album looking?” She adopts the same light tone as him as he sets the table. “Sounded pretty good to me.”

“It’s coming along.” Mick shrugs, his shoulders stretching the washed-soft cotton of his mechanic’s shirt. An embroidered name tag over his left pec says “Lou.” Like he got it from a thrift shop instead of some fancy designer trying to be ironic. Maybe he did. Maybe he shops at Target and lifts weights next to mere mortals at the gym. Just to remember how the other half still lives. “Won’t know until the whole gang gives it a listen. Could be crap.”

Bullshit. If there’s one thing she’s learned about musicians, as an ex-groupie’s kid, it’s that they know when they’ve got

gold and when it's a big old turd. Well, that and the fact that tour buses are rolling dens of sin. And they reek if you don't offload the toilets frequently enough. But none of that matters as long as the public thinks whatever the band's PR machine wants them to think.

She doesn't question Michael's deflection out loud. Mostly because that song she heard snatches of is still coursing through her veins. The words are making their way to her vital organs.

*You're every bad desire
and every good thing.
Should I give you my soul
or give you my ring?*

Was he warning her away or acknowledging that pesky "inevitable" that's been a phantom presence between them since last night? Since this morning and her mouth on his dick. Both? Neither?

The back of Lily's neck heats. And by the time they're seated across from each other at the breakfast nook with a beer for her and a seltzer for him, she almost regrets her restraint. Maybe she should've asked him about the music after all. About what those lyrics really mean. Could someone like her really take his soul? Or wear his ring? He seems to have no inkling of her inner turmoil. He hums with appreciation as he spoons lentils alongside his eggs. It sounds way too much like those noises he made when she had him in her mouth. She could get used to hearing him pleased and satisfied. But she shouldn't. She can't.

Eventually, Michael leans back in his chair, pushing his empty plate aside. "What's putting that look on your face, sweetheart?" Those keen blue eyes tell her that he hasn't missed a single thing.

“Reality,” she sighs, scraping her fork through the last of her eggs. It’s an oversimplification. “Everything that happens when I leave here.”

He nods. “I get that. As much as I try when I’m out here, you can’t shut out the world. It’s always waiting for you. ‘Wherever you go, there you are,’ as they say.”

“What’s so bad about your world? You’re rich.” Yes, Lily’s saying this as someone who went to private school. Someone who’s had her life bank-rolled until she insisted on paying her own way.

“Rich. *Alone*,” Michael counters. Like he didn’t have a wife up until a few years ago. Like he couldn’t have a whole entourage up here with the snap of his fingers.

“Poor baby,” she clucks with mock sympathy.

He tips his sparkling water at her. “That makes two of us, doesn’t it?”

Tou-fucking-ché. Lily shakes her head, chuckling. There’s no shortage of irony in it. She has the same privilege that let Sheila make a respectable society match after running around on tour with rock musicians for a year. A cushion. A safety net. Her dad will never let her starve, no matter how much ramen she ate in college. No matter how much dick she swallows this week. Sheila is another story. If Sheila finds out where she is right now, she’ll want Lily to choke.

The joy of a good meal and good company turns sour in her belly. She knocks back the last of her craft beer to try and erase the feeling of sudden dread. Michael doesn’t ask about her expression this time. Maybe he already knows what—or who—put it there.

The last thing Lily wants is to serve the past for dessert.

Not when she has a much sweeter, hotter, present in mind.

###

The clouds are ominously dark tonight, and the air feels heavy. When Mick goes out to the back deck to put the cover on the fire pit and the extra wood, Lily follows. Her jean skirt’s knee-

length and not all that tight, but his eyes are still drawn to her ass and her legs as she prowls around the outdoor space. There's nothing risqué about her v-neck green t-shirt except for how much he'd like to see it on his bedroom floor. He's such a dirty old man. A dirty old man who shot a load down her throat this morning and wants to do it again. And she looks she keeps throwing him...? She knows exactly what he's thinking about right now. She's thinking it, too.

"You can relax. I'm not going to bite you, Michael," she laughs. "Not unless you ask."

He shouldn't ask. Doesn't mean he won't. "I don't know whether to be relieved or disappointed," he jokes instead.

Lily must read something in his body language. In his face. She tilts her head. Studies him. All that dark hair spilling sideways. "You don't need to feel guilty. I sucked your cock because I wanted to. If we fuck, it'll be because I want it, too."

It's the first thing she's said to him that's outright sexual, no matter that her intentions have been clear from the get-go. Bold as brass. Proud as hell. It's a shock to his ears and his system. He goes instantly hard. Lily DeSilva can render Viagra obsolete just by saying something naughty.

"I don't feel guilty," he lies, turning so his hips are facing the wooden railing. And obscured by the matching latticework under it. "I feel a little used." That's maybe a little bit of the truth. "What is it that you want, Lily? Why are you really here? Do you even know?"

"Sheila." One word, but it has about a hundred layers to it. Every one of them painful.

Michael doesn't know how to make that weight go away. But he's willing to try. Anything to take that tone away and put the naughtiness back. "I didn't love her. Whatever fantasy she's had in her head all this time, we weren't like that. It was fun, and then it wasn't, and then it was done. Is that what you came to hear? That she never loved me and I never loved her?"

“Maybe?” Lily shrugs, leaning on the deck rail beside him. Her eyes are as pewter gray as the sky. “I don’t know if anyone can love Sheila enough. If there’s anything that can fill that giant void inside of her. Maybe I’m here to see if I have that hole inside me, too? If I’m just as needy and selfish and unlovable as she is.”

Each word is like a sour note. A broken guitar string. His chest goes tight. He hurts for her. With her. This beautiful girl he shouldn’t want but does. “You can’t honestly believe that.”

“After this morning, how can you *not* believe it?” She rubs her thumb across her plump rosy lips, as if replaying where they were just eight hours ago. And he tries not to imagine her painting her mouth with his cum. “I practically forced myself on you. Because it was what I wanted. Because it felt good. Even coming here...I didn’t consider what *you* need. And I’m still not thinking that hard about it.”

You. What I need is you. I just didn’t know it. “There was nothing selfish about what you did for me this morning,” he assures her. He wants to strangle whoever taught this girl that looking for connection is a crime. But first he wants to put the sass and seduction back in her eyes. “I am a grown man. If I didn’t want my dick sucked, I would’ve stopped you. If I didn’t want *you*, I would’ve stopped you.”

Lily’s not convinced. Her brows pull together in a frown. “But *why* do you want me? Because I offered?”

“Woman, have you *seen* yourself? You’re gorgeous.” Mick points out the obvious. His wife was a model and Lily could strut a runway right next to Teri if she were just a little taller. “And I just met you, but I think what’s on the inside is pretty damn amazing, too. So, hell yeah, I took what you had to offer.”

She makes a thoughtful noise. Then tips her head back to welcome the first drops of rain on her pretty face. It’s a minute or two before she shares where her mind has gone. “I graduated summa cum laude from Princeton, and Sheila got mad because she was a magna and I ‘beat’ her.” she says after a while. “And when I picked a small design firm instead of a

corporate position, she went on a whole tear about how she didn't give up everything she wanted just so I could slum it. Her new bullshit is that I might marry for love when she didn't get to."

"Jesus. What a crock of shit." Michael has to laugh. Talk about extremely revisionist history. "She was so happy to skip back to her prissy society life and get back into her family's good graces. Nobody was holding a gun to her head when she got hitched to your dad."

"I know," Lily's bitter scoff echoes his. "That poor man. More like someone held a gun to his and never let it drop. That prenup was stacked against him. He never had a chance. He was so dazzled by her. A willing prisoner. Until it was too late to escape."

"And what about you?" he wonders. "What's holding you hostage? What did you come here to get free of?"

"Besides my clothes?" Her eyebrows rise with that mischief he wanted back. She looks like the perfect combination of wicked and innocent.

She's trying to change the subject. He should let her. But a thunderstorm's as good a time as any to lay all your shit bare. "You are not unlovable, sweetheart," he says, reaching out to stroke her cheek with the backs of his fingers. "There's a light in you that no amount of petty head games and shitty parenting can dim. You know that, right? You're not her. You could never be her. And that's a good thing in my book."

Lily makes a little noise like a gasp. A sharp inhale. "Michael..." This is the woman who's already had her mouth on his dick. Already wrapping her hand around his heart. And she shows no hesitation in asking for more. "I might *really* need to kiss you right now."

He really needs to kiss her, too. He's been fighting it. Badly. Pretending the inevitable isn't that. And Michael could also pretend that denying her is an example of strength. That it makes him good and pure and honorable to push her away. But sometimes the true nobility lies in surrender. So he's giving up. Giving in. Making the best worst mistake. He slides his

hand into her hair, cupping the back of her head. Her face is already turned toward him, her lips pink and parted. Lily's blooming for him. So fucking beautiful.

Michael starts at the corner of her mouth. The barest, softest, contact. A taste of her lower lip. Slow. Sipping. Savoring it. A first kiss. But then she presses back, her tongue meeting his. And any thought of going slowly burns up between them. *Fuck*. It's everything. Frantic and wild in an instant. She tastes like malt and hops and cinnamon and sex. His after-dinner drink and his dessert. Buzzing through his veins. Jacking him up. This is what being high was like. But better. Pure and uncut. He hauls her against him. The sky finally opens up above them, and the torrent practically turns to steam on his hot skin.

This beautiful woman could set him on fire. He'll gladly burn.

Seven

The rain plasters their clothes to their bodies, the denim of her skirt and his jeans heavy and Michael's thin white t-shirt nearly transparent. And still he ruts against her, hands on her hips gentle and bruising in turns. She can take it. She wants to take it. All of it. Everything he has to give. This lean and hungry man devouring her mouth and getting them both off with the friction alone. The friction and the location and the abandon that comes from finally giving in.

His groan gets lost in the downpour as he hoists her higher and she wraps her legs around him, pulling him even more deeply into the cradle of her thighs. But she doesn't need to hear him. She can see everything in the wildness of his eyes. Like lighting across the sky. She smells the rain on his skin. The newness of this thing between them growing like something lush and green. Storms nourish as much as they destroy.

Lily crosses her arms behind his head, gripping his wet dark hair. *Closer. Harder.* Like she can crawl inside him. Mick's lips are soft and skilled, his kisses as beautifully rough as his singing voice. His damp beard stubble rubs her chin and her cheek, the sensation just as delicious as every other he's given her. She hopes he leaves marks.

Somehow, they make it to the back door. Up and over the threshold. Hitting kitchen chairs and the counter, adding to their storm's path of destruction. "Want you," he murmurs raggedly, breathing into the hollow behind her ear. The warm puffs of air tickle and tease and turn into electric ripples down her spine. "Want you, baby, and I shouldn't have you."

"Take me," she urges. Because he's throbbing where she's throbbing. They're both so close to cumming. And she wants to see a fifty-four-year-old rocker with nothing left to lose realize there's one last thing to give—and it belongs to her now. "Take me, have me, break me." It comes out unwittingly poetic, like lyrics or a chant. "I don't care, just do it."

“Lily. *Fuck*. Lily. You’re so hot. So tight.” His fingers are there now, deep in her cunt, where she’s wet from him and not the rain. The thick shock of them and the heel of his palm rubbing against her are a cruel approximation of what she prays comes next. Cruel and consuming. Overwhelming. He’s taking her body and giving her his soul. All with one hand.

She scrabbles for purchase, scraping her nails across his shoulders and his chest as she rides his palm. “Please,” she pants. “*Please*.” What she’s begging for, she doesn’t even know.

Michael doesn’t move. He just holds himself above her, mouth trailing heat across her jaw. “She didn’t love you enough, sweetheart,” he whispers. “But I will. God help me, I will.”

The words are all it takes. She spasms and bucks. A white heat spirals out from her center. The orgasm is fast and hard and she’s not even done cumming when his mouth replaces his fingers.

###

Michael falls to his knees before her, right there on the kitchen floor, not even caring if she hears them creak. He shoves up her skirt, sets his face against her the way she did with him on the porch. He breathes her in. His mouth on the wet crotch of her panties, his nose taking in the ocean scent of her sweet pussy.

“*Mick*,” she moans, making it sound like “fuck.” And her hands go right into his hair, fisting tight.

He holds Lily’s hips to keep her still. He puts his teeth on the waistband of her underwear and drags the silk down until it falls to her ankles. And then she’s bare. Glistening. Swollen. Lips flushed for the kiss he’s been aching to give her. Goddamn, she’s beautiful with her thighs trembling and her head falling back. And even more gorgeous when he licks from her slit to her clit and draws little whimpers from her throat. The taste of her overwhelms him like a drowning wave. Briny and heady.

“So good,” he murmurs, and she jolts into the word stroking her soft skin. “So fucking good. Just like I knew you’d be.”

Lily says something in a language he doesn’t speak and may never understand, the syllables punctuated by gasps and guttural cries. She moves restlessly against the wall. Something about this girl makes it impossible to wait for a bed. He has to have her *now*, eating her sloppy and nasty with his own rough noises. She’s hot. So hungry. But he’s starving. Precum drips from his tight dick as he tongues up inside her. Feasting on her. Chin soaked with her desire.

“Michael...Michael...” His name sounds like the best song never written, the way she says it. All hoarse and desperate and wanting. “Let me...I need to...I *need*...” she sobs.

“I’ve got you, baby,” he assures, rubbing his nose up and down the crease between her thigh and her pussy. Memorizing the smell of her and how she feels when she’s right on the edge. Quivering, clenching, rocking into his face. He pulls her forward, and strokes the cleft of her ass, strumming her like an instrument. And when he circles that tight little hole and teases inward, she goes off. Squirming and thrashing, tugging on his hair, cumming on him. It’s like the tide rolling in with her hips. So wet, a force of nature. Michael goes with her, cum drenching the front of his jeans like a kid with his first hard-on.

Jesus fuck. He can’t move. Can’t think. They just stay there, a messy tangle, breathing harsh. Then Lily pulls on his hair, urging him to look up. Her pupils are blown wide. Her smile is like a siren’s.

“Take off your pants, Michael. Let me lick you clean.”

Eight

Michael doesn't really know how they end up in his bedroom. His brain's been shorted out since she offered to lick him clean. Purring those words at him while the taste of her cunt was fresh on his lips. *Goddamn*. There was stumbling. There were stairs. Kisses that went on and on. White-hot lust buzzes between his ears as she stalks him back toward his bed now, challenge in those gorgeous lust-drunk eyes.

Lily's a woman on a mission. Her mouth is bee-stung—*kiss*-stung—her nipples tight little peaks. Her wet hair clings to her neck and shoulders. They should dry off before they catch cold, but Mick can't do anything but let her press him back on the mattress as she works the fly of his cum-soaked jeans. He helps her tug them and his boxer-briefs off and kicks them away. "Fuck, Lily, fuck," he keeps gasping like a hack songwriter's most unimaginative bridge.

Her tongue on him is torture and rapture at the same time. She licks and sucks and it's not so much cleaning as dirtying him up even more. Slicking him with her saliva and the drops of precum at his tip as he gets another erection. A goddamn miracle. He's not going to waste it this time. He has to cum inside her. While she's scratching his back and screaming his name.

Lily mewls in protest when he pulls her off his dick and urges her up. He swallows the hungry little sound, slanting his mouth across hers. She's so willing. So open. Golden skin flushed, legs spread and welcoming him between them. She can claim she seduced him all she likes, but it wasn't that far for him to fall. Not if it meant landing beneath her like this.

He's notched right up against her. All she has to is take him. The first woman since his marriage that he wants to fuck bare. He can feel it already. The velvety grip of her pussy around his dick. Her honey drenching him. Cumming in her until she's dripping, making a wet spot on the coverlet. *Fuck, it's wrong. It's too soon. Too much. Not enough.* Michael flings out his hand, flailing for the nightstand drawer and condoms.

“Sweetheart,” he murmurs, pulling away just enough to grab a foil packet. “Sweetheart, let me protect you.”

Draped over him, a silken sex blanket, Lily rubs her folds along the underside of his shaft. Getting herself off while getting to him. “This is the safest I’ve ever felt,” she whispers, rolling her hips into his again and again.

Me, too. The automatic response teeters at the back of his throat. Natural. Easy. Honest. Like everything so far has been with Lily. He loves being in this girl’s arms. Which is why he unrolls the condom over his straining hard-on and ignores the wild impulse to do it raw. She deserves care. She deserves respect. She deserves more than a busted old rocker can give her.

Lily touches and kisses him, hands finding strings to strum and skins to hit. And then her lips open on an ‘o’ as he pushes up into her. She presses her knees into his hips, tilts her pelvis. Then they’re sinking together slow. Inch by inch. “Mick,” she moans. “Oh my god.” The syllables draw out as he bottoms out.

Christ, she’s so wet and tight. Clasp him like the silkiest glove. “Do you like that, Lily darlin’? How I make you feel?”

“Full,” she pants, her breathing ragged like they’ve run a marathon. “I feel so full.”

Fuck. This girl. She’s gonna kill him. It takes everything he’s got to keep from spilling right then and there. “Ride me,” he says, hoarsely. “Ride me and fill yourself up.”

And this way he gets to watch her. Her chocolate kiss nipples puckering, tits bouncing, as she braces herself with her palms on his thighs and fucks him. Her lush body sheened with sweat. Lily doesn’t close her eyes. She watches him, too. And he doesn’t give a single damn if she sees surrender in his gaze. Maybe he was a goner the minute he let her in the door. This is the inevitable that he tried to delay. And it’s one of the most beautiful things he’s ever seen.

###

Ugh. Hello, reality. Lily pushes her phone aside. Ignoring the three text messages and two frantic voicemails wondering why she hasn't checked in. She regrets going down the hall to her room to retrieve it. Somewhere between 2 and 3AM. Between rounds three and four. She thought Mick Lange was the ghost in her life, but It's Sheila who actively haunts her. A specter following her all the way to the Adirondacks. Well, she can't follow her here to Michael's bed. *No way.* That takes the family dysfunction to an even more fucked-up level.

Her mother thinks she's on a work trip in Toronto. That still somehow requires Sheila's approval. Her assessment of Lily's hotel or choice of restaurant. What she's wearing to meetings. Of course if she's met any men. Lily learned a long time ago to put up the walls that Sheila never does. You don't have to tell your mom everything. There are some things your daughters don't need to hear. Some things your parents never will.

Michael's great at context clues. The phone going back on the nightstand. The tension in her shoulders. Her putting her t-shirt from last night back on and huddling under the sheets. He doesn't even ask for confirmation about who called. He just reaches over and grabs his own shirt off the floor. So much for an enthusiastic round of morning sex. "You okay?" he asks softly. "Having regrets? I was her rebellion. Am I yours, too?"

God. *If only.* A nose ring at fifteen was her rebellion. The DUI at twenty-two. Her first apartment in Hoboken and the Bernie Bro she brought home one Thanksgiving. "No, Michael. You're my last hope for normalcy." Her laugh is weary. "I thought maybe..." She breaks off, carding her fingers through her hair. "I don't know what I thought."

That fucking him would fix it. Or explain the things that have gone wrong in her life when everything else is going right. Mick Lange's magic dick solving all her Mommy Issues. All it does is make her want him more.

It's kind of embarrassing in retrospect. How she threw herself at him. She should've held back a little. Been more mature about it. Responsible. But she can't bring herself to regret the sex. Kissing him and touching him and taking him

inside her. Now that she's had him, she understands why he's so damn difficult to forget. Sure, she'll never really know what Mick Lange, rock star, was like in his heyday. But she knows that Michael Lange fucks with everything he is. Single-minded, attentive, and so damn passionate. And when he's too spent and soft to slide into her, he's happy to use his tongue and his fingers to make her cum until she's just as worn out. He cooks and laughs and creates and makes love like all of it is art.

This isn't the man Sheila misses. This is the man Sheila never got to see. Never *cared* to see. Just like she's never cared to see Lily. She only sees everything Lily isn't.

Michael tugs her close, spooning her and dropping his arm across her hips. "You can talk to me, baby," he murmurs into her hair. "Whatever it is you brought here with you...you can set it down and let it go."

I can't. I can't. I can't. But she tries. It's easier because she can't see his face. The shifts in his eyes and the turn of his mouth. "She used to tell me my boobs were ugly. And tell me that hers were prettier and I got mine from Dad's side of the family."

She feels the flinch of disgust even before he blurts out, "Jesus. Lily, I'm—"

Nope. Don't want to hear it. She shakes her head to cut him off. Then she rolls off the bed and comes to standing. She has to finish it now that she's started. Has to get the rest of it out. "Dad wasn't off the body-shaming hook either," Lily says as she wraps her arms around her midsection. She hates saying this part. Even telling her therapist made her *so* uncomfortable.

"She told me your penis was bigger than his. That it was the best she ever had. Who *does* that? Who says that to their kid? I was fifteen the first time she brought it up." Sabrina pierced her nose at a sleepover a few nights later. Too bad it didn't lance the festering boil of Sheila's spite. "Honestly, I'm surprised she didn't have a dildo cast in the exact dimensions."

Michael looks as sick as she feels. There's a gray-green cast to his skin. And his mouth is a thin, tight, line. He climbs

out of bed and finishes the sentence she silenced before. “I’m sorry, Lily.”

Sorry. *He’s* sorry. Like any of this is his fault. Now he has two generations of fucked-up DeSilva women obsessed with his dick. Lily stifles a high-pitched laugh. She sounds hysterical. Maybe she *is* hysterical. Or, at the least, out of her mind. For thinking this can work. For hoping for even one second that Michael Lange can be hers beyond today or tomorrow.

He reaches out again to comfort her and she puts up a hand. “I’m not done yet. I wish I was, but I’m not. Because this thing with her and me...? It’s going to poison *you* and me. There’s no way it can’t. After we leave this place? There’s no future. Sheila will ask. She’ll compare. She will not let it go.”

“Sheila can go fuck herself.” Mick catches her palm, steps forward into it. So she’s square on his heart. Faintly feeling the pulse of it. “You feel it, baby? That beat? It doesn’t matter who’s had my dick. You touched *this*. You know how rare something like that is? Nothing and no one can compare to that.”

It’s as close to an “I love you” as Lily has ever heard. From anyone. Except he’s not just anyone, is he? This man she’s always known of and only just met. This man murmuring against her hair, stroking the side of her hand with his thumb. He smells like outdoors and leather. His eyes are the blue-black of a night sky. There’s a little gray in his eyelashes and brows. Billions of people adore him, but they’ll never be this close. She’s got a piece of him they never will. That Sheila never will. And he’s giving it to her freely.

“Michael...” Guilt and hope smash together like bumper cars in her chest. She curls her fingers into the warm skin over his fiery heart.

“You’re not your mother,” he says, fiercely. “You might look like her a little, but that’s all it is. On the surface. Everything under the skin is *you*.” He’s more sure of that than she’s ever been. “You won’t let Sheila break you. Or break us.

Any more than I will. Lily, I'm just starting to know you. You think I'm gonna let anything get in the way?"

I don't know. Are you? Lily can count on both hands and her bare toes how many people her mother has driven away from her. Friends, boyfriends, girlfriends. *"They're too polite to tell you the truth, Lily-bee. I'm the only one who knows what you really are. Wasted potential."* The constant sowing of distrust and discord. Like Iago in *Balmain* and diamonds.

"You can count on me, sweetheart," Michael says like he can read her mind. "And you can count on yourself." His voice is a comforting rumble, sending soothing ripples through her nerves. "I want to hear you say it. I want you to believe we've got this."

"Didn't you think this was a bad decision?" she accuses. One last-ditch effort to undermine his gentle arguments. His unwavering confidence. "You wrote a whole song about it in, like, a *day*."

He pulls back and grins at her, eyes glinting with amusement. "Don't tell anyone...but sometimes I'm wrong. And first drafts are all shit anyway."

Lily laughs despite how fragile and uneasy she still feels. "I thought I'd fuck you out of my system and my psyche. Get you out once and for all. This is not going at *all* like I thought it would."

"Well, thank god for that," Michael chuckles. "Because I kind of like where we're headed. Don't you?"

Yes. That's what's so scary about this. "You just want more porch blowjobs, don't you?" She tries to deflect, rocking her hips suggestively against his. Feeling where he's half erect and not needing much encouragement to go all the way.

"That, too." Mick widens his stance, letting her settle between his thighs. She remembers that fantasy she had about riding his leg until she cums. But he hasn't forgotten what they're talking about. *Who* they're talking about. "I'm not the one you need to evict, Lily. I think we both know that."

On this, he and her therapist and her best friend are agreed. She's the one who's been straggling. Staggering. Under the weight of so many poisonous words. Shit she's internalized. "It's not that easy. It can't happen in a day."

"Why not? *This* happened in a day." He squeezes her fingers, still resting over his heart. "And I want to see what happens next."

In the back of her brain, there's still that voice—"you should have been his"—but for the first time in a long time it's a whisper. Not a shout. Drowned out by Mick saying she *is* his. His to protect. His to fight for. Lily cants into him, trapping their joined hands between their bodies.

If she's touched his heart, then he's touched every part of her. And she still wants—*needs*—more. Maybe she'll always want more. And that's okay. She's allowed. She arches up on her toes, and presses her mouth to his in a quick, claiming kiss. "Sheila can't have this. She's taken enough of me already." If she says it enough, someday soon she might believe it. *Mine. He's mine and you can't have him. He was never yours to begin with.*

"That's my girl." Michael traces the contour of her face with one fingertip. It comes to stop at her chin. Which he tilts up as he makes a show of studying her. Taking her in. "I don't see any missing pieces. I see someone brave and beautiful and whole. And I am so damn lucky you came looking for me."

That makes two of them. "You opened the door," she points out, nuzzling into his touch. "You let me in. You didn't have to."

"Yeah, I did. And I'm *glad* I did." Michael mimics her brief hard kiss. A declarative statement that says more than any song lyric.

Lily started this journey. She has to see it through. She doesn't have to do it alone.

Also by Kali Decker

*Starf**ker*

Spoiled Brit (out soon!)

Keep reading for an excerpt of *Starf**ker*, out now on Kindle Unlimited.

Excerpt from Starf**ker

You're not supposed to ever meet your idols. And if you do, you probably shouldn't want to fuck them. Nina Cordeiro is already down on both counts.

He's been eyeing her all night. Staring across the room. Watching her over the rim of a barely touched whiskey tumbler. That huge hand cupped around the glass. The same hand that punched a bunch of zombies on the big screen just a few hours ago. The same hand that would look obscene as it took possession of her, cupping her mound and finding her dripping wet. She tries to look away, tries to keep that fantasy off her face, but she's never been good at hiding what she wants. No matter how wrong. No matter how ill-advised. And what she wants right now is him.

Seth Frasier. The man who's been occupying her thoughts for the better part of two years while B12 Pictures got this movie off the ground. He's been getting *her* off in her mind for months. *Years*, if she's honest. Seth. Fucking. Frasier. Sullen-mouthed breakout star of a sci-fi show. Indie festival circuit darling. Prior credits a laundry list of henchmen, bodyguards, and other assorted criminals. Does he know or suspect that she wrote *two* roles for him? One in her screenplay and the other in her dreams? Probably. No, *absolutely*. She was only on set a few times as a script supervisor and consultant. Most of her meetings involved her agent, production, the EP, maybe even the DP. The latter of which never fails to make her laugh. But whenever Seth has crossed her path, it's been like this. Their gazes clashing. Her thighs tingling. Every molecule of hers screaming *what if?*

Nothing about it is subtle. It radiates from the flush of her face and the way her posture changes whenever he walks into a room. Like a high-school freshman making googly eyes at the varsity football quarterback right before they get eaten by a rotting shambler. Three years ago, writing *Generation Z* in her yoga pants and baggy t-shirts, she'd had no idea they'd ever be in the *same* room. Or that, if they were, he'd actually *see* her.

Five-foot-two in her highest department store heels, too much hair and not enough cleavage. Her premiere dress is short and sparkly and it itches like a motherfucker. But her legs look miles long and Seth can't stop watching her any more than she can stop watching him. Little ol' Nina Cordeiro. Not the clutch of cute blonde influencer girls that the film's publicist invited. Or Kiara Henry, the movie's gorgeous and super sweet female lead. *Her*.

A minute ticks by. Maybe longer. It feels like longer. Enough to make her shift uncomfortably from foot to foot. She starts thinking that she's got this all wrong—that he might be contemplating a restraining order—when he surprises her by moving *toward* her, not away. That determined stride that's just shy of a full Sorkin. It's all Seth, though. The same air of single-minded focus he gave *Off Planet's* Major Casey Shepherd and Eli in *Generation Z*. He cuts a path through some reporters and influencers, broad shoulders doing the job of gently checking people when needed. And all she can do is stand there. Wait. Finish her wine and put the empty on the tray of a passing waiter. Seth's walking with *intent*, and that is so hot. Hot in the movie, hot right now. And in two more strides, he's there with her. In a niche in the wall made for observing, not participating. Like she's a Regency wallflower in off-the-rack silver sequins and spandex. Except there's really not enough room for both of them. He takes up all the space. Blocks out the light. Blocks out everything. Even the too-loud pop music seems to fade to a buzz.

He must have left his drink somewhere, because he fidgets with his fingers for a few seconds, looking for something to occupy them, before his fight-scarred hands go into his suit pockets. "Hey," he says. Just that. *Hey*.

As opening salvos go, it's not great. But Nina needs to remember that this is real life and nobody's giving him lines. *She's* not giving him lines. "Hey," she replies in kind, giving him her best *I swear I'm not obsessively creeping on you* smile. "Don't you know nobody talks to the writer at these things?"

“I did not get that internal memo, no. But I feel like I’m getting a message from you loud and clear.” Seth cocks his head—still with his hands in his pockets, which just makes her wish her dress had some. His dark brown hair is longer than he wore it for *Generation Z*, probably for whatever he just finished working on. It’s gelled, slicked back, and looks a little sleazy. Enough facial hair to qualify as a matching beard and mustache hugs the lower half of his face. His dark eyes are keen with something that might be suspicion or could be curiosity. He’s the hottest thing she’s ever seen. “What do you want from me, Ms. Nina Cordeiro?”

A week of nonstop sex. Rug burn. Kisses that go on for days. Whips and chains and spankings, if that’s what it takes. Everything and anything he’s willing to give. The list goes on. She presses her thighs together, trying to douse the heat that’s spreading through her before it gets up to her cheeks. “What do *you* think?” she asks him, sounding at least marginally cool and composed to her own ears. A high-school junior, at least. “You’re the one who heard this alleged message.”

“I think you want me to take you to bed.” It’s such an old-fashioned way to put it. But somehow, in that whiskeyed voice of his, it sounds like nothing but raunch. And the dangerous speculation in his eyes only supports that interpretation. “Is that what’s going on here? You coming on to me?”

He’s forty-four, she remembers. Brooklyn through and through. It’s there in his cadence, in how he cuts to the chase. In how he’s not interested in playing a twentysomething’s games. She gives him the same courtesy. She can be just as direct. Almost thirty-six, Indiana born and Chicago raised, lacking in fucks of all sorts. Maybe a little emboldened by a few glasses of Riesling from the open bar and the edible she popped before getting on the L. “So what if I am? Are you going to do something about it?”

“I could take you up on it.” He nods like he’s contemplating it. His body is already on board. Hands out of his suit, knuckles white from the clench of his fists. And his jacket barely conceals the telltale signs of arousal at his groin. The bespoke suit is plaid, striped with brown and beige and

maroon. Between that and the hair, he should look like someone's pervy grandpa at a wedding. But, no, he's ridiculously, deliciously sexy. And on his way to being ridiculously, deliciously hard. "But how's that gonna look? Lead of a movie that just premiered going at it with the screenwriter?" he points out. "I can't just ask you back to my place for a nightcap." The conversational tone he's employing shifts suddenly, along with his vocal register. "I shouldn't. I shouldn't pick up a pretty young woman with 'come hither' eyes," he growls low. "No matter how much I want to."

And that leaves them...*where*, exactly? She cocks her hip and her brow. "I'm not that young; I just have good genes," she assures, stepping away from the wall. Closer. The proximity's making her dizzy; her skin's burning and freezing at the same time. But this is it. Her one shot. And she's shooting it.

"You wouldn't be taking advantage of me. My eyes aren't 'come hither.' They're wide open. I know what I'm doing. And I don't care what'll happen tomorrow," she says with a shrug. Maybe it's the wine going to her head. Maybe it's the nonstop zing of attraction racing up her spine, proving that there's at least one thing she *does* care about. Maybe it's the fact that *she wrote a whole goddamn movie and it premiered tonight*. But everything she's saying is one-hundred percent true in this moment. "Nothing outside of this night matters right now," she tells him. "Life's too short." His veneer of respectability, his reputation as a decent guy, even his marriage...none of that is her problem. It's not her job to let him off the hook after he's baited it. It's not her job to justify it to him or to a woman she's never met and probably will never meet. Does that make her a horrible person? Probably. She'll worry about that later. "I'm not asking for strings. I have no expectations. You can go back home to your wife after. As long as you 'take me to bed.'"

She deliberately uses his phrasing, wondering if she should feel pathetic or empowered. Probably a little of both. But she's not wasting this chance. She's learned all too well that there's no telling what the future holds. And that waiting to get what you want, what you need, just results in disappointment.

Sometimes all you can do is grab on to now. She can regret it tomorrow or next week or next year. She'll have all the time in the world to be sorry.

Seth groans, scrubbing his face with his palm. He *should* be the good guy. That's what he's probably thinking. That he should be noble and walk away from this thing he just started. But his dick is hard under his tailored suit pants, and she knows he wants to take it out for her more than he wants any of those *shoulds*. "You drunk right now?" he asks. "Because I'm not even entertaining this if you're drunk."

"Three glasses of wine over two hours. You?" she challenges, because she's just as capable of taking advantage as he is...probably more likely to, given her sudden burst of horny courage.

"Two bourbons." And he's no lightweight. So, he's in the clear, too. "Fuck," he whispers.

"Yes. That." She's not sure she should say much more while he's working through whatever he needs to. Plus, she's so turned on that she can barely concentrate. He could probably get her off with his voice alone. Dirty talking to her while she frantically rubs her clit. It's wild, this feeling. Wild and irresponsible and completely irresistible. Just one night. *One* night where she gets what she wants. Is that so bad?

"Drop back. Follow me slow." His voice is like gravel, and it crunches a reassuring layer over her relief. "There's an office just down the hall. We can talk there."

They won't just be talking.

She knows better than that.

And she can't wait.

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About the Author

Kali Decker is the pen name of a staid and unassuming contemporary romance author—with a secret filthy streak—stretching her work beyond her comfort zone. Kali lives in New York with her neurotic chinchilla and a rotating selection of unnamed goldfish.

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