

A woman is shown from the waist down, wearing white lace underwear and white stockings. She is holding a white fabric, possibly a piece of clothing or a towel, in her hands. The background features a decorative iron cage or structure, and the overall lighting is warm and soft, creating a romantic and intimate atmosphere.

*do me
a
favor*

j e s s a k a n e

DO ME A FAVOR

JESSA KANE

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ONE

Posy

I've just broken in this pair of pointe shoes and they're already ruined.

They're caked in filth and puddle water, growing more and more soaked by the moment as I'm dragged forcefully through the dingy, moonlit alley. My ballet coach, Baker, has my arm in a vise grip and no amount of convincing will make him release me.

Mid-way through rehearsal for Giselle, he pulled me from the stage and hauled me out of the theater with a look of disgust on his aristocratic face. We drove thirty minutes to an unfamiliar neighborhood, well outside of the city. I have no idea where we are or what he has planned. God knows this man has unconventional coaching methods. As one of the best, he gets away with more than most. But this?

I'm scared.

Make that terrified.

"Please, let go of me." The words scrape the sides of my raw throat. "Where are we going? I need to get back to rehearsal."

My ballet coach scoffs, digging his fingers deeper into the bone of my arm. "There is no point in you being there. You're not focused, Posy. You're making a fool out of us both."

"I'll try harder. *Please.*"

Unmoved by my begging, he yanks me harder and I stumble along behind him. Where does this alley lead? It runs along the side of an abandoned warehouse. The only sound is dripping water from a drainpipe and a car alarm going off in the distance. And my labored breathing. My occasional sobs.

“You were cast as the principal dancer in the company’s biggest production in years. They are spending millions revitalizing the theater and advertising to the masses. All because you showed so much promise. More than any ballerina in a decade. And you are squandering the opportunity, Posy. For both of us. And do you know *why*?”

“No. I’m not squandering anything—”

“You have sex on the brain. Did you think I wouldn’t notice?”

I stumble in the wake of those words. Huh?

“I-I don’t understand what you mean.”

Baker mimics my response with a high-pitched impression. “Always chatting with the male dancers. Fixing your makeup. Did you think I wouldn’t notice you’d padded your bra?”

My face swarms with heat.

Oh lord. If my coach noticed, so did everyone else.

I only added a thinly padded cup. What else was I supposed to do after Baker told me he overheard the other dancers laughing about my “Tic Tac Tits”? I started wearing makeup for the same reason. Ever since I was cast as Giselle, I’ve become the target of every joke, every criticism. I’m a walking target to the others. Isn’t Baker constantly telling me that? Recounting the things they say about me? Their laughter at my expense?

I’ve become so isolated at the company.

As for speaking to the male dancers, they’re only my friends—and barely that. We rarely discuss anything but lifts.

“I can explain everything. I don’t have s-sex on the brain. I’ve never even...” *Too much information, Posy.* He probably

suspects I'm still a virgin at age eighteen, but there's no need to confirm it for him. "Well, I-I wouldn't even know what to think about, exactly. I promise I am one hundred percent focused on dancing. On Giselle. It's just there is so much pressure—"

"Pressure you seek to distract yourself from—with boys. Do you think I'm stupid?" We reach the end of the alleyway and he wrenches open a steel door with his free hand. "You are not going to ruin this chance for us."

He pulls me into the pitch black warehouse and my heart shoots into my throat, ice forming a layer on my spine. "Why are we here? Why did you bring me here?"

"I have a surefire way to cure you of this fascination with men. Oh yes. Then we can finally get back to focusing on what matters. Giselle. The power that will come with a command performance." He flips on his iPhone flashlight and shines it down a narrow corridor. At the end of the ominous hallway is another door. Light shines around the edges.

A shadow moves on the other side.

There is someone in there.

"One night with my lunatic brother should cure you real fast, Posy." Baker laughs and hauls me harder, baring his teeth and pulling me forward with all of his might—which is more than required, because the tops of my pointe shoes are digging into the concrete floor, my body lurching in the opposite direction. One night with my brother.

One night with my brother.

What does he mean?

How would that cure me?

"Please, no. No. Cure me of what? I'm not even sick. I'm just under strain." I slide forward on the floor several feet, bringing me closer to the door. "I d-didn't know you had a brother. Who is he? I don't understand..."

"Let's just say he's not fit for polite society."

To my horror, we have reached the door and the shadow on the other side has stopped moving. The floor creaks. Loudly. Oh God, whoever lies beyond this steel door is very large. A stranger. One that lives in an abandoned warehouse and isn't fit for polite society. And my coach is going to leave me here with this individual? For the whole night?

This can't be happening.

I mean, Baker has done some crazy things in the name of training. He once made me walk on a tightrope over broken glass for hours. Blindfolded. Once, he ordered me to remain in the plie position so long that my muscles locked up and I needed to be taken to the ER. Sometimes it seems like he's enjoying my pain and confusion.

But this?

This is on another level. He has gone far beyond his usual antics.

I've always wondered if he is more willing to try these experimental methods on me because I'm an orphan. No parents to call. No one to intervene on my behalf. There is the strict, yet fair choreographer at the ballet company, but she seems intimidated by Baker, as well. Who would even believe me if I told them this was happening? Even if I did have someone to protect me from my coach, he took my phone. I have no way of calling anyone.

"Smith," Baker calls through the steel door, rapping on it with his knuckles. "Open up."

Several bolts and locks disengage on the other side of the door.

And then it opens slowly, creaking on its hinges.

Revealed is a very, very large man, indeed. One so tall that I have to tilt my head all the way back to see his face. When I do see it, my lungs seize and I renew my efforts to get away.

But not because he's scary. Or hideous.

No. It's the violent snarl on his face. It's directed at me.

This man loathes me on sight.

If it wasn't for the utter hatred contorting his features, he might almost be handsome. His black hair is shaved down to the quick, his eyes a piercing shade of light blue. There is a scar bisecting his upper lip, five o'clock shadow darkening his jaw. Tattoos cover every available inch of his neck. There is no mistaking this man has been damaged somewhere along the line. It's right there in his eyes—pain, rage, resentment.

“Posy, meet my brother, Smith. This is where he's been living since they let him out of the institution. I bring him groceries once a week, because he doesn't trust anyone else. *Especially* women. That's how I know he hasn't had one in years. Right, brother?”

Baker catches me off guard by pushing me into the dimly lit room, right in front of the Goliath-sized man whose chest begins to heave violently, his eyelids growing heavy.

“He's too afraid to get burned again. Aren't you, Smith?”

Smith says nothing, but there's a haunted flicker in his eyes, followed by reluctant heat. It floods in and dilates his pupils, making his nostrils flare. The giant's gaze travels down to my mouth and he chokes on a sound, then seems embarrassed by it...but that can't be right, can it? I'm distracted from that thought when something brushes my belly and I look down to find his erection stretching his pants.

No. No way. It's the size of my arm, wrist to elbow. Wider.

I turn to run, but Smith catches my wrist and tosses me up over his thick shoulder, evacuating the air from my chest. *Oh my God*. Is this a nightmare? Is Baker having a joke at my expense? He's going to leave me here with a man who appears to be deranged? All so I can be cured of my non-existent interest in the opposite sex and focus harder on ballet?

“Based on his, uh...reaction to you, I'm guessing you won't remain untouched, Posy,” Baker comments, amused. “If this doesn't cure you of your sudden vanity...your determination to become a fucking *harlot* and toss away both of our careers, nothing will.”

“Please...don’t leave me here,” I whisper, though I can’t see my coach in my current position, draped over the giant’s shoulder, high above the ground.

Baker ignores me. “Smith. Do me a favor. Make sure that when I pick her up in the morning for rehearsal, she no longer has sex on the brain. Whenever she thinks about it again, she should be disgusted. That should be easy enough for you, right?”

One more laugh from Baker.

And then the door slams, leaving me alone with Smith.

“Mine,” he growls.

TWO

Smith

It's hard to concentrate on locking the door again when I have this brat on my shoulder. That's what she is. A little brat in her pink tutu, those silky ribbons crisscrossing up her legs, all the way to the knee. I want to shred them with my fucking teeth. I think I could scent her from a hundred miles away. Not only is she the most beautiful creature I've ever seen in my life with her strawberry-blonde hair and green eyes, she smells as though she's been dipped in vanilla and warm pears. I don't know what the air is like on Christmas morning, but in my imagination, it's heavy with her scent. Magic.

No.

Not magic. Trickery.

Females lie. All of them are *liars*.

Evil.

I've never taken one to bed because I can't get over my disgust toward women long enough to relieve myself. But *this* one...for some reason, I'm not repulsed whatsoever. *Yet*. I'm nearly shaking from my attraction to her lithe legs, currently covered in tights. I'm all but salivating at the possibility of how smooth she'll be underneath them once I rip them off.

If she starts talking and lies begin pouring out of her mouth, I'm sure this odd possessiveness will fade somewhat. Become manageable. I both dread and look forward to the

moment she'll become like everyone else in my mind.
Dishonest. Immoral.

Didn't my brother say she was a harlot?

Baker never lies to me. He always tells me the truth, even when it hurts.

And I don't have a hard time believing a woman would use her beauty to her advantage. Against men. This one is angelic and unique and smells of paradise. I can only imagine the havoc she wreaks on males.

Tonight I give in. Just for a while.

The moment I opened the door and saw her, there was no other choice.

As soon as the locks are engaged, I turn and cross to the cracked mirror hanging crooked on the wall, moving close as possible to examine her tight ballerina backside where it bends over my shoulder. I run my hand over that flesh, squeezing each cheek, playing with the little pink hem of her built-in underwear. Pulling the material taut in the valley of her crack, separating those cheeks and making them jiggle for me.

She whimpers.

Of course she does. I'm sure she loves being a temptation.

Making my cock so hard it could double as a battering ram.

I'm going to take out my frustration on her pussy first, then I'm going to turn her over and lose myself in this ass. If she's a harlot like my brother claims, she'll even moan and encourage me to plow hard and deep. She'll probably open her legs for my cock without me having to shove them open for her.

I set the tiny dancer on her feet, intending to strip her out of that costume—

She slaps me hard across the face.

With such force that I see stars winking in front of my eyes.

And then she stumbles backward and slides down the wall of my makeshift kitchen, tears streaming down her face. “Please, please, don’t hurt me.”

My chest is suddenly full of rocks. This is not how women behave. They smile and parade around until they’re ready to stab a man in the back. This one is erratic and vulnerable and fearful. Is she really going to pretend she doesn’t want to fuck? Don’t women live for the moment they make a man weak with lust? That’s what I’ve always believed—ever since I was a teenager. Ever since the series of events that got me in trouble.

I didn’t touch them. I swear to God.

No one believed me. To this day, no one takes me at my word.

“I won’t hurt you,” I say, the memories causing my voice to be more forceful than intended. Not good, when I want very, very much for her to stop crying. Every one of her tears is like a dagger to my midsection. Why? I don’t understand why I care. Maybe because she seems to honestly be crying, not faking it for show. Or to fool someone. “Go get in my bed.”

“No.”

“Don’t you want to lord your power over me?” I reach her in two long strides and heft her back up onto her feet, hustling her to the back of my home with my hand closed around the nape of her neck. “That’s what women live for, isn’t it? Or maybe you’ve already lorded so much of your power today, you’re exhausted at the thought of more. Too bad. You made my dick hard and I’ve never seen a prettier female in my life. Your fate is sealed.”

She sputters. “I don’t know what you mean by ‘lording my power.’”

“Yes, you do,” I grate, spinning her around to face me. And...my God. I suddenly want to jump off a cliff at the sight of tears clinging to her full, black eyelashes. “You...do. Stop lying to me,” I demand through my closing throat. “Women

are all the same. You love the attention. You love watching men make fools of themselves and punishing them for it.”

I don't like the way she searches my eyes, like she can see inside my head. Or maybe I like it too much. I don't know. This female is very confusing. I want to shake her. But at the same time, I would rip out another man's throat for looking at her funny. Suddenly I'm restraining myself from running after my brother and snapping his neck for holding her arm too tightly. My own brother. The only one who gives a crap about me. “What made you believe women are this way?” whispers Posy, her green eyes luminous.

Posy.

That's the first time I say her name inside my head. So delicate. It fits her perfectly.

She'll fit me perfectly. Why am I not inside her yet? Why am I hesitating?

She's getting to me. With her lies. She's blinding me. This is what women do.

I know this very well.

Picking her up by the waist, I throw her down on the king-sized mattress that is positioned in the corner of the room and come down hard on top of her. She slaps at my hands while I peel down the top of her leotard tank top, two little tits popping out. Dear God. I almost jizz down the leg of my pants. They remind me of cupcakes with a cherry on top. Tiny and lush and bouncy. It takes me a moment to realize I'm groaning. So loud that she's blinking up at me, her hands swiftly covering her breasts, her whole face going pink.

“I know. They're so small. I...” She squeezes her eyes closed and tries to roll over onto her side. To bury her face in my pillow. But I catch her chin in my hand and don't allow her to turn from me. I want to see everything she does. Hear every word out of her mouth. “Baker says the other girls call me Tic Tac Tits. Behind my back. I was just...trying to be less conspicuous about being flat-chested. I wasn't trying to *tempt* anyone.”

“I’m looking right at your tits, ballerina. You are not flat-chested.”

“I...yeah. But they’re—”

“As incredible as the rest of you,” I rasp, wincing inwardly at the reverence in my tone.

She blinks several times. “For someone about to assault me, you’re very complimentary.”

My breath gets trapped mid-inhale. Assault this angel? That can’t be what is happening here. I wouldn’t harm her. I would die first. “I am not assaulting you. You *want* this.”

Slowly, she shakes her head. “No, I don’t.”

“Women love sex. You want to watch me lose my mind, humping away at your little cunt like a monster. It’s what gives you power.”

More head shaking, her breath racing in and out in a way that distresses me. “No.”

She’s lying. They all lie.

Why am I having such a hard time remembering that hard-earned lesson with this female looking at me with her big green eyes? “Open your legs and I’ll prove you wrong.”

“Tell me why you believe these things about women. I...I think you’ve been lied to—”

“*Enough!*” I shout this word in her face and immediately regret it when she gasps, trying to scramble away from me on the bed. No. Not happening. Swallowing down an apology, I drop my hips and pin her to the mattress, moaning over the softness I find there. Between her thighs. Moaning even louder when she wiggles around, looking for an exit, her tights rasping on denim material of my jeans. But she’s not going to find a way out. “I understand now. Why my brother thinks I can cure you of being a harlot. Men probably lay themselves down at your feet, don’t they, little girl? Not me. I’m going to chew your tight body up and spit it out. You’re not going to rule me. Or make me a fool. Tonight I’m going to take your power. Maybe then you’ll stop driving other men insane.”

“I don’t—”

“Enough!” Looking her in the eye, I rip out the crotch of her built-in underwear, digging my fingers into the nylon of her tights until they tear, too, finally exposing her juicy little pussy. Holding her down, I stare at it, dumbfounded by the perfection, my balls drawing up tight to my undercarriage and nearly choking me.

“Jesus, that’s a fucking work of art.” I lean down until I’m an inch away from her flesh, panting, my hips restless on the mattress. “Open your thighs wider or I’ll tie them open.”

Like before, she slaps me in the face. “No.”

“Don’t act like you don’t want to show it off.”

“I don’t!”

“Liar. You want me to know it’s tight. You want me ready to sell my soul for one pump. You want to wrap me around your finger so tight, I don’t know right from left.” Her flesh parts slightly and I see a glorious strip of pink, all wet and shiny. “Son of a bitch, you just might accomplish it, Posy. If anyone can, it’s you.”

As I speak, I trail my hand down the front of her delectable body, my palm scraping over the coarse material of the tutu to delve between her thighs. I bring my mouth flush to hers and capture it in a hard kiss—and I sink my middle finger deep between her legs, just wanting to prove she’s wet. And ready. How could she not be when she’s made me hard as nails? Women love proof that their wiles are paying off. This one’s wiles are like a drug.

Potent.

Necessary to live.

She’s unlike any other.

Mine.

On its way into her sex, my finger meets a barrier, but I’m thrusting it too hard to stop in time and I feel the gentle tear—and the sensation paralyzes me. What was that? She can’t be... a virgin? *This girl is a virgin?*

When she cries out, I swear the heart has been ripped from my chest.

No. It can't be. Didn't Baker tell me she's a harlot? I can't recall my brother's words over the catastrophic roaring in my ears. What have I done?

I look down and find blood trickling down my middle finger and withdraw it with a hoarse sound, gathering her trembling body up into my arms as quickly as possible. "Posy. No, ballerina. Oh my God." I stand up with her in my arms and turn in circles, no idea what to do. Should I bring her to the hospital? "I'm sorry. I'm so fucking sorry."

"Put me down," she says through chattering teeth.

A miserable wail leaves me, rattling the cage of my skull. "Anything but that."

"*Down! Now!*" she shouts, twisting hard and elbowing her way out of my hold, running to the far side of the room as soon as her feet touch the floor, moving fluidly, like the ballerina that she is. Away from me. While I stand in place, shattering. She jerks up the top of the leotard to cover her breasts, but her underwear and tights are shredded, so all she can do is use one of the see-through panels of her tutu to cover her bare pussy, holding it in place with her right hand. "You're a monster."

I nod and bury my head in my hands, knowing I deserve that. "So I've been told. It's never been more obvious than it is right now." It hurts to swallow. What have I done? "All women lie." I hold up my fingers. "But blood doesn't lie. I'm sorry, Posy. Please let me...make you better. I don't know how, but I'll figure it out."

When I take a step in her direction, she holds up a hand, stopping me. "Don't come any closer. Please."

"*What can I do?*" I shout at her, tearing at my scalp.

"Let me leave."

Unthinkable. I might as well throw myself in front of a semi-truck. "No. *No.*"

Several seconds of silence tick by as she considers me.
“Then you can tell me what happened to make you think all women are liars. You can tell me why you’re in this place.”

THREE

Posy

Smith is incredibly strong. His strength is almost inhuman.

But I'm very fast. Nimble.

I might be able to make it past him toward the door, but I would never get all of those locks disengaged in time. And I might as well admit it. There is a part of me that doesn't want to leave just yet. I'm too curious about this man and what has driven him to live in this isolated hell. What has given him false beliefs in members of the opposite sex—enough to put hatred in his eyes when he first looked at me?

He's in pain. A wounded animal.

I don't know how to simply turn my back.

I'll talk to him. I'll find out what I need to know. And once I lull him into a false sense of security, I'll figure out a way to incapacitate him long enough to get out the door.

That plan allows me to take a deep breath.

Having a course of action makes it easier to convince myself that I'm not attracted to him. That I don't find his eyes arresting and his warrior's body appealing.

Because that would just be crazy.

Do I have an accelerated case of Stockholm syndrome or something?

“I will tell you whatever it is you want to know. Just please sit down.” He sidesteps to a small, round table, which is surrounded by three mismatched chairs. He pulls one of them out and gestures for me to sit, his expression guarded, but hopeful. “I can’t concentrate when I’m worried about you running away.”

My pulse kicks up at the thought of getting close to him again. Close enough to be manhandled and mauled. There was a moment on the bed when he kissed me and light flooded my head. I’m trying not to think about how much that single touch of his mouth made me ache. Made me throb. He was going to *force* me. “You’re not allowed to touch me.”

His hands curl into fists. For several beats, his muscles are so visibly taut, I think he’s going to pick up the table and throw it across the room. In degrees, he relaxes, though when he speaks to me again, his voice is a rasp. “I will not touch you right away.”

“That’s not good enough.”

“If you knew the effort it is taking me not to fuck you on all fours right now, it would be good enough, little girl.”

I react as if I’ve been slapped.

Not because I’m offended, but because the imagery is crude and base...and it causes heat to tumble around in my middle. That warmth travels down, down, until the sheer panel I’m using to cover my womanhood feels embarrassingly flimsy. Can he see the moisture beginning to coat my folds? Why am I reacting this way to a violent man?

“Fine,” I whisper. “Not right away.”

Because what choice do I have? I’ve already established I can’t make it out the door without being stopped and potentially making him madder.

On unsteady legs, I cross the room and sit down in the chair he indicates, our eyes meeting over my shoulder, his hands gripping the chair back so tight, the piece of furniture must be on the verge of snapping.

“I’m not used to holding back my impulses, Posy,” he says thickly, leaning down to inhale just above the curve of my neck. “But you make me want to learn.”

My throat is flexing too dramatically to speak. “Sit down and start talking.”

Until he begins to circle the table, I don’t realize how my seated position makes it even harder to hide my flesh. When I cross my legs, my sex is visible from below. When I uncross them and cover myself with the tutu, the position looks indecent, legs spread, hand cupping the juncture of my thighs. He pulls a chair over and sits down directly in front of me, watching me fight with indecision, his attention hot on my core, the stiffness jutting up behind his fly. He manspreads, unabashed by his aroused state, jaw flexing.

I have no choice but to cross my legs and allow a peek at my private flesh. “A gentleman would offer me something to cover myself.”

“I am not a gentleman.” The sound of his heavy breathing fills the room. “You make me want to learn that, too. But a hundred years of lessons couldn’t make me polite around that perfect little cunt of yours. Would be a waste of time.”

It’s a challenge to remain still when I have the sudden need to squeeze my legs together. To run my palms up and over my sensitive breasts. But the moves would be too telling and I sense he would be dragging me back to the mattress in seconds if I let on that I’m...that he...arouses me against my will. “Tell me why you hate women,” I whisper.

“They lie. You all lie.”

“Men and woman lie an equal amount.”

“No.” He shakes his head. “I never lie.”

“Then you’re an exception to the rule.”

He leans forward, those light blue eyes laser focused. “Do you lie?”

My gut reaction is to say no, because I want to take away his false perception of women, but he would know. He’d see

through me. And I find I want to be one hundred percent honest with this man. I want to be an exception to the rule for him, too. “I have told lies. Small ones. Mostly to your brother.”

His right eye ticks. “I no longer wish for you to spend time with my brother.”

“That’s going to be difficult, since he’s my ballet coach.”

Smith’s fist slams down onto the table. For a moment, he seethes—and then he lunges to his feet, flipping the table over entirely. “What lies do you tell him?” he shouts.

“How did this conversation become about me?”

“*What lies, Posy?*”

“Mostly about what I eat,” I blurt. “Ballerinas, especially principal dancers, need to maintain a certain appearance. I’m not sure who decided that was true, but managers and choreographers are very unforgiving about anything they decide is an imperfection. But I love chicken sandwiches from Wendy’s.” How ridiculous that my face should be piping hot right now. “So, um...yes, I lie sometimes and claim I’ve had a spinach salad for dinner, when I really had a crispy chicken combo meal. Sue me, you know?”

Smith is very silent. Frowning at me thoughtfully beneath a knit brow.

“I lied once about having my period, so I could get out of rehearsal. I...just couldn’t go.”

“Why not?”

“One of the other dancers...I guess you could call her my rival. Baker overheard her talking badly about me and I just...” Heat presses in behind my eyes. “I guess I just needed a little break. So I lied. I lied and climbed out my window and went for a walk. All day.”

Smith drops down into the seat across from me again. As if he didn’t just throw a whole table across the room. “What bad things are there to say about you?”

“My fouetté turns were sloppy that day,” I whisper. “She was right. I had a sprained ankle at the time, but still. She wasn’t wrong.”

Silence ticks by. I can see his mind working.

His distress is made obvious in the way he shakes his head, chest lifting and falling faster, faster. “You are too hard on yourself. The lies you’ve told are hardly worth mentioning.”

“You’re living in an abandoned warehouse, locked away from the world—and I’m the one who is hard on myself?” The beginning of a smile transforms his whole face. Just a nanosecond of reluctant amusement and he’s suddenly gorgeous. The moment is fleeting, yet it leaves my heart racing. “What do you consider a lie worth mentioning, Smith?” I ask, my curiosity multiplying by the second. “Tell me.”

Restless, he sits back, his wall of chest and stomach muscles flexing in the light. He bounces his leg for a moment, then pushes back to his feet, turning away from me with crossed arms. “My mother said she would come back one day and she never did. I don’t remember how old I was. We didn’t keep track of those things. But I wasn’t taller than Baker yet, so I was probably six or seven.” He clears his throat hard. “She lied. Just like they did...”

“Who are ‘they’?”

Enough time passes that I’m not sure he’s going to explain. Then, “When Baker was in high school, him and his friends were always messing with girls. Going home with them after school or taking them down to the lake. To kiss. Mess around. They made me their lookout. I made sure to let them know if someone was coming, especially one of the girls’ fathers.” He pauses. “The girls would get my brother and his friends so worked up they were half out of their heads. They would tease them, let the boys think they were getting sex and then change their minds. I wanted no part of that...letting someone have control over my mind and body. So I stayed away from that shit.”

I have a bad feeling about this story.

There is a rock sitting in my stomach and it gets heavier by the second.

“One day, the girls...they didn’t change their minds. My brother was in one car with a girl, his friend was in another. With a different girl. And I got distracted with collecting glass on the edge of the water. I use it for...” As if catching himself, he shakes his head. “Anyway. My brother got out of the car with the girl just as her father pulled up. And she was laughing, fixing her hair—it was obvious what they’d been doing.” A pause drags out. “But she told her father that *I* forced her. She said it was me. And the other girl came out of nowhere saying I did it to *her*, too. My brother’s friend was long gone. Took off because he didn’t want to get in trouble.” His swallow is audible. “Next thing I know, I was locked up. Assigned a lawyer. They found my artwork. All the smashed bottles. And they called me violent. I have always been... quick to hit my boiling point. I have a temper. My outbursts didn’t do me any favors on top of my size and strength, plus the lies they told about me. So I was institutionalized. For years.”

Tears are collecting in my eyes. I’m shaken on his behalf. I can see him as a teenager, head and shoulders above everyone else. He’s fearsome, even when he’s sitting still. I can easily imagine him being accused of something he didn’t do and his demeanor making it possible to believe any mistruths about him.

Something doesn’t quite sit right about the story, though.

There’s more here. Maybe more that Smith doesn’t even know.

I’ve witnessed Baker’s behavior with women.

I’ve been on the receiving end of his cruelty. His manipulations.

Smith believes those girls are responsible for his mistreatment, but I have a feeling Baker is involved in more ways than one.

Furthermore, my heart and my gut are telling me that this giant man is telling me the truth. The truth *he* believes. Even after he confessed to me that he has a hard time controlling his impulses. He controlled them around me, didn't he? When he realized I would not enjoy myself during sex, he stopped. He looked ready to die. And now, my sympathy is a swarm of bees, buzzing in my middle. My hands are trembling with the need to touch. To comfort.

To show him what *good* in another person feels like.

To soothe and heal and...maybe find out something about myself in the process. Ignoring this attraction to Smith isn't working. I'm ten times more restless now than I was when he started the story, my nipples in hard points inside my leotard, my sex pulsing where it presses to the chair. I'm scared. I've never done this before.

But there is an intuition whispering in my ear telling me...

This man is important. To me. I'm still going to run back to the city at the earliest opportunity, but before I go...I can't shake the feeling that this is exactly where I'm meant to be. With Smith.

With a hard swallow, I push to my feet and coast in his direction, raising a hand, hesitating, then laying it on the smooth, muscular breadth of his back.

"M-make love to me."

He wheels around, lustful and incredulous at the same time. "I don't know how," he says raggedly, already backing me toward the mattress.

"We'll learn together."

FOUR

Smith

I can't believe this is happening.

Does this mean she believes what I told her? That I'm innocent?

No one has ever believed me before. Not the nurses or psychologists at the facility. They just wanted to hand me pills to dull the rage and get rid of me. They wanted to stuff me into a box marked with my diagnosis and leave me there.

Violent offender.

Eventually part of me started to believe them, as well. Maybe I am a monster. Maybe I'm better off locked up. Away from the world.

This ballerina and her gentle touch are ruining me, though. Taking every truth I've ever been told about women and flipping them on their head. Years and years of my brother railing about the deceitfulness of women, followed by the trial, have left me hateful of the opposite sex, but I can't hate this one. I can't for the life of me do anything but cup her sweet ass in my hands and lift her off the floor, shocked when her thighs wrap around me, her warm breath pelting my lips. She cradles my face in her hands and searches my eyes, nodding, as if to let me know she sees more inside me than anyone else.

Oh God. My heart is trapped between my ribs.

I feel almost dizzy under the onslaught of need for her. Appreciation. For Posy.

My Posy.

“I didn’t hurt anyone,” I wheeze.

“I know,” she whispers, nuzzling her nose against mine.

Euphoria steals downward from the crown of my head to my toes. I shudder, a hoarse sound ripping up my throat. My body and mind are at war. My mind wants to cherish this little ballerina. Worship her for having faith in me, even though I’ve done nothing to deserve it. But my body, my cock, wants her legs spread open, her nails raking down my fucking back.

“I’m scared about what I’m going to do to you.”

“I’m not.”

“*You should be!*” I shout against her mouth. The flash of apprehension in her eyes causes some of my urgency to retreat. I’d kill a man for scaring her. Even myself. *Be gentle, you bastard.* “I don’t want you around my brother anymore.”

She tilts her head. “Why?”

There is a reason. A good one. But my mind won’t produce it. I shake my head in frustration, trying to unearth the dark spot that lingers there when it comes to Baker. He visited me at the institution. Brought my groceries. Tried to make the girls see reason and stop accusing me. My father was equally disgusted by women, by *everyone*, really, and always said I can only trust my brother in this world. And now, he has brought me this angel. My Posy.

All I have is instinct telling me there is something I’m missing when it comes to Baker.

“I don’t know,” I rasp. “I just don’t want you around him, Posy, *please.*”

“We don’t have to solve anything right now.” She strokes the sides of my face, so gently, so sweet. I rock her side to side, an innocent gesture that clashes with the horniness. The way I’m feeling her up with eager hands. I knead her butt and grope her thighs through the thin tights. I yank her leotard top

back down and shake her, bounce her up and down, just so I can watch her perky little titties bounce. She bites her lip and lets me do it, lets me play with her like a fucking toy, and God help me, she even seems to enjoy it.

When her liquid warmth begins to seep through the fly of my jeans, my knees practically buckle. Holding her tight, I fall forward onto the mattress, pressing down on top of her with those pretty fucking legs wrapped around my hips, her silky ballet slippers digging into my ass.

“Do you like being Daddy’s baby doll, Posy?”

Her breath catches, green eyes blinking rapidly. “Did you say...D-Daddy?”

Did I? Yeah. I can’t explain why. Only that... “I don’t know, it feels right for us.” I bury my face in her neck, laving her pulse with my tongue. “If you don’t like it, I can stop.”

But God, I don’t want to.

I want to protect her. Care for her. I want to be the man she comes to when there’s a problem. I want to fuck her and be her father figure at the same time. If that’s wrong, I don’t know what the hell to do about it. “I never met my parents,” she says quietly, in between gasps, because I’m rolling her hard nipples in my palms now, teasing them with the pad of my thumb.

Looking her in the eye, I lean down and lick over the peak of her breast. “You’ve got your Daddy right here, if you want him.” I buck hard with my hips and clamp my teeth around her nipple, making her cry out. “Are you my little girl?”

“Yes,” she chokes out, her back arching, bringing her hot, jiggly tits closer to my mouth. As if begging for more. “Yes, yes, I am. I am. I am.”

I’ve never known triumph like this. Not in my twenty-seven years on this earth. Having permission to conquer makes me want to worship her, instead, and it’s so confusing that I think I might end up mauling her if I’m not careful. “Nothing is off limits to me. That’s what it means.”

“Nothing,” she gasps.

Something occurs to me. Something important. I should have asked before now but I've been overcome by the presence of her. The perfection. "How old are you?"

"Eighteen."

Relief hits me like a ton of bricks. "Thank God." I crush a fistful of tulle. "The tutu makes you look younger."

"I...could pretend," she murmurs against my mouth, before leaning back to study my reaction. As if to make sure she didn't say anything bad. Or wrong. Do I know if what we're talking about and doing is wrong? No. I just know it's happening. It's our bodies and minds meeting and running their own show, no logic or ethics involved. "Can we pretend?" she rephrases shyly, hiding beautiful green eyes behind her lashes.

Christ, my cock and balls are as hard as stone now, heart hammering in my ribcage. I'm connecting to her on a level I never could have anticipated. Have I really known her for such a short time? My *soul* knows hers. "Pretend," I grunt, nodding with our foreheads pressed together. "I should start by apologizing to your pussy for what I did. Being so careless."

She has no idea what I'm thinking. It's obvious in the way she blinks up at me.

There is nothing pretend about her innocence and that becomes even more clear when I kiss down the center of her body, taking careful bites of her supple flesh, belly, hips, thighs. I come to the core of her and groan over the little wisps of strawberry-blonde hair that she tries to hide by crossing her legs. Not having that, I press her knees open and continue kissing and licking up the insides of her thighs, the fresh fruit scent of her making me salivate. I can see a dried trickle of her virgin blood on her parted flesh, my tongue licking it up like a feast after forty days of famine—and hell breaks loose in my head.

Mine.

Mine.

MINE.

I almost prowl back up her body and pump my cock inside of her, then and there. Something about her virgin blood hitting me in the back of the throat is exhilarating. Like a baptism or a rebirth. “Tastes like fucking sugar,” I growl with my nose buried in her cunt, my hands shaking where they continue to keep her knees pried open. “Ask Daddy to lick it.”

He fists the sheets. “I...I don’t know...”

Is her bashfulness for show? Part of the game we’re playing? I don’t know. I’m already getting too lost in the role. So lost that it’s not a role at all. “I’m licking it whether you ask or not, little girl. But I’ll spank it if you don’t give me what I want.”

I watch the tremor course down her body, her nipples peaking even tighter. More of that fresh fruit scent hits my nose and I know, I fucking know she likes the idea of being spanked. Which is definitely why she denies me again. She wants it. “I just don’t know...”

Using only three straightened fingers, I slap her pussy, dead center.

She chokes on a gasp. And I do it again, harder, then I use those three fingers to rub her cunt open, my face an inch away, watching the wetness grow beneath my petting fingers, her beautiful flesh becoming less and less of a secret to me. Revealing itself. When my middle finger strokes over her clitoris, she bucks off the bed, her fist tearing a hole in my thin sheet. “Oh. Oh, please. Please d-do that again.”

Of course, I give her what she begs me for, but I use my tongue this time, lapping the swelling nub long and thoroughly, her body growing instantly restless. Flushed. Witnessing her pleasure and knowing I’m responsible makes me feel alive, makes me feel forgiven for how roughly I treated her earlier. Never again in my life do I want to be anything but deliberate and careful when I touch this female, but there is an intuition gripping my spine that tells me it’s a pipe dream. That it’s only a matter of time before I go feral.

How can I be anything but crazed when I’m tasting heaven, looking up her writhing body, her face partially

obscured by the pink tutu. Her hands leave the sheets, one of them palming my shaved head, the other lifting to fondle her left tit. *Jesus*. How has this creature existed all along without me knowing? There is no one more hypnotic and sexual and sweet and everything on the planet. I'm not going to last very much longer before the next part. Raking my tongue over her clit, teasing it with the tip and tasting it fully is nothing short of incredible and I plan to spend decade after decade with my mouth between her thighs, but I've got to get my cock inside of her. Now. Yesterday. I'm going to die otherwise.

Knowing she'll need to be soaked as fuck to take me, I press my whole thumb inside of her pussy, pushing deep and stretching her insides, all while flattening my tongue to her clit hard, harder, moving it side to side—

“Yes, Daddy!” she screams through her teeth, struck by her orgasm.

Feral?

That doesn't even begin to describe what happens to me when she comes while calling me Daddy. Labeling me for life as her guardian. Her fuck. The only man in her life *for the rest of her life*. That vow is all packed into one gigantic word and tweaks something in my brain. Locks my possession of her into a position where it can never be carved out.

She's shaking, sobbing, getting my lips soaking wet and I keep licking, licking as long as I can, my dick throbbing with agony. Anticipation. When I've kept her climax going as long as possible and she's gone limp on the bed, head lolling to one side, I slide higher on her rosy body, growling like a goddamn beast, cock in hand.

“You make me need to fuck you. Violently,” I rasp, capturing her mouth in a twisting, panting kiss. “I don't know what to do about it, except give in and hope you love it as much as you loved me slapping that cunt.”

“I will,” she hiccups, eyes locked on mine. “I'll love it.”

“Why?” I demand, biting her jaw. As lightly as possible when I'm in this fevered state. “How do you know?”

“Because I want to see you...I n-need you to feel what just happened to me.” She’s running her hands all over me, her touch like an antidote to all the ugliness that I lived through before I met her. Before I knew such beauty could exist. “I need you to feel that incredible, too. Does that make sense?”

“It makes sense coming from you,” I say hoarsely against her mouth. “Because you’re perfect. Because you’re *fucking perfect*.”

Oh God, I can feel the animal inside of me taking over the reins.

I drop my head to the side and snarl into her dewy neck, rubbing the head of my prick through her soaked folds, pausing at her tight little hole. Rubbing my stiffness there to ease it open. “God help any man, besides me, who fantasizes about getting between these legs. I’ll see it on their faces and I will snap their spines for it.” This vow is delivered right up against her ear. It’s etched onto my soul. “Daddy needs to bang now, baby. You ready?”

Her pulse is going wild. “I don’t know,” she says, a little pouty.

Playing with me?

My impulses are deafening. Loudly ordering me to claim her. Hard. Ruthlessly. But there is something else ordering me to get permission. To care for her. To earn her trust. “Say yes. Please.” Sweat coats my body. I’m speaking through my clenched teeth. Wild and desperate. “You’re flat on your back on a mattress in the basement of a warehouse, little girl. With a fucking tutu around your waist. You don’t walk away from this without taking cock.”

That out-of-control pulse beats harder and she moans, the arches of her ballet shoes conforming to my ass. “Yes,” she whispers—and that’s it. “Cock, please.”

Shouting a curse, I pummel that sweet virgin pussy with a monster thrust.

I ride her like I’m damned anyway, so might as well go out on the highest high imaginable. There’s no stopping me or

slowing down, not when she's this horny and this tight. My God. My God. Slippery wet little cunt taking me all the way to the back, my hips thwacking up against her ass, the backs of her thighs. I'm seeing stars, she's belted around me so securely that I swear, her pussy is sucking on me. Milking me. *Fuck!*

"How's the dick, ballerina?" I grunt, crudely licking up the curve of her neck, absorbing her strangled whimpers like a drug. "Might be big for a first time, but you'll learn to love it. You'll learn to *beg* for it, same way I'm going to spend my life begging for rides of this tight hole." I wrap a hand around her throat and pump faster, the mattress groaning underneath us, the sound of my grunting and labored breath heavy in the room. "Little girl. Little girl. What have you gotten yourself into?"

It doesn't seem possible that she can clench around me any tighter, but she does. Her eyes turn a deeper shade of green and look right into mine, the air zapping around us like an electrical charge. I'm dark. I'm dark on the inside, but in that moment, she defies logic and matches me, meets me halfway. "You're the one who got into me," she murmurs, tightening up those little pussy muscles and making me bray like a beast. "Do I feel nice, Daddy?"

Bolts twist in my throat, corresponding to the ones at the bottom of my spine, in my groin. All over. How is this girl real and not a fantasy? She's everything and more. She's my life. My hunger. My world. "Do you feel *nice*?" I echo back, increasing my grip on her throat, my hips moving in rapid slaps now, balls thick with seed. "You feel like the end of the world and the beginning of the next one, Posy."

Those ragged words leave my mouth and her eyes fill with tears. It's all so powerful—the moment, my encroaching pleasure—that all I can do is rub my face in her hair and pound away, shouting words I don't even recognize as the lust sweeps in and capsizes me, taking us both under. Moisture floods between us, from her pussy, from the furthest recesses of my body, our bodies straining and rutting and grinding. Wild. *Fucking wild.*

Her ballet shoes dig into my humping ass and I lose it. I forget to be gentle. I squeeze her throat too hard and cut off her gasping sobs, giving her my come roughly.

Violently, as predicted.

My big body is bruising her smaller one, I can feel it, but I don't know how to stop for the life of me. Not when she's this sweet and she's so deep inside of my head, my chest, I'll never get her out. I'm ransacking her on this mattress, sweating and grunting, taking my fill, letting go of her throat in favor of shoving her knees up to her ears, getting the final spurts of my semen so deeply inside of her, they'll remain there forever. *Forever.*

“*MINE,*” I growl, falling on her. Ended. Replete and yet so full at the same time.

It's only when I gather her up into my arms and find no life in her limbs that panic tears through me, nearly stopping my heart from beating, that I realize something is wrong.

“Posy!”

FIVE

Posy

I'm drifting on a cloud.

I'm so high above the earth, I can barely see it.

My body has never been so...relaxed. On the heels of the pleasure Smith gave me, I feel like I can fly. Why is he shouting at me? He sounds worried, but my eyelids are a hundred pounds each and I just want to sleep. I want to replay the unexpected bliss that transformed me when he circled my throat with his hand, that massive body moving like a machine on top of me. I've never been so grounded in my life. I've never belonged until now.

"Smith," I mutter. "Let me sleep."

He falls on top of me with a rough expletive. Breathes in great gulps for several seconds, before wrapping me in his thick arms, turning us to the side and rocking me. Holding me so close that my nose is burrowed into his black, curly chest hair. "Don't do that to me. Don't you *ever* do that to me again."

"Do what?"

"You weren't moving!"

"I couldn't," I manage, still on the verge of pleasure-induced unconsciousness. "I can't."

“What have I done?” His chest heaves forcefully, eyes tortured. “Have I hurt you?”

“What? No!” I crack an eyelid, surprised to find him in horrible distress. My heart rebels at the sight of his unhappiness and I rush to reassure him, somehow finding the strength to plant a kiss on his chiseled chin. “I’m the opposite of hurt. You...we...” I can’t believe my blushing function isn’t broken after what we did and said to each other, but there it is. Heat rising in my cheeks. “It felt so good, I have no tension left. I can’t remember the last time I wasn’t tense everywhere. Sore from dancing. I feel none of it now because...you. You.”

A broken sound leaves him, blowing my hair back. “You are not hurt?”

“No,” I giggle, draping a thigh over his hip.

He looks down, observing the new position in wonder. “I was too rough. I...”

“You were perfect. I have nothing to compare you to, but I still know that.” I stare at the notch of his throat and let the truth leave me, unable to contain it when I’m so drowsy and... infatuated. Yes. I admit it. There is something inside of this mistreated man that parallels the lost feeling inside of me. He makes me feel found. “You were rough. But I loved it.” Again with the blushing, the heat climbing all the way to my hairline this time. “Didn’t you notice me encouraging you?”

“I could have imagined it.” His swallow is loud above me. “What if I’m imagining *you*?”

“You’re not.” I press my lips to his jawline. “You’re not. I’m right here.”

“Do not leave.”

“I won’t.”

I wrap my arms around Smith’s neck, he pulls me closer and finally seems to relax, his muscles losing their rigidness one by one. His heat steals into me and I’m finally allowed to continue drifting on my cloud, high above the earth. My sleep is deep and satisfied. So complete that when I wake up, I have

no idea if hours or days have passed. All I know is that Smith is no longer lying beside me on the mattress.

Sitting up, I look around the room, noticing the makeshift shower in the corner for the first time, hidden behind a plastic curtain. The organized rack of cooking utensils and a tea kettle. An old stereo beside a stack of even more ancient CDs.

I find a plain black T-shirt folded beside me, pick it up and hold it my nose, finding it smells like him. Dark and raw with a hint of...apple? My core constricts in response and I have to clamp my teeth down on my bottom lip to stop the moan.

What am I going to do about this man?

My career is on the outside. I'm a principal dancer. The lead in the production.

My whole life is out there.

As far as I can tell, Smith dwells here and doesn't come out—ever. Why else would Baker need to bring him groceries?

I peel off my tattered leotard and tutu, pulling the soft, black shirt down over my head, staring into the distance while my mind begins replaying images from the last year. Since I joined the prestigious, new dance company. It was supposed to be a dream come true, wasn't it? Lately it has been more like a nightmare. I'm treated like a show pony, everyone whispers behind my back, my coach puts me through grueling training. There is no joy in ballet anymore.

It has been sucked out like the marrow from a bone.

Being with Smith last night is the high I always chased on my pointe shoes.

I love dancing. I always will. It's my life. But I don't know how I'll lace up my slippers again, knowing the high isn't attainable on my toes. Only with this man. This man who chokes me and says loving words to me at the same time. Who looks at me like I'm an angel appearing to him in a beam of light, even as he bucks into me so brutally.

When I realize how hard I'm breathing, I shake my head, force myself to calm down. As soon as I stop my pulse from flying a hundred miles an hour, I stand up and move toward the open door on the other side of the room. There is more pitch black on the other side, but when I cross the threshold, a light beckons me from deep within the warehouse space. Smith's large silhouette is outlined to the right. I walk toward him, wincing when a small chain hits me in the forehead. Looking up, I see it's connected to a lightbulb and pull.

The warehouse brightens slightly—

And all I can do is marvel at the masterpieces surrounding me.

Giant canvases covered in what appears to be broken glass. Darker pieces have been placed strategically among lighter ones to create landscapes. Mountains, the ocean, a grove of trees. It's artwork made from smashed bottles and sea glass and broken taillights.

It's incredible.

"Smith," I whisper. Then louder, "What...is this?"

His head turns slowly, brow knit, and I'm hit with blistering intensity. So much that it knocks the breath out of me. "Come here."

I do as he asks. Literally, my feet are moving before I know it, anticipation beating in every single one of my erogenous zones. As I walk closer, I study his hunched over frame, the rippling breadth of his shoulders that blocks the canvas in front of him. To his left is a table holding several broken bottles, chipped glass, a hammer. Glue.

Unable to refrain from touching him, I reach out a hand and settle it on his bare back. He hisses a breath and his muscles ripple in response. He's such a work of art himself that it takes me a moment to look past him to the canvas he's working on. When I do, it's my turn to suck in a breath. He's putting the finishing touches on what appears to be a tranquil lake beneath a blue sky, dotted with white clouds. The way he

has used bits of broken glass to shape trees and reeds and mountains in the distance is extraordinary.

“Smith, this is incredible,” I say, looking around at the other finished canvases. A Victorian-looking home. A balloon floating in the countryside. A bike parked against the side of an ice cream shop. “These must take weeks. Months.”

“I have nothing but time,” he responds—and I feel him staring down at my legs. Obviously he isn’t satisfied with merely the view, because he winds the hem of the borrowed T-shirt around his fist and hauls me closer, inhaling at the notch of my throat. “Solitude is all I’ve ever wanted. Until now.”

I told him I wouldn’t leave.

That moment comes back to me in a flash, making my heart beat faster.

At present, I don’t *want* to go anywhere. There’s no way I can stay down here indefinitely, though. How will I dance? How will I survive without sunlight?

“I can practically hear your thoughts, Posy,” he says into my neck, his tone dark. “Do you need to take a seat on my cock right now to remind yourself why you want to stay?” He scrubs a palm down the front of his naked chest, stomach, ending with a grip on his bulge. “It’s ready when you are.”

I’m instantly wet. Gravitating closer. How easily I could get lost here. In him. “I don’t need to be reminded how good we are together.”

It surprises him how open and honest I am. That much is clear. His blue eyes zip sharply to mine, warming with appreciation. “Posy. You are *mine*.”

My nod is all instinct and truth. “Yes. But—”

“No buts,” he snaps.

“No buts. I just don’t think you’re taking some important details into account. I’m on birth control, but I don’t have my pills with me. If I stay down here long, Smith, I would get pregnant. Have you thought of that?”

I'm quickly drawn closer, his hand lifting to my stomach. Long, blunt fingers splaying over the flat of my belly, his breath quickening. "You. Pregnant with my child."

Dizziness grips me. The happy kind. The hot kind, too, because Smith obviously relishes the idea of impregnating me. I can't help but be turned on by that, too. How possessive and rough he would be during the act. How I would need to teach him to be gentle with a baby. But whoa. Like whoa. I am jumping the gun so hard. "This is no place to raise a baby, Smith."

Several seconds of silence pass. "Ask me to leave with you."

I almost do. I want to. But logic prevails. "I can't do that. It has to be your choice."

His jaw is bunched so tight, I'm worried it will shatter like the glass he spends his days and nights gluing to the canvas. Just when I think he has no intention of moving ever again, he draws my T-shirt off, rendering me nude in the near darkness. His breaths come fast, chest dipping and rising quickly, his fingertips tracing downward from my throat, over my perked up nipples, the lines of my hips. "I've never put a person on canvas before. Only landscapes." He leans in, down, swirling his tongue in my belly button and covering me in goosebumps. "You will be my first, last and only. Pose for me?"

"Of course." I'm used to being posed. For dance. But I've never wanted the opportunity more than now. Anything to keep his eyes on me, my eyes on him. "Where should I stand?"

"As close to me as possible," he rasps, his fingertips dropping away to unzip his jeans. He groans at the additional room, his erection blooming larger through the opening, trapped behind black briefs. "Fair warning. We're not going to get very far tonight. I had to come out here and work to keep from raw dogging you awake."

I don't have to ask what raw dogging means. The context makes it pretty clear.

“Oh,” is all I can manage to push through my dry throat. “Thank you for letting me rest. I haven’t had a deep sleep like that in a long time. I’m usually so restless.”

His gaze drops and locks on my womanhood. “Daddy fixed it.”

A hot shudder courses through me. “Yes.” To hide my embarrassing rush of moisture, I cross my right leg over my left and extend my arms up in the air, spine straight, toe pointed. “This position is called *croisé devant*.”

“It’s perfect,” he breathes. “Don’t move.”

Smith lunges from his seat on the stool, disappearing into the darkness momentarily before returning with a blank canvas, turning his workstation to face me. He studies me with a slow, relishing shake of his head, then he pulls a pencil from behind his ear and begins to sketch, his hand moving in broad strokes, the sound of scratching and our labored breathing rasping in the silent warehouse, accompanied only by a distant trickle of water.

“I’m having a hard time concentrating,” he eventually says, tone thick with lust. “You’re so fucking beautiful, Posy. I don’t understand how you exist.”

Until that moment, I don’t realize how long it has been since I truly felt beautiful. I’ve been an object, a dancer, a cog in the machine. I want to share this revelation with Smith, but I also know this is my opening to reach deeper into his hang-ups. “So many women are beautiful on the inside, as well as the outside, Smith.”

“I have seen women before. There are none like you.”

My skin warms. “Perhaps you find me the most appealing ___”

He snorts. “Don’t apply logic to how you make me feel. I’ve never experienced an ounce of feeling for another female, while I am a goddamn *beast* for you. To say I merely find you most appealing is a ridiculous understatement.”

When is he going to make love to me?

I'm almost ready to knock over the canvas myself at this point. To reach him. Touch him. "I'm just trying to make the point that women are not evil creatures. There is beauty in all of us." For the first time, it occurs to me that perhaps Baker has been fabricating the mean things the other dancers say about me. He's created a rift in order to keep me isolated, dependent on him and him only. Classic abusive behavior that I'm only seeing now because I suspect he did something similar to Smith. "Sometimes the beauty in women is pushed way, way down out of fear, intimidation or pain, but it is there."

He rolls a brawny shoulder. "Why do you care about my outlook on other women?"

"I *am* a woman."

"You are different," he growls.

"No. I'm not. I'm unique. I'm important to *you*. But I'm not better or different than other women. Not even the girls who accused you of hurting them."

Slowly, his eyes darken and lift to mine. "How can you say that?"

"I'm sorry you were put through a trial for something you didn't do. I'm sorry you were treated unfairly. But I know, Smith...I *know* there had to be other factors at play. Women aren't evil. They weren't callous for the sake of being callous. I truly believe that."

"What are you saying? They had a reason to lie *besides* ruining my life?"

I nod.

My arms are still above my head and beginning to tremble, along with the rest of me. "Your brother left me here with you against my will, Smith. Think about it. He asked you to do him a favor," I whisper. "Now that I know you, I am so glad he did, but me falling in love with you was not his goal. That might be what happened, but there's no way he could have foreseen it. He wanted you to ruin my enjoyment of lovemaking, so I could focus on dancing. You *heard* him."

Smith has gone very still.

I don't know if he's processing what I told him and coming to the same ugly conclusion about Baker that I did. Don't know if he's simply angry. Disgusted...

But then it dawns on me.

I told him I love him.

I...do love him. I can't believe it's possible after such a short time. But my heart knows.

My heart belongs to this man. It just knows him. Knows this is right.

When Smith kicks aside the canvas and storms toward me with a heaving chest, I have no choice but to let the storm that is...my boyfriend?...pick me up and carry me away.

SIX

Smith

This girl is in love with me.

As soon as she made the admission, my skin felt protected in armor. She's given me new breath in my lungs, even as I reel in disbelief. I stole her virginity, she obviously disagrees with my feelings about the opposite sex. I'm a dweller in the darkness and she lives in the spotlight and yet, somehow, she loves me. It's a fucking phenomenon.

In the few steps it takes me to reach her golden, naked body, I vow to listen to what she's telling me. To consider that I might be wrong, although...that path leads to some other awful truths I'm not ready to deal with yet. In this moment, all I know is my skin needs to be in contact with hers. I need to be in control of her pleasure, the breaths she takes, every little hiccup and whimper out of her mouth. All mine. All my doing.

"If I haven't made it fucking obvious," I grit out, bringing our foreheads together, gripping her hips in my hands, "I'm in love with you, too. I'm in love with you. I *love* you." Our mouths come together in a hot fusion of lips and tongue, my palms traveling around to clutch that sweet ass tightly, boosting her high against my body so she can wrap those mind-blowing dancer's legs around my waist. As soon as she does it, soon as the smooth flesh of her inner thighs rests on my hips, I tuck my middle finger up against her asshole,

licking the resulting moan out of her mouth. Pressing that digit deeper. “I’m going to fuck this.”

Her head lolls back, allowing me to lick up the curve of her throat, bury my teeth in her delicate jawline. “Y-you are?”

“When Daddy says raw dog, it means both of those pretty little holes, baby.” Her wet lips are parted and panting against mine, turning my balls into heavy, throbbing stones. “Matter of fact, make that three pretty holes. Want to kiss you knowing my dick has been in your mouth.”

I’m already storming out of the art room, back toward the place where I sleep. I’m so sensitive, I could bust on the floor and now she’s doing this thing. Mewling in my ear and touching her tongue to my neck. Licking shyly. I am a very bad man, wanting to screw her mouth, but *she wrecks me*. Turns me crazed. My only saving grace is remembering the moments after the first time we slept together.

You were rough. But I loved it.

This amazing female was built exactly for me. For my crude ways and aggression when it comes to sex with her. I can’t believe I’ve been given this woman, but I’m not questioning this gift.

I throw her down on the mattress and shuck my jeans, briefs, dropping to my knees on either side of her head, jerking off with my balls swinging around above her glistening mouth. Sweat is sticking to every inch of me. I’m unable to unclench my teeth, so I speak through them, my body shaking with the need to come inside of her. On her. Anywhere—as long as my come ends up with Posy.

“Come on,” I grunt, smearing pre-come on her chin, lips. “Tell me I can put my big dick in your little ballerina mouth.”

“You can,” she whispers, running her hands up my hairy thighs. “I want to taste it.”

Frantic to have that precious warmth wrapped around me, I drop forward on hands and knees, positioned over her face, and I slide in long and slow, my fucking thighs shaking, eyes squeezed shut. “Oh Jesus.” I dip in and out of warm honey,

forcing my eyes open so I can watch her lips stretching around my cock, the way her eyes get more and more drowsy every time I lower myself back down, sliding farther and farther back on her tongue until finally, she coughs a little around my shaft, letting me know that's as far as it goes. "Good girl. On your back, sucking a fat dick. Sweet little thing, letting Daddy ride this sexy mouth. Such a good girl."

I'm not sure if it's the way I'm talking to her or if her throat relaxes, but I burrow deeper on my next pump, my guttural groan echoing in the room.

"Careful or I'm going to bust. Don't want to do that until it's in your ass, Posy. Better watch yourself. Don't suck me too good."

My warning comes too late, because she's got two hands around my erection now, pumping and twisting it in her fists, guiding me between wet, greedy lips over and over again, her mouth opening wider, wider, stretching to accommodate my growing length.

Fuck, she's good.

So eager and generous, I can barely stand the pleasure.

No way I'll last much longer in this mouth. I'm already trying to bargain with myself. *Come down her throat this time, fuck her ass when I get hard again.* But no. No. I am severely aware that the basement of the warehouse is not her world and she could try to leave. That means claiming her. Now. Pleasing her. *Now.*

With a shuddering grunt, I pull my cock out of Posy's mouth and flip her over face down, coming down on her hard, pinning her hips so she has no way to escape. I get my hand around her slender throat where it belongs, bite down on her earlobe and pound my cock into her tight, tiny cunt hole, walloping her with mean scoops of my hips, giving her my dick at an upward angle, knowing the most sensitive part of her pussy is receiving friction.

"You will always be serviced when you're underneath me," I say against her ear. "I might be big and bad, but your

clit has me whipped. I'll fuck you nasty, but you'll come nasty, too."

"I know," she gasps into the mattress. "I trust you."

I make a ragged sound. *Why?* What have I done to make this girl my champion? I don't know, but I won't mess it up. I'll treasure her like gold. She'll be my princess until the end of time. "But this princess gets rough sex on all fours. Doesn't she?" I'm powering into her without mercy, her hips tilted to take as much as possible, ass shaking against my stomach. "This princess picked a thick Daddy who'll die if he doesn't tap that little asshole." I squeeze her throat, feeling her pulse against my fingertips. "Didn't you? Choose me? Say it, Posy."

"I chose you." I'm railing her like a dog now, snarling into her hair, accidentally looking back at those ballet slippers and almost busting as a result. "*I chose you!*"

God, I'm salivating. I'm sweating. My balls are ready to explode.

She's the fairytale I never believed in, this girl.

I'm riding her cunt like my life depends on giving us both an orgasm—maybe it does. I'll die if I don't give her pleasure, so I release her throat, sliding my hand in between the mattress and her sex, getting my middle finger between the top of her slit and worrying that pretty clit, listening to her pant, claw at the mattress in response.

"Daddy. Daddy."

Oh my God. I'm going to nut.

She's slick with sweat, her hole getting tighter by the second. A dream come true. I'm taking her in a reckless way, hard and fast and merciless, but I can't stop. Can't stop. And when she finally cinches up and whines my name, her climax coating my thrusting dick, I force myself to pull out and position my cock near the back pucker of her ass. I'm long, swollen and covered in princess juice, lying right across those taut cheeks.

Need to claim.

Claim every inch of her.

I spit on that obviously untouched hole and work a finger inside, *shhhing* Posy when she makes a squeak of alarm. Again she chokes a noise when I add a second digit, twisting and preparing her, my cock pounding where it lays on her butt cheeks. Purple and mottled and angry. Older than her pussy by nine years and so be it. So fucking be it.

Shoving her legs wider with my knees, I work my dick into that pink pucker, sweat dripping from my forehead onto her back. “Daddy gets it all. Say it.”

Heaven help me, she lifts her tush like an offering. “You get it all.”

Groaning at her permission, I press deep—thrust twice—and I nut like a motherfucker. My seed fills her tight ass, spilling out onto her buns, rolling in rivulets that travel in every direction. All I can do is shout expletives at the ceiling while my balls quake, my stomach muscles clenched to the point of agony. Balanced on my left fist, I reach down and smear my spend all over the mounds of her ass and her lower back, growling with satisfaction as I complete the possessive task. “Pretty Posy. How do I feel inside that ass?”

“Different,” she whispers, flexing around me, making my fucking eyes water. “*Good.*”

I erupt some more at the confirmation she’s enjoying it, my abdomen twisting painfully, wringing me out. “I’ve been inside you everywhere now,” I heave through my teeth. “Deep as can be. No getting me out. No getting away for you.”

Her cheek is pressed to the mattress, mouth gasping. “I don’t want to get away.”

That vow invites the final drops out of me and I fall on top of her, using the last of my energy to roll us onto our sides, crushing her close, her back curved to my front. My mouth moves in her hair, my hands stroking down her beloved arms and hips and waist. I repeat my love to her over and over and over until she falls asleep.

She's staying. She's never leaving. She told me she wouldn't.

For the first time in my life, I trust a female...

And pray I won't regret it.

SEVEN

Posy

I wake up to pounding on the door.

The loud thumps are followed by shouting—and I know that angry voice in my bones. It's my coach and he's enraged. I'm too disoriented to sit up. Can barely crack open an eyelid before I slam it shut again, repelled by the idea of light and life and leaving this mattress. I'm naked, wrapped in a blanket, the pointe shoes finally removed at some point over the last couple of hours. Or days. How long have I been here?

Smith sits up beside me on the mattress, tension beginning to coil his muscles.

Unconsciously, I run my hands over his muscular back and arms, biting my lip at the sight of his erection. It's always ready to give me pleasure. How many times has he taken me since the first time? I've been on top, face down over the table, pummeled against the wall. I've shaken with so many orgasms that every single muscle in my body is sore, inside and out. And yet, I ache to have him on top of me again, that big body moving in vicious drives.

My body has steadily become addicted to the relief he gives me and I need it now.

Need it now.

But there is more knocking. Louder.

“It’s Baker,” I say, almost too drowsy to form words. “Are you going to let him in?”

“No,” Smith says immediately, shaking his head. That’s when I notice the sweat forming on his hairline, the bunched quality of his jaw. “He’s here to take you.”

Take me where? Away from the pleasure?

I think not.

“What day is it?” I yawn. When Smith doesn’t answer, I prompt him again, nerves beginning to make their way under my skin. “What day is it, Smith?”

“Saturday.”

“Saturday,” I breathe, my senses coming back online, alarm infiltrating. “It’s opening night of the show. I’ve been here...*five days?*”

There is no way Baker waited five days to retrieve me. I’ve missed too much practice.

Everything comes back to me in a rush.

The loud hip hop music Smith played while taking me over and over again on the mattress. I could hear nothing but our moaning, feel nothing but him. The world has not existed for the last five days. Only Smith. Only the ecstasy. Was he purposefully drowning out my coach’s frantic knocking? He can’t disguise the sound now, though. For once, the stereo across the room is silent. The knocking of my heart is louder than a steel drum, though.

“He comes here to take you every day,” Smith says thickly. “Don’t worry, Posy. I won’t let him.” As he says these words, he rolls me onto my back and enters me in a swift pump, his eyes fastened on the door for long moments before they begin to lose focus and he starts to groan, long and guttural, the slaps of our flesh growing louder, quicker—and God help me, I raise my knees and roll my lower body, chasing the lightning he gives me with his huge shaft. I claw at his shoulders and arch my back, entering a state of delirium that I know is dangerous, but the fog is so heavy, I can’t wave it away or cut through. It surrounds me. Owns me.

Smith bares his teeth at the door.

Wraps a hand around my throat.

“Mine!”

The knocking shakes the door on its hinges.

I whimper Smith’s name and there’s a disgusted sound outside the room. “That does it. I’m calling the police,” Baker growls. “We have three hours until curtain call, Posy!”

Three hours.

To curtain call.

Smith’s forehead presses down on mine. “I’ll lick and fuck you so well, little girl, you won’t even know three hours has come and gone.” He reaches down between us and presses the pad of his thumb to my clitoris, robbing me of breath. “Starting now. Make Daddy’s last few thrusts good and creamy.”

I’m so sensitive. So sensitive and primed that my climax crests automatically and I sob through it, trembling, looking Smith in the eye and falling deeper, deeper, deeper in love by the second. But something is wrong...

There’s something...

Smith’s hand tightens on my throat and he bears down hard, sinking so deep, I swear I can taste him in the back of my throat and I explode again, screaming his name, my flesh in a torturous flex that never ends, never ends. His teeth are buried in my neck and he’s...can I call it anything other than fucking at this point? He has scooped my knees up under his forearms and his hips collide with mine in rapid succession, his sex swelling inside of me, eyes rolled back into his head, grunting, cursing...and finally exhaling my name, wet warmth filling me up in a way I’ve become eager for. So insanely eager.

His seed is mine.

I pine for my prize. I love earning it.

I love *him*.

But it's opening night of Giselle and I've worked my whole life for this.

Dancing has been devoid of enjoyment for the last few months, but something inside of me is unlocked after five days of embracing pleasure. I know how to reach for it now. Without reservation. Smith has reminded me how to shine, how to leap. I long to be on the stage, even as I already miss being in his bed.

As soon as he drops down on the mattress beside me, his muscled back covered in sweat, his breathing erratic, I stand up on legs made of gelatin and wrap the blanket around myself, stumbling to the door. Before I can wrap my hand around the knob, Smith wedges his huge body in between me and the exit, his eyes darkening like storm clouds.

"What are you doing?" he asks warily. Coldly.

The temperature in the room seems to drop twenty degrees. "I'm opening the door. We can't just ignore him."

His breaths are cautious. Measured. Like he's trying to control himself. "You've been successfully ignoring him for days, Posy. He's been listening to you whine for my cock through the door."

"You were playing music...you overwhelmed me on purpose..."

"You definitely didn't mind," he enunciates through his teeth.

This isn't going to be easy. He's not going to make this easy. I can see that. "You have to let me leave. You have to let me dance."

"*You said you wouldn't leave,*" he shouts, backing me against the door with wild eyes, bracketing me in with those rippling arms

"I will never leave *you.*" I reach up and frame his face with my hands. "Smith, you have to trust that I'll come back."

He's breathing fast, hard. Eyes growing glassy. "Trust a female? Never."

That statement is like a slap across the face.

I suck in a breath and push him away. He refuses to budge an inch, but his eyes are flooded with regret. Not enough to eclipse the panic and anger, but it's there.

"Posy..." he whispers miserably. "I'm—"

"Let's go, Posy," Baker grits through the door. "Don't let the understudy usurp you as principal dancer. We've worked too hard."

I hear my coach. His words have an impact. But the man in front of me has my full concentration. "Tell me you trust me to come back," I manage, heat searing the backs of my eyelids. "If we have any chance at all, there has to be trust."

He opens his mouth...

Hesitates.

I flinch.

"You've broken my heart," I gasp, ducking beneath his arms and collecting everything I can grab while still keeping hold of the blanket around me.

"No. You've broken mine. *You're ripping it out.*" He stalks across the room in the nude and bring his fist down in the middle of the kitchen table, splitting it down the middle, the furniture collapsing in a pile of lumber. Even in the midst of his rage, he's magnificent. Seething with muscle. More beautiful than any artist could depict in sculpture. "I'm going to die without you. I'm going to *burn alive.*"

My chest caves in. "Then come with me."

He's already shaking his head. Restless, he prowls from one end of the room to the other, raking his fingers over his shorn scalp. He wants to touch me. After five days of having our souls locked together, it's obvious to me as breathing. In the end, though, I've asked too much too soon. Maybe we both have? "You've made your choice."

Before I can respond to that ragged pronouncement, he's storming into the art room—

And one by one, he destroys his masterpieces with a hammer, shouting expletives at the top of his lungs. I watch it happen with tears streaming down my face, my heart in pitiful tatters. There is nothing I can do to fix what is happening, though. Not without giving up everything that I am. All of my potential. I can't remain here forever. I can't trust my heart to someone who will never give me the same trust in return.

Nor can I give up dancing, the thing I love, because he's too damaged to try and live in the real world with me. Eternal love weighs me down as I walk out of the warehouse, but I go nonetheless.

EIGHT

Smith

Reality—at least, the one I've created for myself—comes back to me in snippets of awareness. I'm lying on my side in the middle of the warehouse floor, surrounded by shards of glass. Some of them have buried themselves in my skin, but I feel nothing but the exit wound of my heart. The sound of dripping of water invades my catatonic state, the pain in my hands from smashing my artwork, the cold layer of sweat on my skin. And most of all, the hole in the center of my chest where my heart used to be. She took it. Stole it.

Posy.

I want to be angry with her. I want to *hate* her.

She made me fall so deeply in love with her that my existence suddenly makes sense. It had a purpose—her—and then she went away. But I can't hate her because my love for her keeps smothering it. My hunger. My obsession. She's mine and I need her. *I need her.*

If we have any chance at all, there has to be trust.

Her words drift in from the darkness and my blood goes hot, pounding in my temples. Is she right? If I trust her, can I have her back? How can I do that when my ability to trust has been trampled so thoroughly? And now she's left me. Left me after saying she wouldn't. I would be a fool to find hope in anything she says, wouldn't I?

If we have any chance at all, there has to be trust.

I roll onto my chest and grind my head against the concrete floor, slamming it there once. Twice. No amount of bashing is going to get her voice and image out of my brain. But I need to see her in person or I'm going to lose whatever is left of my sanity.

And there is something else.

A thorn under my skin twisting and twisting, telling me she is not safe. She is not safe being away from me. There is a threat to my Posy out there. My gut tells me what...who...represents this threat to her—and I'm afraid to believe what my instinct is telling me. Because it means Posy is in danger. And it means I've believed a lot of falsehoods over the years. From my brother. Baker.

Did he bring me Posy because he was rewarding me?

Or punishing *her*?

A snarl transforms my face and I climb slowly to my feet, stumbling toward the other room. Rushing through a shower and a change of clothes, though these ones are threadbare and old, as well. Not worthy of the ballet by any stretch, but I need to go there. I need to be with her or I'm certain I'm going to stop breathing.

"Posy," I rasp, lunging for the front door of my home. I haven't been outside in years, however, now I'm more afraid to remain inside these four walls without ever smelling her sweet scent again. Never holding her, kissing her or hearing her voice. No, I can't do it. I cannot. And I think she might be unsafe. If my girl needs me, then I will be there. Even if she has ripped my heart out, I will find her again and again. It's my life now. Going to her.

A moment later, I step into an orange sunset and my hand flies up to shield my eyes. Across the street, some kids ride by on their bikes and gape at me, pedal faster.

"Please," I shout hoarsely at them. "Where do I find the ballet?"



I'M a leper among the elite.

Walking through a sea of suits and sequins, the differences between me and Posy registering like daggers in my stomach. Maybe I pleased her body for a time, but she left because there is no world where beauty makes sense with a beast—and that's what I am. Prowling down the red carpeted center aisle of the theater while violins and cellos hit their crescendo in the air. There are ballerinas on stage. None of them are her, though, and therefore they might as well be invisible. *I want her now. I need her now.*

I don't realize I'm saying those words out loud until security guards rush up the aisle, hands creeping to their hips, as if they are on the verge of drawing their guns. "Sir? You need who?" They approach me cautiously, patrons beginning to flee up the aisle behind me and on the sides of the theater. "*Who* do you need? Are you looking for someone?"

"Posy," I push out of my raw throat. "Now!" I shout, my skin becoming too tight for my bones. I'm imploding without the sight of her. The smell of her. The longer I'm away from her, the more I'm losing my will to live. "*Posy!*" I bellow at the top of my lungs.

As if I've truly beckoned her with my unhinged entrance, she floats out onto the stage in a cloud of white feathers and sparkling diamonds—

And my knees stop functioning. I drop to the ground, shaken. Awed.

I knew it. I knew she was an angel.

She obviously hasn't noticed the commotion I've caused trying to find her and continues to dance, completely lost in the haunting strain of strings, her body leaping through the air and spinning gracefully, like something out of a dream. A fantasy. Heaven.

This girl was beneath me only hours ago with her thighs spread so eagerly? The same girl who bucked her hips on top of me, twisting my chest hair in her fists and calling me Daddy? I am not worthy of a female who can be the finest of both worlds, but here I am. Broken. Kneeling here, unable to spend any more days of my life without her, even if she spends every single one of them betraying me. Stomping on my heart.

“Just be mine,” I whisper, lurching back to my feet. “Please. No matter how, Posy.”

The guards attempt to block my path from her, finally drawing their guns, but I don’t stop. I can’t stop. Because she’s finally looking at me, frozen, her right hand reaching out.

“Smith,” she mouths.

My brother steps in front of me, blocking my view of Posy, and I roar through my teeth, attempting to shoulder my way past. Several more security guards have arrived in the aisle, though. Over a dozen of them. They attempt to wrestle me to the ground. I fight. I fight for everything that I’m worth and I keep my eyes on her, determined to reach her. I need to touch her. Need her skin on my fucking skin. “*POSY!*”

Tears beginning to track down her cheeks, she takes a step in my direction—until my brother whirls around, pinning her with a look. “Don’t you dare,” he snaps at her. “You’ve done more than enough already, tramp.”

I watch the fear come over my girl. Because of Baker.

She’s afraid of him.

My theory is confirmed.

The things she said to me back in the warehouse return in echoing snippets.

Your brother left me here with you against my will, Smith. Think about it.

He asked you to do him a favor.

I remember Baker on the witness stand at my trial, claiming he couldn’t remember exactly what happened that day at the lake. How the two girls cowered when he walked

into the courtroom. Things I've blocked from my memory. Or remembrances that were blurred by all the copious medication that came afterward. But I remember now.

He *made* those girls lie. Didn't he? He sacrificed me and skated away.

Still, the anger that realization causes inside of me doesn't even come close to my outrage on Posy's behalf. He's been bad to her. Bad to *my* ballerina.

Acid begins to boil in my middle. My head. Hotter and hotter. Out of control.

With a strangled growl, I renew my struggle with the security guards and knock three of them to the ground, throwing a right hook at a fourth and laying him down cold. There are too many of them, though, and one of them hits me with a taser, rendering my legs temporarily useless. Goddammit. The helplessness is impossible to bear. *Get to her. Get to her.*

She makes everything better.

My arms won't work, though, and they are trying to snap handcuffs around my wrists.

In horror, I watch as Baker climbs on to the stage and storms toward Posy, hands clenched into fists at his sides. No. No, please. Not when I'm restrained and can do nothing—

One by one, the dancers step in front of her.

They form a wall between Baker and Posy, arms crossed over their chests.

"Don't ever call her a tramp again," one of them says.

"You're done here," says another. "We're finished watching you bully her. And lie about us to manipulate her. Keep her isolated."

One of the ballerinas actually picks up a prop and throws it at my brother.

Posy looks stunned.

It's in that moment that I realize I've been very wrong about women. I've been lied to and misinformed and instead of finding out the truth for myself, I steeped myself in those falsehoods. Posy is the only female I could ever love, but right now, I would take a bullet for each of the dancers standing between danger and my ballerina.

Baker is not finished with his tirade. No, his face is mottled with rage and half of the audience is still there to witness it.

"My brother was supposed to cure you, but you came back an even bigger piece of trash than before!" he shouts at her.

Out of pure will, I make my limbs work, lunging to my feet. Toward the stage.

He will *die* for speaking to Posy that way.

"Women can't be cured, can they?" He's looking at me now, his teeth pulled back, his evil on full display. Sensing what's coming, my skin turns clammy. "That's why they need to be managed. You remember the girls from the lake, don't you, Smith? Of course you do. Their accusations put you in the institution. Sorry about that. I threatened to kill those bitches in their sleep unless they corroborated my story." He smirks. "I needed a sponsorship from their fathers to get into the fraternity I wanted in the fall. The old bastards were all too willing to write it for me once I painted a new picture for them. One where I saved the lives of their daughters from my violent brother. If only I'd gotten there sooner, I could have saved their virtue, too." His laughter makes my stomach roil. "By the end of my tearful story, *they* were the ones who felt guilty. Honestly, one of my finest achievements. Sorry you had to be a casualty."

It's true, then.

His manipulation and abuse sent me to live in a locked ward. Then a warehouse, to hide from the light of day. He's stolen years away from me.

Now he's stolen Posy?

No. Over my head body.

When I surge forward with a rafter-shaking roar, Baker's face turns white. The guards hit me with another blast from the taser, but it doesn't have any effect this time. There is a twinge of pain and I push through. Moving at a fast clip until I'm running. Going straight for his throat.

A flash of sparkling white enters my vision and I open my arms instinctively, knowing it's my girl. My angel. My Posy. I catch her up against my chest and heave a choked sound, cradling her and stumbling under the onslaught of sensations. My blood warms, head clearing. I can breathe better. I'm no longer caked in ice.

"I'm sorry," I say gruffly into her fragrant neck, running my hands all over her. Assuring myself that she is real. "I love you and I'm sorry. I will live in the sun. I'll live in your sun and I'll be the sun for you, too. Forgive me. *Forgive me* for not grabbing the privilege of being your man with both hands. I am now. I'm not human without you."

With her legs wrapped around my waist, she leans in, pressing our foreheads together, love shining in her eyes. "I was coming back to you after the show."

Her grace knows no bounds. "After everything?"

"After everything." Moisture shines in her eyes. "I love you too much to stay away."

Baker moves in my periphery and I twist around, shielding Posy with my body and growling at him over my shoulder. "Aren't you two so fucking cute? You're nothing but the trash under my feet. Neither one of you amounts to anything without me—"

A ballerina hits him over the head with a prop.

My brother goes down hard. Unconscious.

The remaining audience applauds, causing Posy to giggle into my neck.

And of course, *of course* the musical, carefree sound stiffens my dick in a hot second. "Where can we be alone?" I whisper against her mouth. "I haven't been inside of you in hours, little girl. How do I change that?"

She hums playfully, flexing her thighs on my hips. “First, you take me to my dressing room where we can touch each other. And then we go home. To my place or yours. It doesn’t matter, as long as we’re together.” I’m already walking backstage, grunting a thank you to the avenging ballerinas as I pass, my heart in my throat over Posy’s words. “Then we get started planning forever together.”

Heat brands the back of my eyelids. “Forever in the sun.”

Our mouths melt into a slow, winding kiss. “You *are* the sun,” she whispers. “You’ve just been behind a cloud. It’s gone now.”

“Gone,” I repeat thickly, kicking open the door of the dressing room she indicates, pulse sounding in my ears in the rhythm of her name. “It’s only us.”

“Only us,” she agrees when I set her down, drop into a kneel and begin peeling the tights down her legs, unraveling her ribbons and slippers, putting them aside. Kissing the mound beneath her tutu with reverence. Lick between her folds to find her sopping wet. Panting, I stand and unzip, throwing my ballerina up against the door, that ass back in my grip where it belongs. “Now climb on and rut Daddy back to life.”

EPILOGUE

Posy

Five Years Later

I pout at my husband, arching my back where I've been posing on the padded table for hours. "How much longer?"

"Almost done," he says, gruffly, staring hard at my thighs and shaking his head slowly. "Believe me, I'm ready for bed, too."

I pretend to be doubtful, even though the proof that he very much wants to take me upstairs to bed is thick behind his fly. "Are you, though? Like, really?"

Smith bares his teeth at me. "If the people who commissioned this piece weren't coming in the morning, you would already be passed out, full of my come, little girl. And you damn well know it."

My clitoris throbs between my legs. "That's how I fall asleep most nights," I say, running my fingers up my ribcage. "Maybe you should have me pose like that."

"It would hang it in our bedroom. I'd never sell it to anyone."

"You have nine pieces of your work hanging in our bedroom, husband." I giggle, and a muscle flexes in his cheek. "When people buy a piece of artwork featuring me, there is no

guarantee they will ever receive it. You end up keeping half of them.”

“That’s the risk they take when they buy a depiction of my world-famous wife.” He stands up, wincing at the bob of his erection. With a hand wrapped around his stiffness, Smith crosses the room in measured steps and the closer he gets, the heavier I start to breathe. We’ve spent countless hours in our house’s downstairs art studio, Smith modeling his glass work after me. After the first one sold for over a million dollars at auction, he became a household name in the art world, well known for being temperamental and possessive about my image...while also insisting that the world shouldn’t be deprived of my talent.

Smith has become a very rich man in his own right, but he has no use for the money, so most of his commissions end up on our wall. Personally, I think he just likes me sitting in one place. Posing. Being with him.

Sometimes I wonder if he has any intention of selling any of them ever again.

And if he doesn’t? So be it. My run as Giselle was a critically acclaimed success—after the wildness of opening night, of course. My love of dancing was recaptured after Smith set my soul free, reminding me how to soar. I’m a coach now within the same company and teaching our two young daughters ballet in my spare time.

There are truly no words to describe my happiness. But I’ll try.

Intoxicating.

Beautiful.

Never ending.

Joyful.

Lust fueled.

Filthy.

“There’s no reason we can’t create that pose right now,” my husband says through his teeth, drawing down the zipper

of his pants and reaching inside, forearm flexing. “Make it wet. I’ll fill it up good and messy.”

We watch each other in the dim light of the studio, chests rising and falling faster, faster, as I press two fingers to my slit through the material of my pink built-in tutu panties. I tease my clitoris, then rub it earnestly, opening my legs so my husband can watch. His own hand is busy in the meantime, stroking his shaft fast and rough, perspiration beginning to appear on his forehead and upper lip.

“Have I told you lately that I live for that silky little cunt?” He circles me slowly, leaning down to kiss my mouth with a hot twining of tongues as he passes. “For this sugar mouth. And those spoiled rotten tits.”

“They are spoiled,” I whisper, writhing under his hot regard. “You spoil them so good.”

“That’s right.” He palms my breasts in his hands, briefly clamping his knuckles around my aching nipples. *God*. “Can’t keep my mouth off of them, can I?” He delivers a sharp slap to my right breast, then the left, immediately soothing them with a gentle massage while I whimper. “So sweet and sensitive. Like fresh fruit. But *this...*” A single fingertip trails down the center of my stomach, over my tutu and beneath, his huge hand closing around my sex. Squeezing. “This is the dead fucking center of my universe. This is where my cock gets relief. Where my children are born. Where my obsession gets her pleasure. I *burn* for this cunt.”

I’m using three stiff fingers to massage myself now, turned on by his words of ownership. His growling admissions. My breath is sawing in and out of my lungs, my orgasm closer. Very close. “S-Smith...”

He stands beside me, jaw slack, stroking himself with more and more urgency. “I know, little girl. You want me to put it in.”

“Yes.”

“How deep?”

“All the way.”

“All the way in?” He positions himself at the end of the table and in one swift movement, yanks me by the ankles to the very edge. “You want me to fuck you full of seed?”

Oh my God, I’m dying. *“Please!”*

Looking me in the eye, he tugs aside my built-in panties and shoves himself deep, making my orgasm crown with a vengeance. *Oh. Oh. My lord. Smith.* Sweating, teeth on display, he pumps once, twice, a third time, then kicks into a blurring rhythm that prolongs my release, makes me whine his name, everything below my bellybutton knitted up tight, so tight, the tension ebbing in degrees while his is quickly building to a fever pitch.

Before I know what’s happening, he’s climbing onto the table on top of me, dragging me up the padded leather and giving me all his weight. His breath in my ear. His invasion of my body ferocious. “You saved my life,” he rasps, pinning my wrists high above my head, the table creaking beneath us. “You save it every day just by breathing. By being real.”

“You saved me, too,” I manage to gasp, looking him in the eye, shaken to my core. “I love you.”

The muscles in his throat grow pronounced with strain, those three words pushing him over the edge, as always. “God, my sweet ballerina,” he grits out, dropping his forehead to mine, his warmth blooming inside of me. Flooding my womb, my chest, my soul. “I love you, too.”

THE END

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MISSY IS TOO smart for her own good. All she wants is to be loved and surrounded by laughter, but her intimidating brain has driven everyone away and left her lonely. Running the family corporation and going home to an empty mansion

every night. A baby will solve the problem, though, won't it? A child will love her unconditionally. Missy's intention is to visit a fertility doctor...until she spies the rugged giant working in her company's warehouse. Turk makes her inexperienced body feel uncomfortably warm and restless. Perhaps she won't need the doctor to accomplish her baby-making mission after all...especially if Turk has anything to say about it.

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