

BAILEY

LOVE IN THE APOCALYPSE

N.A. JAMESON

Bailey

Love in the Apocalypse

N.A. Jameson

Bailey: Love in the Apocalypse

Copyright © 2023 by Courtney Moniz writing as N.A. Jameson

All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods, without the prior written permission of the publisher, except as permitted by U.S. copyright law. For permission requests, contact [include publisher/author contact info].

The story, all names, characters, and incidents portrayed in this production are fictitious. No identification with actual persons (living or deceased), places, buildings, and products is intended or should be inferred.

Book Cover by Kay's Covers

Contents

[A Note From Nebby.](#)

[Dedication](#)

[Prologue](#)

[Lessons Learned](#)

[1. Chapter 1](#)

[2. Chapter 2](#)

[3. Chapter 3](#)

[4. Chapter 4](#)

[5. Chapter 5](#)

[6. Chapter 6](#)

[7. Chapter 7](#)

[8. Chapter 8](#)

[9. Chapter 9](#)

[10. Chapter 10](#)

[11. Chapter 11](#)

[12. Chapter 12](#)

[13. Chapter 13](#)

[14. Chapter 14](#)

[15. Chapter 15](#)

[16. Chapter 16](#)

[17. Chapter 17](#)

[Broken Rules](#)

[18. Chapter 18](#)

[19. Chapter 19](#)

[20. Chapter 20](#)

[21. Chapter 21](#)

[22. Chapter 22](#)

[23. Chapter 23](#)

[24. Chapter 24](#)

[25. Chapter 25](#)

[26. Chapter 26](#)

[Epilogue](#)

[Afterword](#)

[Also By N.A. Jameson](#)

[About Author](#)

[Stalk Me](#)

[The Christmas Pact](#)

A Note From Nebby

Spoilers and TW's ahead

Bailey is not for the light-hearted. Yes, there will be a HEA, but Bailey has not had an easy life. She was SA as a child, had to raise her infant brother, and does get SA again. That's a necessary spoiler because I want you to know what you're getting into. Bailey is also filled with heart, healing, and learning to love even when your entire life teaches you not to. Bailey's men come into her life and teach her how to love herself and be loved. The baddie DOES get it in the end. Please be mindful of your triggers.

Bailey may be the strongest, most badass FMC I've written to date, and I promise her story will move you.

Also, zombies.

xoxo,

Nebby

Bailey is a dark reverse harem featured in an apocalyptic setting. Our FMC won't have to choose between her men.

Please be mindful of your triggers. Bailey contains past child sexual assault, trauma, death, murder, rape, references to necrophilia, and spicy content meant for an adult audience. While it deals with dark themes, it is also a story about healing and overcoming your past.

This book is dedicated to every survivor of sexual abuse.
Especially the two women who helped me get Bailey's story
right.

Prologue

Bailey – Age 10

2 hours east of Nashville, TN

My heart was thundering in my chest. Daddy told me to run to the garage and not to look back. Mommy was sick like those people from the news, and she tried to get me and Matty. Daddy told me to run. I silently watched the door that led into the house, wishing Daddy would come through it with Matty.

Finally, I heard Matty's cries getting closer, and relief flooded me as Daddy came barreling through the door with Matty, slamming it shut behind him. A loud thud on the other side of the door told me Mommy was still after us. Daddy handed me my fifteen-month-old brother and barricaded the door as best he could. He came down the few steps and held me by my shoulders, ushering me towards the big roll-up door, the clicker for it in his hands.

He pulled a walkie-talkie from his pants pocket and held it to his mouth. "House two sixty-six is ready for extraction, threat

still active.” Someone answered him, and their words sounded jumbled to my ears before Daddy put the walkie-talkie back in his pocket and knelt before me. “Ok, Buttercup, listen to me. Some people are going to come to get us. I need you to be a big girl and care for your brother. Can you do that? Can you do that for Daddy?”

“Yes, sir,” I whispered, flinching from another loud bang from the door. He pulled me and Matty into his arms and squeezed tightly.

“Good girl, I knew I could count on you. I love you both so much.” He kissed my forehead, then Matty’s. I heard a loud truck pull up outside before three loud knocks rang on the aluminum door. Daddy went over to the button, his hand slapping it in haste. The door started to rise as wood splintering filled the garage. Fear paralyzed me as I watched Mommy start to bust through the door.

Daddy grabbed us and shoved us under the rising door, crawling out behind us. He wrapped his arms around us and lifted us into a pair of waiting arms. He stood up on the tire and held my face in his hands. “I’m sorry, Buttercup, be strong. I love you so much; don’t ever forget that.” He jumped off the truck and turned back to the garage. Mommy was halfway through the hole she had made in the door.

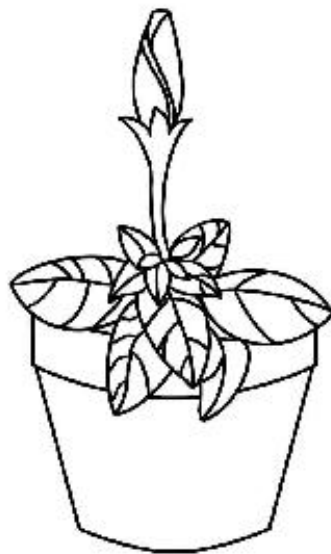
“Hal, what the fuck are you doing? Get in the God damned truck! Carrie is gone, Hal! You can’t help her anymore, but you sure as fuck can help your kids!”

“Take care of them, Jordan. She’s the love of my life. I can’t just leave her,” Daddy said, not sparing us a second look.

I felt the truck shift into gear, the engine’s roar drowning me out. “Daddy!” I screamed. He didn’t look back, and the last thing I saw before we drove out of view was the blood shooting from his body from Mommy tearing into him as he held her tightly in his arms. He chose death with her over life with us.

That was the first lesson the zombie apocalypse taught me. Love is a weakness, and it makes you do some really dumb shit.

Lessons Learned



Chapter One

I was startled awake and lay there trying to control my breathing as the remnants of the familiar nightmare washed over me. I had been having that nightmare for the last seventeen years. You would think that it would have stopped affecting me by now. Though, I'd take that nightmare over the other ones I have regularly. I listened to the sounds of the house, trying to pinpoint what had woken me, when I heard the slight squeak of the screen door hinges as it was quietly opened and shut.

I shook my head as I smiled to myself. Matty. He thought he was sneaky with his secret relationship with the girl who lived a few miles away, but he wasn't. His relationship with Anna was the worst-kept secret around. Her parents and I have discussed it several times while laughing at how they thought they were being slick. My smile faded as I thought about the fact that he was over eighteen and would be leaving soon. Anna's parents told me they would invite him to live with them as they weren't comfortable letting their daughter go and

had plenty of room. They ran a much bigger operation than I did. They offered to let me move in, too, but that wasn't something I could do. Never again would I live in someone else's house.

After that fateful day, Uncle Jordan cared for Matty and me for about six months until he went on a scouting mission and never returned. After that, a couple, Jenn and Scott, took us in, and I was relieved that I would have help taking care of Matty. I was relieved until Scott came into my room one night and almost every night after that for seven years. I told Jenn what was happening, and she laughed. "Better you than me," she had said. "What? Did you think living under our roof, eating our food, and benefiting from our protection wouldn't cost you anything?"

That was when I learned the second lesson of the zombie apocalypse. Nothing is freely given, not anymore. Every kindness comes with a price, and you better make sure you can pay it. So, for seven years, I endured. It kept Matty safe and fed. I wasn't old enough to care for him alone; I needed their help. Plus, it allowed me to learn how to shoot and fight, survive in this apocalyptic nightmare, and make sure Matty survived it. It wasn't until Matty turned eight and I noticed Scott paying more attention to him that the price became too much. I wouldn't let that man touch my brother. It was time for us to leave and make it on our own.

I had been going on scouting trips for the past two years. Before its official fall, the government had built massive concrete walls around the bigger cities, containing most of the

infected population. There were still plenty of zombies around, but they tended not to be in numbers so big that one or two people couldn't easily kill them on their own. On one of my trips, I located a pharmacy. Most useful medications were cleaned out, but I stumbled upon a nice little stash of sleeping pills. I took and hid them, knowing they might come in handy one day.

It took me a week to solidify my escape plan and squirrel away as much as possible, hidden in a bag in the barn. I would do a final sweep the night of as we were leaving. The plan was set. All I had to do was wait for my opportunity. I had already ground up the pills into powder. Finally, one night, my opening came. Jenn and Scott were celebrating their anniversary, ironic, considering he'd spent the last seven years of their wedded bliss raping a child. Because they were celebrating, they got drunk early in the evening and began having me fetch their drinks. I slowly put more and more of the sleeping powder into their drinks until it was all gone and lights out for them.

I wasted no time gathering food and packing the rest of my and Matty's things. Quietly, I took him to the barn, fetched the rest of the supplies, then saddled up my favorite two horses and took off. I had an idea of where I wanted to go, the most critical factor being as far away from Jenn and Scott as possible. To this day, I have no idea if they ever woke up from their drug-induced slumber or not, but I do know they never found us. After traveling for several days, we came across this abandoned house, still in great shape, and moved in. It had a

barn, a paddock for the horses, and the capabilities to provide us with a decent living. Eventually, I met more of the neighbors around us, and while I would never fully trust anyone, I did need to trade with them for livestock and other essentials.

Ten years later, here we still were. I had a farm that provided more than enough for us, and we didn't see zombies too often. The house had solar panels, so we were lucky to have hot water, heat, and lights, and our stove was electric. All the top-notch amenities one looks for in the zombie apocalypse. I managed to raise Matty to be a brave, intelligent, sweet, capable young man, and now he wanted to leave me. I couldn't blame him as much as I wanted to. He deserved to find happiness in life. Knowing this day is coming doesn't make it any easier.

I heard the scraping of the kitchen chairs on the floor and what definitely sounded like more than one set of feet. I jumped out of bed and grabbed my knife and shotgun, opening my door quietly and creeping down the hall. Maybe it wasn't Matty coming home after all. Whoever it was, they made a mistake coming into my home. I rounded the corner and silently took in the scene before me. Matty was here, as well as four other men. I tried to figure out precisely what was happening as they spoke to each other in hushed, excited voices.

That was when I saw a fifth man being held between the others, blood dripping from a wound in his leg. "Here, put him on the table," Matty instructed them. They placed him on the

table as I cocked my gun and pointed it at the injured man's head. They all froze at the sound.

“What the fuck is going on, Matty?” I said evenly. “Who are these men, why did you bring them here, and more importantly, has he been bitten?” Matty jumped between the man and my gun, causing me to lower it instantly.

“B, don't shoot anyone. They're with me, well, I found them anyway. He hasn't been bit. He broke his leg in a gopher hole.” I gave him a long, hard stare, making him gulp.

“And why did you bring them here instead of Anna's?”

“Anna- why would I- how did you- I- None of that is important right now,” he said, flustered. “I brought them here because we have the room, and everyone knows his best chances are with you.” I gave a long sigh and looked up at the ceiling. He wasn't wrong. I spent most of my free time as a child learning everything I could about how to help people. I was lucky enough to spend time with several doctors and nurses through the years who happily taught me everything they could. I had to learn as much as possible to take care of Matty.

“Fuck. Fine. Get his pants off, and then everybody wash their hands. Matty, start a pot of water to boil. I'll grab out my kit. This won't be pretty, and I can't make any promises on the outcome, but I'll do what I can.” I placed the gun and knife on the counter and pulled my hair into a messy bun.

“Ummm, Bailey,” Matty said, keeping his eyes on my face.

“What?”

“You might want to put on clothes first,” he said. I looked down at myself and cursed. Sure as fuck I was in a tank top and a pair of panties. I didn’t even bother getting dressed before I came out here. Well, that was a little embarrassing.

“Don’t feel you have to on our account,” one of the men closest to me purred, reaching out a finger and trailing it down my arm in a flirty gesture. In an instant, I had his hand twisted back with him on his knees in front of me. A little more pressure, and I’d be setting two broken bones.

“Do. Not. Touch. Me. Touch me again, and you’ll be carting your friend off into the night to try his luck surviving in the wild broken and bleeding, got it?”

The man hissed but nodded. “B! Let him go, he didn’t know, and you’ve made your point,” Matty ordered. I released the man, and he climbed to his feet, eyeing me cautiously. My gaze snapped to Matty, who took a half step back.

“I’m going to go change. You brought these men here. Tell them not to touch me. I don’t care if you have to tell them why. Just make sure everyone is on board by the time I get back, or they can leave.” I left the kitchen and paused in the hall long enough to hear Matty.

“Listen, my sister isn’t as unpleasant as she seems. She’s been through a lot. We lived with this couple for seven years, and every night, the man... did things to her... assaulted her. So, just no touching, especially without her knowing you will touch her. As you saw, that’s a fast way to get a broken hand.”

Satisfied that they were told all they needed to comply, I returned to my room to get dressed.

I quickly pulled on a bra, shirt, and jeans before shoving my feet in socks and boots. Nothing fancy, no such thing in the apocalypse. Grabbing my medical supplies, I rushed back into the kitchen. The atmosphere was much more somber than it had been when I left. I placed my supplies on the kitchen table and noted that they had removed their friend's jeans. The man who had touched me approached me cautiously.

"Listen, I just wanted to apologize for my actions before. I don't have an excuse. Who touches a stranger without their permission? Apparently me. Anyway, my name is Caleb, and these are my friends." He gestured to the men around the room. "Boone, Pike, Ethan, and Gray is the one on the table. We really appreciate any help and hospitality you can offer."

I nodded at him, "Bailey. And you've already met my brother, Matty. I'll do what I can for your friend." I grabbed iodine out of my bag along with a clump of cotton and approached Gray's leg. "I'm going to need you all to keep him still. This isn't going to be pretty, and unfortunately, I can't spare the pain medicine to numb him. Hopefully, he passes out quickly."

They all moved closer to the table, prepared to hold their friend down, while Matty came to stand near me to help. I examined his leg visually first to see exactly what I was working with. He had a compound fracture, the shin bone sticking out of the top of his leg. I swabbed the entire area as

gently as possible with the iodine, disinfecting the whole area.
“The good news is it looks like a pretty clean break.”

“The bad news?” Gray huffed out.

“The bad news is this really will hurt like a bitch. And I have no way of knowing until it heals that I got it lined up right.”

“Just do what you can, Doc,” Gray said.

“I’m not an actual doctor,” I cautioned absentmindedly as I eyed his leg, taking in the angle of his foot and mentally mapping out the direction I would need to twist and pull to get it set straight, hopefully. “Ok, someone get his belt and stick it in his mouth. Matty, I need you to get in position to help hold his leg still at the knee. The rest of you get ready. I need him as still as possible, or I could mess his leg up even more.”

They all moved into position, placing the belt between his teeth and grabbing him. A couple draped themselves across his torso and hips, two held him down at his shoulders, and Caleb grabbed his other leg to pin it down and make sure I didn’t get kicked in the face. I grabbed Gray’s ankle and foot in my hands and braced one of my own feet against the edge of the table. “Everyone ready?” They all nodded at me. “Ok, on three. One, two, three.” I pulled his leg towards me, and the bone slid back under his skin, hopefully in place. Gray screamed at the top of his lungs as he was held immobile before passing out from the pain.

“Thank God, this part is going to be even worse.” I took a steadying breath, then still pulling backward on his leg, I turned his foot to the proper position. You could hear the

bones realigning themselves in his leg. Slowly, I released the pressure on his leg, letting it fall naturally back into place, hopefully meeting up with its other half correctly.

“Matty, trade places with me and hold his ankle still. Don’t let his leg flop or turn.” I felt around at the break site, running my fingers over the bone and probing it to see if it was aligned. I didn’t feel any apparent issues with the fix, so I prayed I had done it. I swabbed the area again before getting my suture kit and stitching the wound closed. It wasn’t pretty, and it would scar, but it was the best I could do.

I grabbed the thin boards I had brought to the kitchen and slid one underneath his leg. “Ok, this is the part I will need help with, and hopefully, he stays down until we’re finished. I need his leg lifted slightly on this board and these other two boards on either side. I will wrap the boards to his leg as tight as possible. This is as good a cast as I can come up with. If he makes it through the next few days and things look like they’re going well, maybe I can make a run to a nearby hospital or clinic and get materials for an actual cast. Either way, I want that wound to heal first.” I wrapped as I talked, and soon we were done. They lifted him, and I led them to one of the downstairs spare rooms, where they placed him on the bed.

“He should be fine here. I’m sure he will call for someone if he needs anything.” I returned to the kitchen and began cleaning up, the other four men helping. Matty was putting all the medical stuff back in the bag.

“Matty, can you go out and collect the eggs? I’m betting everyone could use some breakfast.”

“Sure, B,” he pushed open the screen door, and time slowed as he was shoved backward by a zombie. As he struggled to hold him off, I grabbed the knife I had left on the counter and sent it flying across the room straight into the zombie’s head. Matty shoved it off him as I rushed over and inspected him for scratches or bites.

“Are you ok? Did it get you? Are you hurt?” Panic was in the driver’s seat as I checked him.

“I’m fine, Bailey, really. It didn’t get me; it just caught me off guard.” I breathed a sigh of relief, slumping against the door jam before reaching out and smacking him upside his head. “Ouch! What the hell, Bailey?”

“Did you close the damn gate when you came back?” I demanded.

“I thought I did,” he poked his head out the door and looked to where the gate was. “Ahh fuck. Don’t hit me again, but he brought friends.”

“What?!” I shoved him out of the way and stepped out onto the porch. Sure enough, I had several zombies that I could see meandering around my yard. I let out a tiny growl of frustration as I stomped back inside. Matty quickly retreated, staying out of reach of my hands. I marched over to my crossbow and grabbed it off its hook, slinging the quiver of arrows over my head.

“Five years, Matty. Five fucking years since one of them made it inside the fence. Then you come across these yahoos with a nice little pod following them, and you all lead them back to the house and forget to shut the fucking gate. That’s apocalypse one-oh-one, secure the fucking perimeter.” I stomped up to him and poked him in the chest. “Clean the mess off my porch. I’m going to put the rest of them down before they get into the chicken coop or the barn. It looks like breakfast will have to wait, boys. We’ll be burning dead bodies instead.”

I stomped back out the door, muttering about the stench of burning zombies and how it permeates everything, and I’m low on soap. It will take me weeks, if I’m lucky before I get the smell off of me. Before I stepped off the porch, I heard one of our guests say to Matty, “Bro, she’s kinda scary, but I think I might be falling in love with your sister.”

“Good luck with that,” Matty responded. “My sister doesn’t do love.”

Chapter Two

“My sister doesn’t do love.” Matty’s words echoed in my head as I peeked around the corner of the house to ensure there weren’t any zombies to sneak up behind me. Finding the area empty, I sprinted over to the gate to secure it so more zombies didn’t find their way in as I killed the ones that had. I tried not to feel hurt by his statement, even if it wasn’t entirely incorrect. I just hoped he knew that while I didn’t “do love,” I loved him with every cell in my body. I hope he didn’t doubt that.

My sprint to the gate caught the attention of a couple of the closest zombies, and they had changed course and were coming my way. I pulled out my knife and ran towards them, stabbing one and then the other in the head. Two down; who knows how many are left. Everyone had their name for them. Some called them walkers from some comic book turned-TV show from the pre-apocalypse era. Some were poetic and called them the undead. I called them zombies because I didn’t

see the point in getting creative with what to call the monsters of the world; well, the reanimated monsters, anyway.

There were far worse monsters out there than zombies, like humans. At least with zombies, I could easily identify and know their motives. I planted three arrows in the heads of the trio headed toward my pasture where the horses were grazing and continued to creep around the house towards the chicken coop and barn. The animals housed within had started making a fuss, so I needed to be quick before the zombies broke in and slaughtered them.

The zombies weren't terribly bright or fast, but in numbers, they were like a plague, and I still didn't know how many had gotten in the yard. I heard movement behind me and already had my knife out and was swinging it around when a hand shot out and grabbed my arm before I could make contact. Caleb looked at me wide-eyed as his eyes darted to the knife inches from his face.

"It's just us," he whispered in alarm. "We wanted to come help since we're the reason they're here in the first place."

I nodded and lowered my knife, tucking it back into its sheath. "Sorry, but you really shouldn't sneak up on people like that. That's how you get dead," I admonished.

"Noted," Caleb said, relaxing. He gave me a blinding smile, which slowly faded as I stared at him awkwardly. He looked like an angel with blond hair and blue twinkling eyes, which was strange for the apocalypse. How can he look that good when the dead come back to life and try to eat you? I looked at

his two friends standing behind him, staring at me. They, too, were attractive, but I wasn't paying attention when they were introduced.

“Who are you two again?” I asked.

“I'm Boone,” the tall, dark-haired man answered. He had green eyes, and I recognized his voice as saying he was falling in love with me.

“And I'm Pike,” The dark-skinned man added. His coffee-colored skin had several scars that added to his allure. Except for his eyes, this guy looked like he belonged in the apocalypse. His dark brown eyes were entirely too kind.

“Right. Caleb. Boone. Pike. Got it. Boone, go right. Pike, go left. Caleb, with me. If they get into my chicken coop or barn, I'm screwed.” I turned my back on them and continued across the lawn, trusting they could handle themselves. I took in the scene in front of me. Five zombies were loitering around the barn, bumping into it as they tried to get to the cows and goats. I could hear panicking inside. They were safe for now, so I turned my attention to the chicken coop, which was far less secure.

The coop had about eight zombies surrounding it, and the chicken wire was starting to give as my chickens flew around, freaking out. Once Boone and Pike were in place, I shot an arrow through the head of the zombie who had managed to get his arm through a hole in the fencing, then whistled. “Hey!” I said, trying to get their attention on me and off of the chickens.

It worked, maybe a little too well, as it also drew the attention of the ones around the barn.

The three men moved in while I stayed put and dropped zombies with my arrows until I was out. I had managed to down six of them while Pike and Caleb handled the other two. We moved in on the other zombies who had their sights set on Boone and worked as a team to take them down quickly. I double-checked my chickens, who were still in a tizzy, then checked the barn's perimeter for signs that a zombie had made it in. Everything looked fine, so I could relax, knowing my animals were out of immediate danger.

“Ok, let's check the rest of the property. Stay in pairs. I don't care who comes with me,” I said.

“Called it!” Boone said louder than necessary. The other men glared at him as he came over to me. He went to put his arm around my shoulders casually but pulled back when I flinched at the impending touch. “We aren't going to hurt you. *I'm* not going to hurt you. In time, you'll see that,” he said somberly.

“I doubt you will be here long enough for that, but thank you for not touching me anyway. Let's go.” He quickly fell into step with me as we searched the rest of the property to ensure we didn't miss any zombies.

“So you raised Matty on your own?” Boone asked conversationally.

“Basically, yeah. I mean, I had help, if you could call it that, which I am choosing to do since I paid for it with my body.

We stayed with that couple for seven years, and then when Matty was eight, I realized we had to leave if I was going to protect him from those monsters, so we left and found this place. That was about ten years ago.” I said it matter-of-factly, like a series of facts I was reciting.

“It must have been difficult to be on your own and raising a child,” Boone responded as we looked behind a shed closer to the fence line.

“Not really. Sure, there were challenges, but by then, I had learned as many skills as possible, and I knew that no matter what we faced out here, it was infinitely better than what we would have faced had we stayed. What about you?” I asked, changing the subject as we stopped by the horse paddock and waited for old Sampson to plod over to me.

“We were in a foster home together when all of this started. We holed up there for a while until the food ran out then we had to venture out into the new world and find our way. There used to be more of us, but they didn’t make it. Survival of the fittest, I guess. Now we’ve just been trying to find a defensible place we can settle down and call our own,” he replied. I heard the sadness in his voice when he mentioned his other foster siblings. The idea of losing Matty was too terrifying to think about.

Sampson finally made it over to us, and I stroked his head as he nuzzled my neck and then started to chew on the strands of hair that had escaped the bun. “I can’t imagine losing Matty,” I said, surprised at myself for voicing that thought.

“It hasn’t been easy,” Boone admitted. “The only thing that has kept us going is each other. Then Gray stepped in that damn gopher hole, and I thought we would lose him too. Thank you for helping him.” I looked at Boone and the sincerity on his face and nodded. I opened the gate and led Sampson out by his halter, making sure I had a firm grip. He wasn’t one to shy, but I wasn’t taking any chances with zombies in the vicinity and strewn across the yard.

The other horses came trotting over at the sound of the gate opening. While content in their pasture, every animal wanted freedom—even people. My mind drifted to Matty while I led Sampson through the gate, and Boone shut it behind him before the other horses could escape. “Thanks,” I said.

“We make a good team,” he replied with a twinkling smile. I rolled my eyes at him and made a noncommittal sound in my throat as I began leading Sampson toward the house.

“So, what happened to your parents, if you don’t mind me asking?” Boone asked as he fell in step with me. I froze for half a second before I continued walking.

“If it’s all the same to you, I’d rather not discuss my parents.” There wasn’t much to discuss, but admitting that our father chose death over us was embarrassing.

“Ok,” he responded easily. He’d probably go to Matty, but I didn’t care as long as *I* didn’t have to discuss them. As we approached the house, I saw Matty in the yard collecting bodies and tossing them on a sheet of metal we used as a sled to haul the zombies to the burn pit.

“Why are you outside?” I said in a panic. “I didn’t give the all-clear yet. What if we hadn’t gotten them all yet?” I said in a panic. Matty rolled his eyes at me as he took Sampson from me and hooked him up to the sled.

“I know how to take care of myself, Bails. I learned from the best.”

“Flattery will get you nowhere,” I told him.

“Don’t I know it,” he mumbled under his breath. Pike and Caleb were just walking up as Ethan looked at Matty in confusion. “She treats me like a child and prefers I stay inside and safe where I can’t get hurt even though I am more than capable of taking care of myself,” Matty said, answering a question that hadn’t been asked.

“I don’t know. I haven’t said anything about your nightly visits with Anna, have I?” I pointed out.

His face turned red, and his chest puffed out as he crossed his arms defensively. “How did you... how did you know about Anna? And how do you know that I sneak out every night?”

“You, my dear brother, are not as sneaky as you think you are,” I told him. “Why do you think I never take you on scouting trips with me? Sure, part of the reason is because I want you to stay where you are safe, but the other part is because you sound like a herd of elephants stomping through the forest.”

“Not to take your sister’s side or anything, kid, but how do you think we found you to get help for Gray?” Boone asked. “At first, I thought you might actually be a herd of elephants until I got closer.” A giggle bubbled out of me before I could stop it, and five heads snapped to me. Matty looked shocked, making me wonder when he last heard me laugh. The other four, well, they looked... hungry.

I cleared my throat uncomfortably. “Right, Matty, finish loading up all the bodies, then we can take them down to the pit to burn,” I instructed.

“Actually,” Caleb said, “If it’s ok with you, we’d like to help Matty and go with him to burn the bodies. It’s the least we can do.” Normally, I might have pushed back. I don’t like people doing things for me that might put me in their debt. But the zombies were here because of them, and I really didn’t want to smell like barbequed zombie for the next few weeks.

“Ok. I’ll check on the chickens and then your friend. Thank you.” I tried to think about how normal, well-mannered, socialized humans behave and added a tentative smile. I was rewarded with a beaming smile and a wink from Caleb. I walked away thinking that no matter how many times I tried, I would never be able to smile like that. It’s like a special skill or something.

I went inside and hung up my crossbow and empty quiver in their spots. Matty would collect and clean the arrows for me. I grabbed the crossbody cloth bag we used to collect eggs and slung the strap over my head. I peeked in on Gray, sleeping

soundly, then returned outside. Walking to the chicken coop, I ignored the men in my yard. I was reminded of a song Jenn used to sing growing up. I certainly didn't shake any milk, yet here they are.

I let myself into the coop and immediately spotted the chicken lying dead in the middle of the pen. I crouched beside it and inspected it for injuries but found none. The poor dear probably dropped dead from fright. I guess chicken is on the menu tonight. "Hi," a voice behind me said as I stood, causing me to jump three feet.

I spun around to find the man named Ethan standing on the other side of the fence. He held up a pair of needle nose pliers and gestured to the hole in the chicken wire from the zombie. "Caleb mentioned that there was a hole down here that needed patching, so I thought I'd come over quick and take care of it," he said as he knelt and began pulling the broken pieces back together. "Plus, I realized my brothers got to spend some time getting to know you, and I felt left out."

"Well, we can't have that now, can we?" I said back. I grimaced internally. Something about these men brought out parts of me I didn't even know I had. I don't do flirty banter. Ethan's copper hair shined in the sunlight as he fixed the fence with a smirk on his face without responding.

When he finished patching the hole, he stood up, looked at the chicken coop, and then around at the other buildings. "You know, since we're going to be here a while, we stopped overnight in a town with a Lowes about a day or so away. We

could go back and see if they have any building materials left and upgrade your coop and the other buildings. I saw a hospital down the road, too, and you said you'd need to run to a hospital for Gray."

"It's probably all been picked clean by now. Plus, how would we get it all back?" I asked.

"I'm sure we could figure something out. Think about it and let me know," he said with a smile as he walked away without giving me a chance to respond. I watched him walk away and found myself appreciating his well-toned body. He looked back with a knowing look in his light brown eyes as he continued walking, shaking me from my staring. I should send them all to Anna's with Matty for Gray to recover. Having them here is just too much. I'll discuss it with Matty later.

I combed through the coop, gathered the eggs, and took them and my dead chicken back inside. I hung the dead chicken on a hook over my sink and cut the head off, letting the blood drain from the carcass down the drain. Once it was bled, I scalded it and plucked the feathers, shoving them in a sack to deal with later. I finished processing the chicken, slathered it with a marinade I made, and put it in the fridge until it was time to cook. Gray was still sleeping, but I knew he would need to wake up soon and eat something so he could take some antibiotics to ward off any infection. I'd also give him some light pain medication to take the bite out of the worst of the pain.

As I was frying up the scrambled eggs and veggies from my garden, Matty opened his door and stuck his head in. “Hey, we’re leaving. It should only take us a couple of hours.”

“Ok, hey Matty?” I didn’t turn to face him as I talked. My brother knew me well, and I knew he would see right through me to why I was suggesting our new friends go to Anna’s.

“Yeah? Listen, if it’s about me being careful, I know. There’s going to be four other guys with me. I’m sure we can handle it,” he said as he came the rest of the way into the kitchen.

“No, it’s not that. I was just thinking that maybe the guys would all be more comfortable down at Anna’s. They have more room there and better accommodations. We could-”

“No,” Matty said, cutting me off.

“I’m sorry, no?” I asked. I faced him and placed my hands on my hips. He shrunk away from my glare for a moment before squaring his shoulders.

“No. They’re staying here. And maybe that scares you, and you would be more comfortable if they left, but I think it would be better for you if they stayed,” he said. He wrapped his arms around me and hugged me. “B, I know you have issues opening up to and trusting people, but you laughed today. I can’t remember the last time I heard you laugh. And I’ve seen you smile more times today than I’ve seen you smile in six months. Let them stay. They can help fix this place up while Gray gets back on his feet, and then you can decide whether you want them around or not. Give yourself a chance to grow as a person.”

I stood in his embrace for a moment in silence. “Who gave you permission to be so smart?” I grumbled to him, making him chuckle.

He put his hands on my shoulders and pushed me back to look at him. “You did. Everything I am is because of you and everything you’ve sacrificed over the last seventeen years. I’m leaving, and you’ll need somebody to boss around here. It may as well be five guys who have the hots for you.”

“Matty!” I exclaimed as I felt my cheeks heating.

“Don’t Matty me. You deserve to get some enjoyment and pleasure out of life, and I have a hunch that if you asked, they’d be more than willing to help you out with that. I get the sense that they wouldn’t be opposed to *all* of them helping you with that,” he said with a grin as he wagged his eyebrows at me.

The sound of a throat clearing came from the direction of the door. My eyes widened in shocked horror, and I knew my face must be beet red as I looked around Matty and saw all four of them standing there, grinning ear to ear. Jesus, fix it. Actually, I’d happily let the ground open, swallow me up, and send me straight to hell if it meant escaping this moment.

“We’re ready to go when you are, Matty,” Caleb said.

“And we cleaned and brought back your arrows,” Ethan added as he went over to my quiver and dropped them in.

“Umm, thanks,” I said as I turned back to the stove and the cooking eggs. Everything is normal. This is normal. If I ignore

them, they'll all go away and leave me to die of mortification in peace.

"I'm ready," Matty said, poking me in the back and following the men out. I held my breath while waiting to hear the screen door close, signaling I was alone again.

"Oh, and Bailey?" Boone said from the door. I turned to face him cautiously. "Matty is right about what he said. We're real good at sharing." He winked at me and left, the door slapping shut behind him.

I let the breath I was holding out with a huff. I rubbed the palm of my hand over my thudding heart. Well, shit. What the fuck was a girl supposed to do with that information?

Chapter Three

I finished cooking the eggs and plated them, stealing some bites. I added the plate to a prepared tray with utensils, a glass of water, and meds. I carried the tray into the room as Gray turned his head to look at me. “Hey Doc, everything work out ok?”

“I’m not a doctor,” I said automatically, “but I think I fixed you. Ultimately, time will tell, but I think you’ll be good as new once it’s healed.” I set the tray on the dresser and stuffed more pillows behind him to prop him up. Satisfied he was elevated enough, I carefully placed the tray on his lap. “I brought you food. You need to eat so that your body can heal. Nothing fancy just scrambled eggs and vegetables. There are some pills for you to take once you’re done eating.” I went around to the other side of the bed to check on his leg. The wound I had stitched closed looked good, with no angry redness indicating an infection.

“I really want to thank you, Doc. Without you, I wouldn’t have made it. You saved my life,” Gray said. He took a bite of

his eggs and moaned in pleasure while I huffed a sigh of exasperation at his continuing to call me Doc.

“You’re welcome,” I said as I pulled up a chair to sit by his bed. I may as well keep him company. That’s what a good host would do, right?

“Where are the guys?” Gray asked between bites.

“They went with Matty down to the burning pits to dispose of the zombies that followed you through the gate last night.”

“Was anyone hurt?” he asked me solemnly, fork frozen halfway between his plate and mouth.

“Nobody was hurt. The only casualty was one frightened chicken, which isn’t a total loss since she was one of my older hens, and now we get to have chicken for dinner,” I told him. He nodded and continued eating. Silence stretched awkwardly between us, and just as I was going to leave, he spoke again.

“Matty told us that you were abused as a kid,” he said quietly. Well, that’s one way to start a conversation.

“I guess we’re jumping right into that then,” I said humorlessly.

“We don’t have to talk about it if you don’t want to. I, I get it. I only brought it up because I wanted you to know I was too. That’s why I was in the foster home when the outbreak started. I just wanted you to know that I understand that pain and mental fuckery.” I stared into his blue-green eyes and saw only understanding and compassion in them.

Before I could stop myself, I brushed the black hair from his forehead and quickly yanked my hand back when I realized what I had done. “Yeah, well, I don’t like to talk about it. I did what I had to do to make sure Matty was cared for, and that’s all there is to it.”

“I didn’t mean to upset you,” Gray said softly. Slowly, so I knew it was coming and had time to pull back if I wanted to, he reached his hand over to cover the fidgeting hands in my lap. He squeezed my hands gently, “I just didn’t want you to feel weird about it.”

“Thanks,” I said quietly. I searched my brain for something to say to change the subject but was floundering. “Is it true you all share women?” I blurted. Oh, God. Seriously, when is this floor going to open up and take me? Gray’s sea foam eyes widened in shock at my question before he recovered, and a sexy grin spread across his face. He licked his lips, and I tracked the movement of his tongue as an unexpected need began to stir in me. This was crazy, and it definitely wasn’t me. I went to pull my hands away and stand when his grip tightened, keeping my hands trapped in his larger one.

“Don’t shy away from me now, Little Dove. You asked a bold question. Stand behind it,” he ordered gently. I took a shaky breath, then raised my eyes to meet his. I was not this woman; I’ve faced countless zombies, but five men have me all out of wack. “Good girl,” he said approvingly. Somehow, my face got even redder. “I’m not sure exactly what’s been going on out there while I’ve been stuck in this bed, but I’m not surprised that my brothers and I are all on the same page.”

His thumb began to move in soft strokes over the pulse on my wrist. “To answer your question, while it isn’t always easy to meet women these days, we decided a long time ago that we would share. That way, there won’t be any fighting between us. Plus, it makes it much more fun for the lady,” he winked.

“Good to know,” I said lamely. What does a person even say to that?

“Is that something you’d be interested in?”

“No,” I blurted, stunned. He arched an eyebrow at me. “Maybe, I don’t know!” I stood and leaned over to take the tray from his lap, bringing our faces closer together. Our eyes met, and my mouth went dry. His hand came up slowly to twirl a lock of hair that escaped the bun around his finger.

“Why don’t you let me know when you figure it out,” he purred. I gulped.

“Ok,” I whispered. Ok? Stop talking and leave Bailey! “I’m going to go—things to do. If you need something, yell,” I told him. I went to stand, and the hair he had wrapped around his finger tugged a little.

“I don’t think you’re ready to hear what I need,” he whispered seductively. My eyes widened as I straightened, my hair slipping from his hand.

“I think you’re right,” I said quickly as I left the room. As soon as I entered the hall and was out of sight, I leaned against the wall and closed my eyes. Jesus, I don’t think I’m ready for any of this. I ignored the dampness between my legs as I

pushed off the wall with determination and carried the tray into the kitchen. I quickly washed and dried the dishes I had used, then decided to get the chicken into the oven and shower.

I was finishing my shower when I heard what sounded like groans. I cut the water off and listened closely. A few seconds later, I heard more moaning. Panic set in as I jumped from the shower and wrapped a towel around me. What if we missed a zombie, and one of them had gotten into the house and found Gray? I grabbed my knife, burst through his open door, and breathed a sigh of relief when I saw only him in the room.

“What’s wrong?” I asked as I ran over to his leg to look at it. It looked fine, just like before. Worriedly, I pressed my wrist to his forehead to check his temperature. He didn’t have a fever. I looked at him expectantly as he groaned again. “What is it? I can’t help if I don’t know what’s wrong,” I demanded.

“I... I have to pee,” he said.

“You have to... oh! Umm, ok. Let me go get you a jar.” I rushed to the kitchen and found a jar. As much as I didn’t relish the idea of him peeing in one of my jars, there wasn’t much I could do about it. I’d have to boil the thing about fifty times before we had to can all the vegetables. I rushed back into his room and held the jar out for him. “Here, use this.”

“Thanks,” he said, quickly taking the jar from me. I stood awkwardly momentarily as he fumbled under the blanket before realizing he might like some privacy. I turned to leave and reached the doorway when he huffed out a frustrated sigh. “Doc? I.. I think I need help.”

I spun around to face him, “What?! Why?”

“I’m having a hard time getting everything lined up just right laying flat like this, and I can’t exactly reposition myself on my own because of the leg. If one of the guys were here, I’d have them help me, but you’re all I have, and I have to go so bad it hurts. Could you maybe help me sit up a little?” He asked desperately.

That didn’t seem like such a big ask, so I moved forward and took his hand in mine like we were going to arm wrestle. I wrapped my other arm around his shoulders and, in this proximity, became increasingly aware that I was only wearing a towel. “Ok, on three. One, two, three.” On three, I supported him as he began to sit up. Unfortunately, he also let out a shout of pain before flopping out of my hold and back onto the bed.

“Oh God, that hurts. Sitting up like that set my leg on fire. I can’t. Fuck,” he exclaimed, his whole face pinched in pain. I put my hands on my hips and looked down at him, trying to figure out our next move. I felt my entire body heat in embarrassment as I realized we only had one real option left. I was going to have to do it for him.

“I’m sorry. I know this is all sorts of weird and uncomfortable, but please, Bailey. It’s this, or I end up pissing all over myself and the bed, which would be even more humiliating,” he pleaded.

I glared down at him. “This isn’t some elaborate ruse to get me to touch your junk, is it?”

“Believe me. In all the many scenarios I’ve imagined you touching my cock for the first time, none of them involved me peeing in a jar. I’m not looking forward to this any more than you are,” he assured me.

Ok. I could do this. I was a professional. I’m just helping a man pee. The fact that said man wants to do dirty things to me with his four other friends isn’t relevant right now. He’s hurting and needs help. I checked to make sure the towel was still securely tied around me, then pulled down the blanket so I could see what I was doing. He had managed to get his cock out of his pants, and my eyes widened as I got my first look at it.

It wasn’t fully erect and was already a solid six inches. It had a large bulbous head, and the whole thing had a slight curve to the left. As I stared, it grew, and I quickly made eye contact with Gray. “Sorry,” he said, smiling sheepishly. “It has a mind of its own and can sense a pretty girl is admiring it.”

“I wasn’t... let’s just get this done,” I said brusquely. I took the jar from him, leaned over the bed, and held it between his legs. I had just wrapped my hand around his rapidly growing dick, ignoring the quiet moan from Gray, when someone spoke behind me.

“Well, well, well, what do we have here? You know, I’m honestly not all that surprised that my boy could make it so far in such a short amount of time, though I am disappointed that I missed so much,” Pike said from the door.

I jumped and let out a small scream as I dropped, probably more accurately described as spiked, the empty jar into Gray's balls, making him let out a howl of pain. "Oh, thank God! Your friend needs to pee. New rule: one of you stays behind to tend to his more personal needs," I said quickly as I rushed past him without making eye contact with either of them.

"Oh, I think he has some personal needs that you'd be much more suited for," Pike teased as I stopped dead in the hall. The other guys were all standing there grinning at me as I rushed from Gray's room in my towel. Even Matty smiled as he enjoyed this embarrassment at my expense.

"Did you put the horses away?" I asked.

"Not yet," Matty answered.

"Well, what are you waiting for? You lot put the horses away and feed the animals. Then hose yourselves down outside. You stink. Assuming you all have more than just the clothes on your back, put your dirty clothes in the washer, and I'll get them cleaned. And someone go help Gray pee before his bladder explodes," I ordered as I stomped towards my room. "And make it snappy. Dinner will be ready soon." I went into my room and closed the door behind me. The only thing worse than helping Gray pee was getting caught helping Gray pee.

I quickly dressed in shorts and a shirt, taking advantage of the still-warm weather. Fall was rapidly approaching, and soon it would be cold again. I added chop firewood to my mental list of things that need to be done. The house had baseboard heat, but it didn't work all that great, so having a fire in the

fireplace in the living room was super helpful. There have been plenty of cold winter nights when Matty and I camped in the living room.

Once dressed, I cracked my door open to peek into the hall. It was empty, so I quietly passed Gray's closed door and into the kitchen to finish making dinner. The chicken wasn't entirely done yet, so I prepared the vegetables. I was slicing carrots when Pike came into the kitchen.

"Gray's bladder is no longer exploding," he announced.

"Good, thank you."

"Hey, listen, Bailey, I want to apologize for my teasing earlier. I wasn't truly appreciating the uncomfortable position you were forced into and should have been more sensitive."

I stopped slicing and turned to face him. "Did Gray tell you to say that?"

"No. I mean, he told me I was out of line and should apologize but didn't tell me what to say," he said quickly.

"Well, apology accepted," I responded. I went to say more but fell silent when I heard shouting from outside. "Now what?" I asked as I followed Pike outside. I blinked in shock as a raccoon with a chicken egg in its mouth ran past the front porch, followed by three very naked men. Matty was over by the hose, rolling around and laughing as he watched the other men try to catch the raccoon.

"Are they really trying to chase down a raccoon right now?" Pike asked in astonishment.

A giggle bubbled out of me before turning into full-blown laughter. “I think they are. When should I tell them that is Chester and we have an understanding? I let him swipe an egg occasionally, and he doesn’t kill my chickens or tell any of his raccoon buddies about my coop.” Chester reached the fence and jumped into a tree, catching himself on the branches as they shook from his sudden weight.

I felt a blush creep onto my face as Boone, Caleb, and Ethan turned and started back towards us, dicks swinging as they walked. What is it with these men and their oversized dicks? Is it even statistically possible for none of them to have a small dick? I side-eyed Pike, the only one who’s dick I haven’t seen yet. Maybe he’s the one in five. I guess only time will tell. Pike caught me looking at him and grinned at me.

“It’s bigger,” he said confidently.

“I didn’t ask. I’m going to finish dinner. You go get cleaned up.”

He saluted me playfully, “Yes, Ma’am.” I shook my head and went back inside to finish dinner.



“So since you have such a full house, I think I’m going to go ahead and move to Anna’s now,” Matty announced after dinner, setting his packed bag down as he entered the living room. I was relaxing with a book about plants since my guests insisted I let them clean up the kitchen.

“What?! I’m not ready for you to leave yet, and like hell you’re leaving me alone with them. Don’t do this to me, Matty, please,” I begged, sitting up and tossing the book aside. Matty came and sat down on the couch beside me and took my hands in his.

“Bails, you knew this was coming before I knew you knew this was coming. It’s time. I’ll be back tomorrow and every day after to check in on you until I’m sure you can live without me for more than a day,” he promised teasingly, coaxing a smile to my face.

“Ugh, fine, but I still don’t like it. And I’m going to miss you,” I told him, pulling him in for a hug. I squeezed him tightly and tried to hold back my tears. My baby brother was leaving the nest, and I wasn’t sure how to process that. My entire life has revolved around taking care of him. Maybe having five strangers in my house is a good thing. They will keep me distracted from Matty’s absence. Matty started making dramatic suffocating noises, so I released him.

“You’re going to be ok, Bails. I’m going to be ok. You’ll see. This is a good thing. Maybe now you can focus on what makes you happy.”

“You make me happy,” I argued.

He rolled his eyes at me, “You need to get a life, B. Lucky for you, five guys are more than willing to help you with that. Promise me you will give them a chance and won’t shut them out. Keep an open mind and see where it goes. You might be surprised.”

“I promise, but I’m not sure what to do about them, Matty,” I whispered, showing my vulnerability.

He ran a hand over my hair and pulled me in for another hug. “I know we’ve only known them a day, but they seem like pretty upstanding guys. Let them take the lead. You don’t have to do anything you don’t want to. They can take the lead, but you call the shots, Bailey. Just try to have some fun.”

I leaned back to look at him. “You’re the best little brother in the whole entire world, and I hope you know how much I love you,” I told him. I leaned forward and planted a loud, smacking kiss on his cheek.

“Ok, that’s enough of this,” he said as he wiped his cheek and stood. “Why do you always make things weird?” he asked, making me laugh.

“Come on, I’ll walk you out.” He grabbed his bag, and I followed him through the kitchen, which went silent as we passed through and outside. I wrapped an arm around his back as we walked to the gate. Once we reached the gate, Matty turned and hugged me goodbye.

“You’re the best big sister in the whole entire world, and I love you too,” he whispered. I swallowed past the lump in my throat as he stepped away from me and walked through the gate. I secured it closed behind him and waved as he walked down the road. I stood there trying not to cry until I couldn’t see him anymore. Composing myself, I walked back to the house.

When I entered the kitchen, four pairs of eyes turned to look at me. I froze briefly under their stares. “Right, I’m going to bed. There are three bedrooms upstairs you can use. Two of you will have to double up unless you take the couch in the living room instead. Make yourselves at home, and I’ll see you in the morning.” I didn’t give them a chance to respond as I quickly left the kitchen. I went down the hallway towards my bedroom and stopped to check on Gray, who was peacefully sleeping, before closing myself in my room.

Once I was safely behind the door, I let out a sigh of relief. Usually, I slept with the door open, and maybe once everyone went to bed, I’d open the door, but for now, I needed it closed. I took off my bra and shorts and climbed into bed. I listened to the less-than-quiet house as I tried to get used to the sounds of five other men living there. I was certainly out of the frying pan and into the fire now.

Chapter Four

Surprisingly, I fell asleep quickly. Unfortunately, I wasn't sleeping for long before I woke up from another nightmare about my parents. I lay in bed and listened to the sounds of the house while I tried to go back to sleep. After what felt like an hour, I gave up with a sigh. I got up and almost left the room without pants again. I needed to start remembering them now that I had company. I slipped on loose pajama pants and tiptoed to the kitchen.

As quietly as possible, I made myself a cup of hot tea and then took it outside to drink on the porch. The sky was just starting to lighten, so I must have gotten more sleep than I realized. I sat on the porch swing and sipped my tea, thinking about the day ahead and what needed to be done. I jumped slightly as the screen door opened, and Boone came outside with a blanket wrapped around him and over his head like a cloak.

"Is everything ok?" he mumbled sleepily as he sat beside me, causing the swing to bounce slightly. He immediately took

over the movement of the swing, so I folded my legs under me.

“Fine. I just had a nightmare and couldn’t get back to sleep. It’s normal,” I said to him. I felt him looking at me before I watched in my peripheral as he slowly reached for me. I would find it funny how they all make exaggerated slow movements when they’re about to touch me if it wasn’t necessary.

One hand gripped my far shoulder, and the other crossed my lap to grab my outer thigh. He dragged me towards him until there was only about an inch of space between us and moved the blanket so that it was now wrapped around us both. “Do you want to talk about it?”

We sat silently as I debated whether I wanted to discuss it. I never spoke about my nightmares, mainly because the only person around was Matty, and my issues weren’t his burden. I took another sip of my tea and decided to try this open-minded, don’t shut them out thing Matty suggested. I shifted slightly to get more comfortable, which caused me to cuddle into Boone a little bit. I was aware of his arm around my shoulder but ignored it as I began to speak.

“I had a nightmare about the day our parents died. It’s one of my recurring nightmares.” I took another sip of my tea as I organized my thoughts and what to say. Boone said nothing as he patiently waited for me to continue, his thumb lightly stroking my upper arm. “I was ten when the outbreak happened. Matty was just a baby still. I don’t remember what day of the outbreak it was. I was so young that I didn’t realize

anything was wrong until it entered our house. My mom must have been bitten because I awoke to terrible sounds and my father shouting. I rushed out of my room and ran down the hall to my parent's room. Matty's crib was still in the room with them, and I remember standing in the doorway watching as my father held my mother off as he stood protectively in front of Matty's crib. Matty was crying, my dad was shouting at my mother to stop, and she was making these animalistic sounds as she kept lunging for my father. It's weird the things you remember. I couldn't tell you what color the walls were, but I'll never forget the sound her teeth made snapping together as she tried to bite my dad."

Boone pulled me a little closer, and I didn't resist, enjoying the comfort his presence brought. "I must have made a sound because my parents looked at me standing in the doorway simultaneously. My dad yelled at me to run to the garage just as my mother turned towards me. Now, he was holding her back instead of pushing her away. I did what he asked and ran through the house quickly. It felt like an eternity as I stood in the garage shaking while I waited for Dad and Matty to come out. Finally, they got there, and Dad handed Matty to me as he locked the door behind him. I could still hear Mom banging against the door on the other side.

"I remember Dad radioing to someone and the garage door opening as Mom began to break through the door. Dad put us in the back of a truck and told me he loved me and to take care of Matty. Then he returned to the garage while Uncle Jordan yelled at him to be with Mom. The memory is fuzzy and

sounds like I'm hearing everything underwater except for one clear statement. My dad said that Mom was his life's love, and he couldn't leave her. He chose to abandon his children to die with her. The last thing I saw was all the blood as he hugged her. It's the kind of thing that you can never unsee or forget. If anything, I think it's gotten sharper with time."

Boone didn't say anything immediately, and I began to fidget nervously as the silence stretched. Maybe telling him was a mistake. "I'm so sorry you had to go through such a traumatic experience," he finally said softly. "It makes sense why Matty said you don't do love when at such a young age you learned to associate it with your parents dying."

I tipped my head up to look at him. Well, wasn't he just an observant smarty pants? "It's not that I don't *do* love. I love Matty. It's just that... well, the first lesson the apocalypse taught me was that love makes you do stupid shit, so where possible, decisions should be made without factoring love into them."

"I'd have to agree to disagree with you on that. In my experience, sometimes love is the most important factor."

"I'd have to see it to believe it," I said honestly.

"You've lived it though, haven't you?" I was confused by his question until he asked another. "What was the second lesson the apocalypse taught you?"

I looked down at my lap and swallowed several times before answering. "There's no such thing as a good deed. Everything

comes with a price,” I whispered. He pulled me even closer, tucking my head under his chin.

“And you selflessly paid that price for seven years to keep Matty safe because you loved him. That was the most important factor. If you took that out of the equation, you would have left to save yourself, but you didn’t. You stayed because you loved Matty and couldn’t take care of him alone yet,” he said softly.

“Well, of course I love him!” I argued, pushing away from him to look at him better. “I did what I had to because I loved him and could never have turned my back on him. Are you saying I was stupid for letting that vile man touch me every night?” I started breathing heavier as my anger rose.

“That’s not what I’m saying at all,” Boone replied evenly. “That’s the conclusion according to your rule. I’m saying that I disagree with it.” He gently pulled me back into his arms, soothingly running a hand up and down my back. “Why did you decide to leave?” he asked.

“Scott was starting to pay more attention to Matty, and I knew I had to get him out of there before he started abusing him, too,” I replied. Was he right? Was my rule the problem?

“Another decision made based on love,” Boone pointed out. “If you didn’t love him, you wouldn’t have cared what happened to him and might have welcomed the potential reprieve as Scott set his sights on Matty, but that’s not what you did. Instead, you devised a plan to get you and Matty away from them.”

The thought of standing by while Scott hurt Matty and feeling relieved about it made me nauseous. “Well, that... that was some really annoying logic you just laid out,” I finally said. “You’ve given me something to think about.”

Boone chuckled lightly. “You’re welcome. Thank you for sharing with me. You didn’t want to talk about your parents yesterday, so I appreciate you doing so today. I’m going to assume that you haven’t talked to anybody about the things you’ve gone through over the years, especially not Matty, so if you ever want to talk about it, the guys and I are more than willing to lend an ear. We’re here for you, whatever you need,” he assured me.

“Yeah, but for how long?” I questioned, more to myself than to him.

“As long as you’ll let us, I imagine,” he said. He placed a finger under my chin and tipped it to look at him. The sky was light enough now to make out his features in the dark. My stomach flip-flopped as he looked down at my lips; the only warning I had that he was going to kiss me. Before his lips could land on mine, the sounds of distress reached us from the barn. The animals were usually quiet at night. There was only one thing that would cause them to be restless.

I jumped off the swing and ran into the house, Boone hot on my heels. I slid my feet into my boots and grabbed my bow, arrows, and knife. I was ready before him and didn’t bother waiting as I ran back out toward the barn. I heard the screen door slap shut behind me as he followed me out.

“Bailey! Wait up!” He whisper-yelled. I hated to stop, but I slowed my pace so he could catch up to me. As we approached the barn, I scanned it for zombies and didn’t see any. They must be on the other side.

We stopped at the corner of the barn, and I cautiously peeked around the corner. Only one zombie bounced along the barn wall, searching for an entry point. I scanned the rest of the yard between the barn and the fence line and saw no others. “Must be a rogue that didn’t make it through the gate with the rest of the pack,” I whispered to Boone.

I loaded an arrow into my crossbow and stepped around the corner. “Hey,” I said so that it could hear me. Once I had his full attention, I pulled the trigger and let the arrow fly. It hit its target, making a gross squishing sound as it went through the eye socket. The zombie fell with a thud, and I wrinkled my nose at it with disgust as I approached.

“Dammit,” I grumbled.

“What?” Boone asked, standing beside me.

“The fucker landed on my arrow and broke it,” I replied with a sigh. We checked the rest of the yard and located the place in the fence where the zombie had come through. It would need to be repaired in the morning with more daylight. As we walked back to the house, I mentally checked my supplies. I was pretty sure that I had what we would need on hand to fix the fence. I thought back to Ethan’s suggestion to make a run to that town they came through. It was beginning to look like a necessity now.

We climbed back onto the porch, and Boone collapsed dramatically onto the swing, pulling me down with him. I laughed lightly as I set my weapons aside and kicked my boots off. We didn't exert much energy, but your adrenaline tended to spike whenever you faced a zombie. I brought my lukewarm tea to my lips with a slightly trembling hand, the effects of the adrenaline still pumping through my veins.

"Me and the guys will take care of the zombie and the hole in the morning," Boone said.

I nodded. "Supplies to fix the fence should be in the shed," I replied. I looked up at him and found myself trapped in his gaze as I remembered the almost kiss before we had to kill a zombie.

Boone seemed to remember as well when suddenly his mouth covered mine. He had moved fast, but his touch was soft as his lips brushed lightly against mine. I wasn't sure you could even classify it as a kiss, but it wasn't not a kiss either.

The thud of my tea cup hitting the wood planks of the porch was ignored as I suddenly climbed into Boone's lap. He moaned into my mouth as my tongue darted out to taste him. His hands gripped my hips tightly, holding me in place as I deepened our kiss. It was like a switch had been flipped inside me, and I suddenly found myself... needing.

Boone let me take the lead as our tongues danced together. When my hips began to move, seeking friction to satiate my desire, his hands slid up my body, making me moan. His hands gripped my shoulders and applied a small amount of pressure

to move me backward, breaking our kiss. “Hey, hey, slow down. There’s no need to rush, baby.”

Embarrassment was like a cold bucket of water being dumped over my head. “Oh, my God. I’m so sorry. I thought... never mind.” I went to get off his lap, but his hands moved back down to my hips. A whimper escaped my throat as Boone pulled our bodies together, grinding my pussy on his very hard, very large dick.

“Understand one thing, Honey Bee,” he growled lightly as he continued to grind me against him. “Me wanting to take things slowly has zero reflection on how much I want you. You have no idea how badly I want to bury myself inside you. Or how I’ve wanted to from the moment you came into the kitchen and pointed a shotgun in Gray’s face. Understand, Bailey?”

“Yes,” I moaned as my nails dug into his shoulders. I began to move faster as my hips moved on their own accord with him. I could feel my orgasm building when panic suddenly shot through me like a bullet, and I launched myself out of his arms to the porch railing. “No,” I croaked as tears flooded my eyes, and I started to hyperventilate. I crouched down, clinging to the railing, trying to get ahold of myself.

At that moment, I hated myself for my inability to act like a normal person. I felt Boone’s presence as he knelt beside me but didn’t touch me. “Shhh, it’s ok. Breathe, Honey Bee. Just breathe. That’s why I wanted to slow down. Your body and hormones were trying to write checks your mind can’t

cash yet. And that's ok. We are all very patient men. There's no rush. Hell, it doesn't even need to happen if you don't want it to."

I focused on his words as I tried to get my breathing under control. The shittiest part about this was that I was still turned on in the worst way. But what my body wanted didn't matter when my brain refused to cooperate. "Fuck, baby, this is killing me. Can I hold you?" I kept my eyes closed but nodded. His arm slid beneath me, and my heart slammed in my chest as he lifted me into his arms. "Shhh, it's ok. I'm just going to carry you inside and lay you down on your bed so you're comfortable. I know how exhausting panic attacks can be."

He carried me through the house and into my room, gently setting me down on my bed. He went to move away from me, and my hand shot out and gripped his arm. "Do you want me to stay with you, Honey Bee?" I nodded and felt the bed dip as he lay beside me. We lay there in silence as my breathing slowly returned to normal. As my mind settled, I was presented with another problem; I was still horny as hell. I crossed my legs at the ankles as casually as possible, squeezing my thighs together to achieve relief.

Boone didn't miss my movements and understood them for what they were. "You still buzzing, baby?" he crooned. I nodded silently. "Use your words, Honey Bee."

"Yes," I whispered.

“Me too. The way I see it, we have two choices,” he said. He turned onto his side to face me, propping his head in his hand. “The first option is to leave you to finish yourself off while I finish in the bathroom thinking about you in here touching yourself. The second option is I promise not to touch you, sit in that chair in the corner, and finish ourselves off while we watch each other.” My breath caught in my chest, and I got even wetter at the thought of Boone watching me touch myself. “So what’s it gonna be, Bailey? Go or stay?” Boone whispered.

“Stay,” I whispered back. He let out a light growl and then left the room. I stared at the door in confusion for a few seconds before he returned with a hand towel so he didn’t make a mess. He closed the door softly behind himself. He went over to the chair and dropped his pants before sitting down. He spit in his hand and began to stroke his hand up and down his eight-inch dick; it was thick and veiny. I licked my lips as I watched.

I scooted back on the bed so my back rested on the wall, slipped my hand past the waistbands of my pants and panties, and slid my fingers between my wet lips. “That’s right, baby, focus on making yourself feel good. Let me see you,” he pleaded. If he was going to dirty-talk me through this, I wouldn’t last long. Feeling brave, I did as he asked, lifting my hips, pushing my pants and underwear off, and kicking my legs free. I chewed on my lip nervously and let my knees fall apart before I could psyche myself out.

Boone groaned appreciatively when he saw my pussy for the first time. “So fucking pretty, Honey Bee. Show me how you like to be touched. Show me what makes you feel good.” I moaned as I slid my fingers back through my folds and dipped two inside me to gather some of my juices and bring them to my clit. I moved my fingers in slow circles around my clit and moaned again as pleasure shot through my body.

“That’s right, baby, rub that pretty little clit for me. One day, when you’re ready, I will wrap my lips around it and make you come all over my face.” I whimpered as his words washed over me. I moved my other hand between my legs to slide two fingers inside myself. I slowly pumped my fingers in and out of me, increasing my speed until I matched Boone’s.

“Oh, fuck,” I moaned. Boone’s eyes were laser-focused on what my hands were doing as he increased the speed of his hand. My hands sped up with him, and he groaned as he looked up at my face and locked eyes with mine.

“Such a good girl,” he rasped. The gravel in his voice sent shivers down my spine. “I’m so close, Bailey. Watch me. Watch what you do to me.” He sped up his pumps even more, and my hands automatically followed. I was so close to coming myself that when he suddenly growled out my name as he came, I followed. I moaned out my release as I came all over my hand, forcing my eyes to stay open so I could watch as he spurted rope after rope of cum into the towel he had retrieved. Fuck that was hot.

Boone got up again and left the room. I closed my eyes and basked in all the happy hormones. I heard him return and opened my eyes as he held out a towel he had wet with warm water. “Can I clean you up, or would you rather do it yourself?”

I blushed and snatched the towel from him to wipe myself off. It was ridiculous to feel embarrassed by this when he watched me finger myself to completion two minutes ago, but I couldn't help it. When I finished, he took the towel back from me without blinking an eye. He dragged the blanket over my body and leaned over slowly to kiss me softly on the lips.

“Why don't you try to get a little more sleep, baby, and thank you for sharing that with me. I'm proud of you.” I smiled as he left the room, closing the door behind him. I closed my eyes and was surprised to find I was feeling tired. Before sleep, I thought about what we had just done and had to admit that I felt proud of myself, too.

Chapter Five

I woke up a short time later and heard a low murmuring from the kitchen. I climbed out of bed and quickly showered before emerging from my room, ready for the day. I stopped in Gray's room to find him awake and staring at the ceiling.

"You look bored," I commented. I checked his leg and saw it was starting to heal and still didn't look infected.

Gray grinned at me, "Good morning Little Dove! I'm literally bored out of my mind. Keep me company?"

"I'd love to, but chores to do, trips to plan, winter to prepare for, you understand," I said as I returned to the door.

"Have lunch with me then? Please?"

I nodded my head, "Fine. It's a date. And I'll try to come up with something to entertain you while you're stuck in bed."

His eyes took on a twinkle. "I have a couple of ideas," he said with a wink. I rolled my eyes at him.

“Cool your jets, Sparky. Even if I wanted to, you’re in no shape for some cardio,” I said over my shoulder as I left the room. I entered the kitchen and found the four men sitting at the table like they were waiting for me. Boone gave me a heated smile and a wink while Pike quickly jumped up and produced a plate he kept warm in the oven. On it were some fried eggs and...a couple of biscuits?

“Where did you get biscuits?” I asked excitedly as I sat down and dug into my breakfast. I moaned as the fluffy biscuit hit my tongue. I could do many things. When making any form of bread, I sucked in the worst way. Matty had stopped asking me to bake years ago.

“I made them,” Pike said. “I hope you don’t mind that I used your supplies. It had just been some time since we’d had anything close to biscuits, and I saw all the ingredients and couldn’t resist making them.”

“Are you kidding me?! Can you make bread, too? Cake? Muffins?” The more I added, the bigger his smile got.

“I can.”

“Then I’m keeping you,” I said around a mouthful of food. “I can’t bake worth shit. Help yourself to whatever ingredients you want, and if there’s something you need, let me know. I can talk to Anna’s parents about a trade. I’m pretty sure half the reason Matty wanted to go live with them was because of their baking abilities.” The men chuckled at my poor attempt at humor while I continued eating. When my plate was empty,

another biscuit appeared, and I mumbled my thanks around a bite.

Once I was done eating, I took a sip of the coffee that had appeared beside my plate at some point. I sat back in my seat and looked at the men expectantly. I assumed they had something they wanted to say to me. Otherwise, four intelligent men could easily find something around here that needed tending.

“So I guess I will start,” Ethan finally spoke up. “I told the guys my idea about making a trip back to that town we had stopped at to get building and medical supplies, and they think it’s a good idea as well.”

“Not only that,” Caleb continued, “but while we were going through there, I saw some dealerships that still had vehicles inside. I don’t know what is available, but if they’ve been protected all this time, I bet I could get a couple of them running so we can bring the supplies back in one trip.”

“How are you going to do that?” I asked incredulously. Cars just weren’t much of a thing anymore. Lack of fuel was a big part of that. The other part was that once the fuel ran out, the cars fell apart where they were parked from lack of use.

“If anyone can do it, Caleb can,” Boone assured me. He leaned forward and put his hand near his mouth to whisper loudly, “That’s why he was in the foster home with us. His hobby was boosting cars, and his foster parents got sick of picking him up from the police station.”

“How old were you?”

“Thirteen,” Caleb answered with a shrug.

“Were you all bad boys, or was it just Caleb?” I asked teasingly.

“Honey Bee, we were and will be whatever you want us to be,” Boone purred. I blushed at the nickname used in front of the others, but they didn’t comment on it; they just exchanged secret looks. I looked between them and then fixed my eyes on Boone, who looked down at the table.

“How much did you tell them?” I demanded. I was trying not to get upset about him sharing a private moment between us with the others. They said they shared. Obviously, that had to mean more than physical, but I trusted him and couldn’t help but feel a sting of betrayal.

“Bailey,” Boone started, then stopped. He let out a long sigh. “I told them everything, but before you get mad, let me apologize, then explain. I’m sorry for not asking permission to tell them about what happened between us. I should have made sure you knew I was going to because we already told you we share. We want to share you. We’re all kind of crazy about you, and we’re a team. What you shared with me about your life is important information they need to know. So are your reactions to fooling around and... what we did physically.”

I took a sip of my coffee to distract myself from earlier memories and the embarrassment of the thought of them gossiping about me. Pike came over and turned my chair to the side so he could kneel in front of me. He took my hands and

looked up at me earnestly. “Bailey, we know you’ve been through so much, and the absolute last thing any of us want to do is cause you more pain or trigger a traumatic response. We don’t want to push you too far or fast or end up pushing you away altogether.”

“To do that,” Ethan continued, “we must share information and communicate openly. That includes you, too. If you don’t want something or want something, you have to tell us. We take our cues from you. Ok?”

I nodded, “Ok,” I said softly, finding my voice. Open and honest. I could do that. And if they compared notes, that saved me from awkward conversations with them.

“Ok. Now that that’s settled, back to this supply run. Ethan told you there was a hospital there, and you said you would need to get supplies for Gray?” Caleb asked.

“Yes. He needs a better cast to keep his bones from shifting while it heals. He will also need crutches or maybe even a wheelchair or something to start moving around. Staying in bed for the next two months won’t be good for him. We should also grab any medical supplies and medication we can find.”

“Ok,” Boone said, “The hospital will be our top priority, and if Caleb can get us a couple of vehicles, we can see what sort of building supplies we can get together. At a minimum, some wood, nails, and new chicken wire to re-do the coop. I haven’t checked your fence line, but we’ll go through the property with a fine-toothed comb and make a list of everything that needs to be fixed, and with any luck, we’ll be able to bring

back enough supplies to fix the more pressing issues. When did you want to make the trip?"

"I think we should probably go in a week. That should give us time to get ready. I'll ask Matty if he will stay with Gray while we're gone."

"That kind of brings us to our next matter of discussion," Pike said. They exchanged looks again, and I patiently waited for him to continue. "You mentioned it taking two months for Gray to heal. And I'm guessing he'll still need some time to get back to full power after that. With the winter months approaching, we'd like to request shelter until spring formally." They all looked at me uncertainly, expecting me to kick them out on their asses as soon as Gray could walk. Considering I just tried to send them to Anna's with Matty, I guess they might have a good reason for thinking that.

"You are more than welcome to stay until spring. Then we can revisit the matter," I said. The relief was palpable as they all relaxed.

"Thank fuck for that!" Gray shouted from his room, making me laugh.

"Ok, so since that is settled, what do you need to be done so that we're prepared for winter?" Ethan asked. I checked my mental list, and with six of us living here, I felt a small amount of unease that we wouldn't have enough food.

"Well, the first thing we are going to need is firewood. And a lot of it. Once the temperature drops, I keep a fire going in the living room to help keep the house warm," I said. "We're

going to need more food. I'll have to work out a trade with Henry and Susan for more supplies. Depending on what we can bring back on our supply run, we could use some of that."

"Who are Henry and Susan?" Boone asked.

"Anna's parents. We get along pretty well and trade often. With more mouths to feed here, we'll need more than I usually trade for. When Matty comes over, I will tell him to talk to them about it so they can be prepared. I will have to start hunting more to have meat through the winter. I have a freezer in the basement that sometimes works that we can stock."

"Oh! Maybe we can bring a new freezer back with us! Those types of stores usually had appliances, too, right?" Pike asked excitedly.

"So that's another potential issue. As you've noticed, I have solar power, but with the added bodies, we will have to be careful not to strain the system. It might not hurt to keep our eyes out on the supply run for solar parts if they have any."

"So what I'm hearing is that we'll have to shower in groups so we don't use extra power to heat more water," Boone said. "It will be a challenge, but I think that's a sacrifice we would be willing to make. Boys?"

"Oh, I think that's something we can manage," Caleb said with a smirk.

"Good! That's a relief. I was worried you guys might feel weird showering together," I said as I stood and brought my

plate and cup to the sink. I'd wash them later. Right now, I needed to feed the animals and check on the garden.

“Honey Bee, we'll shower with you whenever you'd like,” Boone purred.

I turned to look at him as I opened the screen door. “Who said I was sharing my showers?” I asked him with wide eyes. I grinned to myself as I left them in the kitchen. The sky was looking a little gray today. We could use the rain, but that means Matty might not come over today. He knows I wouldn't want him to get stuck in a storm.

I checked on my garden first. It was a pretty large garden, and I tried growing it a little larger every year. I mentally noted which vegetables I would need to start harvesting first. The tomatoes were beginning to ripen to a nice red color. They would end up needing to be picked first. The peppers and cucumbers were also coming along nicely. When we went on the supply run, I would need to watch for more jars.

As I stared at a tomato, a thought came to me. Would we be able to get the supplies to build a greenhouse? That would keep us with fresh vegetables year round. I'll have to remember to bring it up to the guys later and see what they think. Maybe not this year's project, but it would make a good spring project if they're still here. I was still unsure whether I wanted them here longer than the winter.

I checked on the chickens and fed them. One of the guys must have already been out to collect the eggs because I didn't find any. I walked down to the barn, and the couple of cows

and goats I kept there began greeting me. The calves and kids were jumping around excitedly. They were all ready to go out to pasture. First, I needed to milk them. I grabbed a bucket and a stool and let myself into their stalls one by one, making quick work of it. The curious babies poked me with their noses playfully as I worked. Once I was done, I put the bucket of milk I had collected out of reach of any of the animals and let them out of the barn into the field with the horses.

As I stood in the doorway to the barn watching the animals run around, I noticed Boone was walking the property's perimeter. I also spotted Ethan and Caleb with axes and a two-handed saw walking through the woods on the other side of the fence. My heart skipped a few beats as worry for their safety crept up in me. I reminded myself they knew what they were doing and would be fine. I wasn't the only one capable of surviving the apocalypse, and it wasn't my job to keep everyone around me out of danger.

I heard movement behind me but didn't acknowledge it as Pike approached me. "Hey," he said quietly.

"Hey," I responded.

"I stuck around in case you needed help with anything," he told me.

I turned to look at him, leaning against the door frame. "You know that I've done all of this on my own for the last ten years, right? Well, Matty helped, but most of it was all me."

He took a few steps forward so that he was in my space. My heart thundered in my chest as he pressed his body into mine,

pinning me between him and the barn. “I’m well aware of that, Sweetling, but the correct response was ‘thank you.’ Try again, for me,” he prompted, his voice like velvet as it caressed my soul.

“Thank you,” I whispered as my body buzzed to life.

Pike made an approving sound in the back of his throat as he leaned in even further until our lips were a breath apart. “Good girl,” he whispered. He pushed away from me, and I couldn’t help the chill I felt from losing his body against mine. “Now,” he said in a more normal voice, “how can I help?” It took me a minute for my brain to catch up with his. When I didn’t answer immediately, he looked back at me with a smirk. “Bailey?”

My eyes snapped to his and narrowed at his smirk. I was not a toy to play with. “The milk needs to be bottled, and the stalls mucked. The manure can be wheeled over and spread in the garden. I’ll let you handle that while I take care of the milk,” I said sweetly as I walked past him.

“That works for me,” he said cheerily. I ignored him as I brought the bucket of milk over to the stall I used as a workspace. Inside was a burner and the heavy-bottomed pot I used to pasteurize the milk. A book on milking sat on the shelf above the workbench, but I hadn’t needed to reference it in ages. This batch would just be milk, so I needed to maintain a specific temperature to kill any germs that might have gotten in and could make someone sick. Until I found the book, I couldn’t figure out why me or Matty would frequently get ill.

I placed a strainer over the top of the pot and slowly dumped the bucket into the pot. The strainer was to catch any larger objects that didn't belong in the milk. I heated the milk and stole glances at Pike over the walls mucking out the other stalls as I slowly stirred the milk. His muscles bunched and flexed as he worked. I didn't realize I had stretched on my toes and craned my neck to watch him better until he stopped to wipe his brow and looked my way. After a few seconds of him not moving, I realized he was watching me ogle him with a smile.

Caught, I quickly ducked back down to focus on the milk. The sound of his chuckle reached my ears, and I groaned internally. The presence of these men in my life now was highly distracting. I found this incredibly annoying since I didn't see myself as a sexual person. For my entire life, I viewed sex as a bad thing, a punishment. And now my body seemed to have a mind of its own and wholeheartedly disagreed.

Once I finished heating the milk, I carefully poured it into the clean bottles I had waiting and corked them. Thunder sounded, startling me and almost making me drop the bottled milk. I carefully placed the milk bucket in the pot and the bottles in the bucket. I would take everything inside to clean and then bring them back out later. I closed the barn doors that led to the pasture so that the rain stayed out of the barn. There was a covered shelter the animals could gather in to keep dry if they wanted.

“I’m going to run this inside, then I’ll come back and help you spread the manure in the garden,” I told Pike as I walked past him to the other barn door. “Since rain is coming, I want to get the manure on the garden before it hits to get the fertilizer soaked into the ground with the rain.”

“Ok,” he said. “I’m on the last stall now.” I gave him a thumbs-up before grabbing my pot and leaving. I set it down on the front porch to bring in and looked for the others. Boone was almost through his walk-around. I didn’t see any sign of Ethan and Caleb, which worried me. They needed to get inside and out of the woods before the rain hit. The last thing we needed was for them to get struck by lightning.

Pike was in the garden, so I went to join him, accepting the shovel he handed me. Together, we emptied the wheelbarrow he had filled. Thunder sounded above us, even louder this time, followed by a streak of lightning across the sky. “We need to get inside,” I told him as Boone jogged over to us.

“I’ll run the shovels and wheelbarrow back to the barn. You get inside,” Pike responded. He grabbed my shovel and took off at a sprint.

“Make sure to close the barn behind you when you return,” I called to him.

“Come on,” Boone said, grabbing my hand and pulling me towards the house. “It looks like this storm will be a bad one.” I followed behind him but pulled my hand away as we reached the porch. I looked to the woods and gate again, hoping to see

Caleb and Ethan—still no sign of them. I chewed on my lip as I watched.

“I need to go find them,” I said as Pike joined us.

“No!” They said in unison.

Chapter Six

“Excuse me?” I asked, turning to look at both of them. “Let’s get one thing straight. I’m in charge here. This is my house, and you all are my guests. You don’t get to tell me what to do. Now your friends are out there. What if they got lost? I’m going after them.” I turned away from them and started to march towards the gate. I had my knife on me; that was all I needed.

As fat raindrops began falling from the sky, I was grabbed and tossed over Boone’s shoulder. “Sorry, Honey Bee. You can be mad at me all you want, but there is no way we’re letting you stomp around in the woods by yourself in this storm.”

“It wouldn’t be the first time,” I said, wiggling around and trying to free myself from his hold. A sharp sting on my ass made me yelp as Boone swatted my ass with his hand.

“Stop struggling. You aren’t going anywhere; accept it,” he told me. I stopped fighting him as he walked up the few steps to the porch and brought me inside. I’d drop him and find the

guys when he put me down. I glared at Pike, holding the screen door open for Boone with a grin.

“Careful, bro,” he warned Boone, “she looks like she’s scheming.”

“I’d expect nothing less,” Boone said with a laugh. He bent over and set me down. As soon as my feet hit the floor, I would introduce him to my knee, but he didn’t give me the opportunity. Instead, he kept me crowded close to him as he ran his hands down my arms. Too late, I realized it wasn’t just a comforting gesture, and he gripped my wrists behind my back in one of his hands.

“Are you going to behave, or am I going to have to tie you down?” he asked.

I glared up at Boone. Being pressed up against him was wreaking havoc on my emotions. “You wouldn’t dare.”

“Believe me, Honey Bee, if it meant keeping you safe, I absolutely would,” Boone replied.

We stared at each other in a battle of wills, neither willing to back down. Finally, I conceded with a compromise. “You have one hour,” I said to him, proud of my voice’s strength. “If Caleb and Ethan aren’t back in an hour, I’m going after them, even if I have to hurt you.”

I tugged at my wrists as he returned my stare. When he released them, I stomped over to my crossbow and slung it and the quiver over my shoulder. I stomped down to my room, grabbed a machete and a couple of other knives, returned to

the kitchen, slammed myself into a kitchen chair, and put my feet on the table to wait. I crossed my arms and ankles while looking pointedly at the time on the stove before glaring at Pike and Boone.

Pike stood there smiling, always finding humor in whatever was happening. Boone glared back at me, then walked away, muttering about how much of a brat I was and how he should put me over his knee and spank it out of me. I pretended I didn't hear him as I glared at Pike.

“You know Bailey, we're just trying to look out for you. I know you're used to being the one who takes care of everyone, so I know this is going to be an adjustment for you.” He walked casually around the table until he reached me. He leaned over me, bracing his arms on the armrests of my chair. “But make no mistake, Sweetling, as long as we're here, we will make sure we take care of you right back. Sometimes, that will mean letting us run into danger and do the heavy lifting instead of doing it yourself. That doesn't mean we think you're any less capable than us. It just means that you are far too important to us to risk any harm coming to you. The sooner you deal with that, the easier this will be for everyone.”

I turned my head to the side so I didn't have to look at him. His chuckle turned to a growl as he leaned in closer. “But by all means, keep fighting us. It gets the blood pumping and gives me ideas on what to do with you,” he said in my ear. I yelped as he quickly bit, then released my shoulder as he walked away. Fucking hell, they were going to be the death of me. Maybe they should be protecting me from themselves.



The minutes ticked by as I sat in the kitchen and listened to the murmuring voices of the guys as they sat in Gray's room talking. I couldn't hear what they were saying, but one of them would laugh occasionally. I peeked down the hall as I quietly moved my feet off the table. I knew I could make it to the door without making a sound. The challenge was the screen door. But I'm fast. I'm sure I can make it over the gate before they catch me.

I did say I'd wait an hour, but there were twenty minutes left, and twenty minutes didn't mean shit to us safely in the house. But for Ethan and Caleb, twenty minutes could mean the difference between life and death. Silently, I crept to the door, listening closely to the sound of their voices for any sign that they knew what I was up to. I placed my hand on the screen door, ready to shove it open and make a run for it when it swung open. I started to shriek, then slapped a hand over my mouth as Caleb and Ethan crowded inside the door.

"Bailey, where the hell were you going?" Ethan asked. He and Caleb were soaking wet and dripping on the floor, but they were here and safe. I backed up to give them more room and bumped into a hard chest. I hadn't even heard him come into the kitchen.

"If she's smart, her answer will be nowhere for at least twenty more minutes," Boone said darkly. Ethan raised an eyebrow as he looked between us.

I moved around Boone with a smile. “I guess we’ll never know since it doesn’t matter now that they’re home,” I said. I hung up all my weapons and put water on to boil to make tea. Pike came in with towels, which Ethan and Caleb took graciously.

“What did we miss?” Ethan asked.

“Oh, you know, Bailey was going to look for you because you didn’t return before the storm started. Boone threatened to tie her up if she tried. They compromised with Bailey agreeing to give you an hour to return,” Pike answered.

“Has it been an hour since the storm started?” Caleb asked.

“No,” Boone growled, glaring at me across the kitchen.

Caleb looked at me and grinned. “You bad girl, trying to sneak out. It’s a good thing we came home when we did.”

I rolled my eyes and decided it was time to regain control of the room. “Where the hell were you?” I demanded. “When it’s going to storm, you come home immediately. Nothing out there is more important than getting back home safely. You don’t know these woods. You don’t know that if you travel too far in that direction,” I said, pointing, “you run into ravines that pop up out of nowhere. Or that if you go too far in the other direction, there is a creek that quickly overflows with fast rushing water during a storm, and if you aren’t careful, you can easily get swept away in it.” I walked forward until I was standing in the middle of them. I faced Pike and poked him in the center of his chest. “So, if you don’t want me running off into the woods to find your asses, I highly suggest

you get home before the storm starts. The sooner you do as I say, the easier it will be for everyone,” I said, throwing his earlier words back in his face.

“I’m really sorry for worrying you, baby,” Caleb said, grabbing my hand to get my attention. “Maybe Boone and Pike should have told you about a rule between us. If anyone gets lost, we don’t go looking for them. We stay at the agreed-upon meeting place so nobody else gets lost, but I don’t care about all of that right now,” he said as he pulled me closer. “I really need you to say we have to come home before the storm starts.”

I was confused but did as he asked. “Make sure you come home before the storm starts.” He let out a groan as his lips crashed down onto mine. I made a startled sound, leaving my mouth open just enough for him to dip his tongue in. My knees started giving out when a hard body pressed against me from behind, sandwiching me between them. I didn’t even know who it was, and I didn’t know that I cared.

Whoever it was began to kiss my neck as Caleb devoured me with his mouth. Lust clouded my brain as my touch-starved body responded to their mouths. I moaned as my hands fisted into the ends of Caleb’s hair, and his hands ran down my body to grab my ass and lift me. My legs wrapped around his waist, and I became aware of two very hard dicks pressed against me. I rubbed myself against Caleb’s dick as I deepened the kiss, losing myself to lust.

I felt us moving backward and became aware that my back was wet, which told me the person behind me must be Ethan. There was a slight scraping sound of wood on wood as Ethan was backed into the table. I sat on Ethan's lap as Caleb pressed closer between my legs. Their cocks pressed against my pussy, and my hips moved on their own accord in response. Ethan ran his hands under my shirt to cup my breasts, and I moaned into Caleb's mouth when he lightly plucked my nipples between his fingers and thumbs.

"Fucking hell, that's hot," I heard Pike say. That was all it took to break the spell the two men had cast upon me.

"Wait," I panted, pulling my mouth from Caleb's. They both froze in place as I tried to sort through my thoughts. Did I want to stop? Was I ready for something like this? As much as my body was screaming for me to keep going, in my head, I knew I wasn't. I knew as soon as this moved past a simple but undeniably hot make-out session that I would have a panic attack like last night. It was beginning to become frustrating as hell.

"What do you want, Bails?" Ethan whispered behind me. "You call the shots," he reminded me.

"I... I don't know," I stuttered. "I want this. My body wants this, wants you. All of you. But my head... my head won't let it move past this. It won't... I can't... Let me go," I said slightly louder as everything began to close around me.

The words weren't out of my mouth for more than a few seconds when Caleb had taken several steps back, and Ethan

had carefully extracted himself from beneath me and moved several steps away. Boone and Pike were also a careful distance away, giving me a wide berth. Tears sprung into my eyes at their kindness and understanding. I wasn't sure I deserved it. "I'm so sorry," I croaked as I ran for the sanctuary of my bedroom.

"Bailey, wait," they called after me.

I ignored them. As I closed my door, I heard Gray shout, "You guys really need to make this supply run sooner rather than later. I keep missing all the fun stuff, and I feel like you all are fucking everything up! I need out of this bed!"

I placed my back against the door and slid down it, drawing my knees up and hugging my legs as my head fell forward to rest atop them. I couldn't hold the tears back as I began to cry quietly. I didn't want to attract too much attention, but I knew this house, sound traveled. If I had one wish at this very moment, it would be that I could react to shit like a normal human, not some broken shell of a girl.

I froze as I heard someone approach. I felt the pressure through the door as they sat quietly on the other side and leaned against it. There was a light thud from what I assumed was their head hitting the door as they rested back on it.

"You never have to apologize to us for pushing you to your limits, Bailey. Ever." Boone. I should have known it would be him. "It's us who should be apologizing to you. We know you need to go slow, but sometimes, our desire for you takes over, and we forget ourselves. You did everything right just now,

Honey Bee. Never hold back because you're worried about how we will feel when you have to stop. Do what feels right to you at the moment. We'll survive, I promise." I didn't respond, but my tears stopped falling, and I could take a deep, shaky breath. Baby steps. The only person judging me for my issues is me, and I've had many years of practice doing so. This might not be so easy after all.



I groaned when I woke up later, curled up on the floor in front of my bedroom door. Not the best place to fall asleep. I stood and stretched out the kinks before opening my bedroom door. Boone's sleeping body fell backward when I did, and we looked at each other in shock as his sleepy brain fought to catch up. "What are you still doing sitting outside my door?" I asked him.

"I didn't want you to be alone, but I guess I fell asleep," he replied as he climbed to his feet.

"So did I. I woke up on the floor. Not my best idea," I said with a laugh.

"Bailey?" Gray called out. I exchanged a look with Boone and went to Gray's room. He was quickly becoming a problem patient.

"What's up?" I said, leaning against the door frame. I felt Boone behind me and caught movement as he rested a hand on the top of the door frame.

Gray was sitting up in bed with his arms crossed and a pout on his face. “You promised you would have lunch with me, and now it’s almost dinner,” he accused.

“You’re right. I did promise, but then things got all wonky. How about I have dinner with you?”

“Deal,” he said, grinning. “But just us. The rest of them can eat in the kitchen.”

“Gray, you can’t steal her for yourself during meals,” Boone protested.

“Sure I can. The only time I get to see her is when she is in this room, so as long as I am stuck in this bed, I’ll claim every single meal she will let me. Consider it your incentive to go on that supply run so I can be mobile again.”

“It’s fine,” I said to Boone. “He is cooped up in here, and that’s got to be boring.”

“But we’ll miss you,” Boone whined playfully.

“Something tells me you’ll survive,” I said dryly.

“You’re probably right,” he said, kissing my cheek quickly. “Why don’t you hang out here with Gray, and someone will bring you food when it’s done.” He gave me another wink while he flipped Gray off, then left.

I pulled the chair near Gray’s bed closer and took a seat. “So how ya feeling, other than bored? Same?”

“Yep.”

“Good. That’s a good sign. Thank God you’re healing up much better than I expected.”

“How are you? I know my idiot brothers have been chasing your ass. Say the word, and I’ll tell them to back off completely.” I could see Gray’s seriousness and couldn’t help but smile softly at him.

“Thank you, but I think they’re helping. I can’t heal and be normal without being pushed out of my comfort zone.”

“If you’re su-” Gray was cut off by the sound of the front door slamming open and a lot of shouting. We exchanged worried looks, and I held my finger to my lips as I slipped my knife from its sheath and went to the door. I peeked down the hall and saw strange men standing by the door in my kitchen. Boone and Caleb stood in front of the hall, blocking the hallway as they held their hands up.

Did someone really think they would come into my house and threaten us? I don’t fucking think so. I ignored Gray’s frantic movements as he tried to get my attention and silently crept to my room. I grabbed my guns, including my shotgun, and crept back down the hall, Boone and Caleb’s bodies blocking my movements nicely. Let’s see what these assholes have to say for themselves.

Chapter Seven

I reached Boone and Caleb and saw them stiffen as they registered my presence. So help me God, if they try some macho bullshit and try to protect me right now, I'll... I don't know, smack them or something.

“Now, everybody shift around the room towards the door. This house officially belongs to me, and I'm going to need you to vacate the premises,” a man said. Yeah, that wasn't going to be happening. I slipped a couple of handguns into the waistband of Boone and Caleb's jeans, then nudged them with the barrel of my shotgun to move apart. After a moment of hesitation, they complied, and I stepped forward and pointed my shotgun into the man's face.

“I'm afraid you are mistaken. You see, my name is Bailey, and this house is mine. It's been mine for the past ten years. You think you're the first piece of shit to come and try to take it from me?” His gun swung towards me as he eyed my shotgun nervously. He had dark hair and mud-colored eyes; with him was a frail-looking woman and a girl who didn't look

like she was more than ten. They were all dirty and skinny. “Boys, arm yourselves,” I said to my guys.

There was shifting around behind me as they did as I complied. Ethan even came around behind me and pulled the handgun from the front of my pants. He kissed my neck quickly, then retreated. The man in front of us was waving his gun around wildly. “Nobody moves, I mean it. I’ll shoot!” he yelled while the guys ignored him.

“You shoot, I shoot. And at this range, not only will I blow your head off, but I will do some damage to your wife and kid. Here’s what is going to happen. You will place all your weapons on the table and back away with your hands on your head.” I glanced to my right and saw that Caleb had passed his gun off to Pike and now had my crossbow.

“Do it now, or my friend here will start taking random shots with the crossbow. Full disclosure, that bow is mine, and he isn’t a very good shot. No telling who or what he will hit. Now move it!” I stepped closer to the man for emphasis and heard the guys also take a step forward.

Even as I watched the panic rise in his eyes, I wasn’t expecting his next move. “Run!” he screamed to his family as he threw his gun at my face. I managed to knock it to the side before it could hit me.

“Wait!” I called out as I ran after them. I hit the button outside for the floodlights and watched them hop over the gate and disappear into the woods from the porch. “Well, they just

joined the zombie population,” I said, shaking my head. Ethan was the last to come outside and had the man’s gun.

“Not only was his gun not loaded, but it doesn’t even have a firing pin,” he said, handing me the gun.

I looked it over, “No wonder he threw it at me. That was all it was good for.”

“Have you really had people come and try to take the house from you?” Boone asked.

“Oh yeah. Plenty of times. God, the first year we lived here, I think it happened once or twice a month. People can’t help themselves. I’ve got a good setup, so I get it. I was lucky to stumble upon this place unoccupied.” I stared out at the woods a few minutes more before turning around with a sigh and going back inside. I hit the switch to turn off the floodlights on my way.

“Well, how did you deal with them?” Pike asked. He was the last one through the door, and I heard him close and lock it as I returned to Gray’s room. If it was story time, it may as well happen in Gray’s room so that he could be a part of it. The men followed me and settled around the room as I sat beside the bed again. Gray glared at me, but I ignored him since I knew he was probably mad that I had left the room in the first place.

“Most of them underestimated the preparedness of a seventeen-year-old girl or the lengths she would go to to protect her kid brother. I’ve always ensured I was well armed and well trained, and most people coming through often have

busted weapons like that man. They're desperate. Once we understand who holds the power, they are usually easy to work with. I feed them, let them rest, then send them down to Henry and Susan's. They always have room for people willing to work."

"I guess these people were no different," Ethan said. "Who breaks into a house with a gun that couldn't shoot bullets even if it had some in it and tries to take it?"

"A desperate man with a starving family and no other options," I said quietly. "Now I'll likely have to put them down when their bodies stumble back to us after they die," I sighed.

"Ok, I have to ask," Gray said, "Who the fuck are Henry and Susan? I know *who* they are, but how did they become so... successful in the apocalypse?"

The way he said it made me laugh. "They already had a large farming operation before the apocalypse hit. They were well respected in the community, and when shit hit the fan, they took in many people. Over the years, they've expanded as other farms fell to ruin. This place belonged to a cousin before I took it over. It's a little farther from their house than they would like, so they never did much with it. A few days after I arrived, Henry stopped by to check on the property, and he told me I could stay and make it my own. He's helped me build up my stock over the years and trades me for whatever I can't provide. Usually in health care."

"See! You are a doctor, Doc," Gray said with a grin.

“I’m really not, but I can handle minor things, and with me around to do so, it’s less strain on them. Honestly, I think they just took pity on a couple of kids trying to make it on their own and recognized that I wouldn’t ever be willing to come to live with them, so they let me play house here.” My stomach chose that moment to growl loudly, making the men chuckle.

“I better go get dinner on,” Pike said, leaving the room.

“Question, you guys know how to handle a gun, right?” I asked.

“We do,” Caleb answered.

“Good, start carrying one. Winter is coming, and there is a good chance they won’t be the only ones knocking on the door. I’d feel better if you were all armed.”

“Yes, ma’am,” Boone said.

The rest of the night was uneventful. Gray protested, but we all ended up eating dinner in his room as they spent the evening telling me stories about each other, making me laugh. When I went to bed that night, I couldn’t help but think about the desperate family out in the woods somewhere and wish they had stuck around a bit longer so that I could help them.



The rest of the week was uneventful. I didn’t have any other dalliances with the guys. They still flirted unapologetically, but there seemed to be an unspoken agreement between us that

things needed to slow down. Matty came by several times and agreed to stay with Gray while we were gone, so he was here as we prepared to leave the following day.

“So tell me,” he said as he stuffed his face with biscuits, “how is it going with the guys being here?”

“Really well. We have almost all the firewood we’ll need for winter chopped and stacked. The garden is just about ready to be harvested. There are so many helping hands around this place that I run out of things to do and just... sit. It’s odd, really,” I laughed as I packed food for our trip. I made a bunch of hard-boiled eggs and was packing up a bunch of carrots and beef jerky to take with us. The guys were outside prepping the guns and sharpening the knives we would take.

“And what about the... romantic... aspect of their presence? How is that going?” he asked.

I turned to look at him. “Matty, you know I love you, but there are some things I’m just not going to talk to you about. Whether or not I’m having sex with five men is on that list. How are things at Anna’s?” I asked, changing the subject.

“Things at Anna’s are great. Henry will teach me how to harvest his big fields next week. I’m looking forward to everything he can teach me about running his farm. Then I’ll be able to teach you and help you grow this place even more. He said just to let him know what you need, and he will make it happen. He also wanted me to ask you about the bull calf you have. I told him I thought you might plan to raise it to slaughter, but I would find out. He wants to add another bull to

his herd and might be willing to trade you a bull ready to start breeding in the spring.” He went to eat another biscuit, but I slapped it out of his hand and put a few carrots in front of him instead.

“I have wanted to get my hands on a bull of my own,” I admitted. “I want to add more animals in general. A few more cows, a bull to breed them, more chickens, a rooster. I also want to grow the goat herd, but that might be a next year thing. I’ve been thinking it might be worth scouting out some farms that are further away next year and seeing if there are any abandoned animals we could grab. Now that I have all these extra hands, expansion is a genuine possibility.”

“So then you plan on keeping them around past spring?” Matty asked. He tried to make it seem casual, but I could hear the underlying excitement in his voice.

“Why do you care so much?” I asked.

“Because if they’re here, I don’t have to feel bad about leaving you alone. I’ll be able to be happy knowing that you’re happy.”

“Matty, it isn’t your job to ensure I’m happy or cared for.”

“Why not?” he asked, standing. “It shouldn’t have been your job, but you did it anyway. Now it’s my turn.” He went outside to leave me alone with my thoughts. He was a sweet kid, but if he thought that now that he was grown, I would stop worrying about him and trying to take care of him, he was wrong.

We turned in early and were back up just as the sky began to lighten. We said our goodbyes to Matty and Gray. I gave them several warnings until I was practically dragged out of the house. We walked down the drive, and I gave Matty one last wave before the road curved, and we couldn't see the house anymore.

"Come on, Honey Bee, they'll be fine," Boone said, patting me on the back.

"I know. Let's just get this done. I feel better when we're all safely tucked away at home," I said. "Now, where exactly are we going?"

"Well, we don't have a map, but follow us. We'll find the town," Ethan said cheerily. I could tell that as much as they liked living with me, they had missed this and were happy for an adventure after spending so much time wandering from place to place.

"Ok. Do you think someone should start making a map, especially of the roads, so we know how to get back by car?" I was determined to be positive and expected everything to work out as planned.

"Couldn't hurt," Caleb answered. I pulled a folded piece of paper from my back pocket along with a pencil and began jotting down notes. I knew the roads around here, but soon we wouldn't be following the roads. Just before the turn-off to get to Henry and Susan's farm Pike veered right and led us into the woods. I made a note and then put my paper and pencil

away. Now that we were in the woods, we needed to be more alert.

Sure, we could encounter wild animals, but there could also be zombies lurking or, even worse, humans. All conversation stopped as we quietly and carefully picked our way through the trees, listening for any sign that we weren't alone. We stopped at a small waterfall at about noon to refill our canteens and eat some food.

“So far, so good,” I commented as I dipped my head into the pond. The trees were thinning a bit, and it was getting hot. I sat back up, and the four of them were giving me funny looks. “What? I'm hot.”

“Yes, you are,” Caleb said, making me roll my eyes.

“So how much further do you think?” I asked Ethan, our de facto trail guide.

“I think only about an hour or two more. The town itself is kind of hard to find. The forest grew back around it, hiding it, so we'll have to keep our eyes open for signs of it,” he replied. We finished eating and took off again. After walking for about thirty minutes, the sound of someone or something moving through the woods reached us. Silently, we crouched down and watched the direction the sound had come from.

Slowly, about seven zombies came into view, stumbling through the forest. “What got them moving around?” Pike whispered. I clamped my hand over his mouth as the nearest zombie stopped and turned toward us. The forest undergrowth

hid us reasonably well, and it soon continued moving in the direction it had been headed.

Once the group passed us, I stood silently and took them out with my crossbow. When I was halfway through the group, the ones ahead turned from the sound of the other zombies falling and spotted me. Their paces quickened when they saw what was probably the first food source they had seen in a while. It took the three remaining zombies forever to get back to me. Boone watched my back to ensure there weren't any slowpokes to sneak up on us while the others fanned out and got behind the zombies.

They lunged for them, quickly planting their knives through the skulls. "Well, that was fun," I said as I went around and collected my arrows, smacking them against a tree to knock as much brain gunk off of them as I could.

"Yeah, I was honestly beginning to wonder if it could still be considered the zombie apocalypse if all the zombies were gone. It's good to know we're still in the Age of Zombies. The world hasn't passed us by too much while we've been in our little slice of paradise," Pike joked, making us laugh.

"Ok, onwards," Ethan said. We quickly fell in line behind him to continue our trek. We didn't come across any more zombies, but we did stumble onto a beautiful pond home to many ducks.

"Next spring, we need to come out here and see if we can catch some of these! Maybe even build them a little pond or

something. Raising ducks could be good. More eggs and meat,” I said.

“We’ll add it to your already long list of things you want to do in the spring,” Caleb said dryly.

“Hey! Just be glad I’m including you in those plans, buster. Keep it up, and I’ll toss your ass out once the first flower blooms,” I said, wagging my finger at him. Faster than I could react, his hand snapped out and wrapped around my wrist, yanking me into his arms.

“Before that first flower blooms, sweetheart, you won’t be able to remember a time when we weren’t in your life,” he growled out as he began tickling me and making me laugh.

“Uhh, hey guys?” Ethan called from further around the pond. We all grabbed our stuff and quickly caught up to him. When we reached him, he pointed to what was left of an old wooden circular structure with a dome-shaped roof. “I think we might be close,” he said excitedly.

I looked back at the pond with a calculating eye. “I bet you this used to be one of those places! What the hell were they called? Parks! I bet this was a park!”

We all turned away from the park towards the dense vegetation behind us as a group. Ethan did say the town was hidden. We all shared a look before Boone pulled out a machete and approached the wall of plants. He started hacking away, carving a path through it until suddenly, there wasn’t anything left to chop. I took Pike’s hand as he pulled me through the hole Boone had made behind him. In front of us

was a slightly overgrown ghost town, abandoned and forgotten. A sign to our right said the town was called Wilsonville.

“Ok, I know you guys came through here before but remember, we don’t know what happened here. For all we know, there is a high school gymnasium filled with a town’s worth of zombies who drank the funny Kool-aid together. Let’s try not to wake them up, agreed?”

“Agreed,” they said in unison. I spotted the four-story hospital a few blocks away. That was our first stop. I took the lead, and we made our way down the street, unaware we already had eyes on us.

Chapter Eight

The walk to the hospital was unbelievably uneventful. What happened to the townspeople? Where did they go? Why aren't there any zombies roaming the streets? It felt too easy, and I didn't like it, not one bit. When we reached the four-story hospital, we could see that all of the glass on the main level was broken and appeared abandoned. The building was small enough that I knew it wouldn't take us long to search it from top to bottom.

The glass crunched under our feet as we went inside, sounding like a bomb going off to my ears. As we moved further into the lobby, I kept my eyes peeled, waiting for something to jump out at us. When a few minutes passed, and nothing did, I began to relax.

“Ok,” Caleb said as I studied the hospital map in the lobby's center, “we're going to look for transportation. We will meet right back here, so if we aren't back by the time you're done searching the hospital, don't go anywhere.”

My head snapped up to look at him. “I’m sorry, what? We can’t split up.”

“Relax, Bailey,” Pike said as he put an arm around my shoulders. “Caleb and Boone can handle themselves while the three of us go through this place with a fine-toothed comb.”

“But we don’t know what’s out there,” I protested. “What if they run into a whole army of zombies and need our help? What if we do? We’re stronger and safer together.”

“Baby,” Caleb crooned as he slowly wrapped his arms around me and pulled me forward into his chest. “Are you worried about us again? You keep that up, and I’m going to start to think you like us,” he teased.

I smacked my hand to his chest playfully. “Was that not obvious? I don’t let just anyone live in my house.” I smiled up at him, batting my eyelashes. “So what do you say we make this whole trip a group effort and stick together?” I felt hands come from behind me and slide from my hips to my stomach. Boone pressed himself against me, sandwiching me between him and Caleb. I briefly wondered when the hell I had gotten used to their touches but shoved that line of thought away. The last thing I needed was a panic attack from overthinking it.

“Honey Bee, this will go faster if we split up. That way, we know if hitting the home improvement store is even possible,” Boone said, his lips brushing against my ear. “You want to return to Matty as fast as possible, right?” My worries quickly redirected to Matty, home alone with an injured Gray. If

someone stopped by the house like that family did, there could be problems.

“You’re right. This isn’t a vacation. We need to be quick about this,” I agreed. I stepped out from between them and returned to the map, committing all the hallways, stairwells, and rooms to memory as best I could. Maybe I should have Pike and Ethan memorize their own floor so I didn’t have to. I chuckled at that thought, as if I could relinquish that kind of control and go in blind.

“Ok, so it’s settled then. We’ll meet you here when we’re done, hopefully with a vehicle of some kind,” Boone said.

“Mmhmm, sounds good. Just be careful, and don’t dawdle,” I replied. “Oh, and Boone?” I turned to look back at him. “Don’t use my worry for my brother to distract me from my worry about you all. I don’t appreciate being manipulated.”

The surprise was etched into his face at my words. “Bailey, I didn’t mean to—”

“Yes, you did,” I said, cutting him off. “You may have done it innocently enough, but that is exactly what you intended to do when you brought him up. And it worked. Kudos to you. I’m not mad about it. I would just appreciate it if you didn’t make it a habit. I’ve had Matty’s safety held over my head to control me ever since this whole fucked up world began. I don’t need any more of it.”

Boone looked like he was going to be sick, and the others were studying their feet like there was going to be a quiz. My heart squeezed, and I walked over to him and stood on my

tiptoes to kiss him lightly on the lips. His eyes widened in shock, so I winked at him before backing away. “Pike, Ethan, let’s go.” They hurried to follow me to the stairwell, and Pike placed a hand on my shoulder to keep me back as Ethan stepped inside to check it out.

Ethan gave the all-clear, and Pike stepped through the door. I took a moment to look back at Boone and Caleb’s retreating backs. I hated splitting up, but their reasoning was sound, and I knew they could take care of themselves. They’d managed it all these years without me, and if this relationship had any chance of working, I would need to learn to trust them and trust in their abilities.

“Hey,” Ethan said softly, touching my hand, “they really are going to be ok. Come on. If we don’t find all the shit on Gray’s wish list, he will become even more insufferable than he already is.” I smiled at him and joined him and Pike in the stairwell.

“What’s the plan?” Pike whispered.

“We should start at the top floor and work our way down. It’s much easier to carry shit down with us than to lug it up and then back down again.”

“Sounds good, Pike, lead the way,” Ethan said.

“How about you lead the way,” Pike responded.

“How about I lead the way? Then you can both stare at my ass,” I said, rolling my eyes and starting up the stairs. When we reached the next floor, I peeked through the little

rectangular window and didn't see anything. I carefully turned the doorknob to make sure we could get in. It turned easily, and I opened the door to listen. I heard no noise and closed the door again, ensuring it latched. I didn't want any surprises later on.

We continued up the stairs, testing each floor until we reached the fourth floor. "Ok, this floor was the maternity ward. Let's make sure it's clear first. Then we can go through room by room and collect anything useful now or in the future." They nodded at me, and I pulled the door open. We entered a deserted waiting room with a nurse's station behind a counter. The doors that let you into the floor were shut.

They were those electric security doors that you had to be buzzed through. I remembered going through similar doors when Matty was born. "I'll get the doors," Pike whispered. I watched as he hopped the counter, landed quietly on the other side, and disappeared through another door.

"We could all just hop the counter," I told Ethan.

"Let him get the door. If we run into trouble, running through the open door will be easier than jumping over the counter." I shrugged and waited for Pike to come back. Just as I was getting nervous, the doors began to push open. Ethan and I ran over to help him, and once we got them opened all the way, I heard a click as some mechanism caught, and they stayed open on their own.

"Sorry it took so long. I ran into a nurse and had to put her down," Pike told us. Finally! A fucking zombie. It was

beginning to freak me out. We encountered two other zombies who had been patients wandering around their rooms. Once we were sure we were the only ones moving around, we began combing through the rooms. I ignored the tiny bones in the little bassinets in the nursery, unwilling to think too long about abandoned babies. The third lesson of the zombie apocalypse was obvious: Children don't belong here.

All the baby stuff wasn't helpful, so we left it all, searching instead for things we could use. I pulled a sizeable empty duffle from my backpack and began grabbing any medication I came across and all the baby blankets. You could never have too much linen, and with six of us living in the house now, we would need all we could find.

Once we had cleaned out the floor, we headed back to the stairwell. On the way, we passed a little pantry with vending machines. "Wait!" Ethan said excitedly. I watched as he jimmied open the soda machine and grabbed a can of Grape soda. He grinned at us as he popped the tab and took a large mouthful. I would have started with a small sip.

Pike and I started laughing when he immediately spit the soda out of his mouth. "Bro, it's seventeen-year-old soda. What did you expect?" Pike choked out between laughs. Ethan smacked his lips together as he tasted whatever was left in his mouth before taking another swig from the can and grimacing.

"It's not good, but it isn't bad either," he said as he placed the can on the counter. I guess it wasn't good enough to bring with him. We descended to the third floor and stepped through

the door, listening carefully for signs of life. I set the full duffel bag down and pulled another empty one out.

“Ok,” I whispered, “this floor has the orthopedic department on it. This is where we should be able to find everything we need for Gray. Keep your eyes peeled for a circular saw, supplies for casts, and crutches. I spotted some wheelchairs downstairs, so we can grab one there. Let’s also collect any splint, sling, or air cast items. You never know when we might need them.”

Now that we knew what we were looking for, we first cleared the floor like we had done upstairs. This time, we only found one zombie locked in a bathroom stall. We then went from room to room again, collecting supplies. I was beginning to worry that we wouldn’t find everything we needed when we found a storage closet filled with everything on my list. I filled the duffel bag while Ethan and Pike grabbed crutches of all sizes and tied them together so they would be easier to carry.

The second floor was the one I had been looking forward to the most. This was where the pharmacy was; if our luck held out, we would hit the jackpot. I rushed to clear the floor so I could find all the medicine and got careless. As I pushed a door open to check a room, I looked away briefly and was tackled by a snarling rotting mass as it came through the door I had just opened. I let out a small scream as I was tackled to the floor. The force of the impact knocked my knife out of my hand. I quickly managed to get my arms between me and the zombie to hold it off me.

“Bailey!” Ethan and Pike shouted. I could hear their feet hitting the tile floor as they ran toward me, but I couldn’t focus on that. All my focus was on the teeth snapping inches from my face as it tried to eat mine. I struggled against the weight of the zombie as it kept constant pressure on my arms with small lunges.

A knife appeared through its skull, causing the most vile substance on the planet to drip onto my face. I was pulled out from under the zombie and shoved away from them as I ran for the bathroom we had just cleared dry heaving. I made it to the sink just as the contents of my stomach appeared. I turned on the faucet, surprised to find water trickling out of it. It wasn’t clean water, but it was a fuck ton better than zombie juice. I grabbed some paper towels and washed my face off as best I could.

When I was done, I could still smell zombies. That wasn’t going away anytime soon. I looked down at my ruined clothes and knew I would have to burn them. Some things you couldn’t get out, and zombie was one of them. When I finally emerged from the bathroom feeling marginally less disgusting than when I went in, I found Pike and Ethan leaning against the wall, waiting for me.

“Are you ok?” Ethan asked.

“Yeah, I smell and need to burn my clothes, but I’m fine. Thank you both for saving me.”

“It’s no problem. Not like you wouldn’t do the same for us. We cleared the rest of the floor while you were in there,” Pike

told me.

“Oh good, now we can go drug shopping,” I said, my mood brightening. “I don’t care what it’s for or what it treats, grab everything,” I told them. I would sort it all back at the house and figure out what was what. As we cleaned off the shelves, I found a thick book tucked away with all the different kinds of medications, what they were used for, and how to administer them. Perfect! I tucked that into my duffel bag and continued.

Medication was so rare these days, and it was surprising to see a mostly untouched pharmacy. It made me even more uneasy about what went on here. We finished grabbing everything and lugged our bags down to the first floor. After this, we will return to the lobby where Caleb and Boone are hopefully waiting. We’ll check the ER on that floor and be done. When we finished with the pharmacy, we checked the rest of the floor, but it was mostly a bunch of administrative offices.

We went back into the stairwell when an idea came to me. I dropped my bags and began running back up the stairs. Pike and Ethan didn’t question it; they just followed me up. When I got to the top and the door leading to the roof, I stopped momentarily to catch my breath.

“What’s going on, Bails?” Ethan asked calmly, not even out of breath. That’s mildly annoying. It’s not like I’m not in shape.

“This town is bugging me. Where is everyone? An entire town just left? It doesn’t make sense. So I thought maybe

getting a better view of the town might give me some answers,” I answered. I pulled out my knife and pushed open the door. Everything was quiet as I stepped outside. Pike grabbed a cinder block sitting near the door to prop the door open so we didn’t get stuck out there. Quickly, we made sure no one was up here, then looked at the town.

It was overgrown, with far more trees growing between the buildings than there would have been at one time. However, you could still easily see the town and its buildings. It looked like it was once a cute little town. I scanned the town, not entirely sure what I was looking for. They would have gathered somewhere indoors if they weren’t running around town. It wasn’t the hospital, so where?

I could see the church, but it had half a door hanging off its hinges, so that wasn’t it. I spotted a sign peeking through the trees that said FORD, so that must be where Caleb and Boone were. Thankfully, the streets were just as empty as they were when we arrived.

“Hey, what about over here?” Pike called. I went to join him on the south side of the building and followed his pointed finger. “Take a look at that school. They must have dumped a lot of money into it. It is the newest-looking building around.”

“And it’s big enough to hold the entire town,” I said thoughtfully. “That’s where they would go.”

“What do you want to do?” Pike asked.

“Well, I don’t like the idea of an entire school filled with zombies waiting to escape. In the grand scheme of things,

we're not that far from the farm. We would easily be overrun with a hoard the size of a town. But we are also not prepared to take on a group that size. Even if we find a way to pick them off safely one by one, we don't have the ammo it would take." I gave a frustrated sigh and rubbed my hands down my face. Arms wrapped around me from behind, and I recognized Ethan's familiar scent.

"Bails, you aren't responsible for everything. And you don't have to be responsible for this." I relaxed in his embrace and rested my head back against his chest.

"Yeah, but I know about it now. I can't just ignore it. It's like those commercials and signs you used to see in airports back in the day. 'If you see something, say something.' I can't not do something."

"But do you have to do something about it *now*?" Pike asked.

"No, I suppose not. I'll talk to Henry about it, and we can devise a plan to deal with them. A hoard of zombies that size would easily overrun him as well."

"Ok, then it's settled," Ethan said, kissing my head and letting go of me. "We will keep the noise down and steer clear of anything near or visible to the school so that we don't get them all riled up. Come on, let's get back downstairs and finish the last two floors." He looped a finger into my jeans' back pocket and gave me a light tug to get me moving.

"What's on this next floor anyways?" Pike asked.

“Next floor is surgery. It should be filled with many more goodies,” I told him as we returned down the stairs. When we got to the first floor, we silently moved inside, working like a well-oiled machine, and cleared the floor. We were able to collect more medications as well as suture and surgical kits. I was most excited about the gallons of iodine that was there. I had been running low. We finished up there and went back to the lobby.

At their insistence, I stayed in the lobby while they cleared the floor and ER. I wasn't too happy about it, but it would give me a chance to get food out so we could eat when they returned. Hopefully, Boone and Caleb wouldn't be much longer. As I was pulling food out of my backpack, I froze. Someone was watching me. I could feel their eyes. As discreetly as possible, I fisted my knife and looked around me. Pike and Ethan came back with their duffel bags filled.

“The ER was filled with all sorts of goodies,” Pike said, dropping the bags to join the mountain of bags we already had stacked. “More suture- What's wrong?” he asked, picking up on my body language and looking around.

“Can't you feel it?” I asked. “Something is watching us,” I told him.

“Are you sure it wasn't just the creepiness of being left alone?” Ethan asked gently.

“Oh, I'm sure,” I replied. There was a rustling in the trees across the road from the entrance to the hospital, and our eyes all snapped to that area. “See!” I hissed.

“I stand corrected,” Ethan hissed back. We waited, weapons drawn, for whatever was out there to show itself.

Chapter Nine

Twigs snapped as they approached. Then, to my surprise, a black and tan dog stepped out of the overgrowth.

“It’s a German Shepherd!” Pike exclaimed quietly. It watched us cautiously as Ethan put his knife away and approached it.

“Be careful!” I told him. “You don’t know if it’s friendly or not.” He crouched down several feet away and started talking to it.”

“Hey, pretty baby, come here,” he crooned, clicking his tongue. The dog turned its head to the side curiously and took a tentative step towards him. “Pike, bring me a piece of jerky, would you?”

Pike grabbed a couple of pieces before I could protest them, feeding our food to a wild animal that could still rip our throats out at a moment’s notice. He slowly crouched next to Ethan and handed him one of the pieces of jerky. I watched

with some amusement as they began to baby-talk, the dog slowly creeping closer to them on its belly.

Once it was close enough, it delicately took a piece of jerky from Ethan's hand and fell in love. The dog immediately rolled over on its back and practically melted into the floor when both men petted it. "It's a girl," Ethan called back to me, "and she's a real sweetheart, aren't you? Yes, you are!" I rolled my eyes and sheathed my knife as I approached. When she saw me coming closer, she moved back to her feet and started growling.

I froze in place but glared at her. "Really? Who do you think made the jerky you're eating, ungrateful?" Ethan reached back and grabbed my hand, pulling me to them to crouch between him and Pike.

"Hold out your hand so she can smell you," he told me. "It's ok, pretty girl. Bailey is a friend. We like her." He stroked her head softly, bringing my hand to her nose to sniff.

"I think smelling me is half the problem," I said dryly, "I currently smell like a zombie, remember."

"Ok, but she's a smart girl. She'll see that you aren't one," Pike said. She sniffed my hand and then huffed at me before turning her head to dismiss me. Her tail thumped against the floor as she gazed up at Ethan lovingly.

"Can we keep her?" Ethan asked.

"Fine, but only if I get to name the little witch," I grumbled. I put my hand on Ethan's thigh to stand, and she growled at

me softly. “Get used to it,” I told her, “he was mine first.” I returned to where I had laid out our meal and sat down—stupid dog. The men followed me, and the dog followed Ethan, sitting on his other side as he sat beside me.

“Don’t be jealous, baby,” he said, grinning. I rolled my eyes and began shelling my egg.

“What are you going to name her?” Pike asked.

“Witch,” I said without hesitation. They both chuckled but didn’t comment. “And she stays outside.”

“That’s fine. She can be our little guard dog. You’ll be a good guard dog, won’t you?” Ethan said to her, stroking her back. She leaned into his touch and sighed contentedly. I rolled my eyes and bit into my egg. We sat silently as we ate and rested for about five minutes before the unmistakable sound of engines approached.

I stood excitedly and grinned when two vehicles pulled up. One was a twelve-foot moving truck, which Boone hopped out of with a massive grin. The other was a Ford F-250 with a covered trailer hooked to it. Caleb slid from the truck with a smug look on his face.

“Did I do good, or did I do good?” he asked.

“You did great!” I said excitedly, jumping into his arms. “Do we have enough gas to get us home?”

“Sure do,” he said. He wrapped his arms around me, his hands on my ass to hold me up. He spun us around to press me up against the side of the pickup. “Boosting cars really gets the

blood pumping,” he said quietly. He trailed light kisses down my neck, and I tipped my head to the side to give him better access.

“Umm, where did the dog come from, and why is it eating our food?” Boone asked.

“What!?” I shrieked. I pushed Caleb back and dropped to my feet. Sure enough, Witch was taking advantage of the distraction to eat the rest of the food I had put out. “No! Witch! Bad dog!” I yelled as I stomped over to chase her away. She looked up at me and growled, baring her teeth at me as she stood over the scraps of food left.

I immediately pulled my gun and pointed it at her head. “I will shoot you,” I growled back at her. I guess she was smart since she stopped growling and slowly backed away while staring at the gun. “Ethan! Get your new girlfriend. She ate the food.”

“Come here, Witch. Come here, girl. That’s a good girl,” he called. She walked up to him with her head hung slightly as she wagged her tail slowly. “See, she’s sorry, Bails. Hers is sorries. No need to shoot her.”

I rolled my eyes at him and decided to answer Boone’s original question. “The dog came out of the woods to suck Ethan’s dick. It ate our food because it’s an ungrateful witch. By the way, that’s her name now, Witch, and apparently, we’re keeping her, but she isn’t allowed inside. Oh, and she doesn’t like me.”

“Bailey might be a little jealous of her,” Pike stage whispered.

“I’m not jealous of a dog,” I snapped.

“Ok...” Boone said. “Why don’t we load up and head to the home improvement store? We can load up, then stay there overnight and head back in the morning,” he suggested. The boys loaded the duffel bags into the trailer, and we climbed in. With Witch in tow, Ethan climbed into the moving truck with Boone. Pike climbed into the back of the truck cab while I rode shotgun. On the short drive over, we filled Caleb in on the school.

“I agree. It’s something we will need to take care of, but we should wait until we talk to Henry and come up with a battle plan. Maybe we could even devise a plan to manipulate them into a choke point using cattle gates, who knows,” Caleb said. We pulled up to the large warehouse store, and Caleb, Pike, and Ethan jumped out to raise the large rolling door so we could pull the vehicles in as I slid across the seat to the driver’s seat.

This was my first time behind the wheel of a car, and I wasn’t quite sure what I was doing. I would have told Caleb that, but he didn’t ask, so I didn’t offer. Driving a car wasn’t a relevant skill of the apocalypse. I understood the basic driving mechanics, so when Caleb began to wave me forward, I got the truck into gear and slowly eased my foot down on the gas pedal. The truck moved forward faster than I expected, so I slammed on the brakes. The guys were all giving me weird

looks, so I quickly pressed my foot back to the gas pedal, and the truck lurched forward and then slammed to a stop as I moved back to the brake pedal. I felt my face turn red as I did this start/stop a few more times, with the guys leaning against the building, watching me with amusement. Even Boone had exited his truck and lit a cigarette to watch me. I guess they went on their own mini-supply run.

Finally, I put the truck in park and rolled down the window. “You better come do this before I break something,” I shouted to Caleb. He pushed off the building and sauntered to me while shaking his head. I thought it might be in disappointment until he jumped up on the running board and held on to the door to steady himself as he leaned in through the window a little.

“You can do this, baby. Take your foot off the brake and ease it down slowly on the gas,” he instructed.

“With you just hanging off the truck like that? I don’t think so. I’ll end up killing you!” Was he fucking crazy?

“Baby, that opening is about three of these trucks. I promise you aren’t going to kill me. Now come on, hit the gas.” I sighed deeply but did as he said. The truck began to roll forward again, and just as I was about to panic and hit the brake again, he reached across me and grabbed my knee to keep my foot on the gas. “Don’t brake; you’re doing fine. Just steer her in until I tell you to stop.”

My heart raced as the truck passed through the door and into the building. “That’s it, turn to the right just a little, your other

right, there you go. A little more, a little more, and stop.” I eased my foot onto the brake and put the truck in park when it came to a stop. I slumped over the steering wheel in relief. “Good job, Baby, you did it.” He patted me on the back, then hopped down from the truck as Boone drove his vehicle inside. I heard the large door drop closed and decided it was time to move.

I climbed out of the truck, still feeling a little embarrassed as we stood in a circle. Witch growled at me as I approached, so I hissed back at her—hateful animal. “For your first time driving, that wasn’t all that bad,” Pike assured me.

“It was embarrassing, is what it was,” I grumbled.

Ethan grabbed me and pulled me into his arms, “You did just fine. Don’t be so hard on yourself.”

“Ok! I think it is safe to say that with all the racket we just made, this place is deserted. Everyone has their marching orders. This place looks pretty untouched, and we have plenty of space to fill, so let’s get as much as possible. I don’t know when we can return or if the vehicles will even make it back. Let’s make this trip count,” Caleb said to us. I half expected us to put our hands in the middle of the circle and yell, ‘Break,’ he was so peppy about it.

The guys went their separate ways with these weird-looking metal things on wheels. I grabbed my own and followed the signs to the home and garden department. I combed through the department aisle by aisle, grabbing various tools and informational books. I even found materials and kits to build

your own greenhouse! I went to the outdoor section and found bags of dirt. I wasn't entirely sure why people would have bought dirt, but one of the greenhouse books I browsed showed these elevated planting boxes, so I assumed that's what the dirt was for.

Flat carts were out here, so I started loading them with the bags. Sure, we had plenty of dirt at home, but why dig it up when you could get it prepackaged like this? I had two whole carts filled with bags of dirt and was filling plastic bags I'd found near a cash register with packets of seeds when the guys found me.

"Found her," Boone called to the others. "You look like a kid in a candy store, Honey Bee," he laughed.

"I'm not sure which I'm most excited about, the pharmacy or the home and garden department. They have bags of dirt, and look at all these seeds!" I exclaimed excitedly.

"We found everything we needed for the improvements around the farm, too," he told me.

"That's great!"

"They have appliances, too, so we loaded up a new fridge and a freezer for the basement. Did you want a new washer and dryer?"

"Mine still work just fine. I hate to take up needed space with unnecessary luxuries. They aren't going anywhere."

"That's true enough," Boone said. I finished grabbing all the seeds, and as I walked by to put the bag on one of the carts, he

pulled me against him. “I like seeing you happy and relaxed,” he said as he nuzzled my neck.

“Of course I’m happy, this trip has been fantastic, and we’re getting so many things we need to make life easier. If you guys build my greenhouse before the weather gets bad, I can have food growing for winter.”

“If that’s what you want, we’ll get it done,” he assured me. The others came over and joined us, eyeing the carts I had filled.

“Do you think you got enough stuff?” Ethan joked.

“No, I could have gotten more, but I didn’t think we would have the room,” I said honestly. “Did you get enough wood to build the greenhouse and these planting box things?”

“We have all the wood you could need,” he said with a wink. The others snickered, but I didn’t get the joke, so I ignored it.

“Why don’t we load up one more cart of soil to ensure you have enough?” Pike suggested.

“Good idea! While you and Ethan do that and wheel all the carts over to the trucks, why don’t Boone and I take Bailey to that one section we found to see what she thinks,” Caleb said cryptically.

“Think about what?” I asked.

“You’ll see,” Boone said in my ear, nipping the lobe before releasing me. I dropped the bag of seeds onto one of the carts and followed them through the store wide-eyed as I took in the massive amount of things filling the shelves. When they

stopped in an area filled with mattresses and looked at me expectantly, I was confused.

“You wanted to know what I thought about beds?” I asked.

“Yes,” Boone answered.

“We have beds unless you want to get one for yourself, so you aren’t stuck sleeping on the couch.” That made sense, and I hadn’t even thought about that.

“That’s one route, but we were looking more at this bed over here,” Caleb said, guiding me to a massive bed. It was standing in the shelf slot with the tag ” California King. “We thought maybe we could bring it home and replace your bed with it.”

It took a minute for my brain to catch on to what they were asking. Did I want a bigger bed in my room so we could all sleep comfortably together? That’s where this relationship was heading; I never thought about the sleeping arrangements. It made sense, but it also felt like saying yes to the bed was saying yes to everything, and I still wasn’t sure I was ready for everything. I chewed on my lip nervously as I debated what to do.

“We can put your bed upstairs so I have a place to sleep, then when and if you’re ready, we will have a bed big enough to snuggle in together when the temperatures drop,” Boone suggested easily. I swear that man had a direct line to my thoughts. He always seemed to know what I was struggling with and had a solution to ease my worries.

“I think that’s a great idea,” I told him. I smiled at them both. “Let’s get it.” They both grinned as Caleb reached for the bed to pull it out. Boone grabbed the other end, and I trailed behind them as they carried it to the trucks. I got distracted in the paint department and fell behind them looking at color samples. I was picking out my favorite colors when I heard growling to my left. I looked over to see Witch approaching me and snarling.

“Listen, you little Witch, how many times do I have to tell you I will shoot you if you bite me?” She ignored me and lunged, making me shriek and crouch down as she went sailing past me and attacked the zombie that must have been sneaking up on me. I’m honestly not even sure where the fuck it came from or how it had been so quiet. Annoyance flashed through me at another zombie getting the drop on me. I’m not usually this oblivious. I blame the new men in my life.

“Bailey?!” Panicked shouts reached me from different directions as they responded to my scream.

“I’m in paint,” I called out. I got to my feet and faced the scuffle as Witch kept the zombie back without getting bit herself. She would dart in, throwing her weight against it, then dart back out before it could get its hands on her. I pulled out my knife and got ready to take the zombie down. “Witch, come!” I said to her sharply, hoping she was smart enough to understand me and do as she was told.

She was and came running over to sit by my side. The zombie turned to follow her, and I attacked, plunging the knife

through the eye socket and into its brain. It fell to the ground, and I turned and crouched in front of Witch. “What a good girl you are,” I crooned softly. She sat there stiffly as she allowed me to check her for injuries; thankfully, she had none. “Thank you, Witch. Maybe we can learn to be friends after all.” I continued petting her, and she had just started to lean into my hand when the guys came running up in a panic.

“What happened? Are you ok?” They said, speaking at once. Witch huffed at me in annoyance and trotted over to Ethan to sit by him. I guess we can only be secret friends.

“I’m fine. I was looking at paint samples, and this thing came out of nowhere. I probably would have gotten bitten if Witch hadn’t seen it and attacked. She saved me. And I’ve decided you guys are incredibly distracting. That’s the second time now that a zombie’s gotten the drop on me, and I don’t like it. So whatever you’re doing, stop.”

Even though I had said I was fine, Pike still searched me frantically for injuries. When he found none, he pulled me into his arms and squeezed tightly. “Why were you alone? Why was she alone?” he demanded angrily as he let me go and turned on Caleb and Boone.

“She was alone because she’s a big girl capable of taking care of herself,” Caleb said. The annoyance in his tone was unmistakable.

“Thank you,” I said to him. “Pike, I’m fine and capable of handling a zombie. I just need to be more alert so they stop sneaking up on me so much. I blame the fact that I feel safe

with you guys around. I feel safe, so I drop my guard. That won't be happening anymore.

“It better not, or one of us will start sticking to you like glue at all times,” Pike growled as he stomped away.

“You're not the boss of me, remember?” I called after him. He stopped in his tracks, slowly turning back to me. He crowded into my space, making me walk backward until my ass hit the paint samples display.

“Understand something, Sweetling,” he murmured as his hand slid up my body to wrap around my neck lightly. “We look out for each other; your safety is a top priority. I don't doubt that you can take care of yourself, but if you aren't at the top of your game like you said, someone will stay with you to watch your back.” His thumb stroked my pulse as it began to race. “This isn't about who is in charge. However, I have no problem putting you over my knee and turning that pretty ass red if you need a reminder about safety.” He squeezed my neck tighter for emphasis, then turned and walked away.

The others chuckled as they walked away, leaving me leaning against the display, trying not to pant. What the fuck did I get myself into? And why did I like it?

Chapter Ten

The guys dragged a bunch of other mattresses over to the trucks and laid them on the floor so we had something to sleep on for the night. The rest of the afternoon was uneventful as they packed everything up. We ate the rest of the food as they talked. I tuned them out as I sat a little away from them with my arms wrapped around my legs in a ball. I was trying to figure out what the fuck I was doing. I didn't know these men. I didn't know what they were capable of. What if this was all an act, and they ended up being abusive?

I didn't realize my breathing had become labored as I started hyperventilating until Boone's worried eyes entered my field of vision. "Hey, Honey Bee," he said quietly. He moved behind me and slid forward until I sat between his legs and his chest pressed against my back. "It's ok, Bailey. Just breathe with me, ok? In and out. Pike didn't mean to scare you. He just came on a little stronger than he needed to because he was so scared that you were in danger and wasn't there to protect you. Isn't that right, Pike?" Boone said pointedly.

“That’s right. I shouldn’t have done that, Sweetling, and I’m sorry. I went too far,” Pike said, sitting three feet in front of me. The others filled in around him, ensuring they kept at least three feet away from me so I didn’t feel caged in or trapped. “I would never hurt you out of anger; none of us would. And if that isn’t the sort of thing you’re into, it will never happen again,” he assured me.

I concentrated on the rise and fall of Boone’s chest as my breathing evened out again. I felt foolish freaking out like that as I felt the concern and care radiating off these men. They were so understanding and considerate, always focused on my needs and comfort. Maybe if I had voiced my concerns and discomfort sooner, we could have talked about it, and I could have avoided the panic attack completely. Silently I vowed to myself that I would start speaking up about my feelings more in the moment instead of keeping them to myself.

“I didn’t hate it,” I whispered, finally speaking. I was staring at my knees but felt the heat of their eyes on me.

“What was that, Honey Bee?” Boone asked, his chest vibrating against my back.

I cleared my throat and tried again. “I said I didn’t hate it.”

“Look at me, Bailey,” Pike ordered. Slowly, I lifted my head and was taken aback by the amount of desire I saw in his eyes. I looked at the other two and saw the same thing. I didn’t have to look at Boone for his reaction to my statement. I felt it pressing into my lower back.

“Anytime you want to play or experiment, you say the word, and we will happily stop whatever we are doing to trip over each other to give you what you want,” Pike continued, “but you have to be open and honest with us. We don’t want to cause you any more emotional trauma. You have to communicate with us. We can’t read your mind to know what rabbit hole it’s dragging you down, Sweetling. You have to tell us so that we can help you work through those thoughts and answer whatever questions are eating at you.”

I nodded at his words, knowing that they were true. I snuggled back further into Boone’s embrace, making him groan. “I’m gonna need you to stop moving, Honey Bee,” he whispered against my ear, making me shudder.

“Why don’t we start now? What caused you to freak out just then?” Caleb asked.

I took a deep breath and reminded myself I had just vowed to communicate better. “Well, as I said, I didn’t hate Pike’s hand on my throat and his threat to... umm...”

“Turn your pretty ass red?” Pike supplied.

I licked my lips as I felt my body start to heat. “Yeah, that. It made me question what was wrong with me and wonder what I was doing and what I had gotten myself into. Then I started to think about how I didn’t know any of you and how this could all be an act to lull me into a sense of security before you flipped a switch and started abusing me, and that’s about when the panic set in, like it’s doing right now,” I finished, panting as I fought to get a grip on myself. Boone pulled me

tighter against him and placed a hand on my chest, forcing my lungs to obey.

“Bails, unfortunately, there is no way for us to prove we aren’t bad guys. It will take time to get to know each other and learn to trust each other. But let me ask you this: have any of us ever given you the indication that we would hurt you? Or that we had nefarious intentions?”

“No,” I said softly.

“He’s right,” Caleb said. “Think about it. There are four of us and one of you. Even if Matty was there, you’re still outnumbered. Why would we bother buttering you up when we could easily take what we wanted without the show?”

“You have a point,” I conceded.

“And who’s to say you aren’t pulling one over on us, and one day you’re going to poison us and turn us into jerky?” Ethan asked playfully. That made me snicker. I looked at Pike, who was smiling softly at me. He hadn’t chimed in after I gave him a play-by-play of my mental fuckery.

“I need you to understand one tiny thing, Sweetling,” he said. His voice was low and silky, flowing over me like the caress of a feather. “Liking my hand wrapped around your neck, or the idea of me spanking you, doesn’t mean something is wrong with you. It just means you have darker tastes swirling inside you, waiting to be noticed. And there isn’t a damn thing wrong with that, understand?”

I nodded at him, then stifled a yawn. “We should get some sleep,” Boone said as he tilted us to lie down on our sides. I turned around in his arms to face him and laid my head on his bicep.

“Caleb and I will take the first watch,” Pike said.

I felt Ethan lay down behind me, spooning me as he buried his face in my neck. I hummed happily as I drifted off to sleep, utterly content and feeling safer than I ever have in my entire life with two sexy men wrapped around me.



They must have switched places at some point in the night because I woke up half-sprawled across Pike’s chest as he lay on his back with Caleb cuddled around my legs, using my ass as a pillow. How they managed all that without waking me says more about how much I already trust them than I could ever voice. I shifted to try and extricate myself from between them, but they both held on tighter. I really needed to pee.

“Need help?” Boone asked softly as he came to stand over us.

“Yes, please,” I whispered. He nodded, and I reached up to him, thinking he would help by pulling me from them. That wasn’t what happened.

Boone leaned over and smacked them both in the forehead. “Let her go, you stage five clingers.” I stared at him in shock while Caleb and Pike groaned out their protests but released

me and rolled away from me, leaving me unencumbered and able to stand. “See,” Boone said with a smile as he offered me his hand, “you just have to know how to handle them.”

“I guess so,” I whispered with a giggle. I accepted his hand, and he pulled me to my feet. I started walking toward the bathroom, and he fell in step with me.

“Is it ok if I escort you to the bathroom?” he asked. “It’s just kinda dark in here, and I’d feel better knowing you were close by.” I nodded, and he linked his fingers through mine to hold my hand as we walked.

“Did you sleep well? I assume you did since you barely budged when we traded places.”

“I did. I think I slept better than I have in forever.”

“Hmm, I wonder why that is. What was different?” he teased as we reached the bathroom.

“Must have been the long day we had yesterday,” I answered as I opened the bathroom door. I pulled a small flashlight from my pocket and switched it on. I checked every nook and cranny quickly before I let myself into a stall. You can never be too careful, and even though I had been in here yesterday, it was better to be safe than sorry. I put the flashlight in my mouth as I quickly squatted down and did my business.

I didn’t see Boone waiting for me when I left the bathroom. I switched off the flashlight and pocketed it, and a tremor of fear mixed with excitement traveled down my spine. I didn’t know what was happening but knew I was safe. I felt Boone moving

in front of me more than I saw him. It was pitch black at the back of the store without our flashlights.

“Do you want to play a game, Honey Bee?” Boone asked me. He was barely touching me, making me hyper-aware of the places where we were touching. My nipples hardened as they brushed against his chest.

“Yes,” I whispered.

“Then run,” he responded in a low voice. “If you can return to the trucks without me catching you, then you win.” Excitement zipped through me, and I took off blindly while he started counting. “Ten.”

I stopped at the end of the hallway the bathrooms were in and flicked my flashlight on to get my bearings quickly before turning it off again.

“Nine.”

I slipped off my sneakers and went to my right.

“Eight.”

I hadn't been to this part of the store, but I knew the guys had because this was the lumber department. I was hoping Boone would assume I would go left to the area of the store I was familiar with.

“Seven.”

I knew this was a straightaway to the end of the store, but in the dark, I couldn't tell how far I had gone. What I did know was that I needed to be as close to the trucks as possible before

he was done counting, which meant heading toward the slightly lighter darkness.

“Six.”

I slowed down and gingerly began to feel for the opening of an aisle, praying that I didn't knock anything to the floor.

“Five.”

I couldn't risk turning on the flashlight because he could be watching for precisely that. I also didn't want to run into something and hurt myself.

“Four.”

I started taking small steps with my arms in front of me. My hand brushed cold metal, and I followed it slowly.

“Three.”

Confident I had found an aisle, I began to move a little faster, with one hand held out in front of me and the other sliding along the metal.

“Two.”

I wanted to celebrate when I ran out of metal. That meant I reached the middle of the store and was halfway towards winning this thing.

“One.”

I knew the next aisle was ahead of me and confidently walked forward. I didn't anticipate a display in the middle of the cross aisle and smacked into a pile of something. The boxes hitting the concrete didn't make much noise, but they

made enough. I heard Boone's dark chuckle much closer than expected, and my heart began to thunder in my chest. First things first, I needed to get away from this spot. As quickly as I could, I moved down a few aisles. I glanced over my shoulder and saw the light bouncing around as Boone jogged up an aisle. Cheater!

I turned down the aisle. It was getting easier to see now that the sky outside was brightening, and I could almost discern the dark shape of obstacles in my path. I was moving as quickly as I dared down the aisle when I heard growling ahead of me. Not now, Witch! The pounding of Boone's feet halted, and he couldn't contain his laughter as he switched directions. I knew he would be on me in seconds. Thinking quickly, I grabbed something off the shelf that ended up being a metal pipe and threw it behind me as hard as possible.

It clattered to the floor loudly in the back aisle, causing Witch and Boone to move to the sound to investigate. I reached the end of the aisle, and now everything was gray as the sun began to rise. The trucks in sight, I moved into an all-out sprint, hoping I had given him just enough distraction to give me time to reach them.

I pumped my fist triumphantly as I reached the beds and ran across them, disturbing Caleb and Pike. Ethan looked at me from the door and shook his head as I put a finger to my lips and climbed into the back of the pickup. I peeked over the side and watched Boone appear from an aisle and look around at the trucks before grinning and stalking down another aisle, Witch hot on his heels. As soon as he was gone, I pulled

myself up to sit on the truck's cab with my feet dangling in front of the passenger side window.

I grinned down at Pike and Caleb, who looked confused as they stared up at me. "What are you..?" Caleb started to ask but stopped when I put my finger over my lips. Boone appeared again as he exited the aisle by the beds. He looked around again, his eyes sliding over me, and went to walk towards the other end of the store when his head snapped back around to look at me.

"How long have you been there?" he asked, stalking toward me.

"Not long, but I win," I said, laughing.

"And how long were you going to let me look for you?" he asked, stopping a few feet away.

"As long as your big ole heart desired," I chirped. I launched myself at him, and all four men let out a small yell as he lunged forward and plucked me out of the air.

"Why the hell did you do that?" Boone demanded. I could feel his heart racing beneath my palm.

"Because I knew you would catch me," I said simply, kissing his cheek. "Now, can we leave? I'm hungry, and thanks to that mutt eating our food yesterday, we don't have anything left for breakfast."

"No food!" Caleb exclaimed, jumping to his feet. "Let's go."

I laughed at his dramatics as I grabbed my bag and tossed it into the truck. We ensured we didn't leave anything behind,

and they opened the big door so we could back the trucks out. Once the trucks were out, Ethan and Pike lowered the door back down, and it was like we had never been there. Ethan jumped in with Boone, and Pike came to my side of the truck. I expected him to open the back door and get in. Instead, he opened the front door and climbed up on the runner.

“Scoot,” he ordered.

“What? Why?” I asked as I unbuckled my seatbelt and slid to the middle seat. Caleb grinned at me and immediately put his arm around my shoulders.

“Because I’m not riding back home cramped in that back seat,” he said, climbing in and slamming the door shut behind him. Caleb pulled onto the main road out of town, and Boone followed.

“There’s plenty of room back there,” I said to him as I looked over the seat. I cringed when I saw how little legroom there was. A man as tall as Pike would not be comfortable back there for more than five minutes.

“Then you sit back there,” he responded.

“No, thank you,” I said, facing the front. I pulled the makeshift map I had made from my jeans pocket and smoothed it across my lap. Now we had to find our way home using roads, which might not be so easy. I flipped the page over and began to map out our trip, starting from the bottom. As we left town, we saw a message that had been left in spray paint on the welcome to Wilsonville sign. ‘Town infected. Do not enter.’

“Well, that explains why the town is still so stocked. They must have fallen early, someone left that message as a warning, and nobody was willing to risk it. Eventually, it was forgotten about altogether,” Caleb said.

“Must have. Their downfall was our good fortune,” Pike replied. I remained silent. It felt wrong to comment on it. On the one hand, I was grateful everyone had stayed away because we had all these supplies to bring back. But on the other hand, that meant that there was a ticking time bomb back in that school that we needed to deal with and could explode at any given moment.

Chapter Eleven

The truck fell silent as we drove, everyone lost in their thoughts. I studiously continued marking roads down as we went. It took a couple of hours, but we finally reached the road to our house. Satisfied we were on the right track, I pocketed the map again. Believe it or not, that was boring as shit. Everyone in the truck had noticeably relaxed now that we knew where we were going. I looked sideways at Caleb, who was busy driving, and then at Pike.

“Hey, Pike?” I said casually.

“What’s up, Sweetling?”

“Kiss me.” The truck swerved as Caleb jerked the wheel at my sudden request.

Pike stilled, then turned his head to look at me. “You want to repeat that?”

I took a deep breath and crawled into Pike’s lap, facing him with my knees on either side. “I said kiss me.” His hands reached into my hair, removing the hair tie that held it in a pile

on my head so he could tangle his fingers in it and pull my lips to his.

The kiss started slow and tentative like he was scared to spook me, but I wouldn't be spooked this time. I took control of the kiss and deepened it, swiping my tongue across his and teasing it to come out and play with me. Pike quickly followed my lead and tightened his grip on my hair, holding me in place as he devoured me.

I started rocking my hips, searching for any friction I could get as I felt myself get wet. Unfortunately, I couldn't quite get the right angle with the way we were seated. His right hand left my hair, and I could hear him fumbling around for something before the back of the seat suddenly dropped back. His hands moved to my hips and adjusted me so that his hard cock was pushing against my pussy. I moaned into his mouth as he moved my hips so that I was grinding against him.

"Fuck yes," I said, breaking the kiss. His lips found my neck, and he began to suck and bite it. "I need, I need..." Fuck, what did I need? I needed everything.

"I got you, Sweetling. I'll take care of you, don't you worry," Pike said as he held me tightly and flipped us so that I was on the seat and he was on top of me. He pumped his hips, rubbing his cock against me a few times while he kissed me deeply. I moaned as his lips left mine, and he began trailing kisses down my neck. He shoved my shirt and bra up to expose my tits and sucked a nipple into his mouth, making me

writhe beneath him. When satisfied with his work on that nipple, he moved to the other and did the same.

“Fucking hell, you guys are going to kill me,” Caleb moaned. I could feel the truck moving all over the road.

“Just make sure you don’t kill us,” I gasped as Pike’s teeth closed around my nipple, adding a bite of pain to my pleasure. He released my nipple and left kisses along my stomach. He swirled his tongue in my belly button, making me giggle, before moving his lips to my side and biting my hip, making me cry out. “Jesus, you’re bitey,” I muttered. He soothed the bite with his tongue as he found the lever to slide the seat back. It jolted back about four inches. It wasn’t much, but it did give him the room to maneuver his big body on the floor in front of me.

His hands slid up my legs to the button of my jeans. He unbuttoned them and lowered the zipper before slipping his fingers into the waistband and grabbing my panties. He paused and gave me a questioning look, one last chance to back out. I nodded at him, sliding my hands up to play with my nipples.

His eyes tracked the movement, and he grinned at me. “Now, Sweetling,” he said as he slowly peeled my pants and underwear down my legs. “As much as I would love to sink my cock into you, one, I don’t think you’re quite ready for that. And two, the first time any of us fucks you, it will not be in a truck.” He paused to remove my shoes and socks to slide my pants off my legs completely. Once they were off, he

tossed them at Caleb, who whipped them back at his head with a growl.

Pike laughed and repositioned me so Caleb could get a better view. “I will, however, do as you asked and kiss you,” Pike said with a wink. “And after skipping breakfast, I’m about to eat like a king.” He trailed love bites and kisses up and down my thighs, teasing me.

“Pike,” I begged, “please.”

“Stop fucking teasing her, man, or I’ll pull this fucking truck over and show you how to fucking do it right,” Caleb growled.

Pike suddenly buried his face in my pussy. He didn’t start slow. He just went for it. “Fuck off,” came his muffled reply to Caleb. I was so worked up that I didn’t have time to feel weird or panicky about this. It helped that this was something completely new that hadn’t been predisposed to traumatic experiences.

I tried to move my hips against his face, but Pike placed an arm across them to pin me down and keep me still. I moaned as his tongue slid into me like a shovel, scooping out my juices. I whimpered at the loss when he lifted his mouth from me. “Open your eyes, Bailey,” he ordered. “Open your eyes and look at Caleb and watch him. See how badly he wants you and wishes he could trade places with me.”

I opened my eyes and gasped when I saw Caleb with one hand on the wheel and the other wrapped around his thick cock, stroking it. His eyes kept darting between me and the

road so fast you might have thought he was having a seizure if you weren't aware of what was happening in the truck.

“Keep your eyes on Caleb, Sweetling,” Pike directed. He slid first one, then two fingers inside me, matching Caleb's pace. “Watch him desire you while unable to touch you. You did that to him without even trying.” Pike stopped talking as his mouth lowered to my clit, and he began to suck on the little button as he continued to pump his fingers in and out of me. I knew I was close. I could feel the orgasm building. I focused on it, chasing it like a cat chases a string, desperate to catch it. I needed it to consume me more than I needed air. Instead of bliss, fear washed over me, locking my orgasm behind a glass door. It was there, I could see the proof, but I just couldn't reach it.

“I can't,” I mumbled, closing my eyes. “I just can't,” I sigh in defeat. There was a sudden slap to my clit that made me yelp as my eyes flew open.

“Didn't I tell you to keep your eyes on Caleb? Stay out of your head, Bailey, and let yourself go. I dare you to be brave for me so you can see that it's ok. In hindsight, maybe this wasn't the place to do this, but we're here now. Come for me, you fucking goddess. I need it. I need you.”

With my eyes open, he resumed his pumping and sucking. Caleb stopped the truck and put it in park, turning his body to watch me as he stroked his cock. I reached for him and watched a battle play out in his eyes before he shook his head. “This time is about you, baby, not me. Finish her, Pike. The

moving truck is pulling up, and we're in sight of the house. I didn't think we should pull in while you're down there doing that to Matty's sister."

My eyes widened, and I glanced out the windshield, where I could see the house in the distance. We were stopped at the bend in the road. I heard the moving truck pull up alongside us, and the two doors slammed as Boone and Ethan got out. The truck rocked slightly, and Boone's face appeared behind Caleb. He took the scene in and said something to Ethan. Caleb grinned and hit the lock button right before Ethan and Boone tried to open the back doors. They tried all the doors then I heard their doors open and close again as they continued down the road to the house.

"I think they might be a little mad," I said between pants. I was beginning to get frustrated because I was so fucking close, but I couldn't get there. Pike turned his head and bit my inner thigh to get my attention.

"I don't care what's happening outside this truck. None of it matters. Keep that beautiful brain here. You can do this, Sweetling. Do it for us. Let us see how pretty you are when you come all over my face and hand."

I still wasn't convinced it would work, but Pike was a wizard. With my eyes locked on Caleb's cock, Pike twisted his fingers inside of me and stroked a spot while he gently bit down on my clit. I went off like a rocket. I had no choice as I saw stars and screamed out my orgasm. Pike's fingers

disappeared from my body as he replaced them with his mouth, drinking me in.

Caleb's eyes were on my face as he came into a cup with a groan.

As I recovered from my mind-blowing orgasm, dark thoughts swirled inside my head. It must have shown on my face because worry crossed Caleb's. "You ok, Bailey? What's going on in that beautiful brain of yours? Pike," he said, nudging him with his foot to get his attention.

Pike's eyes opened and snapped to my face. He took one more lazy lick and then slid his tongue around his lips to collect as much of my release as possible. When he finished, he wiped his face off on his shirt sleeve and then leaned over me. "Such a good girl coming for us like that," he crooned. He sat in the space between me and the door with his back against the door and pulled me into his lap. "Talk to us, Sweetling."

"I'm sorry," I blurted, resisting the urge to push away from him. My body curled in on itself to hide all of the intimate bits as mortification filled every cell of my body.

"What are you sorry for?" Caleb asked.

"I'm sorry for throwing myself at Pike like a whore. I shouldn't have done that. Crawling into your lap like a wanton hussy." I could feel my cheeks burn, and I covered my face with my hands. "I feel so embarrassed," I whispered.

"Hey," Pike said softly, gently pulling my hands from my face. "You didn't do anything you should be embarrassed

about. Do you see me complaining? Bailey, you can hop in my lap and demand sexual favors from me any damn time you want.”

“And you aren’t a fucking whore,” Caleb growled lightly. “You’re fucking magnificent.”

I didn’t respond, so Pike rocked me gently as he praised me for initiating and coming for him like a good girl and how much he loved how I tasted. We sat there for fifteen minutes as he and Caleb went back and forth, telling me everything they enjoyed about our tryst. Slowly, I relaxed in Pike’s arms as I shoved the deprecating voice in my head down. Does it make it wrong if all parties enjoyed it?

Pike felt me relax, grabbed my jeans and underwear from the floor, and tossed them at Caleb, who had long since put his dick away. “Why don’t you get her pants back on her so we can get her presentable and back home safe and sound.”

Caleb separated my underwear from my jeans and slid them up my legs and around my hips. His touch was feather soft as his fingers trailed back down my legs. He grabbed my jeans and put them back on with me helping by lifting my hips so he could get them over my ass. When they were almost on, Pike reached down, pulled them the rest of the way, and fastened them. He then pulled my bra and shirt back into place and hugged me to him. “There, right as rain.”

Caleb put the truck into gear and continued down the drive. Pike nuzzled my neck and held me close. “We’re going to have to talk about that, Sweetling. You’ll have to tell us what

happened to you that makes this so difficult for you and why you were so mean to yourself just now.

I nodded. They deserved to know. God knows he worked hard for that orgasm. “After Matty leaves,” I said quietly. “I never... he never... I never told him the details of what happened to me. He didn’t need to know then, and he doesn’t need to know now.”

“Your secrets are safe with us, baby,” Caleb said. He rubbed my thigh comfortingly as he drove the truck through the open gate. When he parked the truck, Caleb got out to close the gate behind us, giving Pike and me a few more seconds to soak each other in.

“I really am so proud of you for letting go like that, for me, with me. I swear to you, as long as I am here, I will make sure nothing and nobody can hurt you again.” I smiled at him as he placed me on the seat and hopped out of the truck. I took another moment to collect myself as I thought about his promise sadly. Lesson number four of the apocalypse: Promises have no meaning.

Chapter Twelve

I slid out of the truck and walked around the moving truck toward the porch. Witch was racing around the yard, barking up a storm like she knew it was safe to do so now. Matty sat on the railing, grinning at me, while Boone and Ethan leaned against the step railings, pouting. I looked at them and sighed. “You aren’t really mad at me, are you?”

Their faces softened. “No, we aren’t mad at you, Honey Bee,” Boone assured me. “Just disappointed we couldn’t watch.”

“I knew I should have ridden with you instead of Boone,” Ethan lamented dramatically.

“Nobody stopped you from watching,” Caleb said as he came over with a couple of duffel bags. He dropped them at the foot of the stairs. “I just kept you from coming into the truck and interrupting the mood.”

“And we definitely didn’t want the mood interrupted, did we, Sweetling?” Pike said, wrapping his arms around my waist

and nuzzling my neck.

“No, I think that would have been counterproductive to our goals at the time,” I admitted with a small laugh. I looked at Matty, who had lost his grin and looked a little green. “You ok up there, Matty?”

“Yeah, I’m just realizing how gross hearing about your sister’s sex life is,” he said with a shudder. There was a beat of silence before the five of us busted out in laughter. “There are just some things I shouldn’t know,” he whined. His statement echoed what I had said to Pike in the truck, and it sobered me quickly. Pike felt me tense in his arms and hugged me tighter.

“I’ve always got you,” he whispered low enough that only I could hear him. I turned my head and kissed his cheek in thanks before tapping his arms to let me go.

“I’m going to go check on Gray. How was everything while I was gone?” I asked Matty as I walked up the steps.

“Everything went normal. Nothing exciting happened. Gray’s doing fine, though he’s gotten more moody from being stuck in bed for so long,” Matty told me, following me to the door.

“Baby, where do you want the bags from the hospital?” Caleb asked me.

“The living room. Scratch that. Gray’s room. He can help me sort through it before we get his cast on.” I went inside, leaving the guys to unload the trucks, and headed in to see Gray.

“Did you eat?” Matty asked.

“We haven’t. I should make something.”

“I’ve got it. Go see Gray. I’m pretty sure he’s sick of my face,” Matty replied as he started pulling food out of the fridge.

I walked down the hall and peeked my head into Gray’s room. “Hey, you, miss me?” I asked. His face lit up when he saw me.

“You’re back!” he exclaimed. “How did it go? Were you able to get everything?”

“We got everything and more,” I assured him. “We will get a cast on that leg and have you mobile by tonight.”

“Thank fuck! I’m so sick of this bed. And I keep missing out on everything. Do you know I haven’t even seen the farm? Or the rest of the house?” I sat down on the side of the bed and leaned over him to peek at his leg.

“Still looks good,” I commented.

“So tell me everything,” Gray requested. “Run into any trouble?” I told him everything that happened while we were gone, like how we now had a dog and the zombie-filled school. Matty came in when I started telling him about the school with a plate of scrambled eggs and peppers. I thanked him while he pulled up a chair to listen to the rest of my story, which I finished between mouthfuls of eggs.

“So when you head home today, Matty, let Henry know we need to meet to discuss what to do about the zombies. Also, let

him know I will have some medicine to trade with.” I could even trade some of the seeds, but I wasn’t offering those up just yet. I needed to make a list of what I needed from Henry.

“Will do. I’m gonna help the guys unload the rest of the trucks before I head out. I see you got a new bed. It’s big. What on earth do you need such a big bead for?” Gray grinned while I blushed a little.

“Are you sure that’s a question you want an answer to, baby *brother*?” Matty paled a little and shook his head no vigorously.

“Nope. Forget I even asked,” he said, leaving quickly.

“So, a bigger bed, huh?” Gray asked, wagging his eyebrows suggestively.

I rolled my eyes at him. “Yes, a bigger bed. Boone is moving my bed upstairs so he has somewhere to sleep. Unless he moves it in here and rooms with you.”

“Not in this lifetime, rooms full,” Gray said.

“What will you do about it if I do, gimpy?” Boone asked as he brought in four duffel bags and laid them at my feet.

“Even with a broken leg, I could still kick your ass,” Gray responded.

“You couldn’t kick my ass without the broken leg,” Boone told him as he leaned over and kissed me, pressing me backward so I was half lying across Gray’s chest. What was it about these men and Bailey sandwiches? Not that I was complaining. “I don’t think I told you how hot you were

earlier with Pike's face buried between your legs," Boone said against my lips.

"Oh really?" Gray said. I felt his hands slide around my sides and to my front in the space between Boone's body and mine. They slowly trailed under my shirt to caress my breasts over my bra. At the same time, Boone's hands started tracing patterns from my knees up my inner thighs. Boone continued kissing me, and I whimpered into his mouth as his hands teased the sensitive skin on my upper thighs.

The bedroom door slammed against the wall, making the three of us jump. "Hey!" Ethan yelled, "Playtime later. Right now, we have trucks to unload." Boone groaned in annoyance but stood up, sitting me up as he did.

"Rain check, Honey Bee," he said reluctantly. He kissed my palm and left, shoving Ethan out of the room and making him bump into the wall. "I'm going to get you back for that. I don't know when, but one of these times, I'm going to pull you away from her at the worst time," he vowed. I couldn't contain the giggle that bubbled out of me.

These men made my day brighter just by being a part of it. They wanted me with all my fuckery and made sure that I knew it. Granted, it's the apocalypse, so their options are limited, but they still made me feel good. Of course, there's always the chance that someone better might come along and swoop them away, but that's a bridge I'll have to cross when I get there. I sighed involuntarily as I bent to haul the first bag onto the bed to be sorted.

“Hey, Little Dove, why did that sound like such a sad sigh? If you want, you don’t have to take a rain check from me,” Gray said. He scooted himself up the bed gingerly so he was sitting up straighter and grabbed the handles of the bag to help me lift it onto the bed.

“Rain check?” I asked with a smile.

“Anytime, anyplace. Now, where did that overthinking brain take you?”

“It’s not important,” I told him as I opened the bag to check its contents. This bag had all the surgical and suture kits, so I re-zipped it and placed it by the wall. I had a ton of bins that I kept all of my medical supplies. I’d have to get them from the hall closet. Just sorting through what we had would be a big help for now.

“Bailey,” Gray warned. I sighed and looked at him as I hefted another bag onto the bed.

“Am I not able to keep my thoughts to myself anymore? Do I have to spill every thought in my head to you all? Cause I have to tell you, that would be far more boring than you think,” I huffed.

“No, you don’t *have* to share everything with us, but if it has to do with what’s happening between us, we’d like you to. We can’t read your mind,” he said softly.

He had a point. I would want to know their thoughts if the roles were reversed. It was the only way to make sure everyone was on the same page. And this way, I could find out

sooner than later if this is just a convenience thing or if they really did want me.

“I was just thinking about how happy you’ve made me since you got here and how good it feels to be desired in a noncreepy way. I’ve never had that before. Then I thought maybe it was just because I was the only one around, and someone better might come along one day, and you would leave.”

“Bailey,” he repeated. He stilled my hands with his own, rubbing them with his thumbs as he waited for me to look up at him. I looked up into his vivid blue-green eyes and waited for him to continue speaking. “If this was an ‘anything with a vagina that walks on two legs and has a heartbeat’ type of scenario, do you think we would care so much about you? Or invest so much time into you and make sure that you’re comfortable with everything? Or go out and get building supplies so we can fix this place up for you?”

“I guess not,” I conceded, feeling a little embarrassed.

“We desire you to distraction because of you, not because of what you could do for us. We like you, not just for all of this,” he said, gesturing to my body, “but for what’s up here,” he said, tapping my forehead. “And for the smart mouth connected to it.” He brushed his thumb across my bottom lip, and my tongue darted to taste him automatically.

His eyes heated as he continued teasingly, “It’s hard not to fall in love with the half-dressed sexy as fuck woman who

pointed a loaded shotgun in your face and demanded to know what the fuck was going on.”

I smiled before my brain latched on to the ‘fall in love’ part. “Love?”

“Love,” he confirmed. “I know you aren’t ready and probably aren’t capable of hearing that right now, but I suggest you tuck it away in the back of your mind and let it marinate because I’m not the only one who feels that way, Little Dove.”

I didn’t know how to respond to that as my brain tried to understand it. Love didn’t exist in the apocalypse, or it shouldn’t. Love clouded your judgment and made you do dumb shit. I reminded myself about what Boone had said about love and how it isn’t bad and guides our decisions. Only time would tell how love would play its hand here.

“Now,” Gray said, changing the subject, “what the hell is going on here, and what are these bags?” I smiled and began explaining what we would do this afternoon, happy to move on to a lighter subject.



Matty left several hours before dinner time, giving Gray and me time to sort through all the bags from the hospital. We had also gotten a cast on him, and he was now sitting at the kitchen table with a pair of crutches propped up next to him. Caleb had offered him the wheelchair, and Gray told him to stick the wheelchair up his ass and go for a spin.

When they were switching out the freezers in the basement, Pike had set aside a few rabbits to cook for dinner with some potatoes from the garden, and the meal was delicious. He had a natural talent for cooking. I insisted I do the dishes tonight, ignoring their protests. Once I had finished cleaning the last plate, Pike reached over from his seat and pulled me into his lap. The idle chatter that had been going on ceased as silence fell, and all eyes shifted to me.

“Ok, Sweetling, I know it’s an uncomfortable topic, but we’d like to know why you have so much anxiety about having an orgasm,” Pike said.

I took a few deep breaths, got up, pulled a bottle of whiskey from the back of a cupboard, and brought it back to the table. I poured a few fingers of the liquid and sat back in Pike’s lap. “Help yourselves,” I said softly. “I have more stashed away. I don’t drink it much, just on occasion.” Nobody moved as they waited for me to begin my story. It took a few gulps to empty my glass, and I used the burn to remind myself that I was in the present and safe.

“Uncle Jordan had been Dad’s friend and had taken care of us for six months after the outbreak. A couple took us in when he didn’t return from a supply run. I was still ten when we moved in with Scott and Jenny. I remember thinking how great it was that we had a family again. A mommy and a daddy to care for us so I wouldn’t have to worry about Matty. For a ten-year-old, it was a big weight lifted off of my shoulders.”

The room seemed to still and grow silent like we were in a void, as if even the air around us knew that my story was about to take a sick turn. Pike rubbed my forearms encouragingly as I gripped my empty glass tight. I hadn't ever really told anyone any of this before. Even when I had told Jenny I hadn't gone into details.

"I think we were there two days when Scott began to come into my room every night. I want to say he took his time and worked his way up to raping me, but that wasn't the case. I was so scared and confused. I was only ten, and I knew that it was wrong. I went to Jenny thinking she would do something, and she told me that if I wanted them to let me and Matty stay there, I'd better get used to it."

Memories flooded me as I thought back to that first week. I remembered each time vividly. Pike silently reached forward, grabbed the bottle of whiskey, and poured a generous amount into my glass. He then poured himself a finger worth and tossed it back. When he was finished, he slammed his glass on the table, making me jump.

"Easy, Pike," Boone murmured. I drank down my whiskey again and continued.

"Anyway, as I said, I was ten. At first, just the act of raping me seemed to be enough for him. I learned early on not to struggle. Struggling made it worse and usually came with a beating. After a few years, that wasn't enough anymore. That's when the name-calling started."

This time, Ethan reached for the bottle and poured himself some, drinking it down with a grimace that almost made me smile.

“He started mocking me, calling me all sorts of names, telling me what a whore I was and how sick I was to want this. I didn’t. I didn’t want it!” I exclaimed.

My chest tightened, and I started breathing heavily. Boone poured himself a shot, then passed the bottle back to Pike to give me more whiskey. I had never had so much in one night, but it helped anchor me. Pike had barely lifted the bottle from my glass before I raised it to my lips. I didn’t empty it this time, opting to take a healthy sip to preserve the burn.

“I learned not to show anything that could be interpreted as enjoyment to avoid the worst of his wrath. Unfortunately, that didn’t help with Jenny’s wrath.” I fell silent for several minutes, my words hanging between us.

“I really don’t think I’m going to like the answer to this question, but we need to know,” Gray said. I could hear the anger in his voice, and a voice inside my head whispered that I never should have told them. “What did she do?”

I swallowed another mouthful and prepared myself for the last piece of the story. “At first, she didn’t care about what Scott was doing to me. It gave her a reprieve. Until I began to develop, then she began to see me as the competition. She began to call me a whore as well. She told me it was my fault he was raping me and that if I didn’t strut around the house and throw myself at him at every turn, he would pay more

attention to her. I swear, I wasn't doing the things that she accused me of. I tried to avoid him at all costs. She would threaten to start lending me out to their friends. She never did, but only because I think Scott would have been angry."

"Fucking bitch," Caleb growled, slamming his fist on the table and making the glasses and me jump. I tried not to tremble as the bottle was passed around to each man. Anger radiated off of each of them. Pike's arms were banded tightly around me, and I could feel how tense he was. I hung my head as large teardrops splashed into my empty glass. I felt so ashamed and mortified that I had told them something I swore I would take to my grave.

And now they hate you, the voice in my head whispered. Now they see you for the disgusting whore you are. They would only stay now because they don't have any other options. "You don't have to stay here if you don't want to," I said quietly. So quietly, when they didn't respond, I worried that they hadn't heard me and I would have to repeat it.

Pike suddenly relaxed beneath me, and his hold on me softened. I jumped at the sound of four chairs scraping against the floor and somehow knew they were about to walk out of my life. I closed my eyes, willing my tears to stop. I could cry when they left. Right now, I needed to be strong for them and myself.

I gasped when I opened my eyes to find four men kneeling on the floor around me, crowding in as close as their large bodies would allow. They touched me in comforting ways, a

squeeze, a pat, or a stroke. Someone took the glass from my hands and set it on the table. Boone reached up with both hands cupping my face in them and wiping the tears away with his thumbs.

“Bailey, you listen to me right now. We aren’t angry at you. We’re angry at those pieces of shit, cock sucking-”

“Boone!” Gray admonished quietly.

“Right, sorry. My point is that we are mad at what was done to you. We are in no way mad at you. I’m so fucking sorry if we made you feel that way, Honey Bee.”

“But I’m disgusting. I’m-” Five angry growls cut me off.

“You are the most spectacular and amazing person we have ever met,” Caleb said. “Every time I think I see you, think I’ve got you figured out, the curtain gets pulled back a little further, and I find out again just how fucking strong you are.”

“So you don’t hate me? You don’t think I’m a disgusting whore?” I hated how small I sounded, as if my abused inner child was trying to break through.

“We could never, ever, ever feel that way about you, Little Dove,” Gray said, holding my hands in his.

“Yeah, if anything, you’re going to regret telling us because it just makes us want to protect and take care of you even more,” Ethan said, trying for a smile and almost succeeding.

Pike squeezed me tighter as if trying to soak up all my pain. “Sweetling, your scars are part of your beauty. Your pain shines like a beacon, drawing us to you like moths to a flame.

Every smile, every laugh feeds us and just makes us want to coax more from you.” He threaded his fingers through mine, and I stared at the contrast of our skin and the scars on his arms. His scars made him beautiful too.

“This does give me an idea of how to work through this problem you have,” Boone said cryptically.

“What’s that?” I asked. I didn’t know what he was thinking, but I did know I would try just about anything for the ability to be with them like a normal person without all the mental fuckery I have rattling around in my head.

“I think you need some orgasm therapy,” he said with a sexy grin, his green eyes sparkling.

“And what exactly is orgasm therapy?” I asked hesitantly. Even if I would try anything, I wasn’t sure I could handle where this was going.

“Well, anytime throughout the day or night, we get to give you an orgasm. Obviously, you can say no, but only if you don’t want to be touched, not because you’re scared. No intercourse, cocks are off the table until you decide otherwise, and you do not have to reciprocate. We can take care of ourselves. This is about you and helping you rewire your brain to enjoy and embrace your orgasms.”

I swallowed loudly, and my body began to heat. Truthfully, I liked the sound of that. “By anytime, you mean...”

“He means anytime and anywhere,” Pike said into my ear. “Say we’re out in the barn, and I’m mucking stalls, and you’re

heating the milk, and I catch you eye fucking me. I get to drag you down into the hay and make you ride my face until you scream as you come all over me.” A shiver ran down my spine as he brought back the memory from last week, except it ended completely differently.

“Ok,” I whispered.

“Such a brave girl,” Pike said proudly.

“And this goes both ways, baby,” Caleb added. “Anytime *you* want something from us, you can initiate it anytime, and we’ll drop what we’re doing to satisfy you. You need to learn that following your desires and doing something for yourself is ok. That doesn’t make you a whore or a terrible person.”

“Anyone have any objections?” Boone asked pointlessly. When no one answered, he nodded. “Good. We start tomorrow. For now, I think we need to get our girl to bed. She drank a lot of whiskey tonight, and I’m sure after reliving her past, she’s exhausted.” He looked at me for confirmation, and I nodded. I was fucking exhausted, and my head was feeling cloudy.

I stood up and stumbled slightly as the full effect of the liquor washed over me. Five pairs of hands reached out to steady me before Ethan stepped forward and scooped me into his arms. “I got ya, Bails.” He brought me into my room, where my new bed was. The room still had plenty of space, but the bed was certainly the focal point. Ethan crawled across the bed awkwardly on his knees and placed me in the center. When he went to retreat, I grabbed his arm.

He raised his eyebrows and looked at me questioningly. “Do you want me to stay?” he asked. I nodded. “Do you want anyone else to stay?” I nodded again. “Who?”

“All of you,” I said quietly. “I know I’m going to have nightmares tonight and feel safest when surrounded by you all.”

“You heard the lady,” Ethan told the others. We all stripped down to our undergarments, except I lost the bra and kept the shirt. Then they piled in around me. I laid on my back, and Ethan and Caleb grabbed the spots beside me. Pike lay beside Ethan, and Gray maneuvered himself and his cast onto the bed next to Caleb. The bed was big enough so they didn’t have to be on top of each other. Boone, however, grinned at me as he crawled up the bed and settled between my legs on his stomach with his head resting on my lower abdomen.

I fell asleep surrounded by five men I had met less than two weeks ago and never felt safer. The nightmares did come, but each time they did, someone was there to pull me back out of them and remind me that the past couldn’t hurt me anymore.

Chapter Thirteen

I woke up before everyone else. I could tell it was still very early in the morning by the color of the light through the window. I was so comfortable in the middle of my hottie nest, so I closed my eyes and tried to fall back asleep. My eyes snapped open a short time later. Nope, it wasn't going to happen. I was up for the day, so I may as well get out of bed.

I looked around and tried to determine the best way to extricate myself from the web of limbs I was covered in. At some point, Pike had switched places with Ethan and wrapped his arms and legs around me like a snake. Caleb was still beside me but was lying on his back like Gray. He had an arm and a leg thrown over me. Gray's foot touched mine, and Ethan's hand was tangled in my hair. And Boone was still lying between my legs, now on his side, curled up with my leg with his head on my hip. Every single one of them was touching me in some way.

"This is just ridiculous," I muttered to myself. What if I had to pee? Which, thanks to the power of thought, I now did. I

slipped my hair out of Ethan's grip and then slid myself back towards the head of the bed. When I managed to get into a seated position, I scooted my butt back to give me room to pull my legs up. Once free, I carefully stood on the bed and tried not to step on any of them as I tiptoed over them to the end of the bed.

Once my feet were fully planted on the floor, I turned to look at the pile of boys in my bed. I laughed when Boone and Pike scooted closer to Caleb and wrapped themselves around him. I went to the bathroom quickly and then rummaged around my room quietly for clothes. I crept out of the room and got dressed in the kitchen. I strapped on my knife, a pistol, and the egg bag, then went outside. I may as well start the morning chores.

Witch ran up excitedly from somewhere when she heard the door but stopped when she saw it was me. I ignored her as I rounded the porch steps to go to the chicken coop. The chickens were still sleeping, and a couple clucked angrily at me when I disturbed them to collect the eggs. Soon, these ladies will have a new, much larger home and a rooster to share it with if things go well. I topped off their food and water and exited the coop.

A pile of fluff landed on my feet, and I looked down to see Witch acting cutesy on her back. "You're just doing that to try and get me to give you an egg, you beggar," I told her. She cocked her head and let her tongue flop out of her mouth, and I melted—stupid mutt. I reached into my bag and pulled out an egg for her. She jumped to her feet, snatched it out of my hand

as soon as it was within reach, and ran away. “You’re welcome!” I called after her. The damn chickens had better manners than she did.

I went into the barn and hung the bag of eggs on a hook. The horses, cows, and goats all called out to me in greeting as they began to shuffle around impatiently in their stalls. “Ok, ok, calm down before you bring the barn down on top of our heads.” I gave them all food and water, occupying them for a little while before I was ready to set them loose.

I started on the horses, brushing them until they shined, then checking their hooves for any issues. Once they were taken care of, I left them to their breakfast and moved to the cow pen. I checked the calves first, and they both looked strong and healthy. I eyed the bull calf thoughtfully and decided I probably would trade him to Henry, but I wanted a bull to breed my girls with. Another heifer would be nice too. I would have to figure out another way to trade him for some beef over the winter.

I milked the mamas, then went to the goats. They were even quicker to look over. I wasn’t sure if Henry wanted one of the kids, but if not, I would keep one for breeding and milking and slaughter the other in the spring. Once I finished milking the mama goats, I opened the barn doors into the pasture and let the animals out to graze for the day one by one. I pasteurized the milk, grabbed everything to clean and my bag of eggs, and left the barn.

The sun was rising, and gorgeous shades of pink and orange stretched across the cloudless sky. It looked like we were going to have good weather today. Perfect day for the guys to start working on their many projects. After breakfast, I would have to go into the garden to see if it was time to start harvesting and canning. Gray could help me with that today if he was bored.

My mind wandered to the night before and the orgasm therapy they decided was starting today. A small amount of trepidation filled me, but the rest was excitement. It wasn't like I didn't enjoy orgasms. Of course I did. And when five sexy men decide to spend the day giving them to you, a girl can't help but get excited. I wanted this. I just wasn't sure how successful I would be at achieving it. They might get tired of having to work so hard for it.

The dark whispers began to stir in my mind, but I shut them down quickly. No. I would take them at their word and not second guess them or their intentions.



The next day, I stood at the sink washing and peeling vegetables to make a large batch of rabbit stew. I had pulled the rest of the frozen rabbits out, and once it was cooked and cooled, I would freeze portions for easy, hearty dinners in the winter months. There were several of these meals I would need to make. I made a mental note once again that I needed to start hunting. At the very least, I needed to set out traps.

I looked down at the carrot I was peeling and sighed when I saw I had peeled most of it away. I was on edge and admittedly a little horny. Yesterday, I was supposed to start getting orgasms, and none of them even tried. I was on pins and needles all day waiting, but I only got measured kisses and flirty touches. When the sun set and dinner was over, I thought they had just been waiting until we got back into bed so we could make it a group thing, but nope. The lights went out, and not long after, so were they. I lay awake for hours surrounded by them, unable to sleep because my body was hyper-aware of their proximity. When I finally fell asleep, I dreamed of them just out of my reach.

Gray was napping, and the other four were outside working on my greenhouse. Yesterday, they spent the entire day building a new chicken coop. It was beautiful and spacious, and my girls clucked happily inside it. I finished throwing everything into the pot and turned on the heat. It would take several hours for it to cook. I went into the room next to the kitchen, which gave a view of the yard to the barn.

We didn't use this room; technically, it would have been used as a dining room back in the day. The kitchen table fit just fine in the kitchen, so this room remained empty, sometimes used for short-term storage. I went to the window and pulled the curtain back to watch the guys. Hungrily, I stared at their naked, glistening bodies as they hammered boards together. When I was about fifteen, I remember overhearing Scott talking to one of our neighbors about how

he missed porn. I got the basic gist of what it was, and I'm pretty sure that this could be considered living porn.

“See anything you like?” I jumped a mile high, letting the curtain fall back in place when Gray spoke from right behind me. The man was on fucking crutches, and somehow he could still sneak around without making a sound. Today, I wasn't planning on doing anything but picking vegetables and making freezable meals, so I decided to wear a strappy summer dress to try and entice someone to touch me. When I walked into the kitchen this morning, their eyes widened, but they didn't comment. They just walked away with smirks on their faces. I was not amused.

Gray trailed a finger from my neck to my lower back, stopping just above my ass. He reached around me and pulled the curtains open with one hand while his other moved around to my hip and shuffled me over so I was framed in the window. As he trailed his fingers up both bare arms, he said, “Has my needy Little Dove been eye-fucking my brothers while they are hard at work building her a greenhouse?” His fingers reached my shoulders, and his pinkies looped under the thin straps, then retraced their path down my arms, sliding them down with them. “Nothing to say?”

I swallowed hard as my breasts were exposed to the fall sun streaming through the window. “Yes.” Gray made an approving sound in his throat for not trying to lie. He left the straps near my elbows and slid his hands up slowly to my breasts. He kneaded them lightly before pinching and tugging at my nipples, sending sparks directly to my clit. “Look at

them, Little Dove,” he whispered into my ear, the feel of his hot breath making me shiver. “All they would have to do is look up and see you standing here, coming for me. Do you think they’ll ever notice, or will this stay our little secret?”

His hands moved down the front of my body, his fingertips skimming the tops of my thighs as he gripped the hem of my dress and started sliding it up my body. Gathering the fabric in one hand on my stomach, his other hand slipped inside the front of my underwear. I was trembling in his arms when his fingers brushed lightly past my clit and into my wet folds. “Oh, baby,” he groaned appreciatively. “You are soaked.” He nipped my shoulder as he pulled my arousal forward to glide around my clit.

I moaned as I leaned against him, my hips jutting forward to increase the pressure of his fingers.

“How long have you been like this?” Gray asked. “I’d bet since yesterday, hmm?” I nodded as I panted in his arms. “Tsk, ts, Little Dove. If you needed us, you should have said something. Isn’t that what we agreed? That it would be a two-way street? We were waiting for you too, hoping that you would.” He trailed kisses from my shoulder to my neck. “Don’t worry, we’ll help you learn to take what you want,” he promised.

My eyes fluttered shut as he continued to manipulate my clit, fluctuating the speed and pressure of his fingers so that he was slowly driving me insane with need. “Gray,” I pleaded.

“I’ve got you, Little Dove, and would you look at that.”

My eyes opened to see that the others had stopped working and were hungrily staring at me, framed in the window for them. I gasped as a fresh wave of desire washed over me, and my pussy dripped even more. I groaned with disappointment when Gray released me, making him chuckle.

“Don’t worry, baby, I’ll never leave you wanting,” he assured me as he kicked a crate toward the window. Carefully, he lowered himself onto it, facing me with his broken leg stretched out in front of him. “Why don’t you take off that dress, and we’ll let them watch how pretty you look coming on my face?” Gray suggested.

I hesitated only a moment before pulling the dress over my head. I wanted this. I wanted them to see me. And really, there was no sense in being shy now.

“Good girl,” Gray praised. “Such a brave Little Dove.” He slowly reached forward and ran his hands up my calves to grip the back of my thighs and urge me forward until I was straddling his chest. One more little pull forward, and my pussy made contact with his mouth. My knees threatened to buckle as he sucked my clit into his mouth. “Brace your hands on either side of the window, Bailey, and keep your eyes on them,” Gray instructed, his breath blowing across my clit, sending little tremors through my body.

I did as I was told and locked my knees to keep from collapsing onto him as he began to lap at my pussy teasingly. I met Boone’s eyes, and he gave me an encouraging nod as my hips moved, chasing Gray’s tongue.

“That’s it, Bailey. Show me what you want. Use me,” Gray encouraged.

I shifted my feet out more so I was pressed more firmly against his mouth, leaving him less room to tease me. Gray moaned his approval as he stroked me more firmly. My eyes bounced between Boone, Ethan, Pike, and Caleb as they pulled their hard cocks from their pants and began to pleasure themselves. I began to feel empowered as their eyes feasted on me like I was the only woman on the planet.

I whimpered as my orgasm built, begging without words for Gray to push me over the edge. His hands flexed on my ass as he held me to him even tighter, pushing his tongue as far inside of me as he could reach. Needing more, I released the death grip I had on the window trim with one hand and brought it to my clit, rubbing rapidly. I was so close, and just as I was about to crest, the fear seized me, and my fingers faltered. Gray must have sensed this because the next thing I knew, he was shoving my hand out of the way and latching onto my clit, sucking hard, and pushing me past that final mental barrier into pure bliss as I came.

My eyes fluttered, trying to close, but I forced them open again to watch my captive audience as, one after the other, they spilled their seed into the grass. Fuck that was hot, and all because of me. I caused that. I pushed at Gray’s head as my clit grew too sensitive, and he released it to move back to my entrance and lazily clean me up with his tongue. When he was satisfied and my legs began to tremble, he pulled me into his lap and held me.

“You did so good, Little Dove. So fucking good,” he murmured into my neck. Basking in the afterglow, I wasn’t in any hurry to move as the guys got back to work until they suddenly turned to the front of the house and started speaking to someone. As Matty walked into view, I squeaked and dove out of Gray’s lap to the floor before he could see me.

“What?!” Gray asked in alarm as he twisted to see what had spooked me. “Oh,” he laughed. He waved out the window at Matty before pulling the curtain closed. “You better go get dressed before he comes in here.”

“You think?” I grabbed my dress and ran for my room, making it inside just as the screen door opened.

“Why are you sitting in there?” Matty asked Gray.

“I was just having a little snack,” he replied with a chuckle.

“Bails?” Matty called.

“Be right out!” I answered as I pulled on shorts and a shirt. If he kept showing up like this, I had a feeling he would see more than he wanted one of these times.

Chapter Fourteen

Once satisfied that I didn't look like I had just had a mind-numbing orgasm, I went to see Matty. "This is a surprise," I commented, hugging him. "I didn't expect you back so soon."

"I talked to Henry, and he invited you guys to dinner to discuss everything. He agrees that the school should be dealt with sooner rather than later," Matty replied as he grabbed a glass of water and sat at the table.

Gray hobbled out from the dining room, licking his lips and shooting me a cocky smirk. I gave him a warning glare, which only made his smirk widen. I shook my head as I focused on what Matty said.

"Wouldn't it be easier for them to come here? Gray can't make that walk on crutches. It's too far." I grabbed a knife and a cutting board and joined them to slice a cucumber at the table. Witch, sensing food, appeared at my side and started to beg. I glared down at the dog. "I thought we agreed that you wouldn't be an inside dog?" She tilted her head as if listening

to me and held a paw to shake hands. I rolled my eyes at the hustler and flipped her a cucumber slice.

When I looked up, Gray and Matty looked at me with amusement. “You’re teaching her bad habits, you know,” Gray chastised playfully.

“Me? I didn’t even want the damn mutt,” I replied.

“And yet,” Gray laughed, “you’re the only one that gives in to her begging.”

I shot him another glare and then turned back to Matty, who was enjoying the exchange. “Do you think Henry and Susan would be willing to come here instead?”

“I don’t think that’s necessary,” Gray said before Matty could respond. “We have the truck, so why don’t we just drive over? It won’t use much gas.”

“That’s a good idea,” Matty agreed. “Then it will be easier to bring back your trades.”

“It sounds good to me if it’s ok with the rest of the guys,” I shrugged. Matty, Gray, and Witch followed me onto the porch. I leaned over the railing to see where the guys were around the corner of the house. “Hey, I’ve got a question for you guys,” I called. They stopped their work on the greenhouse and came over to the railing.

Caleb slipped his arms through the railings to encircle my legs. “What happened to the dress? I like it.”

“You own dresses?” Matty asked. “Since when? I have never once in my life seen you in a dress. Ever.”

“Thank you, Matty,” I growled out.

The men around me chuckled knowingly. Nothing like my little brother to confirm that I only wore a dress for them. “Now I like the dress even more,” Caleb said, meeting my eyes with a lusty look.

“What did you need, Honey Bee?” Boone asked.

“Henry and Susan invited us for dinner to discuss the school and trade supplies. Are you guys good with taking the truck over tonight?”

“You’re asking our opinion?” Ethan asked with mild surprise.

“Yes?” Why was that such a surprise?

“Sounds good, baby,” Caleb replied. “The truck still has enough gas for a round trip to the farm and still get us back to Wilsonville.”

“Great. Then it’s settled. I’ll get the supplies I’m trading with together while you guys get cleaned up, and then we can head over.” I leaned over the railing to kiss Caleb, then slipped out of his grasp and went inside.

“You know,” I heard Matty say, “thinking of you guys doing stuff to my sister really grosses me out, but you’re good for her. I’ve never seen her so happy, so whatever you’re doing, keep it up.”

I smiled to myself at Matty’s words. I was happy. They brought something to my life that I hadn’t ever had before. Security. Safety. Equals. Partners. Did I still worry about

everyone? Of course I did. I didn't see that stopping any time soon. But with them around, I didn't have to worry as much. I wasn't always on high alert, and while that was annoying at times, it was also rather nice. I've never had anyone that I could depend on like that. Sure, I relied on Matty, but not as much as I worried about keeping him safe.

I gathered the medical supplies and seeds I wanted to part with into one of the large duffel bags and set it on the kitchen table. I then sat down and listed the items I wanted to get in trade, including plenty of flour. Now that Pike was here, I looked forward to many more baked goods.

The guys shuffled in one at a time to clean up and prepare for dinner. Ethan was the first in line, and when he came back out, I was just getting up. He caged me against the table before lifting me onto it and stepping between my legs.

"That was quite the show you put on for us earlier, Bails," he whispered. His hands trailed up my legs and yanked me closer to the table's edge so that his growing erection was pressed into me. "I think you should put that dress back on for dinner," he suggested, trailing kisses along my neck.

"Matty is right. I don't usually wear dresses," I replied breathlessly as my body responded to him.

"Mmm. Only for us. I fucking love that. Wear the dress? Pretty please," he coaxed.

Fuck. I wanted to please him. Please them. "Ok," I whispered. He grinned at me as he stepped back to allow me to get off the table to change.

Pike was exiting the bathroom with just a towel wrapped around his waist as I pulled the dress over my head. I saw the surprise in his eyes quickly turn to something more when he saw me.

“Don’t you dare,” I warned. “Matty is here, and we don’t have time to fool around.”

Too late, I realized the error of my word choice as a determined gleam entered his eyes. “That sounded like a challenge, Sweetling,” he purred as he stalked me around the bed. I watched him closely. He had me cornered between the bed and the wall. The only way to escape him would be over the bed, and I would have to be fast.

The bedroom door opened, and he looked toward it. I took advantage of his distraction to bolt for the door. Boone looked at me in surprise and quickly jumped out of the way. I was about to jump off the big ass bed when Pike’s arm wrapped around me from behind and threw me down.

Boone reached over, closed the bedroom door, and chuckled as he shut himself in the bathroom, happy to leave us to our game.

“Now I’ve got you,” Pike growled playfully as his fingers tickled my sides, making me laugh. He settled between my legs, and I became acutely aware that he was only dressed in a towel.

“Seriously, we can’t do anything with Matty here,” I told him as I struggled to wiggle out from under him. My efforts

only managed to loosen the towel, and I bit back a groan as I felt his hard dick slide against my thigh.

“That isn’t a rule, and you know it, Bailey,” Pike grunted as his hips thrust against me. He nuzzled into my neck before starting his descent down my body.

“Well, I’m making it a rule,” I gasped as he gently bit down my inner thigh. His hands spread my legs wider, pushing my dress out of the way. I jumped when I felt his finger slide into the gusset of my panties and shift it to the side. He blew on my wet pussy teasingly as his stubble tickled my thighs.

“I’ll give you a choice, Sweetling. Either you lay there like a good girl and let me lick this pretty kitty until you scream my name, or I hold onto your panties while you go to dinner without them. The choice is yours.” His tongue slid lazily into the crease of my thigh, oh so close to where I needed it. “Before you answer, let me clarify that this is your only get-out-of-jail-free card today, so choose wisely.”

“Panties,” I moaned without hesitation. No way in hell would I be able to face my brother after he listened to me have an orgasm.

“You’re sure?”

“Yes,” I groaned as the tip of his tongue lightly flicked across my clit.

“Ok,” He said as he sat up, looped my panties in his hands, and slid them down my legs. “These belong to me, then.” He held them to his face and breathed deeply as I scrambled off

the bed. I bolted from the room before he changed his mind, laughter following me down the hall.

Gray, Matty, and Ethan sat at the table when I entered the kitchen. Matty looked at me like I had two heads, while Gray and Ethan gave me appreciative looks.

“You ok, B?” Matty asked.

“What? Yeah, I’m fine,” I replied. I grabbed a glass and put some ice and water in it, gulping half down before pressing it to my heated chest.

Pike came strutting into the kitchen at that moment and grinned at me. He went over to Ethan and bent down to whisper something in his ear. Ethan’s eyes snapped up to look at me as he licked his lips and grinned. Why did I suddenly feel like I might have made the wrong choice?

Once everyone was ready, we piled into the truck for the short ride to Henry and Susan’s. Caleb was in the driver’s seat, waiting for everyone to load up. While the others hopped in the truck bed, I sat in the cab with Caleb and Gray. I climbed in and heard Gray gasp behind me. I looked over my shoulder to see what the problem was and saw him staring at my ass. I blushed as I realized I had probably inadvertently flashed him my pussy while getting in.

I quickly sat and slid to the middle, and Gray followed me in. Once we were seated and Caleb had pulled through the gate, Gray asked, “Hey, Bailey? Where the fuck are your panties?” The wheel jerked slightly as Caleb looked over at me in shock.

“You aren’t wearing panties?” he asked.

I bit my bottom lip and shook my head. “Pike took them from me.”

Caleb cursed as he hit the steering wheel with the palm of his hand. “Why the fuck am I always the one driving?” he complained. Silence hung between us before a giggle bubbled out of me.

He looked at me and then at Gray. Soon, they were laughing as well, and we had just gotten our composure back when we pulled into Henry and Susan’s drive. Caleb whistled as we drove through the gate. “I know you said they had a well-established farm, but this wasn’t what I had in mind. This is fucking massive.”

He parked the truck close to the house, and Anna and her parents came over to greet us. Instead of letting me slide out of the truck on my own, Caleb reached across the seat and scooped me up. As he set me down, his fingers teased between my legs. He groaned and bit my shoulder with a slight growl. “You better not flash anyone this pretty little pussy, Baby, or I might just do something rash.”

My body buzzed from his warning as I slid past him to talk to Henry, and I yelped as he swatted my ass as I went by.

“I mean it, Bailey.”

I didn’t have time to respond because Susan rushed over to hug me. “Oh, Bailey, dear, it is so good to see you. We don’t see enough of each other.” I hugged Susan back. She had

always been kind and understanding toward me and never pushed me for more than I was willing to give.

“It’s good to see you too, Susan. Wait until you see all of the medical supplies I’ve brought you. Didn’t you say you have a little girl here who suffers from asthma?”

“Kenzie does. We have to monitor her constantly so that she doesn’t overdo it. And during harvest, we have to keep her in an interior room to keep the dust at bay so that it doesn’t give her an attack,” Susan replied.

“Well, I found a stockpile of asthma medicine and inhalers at the hospital and brought them all for you.”

“Oh, you treasure,” Susan said, squeezing me. “Her parents will be so relieved.”

“Bailey!” Henry boomed, coming over to clap me on the back. “Good to see you, girl. Good to see you. When will you let me take that bull calf off your hands?”

“Maybe this spring, Henry. I have some plans for the livestock that I would like to start moving forward with. One part is seeing what you’ll give me for my bull calf,” I told him as Susan released me, and we fell in step together.

“Matty tells me you want a breeding bull of your own.”

“That’s right.”

“You let me have that bull calf, and you can have your pick of the herd,” he assured me.

I grinned at him. “Sounds like you’ve got a deal.”

Matty introduced the guys to Anna and her parents while nineteen-year-old Cora Lynn came sauntering over with her hips swinging like someone rang the dinner bell to the sausage fest. I rolled my eyes when she attached herself to Boone's side.

“Hey, handsome. I'm Cora Lynn. What's your name?”

Boone's eyes widened as he looked down at her. “I'm with her,” he said quickly, detaching himself and standing behind me.

Cora Lynn was undeterred as she moved her sights to Ethan. “Me too,” he said before she could say anything.

“Cora Lynn!” Anna said. “Stop embarrassing yourself. They aren't available. They're all with Bailey.”

Cora Lynn blushed as she looked at me with narrowed eyes. I shifted my weight nervously, and not knowing what to do, I lifted my hand and gave her a small wave. “Greedy ass whore,” she muttered as she turned and stomped away.

It was like having a bucket of ice water poured over my head, and I instantly wanted to crawl back into the truck and go home. This was why I tended not to venture away from my farm unless I had to. I didn't people well, or rather, people tended not to people well with me.

Boone wrapped his arms around me tightly. “Don't you listen to that little girl, Honey Bee. You've never treated us like hunks of meat, and she just tried to throw herself at all of us in hopes one of us would be interested. She's just jealous.”

I nodded, but I wasn't entirely sure that I believed him. I was being greedy. I had five sexy men who adored me, and I wasn't giving them up.

"Don't worry, Bailey," Anna assured me as she glared daggers at the retreating girl's back. "She'll pay for that soon enough. I won't let her get away with disrespecting Matty's sister like that. Especially since she doesn't have room to talk, considering she trades favors with the farm hands so that she doesn't have to work around here."

We went inside to finalize all of our trades before dinner. And when we were done, I looked at the ten-pound sacks of flour like they were solid gold. I could already taste the buttery, fluffy biscuits that Pike would make with it. Luckily, I didn't have to wait long until I had a biscuit on my plate. Susan had made a roast with mashed potatoes, green beans, and biscuits.

"This smells delicious, Susan," Caleb said appreciatively.

"Thank you. It's nice to have company to feed. I do hope we can do this more often," she replied.

I was sitting between Ethan and Pike at one end of the table, happily eating my food, when Ethan's hand slid onto my thigh, making me freeze. I looked at him, but he was staring straight ahead, talking to Matty, sitting halfway around the table.

I took another tentative bite of my beef, and Ethan's hand slid up my thigh under my dress. When I stopped to look at him again, so did his hand. Shifting slightly in my seat, I crossed my legs to block his access before he got too naughty.

Pike's hand slid onto my opposite thigh and squeezed in warning before pulling my legs back apart. He leaned over until his lips brushed against my ear. "You already used your get-out-of-jail-free card today, remember?" he breathed.

My eyes widened as I realized what he meant and that I would have to endure this. I narrowed my eyes to glare at them, but they didn't look at me. Their smirks said it all. They had planned this back at the house and maneuvered me when we had taken our seats so I was sandwiched between them.

I waited for Ethan's hand to continue, but it didn't. Finally, I began to eat again, and this time my fork fell out of my hand and clattered against the plate as his hand shot up and made contact with my clit.

"Sorry," I squeaked, turning bright red.

Ethan and Pike were both hiding their smiles behind their hands. I saw Caleb and Gray on either side of them peek at me and notice Ethan's hand. Both started laughing as Gray leaned over to whisper in Boone's ear. Boone looked at me in surprise and then smiled with amusement as the three began to guide the conversation away from any attention on me—dirty rat bastards.

Matty watched me with narrowed eyes, and I tried to look as normal as possible while I grabbed my fork and began to bring the food to my mouth again. I quickly caught on when Ethan began to stroke between my legs, that he would only move when I was eating, which made eating normally a challenge.

Even so, I found my legs spreading wider on their own accord to give him better access.

Ethan hummed in his throat approvingly as he slipped his finger inside me, teasing my entrance slowly. My eyes closed as soon as Boone moved Matty's attention to himself. Ethan's hand moved away from me, and my eyes popped open as he turned toward me, and his other hand slid up my thigh.

"Keep eating, Bails," he said softly before starting a conversation with Pike about the fucking greenhouse as if he didn't just slide two fingers inside me. I stabbed a green bean and started nibbling on it as he continued to work me closer to an orgasm at the fucking dinner table. I tuned all conversation out as I focused on my green bean and not moaning.

Pike also turned toward me under the pretense of talking to Ethan and began to play with the back of my neck, making me start to squirm. They continued to talk over me like nothing was happening, and I had to give credit where credit was due. They were far better at this than me. I didn't know how the other end of the table didn't catch on to what they were doing, though Matty kept looking at me suspiciously.

When Ethan's thumb started to circle my clit I couldn't stand it anymore and shot to my feet, causing the table to shake as I bumped it. "Umm, excuse me," I stammered breathlessly, "I have to go to the restroom."

As I rushed from the dining room, I heard Ethan say he would check on me. I barely had the bathroom door closed when it opened again as Ethan joined me.

“Ethan, you can’t—”

He cut me off by sealing his lips over mine and thrusting his tongue into my mouth as he turned and pushed me against the door. He kicked my feet apart as his hand returned to my core and picked up where he had left off.

“Someone is going to hear us,” I hissed as his lips traveled across my jar and to my neck.

“I’ll keep you quiet, Bails,” he promised as he added a second finger, “but this is happening. Rules are rules, and you’ll be my good girl, right?”

“Fuck,” I whined. His fingers stopped moving, and he leaned back to look into my eyes, waiting for my consent. “Yes,” I breathed, throwing caution to the wind.

His lips covered mine again as he doubled down on his efforts to make me come, his fingers playing my body like a fiddle. He swallowed my moans greedily as he pushed me closer and closer to the edge. I didn’t expect the orgasm as I crested, and my eyes popped open in surprise to find him watching me as I tried to keep from screaming. This was the first time in my life that I didn’t freeze up and have to fight through the mental block.

When my orgasm ran its course, Ethan let my dress fall back into place as he gave me several more soft kisses and then rested his forehead against mine. “I’m so fucking proud of you, Bails,” he said softly. “Do you realize what you just did?”

“I did it,” I said with wonder. “I actually did it.”

“Yes, you did. I knew you could. I didn’t expect it to happen so soon, but thank you. Thank you for trusting me like that.”

He held me closely for several minutes before I spoke again. “Is it silly that I feel like I have a superpower now?”

He chuckled and then kissed my forehead. “Not at all. You should feel powerful. You took back control of your body. That’s a big deal.” He poked around in the cabinets until he found a washcloth and wet it under the faucet before bending down to clean between my legs. When he was done, he softly kissed my mound before standing and tossing the washcloth into the hamper. “Come on. We should get back before Matty comes looking for you. I’m pretty sure he’s onto us.”

I groaned as I accepted his outstretched hand and followed him out of the bathroom. “Oh, God, I hope not.” When we returned to the dining room, the rest of my guys were grinning at me, and Matty looked at me head to toe calculatingly.

“Oh, good! You’re back just in time,” Henry said when he saw us. “We were just starting to discuss the zombies in the school.”

“Sorry about that,” I said. “I’ve been feeling a little under the weather over the last couple of days, so I needed to splash a little water on my face.” I didn’t miss it when Matty rolled his eyes and crossed his arms. Now he knew something was up because I would have told him if I hadn’t been feeling well.

“Oh, dear,” Susan said. “I hope it wasn’t the food.”

“I can assure you, Susan,” Matty replied, “it wasn’t your food.” Anna stifled a giggle while I was sure I was doing my best impression of a tomato.

“So, the school?” I asked to get us back on track.

“Yes. I think we need to take care of that before winter hits,” Henry said. “Caleb here thinks he will also be able to get more vehicles running for us so we can do another big supply run for both farms. I had forgotten about that town, but if I remember correctly, it also had a farm supply store. There should be many things in there that we could both use. The priority will be the school, and then we can bring back as much as possible. Once the town is clear, I’ll feel more comfortable sending smaller scouting parties in the future.”

“I agree,” I said. “I didn’t like the idea of all those zombies remaining there as a potential threat. And the home improvement store alone is still more than stocked with useful items. I hadn’t explored the rest of the town to see what other stores were there. If we’re careful, this town could be a huge benefit to us for many, many years.”

“Then it’s settled. Let’s plan for this to happen in three to four weeks. That should give us plenty of time to prepare for the trip,” Henry decided.

Once that was settled, we all relaxed and finished our dinner as we chatted. “I do hope this is the first of many family dinners we will share,” Susan said as we stood to leave.

“So do I,” I replied genuinely. It had been a pleasant evening, and it made me realize that we could have been

having dinners like this all along if I hadn't stubbornly refused to be involved with them any further than absolutely necessary. Maybe leaning on others isn't terrible if it's the right people.

I hugged Henry, Susan, and Anna goodbye, and Matty walked me to the truck as the guys loaded up our supplies. "I know for a fact that you aren't sick," he accused. "Do I want to know what all of that was about?"

I looked at him and grinned. "I don't know, do you?" I asked.

"You don't, bro," Gray laughed as he passed us on his crutches. "You really, really don't."

I blushed, and Matty shook his head. "Nope, I don't. Forget I even brought it up." He kissed my cheek and returned to Anna as we piled into the truck. They waved us off, and I snuggled into Gray's side as we drove home. Things almost felt normal, so why was that starting to make me even more nervous?

Chapter Fifteen

Three weeks later, I was in the greenhouse with Caleb, planting the planter boxes to grow the produce that would help keep us fed through the winter. We had the door propped open to allow the breeze in to help keep us cool. The temperature had been cooler lately, but inside, the greenhouse was doing its job, keeping the building warm and humid. Since we didn't have any plants growing just yet, there was no reason to remain uncomfortable while we worked. Even with the breeze, I could feel the sweat trickling down my cleavage.

The last three weeks had been busy and productive. The guys finished building the greenhouse, mended the fences, and built the new coop. Now I could safely lock them away at night, a relief. If zombies ever got into the yard again, the chickens wouldn't be in as much danger.

I looked over at Caleb, who was focused on the potatoes he was planting. Things with the guys were going better than ever as well. Not only was I getting daily orgasms, but I felt closer to them than I had ever been to anyone other than Matty. They

fulfilled a part of my life that I hadn't known was empty. Companionship. I would never call Matty a burden, but he would always be my responsibility. It was nice to exist as equals with the guys.

“So, tell me,” I said, breaking the comfortable silence, “why boost cars?”

Caleb briefly shrugs as his eyes meet mine before focusing on the potatoes. “A kid's gotta eat somehow,” he replied. “I never knew my Dad and my Mom was a crack whore, so I pretty much grew up on the street. A local gang took me under their wing and taught me the ropes. I was smaller and looked more trustworthy than the others, so I could get into places unnoticed. I'll admit, I didn't think so at the time, but getting busted was the best thing that happened to me.”

“Why is that?”

“That's how I met my brothers. If I hadn't been caught, I would have continued my life on the street and probably would have died long before the outbreak started.” He laughed to himself as a memory sprung to mind. “I will tell you, though, it wasn't an instant bromance between us. They had already been together for some time when I came along, and I wasn't the charming man who stands before you now. I was a little dick head with a chip on his shoulder big enough to park a Buick.”

“What happened?” I asked. They had shared plenty of stories from their childhood with me, but I hadn't heard any stories about when they met.

“By the end of my first day there, Ethan and I had already been in three fistfights and were both sporting black eyes. I was certain that night when the four of them surrounded my bed that I was done for. Instead, Boone, infinitely calm even back then, told me that they understood that this transition was rough and it would take me a while to settle in, but that they weren’t my enemies.”

He had a soft smile on his face as he walked down memory lane. “Then they did something that surprised the shit out of me and went a lot further than his words had. They knelt around my bed, pulled out a well-worn deck of cards, and started a game of Texas Hold’em, using pilfered snacks to bet with.”

I smiled at his story, finding that it rang true with the men I knew them as today. They didn’t hold grudges and were freakishly in tune with a person’s needs. Caleb needed to know he was safe and worthy of real friendship without any strings attached. “What happened next?”

He chuckled. “I swept the floor with those wannabes and took them for all they had. We then pigged out on my winnings until dawn, and we’ve been together ever since. They became the family I was always searching for. They never judged me for my past; we all had skeletons in our closets somewhere, but none of that mattered. Who we were and what we did or had done to us was all in the past.”

Movement at the door caught my attention, and I watched as Witch slunk into the greenhouse. She was careful not to make

a sound as she approached the basket that held the chunks of potato Caleb was using to plant with. This damn dog crept around the farm like she was invisible whenever she had her sights set on food.

“Witch!” I said just as she stretched her neck out to nab a potato. The damn dog jumped a foot in the air and then glared at me before running back outside. Caleb and I shared a laugh at her antics. “Damn, dog,” I muttered. I joined Caleb at the potatoes and started planting them alongside him. “I’ll help you get these in before she returns for another attempt.”

When we finished our task, he turned to me and pulled me into his arms. “Thanks for the assist,” he smiled. He raised his dirty hand toward my face. “You’ve got a little bit of dirt riiight here,” he said as he smudged dirt onto my cheek.

I gasped in surprise as I reached for a handful of dirt. “You’ve got some dirt on you, too,” I replied.

“Oh, yeah? Where?”

I stretched to drop the dirt onto his head and rubbed it into his hair. “In your hair,” I replied.

“Why, you little urchin,” he growled as he shook his head, sending the dirt flying. I giggled as his hold tightened, holding me against him while he tickled me. When I finally stopped struggling in his arms, Caleb lowered his lips to mine and kissed me tenderly. The kiss was slow and lazy but quickly ignited a fire within me.

Before I could lose my nerve or second guess myself, I slipped a hand inside his pants and wrapped it around his dick. It was still soft, but I could feel it harden as soon as I touched it.

Caleb groaned into my mouth but grabbed my wrist as I stroked him to life to stop me. “Baby, this can turn into something if you want it to, but you don’t have to do this. My pleasure isn’t important. Let me make you feel good.”

“Please,” I begged as I kissed my way down to the open collar of his shirt. “I haven’t been able to stop thinking about your cock since I watched you come in the truck on our first run.”

He groaned again, and I felt his dick twitch in my hand at my words, so I doubled down to make sure I got what I wanted.

“Please, Caleb. We don’t have to have sex, but I want to taste you. I need to taste you. I’ve been such a good girl. Don’t I deserve a reward?”

“Fuck,” he swore. “You aren’t playing fair, Baby. How am I supposed to resist that?”

“You aren’t,” I replied, dropping to my knees. He didn’t immediately stop me, so I made quick work of his pants, pulling his now hard cock out and stroking it. “Please?” I gave him my best puppy dog eyes as I looked up at him and licked the precum from the tip of his dick.

Caleb moaned and braced himself on the table beside us as his legs threatened to buckle. I swirled my tongue around the head and moaned as his hips involuntarily bucked forward and slipped the head inside my mouth.

He watched me with hungry eyes, and I saw when he decided. "Fine, but only if you ride my face so that I can lick that pretty little pussy at the same time," he growled.

"Deal," I said, grinning up at him. He wrapped my ponytail around his hand and pulled me to my feet, his lips crashing into mine in a feral kiss. Clothes began to fly as we stripped each other as fast as possible.

Once we were both naked, he broke the kiss to look around the greenhouse while I stroked him and trail love bites across his chest. I had never wanted anyone as much as I wanted him in this moment. I felt like I would crawl out of my skin at any moment. "Caleb," I whined.

"There isn't anywhere good out here to do this, Baby, but the soil bags are better than the floor," he said as he pulled me over to the neatly stacked bags and laid down. I quickly followed him, crawling until I was straddling his head. I bent forward, my eyes on the prize, and he moaned beneath me as I slid him into my mouth.

I had a secret I hadn't told anyone, not even Matty. I had been putting away his clothes one day and found several DVD's hidden at the bottom of one of his drawers. I had never seen them before, and I knew he wouldn't be back until dinner

time, so I watched them. They were pornographic movies, and I hadn't even known that Matty had found them or when.

I remember watching in disgust as the women on the screen sucked the men's dicks, and I swore that I would never put my mouth on a man's penis. Ever. I didn't understand why anyone would want to do that... until these men came into my life, and I found myself daydreaming about doing just that.

I thought back to those movies and put what I saw to use, taking as much of Caleb's dick into my mouth as possible. He squeezed my ass tightly in his hands as he thrust into my mouth. "Fucking hell, Bailey. How are you so good at this?" I felt proud of myself for being able to pleasure him. Suddenly, he yanked me down with force, causing my knees to spread wider as he buried his face in my pussy.

My hips began to move, and I realized he meant this by riding his face when he moaned in approval and stroked my ass. I could do this. It was empowering, and I had never felt so in control during a sexual act before. I always knew with them that I could stop it at any time, but I always felt that I was following their lead, where I was in charge this time.

I was determined to swallow as much of him as possible, working him into my mouth a little more each time I sunk on his cock. What I couldn't fit, I stroked in my hand. It didn't take long before Caleb couldn't concentrate on anything other than my mouth.

"Holy shit, Baby. Slow down. I'm too close," he pleads. I ignored him, determined to retain my control and make him

come when I wanted him to, and oh, how I wanted him to. “Fuck, fuck fuck,” he panted beneath me as his hips moved, pumping his dick into my mouth. “I’m going to come,” he warned seconds before I felt him swell in my mouth and his cum spilled into my mouth. My moan turned into a slight whine as he bit the inside of my thigh at the same time, growling through his release.

I continued to suck on his semi-hard cock long after it stopped spurting, milking every drop from it I could. I didn’t stop until Caleb finally spanked my ass, the spike of pain making me aware of my surroundings and the fact that he was begging me to stop. “No more, please. It’s too sensitive. Fuck! I think you sucked out my soul.”

I giggled and moved to climb off him when his arms wrapped around me like shackles. “I don’t fucking think so, Baby. Now it’s my turn,” Caleb growled. My hips automatically bucked as he wrapped his lips around my clit and sucked as hard as he could. Oh, fuck. He was just as relentless with my pussy as I had been with him minutes before, and when he pushed two fingers into me, I couldn’t stop myself from grinding on his hand and face as I chased my orgasm. They were getting easier and easier to attain, but I knew that even if I were still struggling, I wouldn’t have been able to avoid this one.

When my orgasm washed over me, I screamed so loudly I wouldn’t have been surprised if the others came running. It wouldn’t be the first time. On more than one occasion over the last few weeks, I would come on someone’s face or hands, and

before I had come back down from the orgasm, I would find someone else between my legs, building it back up again.

This time when I went to move off of Caleb, he let me. I tipped to the side and fell onto my back on the soil bags. Caleb followed me, turning around to hover over me, his face shining from my release. He kissed me softly before resting his head between my breasts. We were both breathing heavily.

“Holy shit,” I finally said.

“You got that right,” Caleb replied sleepily.

I think we must have dozed off because Caleb is shrieking like a little girl the next thing I know, and I am jumping to my feet on high alert.

“What? What’s wrong?” I asked, searching for the danger and not finding any.

“Witch touched my butt with her cold, wet nose,” Caleb said indignantly.

I laughed at his response, gripping his shoulder to keep my balance as I snorted. “You sounded like a little girl,” I gasped before trying to mimic the sound.

Caleb looked up at me with narrowed eyes. “I didn’t sound like that,” he pouted.

“Oh yes, you did,” I laughed. I hopped off the bags and stood between his legs. He tilted his head back to look at me, and I melted into him, kissing him softly. His hands traveled up my legs to my ass, and I felt my body heating up in anticipation. Before I could give in to the urge, I pushed away

from him, hopping out of reach as he tried to pull me back. “Oh, no. We’ve already had our fun. Come on; we may as well get dressed and see about dinner. I worked up an appetite.”

He groaned in disappointment but pulled his clothes on anyway. The guys were all in the kitchen when we went inside and had their eyes on us as soon as we stepped inside.

“Have fun?” Gray teased.

“Sure did,” I grinned. “I sucked Caleb’s soul out through his dick,” I said proudly. I turned to look at Caleb, and he had a cocky grin. He was officially the first to have me do anything to their dick. It was a proud moment for us both.

I didn’t even know there was a problem until his eyes widened, and he shoved me away as Ethan approached him with his fist. Boone caught me before I could fall on my ass. The sound of Ethan’s fist connecting with Caleb’s jaw echoed around the kitchen. What the actual fuck.

I scrambled out of Boone’s arms and wedged between the two men, pushing Ethan away from Caleb. “What the fuck is wrong with you?” I yelled.

Caleb looped an arm around my waist and rested his chin on my shoulder. “I’m fine, Baby. Ethan was just communicating.”

“Why did you punch him?” I demanded.

“Because he broke the fucking rule,” Ethan growled. “He knows cocks are off the table. This isn’t supposed to be about us. It’s about you.”

“So this was out of some misguided...defense of my honor?” I asked.

“It’s not like I forced her, dickwad,” Caleb said.

“No! He didn’t. I forced him. Well, maybe not forced, but I begged. He didn’t want to, but I seduced him.” I probably shouldn’t sound as proud as I did, but dammit, I was proud. I put my hands on my hips and glared at him. “And I don’t appreciate you punching each other over me. If I think one of you needs to be punched, I’ll do the damn punching.”

Pike snickered from behind Ethan. I glared at him; he had the good sense to reel in his amusement.

“She begged?” Ethan asked Caleb.

“On her knees and everything,” he confirmed. “She was very convincing and didn’t give me much choice.”

“Fuck that’s hot,” Gray groaned, making me smirk.

“Are you proud of yourself, Honey Bee?” Boone asked.

I had a moment of doubt but pushed it aside and lifted my chin. “I am.”

“Good,” he replied. “You should be. That’s a big step for you. I’m proud of you, too. I think we all are.”

“Sorry for punching you,” Ethan said.

“It’s all good, brother. Barely felt it,” Caleb replied. He kissed my neck and then sat next to Gray at the table. “What are you reading?”

“Bailey’s medical books,” Gray replied. “I’m worthless right now physically, so I figured I may as well try to make myself useful in other ways. This way, Bailey won’t be the only one who can fix your boobos.”

“No offense, but I think I prefer her bedside manner over yours,” Ethan laughed. He and Boone sat at the table with them, and my heart swelled. They were mine. All of them, and I never wanted to let them go.

My eyes drifted to Pike, and he watched me with a small smile. “You want to help me with dinner, Sweetling?” he asked softly.

I nodded and let him pull me into his arms as I approached. He pressed his lips to my temple. “So fucking proud of you.”



A couple of days later, we packed the trucks with provisions. It was time to go back to town with Henry and some of his men to tackle the zombies at the school and stock up on more supplies for both farms. All my guys, except for Gray, who had to stay behind again with Matty, piled into the pickup truck while Henry drove the moving truck with his men in the back. As we led Henry into town, I saw everything looked exactly as we had left it. There wasn’t any sign that anyone had been here after us. We parked the trucks a couple of blocks from the school and went the rest of the way on foot.

We didn't know the situation with the school and didn't want to announce our presence with loud vehicles.

As we approached, I saw that the front door was chained closed from the inside. Whatever happened here, they locked themselves in intentionally. We went around the building until we found a window we could jimmy open enough for me to crawl through. Ethan gave me a boost and then passed me my crossbow. The classroom I was in looked frozen in time, waiting for its students to return. Silently, I crept to the door and took a deep breath. I looked back toward the window, still propped open, and saw the guy's worried faces as they watched. That window would be my only escape if the hallways were flooded with zombies.

I opened the door slowly, braced to run, and poked my head into the hall. I relaxed as I saw that it was deserted. I gave the guys the thumbs up and stepped into the hall. I went to the emergency exit door at the end of the hall. I chewed on my lips as I studied the sign, cautioning that the alarm would sound if opened. It couldn't still be functional, right? Only one way to know for sure. I pushed the door open, relieved when the alarm didn't blare.

Everyone filed in, and we began to clear classrooms as we made our way through the school. There still weren't any zombies, and that was starting to make me nervous. Where the fuck were they? Just as I thought maybe we got it all wrong, I turned a corner and reached the cafeteria. I skidded to a stop. "Fall back," I whispered as I dove around the corner. Holy fuck. Henry and Caleb looked at me curiously and poked their

heads around the corner. Their faces paled as they retreated, Henry indicating everyone to back down the hall.

Zombies were packed into the school cafeteria like sardines. I was pretty sure the majority of the town was there. Sometimes, I hated being right.

Chapter Sixteen

We reconvened further down the hall, safely out of hearing range of the trapped zombies. Even so, we kept our voices low.

“It must be the entire town,” Henry said, echoing my earlier thoughts.

“Damn close to it,” I agreed.

“Ok, why don’t we clear the rest of the school, and then we can decide what to do with the cafeteria,” Henry suggested.

The school had a second floor, so we went up the stairs near the emergency exit and cleared the second floor. We ran into some zombies trapped in the classrooms up here, which was oddly relieving. It was absurd that the entire town had themselves locked inside the cafeteria. I hadn’t missed the chain on the door when I got my first look. We descended the stairs on the other side of the cafeteria and cleared the gym and administrative offices.

We gathered in the faculty lounge, spreading out on the dusty furniture. Pike pulled me into his lap as he sat in an armchair, sending a cloud of dust into the air and making me cough. I waved my hand to dispel the dust cloud while one of Henry's men spoke up.

“What if we just leave them? That's a lot of zombies. How are we even supposed to handle that?” he asked. I could hear the fear in his voice. It had been a long time since anyone had faced a hoard of that size.

“I think leaving them is a mistake,” I replied. “I don't want to deal with them any more than the rest of you, but I don't want to deal with them at home even more. Never mind the damage a hoard like that would cause to the properties. The risk that we might lose someone is too great. If we deal with the issue now, we can control it.”

“I agree with Bailey,” Henry said. “We can't let them remain. This is a ticking time bomb. I'm just relieved that they haven't broken out of the school yet. We would have been overrun in minutes.”

“The real question is how are we going to do it?” Boone said.

“We need a way to funnel them out of the cafeteria and through the front doors. That way, we can control the flow and take them out as they emerge,” I said, thinking out loud more than anything. “Maybe place people in the classrooms to create a gauntlet.”

“I think you’re onto something,” Henry said. “I bet we could find everything we need at the home improvement store. We should head back there.”

Everyone agreed, so we went back up the stairs to circumvent the cafeteria. Once back at Lowes, Henry handed out orders for materials we needed to collect. I volunteered to head to the gardening department. I was sure I had seen something we could use to take out the zombies. The guys followed me, and I whooped triumphantly when I found what I was looking for. The display said that they were called Spading Forks. While I wasn’t sure what they were used for pre-apocalypse, I knew they would be perfect for stabbing zombies through the head from a safer distance.

We grabbed all of them and brought them back to the trucks. A large stack of plywood was already in the back of the pickup truck. We added our forks to the truck as well.

“Oh!” Pike said excitedly. Before I could respond, he took off down an aisle. It didn’t take long for him to return, his arms filled with plastic packages. “Walkie-Talkies!” he exclaimed. We started ripping the packs open and popping batteries into them. I started turning them on and testing them once we had a bunch ready.

“You’re a genius, Pike,” I praised. This was going to help us in a big way.

“Hey!” Caleb said, “What if we get a more powerful set for home? Henry could keep one, too, and then we would have a way to communicate.”

“I like the way you think,” Mike, one of Henry’s men, said, coming over to us. “But you’re thinking too small. What we really need is a couple of short-wave radios, not walkie-talkies. I bet this town has an electronic store somewhere. Once we get the zombies taken care of, I’ll scout for one.”

“Thanks, Mike,” Henry said. “I think that should be a priority. We’ve always severely lacked a way to communicate farm to farm without physically sending someone.”

“I agree,” I said, thinking of Matty, who usually went between the farms the most playing messenger. I may end up seeing him less frequently, but it would mean he was safer, which is a trade-off I’m willing to make.

We got back to the school, and we made quick work of setting up the plywood boards across the doorways. Before locking the men into the room, we made sure that the windows were opened so that they could quickly escape if the zombies broke through. We propped the front doors open, and everyone surrounded the doorway outside.

Boone handed me the bolt cutters but didn’t release them when I took them. “Be fast. Be careful. You get those doors open and then bring that pretty ass back here pronto,” he ordered.

“I’ve got this,” I assured him. He hadn’t been happy with me when I volunteered to be the one to release the zombies, but I made it clear that his arguments were pointless. I was doing this. Boone finally let go of the cutters, and I winked at Ethan

as I walked back into the school. “Look sharp, boys,” I said as I went to the cafeteria.

When I reached the corner, I paused to give myself a few minutes to breathe. One of the reasons I volunteered to do this was because I was smaller than the rest of them. I was also quieter. But the main reason was that I didn’t trust anyone else to do the job. I crouched down and then peeked around the corner. They had been stuck in the cafeteria together so long that they weren’t moving, going into a hibernation-like dormancy. I expected that to end quickly when they realized I was there.

Staying low, I crept to the double doors. Thankfully, the cafeteria wall was half wall, half window, so they wouldn’t notice me as long as I stayed silent and low. I held my breath as I lifted the bolt cutters to the padlock and cut through it. I waited for a reaction, but it didn’t come. The chain jingled a little as I removed the padlock, and I heard the zombies inside start to stir. I froze as I looked up and saw a zombie at the door, sniffing at it. He pushed against the door slightly, making the chain rattle again. I placed the lock on the floor and debated the best way to do this. I could try to do it slowly with the slightest sound or yank the chain in one go and run. I opted for the second one since I didn’t want to be crouching down by the door if they suddenly realized my presence and pushed through the doors.

I grabbed the bolt cutter and the end of the chain. I counted to three and then sprung to my feet. If zombies could be surprised, this one would fall in that category as I suddenly

appeared in front of it. I didn't stick around for it to recover as I ran for it, pulling the chain off the doors. I heard the doors slam open as the zombies followed.

I pulled a knife out as I turned to ensure they were still on my trail. As they passed the first classroom, they started to fall as the men within took them out silently. I run through the doors, and Caleb grabs me and pulls me to his side, handing me a fork thing from Lowes. We kept the funnel tight but gave the zombies a little lead so they didn't clog up the door.

"This is going to take forever!" Mike yelled after a while. He was right. I looked at the packed hallway. By now, the cafeteria had to be pretty empty.

"Come on," I say to Caleb and the man on my other side. I lead them around the building toward the cafeteria. After going through a dome opening in the building, we found ourselves inside a courtyard that the cafeteria opened out to. I looked through the windows as I passed the pagoda and saw that less than half of the zombies were gone. That was a good sign. I tried to open the door, but it was locked.

"Ok," I said, looking at the floor-to-ceiling windows. "Let's break a windowpane, and we can take them out as they come through. Then we can slowly work through the back of the pack."

"Sounds good to me," Caleb said.

I nodded to the other man, I think his name was Kyle or something, and he broke the window. As expected, the sound attracted the zombies inside, and they shifted toward us.

Things were going good, really good. The amount funneling through was manageable for the three of us. That was until they broke through the windowpane that Kyle was standing closest to. They were on him before I could react, his screams echoing off the courtyard walls.

Caleb grabbed my hand, and we ran toward the pagoda. I didn't need to turn around to know we were in trouble. We jumped onto the picnic table and pulled ourselves onto the pagoda. I looked down at the sea of zombies below us and then at Caleb.

“Well, this isn't what we wanted,” I remarked.

“You fucking think?!” Caleb replied.

I gripped the boards as the pagoda shook from the zombies running into the poles repeatedly, my eyes widening.

“Please tell me you have a radio on you,” Caleb said.

I moved my hand to my back and felt the radio I had clipped there. “I have a radio,” I told him as I whipped it out to show him. I pressed the button and brought the radio up. “So... Caleb and I are in a little bit of a pickle... and we lost Kyle.”

“Where the fuck are you?” Pike yelled through the radio. He might be a little pissed.

“Go around the school toward the cafeteria, through the arch, and you'll see us. We're on top of the pagoda in the courtyard, but be careful. It's swamped.”

“On our way, Honey Bee,” Boone replied.

I reattached the radio just as the pagoda jolted harder. “Oof. Maybe we should move to the center to help this thing stay balanced,” I suggested.

“Go slow,” Caleb said as we moved toward the center. Once we were within touching distance, Caleb wrapped himself around me. The way he held me, I got the impression that if things went even further to shit, he would be tossing me as far away as possible. I hoped it didn’t come to that because I didn’t want to play the part of the human javelin.

The pagoda shook again, and this time the sound of cracking wood accompanied it. I looked nervously toward the arch in time to see Boone, Pike, and Ethan come running through, and they weren’t alone. Henry, Mike, and a few other men were hot on their heels and came packing. Mike started to lay down fire from the machine gun in his hands. Too bad we didn’t have him here initially. We might have been able to save Kyle. Henry, his other men, and Ethan went around the side to get some of the zombies to split from the group toward them, allowing Pike and Boone to get closer to the pagoda.

“Come on,” Pike yelled.

Caleb and I stood and carefully picked our way to the edge of the pagoda. Unfortunately, this compromised the pagoda even more, and I felt it start to lean with our weight.

“Get ready to jump!” Caleb yelled. I barely had time to nod before it started to tip, and he grabbed me and threw me off the pagoda into Boone’s waiting arms. Pike helped break Caleb’s

fall as the entire thing finally tipped over, partially collapsing and trapping many of the zombies beneath it.

I didn't have time to rest as Boone set me down, and I turned to fight off the zombies, still mobile. Close-quarter fighting with these monsters was par for the course, and we watched each other's backs as we killed off the rest of them. Once the living were the only things left moving in the courtyard, we rushed back to the front of the school to finish off the rest of the zombies.

We returned to Lowes, many finding somewhere to rest. Henry sent a group out to scout the rest of the town now that we knew it should be zombie-free. After sitting for a while, I went to clean up in the bathroom. I didn't realize Boone and Pike had followed me until they entered the bathroom. They didn't waste any time sandwiching me between them, and it didn't take long for me to react to their adrenaline-fueled kisses and touches.

"That was too fucking close, Honey Bee," Boone said between kisses.

"I don't know if I want to spank you or handcuff myself to you so that you can't get into any more trouble," Pike growled.

"I don't care what you do, just don't stop," I moaned. Seconds later, Pike left the bathroom, but Boone kept me distracted by his absence as he lifted me onto the bathroom counter.

"I don't know what I would do if I lost you, Bailey," Boone murmured against my neck. "I love you so much."

I froze as the words fell from his lips. Love hadn't been brought up since Gray mentioned it that one time. They loved me. Did I love them? I realized that I did. I wasn't sure if it was a smart move, but I couldn't deny my feelings for them anymore.

"I love you, too. I love all of you," I admitted. Boone stilled as he leaned back to search my eyes with his own.

"You mean that." It wasn't a question. He saw the truth in my eyes and was surprised.

"I do."

He kissed me again with renewed energy and didn't stop until the door slammed open again. I jumped and watched Pike enter the bathroom, dragging a twin mattress behind him. He threw it to the floor, returned to the door, and locked it. Boone lifted me from the counter and lowered me to the mattress, his large body covering mine briefly before rolling us so I could straddle him. He moaned as I rotated my hips, pressing myself more firmly against his erection.

He pulls me down to continue kissing me as we dry hump each other. Just as I felt myself building up toward an orgasm, his hands still on my hips. "Hold on," he said against my lips. "Pike, strip her."

"About time you remembered I was here," Pike said sarcastically as he pulled me to my feet. His fingers tangled into my hair, holding me in place as he claimed my mouth. "Watching you grind on Boone is fucking hot, Sweetling," he whispered as he broke the kiss and removed my clothes. His

lips trailed across the newly exposed skin as he bared me to them completely. When he turned me around, I saw Boone also naked and stroking his monster cock as he watched us.

I felt a moment of trepidation looking at him. Was this it? Were we finally having sex? Was I ready for that?

“Cocks are still off the table, Sweetling,” Pike whispered. “Or penetration by cock is, at least.”

“I won’t enter you, Bailey,” Boone assured me, “I just need to feel that sweet pussy on my dick.”

Pike guided me back over Boone as he pushed his cock flat against his stomach. I lowered myself over him again, and he helped position me so my pussy was hugging his cock. I gave a test rock against him and felt my pussy glide along his shaft. “Oh, fuck, that’s good,” I moaned. Boone held my hips and helped me grind against him while Pike knelt beside me and alternated sucking on my nipples.

I was confused when he stood until he stripped off his clothes and stroked his milk chocolate cock in front of me. “I hear you know what to do with this,” he teased as he brushed the head against my lips. I opened my mouth obediently and let him slide inside. “That feels so good, Sweetling. Such a good girl sucking my cock like this,” he praised. His hand held my head in place as he thrust gently into my mouth.

Multitasking proved more challenging than expected as I tried focusing on both men and my pleasure. If I was going to be in a relationship with five men, I would have to get better at that. Good thing practice makes perfect. I relaxed my body

and let Boone control my movements, trusting him to make us both feel good as I gave Pike more attention. I molded my tongue to the underside of his cock and hollowed my cheeks as I added suction.

“Bailey,” Pike groaned, his hand flexing in my hair, causing small bites of pain in my scalp that seemed to spur me on.

“That’s it, Honey Bee. You look so pretty with your lips wrapped around Pike’s dick,” Boone praised. “Your pussy feels so good. I can’t wait until I can bury myself inside of you. Stretch this sweet little pussy around my cock.” Boone’s dirty talk seemed to affect him just as much as it affected me, as he moved me faster against him.

I whimpered when he rubbed my clit in tight circles. It was all becoming too much. I needed to come, but I needed them to come more. Pike had been gentle with me until now, and he groaned loudly when I pushed farther onto him, and his head tapped the back of my throat. On the next downstroke, I was determined to take more and relaxed my throat to let him slide down it.

“Fuck, fuck, fuck!” Pike cried out. “Look at me! Look at me, Bailey!”

I raised my eyes to his and felt him swell as he roared out his release, shooting ropes of cum down my throat. I swallowed around him, milking his cock.

“Oh, fuck,” Boone said at the sight. “Come, Bailey. Come now!” The pressure on my clit increased as he gripped my hips hard enough that I was sure I would have bruises later and

slammed me against him. We came together, my moans muffled by Pike's still-leaking cock.

We were frozen for several heartbeats until Pike pulled out of my mouth. He bent to kiss me, uncaring that some of his cum might linger as he plunged his tongue deep to twist with mine. When he pulled away, he shoved Boone over to lay beside him on the mattress with me sprawled across them. We lay there for a while until there was a knock on the door.

"You guys are still alive, right?" Ethan asked through the door.

"Yes," I answered. I got up and cleaned all the cum from my skin before locating my clothes and redressing. Once we were all put back together, we left the bathroom and returned to the group. Several mattresses were spread out so everyone had somewhere to sleep for the night.

I went to the mattress that Caleb and Ethan were sitting on. As I passed by the others, one of Henry's men laughed and reached out to slide his hand up my leg.

"Now that you've defrosted, when do I get a turn, Bailey?" he asked.

Boone had the man suspended from the ground by his hand around his neck the next instant while Pike pushed me behind him. "Touch or talk to her like that again, and I will kill you with my bare hands," Boone yelled. "Understand?"

The man tried to move his head and made a grunt that I assume meant that he did, and Boone released him, letting the

man crumple to the mattress.

“I’ll be watching him,” Henry assured us as we joined Caleb and Ethan. “He already has a strike against him. This is strike two. One more, and he can find somewhere else to live.” He was staring daggers into the back of the man’s head.

“All he did was come on to me. It happens,” I said. I snuggled into the center of the bed and closed my eyes. The rest of them could hose the room down with testosterone if needed, but I was going to bed. It had been a long day.



The next morning, Caleb went out to get more trucks running while supplies were gathered. Henry’s men had been able to locate a farm supply store and an electronic store, so we would be bringing home a massive amount of supplies, including a shortwave radio so that we could communicate. We loaded the trucks so we wouldn’t have to unload at one farm before going to the other, which meant that Pike, Boone, and Ethan would have to drive.

I rode with Caleb as usual, and as soon as we left the town, I looked at him out of the corner of my eye. Caleb always had to drive and missed out on fun times on more than one occasion because of it. I think it’s time that he got rewarded for his sacrifices. I unbuckled my belt and slid over next to him. He looked at me briefly, flashing a smile, before focusing back on the road.

“How are your multitasking skills?” I asked.

“Pretty good. Why do you ask?” he replied without looking away from the road.

I grinned as my hand slid over his dick. It wasn't hard yet, but I knew it wouldn't take long once he understood what I had in mind. I shifted to my knees. “How good is pretty good?”

“I'm a fucking champion at it,” he moaned as I undid his pants. I pulled his hardening cock out of his pants and stroked it.

“Good enough not to kill us while I suck your dick?”

“Better,” he replied. The arm around my shoulders tugged me closer, his hand running up my back to my head, urging it into his lap. I happily obliged, licking him base to tip teasingly. When I took him entirely into my mouth, he jerked the wheel, causing the truck to jump to the side.

“Are you sure you can handle this?” I teased, lapping at the head of his cock. “Maybe I should stop.”

“Don't you fucking dare,” He growled, pushing my mouth back onto his cock and holding me down as he thrust into my mouth. I relaxed my throat and let him use my mouth, getting turned on more and more by the force he was using. If this had happened near the beginning of our relationship, I would have beat myself up about enjoying myself, but not anymore. I fucking loved it.

I focused on breathing through my nose as I swallowed and moaned around his cock to make sure that he knew I was enjoying myself as much as he was. I felt the truck start to slow, so I grazed my teeth lightly against him in warning, causing him to tense and slam his foot back down on the gas pedal.

“Take it,” he growled a short time later as he came. “Don’t waste a drop. Swallow it, all of it.” I swallowed as fast as I could until he finally pulled me off him. He captured my lips and kissed me. “Thank you for that,” he said when he finally released me.

“You’re more than welcome,” I told him, snuggling against him happily. My mind wandered the rest of the ride home. I felt good. Really good. Not just about the guys but about my preparation for winter. I don’t think I’ve ever been this ready. It was nice not to worry.

Chapter Seventeen

Scott

I watched the young girl huddled against her mother's side as she nibbled on a piece of jerky. The tiny blonde was skin and bones... weak... vulnerable... just how I liked them. She and her parents had just arrived at our camp less than an hour ago, and the leader of our little community was busy getting to know them while they ate around the fire. We didn't have much and slept in tents, but it was more than this little family had.

I was contemplating the possibilities of taking this little morsel for myself and the possible retribution that may come of it when something the father said caught my attention.

“What did you just say?”

“I said that it isn't fair how we have to live like this when others, like that bitch, Bailey, are set up in cushy farmhouses with electricity, heat, and air conditioning. As if the apocalypse never even touched them.”

“Her name was Bailey? What did she look like?” Could it be her? After all of this time searching, could it be her?

“She had brown hair and brown eyes,” the man replied. “Do you know her?”

“Maybe. I was separated from my children many years back. Was there a younger man with her?”

“There were several men with her,” the woman scoffed, “but none who looked younger.”

I had long since accepted that Bailey and Matty had likely died, but part of me had always hoped to find her again. “Where does she live?” I asked. “I have to check and see if she is my beloved daughter.” I grinned at the man’s daughter, causing her to shrink closer to her mother. It looks like today was her lucky day and mine. I had no interest in playing with her when there was a chance I could play with Bailey instead.

I left immediately for the trek to the farm the man said Bailey was living at. It was a half-day trek, and while I should have waited until daybreak to leave, my anticipation was too high, so instead, I walked through the night and arrived at the farm mid-morning.

I stayed hidden in the trees as I watched the house. I was impressed by the setup and understood the man’s anger. Some people got all the luck. I watched four men leave the house with a dog hot on their heels. None of them were Matty. They were doing work around the property, and I kept a passive eye on them while I stayed focused on the door.

Finally, it opened again, and another man hobbled out on crutches. It wasn't him who had my attention. It was the woman who followed him out. Bailey. It really was her. My dick started to harden at the sight of her. She had grown up well—my lost little toy. I palmed my dick as I felt it begin to leak inside my pants. You never forget your first, and while she was now too old for my taste, I could still see the child I had once known when I looked at her.

I wanted to rush in right away, but I knew better. I couldn't lose everything right when I found her again. This was obviously her home, and she wasn't going anywhere. With winter coming, I could return to my camp and start planning our joyful reunion. I stayed in the woods for the rest of the day, watching her laugh and seeing how happy she was. This pleased me. The happier she was, the happier it would make me when I destroyed it all, when I destroyed her.

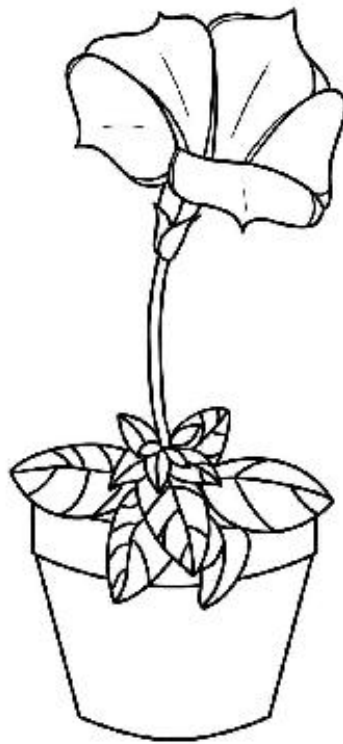
When I finally returned to my camp late that night, the man who had met Bailey approached me. "Not her, then?" he asked.

"Not her," I lied. My eyes caught on his daughter across the camp, and he followed my gaze.

"Daughters are a precious gift, aren't they? I'm sorry yours is lost," the man said.

"The most precious of gifts," I agreed as my mind began to work out my plans for Bailey.

Broken Rules



Chapter Eighteen

I sipped my tea and rocked the swing gently as I enjoyed the quiet of the morning. Witch sitting at my feet, ears twitching as she listened to the waking day. Spring was here, and I only had a light blanket around my shoulders to protect myself from the lingering cold of the night. The past winter with the guys had been one of the best I've ever had. Not just for practical reasons, but it was nice to have companionship that wasn't my brother.

It took all winter, but I've accepted that I love them. Mostly. It still scared me. I was also nervous because Spring's arrival reminded me that we had agreed to reevaluate our situation when Spring came. Did I want them to go? Was that the right course? Did they want to go? The uncertainty of it unnerved me. Maybe this was only meant to last a season, and it was time to cut them loose for all of our sakes before someone got hurt.

The screen door opened, and I watched Gray limp out. He was in an air cast now and should be as good as new in a few

weeks. Was that all the time I had left with them? Three weeks? He rested against the railing across from me and crossed his arms over his chest, his biceps bulging. He watched me silently for several minutes before speaking softly.

“Don’t start running from us now, Little Dove.”

I wasn’t surprised that he knew what was on my mind. As shame washed over me, I dropped my chin to look at my tea cup. After everything they’ve done around here and for me, how could I even think about asking them to leave? They earned the right to live here.

Gray sighed lightly as he knelt between my legs and hugged me. “You’re entitled to your thoughts, Little Dove. I understand. I know you’re still unsure, just like I know that you love us too. Just make sure you keep communicating with us. Tell us when those intrusive thoughts and doubts creep in so we can help alleviate your worries.”

He took my tea cup from me and placed it on the table beside us. I leaned forward and kissed him softly. “Thank you for understanding and not taking it personally,” I said against his lips.

“I know your heart, Bailey,” Gray replied, kissing my neck. “I’ve never met someone with such a capacity to love. I know you don’t see that in yourself, and you struggle with accepting the idea of love, but you love more fully and more fiercely than anyone I know. And I don’t know anyone more deserving of love.”

He continued to trail kisses down my body, gently biting the swells of my breasts sticking out of my tank top. “Let me show you how much you should be loved,” he whispered. He nudged Witch out of the way as his hands spread my legs wider. I hadn’t bothered with pants when I came out, opting to use the blanket if I got cold.

He bent down and started a trail of kisses from my knee up my inner thigh toward my apex. He shifted when he reached my core and did the same to the other leg. “You are so fucking beautiful, Bailey. I don’t think you realize how much, but I plan on spending the rest of my life showing you.”

This time, when he reached my center, he moved my panties to the side and ran his tongue through my arousal, causing us to moan together. He pulled me closer to the edge of the swing and then settled in, not in any hurry. Soft moans fell from my lips as he worshipped me with his mouth, slowly working me toward an orgasm. He held my hips still as I sought a firmer touch, forcing me to accept what he would give me.

“Gray, please,” I begged. I felt like an overinflated balloon ready to pop, but I could not find anything sharp. He hummed into my pussy like he was thinking over my request, pushing me closer to the edge. I grabbed his head, my nails biting into his scalp as I tried to pull him closer. He was stronger than me and resisted as his mouth left my body.

“Do you remember when you were pushing us away at this point instead of pulling us closer? You’ve come so far, Little

Dove.” He kissed my inner thighs, then licked along the crease, cleaning my juices from my skin.

“Gray, I swear to fucking God, if you don’t make me come, I will find someone that will,” I threatened desperately.

He chuckled as his mouth finally moved where I wanted it to. He sucked my clit into his mouth, holding it in place gently with his teeth as he flicked his tongue over the little bundle of nerves rapidly. I cried out my release just as Witch started to bark and run toward the steps. Gray looked toward the road quickly and then returned to my pussy, lazily lapping up my juices.

“It’s just your brother and Anna.”

“What?!” I shrieked as I tried to get up.

Gray kept me pinned down. “I’m not done yet,” he growled.

“Gray! They can’t see me like this,” I said sternly.

“Then stop moving and let me get my fill,” he said, his voice muffled.

I groaned in frustration even as my hips bucked and his tongue swiped across my sensitive clit. I looked toward the road and saw Matty and Anna approaching. They were about halfway between the curve in the road and our front gate.

“Gray!” I huffed.

He ran his tongue through my lips one last time and left a love bite on my inner thigh before leaning back and allowing

me to jump from the swing. His laughter followed me as I ran into the house to make myself presentable for company.

Pike, Boone, Caleb, and Ethan jumped up from a dead sleep as the bedroom door slammed against the wall.

“Where’s the fire?” Boone asked.

“There isn’t a fire. Matty and Anna are here and almost caught Gray with his head between my legs,” I replied as I rushed into the bathroom. I jumped into the shower and washed myself as quickly as possible.

“Where are you going?” Pike whined as he stepped into the shower moments before I stepped out.

“No time. Matty is here,” I told him.

It wasn’t until I was dressed that I stopped feeling frantic. We had the damn radio. If he had used it, I wouldn’t have been coming when they arrived because I would have known they were coming over. Composed, I joined everyone in the kitchen.

“Hey, B!” Matty greeted.

“Hey, baby brother,” I replied. I hugged him hello and then, surprising everyone, gave Anna a quick hug. “We weren’t expecting you.”

“We thought we would surprise you,” Matty replied, shrugging.

“You almost got surprised back,” Gray laughed.

I lightly smacked him on the back of his head to shut him up. “Breakfast?” I asked cheerily. I started gathering breakfast food together to cook without waiting for an answer. I’d leave the biscuits for Pike to make, but I could begin frying up the eggs and bacon. Thank goodness Spring was here, and the snow had melted. We were almost out of bacon. I’d have to see about getting our own pigs to raise.

Ignoring my protests, Anna came over and began to make the biscuits, stating that her mom didn’t raise her to sit idly by when there were men to feed. I accepted her help, and chatting with her felt nice as we cooked breakfast for our men. I realized that Anna and I could become good friends if I gave her a chance.

Once breakfast was done, all eight of us crowded around the table, Anna in Matty’s lap and me in Ethan’s. The conversation flowed easily between us as we ate. Matty caught my eye and grinned at me as he looked around the table as if to say, look at us all, normal.

“Oh, I almost forgot,” Matty said as Anna and I cleared the table and began to wash the dishes. “Henry wants to know if you guys would like to help him plant crops in a couple of weeks in exchange for a percentage of the crop in the fall.”

“That sounds like a good deal,” Boone replied. “Can we have some time to think it over? It would mean leaving Bailey, and I don’t know if any of us can do that,” he laughed.

I felt myself blushing as Anna gave me a nudge with her shoulder. I didn’t like the idea of them leaving, but it was too

good a deal to pass up. I'd let them make their own decision on it, however. Our little garden provided plenty, but having some bulk supplies stocked up for winter would be nice. Spring had just started, but already we would have to think about the following winter.

"That's understandable," Matty said. "I don't like being away from Anna for too long, either."

This time, it was my turn to nudge a blushing Anna.

"So, Bails, what projects do you have planned for these guys now that spring is here?" Matty asked.

"I haven't really thought about it yet," I replied.

"Bullshit," all of the men, including Matty, said.

I turned to them and grinned. I didn't think that they would buy that for a second. "Well," I hedged, "I had thought it would be good to build a building to process meat, milk, and such. But that would require some running water, so I don't think it's possible."

"That's not true!" Anna said excitedly. "We have a man at the farm who is good with plumbing. He could set up a pipe system from your well to the building. He did something similar for Daddy. I bet he could do it for you, too."

"That's a good idea, Baby," Matty said. "I'll talk to him when we get back and see if we can work out something to get him to come out."

"I'll gladly trade with him if he can," I told Matty. I didn't want Matty to pay my debts for me. He has his own life to

build.

“What else do you have planned?” Matty asked, ignoring me.

“Well, I want to go back to that pond at Wilsonville and see if we can catch some ducks to bring home,” I admitted. “I need to get the goats and cows bred. It might not hurt to see if I can also get my mare bred. I also need to talk to Henry about trading for some animals. We discussed trading bulls, but I’d also like to get some pigs and a rooster.”

“Daddy has plenty,” Anna assured me. “I know he’d be happy to give you some.”

“Just make me a list of what you want, and I’ll pass it along,” Matty said.

Just then, the radio we had set up in the next room squawked, followed by Henry’s voice. “Bailey, this is Henry, over.”

I went over to the radio and replied. “I hear you loud and clear, Henry. What can I do for you?”

“Can you tell Anna and Matty that we had a few zombies at the farm? When they come home, stay alert in case we missed some.”

“Will do, Henry. Thanks for letting us know. Is everything good there? Was anyone injured?”

“Everyone is just fine. We found them bouncing along our fence line and took them down easily.”

“Copy that. Let us know if you need help.”

Henry didn't respond as I turned to Matty. “You are armed, right?”

“Of course I am, B. You taught me well. I don't go anywhere without a weapon. Relax,” Matty huffed like always when I worry about him.

“Sorry, kid. I'll always worry about you. Nothing you can do to change it,” I said, ruffling his hair as I passed him.

“Yeah, yeah,” he said, standing. “Come on, Anna. We should probably return and ensure they don't need help removing the bodies.” He leaned down to kiss my cheek.

“Be careful,” I warned.

“Yes, Mom,” he joked as they left.

We followed them out onto the porch, and I watched them leave. When they reached the curve in the road, Matty turned back and waved one last time.

“He'll be fine, Honey Bee,” Boone assured me.

“I know. I taught that boy everything he knows. That doesn't mean I can't worry about him,” I said, leaning against him.

“What now, boss?” Caleb asked.

“Now, chores,” I replied. “I want to check the fence. Make sure that the winter didn't cause any damage—it's time to turn the animals out for the day after milking. Collect eggs. All the things, boys, all the things.” They groaned playfully but didn't hesitate to jump into the day's work. Even Gray hobbled after

me, helping me with the animals while the others checked the fence line.

When we were done with chores, I spent the afternoon quizzing Gray on his medical knowledge while the guys inspected the house and the barn for any repairs that might need to be made. All in all, it was a wonderfully typical day that I had become accustomed to. Yeah, I think I'll keep them around.

Chapter Nineteen

Scott

I glanced over my shoulder to ensure the herd was still following me. I had all winter to make my plans, and finally, the weather had warmed enough to start. This was the first step, and already, I had enjoyed myself far more than I thought I would. I had been patting myself on the back for months at my brilliance. Poisoning the camp stew had been an easy task. Leading them here had proved to be a little more complicated, and I lost a couple of them along the way, but the majority were still with me. As I neared the back of the property, I sped up to give myself enough time and distance to cut the fence wire. Zombie Eric growled at me just as I got the final wire cut, and I chuckled as I hurried out of range of his hands.

The zombie herd followed me through the fence. I silently made my way through the yard and then paused by the chicken coop briefly to make sure that they all made it through the fence. I was tempted to release the animals from the coop and barn to maximize the damage, but I stuck to my original plan.

This step was all about causing confusion and fear. I wanted Bailey on edge. Once the final zombie passed through the fence successfully, I made my way over the gate, leaving my former campmates behind.

As much as I wanted to stick around to see how Bailey would handle them, I needed to put as much distance between myself and her house as possible. I wasn't ready to be discovered just yet. I returned to camp, covering my tracks and laying several false trails just in case someone decided to come after me. I entered my tent, feeling satisfied with the day's events.

"Well, sweetheart," I said, "I dropped your parents off with Bailey. With any luck, they'll—" I was cut off as a small zombie attacked me. I held her off long enough to plant my knife into her skull. I let the petite girl drop to the floor as my anger spiked. "Stupid fucking cunt!" She was alive and well when I left her bound in my tent. Looking around, I saw the corner of my table was bloody. The fucking bitch bashed her head against the table to kill herself.

I sighed with disappointment. She was showing so much potential as my new pet. I looked at her crumpled body as I unbuckled my belt. I may as well get one more turn with her before I get rid of the body.

Chapter Twenty

Witch let out a low, menacing growl that immediately got our attention as she lifted her head from Ethan's lap and looked around. She jumped off the couch, and her hair was standing on end as she stalked over to the window. Seconds later, a zombified hand hit the glass. Fuck! We all jumped into action, killing the lights and silently checking the ground-floor windows and doors to ensure everything was locked up tight. I hit the floodlights and ran upstairs, with the guys on my heels, to see how bad it was. I gasped as we peered out an upstairs window and saw the yard filled with zombies. There had to be close to thirty of them.

“How the fuck is this even possible?” Pike asked. “We checked the fence earlier, and it was fine.”

“I don't know,” I replied. I returned downstairs, grabbed my crossbow, and started loading up on knives. You could never have too many. Boone blocked my path as I took my first step toward the door.

“What are you doing?”

I looked at him in confusion. “Going to kill zombies.”

“Not tonight, you aren’t,” he replied firmly as he lifted the crossbow off me and handed it to Caleb. “We can keep watch to ensure that they don’t bust into the house or get to the animals, but going out there in the dark is asking for trouble.” He flipped the floodlights off. “We will wait for daylight, and don’t bother trying to argue with me, Honey Bee. If we have to tie you up, we will.”

I rolled my eyes at his threat as I sighed and started unloading the knives onto the kitchen table. As much as I hated to admit it, he was right. There were too many of them to go out there at night safely. We decided to take shifts keeping watch through the night and went to bed, but none of us could sleep. Not with the sounds of a zombie herd outside our walls. Once the sun started rising, we shuffled into the kitchen to make coffee. Lots of coffee.

“I’m coming with you,” Gray announced while we were preparing to kill zombies.

“The hell you are,” I replied. “You can barely hobble, and if you need to run, you won’t be able to. I can’t have you out there, or I won’t be able to focus on anything but keeping you safe.”

“She’s right, bro,” Pike said. “You know we want you out there with us, fighting the good fight, but you’re still a liability.”

“Fine,” Gray grumbled. “When I get this fucking cast off, I’m going to make it my life’s mission to eradicate all gophers

from the face of the planet.” I shared amused looks with the guys as I held in my laughter. Gray would not be amused. Once we were ready, he held Witch back as we silently left the house. There weren’t any zombies on the porch, so we were able to make it into the yard without notice. That all changed once we were out in the open. Zombies were scattered around the yard, but you could almost see the wave of awareness spread through them as our presence was noticed. They all began to converge on us.

We tried to stick together as we put zombies down, keeping our backs to each other so that no one was caught off guard. I was shooting arrows as quickly as possible, and it was time to scramble right around the time I reached for an arrow and got nothing but air. We all moved in separate directions before we were overrun. I worried briefly about the others but quickly regained my focus as I found myself surrounded by three of the zombies. They were different than the zombies we usually came across these days, but I didn’t have time to analyze why as the closest one lunged for me.

I stabbed my knife into his head and used the body as a buffer with the second as I kicked the third back. I shoved the dead zombie back as I ripped the knife from his skull, knocking both down as I turned to deal with the other. Growling was the only warning I got as a fourth came out of nowhere and attacked. Before I could react, I heard the sound of a gun, and the zombie fell. After two more shots, the other zombies were down as well. I looked at the house to see Gray holding one of my sniper rifles in the window. We nod to each

other as his focus moves to one of his brothers, and I turn to take down more zombies. He found a way to help, after all, and now I felt like I could focus better on keeping myself alive.

Once all the zombies are dead, I take stock of my men to ensure everyone is uninjured. Even though I was relieved that nobody got bitten, I didn't relax. Something was bugging me.

"Boone and I are going to check the fucking fence again," Pike announced.

"Be careful," I replied automatically. I walked toward the house as Gray came out. "Thanks for the assist, babe." I kissed his cheek and then surveyed the yard again. "Anyone notice anything different about these zombies?"

"Like what?" Ethan asked.

I started moving from corpse to corpse, checking my suspicions with growing panic. The guys followed me until Caleb finally stopped me. "Talk to us, Bailey."

I kicked the closest zombie onto its back. "Look at it. What do you see?"

"He's... fresh," Gray stated hesitantly.

"They all are. Every single zombie in this yard was a brand new baby z. Notice anything else?" I asked.

"Should we?" Ethan asked. I took out my knife and cut the clothes off the zombie. He grimaced and looked away. "I could have gone my entire life without seeing zombie dick."

I ignored him. “See it now?” I asked as I rolled the naked zombie over. They didn’t answer me because they still didn’t get it. “They don’t have any fucking bite marks! They weren’t infected, they were murdered.”

“All of them?” Gray asked. The guys split up and began checking zombies, their growing worry evident in their body language.

“Fuck!” Caleb shouted. “Recognize this guy?” We rushed over to him and peered down at the man.

“No?” Gray said.

“You wouldn’t. You were stuck in bed. This is our visitor with the broken gun,” Caleb replied.

I stared at the man while my brain tried to make it make sense. I was missing something. I just couldn’t for the life of me figure out what. And until I had that missing piece, none of this made sense. “He looks healthier. He put on weight. He must have found a place to take shelter for the winter.” I looked around the yard again. “There’s the woman,” I said, pointing. We went to her and found she was in the same condition as the man. Healthier and has no bites.

“I don’t see the child, and I don’t remember coming across a child zombie,” Ethan said.

Neither did I. Child zombies weren’t something you missed and were usually the hardest to put down. At least they were for me. “Guys, something is going on here. I would bet the farm that all of these people were alive and, dare I say,

thriving days ago at the most. So what the hell happened to change that?”

“I think the more important question is who changed that,” Gray replied ominously.

I looked out at the forest beyond my fence. Was the person responsible for this watching us now? Boone’s shrill whistle broke the unsettling silence that had fallen over us. He waved us over, and I knew what I would find before we reached him and Pike. “Let me guess, the fence has been cut,” I said when we reached them.

“How did you know?” Boone asked.

“Because we have fresh zombies without bite marks strewn around the yard,” I told them.

“Wait, what?” Pike asked, standing from where he was inspecting the freshly cut fence.

“It’s true,” Gray said.

I looked into the forest again as if I expected the culprit to jump out from behind a tree and announce that it was them. “This wasn’t an accident, and it isn’t a coincidence. Someone killed these people, led them to our house, and intentionally cut the fence to let them into the yard.”

“Who would do that?” Boone asked.

I shrugged. I didn’t have that answer yet. “I’m not sure, but I intend to find out. Maybe it’s just someone trying to take my farm. If it’s a fight they want, they’ll get one.” A horrifying thought entered my mind. “Matty!” I turned and ran for the

house as my panic grew. What if we weren't the only ones that were attacked? I could tell the guys were behind me as I ran into the house and got on the radio.

"Matty, do you copy?" I asked frantically. Silence. "Matty? Henry? Anyone, do you copy?!" I was shaking as I held my breath and waited for someone to respond.

Gray wrapped his arms around me in comfort. "Give them a minute, Little Dove. If they don't answer, we'll get a truck running and go check it out."

"Someone answer this fucking radio," I yelled into the radio. "I never should have let him move out," I said to the room.

"Jesus, Bails. What's wrong?" Matty asked. I sagged against Gray in relief.

"Are you ok?" I asked.

"Why wouldn't I be? What's going on?"

"Someone let fresh zombies into the yard last night," I replied.

"I'll be right there."

"No!" I looked at Caleb. "Do you think you could get a truck going, and two of you go pick him up?"

"Of course!" He left to do that. After sitting all winter, we hadn't tried starting them up, and I prayed we wouldn't run into any problems.

"Matty, I'm sending a truck to get you. I don't feel good about you on the road right now."

“Fancy. Ok, I’ll wait for my ride. See you in a bit, B. Try to stop freaking out.” I rolled my eyes as I put the mic down. He’d understand my worry when he got here and saw it for himself.

Caleb came back into the house. “I’ve got one going,” he announced.

“Good. New rules. Nobody goes anywhere alone, and we stay armed at all times. Stay alert. We don’t know what this is all about, but it isn’t good. If one of you gets yourself killed, I will be very cross with you.”

“We’ll be careful, Baby,” Caleb assured me. “Ethan, want to go for a ride?”

“Right behind you.” They both gave me quick kisses goodbye and left.

“I’m going to go fix the fence,” Pike said.

I cleared my throat as he went to leave, and he looked at me curiously. “Buddy system! Nobody goes anywhere alone. That includes across the yard.”

“Boone?”

“Yep,” Boone said, following him out the door.

“I got the best buddy,” Gray said in my ear. I didn’t respond, so he turned me to face him. “We’re going to figure this out, Little Dove. And we won’t let anyone get hurt.”

I nodded and smiled. I gave him a quick kiss. “Come on, buddy, I need to go collect my arrows.” I pulled the last arrow

from an eye socket and grimaced when eye goop came with it. I hated that. I wiped it off on the zombie's clothes and looked up when I heard the sound of an engine. I looked toward the road and breathed a sigh of relief when I saw Matty in the bed of our truck. A second truck was behind them, and I saw Henry in the driver's seat with a couple of other men with him.

I rushed the truck as soon as it was through the gate, and as soon as it stopped, I was ripping the back door open and pulling Matty into my arms. "You're moving back home until we figure this out," I told him.

"Now, Bailey," he replied as he hugged me back, "the guys filled me in on what happened, and I understand why you are freaked out, but don't completely lose your mind. I'm perfectly safe at Henry's, and even if I weren't, you know I wouldn't leave Anna. You raised me to be a better man than that." I sighed against his chest, feeling mine unclench now that I had him with me. I knew he was right. I couldn't expect him to leave Anna's side. He belonged with her no matter how much I preferred to have him where I could see him. I had to let go eventually.

"I know you're right," I sighed.

"Say that again. I don't think I heard you right," Matty joked. I poked him in his side and released him from the death hold I had on him.

"Hey, Henry. Thanks for coming," I said, shaking the man's hand.

“I thought you could use extra hands disposing of the bodies,” he replied.

“We can,” I agreed. “And I see Caleb got your truck running as well! I have a question for you. Did your zombies from yesterday look anything like these guys?”

I led him to the nearest body, and he squatted to look closely at it. “Nope. Ours were your run-of-the-mill zombie we see these days.”

I wasn't sure whether I had hoped his answer would have been yes or no.



Matty, Henry, and his men helped us gather and burn the bodies. Soon, there wasn't any proof of our late-night visit. Gray followed me around as I rushed through the chores for the day. The animals weren't too thrilled with me for being late.

“Ok,” I said after dinner. “I think we need to start guard duty shifts. Until we figure this all out.”

“I don't think that's necessary,” Ethan replied. “I get you're freaking out about this, but we have Witch to alert us if anything is happening outside, just like she did last night.”

“I agree,” Boone said as he threw me over his shoulder. “It's bedtime. None of us slept well last night. We can decide what we will do tomorrow.” The others followed, and soon, we

were snuggled into bed together, with Boone choosing to use me as his pillow tonight. We lay there in silence while I tried to work up the courage to share a decision I had made today. “Why haven’t you relaxed yet, Honey Bee?” Boone asked from his position between my legs. He turned his head and rested his chin on my lower stomach, and I knew he was looking at me in the dark.

“I... I decided something today that kind of involves all of you, but I don’t know how to bring it up,” I said quietly. I felt the others stir as they all focused on me.

“Just say it, Little Dove. Whatever it is, we’re here for you if that’s what you want,” Gray replied.

“Oh, it’s not about you guys staying here permanently,” I said quickly when I realized that’s where their minds went. “I mean, yes, I don’t want you guys to leave, but that wasn’t what I decided.”

“Then what is it?” Caleb asked from the other side of Pike.

“I realized I could have lost one or more of you today, which terrifies me. There aren’t any guarantees in this life, and it’s silly not to live every day to the fullest. This sounds so corny,” I groaned. I powered through my growing embarrassment before I could chicken out. “I want to have sex. With all of you. Together. Tonight.” The silence stretched for so long that I started to regret saying anything at all.

“Are you sure?” Ethan whispered.

“Yes.”

“Fuck,” Pike breathed, his face closer to mine than I had realized. His lips covered mine in the next breath, claiming me hungrily. I felt the others start to move around on the bed, and the light was flicked on, distracting me. Pike pulled back to smile down at me. I looked at the others, and they had similar looks on their faces.

Boone dragged my shorts and panties down my legs without a word while Pike got me out of my tank top. “Now, Honey Bee, we’re going to take this slow. Anytime you want to stop or aren’t enjoying yourself, say the word, and we stop. Period.”

I nodded. “I trust you.” Boone closed his eyes and groaned slightly. When he reopened them, I was surprised to see how much emotion they held.

“You have no idea how happy that makes us, Honey Bee. Now, you just lay back and let us worship you.”

At his words, Pike and Gray, who were by my head, began taking turns kissing me. Ethan and Caleb, next to them, trailed their hands up the inside of my legs, spreading me open for Boone, who didn’t waste any time settling between my spread legs and running his tongue through my arousal.

“You’re already so wet for us, Bailey,” he said approvingly.

I moaned when Caleb and Ethan also began tweaking my nipples. “Start her off with an orgasm, Boone,” Ethan instructed, bending to suck a nipple into his mouth. Caleb bent as well, trailing kisses and love bites across my stomach. With all of their mouths on me at the same time, I knew that I

wasn't going to last long. I felt Boone slide one of his thick fingers inside me and curl it to find my G-spot. I moaned into Gray's mouth as my hips bucked at the stimulation.

"That's right, Sweetling," Pike whispered close to my ear. "Let yourself go. We've got you. We love you so fucking much, gorgeous. You're perfect for us." He continued to whisper sweet nothings to me as I soared higher. I always loved his dirty talk, but this was so much more.

Gray lifted his mouth from mine just as my first orgasm washed over me. My soft moans filled the room as Boone relentlessly turned my first orgasm into a second.

"Good girl," Pike murmured.

"I'll never get tired of hearing moans fall from her lips," Caleb groaned.

"Gray, she's ready," Boone said, sitting up.

Caleb and Ethan helped me move so Gray could take my place on the bed. They turned me to face him and moved me into place on top of him. I wasn't sure when they had decided Gray would go first, but it seemed like they had planned for this eventuality.

"Are you sure, Little Dove?" Gray asked as his hands gripped my hips.

I nodded as I licked my lips. "I need you inside of me." His seafoam eyes seemed to darken as they widened slightly. He gripped his cock with one hand as the others helped me line up over him. I gasped as the tip slid through my lips, collecting

my arousal and seeking my entrance. He pushed into me just enough to be able to release himself, and he gave me another questioning look as his hand returned to my hip. I nodded again in reassurance, and he slowly began to pull me down onto his cock.

I moaned as he filled me. I didn't realize the others had been missing until they rejoined us on the bed naked. My hips moved on their own, instinct and nature taking over.

"Oh, fuck, Bailey," Gray moaned. "That's it, baby. Ride me. Show me how you like it." I trembled as I lifted myself up and then back down. It had never felt like this before.

"Gray," I cried out. He surged up, wrapping an arm around me to hold me close as I moved against him, his other hand tangling in my hair to drag my lips to his. He consumed me, filling my body and senses with himself. I clung to him as another orgasm ripped through me, harder than I had ever experienced. I felt him swell inside me, and his chest vibrated against mine as he groaned.

"Thank you," he said, breaking our kiss to trail his lips down my neck. We stayed locked together, panting, with his forehead resting against my chest.

"More," I begged as I felt him softening inside me. My men chuckled around me as I was shifted off of Gray. He moved out of the way as I was laid back on the bed, and Boone covered my body with his.

"You're sure you want more?" he asked, searching my face to make sure that I still wanted this.

“Fuck me, Boone,” I ordered.

He bent his head and kissed me as he gathered me in his arms. “Guide me in, Honey Bee.”

I reached between our bodies and wrapped my hand around his cock. I teased us both by rubbing against my slit before finally lining him up. Boone pressed forward slightly before stopping.

“Eyes on me, Bailey.”

My heart tried to jump out of my chest as his words thrilled me. I met his eyes, and as soon as I did, he slowly pushed until he was fully sheathed. I arched against him, throwing my head back as I moaned. Boone was bigger than Gray and hit spots I didn't know existed. His lips found my exposed neck as he withdrew achingly slowly. He pushed back in just as slow, and it felt like he was slowly destroying everything I was to rebuild me into a stronger version.

It wasn't until I started begging breathlessly that he sped up his pace. “Yes! Fuck, Boone, don't stop,” I chanted. “Harder, please.” The force of his thrusts increased a little, but not as much as I wanted. He was still being maddeningly gentle with me. He steadily drove us toward our release with infinite patience. I clawed at him as I tried to urge him faster, to no avail.

“I'm close, Honey Bee,” he finally announced. “Come with me.” He reached a hand between us to stroke my clit, not that I needed it, and I came apart instantly. “Fuck, your pussy is squeezing my cock so good!” Boone came with a roar, finally

slamming into me the way I had wanted him to all along, burying himself as deep as he could as he came inside me. Boone pulled out of me when he was done, and I could feel his and Gray's combined cum leaking out of me.

"Maybe I should go clean up a little before we continue," I suggested as I moved to get off the bed.

Pike was on me before I could get too far. "I don't think so, Sweetling. Many factors were considered when we discussed the order we would go in once this night happened. That was one of them. Caleb and Ethan have a surprise for you if you're interested, but first, it's my turn."

My blood turned to fire as we settled his weight on me. Pike would give me what I wanted. I knew he would. He nibbled on my shoulder, taking a moment to enjoy me before rising above me and smiling. "Pike, please." I didn't know how to ask for what I wanted outside of the moment, but his smile widened at my plea.

"I've got you, Bailey. I'll take care of you and give you what you need," he promised. He flipped me over and lifted my ass, stuffing pillows under my hips. He leaned over my body to whisper in my ear. "If it's too much, or you need to stop, say gopher."

The giggle that fell from my lips became a moan as Pike slammed inside me to the hilt. "Yes! More!" I cried. Pike wrapped my hair around his hand and used it to hold me in place as he pounded into me from behind. The bites of pain mixed beautifully with the pleasure, and I could feel myself

falling apart around Pike's cock. When Pike spanked my ass, making it burn, I came undone.

“Oh, fuck. Yes,” Pike moaned, fucking me through my orgasm. “That's my good little pain princess. Come on my dick. Show my brothers how much you love it.” His words should have embarrassed me, but they just made me hotter. I needed this. I craved this.

“More. Fuck, Pike, I need more.” He yanked me up by my hair until my back was flush against his chest. His free hand wrapped around my throat and squeezed lightly.

“Like this, Sweetling?” he purred.

“Yes!”

I made a whining sound in my throat when he bit down on my shoulder, growling slightly.

“Open your eyes and look at them,” he ordered as he continued to pump into me.

I hadn't even realized my eyes had been closed, and they popped open at his order. All four men had their backs against the wall at the head of the bed and stroked themselves as they watched Pike fuck me. Boone looked slightly worried, Gray seemed somewhat surprised, and they all looked hungry.

“Do you see what you do to them?”

I whimpered at his words as he let go of my hair. His hand traveled down my body, all four men tracking his movements with their eyes. His fingers slipped past my clit, making me

moan as he spread my lips open. They groaned and increased their stroking.

“See how seeing your little pussy spread around my cock gets them even hotter. We love watching you get fucked almost as much as we love fucking you.” His fingers moved to my clit and rubbed it as his other hand tightened around my throat, cutting off my air supply. “Fuck, I’m coming!” Pike growled. “Come with me, Bailey. Now!” He bit into my shoulder again as we came together. My mouth opened in a silent scream as my sight grew fuzzy. His hand relaxed, and I gasped for air. My body turned to mush, and his arms wrapped around me to keep me from falling forward, refusing to release me from his orbit.

“That was amazing,” I said, my head falling against his shoulder.

Pike chuckled. “Anytime you need it rough, just let me know, Sweetling. Are you fucked out, or do you still want more?”

“More. Definitely more.” My eyes found Ethan and then Caleb’s. They looked at each other and then moved toward me.

“We figured by now you might be a little worn out,” Caleb said as he ran his knuckle over one of my nipples lightly.

“Now that you’ve been thoroughly fucked and had three loads deposited in your pussy,” Ethan continued, “we thought we’d see how you felt about saving some time and taking us together.”

My eyes widened. “Both of you inside me at the same time?” I asked with trepidation, even as my body betrayed me.

“Fuck,” Pike groaned. “Don’t read too much into her words or her tone. Her pussy just tried to sever my dick from my body. She’s into it.” I felt myself blushing, and I looked down at the bed.

“Even so, we’re still going to need the words,” Caleb said. He tipped my chin up with a finger. “Is that something you want to try, Baby?”

I bit my lip indecisively and then nodded my head. “Yeah.”

Caleb groaned and then slammed his lips to mine in a feral kiss. Pike chuckled in my ear as he finally unwrapped himself from me and pulled out. When Caleb ended the kiss, Ethan was beside us on his back with his head at the foot of the bed.

“Climb aboard, Bails,” he grinned. I straddled him and leaned down to kiss him. I loved these men so fucking much. Maybe even more after tonight’s events. They were so sweet and considerate of me and my feelings. I was the luckiest woman on the planet. I purred into the kiss when Caleb came up behind me and ran his hand down my spine. I broke the kiss with Ethan to sit up and turn my head to kiss Caleb next. I was more than happy to be a Bailey sandwich between them again, and this time, I wouldn’t run away.

“This feels familiar,” Caleb whispered, echoing my thoughts.

“It’s long overdue,” I agreed.

“Ok, Bails,” Ethan said. “Here’s how this will work. Caleb will fuck you a little first to lube up his dick. Then you’ll take me, and Caleb will push in slowly when you’re ready, ok?”

“Let’s do this,” I replied, my excitement growing. I felt like I was graduating from sex school, and this was my reward.

Caleb applied pressure between my shoulder blades to get me to lean forward on top of Ethan. He pushed into me from behind, and I moaned against Ethan’s neck. I never expected to love being filled so much, but I did. By them at least. I don’t think I’d ever want to be touched by anyone else.

“You feel so fucking good wrapped around my cock, Baby. This is going to be a tight fit.”

“Caleb, you done?” Ethan asked impatiently.

“Sorry, bro,” Caleb chuckled. “It’s hard to stop.” He pulled out of me and adjusted, so I sank onto Ethan’s cock seconds later.

“Fuck, you do feel good, Bails,” Ethan groaned.

I sat up and began to ride him, reveling in the effects I had on him. Each sound that fell from his lips belonged to me. They were mine. I instantly realized I would kill before letting anyone take these men away from me. They were mine, and I wasn’t ever letting them go. “Say you’re mine,” I demanded.

“I’m yours. Forever,” Ethan promised.

“All of you?”

“All of us,” Caleb purred in my ear. “Time to lean forward.”

I stopped moving my hips and leaned forward, my hair creating a curtain around Ethan's face. Our eyes locked as I felt Caleb move in behind me. My body tensed as he tried to get the head of his cock next to Ethan's.

"Relax, baby," Caleb said, rubbing my ass soothingly.

Ethan reached up and held my head in his hands as he brought my lips to his to distract me. I let my body melt into him, losing myself in his kiss.

"Good girl," Caleb moaned as he managed to get the tip in.

"That's so fucking hot," I heard Gray say.

I wished there was a way for me to watch them as they watched me. Next time we went to Wilsonville, we'd have to get a large mirror for the wall. I lifted my lips from Ethan's, and we both moaned as Caleb pushed in further.

"You're doing so good, Honey Bee," Boone praised as Caleb slid in another inch.

"Oh, God," I moaned.

"Almost there," Caleb grunted. I felt his hips slam into my ass as he finally got his entire length inside me.

I was panting, and nobody moved as they let me adjust to being stuffed. When I felt more comfortable, I moved my hips experimentally, making all three of us moan.

"Are you ready for us to move?" Ethan asked.

"Yesss," I hissed as he thrust up gently. Caleb wrapped his arms around me, and together, they suspended me between

them as they alternated thrusting into me. Their movements were short, neither wanting to pull out too far and risk falling out of me completely.

“Fuck, this is too much, I’m not going to last long,” Caleb moaned.

“Me either,” Ethan grunted.

All I could do was whimper as they created the most delicious friction inside me. There wasn’t a part inside my pussy that one of them wasn’t touching. I could feel my walls fluttering around them as they fucked me within an inch of my life. “I’m going to come.” I tried to hold the orgasm back as long as I could. You would have thought, with my past trouble with orgasms, that it would have been easier for me to do so, but there was something about the way these men worked my body that made it impossible.

Caleb gripped my hips, pinning me to Ethan’s and taking over the movement for both of us. His strokes lengthened, and his pace quickened as I screamed my final orgasm, dragging them over the cliff with me as my pussy pulsed around them. Caleb collapsed on top of me, squishing me between him and Ethan in the absolute best way.

“Guys, don’t kill her,” Pike laughed.

I groaned in disappointment when Caleb got off me. He gently lifted me from Ethan, and I was passed to Boone, who set me in my spot in the middle of the mattress. My body felt like jelly, and I was pretty sure I wouldn’t be able to move for a while. “We should have been doing that all winter,” I

groaned as my heavy eyelids fell closed. They didn't even open when I felt a warm cloth between my legs as someone cleaned up the mess they made of me.

“Better late than never,” Gray replied, kissing my forehead.

I hummed in agreement as sleep started to claim me. “I love you guys,” I said before I fell asleep.

“We love you, too.”

My last thought before I fell into a deep sleep was that with the right people, sex can be beautiful, as it should be.

Chapter Twenty-One

A couple of weeks later, after another fun morning romp, we were cuddled into a pile, basking in the afterglow, when Ethan splayed his hand across my stomach.

“We had to of put a baby in you this time,” he said.

I froze. “What? You definitely didn’t. I’m on birth control. Children aren’t an option.” Is that what they’ve been trying to do? Knock me up?

“Since when have you been on birth control?” Ethan growled.

“I started taking it sometime in the winter. I knew we were heading in this direction and wanted to make sure that I was covered.” I extracted myself from the pile and got off the bed to face them.

“Why didn’t you tell us?” Caleb asked.

“You didn’t ask. If you’re looking for children, I’m not your girl. It’s not happening with me. Another rule for the apocalypse: children don’t belong here.” I crossed my arms

over my chest and wished I was at least wearing pants for this conversation.

“I’m so sick of all of your fucking rules,” Pike exploded, getting off the bed to stand before me. “If everyone lived by your fucking rules, the world would be miserable. Life isn’t as black and white as you try to make it, Bailey.”

“Like I said, if you don’t fucking like it, you don’t have to stay with me. It’s my body. I decide to procreate or not. This world isn’t fucking safe for kids, and I refuse to subject an innocent child to this life,” I yelled back. This wasn’t something that I was willing to concede on. It would break my heart if they decided to leave, but I wouldn’t compromise my beliefs. Not this one.

“Ok,” Boone said, leaving the bed to stand between us. “Why don’t we all calm down? Everyone to their respective corners.”

Gray threw me some clothes, and I dressed quickly, shooting him a thankful look. “This is a conversation we should have had before we started having sex,” Gray said. “We can’t get mad at Bailey about something we didn’t discuss. She’s entitled to her feelings, and yelling at each other isn’t resolving anything.”

“When everyone has cooled off, we can revisit the topic,” Boone said calmly. “But ultimately, Bailey, if you don’t want children, we will respect that. But you have to realize that it might take time for some of us to adjust our visions of the future.”

I nodded. “I can understand that, and I’m sorry I didn’t mention the birth control sooner. It didn’t occur to me that you would even want kids, certainly not so soon. I’m going to shower,” I said, escaping to the bathroom.

When I emerged later, the house was empty except for Witch, who was waiting outside my bathroom door. The guys had thrown themselves into the chores and stayed away all morning. Even Gray stayed away now that his leg was healed, and it was weird not to have him in the house with me. Why didn’t I think to talk to them about the birth control? If we were going to be together, as much as I like to say it was my decision, it really should be something that we discuss as a group. I was feeling sad as I made lunch. This was the first time we had ever truly fought about anything, and I hated feeling disconnected from them. It left room for the intrusive thoughts to form in my head. Witch stuck to my side like glue, picking up on my emotional state.

My heart leaped when I heard the sound of an engine. I went out on the porch and saw Matty driving toward us. Thank God. I didn’t know if I would survive a tense, silent lunch with the guys alone. I rushed into his arms when he got out of the truck.

“Hey, B. You ok?” Matty asked with concern.

I nodded against his chest before releasing him. “I’m just happy to see you.”

“You’re lying,” he stated bluntly. “I know every nuance of your face, and you’re lying. Is it something I can fix?”

I shook my head as unwanted tears sprung to my eyes.

“Fuck, B. I hate it when you cry. Do I need to kick someone’s ass?”

That question earned him a fleeting smile as I shook my head.

He slung his arm around my shoulder and led me into the kitchen. “Do you want to talk about it?”

I shook my head again. “It’s something we have to work out ourselves. It’s our first fight, and I feel weird about it.”

“You’re sure it isn’t something I can help fix?” Matty asked again.

“Positive.” I heard the guys on the porch and jumped up to finish preparing lunch on the table. “Don’t say anything,” I whispered to Matty as the screen door opened. I turned my back and busied myself at the stove so that I didn’t have to see the anger in their eyes when they looked at me. I don’t think I could handle pretending there wasn’t anything wrong if I did. They greeted Matty as they sat around the table without paying me attention.

I blindly stirred the stew I was heating up and jumped when someone touched my back. I turned my head to see Boone standing by my side. He lifted my chin to meet his worried eyes. “It’s going to be ok, Honey Bee. Our feelings for you haven’t changed.” My eyes filled with tears again, and he swore softly as he wrapped me up in his arms and hugged me.

“You have something you need to fucking say?” Pike asked.

I tensed, thinking he was talking to me, until Boone answered him. “Right now? No. Later? You bet your fucking ass I do, asshole.”

“I’m looking forward to it,” Pike replied sarcastically.

“So, I didn’t want to say anything until you were all together,” Matty said, changing the subject, “but we caught the guy that brought all the zombies to your place a couple of weeks ago.”

“What?!” I said, stepping out of Boone’s arms.

“Yeah. He was trying to steal some of Henry’s cows. He admitted to letting the zombies loose here as well,” Matty replied.

“That’s great news,” Boone said as he sat down.

I felt a part of me relax as I served the stew. Nothing suspicious had happened in the last two weeks, but I was so paranoid I kept feeling like I was being watched. It was a relief to know that they caught the person responsible, and I wouldn’t have to worry about some sudden attack by unknown enemies. When I served Pike, he looped his finger through my belt loops before I could walk away. I met his eyes nervously and, for the first time, saw past the anger within them to see the hurt underneath. Silently, he let all the pretenses fall away and made himself vulnerable so that I could see the depths of his pain. Somehow, I had hurt him, and that broke my heart. I watched as he masked those emotions again and winked at me. Somehow, I felt better. I knew that whatever our problems

were, he wanted to talk about them eventually and wouldn't walk away from me.

Was I being unreasonable? These men came into my life and turned all my beliefs on their heads. Is it such a stretch that they might be able to do the same with my disinterest in kids? I was feeling confused, so when I heard Matty mention to the guys that Henry's offer for help planting still stood now that the danger was gone, I jumped on it.

"I think that's a good idea," I said. Surprise registered in my men's eyes. "I could use the time to think."

"What do you need to think about?" Ethan asked cautiously.

At the same time, Pike said, "Absolutely not. We have things we need to discuss sooner rather than later."

"I don't want you here," I said more harshly than intended. "I need some time to myself," I said softer. I could see the hurt in their eyes, but I knew that time alone was vital. I had some things I needed to figure out, and I couldn't do that with them hovering around me all the time.

"If that's what you want, then that's what we'll do," Gray said quietly. The others didn't comment as an awkward silence fell on the kitchen as everyone ate their stew. When they finished their lunches, they went to pack some clothes to bring with them.

"We're riding with Matty, so the truck is there for you to use if you need it," Caleb said as he hugged me tightly and left the house.

Ethan and Gray both hugged me as well and then followed Caleb out the door.

Pike hugged me next, and he hugged me so tight I was having difficulty breathing. "Please don't leave us, Baby. I'm sorry."

"I just need to think about some things, Pike," I assured him. "I'm not going anywhere." He gave me a hard kiss and then left without another word.

Boone was next, and he pulled me into his arms like he'd done a thousand times before. "Don't make any decisions without us, Honey Bee. And remember that we fucking love you." He kissed my forehead and left, leaving me with Matty.

"Are you sure you don't want to come with us?" Matty asked.

"No. I really do need some space to think," I told him as we walked out together.

"If you're sure..." Matty replied.

"Witch, come on, girl," Ethan called from Matty's truck. Witch bounded down the steps but stopped between us. She whined as she looked between them and me. She could sense something was up. With another whine, she turned and returned up the steps to sit at my side, leaning her body into my leg. Ethan looked slightly put off at her choice but gave me a small smile anyway.

"Us girls have to stick together," I called. His chuckle reached me as they drove away. We watched them until they

reached the curve in the road and disappeared. “Come on, girl,” I told Witch, patting my leg. We went inside, and I looked around my now-empty house. I insisted they leave and give me space, but I couldn’t help feeling lonely without their presence.

Chapter Twenty-Two

Scott

I watched from the trees as the men entered the truck. I almost didn't come today, but my luck was holding steady. I recognized Matty immediately and knew that I would be visiting him next. I was disappointed when I returned a couple of days after my special delivery and saw that they had survived. After that, the other farmer nearby had added extra security patrols to the road, which was an added complication. But Lady Luck continued to bless me with a random stranger. It had taken little to convince him to steal a cow and get himself captured. I knew once the guards had been pulled back to the farm, it had worked out for me better than I had expected.

I watched Bailey go back inside with the dog. The dog posed a problem, but nothing a bullet couldn't fix. This was my time. I had waited ten years to get to this point, and it took every ounce of self-control to stay hidden in the forest. I needed to ensure that her men wouldn't return and interrupt us. I'd give it thirty minutes, and then I would teach that little bitch a long

overdue lesson. I couldn't wait to give her everything she had coming to her finally.

Chapter Twenty-Three

I found a piece of paper and a pencil and entered the living room with Witch following me. I sat on the couch, and she jumped up to lay her head on my lap. I stroked her soft ears as my mind drifted to the guys. I knew they were worried that I was about to kick them out of my life, but they couldn't be more wrong. I love them with everything I am and know that I haven't always been easy to handle. The patience and understanding they've shown me from the day we met helped cement them in my heart. The truth was I wanted to be able to give something back to them. Not because they felt they deserved it but because they didn't.

While bringing a child into this world terrifies me, and more thinking on the subject, I could do it. I would do anything for them, which was why I wanted space to think. I needed to exercise some demons, starting with my rules.

1. Love is a weakness, and it makes you do some really dumb shit.

2. Nothing is freely given. Every kindness comes with a price, and you better make sure you can pay it.

3. Children don't belong here.

4. Promises have no meaning.

I read the lessons I had learned throughout my life. There were more, but these were the four that always stuck out the most to me. I thought about my time with the guys and how they've altered my perceptions and began to adjust the rules accordingly. With each corrected rule, I accepted my new reality and vowed to be more open to change.

Witch stirred, looking toward the kitchen and growling softly. She gets off the couch and stalks toward the kitchen on silent paws. I put my paper down and followed her into the kitchen to grab my crossbow and load an arrow. My stomach drops as I hear the porch creak. If it was one of the guys, Witch wouldn't be growling, and they wouldn't have been sneaking around.

The door was suddenly kicked open, and I released the arrow without thinking. The man yells, but it doesn't slow him down. Witch lunges for him, and he shoots her. I'm frozen to the spot as I meet his eyes, and recognition washes over me. If I had randomly passed him somewhere, I might not have recognized him. He now has a beard, and his blonde hair is greasy and so

dirty it almost looks light brown. He's thinner more ragged, and his clothes are torn. But his eyes, the piercing blue eyes from my nightmares, haven't changed. It's him, it's Scott! Oh, God. I snap out of it and run for my bedroom. I manage to get inside and lock the door, but I know that it won't hold him back for long. I dive for my knife and bring the blade to my neck. I couldn't let him capture me alive. I say a silent goodbye to Matty and my men, and as my muscles flex to drag the blade across my throat, the bedroom door splinters as Scott kicks it in. He's on me in an instant.

"I'm not letting you go that easy, bitch," he snarls as he wrestles for the knife. The blade bites into my skin briefly before he can overpower me and take it. In the next instant, I feel a blow to the back of my head, and everything goes dark.



When I regain consciousness, I'm naked and tied to the bed spreadeagle. I force myself not to hyperventilate. I need to keep my wits and find a way to escape this. I look around the room and see Scott sitting in the chair in the corner naked and stroking himself.

"There you are," he says. "I thought I would have to start before you woke up."

I didn't respond to him, shifting my eyes to the ceiling. I wasn't going to give him the satisfaction of a reaction from me.

“I have to say, Bailey, you grew up well. I’m not usually into older women, but you’re special. Your body will feel like coming home; I just know it. Did you know that you were my first little girl? It was my idea to take you and Matty in. I knew as soon as I laid eyes on you that I had to have you. You were so brave. I knew I would enjoy breaking and molding you into my perfect little toy.”

He stood and approached the bed, trailing a finger from my ankle to my hip. I fought back the bile that threatened to spew from me. Suddenly, his face was over mine. “Matty was supposed to be my first boy, but you had to go ahead and ruin that. It was clever of you to drug our drinks. Too bad you gave Jenny too much. I woke up right before she attacked me. I didn’t understand what had happened until I killed her and discovered that you and Matty were gone with half my shit.”

He grins widely, licking his lips before continuing. “That’s when I discovered my other sick fetish. Fucking recently deceased zombies. I have you to thank for that revelation.” He mounts me, and it isn’t until I feel the total weight of his body on me that I struggle, trying to buck him off before he can violate me again. “Stop fucking fighting me, you dumb bitch,” he swore as his fists connected with my face. Once. Twice. I’m unsure if there was a third time, as everything went fuzzy, and my ears rang.

I feel a sharp pang between my legs and embrace the fuzzy space I find myself in instead of focusing on what Scott is doing to me. Instead, I thought about my men and how much they loved me. They will never stop blaming themselves for

leaving me alone, but I hope they will find peace one day. And I hoped that they knew just how grateful I was to have had them in my life. Thanks to them, I could experience love and be loved purely, something that I had never expected to happen to me.

My mind shifted to Matty. My sweet boy... man. I was so incredibly proud of the good and honest man he's become. I fulfilled my promise to my father all those years ago. I took care of Matty. He would be ok now. He has someone to love and love him back to start a family with and live a long and full life. That was all I ever wanted for him. This would be hard for him, and I prayed for one last request to whatever cruel God let the travesties of this world occur that Matty wouldn't be the one to find me. I tried so hard to keep my darkness from touching him. Please, God, grant me this one last thing.



I'm not sure how long the abuse lasted or when it stopped. I became vaguely aware of my surroundings when Scott was fully dressed again and leaned over to peer into my face. I felt like I was viewing everything through a fog, more shadows than anything else. He holds something close enough to my face so that I can identify it as my knife. It disappears, and I feel pain in my stomach and then warmth as my blood flows. Somewhere inside my head, I understand that he cut me.

Scott's voice reaches me, and it sounds like he's speaking to me from the other end of a long hallway.

“As much as I would like to kill you myself, I think I'll leave you for the zombies to find. Perhaps you'll bleed out first and turn into a zombie naturally. I hope I'll be able to come back and revisit you before you are found so that I can see how good a fuck you are as a zombie.” He chuckled darkly and then leaned over me one last time. “Right now, I have to pay little Matty a visit,” he whispered.

His words helped to clear some of the fog. No! Not Matty! I groaned as I struggled against my bindings. I had to protect Matty!

Scott laughed. “You have no idea how much it delights me that I didn't completely break your mind.” I watched him leave, and I struggled to free myself until I fell unconscious again.



The next time I awaken, it's from movement on the bed. Vaguely, I recognize Witch, but I'm not sure if she's really here or I'm hallucinating. I saw Scott shoot her and assumed she was dead. Her fur was bloody and matted, and I could tell from the careful way she moved that she was hurting. She sniffs my face and whines as she gives me a tiny lick. I can hear the blaring of the truck horn outside as she lies across my

body, facing the door. Maybe this is how they will find our bodies. Girls gotta stick together, after all.

I must have passed out again because suddenly, I woke up to my body vibrating. It took me a moment to realize it was from Witch's growling. I hear movement in the house. It looks like a zombie finally made it in. Hopefully, I will die quickly. What's left of the barely hanging door begins to creak open.

Chapter Twenty-Four

Boone

Matty's farm tour was over as we followed him out of the barn. "Bailey will calm down," he assures us. He suddenly stopped short, causing me to run into him. "That's him!" he exclaimed angrily.

"That's who?" I asked. I peered around him to see an unkempt stranger talking to Anna's little sister in the yard.

"That's the man that hurt Bailey!" he growled.

"Are you sure?" I asked. I hoped he was mistaken. With everything that had happened, his presence here now didn't give me a good feeling. Some things are too coincidental to be a coincidence.

"I know I was young, but I'd never forget that man's face," Matty swore.

I believed him. If he was here, Bailey could be in trouble. We never should have left her alone.

"We need to get to Bailey," Pike said urgently.

“First, we need to make sure he doesn’t escape,” Ethan growled. He was right. We had the man in our sights now, and he was too dangerous to risk missing the opportunity to capture him. Henry was walking by the barn just then, and we called for him to join us inside.

“Do you know that man?” I asked him.

Henry looked to see who we were talking to. “Just someone who stumbled upon us and is looking for work in exchange for a hot shower and a meal,” he replied.

“That’s the man that took me and Bailey in as kids and abused her,” Matty told him.

Henry paled as he looked at the man speaking to his youngest daughter again. He called over more men and his wife. “Susan, I want you to return to the house and call Alice in for lunch. Once you get her inside, I want you both to stay there. If that man comes into the house, you kill him on sight, understand?”

Susan nodded and ran to the house to do as he said.

“Men, go spread out. I want you to move in on him as soon as Alice is inside. He doesn’t leave this farm,” Henry ordered.

Susan called Alice into the house, and Scott was so busy watching her leave that he didn’t notice the men approaching him until it was too late. He tried to run but was tackled to the ground. When he was secured, Matty rushed from the barn toward the man. When he reached him, he punched him in the face. I grabbed him before he could hit him again.

“We will have time for that later, Matty,” I told him.

“Well, if it isn’t little Matty,” Scott said, licking his split lip. “My condolences on your sister.” My blood ran cold as Caleb sprinted to the truck. Scott looked at the rest of us next. “You really shouldn’t have left her all alone. Oh, how she screamed for you,” he taunted.

I saw red, and as much as I wanted to beat the man to death, I knew we had to get to Bailey. Caleb fired up the truck, and we all ran to jump in as he revved the engine. “Lock him up, but don’t kill him yet,” I yelled over my shoulder as I jumped into the truck’s bed, and Caleb gunned it.

Caleb pushed the truck to its limits, and the short drive over was silent and tense. Please be ok, Honey Bee, I prayed silently. I didn’t know what we would do if we lost her. As we got closer, we heard a truck horn blaring, and I saw the gate wide open. As we pulled into the yard, I saw a few zombies shuffling around, and my stomach dropped. Oh, God, please don’t let us be too late.

“Matty shut that fucking truck off,” I yelled as I ran for the house. “Ethan, kill these fuckers before they become a bigger problem.”

I run into the house with Gray, Pike, and Caleb. “Bailey!” I see the broken bedroom door at the end of the hall, and the weight of what that could mean nearly knocks me over. As we approach the door, I can hear moaning and growls. Bracing myself for the worst-case scenario, I burst into the room. Relief surges through me, quickly replaced by worry. I take in

the scene in front of me quickly. Bailey is alive but naked, bloody, bruised, and tied to the bed. Witch growls at us as she crouches across Bailey's stomach. There is a pool of blood beneath her body that is concerning. Witch also looks injured, so I don't know how much of the blood is Bailey's and how much belongs to the dog.

We reach for Bailey, and Witch's growls get more fierce as she snarls at us. I don't doubt that she will bite us if we touch her. Witch is in full protection mode, and everyone but Bailey is the enemy.

"It's ok, Witch," Gray croons softly. "We're friends, remember. Who's a good girl protecting her mama like that? You did good, Witch, but we need to help her now."

"Come on, girl," Caleb says, snapping his fingers. "Come here, Witch. It's ok." Witch whined, tucking her tail as she backed away from Bailey to allow us near her. She almost looked apologetic for growling at us.

We quickly untied her, but as soon as we touched her, Bailey freaked and thrashed to escape us. Her eyes were wild as she looked at us without seeing us. She was still locked inside her nightmare. We released her immediately so that she would stop fighting us. I didn't know the extent of her injuries yet, but she was covered in blood, and I didn't want her to injure herself even more.

"Hey, Honey Bee," I said softly. "It's Boone, baby. We're here. You're safe. Come back to us, sweetheart." Now that she wasn't moving, I cataloged her injuries. Her face was bruised

and swollen. She had a cut on her neck and a deep gash across her stomach that worried me as blood flowed freely. Bruises speckled her body, and her inner thighs were covered in blood. A burning rage brewed inside me, but I kept a lid on it as I focused on Bailey.

I heard the screen door slam. “Bailey!” Matty screamed as he rushed toward the room. This seemed to break Bailey out of her state, and she looked around, surprised to see us. She starts to panic as Matty gets closer.

“Please, I don’t want him to see me like this,” she rasps.

I move immediately, blocking the door and Matty’s view of her. Gray moves as well to further block her. Matty looks betrayed as he tries to push past me. Ethan grabs him, holding him tightly as the boy begins to cry.

“Let me see her! I have to see her!”

“Matty, she’s alive. She’s alive and stronger than ever, but she doesn’t want you to see her like this.” I tell him.

“I don’t care what she looks like. I need to see her,” he replies, fighting against Ethan’s hold on him.

“Matty, listen to me. It’s important that we respect her wishes right now. We need to give her back her control. I promise you’ll see her soon, just not right now.” The fight left him as he hung his head and slumped against Ethan. He nodded, wiping away the tears still tracking down his face.

Caleb appeared at my side, cradling Witch in his arms. “Matty, Witch is bleeding, but we found her guarding Bailey.

Can you help us fix her up?"

"Yeah," Matty says, returning to the kitchen with Caleb. I'd have to thank Caleb later for thinking of that. Matty needed something to focus on while we took care of Bailey.

Ethan takes a step into the room to check on Bailey for himself. His fists clench, and he turns red when he sees her. "I'm going to fucking kill him with my bare hands," he growls. Bailey whimpers and pain flashes across his face, knowing it was because of him.

"Why don't you go help with Witch," I suggested softly. He nodded and left. We needed calm in the room, and he was too close to losing it.

When I turn back to Bailey, I'm relieved that Pike and Gray have gotten her to let them close enough to look at her. Gray rushes from the room and returns seconds later with Bailey's medical kit.

"Do you even know what you're doing?" Pike asks as I climb onto the bed and lift Bailey's head into my lap. I gently stroke her hair with shaking hands. Why the fuck did we leave her alone?

"I read the books," Gray replied. "I'm not as good as Bailey, though, which is why she will help me, right?"

Bailey nods slowly. Her help mainly was nodding or shaking her head as Gray fixed her. She didn't even flinch when he stitched the cut on her abdomen. She was probably in so much pain she couldn't process more of it.

“Do you want a shower?” I asked her once Gray was done dressing her wounds. She nods, so I gently lift her into my arms. “Get rid of the bed and broken door,” I order as I carry her into the bathroom. “Get the spare mattress out”

I shift her carefully into one arm as I get the shower running. Once the water warms, I climb in fully clothed and sit on the tub’s edge with Bailey in my lap. I hold her under the water, and she slowly starts to relax. But as she settles, she begins to panic anew as a manic need to be clean takes over.

“I can still feel him on me,” she said, struggling against me. “Get it off! Get him off me! Please, wash him off me, Boone, please. I can’t stand it. Make the water hotter. Burn him off me.”

I struggle to keep her from hurting herself. “I’ll get you cleaned up, Bailey. I’ve got you. I promise. Pike!”

Bailey tenses and then collapses against me as she breaks down completely, sobbing into my neck.

Pike comes into the bathroom. “What can I do?”

“Help me clean her.”

He steps into the shower and helps support her between us. I grab a washcloth and soap and gently clean her, turning the water in the bottom of the tub red as the blood is washed away.

“Harder,” Bailey begs. “Scrub me until my skin is raw. I don’t want a single skin cell that he might have touched on me.”

I comply as best I can without hurting her more. I drop to my knees to clean between her legs, and my hands shake with barely contained rage as I see the full scope of her assault. Death is too good for him. Once Bailey feels clean, we lift her out of the shower and wrap her in a towel. We dry her with soft touches, taking our time to soothe her as we go. Gray put an oversized shirt over her head when I set her back on the new bed. We get her settled into bed and leave Gray to redress her wounds while me and Pike change into dry clothes.

“I need someone to get me medicine from under the bathroom sink,” Bailey whispers. “It’s called Plan B. It will... it will make sure that I don’t conceive.” Even though she is on birth control, I understand she wasn’t willing to take that chance. Pike went back into the bathroom and came back with the pill and a glass of water.

“Can Matty come in now, Honey Bee?” I ask. She nods, and I leave the room to let him know. Witch is still on the table when I enter the kitchen, but she has a bandage on now.

“She was shot, but it was a through and through and appears to have missed vital organs,” Matty said. “She should make a full recovery. Can I see my sister now?”

“You sure can.” The words are barely out of my mouth before he rushes past me. Ethan lifts Witch into his arms, and I follow him and Caleb back to the bedroom. I reach the room in time to see Matty crumble as he climbs onto the bed next to his sister. Ethan sets Witch down next to Bailey, and for the first time since we left Henry’s farm, I feel myself relax. Our

family might be a little broken now, but we would be ok. I was going to make sure of it.

Chapter Twenty-Five

I try to hold it together for Matty's sake. I wrap my arms around his shaking body as he sobs, trying to soothe him. I can't hold back the tears falling as we cry together, but I assure him I'm ok. I remember Scott's threat against Matty and start to panic. "Matty, you have to be careful. Scott said he was coming for you next."

This time, it's his turn to assure me. "It's ok. We have him locked up. He came to the farm, and I recognized him. That's how we knew you were in trouble. He's never going to hurt you or anyone else ever again."

"Really?" I asked in disbelief. Was it really over? I looked at the guys who were still hovering over me for confirmation. They nodded, and a part of me that had never truly relaxed, even before today, finally did.

"If you want, I can kill him when I get back to the farm," Matty offered.

“No. I want to be there when he dies. I want him to see with his own eyes that he didn’t win,” I replied with conviction. His death belonged to me and me alone.

“I think that’s a great idea,” Matty replied.

He hung around for a little longer, but finally, I had to tell him to go home before it got dark.

“But I don’t want to leave you alone,” Matty argued.

“I won’t be alone,” I remind him.

“Don’t worry, kid, we’ll take care of her,” Caleb promised. “Come on, I’ll drive you home.”

“I’ll ride with you,” Ethan said.

I hugged Matty goodbye.

“I love you, Bailey,” Matty whispered. “I was so fucking scared that I had lost you. I don’t know what I would do if you weren’t here.”

I cupped his face with my hands and kissed his forehead. “You would live your very best life, Matty. You would continue with your life, start a family, and teach them what I taught you. I might not say it enough, but I am so proud of the man you’ve become, Matty. I love you.”

“It wouldn’t be the same without you,” he replied.

“Lucky for you, I don’t plan on going anywhere for a very long time. I have my own very best life to live,” I assured him.

A smile spread across his face. “I’m going to hold you to that.”

“Good.” He kissed my cheek, and then, with one final look at me and promising to return in the morning, he left.

Pike came over to sit next to me. “If I made food, would you eat it?”

“Biscuits?”

“Sweetling, if you wanted fresh deer, I’d go out and get you one. You can have whatever you want.”

“As tempting as that is, I think biscuits and eggs will do just fine,” I replied. He kissed my forehead and left to start cooking. I stroked Witch’s head and closed my eyes as the others crowded around me. I didn’t think I’d get this again. I thought for sure I was a goner, so I silently soaked up their presence and counted my blessings. After eating, everyone piled into bed, wrapping me in safety.

“Do you want to talk about it?” Gray asks.

“Not even a little bit.” I just wanted to forget everything and move on with my life.

I drifted to sleep but wasn’t asleep long before my terrified screams woke me up. The guys were right there to soothe me and make sure that I knew I wasn’t alone and that I was safe. The guys must not have gotten much sleep because they seemed to be awake and alert every time I woke up from a nightmare.

The next day, I wasn’t allowed to leave the bed, and I didn’t have the energy to protest. I hurt everywhere and felt exhausted. They took turns cuddling with me as the others

took care of the chores and repairing the damage that Scott caused to the house. Witch only left my side to go outside or eat and drink. The only time one of the guys was not with me is when Matty came to visit.

Caleb held a piece of paper that night when they all came to bed. “What’s this?” he asked, showing it to me.

“Those are my revised rules,” I replied.

“Does this mean what I think it means?” he asked softly, pointing out the correction to the rule about children.

“I’m open to it, though not right away. I think my recovery might have had a setback,” I admitted.

“We aren’t in any rush, Bails,” Ethan assured me. “But thank you for reconsidering.”

“We aren’t going anywhere,” Pike added. “You may never be alone again.”

I had a hard time being upset about that.

Chapter Twenty-Six

Scott

I looked around the dilapidated barn. By my calculations, it had been a month since I was captured. I should have left the area after raping Bailey, but I got greedy and wanted Matty too. Stupid! And now I was paying the price. Nobody has spoken to me since my imprisonment, no matter how much I've yelled, nor have I seen Matty or the buffoons living with Bailey. I didn't even know if she had survived or not. I like to think not. In my fantasy, she was turned into a zombie and attacked and killed Matty and her men. It was fantasies like that which kept me going. Those and my memories of my little toy.

Yesterday, they moved me from my cushy cell on the farm to this barn. I didn't even have a chance to escape because they drugged me before moving me. My arms were chained around a pole in the center of the empty barn. The barn looked like a strong breeze would blow it down, but this pole wasn't budging. I had tried to break free for several hours until I

finally slumped to the ground. I wasn't going anywhere anytime soon.

The barn door opens, and I scramble to my feet to see who came to visit. Matty and the other men walk in, looking pissed. I laugh as I follow them with my eyes as they climb into the hayloft and sit on the edge, facing me. "I take it she died, then? Weren't you able to get there in time to save your little whore?" I mocked. "She was never yours. She always belonged to me, right to the bitter end; her life was mine."

They didn't reply, but their eyes lifted from me to the door behind me as they smiled. That's when I heard snarling behind me. I turn to see what it is, and my mouth falls open in shock. Not fucking possible. Bailey stands in the barn doorway with a zombie at the end of a pole, and she looks perfectly fine. She's all healed and put back together.

I lose my shit. "All you had to do was die, that's it. How fucking hard can that be?" I screamed. "You never could do anything fucking right, could you? Though, I guess that isn't completely true." I eyed the zombie nervously, hoping my following words would result in a quick death. "You were the best fuck I ever had. You're welcome, boys. I taught her everything I know."

My statement is met with silence as Bailey smirks at me. "Which wasn't fucking much. I just wanted to make sure that I was the last thing you saw. That you knew that I won and you lost. You may have hurt my body, but bodies heal. You didn't

break me. I'm going to rid the world of you, and then I will go on to live a long and happy life with my men who love me."

She pulled out a knife and cut my pants open to expose my dick. Then, she kicks the zombie to its knees.

That's when I started to panic and struggle against my restraints. I try to kick, but my ankles are shackled, and I can't lift my legs very high without support. I can't achieve this with my hands chained behind the pole.

"You like fucking zombies so much. Let's see how you like getting your dick sucked by one," Bailey said before pushing the zombie's face toward my dick.

I scream as the zombie bites into my dick, ripping it from my body before diving in to tear more flesh from my body hungrily. The last thing I see before everything goes black is Bailey's face in mine and the slow smile that spreads across it.

Epilogue

Five Years Later

I stood in the kitchen making lemonade from the lemons from the small orchard we had found. In the last five years, we have explored the land around us a lot. Nature flourished without humans to destroy the planet, and we were reaping the rewards. I grunt softly and rub my belly where the baby kicked. Ethan pressed himself against my back and rubbed my bump soothingly.

“He’s feisty, just like his mommy,” he said. He kissed my cheek and grabbed the pitcher from me.

I shook my head as I grabbed the glasses and followed him outside. We had no way of knowing if it was a boy or a girl, but that didn’t keep the guys from referring to the baby as a boy. They were trying to manifest it to be true by the power of thought. I paused at the top of the stairs to soak up the scene before me. My three-year-old daughter played in the yard with her daddies, cousins, and Witch. Anna and her parents sat on a

blanket in the grass, watching with giant smiles. I had never felt happier in my life.

After I watched Scott die and turn into a zombie, I kept him trapped in the barn. For months, I obsessively checked on and tormented him until, finally, the guys sat me down and told me enough was enough. It was time to let him go for good. I knew they were right. So I stabbed him in the eye and never looked back.

Sure, I still had anxieties and panic attacks occasionally, but my men were right beside me through it all. I was terrified when I found out that I was pregnant with Ava. It wasn't until they placed that tiny little baby in my arms that I knew I was meant to be her mama. I couldn't imagine our lives without her.

Matty comes up behind me and puts his arm around my shoulders. I lean into him as we watch our families together. "Thank you," he said.

"For what?"

"Everything. For everything you did for me. For everything you sacrificed. For teaching me how to love and how to be a parent." He kisses my cheek and takes the glasses from me to join our family.

I didn't used to think love in the apocalypse was possible. Now, I realize that it is the only way to fully thrive.

"Mama! Come play!"

"Coming, Baby."

THE END.

Afterword

As an author, the characters we create take on their own life. They become their own person, and in our minds, they and their story are just as real to us as actual reality. This was the case for Bailey. I don't know why her story was what it was or why she had to go through what she did, I only knew that she did. I had planned to release Bailey on October 31, 2022, but it became clear through alpha reading that I had some hiccups in how I wrote Bailey's trauma. I could have rushed through the needed corrections and kept my planned release date, but Bailey's story and accurately portraying her trauma were more important than meeting a deadline. I decided to push it to 2023 so that I could do it right.

I knew when I was rewriting it that it was the right decision, and her story became more than I expected.

Bailey's story is so much more than a love story.

I have had several readers tell me that her story was a cathartic and healing experience for them. I hope it helped you find a sliver of peace as well. I hope it made you feel. Most of

all, I hope Bailey's story left you feeling hopeful. Unfortunately, wielding a zombie as a weapon to enact your revenge isn't a viable option in the real world... yet. But until it is, Bailey is more than happy to be your stand-in as many times as you need.

I fell in love with the apocalyptic world I've created and the potential for the heartfelt stories within. You can expect another Love in the Apocalypse story next Halloween.

Also By N.A. Jameson

Paranormal Reverse Harem

The Prophecy World

Prophecy Series

[Dark Spirits](#)

[Dark Moon](#)

[Dark Heart](#)

[Dark Sun](#)

[Dark Prophecy.](#)

Spin-off Standalone

[Hell Bound](#)

Standalone Books

[Crowns of Unity.](#)

Contemporary Reverse Harem

Standalone Books

[Small Town Strings](#)

About Author

N.A. Jameson is a born Jersey Girl currently living in Iowa. Her favorite color is pink. She is obsessed with cows, Eeyore is her favorite Winnie the Pooh character, and she may or may not have a princess complex. That's a lie. She definitely has a princess complex. Her absolute favorite TV show is Friends. She watches it a minimum of twice a year.

Super Aunt to countless nieces and nephews. Hates snow, blue cheese, and rude people. Loves the water, ranch dressing, and thunderstorms. Her guilty pleasures are chocolate cake with chocolate frosting, peppermint tea, and wine. Naps are life. When she isn't watching corn grow, you can find her working her way through her never-ending TBR list with zero environmental awareness. Seriously throw something at her if you need her attention when she is reading. She won't hear you speak. When she isn't reading, she is writing, trying to satisfy the characters in her head demanding to be released.

Stalk Me

Want to chat with other readers and myself while staying up to date on all of the things? Follow me on social media, Amazon, and sign-up for my Newsletter?

Visit: <https://linktr.ee/n.a.jameson> to access all of my links.

I want to thank you again for reading my book. If you would, please consider leaving a review. Reviews are so important to a book's success and visibility. A few words from you are so appreciated and helpful.

Thank You So Much!

xoxo

Nebby

P.S. – If you happen to find any spelling or grammar errors or some other issue, please do not report the errors through your Kindle/Amazon. If too many are reported, the algorithm may cause Amazon to pull the book. Instead, please let me know on [Facebook](#) or via email me at najamesonauthor@gmail.com. Thank You!

The Christmas Pact



Welcome to Love -N- Shenanigans, where Fate intervenes to find your perfect match—literally!

It's a cold, cruel world, and the dating scene is no different. Except for twelve lucky souls who've recently signed up for a curious new dating app and quickly find themselves face-to-

face with exactly what they were looking for, whether they knew it or not.

This Christmas, dive into a brand-new shared world and set off on twelve spicy, heart-pounding adventures of love ... and shenanigans!

Pre-Order The Christmas Pact [here](#).

Nova isn't having a great year. This will be the first holiday season without her father. And to top it off, her long-time boyfriend broke up with her days before Thanksgiving. After a bottle of wine, Nova finds herself creating a dating profile on Love & Shenanigans. She isn't looking for anything romantic, but someone to spend the season with would be nice.

Grant, Lincoln, and Benjamin are too busy running their tech company to bother with dating. Unfortunately, the big company holiday party at their mountain cabin is looming over their heads. They can't show up without dates, and after an uncomfortable night at a local bar, they decide to do the sensible thing and create a dating profile. They don't need anything serious, just a date.

After one meeting, they come to an agreement. They'll do all of the Christmas things with her if she attends their company party as their date. Once the holidays are over, they'll part

ways. But what happens when Fate has other plans, and they find themselves falling for each other? When the clock strikes midnight on New Year's Eve, will they go their separate ways, or will they discover that some pacts are meant to be broken?

See the entire series [here](#).