

USA TODAY BESTSELLING AUTHOR

OLIVIA FOX

DADDY

*On Fire*



# **DADDY ON FIRE**

AN AGE GAP, SURPRISE BABY ROMANCE

SILVER FOX DADDY

BOOK 6

OLIVIA FOX



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The Lost Coast is a real part of California, Briarville is based on true places. All characters are *fictional*.

This book is all fiction. All sexual acts are between consenting adults and if there is no talk of condoms, birth control, etc. it's only because it's **fiction and fantasy**. If you are having sex, here are some essential resources:

<https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/basics/prep.html>

Get tested - find out why you should:

<https://www.cdc.gov/std/prevention/screeningreccs.htm>

# DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to my sister, Emily, who recently shared these words with me: “How about next time you take a break before *you* break?” What a concept.

I wholeheartedly recommend the Calm app, which proved to be a lifeline for me during some exceptionally challenging times this year. I suggest giving it a try if you:

- Experience panic.
- Feel persistent anxiety.
- Need a moment to lie down, let your tears flow, and receive expert guidance on processing your grief.
- Struggle with sleep and need Matthew McConaughey to read you a bedtime story.

Remember, the only part of yourself you can give to someone else is what remains when your cup overflows. Prioritize self-care, Foxies.

*Read that again.*

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# CHAPTER 1

# FAITH

**W**eddings were like getting your period.

Things could get messy, unpredictable, and leave you wondering if you'd survive the whirlwind of emotions. The first time you're a bridesmaid, it's kind of exciting. But as you take in the sea of faces of close family and friends, the thought inevitably creeps in: "How many of those tears are full of joy?"

When love was so obviously in the air, wedding bells chiming, it was a time of bitter reflection for many, compounded by champagne toasts and garter removals, topped off by bouquet tosses which were no better than a slap in the face.

As I stood at the altar, looking out at the sea of taffeta and forced smiles, my shoulders tensed with a sense of unease. Although the ceremony was outside, the air seemed to close in on me, the overhead arch adorned with floral decorations threatened to collapse on my head any minute now, and I was trapped like a caged animal, while wearing an ensemble that resembled a fashion experiment gone awry. My dress was a pink marshmallow dipped in a vat of glitter, and I was a walking testament to my sister's belief that tulle can conquer all. The color, a delightful shade of "bubblegum nightmare," clashed with my complexion in a way that even Picasso would find perplexing.

Despite all of this, not to mention the fact that my shoes now pinched and threatened to send me toppling over any minute like a tipsy giraffe, I was happy for my sister.



My heart filled with joy as I watched her walk down the aisle, leaning on my dad's arm, enveloped in the cream-colored bohemian dress we found at an antique store. So why did tears spill down my cheeks despite my blissful happiness for her?

While the happy couple prepared to exchange vows, my fingers nervously tapped against my thigh. Their families and friends looked on, faces brimming with delight. But for me, every word uttered tightened the chain around my chest, threatening to suffocate the wild heart within.

My tears weren't joyous. An ache of sorrow clung to me; it felt like I'd been ostracized. There was a sense I was missing out on something. Like being the kid who didn't get an invitation to the birthday party.

There was a soft pink flush in my sister's sweet, curled lips when she passed me her bouquet. Her expression was true happiness.

Better her than me, I reminded myself, forcing my attention back to the matter at hand—my sister being wed in holy matrimony.

For the rest of her life.

Clover had always been the sweet one, and I was everybody's pain in the ass. They never said it outright, but living around them for years had me pegged as the troublesome one.

I knew very well that everyone who loved me would just fall to pieces with relief if I'd finally pay attention to the silver-haired, firefighter sitting in the third row. His baby blues lit on me with a glint of wonder, as if he found me more fascinating than the blooming wildflower-meadow my sister had planted in the field as a backdrop to her magical day, or the life-altering moment which was playing out before us.

No, I wasn't mistaken. The light smoldered in his sky blue irises as if lit from within.

Dude did not take a hint.

I'd told Riley a million times I lived in sexual abundance, which meant no, I wouldn't date him only.

He demanded loyalty and couldn't accept that I wasn't the relationship type. Every female around gawked at his hard build, his roughhewn features that could make an angel cry. But I remained steadfast; I wouldn't let any man question my ideals.

My sister said "I do," and there was unmistakable triumph on Duke's face.

Adorable. Something I could never be.

Riley wanted someone meek who followed instructions.

Ava spoke from behind, "That smoke eater can't keep his eyes off you. Go ahead, Faith, take one for the team so I can find out if he's better or worse than my fantasies."

Before I answered, Billy Idol's "White Wedding" blasted from the speakers. It's what Duke chose for the recessional, and we all proceeded jauntily from the gazebo to the reception, which was set up in the front yard of his and Clover's ranch.

The florist had worked wonders, transforming the reception area with stunning decorations. People were already seated at the immaculately draped tables, chattering away. A waiter thrust a glass of champagne into my hand, which I immediately gulped down. I glanced around the room, enjoying the cool liquid as it soothed my sunburned feet in their stilettos.

Before I knew it, the happy couple was dancing their first dance as husband and wife, surrounded by their friends and family, who cheered them on. Then my gaze shifted to Riley, the handsome fire chief who made Ava—not me—drool. He was standing nearby, fixated on me. He hesitated for a moment before making his way over, determinedly cutting through the throng of people standing between us. My heart slammed in my chest as he stopped just inches away.

"Dance with me," he directed, holding out his hand for me to take.

Feeling slightly dizzy from the champagne, which went down way too easy, I clasped his hand and swayed slightly on my feet.

“Easy there.”

He pulled me to him and his forearms rippled beneath my fingers, steadying me. Not sure why I’d never noticed, but he smelled delicious. Better than wedding cake. We moved on the dance floor together, swaying slowly to the music as one body, and he moved more expertly than any man I’d ever danced with. His brawny arms encircled my waist while one hand held mine tightly against his chest.

Just one dance is all I would allow myself. The spell he cast on the dance floor was way too seductive and intimate to resist. God, what would he be like in bed? After all, did a wedding hookup even count?

When he finally released me from his embrace, he gave me one final lingering look before turning away with a satisfied smirk on his face and disappearing back into the crowd like nothing ever happened, and I’ll be damned if I didn’t feel like running after him.

As the sky grew dark and my head became fuzzy, I peeled away from the celebration to hit the bathroom.

I was taking a risk going by myself because if that damned fire chief showed his face right now, I’d likely try to kiss him.

Of course, after finishing up and opening the bathroom door I ran right smack into his towering physique. “Oof. Sorry.” I made to move around him, but he grabbed my elbows, pinning me in place.

“Don’t be,” he commanded, looking so gorgeous in his black suit that my breath caught in my throat, bringing about a rarity for me:

It left me speechless.

“Are you okay?” He gently tilted my chin up towards him, and I faked composure as I coughed to clear the silence that had taken over.

At that point, I don't know what came over me, but surely, the glasses of champagne were to blame. I slid my hands toward the crotch of his dress slacks.

"Faith," he cautioned. "You sure you want to go there? Be a shame to cause a scene at your sister's wedding."

"Ugh." I sighed, disappointed I couldn't test the theory that firefighters had the best hoses. There was definitely a big bulge there. I'd seen it from the corner of my eye.

He put his arms on my shoulders, keeping me at arm's length. "I'm happy to go somewhere a little more private with you." He lowered his mouth to my ear and whispered sternly, "If you promise to be a good girl."

Look, normally, I can't stand authority figures, but right there, right then, his nearness was overwhelming, and I longed to dive into him until I forgot about doing things my way for once. I wished he'd show me something only an older man like him could teach me.

I thought fast. "Where did you have in mind?"

"My place," he said, more strict and serious sounding than I'd ever heard him. "Let your sister and Ava know you're leaving. I'll wait for you in the parking lot."

Looking away was impossible, and there was a heat in my core that I couldn't ignore. In all my life, I'd never wanted anyone so badly.

I was delighted to learn he lived in a restored farmhouse, and when I stepped into the living room and the lights flickered on, my jaw dropped at the range of books filling an entire wall. "I didn't realize you read so much," I said, with my hands firmly planted on my hips.

"You never asked," he answered, trailing his fingers down my arm, shattering any pretense that I wasn't lusting after him and fantasizing about the hunger of his kiss. My skin prickled pleasurably beneath his touch, and I gasped.

*More.*

His large hand took my face and cradled it. “You know what I want from you, Faith, and it’s more than just a hookup. But I’m willing to compromise on one condition.”

The sheer shock of him caused a shudder to run through me, and at that point, I’d have agreed to anything he asked. “What’s that?”

“We do this my way,” he declared matter-of-factly.

I tried to suppress a giggle. Damned champagne. “Which way is that?”

Inexplicably, he led me from the foyer to the carpeted room full of books. “Knees. Now.” The order whooshed past his lips, unrelenting and impossible to disobey.

So, he thinks he can tell me what to do? We’ll see about that. I’d give him something he’d never be able to forget. It was lucky for him I loved sucking cock.

We were held captive by the wild hunger that lay between us, an intense lust that burned like fire. It was carnal. Animalistic. The very best kind. “This is your last warning, Faith. Get on your knees.”

Slowly, I reached down to my hem, pulling my bridesmaid dress off and tossing it onto the couch. The way he husked my name afterwards made me glad I’d opted for my best lingerie for the occasion.

My eyes lingered on his face as I unclasped his belt. He merely had to pop the button and unzip his fly, and then his pants were slipping down. A trim trail of brown hair from navel to the top button captivated me, and the bubbly made me bold. His cock sprung free, mouthwatering in its rigid state. I gasped at the size; he was magnificently thick and aroused, glistening with pre-cum. Before I knew it, I was aching to have every inch of him down my throat, desperate for more until it made me choke.

Before I could express my approval aloud, he shoved the crown past my lips and over my tongue. He made hungry sounds at the back of his throat, held himself buried in place, and I curled my tongue around his velvet stiffness.

I wrapped my hand around its throbbing base, licking up and down the entirety of his shaft until it was wet enough, bobbing my head up and down while making counterstrokes with my hand. The friction was just right, and I kept up a tempo that never failed to make guys lose their shit.

In a situation like this, I never questioned whether I belonged. I loved sucking, giving pleasure, making a man lose his mind with my mouth alone, and sometimes when I did it a subtle suspicion crept in, making me wonder if my skill was because of the hyper-focus that accompanied my condition.

Riley's fingers tangled in my hair and tugged until I looked up at him. My eyes were shut tight.

“Open your eyes, Faith.”

I obeyed, and straight away, they crashed into his. There was a hint of awe in his expression and it produced a pang of guilt since there was definitely not going to be a repeat performance. He was too different from any other man I'd met and he gave me the impression it would be impossible to keep him under my thumb.

He might run this show, but he's not running me.

My world suddenly spun, and I desperately worked his cock, pulling at him expertly, a move guaranteed to bring him to his finish.

That's when he really took control. He drove his dick to the back of my throat and held me there before slowly pulling away and shoving himself in again. He kept up that rhythm, knowing just how much to push me so my eyes watered and there was no question who was in charge.

And I forgot everything there was to think about except for serving him, frantic to make him come so I might taste him.

But it was not to be.

He stepped back, leaving my mouth empty and my pussy weeping.

“What's the matter?” I asked.

“Stand up,” he demanded, showing me a side of him I’d never seen before.

Up to now, I found him almost too eager to please. Nearly too polite. Treating me as though I were some precious and fragile thing he wished to place on a shelf to admire.

A perfect gentleman. When what I really wanted was this—so much this.

I did what he asked without question, hoping he’d appreciate my obedience and give me what I needed. Namely, his spectacular cock.

His powerful, well-muscled body moved with an effortless grace that caught me off guard, reaching out and undoing the front clasp of my bra so it snapped open to expose my overly plump and suddenly aching breasts. It was a good thing they couldn’t speak, because the stiff nipples would shout, “Suck me! Pull me! Tug me until it hurts!”

It shocked me to realize he held such power over me. I’d do anything he asked, as long as it meant lessening the unbearable tenderness he had caused. Even if it meant I had to beg.

His eyes were riveted to my chest. Like most men, he didn’t seem to care that they were pudgy and too large, a constant source of embarrassment that never allowed me to walk around without a bra like some lucky girls.

“Those, too.” He pointed at my silk undies and I pushed them to my feet, standing naked before him, looking braver than I felt.

The next moment, he had me embraced in his muscular arms, and effortlessly carried me up the stairs. I assumed he performed the same move many times while rescuing people and the image was so hot.

He tossed me onto the bed, surprising me again with his rough treatment, and tugged his clothes off with urgency. The glory of his naked body made me suck in my breath. Truly, it was a crime to cover those powerfully chiseled muscles, his chest as broad as a bale of hay.

My eyes widened in awe as I took in the shape of him, every inch tan and toned from carrying damsels in distress. I'd never seen someone so fit, so male.

Suddenly, he was on top of me, pinning me down with his weight and strength. His forcefulness sent sparks of excitement through my body as he reached between my legs. "You're so wet, Faith. Let me see if I can't help you pamper that pretty pussy a little more."

The immense bulk of him lowered between my legs, and I missed the way his body had caged me in. I reached out, grasping at his hair, silky and thick.

And that's when he began to use his tongue. Unlike the coarse handling he'd shown me, his tongue landed lightly on my clit, teasing to gauge my response.

I gasped, and fisted his hair, pulling harder to encourage him. His tongue darted around, exploring and pushing me further, before he finally sucked and savored my clit, shoving two large fingers inside to explore, pushing me right up to the brink of orgasm.

He pulled away, and I groaned, frustrated at being so close but not quite there. He chuckled smugly at my dismayed expression. "No need to bare your claws, kitten. I'll give you what you need."

I was so wet, so ready to have him fuck me immediately.

His hands spanned my waist, lifting me up and onto his huge, throbbing cock, manhandling and guiding the entirety of my body with his powerful grip. His erection filled every inch of me, the sensation stripping away everything but my need. It was mind-blowing, the way we fit together, and how, even in my slightly buzzed state, I was suddenly alert, aware of every place he touched me inside.

"Oh, God, Riley. If you don't fuck me now, fuck me hard, I might die." I couldn't stop the words from coming, no matter how much I preferred to keep my control. One night with this man and his magical cock would be enough to last a lifetime.



He pushed forward with long strokes, pumping his beautifully proportioned body above me, filling my view with his undulating and flexing six-pack until I was clawing at his powerful back, trying to get him as far inside me as he could go. He conquered me with powerful thrusts while bouncing my pussy off of him, leaving me breathless and weak with pleasure.

Riley thrust with fervor and my heart pounded with every frenzied movement. Our lips entwined in a passionate kiss as his grip tightened on me, intensifying his deep thrusts. He moved rabidly, smashing our hips together in a thunderous rhythm. I felt every inch of him as he sent my senses spinning out of control. The room filled with the sound of our moans and gasps as we let ourselves be consumed by desire.

“Are you thoroughly indulged, beautiful Faith? Do I live up to your exacting standards?” he teased.

“Yes,” I affirmed in the heat of passion. “Your cock has spoiled me for any other man. It’s so fucking good.”

His every thrust sent jolts of pleasure through me, to the very back of my spine, until I screamed out his name as I came undone beneath him.

My thighs shook from the intensity of it all as he continued to move inside me, his cock searing into me like a burning brand, until finally he, too, let go with a deep growl.

Time stopped during the prolonged after-effects of sexual gratification; the only sounds audible were the beating of our hearts and the panting of our lungs.

This was just a fling. And everybody knew the key to a successful hookup had three steps: find ’em, fuck ‘em, and forget ’em.

That was my story, and I was sticking to it.

# CHAPTER 2

# FAITH

**T**wo weeks later my bestie, Luna whispered, her voice barely audible. “I can only share the strictly confidential information with you in person and dare not discuss it over the phone. Who knows who might be listening? Meet me at our usual place at one p.m.” Her words carried secrets as dark as night itself.

The emergency meeting at The Grind remained vague on the details, with Luna revealing only that she wanted to talk to me about an enticing offer she’d received.

When I walked through the door of the coffee shop, I spotted her—nose buried in a well-loved copy of *Jane Eyre*. It had a cracked spine, and a title rubbed faint from repeated handling.

“Okay, Nancy Drew. Spill it,” I greeted her as I slid into our booth in the café managed by my friend, Ava, and owned by my brother-in-law, Duke, and my sister, Clover.

Luna read so much gothic literature that her head was filled with ancient castles, dark forests, and mysterious figures lurking in the shadows.

These tales were a far cry from the small, rural town we inhabited with its farmers, ranchers, craftspeople, and vintage store merchants. Cloaks and daggers remained in short supply.

Typically, Luna’s latest unsolvable mystery had to do with Gabriel.

The Gabe-enator, as I liked to call him, had been her best friend for years before the two of them gave it a go.

By that, I mean they bonked each other.

Unfortunately, the exchange led to their breakup, not just as bed buddies, but also as friends, and Luna remained love-wary ever since.

I had spent more conversations than I cared to think about discussing the fact that, “His wounds were inked upon the pages of her heart, leaving scars instead of words.” Sometimes it was impossible not to roll my eyes and change the subject any time she brought up his name.

I was over The Gabe-enator.

Way past over.

Unfortunately, that didn’t keep my best friend from constantly analyzing him, as if he were a great literary hero from between the pages of an antique edition of the classics she proudly displayed on the shelves in her studio, each one purchased with hard-earned savings from her job as a library assistant here in Briarville.

But who was I to judge my friend for her fascination with a past love and books she couldn’t afford? I wasn’t any better. My most recent fling with our town’s fire chief at my sister’s wedding was a disaster of immense proportions, but that didn’t keep his voice from echoing around in my skull, saying the words I so longed to hear again, “On your knees.”

*What the hell was wrong with me?*

I didn’t need a man.

Besides, Riley was an old-fashioned guy, much older than me, and couldn’t understand my generation. He’d prefer me barefoot and pregnant.

Ready to fulfill his every command.

We would never work out.

Which is why I had to question the way I kept thinking of his chiseled chest and the intriguing sprinkle of salt-and-pepper that streaked through his hair. I ran my fingers through it that night, pulling him closer for a kiss, and I could still remember the sound of his deep voice growling at me when I

did. I'd enjoyed pretending he was all mine, as Duke belonged to my sister, Clover.

Perhaps Riley was difficult to resist for a certain type of girl, but not for me.

My taste skewed more towards a guy like Jake who understood my need to remain unattached, to explore my sexual desires with more than one man. He entered a polyamorous relationship with me because it's what he required—my complete and utter detachment from any kind of commitment.

We were so well-suited.

Plus, he never went around spewing his alpha male energy in every corner of the room, like a dog marking his territory. Jake had nothing to prove and made it clear by regularly scoffing at gym rats and testosterone-laden males.

It was just that, as much as I wanted to hold Riley in disdain, I had to admire that he earned his muscles not in a den of muscle-bound mayhem, where grown men engaged in a ritual of grunting and groaning, faces contorted as if orgasming, sweat-soaked bodies filling the room with stale stench.

No, Riley's strength resulted from the lives he saved.

I imagined him diving fearlessly into fire which danced and roared. Amidst the billowing smoke and falling debris, in my daydream, my firefighter spotted a frail, elderly woman, cornered and helpless amidst the encroaching flames.

With determination etched on his face, he navigated the treacherous terrain with the agility of a nimble predator. His bulging biceps swung his axe to shatter the obstacles that stood between him and the trapped lady, carving a path to safety.

Honestly earned sweat poured down his forehead, mixing with the ash and grime, his voice firm yet soothing. Then, with swift, gentle movements, he'd carry her through the hazardous maze, navigating past crumbling walls and collapsing ceilings.

While my mind continued to wander, Riley stood tall in my imagination, his strength forged by bravery and compassion, not any desire for a fine physique.

What a physique it was.

*And my God, did he know how to brandish that hose.*

In fact, I should call him soon, we were overdue for a hook-up.

Just one more fling. Nothing more, nothing less.

I remembered how the silver fox stud had plunged his fingers into my hair and pulled. With a firm tug, my neck and back arched in pleasure as he moved inside me.

“Faith!” I jolted back to reality as my bestie’s voice broke through. How many times had she tried to get my attention? I shook off the fog of my lascivious daydream.

She removed her glasses and slowly blinked at me, reminding me of a baby owl. “By the wailing banshees and haunted shadows, I *beseech* thee to hear my words.”

Picking up the glass of water Luna had filled for me at the counter, I thought about how thirsty I’d been lately.

Remembering her phone call, I declared, “Well, you’ve got me hanging on pins and needles here. What’s this mysterious secret you can’t discuss over the phone? Is it about The Gabe-inator?”

Excitement stirred behind her eyes. “Hold thy breath, for I bear news that shall transport us to realms of darkness and intrigue! But don’t you want to order your coffee first?” she asked.

At that point, Ava arrived at our table. “Hey Faith. What can I get for you?” she cocked her left brow at me, her giveaway look. She considered my bestie to be a creature as strange and unsolvable as quantum physics. “You having the usual?”

Normally, I ordered a large iced espresso with extra heavy cream. But right then the very thought of it made me want to

hurl. “I’d better go for something different today. How about a cup of chamomile?”

“By the ghostly whispers of forgotten souls, this takes the cake! You never have tea,” remarked Luna, as Ava gave my bestie an exaggerated eye roll and returned to the counter to fill my order.

“Speaking of tea, you need to spill yours. The suspense is killing me.” I told her. “Especially if it has nothing to do with Gabe.”

“No, it’s not about him,” her shoulders sagged, and she slouched down in the booth, looking defeated, as always, whenever she mentioned his name.

“OK, I give—what is it? What’s all the secrecy about? I’m dying here.” I announced impatiently.

“I received a job offer.” Her mouth pressed into a white line. “Not just any job offer.”

My brows shot skyward. “But what about the library? You love it there.”

“Yes, I know. That’s my conundrum. And I fear the nature of said position is slightly scandalous.”

Over the years, I’d learned a thing or two from her and therefore knew what she wanted to hear in this situation. “By the ghosts of tragic heroines and brooding heroes, my words are true. I swear I won’t tell a soul what you reveal to me.”

Her face ruffled with the gravity of her mood, “I’ve been offered a position to lead the story hour at a very exclusive establishment,” she intoned.

“More exclusive than the library?” I asked, flicking up both my brows at her.

“Not as special, of course. But where the library makes itself available to the public, this establishment only admits a select population of patrons.”

She had my attention.

“Go on,” I urged.

“During my shift, a distinguished gentleman dropped off five boxes of books to donate. All children’s books. After I remarked on their excellent condition, we exchanged words about being life-long learners and the importance of fostering literacy. He then proposed a job offer, asking if I would enjoy working in a place with an abundance of books that required a knowledgeable employee to place orders for more. Naturally, I had inquiries about the details of the job, and he agreed to return another day to satisfy my curiosity. He assured me that if my references checked out, I could help others find solace in literature and cultivate a love of books like mine.”

She put her chin in the cradle of her hands, her whisper laden with excitement. “I’d be free to curate a collection and share my love of reading with a \$500,000 annual budget at my disposal. He asserted it was important his patrons had access to rare and valuable picture books, thus the generous account.”

I angled my body towards hers and asked, “That part sounds good, right? Did he end up coming back?”

“He emailed me a form to fill out for a background check, and between his second visit and the first, I had to sign an extensive non-disclosure agreement outlining the position, and the activities which took place at stated, erm, establishment.” Color touched my friend’s cheeks. “I stated my requirement, which was that he’d let me visit the location with a friend. For safety’s sake. I had to swear by the cobwebs and creaking doors of ancient manors a pledge guaranteeing your trustworthiness. That’s where you come in.” She anchored me with her gaze on mine.

Despite the intrigue, and the liberal book-buying allowance, I struggled to believe my best friend would actually leave her sanctuary, the hallowed halls of the public library. Getting the job had been a dream come true for her. The pay sucked, and I knew she had a hard time making ends meet on the meager salary, but it was still her ultimate vocation.

Luna must have read the astonishment in my expression and pinned her shoulders back. “Mr. Taylor, the owner of the business, made me an offer I’m afraid I can’t refuse.”



“What kind of offer are we talking about here?” The urgent need to pee hit me suddenly. “Just a sec. I need to visit the ladies’ room.” I jabbed a finger upward and admonished, “Hold that thought.”

After releasing a torrential downpour in the toilet which rivaled Niagara Falls, I quickly washed my hands, checked my teeth in the mirror, and decided I didn’t look too shabby. Pulling the heavy unisex bathroom door open to return to Luna, I ran smack dab into the powerful, broad and muscular chest of none other than Riley himself. He wore a black t-shirt which clung to his impressive pecs and made my mouth water.

It was almost impossible to avoid him in this tiny town—the guy I had been desperately trying to forget. He spoke with a deep, assured voice that went straight to my pussy. With a playfully seductive smile, he inquired, “Where’s the fire?” His intense gaze stared down at me from way, way, way above.

“Funny,” I replied, trying not to laugh. Although I didn’t want him to know it, I found his weak attempts at making jokes hilarious.

He tilted his brow, looking at me uncertainly. “What are you up to?”

“I’m with my friend. Why are you here? You keep stalking me every time I need to use a public toilet.”

He refused to take the bait and lounged casually against the door frame, blocking my escape. “Kind of figured on the coffee part. Your friend is the one who told me you were in the restroom, so I thought I’d wait here to talk to you. You’ve been making yourself scarce ever since your sister’s wedding night.”

My cheeks felt as if I stood too near a fire, and I side-eyed him.

Evading his last remark, I babbled, “Well, I don’t think I’ll have coffee. The idea makes me want to hurl today.”

“Problem?” he asked, putting his hand on my shoulder in a possessive gesture so that his ridiculously large biceps bulged out at me in accusation.

Oftentimes his speech was reduced to a series of gruff utterances.

Luna would find it primitive and oddly attractive. Like one of the “brooding and enigmatic” heroes in the books she read.

Jake would comment on the fact that Riley was a walking cliché: tall, silver, handsome, and built with shoulders as wide as a fire truck.

I tore my eyes away from his which were currently gobbling me up. “Anyway, I’ve got to get back. My friend has something important to tell me.” I made as if to step around him, but Riley grabbed my elbow. Gently enough, but his grip was firm, and I couldn’t escape.

In fact, I wasn’t sure I wanted to.

“I don’t know about you, but I can’t stop thinking about our last encounter.” His voice stroked me with its huskiness. “I was hoping you’d do me the honor of accompanying me on a proper date, once and for all.”

Dear lord, now he really sounded like a protagonist on Luna’s bookshelf.

My gaze flitted about the narrow hallway, which led back to safety. “Riley, you know because I’ve told you a million times, I’m not looking for anything long-term or serious.”

“Roger that,” he noted. “What’s long-term or serious about dinner? Everyone eats.”

The warm, spicy smell of him filled the air, and my heart raced with a familiar anticipation. He was so close I could feel the heat radiating from his body. I wanted to run away but I also wanted to stay for just a little while longer. “Let me think about it, will you? My friend’s waiting.”

If I didn’t get away from him soon, I’d do something embarrassing like start humping his leg. I tossed him a bone so he’d let me go. “Why don’t you text me about it?”

He catalogued my assets with his eyes one more time and growled, “I will. Count on it. You better answer this time.”

“Can’t wait,” I offered sarcastically as a parting remark to prove myself immune to his charms.

“Nor can I. And I won’t,” he declared, turning away, picking up his order at the counter, and exiting through the front door of the cafe.

I didn’t feel a bit disappointed to see him go.

*Not one bit.*

Before I got to my table, my phone pinged with a text message from said hose dragger.

**Can’t wait to take you out for a meal. I’m starving, baby. Let me taste that pretty kitty soon.**

I shoved my phone in my purse as if it was a miniature suitcase full of designer drugs, and tried to act innocent when I slid into the booth across from Luna. “Now. Where were we?” I asked.

“I was trying to get your insight and guidance on the matter of working at a sex club. That’s the exclusive establishment of which Mr. Taylor spoke!” She whispered.

I could hardly hear the words, but I read her lips just fine.

I flung my shoulders back. “What gives? Why the hell do they need a children’s library in a sex club? Sounds sketch.”

“I too was wary at first until Mr. Rupert, owner of the club, explained they designed the library for his Ddlg clients. That stands for Daddy dom/little girl. A Daddy dom relationship, he said, is one where a man holds dominance and his partner takes on the role of a submissive ‘little’. He explained that ‘daddy dom’ relationships can take many forms; not all submissives emulate a youthful girl. But the library held books for those little ones who do.”

I considered what all this meant before saying, “Listen, there’s no dilemma here. If the club is as exclusive as you say, there have to be rules and guidelines for clients to ensure customer and employee safety. At any rate, it doesn’t hurt a bit

for you to go check it out. It's not as though you're signing your name on the dotted line. He'll understand your need to interview them as much as they plan to evaluate you as a good fit."

She pulled a slow smile. "You're so practical in matters such as this, more so than I."

I shrugged and remarked offhandedly, "Maybe it's because I'm so worldly compared to you. You've still got your head in the 1800s. They didn't have mutual consent back then, did they?"

"I suppose you're right," she said nodding as she dipped her beak to the cup of Earl Grey tea, her expression reminding me of a tiny, feathered fluff ball again.

I continued to reassure her since she was so often prone to concern. "Don't worry. There's no bad news here. You already have your dream job. If it turns out this is a good fit for you, it's a win-win situation."

I took a swallow of water and Ava came to our table with a plate of complimentary lavender-flavored macaroons, my favorite. She waved the plate under my nose, teasing me before handing it over.

With that, the urge to puke came on strong.

I ran to the bathroom and violently purged the contents of my stomach into the toilet.

# CHAPTER 3

# FAITH

**T**he initial puke into the toilet was kind of scary.

It came on so suddenly, I thought I might hurl on the tiles before reaching the latrine.

Since then, I'd passed seven straight mornings of barfing my guts out.

Then arrived the afternoon, settling my stomach with crackers before eating like a horse.

I inhaled everything in sight like a famished hyena.

When I didn't have the urge to purge, I ate as if I hadn't eaten for weeks.

My bladder had become a water balloon, ready to burst. Even I, the Queen of Denial, could no longer ignore the signs.

Peeing on an early pregnancy stick only confirmed what I already knew.

My fingers quickly summed up that my last period was 25 days ago. Faith's wedding passed three weeks prior. Jake? He'd been in Mexico for two months by then, enjoying the bohemian lifestyle.

Ergo, it could only be the sexy firefighter whose hose had put a bun in my oven.

I was pregnant when I shouldn't have been.

After all—I bowed to no man.

And even though the pee stick revelation was only one week old, having this baby was a foregone conclusion, I thought, placing my hands protectively under my belly where I imagined he or she swimming happily in my womb.

That unforgettable night, when I willingly followed the “daddy’s” orders, was the best sex I ever had.

But that didn’t mean I’d be revealing the news that I was expecting.

Until I could better handle him, I thought it best to keep the baby hush-hush.

No easy task.

No need to seek him out in social gatherings, or steal glimpses of him in our small town. It seemed he was everywhere. His magnetic pull kept me from even thinking about any other man after he’d turned me all compliant and craving his cock at the wedding.

It was so not like me.

And I so,

wanted,

more.

Somehow his demeanor made me want to do as I was told.

And for the first time in my life, I actually liked it.

I checked my reflection in the mirror and admired how my normally untamed red hair fell in loose waves around my shoulders.

The femme, floral, and flowy midi dress with a ruffle-adorned hem was something I’d no longer be able to afford if I were going to be buying diapers soon.

But the sexy innocence, and flirty touch it lent to my appearance was priceless.

As a farmer, overalls were my uniform, and I hadn’t been taken out on an actual date by a real man since...

Why did I keep calling him that in my head?

As if the men my age weren't real.

Where I'd expected arrogance, he showed me only confidence.

I recalled the sultry grin that spread over his features as he undid his belt buckle and pointed to the floor...

The memory of the truly magnificent prize revealed when he unzipped had my clit throbbing in time to the beat of my heart.

My entire bloodstream heated—hot as a jungle summer.

I was playing with fire.

A gut feeling told me if he knew he was the father, he'd take over like he did on the night I couldn't get out of my mind.

A full body flutter quivered through my muscles when I remembered his text about being starved for me.

Hiding my pregnancy entirely wouldn't be right, but I wasn't ready to spill the beans about it just yet.

He turned my entire soul into one, long, sparking electric nerve.

A bundle of lust that held all other partners in disdain simply because they weren't him.

My phone buzzed, making me jump, and I snatched it off the bathroom counter and read the text from Riley:

Are you ready for me?

I was born ready.

Atta girl. Be there in ten.

My sister, Clover, lived her life as if she were some character in a romance novel. No matter what, she kept on living as if all would turn out alright. Usually it did—like



when she fell for my dad's best friend, Duke, and married him. You'd think a family would implode, but ours grew closer from it.

For Clover, everything conspired to work out in her favor.

Me?

Not so much.

Even though I was an apple who fell from the same tree of my parents' happy marriage, long-term commitment looked daunting. Marriage boxed women in, making it harder for them to chase their dreams, and I'd never been able to do things any way but mine.

Just because I was going to be a mom, didn't mean I was ready to jump on the bandwagon of happily ever after.

But did I really have what it took to raise a kid on my own?

I dabbed pink cherry lip gloss on my mouth, and anti-shine powder on my nose. My pulse tapped giddily at my temple in time to the steady throbbing between my legs and I welcomed the distraction.

So long as my vajay was running the show, I didn't obsess about keeping the baby a secret.

A forceful knock kicked my heart into a skittering pitter pat and I gave myself a final peek in the mirror before answering it.

This was it, all systems go.

I flung the door open wide and looked up into his eyes which were at first bright with merriment, and quickly filled with a glint of something like wonder.

A ribbon of pride unfurled in my chest.

I did that to him.

Holding out the skirt of my dress, I mock curtsied and asked, "You like?"

He nodded and the deep timbre of his voice sent shivers down my spine, “There’s my girl.”

“Your girl?” I asked, pretending he didn’t make me all flushed and agitated—obsessed with him doing bad things to my body. “You’re taking a lot for granted, don’t you think?”

“Just stating the facts. But I get it, you can’t be tamed and all that. Luckily, I’m a patient man.” He reached out and tucked an unruly strand of my hair behind one ear, and heat whooshed up my neck.

This guy saw right through me.

The glimpse of his fine ass in black jeans was a sight to behold as he escorted me to his truck. He opened the door and offered a steadying hand as I stepped in.

Honesty and decency surrounded him like a cloud, and I’d never felt safer with a date in my life.

“Made reservations for six thirty. Mind a quick stop along the way?” he asked, which I found surprising. Our last encounter had been all, “I’m in charge and don’t you forget it,” so this courtesy threw me off guard.

“No problem. Where are we going?” I asked.

“You’ll see. This will only take a minute.” He picked my hand off the seat, laying it on his thigh, and grazed his thumb back and forth across my skin.

All week I’d wanted him, and his hand in mine totally captivated me until the truck stopped outside an unfamiliar house.

It was only then I realized the heavy silence between us, and I pulled my hand out of his grip. The intoxicating grin he wore right then was the most salacious and knowing I’d ever seen on a man, and I wanted him to teach me all his wicked secrets.

“This it?” I inquired intelligently, my ability to retrieve actual sentences gone extinct like the Tasmanian Tiger.

He gave a lone nod. “Stay put, princess. There’s something I want to show you.” He lifted an ice chest out of the back of

the pickup and carried it across the street, setting it down only to ring the doorbell. A few moments later he exited the stately house, arms empty, radiating a charisma that could draw the attention of any female still above ground. He was a silver fox, and the distinguished gray only added to his rugged good looks. My eyes latched onto him, his every move baiting my sexed-up body.

He held the front of his sports coat closed, and a curious sight caught my eye—a subtle movement beneath the fabric. My curiosity piqued, I leaned forward slightly to get a better view. To my surprise, he opened his jacket to reveal a golden lab puppy snuggled against his chest. It melted my heart instantly.

A tender smile crept across his face as he gently stroked the puppy's fur. I smiled, enchanted by the unexpected glimpse into this alpha male's softer side. "You wanna' pet him?" he questioned.

Holding out both hands, I uttered, "Oh my goodness. Who's is he?"

"We found him and four of his brothers and sisters in a deserted warehouse that caught fire in the industrial area. Someone must have dumped them there. I brought some food to the foster mom taking care of them until we find them homes."

"We?" Unexpectedly, envy twisted my stomach into knots, wondering who this woman was to Riley, and yes, I knew I was being ridiculous. I just couldn't help it.

He completely disarmed me by placing the warm bundle of fur against my chest, "Hold him tight now. Otherwise, his startle reflex will kick in. He needs to feel secure against your body."

This man turned my thoughts to complete mush with pent-up sexual arousal, and I was more agitated than normal hearing the intoxicating combination of his protective and somehow paternal words.

The smell of puppy made me even more drunk on hormones and motherly instincts when I held him close and he licked my chin. “Isn’t he the sweetest little thing?” I cast a smile towards Riley, and his sky-blue eyes bathed me in a splash of possessive lust.

“Not the sweetest,” he said, and the shock of him ran through my body. “Not by a long shot.”

That was definitely the first time anyone, let alone a man, had compared me to the delightful taste of sugar. His smile widened and he almost made me believe it.

“Do we have to give him back?” I pleaded, marveling at the tenderness he showed towards the little pup when he took him from my arms.

I watched him return to the front porch of the foster home, not missing the assessing gaze the woman inside gave the passenger in his truck.

This side of him stirred a curiosity within me, a desire to unravel the complexities that lay beneath his dominating exterior and discover the secrets like puppies and a generous heart.

No indifference could be mustered in the face of his big-dick energy and gentle tone with the baby dog. It made me uneasy and something throbbed beneath my rib cage.

The ache lingered throughout the meal.

“Dessert?” he asked when we were finished with our mains.

I shifted in my seat, self-conscious about the ribs, corn on the cob, fries, and green beans I’d plowed through already.

My toes tapped their own rhythm on the wooden floor of Blaze’s T-bone where he’d reserved us a table with a view of the bay, and I avoided his stare while biting my lip. “Mm.” I hummed, noncommittally.

He slid the dessert menu towards me across the table and commanded, “Young lady, eat. Don’t pretend you’re not still

hungry for my sake. I happen to like watching you put things in your mouth.”

My jaw dropped, and shock caused the words to wedge in my throat. The reaction was pretty out of the blue, given I was carrying this man’s child. But his playful teasing and flirty banter had kept the date fun and lighthearted in a way that was different from any other guy I’d been with, and he’d caught me off guard.

The server took my chocolate mousse order; apple pie and ice cream for Riley, and while we waited, he continued his thoughtful line of questioning, “Alright, rebel without a cause, spill it—who hurt you and sent you down your life-long path of defiance?”

I coughed up the water I was sipping and set it down with a thunk on the table. “What on earth are you talking about?”

“Look, don’t get me wrong. I’m a fan of brats with attitude, otherwise I’d never have asked you on a date. In addition, I asked around town about you.”

“Hold on, Sherlock. Just exactly what did your gossip spree tell you about little ole me?” I demanded to know, lifting my chin and meeting his gaze straight on.

He began listing his discoveries, counting them out on his long fingers, “Love ’em and leave ’em, that’s your motto. You’re all about living in the now. And above all, monogamy’s not your thing.” He reached out with a hand and twirled then tugged a strand of my hair that had fallen from where I’d shoved it behind my ear. “But from here on out, angel, you’re my one and only. And I’m yours. No other men. Not while you’re with me.” Without hesitation, he picked up my spoon and scraped the rest of my mousse out of its bowl, and slid the delicious dessert past my lips. “Do I make myself clear?”

It was the chocolate coma, or the sex spell he cast over me... no argument came.

I didn’t resist this man who wanted to claim me as his alone.

All I could do was nod silently as a new and unexpected warmth surged through me, pooling, of course, at my pussy.

“That’s my girl. Now let me take you home.”

Great, just great.

I was twenty-seven years old, knocked up, and about to bob on the knob of the very same stud who got me that way in the first place.

# CHAPTER 4

# RILEY

**A**fter our date, Faith let me into her duplex and once inside, I kept my hand on her shoulder in a possessive gesture. “Don’t believe everything you hear about firefighters,” I enlightened, wanting her to know more of the real me than I’d shown any other woman before. I felt compelled to share more than what she saw on the surface.

She’d let me into her modest duplex, which was decorated in what she told me was “Bohemian” style. Her sister helped. It looked like a scene out of Morocco instead of Briarville. It wasn’t the first time I admired the easy connection the two young women shared. Against all odds, they were even succeeding at mixing blood and business, no straightforward task.

“How do you mean?” I realized she was talking to me and had to remind myself to focus. “I can’t say I know a lot about your profession. You must have a hero complex. Thank goodness, otherwise no one would get rescued.” Her nose wrinkled up when she teased me and I found it adorable.

An eruption of pink suffused her cheeks when I ate her up with my eyes, and it took all my strength not to shove her onto the carpet and snarl, “Wrap those pretty lips around my dick and pull like you’re sucking thick milkshake through a straw.”

My inner-dom wanted to cross the line as per usual.

And with Faith, it was even harder to reel it in.

I imagined her lightly scraping my balls with her short fingernails, which were painted lime green to match her eye



shadow.

My fingers squeezed into fists—a bad sign. A man didn't get to be fire chief without learning to resist temptation. Overcoming the urge to run every time he heard glass shattering and the crackling of flames engulfing a building. Holding out against hiding in a corner instead of running toward the smell of burning flesh in a collapsed structure with people trapped inside.

Faith was a weakness I couldn't keep at arm's length. A memory that would never leave me.

At night I was haunted by her cries when I sent her over the edge. Her fingers firmly around me, tugging as she sucked.

I needed her closer.

Close as I could get.

Inside her.

The only way to ease this yearning was by being inside her.

Not just physically.

Though it was impossible to ignore how hard she made me, I longed for something beyond our surface-level interactions.

*What were we discussing?*

I replied after the uneasy quiet, “We're no different from anyone else. Like Emerson said, ‘A hero is no braver than an ordinary man, but he is brave five minutes longer.’”

Her questioning gaze searched mine, then she remarked, “You sell yourself short, too. I thought I was the only one!”

She almost never showed vulnerability, so I encouraged her. “You usually seem so confident.” Although I found her fascinating, I cut my words off, leaving myself wanting to say more. She had a tendency to push people away when they tried to get close, as she'd done with me for months leading up to her sister's wedding.

Letting that schmuck, Jake, cozy up to her instead. My hands curled into fists of their own will.

A wrinkle cut across the expanse of her forehead, and she twirled a strand of her thick hair around one finger, biting her bottom lip so that all the blood rocketed straight to my cock, bringing on a sudden brain block.

Thinking was now beyond the bounds of possibility.

Thankfully, she found her tongue. “I love the business Clover and I built, but sometimes I wonder if farming is really my higher calling. I mean, making ‘Udderly Fabulous Bath Bubbles’ is great and all, but it’s nothing like what you do. Saving lives every day.”

I grabbed her hand where it rested on the couch beside mine. “Close your eyes, angel,” I said, no longer able to refuse her pull, and scented a trail up her neck with my nose. She smelled delicious, and I couldn’t resist a taste, not when I was so close to her.

I sucked the soft flesh of her earlobe into my mouth, and was rewarded by the sound of her gasp.

Despite her dramatic eyeliner, and the deep berry shade on her lips, she was all wide-eyed innocence in my eyes.

I’d teach her things that made Jake the Flake look like a one-trick pony in a field of thoroughbreds.

I told myself longing filled her gaze, but that could be pure fantasy.

Hence my next command, “Tell me what you want.”

I didn’t even think of drawing air into my lungs until I realized I’d been holding my breath, waiting for her to respond.

Perhaps it was that my presence overwhelmed her and shoved all rational thought out of her mind, as she did to me.

“The truth, Faith”—another nibble on her ear, using the opportunity to inhale her scent which was something indefinable and exquisite—“or I stop now and we talk about goat soap.”

A giggle burst from her lips, and I crushed it immediately, gripping her gaze with mine.

She needed to know I was serious.

“Go on.” I picked up one of her hands to reassure her. “Tell Daddy what you need.”

There was a sharp intake of breath from her. She met my questioning look, and the column of her neck lurched with a hard swallow. “Daddy?” A single word, its emotional weight heavier than the solid oak table that sat in the corner of the room. She cleared her throat and shifted her eyes from mine.

“Speak up, Faith. I promise to respect whatever you share with me.” My voice was rough as rock, and my heartbeat went haywire.

“How did you know?” she asked, fidgeting with the belt of her dress. “Did I accidentally give something away?” Her question ended in a slight croak.

“Don’t disobey me. If it helps, close your eyes when you say it, but rule number one is tell me what you want. Otherwise, how can I possibly make it yours?”

Desire took possession of my limbs and my hand moved of its own accord, dragging hers along with it. I came to the half-apple shape of her breast, and covered it with my palm, trapping hers there as well, loving the way her chest rose and fell rapidly beneath our hold.

I could see the lust in her eyes, the way she stared at my lips, and then my eyes. The way her tongue slid over her plump bottom lip.

“You need a daddy more than any woman I’ve ever met, and I’m just the man to be yours.” It took all my strength not to press her down on the cushions of the couch, but like I mentioned earlier, I craved more than a one-night stand with this intoxicating female.

I needed to dominate her.

Discipline her.

Reward her when she was good.

Her every move, every whisper, ignited a fire within me.

Then she mentioned the thing which slayed me, “I... I want you to put your big hand here.” She cupped her pelvic mound and showed me exactly where. The sight of her doing so made my dick ache to be inside her. “It’s even hotter than usual, because you said you wanted to be my daddy. Like you forced me to go into heat, just by saying that word.”

“What else, princess? Tell me all your secrets.” The words came out as a jagged whisper on my tongue.

She leaned forward and released a breathy laugh, hot against my ear. “I need you to put your hand inside my panties and memorize all the places that you make me hunger for your cock. Stroke and pet them, slide inside with your fingers...”

I covered her mouth, “Have you been a good girl since the last time we were together like this, or have you been showing other men what’s mine?” I hated the way jealousy gnawed at me, but the mere thought of her in the arms of another fueled a burning need to claim her, to make clear she belonged to me alone. “Don’t lie to me, Faith.”

A scowl tugged at the corners of my lips, and again, my fists clenched involuntarily. My insides were a volatile mixture of anger and a gnawing ache. Thinking of her with someone else stabbed at my chest, and an unbearable surge of possessiveness hit me.

I shot out my hand and used her nape like a lever, pressing down on it until it forced her to bend her body downward, the motion awkward and totally out of place at the moment. Especially since we hadn’t even discussed consent.

Defined the rules of our engagement.

I knew somewhere in my alleged mind that I was going about this all wrong, deftly manipulating her lithe, irresistible shape until she lay across my lap, my granite-hard cock wedging itself insistently into her side.

I drew myself up short, realizing this had gotten out of hand.

Her shoulder blades were stiff, locked together, and surprise or resistance constricted the defined muscles of her back.

Her ribs rose in a steady rhythm.

Panting.

My blood came all at once in a whoosh, buffeting my eardrums.

That night, Faith vowed, “No, Daddy. I haven’t let anyone touch me there but you. I promise.”

I learned desire has a flavor.

Caramel.

Chocolate.

Bittersweet like grapefruit.

And I was about to make her my fucking banquet.

# CHAPTER 5

# FAITH

**D**id I really just call him “daddy”? I wondered while lying over his lap.

I found it hard to focus. It must be pregnancy making me so shook for this man.

The resonant rumble of his voice stirred my senses. “That’s my good, fucking girl,” he purred. His deep notes captivated me like no other man ever could.

I argued with myself. Maybe it was the hormones that made me need him to park his big fire truck in my little garage.

But inside, I knew better.

His voice brought me back to the matter at hand, namely his hand on my ass.

“I want you to pick a safe word, so you have a way out if things get too intense. Everything has to be consensual between us. Even when I’m forcing you.”

Forcing me?

He said it as if it were a foregone conclusion.

The idea made my heart hammer foolishly.

Why was the idea of him taking me by force so very hot?

Suddenly it came to me. I knew exactly what I’d say if I wanted him to stop our play. “Free Bird. I hate that fucking song.” It was Jake’s favorite, and I was this many years old

when I realized that the mere thought of my polyamorous, noncommittal bed buddy was enough to extinguish my lust.

The song title was the perfect phrase for a safe word.

“Good girl.” Riley’s hand slid down the slope of my buttocks, still covered in thin satin, and he sensually plunged his fingers between my legs, stopping directly over my thrumming clit.

They rested on the spot as if it were an overnight parking place. Meanwhile, my neediness for his cock was edgily growing to gargantuan proportions.

“You ready for your spanking?” he purred.

Riley hurled out what I’d been too scared to ask for.

Not prepared to lay myself bare, I braced myself.

It wasn’t on my radar to be vulnerable.

The possibility of being laughed at for my singular needs, and then having them dismissed, kept me from sharing my undisclosed desires.

My skin tingled as Riley’s palm circled my bottom. I desperately tried to keep my hips still, but the sensations were too much. The hip-hop beat between my legs pounded harder with each passing second. “Ah, ah, ah.” His voice was a perfect mix of tenderness and authority. At school I never paid attention, but when I was around Riley everything felt different. His very presence forced me to stay in the moment.

The way he moved, the way he dominated the room and filled it with something extraordinary drew me. I wished to learn more about him, and everything he could teach me.

Slap!

The contact with my bottom startled me, and I sucked in my breath.

Then came the delicious sting.

He grasped me tightly, commanding my attention. His hard swat electrified my body, sending a wave of pleasure through



every part of me. I could feel my core throbbing uncontrollably, begging for release. All my focus was on him.

Riley's question made my body go all shivery. "Did your spanking feel good, baby?" How did the same man who I'd once found so exacerbating now feed me all the phrases I needed to hear?

A hum of satisfaction slipped through my lips remembering how he trained me in the forbidden ways of pleasure. "Mm."

"Keep those luscious legs open for me." I didn't listen immediately, and his reprimand caused me to realize my mistake. "When I tell you to do something, princess, I expect you to obey." He slapped my ass again, plenty strong this time. "Clear?"

The silence filling the air between us made it impossible to hear anything else.

"Yes, Sir." I said half in jest, trying out the role of submission as a joke, not truly revealing how I longed to yield to him.

To surrender.

"Not 'Sir'. I'm your Daddy. The man who's going to take care of you."

I understood he meant look after my sexual needs, and judging from the wetness down below, my pussy quite liked the idea. But I couldn't help but pretend he meant he'd take care of me.

Defend me.

Protect our baby.

The heartbeat between my legs thudded faster.

And that's when he rained down five more rapid-fire swats on my ass. My attempts to wriggle away were futile, trapped as I was by the steel band of his forearm resting on my lower back.

I craned my neck to see him, and the grin that sprang across his lips showed me he was enjoying this at least as much as me.

“You ready to listen to now?” His eyebrows raised inquiringly.

I plunged on carelessly, not wanting to reveal how startled I was by the smoldering flame in his pupils.

The expression sent my spirits soaring, unfamiliar as it was. No man had ever looked at me that way before. His eyes sparkled with admiration and a fierce protectiveness that made me feel as if I was the only person in the world he wanted to be near. As if he could have all the other women in the world lined up in a row, and still, he’d choose me. As if he might murder another man who dared to look at me. He stared at me like he wouldn’t hesitate to fight for my honor, as if he might murder another man who dared to look at me.

The words ripped at my throat because it pained me to express them. Even with his baby blue eyes seemingly sincere, I struggled to believe him. “You’re not my daddy. That’s not what this is and you know it. Besides, I’ve always been bad at following the rules.”

My stomach tightened as his gaze stung my skin, almost burning through me.

He seemed to dare me to take back my words, and when he slowly trailed his fingers along my spine I suppressed a sigh, letting him soothe me.

“I may not be aware of all your finer details... but I’m experienced enough to recognize a woman who captures a man’s heart in the blink of an eye and stays with him forever. You’re funny, quirky, and smart. You throw yourself into whatever project is in front of you, whether it’s fertilizing a tomato plant or milking your goats.” Warmth rushed through me when he said, “You feel like sunshine to me.”

As he talked, happiness bubbled inside, but a nagging sense of guilt tried to spoil it. I really should tell him.

“Your mouth is so perfect. Just thinking of it gets me hard. Whenever you speak, I get this incredible urge to smother you with kisses. You’re so deliciously rebellious. I want you to be my submissive. You’ll comply with my rules and trust that I’ll protect you at all costs, bring you coffee in bed, wrap my arms around you and let you know it’s okay.”

I turned my head to give him the side eye. He quirked an eyebrow at me and said, “You don’t have to believe it yet, Faith. I plan on spending as long as it takes to convince you. One spank at a time.”

I nervously nibbled on my lip, looking away from his intimidating gaze. There was no escaping his scrutiny when he studied me, as if he could read the secrets that I kept. I felt exposed in his presence, and I had plenty to hide in the daddy department.

No one would guess it, but I was a submissive who needed a man who took control and knew how to punish me when I misbehaved.

The vibe I gave off didn’t exactly encourage a guy to be my caregiver. One who dominated and disciplined me.

No. I was too iron-willed and unruly to encourage that.

This fantasy of mine had only played out in books.

But man, oh man, did I want Riley to be my daddy.

As he rubbed gentle circles on my backside, tingles spread all over my body. “You’ve got no idea what you’re getting yourself into, bub,” I said with a mischievous smile. Peering up at him, I raised a brow skeptically. “I’m forgetful, impulsive, and get bored easily. Always have been.” Humor was my shield. I’d learned to make fun of myself before anyone else did. I grappled with wanting to share that because of my ADHD. Every day felt like I was two kids in a trench coat, faking it and struggling to do adult tasks. Both kids were perpetually on edge and in need of a nap.

He chuckled deeply, and his eyes sparkled with heat as he replied, “I’ve never been one to cower and run away from a challenge. You’re a challenge worth fighting for, princess.” He

stroked the length of my hair while pondering, “And you better damn well bet that I’ll fight for you.”

Riley’s remarks blanketed the room in a comforting layer of reassurance. “Your achievements are even more impressive if your claims are accurate.” Pride bubbled within me..

“Can I ask you something?” he asked.

“Okay,” I said, having to battle my worry that there was no man who could understand or accommodate my challenges.

“Allow me to be your daddy, angel,” He breathed. “Let me provide you with the structure, guidance, and stability you need.”

Boy did I ever need it.

I nodded. Yet, I knew my performance wouldn’t satisfy him. As if he could tell what I was thinking, he continued. “Let’s agree on one rule right here and right now. You are beautiful, you are intelligent, and you won’t ever say otherwise. If you do, there will be consequences. Agreed?”

The very thought of those “consequences” caused waves of desire to course through me so intensely that it throbbed in my veins. I was breathless with need and barely found the air to whisper. “Yes, Daddy.”

In this prone position, his strong thighs dug into my belly, the undeniable hardness of his arousal thrust into my side. With all my most vulnerable places on display for him, albeit beneath the thin protection of my dress, I felt thoroughly in my element. Even though he’d caught me totally off guard telling me to call him Daddy.

The nickname was nothing compared to his hot hand which carefully lifted my skirt up over my ass, sliding over the fabric of my underwear, squeezing first one cheek and then the next.

We’d done the deed, now I had to cope with the consequences, a small life growing inside me.

Oh God, I had to break the news to him.

Riley's voice dropped a notch, "Tell me the truth, Faith. Why is it you stopped your winning streak of polyamory all of a sudden?" He slowly squeezed my aching clit between forefinger and thumb. It was torture and everything I needed all at once.

"Lie to me and I'll spank your bottom," he added.

# CHAPTER 6

# FAITH

“ I didn’t need any other man touching me. Not after how you satisfied me that night. No other guy comes close to the way you make me feel. I want you to be the boss of me.” Riley’s hand curled around the base of my neck, rigid, restraining me.

I threw gasoline on his fire and shocked myself by saying those words. Mostly because I actually meant them.

He teased me with his touch, sliding his fingers expertly around my clit, gripping it lightly through the flimsy fabric of my undies and giving it a tug, squeezing enough to make a sweet ache start up in my belly. “I’m so proud of you, baby girl. You know what you would have gotten if you allowed another man anywhere near my prize, don’t you?”

He stroked the very reward he referred to, and my voice broke. “You would have been angry?”

His fierce tone filled my room. “And why is that, Faith?”

I wriggled on his thighs, wanting to torment him as much as he was teasing me, and bumped my hip into his rigid shaft.

Hoping he’d take the freaking hint, I widened my thighs and breathed, “Because I was a bad girl?” My words tumbled out. “Letting someone else touch what’s yours. Letting him do all the naughty things...spanking my bottom while I sucked his cock.”

With no advance notice, he snatched up the spill of my hair and tugged upward, arching my neck so my eyes fixated on the ceiling. His erection grew harder and the heat between my

legs could melt a glacier when he spoke, breath ragged, “And what happens to bad girls?”

The speech came naturally, as if I’d been playing this role my entire life. “They get punished, Daddy. So they remember their rules.”

Nothing ever felt so true as this, except for the way I knew I’d keep my baby the second I found out I was pregnant.

No matter what.

Even if alone.

Work-life balance?

I’d make it work as a working mom.

Sleep deprivation?

Week-long stretches with no rest?

Breadwinner role? Sure, why not.

Luckily, my parents would help babysit. Clover and Luna would keep me sane through potty training, tantrums, and the first days of school.

Riley’s statement yanked my head out of the clouds. It held a warning that should have scared me. “You remember that.”

His bulging biceps were sculpted by carrying heavy fire hoses, rope, and rigging gear, and they were about to become the driving force behind his playing patty cake with my ass.

Anticipating the spanking I desired, I thrust my bottom up.

“This is for your own benefit. A reminder of who you belong to—should you ever forget,” he snarled.

Without warning, his blow landed heavily on my bottom and I yelped in surprise, “Son of a bitch!”

He expressed every word in tempo to his alternating swats to my butt cheeks, “When you are out in the world, being little Ms. Bad Ass, you might get away with swearing. But not with Daddy. Clear, pretty girl?”

I swallowed hard, looked over my shoulder at him, and boldly met his gaze. “You’ve got to be fucking kidding me.



I'm not a child. You're not my real Daddy. We're just fooling around."

He began swatting me again, peppering my butt harder, coming to a halt only once to inquire, "Safe word?"

I grit my teeth and said, "As if I'd give you the satisfaction."

He pinned my wrists to my lower back, making it impossible to escape. But when he spanked me forcefully and fast, swinging upwards to land on the tender underside of my butt cheek, I started kicking to get away from the pain.

Riley stopped, asking, "Had enough?"

Instead of being angry, my skin was tingling everywhere and a passionate fluttering arose at my nape.

His punishment made me want him more, not less.

"I'll take your silence for a yes. Don't curse again unless you're begging me to fuck your perfect pussy. That kind of dirty talk is allowed."

He cupped the place he called "perfect" and remarked, "So wet, aren't you? You've soaked your panties through. Does Daddy's discipline excite you, sweet Faith?" His voice was feral, and although no one else ever referred to me as "sweet" and meant it, his saying so made my belly flip.

After his stinging swats were over, my nipples ached for his mouth and my clit throbbed.

It needed the healing only his cock could deliver.

My admission came hard. "Yes." I inhaled a shuddery breath. "It does."

"That's excellent, princess. Because I've thought of doing so non-stop since the last time we were together." He used his thumb and pointer finger to give my clit a squeeze and moved to tuck his other hand beneath the elastic on the back, sliding it inside. "You did such a good job using your words, letting me know my spanking arouses you. I think you've earned a reward."

My lungs locked up.

His palm slid where I needed him, and I was drenching his fingers, but there was no chance to be embarrassed. His other hand held the heavy weight of my breast, palming it gently at first, then rubbed rougher against my sensitized flesh, locating my nipple and tugging, causing me to writhe against his hand.

He was inherently dominant, bossy, and kinky as fuck.

He played my body like a fiddle.

I wanted to show him I could hold my own in the sex department.

But before I could think of anything clever to say, he plunged two fingers inside me, overwhelming my senses and making me crave more. He thrust inside, arousing me beyond thought. Every nerve was alive with pleasure and anticipation of his gorgeous cock doing the same. He pulled out again, using my wetness to slide circles all over my sensitive clit, then rubbing expertly over its surface.

He increased his pace until needy, tortured moans squeezed past my lips. “Oh God, I need...”

His voice was crisp and clear, as though undiluted by the same liquid lust that coated my total body. “That’s my girl. So perfect.” He slipped his fingers back and expertly fucked me harder, making me see stars. “You’re daddy’s dirty fucking princess, aren’t you?”

It was all I could do to moan his name, when what I really wanted to say was how badly I craved his cock. Let him know fantasies of being on my knees for him consumed me constantly since we were together.

No matter how much I should keep my distance, play it cool, every minute I spent with Riley forced me to need him a bit more.

He controlled me from the inside, same as when he mastered me with his huge dick after my sister’s wedding and sought out the ridged special place I can only find with a toy— if it’s the right time of the month. He made a come here

movement with his fingers, beckoning me to explode all over them, and I was a hair's breadth away.

“That’s it, breathe baby. You’re doing so well.” The pad of his thumb found its way to my clit, and I chased my release, pumping forward and seeking the pressure of his largest digit.

“I love how needy you are for me, how your pussy chases after my hand. You’re going to cum all over Daddy, aren’t you? Cream all over Daddy’s fingers like a good girl, now.” His throaty rumble sounded nearly as desperate as I felt, and my thighs clenched his wrist, as he kept thrusting and setting off a blinding heat in me.

“Daddy,” I whined. “I’m g-going to...”

“Don’t be shy. Let me watch you squirt, beautiful. Give me all your cum, little girl. Give it to me or I’ll spank it out of you.” His direction drove me over the edge and I came so strong I shrieked, too blissed out to care about the gush of liquid he’d stroked out of me.

I savored the moment, lost in a contented haze that caused its passing to go unnoticed.

Riley pulled me into a sitting position on his lap, his erection undeniable.

“Is that what you needed baby girl?” he whispered. “You’ll forget your own name after Daddy’s done fucking you tonight.”

# CHAPTER 7

# RILEY

**F**aith sat on my lap, and from my vantage point, the round swell of her breasts tempted me to suck, bite, and make my mark.

I mentally flipped through the other sexual experiences with women in my life and wondered if they'd been utterly pointless.

None of them compared to being with her.

I pulled her into a sitting position on my lap, petting her hair while she came down off her climax. My dick jabbed insistently at her hip.

Trailing my fingers down to her breast, I clasped the tip of her nipple through her dress, squeezing, tugging, twisting until she pumped her pelvis at me and pleaded, "Oh, God. Please. I need you inside me, Riley. Let me ride your cock."

What man wouldn't fulfill her needs when she begged so prettily?

"Take your clothes off first." I demanded.

Her cheeks lit up with a pink flush that made me stiffen further.

She grabbed the hem of her dress and slowly slid it up her body. I stared in awe as her toned figure was revealed inch by glorious inch. Her plump, pert breasts and rosy nipples stood out against her pale skin. I wanted to kiss every bit of her and make her mine for good.

Faith continued to work off her clothes, painstakingly spun around, and tossed them at me. I watched in captivated silence as she trailed her hands down her curves until she reached the waistband of her panties. With a little teasing, she bent over and let them drop to the floor, feeding my hunger by letting me see the perfect pout of her wet lips from behind. It took all my self-control not to stand up, grab her hips, and thrust inside.

“That’s my good fucking girl,” I murmured, barely able to contain myself at the sight of her.

Faith called me “Daddy”, but I’d bet money she had no idea how seriously I needed to claim her. Given the way she so blatantly avoided monogamy, if she knew I was determined to possess her, she’d start looking for the door.

She was with me always. I felt a profound connection even when we were apart, and that single fact would make her bolt like lightning.

Younger than I, she likely hadn’t realized the special bond between us. But I had plenty of time to show her.

Oh, Jesus wept.

My mind came to, and she stood before me. Her fingers slid down my stomach towards my waist. With a tug, she quickly unzipped me and whispered, “Your turn, Daddy”. I quickly undressed, then reclined on the bed so she could straddle me. Her hands moved to the base of my jutting cock and wrung out a generous spill of pre-cum.

“Please. Fuck my pussy,” she whimpered.

Her plea pulled a groan from me, and I positioned her so my erection notched at the junction of her thighs.

I wrapped my hand around her throat. “Not until I say so.” I gently squeezed. “Tell me how turned on you are.”

Adorably, a blush stained her cheeks. My pretty girl wasn’t used to begging anyone. I moved her hand away, gripping my hard-on and rubbing the tip back and forth across her clit. “How bad do you want it?”

She pouted slightly while considering what to say, then slid her palm down her thighs, splitting open her lips so I had a perfect view of her swollen clit. “Is this yours? Are you going to take control of me?” she asked.

A snarl ripped from my throat. “Daddy’s about to pound that tight pussy until she milks out every ounce of my cum.”

Grabbing her by the hips, I set her atop my cock and shoved into her slowly, giving her a chance to stretch around my width. “How badly do you need to be fucked, princess?”

Her eyes clouded in a sexual haze. “So bad, it seems like forever since the last time. I missed your big cock. Fuck me hard with it.”

“That’s my girl,” I said, gripping her hips, lifting her up and down as I jack-hammered into her from below, jabbing my dick into her tight sheath. “There you go,” I whispered against her nipple, voice husky, lips brushing, tongue suckling. “Take what you need.”

As my length speared her, she purred like a kitten. “I love when you grind your cock into me.”

I gripped the ample flesh of her ass for leverage and rammed my relentless thrusts into her. “God, you feel so good. You look so beautiful when you’re taking me. Come all over me.”

Our dirty talk pushed me toward the ledge. I clamped my tongue between my teeth to hold back my orgasm, but it wasn’t easy. Her gorgeous breasts bouncing with each of my savage thrusts was too much.

Suddenly, Faith’s pleasure rippled through her, squeezing and milking me. I encouraged her, “Just like that, beautiful.”

“Oh, Daddy! I’m coming on you!” she cried.

“You ride me like a goddess.” I screwed up in an intoxicating mixture of desire and anguish, chasing release. “My girl. Take it.” I poured my seed into her and my body quaked as I babbled unintelligently, unable to keep the words from spilling past my lips. “Going to put a baby in this belly—make you mine for real. I’ll worship that pretty round stomach

of yours and make you my queen. Here it comes.” I bucked beneath her as scalding cum shot into her. She drained me of every drop as I held her in place. My groan ended in a roar, so intense was the orgasm she wrung out of me.

I expected her to be worn out from our lovemaking, limp as a noodle. Instead, she lay on top of me while I pet her hair, her body slightly stiff and she kept herself in a rigid pose instead of relaxing on my chest.

Dammit.

I had to blow this night by sharing my thoughts too soon. I had no intention of voicing them, but they escaped before I could contain them

Faith’s eyes widened, and her bottom lip quivered. I should have known giving away my true feelings about claiming her forever, no matter how real they were, would freak her the fuck out. She wasn’t ready for that type of commitment, so I should have kept my intentions to myself.

“Is that what you needed, baby girl?” I asked, taking her face in my hand and cradling it.

“Mm. Exactly,” she breathed.

“Where are your washcloths? Stay here and I’ll get you a warm one.”

A smile flickered on her lips. “You know, for a big, bad Dom, you sure are sweet.”

My mouth brushed her flushed cheek, and I told her, “Keep it to yourself, would you? I have my tough guy reputation to live up to.”

Her smile broadened and she gestured. “That way. The washcloths are in the cupboard down the hall. Bathroom’s the last door right.”

I loved us like this.

Domestic.

Familiar.

And I’d prove to Faith I was in it for the long run.



I made a quick stop to relieve my bladder, rinse off, and shook my head seeing her waste bin overflowing onto the floor.

I'd take it out for her as soon as I delivered her washcloth.

"Here you go, sweet cheeks." I handed her the washrag and asked, "Where do I empty your bathroom trash? It's spilling over."

She replied feebly. "There's no need, Riley."

"I insist," I urged.

Her shoulders bobbed. "Through the kitchen and out the door. Gray container."

I pulled on my jeans and ducked out, lifted the lid of the garbage can next to the garage, and emptied the contents into the larger container.

Glancing down, my heart vaulted in my chest and the ridge of my backbone shot straight.

What the fuck?

Perched on the pile, the stinging evidence of the hidden truth, a white piece of plastic, with two distinct pink lines, one bolder than the other.

Someone had some explaining to do.

Carefully, I took the positive pregnancy test result between my fingers and marched back inside.

With a forceful flick, I sent it sailing onto the bed where Faith was lounging, my tone razor-sharp as I commanded, "Enough games. Start talking."

# CHAPTER 8

# RILEY

**S**he lay there, looking stubbornly beautiful, keeping her secrets, while I was about to lose my shit.

Some small, functioning part of my frontal lobe, the bit in charge of reason that you might say I'd made inoperable due to smoke exposure, recognized that I was going about it all the wrong way.

I wasn't pissed because she was pregnant.

The problem was she kept it from me.

So independent. Could she ever rely on me? Need me like I needed her?

How was I supposed to offer her my help if she wouldn't take it?

Fear of scaring her away almost matched the dread of failing to save someone from a burning building. I softened my voice.

"Faith? Is this really happening? Are we going to have a baby?" I parked myself on the bed beside her, stroked her leg, and angled my body towards hers.

"We?" As she sat up, her lashes flipped full-open, eyebrows jogging up her forehead. Her arms crossed over her chest, and she continued, "Last time I checked, men weren't capable of shoving out a baby the size of a watermelon."

Amusement rippled in my abdomen as I thought of what to say next. We'd had a fling, no commitments made. What if the

child wasn't mine? I mentally backed away from the thought, not trusting my reaction if I found out it was someone else's.

But I wanted so much more from her.

I craved it all.

But now wasn't the time to unleash the beast.

I gently brushed aside her hair and kissed her forehead.

Her nature was one that required discipline and rules. All of that would have to wait until the matter of that pregnancy test was resolved.

"I need you to be real with me for a minute. You can go back to bratting after we finish this conversation. Not before." I speared a hand through my hair, knowing I had to proceed carefully.

No matter how hard I attempted to remain calm this was heavy stuff.

God help me if I didn't have the urge to punish her until she spilled her secrets while struggling and squirming on my lap. "First, confirm. Is it your test?"

Faith's typically lively demeanor vanished, replaced by a slouched stance and downcast gaze which revealed the extent of her dejection.

A relentless gnawing started in the pit of my stomach as I waited for her to answer, and a cold, leaden feeling spread through my chest. My heart sank when I realized things weren't going as planned.

She ignited an inner spark in me, the kind of warmth and ease that I hadn't felt in years.

I loved her spunk. Her refusal to conform to the edicts of this small town, which could be cruel on a free spirit like her.

Being around Faith gave me a purpose I'd been missing and now there was this twist to our courtship before we even had a chance to explore our dom/sub dynamic. I should have known better than to speak critically over such a delicate matter, but I needed to find out what the fuck was going on.

She inhaled a shuddery breath and began speaking, “I’m not the relationship type. To a certain extent because of my personality, but part of it is because I...” A quiver ran down her delectable frame and the sight made ice trickle up my legs.

I took my place beside her and patted my lap. “Come here, princess.” I opened my arms up to her, encouraging her to have a seat. She put her head to one side in a questioning manner and finally snuggled into my embrace. I grabbed the covers and pulled them around her, stroking her hair with my hand. “You can tell Daddy everything. In fact, I’m not going anywhere until you do.”

Something skittery crawled over my muscles as I watched her gather the courage to speak. This wasn’t the Faith I knew. My girl wasn’t afraid of anything. She spoke her mind, didn’t hold back.

Her heart went haywire, and I felt it thudding through her bones as I held her.

“It’s true. I’m pregnant and the baby’s yours.” Her shrug rolled over her shoulders and relief whooshed through me. Sure, I’d take care of her regardless, but another man in the picture was a complication I didn’t care to have.

My angel deserved the powerful protection of her daddy’s arms.

But that fact alone wasn’t doing the trick. I longed to create a safe harbor for her day-to-day life issues. I was here for it. But my attempts fell short.

“Faith, we barely know each other—” I began.

She cut me off. “You mean boff each other, right? It was only supposed to be a hook-up, Riley. This was never meant to happen.” Biting her lip, she looked away. “I’ve never been able to control my impulses. I’m so forgetful.” Her gaze flitted about her room, then she dropped her forehead in her hands.

“Look at me.” She met my gaze; her emerald eyes were laden with pain, and I wanted to make it all better. We barely knew each other yet now we’d create a life together. “You’re

such a pretty angel, but you have so much more. You've built an impressive business—you should be proud.”

I held her face tight, eyes locked on hers. “No more fear. No more worry. I'm right here to help you through this.”

My heart raced. She had me completely wrapped around her finger and I wanted to be her daddy more than anything.

“No matter what you decide in the end, angel. I'll still take care of you and our baby.” My voice cracked with emotion.

I put my arms around her, and my palms clenched together on her lap in possessive prayer. This was a gesture that no other man would ever touch her again.

Now that she was carrying my child, it was my chance to prove I was the right man for her.

She looked so fragile and scared I pulled her close against my chest, holding her tight until all the tension was released from her body. This was it. Not just sex, but something deeper. We were doing this together; I wouldn't let her face pregnancy, birth, and raising our child alone.

Not on my watch.

Her eyes wide and pleading as she looked at me, lips drawn in a tight line and her forehead creased with worry. “You're not mad?” she asked.

I shook my head, “Not at all.”

“I was scared to tell you...” I held my tongue as she fumbled for the words. “I have ADHD, and it makes me so scattered sometimes.” Her hands trembled, her gaze downcast in shame. She continued after a long pause. “The doctor said the reason this happened while I was on the pill was because I was so occupied with Clover's wedding. I messed up and forgot to take them two days in a row. Now I've ruined everything.” She bowed her head and stared at the floor, not meeting my stare. I reached out and pulled her close, holding her tightly as tears fell from her eyes.

I spoke slowly, so my words sank in. “I promise to never judge you or punish you for having symptoms of ADHD.”

My stomach churned as I wondered what I could say to make her feel better. “Thank you for sharing your diagnosis with me, princess. I’m honored. There’s no need to be guilty. Pregnancy protection is my responsibility too. We’d both been recently tested, so we thought relying on the pill was enough. But that doesn’t mean the fault’s only yours. I could’ve worn a condom.”

Her collarbones dropped and she chewed on the inside of her lip.

I massaged her tense shoulders. “You’ll be an incredible mom.” The right words finally found me. “There’s no need to rush a decision about us...”

Gradually she relaxed then gave me a small nod saying, “Yes, Daddy.” Her eyes sparkled with playful amusement, the corner of her mouth twitched with a hint of mischief. My pretty, feisty angel was back, and I felt the tension melt away.

I cupped her chin, forcing her to meet my gaze. My lips twitched into a reassuring smile. “Good girl. You trust me and want to do the right thing even when it’s hard. I’m proud of you.”

Time to let her know our casual affair was over. I braced for her reaction when I said we’d start again from the beginning—before we had our fling.

The feelings between us were electric. With every glance at her perfect curves, I felt a tug at my dick, urging me to hold her in my arms, hold her close, and then drill her into the mattress. Now I’d have to allow our relationship to progress gradually instead of diving straight into sex again. Too much hung in the balance to succumb to the heat of the moment.

It felt impossible, yet my gut told me I had to resist.

Fatherhood never crossed my mind before, but now it was all I thought about: bike rides, first days of school, swimming lessons—a future with Faith.

The news of impending parenthood was still ringing in my ears. “It’s going to be okay, princess. We’ll figure this out together.”

I grasped her face tenderly, wanting her to see the truth in my gaze. “Don’t feel alone. I’m here for you and the baby. Anything you need, I’ll take care of it. Both of you—always.”

We were heading towards a future of three and, even though it was still in its infancy, I was already planning our lives together.

I wanted to be there for her. She was still cautious after sharing the news of her pregnancy with me, and her diagnosis on top of it.

Faith stepped away and walked slowly towards the window. She kept her back towards me as she spoke in a quiet voice. “I don’t know what to do now.”

I cleared my throat before speaking. “I think we should take it slow,” I said softly. “This news is a huge adjustment for both of us, and there’s no need to rush anything,” I murmured carefully, not wanting her to take things the wrong way and think I no longer wanted her. “We’ve got a lot to digest here, so the only thing we should be focused on right now is how to be good friends and co-parents.”

Faith gave me a speculative nod. We’d said enough and didn’t need to further discuss the unspoken understanding between us.

We’d remain platonic.

And though the painful, stone-hard erections would kill me, from now on, we’d take small steps toward building a relationship — getting to know each other better, learning more about our respective dreams and goals in life, being honest with one another when something wasn’t quite right between us.

I imagined countless conversations about our hopes and fears for ourselves and for our child. Slowly but surely, we’d plan our future together—move her into my place which was big enough for us all. But that could wait until Faith showed me she was ready.

I’d make it clear she could count on me to pay the bills, put food on the table, and fill our household with love,



laughter and acceptance. Whatever it took to prove my worth and finally capture not just her pussy, but also her heart.

# CHAPTER 9

# FAITH

**S**o. Not. Fair.

Hormones had me hornier than ever and he wanted to “slow things down”?

Not sure if he noticed, but I didn’t do slow. My paces were high speed and turbo.

I’d agonized a good amount after sharing my diagnosis of ADHD with him. Riley had the strange ability to get me to speak my mind. It was the first time I’d ever told a guy my brain was like a squirrel on an espresso bender.

It’s why I adopted sloths as my personal mascot: they had that lazy, too-smart-for-their-own-good attitude and never rushed anything. I fidgeted with my key chain as I drove. A purple sloth holding a miniature lotus pose, its legs crossed and its arms resting on its knees in a meditative stance—reminding me to chill.

Given the larger issue at hand during our last conversation—aka Riley’s baby in my uterus—we didn’t delve too deeply into my symptoms, nor did he react when I shared my diagnosis. Nor did he stay mad about my keeping the pregnancy from him, like I expected.

In fact, he seemed happy about the news.

If only it weren’t for his later mandate of no sex.

To top it all off, today I drove through winding hills, my stomach in knots, after picking up my friend Luna for a tour of

The Ranch—the exclusive club where couples went to explore fantasy and pleasure.

Great, just great. I was currently living like a nun, and now I'd be dragging my habit through halls where sex practically oozed out of the walls.

As we followed the winding, paved road that cut through a timberland of spruce trees, I felt something flutter in my gut. Apprehension mixed with excitement as I envisioned what was ahead of us.

We pulled up to a gigantic, glass-fronted building with log columns flanking the enormous front door. Although I passed myself off as being sexually worldly with my friend, Luna, I'd never been to a club like this. The locomotive in my chest chugged faster.

I looked over at my bestie. Her eyes were wide with anticipation and uncertainty. Clearly, she was nervous, but the smile that curved her lips told me it was thrilling for her as well.

“Here we are. You ready?” I asked.

Luna gave a small nod of her head, stirring her bright pink, wavy locks flowing past her shoulders in a beautiful cascade resembling candy floss. She reached out, intertwining her hand with mine.

The hem of her A-line skirt brushed against her ankles, the navy-blue fabric had silver buttons that ran down the center front, giving it a classic Victorian schoolgirl look. She paired it with a crisp white blouse, neatly tucked in, and a narrow black ribbon tied into a bow around her collar. Shiny Mary Janes completed the outfit.

Clad for a bygone era, her iconic circular glasses added a hint of scholarly flair which made her hopelessly out-of-place in this establishment where people came to get busy. Her penchant for whimsy snuck out, this time in the form of mismatched socks.

God, I loved her. My heart lifted and I could breathe again, thoughts of impending parenthood and a devilishly handsome

firefighter banished for the moment.

We stepped out and the crisp, coastal air kissed our skin as we ascended the front steps. As soon as we entered, a curvaceous woman wearing a bombshell dress which hugged her covetous curves, greeted us warmly and introduced herself as Priscilla.

We each signed a confidentiality agreement and followed her through an opulent great room that showcased the finest furnishings—thick carpets, plush leather sofas, rich mahogany accents, and crystal chandeliers. It transported us to another world we never knew existed in Briarville. “Do you believe this?” I whispered in my friend’s ear.

She shook her head and followed Priscilla’s brisk walk through a lavish bar with sheepskin-covered stools and custom antler light fixtures overhead. Upper-class patrons in designer dresses and suits rubbed elbows alongside some obvious locals who wore cowboy hats and boots.

As we marched down a wide hallway to the library where Luna might work, Priscilla instructed us on the establishment’s strict adherence to safe sex play, “We take the well-being of DDLGs seriously. There is a mandatory training course before anyone may participate. This includes lessons on communication techniques and BDSM basics and etiquette. In addition, there are regular seminars on kink-related topics open to all members. Experienced educators who understand the importance of safety and consent teach these classes.”

Priscilla continued leading us down the hall, her heels sinking into the thick carpet pile. At one point, she stopped and stretched her arm upwards, fingers reaching towards the Tiffany-style glass. Its soft luminescence illuminated a tiny speck of dust previously imperceptible to my eye. With a delicate flick of her wrist, she sent it spiraling away into oblivion and picked up where she left off, “The Ranch has a strict zero-tolerance policy for any behavior that causes discomfort or distress. If a patron violates these rules or acts inappropriately with another guest, they face immediate expulsion from the property and legal repercussions when

appropriate. This creates a safe environment for everyone present.”

My best friend’s eyes sparkled in awe, her steps a slow-motion dream. She slowly drank in the splendor of the glittering chandelier and luxurious carpet. Both of us were overwhelmed by the sheer extravagance of it all.

I leaned over and murmured in her ear, “Well. Can you see yourself working here?”

She stood there, agog, as if plunked into one of her beloved novels, where decadence oozed from every corner.

She couldn’t help but exclaim, “By the quill and inkwell!” as she marveled at the lavishness before us, her words dripping with dramatic flair. Her voice resonated with eagerness as she gushed, “Yes! It may be hasty for me to say so, but now that I’ve witnessed it with my own eyes, I can hardly imagine anything else.”

I wrapped one arm around her and squeezed her to my side. “You deserve all this and more.”

Priscilla chimed in, smiling. “Wait until you see the actual library. Come with me.”

She grasped a golden doorknob and pushed the pale pink leather door, its surface quilted with diamond-shaped button tufts, as it swung open, a wave of giggles greeted us.

We beheld a fanciful wonderland. As Luna stepped under the arched doorway, she couldn’t suppress a gasp of awe and I was vibing right there with her.

The library’s high, ornate ceilings were painted with scenes from classic fairy tales.

In the center of the room sat a cluster of small tables covered in board games, blocks, rainbow-colored Lego sets, and a gaggle of littles who stood around constructing buildings, animals, and unidentifiable shapes.

Everywhere you looked, brightly covered books invited you to dive into a story.

Priscilla led us to the designated reading corner, where participants sat in comfortable chairs strewn with cozy blankets and plump pillows. The blanket fort shimmered with tiny strands of light, and a woman in a onesie lounged, singing softly to herself as she flipped through a picture book.

I glanced at my friend and saw the lights reflected as sparkling stars of delight in her eyes. Her hands clasped together in glee as she sighed, “What a blissful paradise! This is like a dream come true!”

Priscilla’s face lit up. “Best of all, littles’ curiosity is cultivated and encouraged.”

She led us to an array of picture windows full of bright natural light, casting a calming glow over the littles lounging on long bench seats while flipping through pop-up books.

Priscilla gestured to the yard as she continued. “We have plenty of options when members need more active play. There’s the indoor roller rink that doubles as a fun room. And of course, the outdoor playground is perfect when the weather is nice.”

Outside, baby girls and boys skipped around a sandpit, and another group hopped up and down after they released their boats into a creek which spilled into a small pond.

There was a tree house with an intricate wooden spiral staircase leading up to an ornate balcony overlooking the backyard. Colorful banners decorated its sides. A woman in a lavender playsuit lowered a stuffed dinosaur to the ground in a handwoven basket attached to a pulley system.

My friend and I exchanged glances, both of us in awe at the sheer amount of imagination poured into this place.

Once inside, I noticed a vintage carousel horse I hadn’t seen before, its rainbow-colored mane charming as childhood wonder.

One little stood next to the wooden pony, determination in her eyes. She tried several times without success to swing her leg over its back. Priscilla saw the struggle and asked, “Do you need help, Roxie?”

The woman's face hardened with conviction. "I can do it myself!" I recognized her as the owner of the amazing cupcake company "Sparkle." Only here, she was simply her carefree childhood self and not the creator of an empire.

I smiled at the pink onesie she wore with a matching pacifier around her neck. Her fiery pluck reminded me of my stubbornness. I watched as she tried once again, her legs swinging like a pendulum as she attempted to hoist herself over the horse's back. She let out a yelp of disappointment as she fell down on the soft carpet beneath her.

Priscilla smiled knowingly. "Of course you can do it yourself, princess. But sometimes asking for help is okay, too."

With that, she boosted Roxie onto the wooden pony and watched as she giggled with delight, her fists clutching the reins, legs kicking the steed into a gallop. At least in her own mind.

My friend might remain undecided, but I knew this was the perfect place for her. It radiated carefree joy. An atmosphere of endless possibilities—something we'd stopped believing in. A reflection of the exclusive club's Ddlg lifestyle.

Our tour ended and a strange feeling tugged at my heartstrings. Though I was no longer a child, the library had a magical atmosphere that made me want to stay forever.

Priscilla gestured for us to leave the library. We soon walked into the ranch-style bar, where laughter and conversation muddled the air. The jazzy music in the background was slow and seductive, totally different from the playful atmosphere of before.

She strode to a large wooden table fronting a row of leather armchairs. The seating area had a view of the sea, its powerful, rolling waves stretching out into the distance. At the center was a large vase filled with fresh flowers that drove home the luxurious atmosphere.

"Thank you for the tour, Priscilla. That was absolutely enchanting." A thrill of contentment zinged through my



tummy hearing Luna's excitement about The Ranch.

Priscilla's lips tugged upward. "Many of our clients never enjoyed a carefree childhood. But here, in the library and play area, they can forget their troubles and find peace. I go there when I'm having a bad day, and immediately I feel better."

My blissed-out friend said, "I found it as alluring as a secret garden, hidden within the grounds of a decrepit mansion, where forgotten roses still bloom."

A look of triumph flitted across Priscilla's features, and she honed in to seal the deal. "Let me tell you more about what we offer. Not only will you have a generous budget for purchasing supplies, you'll receive access to all the club amenities. We offer informal get-togethers every other week for people involved in or interested in BDSM, kink, or fetishes. No sexual activities occur during these social gatherings, and we pay employees to attend in order to enhance their understanding of alternative lifestyles. We offer our representatives free concierge match-making services as well as a complimentary club membership, which gives you free perks such as spa treatments, massages, wellness programs, and even a fine dining pass. You'll receive a wardrobe allowance for high-quality attire fitting the club's standards. That's just for starters."

Priscilla slid a thick packet she'd been carrying under her arm towards Luna, who stared at the expensively embossed folder, tongue-tied for the first time in her life. "The details of our lavish leave policy, retirement plan, child care services, housing assistance, and more are inside. Mull it over, but remember, this is a competitive appointment and one we can't wait forever to fill."

Luna made her backbone a rod. "Will tomorrow be soon enough? I'd like to sleep on it."

A suggestion of admiration hovered in the club manager's eyes. "Of course."

As we left the bar and headed back to my crappy car, it was hard not to be enamored by the luxurious lifestyle The Ranch represented.

This should be a no-brainer for my friend. I just hoped her mind didn't wander too far down the haunted halls of uncertainty before deciding.

# CHAPTER 10

# FAITH

**A**fter our magical tour of The Ranch, where I dearly fucking hoped she'd take the job, I chirped to Luna, who lounged in the cheery turquoise booth across from me, aglow in the haze of the delicious dessert she'd just wolfed down. "Ready for a top-up?"

During our tour, we ran into Roxie, the woman owner of "Sprinkles" in the littles library, and it inspired us to visit her shop and order one of her buttercream masterpieces. Of course, all secrets about Roxie's Ddlg lifestyle at The Ranch remained locked behind our lips.

We couldn't tell a soul.

Before you could say 'Yaaas Cupcake Queen', we'd gobbled our sugary creations and I was jonesin' for more.

Luna joined me to place a second order at the counter.

We eyed the cupcakes—a technicolor dream of spongy goodness behind gleaming glass. This time, we snagged a few each, including some of Roxie's cream-filled inventions: Mystical Marshmallow Swirl and Cosmic Cotton Candy.

Biting into my cake, I moaned around a mouthful, sounding more like I was approaching climax instead of devouring a dessert.

"This is seriously one of the best things I've ever tasted," I exclaimed as Luna rolled her eyes in ecstasy.

I watched as she savored her own cupcake, cheeks pink with pleasure.

Luna's grin widened. "Think about it—me, your sugar mama for reals! Keep you knee-deep in cupcakes. Imagine how sweet our lives would be if I took that job." She winked.

I blinked several times, momentarily speechless at the thought of Luna affording a life of luxury. I knew if I wanted to give my kid a good life, I'd need to pull off something big too.

But what?

Busting my worries open like a piñata, she changed the subject, "I've noticed that you've come more alive since you and Riley became an item." She rolled her elegant fingers towards me. "You have a certain glow about you. A skip in your step."

My hands shook as I nervously twisted a cloth napkin beneath the table, and my insides twisted into knots. The words I searched for tangled in my throat like a ball of yarn. No matter how I tried to ignore it, the fact remained—Riley and I were going to be parents.

I took a deep breath and met her gaze with a determined look. "I have to share something with you," My voice was barely above a whisper. "I'm fucking pregnant."

Luna's eyes widened in shock, her feet swing-skidding across the black-and-white checkered floor, first one, then the next. Swing, skid, swing, skid. "How do you feel about this?" She puzzled.

I exhaled a sigh of relief. It felt good to share my secret with my friend, especially someone as supportive as Luna. "I'm definitely keeping the baby."

My jaw set, fists clenched tight around the napkin still in my hands, and shoulders drawn back as I stared ahead determined.

"What about Riley? Have you told him yet?" Luna asked, her voice soft and concerned.

I nodded my head, and shame thickened in my throat. "He announced he thinks we should slow things down between us," I murmured, hating how tears pricked my eyes.

I guess it was true what they say about preggo ladies. The hormone gremlins had taken over my body: weepy one minute, elated the next.

Luna reached across the table to clutch my hand, her gaze reassuring me with its strength. “You don’t have to do this alone,” she declared. “I’ll be here to support you every step of the way.”

My heart overflowed with a warmth that I hadn’t known in a long time and I sniffled as gratitude filled me up. “Thank you, Luna,” I said with sincerity. “I’m so lucky to have you as a friend.”

She cooed, “You’re eating for two now. Let me get us another cupcake to celebrate the fact I’ll be an auntie! And, I’m going to accept the position at The Ranch. Can’t afford Gothic princess baby sets on a librarian assistant salary.”

A smile sprang to my mouth. “How do you know it’s a she?”

Luna beamed, “Boy, girl ... whatever their sex at birth or eventual gender identity, we’ll smother this baby with love!”

Regardless of the circumstances, this was my time.

Time to fuck it up buttercup.

With my loyal friend to support me—everything was figureoutable.



The following Saturday, an abrupt banging interrupted my nap. In my semi-lucid dreamscape, I witnessed a surreal sight: one of the mystic creatures from the library mural at The Ranch was fiercely pounding a wooden alphabet block with its tiny wings, creating a sound like insistent knocking at the door.

Its delicate frame was the size of a teacup, and it whispered, “Wake up”. I rubbed my eyes blearily and sat up.

The strange thumping had stopped, but I knew it couldn't have been a dream.

Pinned down by the heaviness of the slumber which hit me after lunch, I groggily forced myself out of the chair and heard Luna on my front step, "Faith, it's me!" she called out.

I stumbled to the entrance, still rubbing the sleep from my eyes. "Yeah, I'm up," I uttered as I unlocked the door and let her in.

"Sorry to wake you," Luna said with a sheepish grin. "Hopefully, the surprise will make up for it."

I shook my head, trying to clear the grogginess away. "What kind of surprise?" I asked, half-heartedly curious. "I thought we had a date to go wardrobe shopping for your new job." It was only then I noticed the large package behind her.

She spun around and bent down to retrieve the item; her petite body was more powerful than it appeared; a result of all the time she spent hoisting books above her head in the library.

"What's in the box?" I asked, following her slight form to my dining table, where she plunked the carton down.

A devious grin spread across her face. "I got you something," she said, eyes gleaming with excitement. "Open it!"

A small, white envelope sat atop the contents of the container. Words written in an elegant script, in shades of blue and pink, looped across its surface and I recognized them as my bestie's penmanship, "To: Pretty Angel & Little Devil."

I raised an eyebrow at Luna, recognizing the source of the nicknames. They definitely weren't any she would choose. My friend smiled knowingly and allowed me to connect the dots.

"He had me address the envelope, but the gift certificate inside is from Riley. I ran into him at Chapman's Bookery while purchasing the rest of the contents of the box. When I told him you and I had a date to go shopping today, he asked me to deliver it to you." Her cheeks grew faintly pink.

“What’s up? That grin just screams you have something up your sleeve.” I playfully nudged her elbow.

Her color deepened. “Riley is the perfect dashing figure of a man, ready to sweep you off your feet with spa treatments instead of eloquent sonnets. Not only that, he insisted on calling Chloe’s Salon & Spa and booking me a session as well, so you and I can enjoy being pampered together.” Her soft-as-silk gaze levied a stare at me. “His dotting aura might not be your particular cup of tea, but it’s certainly enough to entice many a heroine.”

“I guess,” I replied, as a sensation fluttered in my stomach that had nothing to do with baby kicks. It was way too soon for that. “Like I said before, he doesn’t want to rush into anything now that a baby is involved.”

Luna spoke with quiet but undeniable firmness. “He wants to woo you, Faith. Why don’t you let him? There’s a lot more at stake. Be patient. Sometimes the heart’s secrets unravel like ancient scrolls, revealing a tale of love with deeper layers, darker mysteries, and higher stakes than ever imagined.”

Deep within my chest, an unfamiliar warmth spread. What would it be like? Letting Riley court me: laughing and talking, walking hand in hand through a park, enjoying a romantic dinner?

The thoughts lifted a shadow I didn’t know I stood under. An unfamiliar lightness filled me; a vision, hidden in the depths of my mind, seemed achievable. A thrill surged through me— could this really come true?

My brow furrowed as I looked down and observed my hand, marveling at the way my thoughts were moving faster than I could keep up. I hoped my lady parts didn’t spontaneously combust before I gave birth and my foxy firefighter deigned to put his hands on me again.

Quickly, I changed the subject. “What else is in the box?” The distraction worked. My friend could never resist talking about books and she’d brought over every pregnancy guide ever written on planet earth.





**M**y massage, facial, mani, and pedi with Luna ended in the most restful sleep I'd had since finding out I was pregnant. A relentless buzzing woke me up with a start at eleven a.m. the next day.

It was a text message from Riley:

How's my pretty girl and my baby this morning?

More rested than I've been in a long time. Sorry I never thanked you for the amazing gift yesterday. I totally fell asleep before I got around to it.

Are you still snuggled in bed? Hope I didn't wake you.

Why? Are you going to break your vow of celibacy and come over?

Three dots let me know he was crafting his response, and I wished on every star in the sky my dream would come true and he'd go down on me for brunch.

What did I say? I want to connect with you on an emotional level for a change.

Ugh. Tell that to my W.A.P.

Say that again?

You heard me.

You're playing with fire, princess.

Promises, promises. My pussy wants to ride on that perfect dick of yours until you put another baby in me.

Many dots and many minutes passed.

Pretty sure that's physiologically impossible. I'm bringing you breakfast. And that's it.

God dammit, he was such an annoying fucker. I can't believe I was going to have his baby.

# CHAPTER 11

# RILEY

**B**reakfast in hand, I smiled to myself at the sloth figurine wearing a purple wizard's robe and hat while casting "slow-motion" spells on the front stoop. Faith already told me about the slothicorn she'd invented for Halloween, and I admired the unicorn horn, which gave its sleepy wearer a magical touch. Holidays would be fun with a mom like Faith.

When she didn't answer right away, I worried.

She swung open the door, interrupting my chain of thoughts, and the mere sight of her made my heart somersault in my chest. Then I took in the minor details that divulged her state of mind.

She'd tossed her gorgeous tresses up into what she called a high pony. Thin lines of dried tears streaked down her cheeks, and her eyes were red-rimmed from crying.

My heart sank as I took in her appearance. All the laughter and joy that usually filled her face had been replaced by sorrow. "Tell daddy what's wrong."

She flinched at the sound of my voice. Dammit. The bridled anger in my voice was directed at whatever hurt her, and now I'd made it worse. "Every minute of the morning is wrong," she said. "I can't keep any food down no matter how hungry I am, and my mouth constantly tastes like barf." Her beauty blew me away, even when she was sorrowful and wearing pajamas.

Before long, the overwhelming odor of pancakes and pork sausage wafted around us, and made her gut grumble, breaking

up our brief silence. Suddenly she seemed like she was going to be sick again. I whipped the warm package I brought her behind my back.

She spun on her heel and bolted for the bathroom. I tossed the culprit in the trash outside where she couldn't smell it, then returned to follow the sound of Faith emptying the contents of her stomach into the toilet bowl. "Poor baby." I said, kneeling beside her. I grabbed her ponytail in my hand to keep it away from her face while she continued to dry heave.

During a respite, she moaned, "Oh my God. I can't believe you're seeing me like this."

I did my darndest, to soothe her, rubbing circles on her back. "That's what daddies are for, princess. Besides, you puke pretty."

"That might be the best compliment ever," she said. "Looks like this round of Puketopia is over. I'm safe to leave the bathroom."

I followed her down the hall, thinking about how I couldn't wait to move her into my place so I could be with her for every challenge she faced during her pregnancy. It wasn't right for her to be alone when she was this sick.

"I brought you something." I had to smile, seeing her girlish glee so shortly after puking her guts out.

"What is it?" Her wide eyes sparkled, and her hands flew to her face in anticipation.

"I hope it won't induce vomiting. Come see." I said, walking her out to my pickup. I gestured to the glistening heap of oranges nestled in the box in the back of my truck. "What do you think about these?" I asked, my gaze never once leaving her. She smiled as she cautiously leaned into the tailgate and examined the citrus fruit.

After a moment of admiration, she exclaimed with delight, "They're perfect!" Ever protective, I watched her carefully since my first attempt at feeding her had gone so far afoul. The warmth and sparkle in her eyes made me proud that I had chosen something she might actually be able to eat.

I opened the tailgate, hefting the twenty-five-pound box, and turned to see her ogling me. I quizzed her, “How come you’re so giddy after your visit to the vomitorium?”

“Your bulging biceps always look delicious.” She said. “Never puke worthy.”

Her words made my chest swell like a peacock displaying its plumage.

“Careful complimenting me too hard, princess. It might go to my head.” I wagged my eyebrows at her and she gave a meaningful glance at my zipper area.

Back inside, I set the box on her oak table. “You mentioned you were craving them, so I thought I’d lay in a supply for you. These are fresh from Visalia, organic navel oranges. Nothing but the best for my baby. Both of you.”

Unfortunately, my comment made her burst into tears. “Gee, I didn’t expect you to be so emotional about citrus.” I responded.

Faith gave me a watery smile and never looked more beautiful in my eyes. “It’s the hormones. I read in a pregnancy book Luna got for me how they drive you crazy, and for me, it was already a short trip.”

I grabbed the hem of my jersey and yanked it up and over my head in one swift movement, appreciating the way she admired the ripple of muscles flexing beneath my skin. “You cry all you need to, pretty girl. Use my shirt for a hanky. I’ll never wash it.”

She reluctantly dragged her gaze away from my pecs. I straightened my spine and puffed my chest out before murmuring, “Let me slice some of these up for you while run a bath.” I tossed one of the fragrant fruits from hand to hand, showing my muscles off for her. Hey, what guy could resist being sexualized by a bombshell like Faith?

“Fine,” she sighed. “You make it easy to depend on you.”

“Get used to it.” I commented.

While she took a bath, I tidied up the kitchen, chuckling to myself at the random chaos I found inside her cupboards and drawers. It wouldn't be long before we lived together. Once she realized we were meant to be I'd help her with daily struggles like this. I didn't become fire chief, without having some kick butt, organizational skills.

"Don't make it too tidy, or I won't be able to locate anything." She murmured, and I turned to stare at her, loving how she was pink and dewy from her soak in the tub. She wore yoga pants, which showcased her voluptuous bottom to perfection, and a graphic shirt that read, "Bad Bitch Energy Only."

"Sorry. Guess it's in my nature to straighten up. I find it relaxing." I said.

A smile crept across her lips, and she raised a skeptical eyebrow. "You, Mr. big, bad, fire, fighter, doubles as Susie homemaker?" She asked incredulously.

"What of it?" I asked. "Our baby is fortunate enough to live in an era where they can express both the feminine and masculine sides of themselves. No contradiction there," I declared.

Faith's eyebrows furrowed, and her lips formed a scowl as she crossed her arms over her chest. "Oh, so not only are you a homemaker, you're a child psychologist?" She cocked her head to one side and stared at me with unblinking intensity.

I distracted her, pointing to the stacks on the dining room table. "Where did you get these?"

"Auntie Luna sent them. She said reading aloud benefits the baby even while it's in the womb. She brought over a shit ton of children's books on her last visit."

Although it was just past lunchtime, I could see her eyelids drifting shut. She yawned and stretched out her arms. I took her hand in mine, marveling at how delicate she was compared to me, and led her to the sofa. "Come, lay on my lap and I'll read you a story, baby girl." I sat down, extended my legs and

exhaled, relaxing. I had a million things to do today, but none mattered as much as making sure she was happy and safe.

Completely worn out, she fell asleep during the first chapter of *Sloths: A Celebration of the World's Most Misunderstood Mammal*. I carefully dislodged myself, tucked the blanket up around her shoulders, and brushed a strand of hair away from her beautiful face. She snored gently, and I felt a surge of protectiveness as I gazed down at her sleeping form. Quietly, I locked the door securely and locked it behind me.



# CHAPTER 12

# RILEY

One week later, I accompanied Faith on a stroll around our small town of Briarville. She stood in front of a craft table at the farmer's market, which was covered in handmade items: knit scarves, embroidered aprons, and tiny, pastel-colored baby sweaters. I dipped my head and asked, "What are you thinking?"

I wanted to discover everything about her and always know what was on her mind. Even before finding out she carried our child, I wanted to know what she liked, what annoyed her, what made her laugh and frown. What got her hot-tempered or upset so I could avoid doing any of those things.

"How is this possible?" she puzzled. "One minute everything is normal as all get out: marketing our handmade goat soap, obsessing over custom-decorated coffee mugs on my favorite site, tending to the veggie and flower garden, and next, there's a baby in my belly."

She sucked down the last of the fruit smoothie I'd insisted on paying for, the sound reverberating loud enough to earn stares from more than one passerby. "Hey." I cupped her chin, forcing her gaze to meet mine. And in that moment, I let her see the truth. "Listen to Daddy. You're not doing this alone. I'm right here."

She placed her hand on my forearm, then hastily drew it away, evading my stare.

“What is it, pretty girl? Use your words,” I admonished, loving the way we’d already fallen into a pattern of me as her protective provider, one who just wanted to spoil and take care of her and our baby, but still respected her independence. We’d learn to value each other’s perspectives over time, no matter how hard that might be.

She wore a bright, rainbow-colored skirt with bold stripes that danced in the light breeze. Her Converse shoes were light pink, standing out like a beacon against the gray sidewalk. The outfit, along with the sparkly rhinestone brooch she’d pinned to her sweater of a sloth taking a selfie, gave off an energy of fun playfulness.

“It’s just that…” she said with a sharp edge in her voice. Her piercing eyes cut through me like lasers, as if trying to decipher the puzzle of me. “I’m not some gold-digger looking for a quick buck. I don’t want you to think I’m using you because of our baby.”

I embraced her, taking in the fragrant smell of lavender and roses. “Never, Faith. I’ll be there for you and our child—active in both your lives.”

She smiled, and my heart constricted with tenderness.

“Thank you,” she uttered, her voice soft and vulnerable.

I kissed her forehead, and she shifted from one foot to the other, saying, “Can we discuss this over lunch? I can’t believe it, but I’m already hungry again. And I really need to pee.”



“**T**hanks for agreeing to let me prepare lunch for you, angel.” The belt around her waist defined its trimness, and I wondered how soon it would be before she had an actual bump.

Her perfect breasts had swollen, begging for attention. I wanted to rip her shirt off and caress the heavy undersides in my hands. Suck on her rigid nipples.

I'd spent a shit ton of energy restraining my urges and true feelings for her. Feelings which so far I'd displayed via actions instead of words, while I covertly ogled her.

I set a plateful of healthy and crunchy baby carrots, celery sticks, and ranch dip, along with tiny tacos and all her favorite fixings in front of her.

She shoved an entire taco into her mouth and mumbled around it. "How did you guess these were my favorite? I can't believe you had them in your fridge."

I couldn't keep from saying, "It's my job to make sure you get enough to eat, princess."

Her features became more animated. "It's like you get me or something."

I laughed, delighted with her. "Why is that so surprising?" I needed to hear her flatter me.

This second.

She crunched into a carrot and continued, "Good question. My family gets me. They had little choice, I guess. And Luna, she's as weird as I am, so no judgment there."

"Who would dare look down on you?" Fury coursed through me at the thought of someone harming my girl. She was perfect.

Faith pursed her lips and furrowed her brow, gaze fixed on the floor as she deliberated over my question.

Tears pooled suddenly in her eyes, and she rubbed them away with the backs of her hands. My heart ached to make everything right for her, to take away all the hurt that had obviously built up inside. "Stupid hormones. I swear I cry at the drop of a hat these days."

"Hey." I covered her hands with my own. "Be gentle with yourself. You're allowed to make a big deal out of feelings that feel really big to you, clear?"

Brushing away her tears, her eyes were contemplative. "This stuff hasn't bothered me in such a long time. So many girls don't get diagnosed with ADHD during their school

years. I was lucky to find out then. And I had parents who supported me, no matter how difficult I could be. It's just, in the past, I got used to disappointing teachers, friends, even my sister and parents sometimes. But now, there's a child at stake. I can't afford to fuck up like I have so many other times."

My words were a feeble attempt to soothe her. "I'm glad you're putting this on the table. You can talk to me about anything. I want to be your safe place to go when things get scary." She looked at me with such gratitude in her eyes, it seemed like the world stopped turning just so we could share this moment. From that instant on, I vowed to be her unwavering protector, her devoted companion, her everything.

Suddenly, her face went glum. "But Riley, I struggled myself as a student. How am I supposed to keep a child's belongings, schoolwork, or schedule organized? Patience has never been one of my virtues. What if I lose my temper...?" She was riffing on her fears now, upset at how many different ways things could go wrong. Faith's inner turmoil became more apparent as she spoke, worry and fear clear in her voice.

"And you can appreciate all too well I have a hard time remembering to take my pills. If I forget my ADHD meds once the baby's born, I'll be an even worse parent than ever!" She struggled to maintain an even, conciliatory tone and I wrapped my arms around her.

My voice was calm, but I couldn't help but be feverish inside. This was a teaching moment and as her daddy, it was my job to use this opportunity to ensure she didn't resort to being overly critical of herself.

"Sometimes people make mistakes," I said slowly, emphasizing each word for maximum effect. Internally, I acknowledged that spanking her would help ensure she remembered the lesson, and acting on this thought, I grabbed the wooden spoon from the utensil stand and stood up from the kitchen stool. "We can all learn from them," I said with more conviction than before. "Follow me." Taking her hand firmly in mine, I led her into the living room.

This was about more than just disciplining her for inappropriate behavior. This was about showing her how the smack of my hand could provide succor when she needed it most. With each swat, she'd feel the guilt draining out of her body. She'd learn that my spankings would help her let go of self-judgment and restore herself when she stumbled.

I lightly traced my fingers along the back of the chair. "Rest your palms here, bend over, and remain still until I give you permission to move. Don't worry, I asked my buddy, an M.D., if spanking is safe during pregnancy and he said BDSM sex is as safe as any other sex during pregnancy. And I promise you I will never punish you for having an ADHD symptom."

She put her hands on her hips and pouted. "But what did I do!?"

"You tell me. What was the very first and most important rule Daddy gave you?"

I watched her expression as she wracked her brain for the answer. She bit her lip and scrunched up her forehead, before finally meeting my gaze with a determined one of her own. "You said I'm beautiful and intelligent, and if I say otherwise, there would be consequences."

"So, you understand why you're getting a spanking." She glowered at me and lowered her eyes from mine as pink crept over her cheeks.

"All new parents worry they'll mess up. Becoming a good parent is a learning process. I'll be right there learning along with you." I said reassuringly.

I watched as her breath gradually slowed and she seemed to relax. I pointed to the chair, "Bend over and rest your palms on the back like a good girl." She obeyed, her body delicately balanced between nervousness and surrender.

Faith trembled as I brought my hand up to caress her bottom. I slowly caressed the shape of her buttocks.

Gradually, I lifted her skirt up onto her back. "Daddy likes it when you wear pretty skirts like this so he has access to your

panties.” With that, I yanked said underwear to the floor.

She gasped as my fingertips ran along the silky softness of her naked flesh. To warm things up a bit before we got started, I lightly smacked each cheek a few times. “I love the way your bottom turns pink at the lightest blow. You’re so perfect.”

When she was ready for more, I delivered firm strokes across both buttocks—not too hard, but painfully enough so she’d remember why it was important to follow my rules next time around. As each swat landed on its mark, she yelped out in surprise, then released a breath as if letting go of all the tension that had been building up inside.

I spanked her next with unrelenting intensity. The tip of my cock throbbed with each strike, as she writhed and gasped beneath me. Her pert ass quivered deliciously under my palm, and I reminded myself this punishment was for her own good.

With a slow, unrelenting tempo, I slapped her bottom. The tender skin of her buttocks rippled under my hands as each strike landed, eliciting a soft moan from her lips. Her skin turned cherry red as I smacked her. I informed her, “One day I’ll frost this pretty red ass white with my cum”.

Oddly, she giggled at that remark. “What’s so funny little girl?” I inquired, raising an eyebrow.

Her mouth twitched with a mischievous grin. “If you do, my butt will look just like the Creamy Crimson Bliss red velvet cupcakes at Sparkles Bakery!”

“Your spanking isn’t supposed to make you laugh, angel,” I said sternly. “It’s a punishment for your lapse in judgment.”

I gave her a few moments to compose herself before continuing. “I’m not expecting perfection from you, but I do expect accountability when it comes to your actions—especially when it comes to respecting yourself and others. Are we clear?”

She nodded in agreement and I continued.

Swat after swat, I kept spanking her until she wriggled and let go of the chair. “Arms in place, pretty girl. If you can’t listen, I’ll have to punish you further.”

She slapped her hands down. “I’m sorry already, Daddy! I won’t do it again!”

I paused and delicately ran my fingers along her flushed face. “I really hope not, angel, but if you do, I won’t hesitate to tie you down,” I said, gently placing my palm on the small of her back. “Do you think you’ve learned your lesson about negative self-talk?”

“Definitely,” she declared, quickly averting her gaze to the ground.

My command came out in a growl, tense from frustration with her and the need to bury my cock in her sweet pussy. “Say it, Faith. The words we agreed upon.”

She paused. “I’m beautiful. I’m smart.”

“And what kind of parent will you be?” I prompted.

Her response was cheeky. “One who has a lot to learn.”

“Fair enough.” I capitulated.

I worked my fingers into her, and the most exquisite sound came from her throat. A cross between a moan and a sigh of pleasure.

Soothing her, I slowly slid her panties on and pulled her skirt down. Gathering her to my chest, I ran my hand through her hair. “I’m so proud of you, angel,” I whispered, kissing the top of her head. “It’s alright, Daddy’s here. Trust me, I get scared too sometimes.”

Faith drew back, eyeing me narrowly. “You’re messing with me. Since when is a big, bad firefighter afraid of anything? You drag people out of burning buildings for a living, for heaven’s sake.”

Taking a deep breath, I chose my words with caution. I accepted all her shortcomings,—would she do the same for me? “I’m a firefighter and medic. So many of us struggle with PTSD, or worse—death by suicide or drugs. I understand what it’s like to battle anxiety on your own. It doesn’t work. Instead of hiding from our fears, we can name them, deal with them, and make life better. As a team. Trust me—we’ve got this.”



My hands shook as I spoke, and Faith's eyes darted around the room as if searching for an escape. It came to me then that only by sharing my deepest doubts would she be able to open up to me. "I get it. You don't want to settle down." I murmured. "You've jumped from one guy to the next without ever getting close. And that scares me—what if I'm not enough? What if I make a mistake and you just leave, same as all the others? Promise me something when you feel that urge?"

She nodded, eyes burning through me. My arms ached to embrace her. I wanted to keep her safe forever, hold her tight and never let go.

"Remember, I'll wait here for you. No matter how long it takes you to return." My gaze fixed on her like a hawk tracking its prey.

I couldn't help the possessive itch that crept up my spine. It was a subtle shift, imperceptible to anyone else, but I felt it keenly every time she was around.

My jaw tensed, and I fought the compulsion to grab her and pin her over my knees, assert my dominance, and take what belonged to me—her love.

Instead, I settled for a quiet admonition. "Even if it means I have to hunt you down and bring you home myself."

Deep breathing helped to unclench my fists, which were ready to take on any challenge to the sanctity of my family.

Little did I know how completely clueless I was about the trials we'd face ahead...

# CHAPTER 13

# FAITH

**T**he same week Riley taught me a lesson about negative self talk, his thunderous voice, like distant rumbling, shattered my trance. “Did you even hear what I just said?” He FaceTimed me at least once a day and texted me in-between to see if I needed anything.

He stopped mid-sentence, and I popped out of my foggy trance to see his quizzical expression on the screen. A wave of embarrassment swept over me as I realized he had been speaking to me the entire time.

Weird thing was, it didn’t faze him when my mind wandered. I couldn’t recall a single instance when I really got on his nerves.

Which kind of annoyed me if you wanted to know the truth.

“Sorry. What did you say?” I asked.

“When’s your OB-GYN appointment? I’m coming with you,” he growled, low and gravelly, sending shivers down my spine.

Like clockwork, Riley triggered a tug-of-war inside me, optimism about a bright future on one side and reckless desire on the other. I wanted to grip my hand around the base of his dick, lower my head and show him what a good little cock worshipper I could be.

Sex I was great at.

Penises were very straightforward.

## Relationships?

My emotions reacted faster than my brain, so I usually didn't even get time to decide how I wanted to act.

My impulsivity drove me to disastrous relationships again and again. I finally figured it was better to pass on the whole 'happily ever after' thing—that it was a myth as elusive as the Loch Ness monster. Allowing my heart to lead? Recipe for disaster.

A crash-and-burn affair wasn't a mistake I could afford to make with my baby daddy.

Especially since, each time he spoke, his voice rough and velvety, my inner conflict surged. These reactions were more than just obsessing about his bulge.

It was a skirmish in my mind, me versus my fantasies of Riley telling me I'd be his forever.

Shit. He was always honing in on subjects I wanted to avoid. How did he do that?

I fidgeted my butt on the mattress, and smoothed my sloth's fur, trying to come up with an excuse.

"Faith. What is it? Tell Daddy," he snapped with a feral edge, eyes glittering with predatory hunger. I knew what was coming next—he was about to sex me up, or give me a talking to.

"Are you sure it's a good idea for me to keep calling you Daddy, and for you to give me presents and stuff when we're not even a couple? Do those things really count as platonic?" I bided my time, looking around at the walls, plastered with a wallpaper featuring a vibrant botanical print. The shiny black faux-leather headboard was trimmed with decorative upholstery tacks, capped by rhinestone embellishments that looked like diamonds.

In one corner, there was an antique vanity table littered with colorful makeup and wild hair products. My closet doors were open to reveal my collection of custom-made overalls and coveralls for work on the farm—each pair hand embellished by yours truly with everything from blooming

fields of wildflowers, to playful dragons soaring in a stormy sky, to prancing unicorns frolicking across meadows.

That deep, gravelly voice scattered my thoughts again. “We’re blessed to live in an era of freedom and fluidity. Platonic daddies, romantic daddies—there’s no one-size-fits-all, no specific way to be, no certain ‘type’ for anyone.”

He narrowed his gaze at me with a laser-like intensity. “Now stop evading the question. Tell me when your first checkup is. I’m taking you.”

Half a dozen weeks had flown by since my sister’s nuptials. I’d done the research. Time was running out. The initial baby checkup should happen within the first twelve weeks—which gave me not much time before having to ’fess up about not being insured...and the clusterfuck of decisions I’d made. Again.

I kept putting off signing up during the enrollment period, always thinking I had more time.

My heart raced as I searched for the right words, gathering courage. I knew there was no avoiding this talk, and I steeled myself before speaking. “Okay, about that. Please don’t get mad.”

He inhaled, his chest rising and falling as he braced himself for the conversation at hand. His gaze softened as he said, “Listen to me. Good friends are honest, even when it’s tough. Share your feelings, don’t bottle them up. It just breeds resentment. Especially if something is bothering you.”

I felt my stomach untangling itself as his words washed over me like a calming wave.

“Okay, but this is a doozie. Don’t fly off the handle.” I barely lifted my tone above a whisper, “I haven’t set up an appointment with the doctor yet.”

Riley’s beauty stunned me into silence. Maybe it was odd to call a man ‘beautiful’. I’d never been so mesmerized by anyone’s features: riveting ocean eyes, dark brows, and a tattooed serpent that slithered at the slightest movement of his arm. His silver fox sophistication sent my heart racing. “Do

you need help to find an obstetrician? Our crew has good community contacts. I can ask around.” His kindness touched me—medical providers were scarce in our rural community.

“Riley, you’re not picking up what I’m laying down. I don’t have a doctor because I don’t have insurance. I forgot to sign up during open enrollment. Don’t worry, I read that the first perinatal appointment should be scheduled before twelve weeks, and I’m still within that window.”

It was tough putting a positive spin on the thing that had been worrying me for weeks. Turning twenty-seven came with a sobering realization. I was no longer part of my parent’s health plan.

Self-employed people know that health costs can break profits, and the uninsured face ruinous medical bills. I’d let my symptoms run my life—endangering myself and my baby.

My entire body tensed as a sharp twist of dread seized my gut. I took a deep breath and tried to remain calm, but my heart raced, and I felt dizzy.

I squeezed my eyes tight, waiting for him to hit the roof.

I dared a peek out of one eye, and Riley furrowed his brow and curled his lips inward, as if tasting something bitter on his tongue. His eyes darted around the room as he mulled over what I said, rapid-fire.

Oh shit. This was it. The moment he gave up on me. He’d seen through my facade and discovered I was more trouble than I was worth.

The sound of his voice was a dark, resonant purr. “Keep your pretty little butt put. Don’t go anywhere.”

I thanked my lucky stars for the protective barrier of the screen. My tendency to procrastinate, dodge responsibilities, and procrastinate swooped in like a giant flock of chickens, landing right on my doorstep, coming to roost on my soon-to-be-sore ass instead of a coop.

The video chat window faded to black, and the last of his words reverberated in my earbuds. I stayed there for a heartbeat as the finality settled in—I was utterly alone.

I'd worry about that later.

I yearned for slumber, but Sloth refused to rest. I imagined tiny claws digging into my ribs right above my heart and his heavy breathing kept me awake. "Settle down, little dude. Did you expect him to actually finish telling you a bedtime story? You can't hope he'll do that every night, you know."

I was just drifting off into a light sleep when the insistent ring of the doorbell jarred me. I threw on my favorite slippers, a gift from Clover, and hopped down the hallway. My steps made my slippers' feathery orange adornment wave jauntily, making it appear as if the wild and frenzied Muppet drummer, whose face adorned each toe, was actually alive.

I squinted from the sudden brightness of the hall lights and the doorbell rang again.

WTF?

Who dared come over at this hour? I shot an eyebrow towards the kitchen clock. It was only seven o'clock. My bedtime kept creeping earlier.

I barked at the intruder, "Wait!" before rushing to the bathroom to freshen up. They could just deal with it. Whoever was knocking had no appreciation for precious sleep, so they could wait outside.

I hopped to the entrance in my leopard print jammies with pink piping and looked through the peephole Riley had insisted on installing for me. No one was there.

"Great. Just great. Wake me up for no reason, why don't you?" I muttered.

I flung the door open and scanned the area for any clues. My pulse sped up, gripped by anticipation of the unknown culprit that had disrupted my peace. Only instead of doorbell ditchers, a big, dangerous man whose massive muscles I could recite like Luna did lines from her gothic romances, knelt on my doorstep. A bouquet three times the size of his head under one arm, and something shiny resting on his palm.

My jaw dropped and eyes widened as I tried to process what was happening. "What's going on here?"

His voice was pure, vulnerability quavering beneath. “Faith.” He grasped my hand, encasing it in his own, and his gentle smile grew. Then he asked me the question that would change both of our lives forever, “Will you marry me?”



# CHAPTER 14

# RILEY

“Are you crazy? Come inside, someone might see you,” urged Faith. She had a point. Ours was a small town, and if she told me “No” tonight, the fact she’d had the Fire Chief down on one knee and rebuked his proposal would spread quicker than wildfire—faster than either of us could contain it.

Yes, I was certifiable.

Crazy for her.

Could I resist this opportunity to ask her to put my ring on her finger, even though it might not be right?

No, I could not.

She reached forward and grabbed the fabric of my shirt, tugging me up off the ground.

I followed her as she marched into the kitchen and caressed her butt with lusting, invisible fingers as it jiggled like two puppies under a blanket.

She spun around and fixed me with a stare that would melt the polar ice caps. A vein pulsed in her temple.

“You’re out of your mind,” she admonished.

“Yes, I know. But I can’t help it,” I said, a note of desperation in my voice.

Despite the constant prodding from my mother, I’d remained single well into middle age. People thought I was commitment-phobic, dedicating my life to work.

In truth, no woman had sparked an intense connection. One who let the daddy in me come out and answer her questions, calm her fears, and make her insecurities go away.

With Faith, those things came naturally. With her, I discovered a love I no longer believed existed.

Yes. I said it. The “L” word. She was a rarity. She was real. No one ever accused me of being a genius, but I’d be an idiot not to lock that down tighter than my turnout gear straps.

My angel questioned me with a stubborn fold of her arms, “What do you think you’re doing, Riley?”

“I’m asking you to marry me,” I spelled out, speaking each word in a measured yet passionate way. I looked into her eyes, and my chest rose and fell. Waiting for her to respond was pure torture.

Thankfully, her delectable tendency to be distracted by her environment kicked in to save my ass.

Her fingernails dug into my skin as she held my hand, gaze widening with appreciation at the sight of the sparkling gem nestled in a bed of white gold. “Where on earth did you get that gorgeous ring?” she asked breathlessly.

The stone’s spell took hold, and she stared wide-eyed at the diamond. Seizing the moment, I dragged her into the living room. Not ideal, but it beat the kitchen or porch when romance was afoot.

My smile went full strength, and I pulled a deep breath, feeling ten feet tall.

My swollen chest wasn’t the only bulging part of my anatomy. Every cell in my being pulsed with the need to take her in my arms and ply her with kisses until she was powerless to do anything but let me put this damned ring on her finger.

I was possibly a certified genius. Was I aggravated at her for not scheduling her prenatal appointment at the earliest opportunity, and for letting her insurance registration fall through the cracks?

Yes.

But grateful, oh so grateful, she'd given me the perfect reason to propose.

"My coverage is aces, no worries there. As my wife, you'll have access to the best medical services, and so will our baby." I told her.

Who cared if my aims were impure? I needed to lock her down, stat. My plan was simple. No shame in admitting it: marry her quickly before she ran away. I'd provide her and our baby with top-tier care, regardless of my ulterior motives.

"The ring belonged to my great-grandmother. Mom gave it to me some time ago, in case I met the woman I wanted to marry." My pulse thumped a rhythm in my throat. I was on edge, waiting for her to answer my damned question. A girl like her had a way of knocking the breath out of an otherwise confident man, and mine evaporated in an instant. I stopped speaking, and my mouth dried up.

Her stare sparkled with intensity, and her voice faded with hushed stillness. "It's so pretty."

My gaze softened, letting her know without words how much she meant to me. This differed from mere love—it was my commitment to protect and provide for her and our unborn child.

On the carpet in front of her couch, I got down on one knee again, placed the ring on her coffee table and grabbed both her hands.

"There will be tough times. At some point, you'll question whether you made a big mistake marrying me.

But if I don't ask you to be mine forever, I'll regret it for the rest of my life.

It's too soon, and we hardly know each other, but in my heart, you're the only one for me.

Will you make me the luckiest daddy in the world and say 'yes'?"

My eyes clung to hers, assessing her expression. "What if I'm baby-trapping you?" Her question lingered in the air.

I inhaled a deep breath, determined to make her see my point. “Faith, this is the best thing for you and our child. Please, believe me.” Let me take care of you. I know this is hard, but I’m here.” My body ached to touch her.

Suddenly, the answer hit me. I had a way to help her if she ever felt trapped. “If you’d feel better about it, we can keep our plan between us. I’m fine with that.”

I was definitely not cool with that.

My ring needed to be on her pretty finger, showing the world she belonged to me.

Hands off.

Keep your distance.

She’s taken.

Eventually, she’d come to accept it.

Faith furrowed her brow and her emerald eyes shone, clasping her hands tightly in front of her. She tucked her lower lip between her teeth and looked down at me with trepidation.

Seconds ticked by like hours as she silently weighed the pros and cons of my proposal. After an eternity, she finally nodded and said softly, “Yes.”

I lifted the delicate silver band from its velvet box and held it up for her to admire. My heart raced as I slid it onto her finger, and I smiled when it fit perfectly.

The ring bound us together permanently. I wanted it on her finger, warning all other men that she was mine. My machinations would become clear in time, but for now, I luxuriated in the knowledge that I’d captured her forever. She belonged to me now, and I’d take care of her and our baby in the manner they deserved.

She watched me intently, and deliberately, seductively, her eyes roving over my body.

Did she feel the same dizzying desire that I experienced? During our platonic phase, I’d spent an inordinate amount of energy discouraging my lust for her. I’d become adept at

hiding behind our casual friendliness. But Faith wasn't like that. Her emotions poured out of her in an unstoppable spill.

The room filled with intensity, and my heart rattled its cage inside my chest. I pressed pause on my excitement and met her gaze.

That mouth of hers.

My brain took a detour to register all of her stunning features I'd tried so hard to avoid while we were keeping things non-sexual.

This was nothing new, of course. If she only knew how often I covertly drank in her beauty.

I couldn't hold back any longer; I needed to taste her lips.

I stood up. My hands involuntarily caressed her face, memorizing every slope of her cheeks and jawline. Her skin was as smooth as silk and I relished the whine which escaped her as I drew her closer, our eyes locked in an intense gaze. My mouth crashed onto hers, hungrily seeking entrance. She returned my kiss with equal fervor as I ravished her with my tongue.

We were so lost in each other that the world faded away. Electricity surged through me as her hands explored my chest, and I gasped, staring impatiently at her as she undid the buttons of my shirt. We tumbled onto the couch, our limbs entwined as we kissed.

Her touch sent fire through my veins and I got harder by the second. She tilted her head, and her smoldering green eyes captivated me. A million thoughts and questions filled the air between us, but neither of us wanted to break the silence. Our bodies gravitated towards each other, our hands shaking as we slowly entwined our fingers—no words could adequately express what this moment meant.

I grinned wickedly and swept her tiny frame up into my arms. As I carried her to the bedroom, the suspense of what might happen next hung heavy in the air. My voice dropped ominously, "Who's trapping who? Now you're my dirty princess for life."

# CHAPTER 15

# FAITH

“**G**ood thing you’re a big, strong firefighter. Otherwise, I’d feel guilty about this chauffeur service from one room to the next.” Did he know how much I loved it when he carried me like this, as if I were feather light instead of six weeks with child, and had been eating my weight in food daily?

“Damn straight.” His voice reverberated with power and gave me shivers. “My Princess best get used to the royal treatment. Including in the bedroom.”

I snort-laughed. “Oh yeah? Exactly what does that entail?”

He closed the door behind him with a firm push and answered my question with an assured air. “Better if I let my actions do the talking.”

With that, he gently laid me down on the mattress and began undoing the buttons of my pajama top. “God, how I’ve missed these pretty, perfect breasts. I can’t stop picturing you on your knees, touching them for me with your mouth wide open, begging me to feed you my cock between those plump lips.”

He reached out with both hands, pinching each of my nipples between his fingers, then he tugged them gently upwards toward the ceiling so they ached in a way that was nearly unbearable.

He smiled as he purred the question, his eyes glimmering with anticipation. “You’re moaning, baby girl. Is that because you missed Daddy doing naughty things to you?”



I whimpered, gasped, and writhed, overtaken by his continued plucking at my nipples and the erotic pleasure it whipped up.

“Use your words, princess. Tell me what you need.” His throat was thick with desire, and the gentle command fortified me.

“More. I need more...” I said.

“More what? Let me hear you say it. What does my sweet little demon need me to do to her?” he asked.

“Put your mouth on me.”

He obliged, sliding his tongue slowly from my collarbone to my right nipple. He sucked the hard peak softly at first, then increased the intensity as I begged him for more. His palms roamed over my body, caressing every inch of me, and to know those enormous hands were touching me was mind-boggling and pussy-pulsating.

My desire grew and I longed to have him closer. I wrapped my fingers around his belt and tugged gently, undoing the buckle. He stood and stripped off his shirt, teasing me further with his words, “That’s it. Let me hear you beg for it, princess. Tell me how you want Daddy’s big cock between your legs.” It drove me insane when he talked like this, which was how I knew the whole daddy-dom aspect of BDSM was exactly right for me without ever having explored it before. Riley had a hand in this, as with so many other things

He kissed me deeply, pushing his tongue between my lips. His hands roamed down to my waist until he reached the hem of my pajama shorts. With one swift move, he pushed them off of me.

He grabbed my thighs and pulled them apart, spreading me out on the bed in front of him. His eyes gorged on me as they moved up and down my body.

“You look so beautiful like this,” he murmured against my neck as he leaned in to nip at it gently.

“I can feel how ready you are with just a touch of my finger,” Riley said as he dipped it into the ache that was

begging for him. He licked the slickness off himself and settled onto the mattress. “I’m not sure I’d still be able to drive to the fire station each day if I had this delicious pussy waiting for me at home.”

I bit my lip as he blew hotly on the spot between my legs before pressing into it with his tongue. He groaned against me as he devoured me, exploring the area with the utmost attention to detail. I got hotter and hotter by the second under his touch.

“Yes,” I gasped out in response, as the heat radiated through me.

“Good girl,” Riley said approvingly as he trailed his fingertips along the inside of my thighs. “You have no idea how much I enjoy seeing you let go like this. You make me so proud when you tell me what you want. When you’re so ready for me.”

If there was one thing I excelled at, it was letting my mind wander. Even with Riley between my legs, about to work his magic, I found myself staring at the brilliant ring on my finger and pretending it was all real. That he’d consider me perfect till the end of our days. That I’d met a man who would put up with my crazy shenanigans, and not only tolerate them, but love me because of them.

It was admittedly an impossible dream, but one I clung to like a life raft.

Suddenly Riley’s hot tongue licking small circles across my breast snapped me right out of my daydream and sent a fiery electric shock straight to my clit.

When he spoke again, his tone had a rich, dark quality that was both commanding and enchanting. “Where’d you go, you naughty thing? Pay attention, Faith, and cum in my mouth like a good girl. I want to taste you on my tongue.”

Ever since I became pregnant, that spot had become more sensitive. Each day, I counted the minutes until I could leave work and rush home to my toy. Riley’s ban on sex made things even more unbearable. But now I didn’t need to get myself off.

He lowered his handsome face between my legs again to go to town on me.

He sucked the tingling bundle of nerves into his mouth, sending waves of desire through my body that made me dizzy. His tongue explored every inch of my wetness, and I moaned an appeal as the sensations intensified. His hands moved to cup my butt and pull me closer, and he pushed his fingers into me, thrusting in a rhythmic motion that echoed the movement of his tongue on my clit.

I saw stars. Extraterrestrials, maybe.

I watched mesmerized as Riley's head bobbed up and down, his lips slipping and sliding over my folds as if he were a starving man. He moved with the skill of a professional and the heat of his kisses exacerbated my pleasure.

Riley's eyes were closed in concentration as he pleased me with his tongue. His full lips parted as he drank me in. The sight was like a drug and drew me further under his spell. His mouth coaxed the most intense pleasure I'd ever experienced. He moved with expert precision, as he devoured me with each gentle kiss and powerful suck. He opened his eyes and stared up into mine.

It wasn't our age difference that made him better than any other lover; it was his sheer enthusiasm for the act. It was his sheer enjoyment of the act. Not too hard, not too soft, just the right amount of pressure applied, and when I thought it couldn't get any better, his tongue circled around my clit, making me quiver with pleasure. I let out a blissful moan as he continued to work his magic until it was impossible to contain the buildup of energy. Ecstasy radiated through my entire body.

I whispered his name and the tension inside me exploded. My soul shook like an earthquake and my mind reeled, senses shattering as I came. My eyes widened as I gasped for breath, quivering with aftershocks of sensual gratification as the waves of pleasure surged through me. The tension disappeared and euphoria flooded my limbs.

True to his word, Riley swallowed every drop of my cum, his tongue darting in and out of my pussy as he savored the flavor. His eyes opened briefly and shone with desire before they closed again, lids fluttering rapidly as the pleasure washed over him. His body trembled, thick muscles clenching as he lapped up the last few drops from between my legs.

His lips curled up in a satisfied grin and he purred. "That's my princess. I've been dying to eat you out for weeks. Thank you for letting me make you feel so good."

His gaze burned with desire and his taut abs clenched as he ripped open his jeans, revealing his thick, veined cock which strained toward me. Its tip already glistened with anticipation, leaking droplets which fell over his fist as he gripped his arousal.

Unable to resist any longer, I reached out and wrapped my hand around the base of his shaft, wrapping its warmth in my fingertips as I stroked it with a gentle caress. His breathing grew ragged when I placed a chaste kiss at the very tip and cast a fixed look up at him.

His eyes were dark with desire. "Now it's Daddy's turn. Do what Daddy tells you. Up on your hands and knees, princess," he commanded. "Show me what a good little cock worshiper you are before I fuck you hard. I want to watch while you swallow me."

Staring up at him, I scrambled to obey.

The heat of his stare was like liquid fire, burning through me as he watched every move I made. His deep gasp filled the surrounding air when my tongue darted out and licked circles around his cockhead, while my eyes locked on his.

His fingers were gentle as they discovered my waist, his palms hot at my hips, which he used as handles, setting a rhythm for me to follow. "That's it. Show Daddy how you love sucking him. It's your cock, isn't it? Any time you need it." With each pass, his thrusts grew more urgent, and I barely managed to keep up. His breathing turned rough and his hands clenched tight, pulling my mouth onto him so he plunged to the back of my throat.

I licked every inch of his shaft, faster now, wanting desperately to please him, savoring every inch of his deliciousness as my drool dripped down my chin and tears leaked from my eyes. His body trembled under my touch and a low keening escaped his lips in response. I mewled around his thickness, loving how I was completely at his mercy while he rough-fucked my mouth.

It made me need his gigantic cock inside me.

Now.

Finally, he flipped me onto my back, pinning me to the mattress so that we were face to face again. His body was a canvas of rippling muscles, and I felt small and vulnerable as I lay beneath him. His gaze captured mine, demanding submission even as his hands bound my wrists above my head. With every breath, his hardness brushed against my sex, dragging out a longing that threatened to consume me. I began to writhe and buck when he lowered a hand and used it to tease me with the tip, drawing circles around my clit.

His lips parted in breathless anticipation, and the fire of his desire licked at my skin. “What a well-behaved little cock sucker you are. That pretty face deserves to get fucked, doesn’t it? Do you think your pussy has earned this dick?” He took said member in his hand and smacked my clit with its heavy weight. Each thwack roused a fresh wave of pleasure that rolled through my body.

I was completely at his mercy as I felt the sensations radiating outwards from my core.

He smiled down at me indulgently before finally giving in to his own desires and plunging into me with one powerful thrust.

I gasped, reveling in the feeling of his hard length gliding over my inner walls. My hands clutched the sheets, digging into the soft fabric as I grit my teeth and tried to clutch at some semblance of control. He moved slowly, savoring each moment as if it was our first time together. My fingers went to the top of his head, guiding him as I chased a pleasure that threatened to overwhelm me.

Riley made a ravenous sound at the back of his throat. “Mark me with your nails. Show everyone you own me.” His huge cock stuffed inside me and moved with a steady, relentless tempo.

“So tight and warm, angel. You feel like home. I knew it from our very first night together.” His eyes never left mine as his thrusts turned frantic, pumping in and out of me with animalistic lust. My moans echoed through the room as his dick filled me completely, missing him each time he pulled out. His immense size rammed inside me, filling every crevice. His hips kept up a relentless rhythm, and I clung to him as if for dear life, desperate for any kind of reprieve from the sensations that consumed me whole.

My moans grew louder as his strokes increased in intensity until I thought I’d burst from the thrill. I bucked and writhed against him as orgasmic electricity coursed through me, making me shudder.

Riley’s reaction was instant, and he surged forward, pushing deep inside, and his rigid shaft pummeled me over and over again in a wild frenzy of passion. His thrusts shook my body with their power, and soon he let out a rough shout as he came. The spill of hot liquid flooded my insides as our bodies shuddered in unison. I wrapped my legs tightly around his waist, imagining he was putting another baby in me.

His hands gripped mine as we rocked together until we finally stopped reeling from our explosive climaxes.

His voice husked out a demand. “Tell me who owns this fucking pussy for life.”

My heart lurched. He wouldn’t take possession of that part of my anatomy and leave the rest behind, would he? “You do, Daddy,” I whispered, a hum of satisfaction on my lips.

Collapsing beside me, he pulled me into an embrace and kissed the top of my head, his breath hot on my scalp, tenderly whispering, “That’s my good fucking girl.”

If only we could stay this way forever.

But I could never be the good girl he deserved.

I was too much of a fuck up for that.

# CHAPTER 16



# RILEY

**A**fter the best blow job of my life, some mind blowing sex, and a lengthy cuddle session, Faith showered while I sat on her bed. My heart pounded intensely as if I were being punched from within. Anticipation gripped me, causing my entire body to shake and buzz like someone had plugged me into an electric socket. Her soft voice spoke behind me and I couldn't contain myself. I spun around, almost leaping out of my skin.

“What are you doing?” she asked.

Wrapped in a towel, her damp red hair framed her shoulders. Faith, slender and fair with fiery eyes, was about to become my wife.

I struggled to explain to her why I'd been taking slow, measured breaths—inhaling through my nose and exhaling audibly through my mouth—knowing it would help ease the anxiety coursing through me. My therapist introduced this technique after haunting memories of a patient who died from gunshot wounds plagued me at night, keeping me awake.

Glancing at her, I noticed the uncertainty in her eyes. I trembled, but couldn't bring myself to reveal my fears—fears of rejection, of her reluctance to proceed with the marriage. The air thickened as I clung to control and the silence was burdened by my thoughts and uncertainties.

“I've used this technique to manage my PTSD and anxiety,” I explained. “The horrors of our work resurface, even if we try to avoid them.”

Holding up my hands as if to shield myself from those memories, I continued, “My mindfulness practice helps me cope, so the panic doesn’t become overwhelming.”

“Are you nervous now?” Faith asked, eyes narrowing as if trying to read my mind.

I evaded the question through gritted teeth, tugging at my choking collar. “Not about work. I’m just afraid you won’t be happy.”

My words stuck in my throat, and I looked away, unwilling to let her see the alarm that still lurked. She deserved a more thoughtful wedding ceremony, but the situation didn’t allow it, and there was no time to do it differently. I swallowed hard, trying to keep the emotion from my voice as I continued to speak.

“I know you want this to be special,” I breathed.

Stepping closer, I took both of her hands and then lowered my head to gaze into her sparkling green eyes. This wasn’t just another game or some sort of roleplay. We were about to make a sincere commitment—a bond of mutual trust and respect.

“Do you, Faith, agree to accept me, Riley, as your protector and dominant partner? To obey me as your Daddy Dom, and in return, I promise that I’ll treat you as my princess and always keep you and our baby safe?” I asked.

There was surprise in her expression, accompanied by a spark of something I’d never seen there before. We hadn’t yet dived too deep into our roles, and I could tell it intrigued her.

She nodded, and my anticipation surged.

“Do you take me as your number one supporter, who believes in you more than you believe in yourself, the man who accepts you with all your flaws?” A smile trembled over her lips as she repeatedly dipped her head in concession.

“I promise to be your confidant, available to you day and night. I’ll protect you and our future child. Always be there if you need to seek solace in my embrace. Reward you, take you to unknown places, and provide you with sexual adventures you’ve never experienced. I’ll be there to answer your

questions, soothe your fears, and erase your insecurities.” My voice was strong and unwavering, leaving no doubt as to my conviction. “And when you misbehave, discipline you as necessary.”

Her eyes crinkled with a smile, and she bobbed her head eagerly.

“We’ll listen to each other’s ideas without being critical. I vow to be honest with you, Faith, and never judge you. Be there for all your successes, failures, and moments of sorrow. I’m your Daddy.”

“You’re impossible to resist, Riley,” she whispered, her lips gently brushing against mine. I shivered in delight, relishing the warmth of her body against my own as we sank into an embrace.

I squeezed her hands tighter, conveying how serious I was about this commitment, and her skin was soft, bringing to mind how soft she was everywhere. If I didn’t stop thinking like this, we’d be late for our wedding.

“Let’s go get married,” Faith announced softly, an air of determination in her voice.

Taking her hands, I nodded silently, ready to spend my life with this incredible woman. Our marriage vow was a sacred oath that I would take to heart, even if she believed it was for insurance purposes.

“I’m completely onboard,” I said, “But maybe you should put on some clothes before we go.”



**F**aith’s family and her friend Luna had watched tearfully as Faith walked down the aisle to join me at the altar. My best man, Duke, had stood at my side, his eyes glinting, looking dapper in his suit.

Her parents were supportive, if somewhat concerned about the hasty nuptials, even after we told them our reason for

moving so fast. But neither they, nor my bride knew that even if our marriage never happened, I'd still do anything to protect and feed my family. That included paying for the birth and any medical care. Whether or not we were married.

Two weeks had passed since the wedding, and I still got an emotional hard-on seeing my ring on her hand. My angel spun her engagement band around her finger, lost in thought as she surveyed the restaurant's menu at Splendor in the Grass.

"How do you feel about our doctor, angel?" I asked. We'd just been to our first pregnancy checkup, and I'll be damned if I didn't tear up hearing the little sprout's heartbeat loud and clear with the help of the ultrasound.

"She seems nice, I guess." Her voice was low and pensive, a note of uncertainty lingering in the air.

"Tell Daddy what's bothering you." I moved to her side of the booth, putting my arm around her. The noise of a group of women talking and laughing grew louder behind us and Faith stirred uneasily in her chair. "No one enjoys going to the doctor's office," I told her.

She stammered, her voice wavering as her eyes glistened with tears. "I-It's not just that. A real live baby? I don't know if I'm ready for that kind of responsibility. Sometimes, I feel like I can barely take care of myself." Her lip quivered as a tear rolled down her cheek.

I grasped her hand, brought it to my lips, and kissed the ring on her finger, reminding her what our wedding bands meant. She averted her gaze slightly, looking embarrassed.

"I'm your daddy, Faith. Or did you forget? That means you don't have to do it all alone."

I could see the tension slip away from her shoulders as a half-smile crossed her lips. Her mood seemed suddenly buoyant, taking in my words. The pride in being the man she could count on was an adrenaline rush like no other, and nothing could ever stop me from feeling this way.

"It's like my brain has a delete button for that," she murmured. "I can't believe this is really happening."

“Get it into your head, princess. Now, do you need me to feed you your lunch?” I wondered aloud.

She smiled and gave a quiet chuckle, her fingers gripping my hand as if it were the only thing that kept her from flying away. I kissed her knuckles, comforted that she would always find solace in me like this.

“I’ll never let you go,” I whispered as I wrapped my arms around her. “Now eat your fries like a good girl.” I pulled her onto my lap, certain she felt what she did to me when she let me care for her this way. My cock was harder than a Halligan bar. I dipped her fry in steak sauce, just how she liked it, and watched her bite into it with a satisfied hum.

“See there?” I said, wiping the smudge of sauce from the corner of her mouth with my napkin. “You have your daddy to do it for you.”

She leaned into my embrace, resting her head against my shoulder as if to say that was all the answer she needed. We stayed like that for some time after finishing our food.

I paid our bill, and we headed outside, stepping into the brightness of the day. I brushed a strand of coppery hair from her face and kissed the top of her forehead before we strolled down the street hand in hand. She seemed lighter now, finally at ease.

“Faith?” The person that called her name had a grating male voice, and it had a particular sound that made my skin crawl—like nails on a chalkboard.

So whiny.

So needy.

It didn’t deserve to have her name on its tongue.

My little one tensed in my arms and grasped my hand more firmly as she hid behind me. I shielded her from the strange man, ready to fight for her if it came to that.

“Wow, seeing you again brings back so many memories,” he sniveled.

My girl spat out, disgusted, “Memories? What does that mean? Did you have my memory on your mind the whole time you were in Mexico, hanging out with other women? Never texting or calling me?”

*Wait a minute.*

*Was she still interested in this guy?*

*Oh, hell no.*

Her next words told me what I wanted to hear. “I’ve moved on, Jake.” She held up her ring finger. “Time to move on.” Her voice was firm and unwavering.

I took a deep breath, squared my shoulders, and set the most intimidating glare I could muster onto him—daring him to take another step towards her. He froze in his tracks, scared by the sudden coldness of my expression.

“What do you want?” My voice was harsher than usual, making sure he knew I wasn’t someone to mess with when it came to protecting what belonged to me.

The punk shuffled his feet before coughing nervously and backing away. “Name’s Jake, and in case you didn’t know it, one man will never be enough for her,” he stammered, before quickly retreating.

Suddenly, she stood between us, shouting after him. “Hey Jake, it’s not me, it’s you! My husband licks me like a lollipop, and satisfies me every time!”

My cock throbbed its approval at how Faith handled herself, my body thrumming its urgent desire to stake my claim again. I hissed out my demand, “Time to renew our vows, pretty girl. Let’s start by giving you a ‘sexual adventure you’ve never experienced’.”

# CHAPTER 17

# FAITH

**A**fter Riley made his mysterious sexual adventures comment, he led me to his pickup. He made a quick phone call and hung up. I shot a questioning look his way. Feminine poise had radiated from the other end of the line, and I cross-examined him, “Who was that?”

“You’ll find out soon enough,” he said, something mischievous stirring behind his eyes.

A tiny fizz of anticipation zipped up my spine as a tumble of confused thoughts and feelings assaulted me. After our encounter with Jake, on the sidewalk outside Splendor in the Grass, I’d felt muddled.

Typically, you know before you know.

Like when you’re zoning out, daydreaming about colors for nursery walls and your future, following the winding roads of your mind, and a tight knot grows in your stomach.

Unlike other guys, Riley showed no signs of envy.

It abruptly dawned on me that his straightforward trust in me was far more attractive than false machismo.

Not a flicker of doubt crossed his face, although we’d stumbled upon an old flame of mine, now reduced to cinders and ash—smothered completely. He never doubted me, even after encountering a very vivid reminder from my risque past.

My face flushed with embarrassment at my reaction hearing a woman’s voice when he spoke on the phone. Unhinged!



I ran my fingers along the hem of my sundress, unable to look him in the eye, and sighed.

Heavily.

My eyes traced the ever-changing landscape outside the window, and my mind drifted as the pickup truck rolled through the countryside. Deep within my thoughts, I pondered how even though I wasn't the jealous type, my so-called green-eyed monster refused to get back into her box.

The idea of actually committing seemed insane—until it slapped me in the face. I had finally found someone worthy of my time. Our relationship was as complicated as a calculus equation, and yet it felt like pure destiny.

The vehicle weaved around the curves of the country road, and as sunshine filtered through the tall spruce, a tightness spread in my chest.

Recognition slammed into me as the same trees I'd seen on the way to Luna's job interview came into view.

All at once, the skittering at my spine turned to a stampede.

I gave him a nervous glance as I asked, "Why are you heading this way?"

He didn't say a thing. The intensity behind his gaze stoked a bonfire of excitement between my legs. He brought the rig to a stop in front of the large wrought-iron gate that stood as an imposing blockade to the entrance of the private club. "Not this place again," I muttered unintentionally under my breath, marveling at its crafted curves and intricate details.

"You've been here before?" he interrogated; his tone made it impossible to pretend I was a stranger to The Ranch.

My mind was a crazy mixture of hope and fear as I considered what lay ahead on this very road. "Please. I've seen enough to know these places exist." I lifted my chin, meeting his icy stare straight on. "Get a grip."

He spoke in a way that alternately thrilled and frightened me. "Watch. Your. Mouth."

Then I had to stir the hornet's nest. "You watch it." I sassed. "I can't see it from here."

My heart galloped as he made slits of his eyes, unblinking. I waited for him to say something.

"Uh, oh?" I wondered aloud, reminding myself too late how dumb it was to tease a grizzly.

"Uh oh, indeed."

Fantastic. The man could be so infuriating, and now I'd pay the price for my smart mouth. I fidgeted in my seat as my fingers tapped a beat on my crossed leg. The pounding of my pulse vibrated throughout my body. Weighty silence hung thickly in the air. He clenched his teeth so hard the muscle of his jaw danced, and he white-knuckled the steering wheel.

The raging tempest of electric indigo in his stare nearly made me feel guilty. But I couldn't admit I'd visited the Ranch with Luna, not another guy—his torment was too delicious. I knew I was being petty. But damn did payback feel good when the green-eyed monster was high on pregnancy hormones.

I was playing with fire.

After that, the truck ride was fraught with tension. Riley's face gave away nothing, and his silence was a wall against my curiosity. Why were we going to a sex club? I kept glancing at my phone, but the clock seemed to drag. Why was this taking so long?

As I directed my gaze to Riley, he offered me a warm smile. His soft laugh made it impossible to keep my guard up, all of my defenses shook on their foundation.

I snapped at him, "What's so stinking funny?"

Riley's arm snaked around my waist, hauling me up the steps. His baritone was gritty with emotion. He answered my question with a warmth that seemed to come from his very soul, engulfing me like a blanket of summer sunlight. "You. You're hilarious. And adorable." He picked up my hand and kissed its palm. "And I love you."

Luna had cautioned me, and she was right: this was one of those times when my heartstrings were like a mischievous puppeteer, pulling me closer to love's embrace while simultaneously tugging me away.

"I want you and only you, Faith. But you don't have to say it back if you're not ready. I'm proud of you for taking your time before diving in emotionally with me."

His strong grip was warm as he grasped my hand. "I've never felt this way about anyone, and nothing will change my mind." He tried twisting the wedding band on my pregnancy-swollen finger, but it wouldn't budge. "Just like this ring, I'm not going anywhere."

"I guess there's no getting it off now." I told him. "You're stuck with me."

"Trapped for life." Riley said, placing a kiss on on the knuckle of said finger.

We pulled up to the formidable luxury of The Ranch's front entrance, and a staff member came out to provide valet parking. Riley smiled and my guard melted away. "Hey," I said. "Luna and I didn't get this treatment." I quickly covered my mouth with my hands.

Without acknowledging me, Riley wrapped his arm around my waist and guided me up the stairs. He squeezed me tightly.

He looked so mouthwatering as he held open the door and allowed me to walk in front of him. The voice in my head chimed as it so often did, "my husband".

As we walked up to the concierge desk, the manager showed no sign she remembered me until I offered my hand in greeting. "Hi, Priscilla," I said cautiously. "It's Faith. Do you remember me? I was here with my friend when she applied for a job in your library."

"Of course." Her teeth flashed as she nodded her head politely.

She kept her lips sealed. Not a hint of emotion crossed her features, nor did a single syllable leave her mouth to reveal any information about my friend.

“Luna is so excited about starting her position here. She told me she accepted the job,” I blurted.

Priscilla’s face softened in relief, and her tight professional mask evaporated. In its place, a delighted child smiled back, like that of a little girl allowed to stay up late.

“Yes, I’m so very pleased,” she said, “I think she’ll be a wonderful addition to our Ddlg staff.”

Riley’s eyes locked onto mine with a glimmer that set off sparks in my belly. The hint of wickedness in his smirk was unmistakable, glinting with a spark that said, “Payback’s a bitch. I’ll take care of you later.” I toyed with him, making him believe that I’d been to The Ranch on a date, when in truth I’d just helped a pal explore job prospects.

Priscilla wore a forties-style suit in a lush emerald green, and there was white piping on her Peter Pan-collared jacket, and a pencil skirt with a kick pleat. She asked kindly, “What can I do for you today?”

Riley said, “I called earlier to reserve a viewing booth for the Dutch barn.”

My icy gaze shot daggers at him. He had the audacity to wink at me. His smug smirk spoke volumes. “Didn’t I tell you that you’d find out soon enough?”

“Oh!” I stamped my foot. “Aren’t you just as slick as a banana peel on a marble floor?”

He reached out his hand and intertwined his fingers with mine. It was impossible to hold a grudge against him when he gave me his trademark infectious grin.

We followed Priscilla through the bar and passed Little Library. She led us up a wide staircase to a long hallway lined with many ornate doors. They were tall and imposing, painted in rich colors with heavy-looking handles made of brass. Erotic tapestries hung on the walls in between each door: mouths, fingers, and genitals everywhere, illustrated in vivid detail. My pulse quickened as I ogled each sultry scene.

Priscilla’s voice snapped me out of it, and I started, like a rabbit caught in the headlight’s glare. “You’re lucky. We had a

last-minute cancellation in the Lone Star Elite Lounge. Ready to go inside?”

Our suite was more luxurious than anything I'd ever imagined. The main room was decorated in a sumptuous style, with a plush sofa, armchairs, and a gleaming hardwood floor. A fireplace provided extra warmth and charm. The bedroom contained dark wood furnishings, including a nightstand holding a filled decanter of red wine plus two glasses. The bed was piled high with fluffy pillows and fancy silk comforters. A wooden dresser sat against the far wall, next to a set of closed double doors. Our guide informed us, “And these doors lead to the viewing area, of course.” My curiosity almost led to my demise more than once, but I desperately wanted, no *needed* to know what was on the other side.

I waited with barely concealed impatience while Priscilla continued with our tour of the room. She pointed to a phone and said, “Should you wish to indulge in our fine dining service or spa offerings, this is your direct link.” My heels bounced nervously off the ground, betraying my anxiousness. I held my breath and tried to stay silent. At last, she brought me to a compact desk in the corner and explained the regulations concerning consent and safety protocols. While I processed this information, my gaze wandered over to the two doors that could lead anywhere. Once we had finished signing in, Priscilla set my guest pass on the table and left.

“Viewing room?” I asked Riley.

His eyes grew openly amused. “Yes, that’s kind of the point,” he said. “Settle in, sweetheart. Enjoy a bubble bath, we’ve got the place for the entire weekend.”

No way José could I linger in the bathtub when my insides burned with curiosity.

Luna and I only explored the areas intended for the Littles’ entertainment. But I was keenly aware of what this place had to offer, and my curiosity burned a hole in me to uncover what lay beyond the next door.

Riley’s delight grew unmistakable, and I looked around for its source. Standing tall and proud, he wore a mischievous grin

that played at the corners of his lips. I swear I could almost see him mentally rubbing his hands together when he said, “Time for me to remind you of the private vows we promised.”

Before I saw it coming, he picked me up and carried me to a huge, velvet-covered Chesterfield couch. He sat down, holding me effortlessly on his lap, his arms around me.

I thought back to his comment about sexual adventures after we’d encountered Jake, and it didn’t take a genius to figure out that’s why we were here. I tried to play it cool.

My sandpapery throat made my voice come out in a hoarse croak. I cleared it, took a deep breath, and asked, “What about them?”

His fingers played with a lock of my hair, twirling it around. “Do you recall telling me no one man would ever be able to keep your attention?” He paused for effect, his sapphire irises sparking. “You were so cruel. I was completely smitten with you, desperate to make you mine, and I couldn’t stand the thought of other men’s hands touching what belonged to me.”

I swallowed hard, having lost the ability to speak. The only sound was the slight rustle of clothing as I moved my shoulders in a shrug.

Fear of being abandoned because of my ADHD-related oddities had driven me to push Riley away preemptively, but they hadn’t bothered him. Suddenly, my self-sabotage seemed over the top. “I guess so. Honestly, I wasn’t trying to hurt you. It’s just that I’ve never been good at relationships.”

His stare blazed with a jealousy that made my own green-eyed monster resemble a timid kitten. “You didn’t upset me, Faith. What you did was torture me. You may as well have laid brands on my skin, pulled out my nails with a pair of pliers, plucked out my eyeballs, and tossed them to the dogs, so bad was the pain whenever I thought of you in another man’s arms.” His voice was thick and unsteady. “You belong to me.”

Like I said, you usually know before you know.

My heart was hooked on Riley before my brain even had a clue.

And I realized suddenly—my big mouth had been writing checks my ass wasn't ready to cash.

# CHAPTER 18



# FAITH

**H**e still held me on his lap, as if afraid to let me go. I gently pressed my lips to his eyelashes, which were squeezed shut tight. His voice was raspy and low, and a subtle tremor clung to the edges of his words, which filled the room of our suite at The Ranch. The irony was, hearing the pain he expressed was the same torture he'd described. Only one idea came to mind—it wasn't my kisses that could fix it.

I mustered up the courage, and let the words tumble out of my mouth. My heart seized with fear—the thought that he might grow tired of my forgetfulness and impulsivity was beyond scary. But as I looked him in the eyes, there was not a whisper of hesitation left in me. “Daddy, I love you. Thank you for never giving up on me.”

A lone tear rolled down his cheek.

Shit.

I sucked so badly at this.

The shock of failure held me immobile.

In my attempt to make him feel better, I'd only made it worse.

My throat ached with defeat. “Please don't cry.”

His voice was a gentle purr. “Happy tears, Faith. You make me so happy. I love you.”

Riley kissed my nose and I wiped the wetness from his cheeks. “Only the woman gets to be moody as fuck due to pregnancy hormones.”

“Maybe I’m having sympathy mood swings.”

“But, seriously, why are you crying?” I asked.

“I’m not crying. You’re crying,” he joked.

I couldn’t tear my gaze from his profile and had whole-body tingles as he added, “The diamond ring on your finger is the least you deserve.” He took a narrow, black velvet box from the interior pocket of his sports coat. “This token is something I picked out for you myself. It’s my promise to shower you with affection and unwavering attention for the rest of your life.”

I bit my lip to stifle my outcry of delight and extended my hands for the present, saying, “You don’t have to pamper me with gifts—a hug and kind words are enough to show that you care.”

“That might be the case, but I want to give you this.” He opened the package, revealing the most sparkly strand of diamonds I’d ever seen. Bright flashes of light winked off the gems, creating tiny rainbows that danced around us.

Captivated, I reached for them.

Riley snatched up the length of glittering gemstones and held it above his head. A smirk curled the corners of his mouth. “Not so fast. I don’t think you’ve earned them yet.”

My hands slammed onto my hips. I huffed a gust of air and pouted. “That’s not fair! You don’t get to show me something so shiny and then yank it away!”

His tone had a rugged, husky quality that was both alluring and commanding. “Agreed. Provided that it’s the thing you have on. You were a bad girl torturing Daddy, and it’s time to pay the piper.”

He hesitated, and his eyes lingered on my slightly rounded belly where our baby was growing. “Remember what my buddy the MD said? It’s still okay to spank you so long as the swats aren’t anywhere near your stomach. Tell me your safe word before we go into the other room?”

My heart fluttered like a startled butterfly. “*Free Bird*. I remember. Should I be scared?”

He replied, “Not if you keep in mind something else: No more of this jackassery about polyamory. I own you.”

“You can’t own another person!” I said, stamping my foot. “You’re the worst!”

“I believe you mean the best, right?” He dangled the strand of glittering goodness over my head. “Clothes off, angel.”

Reluctantly, I obeyed, torn between being a brat and really, really wanting that bauble. I took my time raising my skirt, dragging the silky fabric up my legs while his smoldering gaze flicked over me like flames.

When at last I revealed my pretty silk undies, he attempted to drag them down, but I smacked his hands away. “Ah, ah, ah. Wait for it.” I admonished, kicking the garment from my ankles, turning around so that my bottom was to him, and bent over to pick it off the floor.

He made a starving sound in the back of his throat, and satisfaction pursed my mouth. “Perfect,” he murmured. “Daddy wants. Take that shirt off, too. Leave the panties on.”

My hands shook with need and with a swift tug, I pulled my blouse off and threw it onto the couch. I now stood before Riley, wearing only my bra and underwear. “Remove the bra,” he groaned. I fumbled with the hooks, tearing it away, freeing my peaked, aching nipples to his stare.

“Gorgeous,” his deep, gravelly voice had an irresistible charm that created an animal need in me. “Get over here,” he ordered.

I inched closer to him, my heart thumping wildly at the thought of what was about to happen. Riley looked me up and down, his gaze lingering on my breasts.

He made a come here motion with his index finger, then allowed his eyes to travel from my toes to the top of my head, resembling a hungry lion. My cheeks flushed as I inched closer, suddenly shy in front of my husband.

He clasped the diamond bracelet around my left wrist and carefully adjusted my body so I was splayed over his lap, tush up. He tore the silk away, exposing my backside. His hand smacked it lightly while the other secured me in place.

“Now you’re over Daddy’s knee, about to get your cute little bottom punished. Right where you belong. Spread those legs for me,” he hissed.

I shifted, my face hot at the strange thrill of eagerly obeying him. I braced myself, body tensed with anticipation of what was to come.

He hovered his hand above his head, then brought it down forcefully in a sharp slap. The sting of impact quickly passed, replaced by a wave of humiliation that cascaded through me with every thwack. Alternating shocks of embarrassment and pleasure swept through my body as he continued the pattern with measured strokes. His fingers occasionally caressed my flesh in between smacks, giving it a chance to cool before continuing with renewed vigor.

Suddenly, he paused.

“That was an extremely naughty thing to do—making me wait to decide you were mine. Wasn’t it?” he growled menacingly.

A wave of animal submission engulfed me and I felt a mix of shame, pleasure, and need. “Yes, Daddy,” I said softly, wanting more.

“What do I have to do when my little girl misbehaves?” he snarled.

“S-spank me?” I stuttered.

He leaned down to whisper in my ear. The deep, growling quality of his voice sent shivers down my spine. “That’s right. Daddy has to take her over his knee, pull down her panties, and smack her naughty, bare bottom till it’s nice and pink.”

I wriggled uncomfortably on his lap. “Don’t you think I’ve learned my lesson?”

“You tell me. Have you? Spread your legs and let me check.” His voice was strained at the edges like frayed rope. He seemed to struggle to control his emotions, and I couldn’t help but delight in knowing I had that kind of power over him.

“You heard me.” His stern voice interrupted my mind-wandering. “Open your legs.”

“Sorry, Daddy.” I scooped my knees apart and gasped as his fingertips inched up my inner thigh to dip into my pussy. “Oh, yeah. My girl is an eager pupil. I think she needs just a couple more drills, and she’ll have understood the consequences of her actions.”

He used two fingers to thrust inside me, my walls gripping around them tightly. My pelvis ground into his thighs as I thrashed with wild abandon—all embarrassment cast to the wind. “That’s right, baby girl. Fuck Daddy’s hand, that’s a good girl. Let me feel you come all over my hand.” Riley continued to finger-fuck my pussy from behind, until I came in a sharp explosion, sighs turning to soft, whining mews.

I lay limp, panting.

His fingers slid sensuously out of me, softly brushing over my backside. “My favorite sight in the world is you over my lap with a red bottom.”

He allowed me to come down from my orgasm, then pulled me into a sitting position.

What had I done to deserve him? A daddy who fastened a diamond bracelet on my wrist and then gave me a spanking and a climax?

Holy shit.

Astonishment spread through me. I hadn’t expected this kind of fulfillment from a man.

He plunged his fingers through my hair and I melted into his chest, blissfully at ease. “Erm. Are you going to show me what’s behind those doors?” I said sulkily, jabbing a thumb towards the mysterious double doors. A combination of anticipation and trepidation bubbled within me. To steady myself, I inhaled his manly scent deep into my lungs, waiting

for his reply, gaze darting from the bracelet on my wrist to the floor and back again.

Nerves jittered, yet I trusted him. He'd never failed me before, instead, he was kindness in the flesh.

He laughed heartily, his voice rumbling through the room. "I can agree to that. I have one demand before we go in, though."

Before I could process the implications of my words, they'd already escaped my lips, "Done!" I declared, gazing at the doors with a resolute gleam in my eye. I was determined to uncover whatever secrets lay behind them, no matter what it took.

"From now on, when Daddy wants to spank his little girl's bottom, he swats it. No reason necessary."

# CHAPTER 19

# FAITH

**H**is last words still rang in the air; my mind reeled, and pussy ached. “From now on, when Daddy wants to spank his little girl’s bottom, he swats it. No reason necessary.”

He cupped my breast, “And if he wants to suck these, he sucks.” My breasts were so much bigger and puffier than normal because of my pregnancy. I panted when he lowered his head to take my nipple in his mouth, nursing at it. His tongue tantalized and teased me, and the place between my legs throbbed.

I moaned, my pussy becoming increasingly damp. “Yes, Daddy,” I whispered.

He kissed me passionately, shattering my calm with the hunger of his kiss.

He shifted back, holding my gaze. “Do you, Faith, take this Daddy? To have and to hold?”

“Yes Daddy. I, Faith, promise to love and obey you, till death do us part. Pinky promise.” I held my hand up for him to swear upon, the shiny sparkle of my bracelet catching my eye.

He hooked his huge pinky with mine, shaking on it. “Let’s go,” he said, standing up and lifting me off his lap. He grabbed me and led me through the door, and I could barely contain my excitement.

When he opened the door, my eyes were immediately drawn to the ballet bar in front of the large, curtained window.



The wood was covered with light pink leather, similar to the material used on the Littles' library door downstairs.

His breath was hot and tickled my ear. "It's time, pretty girl, to disprove your theory about wanting more than one man at a time."

Confounded, I spoke. "Wait a minute. Put it in reverse, Skippy. I didn't come here for that. We've taken vows, and if that doesn't tell you enough about my being done with multiple partners, I can't help you."

He said in a grudging voice, "I need you to be one hundred fucking percent certain, Faith. I'm not holding you to anything you're not ready for. If your happiness hinges on having multiple partners, I'll let you, so long as I'm in the room. No matter how it stabs my soul like a dagger. Your happiness is what truly matters."

A flicker of apprehension coursed through me, and a sudden chill hung on the edge of my words. "How do you plan on proving your thesis?"

He picked up a lock of my hair and caressed it gently. "What exactly did you think we were coming here to see, Faith?"

"I guess I assumed it had something to do with sex. I had no idea there would be some sort of test involved." Oh boy. My sarcasm would be the death of me.

Or my ass.

His hands locked against my spine, grounding me. "You trust me, don't you?"

"So far you haven't given me any reason not to," I replied, shrugging to hide my confusion, distracted by the thrilling current running through me.

Riley's presence loomed like a physical force. "I won't break my word. And if you need to end it, just use your safe word."

Well now, how nice and nebulous.

He pulled a satin blindfold from his interior pocket, put it on me, and led me towards the picture window.

Don't chicken out just yet, I told myself.

My pulse beat erratically when he placed each of my hands on the padded bar. I sensed him lowering himself to the ground behind me. With a gentle smack to the inside of my thighs, he murmured, "Spread your legs, baby girl, so I can feast on what's mine."

This was when the "obey" part of our vows kicked in.

My feet were wider apart than my shoulders, but apparently it wasn't enough. He reached to pinch the interior of each thigh. Not so much as to hurt. Just the right amount to make it feel nice. A shiver ran through my body at his every touch.

"Take it easy," I warned. "That's human flesh you're dealing with, not play dough."

His lips ran along the interior of my thighs, and tremors built up with each pass.

When he spoke, his deep voice filled the room. "I'm starving, baby. Let me taste that pretty flower."

Pregnancy already ramped my arousal up and his dirty talk only made it worse.

Next, he parted the outer lips of my pussy with his hand and dove in. His hot mouth was on my clit, sucking, nibbling. I thrust back towards his face, and he dove his tongue into my opening.

My hands reached for his head, pulling him closer. He lapped up my juices, tracing my folds up, down, then up again to circle my pulsing clit. My insides were molten lava, and I was about to erupt.

He pinched my clit then trailed his other hand from my ankle, up to the split of my legs, and started thrusting into my wet opening, tongue-fucking me from behind. "Is this what my dirty princess wanted?"

I moaned, “Yes, just like that. Don’t stop. I’m so close I’m going to come again.”

“That’s right, gorgeous. Cum all over my tongue.”

His lewd command pushed me over the edge. I arched my back, and cried out, “Fuck me! Fuck your little pussy.”

I rested my chest on the bar and caught my breath, then heard him toss his blazer off and unzip. His abs clenched against me when he reached forward to rip the blindfold off. My entire sex was presented to him, perfectly aligned as an offering to his erection. He yanked the heavy velvet drapes away from the window, revealing a scene beyond my wildest dreams.

“Daddy’s going to fuck your pretty pussy while you watch what it’s like taking two at once.” His cockhead teased my entrance from behind. “Could you handle me fucking you from behind like this while another man made you worship his dick?”

Shock jolted me as I glimpsed the sexcapades beyond the window. “Polyamory doesn’t mean having many partners simultaneously,” I croaked.

“That’s good. Because I’ll never let anyone touch what belongs to me. And if you get too excited watching this, I’ll know from the way your tight pussy smears cream all over my shaft.” With those words, he shoved forward without warning, pulling me backwards, forcing me to accept his entire length and girth. He plunged deep, his hips colliding against my ass, seeking ever-deeper satisfaction.

Our rhythm quickened, and I clenched tightly around him. My head lolled as he pumped into me, relentless. Biting my lip, my scream choked in my throat as a searing heat flooded through me. I couldn’t hold back anymore and begged, “Oh God. Go faster. Fuck me harder. As hard as you want, you won’t hurt me!”

His brawny arms caged me, gripping the bar and using it as leverage to pick up his pace, pounding me with his huge, over-swollen cock.

“Tell me what you need. I’ve been saving my cum just for you, princess.”

I was too absorbed in watching what lay beyond the glass to respond. What I saw shocked even me.

The men in the arena were cowboys, buck-naked apart from their hats and boots.

They were taking care of a woman, obviously in the throes of pleasure. She lay atop a stack of hay bales covered with a plaid blanket, her neck arched over the side perfectly aligning her mouth with the big dick riding her face.

Between her legs, the other cowboy kept his hat perched at an angle so he could eat her pussy without removing it.

The sight of the woman’s lips stretched tight around the gigantic cock, and a different man eating her out made my toes curl.

I hungrily eyed the two men as their hips bucked against her face and pelvis with unfettered lust.

Riley increased his pace and squeezed my nipples, and by his ragged breathing, I could tell he was close. As the pleasure built, my insides squeezed around his shaft. He gripped my hips and drove into me harder and deeper than ever before, claiming every inch of me as his own.

Compliant beneath him, I mewled. “Is that turning you on? Do you enjoy watching her sucking one man, while another one eats her pussy? Does it make you want to slam into my tight little hole even harder?”

He spoke no words, but pulled out almost all the way, then plunged deep, rattling my teeth.

I knew I was getting to him. “Are you going to pound my tiny pussy with your big cock, Daddy? Fill it up with your yummy cum until it drips down my thighs?”

My body quivered with pleasure as he moved faster, the thick head of his dick lodging inside me with each thrust. He let go of my waist to grip my clit tightly between his fingers as he pounded into me. His grunts echoed in the private chamber

as he found release, spilling his cum until I felt it warmly flooding out around us both.

He held onto me until we both stopped trembling from our shared orgasm. We stood there panting heavily for several moments until he finally spoke again.

“That was amazing, princess,” he crooned softly to me in a low voice filled with admiration, trailing a single finger down the center of my back. “God, you look so beautiful when you’re taking my cock.”

My lips curved with satisfaction as he thrust—so fiercely yet so lovingly fucking me.

We cuddled there until we recovered enough for him to close the curtains, pick me up, and carry me to our private spa, where he loaded the tub with bubbles. With him, I felt truly wanted, *desired*. Not just good enough, but better than I ever thought I could be.

They say we’re born alone, and that we die alone. I know what that’s like. I’d been lonely before. But with Riley, I didn’t feel that way. At all. I realized one thing suddenly while carrying this new life. In fact, we are not born alone. We’re born as part of another living being. And mothers continue to carry their babies in their hearts, even after they give birth.

Riley was my refuge, my safe place in a world that hadn’t always been kind.

My husband was my hero.

We wished it could last forever... but when our weekend was up at The Ranch, we headed back to our regular lives.

And that’s when, two trimesters later, and two weeks early, everything fell apart.

# CHAPTER 20

# FAITH

I mumbled to myself, months later, dashing, okay waddling, between the stalls of the barn at Duke and Clover's ranch, straw clinging to my jeans and the very subtle, yet overwhelming to my over-sensitized nose, smell of goat pee making me want to hurl. "Third trimester, and I'm like, everything hurts and I'm dying".

Moving as quickly as possible, I duck-walked between animal enclosures, bits of hay flying in my wake as I emptied a bucket full of oats into the last feed trough, then swiped at the dust tickling my nostrils.

I knew I had to hustle if I wanted to finish my tasks on time so that I could get home and prepare for our babymoon. Riley booked a romantic weekend getaway to Sausalito, where we'd stay in a room with windows looking out onto the Golden Gate Bridge. With its spa and restaurant, it made for a perfect pre-baby outing. Something to cherish forever.

Lost in thought about our excursion, my foot landed on a clump of damp straw, and I didn't catch myself soon enough. In an instant, I was tumbling clumsily to the ground, brought to reality by a sickening thud as I hit the floor with a jolt. I rolled onto my side with a sharp gasp and grabbed the bottom rung of the ladder leading to the hayloft to hoist myself up.

Stabbing agony spread across my lower back.

I blinked through the shock of pain, then let out a slow, jittery breath. Sensation struck my abdomen. I froze, feeling an ache expand from one side to the other. Then it hit me.

An unmistakable contraction.

“Oh no, oh no,” I fretted aloud. My phone was still in my purse, on the front seat of my car. I’d never make it that far.

It looked as though I was having my baby girl in a manger.

The door creaked open, saturating the dimly lit building with a brilliant stream of light. A tall figure stood silhouetted against the backdrop of the outside world. “Faith!”

I clenched my jaw to kill the sob in my throat, teardrops streaming down my cheeks with relief now that he was here.

“Daddy.” Tears blinded my eyes and choked off my words.

His tone was calm, gaze steady, but his hoarse whisper broke when he asked, “What happened, sweet girl? Tell me what hurts.” My chest squeezed, seeing how worried he was.

“My foot slipped on the straw and I fell,” I explained before a scorching ache volleyed through me again, stealing my breath. All I could manage was a primitive grunt before I curled up in agony.

Riley’s voice broke through the haze of misery, his words my life raft as he spoke into his cell phone. “We need someone here at once,” he said to the dispatcher, but his grip on my hand never loosened. I felt his fear, even if he wouldn’t show it. “It’s going to be okay,” he breathed when he hung up. “You and our baby will be just fine.”

I did the deep breathing exercises we’d learned in our birthing classes to keep my head above the flood of pain that crashed against me each time a contraction wracked my body.

It didn’t help.

Nothing helped.

I reflected on our babymoon trip. How one moment we were planning a celebration of our future and the next we were here—Daddy calling 911 while I sprawled on a dirty hay floor giving birth to our child amidst bleating goats and chickens clucking around us.

Perfect.



Just perfect.

His expression hardened, and he called a second number, determination in his voice. “I can’t move her,” he announced, struggling to retain his composure. “We need to prepare—bring clean sheets, a ton of towels...” my mind faded as he recited a long list, “...and a warm blanket. Got it?”

My torso tensed as agony seized me, and I gritted my teeth against the sheer force of it, knuckles turning white as I gripped Riley’s hand. “Oh my gawwwwwwwwwd.” The sound that broke from my throat was one I’d never produced before, reminding me of a heifer lowing for her calf.

The contractions grew more intense and came faster each time, and when Duke finally arrived, his arms were full of supplies—I felt not the tiniest ray of hope. He stood in the barn’s doorway, panting from his sprint from the house.

My Daddy soothed, “Sweetheart, Duke’s here. He brought what we need in case you decide to have her before the ambulance arrives.”

“Clover’s on her way,” Duke reassured me. “She’s almost here.”

I watched as Riley quickly put on sterile gloves, taking charge of the situation. “Why are you doing that? Is the baby coming?” My voice sounded frantic to my own ears.

Before he answered, one more contraction hit. My body shuddered, and I clung to him for support.

Clover burst through the door with a loud cry of dismay at seeing me in distress. She composed herself, clapped her hands together, then said, “Let’s do this!”

Before being silenced by another swell of agony, I said sarcastically, “I hope you’re all enjoying the show. I’ve been rehearsing for almost nine months.”

My sister lowered herself and grabbed my hand, letting me squeeze it through each labor pain while my husband provided ground support from between my legs.

The hurt swept through my abdomen same as the Eel River after a rainstorm, and I bit down hard on my lip to stop from screaming.

The wave of torture crested, taking my breath away. The effort of pushing caused my body to tremble and sweat trickled down my brow. The cramping lasted forever, but finally eased off and I sucked air in short, shallow breaths.

“Mother fuck, that was a doozie. Will it get worse? Where is that cunt-licking ambulance, *for fuck’s sake?*” I snarled.

“Looks like she takes after her mama, no good at waiting around,” Riley said, his voice firm with reassurance. “Don’t worry. I’m all scrubbed up and ready, and this isn’t my first rodeo. Let’s take you out of those clothes.”

I barely had time to undress before pushing our daughter into this world. Her family delivered her with no medical complications before the paramedics came. Riley quickly cleared her airway and stimulated her breathing by tickling her feet and then he placed her on my chest, snuggled in a warm blanket Clover had prepared.

We posed, frozen, staring at her in amazement. Her tiny eyes opened, then closed in a squint, as if the light of the world was too much for her to take in right away.

Riley’s gaze was glued to the little bundle in my arms, his fingers tracing the delicate features of our newborn daughter. His voice shook, reverent as he murmured, “She’s perfect, every inch of her. Same as her mommy.”

My heart threatened to burst with emotion as her tiny hand grasped tightly at my finger. She was here, our tiny miracle, born in a barn, and more precious than anything I’d ever seen.

Clover’s eyes shone with tears as she leaned over to inspect her niece. “Congratulations, Faith. She’s beautiful. And you...” she turned to Riley, giving him a gentle nudge, “you’re a daddy.”

He caught my stare, wagging his eyebrows meaningfully at me. “I sure am.”

Our family bonded over me delivering a child in a barn. Soon enough, we would fill our days with diaper changes, late night feedings, and teething pains. But for now, in the quiet stillness of the goat shed where two sisters earned their livelihoods together, we found sanctuary.

When the paramedics arrived, my husband followed the gurney, and stepped into the ambulance, joining me.

A single brow jogged up my forehead. “Are you even allowed to be in here?” I asked.

He held my left hand in both of his, smiling down at me with an intensity that made my pulse race. “You’re stuck with me,” he said in a bossy tone, gently pressing a kiss to my ring finger. “Get used to it.”

As we pulled away from the barn’s quiet embrace, Riley’s stare promised to give my newborn and me the love and security we both deserved. I noticed a newfound strength with my baby in my arms and realized I was ready for anything. With our baby’s tiny hand wrapped around his finger, Riley gazed at her with tender affection. He then looked up at me and said, “I’ll always protect you both from whatever may come our way. Our family is everything to me.” His voice was throaty with emotion.

His gruff words of tenderness and protection echoed in my ears as I reclined on the stretcher, blissfully unaware of the trials that lay ahead. Staring out the back window, I saw Duke pull the barn doors closed. I couldn’t shake the feeling that something was about to shatter our happiness.

# CHAPTER 21

# FAITH

A couple of weeks after giving birth to our beautiful girl, I made my ridiculous proposal to him at breakfast, hoping against hope he'd refuse it.

Riley stood next to the cozy fire he'd built for me, fists balled so tightly around his mug that his knuckles paled. His speech quaked with betrayal as he hissed, "I was never 'faking' it, you imbecile," jabbing imaginary quotations in the air when he said the word 'faking'. "I've been hopelessly in love with you since the day we met."

Tears pricked my eyes, threatening to spill over, and I bit down on my bottom lip to keep it from trembling. He looked away, silent, and I sensed the tension emanating from him.

"No name-calling. Remember?" It was one of our important rules. Reminding him of his infraction just made me miserable.

Would he be happier without me? I told him over coffee I wouldn't hold him to our marriage if he wanted out. Now that health insurance options were open for enrollment again.

Should I let him go? I'd never be a decent partner when I couldn't focus half the time.

My obstetrician warned me, but I hadn't heeded the advice. The hormonal roller coaster was even worse after Tabitha arrived. Mood swings beyond measure.

The tautness of his jaw belied his deep frustration with me. "You know what? I can't wait for you to heal down there so I can feast on my pretty pussy. Daddy's going to make you

come so hard, you forget all your stupid talk about baby traps and fake marriages once and for all.” He approached me on the couch, the place where I spent most of my time, a milk-leaking, breastfeeding blob. “Kiss goodbye.” He spoke. “I’ll be back shortly.”

It was another rule. He never left without touching his lips to mine in farewell, and vice versa.

I heard him rev up his truck engine from a distance and roar away down the street.

I snatched up my phone and practiced the calming breathing exercises using the special app he installed, and lit soothing essential oils in the diffuser he bought me. Just then, the reminder he set went off, telling me when to take my meds. Usually, he put them in a pastel pillbox and stayed with me until I took them. Today, though, I ran him off before he did.

Every morning, Riley would whip up a hearty breakfast for us and scribble his “Daddy to-do list” on my favorite notepad. Miraculously, copies of the list would appear on my bathroom mirror and the refrigerator because he knew I needed reminding.

None of these things were what I expected in marrying him, but they ended up being everything I needed.

My stress was so much lower because he helped me navigate the events that were simple to most, but I found extremely tricky.

My tummy growled and I opened the fridge. Containers of healthy grab-and-go snacks he prepared sat in organized stacks. I plucked my favorites from the shelf, stacking fruit kabobs with chunks of strawberries, honeydew melon, and grapes, a yogurt parfait, and cheese with some whole wheat crackers on a tray.

Closing the door shoved in my face the daily schedule with color-coded blocks he crafted to help me remember basic self-care. If I forgot, he prompted me, “Have you eaten? Have you taken your meds? Are you drinking enough water?”

When I lay with my head on his chest as we drifted off to sleep, his heartbeat played a lullaby that soothed my soul.

Shit. What was I thinking insinuating ours was a marriage of convenience? How could I say something so hurtful to him?

He was consistently there to offer a cuddle if I was frustrated, light a calming candle when I got stressed.

He respected me.

Cared for me.

Supported me.

Gave me room to grow.

Showed me he loved me with his actions.

He was there when it mattered.

My throat suddenly closed up with emotions I couldn't quite explain. Something clicked in my mind and I heard myself whisper a promise I desperately vowed to keep:

“No matter what happens, you'll always be the man I call Daddy. I'll never doubt you again, Riley.”

Our vows already spoken, this was a promise to myself.

Whether hormonal, hangry, or insecure, I wouldn't quit on us.

When the day finally drew to a close, he came home and sat beside me, a sleeping baby Tabitha on my lap.

I placed my index finger over my lips and he tiptoed over gently, picked her up and carried her to her crib.

Seeing my expression upon his return, he furrowed his brow. “What's wrong, pretty girl?”

My exhausted eyes smiled at him. “She only nursed on that side before she fell asleep, and this one...” I pointed at my chest. “My milk supply has become too much for Tabitha to handle. I know I should use the pump, but it's so painful.” I placed a hand over my suffering boobie and the bare hint of contact made it ache painfully.

Riley's eyes seared into me. The silence between us crackled with tension until it became unbearable.

The deep timbre of his voice was magnetic. "I know something softer than the breast pump."

My eyes widened and my stomach dropped as his words registered. I pointed an accusing finger at him. "Uh uh. I see right through you. You've got some shady plans up your sleeve."

It had been three weeks since I'd given birth, and I didn't know if I'd ever feel right down there again.

Riley sauntered over and sank into the cushion beside me. I shifted in my seat, subtly widening the gap between us. With a raised brow, I wagged my forefinger at him and declared firmly, "Don't even think about it, buddy. This territory here"—I gestured to the space between my thighs—"is strictly verboten until further notice."

He edged closer, excitement sparking in his blue eyes. "When did the doc say you'd be better?"

I exhaled deeply. "Four weeks—if I'm lucky. Just the thought of making another one of these demanding creatures makes me shudder."

"That's not what I had in mind," he muttered darkly.

I raised a quizzical brow at him, asking, "What exactly were you thinking?"

"Let me show you with actions instead of words." He stood up and turned on some soothing music, dimming the lights, and speaking over his shoulder as he walked toward the kitchen. "I read it's important for a nursing mother to be in a relaxed environment, where she feels safe, in order for her to let down her milk."

The pain in my boobs made me cranky. I crossed my arms and a zing of pain shot from my nipple to my collarbone. "Oh. Shit. They're so sore."

Riley returned, placing a tall, green bottle of sparkling water on the coffee table after filling my glass. Its



condensation glistened in the light, and he beamed. “Poor thing. Your job’s so much harder than mine. Making food for our baby. Feeding her day and night. It’s also necessary for you to stay hydrated.”

“What are you now? Larry, the lactation consultant?” I sassed.

We both held our breath, and the air crackled between us before he finally spoke.

“Let me help you, Faith,” he uttered softly, more than a hint of admiration in his expression as he sat beside me and shoved the fabric of my sweater up, gently unfastening the hooks of my nursing bra.

He stared in awe. “They’re so full,” he admired.

My cheeks reddened as I thought about the implications. A wave of confusion and excitement washed over me as I wondered what he planned.

He ran his fingers along the edge of my breast, trailing light circles with the tips that sent shivers down my spine. A surge of power coursed through me as I grasped his plan.

I watched him while he studied my features. “Which one hurts?”

I indicated the side that ached. “Careful, please.”

He cupped my aching bosom lovingly in his hands before lifting it to his lips and greeting it with a gentle kiss. His mouth was electric against my swollen flesh, sending sparks throughout my entire body until all I wanted was for him to take control completely.

# CHAPTER 22

# FAITH

**T**he air buzzed with electricity between us as he leaned closer, savoring every forbidden second before lowering his head to drink from me.

I didn't know it was possible to feel sexy with sore nipples, but Riley's lips were soothing as he placed them around my hardened peak and suckled like a baby. His touch gentle, yet possessive. A fiery heat radiated through my body as I released a low, throaty moan along with my milk letting down.

He pressed his mouth against my tender flesh with increasing urgency, his powerful arms pulling me closer as he eagerly drank. I melted into him.

His tongue was warm as it teased the sensitive skin of my nipple before lightly flicking over its crest and sending waves of pleasure to the apex of my thighs.

As I let the sensations wash over me, my hips rocked of their own accord.

My entire being craved the assistance he gave me, with this even closer connection than I ever could have imagined.

The sweet relief was palpable. My pain dissipated as the familiar nurturing warmth enveloped me while he performed this elemental act.

His hungry azure eyes looked up as he drank from me, clamped around my breast. The taboo exchange sent an irresistible wave of desire through me. I felt so alive, the shame of the illicit exchange somehow making it even more

exciting. He slowly, yet ardently, gulped, swallow after swallow, and I shoved both hands into his silky hair, tugging him slightly closer.

It still wasn't close enough.

The sensation of his mouth was like nursing, only different. His gentle kisses and tugs aroused an acute ache inside me. Although I was the one feeding, it made me hungry for him and stirred a warm pulse between my legs.

When he finished emptying my breast, he sat up and stared at me appraisingly. "That was incredible," he murmured softly, brushing back an errant lock of hair from my forehead. "So sexy. I felt so close to you. I'll help you like that any time you need me to."

We'd shared something special that night that words alone couldn't describe.

My hips slowly undulated against the comfortable cushions of the couch, driven by the irresistible fever pitch of arousal. Riley lowered himself to take another swipe at the swollen tip of my nipple with his tongue, sending shivers down my spine.

His deep voice was rough and velvety. "Will you nurse on me while I watch?"

Damn, he was tapping into my need to choke on a dick.

It was a way for me to get physical pleasure while still holding off on intercourse.

His blue eyes pierced my soul.

"That depends." I teased.

"On what?" Concern flashed across his face.

"On whether you've been a good Daddy or not."

His smile was boyishly affectionate. "You tell me."

I hesitated before replying, relishing in the temporary power over my husband who was physically much stronger than me.

“Alright. I guess I owe you, given how you feed me and provide all the tools and techniques to get me to stay organized and healthy. Do you think you’ve earned the right to fuck my face so hard it makes me gag?”

I watched as his expression grew still and serious, turning to desire. “Oh yeah, princess, show Daddy what a good little cock worshipper you are.” Riley shucked off his clothes and my gaze roved over his toned body, and I was eager to taste him, to take him into my mouth. He gripped his wide shaft in his hand, pumping it up and down until the peak glistened with pre-cum. I could smell the faint aroma of male lust.

Mesmerized by his dick, I replied. “All right, let me suck your big fire hose until you spray it down my throat.”

He lay the cushions on the floor so I’d be comfortable there on my back, and positioned himself over me, a knee on either side of my head. I gripped the base of his thick shaft and guided it towards my face. He commanded my attention by bouncing his cock against my chin, “Open wide, angel.”

His shoulders were a yard broad and his powerful abs were a fantasy come to life as I obeyed. The muscles in my neck strained as he came closer and closer, until finally, with a thrust of his hips, he plunged forward and, in one long stroke, stuffed my face full.

Right up my alley.

“Are you warming it up, pretty girl? Do you like the special pacifier Daddy has just for you?”

“Mm hmmm,” I vibrated my lips around him, licking the underside with my tongue.

My eyes widened as Riley began slow-fucking, and I welcomed the invasion. I groaned and writhed on cushions, encouraging him to increase the pace of his strokes. His hard head collided with the back of my throat and I gagged a little, but I relaxed through it. My body alive with pleasure.

I took him ever deeper, his thickness stretching my jaw wide open, and the low moan that escaped him gave me a twinge of pride. Each thrust sent spikes of desire through

every nerve ending in me. My head bobbed up and down on its own accord while giving him a sloppy, dripping kiss, eagerly swallowing him.

His breathing became ragged as he moved faster and harder, gripping my ponytail in his fist. His cock swelled as he inched closer to the edge; he was going to come soon, and I'd make him proud by drinking every drop that spilled from his body, as he'd drank from me.

I moaned around his hard length as he pulled out and pushed back in again.

The low rumble of his groans filled the room and grew louder while his pace intensified.

His hips pistoned faster and faster until, finally, he clamped my nostrils between his fingers. His sex swelled and I knew what was coming. "Ready to swallow Daddy's cum?"

He withdrew his entire length so fast it made a popping sound on exit. My chest heaved as I filled my lungs with air, loving how he used breath play to make me submit, branding me as his while he teased and tormented me with his cock, pushing to the brink, then pulling back.

My voice was heavy with sexual heat. "Give me all of your yummy cum so I can drink it down. I love it when you force it down my throat. You're such an excellent daddy. I'm going to drain every ounce out of you."

He made a rough-voiced request, "Your mouth is a masterpiece, angel. Now open wide and I'll drive it deep."

I opened obediently, and he pushed himself inside, using the hair tied high on my head as a handle with which to pull me onto him further. His thrusts increased in speed and intensity, and his grip on my ponytail became desperate as his body tensed, chasing release.

His thick shaft plunged as I gulped it down, feeling every ridged inch of him muscle past my lips and over my tongue. He murmured encouragement as he bucked wildly while fucking my face, pulling out almost all the way, then plunging

deep as I savored the pleasure of swallowing. “That’s it. Breathe, baby. You’re doing so well. Just a little more.”

His pelvis jerked more quickly as his climax approached, and moments later, warm liquid spilled down my throat, as he groaned out his release, pushing his spend down my esophagus with his still-hard cock, forcing me to swallow it as he humped harder into my mouth.

I greedily consumed it, coughing as I did.

With a loud groan, he dragged himself out and his hot cum splattered onto my face and neck, coating me with warm splashes. His fluid dripped over my chin, slowly seeping down my chest. Once his eruption subsided, Riley pulled me into an embrace, our sweaty bodies intertwined after the frenzy of passion.

I remained still before rubbing my fingers in the droplets covering my cheeks and licking up every bit. I wanted to savor this moment that we shared and show him how hungry I was for him.

“Look at how beautiful your smile is covered in my cum,” he murmured into my shoulder as we lay together. “I love you so much, princess” Those few words were enough to fill me with love and acceptance like I had never felt before.

Riley carried me to our bed and held me against his chest with an arm draped protectively across my stomach, holding me tight. This single night reminded me of how I needed his dominance and ownership over me. Our connection was unlike any other—I was his devoted, dirty princess, and he was my loving daddy.

Forever.

# CHAPTER 23



**FAITH**

## EIGHT MONTHS LATER

**T**abitha was with Mom, who watched her on Fridays, while my sister, Luna and I got together for brunch. On this morning, they waited for me to put on my sequin-covered sneakers that changed colors with each step, making me resemble a walking disco ball. When I finished tying the last bow, a limousine pulled up to our house.

Clover arched a brow and quirked her lips. “You expecting someone?”

I shook my head, curiosity bubbling up inside.

We lived in our ranch home off the road and there was a locked gate at the entrance. Nobody just showed up to our door.

“I’ll check it out,” Luna said, heading to the entry.

As soon as she turned the handle she revealed a tall, well-dressed man approaching with a glossy white box under one arm. I recognized the shiny gold sticker from Sweetness & Light, the best chocolatiers in town, and possibly the world. Giving him a perplexed glance, I removed the lid and found three Moo Bars, my absolute favorite, nestled inside with a note:

*Pretty Girl,*

*Bring your wild child self, along with the ladies, to join me for a surprise. Enjoy a glass of champagne and some chocolate.*

*Love, Daddy*

“You guys, look!” I exclaimed, breathlessly, holding the note out for each of them to read.

We gazed at each other in stunned silence for a minute before my bestie uttered a joyous shriek, jumping up and

down, and clapping her hands. My sister scrambled into the luxurious limo, and Luna and I joined her, giggling as our laughter bounced off the soft leather seats.

My sister didn't waste a moment; she reached for the minibar and took out a chilled bottle, popping the cork and expertly filling each flute with bubbly liquid, handing them to us one by one.

As we got further down the road, heading away from Briarville, my friend smiled slyly. Clover and I snuck a puzzled glance at each other, wondering what was up.

The mood changed with my sister and I quietly sipping our champagne as the tension grew thicker.

My bestie eyed me with yet another surreptitious smirk and my face flushed and my fists clenched. Taking a deep breath to steady myself, I fixed her with an icy stare that she quickly avoided. Finally, I couldn't stand her sneaky behavior for a single second more. "Out with it, mystery maven," I ordered flippantly.

Luna pursed her mouth into a cherry and locked it with an invisible key, before saying, "Can't. Sworn to secrecy."

Clover ripped out the words impatiently, "By Riley?" When my friend refused to answer, my sister seethed. "I'm going to 'secrecy' your ass."

"The only thing I can say is, our fate awaits, and it is stellar." Luna hinted.

Fidgeting with impatience, I appealed, "How much farther until we get there?" My arms were crossed as I anxiously awaited her response.

Waiting was definitely not my strong suit.

She smiled smugly. "Not long at all," her words dripped with the sort of secrecy she gobbled up with a spoon.

Deciding to literally go along for the ride, my sister and I rolled down the car window, sticking our heads out to inhale the fresh breeze that blew in as we drove down the winding road. Colorful butterflies danced across the sky, simulating

living confetti, and goldfinches perched on the tall stalks of native foxgloves.

The liquid was cold and crisp in my mouth and a parade of scent snagged my senses. Earthy loam from the freshly plowed soil, sweet wildflowers ... all the things I loved most about the country.

My sister looked at me, her face lighting up with inquisitiveness. "We're going to Centerville Beach? You have no idea why?"

I tilted my head, perplexed. "I seriously don't. Dude is always surprising me. So annoying."

Luna interjected, "There's an elegance in the arcane, resembling the allure of an unopened letter." She had been unusually quiet and secretive lately. It should have been a red flag that something was brewing.

My fingers tapped the seat. I hummed my own tune, leg bouncing as my eyes darted to the dashboard clock. Time dragged on.

Luna read my mind, "Not far now." She grinned mischievously, making me want to yank one of her pigtails.

Clover sensed our trepidation. "Refills?" She uncorked the bottle and generously poured our glasses full of liquid fortitude, helping us to feel more at ease. "Let's savor the moment. It's not every day you get whisked away in a limo."

Her words sank in and I surrendered with a wide grin. "You know it!" A joyous chuckle tumbled out as I raised my glass up in celebration.

Luna extended her arm in a toast. "To women who dare to dream beyond the ordinary, and friendships that transcend time and space. May our secrets, stories, and laughter be as enduring as ancient castles."

"What she said." Clover teased affectionately, "And here's hoping Luna finds her own daddy."

I blurted out a belly laugh, clinked my glass against theirs, and winked. "Cheers to that. Daddies are the best!"

Luna sat small and cunning as a fox, sipping her drink. A backwind from the limo's speed blew her fuchsia bangs in a wild tangle, and as she smoothed them out of her eyes, a soft smile played on her lips.

I narrowed my gaze at her.

Something fishy was definitely going down.

A colossal, Spanish-style estate came into view. The morning light glinted off its stone-gated entrance with massive, variegated agave plants in pots perched on top. As we approached the barrier, it swung open automatically.

We pulled into the driveway and Clover refilled our glasses to the brim. "Mystery rides definitely go better with a buzz." She stated.

As we stepped out of the limo, the morning sun played peek-a-boo from behind a puffy cloud and did its glittery dance with dewdrops on the expansive lawn.

My jaw dropped when a butler donned in a tuxedo appeared as we pulled up the circular drive. "You've got to be shitting me," I murmured, unable to believe what I saw.

He held the door open, saying, "Right this way, Ms. Faith. Ms. Clover. Ms. Luna." He welcomed us with a bow, his starched shirt perfectly pressed and black tie discreetly tucked into place.

"What's going on here?" I demanded, trembling at the thought of the spanking that would follow if Daddy heard me.

The butler displayed an amicable grin as he spoke. "If you'll follow me, please. The truth will reveal itself shortly." He spun on his heel and strode towards the mansion overlooking the Pacific Ocean. The crisp, salty breeze smelled of the seashore, and the distant roar of crashing waves filled our ears.

Luna winked at me, elbowing my arm as we strode a path between dense rows of roses ablaze in riotous pinks. Explosions of color ready to burst.

A tall, slim woman with gold hair swung the door open. She wore a raspberry ensemble as bright as her smile that twirled around her legs. “Oh, uh, h-hi! Name’s Melinda. I’m your helper for the day,” she announced, befuddledly. She gestured to follow her down a hallway. Her heel caught on the tiled floor and she stumbled forward before regaining her balance and continuing on. “Sorry, almost tripped there. Super excited to have you here today! Follow me to your dressing room.”

I hastily glanced over my shoulder, lingering on Luna before I silently mouthed, “Dressing room?” She offered me a dreamy nod and my sister bobbed her shoulders at me, mirroring my confusion.

Our guide strode down a lengthy corridor with floor-to-ceiling windows on one side, her legs taking two steps to my one. With every few strides, she tossed a peek over her shoulder, as if expecting us to stop following her.

Reassured, because in this intimidatingly grand setting she wasn’t as graceful as expected, I watched her high heels clatter on the marble flooring. There were a couple of near-misses where she almost bumped into the expensive sculptures lining the hall.

Melinda stopped in front of a towering door with intricate carvings and declared, “I’ll make sure everything is perfect for you today, Ms. Palmer.”

My mind buzzed with questions. I cleared my throat, leaning in slightly, “Why are we here?”

She paused. “This ought to clear things up.” She removed a key from her pocket, struggling to fit it into the lock. After several moments, it finally clicked, and she unlocked and pulled the door open, lightly banging the back of her hand against the frame as she waved us inside. “Après vous.”

My bestie and I spoke simultaneously.

“Are you okay?” I asked.

“Oh, dear,” gasped Luna behind me.

Melinda rubbed the sting out of her knuckles. “No harm done. Clumsy is all.”

A picture window spanned an entire wall, showcasing the turquoise blue of the Pacific. A line of brown pelicans flew over the first row of waves and an unspoken thrill hovered in the room, promising something that would make me shimmer like glitter.

“He instructed me to give you this.” Melinda exposed the closet interior by swinging the door wide and removed a huge cream-colored garment bag hanging from a brass hook.

“For me?” I questioned, trying to fit all the pieces together.

“Indeed.” Melinda’s smile took up nearly her entire face, the embodiment of sheer jubilation.

“Let’s not dawdle. Time is short.” Luna urged.

My eyebrows shot up in surprise. “Oh, so now you’re the impatient one?” I grated.

Clover interjected, “Get on with it, Faith. Unwrap that thing!”

“All right already, you don’t have to bite my head off.” I huffed and fumbled with the zipper. A nervous laugh bubbled in my chest.

I removed the garment bag and before me lay a vision of snowy lace that cascaded out, a waterfall of snow. I merely stared. Tongue-tied. Clover asked, “What on earth?”

Ever so eager to help, our assistant came over and started shaking out the contents from its protective covering. Her hands pulled at the material as she tried to fix it. “Let me try and adjust this bustle, and you’ll see...” she murmured, her tongue poking out the corner of her mouth.

I was worried that our new companion might mess up the delicate lace, but I didn’t want to make her feel bad.

Was I imagining things? Printed in bold letters, the label read, **MADE FOR YOU BY: Berta.**

“Oh no, he didn’t.” Tears of joy pooled before spilling down my cheeks.

Clover’s gaze was intense. She brushed a hand over my arm and tilted her head. “What is it, Faith? Is everything alright?”

Luna peered at the tag of the garment, unable to hide the fact she knew perfectly well what was taking place, “A Berta wedding gown. And what do you know? It’s your size.”

My sister’s voice had a distinct edge of impatience. Her arms crossed and her gaze fixed on my friend as if she was the only one responsible for this mess. “Come on Luna,” she responded, her tone heavy with disdain. “Enough with the enigma.”

“He’s so crazy!” I blurted out and a hot tear dripped off of my chin.

“Okay,” Clover continued and tried to make a joke out of it. “But a Berta. That’s good crazy, right?” She wiped away my tears. “Why are you crying?”

“I can’t believe he remembered this,” I said, trying to swallow the lump in my throat.

My chest tightened as I recounted. “I don’t recall when the conversation began, but we discussed a ceremony if there had been more time. Before our baby was due and before I had to get insurance fast. Then he bombarded me with queries about my perfect wedding dress. He’s such a sneaky snake!”

Melinda murmured, “If that’s what it means to marry a serpent, sign me up. I’m ready to be slithered.”

Clover rubbed her hand across my back, her comforting words speaking volumes. She had a way of saying exactly what I needed to hear. “Just because no dude ever paid you the attention you deserve, doesn’t mean you aren’t worthy of a man like your husband. He’s your one true love. That’s what soulmates are for,” she soothed. “So. Are you getting married today or what?”

I gulped hard. “Sorry for blubbering, you guys. He really caught me off guard with this surprise.”



Our helper expressed her opinion with a grin, “Mr. Palmer’s intention, no doubt. I’d better fetch a few more boxes of tissues. This is only the tip of the iceberg.”

“Melinda?” My sister’s tone was solemn. “We’re going to need more champagne.”

“Did someone say bubbly?” My mom spilled into the room holding Tabitha.

Right away my baby stretched her pudgy arms out to me, opening and closing her tiny fists, “Mama!” she exclaimed. I hugged her, admiring her frock of the softest pastel fabric. Its bodice adorned with miniature felt flowers in shades of blush, coral, and cream.

“Isn’t she the cutest little flower girl ever?” asked Gram, taking a good gulp of her bubbly.

My voice was measured, “You knew about all this?”

Mom answered—Grandma was still swigging her drink. “Not until last night. Keeping this from you was a killer. Wait until you see the venue outside!”

“Shh,” My gran hissed. “Top secret!”

Hours later, I’d been preened and primped to perfection. As I descended the stairs, Dad stood in an alcove, tears filling his eyes. Wiping them away with a hanky, we waited for the ceremony to begin.

He smiled, his eyes filled with tenderness, as he said, “My baby girl is getting the wedding she deserves.”

I quipped back, “Your girl who already has a husband and a child?”

He chuckled and kissed my cheek, and through the window, I picked up a sound I couldn’t place.

Then I made out the chamber music version of a song I had listened to on repeat for years. The lyrics got me through tough times whenever I felt isolated or misunderstood because of my impulsive behavior. The slow violins harmonized in the air, plucking at my heartstrings.

The tune stirred the soul and spoke of hope, reminding the listener that they were stronger because of their struggles.

Gilded light cast a golden glow over the picturesque site on a clifftop overlooking the ocean. White folding chairs formed neat rows on a lush green lawn, chock-full with loved ones, and a path strewn with pink petals led to an elegant gazebo adorned with billowing ivory fabric and garlands of blush roses and opal orchids.

I strolled down the aisle arm-in-arm with my father. Sia's 'Titanium' resounded from the string quartet, the soundtrack leading to many more wonderful experiences with Riley by my side.

Underneath the gazebo, stood my husband, my silver fox. His muscles bulged beneath his tailored tuxedo, his salt and pepper hair, and his piercing baby blues gave him an appearance of dashing bravery—like he'd just stepped out of a firefighter's calendar.

The surrounding air carried a scent of roses and the roar of the waves, however nothing was as captivating as my husband's allure.

Although stunned by the wedding ceremony, not knowing what our vows would entail, my words came pouring out spontaneously.

I looked into Daddy's electric eyes and spoke, "You surprised me today, as you do every day. First, meeting you. Then, having our beautiful baby, Tabitha. Buckle up because you're stuck with me for life. I love you forever." Then I whispered, so only he could hear, "*Daddy.*"

During our first dance, his voice vibrated with intensity. "This is how it all started. Remember?"

"Of course." We swayed as one to the music and I said, "Thank you for believing in me, even when my thoughts are a whirlwind and spinning out of control. You help make me into a better version of myself."

His expression was gentle and contemplative. "Always and forever, princess. That's how long I'm here for you."

I glanced at the still happily married couple whose wedding brought Riley and me together. Duke's eyes were glued to Clover as they slow danced. "Hey!" I said suddenly. "I almost forgot to tell you something—but it's a secret. You can't breathe a word of it."

He traced his fingers over the left part of his chest, "Cross my heart and hope to die."

I stood on tiptoe and confided in his ear. "Duke and Clover are going to start trying for a baby next month."

Riley's eyes widened in astonishment, and I quickly put a finger over my lips. "Shh! You promised not to say anything," I whispered, fighting the urge to giggle. This man always made me laugh.

He raised his hand in the scout's honor pose. "I give you my word, and I'd stake that dress on it." Riley's gaze swept over me. "In fact, I can't wait to get you out of that dress, and into bed."

# CHAPTER 24

**RILEY**

## EPILOGUE, ONE AND A HALF YEARS LATER

I gently twisted the doorknob, ensuring that I wouldn't wake up Tabitha. Quietly, I stepped inside.

Faith's sweet ass was the first thing I noticed when I entered our house. She swayed her killer body to the beat of music only she could hear, headphones only halfway on she could hear the baby if she stirred. She was in the kitchen, mixing the contents of a hundred different pots, bowls, and pans with a flourish.

Slight exaggeration, but it always astounded me how many saucepans she used to concoct her soap recipes. I took a moment to stare at my wife, inventorying all of her stunning features, but I didn't have all day, and I couldn't wait to join her.

She heard me set my lunch box on the counter and twirled around, unaware of the captivating picture she painted when she smiled. "Well, look what the cat dragged in."

I pinned my shoulders back and declared, confidently. "Gonna' take a whole tiger to drag me in, princess."

The sight of her voluptuous form sent a wave of desire through me. I had to admit she was right about refinishing the cupboards in robin's-egg blue; they looked great above the quartz countertops I installed. Faith stood in a heavenly halo of light beneath the newly added skylight, she didn't have a clue about the power she held. I'd remodel a room a month if she wanted.

Time was short and I'd make the most of it, satisfying her every fancy and catering to her every desire. Eternity wasn't nearly enough time for us, but soon I would have all day long with her and Tabitha. She didn't know yet what I had planned, but everything was about to change.

“How was your day?” I swept her hair off her neck and placed a kiss on her nape. Her delicate sugar and vanilla scent tickled my nostrils.

She had an aura of determination that I found so endearing. She was always passionate when she was working on something she enjoyed. Her features lit up with concentration as she studiously stirred the pot. “Good. Trying out a new batch of our popular rose syrup hydrfacial soap,” she said. “More and more requests are coming in for it and I think we’ve hit the target color this time—blush pink.”

“I’m so proud of you, baby.” I trailed my fingers up and down her back. “You and Clover—once a two-woman show—now juggle a staff of fifteen. All while keeping up with raising children. Amazing!”

She hesitated and smiled gratefully at me. The corners of her eyes crinkled with happiness. “Thanks, Daddy. You know I couldn’t have done it without you.”

The wooden spoon attracted my gaze as she stirred it in a steady pattern. Slowly, I began rubbing my neck at the base of my skull.

My lips pursed into a thin line, and my forehead creased with worry, hoping my news elated her. I’d kept it from her, and now I wondered if that was the incorrect move. A bachelor for so long, I was sure I’d gotten this relationship rule all wrong. I sucked in a breath. “Yeah, I’ve got something to say...”

She bit her lip. “Sounds serious, let’s talk it over. I’ll just rinse up.” She wiped her hands on the nearby towel. She left the pots of bubbling soap behind after turning them to simmer. “Grab me one of those fizzy cans from the fridge, please?”

As I opened the refrigerator door, the droning hum of its motor quieted my nerves. After nearly two years of marriage, pleasure still surged through me each time I did something for her.

She devoted herself to raising our baby to toddlerhood while also managing a business. It was time to give her some

much-needed relief—a surprise I was excited and a little nervous to share with her.

I watched as she headed out of the kitchen and tried to calm myself before our talk.

We sat on our couch, the blinds open to gaze upon the fields beyond. We purchased ten more acres next to the house, giving her and Clover more space for their goats, workshop, and vegetable gardens. It was ideal.

Faith's crimson tresses cascaded over one shoulder blade. Her irises glowed, a few shades paler than the trees outside. She looked me over with curiosity. "What's this all about?"

I reached into my back pocket, feeling for the paper folded into quarters. My stomach twisted as I dropped it on her lap and watched her read the letter that I submitted earlier in the day. "See for yourself," I said.

She skimmed the words, eyes flitting from line to line.

My heart thrummed as I edged closer and cautiously met her gaze. Would she smile with joy? Would she leap into my arms? I waited anxiously, every second seeming to stretch on for eternity, since giving her the letter.

It was quiet except for the sound of her folding the crisp document, my heart pounded like a jackhammer. She glanced back and forth between me and the paper, disbelief painted on her countenance. There were tears on her lashes. "Is this true?"

Uncertain of her response, I answered. "My retirement papers. It's the real deal."

She looked up at me, her face full of confusion and an unreadable emotion. "Why didn't you tell me? I thought we shared everything."

Oh shit.

This news should have been welcome, but it was yet another example of a man trying—and failing—to get things right.

I inhaled, exhaling an apology. "It was a thoughtless thing to do. I suppose I wanted to surprise you."



Her voice wavered with a mixture of astonishment and joy. “Surprised? I’m thrilled! You’re really sure this is what you want to do—be a house husband?”

I stood still, my hand on my chin revealed the weight of the decision.

Pausing to take in some air, I said, “Let’s face facts—I’m not twenty-five anymore, and I’m looking forward to my full pension at retirement. This move will allow me to focus on what matters most—you and Tabitha. My girls.”

She startled me by pounding her fist against her leg and suddenly jumping up from the sofa. I was growing accustomed to her sudden spurts of energy and found them adorable. “Shit balls. I guess there’s something I should tell you, too.”

Faith sprinted towards our bedroom, and emerged with a waste bin held in one arm, her other hand steadying its contents. She positioned the container on the coffee table, between us, and carried on with her words, “I planned to share something wonderful with you too, and left this in the bathroom for you to discover, but I can’t wait anymore.”

Two lines displayed on the pregnancy test that sat atop a small mound of garbage—the outcome a resounding “yes”.

“Seriously?” I asked her, feeling joy bubble up in my chest as the implication of the unmistakable results sunk in.

“As a heart attack,” she muttered, her expression slightly embarrassed. “But there’s more to the story.” My wife looked sheepish.

A muscle in my jaw tensed. “Out with it. Or should I spank it out of you?”

At last, she spoke, “From now on, it’s not only us girls you’ll be taking care of.”

I wasn’t following, and she could tell.

“I’m ten weeks pregnant and couldn’t wait, you can punish me for that later. We’re having a boy.”

In a second, a flood of emotion overcame me. Reaching out for her, I embraced her tightly in my arms. “A son?”

My voice shook with pride as I continued, “I may be the stay-at-home dad of the household, but you are its queen. My queen.” I knelt before her and looked up at her while I spoke. “You drive this king to his knees. You’re the true ruler of my heart.”

At first, I was taken aback by her outburst of mirth in such a serious moment, even though I’d grown accustomed to her unusual reactions to things. “What is it, pretty girl? I bow down to you, and you laugh?”

“That’s how we ended up here, huh? You demanded I get down on my knees after Clover and Duke tied the knot. My how the tables have turned.” She giggled uncontrollably, and I whisked her into my arms and carried her to bed.



**T**he notification flashed green at the corner of my eye, and a single glance revealed it was from Faith, contact name, “My Queen”.

I flipped on the turn signal and pulled over onto the shoulder of the road.

Safety first—and I never knew what kind of text my sexy little wife would send. Especially given that it was about nap time for Tabitha, and Faith’s hormones were kicking in full force.

Thank God for pregnancy hormones.

Maybe it was blasphemous to give thanks to the Almighty for the things she did to my cock. If I had my druthers, she’d stay pregnant forever.

I read the words on the screen:

May I, Daddy?

Depends. Have you been a good girl?

I didn't know what we were talking about yet, but hoped it was heading in the direction I expected. If so, I'd be able to get home before she finished. Meanwhile, I stayed put and answered the video call.

My pretty girl came in to focus. She gave me a wicked grin before she pointed the phone at herself and moved it downwards to show her bare breasts which were already, beautifully swollen from pregnancy.

“Oh yeah, that's what I like.” My words left my mouth as a primal growl, reverberating in the truck.

My vixen stopped panning the camera at her belly button. I gripped the steering wheel, a rumble of frustration resounding from deep within. “Come on you little minx, don't keep me waiting. Show me what's mine.”

The lens inched downward, slowly giving me a glimpse of what I what I needed to see.

I made a smug sound of pleasure in the back of my throat. “I'd recognize those perfect princess parts anywhere.” I repositioned my cock, trying to give it more room. It was no help. The sight of her had me hard as a ramrod.

She gave a breathy moan. “Please, can I touch it?”

I mulled over the possibilities. Should I allow her to grow more aroused in anticipation of my arrival or should I permit her to pleasure herself while I watched? Involuntarily, my mind started racing with vivid images of her submissive figure fondling and teasing while I stood at the end of the bed watching, stroking myself. In my imagining, she threw her head back in ecstasy, whimpering loudly as she surrendered to her desires. An uncontrollable force surging through her body, consuming her.

I gave her the green light. “Since you asked so nicely, I'll allow it.”

She dragged the camera down to my favorite place on earth, hell in the entire universe. I recognized the panties as a gift from me. They showed sloths in poses of all kinds. A bespectacled one was knitting while perched on an armchair, a

mug of tea steaming at its side. One more brushed its teeth in front of an antique mirror with a gilded frame. Yet another wore a vintage-style apron and piped the final touches of frosting on a tray of cupcakes.

“I bet I can make you come just by talking to you, baby girl, but you may make yourself come so long as you follow my direction,” I rasped.

“I’ll die if you don’t let me touch myself, you know how horny I get when I’m pregnant,” she whined, and it was that sweet simpering, her crushes on quirky things such as sloths in pajamas, that she had a different shade of nail polish on each finger that drove me to adore her. It was the same with how she crossed her eyes at me when we had a disagreement, the way she waved her hands around like sea anemones when telling a story. These unique things about her kept her on my mind and in my heart.

“Watch,” she said as if we were right there together. She placed the phone on the stand I bought so we could film ourselves in the act when the mood struck. Rewatching those videos never failed to get us both hotter than an inferno.

“Hurry up, baby girl. Show me what’s under those panties before I lose it. I’m about to explode from the anticipation.”

“But won’t it be hard for you, seeing me naked?” She teased, cupping the place between her legs over the top of the silky cloth.

An aching hunger filled me as I gazed upon her. A jolt of lust ran from my balls to the tip of my engorged cock, and she only exacerbated it when, with one fluid motion, she pulled her underwear down and kicked them off.

I whispered as she moved her finger over her rapidly swelling clitoris, “That’s right, baby. Work that slippery little bud until it throbs. Daddy will stuff his tongue inside her and drown in that taste when he gets home.”

Her sea-green eyes were wide open saucers filled with wonder and longing—all for me.

Impossibly, it made me love her all the more.

“Perfect,” I praised her, as she grew lost in stroking and petting herself while I watched.

“Can you see me okay?” Her voice trembled with a desperate appeal to please me.

My voice gruff, I said, “Yes, but come closer so I can see if you’re slick enough for this cock yet.”

I smiled at her as she muttered colorful words to herself while attempting to line up her phone’s camera with her pussy. She kept adjusting the angle and zooming in and out, trying to get that perfect shot.

My blood throbbed in my veins, and lust burned my brain. “Look at that exquisite pussy. She’s begging me to put it deep, isn’t she? Needs me to ride her, using her hair as reins. You can’t escape away from me that way, can you, princess?”

Instead of responding with words, she placed two fingers right on her clit, making me gape.

“It won’t take me very long, Daddy.”

“Stroke it for me, sweetie. I’ll talk you through it.” It satisfied me to see her slide her fingers, faster and faster across her slippery bud. My eyes ate her up as she writhed against her own hand, lost in pleasure.

“Daddy’s going to force you. Catch you and punish you with my massively hard cock because you didn’t wait for me.” My words had their desired effect, as she continued pumping her hips while fingering herself faster and harder.

“Am I inside you now, princess? Do you enjoy it when Daddy fucks your tiny hole? Drilling you into the mattress? God, you feel so good, when you’re taking me. We need that pussy happy, don’t we?” I squeezed my shaft, chasing any kind of relief from the sight my beautiful wife had on me while she fingered herself.

“Come for me, angel. Daddy’s giving your clit a slap to help you along. You’re such a good girl like this, it makes me want to pummel your little mouth and then fill up your pussy after I’m done holding you down and eating you out. Is that

what you need? I think it is because I can feel you milking me, strangling me like a fist.”

Finally, she could no longer contain herself and cried out her release.

“That was incredible,” I whispered, “Stay put. Daddy’s on his way.” My truck roared to life, my body still buzzing with desire from what we just shared.

I made my way to the place I belonged.

Faith was my haven.

# THE END

Hey there, Foxy!

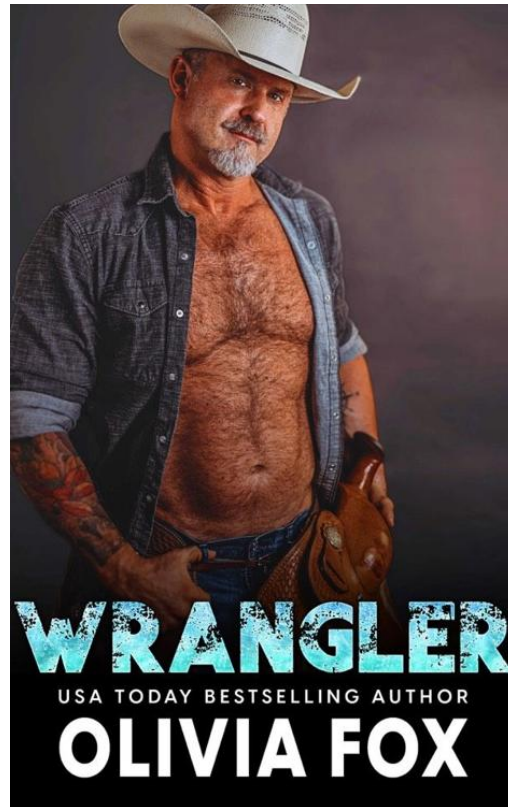
First of all, I want to say a huge thank you for diving into “Daddy on Fire.” Your support means the world to me, and I hope you enjoyed every sizzling moment of it. 😊

Guess what? I’ve got some exciting news to share. I’ve been cooking up something special, and can hardly contain my excitement. Get ready for a brand-new series launching in 2024 the “Daddies of Cowboy Cove”.

And, oh my, have I got a treat for you – the cover for book one is smoking hot. You’re in for a ride with the quintessential daddy himself, Keven R. Davis. ☐ Keep reading to see cover, blurb and [pre-order link](#).

I can’t wait to share this new adventure with you, and I’m crossing my fingers that you’ll fall head over heels in love with it. Stay tuned for more updates, teasers, and all the romantic naughtiness coming your way.

Thank you again for being such an amazing reader. Much love and can’t wait to share more with you soon. ☐



**A**t 45, I meet my dead husband's mistress in the morgue.

Crippled by grief and fleeing from the uproar of gossip surrounding me, I seek refuge in a little-known paradise with wild shores and verdant valleys. Perfectly concealed from prying eyes, it's so far off the beaten path I need a compass and machete to find it.

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If so, why does it feel natural when Mr. Sex-on-a-stick introduces me to the secrets of forbidden pleasure?

His adept hand commands me to focus on punishments, rewards, and the delicate art of being a good girl.



Strict requirements are a struggle for a hot mess like me. So, how can I possibly satisfy him?

Do as I'm told, of course.

The unwritten order of Cowboy Cove is one hat, two hearts, endless ways to ride. I seize this hottie's Stetson with both hands and consent to the adventures it guarantees. There's something deeper beneath it all that tempts me to break out of my comfort zone.

Will our explosive chemistry spark an inferno that scorches what's left of my shattered spirit?

Can I resist Wyatt's seductive power and protect myself from being hurt again? Or should I surrender completely and say, "Yes, daddy"?

I tell myself I'm a woman who can't be tamed. Even if he makes me burn with desire I haven't felt in years.

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# ABOUT OLIVIA

Join over 800,000 readers for a naughty ever after.



Olivia Fox is a USA TODAY bestselling author who writes naughty ever afters for readers who love swoony alphas and doting doms. She also has a fantasy monster romance series.

Olivia lives and writes in the real live Lost Coast, a wild place in Northern California which hosts its fair share of cowboys, mountain men, and rugged heroes. You can always rely on a NEA (Naughty Ever After) with her reads, and you'll find heroines who are feisty and love to buck against their reigns.

Reigns held by tough guys with a soft spot for their loves.

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