

A small town
age gap romance

Dirty

DILLON

BRILL HARPER

Dirty Dillon: A Small Town Age Gap Romance

Dukes of Tempest, Volume 2

Brill Harper

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DIRTY DILLON: A SMALL TOWN AGE GAP ROMANCE

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Chapter One

Cressida Hamilton

Well, this blows.

I step off the bus in my hometown of Tempest and just about cry. Which is fine. It's not like I haven't already sweated off my mascara anyway.

This is so not supposed to be my life. I should be partying with my sorority sisters, not stuck in this hick town with nothing to do and no one to do it with. My father didn't even send a car for me.

Just a freaking bus ticket. I've never even been *on* a bus before today.

True fact: I'm never getting on another one.

There is not a playlist in the world that could anesthetize me to the horrors I experienced on that thing.

I'm sticky and hot and would kill for a margarita. Or seven.

My father is not here to pick me up either. I can't exactly walk home with all these suitcases. He's mad. I get it. But this is a bit of an overreaction.

I get my stuff from the sidewalk and gather it around me when I see Chad, my older brother, and my father's personality clone. Fanfuckingtastic. God, Chad is such an asshole. I'm sure he's thrilled that I got expelled from college.

"Hey, Cressida," Chad drawls with a smug grin. "How's life treating you?"

"Couldn't be any better. Sunshine and roses and whiskers on kittens, as usual," I snap back.

"Heard about your entire sorority getting expelled. A real shame." Chad smirks and grabs my suitcases, throwing them into the back of a truck.

Chad gets a new truck. I gets a bus ticket.

To be fair, Chad manages to keep his scandals on the downlow. Our father never hears about all of Chad's little disgraces. Of which there are many.

Mine made the evening news.

"We're appealing the expulsion. I'll be back in school in no time."

"Sure you will," Chad says, his tone laced with condescension.

"What is that supposed to mean?"

"Get in the damn truck, will you? I have better things to do than hang out here all day," he barks impatiently.

I reluctantly climb into the passenger seat. "Why do you think I won't be going back to school?"

Chad pulls out and we turn onto Main Street. The bookstore reopened. And there's a new chocolate shop next to it. There seem to be more people on the sidewalk than usual. I wouldn't use the word bustling, but there is definitely more activity downtown than on my last visit. My father must be turning things around in Tempest.

The place was becoming a real ghost town, and since he's been the mayor as long as I can remember, it wasn't a good look for him.

Not that it seemed to bother him that much. Somehow men like my father, and Chad, seem to think they're pretty hot shit, no matter what the evidence around them says.

"Chad, answer me," I remind him.

"Dad has a lot on his plate. He's done dealing with your bullshit. If you want to go back to school, you're going to have to find someone else to pay for it," Chad says.

No way.

My father has never been the doting dad he pretends to be in public, but I can't imagine he won't finish paying for my college education. If nothing else, he doesn't want me underfoot in Tempest any more than I want to be here.

The rest of the drive back to the mayor's mansion, also known as home sweet home, is silent and tense. As we pull up to the house, I can't help but feel a pang of nostalgia mixed with resentment. It actually used to be a pretty good place to live. Now it feels like a prison. I haven't had a fond memory of home in a long time.

After my mom died, my father got more and more distant and less and less indulgent. By the time I graduated high school, I was ready to get out, and I don't think he missed me. I haven't been home for many of my breaks. Not even Christmas.

"Father's waiting for you in his study," Chad says as he hops out of the truck, not bothering to help me with my bags. My jaw clenches in annoyance, but I grab the suitcases and stack them in front of the door and head inside.

I pause outside my father's study, taking a deep breath before I knock on the door. When I hear his gruff voice telling me to enter, I push the door open and find him sitting behind his desk, looking every bit the polished, soulless politician he is.

"There she is," he says in a joyless tone. "My pride and joy."

"Hello, Father," I say through gritted teeth, trying to keep my temper in check. It's not easy, especially when the man has made it clear that he sees me as nothing more than a nuisance.

"Take a seat, Cressida," he orders, gesturing to the chair across from his desk. I do as I'm told, but not without rolling my eyes first.

"Why did you bring me home? You obviously don't want me here," I ask, unable to hide the bitterness in my voice.

"Because you can't seem to avoid trouble anywhere else," he replies, his eyes cold and unyielding. "I've turned off your phone."

"You what?"

"Your credit cards, too."

“Father...please...”

“I’m done with your nonsense. I have invited my lawyer, Blake Masterson, to dine with us this evening. I expect you to be on your best behavior. Do you understand? This is a very important dinner. You are to be very nice to Masterson. I’ve picked out your dress.”

“What?” I’m getting whiplash from this conversation.

“It’s on your bed. Do something with your hair. You’re a mess.”

And just like that, I’m dismissed.

Well, that went well.

It takes me several trips to lug my suitcases up to my room. That’s when I notice the dress I’m supposed to wear.

He cannot be fucking serious.

It’s a very small, very red dress with a plunging neckline. It is not the kind of dress a young woman wears to impress her father’s business associates unless...

It’s like getting kicked in the gut when I realize that Mr. Family Values is using me like a piece of meat to impress his colleague. I can’t believe he’s stooped so low.

I take a deep breath and try to push down the anger that’s bubbling inside me. I can’t let him get to me. I don’t have any options if I can’t figure out a way to placate my father. I just need to behave the way he wants until he forgets he’s mad at me, and then I can approach him about school again.

I sit on the edge of my bed, staring at the red dress.

What kind of man is my father, really? He’s always been cold and controlling, but this is next level. Chad said he has a lot on his plate right now, but downtown looked so much better than the last time I was in Tempest. So why is he so stressed that he needs me to impress this Blake person with my tits?

I take a shower and put on a full face of makeup, needing the mask it provides. Slipping into the revealing dress, I cringe

at how exposed I feel. The fabric brushes against my skin whispering promises of humiliation and embarrassment.

I mean, usually when I wear something like this, I feel powerful. I know my assets and how to use them. But it's different when a man is using your assets. When it's your own father. There's nothing powerful about this situation. Nothing that isn't completely disgusting.

At dinner, I shift uncomfortably in my seat, the fabric of the dress clinging to my body as I pull at its hem. My father's eyes are stern, and Blake's linger just a bit too long on my exposed skin for my liking. I sip more wine, desperate to regain some semblance of control over the situation.

Chad never looks up from his phone.

Blake Masterson is not as old as my father, but he exudes the same level of power and control. The way he's looking at me is making me feel small and insignificant. His face is... weird. Like he's not young, but his face is unlined and an unnatural color. His hair is dark, but styled like a plastic doll. In fact, that's sort of his overall vibe. Plastic.

I try to focus on the conversation, but my mind is racing. I can feel Blake's eyes on me, like he's undressing me with his gaze. My father's words are just background noise as I try to keep my composure.

Usually, I wrap men like Blake around my pinky. Generally speaking, men are easily controlled by increasing and decreasing the throttle of my feminine charms to keep them off balance but wanting more. However, having my father involved has thrown my confidence. I get the feeling I don't know the entire scope of this situation, either.

Blake leans in, his voice low and smooth. "I think your daughter is quite stunning, Mr. Hamilton. You must be very proud." His words make my skin crawl, despite sounding innocuous, and I resist the urge to cover myself up or dump my soup into his lap.

I feel my father's judgment on me as well. I'm supposed to be *nice* to this man. I inhale deeply. "So, Mr. Masterson, what

do you think of our little town?”

“Call me Blake. I insist.” He leers at my cleavage. Doesn’t anyone else at this table think it’s gross? Inappropriate?
“Tempest is lovely.”

I want to squirm in my seat but won’t let him see how much he’s affecting me. At this point, playing dumb is my best strategy. It’s certainly what Blake is expecting.

“Indeed it is,” my father says, his voice dripping with satisfaction.

The conversation stops there, and the weight of my dad’s disappointment is crushing. I’m not being nice enough.

“Blake,” I begin, forcing a small smile. “What kind of cases do you usually work on with my father?”

“Ah, well,” he replies smoothly, leaning back in his chair. “A variety of legal matters—land disputes, business deals, and the occasional scandal.” The men laugh like scandals are funny. They aren’t. Ask me how I know.

My chest tightens with anxiety, but I swallow it down, determined not to let my discomfort show. “Must be fascinating work,” I say politely, though the words taste bitter in my mouth.

“It certainly keeps me busy,” Blake answers, his gaze flickering over my face before returning to my breasts. “Your father has done great things for this town,” he continues, and I can’t help but detect a hint of condescension in his tone. “And I’m sure he expects the same from you.”

I bite the inside of my cheek, doing my best to maintain a pleasant expression. “Yes, I’m aware of his expectations,” I reply coolly.

“Good,” Blake says, his eyes never leaving mine. “It’s important to know one’s place, after all.”

His hand brushes against mine under the table. I pull mine back quickly and shoot him a warning glare. Blake’s lips curl into a smug smile, revealing a set of perfect teeth. Like fake teeth. At this point, I am not one hundred percent certain Blake

is actually human. Maybe he's some kind of lecherous android.

I take a deep breath and try to focus on anything but him as my fingers fidget with the napkin in my lap. I attempt to keep up appearances by taking small bites of my food, but every morsel tastes like ash in my mouth.

"Try more wine, Cressida," my father suggests, an edge in his voice that suggests it's more of a command than a suggestion. "Blake brought it."

Cool. Now my dad is trying to get me drunk.

The last thing any of us needs is for me to have more wine. I glance at the rich, red liquid in the crystal glass next to my plate and reluctantly take a sip to please the men. The warmth of the wine spreads through me, and for a brief moment, I allow myself to enjoy the sensation, hoping nobody put a roofie in it.

"Delicious," I murmur, meeting Blake's eyes as I set the glass back down. Something in his expression makes me want to wipe that self-satisfied look off his face. I find myself reaching for the glass again, this time taking a larger gulp. I know I shouldn't, but the alcohol dulls the discomfort that has been building inside me since the start of the evening.

As the hour ticks by, I continue to drink the wine, my glass never empty thanks to Plastic Man, each sip making me bolder and more reckless. *This* I know how to do. Making bad decisions fueled by alcohol has been my calling card since I was fifteen.

My father and Blake carry on a conversation about some legal matter, their voices fading into a distant hum as the world around me starts to blur. I can feel the heat spreading from my cheeks down to my chest, and I know I've had too much to drink, but I don't care.

"Did you know," I interrupt, slurring my words slightly as I struggle to focus on both men, "that Blake reminds me of the dean from my school? My former school I mean." My remark earns me a sharp glare from my father, but I ignore it, giggling

as I lean forward, allowing my cleavage to become more exposed.

“Really, Cressida,” my father hisses through gritted teeth, “this is not appropriate dinner conversation.”

“Neither is parading me around in this dress like some sort of trophy,” I retort, my voice growing louder and more defiant. “But here we are.” I push back from the table, stumbling slightly as I rise to my feet. “I think I’ll retire for the evening.”

Chad snorts.

“Sit down,” my father commands, but I ignore him, my alcohol-fueled bravado urging me onward. I wobble toward the door, leaving behind a trail of embarrassment and tension that will undoubtedly have consequences in the days to come. So much for my plan to behave until Daddy Dearest forgets he’s mad at me.

As I stumble through the hallways of my childhood home, a small, stupid part of me revels in the chaos I’ve caused, the power I’ve seized, if only for a moment.

This is what I do, after all. It’s really all I’m good for.

Chapter Two

Dillon Duke

The scent of motor oil fills my nostrils as I work under the rusty car trying to loosen a stubborn bolt. I like fixing cars, but I'd much rather build them. My custom clients are itching for me to get back to doing what I do best. I'll be glad when we start work on the next phase of Duke's Garage that gets me my own space for custom work.

In the meantime, the people of Tempest need someone to fix their rides. Since the mayor started running any profitable business out of town a few years ago, people have had to tow their rigs to the next town over. I'm building trust getting the garage back to serving the town. Soon, I'll need staff. Creating jobs is important in the plan my brothers and I have for fixing all the shit that's wrong with Tempest.

Downtown is our first priority right now, and since I'm neither the face of our business, my brother Max, or the construction guru, my brother William, I stay on the sidelines where I'm happiest. Fixing shit is my strength.

Though I may have met my match with the rust bucket I'm working on now.

The sound of high heels clicking against the concrete floor interrupts my focus. Who the hell would come to my garage wearing heels?

"Hello?" a feminine voice calls out, her tone dripping with...entitlement. I'm expecting a rich bitch as I slide out from underneath the car. I'm not disappointed. But fuck me, look at those legs.

Standing up and wiping my hands on a rag, I'm met with the prettiest woman I've ever seen. Her long, tousled honey-brown hair falls in waves around her shoulders, framing her heart-shaped face. She's wearing a loose-fitting dress that looks more like a long shirt with macrame lace at the bottom. The women I dated in LA called that kind of style boho or something. It makes her look soft and sweet, like she just came in off the prairie. Her long legs seem to go on for miles.

“Dillon Duke,” I introduce myself.

“Cressida Hamilton,” she says.

Fuck. She’s the mayor’s daughter. Not good.

“Miss Hamilton,” I say. “What brings you to my garage?”

“Please, call me Cressida,” she replies, batting her eyelashes at me. She even thrusts her tits out.

Ah. One of those. Not fresh off the prairie after all. She’s well aware of how she affects men.

Unfortunately for me, she is exactly my type. Fortunately for her, I’m not going to act on it.

I fold my arms across my chest, watching her with a wary gaze. “How can I help you, Ms. Hamilton?”

She pouts, clearly annoyed by my refusal to call her by her first name. Good. That’s fine. I like the shape of her mouth in that pout. I’d like to make a mess of that pretty pink lip gloss.

She does the hair twirling bit. Again, cute. “Daddy’s car is making a strange noise. He sent me to have you take a look at it.”

I snort. As if the mayor would send his precious daughter to a place owned by a Duke. He fucking hates us. She’s lying, though I’m not sure why.

“I don’t believe that for a second.”

Her cheeks flush at being caught in the lie. She recovers quickly, sauntering toward me with a sway of her hips. I feel a spark of arousal at her boldness, though I don’t let it show on my face. I remain impassive as she stops inches from me, tilting her head to look up into my eyes.

And then I get a good whiff of her scent and everything sort of stops like an old-fashioned record scratch. I can’t tell you what floral notes her shampoo or perfume holds, but I can tell you my dick likes it.

She’s more tempting than I thought.

Shit. I turn and head toward the office, willing my erection to stand down. We don't need this complication. I unzip my coveralls to the waist and take my arms out as I go though I doubt it will cool me off the way I want it to.

She follows me, her heels clicking on the cement. "My father doesn't know I'm here," she says to my back.

"No shit."

I turn around to find her right behind me. She bites her glossy lips, and her gaze gets all tangled up on my tat sleeves like she's hypnotized.

"Never been this close to a tattoo before, princess?"

She swallows hard. "Please, half my sorority sisters have a tramp stamp, which is ridiculous. They're trying to bring them back. That's what they say, anyway. I think they were all just wasted the night they got the tattoos and want to save face. It probably sounded funnier when they were drunk."

"Tell me how close up you get to your sisters' tramp stamps. I'm starting to like where this story is going."

She tilts her head to look all the way up at me. "If I do, will you fix my car?"

Brat. I like her eyes. They're intelligent. Gonna have to stay two steps ahead of this one.

"If you want to pay extra for a rush, I'll fix your car next. Otherwise, can't get you in until next week."

Cressida gasps, causing my dick to twitch. I'd really love to hear that sound again under very different circumstances. "I can't wait that long. Isn't there anything you can do to expedite the process?"

I raise an eyebrow. "Maybe. But it'll cost you."

She looks down at her pretty toes. I put my finger under her chin and raise her face back up. Not done looking in those eyes. "What is it, princess?"

"I actually don't have any money."

Now I do laugh. “Your shoes cost more than a mechanic makes in a week.”

“My shoes are seven years old, and I’ve seen what mechanics charge an hour. You could totally afford these.” She sighs. “Look, my dad sort of...cut me off...so I don’t have any money. Or any other transportation. And if I pay you in sorority girls gone wild stories, I’ll have to make most of them up because we really aren’t that exciting.”

“Pillow fights?”

She shakes her head. “Sorry. We hardly ever make out, either.”

“Hardly ever implies at least sometimes.”

She smiles, her pretty lips stretching wide. “Does it?”

She’s the prettiest thing I’ve ever seen and a brat besides. My weakness. I’d love to tame this one, but I don’t need to add gasoline to the fire with her father. My brothers and I are still trying to figure out why he’s so against us filling the town with business and people again. You’d think he’d be happy to get Tempest back on track.

I exhale loudly. “Sorry, I can’t help.”

She stamps her foot. Just a little. It’s like a tug on my cock. “Please, Mr. Duke.”

“You can call me, Dillon. But, no.”

“I’ll do anything.” She makes a show of putting her hand on my chest and stroking down.

My dick is once again very happy about the proximity of this spoiled young woman, but my brains are trying to stay in control. I don’t think they have a chance in hell.

“Anything? You sure about that, princess?” I ask, my voice low and dangerous. “Because I can think of a few things you could do.”

Cressida’s eyes widen even further, but she doesn’t back down. Instead, she tilts her chin up. My defiant cock twitches

again. This girl is trouble with a capital T. But I can't resist the challenge.

"Anything," she repeats, her voice breathy and her eyes wide.

I smirk. "No."

That riles her up. "What? I thought you said—"

"I said I can think of a few things," I interrupt, "but I didn't say I would do them. Besides, I don't think you're ready for what I have in mind."

Cressida's eyes narrow. "Try me," she says, her voice daring me to prove her wrong.

I step closer to her, my body nearly touching hers. She inhales sharply, her chest rising and falling with each breath. I'm a big dude and I hope that's enough to change her mind. "You sure you want me to try you, baby?" I ask, my voice a low growl.

She's beginning to see that maybe she's outmatched for once. My guess is she usually gets what she wants with a little flirting.

"You're definitely not ready to tangle with me. I wouldn't want to get you all dirty."

Her eyes flicker to my lips, then back up to my eyes. "I don't mind getting dirty sometimes," she says, her voice husky with desire.

This girl is playing with fire, and I have a feeling she's not the only one who'll get burned.

"What do you think you can do for me that will be comparable to the cost of a car repair? You got some hidden talent, sorority girl?"

She's starting to get a little nervous. I think she thought she was just going to pay me in euphemisms and innuendo. "I can give you a blow job?"

She must really want her car fixed because she wears a look of reluctant determination. Who wants a reluctantly

determined blow job? Jesus. If it's not eager and sloppy as fuck, what's the point?

She slides to her knees and looks up at me with amber eyes full of unease.

Who is this woman? She's beautiful, smart, sassy...and doesn't have a lick of real self-esteem. And now I know I'm in trouble because the challenge in taming this brat just did a one-eighty.

I still want to bring her to hand.

But now I want to fix her broken parts too. Fuck me. I coulda had an uncomplicated fuck, but no, I had to go and catch feelings.

“Get off the fucking floor.”

Cressida's face falls, her mouth turns down while her hands fidget, twisting her dress in her fingers. She loses that haughty princess look for a split second. Enough for me to realize how fragile she really is.

I want her mouth on me more than I should for someone I just met, but I want her taking me in that sassy mouth because she can't think of anything she wants more. Not because she thinks that's all she's worth.

Who did this to her?

Goddammit.

I help her to her feet, then she yanks her arm out of my grasp.

“Well?” She presses her glossy lips together, arms crossing over her chest. I see her putting on her defiant little face inch by inch. What a transformation. How many people does she fool with that mask? “Are you going to fix my car or not?”

There she is. The brat is back. We're going to enjoy getting to know each other. I haven't been this excited in a long time.

“I'll fix your car, princess, but we're doing this my way. You'll work as my receptionist for a week, and if you give me any attitude, I'm turning you over my fucking knee.”

Her eyes widen, but I see the flash of heat in their depths.
“You wouldn’t dare.”

I stalk closer, crowding her against the wall. She shivers as I place my hands on either side of her head, leaning in until our noses brush. “Try me.”

She doesn’t push me away.

A soft whimper escapes her as she averts her eyes. “I don’t know the first thing about being a receptionist.”

“Don’t worry, sweetheart. You’ll learn.” I grin, nipping at her earlobe. “The hard way, if necessary.”

She sucks in a sharp breath, arousal and nerves rolling off of her in waves. I can already see the first cracks forming in that spoiled facade of hers, hinting at the woman she really is when she’s not putting on a show.

“I like a little sass, but if you push me, I’m taking you to hand. As often as necessary.”

“You obviously don’t have an HR department.”

“Careful,” I warn.

Fuck if I don’t love that fire in her eyes.

“I’m not going to allow you to spank me. I’m offended that we are even having this conversation.”

“You just offered to put my dick in your mouth. I’m not worried about your sensitivities.”

“If I tell my father what you—”

“You won’t. Know how I know?”

She shakes her head defiantly. “This ought to be good. Tell me, Mr. Duke, why won’t I tell my father, and maybe even the sheriff, how I came to this place of business and was accosted by the thug who owns it? And threatened with violence if I don’t do as he says.”

I chuckle darkly. “You won’t tell him because you like the way I make you feel. You like the way I make your body quiver with anticipation and the way I take control. You won’t

tell him because you want more, princess.” I take another nip at the skin below her ear because she tastes so damn good. “You like the danger and excitement. You like the power I have over you. You know, deep down, that I’m exactly what you need.”

“You are delusional.”

Fuck she smells good. “Can’t help but notice you haven’t pushed me away.”

She swallows. “You’re the size of an ox.” She meets my eyes like she’s looking for something. The world has narrowed to our little bubble. Just me and this woman. “I don’t want to break a nail.”

Yeah. This woman.

“Well?” I prompt. “Do we have a deal or not?”

Cressida hesitates, pride warring with desire, before whispering, “Deal.”

“Good girl.” I seal our bargain with a bruising kiss, reveling in her soft moan. By the time I release her and step back, her lips are kiss-swollen and eyes glassy with need. “Be here at eight sharp tomorrow. We’ve got work to do.”

She stumbles back against the wall, chest heaving as she struggles to catch her breath. “Th-the repairs. How long will they take?”

I shrug, turning away to hide my smile. “However long it takes to teach you a lesson. You can borrow a loaner car in the meantime.”

Her indignant squawk follows me into the garage, but she doesn’t argue. She already knows she’s mine, whether she wants to admit it or not.

Chapter Three

Dillon

The next morning, Cressida arrives at the garage with her nose in the air and a scowl on her face.

“You’re late,” I inform her, tossing a shop manual onto the counter. “That’ll be your first demerit. Three demerits equal one spanking session. Understand?”

She blinks at me, momentarily stunned, before rallying with a huff. “You can’t be serious.”

I pin her in place with a stern look. “Do I seem like the joking type to you?”

“Well, no, but—”

“No buts,” I interrupt. “You agreed to my terms, and now you’ll abide by them. Is that clear?”

Cressida’s hands curl into fists, her cheeks flaming bright red, but she ducks her head in acquiescence. “Yes, sir.”

“Good girl. But you don’t need to call me sir. That’s not my kink” I pass her a stack of papers. “These need to be filed.”

She takes them with trembling hands, her lips pressed into a thin line. But she just stands there.

“What?” I ask.

“What *is* your kink?”

I smile. “You’ll learn. When the time is right.”

I can see the effort it takes for her to bite back another retort, and it makes me want to chuckle. My little brat has no idea what she’s gotten herself into, but she’ll learn.

By the end of the week, she’ll be begging for my touch.

The next lesson is making coffee.

Walking her through the steps, it becomes apparent Cressida has very few life skills. She carefully measures out the coffee grounds and water, her movements hesitant and unsure.

It's coffee for fuck's sake. It's not like she can ruin it.

I lean over her, my breath hot against her ear. "You're doing well, honey," I murmur. "You need to have more confidence in yourself."

She shivers, and I can see the goosebumps rising on her arms. "Sure," she replies, her voice a whisper.

I can't resist the urge to trace my finger along her jawline. She leans into my touch, her lips parting in surprise.

"You like that, don't you?" I ask, my voice low and husky.

Cressida nods, her eyes fluttering closed. "No."

Fuck.

I take her chin in my hand and make her look at me. "Say it," I demand.

"Are you going to spank me if I don't?"

"Yes."

"I like it," she breathes out. "Happy?"

Immensely. "Good girl."

The phone rings but she hasn't figured the thing out yet, and I don't want her hanging up on any more customers, so I go answer it. When I come back, she's holding out a mug for me.

"It's done!" She looks so damn pleased with herself.

She watches me very closely as I sip.

I was wrong. Turns out she *can* ruin coffee. She can ruin coffee a lot.

It's fucking awful. Battery acid would taste better. But I was in the army for nine years, so I'm used to caffeine that doubles as jet fuel and is gritty enough to exfoliate your teeth.

"It's great," I lie.

The proud smile on her face makes it all worth it. I can tell she's eager to please me, to make me happy.

My heart swells with something I don't want to name. God damn, these *fucking* feelings.

A few hours later, Cressida's sassiness has earned her another demerit and a healthy dose of frustration for us both. She's unused to hard work, and the pile of paperwork is clearly wearing on her nerves.

When I find a stack of papers in the trash can at closing time, I can't help but laugh. She's going to be a handful. I've never felt so alive. I was joking about the demerit system, but seeing her latest rebellion makes me realize she's at least curious about discipline.

Which is just fine by me.

I crook a finger at her. "Over here. Now."

She startles, eyes going wide as she takes in my stern expression. For a moment, she looks poised to argue again but thinks better of it. Slowly, she makes her way over to stand before me, cheeks already flushed in anticipation.

"This is your third demerit," I say, grasping her wrist and tugging her to the couch. She lets out a little squeak as she tumbles across my lap, ass perched high. "You've earned yourself a spanking, princess."

She shakes her head. "It was an accident."

Well, that definitely wasn't a "let go of me" or a "no."

"You accidentally threw away the work orders you were supposed to be filing?"

She wriggles, goddammit. That feels good. "You should really step into this century and keep digital files, Grandad."

"Now I know this is what you want." I flip up her skirt, palming her ass under her lacy panties. She's so soft, so supple under my hand. I give an appreciative groan, massaging her cheek. "Such a perfect ass. I knew it would be."

Cressida squirms, torn between protest and pleasure. I can feel the heat radiating from between her legs, her arousal scenting my lap. She's just as turned on as I am. I gather the panties to the middle like a thong so I have access to her skin.

With a sharp smack, I bring my hand down on her right cheek. She jerks, a strangled gasp escaping her lips.

“Be. Still,” I order, punctuating each word with another firm swat.

“I thought you said one spanking,” she protests.

“One spanking *session*. Now be still.”

Her ass is turning a pretty shade of pink, and she’s starting to whimper, but the sounds are born more of desire than pain. “You want me to stop, you say the word granddad again. We clear?”

She nods.

“Words, Cress.”

“Fine, Mr. Grey. Granddad is my safeword.”

Another smack for sass. Mr. Fucking Grey, is it?

“Admit it,” I say, smoothing a hand over her heated skin. “You like this, don’t you? My naughty girl.”

“I don’t!” she protests, even as she pushes back into my touch. “You’re despicable!”

Yet, no reference to granddad.

I chuckle, giving her ass a firm squeeze. “The way you’re wiggling says otherwise. You’re soaked, aren’t you?”

She stays stubbornly silent. Time for a more persuasive technique.

I slide a hand between her legs, cupping her sex. She’s dripping wet, the fabric of her panties soaked through.

Cressida is fucking perfect. I want her more than I’ve ever wanted anything. She’s got me by the short hairs, and she doesn’t even know it. She may be the one acting submissive right now, but it’s clear as crystal to me that she’s my queen.

“Please,” she whimpers, rocking against my hand.

“Please what?” I ask, slipping a finger beneath her panties to stroke her slick folds. She’s so sensitive, trembling at my lightest touch. “Tell me what you want, Cressida.”

“I want to come,” she says on a sob, her pride crumbling.

“Already?”

She kicks her legs since she can't stomp her foot in this position. “Please let me come!”

“That's my good girl.” I press on her clit, rubbing in circles until she's arching against my hand.

She makes me higher than a kite.

I keep her there, suspended on the edge of release, until she's begging and pleading for me to let her fall. One more surprise spank takes her over.

Cressida's orgasm is a powerful thing, her cries of pleasure echoing through the office as she shudders in my lap. I hold her until she's still, her breathing slowly returning to normal.

“Good girl,” I whisper.

I gently ease my fingers away from her body and pull her up, wrapping my arms around her, pressing a kiss to her temple.

“There now, that's over. You did so well.” I lift her chin, forcing her to meet my gaze. “For the next week, you belong to me. We clear?”

A complicated mix of emotions flit over her face before she nods hesitantly.

“Use your words,” I prompt.

“You're a Neanderthal.”

“Not those words. Try again, princess.”

“Whatever,” she says softly. “I'm yours. For a week.”

My fucking heart swells up like it wants to break out of my ribcage. My cock is fighting the zipper of my pants. This madness is going to complicate both our lives.

“Good girl.” I hug her close, rubbing her back as she relaxes into my embrace. She's stubborn and spoiled, and I fucking love it.

Too much.

My brothers are probably going to be as mad as her father about this. We've got some real fucking Romeo and Juliet shit going on.

Hopefully we can keep the body count lower.

Chapter Four

Cressida

I get to work early the next morning. I know, right? Surprised me too.

A very large and usually in charge part of my personality knows that arriving late would get me another round of Stern Dillon and that would be fun and something I might enjoy again. But a voice I don't usually listen to cautioned me against it. I'm not afraid of Stern Dillon, I'm just not mentally or emotionally prepared to deal with him again yet.

Frankly, I don't know how to deal with him.

As I sit at my desk, my mind wanders back to the events of last night. Never having been spanked, the surprise was on me that it would feel so good. How he pulled me over his lap, how his hand felt on my bare skin, how the sting of each slap turned into a warm and throbbing pleasure. I can't believe how turned on I was, how I begged him to make me come.

I don't usually have orgasms with a partner involved, so having a raging, shuddering climax on his lap was a plot twist to the narrative I've been running in my head that I don't really like sex.

Don't get me wrong. I like orgasms. But they are usually found in quiet moments alone. Sex has always been about getting or keeping a guy's interest. Dillon is the first man who's ever focused solely on my pleasure.

He was hard as granite but did nothing about it. Yet I got to come. Hard.

So yeah, all that was confusing but what I really haven't come to terms with is my reaction to Dillon's praise. And until I do, it's best to not put myself in that head space again. Admiration I'm used to. *You're so pretty*, fine. That I can deal with. Praise is something else.

Telling me I did well, that I'm a good girl...that tripped a wire in my brain. His words felt like a hit off one of those drugs that gets you hooked the first time you get high.

Dillon is either very good for me or very, very bad. But I'm not sure I'll ever get to know which because of my family. The whole beef with my father thing adds another layer of complications.

My relationship with my dad is already at an all-time low. He won't talk to me about fighting the expulsion, and he hasn't offered tuition payments anywhere else. If I want to get out of Tempest, and I do, fraternizing with his sworn enemies is stupid.

I just can't figure out why everyone is so mad at each other. Why does my father hate the Duke brothers so much?

I'm just going to do what needs to be done to get my car fixed and try to forget about the orgasm and the confusing man who gave it to me. It's better for all of us that way.

Even if he weren't a Duke, he's still not the kind of guy I pictured myself with. He's intense, for one thing. Most of the guys I date swim in the shallows, and that's my preference as well.

Plus, he's so burly and big and...he's just wrong for me. Mechanics with more tattoos than skin are not my type. I'm trying to work my way out of a scandal, not into a bigger one. No matter how he makes me feel.

The office feels even more cluttered than yesterday, stacks of files and papers scattered about haphazardly. It's exactly how I left it, but it's hard to think straight in here. There isn't any reason for this much paper to begin with. There's a perfectly good working computer on the desk. Why are we not using it more?

Since I can't solve that mystery yet either, I get the coffee going because I know I can at least manage that. Dillon will be so surprised to get to work and already have the coffee ready just the way he likes it.

Once that's percolating, I straighten out the desk as best I can, but it's the beast he calls a phone that I really want to tackle today. I try to familiarize myself with the buttons and settings. I'm one hundred percent certain that I'm going to be

hanging up on even more people today than yesterday. I'm also sure this phone is from 1992.

My gaze wanders to the couch, and the sound of Dillon's palm cracking on my ass echoes in my brain. The memory sends heat flooding between my legs, and I squeeze them together, trying to ignore the growing ache.

This is so not me.

Dillon strides into the room, his heavy boots thumping against the floor. I look up at him through my lashes, my cheeks flushing. Can he tell what I was just thinking about?

He stops, taking in the office and my expression. He frowns like nothing makes sense to him either.

"Hi."

"The place looks great," he says, glancing at the organized desk. His praise sends a thrill through me, and I have to fight back a smile. Why do I crave his approval so much? "You already made coffee?" He steps closer, his presence making me feel both small and safe all at once.

Dillon studies me for a moment, his eyes searching mine as if trying to find an answer to a question he's too afraid to ask. Finally, he says, "Thank you for helping me in here. I know you're not used to doing office work, but neither am I. I really appreciate your time."

Pride swells within me, warm and heady like the finest margarita buzz. No one has ever made me feel this way before, not even my own father. Is it strange that Dillon's words mean more to me than any compliment I've received in my entire life?

I mean, it's no secret that the help I'm offering isn't exactly quality organization. He's praising my *effort*. Why is that so hot?

"Thank you," I whisper, my cheeks burning.

This is weird. I need to finish up this week and get out of this garage. I'm feeling soft and gooey over a guy that looks

like a biker dude and thinks I'm his to dominate. None of those things go together.

Of course, I *agreed* that I was his to dominate yesterday. But a girl can't be held responsible for what she says after an orgasm like that. If I keep my nose to the grindstone and not do anything to agitate the man, we should be able to get through this week without any more sexy situations. A shame, but necessary.

"You okay?" Dillon's hand comes up to cup my cheek, his thumb gently stroking my skin.

The office door opens with a squeak and we break apart.

"Well, this is cozy," the man says, extending his hand. "I'm William Duke. Dillon's brother."

Well, hot genes run in the Duke family I guess.

"I'm Cressida, the temp for a week," I say, shaking his hand. His grip is firm but friendly.

"Cress is helping me get the office under control," Dillon says.

"I see," William replies, his lips widening into something less of a smile and more of a taunt toward Dillon.

"Can I get you some coffee, William?"

He is about to say yes, but Dillon says, "No," sharply.

William makes a face at him that says in perfect brother speak, "*WTF crawled up your ass?*"

"You've quite a job ahead of you, Cressida. Dillon isn't the nicest of the Duke brothers. Maybe when you finish out your week here, you can come be my assistant instead. I'm much more easy going." He winks at me, and I feel my cheeks flush under his gaze.

"Alright, enough of that," Dillon interjects, his jaw tensing.

Jealous much? I can practically taste the testosterone in the air, and it's a little bit delicious. First Dillon wanted to keep

the coffee I made all to himself. Now he doesn't want me to work for anyone but him.

"Also, William is not easygoing," Dillon tells me. "He's a total control freak. And a neat freak. Just a freak in general."

William chuckles, raising his hands in surrender. "Not trying to poach your employee." To me, he says, "Maybe we can just grab a drink sometime instead."

"I mean it fuckface," Dillon growls.

William laughs. "So it's like that is it?"

"Are you here for a reason?"

"Actually, yes. To remind you to give me fifty bucks. I picked up Max and Cherry's engagement gift. Also, don't forget about the barbecue at their place tonight." William looks at me. "You should come, Cressida. Are you new in town, or do you already know Cherry?"

I look at Dillon before I answer, but he doesn't give me any clue how to proceed. "I was raised here. I've been away at school."

"Her name is Cressida Hamilton," Dillon says, and I watch as William's eyes widen with recognition.

"Hamilton? As in Mayor Hamilton's daughter? The mayor who hates us? What the fuck, Dillon?"

Yikes. William's reaction to my name is sort of an explosion.

"Yes," I admit, lowering my gaze. "My dad is Mayor Hamilton."

"And if anyone has a problem with her being here, they can take it up with me," Dillon growls, his arm tightening protectively around me.

William looks at us like he's very confused. "Easy bro. I'm just shocked."

"Cressida needed a job. I needed some help."

William shakes his head. “Does your dad know about this?”

“No,” I admit. “I’m not trying to cause Dillon any problems.”

“You’re not,” Dillon interrupts.

That is not what William’s body language is telling me.

“Maybe if someone explained to me what is going on... why is everyone so mad?”

William plops onto the couch. *That* couch. I share a horrified look with Dillon, but he just smiles, his gaze boring a hole right through me. He’s imagining it too.

Oh my God. This is mortifying.

William says, “Tempest was turning into a ghost town.”

I nod. “Right, but things have turned around lately, haven’t they? I get that people think my dad was doing a bad job as mayor, but he and his lawyer have been fixing things. Downtown is looking better already.”

A little vein shows itself on William’s temple. “Your dad and his lawyer have been fighting us every step of the way,” he protests.

“Fighting you?”

Dillon is very tense next to me. “My brothers and I formed a holding company last year and started buying the abandoned storefronts and houses. We moved back a few months ago with a plan to fix them up and bring businesses back. Your father hired his lawyer to find a way to stop us.”

I’m no business mastermind, but that makes no sense. “Why wouldn’t they want you to succeed? It benefits my father more than anyone to have a healthy town.”

William’s eyes narrow. “You’re right and that’s why I don’t know how to answer you.”

It doesn’t make any sense. Are they lying? Trying to make my dad look bad?

But then I remember how tense my dad has been. The looks he shared with the slimy lawyer. The comment my brother made about our father having a lot on his plate.

“You okay, Cress?” Dillon asks.

“Yeah, I’m just trying to understand. Believe me, I think Blake Masterson is a giant creep, but there doesn’t seem to be a reason that makes sense why he and my dad would want Tempest to fail, unless...”

“Unless what, honey?”

I shake my head. “It’s silly. I don’t know anything about this kind of stuff.”

Dillon turns me so that I’m forced to look at him. “You’re a smart woman. If you have an idea, then I want to hear it.”

Again, a strange heat blooms in my chest. Nobody has ever wanted to hear my thoughts before. “It just makes sense to follow the money, I think. That’s the reason people like my father do things. So why would Tempest failing be worth more money than Tempest thriving would?”

Dillon shoots a look at William, but William shrugs. “She’s got a point. We should call Max. All these months, I’ve been assuming it was personal. That the mayor didn’t want people like us, people he sees as riffraff, making him look bad. Maybe we’re missing a key piece. Thank you, Cressida.”

When William leaves, Dillon turns to me. “I don’t want to make you uncomfortable, Cress. You shouldn’t feel like you have to choose between me and your dad.”

“What are you saying?”

“I’m saying that it’s looking like your dad may be doing something worse than just burying his head in the sand about the problems in this town. If we find out he’s doing something illegal or...I don’t even know. But he’s your dad. If you don’t want to work here, I understand.”

Disappointment should be my middle name. I should be used to it by now. I’m not worth the trouble. I get it. It just hurts more because I let myself get caught up in the praise. My

heart does a slow descent to my feet, and I take a deep breath. “You don’t trust me, right? You want me to leave?”

“I don’t want you to leave. But your dad is still your dad. He loves you and—”

I snort. “My father doesn’t love me. I’m a great big disappointing nuisance to him. I always have been.” I pick up my purse. I guess my time playing office is done.

Dillon puts my purse back down and folds me into his arms. “If that’s true then he’s an idiot. There’s nothing about you that isn’t lovable. You’re sassy, yes. But that doesn’t make you a nuisance.”

Right.

I pull out of his hug. “I want to stay and work off my car repairs, Dillon. I want to follow through. It’s important to me. But I understand that you and your brothers might have some sensitive information that you don’t want to get back to Blake and my father. So, maybe just keep it out of the garage. That way you don’t have to worry about my loyalties.”

“How would you like to come with me to the barbecue at Max and Cherry’s house tonight?”

“Did you not just hear me? I’m trying to put distance between me and your brothers.”

“And I’m trying to tell you that I trust you.”

“You do?”

He nods.

“Why?”

I’m caught off guard by Dillon’s sudden kiss, but I respond eagerly nonetheless. His lips are hot and demanding, his hands gripping my waist tightly. I moan into his mouth, feeling an electric sensation course through my body.

When he pulls away, his eyes are smoldering with desire. “That’s why. I don’t know what this is between us, but it doesn’t happen every day.”

“You mean you don’t make a habit of spanking women you don’t know in exchange for car repairs all the time?”

“You’re going to regret getting sassy with me. You know that, right?”

I smirk, feeling my heart race with excitement and anticipation. Dillon is like a drug to me, and I crave his touch like nothing else. Even though it’s bad for me in the long run.

“I highly doubt that,” I reply, my voice low and sultry. “I think you like it when I’m sassy.”

Dillon’s eyes darken with lust, and he growls low in his throat. “You have no idea how much I like it when you’re sassy.” He pulls me closer to him, his hand running up my back and tangling in my hair. “And you have no idea how much I want to punish you for it.”

The phone rings and we both stare at it.

I take a deep breath and approach the prey warily. I pick up the phone, push a button that may or may not be correct, and say, “Duke’s Garage.” The person on the other end starts talking, and I bounce up and down, smiling at Dillon.

He looks at me like I just successfully created the formula for cold fusion.

And that he’d like to take off all my clothes and lick me from head to toe.

Wait, that’s me. I’d like to take off all his clothes and lick him from head to toe. Stopping in the middle for a very long time.

Chapter Five

Dillon

She's so fucking sweet.

I'm in trouble here. Big fucking trouble.

Cressida flipped a switch inside me. Watching her grow her confidence is such a turn-on. She's bouncing and animated and adorable taking a phone call. But it's the way she sought out my gaze when she succeeded in answering the damn thing that just changed my life.

My entire fucking life.

I want to see all her successes. I want to be there every single time. I want her searching me out because she knows I share her pride.

I take a drink of her undrinkable coffee, which is somehow worse than yesterday, my brother owes me big time for saving him when she offered him a cup of it. But I just accept the idea that I am going to be drinking this shit for the rest of my life because this is it. I belong to her now.

She finishes the call and writes the customer name on the calendar. I walk over to the desk, imagining bending her over it. Instead, I kiss her forehead. "Thank you. You're doing a great job."

Instead of smiling, she gets very serious. "Do you really mean all the nice things you say to me?"

What have they done to her? "I don't say things I don't mean, Cress. What's wrong?"

"Why do I like it so much?" She shakes her head and moves away from me. "Never mind. Everyone likes to be praised right? It's just..."

I reach for her arm so she can't get too far from me. "It's just that I know exactly what you need and that scares you. I know what you need to hear. I know what you need to feel. I know you better than anyone else ever has and it freaks you out."

She looks up, shocked. “You don’t know me.”

“Don’t I?”

She takes a step closer to me, her eyes searching mine. “I don’t even know myself most of the time. How can you know me better than anyone else?”

I brush a strand of hair behind her ear, letting my fingers trail down her neck. “Because I’m paying attention. Because you’re hardwired to my body.”

The little noise she makes stirs up my blood. Then that shadow falls over her face. “All right. Since you know me so well, tell me, why am I such a fuck up?”

“I should turn you over my knee for that kind of talk.”

“What? I’m not allowed to swear?”

I chuckle softly, taking her hand in mine. “You’re not allowed to talk down on yourself. You insult me every time you think an unkind thought about yourself.”

She shakes her head. I think she’s about to cry. “Dillon, the sooner you realize my looks are the only thing I’ve got going for myself, the better off you’ll be. You’re looking at me like I’m special and I’m not.”

“You’re hot as fuck, Cress, but if that’s all you were, I’d be bored. Trust me, you are worth a lot more than your beautiful face and your smoking hot body.”

She gestures to the office. “Yesterday, I didn’t even know how to file papers. Or make a simple pot of coffee.”

“Yeah,” I agree. “And today you do. And here you are early to work, learning new things, and trying hard to be a good employee when you’ve never worked a day in your life.”

She shrugs and looks away, but I can tell she’s pleased with my words. I pull her closer to me until our bodies are flush against each other. My hands travel down her back, feeling the curves of her body.

“And you’re smart. You looked at our problems with the mayor from an angle we hadn’t thought of before. One that

might really help this town even if it makes your life worse.” She shrugs again, but she eats all this up. “And instead of rushing into something with me, you’re taking time to think things through.”

The skin above her nose crinkles. “What do you mean?”

She thinks I didn’t notice her putting the brakes on this morning?

“We both know what we want. But you slowed us down. You could have showed up here today bratting out, poking me to bend you over my lap again, but you slowed down.”

I can practically see the spark light up her eyes. “Maybe I just don’t want you that way.”

I crowd her against the wall. Feeling her body pressed against mine, I lean in and nuzzle her neck. “Tell me that again.”

She moans softly as my lips trail down her neck. “I don’t want you.”

Her skin smells so fucking good. I want to lick her from head to toe, marking her as mine. “I think you’re lying.”

“I don’t.”

“Oh, you’re a naughty girl, aren’t you?”

She gasps as I find the spot behind her ear that drives her crazy. “I’m not.”

I nip her neck. “Baby, I think you are.”

“Dillon.” She whispers my name, and my body is on fire. I’m so ready for her, I’m about to explode. “You’re a bad influence on me.”

I tilt my face, pressing my mouth to hers. She’s just like I remember her. Sweet and tart and everything I could ever want.

Wrapping my hand around her waist, I pull her closer, pressing my body against hers. She has to feel my hard-on. I’m throbbing for her, and I’m about two seconds from ripping

my pants open and pushing inside her. I want her so fucking much.

She moans, and I deepen the kiss. I release her waist and slide my hand up her shirt, cupping her tit, squeezing the perfect roundness of it. I pinch her nipple between my thumb and forefinger until she hisses.

“Come to the barbecue with me,” I demand.

She blinks out of the sexual haze I put her in. “What?”

“You heard me.”

“I can’t go to a barbecue with your family.”

“I want you with me.” I put her outfit back in order, ignoring her confusion at my abrupt change of pace.

If I don’t stop now, I will fuck her. We don’t get a lot of walk-ins at the garage, but we get some. When I fuck her, I don’t want to be interrupted.

Besides, it’s fun to keep her a little off balance.

“Dillon, I don’t think your family wants to hang out with me.”

“They’re going to have to get used to it, Cress. We’re a package deal now.”

“Why are you like this?”

I just smile and get to work. Let her stew on it for a while.

Chapter Six

Cressida

The scent of barbecue wafts through the air, mingling with laughter and music. Dillon takes my hand, giving it a reassuring squeeze as we approach the backyard of his brother and Cherry Miller.

“Relax,” he murmurs in my ear, “You’re going to have a great time.”

Yeah, okay. Sure.

Why am I here? Hormones and bad decisions, that’s why. Usually, it’s booze and bad decisions that get me into these kinds of messes. Hormones are a lot more potent.

As soon as we step into the backyard, his brother Max and fiancée Cherry greet us with curious smiles, though I’m sure William already informed them that Dillon has been fraternizing with the enemy.

Max is a tall, muscular man, much like his brothers in that biker gang lumberjack way. I know he was doing well in LA before he got it in his head to come back to Tempest and turn things around. William and Dillon jumped with him because I think they always do whatever Max suggests. From the stories Dillon told me today, many of Max’s ideas got them into juvie or worse. So buying a whole town really isn’t all that crazy.

Cherry is familiar to me in that way that everyone in a small town is familiar to each other. I think she was in my brother’s grade, but I don’t really know her. Dillon told me she’s managing the bookstore when she’s not wrapping Max around her little finger.

We get introduced. “We grew up in this house,” Dillon tells me. “Max and Cherry have been fixing it up.”

“Thank you for having me,” I reply.

Max is assessing me very carefully, but not giving away much. I know he and my father have gone rounds. He’s probably wondering what Dillon sees in me.

You and me both, Max.

As if magically sensing the trajectory of my current thoughts, Dillon pulls me closer, wrapping me up in his strong arms from behind. Max raises his eyebrows then, looking above me into Dillon's eyes.

They're saying something in silent brother language, and then Max tells me he's happy to meet me.

"William is manning the grill, which is never good. Dillon, come with me to wrestle the tongs away from him."

I inhale sharply at the thought of losing his protection.

Cherry offers me a drink and introduces me to her father and little brother. Mary from the diner is also here. She's probably wondering what I'm doing here, too. But at least I kind of know her. Everyone knows Mary. And Mary knows everyone. And every dumb thing they have ever done.

This was a mistake. I should have brought my own car, well, the loaner, but Dillon had me drop it off at home so we could arrive together.

I swig the beer like I'm at a frat party.

"You okay?" Cherry asks.

Opening my mouth to lie, I stop and shake my head. "Dillon is a nice guy, isn't he?"

She nods, looking a little concerned. "Yeah, of course he is. Are you worried about him?"

I flop down on a bench. "Not the way you think."

She joins me, looking concerned. "What's wrong?"

"I don't know why he brought me here. We're not...I don't know what we are."

Cherry gets a knowing look. "If he's anything like his brother, he's moving at warp speed, and you can barely hold on, right?"

The laugh sneaks out of me like a snort. "My impression of him is that he has traveled light with women so far, but he's

not quite figuring out yet that I have so much baggage.”

“What, you mean that little thing like your father and brother hate the Dukes?”

Great. “Chad does too?” It would make sense since Chad doesn’t have any unique thoughts of his own.

“It’s more Max he hates, I think. Chad was under the impression he had a chance with me before Max moved into town.”

Cherry seems like a smart girl. “You didn’t date him, did you? Because...”

“God no.” Her nose wrinkles up as she scrunches her face, shaking her head in repulsion. “No offense.”

“My brother is disgusting. I never had sleepovers at our house because of him. Total perv.”

Cherry looks away. “He bullied me all through school.”

Her comment hangs in the air like a heavy dark storm cloud.

I clearly won the family lottery, didn’t I? “I don’t know what to say, Cherry. I’m so sorry. Do you want me to leave?”

“No, no. Don’t worry about it. It’s not your fault.”

“My family...”

“Cressida, you don’t have to be like them. Be the person you want to be.”

Cherry makes it sound so simple, and when Dillon brings me a plate of food and beats me at croquet twice, it feels simple. The whole evening does. Like this could be my life if I were someone not prone to always screwing up.

“Ready to head home?” Dillon murmurs, his breath warm against my skin. I nod, leaning into his side as we make our way to his truck.

Climbing in, I realize I never even finished my first beer. I can’t recall the last time I didn’t get drunk at a party.

What am I going to blame if I do something ill-advised?

I expect Dillon to take me to his house, but instead we're headed toward mine. So much for ill-advised decisions.

When we arrive at my house, Dillon walks me to the door. I turn to thank him for inviting me, but the words lodge in my throat as I meet his intense gaze.

He bends down, capturing my lips in a searing kiss that steals my breath. I cling to him, overcome. He makes me feel things so deeply. I think I've been skimming the surface of my entire life before I met him.

"Don't be late tomorrow. Unless you want my handprint blazoned on your ass."

"Hmmm..." I pretend to think about it. "I guess we'll find out in the morning."

"You're a brat."

"Only for you," I tease, reluctantly pulling away from his embrace. Our eyes lock, and I see a hint of amusement dancing in his dark depths.

"Damn right only for me."

The possessive tone makes me wish he'd have taken me to his house, but I understand he's trying to honor my slow down from this morning.

I've never been with a guy who wasn't always racing for the finish line.

"Goodnight, Cressida," he whispers, pressing one last tender kiss to my forehead before stepping back.

"Goodnight, Dillon." I watch him walk to his truck, feeling a sense of loss as he drives away.

The door to my house closes with a soft snick, and before I can even process the events of the evening, I hear my father's voice coming from his study. A chill runs down my spine as I realize he's not alone—Blake is with him.

Gross gross gross.

"Blake, I understand your concerns, but..." My father's voice echoes down the hallway. A feeling of unease washes

over me, replacing the contentment from moments ago.

Curiosity gets the better of me and I tiptoe toward my father's study. I press myself against the wall, straining to catch every word of their conversation in case there is something that explains why he is trying to fail Tempest.

"Patience, Blake," my father says, his voice firm yet reassuring. "Give her time."

I strain to hear more. What are they talking about?

"Fine," Blake replies through gritted teeth. "Just remember what's at stake here, Hamilton." Blake's frustration tightens his voice. "I've done my part. I've kept my mouth shut about your... indiscretions. When will she be mine?"

"Cressida is a strong-willed young woman," my father says. "But she knows her place."

Cressida? They're talking about me?

Blake snarls, "You promised her to me. Told me she wouldn't be a problem. That she would willingly come to my bed."

What the hell? His bed? My father promised me to have sex with his lawyer?

My father uses his politician voice. "And she will. And won't she be worth the wait, Blake? She's ripe for the taking, and once you have her, she'll be yours to do with as you please."

My mouth begins overproducing saliva like I am about to throw up. How could he do this to me? Talk about me this way? Promise me to someone like Blake? I can't believe what I'm hearing.

Dads don't do this. It's wrong on every level.

"Fine." Blake exhales sharply. "But if this drags on for much longer... well, let's just say I won't be so understanding."

I can't stand here any longer, listening to these men discuss me like an object to be owned and controlled. Traded. Used.

I storm out of the house, my heart pounding in my ears and my fury blinding me to anything else.

I slide into the driver's seat of my car, my hands shaking as I grip the wheel. My mind races, searching for somewhere to go, someone to turn to. But there really isn't a question, is there?

Dillon.

The drive to his house is a blur, my thoughts consumed by the pain of my father's betrayal and the rage that courses through my veins. When I finally pull up outside of Dillon's house, I take a deep breath to steady myself, then step out of the car and march toward his front door.

I raise my hand and knock loudly, my heart pounding as I wait for him to answer. The door swings open to reveal Dillon, clad only in blue jeans, the top button undone as if he hastily pulled them on.

The happy trail of dark hair that leads from his belly button to the waistline of his jeans draws my eye, and I gasp without meaning to. Dillon's eyes rake up my body, and then his gaze locks with mine.

“Cress?”

If he just pulled on his pants...what if he's not alone? What if I interrupted him with another woman? Oh, God. What am I even doing here?

“Cress?” he repeats.

“Never mind. I'm sorry I bothered you.”

I turn to go, but he reaches for me. “Princess, wait. What's wrong?”

I pause, my heart racing as I turn back to face him. I can feel my hesitation crumbling, my need for him overwhelming my fear and uncertainty.

He pulls me into his arms, and I cling to him, breathing in his scent. His chest is warm against my cheek.

“What happened?” he asks, his voice low and gentle as he strokes my hair.

I just want to pretend it all away. And I will. Dillon does not need all my drama. He’s got enough going on. “Nothing.”

He pulls away and gives me one of his patented Stern Dillon looks.

That’s so much better than a pity look. I just want to forget. And Dillon will be excellent in that capacity. Like drinking the whole keg to myself, without all the beer burps and vomit.

I would rather just have a good time and deal with the mess tomorrow. “I’ve been very naughty, Mr. Duke.”

“Is that right?”

I nod. “I’m here for my punishment.”

He steps back. “Get in the fucking house.”

After I’m inside, he slams the front door and locks it behind him.

“Boy, I’m in for it now, aren’t I?” I flip my hair and make sure my boobs are thrust to maximum capacity.

Dillon crosses his arms over his chest. “You’re something else.”

This isn’t exactly what I was expecting. He’s less stern and more pissed off. “What do you mean? I figured you would be happy I turned myself in. Don’t you want to, how did you word it, emblazon my ass with your handprint?”

“Yeah, that’s what I said. All of twenty minutes ago. What kind of trouble could you have possibly gotten into in the twenty minutes since I left you on your front porch.”

My chin juts out on its own. “That’s the thing about me. I can find trouble anywhere I go. Didn’t I already tell you about my predilection for fucking up?”

He rakes his hands through his hair, and I’m definitely distracted by the way his muscles flex and strain with the movement.

And that happy trail. I want to follow it to its source. It's like a road map calling to me: *This way, Cressida. Come this way.*

Pun intended.

"Woman." Dillon looks skyward for guidance, and then points to the couch. "Sit."

"Dillon..."

"Do not sass me right now. Plunk your ass down."

It's quiet for a minute, but I never met a silence I couldn't fill. "I don't understand why you're mad." I hate the crack in my voice. "I thought you'd be happy to see me. Unless..." I peer down the short hall. "You're alone, right?"

"Of course I'm alone!" The words come out angrier than that muffler he was working on today.

I hold up my hands in surrender. "Geez. Then why are you acting so weird?"

"Why am I acting so weird?" He takes a deep breath, and then exhales slowly. "Cressida, I'm trying not to lose my temper. I know you're used to getting away with a lot of things, but this isn't one of them. You need to tell me what's going on." He takes a step closer and all I can think is that I want him even closer. Like, inside me closer. "You need to tell me what is going on."

"Nothing is going on."

"Don't tell me nothing is going on. Your mascara is running down your face, and the tip of your nose is red. You didn't come here to seduce me. What's wrong?"

The urge to hide my face is unbearable, but the damage has been done. He can't unsee it. "I'm pissed off. And I'm heartbroken. And I don't want to bother you," I start crying again, "but you were all I could think of when I ran out the door."

He crouches in front of me. "Baby, I'm glad you're here. I want to be the person you come to with your problems."

“I’m so tired of having problems, Dillon.” Exhausted, actually.

His big hands cup my face tenderly. “Then let’s get rid of them. Tell me what they are and I’ll help you.”

“It’s my father,” I say. “He’s betrayed me in the worst possible way. I don’t even think I can say it.”

Dillon’s expression hardens, and I can see the anger in his eyes. “What did he do to you?”

I struggle to find the words to explain what has happened, my emotions threatening to overwhelm me. I take a deep breath, trying to center myself. “My father promised me to Blake Masterson in exchange for Blake’s silence about something. Some kind of indiscretion,” I confess, my voice shaking.

Dillon’s expression darkens as I speak, his jaw clenching in fury on my behalf.

“Like an arranged marriage?”

A dark chuckle erupts from my throat. “I’m pretty sure Blake is already married. I think...I think my dad is trading my body for Blake’s silence. I think I just became a whore.”

Saying it makes me feel dirty. Used.

The truth hurts.

“Those bastards,” he growls, his voice low and dangerous. “Cressida, you’re not a whore.”

I can feel the intensity of his gaze on me, his eyes boring into me. It’s like he can see everything I’m feeling, everything I’m thinking, and it’s almost too much to bear. I push his hands down. It’s too intense. I need some space.

“I don’t know what to do,” I whisper, looking away from him and down at my hands. “What kind of monster sells his daughter?”

Dillon picks up one of my hands but doesn’t force me to look at him. “You’re never going back there, Cressida. “

I look back up at him, my heart pounding in my chest.
“Dillon...”

He leans in closer, his breath hot against my ear as he whispers, “I’ll protect you. Whatever it takes.”

He moves his hand from my arm up to my cheek, cupping it gently and tilting my face up to his. His lips brush against mine, a feather-light touch that sends electricity shooting through me.

“I don’t think I should drag you into this,” I whisper, tears pricking the corners of my eyes. “I think it might be dangerous. Obviously my dad is not a saint, but this...he must be backed into a pretty dark corner to make this kind of deal. I don’t want you to become collateral damage.”

Dillon’s eyes soften, his thumb brushing away a tear that escapes down my cheek. “I’m not afraid of your father. Blake Masterson will never get near you again.”

I take a deep breath, feeling Dillon’s hand tighten slightly on my cheek. It’s like he’s trying to ground me, keep me steady. And I need that right now. I need him. “You didn’t sign up for this.”

Dillon shakes his head, his eyes never leaving mine.
“Didn’t I?”

Maybe he did. Maybe we both did. Something about us clicked into place from the moment we met, like two puzzle pieces made to fit perfectly together.

“I’m going to run you a bath and put you to bed. We’ll deal with the rest of this in the morning.”

If he thinks he’s putting me to bed alone, he’s got another thing coming.

Chapter Seven

Dillon

I fill the old clawfoot tub with warm water, trying to get my anger under control. Cress needs me focused on her right now, not what I'm going to do to make sure Masterson and her father pay for hurting her.

But they will pay.

My hands are shaking with rage. Those fuckers won't get away with this. Nobody messes with my girl.

I don't take baths, so I don't have any bubbles or bath oils or girly things. My mom used to tie a few chamomile tea bags to the spigot, so I give that a shot, letting the soothing scent of the tea blend with the steamy air. I light a handful of emergency candles, and they cast soft shadows on the walls.

Best I can do.

"Come here, sweetheart," I say softly, reaching out my hand for her. Cressida hesitates, but eventually takes it, allowing me to guide her closer to the tub. I slowly unbutton her blouse, my eyes never leaving her face. "Is this okay?" I ask, pausing my movements.

She's feeling vulnerable, but there's trust in her eyes that makes my heart swell. "Y-yes, Dillon," she whispers, nodding her head. I continue undressing her, willing my cock to behave. This isn't about getting her naked, it's about getting her comfortable.

Gently, I lift her into the bath, watching as she sinks into the warm water with a sigh of relaxation.

"Are you comfortable?" I ask, brushing a curl from her forehead. She nods, eyelids fluttering closed. A surge of tenderness warms me watching her relax into my care.

No one has ever taken the time to cherish Cressida, to anticipate her needs before she's even aware of them herself. But I will. I'll give her everything she's been denied, and more. I don't recognize myself, but this is who I am now.

Maybe I should make her tea for when she gets out? That seems like something she might like. Maybe. I don't know if she drinks tea.

"Dillon," she breathes, catching my hand as I move to stand. "Stay."

A smile tugs at the corner of my mouth. "As if I could ever deny you anything."

I settle on the floor, content to simply watch over her as she soaks. We sit in silence, the only sound is that of water lapping at the sides of the tub.

When her skin is pink and wrinkled, I help her from the bath and pat her dry with a fluffy towel. Cressida's eyes follow my every movement, dark and trusting. Once she's wrapped in the towel, I pull her against my chest, cradling her head under my chin. "You're safe here, Cress. No one will ever hurt you again." Not Blake, not her vile excuse for a father. She's mine now, and I will protect what is mine.

Sliding one of my t-shirts over her head, I lift her into my arms and carry her to bed. Cressida nuzzles against my neck with a contented sigh.

I don't have words for my feelings right now. I have enjoyed Cressida's sassy talk on every level, but this feeling is something I didn't know I yearned for. Providing for her. Protecting her. It cuts through all the noise, leaving a sense of purpose that is new and peaceful.

I set her down next to the bed and look her over. "I love your tight dresses and fuck-me heels, but princess, I think you wearing my shirt is the sexiest outfit of all."

"It smells like you."

"Get in," I whisper softly as I pull back the covers, guiding her into the warm embrace of the sheets.

She looks up at me with expectant eyes, but I shake my head gently. I know what she's thinking. "Tonight, we're just going to sleep," I tell her, climbing in beside her. My cock aches with unsatisfied desire, but I know this is the right choice. For her. For us. At least for now.

Cressida seems surprised, but she doesn't argue, another first. Instead, she snuggles against me, her back pressed against my chest as I spoon her.

"Are you sure?" she asks, rubbing herself against me, teasing me through my boxer briefs. "You don't have to hold back on my account."

I let out a low growl, my grip tightening around her waist. "Don't be a brat," I warn, trying to maintain some semblance of control. "We both need rest."

"Fine," she sighs.

"Quit pouting."

"You can't even see me!"

"I don't need to see you to know you're pouting. Be a good girl and you can have your reward in the morning. Rest now."

"Sorry, I forgot old people need their sleep."

My cock flexes against her. I love her bratty mouth.

The dark, quiet room is a cocoon of peace around us. Nuzzling the back of her neck, I inhale her scent deeply.

"Rest now," I whisper again, placing a soft kiss against her skin. "Tomorrow we'll make up for lost time."

"I ache for you," she whispers.

Her simple confession spears me with intense need. "You've had a rough night, princess. I don't want you to regret our first time together. You still want me in the morning, I'll keep you in bed all goddamn day, I promise."

"I regret a lot of things, Dillon, but I don't think I could ever regret you."

We settle into a comfortable silence, our breathing syncing as sleep claims us both.

In the dead of night, a soft moan wakes me. Cressida is writhing against me, little whimpers escaping her lips. Is she having a nightmare?

“Dillon,” she breathes, arching into an invisible touch. I can feel the heat radiating from between her thighs, and my cock hardens in response.

Not a nightmare then.

“You dreaming about me, baby?”

Her breath changes as she wakes just enough. “Mmm. Yes.”

I’m humbled and turned on. Fuck am I glad to be the man of her dreams.

I grind into her from behind before I can stop myself, my arms reflexively tightening around her. I’m half asleep but fully aware of her soft skin beneath my callused hands as they move lower. I relish her soft gasp when I cup her between her legs. She’s soaked for me, all hot and creamy and ready.

We’re in a surreal space between dreaming and awake. Everything is slow and languid, just the two of us in our own little world. She’s got me spellbound.

“You’re so wet, baby girl,” I whisper against her ear. “Did dreaming of me get you this hot? Tell me what I was doing to you in your dream. I want to hear every dirty detail.”

Cressida whimpers, hips rolling into my touch. “You were touching me,” she breathes. “Your hands were all over me, and your mouth, God your mouth...”

“Where was my mouth, Cressida?” I ask, pressing a kiss against her neck. “Tell me.”

She shivers, her body arching into mine. “Everywhere. You were kissing me, licking me, sucking my nipples and then you were between my legs, your tongue...”

I groan, my fingers finding their way into her slick heat.

“Dillon,” she whispers, her voice thick with desire.

“Shh, baby. I’ve got you,” I whisper in her ear. I kiss her neck, my fingers working faster as I whisper dirty words in her ear. “Such a naughty girl having those bad girl dreams about

me. I'm gonna make them come true, Cressida. I'm gonna make you come so hard."

Cressida's breath catches in her throat as I drive her higher, her body quaking beneath me.

"Come for me, Cressida. Come all over my hand."

She does, her body shuddering as wave after wave of pleasure washes over her. I hold her close, kissing away the last of her tremors until all that remains is a quiet, satisfied sigh.

I growl in approval, desire burning hot in my veins.
"That's my girl."

In the morning, I make sure I'm the first one to the coffee pot. No sense in starting out our first morning together with Cressida's version of coffee you can chew.

I think about making her come, half wondering if it was real or a dream.

She stumbles in, wearing my t-shirt and some fucking wild bedhead. She blushes sweetly.

Not a dream then.

I'm so fucking horny after last night. Watching her in my kitchen now, wearing my clothes looking soft and sweet... I don't think I can take much more.

Her gaze travels to the growing bulge in my sweatpants.

Cressida's lips curl up into a half-smile, her eyes sparkling as she surveys my growing cock. "Well, good morning to both of you."

"Come here," I order, my voice thick with need. Her eyes widen but she obeys without hesitation. As she approaches, I wrap a strong hand around the back of her neck, pulling her close until our lips meet in a heated, passionate kiss.

"Tell me to stop if you're not ready."

She grips a handful of my cock in reply. Jesus, I could spill right now.

My hands roam over her body as I claim her mouth again, tugging the shirt up and over her head. She's naked beneath, her skin flushed and warm against my chest.

Touching her feels both like an adventure and coming home at the same time.

Cressida moans when I cup her breasts, her nipples pebbling under my thumbs. I roll them between my fingers, pinching just enough to make her gasp. Oh, she's going to be so much fun to play with.

"You're moving in here today."

She blinks. "What? No."

Instead of answering, I suck one of her perfect tits in my mouth.

"Yes, Cressida," I growl, my teeth grazing the sensitive skin. "You're moving in today."

She moans and arches against me. "We've only known each other for a few days. And half of that time we spent arguing."

Kissing my way down her stomach, I lower to my knees. "You're not going back to that house of horrors." I stick my nose right in her pussy and inhale her sweet scent. "You'll stay here from now on." She gasps as I flick my tongue against her clit. "Say yes, Cressida."

She moans, her body trembling against mine. "Yes," she breathes out. "Wait. No. You can't just use my vagina against me when you want to get your way."

I pull back and look up at her, a wicked grin tugging at my lips. "Watch me."

With that, I bury my face between her legs and proceed to prove my point.

"Dillon..."

"You taste like honey. I want to eat you for hours."

Cressida gasps and clutches at my hair, her body trembling as I push her closer and closer to the edge. She's the sweetest thing I ever tasted.

"Say you'll move in," I demand, my tongue lapping hungrily at her candied heat. "And I'll let you come."

"Dillon, please," she begs, fisting her hands in my hair. I chuckle, the vibrations setting her squirming again. "Yes," she moans.

Cressida lets out a strangled sob, tugging at my hair in frustration. I relent enough to slide two fingers into her slick channel, crooking them to find the spot that makes her see stars. She comes with a wail, her inner walls clamping down on my fingers as I lap at her clit. I work her through the aftershocks, only withdrawing once she's gone limp against me.

Cressida's breathing is ragged and her eyes are heavy-lidded as she stares down at me. I rise, pressing a gentle kiss to her soft lips.

"You'll move in," I whisper, pressing my fingers back into her warm cunt.

Cressida nods, her eyes still closed. "Yes," she whispers, her voice barely audible. "I'll move in."

"But first..." I pick her up and sling her over my shoulder in a fireman's carry.

She yelps then does it again when I smack her ass.

Chapter Eight

Cressida

Dillon dumps me in the middle of the bed, and I bounce a couple of times. I laugh, teasing him with a raised brow. “I’m not a sack of potatoes.”

He growls, the sound sending delicious shivers everywhere in my body where there is a nerve. “Believe me, a sack of potatoes could never cause me as much trouble as you do. You’ve been driving me crazy for days, brat. Now it’s time to pay the price.”

Heat pools between my legs at his words. I try to scoot away on the bed, putting up a token protest. “You’ll have to catch me first!”

In a flash, he’s on me, pinning my wrists above my head, draping his weight on me. I gasp as his hard body presses me into the mattress. “Caught you,” he purrs. “Now, what should I do with you?”

I squirm beneath him, aware that I’m naked and he’s still clothed, desire burning in my veins. “I can think of a few things.” More than a few.

“Can you? Me too.” One of his hands manacles both my wrists leaving the other to slide between my legs. My hips jerk to get closer to his touch. I can’t get enough of him. “My, my, so wet. I just licked you clean a minute ago. I didn’t realize you were going to be so high maintenance.”

“I don’t think it’s any secret that I’m high maintenance.”

We pause for a second, like my words are hovering in the air between us.

“You’re exactly the right amount of maintenance for me, princess. I wouldn’t want you any other way.”

I don’t want to derail the direction we were headed, but his words strike something powerful inside me. “I know I can be a little much, sometimes,” I say, my voice a quiet rasp.

The hand stroking the folds of my pussy stills. “I’m sorry you’ve been let down by men who were supposed to care for you in the past, but you don’t have that problem anymore. I promise you, I can take whatever you dish out, and I’ll even like it.”

“I can be stuck up.”

He kisses my neck. “I know.”

“Entitled.”

His stubble scrapes the skin of my collarbone. “Yep.”

“Hard-headed.”

“Uh-huh.” He traces my areola with his tongue.

“Sometimes I think I do stupid things just to get attention.”

“Yes, princess. I’m aware.”

I arch into him when he sucks my nipple into his mouth. “I don’t like hard work or applying myself.”

He releases my nipple with a plop. “You don’t believe that and neither do I. That sounds like someone else’s words.”

My father. Every single report card. My college advisor.

“Why are you so nice to me, Dillon?”

“I’m using you for sex.”

“We haven’t even had sex yet. You’re really playing the long game.”

“I’m not playing, princess. I haven’t been playing since the day you sashayed that pretty little body into my garage. You’re mine. I’m yours. Game over.”

I move my hips around to get more of that contact he’s denying me. “Then you better fuck me so I know for sure.”

With a grin, he releases my hands only to flip me onto my stomach. I start to push up onto my hands and knees, ready to beg him to fill me, when his large palm lands on my rear with a loud smack.

What the?

I gasp in surprise, the sting fading into pleasure. “What was that for?”

“For my entertainment.” He smacks me again, harder this time. “And because you like it.”

I moan as his hand caresses away the sting, the pleasure and pain mingling together in a way that sets my body on fire. I’m desperate for him to take me, to fill me up and make me his.

“Please,” I whisper.

“What was that?” His hand pauses, resting on my surely pink skin. “You’ll have to speak up, baby.”

I glare at him over my shoulder, but the haughty effect I’m going for is probably ruined by my arousal-flushed face and mussed hair. “I need you to fuck me right now!”

“Who’s in charge here, princess?”

A different tactic is necessary here. I begin calmly. “Dillon, if it’s not too much trouble, and if you can find the time, I would surely appreciate it if you could fuck me with that great big cock you’ve been teasing me with.” I wiggle my bottom, trying to get him to touch me, and I smile sweetly. “Please.”

He spanks my bottom again, the heat spreading as his hand connects with my skin. I moan at the delicious sensations and push back against his hand.

He leans over me, his hot breath on my neck. “You’re being naughty, Cressida. You’re being a very naughty girl.”

I shiver at his words, my skin alive and tingling with anticipation. I can’t wait for what he’ll do next.

This anticipation for sex is new to me, and so is the playful aspect. Sex has been about getting a guy or keeping a guy. It’s never been what I physically needed or even wanted all that much.

I know I’m good at it. And I like knowing that I can use my body that way. But this is new. Fun. Exciting.

Dillon moves his hand lower, cupping one of my cheeks and squeezing possessively. “You’re so fucking hot,” he murmurs, his lips brushing against my ear.

I melt against him, unable to resist.

His fingers move around to my front, his touch gentle but insistent. I gasp as he slides a finger inside of me, his thumb rubbing circles around my sensitive bundle of nerves. I moan at the sensation.

“That’s a good start, Dillon. But I really need your cock. Please.”

“That’s my good girl.” His praise sends a wave of heat through me. “You’ve earned your reward.”

His sweats are off faster than I can blink, and the blunt head of his cock is pressing against my entrance.

Oh god. He’s so thick. I push back with a groan, taking him inch by inch until he’s seated fully inside me. I’m so full, I can barely move, and the sensation is exquisite.

“So tight and wet for me,” he murmurs, hands gripping me tightly. He moves his hips, his thick shaft pushing against my sensitive walls. I moan and grip the sheets, my body arching to meet each thrust. He starts to move, pulling out until just the tip remains before slamming back in. I cry out at the sensation, the sound muffled by the bedding.

The steady slap of skin meeting skin fills the room as he increases his pace. This is what I’ve been waiting for. I fist the sheets, meeting his powerful thrusts. Every snap of his hips sends jolts of pleasure through my body.

“You feel so good,” he groans. One hand leaves my hip, sliding around to rub tight circles on my clit. I whimper in response, already close to the edge.

“Dillon, I’m gonna—” A sharp thrust cuts me off with a moan.

“Come for me,” he commands, his voice rough with his own need. “Let go and come for me.”

His fingers pinch my clit, and I shatter around him, my inner walls convulsing. He follows soon after, warmth flooding me as he grunts my name.

We collapse onto the bed in a tangle of limbs, breathless and sated.

I've never felt cum inside me before. I always thought it would be icky, that I'd feel gross and messy. But, I'm not thinking icky thoughts now. I'm feeling primal and sexy, and my body is still humming from the orgasm, from the pleasure of being used roughly and cherished at the same time.

And owned.

Dillon's seed is a reminder of his claim on me.

He wraps his arms around me and pulls me close, his lips brushing against my forehead.

"I think smacking your ass is on my top ten list of things I love best in life."

"What else is on that list?"

"Eating your sweet pussy. Fucking your sweet pussy."

"That's only three things."

"We haven't gotten to the others yet. But it's not even noon, so I have high hopes for the day."

I nestle into his side, tracing lazy circles on his chest as he pulls me closer. His heart thumps steadily under my palm, in time with my own.

"You are perfect," he murmurs, dropping a kiss on the top of my head. "So responsive, so eager to please."

Heat floods my cheeks at the praise. "I aim to satisfy."

He laughs, the sound rumbling through me. "And satisfy me you did." His hand slides down to cup my rear, giving it a gentle squeeze.

I tilt my head up to meet his gaze, unable to stop the smile tugging at my lips. "Dillon, do you think it would be okay if I tell you something naughty?"

“That will be the fourth favorite thing. You can tell me anything you like, princess.”

I scoot away and sit up, batting his hand away when he tries to pull me back. “Dillon?”

“Yes, Cressida?”

“I want your cock in my mouth. I want to clean you all up and make you come again down my throat. Is that okay to tell you?”

He stiffens at my naughty request, then pulls me against him, his mouth finding mine. His hands leave trails of fire up and down my body before settling on my ass, squeezing and kneading my still-sensitive skin and driving me wild.

“Yes,” he finally murmurs against my lips. “Yes, that’s more than okay.”

My heart beats faster, anticipation flooding my veins. I can’t wait to feel his cock in my mouth, to show him the pleasure I can bring with my lips and tongue.

I know I’m good at giving head, but this is the first time I ever wanted to do it. Everything is different with Dillon. I want to make him feel just as good as he makes me feel. Even more than that, I crave him. The thought of tasting him, holding him in my mouth...I can’t wait.

He sits on the edge of the bed, and I lick and kiss my way down his body over the acres of taut skin over hard muscle until I am on my knees. A soft groan escapes him as his fingers tangle in my hair. “Eyes on me, baby.”

I bring my gaze to his immediately. The intimacy of the moment washes over me, making me feel even more connected to him.

“Beautiful.”

I rub my cheek against his impressively large but not yet hard cock. “You’ve taken such good care of me the last few days. Now it’s your turn.”

He’s getting hard again now.

I lick him, the flavors of our lovemaking still lingering on his skin. This makes me feel so extra naughty.

I suck and swirl my tongue around him, taking my time as I savor every inch as he gets harder and harder. I like the weight of him in my mouth, the smooth head dripping fresh precum on my tongue. His hips start to move, pushing into me, his eyes never once leaving mine.

“Such a talented mouth,” he praises, his voice thick with lust. “You’re doing everything right, baby. Don’t stop.”

I hum in response, the vibration sending shudders down his body. Dillon’s praise fuels my desire even more, and I eagerly continue to explore every inch of him with my mouth.

“God, you’re beautiful,” he murmurs, his fingers trailing down my cheek. “So strong and confident. I love watching you take control like this.”

His cock is fully erect now and a lot harder to get in my mouth. He’s so fucking big. I love the texture of his skin against my tongue. I take him in deeper, my throat accepting the challenge of accommodating him as he gets further in.

He gasps, his hands gripping my head as he thrusts harder. I swallow around the tip.

“Baby, fuck. You take my cock so good. I’m not gonna last.”

Yeah, I knew he’d like that move.

I pop off him. “Promise me you’ll come in my mouth.”

That is the very first time I have ever asked for that, too. Usually it’s the opposite. I prefer a warning so I can direct a guy and his jizz anywhere but in my mouth. But I want to know what Dillon tastes like. I need to know.

“You gonna swallow everything I give you? Does my girl want to taste my cum?”

“Yes,” I whisper, my teeth lightly grazing his shaft, enjoying the hiss of his reaction.

“Then get back on it. I’m close.”

I eagerly take him back in my mouth. His hands grip my hair tighter as he thrusts, his breathing becoming more and more ragged.

“Oh fuck, I’m gonna come,” he growls, his head falling back as he comes with a guttural groan.

He explodes in pulses, each one sending more cum down my throat. It’s not easy to keep up with the amount he’s giving me, but I make sure to take as much as I can.

“Look at you, cum leaking down your chin. What a naughty, messy girl.” His voice is thick with pleasure, and I can feel the aftermath of his orgasm still coursing through his body. “My princess can take anything I give her.”

I smile around his cock, licking it clean as I look up at him. He picks me up and settles me on his lap, and I curl into him, my head resting on his chest. He kisses my forehead and wraps his arms even tighter around me, and I feel like I’m home.

He whispers soothing words, stroking my skin in a way that makes me feel safe and cared for. I close my eyes, contentment flooding through me.

This is usually the part where I clean up, fix my makeup, pretend I was just so into it. Instead, I’m buzzing inside, needing his care, his attention.

“This has been the best morning of my life, Cressida.”

His simple words open my heart, and I’m overwhelmed with emotion. No one has ever made me feel this cherished, this valuable, this adored. I bury my face in his neck, inhale his scent, and savor this moment.

“Thank you,” I whisper.

It seems like a rash decision to move in with a man I hardly know. Since I am the queen of poor choices, it’s hard to trust that this isn’t another one.

“Out loud, princess. What’s happening in your head right now?”

I look up at him, my heart in my eyes I'm sure. I don't think I can hide anything from him, a sobering thought. "I'm scared that this is a mistake, that I'm going to get hurt. But then I look at you and I just want to take the chance. I want to be with you."

"Cressida, we can slow down if you need to. You're still moving in here, make no mistake about that. I'm not sending you back to the men that will hurt you. But we can take the rest of it as slow as you please." He strokes my hair, his thumb tracing soothing circles on my temple. "I'm never going to hurt you. I'm here to protect you. You can trust me."

His words sink deep into my soul, and I nod, taking a deep breath.

Vulnerable. That's how he makes me feel. Not because he wants to make me feel small, but because he's opening up a whole big world that I didn't know existed. One I don't know how to navigate or control. But then, was I really in control of anything before I met him?

"I trust you. I don't trust myself. You've seen what I come from. My father is a monster. My brother is no better. What if I'm damaged goods and I can't be trusted?"

"You are strong and brave. You survived the nightmare your home was, and you're here now. You can trust me, but more importantly, you can trust yourself. You don't have to be scared."

He kisses my forehead, and I feel his strong presence wrap around me.

"What if I'm incapable of love?"

"Oh honey, you have so much love to give. You just need to open your heart and let it in. You can do it, princess. I believe in you." He cups my face and looks me directly in the eyes, like he's trying to tell me what I can't find the words for. "You will never be alone again, Cressida. I'm here for you, no matter what."

"I hope you mean that after I tell you why I got expelled from college."

Chapter Nine

Dillon

Cressida says that like I'm going to walk away. Like whatever she did to get expelled is so bad, I couldn't take it.

She doesn't understand yet. She's it for me. Her past doesn't matter. I love her, and nothing will change that.

She's tucked under my arm. I run my fingers along her spine, enjoying the feel of her soft skin against my callused palm, but I can sense the tension in her body, the way she keeps glancing up at me through her lashes before looking away.

"What is it? Tell me why you were expelled." I ask, keeping my tone gentle. I don't want her to retreat. It won't affect us, but I can tell it's important to her.

"First, before what I tell you changes everything, I want you to know that today was the first time I ever wanted to... take a guy like that...in my mouth."

Not sure where she is going with this, but okay. "You rocked my world, baby. I don't mind if that was your first time."

"It wasn't my first time giving a blow job. It was the first time I wanted to."

My hand stills on her back. "What are you saying?"

Someone forced her?

"My first blow job was on the dean of my university. I was a freshman. He didn't force me, but I didn't want to do it. None of us did."

The hackles on my neck are standing up. "Cress—"

"Please let me finish." She sits up, biting her lip, a hint of color rising in her cheeks. "It's stupid," she says. "You'll think I'm foolish. I am foolish. I don't want you to hate me."

I tip her chin up so she has to meet my gaze. "You can tell me anything."

She swallows hard, eyes shining with unshed tears. My heart clenches at the sight. Whoever hurt her will pay. “During rush week at my sorority, they had a...tradition. To initiate the new pledges.”

I have a feeling I’m not going to like where this is going. “What kind of tradition?”

“We were expected to...we were taken to the dean’s office. Two different pledges every night.” Her face flames red, but she forces the words out. “To give him oral sex. As a show of loyalty to the school or the sorority...I don’t know. I don’t think it was something the sisterhood ever came up with. But it was part of getting in.”

Rage erupts inside me like a volcano, hot and violent. If that bastard were here right now, I’d rip his fucking head off.

“I didn’t want to. But my dad told me I had to get into *that* sorority during rush week or he’d pull me out of school. It was the only one he thought was good enough. I didn’t tell him what I had to do, but after hearing him talk to Blake...he probably wouldn’t have cared.” She huffs out a laugh. “I wasn’t a virgin, so I don’t know why it bothered me so much. It was just a blow job.”

“It doesn’t matter if you were a virgin or not. You didn’t want to. You shouldn’t have felt forced to. The dean should never have allowed that. Your organization should never have allowed that.”

Cressida shrugs. “The organization claims no knowledge. But it’s been happening for a long time. I bet my mom had to give her dean a blow job too. It’s just not discussed.”

“I’m so sorry, baby,” I say, pulling her close. She clings to me. I stroke her hair, whispering soft words of comfort against her skin. “You didn’t deserve that. No one does. He’s the one who should be ashamed, not you.”

She peers up at me again, eyes wide and vulnerable. “You don’t think I’m stupid? Or dirty?”

“Never.” I kiss her then, deep and thorough, hoping she understands what I can’t quite put into words. She’s safe here,

with me. I'll do whatever it takes to help her heal, to show her she's so much more than what's been done to her.

I think about the day she came into my garage, offering me her mouth when she obviously didn't want to.

"Cress, are you sure you wanted to do that this morning? You don't ever have to do anything with me you don't want."

She holds my face in her hands. "I promise I wanted to, Dillon. And I promise I'm going to want to again. I loved it. With you. I love how you make me feel and everything we do together. I just don't think I deserve you."

"I'm no prize, baby. But you're stuck with me."

She snuggles into my side again with a contented sigh, tracing idle patterns across my chest with her fingertips, her touch feather-light. I thread my fingers through her hair, enjoying the simple intimacy of the moment.

"It's not just that it happened to me. That's not even my biggest shame. It's that I didn't stop it last year. Other girls had to...to join our sorority. I'm part of the problem."

"Could you have stopped it?"

She shrugs. "I could have tried. I should have tried. I did try...this year. Dillon, you can't tell anyone...but I'm the one who took the story higher up. I spoke anonymously to the school paper, and they cracked the story."

"Why don't you sound happier about it?"

"Because the only people who got punished were all the girls who had his cock in their mouths. My sorority chapter was disbanded. We were all expelled. The national organization is under investigation, but I doubt anything will come of it."

"And the dean?" I ask, already knowing I won't like what I hear.

"He's back at work. The newspaper has been accused of running a false story, so the student reporter and editor are done. The dean...nothing happened to him."

She stands up and starts pacing. “I’m so tired of men like my father and Blake and the dean just getting away with things. Like women are pawns.”

“What would you like to do about it?”

“I want to take them all down, Dillon.”

“Then that is what we will do.” Her stomach rumbles. “After I feed you breakfast.”

I pull my truck up to the towering iron gates of Mayor Hamilton’s estate and feel a twinge of intimidation. The imposing mansion looms before us, a symbol of the privileged life Cressida has known up until now.

Fuck me, it’s big.

“Are you ready?” I ask her.

Cressida nods, her expression resolute. “Let’s do this,” she says, her voice trembling just slightly.

My brother let me know the mayor was in a council meeting this afternoon, so we decided to grab some of Cressida’s things without having to chance a confrontation.

There will be a confrontation eventually. Hamilton and Masterson will not get away with what they tried to do to my woman. But Cressida doesn’t need the stress of it right now. Once she’s settled and feeling safe, she can be part of the plan. Or not.

We walk side by side through the immaculate gardens toward the front door, my hand protectively on the small of her back. As we enter the opulent foyer, my eyes widen at the grand staircase and marble floors that seem to stretch on forever.

“Wow,” I murmur, taking in the extravagance of it all.

Cressida gives me a wry smile. “You should see the ballroom.”

“Ballroom? Does the town pay for this?”

Cress shakes her head. “The house had been in my mom’s family for generations. It will go to my brother eventually.”

“Your brother but not you?”

She shrugs. “Patriarchy.”

I’m starting to feel really shitty about being born a dude. I saw how hard things were for my mom as a single mother, but I don’t think I ever factored in how hard things were for her because she was a woman.

I wish I’d opened my eyes a lot earlier in life.

As we make our way through the richly decorated rooms, my rough hands and worn clothes seem entirely out of place among the luxurious furnishings and priceless art. Is it possible for someone like me to truly fit into Cressida’s world? Can I ever really be enough for her?

I stop in the doorway of some kind of sitting room with a large portrait of her father hanging over the fireplace—the man who would willingly trade his own daughter’s body to Blake for his twisted gain. It’s a chilling reminder of why we’re doing this.

I won’t let them hurt her. Not while I’m still breathing. We will figure out what Hamilton is hiding and then we will expose him and his pervert lawyer. Once she’s safe from them, I’ll help her take down the dean if she wants to.

“Up here,” Cressida calls, pulling me from my thoughts as she leads me up the grand staircase to her bedroom.

I shake off the dark thoughts as I roll up my sleeves. First we pack. Then we worry about the rest.

As I watch Cressida rummage through her closet, she pulls out a pair of shoes that look like they cost more than my mortgage. How the fuck does she even walk in them?

“I’m taking these,” she declares, clutching them to her chest.

“Really?” I ask, trying to keep the annoyance out of my voice. “You’re moving in with a mechanic, not going to a ball.”

“You never planning on taking me out on a date?” she retorts, a stubborn glint in her eyes.

“Fine,” I concede, not wanting to start an argument.

I watch as she continues to gather an assortment of impractical items. “Are you planning on wearing that while working on cars or something?” I tease, attempting to lighten the mood.

“No,” she replies, holding up a little lacy number that I’m hoping goes on under her clothes and is not an actual outfit. “I was thinking that I would wear *this* when I work on cars.”

“I wouldn’t mind seeing that,” I reply, my voice low and suggestive. “But it doesn’t look practical.”

“Is that so?” she purrs, her lips curling into a sultry smile. “You don’t think I can handle a tool while wearing this?”

I wrap my arms around her waist, pulling her closer to me. “The only tool you’ll be handling is mine,” I say, my voice dropping even lower. “And I’d much rather see you out of that than in it.”

“I promise it will look fantastic on your bedroom floor.”

“It’s your bedroom floor now too, princess.”

Cressida smirks up at me, her eyes filled with a playful challenge. She leans in, her lips ghosting over mine. “Then you won’t mind if I add a couple more pretty shoes,” she whispers against my mouth before pulling back.

When it comes to the makeup kit, though, I’m done. The case is filled with enough products to start a small cosmetics store. “You don’t need all this shit.”

“Says who?”

“Says me,” I reply firmly. “You don’t need all of this to look beautiful.”

Cressida scoffs, but I can see the hint of a smile playing on her lips. “You don’t know anything about makeup, Dillon. I know you think women just wake up looking like they belong

on a magazine cover, but it takes work to look like you're not wearing makeup."

That doesn't even make sense. "I woke up next to you this morning. Trust me, you don't need any of this." I hold up a complicated electrical implement. "What does this even do?"

"It's for my hair. You've never lived with a woman before, have you?"

I shake my head. "Wait, have you lived with a man before?"

"I lived in this house, a dorm, and a sorority house. You forget I'm not old like you."

When she sticks out her tongue, I see exactly where this is going.

"Little girl, are you *trying* to earn a spanking?" Because I can certainly oblige. The thought of her pink bottom upturned over my lap sends a jolt of lust through my body.

Cressida giggles and winks at me. "Maybe I am," she says, biting her lower lip seductively. "But you'll have to catch me first."

I chase her around the room, her laughter filling the air as we playfully wrestle for a few moments. When we finally stop, I've got her across my lap. "You know what happens to naughty girls who try to earn a spanking, don't you?" I say, my voice low and husky. "They get exactly what they're asking for."

I yank Cressida's pants down and palm her bare ass. Her gasp of surprise is followed by a yelp as my hand comes down hard on her behind. "You need to learn some respect, Cressida."

"Ow!" she cries out, squirming against me.

Cressida may be a fiery little thing, but she's also incredibly responsive to my touch. I run my hand over her bare skin, soothing the spot where I just spanked her. Her hips buck against me, and the heat between her thighs is scenting the room.

“Looks like someone’s enjoying this,” I murmur.

“I am not. Okay. Maybe a little,” she admits. “I keep thinking I shouldn’t like it. But I do. Is that wrong?”

“Nothing we do together is wrong, princess.” I pull her up into my lap. “Are you going to behave now?” I ask gruffly, trying to maintain control. We’re never going to get out of this bedroom at the rate we’re going.

“Yes, Dillon,” she breathes, the sound of my name on her lips sending a jolt straight to my cock. Jesus. Just my name does it. “Thank you for... showing me who’s in charge.”

“You should try to say that with a straight face. I might have a better chance of believing you mean it,” I say, pulling her close so our bodies are pressed together.

The feeling of her soft curves against my hardness is intoxicating. We share a heated look, a beat passes, and our lips crash together, tongues dancing and hands roaming.

Suddenly, nothing else matters.

“Maybe I should fuck some manners into you. Would you like that? Is this your childhood bed?”

She nods enthusiastically. “You’re the only boy I’ve ever had in this bedroom.” She grinds into me. “But this very bed is where I had my first orgasm. Where I learned to touch myself.”

I groan, feeling my cock swell against her. I hope we have enough time to finish packing after this. I push her down onto her back and pull her pants all the way off her legs. “Show me. Show me how you used to touch yourself.”

Cressida blushes, but complies, pushing her hands between her legs and stroking her clit. She gasps in pleasure as she moves her fingers faster, and I move my hands to her inner thighs, pushing her legs open wider.

“That’s it, baby,” I encourage her, my voice thick with desire. “Let me watch you come.”

She arches her back as her orgasm builds, and I can’t resist the urge to feel more of her. I reach between her legs and press

my fingers against her slickness, thrusting into her as she continues to pleasure herself.

Cressida cries out as she comes, her body trembling with pleasure. I lean down and kiss her. “That was incredible,” I whisper, my voice raw with emotion.

Cressida smiles up at me, her cheeks still flushed. “What about you?”

“We should finish packing,” I say, licking the fingers that were inside her. “You can take care of me later.”

She pouts. “Okay. Can you please pack that drawer for me?” She points to the nightstand and rolls over, still naked from the waist down.

I roll my eyes as she saunters around half naked trying to change my mind so that I fuck her. I have my suspicions that she will not be as easily tamed as I thought the first day she came to my garage. And I’m glad.

It’s never going to be boring.

I open the drawer and laugh. It’s completely full of toys. “What’s all this?” I ask, picking up a small vibrator.

Cressida grins. “That, my bossy boyfriend, is a reminder of the naughty things we can do when we get to our destination.”

I’ve got two choices. I can pack all her naughty toys and ignore that she’s trying to tease me into fucking her. Or I can give in and enjoy the ride.

I grin. I think I know which one I’m going to choose.

“Bend over that dresser.”

“No argument from me.”

“First time for everything.” I grab one of the toys and lube it up.

It’s an anal plug, and as Cressida gasps in anticipation, I slide it in.

“Oh, God,” she moans as I slowly pump it in and out.

I kiss her neck and nibble on her ear as I continue to tease her with the plug. She trembles and whimpers beneath me, her body shaking with pleasure.

I press my cock into her pussy, leaving the plug in.
“Feeling full, princess?”

“So full.”

“Someday when I have more time, I’m going to put my cock where this little plug is. Would you like that, naughty girl?”

She whimpers something.

“What was that?” I ask, slamming into her hard enough to put her on her toes.

“Yes,” she gasps, her voice barely a whisper.

I thrust inside her, pushing us both further and further toward bliss. She cries out in pleasure as I drive in deeper and faster, her body going wild beneath me.

Her inner walls squeeze me tight as her orgasm builds. She’s so tight with the plug.

“I’m going to come. Are you ready, princess?” I whisper against her ear.

She moans her answer, and I feel her body tense up as she comes undone around me. I pour myself into her, lost in the feeling of being completely connected with her.

When I pull her off the dresser, I notice the red marks where the furniture pushed into her skin. I press my lips to the angry skin, murmuring apologies for getting carried away.

“It’s okay,” she whispers, her voice thick with emotion. “I liked it.”

“Dirty girl.”

Hastily, we dress and gather the last of her belongings. On our last trip to the truck, Blake and Mayor Hamilton round the corner, their expressions dark and menacing.

“Care to explain what you’re doing with my daughter, Duke?” Mayor Hamilton sneers, his eyes narrowing dangerously.

Chapter Ten

Cressida

The venom in my father's voice is startling. I really don't understand why he hates the Duke brothers so much. But it doesn't matter. Not anymore.

"Dad, I'm in love with Dillon," I say, surprising myself with the strength in my voice. And probably I should have told Dillon I was in love with him before I told my dad. "And I'm moving out to be with him."

My father glares at me, his icy blue eyes searching for a sign of weakness. "Absolutely not!" he seethes. "Go to your room, now!"

I refuse to back down. I shake my head, my determination growing stronger with every beat of my heart. "No, Dad. I won't be controlled by you any longer. I heard you talking to Blake last night. I know there's something going on, and I won't be a part of it."

"You're imagining things, Cressida. Always so dramatic," he snaps, but there's a flicker of uncertainty in his eyes.

"Am I?" I challenge, my hands trembling ever so slightly. "Because I'm pretty sure I heard you promise your daughter's body to Blake in return for silence."

"Cressida, don't be ridiculous."

I stand my ground, refusing to let him intimidate me any longer. "I'm not being ridiculous, Father. I heard every word. I won't be a pawn in your twisted game anymore. You're not my pimp."

My father's expression darkens, and I can see the anger boiling inside of him. "You ungrateful little brat," he says, his fists clenched at his sides. "You will do as I say, or else."

He is certainly not acting like the cool, collected politician he pretends to be.

I take a deep breath, steadying my nerves. "No, I won't. I'm going to be with the man I love, and there's nothing you

can do to stop me.”

Before he can respond, Dillon places himself between me and my father, asserting his dominance.

“Enough, Hamilton,” he growls. “Cressida is coming with me.”

My father’s face goes red with anger, but I can see the fear hidden behind his fury. It seems like he knows that he’s losing control over both me and the situation. Whatever Blake knows about him must be really bad.

“Fine,” he spits. “But don’t come crawling back when you realize what a mistake you’ve made.”

Dillon takes my hand, squeezing it reassuringly, but Blake blocks our path. His eyes are dark with anger and possessiveness.

“Your father entrusted me to look after you, and I won’t let you throw away your life on some...mechanic.”

Dillon’s jaw clenches, but he doesn’t back down, stepping between me and Blake. He towers over the lawyer, his body language radiating confidence and power.

“Back off, Masterson,” Dillon warns in a low growl. “Cressida made her choice, and she doesn’t need you or anyone else controlling her life.”

“Is that so?” Blake challenges, his eyes narrowing. “Well, we’ll see about that.”

As if sensing the potential for a fight, Dillon’s body tenses, ready to defend us both.

“Let’s go, Dillon,” I urge.

“Think very carefully, Cressida,” Blake calls to my back as we head to the truck. “Your family is counting on you.”

My family currently consists of only the man opening the vehicle door for me. He’s the only person who has ever defended me. The only person who matters.

And I’m never going back.

As we pull out of the driveway, Dillon reaches for my hand. “Did you mean that? Back there?”

I close my eyes. “It’s too soon. I shouldn’t have said it. I’m sorry if it freaks you out.”

“Freaks me out? Have you not been paying attention? Cress, I love you. I have from the minute I first saw you.” He squeezes my hand. “Are you crying?”

“No. Yes. I don’t want to tell you that you’re perfect because you’ll probably use it against me. But you say all the right things. And you do that thing with your tongue. And I don’t see how it’s possible to fall in love this fast. But I meant what I said to my father. I love you.”

I chance a look at him and he’s smiling. “Which thing with my tongue?”

The next day, while Dillon is out picking up lunch, I find myself alone in the garage office. I’m lost in thought when suddenly, the door opens, revealing Blake. His expensive suit and polished shoes are a stark contrast to the grease-stained walls and concrete floor.

“Darling, you’ve had your fun. It’s time to come home.”

Darling?

“Get out of here, Blake,” I demand, trying to keep my voice steady despite the fear that’s beginning to creep in.

“I’m here in your best interests, Cressida.”

I shake my head. “I think I am a better judge of my best interests than you are.”

“Are you, though? You’ve just been expelled from your university. You have no skills, no prospects. We both know that there is nobody in this town who can give you what you need. Other than me, of course. You won’t get a better offer.”

“I have no interest in being your mistress, Blake. Leave.”

“You think someone is going to marry you after your sex scandal? I’m afraid that ship has sailed. But I promise to take

care of you.” He steps closer, his face just inches away from mine. “You know you want this.”

I take a deep breath and step back, putting more distance between us. His words are calm, but his eyes are wild. He’s unhinged, I think.

“I want you to leave,” I say firmly. “Now.”

He reaches out to take my hand. “Think about it, Cressida. I could give you so much. A life of luxury. You deserve it after all you’ve been through.”

Just then, the door slams open and Dillon strides in, his eyes blazing with fury. “Blake,” he growls, his fists clenched at his sides. “You’ve got three seconds to leave before I throw your sorry ass out.”

“Ah, there’s the white knight,” Blake sneers, straightening his suit. “No need for violence, Mr. Duke. I was simply making sure the lady was safe after her argument with her father.”

“Do not come back here, Masterson.”

“As you wish.” Blake casts me one last look before complying. I exhale a deep breath as he finally leaves.

“Are you alright?” Dillon asks, turning to me.

“Yes,” I say, my voice still trembling. “Thank you.”

“Hey,” he murmurs, pressing his lips to my forehead. “No one is going to hurt you, not while I’m around. I promise.”

The warmth of his touch and the softness in his voice wash over me, calming my frayed nerves.

“I missed you,” I whisper against his chest, feeling his heartbeat steady and strong beneath my cheek.

“Missed you too, sweetheart,” he replies, his arms tightening around me.

“Has your investigator come up with any leads on what Blake knows that my father is willing to trade me for in order to keep him quiet?”

“No, I’m sorry. Not yet. We’ll find it, princess. And then we’ll break open the corruption. No more secrets.”

I nod, but I don’t think it’s going to be that easy.

As a person who makes a lot of bad decisions, I’m aware that I usually ignore what my gut is telling me right before I make them. It’s not that I don’t have intuition. It’s that I usually ignore it.

My gut is telling me that Blake is more dangerous than I’ve given him credit for. He doesn’t like losing. It’s not that he even cares that much about me. I’m just a pawn to him. The status of a younger woman. The power of forcing a man to give away his daughter. And now, after watching him with Dillon, I’m also a symbol of what he cannot have. He will do whatever it takes to get me.

And I’m terrified.

Chapter Eleven

Dillon

Three weeks later

The air at the garage feels heavy, like an ominous cloud hanging over my head. I pace back and forth, my heart racing in my chest as I check my phone again. Damn it, where could she be? Why won't she answer her phone?

She's only a few minutes late, but my gut says there's trouble. I can't shake the feeling that something's wrong. I try calling her again, but it goes straight to voicemail.

Maybe Cressida is being bratty on purpose and I'm overreacting. I can't say that I've ever felt so possessive of a woman before. It's possible she's playing with me to get a spanking session. Because we both really like those.

But my gut says something different.

I punch in Cherry's number. "Hey Cherry, have you seen Cressida? Is she still with you?" I ask, my voice wavering with concern.

I'm a Duke. My voice doesn't fucking waver. Ever.

"We had breakfast together at the diner," Cherry replies. "After that, she popped into the bookstore while I was opening and then she said she had to get to work. She's not at the garage yet?"

My mind races with possibilities, each one more terrifying than the last. I can't shake this growing sense of dread. "No."

"Maybe she went home first?"

"I'll check. Thanks."

It wouldn't surprise me if she decided her outfit was all wrong for the playlist she wanted to listen to in the office, so she went home to change clothes. My girl is like that.

But that doesn't explain why she isn't checking her phone. Cress really likes her phone. She's especially fond of it since she bought her own plan after her father shut off the one he'd

been paying for. Having that independence means a lot to her. She paid for it with money she made working, something she's never done before.

Would her father have something to do with her not answering her phone or not getting to work? I don't trust him or Blake. Especially after I had to throw that lowlife out of my garage.

But the mayor hasn't contacted Cressida since she moved out three weeks ago. His loss is my gain. This has been the best three weeks of my life.

Waking up with her in my bed every morning, watching her sleep peacefully beside me and knowing that she's mine. Nothing has ever felt so right.

Cressida means everything to me, and I need to make sure she's safe.

I lock up and head home. When I don't find her there, I text my brothers to meet me at Tempest Books. That was the last place she was seen. We start there.

Fuck.

They didn't question my fear or try to put me off at all. Max knows what it's like to love a woman more than anything else in the world. If it were Cherry, he'd be unglued. By the way he's looking at Cherry now, he's thinking the same thing.

We're dividing up the search routes when Cressida's brother, Chad, comes into the bookstore.

"What the fuck are you doing here, Hamilton?" Max asks immediately standing in front of Cherry, protecting his woman from her high school bully.

"Easy there," Chad replies, holding up his hands defensively. "I found Cressida's phone on the street. Thought I'd bring it here since she's friendly with...you all."

I ignore the tone. I know what *you all* means. Chad thinks she's slumming it. Which she is, I guess. "Which street?"

"Elm. What's going on? Why are you all so tense?"

I scrub my hands through my hair. “She’s gone.”

“You don’t know that,” William says, his hand squeezing my shoulder.

“Who’s gone?”

“Cressida,” Cherry answers.

As much as we all hate Chad, I don’t think he’s faking his reaction when his face pales. “My sister is missing?”

“Are you sure you don’t know where she is?” Max asks skeptically, narrowing his eyes at Chad.

“Positive,” Chad insists, his jaw set with determination. “Look, we may not get along, but she’s still my sister. If I knew where she was, I wouldn’t keep it from you. Have you called the hospital?”

“Yeah. They were pretty vague, though. I’m not family.”

Chad holds up a finger and pulls out his phone. “I am.” He walks a few feet away for the quiet.

“Let’s think this through,” William suggests, his brow furrowed with concern. “Could someone have taken her? Who would have a motive?”

“Blake,” I say without hesitation, my blood boiling at the mere thought of his name. Blake Masterson.

“Blake,” Max and William echo in unison, their expressions darkening with realization.

“He was really counting on keeping her as his sex toy. If he has her...”

“We’ll get her back,” Cherry says, comforting me as much as she can.

Chad comes back just as she’s saying that. “Cressida hasn’t been brought to the hospital. I called the Sheriff and nobody has called 911 this morning.”

“Then it’s settled,” I say firmly, my resolve strengthening. “We find Blake, we find Cressida.”

“Agreed.” Chad nods, the animosity between us momentarily forgotten in our shared concern for Cressida. “Masterson seems like the most likely psychopath to have my sister since she’s not with the psychopath she moved in with..”

I growl at him.

“Just kidding, man. I can tell you care about her. It was a dumb joke. I say stupid shit when I’m rattled.”

I don’t like Chad any more than Cherry and Max do, nor do I trust him. But he can be useful, and it’s possible he’s not a monster like his old man.

The thought of her bound or hurt makes my rage boil over. But I use that fury to propel me forward, knowing that every step brings me closer to finding her. And when I do, there will be hell to pay for whoever dared to lay a finger on her.

Max pulls out his phone to find the report our investigator sent him last week detailing Masterson’s assets.

“Got it,” Max says. “He’s got two hunting cabins. One is about an hour away. The other is in Tennessee. The one nearby is pretty isolated, according to the map on my phone. It’s a good place to start.”

“Alright, let’s move,” William commands, determination etched across his face. “Let’s take several rigs in case there’s a chase.”

As we set out, I can’t stop myself from imagining what Cressida must be going through. The thought of her suffering ignites a fire within me, driving me to push harder and faster in my search.

“Hold on baby,” I whisper to myself, my chest tightening with anxiety, “I’m on my way.”

Chapter Twelve

Cressida

My head throbs as I slowly regain consciousness, the room around me dimly lit and unfamiliar. The cold hard floor beneath me offers no comfort as I struggle to remember how I ended up here. Panic sets in when I realize my wrists and ankles are tightly bound together, leaving me immobile and vulnerable. My heart races, a terrifying sense of helplessness washing over me.

I was walking. I saw a shadow behind me then... then what?

“Ah, you’re finally awake,” a voice cuts through the darkness.

“Blake? What’s going on?” I ask, trying to keep my voice steady despite the fear coursing through me.

“Let’s just say that I’ve decided it’s time for you to learn your place,” he replies, obviously relishing in my terror.

“Why are you doing this? What do you want with me?”

He sits me up. A tremor of revulsion shivers through me at his touch. “You belong to me. Nobody takes what’s mine. Especially not a thug like your mechanic.”

I shake my head. “Blake, I don’t belong to you. We don’t even know each other.”

“Your father gave you to me.”

“I don’t belong to my father, either. I’m not a possession. Blake, let me go. You’re a lawyer, you have to know how much trouble you could be in.”

“Only if I get caught. Which I don’t intend to do.” He grabs a handful of my hair. “I don’t like uppity women who don’t know their place.”

“Then why do you want me? I’m as uppity as they come.”

He crouches down. “I can break you of that.”

Cold fear washes over me as I realize the full extent of his plan. I'm going to be his prisoner, and he's going to do whatever it takes to make sure I'm obedient and submissive.

"Please, Blake. Don't do this. Let me go."

He shakes his head and stands. "You belong to me now, Cressida. Get used to it."

I swallow hard, my throat dry with fear. I have no idea how I'm going to get out of this.

"My father believes you are going to take care of me."

Blake laughs, but it's not exactly filled with joy. "Your father doesn't care about you. You're a liability to him. He was happy to make the trade for my silence."

The truth of his words cuts through my heart. My father sold me to this man to protect himself. He really doesn't care about me at all.

"Now, I suggest you get used to being my possession, Cressida. I'm not going to let you go."

"Why did my father...what are you hiding for him?"

"Your dear daddy has been sabotaging Tempest behind everyone's back," he reveals with a wicked grin. "He's been doing everything he can to make sure that town crumbles into oblivion, all for his own personal gain."

"I don't understand."

Blake sighs like I am trying his patience. "I'm not your father's attorney. I represent the Billacombe Corporation. They sent me here to get him back on track. They want Tempest for the river access and mining rights. They also want it cheap. Unfortunately, while your father has been driving down the land value, he's also been working with the Farugi family on a side project."

If this is supposed to make sense, it doesn't. I shake my head. "I don't know who the Farugi family is."

"Well, they are not a family you want to be in debt to. Not if you like living. Your father is stuck in the middle of two

very powerful entities, and now he's unable to fulfill his promises to either. Much like he screwed up his promise to me."

My heart sinks as the weight of this knowledge settles over me.

"Your father is already a dead man. The Duke brothers sealed his fate when they bought up the properties he'd been saving for Billacombe. As property values continued to plummet, he stood to make a bigger bonus from Billacombe. Now, with Tempest businesses getting filled again, he can't pay back the Farugis either. You're lucky I got to you before they did."

I shudder. I don't know the name Farugi, but what he's describing sounds like mafia or something. Are they after me too?

"You don't have to worry about them," Blake says, as if he can read my thoughts. "You're mine now, Cressida. Your safety is my top priority."

I don't feel safe. "What are you going to do with me?" I ask, my voice barely above a whisper.

Blake's lips quirk up into a small smirk. "Oh, Cressida. You're going to be my very own little pet. You'll do what I say, when I say it." He leans in closer, his fingertips brushing the side of my face. "You're mine now. Finally."

"Blake, you don't have to do this," I plead, desperate for any chance of escape.

Blake unties my hands and feet, leaving me momentarily disoriented as the blood rushes back into my limbs. "I don't have to do this," he repeats. "But I want to. I'm going to take care of you, Cressida. And you're going to take care of me."

He stands, pulling me up, his eyes filled with lust and cruelty. I know what he intends to do, and fear courses through me.

"Such a pretty little thing," he murmurs, reaching out to touch me. "I've always admired you, Cressida. Now I finally get to claim you as my own."

“Get away from me!” I shout, trying to put as much distance between us as possible. I don’t have much strength. Whatever he drugged me with is messing with me. The world goes topsy-turvy when I move my head too fast.

“Feisty, aren’t we?” Blake chuckles, clearly not dissuaded. “That just adds to the fun.” He grabs me suddenly, and I’m too weak to resist. “You’re mine now,” he repeats, his lips coming closer and closer.

I close my eyes, bracing myself for the inevitable.

Channeling all my fear and anger and limited memory of a self-defense class my sorority took when I was drunk, I drive my knee into his balls.

“Bitch,” he snarls, grabbing at me again. We struggle, knocking over a table and chair, and I execute a not very well-aimed punch to his temple, but it connects, sending him crashing to the ground.

He doesn’t get up, so he must be unconscious. I hope. But my momentary reprieve is shattered when I notice a flicker of flames in the corner, quickly growing.

“Damn it,” I mutter, realizing that my battle with Blake has inadvertently led to an even more dangerous situation when we knocked a kerosene lamp off the table. I need to find a way to escape before the room becomes my tomb.

The heat in the room intensifies as the hungry flames lick the walls, and I can feel sweat prickling along my brow. Panic claws at my chest, constricting my breathing as I frantically search for an exit. I’m still so woozy.

I make it to the door, but it’s locked from the inside. Damn it.

My heart hammers in my chest as I crawl towards Blake’s unconscious body. “Blake,” I choke out. “The key... where is it?”

He doesn’t respond, and panic floods my veins like ice water. Crawling closer, I reach out and frantically search his pockets, my fingers trembling with urgency.

“Come on, come on,” I murmur to myself, trying to block out the searing heat of the encroaching flames. Finally, my hand closes around a cold, metallic object—the key. Relief washes over me, followed by a renewed determination.

Coughing from the smoke, I insert the key into the lock, turning it with a faint click. Cool air rushes in when I swing the door open, but there’s no time to savor it. I glance back at Blake’s prone form, knowing I have to get him out of here.

I curse under my breath. The floor seems to smolder beneath us as I struggle to drag his unconscious body towards the open door.

Suddenly, the sound of approaching voices cuts through the chaos. My heart leaps with hope as I recognize Dillon’s gruff tone among them.

“Over here!” I shout, my voice barely audible above the crackling flames.

Dillon moves quickly, sweeping me off the floor and into his strong arms. I gasp at the sudden contact, but it’s a comforting contrast to the fiery hell around us. I cling to him, my hands finding purchase in the rough fabric of his shirt, desperation fueling my grip.

“Stay with me, Cressida,” he pleads, his voice a mixture of command and tenderness. “Almost there,” Dillon murmurs.

The cool night air feels like a balm against my heated skin as we finally emerge from the cabin, but my vision starts to blur, dark spots dancing at the edges. The adrenaline that had been sustaining me begins to fade, and exhaustion takes hold.

“Stay with me,” Dillon pleads again, but it’s too late. I surrender to the darkness.

The sterile scent of antiseptic fills my nostrils as I slowly regain consciousness.

Again.

I blink my eyes open, taking in the stark white walls and beeping machines surrounding me. The hospital room feels

foreign, a stark contrast to the dark, smoke-filled cabin that haunts my thoughts.

“Thank God, you’re awake,” Dillon’s voice cuts through the silence, and I turn my head to see him perched on the edge of my bed. His rugged features are creased with concern, and I let out a shaky breath at his presence.

“Wh-what happened?” I ask, my voice weak and trembling.

“We got you and Blake out in time. You’ve been unconscious for a while, Cressida.” His hand finds mine, his rough fingers gently squeezing. “You scared the hell out of all of us.”

“Blake...” I remember the heated words exchanged, the revelations about my father’s corruption and his plans to devalue Tempest. “I need to tell you what I learned from him.”

“Shh. He’s under arrest and as soon as they medically release him, he’s going to jail. You can tell me the rest later,” he reassures me, his intense gaze never leaving my face.

I nod.

The door to the sterile hospital room swings open, and a doctor holding a tablet and wearing a white coat approaches my bed.

“Ms. Hamilton, I’m Dr. Shea,” she begins, glancing at me before focusing on the screen in front of her. “Mr. Duke, can you please step out for a few minutes?”

“It’s okay if he stays,” I tell her. “I’d rather have him here.”

She smiles. “All right, if you’re sure. I have the results of your labs. I don’t think you’ll have any lasting damage, though we’d like to keep you overnight for observation. Your cuts and scrapes are superficial, thankfully. The smoke inhalation from the fire is our biggest concern.”

“Thank you, Doctor,” I say, my voice still weak but brimming with relief. Dillon squeezes my hand reassuringly.

“However,” the doctor hesitates, raising her eyes from her tablet to meet mine, “there’s something else you need to know...one of the blood tests showed positive.”

“What? COVID?”

“No, Ms. Hamilton. Not COVID. Pregnant.”

My heart stops, frozen in time as the words echo through the room. Pregnant? How can this be?

“Are you sure? I’m on the pill.” I ask, my voice barely more than a whisper, while my insides twist into knots.

“Nothing is 100% effective, and you are pregnant,” the doctor confirms, her tone gentle yet matter-of-fact.

“I was supposed to start my period two days ago, but I’ve had some stress lately, so I didn’t even think about it.”

Dillon’s grip on my hand tightens, his eyes searching mine for a reaction. A million thoughts collide inside my head. We’ve only been together for such a short time. I’m not ready to be somebody’s mother. But a baby. Wow.

The doctor continues to speak, her words fading into the background as I try to process this new information. A baby. With Dillon. The thought sends a thrill through my body, but also a sense of fear. I’m not ready for this. I’m not sure if I ever will be.

“Sweetheart,” he murmurs, his eyes filled with concern. “How do you feel about this?”

“I don’t know. Wait. How do you feel about this?” My eyes are searching his when the doctor makes her polite exit.

“Cressida, it’s your body. You get to decide how you feel first.”

I swallow hard, trying to sort through the chaotic emotions swirling within me. Fear. Joy. Uncertainty. But one feeling rises above the rest: desire. The thought of carrying Dillon’s child, our love manifesting in the most intimate and primal way...

“Surprised,” I admit, “but... excited. This is our baby, Dillon, and I want to raise it with you. If, um, you want to, that is. Otherwise, I mean, I guess I’ll do it alone. I know this is sudden.”

He places one hand gently on my abdomen. “Of course I want to. But are you sure?” he asks. “I know this changes everything.”

I exhale, feeling the weight of the world lift slightly from my shoulders. Dillon’s hand on my belly feels right, feels like the beginning of something new and beautiful. “I’m sure,” I say. “I mean, as sure as I can be right now. But I want this, Dillon. I want you to be the father of my child.”

Dillon’s eyes light up with emotion, and he leans down to place a tender kiss on my lips. “I want that, too, Cressida,” he says, his voice husky with desire. “I want to love you and our baby, to protect and provide for you both. And I want to make sure you feel loved and desired every step of the way.”

My heart swells with warmth and affection as I realize the depth of Dillon’s commitment.

“Thankfully, they make super cute maternity outfits now. There’s this influencer I follow who’s about six months along. She never looked cuter.”

The corners of his mouth twitch upward, relief washing over his chiseled features. “I’ll make sure you have all the cute maternity outfits you want,” Dillon says, his voice deep and full of promise.

“Dillon?”

“Yeah, baby?”

“I think we need to have my father arrested.”

Epilogue

Dillon

Five Years Later

The last bedtime story ends, my voice drifting off as our son's breaths slow into sleep.

It's been a busy week and I'm hoping everyone can sleep in tomorrow. It's not likely, but it would be nice. Our kid is an early riser no matter what time you put him to bed.

Checking the windows and doors of our house, I run through my to-do list. The parts I need for the next custom car were supposed to be here Thursday. If they don't come by Monday, I'm going to have to work a couple of weekends to get caught up.

Cressida had a Chamber of Commerce luncheon today and those always exhaust her. She's a good mayor, though, taking over for Max after he decided four years was enough and he wants to start making artisan mead. I like his beer just fine, but I don't know if I'm really a mead dude.

Cherry's baby shower is tomorrow, which is somehow a couples party instead of a woman-only shindig, but it will be nice to spend some time with my brothers that isn't Tempest business.

We have a lot to celebrate, too. Not the least of which being Cressida's dean was finally sentenced this week for his career of shitty actions. We've managed to put three assholes in prison in the five years we've known each other. Masterson won't be eligible for parole for seven years. Hamilton is in protective custody because the mafia is still putting hits on him in prison. And now the dean. I hope prison treats him the same way he treated all those young girls.

I'd love to see Chad Hamilton do some time, but so far he hasn't broken any laws. He's just an asshole.

He's been working with Cressida on a foundation to fight sex crimes, so he's at least trying to mend his ways. Cherry doesn't even kick him out of the bookstore anymore, but no

one wants to spend time with him, either. Max has only hit him three times this year. Progress.

I check the kiddo one more time and tiptoe out of his room and down the hall to our bedroom. The sight that greets me makes my cock twitch.

Cressida is sprawled in our bed, her swollen belly straining the soft cotton of my old t-shirt. It barely covers the pale expanse of her thighs.

My gaze travels the curve of her hips, remembering how they fit perfectly in my hands. How even now, especially now, heavy with our child, she's the most beautiful thing I've ever seen.

"Like what you see?" Her voice is husky, eyes gleaming in the dim light.

"Very much." I peel off my shirt and jeans, sliding in next to her. The mattress dips under my weight. "Nice shirt."

She laughs, the sound melting over me like warm honey. "This old thing?" She plucks at the shirt, giving me a glimpse of the dark furrow between her legs. "I just grabbed the first thing I saw."

"Is that so?" I trace a finger down her neck, over the swell of her breast. Her nipple pebbles under the thin fabric. "Seems to me you knew exactly what you were doing. It's no secret I like it when you wear my clothes."

"You do?" The words end on a gasp as I cup her sex, parting her slick folds. "Dillon..."

"Shh. Remember the first day we met, when you called me 'sir' and I told you it wasn't my kink."

"Vaguely. I asked what your kink was, didn't I? I've learned about several of them. Hiding any more?"

I smooth my hand over the baby bump while stroking her. "I think I have a new pregnancy fetish."

"Mmmmm. That's a good one. What do you like about it?"

“The way your body changes, and how beautiful you are in it. The fact that I was the one who put you in this state. It’s incredibly sexy.”

“I’m glad you think so.” She sighs, arching into my touch.

I thrust two fingers into her and swallow her moans with a kiss. She’s already dripping for me. “Big milky tits, round curvy belly...knowing every man that looks at you knows you like to take my dick in that fertile pussy and let me come inside you, filling you with my seed.”

Her hands fist in my hair as I lavish open-mouthed kisses down her neck. I curl my fingers, seeking and finding that spot that makes her keen.

Her inner walls flutter around my fingers and I groan. “So wet and ready for me.” I nip at her earlobe, adding a third finger. “Do you want my cock, Cress? Tell me how much you need it.”

A broken cry spills from her lips as I work my fingers inside her. She’s close already, her body writhing under mine. Horny little thing. I ache to be buried inside her, to feel her silken heat enveloping me as I drive into her depths. But first I want to see her come undone. I want to watch her shatter into a million pieces under my hands.

“I can’t wait to drink from these big tits after the baby comes, princess. That sweet, warm milk that only you can give.” I suck her nipple through the fabric, and she shudders. “We get so messy when you’re lactating. My cum all over you, your milk all over me.”

She cries out as I rub her clit harder, her legs trembling.

“Dillon, please.” Her nails rake down my back. “I need you. Now.”

“Not yet.” I kiss the corner of her mouth, the edge of her jaw. “Come for me first. Let me see you fall apart, sweetheart, and then I’ll give you what you need.”

She whimpers, desperation clouding her eyes. I curl my fingers again, pressing hard against her sweet spot. Her inner

walls clamp down, rippling around my fingers as her orgasm crashes over her.

“That’s it.” I drink in her cries, the flush spreading down her neck. “So gorgeous when you come.”

Her chest heaves as she struggles to catch her breath. I withdraw my fingers and she moans at the loss.

“Shh.” I kiss her, tangling my tongue with hers. “I’ve got you.”

We adjust so she’s on her side and I shift between her thighs, the broad head of my cock nudging at her entrance. Her breath hitches as I slide inside her inch by inch, her silken heat enveloping me.

We moan in unison as I bottom out, her inner walls rippling around my length. I pause, savoring the feeling of her stretched taut around me.

“Dillon, please move.” Her nails bite into my forearm, desperation laced in her voice. “I need you.”

I smile and brush my lips over her ear. “Who’s in charge here, Madame Mayor?”

She groans. “Me. I’m in charge.”

“No, little brat. Try again.”

“Mr. Duke, fuck your wife or so help me I’ll get a toy and ignore you altogether.”

“You like my cock too much to forsake it for a piece of silicone.”

“Please.”

“Please what?”

“Please fuck your wife, Mr. Duke.”

“That’s better.” I slide my hips back, pressing in deeper. Her breath catches and I smile, sinking in as far as I can go. Drawing back, I thrust deep inside her, setting a slow, steady pace. Her breath comes in pants, soft moans escaping with each stroke.

“You feel so good.” I nuzzle the side of her neck, inhaling her scent. “So tight and wet for me.”

“Only for you,” she whispers.

Heat coils in my gut at her words. I crave her, need her like I need air to breathe. Emotion swells inside me, threatening to overwhelm me. “I love you so damn much.”

“And I love you.”

The coil in my gut tightens, pleasure building with each thrust. She cries out, inner walls clamping down around my cock. I groan, thrusting deep as my own release crashes over me in waves.

We cling to each other as the aftershocks fade, our breaths and heartbeats slowing. A contented sigh escapes her, her body going lax.

I settle in beside her, pulling her into my arms. She nestles against me with a sleepy murmur, her fingers curling into my chest hair.

“Get some rest, sweetheart. I’ve got you.”

Her eyes drift closed, a smile playing on her lips.

Within moments her breathing evens out, the stresses of her day fading away. I stroke her hair, listening to the soft sounds of her sleep.

My fierce, beautiful, bratty wife.

* * *

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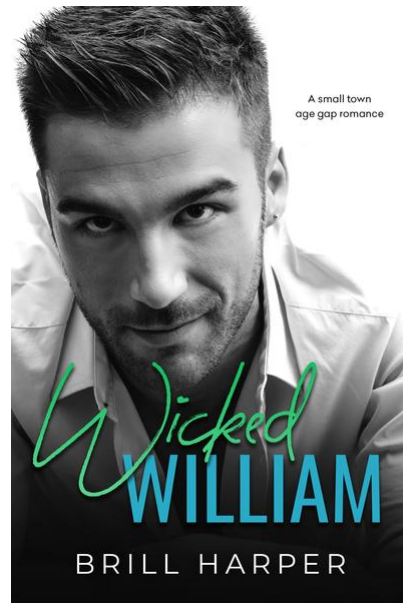
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Connecting independent readers to independent writers.

Did you love *Dirty Dillon: A Small Town Age Gap Romance*?
Then you should read [Wicked William](#) by Brill Harper!



As the middle brother of the notorious Duke family, my reputation for trouble knows no bounds. It takes all my concentration, all my time, to stay in control of my baser instincts. I need order and routine. I hate surprises.

Everyone thinks I'm the nice one. If women knew the beast I harbor inside, they'd turn and run.

And then a kaleidoscope of mischief and curves knocks on my front door. She says she's a psychic and her vision brought her across the country to save me. She says she's a kitchen witch. She says a lot of things that don't make sense to a man who doesn't believe in visions and magic.

She's nothing but chaos. If I let her, she'll break me open. Everything I've repressed, stuffed down, boxed up...she's going to unleash it all, undoing all my careful control.

I have my own kind of visions...about her. Fantasies that are dark and twisted. My little psychic should have seen me

coming.

Author Confession: William was the hardest brother to write because I thought he was just a basic, nice guy saddled with the Duke brother reputation. Turns out he's one HUGE surprise. This guy made me blush writing him. He's every feral, primal dream you ever had in nice guy's clothing.

Read more at [Brill Harper's site](#).

About the Author

Unfailingly filthy...and super sweet

Brill's books are filthy/sweet for when you're in the mood for something a little over the top. Okay, a lot over the top. Sorry, not sorry.

Brill Harper is represented by Deidre Knight of The Knight Agency.

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