



filthy

*jealous*

THEIRS OF ALL HALLOWS

THEIR

PART ONE

CAITLYN DARE

# FILTHY JEALOUS HEIR: PART ONE

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# HEIRS OF ALL HALLOWS' BOOK ONE

CAITLYN DARE



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## REESE

I bring my car to a stop outside the only house I've ever known and sigh. It's been ten weeks since I threw a bag into the boot and hightailed it out of Saints Cross, leaving the vivid memories of the night before behind. Or at least, that was the plan.

I might not have got the answers I wanted that night, but I sure left town with a fuck load of new material for my wank bank. After turning off my phone, I'd headed into the sunset on the promise of a new life. A promise that has kept me going through the summer.

But that dream wasn't exactly all it was cracked up to be.

It could have been. It could have been everything I wanted. Everything I've craved since Mum signed my life away.

But the lying son of a bitch I get to call Dad fucked it all up.

All the promises he'd made me about starting over, about cutting ties with our old life... they were all bullshit.

My fingers tighten on the wheel as I stare up at the house, anger bubbling up inside me and threatening to overflow at the fact that I'm back here. That I have been given zero fucking choice but to come back here. For now, at least.

My phone buzzes in my pocket, but I ignore it.

I turned it on before I got in my car and instantly wished I hadn't.

I haven't spoken to anyone since the night of the initiation.

The second I left that party, I disconnected from my past and looked to the future.

It hurt. Fuck yeah, it did. Those boys—my best friends Oakley Beckworth, Elliot Eaton, and Theo Ashworth—have been my life. My brothers. My ride or fucking dies.



But they'd got what they wanted. They were Heirs. They had their tattoos; Elliot had the key to the Chapel, and they all had the power.

They'd rule All Hallows' Sixth Form with an iron fist—and I had no doubt that they'd be fucking good at it, too.

They probably barely even noticed that four had become three with the hordes of girls I'm sure they've been fighting off since that night. I bet they can hardly think fucking straight from the sheer number of free blow jobs and pussy offered to them in the past few weeks.

Reaching down, I tug at my sweats, the memories of that night affecting me as if I'm right back there.

I slam those thoughts down.

The only reason they're bubbling under the surface is because my dick's seen less than zero action besides my right hand since getting out of his hellhole and it's desperate. I'm desperate. Even Darcie fucking Porter, the Queen Bitch of All Hallows', could get it hard with one look right now.

That thought sends a violent shudder down my spine.

I shove my door open, frustration seeping through my veins as I trudge to the boot and pull out the one bag I packed to take with me all those weeks ago.

Hitching it up onto my shoulder, I head toward the door.

I was half expecting Mum to be here. For her to be waiting for me. But that doesn't seem to be the case. The driveway is empty, and as far as I can tell, so is the house.

There's certainly no big welcome home party.

Hell, there's not even a greeting.

I'm halfway up the steps to the front door when a note taped to the glass catches my eye. A frown pulls at my brows as I consider her being aware of my arrival and still not making the fucking effort to be here.

I guess it should be exactly what I expected. She's a lying, cheating control freak after all, and it seems those traits might extend to her relationship with me now.

My bag hits the ground with a thud as I step up to the familiar handwriting on the note. The second the words register in my head, my heart drops to my feet and my blood turns to ice.

*Reese,*

*Surprise! We have moved in with the Beckworths.*

*Mum x*

Hooking my fingers under the small scrap of paper, I tear it from the door. My hand trembles with barely restrained aggression. “No,” I spit. “Fuck no, this is not happening.”

Ripping my bag open, I search the bottom for my keys. Keys which I haven’t used in fucking forever, because there was always someone inside this house. Always someone to greet me when I did show my face, even if it was our housekeeper.

Finding them, I pick out the one I need and move it toward the lock. Only, when I get it there, it doesn’t fucking fit.

A bitter laugh of disbelief falls from my lips, but despite knowing what she’s done, I keep pushing, desperate to get inside, to walk into my room, curl up in my bed and fall asleep with the hope that I can wake up six months ago and that none of this is happening.

I can’t move in with the Beckworths. I can’t...

Dropping my hand, my keys fall to the floor as I stumble back until my legs hit the small wall of our porch and I flop down. My head lowers into my hands as I fight to stop it from spinning.

There was a time when we were like, eight or nine when Oakley and I came up with a plan for me to move in with them. It was stupid childish shit. But I’d wanted it. I wanted what they had. Oakley and Olivia Beckworth.

Oakley might have been my boy. My best fucking friend in the entire world. But we would never share the connection that he and Olivia had.

Even as a kid, jealousy used to ravage me when I’d catch them sharing a knowing look that they both fully understood but I had no fucking clue about. It was a twin thing. They could finish each other’s sentences. Hell, at times, they even knew what the other was doing without being told.

It was weird. It was impressive. But mostly, it made me fucking lonely.

Mum and Dad were always busy and almost always out of the house, leaving me to be cared for by nannies. Oak and Olivia didn’t have that either. Their mum was incredible. Kind, caring, loving. They had a family, a home. And it was everything I wanted.

Don't get me wrong, my parents were great. They were happy, they loved each other, and they made sure I had everything I could ever want. They had no idea that deep down, what I really needed was... them.

Looking back now, I wonder how blind I was to it all. They put on such a united front, showed the world that they were the perfect couple with the successful jobs, the happy family, the beautiful home. All the things people crave in life. But when it came down to it, it was all lies.

There was nothing but lies, secrets, and betrayal hiding beneath the perfect veneer they had painted on our lives.

My arms fall, my fingers wrapping around the edge of the wall until it hurts and I tip my face up to the sky.

It's the perfect summer's day. Not a cloud in the sky. One of those days as a kid that you never want to end, because you know that every one you have edges you closer to growing up, to facing the brutal reality of life and the things you have no choice but to become.

Or maybe that was just me.

I hated that I'd had my life mapped out for me, hated that every day I woke got me closer to the inevitable.

I have no idea how long I sit there, putting off doing what I need to do, but eventually my phone buzzes and I pull it free.

Anger licks at my insides, my hand trembling as I swipe the screen to open what he has to say.

Dad: I'm sorry, Son. But we both know it's for the best. Saints  
Cross is where you really belong.

My eyes lift from the screen as my grip turns so tight I'm amazed I don't crack it. What I really want to do is get in my car and go straight back to where I came from to hide. But I can't.

My only choice is here, or...

My eyes find my car as the option of getting in it and driving plays out in my mind. I don't have access to the kind of money I need right now to start over. That's why I'm here. Although I'm sure I've got enough to at least get started.

But I need to be here.

I need to be here and show this entire town what lying, cowardly, manipulative arseholes my parents really are. And then, and only then, I might be able to leave with my head held high. I might be able to start over.

Nodding to myself, I find my feet, determination pulsing through my veins.

I can do that. I can endure stepping foot back inside that house, living with those liars so long as at the end of it, I show the town exactly who they are, exactly what they do to people's lives.

My hands tremble around the wheel as I make my way toward the house that I know almost as well as the one I just left. Hell, there's every chance that over the years, I've spent as much time under the Beckworths' roof as I have my own.

The sight of their mansion makes my stomach knot. I have no idea what kind of reception I can expect. Mum knows I'm coming, although she thinks I'm turning up tomorrow. But the others?

What has she told them? Where do the boys think I've gone?

Are they relieved that I'm no longer in their lives?

I bet Olivia is.

For the briefest moment, I allow myself to think back to our final meeting in the woods. Her scent, her addictive taste, the way her pussy gripped me so fucking tight, trying to draw me deeper.

"Fuck," I bark, slamming my hand down on the wheel.

I told myself as I walked away from her that night that I wasn't going to think about it again. That what happened under the cover of darkness, deep in the trees was nothing but a show.

A show of power over the girl who was just as bad as my parents.

I wanted to see her broken. Ruined. I wanted to see her fucking tarnished for what she was doing, what she was hiding, and as she curled up on the cold, dark ground at my feet, I almost got my wish.

But it wasn't enough.

I knew instantly that what we shared that night wasn't enough. Not enough to break her, and certainly not enough to sate my twisted need, my darkest fantasy, my... obsession with the girl I could never have.

Unlike my house, there are cars parked in the driveway here. The windows are open with soft music pouring from inside.

My heart pounds harder as I consider the fact that they're all in there, playing happy families.

*Is she being a better mum to them than she's been to me?*

I sit there for the longest time, staring up at the house I once felt so at home in. But it's different now. It's tainted right along with my memories of

everything that happened inside it.

Aware that I'm going to be caught if I sit out here like a creep for much longer, I push the door open and drag my bag out that I dumped on the passenger seat before leaving... home.

I shake my head. That house is apparently not my home anymore.

This is.

A house where my mum and my what... my new stepfamily are.

*Please.*

My eyes roll and my fists clench as I head toward the front door. The music gets louder, and it becomes more than obvious that it's Oakley's as I get closer.

A sense of longing pulls at my tight muscles, the need to kick back in my best friend's room with some beats pouring from his speakers as we forget about the world and all the bullshit in it.

But something tells me that after the stunt I pulled, I'm not going to be welcomed back with open arms.

I don't have a key this time, so I reach for the handle, hoping like hell that it's open and I'm not going to have to ring the bell and wait to be invited inside.

Thankfully, it twists, and only a second later, I've thrown the door wide open and stepped into their massive hallway.

Their house always did put our mini mansion to shame, but after living in a beach house in a small seaside town for the last few weeks, it seems even more fucking ridiculous than ever.

Voices float down to me from the kitchen at the back of the house. The scent of something cooking hits my nose and makes my stomach growl loudly.

Dumping my bag on the marble floor tiles, I take a step forward, but a shadow falls in a doorway beside me.

My heart jumps into my throat, but I don't get a chance to turn his way, to say anything before Oakley roars, "You motherfucker!" and flies at me.

His fist collides with my jaw and my head snaps back as pain explodes across my face and down my neck. My head spins and my vision blurs for a beat, his punch is a hell of a lot harder than I ever remember them being in the past. But after what I've done, I guess I deserve it.

A blurred figure races down the stairs as I fight to recover from the surprise attack, but the second my vision clears and I find her dark, angry

eyes, everything comes crashing down around me. Literally.

## OLIVIA

The hand-painted Moorcroft vase lays scattered at Reese's feet as he stares blankly at me.

"You threw a vase at my head."

I cock a brow and smirk. "Shame it missed."

"You're fucking crazy."

"And you're a piece of shit."

"Liv," Oakley warns, stepping in between us.

"Control your psycho bitch sister, Beckworth, or I'll—"

I grab the next item off the sideboard and haul it above my head. "Or you'll what?" I threaten, unsure how likely I am to follow through on my intentions.

Seeing Reese Whitfield-Brown standing at our door unleashed something in me. Something I thought I'd long let go of.

He's been gone all summer, ever since the end of year party.

A night I've tried my hardest to pretend never happened.

"Okay, okay, everyone just calm the fuck down," Oakley barks, holding out his hands as if he's physically trying to keep me and Reese apart. Which is rich, seeing he was the first one to land a punch.

"He started it," I snap, the anger I feel at seeing Reese again bubbling over.

"Liv, not helping."

"What are you doing here, Reese?"

His expression falters, and for a second, I see behind the icy cold veneer he's wearing.

"You mean my mum and your dad didn't tell you the good news? You're

looking at your new housemate.”

“No.” My breath catches, because this is the worst thing that can possibly happen to me.

Almost as bad as that night.

“You’re kidding?” Oakley hisses. “You take off at the beginning of summer, ghost us, ignore our calls and texts, and then turn up without warning and think you’re going to live here? Over my dead fucking—”

“Oakley.” Dad’s voice ripples through the hall. “Reese, we weren’t expecting you until tomorrow.”

“You knew?” My head whips around to him, and he blanches.

“We planned to discuss it with you tonight over dinner.”

“Oh, this is pure gold,” Reese chuckles darkly. “And exactly what had you planned to tell them, *Dad?*”

“Reese, that’s not—”

“Not what? Appropriate? Like how you were fucking my mum behind my dad’s back all those months? Or how you ruined my family?”

“We should talk,” Dad says, somehow managing to keep his composure. But then, it’s his job. He defends some of the worst criminals in the country and does it with a smile.

“So let’s talk.” Reese folds his arms over his chest and cocks a brow. “Did you fuck her over the desk at work, or did she get on her knees and—”

“Enough!” Dad booms. “I will accept your anger and disrespect toward me because I understand there are things we need to talk about, but what I will not tolerate is hearing you talk about your mother that way.”

Reese steps forward, blind fury rolling off him in thick, angry waves. “My mother is a lying, deceitful whore.”

Fiona’s gasp echoes through the hall and we all turn to find her standing there, unshed tears clinging to her lashes.

“Reese, you’re early.”

“Quite the set-up you’ve got here, Mum,” he spits. “A nice little happy family.”

“Reese, please.”

Fiona Brown is a formidable woman. Sharp-tongued, driven, and a force to be reckoned with in a town ruled by men. But she’s also kind and compassionate, and she makes my dad happier than I’ve seen him in a long time.

It was a shock at first, when we found out about their affair. But anyone



can see how happy they make each other, and despite Reese's reaction, Fiona and Reese's dad had been having marital issues for some time.

"I haven't seen you in over two months. It would be nice to talk, to catch up."

"Your mum is right, Reese." Oakley offers him a faint smile. "We should all sit down and talk."

"Go fuck yourself, Beckworth." Reese lunges for my brother, and the two of them slam into the wall in a blur of fists and insults.

"Christian, do something," Fiona yells, and my dad wades into the chaos, pulling the guys apart.

"ENOUGH!" he bellows. "This is my home, and I will not tolerate this. Oakley, go upstairs and calm down. And you," he pins Reese with a dark look, "you will go sit in the kitchen and talk to your mother."

"You can't tell me what to do."

"No, but you live under my roof now, and you will respect my rules. Or there's the door." Dad flicks his eyes past Reese.

"Whatever." He shrugs out of my dad's hold and cuts each of us with a cold look that sends a shudder through me. "I'm out of here."

"Reese, wait—"

But he's gone, blowing out of the house like a storm. The door slams behind him, and Fiona sucks in a sharp breath.

"Well," Oak says, still loitering by the stairs, "that could have gone better."

**R**eese didn't return.

The mood in the house was tense after he stormed out. Dad had ushered Fiona into the kitchen and told me to deal with Oakley. He'd gotten an impressive split knuckle from his scuffle with Reese, but it was nothing an antiseptic wipe and some skin closure strips wouldn't fix. When you have a brother who plays rugby, you become well versed in cleaning up cuts and bruises.

"Where do you think he is?" I ask Oakley as we veg out in his room. Reruns of *The Walking Dead* play on his television, but he's more interested in whatever's on his phone screen.

“Probably getting fucked up or straight up fucked. You know what he’s like.”

Don’t I just.

I shake *those* thoughts out of my head. “I can’t believe he’s going to live here. They should have told us sooner.”

“And ruin the last few days of summer?” He looks up at me and gives me a weak smile. “I want to punch him all over again.”

“It won’t help anything.”

“No.” He flexes his busted hand, the closure strip lifting slightly. “But it’ll make me feel better.”

“I still can’t believe he ghosted you all summer.”

“I’m not surprised. It’s Reese. He’s always had a chip on his shoulder. Especially since all that shit with Judge Bancroft and Abigail. Fuck, I wish he’d talked to me before taking off like that.” Oakley drops his head back against the giant beanbag seat and blows out a steady breath. “I kinda get why he did it.”

“What?” I balk.

“It’s different for him. His whole life is mapped out.”

My stomach drops. “You really think she’ll make him go through with it? Marrying Abigail?”

“Before the summer, I would have said one hundred percent. It was a signed and sealed deal. But now... I don’t know.”

I make a small, derisive sound.

Arranged marriages, for God’s sake. It’s the twenty-first century. But the arrangement between Fiona Brown and Judge Bancroft is no secret. Upon graduating, once they turn twenty-one, Reese and Abigail are expected to be married.

I can’t imagine Reese Whitfield—as he prefers to be called, because a double-barrel surname is too pretentious even for a rich boy like him, apparently—in a serious relationship, let alone a marriage. But none of the Saints Cross Heirs live particularly normal lives. They’re the descendants of some of the country’s most powerful and successful men. Magistrates, lawyers, politicians, businessmen, and investors. The upper echelons of Saints Cross have been marrying off their sons and daughters for years. To strengthen families’ positions, to merge assets, to breed the perfect offspring.

All Hallows’ School and nearby Saints Cross University don’t educate your average teenagers. They cultivate the leaders of the future.

And my brother and his dumb friends are next in line to carry the baton. Oakley's phone vibrates again, and he chuckles at whatever the message says.

"Theo?" I ask.

"Group chat."

"Of course." I roll my eyes, flipping back onto his bed. "What do they think about the whole Reese-is-back-and-is-our-new-housemate situation?"

"Theo is still laughing, Elliot is... well, you know Elliot. He's already told me to rein it in."

"You don't always have to do what he says, you know."

He shrugs. "You know how it is. He's the lead Heir. He has the key."

The key.

Another ridiculous tradition bestowed to every new generation of Heirs. The key to the Chapel. A private residence in the oldest building on the All Hallows' School estate.

"Anyway, I'm not—"

A loud crash from somewhere downstairs makes me bolt upright. "What the hell?"

"I'm guessing Reese is home." Oakley rises from his chair, grim determination etched into his expression.

"What are you going to do?"

"Make sure he doesn't do something he'll regret."

"Oak—"

But he's already gone.

I hesitate, really not wanting to get involved. Not while Reese is so angry. But he lives here now; it's not like I can escape him.

I love my dad, I love him something fierce, but he screwed up, not telling us about Reese moving in. I get why they wanted to wait, but a little time to get used to the idea would have been nice.

Stepbrother.

The word clangs through me.

I had sex in the woods at the end of year party with not only my brother's best friend, but also my new stepbrother.

A shudder rips down my spine as I fight to block out the memories.

It was a moment of madness. Anger and alcohol are never a good combination. Throw in a lot of unresolved tension and frustration and you get one colossal mistake.

When Oakley told me Reese had upped and left town with his dad, part of me had been relieved. If he was gone, I didn't have to worry about what happened that night ever coming out. About those photos.

I would never—

“Fucking hell, Reese. Just work with me here,” Oakley booms as another crash reverberates through the house.

With a heavy sigh, I slip into the hall and find Oak practically dragging a very drunk Reese up the stairs.

“A little help, Liv.”

“What? No! Let him sleep on the stairs, for all I care.”

Oakley levels me with a hard look and I roll my eyes. “Fine,” I groan. “But you owe me.”

Reese murmurs something as I grab his arm and slide it over my shoulder, taking some of his weight.

“Jesus, Whitfield, how much did you drink? You smell like a brewery.”

“Olive... Olive... Olive...” he slurs, and I hope to God he's too drunk to say anything that might make Oakley suspicious. Because if my brother knew what went down that night...

It doesn't bear thinking about.

Between us, we manage to wrestle Reese into his new bedroom.

“Sleep it off,” Oakley says, giving him a little shove. Reese lands face down on the mattress but turns his head toward me. “I'll grab a bowl and some water. Stay with him a second.”

“But... fine.” I concede, dropping my gaze to Reese's unmoving form. He's barely conscious, so it's not like he can cause any more trouble. “Just hurry.”

Oakley rushes from the room, and I pace alongside Reese's bed. Fiona brought most of his stuff from their old house when she moved in last month. It's all been here, waiting for him. But no one ever said he might actually come and live here.

It's my worst nightmare come true.

*He's* my worst nightmare.

And now, there's no escaping him.

---

## REESE

I roll over with a groan and fall straight into a cool patch of drool on the pillow. Nice.

As I rouse, my head pounds harder until I swear I've actually invited a fucking brass band to take up residence there.

Flipping onto my back, my stomach churns as I rip my tongue from the roof of my mouth.

What the hell happened last—

“Fuck,” I breathe, my eyes popping open to take in my surroundings.

Shit. It was real.

“Fuuuuck,” I groan into my hands before combing my fingers through my hair and pulling it until it hurts.

My head spins with everything that happened yesterday, from Dad giving me little choice but to return to Saints Cross, to finding that motherfucking note on our front door, and then stepping straight into this fully functioning little family where my best friend actually defends my whore of a mother. But then, I guess it's easy for them. Their father hasn't betrayed anyone. At least, no one important to them. Their mum died years ago, and as far as I know, Christian has been single ever since.

But of all the women, why my mum?

Why lie, cheat, and deceive my dad, the one person who held the key to breaking me free from the prison I've been locked in my entire life? He'd promised me that the day he left, he'd take me with him. That we'd get to start over together, somewhere far away from Saints Cross.

Was that all just as big a lie as their relationship must have been?

Footsteps pad down the hallway outside the room I must have been

dumped in last night. I don't remember getting back here. I do remember swiping a bottle of whisky from the shop and heading down toward the Rock with the intention of drowning my sorrows.

I'd sat there for hours, drinking and wishing I was anywhere but back here as I rested on the old rock, the place where all the legends and rituals of this town stem back to, and looked out over the forest in the distance.

It's said that anyone who comes out here and touches this thing is cursed. But I'm long past worrying about that kind of shit. It sure is fun to tease those who truly believe it though.

Looking to my side, I have to blink a couple of times to make sure I'm not seeing things when a glass of water and a packet of painkillers appears before me. I can only assume it was Mum. Although why she'd bother after the way I spoke about her when I got here yesterday, fuck only knows.

It sure as hell wouldn't have been Oak or Olivia.

Lifting my hand, I rub at my jaw where Oak landed his impressive blow. He's been training while I've been gone. It makes me wonder if the others have too, and if they'll have a similar opinion about my sudden return.

Hindsight is a great thing, but I truly believed that the day I drove out of town would be the last time I would ever show my face here.

I thought I was severing all ties, and I thought going cold turkey and allowing them to get on with their lives as if I never existed was the best thing to do. At no point did I think about how they might react when I came back. Because I wasn't coming back.

Not ever.

I swing my legs over the side of the bed and quickly swallow the pills.

My head pounds as I stare at my bare legs. Whoever got me in here last night was apparently kind enough to ensure I was comfortable.

My mind wanders to Olivia, and a smirk curls at my lips. I bet she'd have had a good look. She sure wanted more of my cock on initiation night.

Thoughts of that night cause my anger to reignite deep within me. I reach for jeans and shove my hand into the pocket, wrapping my fingers around my phone and pulling it out.

It accepts my battered face and unlocks for me, and in only seconds, I'm staring down at the photos I took of her that night.

I've memorised each one of these images over the past couple of months to the point they may as well be painted onto the back of my eyelids. And like every other time, desire swirls with my anger. My temperature soars and

my cock swells.

It would have been so easy to take more from her that night. I craved it, fuck. Her cunt was so tight, so fucking wet for me. Pulling out of her and denying something that I'd imagined for... way too fucking long was torturous. But I knew it needed to happen. I couldn't leave this place without letting her know what I really thought of her.

My mum, her dad. They might be the liars, the cheaters. But she's no fucking better. And I'm going to make goddamn sure she knows it too.

Dropping my phone to the bed, I finally scan the room I've been dumped in.

Confusion pulls at my brows as I take in all the things I'm surrounded by. The shelves are lined with familiar rugby trophies. The photos are of the boys and me over the years. The speakers, the books, even the computer. It's all... mine.

My heart rate increases as reality settles within me. Mum really has moved us in here. This is... this is my new room.

Pushing to my feet, I pad toward the door at the other side of the room and pull it open. There's a massive bathroom, and to the left, a dressing room that I'm sure Kim Kardashian would be proud of which is full of all the clothes I left behind.

"Jesus." This is really happening. Mum really is expecting me to live here. To become a part of this family as if there's nothing wrong with the fact that she's been fucking Christian behind all our backs.

With a pained groan, I stumble forward and toward the shower. I turn the water on as hot as I can stand, shove my boxers down my legs, and step under it.

The dirt from hanging out in a dusty field the night before washes down the drain as I stand there with my head hanging and my shoulders lowered.

Reaching for my shower gel, I don't even react to the fact that it's my brand. The one that, no matter how many times I demanded Mum buy for me, she would always fuck up and get a different one. How did she suddenly get it right?

I wash, scrubbing at my skin until it hurts in the hope that I'm still dreaming and I'll wake up back by the beach with Dad.

I hated it when we first got there. Although not as much as I did this place. Dad said it was temporary, and that once he'd got a few things in place, he'd find a real home and start over.

I didn't understand it. He had money, that much was obvious. Even if Mum was the big earner in our house. But he seemed content, and I was happy to be free of all the things that were expected of me here. I figured that as long as we were together, I'd follow him wherever he wanted to go.

If only I knew that he'd planned on kicking me back here before the new school year started. That all the promises he'd made were nothing but lies.

Has everything my parents ever told me been nothing but total fucking bullshit?

**M**y fists curl as I silently make my way down the stairs to the sound of happy chatter in the kitchen.

"Have you got everything you both need for Monday?" Mum asks, sounding more concerned than I'm sure I've ever heard her before about the beginning of a school year.

When I was a kid, that was my nanny's job. And in more recent years, I sorted out my own shit and got on with it, since she was always too busy working. Unlike most of the founding families of Saints Cross, it's my mum who carries Heir blood. She wasn't allowed to be initiated, but she set out to prove my grandfather and everyone in this town that she had what it took to be just as good as them. It's why I have a godawful double-barrel surname—because she refused to take my old man's name.

"Yes, I think so." Olivia's soft voice washes over me.

"You don't need to worry about these two, Fi. They're the most organised kids I've ever met," Christian laughs.

"Oakley might be. Not sure I can claim that title," Olivia jokes.

If things were different, I wouldn't be able to disagree with her. Oakley's need for order and tidiness is fucking unbearable. But it's the least of my worries right now.

I come to a stop in the doorway. The sight before me makes my chest ache and my stomach knot.

They look like a real family. Like the one I've always wanted but never had.

Mum notices that Olivia's glass is empty and stands, reaching for the jug to refill it while Christian offers her the last pancake on the plate in the



middle of them all.

“Well, well, well,” I say, announcing my presence when they all fail to notice my arrival.

Four sets of hesitant eyes turn on me as I step into the room.

“This looks... cosy. Seems I missed the invite.”

Stepping between Mum and Olivia, I reach for that pancake, fold it in half and stuff it in my mouth while Olivia bristles beside me.

“We weren’t expecting you to roll out of your pit yet,” Oakley spits, watching me through a swollen eye.

“It would probably serve you well not to underestimate me, Oak. You know how much pain I can cause, after all.” My eyes dart to the split in his lip as he pushes his chair out.

“Oak, don’t,” Olivia warns.

“Yeah, Oak. Be a good boy and listen to your sister.”

“Reese,” Mum breathes. “Come and take a seat. I’ll get you some food.”

“It seems you’ve already eaten it all,” I mutter, looking around at their half-empty plates.

“It’s no problem to make more,” Christian says. “If we knew you were up, we’d have—”

“Given me some warning? Forgive me, Christian, but that doesn’t seem to be your style.”

The second Mum stands from her chair, I drag it toward me, ensuring I’m close enough to Olivia to make her uncomfortable and sitting my arse on it.

“I’d like a coffee, and a whole stack of those pancakes,” I say without looking at Mum.

She hesitates before she reaches the kitchen island.

“The man you’re fucking isn’t the only change with you, huh?” I mutter. “It seems you learned to cook as well. The only thing I remember coming out of your kitchen when I was a kid resembled charcoal.”

“That’s enough, Reese,” Christian snaps.

“Is it, though? Is it really?” I sneer. “I’m pretty sure after what you two have done, it barely scratches the surface.”

“You don’t have to follow his orders, darling,” he says to Mum, who’s standing in the middle of the kitchen with glassy eyes as if she’s about to burst into tears.

The sight should probably affect me, but it doesn’t. She deserves a little pain for the amount she’s caused me over the years.

“What the hell has he done to you, Mum?” I ask, studying her. “The woman I remember would never have broken down so easily.”

“It’s complicated, Reese,” she whispers.

“And here I was thinking that you’re barely able to understand the simple things. Like only fucking the man you’re married to.”

“Enough,” Christian booms, slamming his palms down on the table and pushing to stand. “We’ve made mistakes, Reese. We’ve hurt those we love, and we’ll forever be sorry for that. But we’re happy. Happier than we’ve ever been. And we want our family, our kids, to be the same.”

“And you think that’s possible after lying to us... for how long, exactly?”

Mum shoots a look at Christian, confirming that their affair started long before I figured it out.

“Those pancakes aren’t going to cook themselves.”

“Your mother isn’t your slave, Reese,” Christian barks, his face beginning to turn purple with frustration.

I’ve never known him to be anything but calm and collected. Even after we had a party last year and managed to get almost the entire house trashed, he was able to keep his cool. But it seems that my mother could be a very touchy subject to him, because one insult and he looks like he’s about to blow his lid. “While you’re under this roof, you’re going to treat her with the respect she deserves.”

“What are you going to do? Kick me out? Because it seems to me that for some fucked-up reason, you both want me here.”

Tension ripples around the room as everyone bites back the words that are on the tip of their tongues.

Turning toward Oak and Olivia, my eyes bounce between the two of them.

“So tell me, Olive,” I say with a smirk. “Did undressing me last night give you a thrill, or are you still an uptight bitch?”

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## OLIVIA

**H**is words ring through me as I grind my teeth together.  
Don't take the bait.  
Don't take the bait.

Smiling sweetly, I say, "We're family now, Reese. The way I see it, I was helping my new stepbrother out."

I almost gag on the words, but I don't let him see that. He thinks he's so fucking smug, sitting there, making things awkward and uncomfortable.

"Can we just have breakfast, please?" Dad implores. "Without trying to kill each other?"

"Now there's a thought," Reese murmurs, and I shoot him a hard stare.

'What, sister?' he mouths.

This isn't going to work. I can't see him every day of my life for the foreseeable future. It's been less than twenty-four hours and I already want to strangle him with my bare hands.

"What are your plans for today?" Fiona asks, keeping one eye on her son. "I thought maybe we could—"

"No."

"Reese, work with me here." She lets out a heavy sigh. "School starts on Monday, you must need some new—"

"I think I'll manage." He throws his cutlery down on his plate and stands abruptly, making the tableware clatter. "I'm going out."

"Out? Out where?"

But he walks off, ignoring her.

"Reese, come back here," she yells after him, but Dad pats her hand.

"Let him go, darling. It's going to take time."

“Time?” My brow lifts. “He’s never going to accept this.”

“Well, he doesn’t have much choice.” Her expression gutters.

“I’ll talk to him,” Oakley says. “When he’s calmed down, I’ll talk to him.”

“Thank you, Son. We know this isn’t easy, but Reese is a part of this family, and we all need to find a way to co-exist.”

A shudder runs through me.

*Family.*

As if I need any reminder that we’re now as good as stepbrother and sister.

God, if anyone ever finds out about what happened that night...

They can’t.

I need Reese’s word that he won’t ever tell anyone about it.

**T**he sudden trill of my mobile phone startles me, sending my centre of gravity off course. I slide down the wall into a breathless heap. Damn it. I’ve been working on the handstand scorpion for weeks, but I still haven’t progressed to moving away from the wall for balance.

“Hello?” I bark, annoyed with the interruption, although it’s my own fault for not silencing my phone.

“Hey, it’s me,” my friend Charli sing-songs. “What are you up to?”

“Yoga.”

“Riveting,” she deadpans.

“There’s nothing wrong with wanting to improve my strength, balance, and flexibility. It’s also great for relaxation.” And God only knows I’ll need some of that now Reese is living here.

“You know what else is good for relaxing, Liv? Sex. Sex is good. I swear multiple orgasms is the new meditation.”

Charli is... a handful.

She got expelled from All Hallows’ the year before sixth form. Now, she attends the public school in Huxton. But we still hang out occasionally. She doesn’t care that my brother is an Heir, never has. It’s why I’ve always liked her. The girls at school only care about using me to get to my brother and his friends.

“Did you want something, or did you only call to traumatise me with all your sex talk?”

“No, bitch, I was calling to ask if we’re partying tonight.”

“I hadn’t planned on it.”

“Well, a little birdie told me that there’s a big party at Elliot’s house tonight, and I think we should go.”

Of course there’s a party at Elliot’s house. It’s the last weekend before school starts. But that doesn’t mean I plan on going.

“No. No way.”

“And why the fuck not? It’s been ages since I partied with you and the Heirs.”

“Charli, come on. I have to live with Oak and—” I stop myself.

Crap, I didn’t mean to say that.

“And what?”

“Nothing, it doesn’t matter.”

“You know I won’t quit until you tell me...”

“Fine. Reese is back.”

“No shit,” she breathes. “Wait a minute, does that mean—”

“You guessed it. We have a new housemate.”

“And stepbrother, by all accounts.” I hear the smirk in her words and groan.

“Ugh,” I clamber to my feet. “Can’t we do something else? I could come over and we could—”

“I need to party, Liv. Things at home are... well, they’re a fucking mess. I need to get fucked up, and nobody parties like the Heirs. Please come with me.”

“Charli, I really don’t—”

“Please, please, pleeeeeease. We haven’t hung out properly in forever, and I can’t turn up without you.”

“Gee, thanks.”

“Come on, don’t be like that,” she whines. “We can get drunk and make fun of all the Heir chasers.”

A smile tugs at my lips. Watching the girls of All Hallows’ fall over themselves trying to get their shot with Oak and his friends is one of my favourite pastimes.

“Fine,” I concede. “We can go for a little bit.”

“Yes. Thank you, thank you, thank you! I owe you.”

“It’s fine. You want me to swing by and pick you up or meet there?”

Ever since Charli’s mum was run out of town after a local scandal, Charli has kept me at arm’s length. And I know her mum’s boyfriend is a right creepy wanker, so I suppose going to the party is the least I can do for her.

“I’ll meet you there, say seven?”

“Yeah, okay.”

“Wear something sexy.” She chuckles before hanging up.

I throw my phone down on my bed with a huff. The last thing I want to do tonight is party with my brother and his friends, but Charli’s right.

If I’m going to do it, I’m going to do it in style.

“**H**oly shit, Liv. You look... if I didn’t like dick so much, I’d be all over you.”

My brows bunch together as I roll my eyes. “And you look... as slutty as ever.” I say, taking in her black leather halter dress, fishnet tights, and biker boots.

Charli has always marched to the beat of her own drum, and her outfit choices have always been like a giant fuck you to the upper echelons of Saints Cross.

“Why thank you, bitch.” She swishes her pink-streaked, jet-black hair off her shoulder and shoots me a salacious grin. “Ready to cause some mayhem?”

“I’m ready to watch you cause some mayhem.”

“Hell to the fuck yeah.” Grabbing my hand, Charli yanks me toward Elliot’s house.

The long, sweeping driveway is already crawling with cars, but none stands out more than Elliot’s custom paint matte black Aston Martin DB11. It makes the collection of Range Rovers, BMWs, and Audis look like child’s play. Even Oakley’s custom-built BMW X5 doesn’t have a patch on the beauty that is Elliot’s baby.

Lucky bastard.

Although no surprise given his father is Johnathon Eaton, one of the wealthiest men in Oxfordshire.

“Let me guess... you’re imagining fucking someone on the bonnet of that

car.”

“One: that’s Elliot’s car, so no, that’s gross. He’s like my brother. And two: what is wrong with you?”

“I’m horny, and that is one sweet-ass ride.”

Laughter peals out of me. “You’re crazy.”

“I need a drink.” She grins. “Come on.”

A couple of girls check us as we enter Elliot’s house, sneering at Charli. She ignores them, but I bristle at their blatant disapproval, staring them both down.

Bitches.

I should be used to it by now, but I’ll never get over how awful girls can be to one another. And all in the name of climbing the social ladder.

It’s why, aside from Charli, I gave up trying to make friends a long time ago.

“Charli Devons, is that you?” My brother’s voice rings out over the music, and I smother a groan. I was hoping to avoid them for a little while.

“Looking good, Oak.” She saunters over to him and Theo as they hold court at Elliot’s huge kitchen island. Big enough to seat at least sixteen people, it’s topped with shimmering black marble the same as the other kitchen tops—a stark contrast to the pristine white walls. But I would expect nothing less from Johnathon and Julia Eaton.

“Theo,” she clips out.

“Charli.”

“Always a pleasure.”

“Don’t mind Theo,” my brother smirks, “he’s still sulking that Reese aka his competition is back. ”

“Fucking idiot.” He pins Oakley with a dark look. “I’m pissed because he’s a fucking prick.”

“So he’s not here?” I ask, relief sinking into me.

“Nope. And hopefully he knows better than to turn up uninvited.”

“Do I sense dissension in the ranks?” Charli asks. She might not be a student at All Hallows’ anymore or even live in Saints Cross, but she knows the deal. And the guys give her somewhat of a free pass, given that she’s my friend.

“He left us,” Theo huffs, downing his drink and slamming it on the counter. “Fill me up, Beckworth.”

“Now why did that get my blood pumping?” Charli chuckles. “Have the

two of you ever thought about—”

“Fuck no,” Oak grumbles. “Not cool, Charli. Not cool.”

“So touchy, Oak. How can you be so adamant you don’t like something unless you’ve tried it?”

“What are we trying?” Elliot appears, running an assessing eye over Charli. There’s no lust in his gaze or even mild interest. But then, there rarely is where the Heirs’ formidable leader is concerned.

Elliot is a glacier when it comes to letting people in. I’ve known him years and feel as if I’ve barely scratched the surface.

“See something you like, Eaton?” Charli teases, brazenly checking him out. There’s no denying Elliot looks good in his ripped jeans and black Paul Smith rugby top, but his eyes are an icy warning to stay well back.

“You’re not my type,” he says flatly.

Most girls would recoil at his rejection, but not Charli. She simply throws her head back and laughs. “Oh, I’ve always liked you, Eaton. Now someone pour us girls a drink, and make it strong.”

Oakley grabs two empty glasses and makes us each a vodka and coke, heavy on the vodka.

“Now we’re talking.” Charli lifts her glass to mine, clinking it. “Here’s to getting fucked and getting fucked up.”

“Are you sure she’s not one of us?” Theo murmurs, watching with equal parts disgust, pride and awe as Charli downs her drink in one.

“Packing the wrong anatomy, I’m afraid,” she says.

“I don’t know. I reckon you’ve got a dick down there,” Elliot taunts.

“Care to test that theory, Eaton?”

They launch into a debate about the fairer sex, but something catches my attention over by the door. A ripple of awareness goes through me as the air shifts.

“Wha—”

Reese appears, cutting through the crowd and heading straight for us.

“Motherfucker,” Oakley whispers under his breath.

Reese doesn’t acknowledge anyone as his legs eat up the distance between us. My heart pounds wildly in my chest as I’m caught in his intense, dark stare.

Oh my God.

This can’t be happening.

It can’t—



“You’ve got some fucking nerve showing up here,” Theo spits, the entire kitchen hushing to witness the reunion between the Heirs and their absent member.

“Nice to see you too, Theo,” Reese says coolly.

“You couldn’t have called?” Elliot asks, arms folded over his chest as he leans back against the counter.

“Didn’t know I needed permission to be here.”

“I see the time away didn’t deflate your ego.”

Reese snorts at that, helping himself to a drink. “Charli Devons,” he smirks, “didn’t expect to see you here.”

“I could say the same thing about you, Whitfield.” She doesn’t miss a beat, more than willing to verbally spar with an Heir.

Everyone is watching, their eyes like lasers in my back.

“Touché.” He smirks at her, and something inside me tightens. “Anyway, this has been fun and all, but I didn’t come to talk. I came to get fucked up.” Lifting his drink in the air, he runs his gaze over each Heir. “Cheers, boys.”

And then, he walks off like he didn’t just drop a bomb at their feet.

## REESE

The eyes of the entire sixth form burn into me as I make my way outside.

I knew it was going to happen. There was no chance of me turning up at this party out of the blue and slipping into the background. The boys and I have never been in the background in all our lives.

“Reese,” a sickly-sweet voice says, and when I look over, I find Darcie Porter fighting her way through the crowd to get to me.

“Great,” I mutter under my breath as she closes the space between us with an excited smile on her lips.

“It’s so good to see you,” she sings, not stopping until there’s zero space left between us and she’s shamelessly running her hands up my chest.

“Uh...” I grunt, unable to return the sentiment.

My skin burns with the attention of those I walked away from. I don’t need to look up to know that the worst of those hate glares is coming from Olivia.

She hates Darcie with a passion that’s almost as strong as what I’m sure she feels for me. It’s why Darcie has always been the perfect bait. Especially since she’s the headteacher’s daughter and more than willing to do whatever she can to prove she’s not the prim and proper star pupil her father makes her out to be.

A few other girls follow her, all their attention locked on me as if I’ve come back being suddenly interested in them.

Spoiler: I have not.

My opinion on the shameless Heir-chasing sluts of All Hallows’ hasn’t changed.

They have their uses, sure. Fuck knows, I've used them more than a few times. But that doesn't mean I'm going to return and suddenly lock one of them down. Hell, they all know that's never going to happen with me. Everyone knows that my future is mapped out. But still, they sniff around like strays, hoping to get a boost up the social ladder.

"How about we take this welcome home party to the dance floor?" I suggest, looking each of them in the eyes.

Unsurprisingly, they all agree excitedly. Darcie and one of her friends grab my arms and drag us deeper onto the patio where everyone is grinding it up to the beat.

Right before we get swallowed by the crowd, I shoot a look over my shoulder.

A smirk pulls at my lips when I find my boys, Olivia and Charli all standing in a line, glaring at me. Okay, so Charli is looking more amused than anything else. But I'm pretty sure Olivia, Oak, and Theo are each about to pop a blood vessel, while Elliot stands as stoic as ever.

I nod in their direction, my smirk growing as I'm dragged farther away from them.

I catch Oak lean over to whisper something in Theo's ear before they vanish from my sight and I'm once again surrounded by my admirers.

I have no idea how long we dance, but a few songs pass me by and I get more than a couple of drinks delivered thanks to some terrified soon-to-be lower sixth student, and rugby team hopeful, who literally tripped over himself to make me happy. Pretty sure he'd have dropped to his knees and sucked my cock should I have suggested it.

The buzz I've got going on and the hands that are trailing over my body are enough to almost make me forget where I am. Almost. But it's impossible when I feel their attention. Even when I can't see them. I feel it.

We've always been tight. Oakley, Elliot, and Theo are like the brothers I never had. Over the years, I've come to know them better than I know myself, so I'm more than aware that they're not going to let this go without having it out with me.

I'm amazed it hasn't happened already.

I was expecting it the second I walked into this house. But I guess they've decided to bide their time.

"We should take this upstairs," Darcie purrs with her lips against my throat.

The thought of that makes my dick want to shrivel up inside my body. My grip on her waist tightens, and I'm about to push her away when the crowd parts before me.

"Oh shit," someone cries before people start to move back, obviously able to read the danger emanating from both Oak and Theo.

"Reese," Darcie whispers, a quiver in her voice that makes me want to laugh.

Oak and Theo would never hurt her. Despite how much they might want to, they never would—not physically, anyway.

"You need to leave," Theo growls, his voice slurred and his eyes glassy. "You're not welcome here."

I look him up and down. He's exactly as I remember, only he's bulked out a little over the summer. It was our aim to do so as a group, to hit it hard, ready for the new season. Looking at the three of them, I'd say they took that challenge seriously. I, however, had other things to deal with than worrying about our next match and finishing our time at All Hallows' with a championship win under our belts.

"Pretty sure I am. Right, Darce?" I growl, grabbing her and pulling her back into my side before she scurries away like a scared little mouse.

"They don't get a say," Oak growls.

"And if I'm right, neither do you. Where is your fearless leader, anyway?" I ask, looking around for the final piece of our puzzle.

I don't spot Elliot, or Olivia for that matter, and I fucking hate that I keep searching. I shouldn't care where they are. Or what they're doing.

"It doesn't matter where the fuck he is, he doesn't want you here either."

Ripping my eyes from Theo's, I focus on my best friend's. "And you agree, do you?"

Oak snarls, closing the space between us. "You betrayed us, Reese. What did you expect? That we'd welcome you with open arms?"

"What I wasn't expecting was to find your dad still fucking my whore of a mother," I hiss.

His brows pinch. "Still?"

My fists curl and I take a step forward. "I always thought your dad had

taste, and that was why he never dipped his dick into any of the whores in this town. Clearly, I was wrong. He's as bad as—"

*Crack.*

A feral growl rips from my throat as pain explodes from my jaw. "Motherfuck—"

"Wait," Elliot barks, jumping into the space between me, Oak and Theo.

"What the fuck are you doing?" Oak booms. "I know you want his blood as much as we do."

"Not like this," Elliot snarls, his voice low so that only the four of us can hear him.

His eyes hold theirs for a beat before he turns to me, his top lip peeling back. It's the only reaction he has, but it's all I need.

"Get in the cage," he demands, his tone deadly. "I won't have anyone else caught up in the middle of this bullshit. But you might as well give them some entertainment."

"Fine," I spit, shoving his hand from my chest and storming toward the end of the garden where the Eatons' tennis courts are—also known as the cage.

Excitement and anticipation buzz behind me as the crowd follows.

The second I get to the open door, I reach behind me and pull my polo shirt off, abandoning it in a heap on the ground.

I don't look back—I don't need to. I already know that they're following me with hunger and retribution in their eyes.

Oak might have got a few solid punches in yesterday, but it barely took the edge off.

We need this.

If there's going to be any way of moving past this anger between us, then this needs to happen.

Elliot knows it too. It's why he's allowing it.

I don't even flinch as the door is slammed closed, the entire metal cage around us rattling ominously.

Shadows move around me as the crowd fights to get the best view, but I don't hear their taunts or pleas for us to start as blood rushes past my ears.

"Face us, you fucking coward," Theo barks.

Sucking in a deep breath, I spin around as Olivia breaks through the crowd, her eyes finding mine.

'Don't do this,' she mouths, her attention flicking to Oak in concern.

Shaking my head at her, I roll my shoulders and crack my knuckles.  
*Sorry, sweet cheeks. This needs to happen.*

The crowd's roar of excitement gets louder as both Theo and Oak shed their tops and step toward the centre of the court where the net should be.

"Two against one, huh?" I ask cockily, sizing them both up.

"You suggesting you don't deserve it?" Oak taunts.

"Fucking bring it on. I could take you both in your sleep and you know it."

Theo shoves me in the chest, taking me by surprise, and I stumble back.

"Oakley," Olivia screams. "Please, don't do this."

"Go home, Liv," he calls back. "We need to handle our shit."

"If you can't take the heat, Olive, you need to get out of the kitchen."

"Fuck you, Reese," she screams back, dragging my eyes from the two bulls getting ready to charge before me.

I look her up and down, a suggestive smirk playing on my lips. "Maybe later, sweet cheeks. You can help me celebrate taking these two motherfuckers down."

"Don't fucking look at her like that," Oak booms, shoving me again.

"What the fuck is this?" I ask, shoving his hands away. "You forgotten how to fight? Or are you too fucking pussy to try and take me?"

I'm too busy taunting Oak that I don't see Theo's fist flying toward my stomach.

All the air leaves my lungs on a groan as I bend over, pain surging through my body.

While I'm bent over, Oak takes another swing, proving that he's got more than what it takes for them both to have me on the floor.

But fuck that. I'm not letting them take me down.

I've got just as much to fight for as they have.

They might think they own this motherfucking town, but they're forgetting a quarter belongs to me too. And now I'm back, I intend on claiming every fucking inch that is mine.

My eyes find Olivia over his shoulder and I smile.

Every motherfucking inch.

held my own for longer than everyone probably expected. But let's be honest, the odds were never in my favour. I might be able to take Oak and Theo individually, but together, they're a force to be reckoned with. And they were fucking relentless to go with it.

But by the time they were done with me, all three of us were covered in blood. Knuckles, lips and brows were all split from the brutal punches we'd thrown and our bodies littered with fast-emerging bruises.

With the fight over and me half dead on the floor, the crowd who were once hungry for blood quickly turned away to restart the party, melting away from the tennis courts as if I wasn't even there.

So much for being one of their fucking kings.

The only person who lingered was Olivia. And I quickly discovered that that had nothing to do with me. The second Elliot dragged Oak out of the court, she rushed toward him, her eyes taking in each of his injuries with a scowl on her face.

I didn't want to be amused when she joined in and smacked him in the shoulder, but I couldn't help but snort a pained laugh which made my ribs smart.

They hurt, but I was pretty confident they weren't broken.

We were fucked if they were—something Oak and Theo were more than aware of. They might not want me here, but they need me. The fucking team needs me, and they know it.

After smacking Theo upside the head, she turned her back on me as if I didn't even exist.

Her dismissal shouldn't have hurt. I shouldn't have fucking cared.

The house is in darkness as I stumble my way up the driveway.

It's the second night in a row I've barely been able to control my own body as I've fallen into the front door, praying that it's unlocked for me because I still haven't been given any keys. An oversight, I'm sure.

Yeah fucking right.

My head spins from the vodka and my body aches from the beating, but none of it can top the pain that slices through my heart as I tumble into the house.

My new home.

I scoff at my own thoughts as I stumble toward the stairs.

Movement at the top drags my attention from my feet, and my eyes widen at the person sitting up there.

“Worried about me, sweet cheeks?”



---

## OLIVIA

I'm surprised I haven't worn a hole in the floor as I pace back and forth, keeping one eye on the door.

It's ridiculous—he deserved it.

Reese deserved every scrap of pain my brother and Theo delivered tonight. But when I'd seen him lying there, broken and bloody on the ground...

God, why can't I be a cold, heartless bitch? Why can't I go up to bed and go to sleep instead of staying down here, waiting for him to come home?

If he comes.

The guys partied on like they hadn't beaten the shit out of him. But I saw how much they drank, as if they were trying to chase their regrets away. They were a mess by the time I left.

Admitting defeat, I finally climb the stairs and head to bed. Wherever Reese ended up, I'm sure he'll be okay.

But something crashes against the front door, startling me, and I glance back, frozen as the door handle rattles.

Lowering myself to the top step, I sit there, waiting. Once I've seen with my own eyes that he's okay, I'll go to bed.

I'll go to bed and—

A dark figure stumbles toward the stairs, cursing under his breath.

Even from up here in the dark, I can see the cuts and bruises marring his face. He's a mess. But he's alive, and that's all I wanted to know.

Grabbing the handrail, I start to pull myself up, but his eyes snap to mine, a ripple going through the air.

“Worried about me, sweet cheeks?” His mouth curves.

“Just wanted to make sure you weren’t dead,” I spit as I stand.

“Unfortunately for you, I survived.”

“You are such an asshole.”

“And yet, here you are, waiting up for me. Did you want to kiss me better?” He lifts his face into the stream of light and my breath catches.

His injuries are far worse than I realised. One of his eyes is practically swollen shut and there’s dry blood crusted over his bottom lip.

“What?” he growls.

“There’s a first aid kit in the bathroom.”

“I’m touched you care, but all I need is a bottle of Daddy dearest’s best whisky and I’ll be set.”

“Seriously?” I hiss. “What is wrong with you?”

“Pretty sure your brother and Theo tried to kill me with their bare hands.”

I roll my eyes at that, stomping back down the stairs.

“Come to finish the job, Olive?”

“I asked you not to call me that.” I brush past him and head for the downstairs bathroom.

When he doesn’t follow me, I glance back and lift a brow. “Coming or not?”

“Where are we going? Because if you want to play nurse, I can think of much more—”

“Stop, just... stop.” I let out a heavy sigh. “I know what you’re doing and it won’t work, Reese.” He goes to respond, but I cut him off. “I stayed up because I’m a decent human being. Something you clearly know very little about.”

Something flashes in his eyes, but I ignore it. “Now I’m offering to clean you up. You can either take my help or risk getting blood all over your new sheets and—”

“Fine. Lead the way.”

Silence envelops us as we move through the house to the bathroom right at the end of the hall. I hit the light switch, bathing the room in a soft amber glow, but when I catch Reese’s eye in the mirror, I suck in a sharp breath.

“Gruesome, huh?” he deadpans.

I shrug. “I’ve seen worse.”

His mouth twitches at that.

“Sit.” I motion to the small bench running along the wall next to the shower. To my surprise, Reese follows orders, but not without a pained

groan.

“What hurts?” I ask, collecting everything I need and placing it on the marble counter.

“Everything,” he admits.

My gaze drops down his body, noticing the way he’s shielding his side protectively with one arm.

Gently, I tug his arm away and lift his polo shirt, wincing as the huge, mottled angry bruise comes into view.

“Do you think they’re broken?”

“Not much anyone can do if they are.”

“Reese, I—”

“Are you going to patch me up or not, Oli—”

I glare at him, and he chuckles, adding a small, “Olivia.”

It feels far more of a victory than it should.

“This might sting,” I say, folding an antiseptic wipe in half and bringing it to his face.

“Fuck,” he hisses as I swipe it over his brow.

“Poor baby.” I chuckle. “I can’t do much for your eye. You should try and ice it before you go to sleep.”

“Gee, I hadn’t thought of that.”

“Why’d you do it?”

“What?”

“Turn up at the party... bait them into the fight...”

“Why do we do any of the things we do?”

“Riddles, nice.” I flash him a droll look as I fold the wipe into itself and continue cleaning the dried, crusted blood from his face.

“Your mum is going to lose it when she sees the state of you.”

“Like I give a shit.” He inhales a sharp breath when I move to his lip, dropping his head back against the wall. Our eyes collide, and I’m swallowed whole by the intensity burning in his gaze.

Memories slam into me one after another. His mouth on my skin, teeth and tongue. The huge tree at my back, his body pressed up against me, caging me in as he pushed inside me.

Heat curls in my stomach and I swallow.

“You’re thinking about it, aren’t you?” he asks, one of his hands sliding up the back of my thigh. “You’re remembering how it felt to have my dick inside you.”

“Reese,” I breathe shakily as his fingers move higher, toying with the hem of my sleep shorts.

“I bet I could make you beg again. I bet I could make you—”

“Stop.”

The word has the same effect as a bucket of ice-cold water and his hand falls away. I inhale a sharp breath, forcing the memories out of my head.

“That was a mistake.” I press a fresh wipe to his mouth, a little too forcefully, and he hisses with pain.

Good.

Silence falls over us as I finish cleaning him up. I can’t work miracles, and he still looks like he went ten rounds with Tyson Fury, but at least he won’t get blood all over his fresh new sheets.

I discard the dirty wipes and cotton balls and tidy everything away before handing Reese two strong painkillers and a glass of water.

“Here, you’ll need these.”

He eyes the pills in my hand. “Maybe I want it to hurt.”

“Suit yourself.” I shrug, going to put them back. But he snags my wrist and takes them without so much as a thanks.

After downing the glass of water, Reese stands and glowers at me.

“What?” I snap, hating the trickle of awareness my body has at his close proximity.

He doesn’t answer as he continues staring at me. The air crackles around us, mimicking the flutter of my heart.

“Reese, what are you—”

He turns on his heel and heads for the door, not sparing me so much as a thank you or goodbye.

Prick.

But he pauses in the doorway, glancing back at me. His eyes glint with something that makes me shudder as he drawls, “I’m going to enjoy breaking you.”

**T**he next morning, I wake to the sound of arguing.

With an irritated groan, I throw back the covers and trudge out into the hall, hardly surprised when I hear Oakley and Reese’s raised voices

downstairs.

“Will you both just calm down,” Fiona shrieks right as I reach the kitchen.

“Seriously, did you not work out your issues last night?” I ask, heading for the coffee machine.

Oakley smirks at me while Reese glares at him.

“You knew about this?” Fiona asks. “Didn’t you think to, I don’t know... stop them?”

“You’ve lost your mind if you think I was about to get in the middle of them.” I shrug. “Besides, maybe it’ll have knocked some sense into them.”

Reese coughs ‘bitch’ under his breath, and Oak snorts.

“If this is what we can expect all term, you can go and live with your grandparents in Oxford.” Fiona pins Reese with a look that would make grown men cower as she threatens him with his father’s elderly parents.

“Fuck that, you can’t send me there. They’re old and—”

“So. Stop. Acting. Out. I know you’re angry. I know you blame me. But you don’t know all the facts. You don’t—”

“Yeah, whatever.” Reese blows past her and storms out of the kitchen.

“That boy will be the death of me.” She shakes her head.

“He started it.”

“Oakley, not helpful.”

“Sorry,” he murmurs.

My brother’s face isn’t as messed up as Reese’s, but he has a split lip and a nasty looking bruise under his eye.

“Where did you get to last night?” I ask, knowing for a fact he didn’t come home, given that he’s still in last night’s clothes.

“That’s for me to know and you never to find out.” He grins.

“I hoped you wrapped it. The last thing we need is an Heir chaser claiming you knocked her up.” I smile sweetly, and Fiona almost chokes on her bagel.

“It’s too early for this,” she grumbles. “I’m going to find your father.”

We watch her leave and Oakley smirks. “She’s such a contradiction.”

“She makes Dad happy.” I shrug.

“Yeah, but where does this all end? Reese is... he’s different.” He lets out a heavy sigh, and I see the pain in his eyes.

Reese leaving Saints Cross affected Oakley most. He and Reese were best friends. They shared everything. And then he left without so much as a

warning.

My brother might not ever admit it, but it cut him deep.

“Us all living here,” he added, “under the same roof... it has disaster written all over it.”

“You were best friends once.”

“Yeah, well, things change. He abandoned us, Liv. I won’t forget that in a hurry.”

“So what... you’re going to beat the crap out of each other every morning over breakfast?”

“Since when do you care about Whitfield?”

“I don’t,” I rush out, hoping he doesn’t catch the slight tremble in my voice.

Because I don’t care. Reese is a selfish, entitled, arrogant twat. But when he touched me last night, I had felt something.

Jesus.

Oakley is right.

This is a disaster. Except not for the reasons he thinks.

I can handle Reese living here. What I can’t handle is the strange effect he has on my emotions, my body.

I should hate him—I *do* hate him.

But there’s something else too.

Something I never ever want to acknowledge.

## REESE

I stand staring at myself in the mirror. It's an image I never thought I was going to have to see again. Here I am in my black All Hallows' uniform, ready to dive straight back into my old life as if I never even left.

The summer almost feels like a dream at this point.

The days I spent away from here, chilling on the beach, pretending that I didn't have a care in the world seem a million miles away now. Instead, I'm back in the one place I don't want to be, looking like shit.

Coach is going to bust a nut when he sees the state of us later.

Oak looks better than I do after our fight Saturday night, and I can only assume Theo looks similar, seeing as I wasn't invited to hang out with them yesterday like we always used to do on Sunday afternoons. Instead, I locked myself in my room and tried to pretend the world—the girl—outside my door didn't exist while I worked on my plan to get the hell out of here.

I need money, and I need to get my hands on it in a way Mum won't notice—well, not instantly, anyway. And I need a place to go, a new town to start over in and call my own.

Lifting my hand, I press my fingertips to the cut on my lip, still able to feel her touch as she cleaned me up. I should have refused her offer. Really, I didn't give a single fuck if I got blood on the pristine sheets. In fact, I'd happily get them dirty if only to piss my mum off. But I couldn't turn down her offer.

The need to see if my proximity to Olivia still affects her in the same way it did that night was too much to deny. Plus, I'd had a pretty shitty night. It would be nice to be able to pass out thinking about the way her body reacted to my touch instead of the unbearable pain thumping through my body.

I was fucking right too. The second I laid a finger on her, her entire demeanour changed. Her eyes darkened, her cheeks reddened, and her fucking nipples hardened through her tank.

How I held myself back from acting out on all the things that were running rampant in my imagination, fuck only knows.

Pretty sure I deserve a fucking medal or something for that shit.

She might not have confessed to it, but I know the whole time we were in that bathroom, she was thinking about initiation night. About how good I felt inside her for those few minutes. Just how desperate she was for me to fuck her in a way she knows I'm capable of.

She's heard the rumours. Probably listened to the bragging rights of the Heir chasers in the girls' locker room. Hell, she's walked in on the four of us up to shit we shouldn't have been enough times over the years to know what we're like.

All she's gotta do is ask for it.

No.

Beg for it.

And I might even give her what she's been craving since I walked away from her that night.

Or I might not.

A smirk pulls at one side of my mouth as I push my hand through my hair.

I meant what I said to her when I walked away.

I'm going to ruin her...

And it's going to be so much fun.

**B**y the time I finally emerged from my bedroom, Mum and Christian were long gone, and Olivia had already left for school. Oak didn't stay here last night; he and the other two Heirs spent their first official night in the Chapel. I tried not to care that I wasn't invited to the sanctuary the four of us now had the keys to, but I failed. Badly.

It's the first time I've been in the house alone since I returned, and I can't deny that the urge to burn the place down is strong.

I can almost picture the four of them watching the embers as I stand,



hidden in the trees that surround the property with an empty box of matches and a smug-as-fuck grin on my face.

*Fuck with my life? Watch as I bring yours to its fucking knees.*

In the end, I decide against doing something quite so drastic. Yet, anyway.

I hate the drive to school, the familiarity of everything I was more than willing to walk away from. I hate the attention that turns on me the second I step out of my car and the whispers that follow as I make my way inside.

I'm late. Later than I ever usually would have been.

We always had breakfast together with Scott, Evan and Liam in the Chapel. And I can only assume that's where they are now.

Eyes and whispers follow me all the way down to my tutor room. Most students jump out of my way, but some, mostly girls, edge a little closer despite the more than obvious 'stay the fuck away from me' vibes surrounding me.

Swinging the classroom door open, I scan the empty desks, my eyes landing on the back row.

Our row.

I hesitate, autopilot telling me to move there, to claim my seat, my position in this school. But the rational side of me, the part that's still in agony after Saturday night, is telling me to go elsewhere.

Excitement outside pauses my decision making, and when I look back, I find Oak, Theo, and Elliot marching this way with deadly expressions on their faces.

Damn near half the sixth form follows behind them, probably hoping that they're about to witness me get my arse handed to me again.

The bell rings out as they file into the room. Theo and Elliot both pass me as if I'm not standing here, while Oak slows.

I startle when his hand lands on my shoulder, and I curse myself for it.

"What the fuck are you waiting for?" he barks. "The bell rang."

He shoves me forward and toward the seat that has been mine for the past year at the end of our row.

"I... uh..."

"Just sit the fuck down, Whitfield," Elliot demands.

"S-sure."

Following orders like a good—albeit confused—little Heir, I drop my bag to the floor and fall into my chair as the rest of our class moves inside and

takes their seats.

Oak leans over, obviously sensing my confusion. “You fucked up this summer,” he states, his voice cold and hard, any of the friendliness I’m used to from him long gone. “But you’re still one of us. And we stand together here.”

Mr. Waters, our tutor group teacher walks in, his eyes scanning the class before they land on me.

Great. Even the fucking staff know what’s going on.

“**M**issed you, Reese,” Tasha, one of Darcie’s irritating best friends purrs as she drops into my lap at lunchtime.

Sitting at our usual spot in the common room, it really is like the summer never happened. It’s a massive head fuck.

To the outside world, to the Heir chasers, the lads might appear to be cool with having me back. But every time I catch one of their eyes, I see the truth within them.

They’re doing this because it’s expected of them, of us. They’re not doing it because they missed me and want me to be a part of their group again.

Movement over by the door catches my eye right as Tasha smooths her hand down my chest, resting her palm on top of my abs.

A smile pulls at my lips when I find Olivia standing there, watching with her eyes narrowed in anger.

“Hey, stranger,” another female voice says behind me before Lauren appears at my side.

The guys might be lapping up their own attention from the girls, but none of them are getting the kind of welcome back that I’m receiving. It’s pissing them off more with every second that passes. Not that I can say I’m overly enjoying myself.

Or at least, I wasn’t until I got to witness Olivia’s reaction.

Twisting around to look at our newest arrival, I let a fake-arse smile pull at my lips.

“Hey, Lauren. How’s it going?” Wrapping my arm around her waist, I pull her onto my other thigh, letting them both pet me as if I’m a fucking dog.

There is something really wrong with the girls in this school and their undying need for attention.

I don't need to look back in Olivia's direction to know that she's still watching us. I can picture her face all screwed up in disgust. I've seen it enough times when the four of us have girls hanging from every limb.

"Liv, get over here," Oak calls, spotting his sister and shoving his adoring fan aside so she can join us.

"Nah, you're all right. I don't want anyone thinking I'm a part of club desperate."

"You're only saying that because you know that none of our boys would touch you with a barge pole," Tasha adds helpfully once she realises that Olivia is talking about her.

"Oh yeah," Olivia mutters. "That's my issue. I want all of them so badly I can hardly think straight." She rolls her eyes so hard I can't help but wonder if it actually hurts.

"Ew," Lauren says. "You can't have all of them, Oakley is your brother."

"Oh, is he? Shit, I forgot about that."

"Liv," Oak growls, trying to get her to behave. You'd have thought he'd have learned by now that it's not so easy.

"I think I'm gonna go and— Oak," she cries when he jumps up, wraps his hand around her upper arm and drags her to the table.

"Sit. Eat. Be nice."

She snarls at him but drops her food to the table and does as she's told.

"So, tell us what you've been up to this summer, Reese," Lauren whispers in my ear.

"Oh, you know," I mutter, keeping my eyes on Liv. "This and that."

"You missed out here, baby. The parties have been wild."

"She's not wrong there," Theo agrees, downing his drink and throwing the bottle into the bin on the other side of the room like a pro.

"The hockey team is having a party Friday night. You should come," Tasha suggests.

I'm assuming because she doesn't think I'll be welcome at the Heirs' party. Hell, even if I'm not, I wouldn't be caught dead hanging out with the fucking hockey team. Her hand drops over my waistband as if a quick rub through my trousers is going to be enough to make me agree to anything.

Reaching for her wrist, I stop her before she makes contact with my less-than-interested cock.

“Might as well just lie on the table with your legs open,” Liv mutters, staring down at her sandwich like it’s personally offended her.

“What was that, Olive? I don’t think my friends quite heard you.”

Her eyes find mine, narrowing in anger. “No, they were too busy trying to give you a hand job under the table. Excuse me,” she says, shooting out of her seat. “I seem to have lost my appetite.”

She’s gone before Oak has a chance to do anything, and I watch with a smirk as she marches out of the common room in her short silver, black, and green tartan skirt.

“What the hell is her problem?” Lauren mutters.

“Ah, you know what it’s like when you don’t stand up to the competition.”

Thankfully, Oak’s attention has been captured by an Heir chaser with her tits damn near falling out of her shirt so he doesn’t hear my words, or notice when I shove them both from my lap.

“It’s probably because Mr. Jenkins has left. I know I don’t want to do PE without him,” Tasha says, mentioning the student teacher all the girls were lusting over last year.

“Excuse me. I need to take a piss,” I say, finally untangling myself from them and getting to my feet.

No one bats an eyelid as I walk away. I mean, the guys don’t really want me there, so it’s probably a relief as I take off in the direction I watched Olivia disappear only minutes ago.

If I’m lucky, I might just catch up with her.

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## OLIVIA

I hurry down the hall and duck into the girls' bathroom.  
Damn Reese to hell.

Arrogant, smug bastard with his cruel taunts and wicked smirk.

I can't keep letting him get to me like this, but he was purposefully baiting me back there. And in front of Oakley and the guys, no less.

Argh.

Inhaling a sharp breath, I force myself to calm down. I've been dealing with boys like Reese for years. As long as I keep my wits about me, I'll be fine.

The bathroom door swings open and I look up, expecting to see a group of girls piling in, but instead—

"You." The blood drains from my face.

"Miss me, sweet cheeks?"

"You can't be in here."

"And yet, here I am." Reese smirks, running his eyes down my body—a slow, intense perusal as if I'm here purely for his entertainment.

"I'd forgotten how good this uniform looks on you."

"Pig."

"Now, now, Olive." He steps closer, taking the air with him. I inch back one step and another, until my back hits the wall and a small gasp escapes my lips.

Interest sparks in his eyes as they narrow with predatory intent.

"Reese," I warn. "I'll scream."

"Oh, by all accounts, do. It'll make it so much sweeter." He takes another step closer and my heart ratchets.

I glance toward the row of cubicles and, without hesitating, dart toward the end one. His deep chuckle echoes around the bathroom as I lock the door and press my hands against it.

“Seriously, you think that’s going to keep me away from you?”

“What do you even want? You have plenty of girls more than willing to \_\_\_”

“Careful. You’re starting to sound jealous.”

I snort. “Don’t flatter yourself. I’m not jealous, I’m pissed. You followed me in here like some unhinged stalker. It’s not—”

The door lock rattles and I watch with horror as it clicks open.

“Reese, don’t you dare.” Blood roars between my ears, an overwhelming whirring as I push with all my might to keep the door closed.

But it’s futile. Reese is at least half a foot taller than me, and he’s strong. Really damn strong. He has to be to play full-back for the All Hallows’ Saints rugby team.

The door flings open as I inch back, glaring at him.

“Get. Out.”

His lips twist with amusement as he lets his eyes sweep down my body. His pupils flare and something I refuse to acknowledge curls in my stomach.

“I don’t think so. I think I want to play a game.” He closes the door behind him and slides the lock into place.

A lick of fear goes through me, but I know Reese won’t hurt me. Humiliate and ruin me, sure. But physically hurt me, never.

My brother, Elliot, and Theo would end him if he ever laid so much as an unwanted finger on me.

Maybe even a wanted one.

The thought makes me smile, and he frowns.

“What?”

“I’m just thinking about all the ways my brother and the guys are going to kick your ass when they find out you’re harassing me.”

Another chuckle. Only this one rumbles through me, making my chest flutter.

I need to have a serious word with myself later about how I must not be so easily affected by Reese and his tiresome games.

He’s one of the most gorgeous boys I’ve ever laid eyes on, but his redeeming qualities end there.

Reese Whitfield is one hundred and ten percent arrogant wanker, and I

have no intentions of letting him—

He steps closer and I have nowhere to go, not if I don't want to end up a heap on the toilet.

“Reese,” my voice quivers. “What the fuck are you doing?”

“Hmm, say that again.” He reaches for me, trailing a single finger down my neck, dipping it over my crisp white blouse and between the valley of my breasts.

I'm not breathing. I can't breathe as he holds me captive, trapped in his dark grey eyes.

“You were jealous, earlier in the common room.”

“No, I really wasn't.”

“I think you're lying.”

“I think you're full of bullshit.” It comes out saccharine but full of bite.

His eyes flare again, a silent storm swirling in his inky depths. “Pretty little liar,” he snarls. “I wonder if Oak has any idea how easily you lie.”

“Reese...” I breathe.

“Hmm, you sound so fucking hot when you beg.” His thumb strokes back and forth along my pulse point.

“Someone could come in here,” I remind him.

“They won't. Tell me. Tell me you were jealous, sweet cheeks, and I'll let you walk out of here right now.”

“What could I possibly have to be jealous of? I'm not an Heir-chasing whore.” I smile sweetly.

“Care to wager that?”

“I...” I press my lips shut, because it's hard concentrating when he's touching me like this. My traitorous, fickle body likes the way he touches me. The possessive flex of his fingers along the side of my neck.

I really shouldn't like it, but God help me, I do.

Not that I'll ever admit it out loud.

Over my dead body.

“Tell me, Olivia. Say it and I disappear.”

“Why?”

“Because,” he leans in closer, his mint-scented breath fanning my face, “I know you, and you wanted it that night in the woods, just like you wanted it the other night in the bathroom. You want me and—”

“You're deluded.”

“The photographs would suggest otherwise, sweet cheeks.”

My blood turns to ice in my veins. “Is that a threat?”

“No, consider it... a promise.”

“You bastard,” I spit, anger saturating my insides.

“So feisty. You know they say angry sex is the best sex you’ll ever have.”

His brow quirks up. “I’m game if you are.”

“In your dreams.”

“Oh, you already live there, Olive. The way you begged for me to fuck you... So needy and desperate.” His fingers slide around my throat, my pulse thundering under his touch.

“Get. Your. Hands. Off. Me.” I shove my palms into his solid chest and catch him unawares. Reese stumbles back against the door but snags my blazer, pulling me with him. We crash into the damn thing, his laughter an irritating buzz in my ear.

“Shit, Olive. This is going to be so much fun.” He gazes down at me, and for a second, I imagine we’re here under different circumstances.

Stupid, stupid girl.

This is all a game. A game I don’t understand or want to play, but one Reese seems intent on playing regardless.

“W-what?”

He backs me up against the cubicle wall, caging me there as his hand dips under my skirt.

“Reese,” I warn, clenching my thighs together. “Don’t you—”

I smother a whimper as his fingers glide over my underwear.

“My, my, what do we have here?”

“Reese!”

“You’re wet for me.” His lips curve with smug satisfaction.

“Never.”

His eyes light up at my denial. “Such pretty lies.” Hooking my knickers to the side, he glides two fingers through the wetness there, passing over my clit enough times to make me moan.

“Fuck, yeah.”

“I hate you.” I seethe.

But I also hate myself because damn him, it does feel good.

“This.” He pulls his fingers away, lifting them between us. “Suggests otherwise.”

They glisten with the truth—Reese Whitfield does affect me. But I’ll never say the words. Because clearly there’s something very, very wrong



with me.

“Mmm.” He makes a big spectacle of sucking them clean, smirking at me while he does. “Delicious.”

“You make me sick.”

“Don’t you mean I make you wet?”

I press my lips together, choosing silence as my answer.

“I should probably get back to Tasha. Pretty sure she’s up for giving me a blow job before class. But thanks for the chat. See you around, Olive.”

Glaring at him, I silently watch as he unlocks the door and slips out of the stall as if it’s business as usual.

Exhaling a shaky breath, I drop down on the toilet lid and run a hand through my hair.

This is bad.

Really fucking bad.

But it’s not like I can tell Oakley. Reese is an Heir. He’s one of them. Not to mention the fact that Reese is promised to Abigail Bancroft.

Even if I wanted to explore this strange attraction we have to one another—and I don’t, ever—it could never be anything more than sex.

I wait for Reese to leave and then wait some more. There’s no way I can go back out there yet.

But I linger too long and the bathroom door opens, footsteps sounding beyond my stall.

Crap.

Inhaling a deep breath, I smooth my skirt down and step out of the stall.

“Oh, sorry, I didn’t realise anyone was in here.”

“Abigail?”

Talk about bad timing.

Guilt churns in my stomach.

“I’m sorry, did you need me to go?”

“What, no. You have as much right to be in here as I do. I was surprised to see you is all. How are you?”

Surprise flashes in her pale hazel eyes and I realise how weird I must sound.

Abigail Bancroft and I aren’t friends. We aren’t even really acquaintances. She’s quiet, really quiet. A small, skittish thing with big hazel eyes, long, reddish-brown hair and heart-shaped lips. She reminds me of an ethereal creature, some red-haired fairy from the myths and stories we studied

in English Lit last year.

But like everyone else at All Hallows', my eye doesn't go to her delicate features. It goes to the wicked looking scar running down her face.

She catches me looking and quickly smooths her wild curls over it.

"Shit, sorry. That was rude," I say.

"It's okay," she says, her voice barely louder than a whisper. "After a while, you get used to it. You're Olivia Beckworth."

I nod. "In the flesh."

"So you know Reese..."

"I... yeah." A heavy weight settles in my chest.

"He's back, then. I didn't know..."

"Yeah. He got back a few days ago."

"And now he lives with you and your brother."

"That's right."

Her lips twist. "I'd hoped..." She sucks in a sharp breath that seems to evaporate the air from the room. "It doesn't matter. Anyway, I need to—" Her eyes flick to a stall.

"Oh, yeah. Sorry."

I watch as she hurries into a stall and locks the door.

It feels wrong not to say more, to try and ease some of her obvious discomfort. But I don't know her, not really. And I'm not sure she would want to know me if she knew what I was doing in here five minutes ago.

So I wash my hands and slip quietly out of the bathroom. But I can't help think that if Reese has the power to ruin someone like me...

He'd destroy someone like Abigail Bancroft.

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REESE

“Ugh,” I grunt as I’m slammed into from behind before I quickly crash to the ground in a heap.

“Whitfield, get your arse back up,” Coach Walker barks when he finds me down again.

“Fucking liability,” Theo mutters from behind me, clueing me in to who took me out this time.

This whole practice session has been the same.

One after the other, they’ve been landing digs on me. Elbows in my ribs, fists in my gut when Coach isn’t looking, and brutal tackles when he is.

I knew this first week back at training was going to be tough. I might have worked out over the summer, but nowhere near as much as I should. I knew it was going to show. But not this fucking bad.

“Get up, Whitfield,” Oak taunts, coming to stand beside Theo.

“Leave him alone,” Elliot says, finally joining the fray, and I stupidly breathe a sigh of relief. “Clearly he forgot his balls when he rolled back into town.”

“Fuck you,” I hiss, pushing myself up.

Every inch of me is in agony. The pain of the beating I took at the weekend has barely lessened. I did not need this.

“Ladies, get with the fucking program,” Coach barks.

The man is a tyrant. But he’s also about the only member of staff who demands our full respect here at All Hallows’. An ex-Rugby Union player, he has enough experience behind him to be training a team better than us. He constantly walks around looking like someone has popped his favourite ball with his lips twisted in frustration and his eyes dark with anger. He’s also

built like a brick shithouse and could probably crush each of us like flies if he so wished.

I finally make it to my feet. My ribs smart, making my eyes water as my muscles pull.

“Oi, three stooges, get fucking running. You’re not getting off this field until you’re crying in pain.”

“Lucky for Whitfield, he’s almost there,” Oak taunts.

“Go,” Coach barks, and unlike you’d see from any other order around this place, the three of them take off.

“You wanna talk about it, kid?” Coach offers.

“Nothing to talk about, sir,” I state, attempting to stand a little taller in response.

“You need to get your shit together, Whitfield. We want results this year, and if you’re bringing us down, then you might find yourself in the dance studio practising your pirouette instead of in a scrum with your teammates.”

My argument is right on the tip of my tongue, but one stern look from him and I manage to swallow it down.

“Go and hit the showers,” he barks. “I’m expecting more from you from here on out. This is your one and only warning.”

“Coach.” I nod, grabbing my water bottle from the sideline and marching toward the locker room, keeping my head high and using the pain surging through my body to push me forward.

Twisting the lid, I empty what’s left over my head. Pushing my fingers into my hair, I drag it back, stopping it from dripping into my eyes.

The familiar scent hits me the second I stumble through the door, but it doesn’t have the effect it once did.

This place used to be my home, the place I always used to feel most like myself. But that’s gone. Ruined the day I got in my car and followed Dad out of town, vowing never to come back.

“ARGH.” My water bottle flies across the room, colliding with the tiled wall with a less-than-satisfying bang. “FUCK,” I roar, my fist slamming into the wall, instantly opening up the cuts on my knuckles and making my body ache like a motherfucker. “Fuck. Fuck. Fuck.”

I lean forward, pressing my brow to the cold tiles.

Why am I back here? What the fuck am I doing?

My fists curl as my chest heaves, trying to tamp down the fury that’s burning me up inside.

*You're here because despite everything he's ever said to you, your dad doesn't want you, and this is the only home you have.*

*And you need to them to understand just how much it fucking hurts.*

I scoff at my own thoughts.

Home.

This isn't home. It's hell.

The only thing that makes it bearable right now is her.

That inkling of fear in her eyes is quickly extinguished by desire the second I get close.

I shouldn't have followed her earlier. I know that. But the urge to see her stare up at me with those big brown eyes, to hear her defiance falling from her lips all the while her body arched toward me? Yeah, it's fucking addicting.

And the only good fucking thing I've got going on in my life.

She's a liar and a traitor. And by the time I'm done with her, I'm going to make sure everyone knows it.

My cock swells as my twisted desire for both her and the vengeance we all deserve burns through me like a wildfire.

The sound of chants from outside the door tells me that my time alone is coming to an end, and I force myself to move.

It takes more effort and causes more pain than it should, pulling my shirt over my head. I feel like a total fucking pussy grunting in pain as I undress, but the noises fall from my lips without instruction from my brain.

What I need is my little nurse.

My teeth sink into my bottom lip as I make my way into the showers, wondering if it got bad enough that she'd even dress up for me. Nah, fuck that. She could strip off. Having those tempting tits in my face while she cleaned me up sure would make me feel fucking better.

I'm rocking a semi that I desperately need to sink before the guys appear when I finally slam my hand down on the button for the shower. Ice-cold water rains down on me for a few seconds before it starts to warm.

I hang my head, letting the water wash the mud and dirt from our extra-long training session from my body.

*It's only fucking Monday*, a little voice says in my head.

I wince. I can barely walk now. What the fuck is it going to be like by Friday?

Thankfully, I have myself back under control when the ruckus of the

others fills the locker room. They all laugh and taunt each other, happiness at being back out on the field together after a long summer bouncing off the walls.

But it doesn't seep into me. It sends me deeper. Further into that twisted place that I've discovered lives inside me.

"Fuck me, Whitfield. You're a bit of a mess, huh?" Theo asks, the three of them hitting the showers first, as is always the case with the ruling Heirs.

I grunt in response, not having any inclination to discuss anything with them right now.

"Now that's not very friendly, is it?" Elliot growls, his voice low enough not to carry to the others.

I've figured out what they're doing.

They're keeping up appearances, letting me slot back into my life in public after that fight at the weekend. But really, deep down, I'm nothing but a virus that's infiltrated their group now. They can't be seen to cut me out. I am an Heir, after all. And no matter what, we stick together.

I bet they're fucking hating those old motherfucking rules right about now.

Spinning around, I hold Elliot's eyes. Hatred so strong I'm surprised it doesn't light him up pours from my eyes.

"Fuck friendly," I hiss, my adrenaline working to cover the pain and convince me that I could survive another round with these dickheads.

"And to think, we were coming over to check you were heading to the Chapel after this."

A sneer curls at my lips.

"It's tradition. First day of the year under new leadership."

"I know the fucking traditions," I scoff. They've been forced onto me by everyone my whole life.

"Good, then you'll be there after here. Everything is organised."

The smile Elliot gives me is pure malice before the three of them give my body one last look of disgust and turn toward their own showers to clean up.

And it's not until we're done and heading back to our benches that the rest of the team is allowed to enter the showers.

Despite hating the world and everything around me right now. I'm still filled with a sense of power as I watch the rest of them move.

It was easy to forget how much control and respect we have here while I was living an entirely different life over the summer.

Easy to forget that I was a god who'd fallen from his kingdom.  
Well, I'm back now, and it seems my throne is still waiting for me.  
At least publicly, anyway.

**W**e walk out of the locker room side by side, as if nothing had ever happened.

It's a front that I'm not sure I've got the energy to be putting on, but one that I know I have little choice but to go along with.

There's a part of me that aches as I stand next to the boys who have had my back almost since the days we were born.

I know I was the one who ruined things. I abandoned them, ghosted them when I should have at least reached out.

I know all those things.

But it still doesn't stop me from missing them, despite it all being my fault.

It's just over a five-minute walk to the Chapel, the sacred building that Elliot was given the key to the night we were initiated as the reigning heirs.

The sun is still high enough in the sky to lick my skin with warmth. It makes me crave easier days when we all hung out here with Scott and his boys, drinking beer, fucking the chasers, and generally not giving a shit about life.

That's what our final year here should be about. And I guess, for them, it will be. Nothing has changed, other than they now have an untrustworthy traitor in their ranks.

I let out a sigh as the ancient chapel appears in the trees before us. It's the oldest building on the school grounds. The one with all the history, the traditions, the legends.

The air surrounding us darkens as we approach.

The guys have already made this place their home. They've spent all summer fixing up the mess that Scott and his boys will have left behind. It pains me that I wasn't here for it. Making this place ours has been something I dreamed about for years. But turns out, I was never destined to get the chance.

Elliot pulls the coveted key from his pocket and pushes it into the giant

lock in the colossal double front doors.

They're good enough for a king, so it's only right that they're the way into our kingdom. Or... their kingdom.

Any familiarity I had with the outside is gone the second I step over the threshold.

All of the fancy white marble from Scott's reign has gone, and in its place is black, dark grey, and silver. It's... incredible. Creepy, gothic, totally fucking fitting for all the debauchery that will no doubt happen here over the coming months.

I bite my tongue, not wanting to tell them all what a stunning job I think they've done of the place as we walk deeper inside.

It's been years since the building was converted from its original purpose to living—partying—quarters for Saints Cross elite.

It's almost impossible to see its old life, but there are a few relics that have lasted the test of time.

The lectern still stands front and centre, only it's used less for worshipping now and more for the king to reign over the masses.

Memories of Scott standing up there, kicking off a night of depravity, flicker through my mind. It's hard to imagine Elliot doing the same, but I guess he will in a few hours. Traditions and all that.

The three of them come to a stop in front of me once we're standing in the middle of the vast, open-plan room with an impressive staircase leading to the first floor balcony and, beyond that, the bedrooms.

Each set of eyes drills into me. But I don't cower. I hold my head high and glare right back.

"You don't belong in here anymore," Elliot tells me coldly. "Your room is untouched and the key is safely locked away. On the outside, you're one of us. You will uphold the tradition of being an Heir. You will do what is expected of you.

"But in here, with just us, all of that is stripped away."

"You're nothing," Oak adds, disgust dripping from his words.

Ignoring the venom pouring from their eyes, I plaster a smile on my face.

"So when do I get the grand tour?"





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## OLIVIA

“**Y**ou’re coming tonight, right?” Oakley whispers as we sit in class listening to Mr. Piper drone on about this year’s coursework.

“No,” I say.

“But it’s our housewarming at the Chapel.”

“Housewarming?” I almost choke on the word. “It’s a glorified orgy and we both know it.”

“Jealous you won’t be getting any, Sis?”

My brows furrow as I inhale a calming breath.

I love my brother dearly, but sometimes he really is a clueless idiot.

“If I want some, I’ll get some, thank you very much.” I straighten in my chair and flip my hair over my shoulder.

“The fuck.” He grabs my arm, pulling me back down. “Who?”

“Oak!” I hiss.

“Who are you fucking? Because I swear to God, Liv—”

“Let’s get one thing straight,” I grit through my teeth as the class goes on around us. “You are my brother, not my keeper. Who I fuck is none of your concern.”

His eyes flicker with anger, but the fire quickly gutters. “Shit, sorry. I just... I don’t want some wanker to try and get to me and the guys through you.”

“I can look after myself, Oak.”

“I know you can. But I’ll still always want to protect you. You know that, right?”

“Yeah, I know. It sucks you won’t be at the house much now.”

“You can come stay at the Chapel whenever you want, you know that.”

“Never going to happen,” I scoff.

I know exactly what they’ll be doing in their new digs. The fact that All Hallows’ still allows the Heirs to keep their private residence on the school estate is really testament to how deep the traditions and power run.

I let out a small sigh and Oak nudges my arm. “What’s wrong?”

“Everything’s changing,” I whisper.

“Change can be a good thing. Speaking of change, have you thought about uni applications yet?”

“No, and I’d prefer it if you didn’t get on my back about it.”

“You need to make a decision, Liv.”

“I know.”

I’m not an Heir, so my career path isn’t all laid out for me the way it is for Oakley. But that isn’t to say Dad doesn’t have expectations for me.

He wants me to apply to Saints Cross University, like Oak and the guys. But I’m stalling. Do I really want to survive another three years of them? To have them constantly breathing down my neck and thinking they can get all up in my business?

I don’t. But the idea of starting over where everything is new and I don’t know anyone isn’t exactly appealing either.

“You know—”

“Oakley Beckworth, what a surprise.” Mr. Piper clicks his tongue. “Something you’d like to share with the rest of us? Please, the floor is all yours.”

“Twat,” Oak murmurs under his breath, flashing Mr. Piper a blinding smile.

“Well?”

“I think I’m good, sir. But thanks for checking in.”

A couple of nearby girls snigger and I roll my eyes. Of course they’d find this kind of thing attractive. It’s Oakley. He’s an Heir and one of the All Hallows’ Saints star players. It elevates him to celebrity status.

The biggest shock here is that Mr. Piper actually dared to say anything about the fact that we’re blatantly sitting here, having a full-on conversation and ignoring every word he says.

One of the girls whispers something to her friend and scribbles on a page in her notebook. Tearing off the note, she folds it and leans over, dropping it on my brother’s desk.

He shoots her a knowing smirk as he smooths it open and reads her

message.

*Want to go somewhere after class? You look a little tense, and I'd love to help you unwind.*

“That is... wow,” I say, peering over his arm.

He shrugs me off and grins. “Jealous?”

“Yes. Because it is my life’s goal to fuck as many of our classmates as possible.”

“Might help remove the stick from up your arse.”

I flip him off behind my textbook and he chuckles before turning his attention on the blonde.

“It’s a date,” he says. “And bring your friend. I’m sure we can have a party for three.”

The girls practically fall over themselves at his offer.

I roll my eyes, angling myself away from Oakley slightly.

He might be my brother, but it doesn’t mean I have to like him all the time.

I headed straight home after school. Talk of the ‘housewarming’ has taunted me all day. At least with the guys moving into the Chapel, I won’t have to deal with Reese being around as much. The house has become unbearably small with him here. Even when he’s not all up in my face, I feel his presence.

This is a good thing.

The guys will spend most of their nights at their new fuck pad, and I’ll be able to sleep easier knowing I’m not going to run into Reese on a late-night trip to the kitchen.

I should be elated, and yet, there’s a strange pang in my chest.

Oakley has always been one of the Heirs. He’s always been surrounded by a group of people all vying for his attention. But he’s never made me feel less than part of his life.

Things are changing now, though. I can feel it like a shift in the air when

a storm approaches.

I don't like it, but there isn't a damn thing I can do about it.

It's almost nine now, and the house feels desperately empty. Dad and Fiona are at some work thing, so I made some pasta and then did some homework. But I'm restless, trying not to think about the housewarming at the Chapel.

Oak begged me to go but stopped texting me about an hour ago. I guess he's distracted now.

Refusing to wallow, I grab my running shoes and my earbuds, slip on a lightweight hoodie and head out for a run.

It's dark out, a thick band of wispy clouds concealing the moon and stars. But it doesn't bother me, I'm used to being out here alone.

I like the quiet.

That time when the town begins to sleep and everything falls silent.

My legs pound the asphalt as I take the roads leading past the houses in our neighbourhood. Big, ostentatious houses that scream wealth and power.

My mind flickers back to the housewarming. I could have boarded at All Hallows' this term—Dad offered to pay. But it seemed silly to board when we live so nearby. Besides, I like my space, my home comforts. And with Oakley and Reese gone now, I'll have plenty of that.

I keep a steady pace, focusing on breathing, as I make my way around the perimeter of the town. But as the imposing silhouette of All Hallows' comes into view far in the distance, I slow.

I don't want to be there, watching a bunch of desperate Heir chasers fall over themselves for their shot with my brother or Elliot or Theo.

Or Reese.

Just his name does things to me.

Unwelcome, unnerving things.

He's under my skin, I can't deny that. But it doesn't matter. Reese Whitfield despises me and the feeling is mutual.

And yet...

No, Olivia. Don't go there.

Don't even think it.

I spot a flat rock through the trees and smile. Perfect.

Switching my music track to something more chilled, I climb up on to it, slip off my trainers and hoodie, and take a deep, calming breath.

Drawing my hands together, I slide my left foot up my opposite leg and

hold it to a count of ten. Then, I repeat with my other leg. The tension begins to seep from my body, leaving me with every slow exhale. I move through the tree pose into standing backbend and then a chair pose, and down into a standing forward bend.

“Well, well, what do we have here?”

My heart ratchets in my chest as I shoot up and turn, searching for him in the trees.

Reese steps out of the shadows, hands casually shoved in his pockets, a sly smirk plastered on his unearthly handsome face.

I narrow my eyes, anger boiling my blood. “Stalker much?”

His shoulders lift in a small shrug. “Last time I checked, it’s a free country, sweet cheeks. And this is the way home.”

“What do you mean, way home?” I sit down to put my trainers back on. “I thought—”

“That I’d be staying at the Chapel?” His expression wavers a little. “Turns out Elliot has decided to confiscate my key until...” He trails off, and it hits me.

“Until they trust you again.” Smug laughter bubbles inside me. “Ah, poor baby, must suck being the outsider.”

“And yet, here you are, Olive. All alone, practising your yoga shit on a rock.”

“I like my own company.”

“Sure you do.” He stalks closer, every step reverberating inside me.

“What are you doing?”

“Why, scared?”

Yes.

“No,” I lie.

I’m not scared of him, not really, but I am unnerved by how easily he affects me.

Blood pounds in my ears as he comes closer and closer, until his palms fall either side of my thighs and he pushes his face right in front of mine. The bitter scent of whisky lingers on his breath. I should hate it.

I don’t.

The initial anger in my veins dissipates into simmering heat. He’s close. Too close. But I don’t move.

I can’t.

“You didn’t come to the party. Why?”

“I didn’t want to.”

“You and me both, sweet—”

“Don’t call me that.”

“I’ll call you whatever I want,” he breathes. “Olive. Sweet cheeks. My pretty little slut.”

“Reese,” I hiss.

“Yes, Olivia?” He smirks, and I want to punch him right in the face.

“Get the hell out of my way and leave me alone.” I shove him hard and he staggers back a little, giving me enough room to hop down and take off toward the path.

He falls into step beside me, a quiet storm.

“What?” I bark up at him, aware of him watching me.

“Way home, remember?” His brow arches with amusement, but I catch the flash of regret in his eyes.

Reese cares that he’s been sidelined by my brother and the guys. He’s just too arrogant to ever admit it.

“We don’t have to walk together, you know.”

“But it’s so much fun,” he chuckles darkly.

“Reese,” I whirl on him, “what are you doing?”

His eyes are dark, so dark it sends a shiver rolling through me.

“Just thinking about all the fun we’re going to have.”

“We’re not... that’s—”

His hand snaps out, collaring me, his thumb brushing over my pulse point. He leans in, his mouth brushing the shell of my ear. “Tell me you don’t want me. I can practically smell your pussy.”

“Reese.” I inhale a shuddering breath. It rolls through me like thunder, matching the violent beat of my heart.

“What do you say, Olivia?” he drawls. “Want me to finish what we started before summer? Want to me to fuck you so hard you’ll feel me imprinted on your soul?”

Heat engulfs me. I’m angry, livid that he thinks he can talk to me like this. But I’m also trembling, the throb between my legs refusing to abate. Because despite the hatred between us, there’s something else.

A fire that refuses to burn out.

And Reese knows it.

But I still can’t figure out why...

Why he’s trying to bait me into this game we’re playing.

“What happened to you, Reese?” I whisper, aware of his fingers flexed around my throat.

“You, Olive,” he growls. “You happened.”





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## REESE

Tasha sits on my lap once again, her arse grinding down on my less-than-interested dick as she talks animatedly to one of the two girls Oakley is entertaining. I recognise them both as girls in our year. Hell, they could even have been in my classes in the past... I could have fucked them, but fuck if I can remember who they are.

“This place is so much more than I could have imagined,” the redhead gushes. She might be talking to Tasha, but her eyes are locked on Oakley as he shamelessly stares down her dress. I mean really, she may as well not be wearing it for how little it’s covering.

“Just wait until I get you downstairs.”

The desperate whore purrs in response before threading her fingers in Oak’s hair and shoving his face into her tits. I mean, if I had to suffocate to death, then I guess going by a pair of tits would be right up there.

“Are you going to take me downstairs, Reese?” Tasha purrs in my ear as her hand slips under the fabric of my shirt and she drags her hideous pointed nails down my abs.

“Unlikely,” I mutter under my breath.

“I’m desperate to see what you’ve all done to the place. When I was down there with Evan last year it was— ow, what the hell, Reese?” she whines like a little bitch as she hits the solid walnut floor on her pert arse.

“Whoops. I need another drink,” I mutter, pushing to my feet and leaving Oak and his two hussies behind.

My eyes scan the space around me as I move toward the kitchen. There are people drinking, dancing, and enjoying themselves in every inch of the space.

A loud moan rips through the air, overpowering the music, and when I glance down the hall, I find Theo on his knees, his head under some girl's skirt as she screams for God.

Fuck my life.

I used to dream about having this. I was desperate for the status, the respect, the girls.

But I feel like a fucking whore in a convent right now.

I've never felt so out of place somewhere I should belong.

My boys are here. This should be my home, my lair. Yet all I can think about it is walking out of that monstrous front door and never coming back.

"Reese Whitfield, to what do we owe the pleasure?"

Hands grab my sides and my skin prickles in a way that makes me want to rip it off.

Spinning around, I find Melanie Brian. She was one of last year's Heir chasers. I'm pretty sure she spent most of her final year on her back with either Liam or Evan between her thighs.

"You back for another go at snagging an Heir, Mel?"

Her smile falters a little. "Nah, I'm all spoken for now, Reese," she sings, holding up a giant-arse engagement ring as if I should be impressed by it.

"What stupid motherfucker knocked you up?"

Her cheeks heat as her lips purse.

"Right, well..." I take off just in time to hear her laugh off my comment, but seriously, who the fuck would want to tie that down?

I finally make it to the kitchen after only being groped by a couple wandering hands.

"What's it to be, Whitfield?" Zayn Hickman, a new member of the team who has a fucking lot to prove right about now asks as I come to a stop in front of the array of bottles.

"Strongest bottle you got."

"You got it."

He reaches out for a bottle of whisky—not my usual choice, but I don't really give a fuck right now.

I need the oblivion it promises.

"Cup?" he asks, clearly misreading my body language.

"No." Reaching out, I snatch the bottle from his hand, twist the top, and flick it at him. It hits him right between the brows and he pales. "Want some advice?" I ask, although I have no intention of waiting for an answer. "Open

your fucking eyes. They'll eat you alive if you're this fucking clueless all the time."

"U-uh, y-yeah sure," he stutters like a pussy, and I swear to fuck, a little sweat beads on his brow.

Fuck me, where did Elliot find this bellend from?

With the heat of the whisky burning down my throat and warming my stomach, I leave the party behind and burst through the front door.

Multiple voices call after me, but I don't stop to even look to see who it was. I don't give a fuck. The only thing I can think about is getting away from all this bullshit.

It's fake. All of it.

The power they hold, the bullshit traditions they uphold. The futures that have been mapped out for them.

They all act like it's a privilege, but really, it's nothing more than a noose around their necks.

A noose I'm no longer willing to accept.

Fuck my mother's expectations of me. Fuck the life, the marriage, she expects me to have.

What about the life I want to lead?

The bottle is already half empty as I stumble through the trees. We've spent years scaring the shit out of girls in these woods, so even with the moonlight illuminating the space through the thick leaf cover above, I can navigate it with ease.

Twigs crack under my feet and old leaves rustle, but there's nothing else out here. I can't even hear any animals.

Peace. Fucking finally.

Once I'm so deep that all I can see around me is darkness, I tip my head toward the sky and roar out my frustrations into the dead of night.

I keep going until my throat is raw and some of the tension in my shoulders has lessened. Then, I take another swig of the whisky and keep going toward the rocks on the other side which will lead me home.

Thoughts of that place, the Beckworths', doesn't do anything for my current state of mind. The only positive from that house is the girl in the room opposite mine.

The second I emerge from the cover of trees, movement up on one of the huge rocks catches my eye.

She moves so smoothly, so elegantly, that I find myself captivated by her

for a few minutes as she switches from pose to pose.

I've never really understood Olivia's love of yoga, but I sure as fuck enjoy watching her do it. Especially those times she used to do it first thing in the morning in her tiny booty shorts and sports bra in the back garden.

Thank fuck Oak has never been an early riser, or he'd have caught me getting up at sunrise and watching his sister show her arse to the world.

Her body has the same effect on me now as it did back then, and my cock swells as images of bending her over, ripping her leggings down, and fucking her from behind fill my head.

Fuck this girl.

Fuck this beautiful, sexy, filthy little liar.

I palm my dick through my trousers, trying to ignore the fact that no other girl tonight has made it so much as jerk let alone harden. Leaning against a tree, hidden in the shadows, I watch her, swallowing a shot of whisky every time she moves.

It's not until she seems to come to a stop that I finally make my presence known, and fuck am I glad I do when her eyes widen and shock covers her face a second before her anger sets in.

Oh yes, game on, Olive. Game fucking on.

She hops down from her rock, her defiance and smart mouth only making me harder and more desperate for a repeat of initiation night.

She wants it, too. As we spit insults back and forth at each other, our irritation and obvious desire fuelling our hate-filled words, her eyes darken, her breathing increases and her blush deepens.

"What happened to you, Reese?" she whispers, causing my grip on her to tighten and her pulse against my fingers to race.

"You, Olive," I growl, loving the way her eyes narrow in anger at that nickname. "You fucking happened."

"But I never did anything. Nothing changed. One day you were just Reese, my brother's annoying friend—"

"Hot friend," I correct. "Don't even pretend that you never used to make any excuse to get into Oak's room when I was there to check me out."

"And then you turned into this vicious, hate-filled demon."

"Demon, huh?" I ask, leaning in closer, stealing her air.

"Reese," she begs.

"Fuck, I love it when you do that," I confess, my eyes flicking between hers and her tempting lips.

Her tongue sneaks out, running across her bottom lip as a wanton moan rumbles deep in her throat. A moan I think she assumes I don't hear.

But I do. And it hits me right in the cock.

"You're a filthy little liar, Olive."

"I've never lied to you."

My lip curls up in an accomplished smile. "You just did. And you're about to do it again." Her brow quirks. "Tell me how wet you are for me right now."

"Fuck you," she hisses predictably.

"Yeah..." I say, releasing her throat in favour of copping a feel of her tits. "I think I might. Just to prove a point though."

"And what would that be?" she asks, desperately trying to keep her voice level as I pinch her nipple through her bra.

I lean into her again, my lips brushing the shell of her ear before I breathe, "That you want me. That all you can think about is how I stretched you open and made you feel better than you ever have in your life."

I sense her hit coming a mile off, and I catch her wrist long before it connects with my cheek.

"Careful, sweet cheeks, or I'll start to think you get off on the pain."

"Fuck you," she hisses again.

"I thought we'd already cleared that up. I'm more than willing to find out how badly you want me."

"I hate you," she spits.

"The feeling is mutual. But doesn't it make it that much hotter?"

"You need to let go," she demands.

"I need to? Right. I'd love to hear your reasoning."

Her eyes narrow and her lips purse. "If Oak finds out you left a bruise on me, he'll kill you."

I can't help but laugh. "Your dear brother is in no state to protect your virtue right now, sweet cheeks. When I left, he had a girl on each thigh and his face in one of their tits."

A shudder of disgust rips through her.

"Jealous, Olive? Is that where you'd rather be right now? At the Chapel with an Heir on their knees for you?"

"Let. Me. Go," she seethes.

"Okay," I concede. "I'll let you go, and I'll even give you a head start."

"W-what?"

“I’ll give you ten seconds. But you can be damn sure that when I catch you, all bets are off. So I suggest you run fast, little Olive.”

“I-I don’t—”

“Run,” I whisper in her ear.

“What?”

Releasing her, I take a step back. “Ten. Nine. Eight,” I start counting, and her eyes widen in realisation. “Seven. Six. It’s almost like you want me to catch you.”

“Fuck,” she barks, before darting into the darkness and vanishing from my sight.

A laugh rips from my lips as the first real excitement I’ve felt since returning to his hellhole trickles through my veins.

“Five. Four. Three. Two. One,” I say in a rush. “Ready or not, Olive. The big bad wolf is coming for you.”





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## OLIVIA

I stumble into the trees, the overgrowth crunching and cracking beneath my feet.

“Ready or not, Olive. The big bad wolf is coming for you.” His voice echoes around me, his dark chuckle sending shivers skittering down my spine.

Reese can flip a switch on his personality so quickly it gives me whiplash. It’s disarming.

He’s disarming.

And I know that if he catches me, he’ll make good on his promise.

My heart drums in my chest, blood roaring between my ears as I run faster.

Luckily for me, I know these woods like the back of my hand. But it doesn’t stop my heart rate from spiking as I hear something crunch behind me. I don’t glance back, refusing to be distracted.

Reese wants to play cat and mouse? Fine. I’ll make him work for it.

A smile tugs at my lips. I shouldn’t like this—him chasing me through the woods at night like a predator hunting its prey—but I can’t deny that something else fizzles inside my stomach besides fear.

God, what is wrong with me?

This isn’t normal.

If I heard about Oakley doing this to some poor unsuspecting girl, I’d give him hell for it.

Bursting through a thicket of trees, I hiss when a branch snags my shoulder, slicing through my skin. It’s enough to make me ground to a halt and try and catch my breath.

“Don’t make this easy for me,” Reese calls from somewhere behind me. Shit.

I dart behind a huge oak tree, pressing my back against the rough bark. Warm blood trickles down my arm, my heart crashing violently in my chest.

“I know you’re here,” he drawls, his footsteps slow and steady. “I can feel you.”

Pressing my lips together, I try to remain utterly silent. Part of me wants to tell him to go fuck himself. Reese might be a bastard, but he’s an eighteen-year-old boy. This is a game to him. A power play. A way for him to remind me that he’s an Heir and I’m nothing but a young woman trying to survive in a man’s world.

So why does the other part of me want to get caught?

Silence echoes around me as I listen for a clue to his whereabouts. But there’s nothing.

Has he gone?

Is this all part of his plan to spook me? Chase me and then abandon me out here alone?

As quietly as I can, I slip out from my hiding place behind the giant oak, ready to make my way back to the house. But a hand snaps out from the shadows, grabbing my throat and pushing me back up against it.

“Going somewhere?” Reese growls in my face, his eyes glittering like two deadly orbs in the moonlight.

My own gaze narrows, silently seething at him as fear pulses through me.

“Something you want to say?” His fingers flex around my throat as he pins me there.

“Fuck. You,” I spit.

“You’d like that, wouldn’t you? If I finish what we started all those weeks ago. Tell me, sweet cheeks.” He leans in, ghosting his lips over the corner of my mouth, eliciting a shiver from deep within me. “Have you let anyone else in here while I’ve been gone?”

Reese cups me possessively, grinding the heel of his palm against my clit.

A wanton whimper spills from my lips and his lips curve into a smug smirk. “You’re so fucking responsive, Olive.”

“Get your hands off me,” I snap, trying to press my body into the tree trunk. But Reese cages me there, using his body to trap me in place. A heady mix of fear and anticipation races through me.

I shouldn’t be excited by this and yet...

“Is that what you really want? Me to walk away? To leave you so hot and bothered?”

“I...” My voice quivers as I try and gulp a deep breath.

“I’ll make you a deal. If you really don’t want this, if I shove my fingers inside your leggings and you’re not dripping for me, I’ll walk away.” Hunger flares in his dark gaze as if the very idea of touching me does things to him. “But if I find you wet, you have to let me get you off.”

My stomach curls at his words.

“What’s it going to be, Olive?”

I glower at him, because I’ve lost and he knows it.

He knew it the second I ran into the woods.

“Nothing to say?” His brow arches as he slowly, almost lazily rubs me through my leggings.

My head falls back on a defeated sigh. It feels so good.

Too fucking good.

“Right answer,” he says, dipping his hand into my leggings and underwear. “Fuck, you’re soaked.”

Surprise coats his words as evidence of my body’s betrayal coats his fingers. A moan rumbles through me as he pushes two thick fingers inside me.

“Reese,” I choke out. “We can’t do this.”

“Sure we can.” He crooks his fingers in a come hither motion and my knees almost buckle.

“Oh God,” I cry, trying to bury my face in his shoulder. But he refuses to let me move, using his body weight to pin me in place.

“Not God, sweet cheeks. The devil. And I’m going to fucking ruin you.” He pumps his fingers inside me, harder, deeper, while his thumb makes sweeping circles over my clit.

“This pussy is mine,” he grits out.

“Yes... God, yes.”

I don’t know what I’m saying, too lost in the sensations crashing over me. Fisting his rugby shirt, I try to kiss him. But Reese hovers out of reach, watching me.

“Kiss me,” I breathe. I need the intimacy, the connection.

“Oh, I’m going to kiss you, Olive. Just not on those lips.” A wicked glint shines in his eyes, and before I can ask him what the hell he means, Reese drops to his knees and yanks my leggings down.

“R-Reese,” I shriek, startled.

He grabs the backs of my thighs and forces my legs open as wide as he can, given the fact that my leggings are bunched around my calves, and he buries his face in my pussy.

“Reese.” My fingers grab onto his hair as he aggressively licks me, spearing his tongue inside me. “Holy shit,” I pant, riding his face, because I might hate him, I might despise everything that Reese Whitfield represents, but good Lord can the boy eat pussy.

Not that I have a wealth of experience to compare it to. But it feels amazing.

“More,” I moan, scraping my fingers against his scalp.

“Fuck, Olivia,” he murmurs, not bothering to come up for air, breathing the words onto me. Into me.

Using his fingers, he spreads me open and licks my clit, toying with it, sucking it into his mouth and grazing his teeth dangerously against it.

“Fuck,” I breathe, unravelling.

It’s too much. He’s too much. And this whole thing is crazy. Completely, utterly wrong. But it feels too good to stop.

And deep down, maybe I don’t want to stop. I want him on his knees before me, worshipping me, making me shatter.

“You taste so fucking good.” He dives back in for seconds. “Why do you taste so good?”

“Less talking,” I grab a handful of his hair, “and more eating.”

His deep laughter rumbles over me, adding a new dimension to the sensations already wreaking havoc on my body.

More.

I want more.

And more.

And—

“Reese,” I cry as my body begins to tremble involuntarily. He curls two fingers, rubbing that special spot deep inside me as he laps at my clit. Over and over and over.

Pleasure crashes into me, rolling through my body in overpowering waves.

“Fuck yeah,” he says with smug satisfaction as he licks me through my orgasm, drawing out every last drop of pleasure. I gaze down at him, lust-drunk and sated, and he stares up at me like a fallen prince.

“What?” I whisper.

“You taste like victory.”

And just like that, the world comes crashing down around me.

“Get off me.” I shove his shoulder and he stumbles back, quickly shooting to his feet.

Grabbing my leggings, I yank them up my body.

Laughter rumbles through him again as he watches me, slowly sucking his fingers clean. “Mmm, looks like I was right, sweet cheeks.”

I straighten myself, wincing as the cut on my shoulder smarts.

“Shit,” Reese says, noticing the streak of blood down my arm. “Are you okay?” He takes a step forward but catches himself and draws to a stop. “You’re bleeding.”

“No shit, Sherlock.” I inspect the cut. It’s a little deeper than I first realised, but nothing I can’t clean up myself.

“Do you need—”

“Don’t pretend you care,” I scoff, annoyed at myself. “We both know you don’t.”

Storming past him, I head for the house.

And this time, Reese doesn’t follow.

**W**hat have I done?

That’s all I can think as I lie in bed, staring up at the ceiling.

The second I’d gotten home, I came straight up to my room, stripped off, and took a shower before dressing the cut on my arm.

I heard Reese get back, his heavy footsteps in the hall beyond my bedroom door. Part of me wondered if he would knock.

He didn’t.

Reese ignites a fire inside me, but it’s a dangerous game we’re playing. Because one of us will end up burnt, and something tells me it won’t ever be him.

Filthy little liar. That’s what he called me. But it doesn’t make any sense. I’ve never lied to him. Not once.

Okay, that’s not entirely true. I have kept some things to myself, but only because I don’t want to give him any more power over me than he already

wields.

Christ, I need to stop this... Whatever this thing is simmering between us. He doesn't want me. He wants to toy with me.

To ruin me.

He said it himself.

But why?

Why me all of a sudden?

It doesn't make sense. But then not a lot does when it comes to the Heirs and the world they inhabit.

My mind flickers back to my run-in with Abigail Bancroft at school, and a wave of guilt washes over me.

She's promised to Reese. The girl their families expect him to marry. But no one talks about it. Not Reese. Not his mum or my dad.

It's another expectation. Another burden to shoulder.

They're not together, but one day they will be, and it shouldn't matter. I shouldn't care. Because this—whatever Reese and I are doing—isn't serious. It's a game. A battle of wills. Nothing more.

Reese Whitfield isn't boyfriend material, and he sure as hell isn't husband material.

So why do I feel a stab of jealousy, knowing that he's promised to another?

That one day, he'll be hers...

And there isn't a damn thing I, or anyone else, can do about it.



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## REESE

I sit in the middle of my bed, staring down at my phone screen.  
I should be moving some more money, finding somewhere to live.  
Anything other than getting lost in memories of watching her fall.  
Something shifted in me tonight.

I'm not sure if it was when I truly discovered how much I'd been outcast by the three best friends I've ever had, or if it was the moment I swiped my tongue against her pussy and got a mouthful of her addictive taste.

But suddenly, things started to make sense to me in a way they haven't before.

I knew as I drove back into town that I needed revenge. That I needed to make those pay for fucking up my life and taking everything that I've ever wanted and making it their own. But I never quite grasped how I was going to do it.

Until tonight...

Until she gripped my hair so tight that I thought she was going to rip it clean from my head.

A wicked smile tugs at my lips.

Everyone loves Olivia Beckworth.

The Heirs see her as a sister, whether they're related by blood or not. And she's even got my mum wrapped around her little finger now they're living under the same roof.

She's my answer. I see it more clearly now than I did when I first drove past the 'Welcome to Saints Cross' sign, returning to my old life as if I'd been on holiday and nothing more.

The minutes tick by as I force myself to think over my plans. It's



something I've been doing every free second I've had since Dad told me I had no choice but to return.

It seemed like a pipe dream then. But now I'm here, setting things into motion. I know it's possible. And now I've got close to her once again, I realise that it's going to be easier than I ever thought it would be.

Olivia seems to be holding true to her roots, lying to the most important person in her life. Oakley has no idea that anything has happened between us. She's kept her mouth shut, and I suspect she will continue doing so.

Confident that it's been long enough, I climb from my bed, dropping my phone into my pocket as I do, and pad toward the door.

Mum and Christian were already in bed when I got back, so I can only hope that they'll remain hidden in their room and not catch me slipping across the hall to creep on my new stepsister.

My heart thumps as I press the door handle down and step onto the thick carpet beyond the threshold. The room is in darkness. I can only see where I'm going thanks to some glowing fairy lights Olivia has hanging from her bookcases. But it's all I need to be able to see her sleeping, tucked under her covers with no fucking worries.

I know she sleeps heavily. I've been in here enough times with Oak over the years, playing practical jokes on her in the middle of the night. She never once woke up. She also proved the theory of people pissing themselves at night if their fingers were in a bowl of water wrong a few times too, much to our disappointment.

Pulling the chair from her desk, I roll it beside her bed and sit down, spreading my thighs wide as I watch her.

She looks almost angelic in her sleep. It makes it almost hard to believe she's got such a deceitful tongue hiding behind her full, tempting lips.

Rubbing my hands down my thighs, I rest back, letting my imagination run wild. I lick my lips, as if I'll still be able to taste her on them.

I watch her for the longest time, stealing all the little whimpers and noises she makes in her sleep, wishing I could get into her head to find out what she's dreaming about.

My cock aches, precum leaking into my sweats with my need for release. Teasing her, tasting her. It left me fucking aching for her.

"You're a fucking tease, little liar," I breathe, pushing my hand beneath my waistband and squeezing the base of my cock.

My eyes shutter as I fight the need to give in to temptation.

It makes me wonder how badly she'd freak out if she woke to find me here, getting myself off to the sight of her.

Or would she enjoy it?

Would she wake up burning for me and help me out? Take me in her mouth and...

Before I know what I'm doing, my hand is moving up and down my length and my muscles are bunching up in my need to let go.

Her lips part as my speed increases and she shifts in the bed, a little moan spilling from her mouth as I come in my pants like a fucking pre-teen.

Heat rushes up my cheeks, colouring them both in reaction to my much-needed release and the embarrassment of how quickly it took to achieve it.

My chest heaves, my body relaxing as the release loosens my muscles and forces me to let go of a little bit of the tension I've been walking around with since the other day.

I pull my hand free, some of my own jizz covering my fingers, and I act before I think better of it.

Gently, I trace the fullness of her bottom lip, coating it in the evidence of my visit, before I stand back and appreciate the sight of her. Dragging my phone from my pocket, I clear all the notifications of messages and missed calls from my dad that I've been ignoring, and I take a quick photo to add to the others in my wank bank.

After pushing her chair back where I found it, I let my eyes linger on her for a second longer before leaving her room. The last thing I want is to get caught on my first visit. Especially as I'm planning on spending plenty more nights here, corrupting my little liar.

The boys don't want to let me move in with them, then fuck it. I'll make my own fun.

There's plenty to be had here, after all.

**J**ust like the morning before, the house is in silence as I make my way down the stairs in my uniform with my bags thrown over my shoulder.

I head for the kitchen to grab a coffee before making my way to school.

I was ordered by King Elliot to join them at the Chapel at seven AM,

ready for breakfast.

Well, despite my good intentions to move forward with regaining my old life, I seem to have failed at the first hurdle, because it's already five past and I haven't even left the house.

Whoops.

I never was great with my timekeeping. They can't expect me to suddenly be on top of shit.

"Oh fuck," I breathe as I step into the kitchen and find my mum sitting at the breakfast bar as if she's waiting for me. "Sorry, I'll just..."

"No, wait. Please, Reese. I only want to talk."

"Yeah, well I've got nothing to say to you."

I turn to leave but make the fucking stupid mistake of catching her eyes before I go.

"Please, Reese. Even if you just stay long enough for me to apologise."

My head tells me to walk out, to leave her and her stupid fucking apology behind. But my heart, my naïve little heart, begs me to at least hear her out.

"Fine," I spit. "But it better be good. I'm not sure any excuse will be enough to make me forgive you for fucking around on Dad."

"Reese," she breathes. "Things aren't always as they seem. Did you even let him explain while you were away?" I glare at her, letting her see the answer in my eyes.

"If this is your way of trying to tell me that you never loved him and my whole life was a joke, then you could go a better way around it."

"What? No. I've always loved your father. I *do* love your father."

I throw my hands up, indicating the house we're currently in.

"I know, I know. But things between your dad and me... they were complicated and—"

"Try harder, Mum. Right now, I'm starting to think your clients must be wasting their money getting you to defend them."

"Your father and I haven't been in love for a long time. But we both agreed that we wanted to keep our family. That meant we both had to make sacrifices for the greater good."

"Which was?" I ask.

"You, Reese. Always you."

"I'm sorry, but I'm struggling to understand how me walking in on you getting railed by my best friend's dad was for my own good."

She gasps, blood draining from her face as I reveal that little fact.

“Christian is a good man, Reese.”

“A good lay, you mean?” I scoff.

She blows out a long breath as if she’ll find some sense of calm by doing so.

“Life isn’t so black and white, Reese. There’s this whole heap of grey in the middle of it that is sent to try us, to test us. And sometimes, yeah, we make mistakes. But I promise you, I never hurt your father in the way you think I did.”

“You mean, he knew you were fucking around?”

She gives me a weak smile, and it’s all I need to answer that question.

“Motherfucker,” I grunt, my fist slamming into the wall beside me.

“Our priority was always you, Reese.”

“That’s rich, seeing as neither of you were ever actually there for me. I can’t see it would have made any difference to my life if you went your separate ways.”

“In hindsight, maybe not.”

“Why didn’t you?” I ask, sensing there’s more here than her need to give me some kind of normal life. “Why did you fake it for so many years?”

“For—”

“Do not say for me again. I know you, Mum. I know there’s more. So please, for once, just be fucking honest with me. I promise you, it’s not going to make me hate you anymore.”

“Your grandfather.”

A bitter laugh falls from my lips. Disbelief floods me that I didn’t figure that out earlier.

“So good old pops died and you decided to give in and fuck your way around Saints Cross.”

“We all have things that are expected of us in life, Reese. Sometimes, you have to roll with the punches and find happiness wherever you can.”

“Roll with the punches. Like my arranged marriage?” I blurt, anger forcing the words from my lips.

I never talk about the fact that this woman standing before me on the verge of tears promised me to Judge Bancroft’s daughter when we were nothing more than kids, and actually thinks we’re both going to follow through with it.

Abigail is the opposite of my type. There is no way Mum or Judge Bancroft can think for even a second that putting us together is a good idea.

“Abigail is a good girl, Reese. She’s—”

“Yeah, that’s my point. Not exactly my perfect girl. I need mine a little more... rough around the edges. Experienced.”

“She needs someone like you. Someone who can protect her from all the snakes in this town.”

“Then sign me up to be her sponsor, not her fucking husband.”

“It’s out of my hands.”

“It wasn’t the day you signed my life away though, was it?” I spit back.

“I need you to trust me, Reese. I’m trying to do my best here.”

“Well, try harder. The only people who are falling for it are those who actually belong in this house.”

I storm away, her pleading voice following me down the hallway.

“Sometimes, we need to be selfless beyond all else, Reese. Sometimes, putting other people first and playing this game is all we have.”

“This game?” I ask, regretting being sucked back in.

“Yeah, life. And in case you didn’t already know, happiness and love are it. The end goal. Maybe you should stop trying to push everyone who loves you away and focus on the good they can bring to your life instead.”

I slam the door behind me the second she’s stopped talking. But her advice doesn’t leave me the whole way to the Chapel, where I’m sure I’m probably going to walk straight into the middle of another fucking argument.



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## OLIVIA

**I**t's weird, heading into school by myself. But with Oak staying at the Chapel and Reese gone before I even managed to drag myself out of bed, I have no choice but to drive in alone again.

Darcie and her friends all gawk at me as I climb out of my car and smooth my pleated skirt down my thighs. I narrow my eyes at them, and they go back to their conversation.

Stupid bitches.

No doubt they're talking about the party last night. Who got with who and who made a fool of themselves.

A shudder runs through me as memories assault my mind. Reese. The woods. His ridiculously skilled tongue and fingers.

Ugh.

Get a grip, Olivia.

He wasn't that skilled, and he practically assaulted me. But I know I could have escaped if I had really wanted to. I could have screamed for help or kned him in the balls or punched him right between his stormy grey eyes.

The truth is, I liked the chase. And more than that, I liked being caught.

I give a little shake of my head. There really is something very wrong with me.

Heading into the building, I run over the day's classes in my mind. But the second I enter the corridor, I freeze.

Gareth Franklin, a first year new to town, has Abigail Bancroft cornered in the alcove under the stairs leading to the first floor. I can't hear what he's saying, but terror glitters in her eyes as he crowds her further into the shadows, taunting her, if his devious smirk is anything to go by.

I make a beeline for them, anger zipping up my spine. “Get away—”

Reese appears out of nowhere and grabs the boy, shoving him away from Abigail. “What the fuck do you think you’re doing?” He gets all up in Gareth’s face.

“We were only talking.” He stands his ground. “Isn’t that right, baby?”

Abigail blanches, cowering in the alcove.

“Who the fuck are you?” Reese grits out. “I don’t recognise you.”

“I’m new. Just moved to Saints Cross from—”

“Don’t give a fuck.” Reese fists his shirt, dragging him close enough that they’re almost nose to nose. “Maybe you didn’t get the memo, or maybe you need to be reminded, but this is our school, and we don’t tolerate little pricks like you preying on our girls.”

*Our girls.*

My chest squeezes at his words.

But I guess he’s right—she is his.

“Shit, dude.” Gareth finally has the sense to look scared. “We were only talking.”

“Dude? Do I look like I’m your fucking dude?” Reese slams him up against the wall, knocking the air clean from his lungs. “Want my advice?”

“W-what?”

“Keep out of my fucking way, and if I catch you sniffing around Abigail again, you’re a dead man.”

Reese releases him with a hard shove and Gareth practically slides down the wall, fear radiating from him. He clammers to his feet and all but runs down the corridor.

Abigail steps out of the alcove and gazes up at Reese with a weak smile. “Thank you.” I see the whispered words form on her lips.

Reese goes rigid and glares at her. “Whatever,” he says. “I didn’t do it for you.”

Her expression is crushed as he spins around and walks away. She glances down the corridor, her gaze snagging on mine. A silent question simmers in her eyes, but I don’t engage.

I’m not sure I have any of the answers she wants.

So I take off in the opposite direction, putting some space between us. But that sickly, unnerving sensation lingers, and I don’t like it. Because I know what it is.

Jealousy.



I was jealous seeing Reese defend her.  
Christ, he's under my skin in a way I hadn't expected—or wanted.  
Reese Whitfield isn't a good person. He's arrogant and smug, and a little bit messed up inside.  
Yet, I want him. My body wants him.  
I whip out my phone and pull up my chat history with Charli.

Olivia: What are you doing tonight?

Charli: Dinner with my mum and wankstain, why?

Crap.

Olivia: I need to get out of Saints Cross for a bit.

Charli: Things that bad?

Olivia: They're... complicated.

Charli: Sounds intriguing. I can't get out of tonight, but tomorrow? We could go to the Spire. It's karaoke Wednesday. I know the new barman, he's cute and will definitely be down for sneaking us a few drinks if I ask nicely.

Olivia: I'm in.

I need to put some distance between me and Saints Cross.  
Me and Reese.

Charli: Yes!!! I'll text you tomorrow and we can make plans.  
Wish me luck for tonight, something tells me I'm going to need it.

Olivia: Good luck. You can always stab Dan with your fork if it goes sideways.

Charli: DON'T tempt me. Later. x

A soft chuckle escapes me, but it's quickly followed by a gnawing sensation. I miss Charli. I liked having her around. Being an Heirs sister is a lonely place to be sometimes.

And something tells me this year is only going to get worse.

**B**y lunchtime, my suspicions are confirmed. Oakley texted me earlier, asking me to have lunch with them in the Chapel, but when I spot him, Elliot, and Theo heading out of the building with Reese in tow, I decline.

That place isn't big enough for the both of us, and Reese's little white-knight routine from earlier seems to have gotten him back in their good graces.

So I head for the refectory to grab some lunch, but the second I step inside, I almost collide with Abigail.

"Sorry," she blurts out, her cheeks pinking. "I... I wasn't looking where I was going."

"It's fine."

Her eyes dart around the room. "This place is really busy. I try to avoid it, but I forgot my packed lunch." She's all wide-eyed and surprised as a couple of students rush past us in a hurry.

"Yep, it's... something, all right." I scan the sea of bodies all jostling to find a table and in the lunch queue.

I should probably ask her if she's okay after earlier, but the words teeter on the tip of my tongue. Abigail stares expectantly at me, as if she senses I want to say something. But when I don't, she says, "Well, I suppose I should brave the queue. Are you—"

"Actually, I'm meeting somebody," I lie.

"Oh, okay." Her expression drops, sending a bolt of guilt through me. But I can't make friends with Abigail.

It's weird.

I'm... whatever I'm doing with Reese. It feels icky, unease trickling down my spine.

I know they're not together; they barely even acknowledge each other around school, but one day, she will be his.

Whether he likes it or not.

And it isn't in my future plans to be someone's dirty little secret.

My chest tightens. I guess that's what I am now. Reese hasn't told anyone about me, and I don't want him to.

What we're doing is... wrong.

Messed up.

I need to put a stop to it.

But I'm not sure I can.

Reese ignites a fire inside me, and the heat between us is addictive. But the thing about playing with fire...

Someone always ends up getting burned.

“Liv.” Oakley waves as I enter English Lit. Reluctantly, I traipse over and drop down into the chair next to him.

“Where were you at lunch?”

“I told you, busy.”

“Yeah.” He nudges my shoulder. “Busy doing what?”

“I had a thing.”

“Bloody hell, Liv, why are you acting so weird?”

“I’m not.”

“Is it because I stayed at the Chapel? You know—”

“Believe it or not, Oak, I do have a life outside of you and the Heirs.”

His brow lifts, an amused smile tugging at his mouth. “Yoga does not constitute a life, Sis.”

“Piss off.” I swat him away, annoyed at how much his words affect me.

“Seriously though, you good? Because I know things are going to be different this year. But you’re welcome to hang out at the Chapel any time. I already told you that.”

“I’d rather not hang out at your little fuck pad.”

“Jesus, Liv.” He chuckles, running a hand down his face. “You make it sound like that’s all we do.”

“Isn’t it?” I quip, and he elbows me in the arm.

“I’m still your brother. I’ll always make time for you.”

“Aw, I’m touched.” My eyes roll as I chew the end of my pen, trying to ignore the giant knot balled in my stomach.

We don’t keep things from each other—that’s always been our mantra. But now, it feels like nothing but secrets exist between us.

I hate it, but I don’t know how to fix it. Because if Oakley finds out what Reese did, what I’ve been doing... he will lose his shit.

There’s already enough animosity between them, and I do not want to end

up the middle of it.

“Did Whitfield make it home last night?”

“What?”

“You know. Reese, our new housemate.” His eyes crinkle. “Future stepbrother.”

“Don’t you mean, *my* new housemate.”

“Come on, Liv. Don’t be like that. You always knew I’d be moving out come second year.”

“Yeah, I know.” But I didn’t know I’d be stuck living with Reese then. “You’re going to let him back into the fold eventually, right?” I ask.

“He fucked up, Liv.” Oak shrugs. “Part of me gets it. It’s different for him, and then this shit with his mum and dad. But he could have talked to me, he could have—”

“Good afternoon, people.” Mr. Piper strolls into the class and drops his leather satchel on the desk. “Sorry I’m late. Hopefully you’ve all been spending the time productively.”

“He’s still one of us,” Oakley whispers, “but trust isn’t rebuilt overnight, Liv.”

“Yeah.”

A shiver runs down my spine. If Oak discovers the truth about me and Reese, any fragile trust rebuilt between them won’t only crack. It’ll shatter.

I can’t do that to my brother.

I won’t.

Whatever Reese and I have, it has to end.

A hollow feeling goes through me.

But that’s silly.

You can’t lose something you never had in the first place.

Reese Whitfield isn’t mine.

And he never will be.



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## REESE

I didn't make a conscious decision to defend Abigail when I rounded the corner and found that first year prick getting in her face and scaring the shit out of her. It was just an ingrained reaction.

That's what the Heirs do.

We rule this fucking school.

But that doesn't mean we just lord it over the rest of the students and throw kick-arse parties. It means we take on the hard jobs too. And punishing those who hurt a fellow student of the school is right up there.

We don't put up with bullies on our turf, and anyone who tries to push people around will eventually find themselves with the four of us breathing down their necks. And unlucky for Gareth fucking Franklin, he's managed to land his name first on our list this year.

Now we need to ensure the lesson we teach him is loud enough to send ripples through the rest of the school that we mean fucking business.

There's always unrest when the key changes hands.

Scott and his boys have ruled this place for two years. Everyone knew where they stood, mostly.

But we're new. Everyone might know us. We might already have a reputation around the school halls. But we haven't had a chance to exert our power yet.

Well, today, that is going to be changing.

I knew they were watching as I threw that stupid prick against the wall. Their intrigued stares burned into my back as I spelled out quite simply that no one, even the pussy fucking new boy, even thinks about taunting one of our girls.

I half expected one of them to drag me away and take over the punishment themselves. But they never did. They stood with the rest of the crowd that had gathered and watched the show.

The only disappointment about the whole thing really was that pussy little Gareth didn't piss his pants.

That would have turned my day right around.

There's always time. Something tells me the boys and I will be seeing more of Gareth before he gets the chance to run back to wherever he hides at night.

With any luck, he boards at All Hallows'. That will give us round-the-clock access to him. Should we need it, of course.

From the arrogant glint in his eyes as he stared up at me, I'd be tempted to say that scaring the shit out of innocent girls is the least of what he's capable of.

"Up the pace, ladies," Coach barks as my fingers touch the white line at the end of the pitch.

All of us are covered head to toe in mud, but apparently, our performance during our training wasn't good enough, so instead of practicing new plays, he's got us running fucking drills as punishment for our piss-poor effort.

"Is he trying to fucking kill us?" Oakley grunts beside me, his fingers touching the ground less than a second after mine.

"Pretty fucking sure, yeah."

A pained groan rips through the air as another of our new year twelve teammates collapses in a heap on the ground.

"You're not going to be winning any matches this year with dedication like that, princess."

"Motherfucker," Elliot grunts as he appears at my other side. "That's Middleton."

"Oh shit," Oak pants.

Elliot doesn't need to say any more. The surname is enough.

Middleton is one of the next Heirs who will take the key from us after our year at the top. There is no fucking way he should be rolling around on the ground right now like a pussy.

"Eaton, get back in line," Coach barks as Elliot darts right, fisting the back of Middleton's shirt and dragging him back to his feet.

"You don't fucking quit," Elliot growls in his ear before shoving him back into line.

To my shock, when I look up, I find the punk I threatened at the party last night still on his feet. Although his face is damn near purple.

Coach doesn't let up for the longest fucking time, and when he finally does blow his whistle to bring the torture session to a close, almost everyone who's still standing falls to the ground.

All bar the four of us.

Our eyes connect as we stand there fighting to get our breath, an understanding passing between us as we exert our strength and power.

None of them said anything about my show earlier, but there was a shift in the air. Following the unwritten rules of being an Heir has bridged something between us, and I can only hope that it continues. Because Mum was right this morning. Sometimes, we all have to sacrifice things for the greater good. And that for me right now is figuring out a way to bring everyone in this motherfucking town to its knees. And the way to do that is to force myself back into the life I thought I'd left behind and earn their trust once more. And when I've got that back... boom.

"What the fuck is so funny, Whitfield?" Theo barks as a sadistic laugh slips from my lips.

I glance around, my eyes tracking each of our teammates half dead on the ground.

"Those fucking pussies. We've got our work cut out making sure they're up for this."

Both Oak and Theo rub their hands together in excitement as wicked ideas fill their minds.

We've been planning initiation tasks for fucking years. And even I can't deny that the thought of finally being able to watch them play out ignites a fire inside me.

"I expect you all on better form tomorrow night, ladies. Maybe leave your tiaras at home, yeah?" Coach barks after ripping all the guys on the ground new ones.

He nods in our direction before stalking back toward his office.

"Let's move," Elliot demands. "We've got a little rat to go and sniff out, after all."

"A rat?" I ask.

"Yeah, that cunt you marked earlier. I think a louder message might need to be given. We're not starting the year off allowing anyone to think we're soft."



Oak and Theo both agree as we march toward the locker room.

“Where is he?” I ask, knowing nothing about the prick other than that he likes to prey on innocent girls.

“Out there.” Elliot jerks his chin toward where the football team is training. “They’re about to have their session cut short,” he states.

“Oh?” I ask, curious as to what he’s schemed up.

“Their coach is about to get a call that’s going to ensure he leaves. So that prick will be heading our way any minute.”

Just before we get to the door to the locker room, we all watch as their coach blows his whistle, bringing his session to an end before talking to his players animatedly.

The second he dismisses them, he takes off running in the opposite direction.

“How the fuck did you do that?” Oak asks, shock and pride laced through his voice.

Elliot chuckles. “The rat is heading into the trap, boys. You ready to start this year properly?”

“Damn, I thought that was last night while two girls were sucking my—ow,” Theo hisses when Elliot slaps him hard across the head.

“Get your head in the fucking game, Ashworth.”

We head into the locker room as the rest of the rugby team finally stumbles after us, and the football team also heads this way.

Hunger and the need for this fight burn through me something fierce.

The four of us stand in the open space in the middle of the huge room. Pained voices head our way, but the second they step foot inside, their words falter and silence falls. Anticipation ripples through the air as the rest of our team look at each other, fear etched into their features.

They probably think we’re gunning for them after that poor show.

To be fair, we are. But not right now.

Our new recruits will be put through their paces soon enough. Right now, we’ve got our sights set on our first victim.

When we don’t make a move to pull anyone forward, they all edge around the room, still looking at each other as they wait for the other shoe to drop.

More male voices fill the air as the football team gets close and understanding seems to wash through the room.

The year thirteens are first inside, and the second they take us in holding

court, they instantly pale. They know the deal—they've witnessed the Heirs in action before. Although, not us, which adds an element of unease to this whole situation.

No one is aware of how we're going to handle our business yet.

Every new generation of Heirs plays it differently. Some opt for pure pain. Others, like Scott, go for mind games. Even I'm unsure of how Elliot is going to play it this year. He might not be as vindictive and ruthless as his older brother, but I'm not naïve enough to think he doesn't have it in him. He is, after all, an Eaton. And his father's reputation precedes him.

"What the fuck is going on?" some dumb-arse year twelve barks as everyone slows in front of him.

"Shut the fuck up, dickhead," someone mutters as danger and fear ripple through the room.

I search the new boys standing behind the ones we've gone through All Hallows' with, hunting for our target.

The second my eyes land on his, he tilts his chin up in defiance.

Fucking stupid prick.

Clearly, no fucker has clued him in as to how things work in this school since I tipped him off earlier.

A couple of his teammates are clearly quicker than him, because some helpful guy shoves him from behind.

Caught off guard, Gareth cuntbag Franklin stumbles through the crowd and quickly finds himself standing right before the four of us.

Both teams stand shoulder to shoulder around us, stopping him from running, if he's stupid enough to even try it.

He squares his shoulders and stares each of us dead in the eyes.

"Gareth Franklin," Elliot starts, spitting his name as if it's poison. "Day two... You made it to day two before landing yourself at our feet. Some might say that's a fucking stupid thing to do."

Gareth laughs as if this is all one big joke. "Who the fuck do you lot think you are?" Mirth dances in his eyes. But when he's only met with silence and the growing threat of violence, it soon starts to diminish.

"Who? Us?" Elliot asks.

"We're your worst fucking nightmare," Theo adds.

"Judge, jury, and motherfucking executioner," Oak sings, making the dude's brow wrinkle in confusion.

"You step out of line at All Hallows', you answer to us."

“Fuck off,” he scoffs. “You don’t have that kind of power,” he states confidently, but when no one agrees with him, his smirk begins to falter.

“Are you sure about that?”

He looks between the four of us once more, his confidence levels weakening with every passing second.

“What?” Elliot taunts. “Do you think mummy and daddy will have something to say about it?”

Gareth’s lips part to answer, but Elliot doesn’t give him a chance.

“As far as I can tell, she’s too busy sucking her boss’s cock to pay much attention to what her little prince is doing.”

His face turns a shade of red that I’m not sure I’ve seen before.

“Whitfield. Care to finish what you started earlier?” Elliot offers.

To everyone watching us, it might seem friendly. But I hear the challenge in his voice.

They want to know I’m with them. That I really want to reclaim my place. This is the start of me earning my way back into their circle.

And I’m going to take it.

Gareth might know it’s coming, but that doesn’t stop him from flying back into the blood-hungry crowd the second my fist collides with his jaw.

“Fuck you,” he spits when he’s shoved back into the fray roughly.

“Oh, dude. There’s only one of us who’s getting fucked up right now.”

To give him credit, he tries to fight back. But as is usually standard when it comes to bullies, he’s all fucking mouth, and before long, he’s on the dirty tiled floor, bleeding and crying like a little bitch while the four of us stand over him with accomplished smirks pulling at our lips.

“Anyone else wanna try us?” Theo taunts, but unsurprisingly, no one replies.

“What the fuck are you lot doing?” a deep voice booms from behind the crowd before it parts, revealing Coach with his arms crossed over his chest.

His eyes find ours before they collide with the pained ones of the pussy at our feet.

“Sir, they came at me. Th-they—”

“Enough,” he booms. “Get your filthy arses in the showers. And you,” he spits, looking down at our prey, “get the fuck up and stop dirtying up my floor.”

“B-but—”

“Now, arseholes. Move.” He claps impatiently, and everyone shuffles to

find their piece of bench, ready to wait for their turn in the showers.

As he walks past us, he claps Elliot on the shoulder, much to Gareth's horror.

Fucking hell, maybe being back isn't that bad after all.



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## OLIVIA

**B**y the time Wednesday evening rolls around, I can't wait to get out of Saints Cross for the night.

Avoiding Reese and my brother is hard work. But I manage it.

Reese has been oddly absent too, although it probably has something to do with the fact that he's back in with the Heirs, the four of them prowling the corridors of All Hallows' like merciless kings.

News soon spread about Gareth and his unfortunate broken nose.

I don't condone violence, but part of me knows he deserved some of what was coming to him.

Checking my reflection one last time, I fluff my hair and throw my bag over my shoulder, heading for the bedroom door. Charli has promised me a night of drinks, hot guys, and ear-splitting karaoke, and I can't—

"You." I grind to a halt, glowering up at Reese as he takes in my outfit.

"Hot date?" he deadpans.

"None of your business." I barge past him, but not before he grabs my arm, yanking me back.

"You're avoiding me."

"And you're going to make me late for my date." I flash him a smug smile.

"Don't push me, Olive. You won't like what happens."

"Fuck you, Reese." I shove him away and take off down the stairs. He follows but keeps a safe distance.

Wanker.

Of course he had to be here tonight, right when I'm leaving the house.

"Olivia, is that you?" Dad calls.

“Yeah, I’m about to leave.”

“Okay, sweetheart. Have fun and say hi to Charli for me.” He appears around the kitchen door. “And try not to get into too much trouble.”

“I think you’re telling the wrong twin.” My lips twist with amusement. “Bye, Dad. Reese,” I clip out as I grab my keys and head for the door.

His eyes follow me the whole way, but I don’t spare him a second glance.

But when I climb in my car and glance up at the house, I don’t expect to see him still standing there, his big frame eating up the doorway.

For a second, I think he might give chase. He doesn’t, though. He stands there, staring.

Done with his games, I fire up the engine and peel out of the driveway, ready for a night without the Heirs looking over my shoulder.

Or Reese Baron Whitfield breathing down my neck.

**T**he Spire is packed with not an All Hallows’ student in sight.

It’s perfect.

“Wow, they grow them good over in Huxton Academy.” I grin at Charli, watching a couple of boys from her class stalk past us. One of them gives me a cheeky wink, and she chuckles.

“Olivia Beckworth. I didn’t know you had it in you.”

“I don’t... yet.”

“Oh my God.” She falls about laughing, slurping the rest of her vodka Coke down. “I’m so glad you came. I didn’t know if...” Charli trails off, her eyes darting to the floor.

“We’re friends, right?”

The word sounds strange on my lips, but I mean it. Outside of Oak and the Heirs, Charli is the closest thing I’ve ever had to a friend.

“Oh my God, yes. The girls at Huxton are so not my people. It’s funny.” She lets out a soft sigh. “I never really fit in at All Hallows’, but I don’t think I fit in at Huxton either.”

“If you ask me, fitting in is overrated.”

“I’ll drink to that.” She flags down the roving barman and orders us two shots each of cherry sours.

“You do know it’s a school night,” I remind her.

“School schmool. I need this, and something tells me you do too.”

She isn't wrong there.

I sniff the bright red liquid and retch a little. “That is—”

“A means to an end, my friend. Now drink up.” She clinks her plastic glass against mine and tips her head back, downing it in one. Not wanting to be outdone, I follow, retching again at the godawful burn as it sluices down my throat.

“Oh shit.” Something catches Charli's eye, and I turn slowly to see a group of lads enter the bar.

“Is that—”

“Dale Starling, yep.”

“He's... filled out.”

“That's one way of putting it. Word on the street is he's pumping steroids.”

That would explain his new beefed-up appearance then.

Dale Starling is the fly half for the Huxton Harriers, and the Saints' bitter rivals.

My brother hates him with a passion.

“Oh shit. Shit. He's coming over here.” Charli tries to act aloof, but it only draws more attention to us.

“Do I know you?” His leering gaze sends spiders crawling under my skin.

“I don't think so.” I smile.

“She with you?” he asks Charli.

“What does it look like?”

“You know, I'd really like to fuck the attitude right out of you, freak.”

“Don't speak to her like that.”

“Or what, beautiful? What are you going to do—”

“Leave the girls alone, Dale,” one of the barmen shouts.

“We're only talking.”

“Actually, we're not,” I reply loudly enough for our section of the bar to overhear.

“What's your name?” Dale asks, looking impressed.

Not what I was going for.

“Sarah.” I smirk.

“Want a drink, Sarah?”

“I'm good, but thanks.” I flash him another saccharine smile, but it doesn't deter him.



I can't help but wonder what Oak would say if he knew I was here, cavorting with the enemy. What Reese might say.

"Well, ladies, we'll be over there," Dale points to a cluster of tables, "if you feel like joining us later."

A small nod is my only answer while Charli toys with the ends of her curled hair, making no attempts at hiding her blatant appraisal of Dale's dark-haired friend.

"You're right. Huxton does grow them good. It's a shame they're complete tossers."

"I'm beginning to think all boys are."

"You know what we need? A trip to Saints Cross U. Check out some of the older lads."

"And run into the Scions? No thanks." A shudder goes through me at the thought of ever having to see Scott Eaton again. Some of the shit he got up to in his reign of All Hallows', makes Oak and his friends look like children.

"Ooh, the karaoke is about to start."

"Please tell me I don't have to sing." I balk.

"Nope." She flashes me a knowing smirk. "We can sit back, relax, and enjoy the show."

"Are you going to answer that?" Charli asks me sometime later. Karaoke is in full swing and the drinks are going down far too easily. But I haven't felt this relaxed in forever.

"It's probably Oak."

"Well, if you checked"—she snatches my phone off the table—"you'd know. It's Oak."

Charli hands out my phone and I take it, opening our message thread.

Oak: Reese said you're in Huxton with Charli...

Olivia: So what if I am?

Oak: Come on, Liv. It's Harrier territory.

Olivia: Nobody knows me here except Charli. Stop worrying.

Oak: I'll always worry where you're concerned, sis. So what exactly are the two of you up to tonight?

A smile tugs at my lips. I want to be pissed at him, a small part of me is. But I also like that Oak still cares. That even as he's pulled more and more into the Heirs world, he'll always be there for me.

Olivia: That's for me to know and you never to find out.

I add a wink emoji for good measure and switch my phone off. He's probably too busy with his hand up some Heir chaser's skirt to be that worried about me and what I'm doing.

"Dale keeps looking over here," Charli says from the corner of her lips.

"He can look all he wants. I'm not interested."

"And that would be why exactly?"

"I don't know what you mean."

"So Reese is—"

"Seriously, that's... gross. He's an Heir and my new stepbrother, or whatever you want to call it."

"I don't know how you do it. Living with Oakley and Reese."

"Charli, they're my family."

"Okay everyone," the compère says, "let's give it up for Charli Devons."

"You're going to sing?"

"Surprise." Her eyes twinkle with excitement. "Make sure you cheer for me."

"Oh, I will."

Laughter bubbles in my chest as she hurries to the stage and takes the microphone. I don't miss the judgemental stares thrown her way. But at least Dale and his friends seem to be impressed that she got up there.

The whole place joins in as Charli regales us with her best version of 'Like a Virgin'. She looks so carefree up there, her smile wide and content. But I see the cracks. The pain behind her eyes.

She lost everything when she moved to Huxton.

"Here." Dale appears out of nowhere and slides me a drink.

Arching a brow. I say, "I'm good, thanks."

"That's a bit rude."

"Yeah, well, I don't accept drinks from strangers."

"Come on now, beautiful." He sits down on the banquette beside me. "I

haven't spiked it or anything."

"Good to know." Disbelief coats my words. I glance back at the stage, but Charli is too caught up in the performance of her life to notice me and Dale.

Crap.

"So I figured it out."

"W-what?"

"Where I know you from." His lips twist into a smirk, sending my heart into freefall.

"You go to All Hallows'."

"So? I didn't realise there was a Huxton-only policy here."

"Oh, there isn't." He moves closer, his big body blocking my view of the bar. Fear snakes through me as I glare at him.

"But everyone knows there's no love lost between the Harriers and the Saints."

"I'm not a fan of rugby, sorry."

Where the hell is Charli? The song ended at least ten seconds ago, but there's no bloody sign of her.

"That's not all though, is it, beautiful?" His eyes dance with delight as he reaches for my arm, toying with the cap sleeve of my shirt. "You're not just any girl, are you, Olivia?"

Shit.

"I—"

"What's going on?" Charli finally appears, cutting Dale with a hard look.

"Just getting acquainted with Olivia. I've never met an Heirs sister up close and in person before. Figured they kept you all on leashes or something."

"Get off me." I seethe, swatting his hand away. "I'm not here to cause any trouble."

Dale snorts at that, as if the idea is ridiculous.

"You can run along now," Charli hisses. "She's not interested, and I'm sure there are plenty of girls willing to be your plaything for the night."

"Relax, I'm going." He slides out and stands, raking a hand through his hair. "Send your brother my love." His dark chuckle makes my stomach dip.

"Oh, shit." Charli flops down beside me. "He recognised you."

"Apparently so." My lips thin.

"Are you going to tell Oakley?"

"Why the hell would I do that? Nothing happened."

Except, something did happen. I'm pretty sure there was a threat in there somewhere.

"Because Oak will lose his shit if he knows Dale was harassing you."

"He wasn't harassing me, Charli. He was... trying to exert his power. Either way, he doesn't scare me."

Reese makes Dale Starling look like a teddy bear.

"I'm going to go on record and say I think it's a bad idea."

"If I tell him, he'll come here. Probably with his friends. That is a bad idea."

"Yeah, you have a point. Maybe we should go?"

"No way. We came here to have fun." To get away from Saints Cross. "And fun we're going to have. Ignore Dale and quit talking about my brother."

"Do you know what we need?" A devious smile tugs the corner of her mouth. "Shots. We need shots."

My eyes flick to Dale and he smirks again.

Shit.

But I refuse to be intimidated, glaring right back at him. So I'm Oakley Beckworth's sister? Big deal. Dale glances away first and a smug satisfaction washes over me.

"Liv?" Charli tugs my arm and I look at her, grinning.

"Shots," I say. "Shots it is."



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## REESE

“O h, yes, Oakley,” a voice cries from behind me, making my teeth grind so hard in my mouth I’m surprised I don’t chip one. “Yeah, baby. Just like that.”

Jesus fucking Christ.

I slump lower down on the sofa, my eyes locked on my dark phone screen. The only notifications on there are once again courtesy of my dad.

Elliot told me after practice that I was coming back here tonight. That I could hang out. Very generous of him.

It all sounded good. Things have been better since I beat the shit out of Gareth and proved I wanted my place among them.

But if I’d have known that hanging out would have included them with a girl each and me sitting here with little choice but to listen to the moaning and groaning, seeing as they refuse to take the girls downstairs, then I wouldn’t have fucking agreed.

I’m being punished, I get it. But fucking really?

I glance up at Elliot, who’s on the opposite sofa with a blonde between his legs.

“You’re so big,” she praises after he helps her free his cock.

I can’t help but roll my eyes at her over-the-top excitement.

Yeah, okay, the four of us haven’t only been given more money and power than we know what to do with. We’re pretty fucking lucky in the junk department too. But I really don’t need to hear about how fucking hung Elliot is.

Elliot holds my eyes, and they crinkle at the corners in amusement.

As if he can read my thoughts, he grabs a fistful of the blonde’s hair and

growls, “You think you can take it all, beautiful?”

Her head bobs like a fucking nodding dog before she lowers down, proving her worth.

Elliot’s eyes shutter as she goes to town on him, slurping like he’s her favourite flavour lollipop.

My lips peel back in disgust. He might be lording it over me, but I’d put any money on that being one of the worst fucking blowies he’s ever had.

“Easy, beautiful,” he growls, dragging her off a little. “It’s not going to disappear. There’s no rush.”

A laugh falls from my lips as I continue watching them. “You’re gonna need to try harder, Eaton.” I gesture to my flaccid cock that’s grateful to be hiding behind my sweats. “Not even an inch of jealousy right now. You can keep slurper all to yourself.”

Pushing to my feet, I swipe my empty beer bottle from the table and head for the kitchen, quickly discovering why Oak’s girl was moaning so loudly.

He’s fucking her on the kitchen counter, her bare arse rolling back and forth on the black granite.

“I hope you’re gonna sterilise that once you’re done,” I comment with a smirk, knowing that talk of cleaning is going to put Oak right off his game.

He’s a neat freak who’s always within ten feet of a packet of anti-bac wipes. The thought of her arse crack planted exactly where he preps food is going to sink that boner faster than finding the brunette impaled on his cock is his sister.

Thoughts of Olivia slam into me, and my blood finally starts to heat a little.

Memories of watching her sleep, of keeping tabs on her all day at school today while she was completely oblivious run through my mind.

But all of that quickly morphs into the image of her walking out of the house earlier, looking hot as fuck and heading into enemy territory.

Olivia isn’t stupid, even if I might make her head spin to the point she wonders if she is.

I’ve got to believe that she wouldn’t put herself in the middle of Harrier territory.

“Oakley,” Counter Arse wails as he ups his pace.

I swallow down the growl of frustration that wants to erupt from my throat as I rip the fridge open.

“You can join in too,” a hoarse, needy voice calls, and I still.

“No, he fucking can’t,” Oakley barks. “You’re mine tonight.”

“Fuck, yeah,” she cries.

“Play with your tits for me, baby.”

She immediately does as he demands, having zero fucking concern about me standing here, like this is fucking normal. Although to be fair, in this house, it pretty much is.

An angry growl rips around the room, cutting through the cries and moans of Oakley’s girl. Theo’s is equally as fucking irritating, but at least I can’t see them behind the fucking island.

“Just fucking give up, yeah?” Elliot barks, shoving the girl off him and tucking his cock back into his pants.

“B-but, I was getting to the good bit.”

I can’t help but bark a laugh. I knew he wasn’t enjoying a second of slurpy lips.

“It should have all been good,” he seethes. “Get out,” he demands, pointing toward the front door as he glares at her with nothing but the promise of pain if she refuses.

“I-I-I’ll let you fuck my arse.”

“Jesus,” I mutter in amusement.

“Desperate doesn’t look good on you.”

“Didn’t stop you earlier,” I quip.

“Shut the fuck up, Whitfield.”

I raise my hands in surrender, although I don’t avert my eyes from the drama for a second.

“Just go. And if you intend on ever returning, you might want to up your skills.”

Her cries fill the air as she finally makes a run for the door.

“You sound stressed, baby. Come over here and I’ll show you how it’s really done,” Counter Arse purrs.

Elliot meets Oakley’s eyes, a silent understanding passing between them.

It guts me, because it’s the exact kind of connection that Oak and I used to have. But that’s gone now. And I know it’s all my own fault.

I shouldn’t care. But these boys were always the best part of my life here, and I can’t help but miss them at times.

Elliot stalks over as Oak rips the girl’s arse cheeks from the counter, placing her on her feet and spinning her around.

“I thought she was yours?” I ask, a little more dejection than I’d like



lacing my tone.

I don't want her. And I certainly don't want to share her. But that's not the fucking point.

"Different rules, man," he mutters.

Gripping the back of her neck, he forces her to bend over, filling her from behind as Elliot steps in front of her and shoves his trousers around his hips.

Not willing to stand there and watch as the pair of them spit-roast her, I walk out of the kitchen, kicking Theo's foot as I pass the island and disappear in the direction of the bathroom.

The slam of the door echoes through the building before the silence of the room beyond engulfs me.

Falling back against the door, I press my hands to my knees and breathe for a few minutes as confusion reigns in my head.

I don't want to be here playing this game with them, ruling the school like we were born to. Yet, at the same time, I do.

I want my best friends back. I need them.

Being here while they cut me out, punish me, and force me to earn their respect and trust back fucking hurts.

"ARGH," I roar, confident that the heavy wooden door at my back and solid brick walls will contain my frustration.

Dragging my phone from my pocket, I open the gallery I've got her photos hidden in and stare down at her. Finally, my cock wakes up, but even more frustration quickly follows.

Where is she right now? And was she actually going on a date? Because if she was going on one with a fucking Huxton kid, then she has to know that we'll be paying him a visit the second we find out.

I take a piss, wash my hands, and waste some time in the hope that they will have all made use of their girls and sent them packing back the time I get back out there.

And thankfully, only a few minutes later, I find that I'm right.

"Ah, here he is. The pussy who'd rather jerk off in the bathroom than party with us."

"Fuck off. If I remember rightly, I wasn't actually invited to participate, just spectate."

I swipe one of the bottles from the coffee table and drop down onto the sofa beside Oak, happily ignoring the one that Theo is laid out on with his hand stuffed in his boxers.

“You already suffering from whatever that ho gave you, Theo?” I ask

“Nah, man. He’s clean as a whistle. Just keeping him warm.”

At his mention of the word ‘clean,’ I glance over Oak’s shoulder at the kitchen, finding no evidence of any activity on the counter.

“He cleaned it already,” Elliot says. “Barely put his cock away before he was scrubbing.”

“Fuck you, man. Like you wanted her juices all over your fucking counter.”

“Didn’t stop you smothering your cock in them.”

“I showered,” he grunts.

Fuck. How long did I lock myself in the bathroom for?

“Right, well. You figured out what your sister is up to yet?” I ask, hoping it’s nonchalant enough that no one will pick up on the seriousness of the question.

Oak pulls his phone out and opens his tracking app while Theo scrolls through options on Netflix before landing on something.

“We’re not fucking watching that,” Elliot complains, although I don’t look up to see what it is. My eyes are locked on Oak’s screen.

“It’s meant to be hot and full of sex.”

“Then put on fucking porn. I’m not watching some sappy romance shit.”

“Get that fucking stick out from up your arse and experience something different for once,” Theo mocks.

“I should have kicked you out with the girls. And go and put some clothes on, you look like a fucking hobo.”

I finally shoot a look over at Theo, and honestly, I can’t even argue. His hair is all over the fucking place, he’s got bite and scratch marks all over his chest, and— “Is that a hole in your boxers?”

He beams at my question while Elliot bristles.

“Yeah, bro. She was that fucking desperate for my man, D down there. She—”

“She’s turned her fucking family tracking app off,” Oak spits, anger coating each word.

“Just message her, I’m sure she’s fine. She’s not a kid anymore,” Elliot instructs.

“You don’t get it,” Oak mutters.

“Just do as he suggested and message her,” I encourage, as desperate as he is to know she’s okay.

“Fine.”

He taps at the screen while Theo offers up other options on the TV, all of which Elliot refuses.

“Fine, you choose something then, our almighty fucking leader,” Theo grunts, throwing the remote at Elliot and hitting him right between the eyes.

“You fucking—”

Elliot dives for him as Oak continues tapping away.

“She says she’s fine and no one knows who she is.”

His words don’t settle anything inside me.

Theo’s grunt of pain fills the air as the pair of them roll off the sofa and hit the floor with a dull thud.

“Careful, man,” Oak says, finally looking up and watching the two of them brawl. “The one-eyed snake might sneak out of his hidey-hole and get you.”

“Ugh, get the fuck off me, wankstain,” Elliot grunts, using Theo’s chest to push himself up. “Go and shower. You smell like cheap perfume and pussy.”

“My favourite scent,” Theo says with a smirk as he also gets to his feet.

“If she causes us fucking trouble with the Harriers, I’m gonna—”

“Gonna what?” Elliot asks, falling back into his spot while Theo stalks off like a kid who’s been sent to his room.

“I dunno, lock her up in Dad’s house to keep her out of trouble.”

Oh yeah.

Because she’s totally safe under that roof...



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## OLIVIA

I'm drunk.

Not white girl wasted, but I've got a good buzz going. Enough that I let Charli persuade me to get up and dance on the makeshift dance floor while people get up and sing about sweet Caroline, living on a prayer, and summer nights.

It's wild, messy, and I haven't had so much fun in a long time. I've almost forgotten all about Reese Whitfield.

Almost.

But apparently, vodka makes a girl horny, because I'm desperately trying to fight the urge to text him and ask him to come and pick me up.

I won't, though.

I won't ever give him that kind of satisfaction.

"Hotties, over by the bar." Charli tips her head in their direction and my eyes collide with a cute blond.

"They look like surfers."

"In Huxton?"

"Maybe they're visiting."

"Maybe we should go and say hi." She grabs my hand and starts tugging me in their direction, but a wave of nausea rushes through me.

"Liv?"

"Toilet. Now."

"Oh no." She cackles as I spin on my heel and hurry through the crowd. But by the time I reach the bathroom, I feel okay.

"False alarm."

"Maybe you should get some water and think about calling it a night."

“What time— shit, it’s that late?”

“Time flies when you’re having fun.”

“Yeah, I need to call a cab. My dad will shit a brick if I’m out later than one on a school night.”

We head to the bar and ask for two bottles of water to go. But the second we step outside of the pub, my good mood vanishes.

A wicked glint ignites in Dale Starling’s eyes as he pushes off the picnic bench and rises to greet us. “Well, well. What do we have here.”

Charli squeezes my hand, stepping forward slightly. “Don’t mind us,” she says, full of fire and fight. “We’re just leaving.”

We try to move around him and his group of friends, but Dale steps in front of me, smirking as he lets his hungry gaze drop down my body.

A violent shudder rolls through me as fear spikes in my blood.

“What’s the hurry? Stay. Talk.”

“I don’t think so. Our taxi is going to be here any second.”

The one I haven’t ordered yet.

Shit.

“Come on, Liv.” Charli tugs on my hand, but Dale snatches my arm, pulling me back toward him.

“Get off me, tosser.”

“Feisty, I like it.” His friends all explode with laughter as he reaches for a strand of my hair, toying with it. “Question is, do you suck dick as good as you look like you do?”

I press my lips together, refusing to let him bait me.

Guys like Dale—like Reese and my brother and their friends—thrive on power. On lording it over other people to make themselves feel better.

At least, that’s one thing they have in common.

His eyes flare with anger. “What? You think you’re too good for me or something?”

“Dale, don’t be such a dick.” Charli lunges for him, but one of his friends catches her by the waist and pulls her out of reach.

“Relax, Devons, I’m only having a little fun. Isn’t that right, Olivia.” He drawls my name like it’s something dirty. “Yeah.” His fingers flex around my neck. “We could have all kinds of fun, you and me.”

My teeth grind together as I snarl at him.

“Starling, man,” someone says quietly. “We’re a little exposed out here.”

“Yeah, yeah, Jack, keep your hair on. We’re almost done here.” Leaning

in, Dale's lips brush the shell of my ear. "I'll see you soon, beautiful."

He releases me and I jerk back, putting as much space between us as possible.

"If you ever touch me again—"

"You'll what? Run back to your prick of a brother and tell him?"

My lips twist into a grim line.

Because that's the last thing I plan to do.

It would be like throwing gasoline on an already burning fire.

"Come on, Liv." Charli shoves out of Dale's friend's arms and grabs my hand. "Let's leave these arseholes to it."

We take off down the street, my body trembling.

"Are you okay?" she asks me quietly, and I nod, too overwhelmed to reply.

"Maybe we should call Oak—"

"No. He can't know about this," I breathe.

"Yeah, you're right. I can't imagine him and the Heirs letting it slide if they knew Dale had his hands on you." Guilt coats her words. "I swear I didn't know they would be there tonight. It's not usually their scene."

"It's fine. I'm fine."

But as we hurry away from the Spire, I don't know who I'm trying to convince more.

Her?

Or myself.

**I** wake to a bass drum in my head. Obviously, the pint of water I downed before I went to bed didn't help neutralise all the vodka in my system.

Rolling onto my back, I stare up at the ceiling, replaying the night over in my head. Dale Starling aside, it was fun hanging out with Charli and being a reckless eighteen-year-old.

Life in Saints Cross is different. Especially if you're an Heir's twin sister.

Part of me wondered if Reese and Oakley would be here when I got back last night, waiting up to grill me about my non-existent date. But there was no sign of either of them. So I guess Reese is back in the fold properly, or he found somewhere else to sleep for the night.

I ignore the twinge of jealousy inside me. I'm not an idiot. I don't expect anything from him. He's an Heir. It's practically synonymous with the words 'casual sex'.

Forcing myself out of bed, I throw myself in a tepid shower and try to wash away the stain of last night.

I made Charli promise never to breathe a word of what happened with Dale to anyone. Especially not anyone who might run off and tell Oakley.

I don't relish the thought of keeping yet another secret from my brother, but I also don't want to be responsible for starting a war between All Hallows' and Huxton Academy.

Throwing on my uniform, I drag my hair into a loose plait over my shoulder and head downstairs.

"Morning, sweetheart." Fiona greets me. "Rough night?" A knowing smile tugs at her mouth.

"Things got a little messy."

"Well, so long as you were safe and stayed out of trouble. We were all young once."

If only she knew.

"No Reese this morning?" I keep my voice light.

"He stayed out."

No shit.

"How are things going with him?"

"S-sorry, what?" My heart crashes in my chest as I gawk at her.

"With school, I mean. He'll barely talk to me."

"Oh, oh. Uh, fine, I think."

She lets out a small breath. "I didn't mean for it to happen like this, you know. He's so angry with me. Maybe we went about it all wrong."

"Morning," Dad breezes into the kitchen. "Do I even want to know?" He eyes me across the breakfast island.

"Probably not."

His brow flicks up. "You look like you could use a strong coffee."

"Thanks."

"I can make breakfast—"

"No, thank you," I murmur as my stomach roils at the thought of food. "I don't think I could eat."

"It sure feels empty without Oakley and Reese around, doesn't it?" Dad slides a coffee across to me. "I remember my first week in the Chapel. It was



a crazy time.”

“Seriously, Dad. I’m not sure me or Fiona need to hear about your college sexcapades.”

“I’ll have you know I was an angel.”

“Yeah right, tell it to someone who believes you.” I chuckle, groaning as my head pounds. “Can I go back to bed?”

“No,” he and Fiona say in unison.

“Fine. Maybe I can sleep in class.”

“Olivia!”

“Relax, Dad. I wouldn’t dream of cutting class.”

“That’s my girl.” He walks over and presses a kiss to my hair. “You’re a good girl, Liv. I definitely got lucky with you.”

“Thanks, I think.”

Although I’m not sure he’d feel the same if he knew what I let Reese do to me in the dark.

Draining my coffee, I check my phone. “I’d better make a move.”

Leaving my car at Charli’s seemed like a good idea last night, but now I’m regretting it. A mile walk to All Hallows’ is the last thing I need, but maybe the fresh air will do me good.

It sure as hell can’t make me feel any worse.

But before I make it into the hall, the front door opens and Oakley’s voice fills the house.

“Let’s go, Liv. Your taxi is here.”

“What?” I gawk at Dad and he smiles. “Figured you might need a ride.”

“Seriously?” A low groan rumbles in my chest. I appreciate the sentiment, I do. But riding to school with Oakley quizzing me about last night is not what I had in mind.

“**Y**ou could at least pretend to be grateful.” Oak leans over and pinches my arm, keeping one hand on the steering wheel.

“I am, I’m just hungover.”

“Do we need to talk about the fact that you and Charli were out, alone, getting drunk?”

“Do we need to talk about the fact that you’re my brother, not my dad?”

“Jesus, you’re a bitch when you’re suffering.”

“I feel like something crawled in my stomach and died.”

“Where did you say you were again?”

“Just some pub in Huxton.” I shrug, pressing my forehead against the tinted glass.

“Why are you being weird?”

“I’m not being weird.”

“Yes, you are. There are only four pubs in Huxton, so which one were you at?”

“Why do you care?” I pin him with a hard look.

“Because you’re my sister. Because Huxton is Harrier territory. Because I don’t like the idea of some townie prick putting his hands on you.”

“You do know I’m a person, right? Not a doll you can keep locked up in a glass cabinet.”

“Come on, Liv. I’m only looking out for you. You’re too good for anyone from Huxton.”

“You can be a real dickhead sometimes,” I hiss. “If you must know, I went out with Charli to escape this place.”

“What the fuck is that supposed to mean?”

“Forget it. Forget I said anything.”

“No, Liv. What does that mean? Escape this place? Why the fuck would you need to escape?” He grabs my wrist and my eyes snap to his.

“If you have to ask, Oak, then you really are a dumb shit.”

“What, I... are you on your period or something? Because you’re acting fucking crazy.”

“And you’re acting like a territorial, over-the-top asshole.”

Tension ripples through the car, and Oak’s hand tightens on the steering wheel.

“Fucking girls,” he mutters, and a bolt of anger goes through me.

But I don’t try to fill the silence.

I have nothing to say to him right now.

Nothing he’ll want to hear, anyway.



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## REESE

I wake with a bitch of a sore neck and a thumping in my brain that can only be blamed on the empty bottles and shot glasses that littered around me when I finally crack my eyes open.

I should probably feel pleased that the Heirs allowed me to crash on the sofa after they fucked me up in one of our old drinking games, one of which I knew they'd rigged the second Theo started dealing the pack of cards.

I knew it was going to be painful. I knew I was going to regret it. But I also knew that I couldn't exactly refuse when my number one mission right now is reclaiming my place.

Twisting onto my side, my stomach rolls as the room around me begins to spin again.

The Chapel is in silence, but with the sun streaming in through the small windows that line the wall opposite me, I know it's time we should all probably be moving our arses.

I've still failed to force myself to move when a dull thud from upstairs sounds out, followed by a series of doors closing.

I look up at the exact moment they all appear on the balcony that runs around the upper floor and groan when I find them dressed, ready for school and looking as if last night never happened.

Of fucking course. There was probably water in their vodka bottles last night.

"Oh, Whitfield," Oak taunts, leaning over the railings to study me. "You've looked better."

"Fuck off," I grunt, finally managing to find the strength to roll to a sitting position.

“Just be glad we took pity on you and didn’t shove you out on your arse. Just think what kind of position you could be in right now,” Elliot points out.

“Yeah, yeah. I need to go home and—”

Clothes rain down on me from above. “Just go and get ready,” Elliot demands.

Gathering everything up, I push to my feet and stumble in the direction of the bathroom. By the time I get there, the boys hit the bottom of the steps, their eyes all assessing me closely.

Fuck knows what they’re looking for, and I have even less clue if they find something they like or not, because their expressions are blank.

Well, that’s not entirely true, because concern lingers in Oak’s eyes.

“I’ve got to go to the house to get Olivia. Apparently, last night wasn’t quite as uneventful as she led me to believe.”

“Of course it wasn’t,” I mutter. “What did she do?” I ask, hoping that I come across as nosey instead of my concern levels matching his.

“Came home wasted without her car.”

“They’ll have had that thing up on bricks before she even got out of Huxton,” Theo states, walking away from us in favour of the kitchen.

“I’m gonna fucking kill her for that stunt,” Oak promises, shoving his hand angrily through his perfectly styled hair and instantly messing it up.

He blows through the Chapel like a storm, only pausing in the kitchen for a moment before he leaves the echo of the front door in his wake.

“Should we warn her?” Theo shouts, although he sounds much more amused than concerned.

“Nah, she has to know it’s coming. Maybe it’ll make her think twice before she heads into Harrier territory again.”

With one more assessing, irritated look, Elliot turns away from me, dismissing me as if I’m not even here.

“Breakfast will be in fifteen minutes. You will be at the table.”

I roll my eyes at his demands as I continue toward the bathroom, more than ready to wash the scent of last night that’s still clinging to me down the drain.

By the time I re-emerge, Elliot and Theo are at the table with breakfast sitting before them. And there’s a third plate and an empty seat.

I remember watching Scott and his boys sitting there like fucking kings of the world every morning, with their fancy-arse breakfasts made by the cook Mr. Eaton pays to feed the Heirs and keep his mouth shut about what goes on

in the Chapel.

The scent of bacon hits my nose and my stomach grumbles, my hangover vanishing into nothing as my hunger takes over.

“I told you not to be late.”

“Keep your frilly fucking knickers on, Eaton.”

My eyes feast on their plates as I move closer, but everything soon crashes down around me when I realise mine is different.

I don't have salty bacon, sweet pancakes and the freshest fruit All Hallows' can get their eyes on.

I have granola.

Dry.

And some gross, green-looking smoothie thing which I don't even want to know the contents of.

Motherfuckers.

“What's wrong?” Elliot drawls. “Not hungry?”

“I hope this power trip helps you sleep at night, knob.”

“I sleep perfectly fine. Thank you for your concern, Whitfield.”

“He's lying,” Theo offers. “He doesn't sleep a wink, because he refuses to take that crown off his head long enough to rest.”

I snort a laugh as I can't help but agree with his assessment.

“You want the rabbit food too, Ashworth?”

Theo stares at him, a silent threat rippling through the air.

I force my less-than-desirable breakfast down, knowing that it won't be worth Elliot's wrath not to do so. A couple of days ago, I'd have thrown it over his head. But things are different now. I'm playing the long game.

That means swallowing down his bullshit and playing his games.

**S**urprisingly, my stomach had settled a little by the time we headed out, and I hated Elliot for that almost as much as I was grateful.

I follow Theo into our class before lunch, my head now clearer and my stomach growling for more food as we make our way to our seats at the back.

The second my arse hits the chair, something forces me to look up, and fuck am I glad I do, because I find Olivia walking in with her head down,

hiding behind her hair.

“Feeling rough, Beckworth?” I bark, ensuring that every set of eyes in the room turns her way.

Her eyes instantly find mine. They’re dark with exhaustion and her lingering hangover. Apparently, she didn’t get a shot of that gross green shit to sort her out this morning and is burning with hate.

‘Fuck you,’ she mouths, moving deeper into the room.

Miss Fletcher notices her hesitating. “Just go and sit next to Mr. Whitfield, Olivia. You’re making the place look untidy.”

She sucks in a sharp breath, her lips pursing with frustration.

But when she looks around at the room for another option, she quickly comes up short, because while she paused, everyone else filed in behind her and every seat has been taken.

“Come on, Olive. I won’t bite... hard.”

Theo chuckles at the rabbit-caught-in-headlights look on Olivia’s face.

“Looks like your new stepsister is a real fan of yours, Whitfield.”

“I’m sure I can warm her up.”

“Don’t let Oak hear you say that.”

My lips part to respond, but I forget whatever my comeback was going to be when Olivia finally moves and drops down beside me.

Her sweet scent fills my nose, making desire burn through me in an instant.

Leaning over, I breathe her in before whispering in her ear. “You were a bad, bad girl last night, Olive.”

She stiffens, locking down her real reaction to my closeness and the way my breath tickles over her skin.

“And I think you need to be punished.”

Her entire posture changes at those words, her chest moving more dramatically as her heart rate picks up.

“You’d like that, wouldn’t you?” I ask as Miss Fletcher starts introducing whatever the fuck we’re meant to be doing for the next hour.

“Fuck off, Reese.”

She schools her features and reaches down to grab her books and pencil case from her bag.

With the rest of the class, and even Theo distracted thanks to the fact that Miss Fletcher is on his end of sixth form bucket list, I reach between us and drag Olive’s chair closer to me.

“What are you doing?” she hisses as our thighs touch.

“Keeping you safe, Olive. We have no idea when you might go running off into enemy territory again.”

“I can assure you that it won’t be in the middle of class.”

“Can’t take that chance, sweet cheeks. Oak would never forgive me if I let anything happen to you.” I regret the words instantly, and when Olivia’s eyes flare with excitement, I know she didn’t miss it either.

“He’s already never going to forgive you. And the second I tell him what you’re doing to me, he will probably kill you.”

“Can’t say I’ve got all that much to live for right now, little Olive. So I think I’ll take my chances.”

“I think your future wife might have something to say about that,” she mutters, and I take a sharp breath as her words hit exactly as she intended.

“You don’t need to worry about her, Olive. But I must say, jealousy looks good on you.”

She bristles but doesn’t respond. Probably for the best, because I’m not sure she could say anything that could convince me that my words weren’t true.

Olivia might hate me, might wish me all the pain in the world from what I did to both her and Oak this summer. But beneath that, she wants me. Her head is yet to catch up with her body on that.

It’ll happen, though.

And when it finally does, I’ll get every single thing I need to right the wrongs, to hurt those who hurt me, and to finally break free of the shackles holding me to the goddamn town I no longer want to be in.

**O**nce again, I’m the last to the Chapel for the lunch Elliot demanded I attend.

They all turn to look at me from the dining table, and I internally groan as I wonder what delights they’ve got to eat and what mine will be in comparison.

The scent of cheese hits my nose, but I don’t allow myself to believe it might be coming from my plate.

“What time do you call this?” Elliot barks.



“Lunchtime,” I grunt.

Truth is, I ran into a couple of year twelve boys who were about to go at it in the middle of the hallway over some slut they apparently both banged over the summer. Safe to say that the black eyes they’re both sporting aren’t courtesy of each other.

I clench my fists as I move toward them, something Oak doesn’t miss. “Oh wow, this looks nice,” I praise, ignoring the steaming bowls of pasta they all have and focusing on my dull-as-fuck cheese sandwich with shitty white sliced bread.

“Even asked chef for the special cheese.”

“Great. My favourite,” I lie. This is going to be like eating fucking rubber.

Once again, I swallow down my need to argue and suck it up. It won’t be forever. They’ll forgive me eventually, and then I’ll be one step closer to shattering their perfect little worlds.

My lunch is dry as fuck, and the lukewarm water Elliot also ensured I had wasn’t exactly a great help.

We’re almost done when Oak’s phone vibrates on the table.

Dropping his cutlery, he reaches for it. A deep frown forms on his brow as he stares at the screen.

“What is it?” Elliot asks.

“Motherfucker,” Oak booms, shoving his chair back with such force it topples to the floor with a loud bang.

“Wha—” Elliot snatches his phone, pressing play on the video that’s filling his screen. My blood turns to ice as I stare down at Dale Starling leaning into Olive as if he’s about to fucking kiss her.

“I’m going to fucking kill him. But only after I’ve killed her.”

“I’m assuming she lied to you about this?” I ask, trying and mostly failing to keep the smug lilt from my tone.

Thankfully, Oak is too angry to recognise it as he takes his phone back and storms toward the door, ready to go and have it out with his sister.

“Oak, wait. We’ll—” But it’s too late. He’s gone.

The three of us look at each other, a silent agreement passing between each of us as we rise from our seats.

I’m sure there’s a slim chance of it happening, because Oakley and Olivia have the freaky twin connection and all that, but we really need to find her before he does, for her own good.

And possibly mine, if I'm able to pull some magic out of my arse in the next few minutes.



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## OLIVIA

I'm minding my own business, eating lunch in the refectory when Reese appears, his dark gaze searching the room for—

Me.

Crap.

He zeroes in on me and I instantly know something is wrong.

Hardly in the right state of mind to deal with his games today, I grab my lunch tray and take off in the other direction, hoping to slip out of the door leading to the outside courtyard.

But as I weave through the tables, someone says, "Olivia, hi."

I whirl around and find Abigail standing there. She smiles and adds, "Want to join—"

"I can't right now, sorry." I glance back to find Reese fighting his way through the lunchtime crush, his expression as dark and stormy.

Abigail glances over to where I'm looking and frowns. "Is he coming—"

"Sorry," I rush out. "I really need to go."

Shouldering the glass door, I spill outside and dart around the side of the building, hoping to lose him. But Reese is annoyingly quick, and as I reach the end of the building, his voice ripples through the air.

"We need to talk."

"No thanks," I call over my shoulder.

"Olivia, I swear to fucking God. Would you just slow the fuck down?"

"Go away, Reese." He grabs my bag and yanks hard enough for me to stop. I whirl around and scowl. "I am not doing this—"

"What happened last night?"

"W-what?" The ground goes from under me. "I don't know what you're

talking about.”

“Starling sent Oak a video. We know you were with him.”

Crap.

Double crap.

I fight to compose my panic, lifting my chin in defiance. “With him... you think... wow. Just when I think you can’t get any lower, Whitfield. Not that I need to justify anything to you, but you can call off your bloodhounds. I was with Charli at the Spire. Dale Starling turned up out of nowhere and recognised me.”

“So you didn’t kiss him?”

Kiss him? What the actual fuck?

“Excuse me?” I hiss.

Reese crowds me against the wall, caging me in with his hand beside my head. “You heard me, sweet cheeks. Did. You. Kiss. Him?”

Oh, this is pure gold.

Reese Whitfield, the guy who claims not to care, is pissed because I might have kissed another guy.

“Maybe,” I sass, giving him a little half-shrug.

“Olivia...”

“Reese...” My lips curve with amusement. “If I didn’t know, I’d say you were jealous.”

“Fuck off, I’m not—”

“Keep telling yourself that. Now, if we’re done here...” I go to move around him, but he shoves me back against the wall, pressing the entire length of his body into me.

“What happened, Olivia? You’re not walking away from me until you tell me.” Something akin to fear flashes in his eyes, but surely, I must be mistaken.

Reese doesn’t care about me. He cares about taunting me, about the push and pull that exists between us.

“Noth—” His fingers dig into my hip, and I narrow my eyes. “Fine. He recognised me and tried to spook me, happy?”

“Did he touch you?” he seethes, his body vibrating with anger.

“Drop the caveman act, Reese. I’m fine.”

“Why didn’t you tell Oakley this morning?”

“Because I’m not some damsel in distress. I can handle the likes of Dale Starling.”

“Oak is pissed.”

“Oak can go fuck himself.” Irritation coats my words. “He’s not my keeper.”

“Oh, that’s it, is it? Acting out to upset big brother?”

“Twin. *Twin* brother. And like I said, I didn’t know Dale was going to be there.”

“You went into Harrier territory—”

“Oh my God,” I shriek. “Listen to yourself.”

“If he touched you—”

“What? You’ll what?” I seethe, getting all up in his face, anger saturating my veins.

I should have known that Dale Starling wouldn’t leave it there. That it was all part of some plan to bait the Heirs. But I didn’t know he’d recorded it, that he’d send it to Oak.

“You can’t let Oak do anything stupid, Reese.”

“I’m not Oak’s keeper,” he smirks, throwing my words back at me, and I want to wipe it off his stupidly gorgeous face.

Voices pierce the air and Reese bolts away from me, dragging a hand through his hair.

“Found her,” he says, right as Oak, Theo and Elliot round the corner. “Was just about to text you.”

“Prick,” I hiss under my breath.

“What the fuck, Liv?” Oakley says. “You were with that bellend Starling?”

“Oh my God, I wasn’t with him. He turned up at the pub we were at.”

“Looked like you were getting pretty close, if you ask me,” Reese adds.

“No one is asking you,” I snap.

Is he for real?

I cut him with a deadly glance, but he only smirks again.

“Why didn’t you tell me?” Oakley’s brows pinched. “You should have called me.”

“Like you would have been in any state to come and get me.”

“Liv—”

“No, Oak. You’ve got to stop doing this. We’re not kids anymore. I don’t need you all up in my business, acting like I need your permission to live my life. It was a few drinks at the pub with Charli. Dale Starling is all bark and no bite. Clearly, he only wanted some leverage over you. Which, by the way,

is exactly why I didn't tell you. Nothing happened. I'm fine. Everything is fine."

My chest heaves as I stare at my brother.

"Are you done?" he asks quietly.

"Are you going to go after him?" His jaw tics and I shake my head. "Oak, nothing happened. He isn't worth it. He's trying to bait you."

"Fine. We won't go after him this time."

"You won't?" My eyes narrow.

"No. But stay away from Huxton, Liv. I mean it. Or next time, he's a dead man."

"So dramatic." I roll my eyes as I barge past my brother and Elliot and take off down the path.

But his voice gives me pause.

"Party at the Chapel tonight. I expect you to be there."

Overbearing arsehole.

I glance over my shoulder and shoot them all a saccharine smile, and reply, "We'll see."

**A**fter I spend the rest of the afternoon avoiding Reese, Oak and the Heirs, I head straight home and lock myself in my bedroom.

Who the hell do they think they are?

Annoying, infuriating, entitled pricks, that's who.

God, I'm so angry at Oak.

At Reese.

*Especially* Reese.

My phone buzzes, and I read Charli's latest text.

Charli: We should totally gatecrash their party tonight.

Olivia: Have you lost your goddamn mind? I don't want to be anywhere near them.

I'd called her on the way home to vent. Of course, Charli thinks I should play them at their own game. It's totally her style. But I don't want to give Reese any more ammunition.

Charli: Come on, it will be fun. You can ignore them, flirt with some guys, show them you won't take their overbearing Heirs-rule-the-world bullshit.

Olivia: I don't think it's a good idea.

I don't want to go. I don't want to be anywhere near that place or the debauchery that happens inside the Chapel's brick walls.

But do I want to spend my last year at college hiding from them?  
From him?

Charli: We're going. Be ready for eight. I'll pick you up on the way.

My lips twist. She's so bloody persistent, but maybe I need that sometimes. Maybe I need someone to push me. I roll onto my back and lift my legs in the air, stretching them.

Olivia: I'll think about it.

Charli: See you later... and Olivia?

Olivia: Yeah?

Charli: It's okay to live on the wild side occasionally.

If only she knew.





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## REESE

“**K** eep fucking moving,” Elliot growls at the bound and blindfolded guys we’re shoving deeper and deeper into the woods.

The sun is beginning to set through the trees. By the time we get to the starting point of this game and give them their instructions, it’ll have sunk beneath the horizon, plunging us into darkness.

There’s a loud cry as someone stumbles before a body crashes to the ground.

“Get the fuck up, Middleton,” Theo barks. “Or do you just like being in a pathetic heap on the ground? It seems to be your favourite fucking position. If you wanna make the most of it, you could always open your mouth and—”

“Enough,” Elliot grumbles.

Oak leans down and pulls Middleton up by the back of his shirt and places him on his feet.

Silence falls around us again as we continue directing the new rugby team recruits through the woodland.

The four of us stand in line as one unit together. It’s as it always should have been, and for that moment, I wonder why I ever wanted to leave this behind.

All my life, my boys have been everything to me.

Glancing over, I meet Oak’s eyes. Anger and the need for retaliation still burns through him from that video from Dale earlier.

I get it. Hell, I more than fucking get it.

Fury and jealousy collided so fucking hard within me, both as I watched it play out on his screen and then when I found Olivia and she dared to taunt me over it, allowing me to think that she might have kissed the motherfucker.

She wouldn't. Deep down, I knew that. She would never betray Oak like that.

But still, the thought of her wanting that cunt's attention didn't fucking sit right with me in any fucking way.

My lips twitch at the corners, the promise of pain and retribution for that swipe he took at them more than evident in my own dark eyes.

Oak nods as if he can read it within me before I look beyond him to Elliot and Theo.

Elliot is as focused and stoic as ever, but I know deep down he's as excited about this as the rest of us, while Theo has a wide-arse smile on his face like this is the best day of his life.

Fond memories of us completing this task along with the rest of our year thirteen teammates fill my mind. It was hell. It was hammering down with rain, the woods were slick with mud, and by the time we made it back to the Chapel to claim our win, we were covered from head to toe. The only benefit of that was that no one could really tell we were butt naked.

We have to pick up a few more fallen soldiers before we make it to the clearing where this challenge starts.

We bring them all to a stop in a beam of orange light that filters through the leaves, and they all seem to breathe a sigh of relief.

Fuck knows why, though. They already know what's coming next, and they know it's going to get a hell of a lot worse. This challenge gets talked about by every student at All Hallows' from the day they start.

"You boys think you've got what it takes to be an All Hallows' Saint?" Elliot asks, his voice deep and haunting.

A less-than-impressive yes comes from our blindfolded victims.

"You're going to need a little more enthusiasm and determination if you're going to survive the next hour of your lives, knobheads," Theo happily announces, crossing his thick arms in front of his chest to look even more terrifying—not that they can see him.

"This is your first initiation task, boys. You pass this, you may continue training with us. You fail, and you can head on over to the dance studio and don a tutu instead. Is that understood?"

A roar of agreement sounds out, their adrenaline picking up at last.

"When your wrists are freed, you can go ahead and strip. We want all your clothes thrown in front of you. Blindfolds will remain on until we tell you to remove them.

Theo, Oak, and I pull our flick knives from our pockets and walk around behind the guys, cutting through their bindings one by one.

As each one is released, they immediately follow orders, shedding their clothes and throwing them into the mud.

Anticipation ripples through the air as the three of us keep going.

“Ow,” my guy complains, flinching as I accidentally catch his wrist with my knife.

“Don’t be a pussy, Ainsworth,” I hiss. “A little scratch from me will be the least of your worries by the time the end of this night rolls around.”

“You already know the rules. But for the sake of tradition, I’m going to lay them out for you again, just in case anyone has suffered a blow to the head recently and forgotten anything.

“We will release you from here, and you must follow the marked route back to the Chapel. There will be no shortcuts, no cheating, or trying to find an easy way out. We have eyes in every inch of these woods, and we will know long before you get back if you’ve fucked this challenge up.

“We will be waiting for you at the other end, and if you’re really lucky, we might have vodka and clothes for you. If you’re not, it might be a hose and ice-cold water.”

Fists clench in anticipation, and others move from foot to foot as the chill of the early autumn air breezes past their balls.

“After three, you may remove your blindfold. You turn around and you take off. Just remember, you need to take this seriously. Because none of you want to be the last one back.”

Elliot falls silent, and we stand and watch them like hawks waiting to dive for that poor, innocent little mouse.

Then, throwing them off guard, Elliot shouts, “ONE.”

The three of us laugh as they trip over their own feet to get a head start, more than a couple of them slipping in the mud we ensured was waiting for them on the start line despite the dry days we’ve had recently.

“Ah fuck, this is going to be epic.”

A loud wail rips through the trees only a minute later, making our laughter grow.

“Looks like they’ve found our first trap.”

We weren’t lying. We have the rest of the team dotted through the woods wielding paintball guns, water bombs and rotting food. As much as I’m looking forward to watching them all stagger back to the Chapel, there’s a

big part of me that wishes I was hunting them through the trees.

“Let’s go and get the party started, boys. We’ve got some retaliation to deliver.”

Turning in the opposite direction to where our victims ran off, we take the short trip back to the Chapel.

The party has already started inside. The music booms and the girls immediately turn our way, their eyes lightening up as their kings return home.

“Tonight is going to be epic,” I announce as someone pushes a glass of neat vodka into my hand.

“You know the plan, yeah?” Elliot asks me as we form a circle, cutting everyone vying for our attention off.

“Yeah. I’m good for it,” I agree.

“I still don’t understand why it can’t be me,” Oakley complains.

“You need to be here. If Olivia notices your absence, we’re fucked,” Elliot says for what must be at least the tenth time since we came up with this plan. “As soon as those motherfuckers get back and distract everyone, you do what you need to do.”

I nod, more than ready to head to Huxton to pay Dale fucking Starling a little visit—although thoughts of how I’m going to get my alibi make my blood run a little cold. But needs must, and there is no fucking way I’m letting that cocksucker get away with being anywhere near Olivia.

“Just fuck it up a bit, yeah? Don’t go over the top.”

“Yeah, yeah. I’m not a complete moron.”

They all look at me with raised brows, which makes fire lick at my insides.

“I can fucking handle this. Trust me, yeah?”

They all nod, and in only seconds, our little huddle has fallen apart as the girls get impatient and get their hands on us.

“Hey, Reese,” Darcie purrs at me, her hands running up my chest.

Her touch feels like tiny daggers slicing my skin wide open, but I don’t stop her. Not tonight. I need her.

A smirk curls at my lips as I stare down at her.

“You look like you’ve had a long day, Darce. We should get you a nice strong drink.”

I swear to God, her eyes turn into little hearts like a fucking cartoon character the second I respond to her shameless flirting.

“I’m more fun when I’m drunk,” she confesses, one of her hands descending south.

I catch her wrist before she makes it past my waistband. I need her to think I’m interested, and one brush of my cock is going to show her just how little affected I am by her body. Even if her tits are pushed up under her chin and her skirt is so short that I’m sure it will show the world the overused goods should she bend over.

Twisting her around, I place my hand on her lower back and push her toward the bar.

With more than a few shots warming my stomach, I scan the crowd, looking for Olivia. Oakley made her promise that she’d be here earlier. And although he’s convinced she’ll come, I can’t say I’m feeling quite so confident.

She’s made it more than clear that she hates this place and everything that happens inside. Hell, a part of me doesn’t want her here either, watching as the girls paw at us, at her brother, like they own us.

But also, if she’s here, then we know she’s safe. We know she’s not running off into enemy territory again and getting herself into trouble.

With Darcie’s hand reluctantly locked in mine, I less-than-gently drag her toward the sofas where Elliot, Oak, and Theo are sitting surrounded by girls.

“You want some?” Oak asks, holding a little baggie in front of him. His eyes are blown, making it more than obvious that he’s already started his night.

“Nah, man. I need to be sober for what I have planned.” I run my eyes over Darcie, trying as hard as I can to look at least a little bit interested in what she has to offer.

Unsurprisingly, she buys my crap and throws her leg over my waist, letting her dress ride up enough to gift me with the unfortunate sight of her bare cunt beneath.

“I think you forgot something tonight, Darce,” I growl in her ear, still feeling absolutely no desire for her even when her bare pussy is grinding down on me.

“It’s a gift.” Is it fuck. “This way, you can have me whenever and wherever you want me.”

“Wow, how generous of you.”

Thankfully, she’s already drunk enough not to hear the sarcasm in my tone. Oakley doesn’t miss it though, and throws his head back as if I’m the

funniest fucker on the planet.

The girls on either side of him take advantage of the situation and begin kissing up each side of his neck.

“Hell, yes. Tonight is going to be epic,” he bellows, earning a round of cheers from the rest of the room.

“Any news yet?” I ask Elliot.

He shakes his head. “Another ten minutes, by the looks of it,” he says, glancing down at his phone.

Darcie leans forward, her lips brushing my ear.

“Just enough time for what I want to do.”

Her fingers find my waistband and I move on instinct, forgetting about what I’m meant to be doing tonight. She lands in a heap on the floor, her dress lifting so that she’s flashing everyone who might be looking.

“Whoops, sorry, Darce. Let’s go and get you another drink, yeah?” I offer, hoping it’s enough to pacify her and make her forget why she’s got a bruise on her arse in the morning.





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## OLIVIA

“I can’t believe I let you talk me into this,” I groan at Charli as we walk into the Chapel. Music pumps out of hidden speakers, reverberating through me.

“We could always go hang out with Dale and—”

“Bitch,” I hiss.

“But you love me.” She flashes me a blinding smile. “This place is the tits.”

“It’s disgusting.”

“Someone sounds a little jealous.”

“Jealous? Of this... it’s practically a rich boy’s brothel.” Tipping my head over to where one of Oakley’s teammates has his hand shoved up a first year’s skirt as she writhes against him, I add, “Case in point.”

Charli makes a beeline for the bar and orders herself a drink. Because of course there’s a bar with a bartender.

I really, really hate this place.

Everything it stands for, the traditions and values it upholds. But when my eyes land on Oakley and I see him holding court with a small group of girls, mischief twinkling in his eyes as he laughs, my expression softens a little.

He’s waited his entire life for this, and he looks so happy. Of course, I’m sure all the attention and sex offered up on a platter is a huge part of the draw, but I also know my brother and I know how important it is for him to continue the family legacy. He wants to walk in our father’s footsteps and become a lawyer.

“This was a bad idea,” I hiss as I join Charli at the bar as she shamelessly

flirts with the bartender. He is kind of cute, although I wonder what he must think of all this.

“What do you want?” she asks me, but I decline.

No way I’m letting my guard down here.

We move to one of the leather sofas and sit, watching the chaos unfold around us.

“Look at them all,” she says. “Heir chasers en masse. I mean, part of me gets it. They’re good-looking lads. But a dick is dick. So long as a guy knows how to use it—”

“Oh my God, Charli. I do not want to be thinking about my brother’s dick.”

“Yeah, but if you had to choose one, who would it be? I think I’d go for Elliot.”

“Elliot?” I balk.

“Yeah. It’s always the brooding, silent types that are the kinkiest in the bedroom.”

“That’s... wow.”

“Oh, come on, like you haven’t thought about what he’s hiding under all that ice and arrogance?”

“He’s like a brother to me, Charl. They all are.”

“Yeah, I guess that’s a bit of a fantasy—”

A loud cheer goes up around us as three guys stagger into the room, butt-naked and covered in mud, paint, and... what is that?

“What the fuck is that smell?” Charli dry heaves as we watch more of them pour into the room.

Elliot climbs onto the ornate coffee table and lifts his glass in the air. “Looks like we have our winners. Get yourself a drink ladies, and then go get a fucking shower. You reek.”

“Where are the rest of you?” Theo asks, smirking as he watches the first-year players squirm on the spot, trying to cover their junk.

“Initiation,” Charli breathes, and I nod, fighting the urge to roll my eyes.

“A couple of lads got hurt, we left them.”

“You left them?” Elliot snarls, his eyes darkening. “Is that how you treat your teammates, Middleton?”

“W-what? I thought... you said it was the first one to make it back—”

“But I didn’t say anything about leaving anyone behind. We’re motherfucking Saints. If one of us falls, you’d best believe the rest of us will

be there to pick him back up.”

“Fuck,” the guy hisses. “It’s a fucking death trap out there. You’re not seriously—”

Elliot jumps down off the table and prowls toward him. A ripple goes through the air, the room bathed in silence as everyone waits to see what Elliot will do.

“You want to play on my team? You want to be a Saint?” The guy nods, fear glittering in his eyes. Elliot’s lip curls up disgust. “So the get the fuck back out there and go get your teammates.”

“Jesus, he’s scary,” Charli whispers.

“Y-yeah, okay.” The guys backtrack out of the room, and Elliot mutters, “Fucking pussies.”

Laughter bounces around the room as someone turns the music back up and the party goes on like it’s business as usual.

And I guess where the Heirs are concerned, it is.

“Oak seems to be enjoying himself.” Charli says as we watch a girl grind down on his lap.

As if he hears us, he glances in our direction and his smile grows when he notices me.

Excusing himself, he rushes over to me and drops down beside me. “You came.”

“You can thank Charli. She coerced me.” Oak grins at me, his pupils blown. “Are you on something?” My brows pinch.

“Just a little pick-me-up.” He winks.

“Oak,” I hiss.

“Don’t worry, Liv. It’s good shit. I feel in-fucking-credible.”

“Jesus, Oak.” My brows furrow and he pouts.

“Nooo, don’t go all fun police on me. It’s a party, we’re celebrating.”

“Olive.” Reese appears, looming over us. “Didn’t expect to see you here.”

“Reese, always a pleasure.”

Oak groans. “Can the two of you at least try to get along? You used to be friends.”

“That was a long time ago,” Reese spits, sending a violent shudder through me.

“Okay, this was fun and all, but we didn’t come to watch you and the slut squad in action, so we’ll be around.” Far, far away from them.

I stand, grabbing Charli’s hand and tugging her away from them.

“Stay out of trouble tonight, Sis,” Oak calls, and I flip him off over my shoulder.

His deep rumble of laughter follows me, but it’s the heat from Reese’s heavy stare that penetrates some of the ice around my heart. When we reach the big ornate doors leading out of the room, I risk peeking back, and sure enough, Reese is watching me.

A devious glint in his eye.

A silent message that looks a lot like: I’ll be watching.

“**Y**ou know I’m surprised Oak didn’t go after Dale,” Charli says as we sit outside, the party still raging on inside. We’ve managed to avoid Oakley and Reese and the other Heirs.

“I made him promise.”

“Yeah, but come on, Liv. It’s Oak and the Heirs. They’re not exactly known for playing nice.”

“You think they’ll go after him.” My heart sinks.

“I think Dale knew you were the perfect bait...”

“Ugh. Sometimes, I really bloody hate this place.”

“Come on, let’s go.” She stands, brushing her hands down her cut-out jean shorts. “I need to pee, then you can give me a ride home.”

Thank God.

I am so over tonight.

But the second we go back inside the Chapel, my stomach drops.

“Oh my God, is that Darcie Porter?” Charli points to where Darcie is draped over Reese like a cheap throw.

“Yeah.” My teeth grind as I take in her outfit, or lack thereof.

“She looks like the entertainment.”

“She likes the attention.” I shrug, hardly surprised when she runs her perfectly manicured nails up his chest, nipping his jaw.

God, I hate her.

I hate that he’s touched her. Kissed her.

I hate that he hooks his arm around her waist and draws her near, flicking his dark gaze to mine. Taunting me. Daring me to do something about it.

But I won’t.

I won't play his games—not anymore.

“You okay?” Charli asks and I nod, my teeth grinding together behind my lips. “We could stay?” she asks. “Play him at his own game?”

“W-what?” My eyes snap to hers and she smirks.

“You're not fooling anyone.”

“I don't know what you're talking about.”

Charli rolls her eyes. “Of course you don't. Come on. One dance for the road.” She stands and offers me her hand.

“I'm not sure this is a good idea,” I protest.

“Sure it is. Sometimes you have to fight fire with fire. Give him a taste of his own medicine, Liv. What's the worst that could happen?”

The second she says the words, my stomach twists. Because where Reese is concerned, I'm not sure.

We make our way to the middle of the room and Charli starts swaying her hips, rolling her lithe body to the beat. “Come on, dance like no one is watching.”

But they are watching.

*He's watching.*

Charli grabs my hands and weaves them in the air between us, her head thrown back with a smile. She looks sexy, so carefree... I envy her. Because I'm strung tighter than a bowstring.

Reese hasn't taken his eyes off me. But he hasn't taken his hands off her either. He lifts her slightly, dropping her on his lap so she's fully straddling him as his fingers tuck underneath her halter top and graze the sides of her boobs.

“Holy shit, he hasn't stopped looking at you,” Charli whispers. I can't look at her.

I can't tear my eyes off Reese as he drops his mouth to the crook of Darcie's shoulder and kisses her there. She grinds down on him, lopping her arm around his neck to leverage herself.

A hollow pit gnaws inside me as he keeps his eyes on me and his lips on her.

“Maybe we should go,” Charli says, stepping in front of me and breaking the tense connection between me and Reese.

“No,” I snap. “I want to dance.”

Glancing around, my eyes land on a cute guy I recognise from my history class. His eyes widen as I crook my finger at him. With a small nod, I flash

him what I hope is a seductive smile. He drains his beer and makes his way over.

“You’re Oakley’s sister, right?”

Not Olivia... Oakley’s sister.

Irritation skitters through me, but I force it down. “Dance with me,” I breathe.

“Uh, I’m not sure. Your brother—”

“Dance with me.” I loop my arms around his shoulder and press my body up close to his.

“Y-yeah, okay.” He audibly swallows but curves his hands around my waist and starts moving to the beat.

I tug him closer, moving us around in a half circle so I’m facing Reese. So he can see my eyes as I rub my body against the poor, unsuspecting guy.

Reese’s eyes flare with anger, his grip on Darcie’s waist tightening. If she notices, she doesn’t let on, too busy trailing her tongue up his neck.

It’s a dangerous game I’m playing. Especially here, in my brother’s territory, but Reese Whitfield is under my skin. More than I care to admit.

The guy’s hands glide down to my arse, and for a second, I think Reese is going to march over here and put an end to my little display. But he doesn’t. He lifts Darcie off his lap, grabs her hand and starts pulling her toward the double vaulted doors.

The doors I know that lead to the staircase. The staircase I know leads down to their basement.

He doesn’t look back. He doesn’t challenge me to stop him. To intervene. And it occurs to me...

Maybe he doesn’t want me to.



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## REESE

**B**ile stirs in my belly, quickly burning up my throat as I lead Darcie down to the basement.

This isn't my first time down here, far from it.

But it is hers.

And from the way her eyes are glittering with excitement, I'd say she's been looking forward to a visit for longer than we've given her credit for.

The heavy doors slam closed behind us, rattling through me and making me question this part of our plan.

Elliot was adamant that Darcie was our girl.

He's probably right. He usually is. And I can't deny that this little part of our revenge plan sure fits right into mine with Olivia.

The jealousy that darkened her eyes as she watched Darcie grinding down on me on the sofa makes a smirk curl at my lips.

She can pretend that I don't affect her as much as she likes.

We both know that she's a filthy liar.

She can try and make me jealous with any motherfucker in this place, but we know that there is only one person she's imagining between her thighs, only one cock thrusting inside her until she forgets her own name.

Images of what that might look like fill my head and my cock swells. Although, it sinks faster than I thought possible when Darcie turns into me and looks up with her hungry, dilated eyes.

She's taken something. Probably the shit that Oak is riding high on.

I have to hope it makes her more compliant, and if I'm really lucky, lowers her libido. Although, that seems pretty unlikely from what I've been forced to endure so far tonight.



“This place is even better than I imagined,” she purrs, running her hands up my chest as we step down the final few stone stairs.

A shiver rips down my spine from the temperature change, but she doesn’t seem to notice, despite the fact that she’s basically wearing nothing.

The hallway down here is practically untouched, and it looks much like it did back in the day when it was actually a functioning chapel. The rooms behind the next set of doors are an entirely different matter, and I can’t deny that I want to see that kinky shit the guys have filled the place with.

The clang of the lock echoes around the empty space as I slide the key that Elliot gave me purely for this task past the old metal.

Darcie squeals in excitement and darts forward the second I push the door wide.

“Oh my God, Reese. This place is insane.”

I follow her, looking around at the vast room with wide eyes.

Holy shit. She is not wrong.

There is a huge—and I mean huge—bed filling the centre of it, and that is about the only normal thing in here.

“I don’t even know what some of this is for. I think I need to get reacquainted with Christian Grey again if we’re going to be spending time here. I want to try it all,” she breathes hungrily, running her finger along what looks to be a whip.

Jesus, Eaton.

“I think we should go somewhere a little more private,” I say, making a beeline toward one of the doors to the rooms beyond.

“I’m more than happy for people to watch.”

“Why doesn’t that surprise me,” I mutter under my breath. “I’m not really into that, Darce.”

“Oh, you’d rather have me all to yourself,” she says excitedly, bouncing over to me.

Jesus Christ.

The moment I have the door closed behind us, she’s in my space and attempting to drag my shirt up my body.

I stand frozen and stare down at her. But she’s too distracted with trying to get me naked to sense the danger in the air.

“Sit down, Darcie,” I state, my voice so cool and detached that I’m sure Elliot might even be impressed.

“W-wha—”

Pressing my hand to the centre of her chest, I force her to back up and she stumbles toward the bed when I give her a less-than-gentle shove.

“You want me to strip for you?” she offers in a breathy, desperate voice.

“No, I really fucking don’t. I’ve got a deal for you.”

She pushes herself to sit on the bed and blinks at me as if I told her that I’m really an alien who doesn’t possess a cock.

“A... deal?”

“Yeah. I need an alibi, and you need the bragging rights of being with an Heir to take a few steps up the social ladder. So what do you say? Wanna help each other out?”

She continues to stare at me as if I’ve suddenly started talking in a different language.

“So you didn’t bring me down here to fuck me?” she asks, I swear to God blinking back tears.

Jesus, this girl is really fucked up.

“No, Darcie. You’re not really my type. No offence.”

I realise my mistake with those words the second her bottom lip starts to quiver.

Fuck me. I do not need this shit.

“Look, I’m sorry, okay. I just... I know that you’re trustworthy enough to help me out with this,” I say, hoping that a change of angle might help. “I could have asked any girl up there, but I knew you were the one for the job.”

Thankfully, her demeanour completely changes.

“So you’re going to what... leave me down here, go and do something you shouldn’t be doing, and then I get to claim that you showed me heaven all night long or something?”

“See, you’re cleverer than you look, Darce,” I praise through gritted teeth.

She smiles at me, but I can practically see the cogs turning behind her eyes as she considers my offer.

“And I can tell everyone that you did anything to me down here.”

“Anything,” I agree, cringing hard. “So long as you follow the rules.”

“The rules?” she confirms, but there’s no way she needs me to lay them out for her—every Heir chaser knows them like the back of their hands.

“Yeah, you know. You can’t talk about the details of the dungeon. That’s for us and our chosen ones to know about.” I wink, and she eats it right up.

“Where are you going?”

“You don’t need to know about that.”

She considers me for a moment before I turn to point at the cupboard behind me.

“There are drinks and food. The TV works. Have a little private party for one while you let your imagination run wild about what I could have done to you.” My stomach churns, already considering the kind of bullshit I’m going to have to go along with to make this plan work.

It’s going to be fucking worth it, though.

“How long will you be?”

“Two hours, tops.”

“Plenty of time for multiples O’s from your talented tongue then.”

“That’s the idea. So, we’ve got a deal?”

“I mean, it’s not quite as sweet as it could be.” She lets her eyes drop to my body, but she doesn’t say any more.

“That’s a yes?” I confirm.

“Sure thing. Lucky for you, I’ve got a really, really vivid imagination.”

“Fantastic. See you in a bit then.”

She calls for me as I step out of the room, but I don’t bother hanging around to hear what she wants to say. Instead, I flick the lock and take off through the hidden back door toward my car.

The drive to Huxton is fast, and in no time, I’m pulling up at the end of the street where Elliot told me Dale’s beloved orange Ford Focus RS would be.

Flipping down the glovebox of my Subaru BRZ, I stare at the extras I packed for tonight’s job before quickly slamming it closed. The Heirs need me toeing the line right now. I need to follow orders.

With my fingers wrapped around my knife, I step out of the car, pulling my hood up as I look up and down the street to ensure there are no witnesses.

I duck between the other boy racer cars that line the street to their favourite hang-out in the middle of their shitty estate.

A devilish smile pulls at my lips as I come to stand beside Dale’s baby. This thing is his life. His socials are full of him posing like he thinks he’s all that on the thing.

It’s pathetic. Especially because if you were to actually lift the bonnet, anyone would discover that this isn’t a legit RS, just a pretty paint job and an extra couple of stickers. Fucking wannabe bell piece.

Even if he didn't deserve this for touching Olivia, he would for being an arrogant waste of oxygen.

Lifting the knife to his back door, I press it into the paintwork.

"Touch what belongs to us, and we'll come right back at you, motherfucker."

I scratch right down the side before dragging it all the way back, making sure it's deep as fuck.

I do the same on the other side, keeping an eye on the street to make sure no one appears before sinking my blade into each of his tyres.

The sound of them deflating feeds the beast that lives inside me, and I smile like a fucking maniac as I admire my handiwork.

Pocketing my knife, I walk back toward my car, but I stop when I get to my door as the video that motherfucker sent us with Olivia fills my mind once more. It blurs into what school is going to be like for the next few weeks as Darcie fills everyone's eager ears with bullshit about our night together.

Anger bubbles up inside me for this prick and the events he's put into place that led me here.

Ripping open my passenger door, I flip open my glovebox and follow through with my own little mission.

Elliot told me to fuck his car up but to leave it standing.

Well, fuck him and his fucking God complex.

With everything I need, I march back toward dickwad's car and wrench open the petrol cap.

Because he's an arrogant motherfucker who thinks he's untouchable, he hasn't even locked it.

In only seconds, I have the scarf I stole from Mum covered in lighter fluid and stuffed down into the car with my lighter ready.

"Fuck you, motherfucker," I roar, probably way too loudly considering I'm meant to be being discreet, but fuck it.

Adrenaline is flooding my body, and my need to see this little bitch's car go up is the only thing I can think about as I spark the lighter and hold it beneath the fabric.

"Fuck you, Dale Starling. Fuck everyone who's trying to control my goddamn life. FUCK YOU."

I stand there long enough to be confident that it's going to burn all the way down, and then I hightail it out of there.

Flooring it down the street, I'm in the next one over when a loud, earth-

shaking boom rips through my car.

“Fuck yes,” I bark as an accomplished smile stretches wide across my face.

I don't go back to the party—I can't while I stink of kerosene—so I swing by home for a quick shower and a change of clothes before I head back to free Darcie from her prison. Shame really, life would be so much fucking easier without her trying to cling onto me like a fucking limpet. I can only imagine that she's going to get so, so much worse after this little stunt she helped me pull tonight.

Fuck it.

Knowing that little bitch is going to be crying over his lost baby right now makes it more than worth it.



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## OLIVIA

“Good morning, sweetheart,” Dad says as I enter the kitchen. “How was the party?”

“Well, there’s every chance one or two of the first-year rugby players are still out in the woods, naked and covered in God knows what...”

He chuckles. “Ah, good times. I remember it well.”

“Seriously, Dad, it was gross.”

“Oh, come on, Olivia. Boys will—”

“Be boys, yeah. I got the memo, Dad.” My eyes roll dramatically. “But you know that can’t always be a cop-out for plain stupid. It’s the twenty-first century. Don’t you think it’s time the Heirs moved with the times?”

Shaking out his morning paper, he folds it in half and lets out a heavy sigh. “Tradition is important, sweetheart. The foundations of society are built on them. Sixth form is a chance for the boys to expel all that restless energy before things get serious.”

“Lucky for them.” I make myself a strong coffee, relieved I didn’t break my no-drinking rule last night.

Even after Reese disappeared with Darcie. Charli and I had left not long after that. I couldn’t be there, knowing he was with her, touching her the way he’d touched me.

I felt stupid, thinking that something more existed between us. Reese isn’t capable of feeling. He’s spoilt and arrogant with layers of ice encased around his heart.

They’re welcome to each other.

*Liar.*

I ignore the little voice and drain my coffee, hoping it might burn some

sense into me. I am not going to wallow over Reese Whitfield and his manwhoring ways.

“What are your plans for the weekend?”

“Workout, homework, the usual.”

“You know, Olivia, it wouldn’t hurt you to get out more. Enjoy life.”

“I enjoy life, Dad.” Just because I’m not a Darcie Porter of the world, doesn’t mean I don’t have a fulfilling, content life.

A strange current runs through me, but I shake it off.

“Good morning.” Fiona appears, looking as perfectly polished as she does during the week.

She picks up the television remote from the table and turns on the widescreen hanging on the far wall, and the news reporter’s monotonous tone fills the air.

“Another day, another political scandal,” she tsks, switching on the coffee machine.

I’m only half tuned in when the next announcement catches my ear.

“The explosion in Huxton is thought to be the work of vandals. Mr. Starling is offering a reward from anyone with information pertaining to the damage to his son’s car. Police confirmed that it happened around eleven PM last night.”

Icy dread floods my veins.

No, it can’t be...

They wouldn’t.

“Starling... why does that name sound familiar?” Dad asks, and I tense.

“He... uh, attends Huxton Academy. He’s a Harrier.”

“Yes, that’s the one.” He goes back to his morning reading as if arson is a regular occurrence in Huxton.

It isn’t.

And while I want to believe my brother and the Heirs have nothing to do with it, my gut is screaming at me that they did.

Damn it.

They were at the party all night. I saw them, right there. But that isn’t to say they didn’t orchestrate the entire thing.

Bloody idiots.

Excusing myself, I hurry upstairs to my room and slam the door shut behind me.

Grabbing my phone, I locate Charli’s number and hit call.



“Hello.” Her groggy voice fills the line.

“It’s me. Did I wake you?”

“Yeah, it’s fine. What’s wrong?”

“Someone blew up Dale Starling’s car last night.”

“What?”

“I saw it on the local news. Mr. Starling is offering a reward to anyone with information.”

“Crap. Do you think it was them?”

“Do you?”

“I mean, it’s one hell of a coincidence if it isn’t. But they were at the party. When we left, they were all right there.”

“I know. I guess they could have paid somebody to do their dirty work.”

“Shit,” she hisses. “That makes sense. What are you going to do?”

I know what I’d like to do, but something tells me Oak and his friends might object to being strung up on the rugby goal posts by their balls.

“I haven’t decided yet.” I bristle.

“There might be another explanation,” she says, but I hear the doubt in her voice.

Charli warned me last night that Oak wouldn’t let it go...

And it looks like she was right.

**A**n hour.  
I last an hour before I send Oakley a text demanding to know what happened.

Oak: I don’t know what you’re talking about.

Olivia: Seriously, Oak. It was on the local news.

Oak: I don’t know what to tell you Liv, but I swear to God I had nothing to do with it. We were at the party, you know that.

Olivia: You promise?

Oak: Cross my heart, hope to die. Stick a needle in my eye.

Soft laughter bubbles out of me at the silly childish rhyme we used to say to one another when we were younger.

Another text comes through before I can reply, making my brows pinch.

Oak: Do I need to worry about Ben?

Olivia: Ben?

Oak: Yeah, the lad you were dancing with...

Oh.

Ben.

*Right.*

Olivia: Uh, no. It was an experiment.

God, why did I say that?

Oak: Sounds kinda odd.

Olivia: Long story. But let's just say you don't have to worry about Ben again.

Oak: Thank fuck. Because I'm not ready for you to get with anyone.

Olivia: Seriously? Do you think I'm a nun?

Oak: I try not to think about my sister as anything else...

Olivia: Wow, that's... wow. You need to get over yourself, Oak. I don't know whether to be flattered or slightly concerned that you still think I'm a virgin.

"Ugh." I slam my phone down and heave a ragged breath. My brother can be so sweet and understanding, and then sometimes, he can be such a clueless twat.

Grabbing my yoga mat, I unroll it on the floor and take a deep, calming breath. But as I get in the cat position to warm up, stretching my shoulder and back muscles, the anger doesn't dissipate. In fact, it swirls like a storm inside me. Because deep down, I know Oakley would lie to me. If he thought he

was protecting me, he would lie.

And I hate it.

I hate that I live in a world where men get to decide what a woman can and can't handle.

It's why I still haven't filled out my application for Saints Cross U, why I have a stack of brochures for universities outside of Oxfordshire hidden in my desk. Oakley would never forgive me if I do it, though. If I break away and try to make a life outside of Saints Cross.

I roll my shoulders, dropping my body down into cow position. But it's no use. I can't find my zen. Not with too many thoughts running around my head.

Flopping onto my back, I stare up at the ceiling, picturing Reese's smirk last night as he groped Darcie.

A game.

That's all I am.

He's out to hurt me. To ruin and break me. And I still don't know why.

But Reese Whitfield has never needed much in the way of a reason to do anything.

Ugh.

I need to stop obsessing over him, over this toxic thing between us.

He showed me his true colours last night when he went off with Darcie. He knows how much I hate her.

Damn you to hell, Reese Baron Whitfield.

**I** spend the day cleaning. My room, then the kitchen and bathrooms. Dad and Fiona insisted I didn't need to, we have a cleaner for that, but the mindless activity is a good distraction.

Once I'm done, I grab my laundry basket and take it down to the utility room. Unlike Theo's and Elliot's families, we don't have help around the house. After Mum died, Dad didn't want us to be 'those' kids raised by a nanny and housekeeper. He wanted us to pitch in and be a family. The kind who pulls their weight and gets on with it. It builds character, apparently.

There's two baskets of freshly laundered clothes, so I move them to one side and add my laundry to the washing machine and set the program.

I'm about to leave when my gaze snags on one of the baskets. It's Reese's. Before I know what I'm doing, I scoop it up and head upstairs to his room.

He'll kill me if he finds me in here, but temptation is too hard to resist. Dropping the basket on his bed, I take in his space. Although Fiona had it decorated for him—hoping that one day he'd come back—it's all Reese. Dark grey walls with splatters of royal blue that match the thick curtains and bedsheets. It reminds me of a storm at sea. The angry swell of water. Dark thundering clouds. My lips twist with amusement. If a space ever perfectly captured someone's personality, it's this room.

There are photos of him with the guys on the shelves, but I already know he didn't decorate the place with them. That was Fiona in the hope he might feel at home here.

The basket of laundry taunts me. I should leave it, or even better, douse it all in itching powder. God only knows, the asshole deserves it.

Darcie Porter.

How could he?

He knew how that would make me feel.

Because he doesn't care.

Reese isn't a good person. He isn't—

Something catches my eye in the corner of his room. It's his laundry bin, identical to the one in my room except it's dark grey and mine is light blue.

My heart crashes violently in my chest as I move toward it. The black hoodie hanging half in, half out of it. It's only a hoodie.

Before I can stop myself, I reach for it and pull it out. The faint smell of kerosene assaults my senses and I frown.

Why would—

No.

No!

It makes no sense. I saw Reese at the party. I saw him lead Darcie out of the room. Saw the lust in her eyes. The desire.

A huge pit gnaws my stomach as I clutch the hoodie. I know what it means. I know I'm holding the item of clothing Reese wore to blow up Dale Starling's car.

But why?

Did he do it for Oakley and the other Heirs?

Was it part of some task to get back into their good graces?

Or did he act alone?

And if he did...

I shut those thoughts down.

It doesn't make any sense.

None.

Dropping the hoodie back into the laundry basket, I hurry out of Reese's room and slip into my own, closing the door behind me.

Either Oakley is telling the truth and Reese went on a one-man mission to destroy Dale's car, or my brother is lying, and they're all in on it.

And I don't know which is worse.



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## REESE

**A** loud bang rocks through me, forcing my eyes open. The Chapel is bathed in light, the morning sun long risen. I blink a few times to clear my vision. My head swims with the amount of... I can't even remember what it was I drank when I got back last night.

Having to spend the rest of the party with Darcie's hands all over me like she owned me to make it look realistic was the last thing I fucking needed. But, as much as I might have wanted to pick her up and launch her in the direction of the dorms to get fucking rid of her, I knew I needed to play the game. For a little bit at least. Everyone needed to believe I really did take her downstairs to show her the time of her life, or my alibi is fucked.

Leaving my fate in the hands of Darcie fucking Porter really doesn't sit great with me. But it's the best we could come up with. Elliot was convinced by his decision, and heaven forbid I go against our control freak of a leader.

The pounding of feet on the stairs reminds me of why I'm suddenly awake when I should still be sleeping off the effects of the previous night before a furious Elliot rounds the corner and makes a beeline straight for my position on the sofa again.

With a pained sigh, I haul myself up so I'm sitting and not at such a height disadvantage. My back pulls and my neck aches.

"What the ever-loving fuck did you do last night, Whitfield?"

I stare up at him, trying and failing to keep a smirk off my face as I take in his dark, angry eyes and the pulsating vein that looks like it's about five seconds from popping at his temple.

"Payback," I say simply, sensing that he probably expects me to answer that question despite the fact that he clearly knows what I did.

“We told you to fuck it up, teach him a lesson. Not fucking destroy his car and end up on the local fucking news, you prick.”

I shrug. “Keying it didn’t seem like enough. I got creative.”

“You fucking blew it up. And two of the cars either side of it, if the fucking news report is to be believed.”

I push to my feet as he stares down at me, doing his best impression of a fire-breathing dragon.

Reaching out, I rest my hand on his shoulder. “You really need to calm down, E. I think you’re about one outburst away from an aneurism.”

An angry growl rumbles deep in his throat before he knocks my hand from his shoulder. He charges at me with the force of a bull, and I have little choice but to let it happen.

We both crash onto the sofa, but with Elliot’s force and our combined weight, the whole thing flips back, crashing down on the old flagstone floor behind us.

“You motherfucker,” he roars, recovering faster than me and planting his fist into my stomach. “You had one fucking job. Orders you were meant to follow.”

I don’t fight back for a few minutes. Instead, I let him burn off some of his frustration.

Over the years, the three of us have learned how to deal with his outbursts.

It takes a lot for Elliot to crack, but when he does, he needs to expel it for a few minutes, let the red haze lift a little before he’s a worthy opponent and aware of what he’s actually doing.

Shoving his shoulders, I manage to roll him off me before pinning him to the floor and throwing my fist into his jaw.

“What the fuck are you two doing?” Theo bellows, heading toward us leisurely and staring as if we’re two crazed animals at the zoo.

I glance over my shoulder at him, finding his hair sticking up in every angle and his hand lost in his boxers.

Elliot uses my moment of distraction to take another swing at me, and his fist collides with my eye before I crash to the floor beside him.

“Fucking cunt,” I mutter, pressing my hand to my eye as Elliot stands, smoothing down his t-shirt and sweats before walking toward the kitchen as if that never happened and he didn’t let his inner monster take over for a heartbeat.



“Does someone want to tell me what’s going on?” Theo looks between us, but eventually he settles his eyes on me, because who else could have fucked something up here? Surely not our almighty leader. “What did you do to wake the devil?”

I roll my eyes at Theo but accept his hand when he offers it to help me up.

“You mean you haven’t looked at your socials yet this morning?” Elliot barks.

“No. I was woken by you two fucking animals going at it.”

“He started it,” I mutter, although loudly enough for Elliot to hear me.

“I swear to fucking God, Whitfield—”

“What? You swear to God what? You gonna make me sleep on the dining table next? Or outside maybe? You do know that you’re not actually fucking God around here, right?” I spit. “I did what was needed of me last night. I did everything—” Almost. “That you said. I’ve even let the entire fucking school think I shoved my cock in that slag, not to mention listen to her brag about how much I enjoyed it for the rest of the year. Is that not e-fucking-nough to prove my loyalty?”

“He’s got a point, man,” Theo agrees.

“He blew up Starling’s fucking car,” Elliot seethes, making Theo still in shock.

“I thought you were just going to key it and slash the tyres.”

“Yeah, didn’t we fucking all. Where the fuck is Oak?” Elliot barks, changing the subject without even taking a breath.

“Last I saw of him, his head was buried between some bird’s thighs.”

“Jesus fucking Christ. He’d better have got rid of her,” Elliot snarls, abandoning his coffee and storming toward the doors that lead to our basement.

Theo and I are hot on his heels.

I think Theo is probably going for Oak’s protection, whereas I’m all about the entertainment should that room be littered with girls.

I’m not the only Heir who can break the rules from time to time.

Doors slam and the anticipation grows as Elliot makes his way downstairs. But when he throws open the doors to the main room, his shoulders sag in relief when we find Oak passed out naked in the middle of the massive bed.

“What are you doing?” Theo asks when Elliot marches toward the

bathroom and then reappears only two minutes later with a jug of what I can only assume is cold water.

Amusement floods me as I stand shoulder to shoulder with Theo and watch as Elliot throws the contents over Oak.

“Dad, no. I wasn’t even going to—” His words falter as he opens his eyes and finds the three of us staring at him. “You fucking cuntbags,” he groans, not giving two single shits about the fact that he’s laid out like a starfish. A starfish mauled by a shark, that is.

“Who the fuck tried to eat you last night?” Theo asks, clearly tracking the multiple bite marks across his body as I am.

“Fuck knows. They were good, though.”

“They?” I ask, kinda disappointed I missed the best bit of last night’s party while I was pretending to be Darcie’s fuck of the year.

“Yeah, man. It was fucking epic. Best night ever,” he sighs with a satisfied smile playing on his lips.

“Sorry to burst your bubble, Casanova, but you need to get up. We’ve got an issue.”

“It’s not an issue. I made sure nothing can be traced back to us. You need to chill your fucking tits, man.”

Oak pushes his hair back and finally sits up. “You made sure what can’t be traced back to us?” he asks ominously.

“Cover your fucking cock up, brush your teeth, and then we’ll talk. You look like a well-used whore right now.”

“Jealous, Eaton?”

“Fuck you. Just do as you’re told.” He turns and marches out of the room.

“Sure thing, boss.” Oak salutes his back before falling to the bed once more. “Everything hurts. I think I’m dying,” he whines.

“You gonna tell him, or should I?” Theo taunts, looking up at me.

“What did you do, Whitfield?” Oak asks with his eyes closed.

“Blew up Starling’s car.”

Oak’s eyes pop open in shock before a smirk twitches at his lips. “On purpose?” he asks, excitement sparkling in his eyes.

“What the fuck do you think? That cunt deserved it for using Olivia to taunt us.”

“Too fucking right he did. He’s gonna regret the day he decided to go up against us,” Oak promises. “I guess we’d better go and talk Elliot off the edge

and figure out our next move.”

Oak slides to the end of the bed, swinging his legs over the side and placing his feet on the floor.

“You seen my clothes?”

The three of us all look around. The place is fucking trashed. But I don’t spot any male clothes amongst the girls’ underwear and used condoms.

Fucking dogs.

“They probably stole them to sleep in to remember your night together.”

“They’re fucking welcome to them. They already know there won’t be a repeat.”

“How would you know?” I ask. “You can’t tell me you remember any of the girls you fucked last night.”

“I’ll know,” Oak disagrees, giving up on his search and marching to the door that leads to the stairs with everything still hanging out.

We’re halfway up the stairs when a high-pitched voice rips through the air, the familiarity of it making me wince.

“So you just thought it would be okay to use me in this?” Darcie screams. “I could be an accessory to arson.”

Shoving Oak out of the way, I move faster. I might not like the bitch, but she did us a solid by agreeing to be my alibi last night, and we really don’t need Elliot going crazy psycho on her arse.

“How the fuck would it get back to you? You were downstairs having your brains screwed out by Whitfield. How was that, by the way? As mind-blowing as you always imagined? His cock is hella small, right?”

“Shut the fuck up, prick,” I grunt, marching straight over to a red-faced Darcie.

“You,” she seethes, pointing right in my face. “You left me down there while you went to blow up that idiot’s car. Do you have any idea what that could do to my reputation?” Her eyes shift to something behind me, and when I glance over my shoulder, I find Oak standing there with his hand cupping his junk.

“Beckworth, I told you to go and get some fucking clothes on.”

“You don’t need to do that on my account,” Darcie purrs.

“And you’re worried about your rep?” I scoff, marching into the kitchen to finally get some caffeine.

“Beckworth,” Elliot booms, and after a dramatic roll of his eyes, Oak heads up to his bedroom, Darcie’s eyes feasting on his arse until he

disappears from sight.

The second he's gone, her demeanour completely changes.

Crazy fucking bitch.

"You should have told me what you were really doing."

"You're not the only one," Elliot mutters under his breath.

"I should go and tell my Daddy about this. He won't have an arsonist attending All Hallows'."

Elliot stares at her blankly as if her threat means nothing to him. "Feel free, Darcie. But be aware of what we'll offer up in return."

Her brow creases, confusion filling her features. "What are you talking about?" she demands.

"You're not going to talk to anyone about what did or did not happen last night aside from what was agreed between you and Whitfield."

"Oh yeah, and why is that?"

Elliot makes a show of pulling his phone from his pocket. He finds something before turning it around.

We all knew he had a card up his sleeve. It's why he was so confident that Darcie was the one to help last night. But he never let on as to what it was. Although, as a wanton moan rips through the air, we're clued in pretty quickly.

"No," Darcie cries, surging forward as if she's going to grab the phone from Elliot's hands.

She doesn't even get close. Theo is too fast for her to even get a chance, wrapping his arm around her waist and pinning her to his solid frame.

"And who exactly is that fucking you like a dirty whore, Darcie? Did you want to fill my boys in for me?"

"Fuck you, Elliot."

His lip peels back as he runs his eyes down the length of her. "No, you're all right. I have some taste, and desperate, dirty whores aren't it."

"Who is it?" I ask, curiosity burning through me as he watches the show with a blank expression.

Elliot looks down at his screen again. "Darcie?" he asks.

Tears fill her eyes as she stares pure hate at Elliot, not that he gives a fuck. "M-my daddy's f-friend," she stutters, but something tells me that's not even the worst of it.

"Oh wow," I breathe. "That really is quite scandalous, even for you, Darce. I guess you really need this keeping under wraps, huh?"

“I’ll do anything,” she cries. “Please, promise me you’ll delete it.”

Elliot finally looks up at her again.

“Don’t worry, Darcie. I’m not keeping this shit on my phone any longer than necessary, but rest assured, I have backup copies should we need them.”

“You... you... wanker.”

“Oh, Darcie,” Elliot growls, pocketing his phone and stalking closer to her. “I’m so much fucking worse than that.”

A yelp rips through the air as he grabs her by her hair and drags her toward the doors.

“Now, do us all a favour and fuck off, yeah? And keep your filthy mouth shut.”

“B-but Reese said.”

“Oh, you can tell the whole fucking world about your night together. You can make that as creative as you like, just like you agreed. But anything else passes your lips and that video goes viral. Got it?”

She nods, a whimper falling from her lips before he finally shoves her through the door and slams it behind her.

“What the fuck?” Oak barks, finally returning in a tank and sweats. “Did I miss all the fun?”



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## OLIVIA

“I kid you not, Keeley, his dick was huge.”

“Oh my God, what did you do?” Keeley Davis sniggers as I sit quietly in the bathroom stall, praying to God that they’ll move it along soon.

I didn’t intend on getting stuck with them in the girls’ bathroom. But the universe clearly loves any opportunity to fuck with me.

“What do you think I did? Rode him like a champ.” She smacks her lips together as if she’s applying gloss. Bright red, no doubt.

“And...”

“And what? It’s sex, Kee, use your imagination.”

“I can’t believe you fucked an Heir.”

“Told you I’d make it happen this year. And Reese is... ugh, he’s so bloody hot.”

“I don’t know, I think I prefer Oakley. I’ve heard he’s a real freak between the—”

No.

No. No. No.

I press my hands to my ears. No one needs to hear a girl recount her sexual fantasies about your twin brother.

Their laughter fills the bathroom, setting my teeth on edge, but eventually they finish their gossiping and preening and leave.

Thank God.

I slip out of the stall and wash my hands, splashing some water on my neck. My heart is working overtime, making my stomach churn.

Darcie was with Reese. She said it herself. So how the hell did he manage

to sneak out of the Chapel and go to Huxton?

It doesn't make sense. I'm missing something, I have to be.

Because it's the only explanation for his kerosene-scented hoodie, isn't it?

My phone vibrates and I dig it out of my blazer pocket, groaning at my brother's name.

All weekend he's bombarded me with messages, trying to worm his way back in my good graces, but I've mostly been avoiding him.

Reese committed arson, I know he did, and there's every chance my brother, Elliot, and Theo were in on it, and that is not okay with me.

Sure, there have been plenty of incidents over the years. Fights, drugs, vandalism, and trespassing. The Heirs of All Hallows' are lawless. Reckless and hot-headed.

Because society tells them that their money, their names and family ties place them ahead of everyone else. Dad was right about one thing—it's how it always has been and probably how it always will be.

Scanning the text again, I decide to ignore Oakley. I'm not ready to talk to him. I'm not ready to talk to any of them, and given how well they've settled into their roles as the new Heirs at school, it shouldn't be too difficult to stay out of their way.

“Liv,” Oakley calls as I enter class, but I slide into an empty seat in a row near the front.

“Are you fucking kidding me?” he hisses. There's a commotion behind me, and then I sense him.

“Move,” he growls at the lad beside me.

“Come on, man. This is my seat. I always—”

“I said, move.”

I offer him an apologetic smile as he packs up his stuff and switches seats.

So much for avoiding him.

“Seriously, Liv. You're starting to piss me off.”

“Me?” My eyes narrow with contempt. “I'm pissing you off? Go annoy someone else, Oak. I'm not in the mood.” I stare upfront, dismissing him.



But of course, Oakley doesn't appreciate being ignored. Another prerequisite of being an Heir, apparently.

He drags his table and chair closer, leaning right in. "Look, I already told you, it wasn't us."

He lies so easily and it hurts. It hurts that he can look me in the eye and act as if I'm the one in the wrong.

"I don't believe you."

"Liv!" His hand slams down on the table and my eyes widen.

"Shit, I didn't mean... I don't like that we're fighting."

"I don't like that my brother is a lying tosser."

"I swear to God, Olivia. I am not—"

"Like I said, Oakley, go annoy someone else."

I stare ahead again, refusing to look at him.

"Hormonal bitch," he mutters under his breath, and I cut him with an icy glare.

He smirks, and I give him the bird right as Mr. Piper walks in.

"How lovely, Miss Beckworth."

"Sorry, sir," I mutter, much to Oak's amusement.

Anger explodes inside me at how flippant he's being. My hand shoots up as I blurt, "Actually, sir. I'm not feeling so good. Please may I be excused?"

"The fuck, Liv?" Oakley hisses, and I flash him a saccharine smile.

"I'm sure you can manage, Miss—"

"Period cramps, sir. Really bad ones. I need some painkillers and a hot water bottle."

"Yes, well, that is... yes. You should go..." He flushes bright red, as if the word 'period' is the worst thing I could have possibly said.

Stuffing my things into my bag, I don't spare Oakley a second glance as I walk out of there and make a beeline for the side exit.

I can't be here, not today. Not with all this unresolved anger.

My phone vibrates. Once. Twice. A third time.

I don't even bother to read Oakley's texts. He can stew on his lies a little longer.

Deceitful bastard.

Guilt snakes through me. He isn't the only one lying. But it's not the same. My relationship with Reese, if you can even call it that, isn't illegal. It couldn't land us in jail. Not unless Reese pisses me off so much that I try to strangle the life right out of him.

Bursting out of the fire door, I almost run straight into a girl sitting on the steps.

“Crap, I’m— Tally?” I gawk down at her.

“Oh, hey.”

“What are you doing out here?”

“The same thing you are, if the way you spill out of the door is anything to go by.” She lifts her shoulders in a small shrug.

“Is everything okay?” I ask, sensing her emotions.

“Same shit, different day.” She barely looks at me, and I don’t blame her.

Me and Tally Darlington aren’t friends. We aren’t even acquaintances, all thanks to the names we both bear.

Beckworth and Darlington.

If my father is one of the best defence lawyers in the country, hers is the best prosecution lawyer. More than once, Dad has come up against Mr. Darlington in the courtroom, and there is no love lost between them.

Befriending Tally would be like befriending the enemy, a move neither my father nor brother would appreciate.

Maybe that’s all the more reason to do it.

My lips curve.

Tally glances up, noticing. “What?”

“Nothing.”

“Are you planning on staying out here or...”

“Don’t worry, I’m not staying.” I skip past her.

“Wait, Olivia.”

“Yeah?” I look back at her.

“Sorry, that was rude. I’m just having a really bad day.” Something flashes in her eyes, but I’m all out of sympathy today.

I’ve got enough of my own problems without inheriting a girl I’ve barely spoken two words to my entire life.

“Don’t worry about it,” I reply before taking off down the path leading back around the building to the car park.

It’s times like these I miss Charli. At least when we were at school together, I had someone to turn to.

Climbing into my car, I slam the door shut, flinching at the sound. A quick check of my phone says I have two texts from Oakley.

Oak: What the fuck Liv?

Oak: Seriously, stop acting like a drama queen and come back to class...

Tears of frustration prick the corners of my eyes. He doesn't get it. Why would he?

I spend the afternoon studying in my room. It's hardly the rebellious act I felt like committing as I fled All Hallows', but it's the safest. Oak won't come back here and pick a fight, not with Dad and Fiona already home.

They got back an hour ago, their voices drifting up to my room. But I haven't been down to say hello.

Eventually, my grumbling stomach gets the better of me, and I venture downstairs in search of some food—only to come to a sudden halt at the scene before me.

“What is going on?”

“Sweetheart, you're awake.”

Awake?

I frown.

I was never asleep.

“The boys thought it would be nice for us all to eat together.”

“I'm not hungry.”

My stomach growls at the smell of Chinese food, and they all look at me.

“Sounds like you're ravenous.” Reese smirks, and I want to throw something at his head.

I've never been a particularly violent person before, but he sure has a way of bringing that out in me.

“Come on, Liv. It's your favourite.” Oak smiles, apology glittering in his eyes.

Damn him.

He's too good at this—manipulating people to his own ends.

But neither of them is aware that I know the truth. Well, some of it. Because I still haven't figured out how Reese pulled it off.

“Fine,” I snap, joining them at the table.

“How are you, sweetheart? Oak said you weren't feeling so good this afternoon.”

“I’m fine, thanks.”

“I got you some things.”

“Things?” My eyes slide to Oakley’s.

“Yeah. You know, painkillers, chocolate, women’s things.”

“You brought me sanitary products?”

Dad almost chokes on his spring roll while Reese stares at us, confusion crinkling his brows.

“Yeah.” Oak shrugs. “It’s no big deal.”

He bought me guilt tampons.

Oh my God.

“That is... I really don’t know what to say.”

“Such a sweet, thoughtful thing,” Fiona says. “You’re lucky to have each other.”

Lucky.

Sure.

I load my plate with some prawn toast and wontons and give my brother a thin smile. “I’m sure Dad and Fiona don’t want to hear about my... issues. You should fill them in on the party.”

“Oh yes, was it fun?” Fiona asks, completely oblivious to the ripple of tension that goes through the room.

“Nothing to tell.” Reese stiffens, studying me.

“Oh, come on, there’s always a tale or two from a party at the Chapel. I heard that you and Darcie Porter were getting cosy.”

His eyes narrow, anger rolling off him in vicious waves.

“Darcie Porter, the headteacher’s daughter?” Fiona frowns.

“Relax, Mum, we’re not... it’s not serious.”

Oak sniggers, and I pin him with a hard look.

‘What?’ he mouths.

Fiona’s mobile starts ringing.

“Crap, I’m sorry,” she says, checking the caller ID. “It’s Krystal, I told her to call tonight.”

“Aunt Krystal?” Reese asks. “I haven’t seen her in years.”

“We still catch up now again. I’ll tell her I’ll call back later.” She gets up and goes to take the call, slipping into the hall.

“I didn’t know you have an aunt called Krystal,” I murmur.

“Oh, Krystal isn’t really Reese’s aunt, sweetheart. She was my best friend in high school. She used to come around a lot when Reese was a little boy,

and he took to calling her auntie.” Something passes over her face, but I don’t ask her to expand.

I don’t know why I said anything in the first place.

We all eat in awkward silence for the next few minutes. Reese watches me watch Oak. What are they playing at, trying to ambush me like this?

I don’t like it—the two of them in cahoots again. It feels... weird.

After I’ve devoured my prawn toast, I take a sip of my water and sit back in my chair. Everyone’s enjoying their food. A rare memory of peace between the five of us.

I clear my throat, earning their attention.

“Something wrong, sweetheart?” Dad asks when he realises I’ve stopped eating.

“No, Dad. The food is great. I was thinking about what happened over in Huxton.”

“Huxton?”

Oak straightens, his eyes going to mine while Reese barely looks up.

“Yeah. Has anyone come forward with any information yet?”

“I don’t know, sweetheart. But I’m sure they’ll catch whoever did it. Someone will have caught them fleeing the scene on CCTV or a Ring doorbell.”

“True. It’s a bit scary to think there’s an arsonist on the loose. Charli lives right up the street from the Starlings.”

“I’m sure it was an isolated incident,” he adds with a tone that suggests this line of conversation is over.

But Reese makes a small sound of disapproval and says, “If you ask me, the prick deserved it.”



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## REESE

“**M**ust we talk rugby rivalries over the dinner table?” Mum sighs, taking her seat at the table again, as Olivia’s hate-filled stare burns into the top of my head.

“What exactly does that mean?” she asks, completely ignoring Mum’s request.

“That he’s an entitled dick. He’s had something like that coming for years with the way he lords it over everyone.”

Olivia snorts a mixture of disbelief and amusement that finally makes my head lift from my food.

“What?” I ask, confused by her outburst.

“You’re accusing someone else of being an entitled dick. Fuck, Reese, you lot all own that title to the point I’m surprised you don’t actually have trophies to prove it.”

“Enough, Olivia,” Christian growls in annoyance.

“You’re defending them?” she asks, although I have no idea why.

Christian has made it quite clear time and time again that he fully supports us. He was an Heir back in the day, and then a Scion at Saints Cross U—why would he be against it? He knows how much fun having the power is. He wants that for Oak, and in turn, he wants it for me and the other two.

“It’s all part of being an Heir,” he reasons, and these kinds of disputes are great for Oakley’s future career.

“Of course you only see the good in this stuff,” she mutters, letting out a huff that tells everyone in that she doesn’t have the energy to go up against her dad. Who does? He’s formidable.

A ripple of tension goes around the room while Olivia seethes and Oakley

bristles next to me.

I have no idea what they're fighting about really. He's barely said a word about her all weekend, but I know it's eating at him. He didn't need to bring up the fact that he dragged me to the shop for fucking tampons to pacify her to tell me how much he hates fighting with her.

It's always been the same. It's like she has the power to flip a switch in him that only she can turn off again. I used to hate it when we were kids. I'd do anything I could to cheer him up, but it was never enough. He didn't need me. Just her. It fucking killed me.

"So how are classes? Do you like your new teachers?" Mum asks naïvely. She's putting this shit on to pretend that we're all one big, happy family, and I hate it almost as much as knowing my best friend is hurting.

"Yeah, it's great," Oak mutters, stuffing his mouth full of noodles.

"Excuse me, I just need..." Olivia trails off before taking her plate to the dishwasher and disappearing out of the kitchen. No one speaks until the sound of her slamming her bedroom door ripples through the house.

"What have you two fallen out over? I'm assuming this is more than hormones," Christian says.

"It's nothing," Oak says with a shrug. "Thank you for this, it's been... great."

He follows Olivia's move, cleans off his plate, and dumps it in the dishwasher.

"I've got homework to do. I'm gonna stay here tonight if that's—"

"Of course, sweetheart. You don't even have to ask."

"You coming?" he asks me, but I hesitate. Fuck knows why.

"Fine, well, you know where I am if you need me."

He's gone before anyone gets to say anything, and I'm left with Christian and Mum staring at me like they're about to impart some parental advice.

Safe to say, I bolt as fast as fucking possible.

Being here and sleeping in a bed might be preferable over the Chapel's sofa, but only just.

Everything is quiet as I make my way up the stairs, and I smirk, imagining them both sitting in their rooms with their faces twisted up in anger over whatever bullshit fight they're in the middle of.

I stop when I get to my door, my eyes firmly locked on hers. I wonder what she's doing right now. If she's thinking about me.

Doubtful, but it doesn't stop me from abandoning the idea of my bedroom



in favour of hers.

I've missed her the past few nights, but with the parties raging at the Chapel, I could hardly sneak off in favour of watching my soon-to-be stepsister sleep.

I expect her to say something the second I open the door, so when nothing comes, I assume that's a suitable invite and close the door behind me.

Stepping forward, the sound of her breathing hits me in the silence, letting me know that she's here before I turn the corner and suck in a breath.

Holy fuck, I've walked into heaven.

Olivia is bent in half, her arse pointing right at me in a tiny pair of shorts, her long legs on full display.

My fingers curl into fists as I rest my shoulder against the wall and watch her. But she doesn't do anything. She stays there, probably with her head filling with blood, exactly like my cock.

Reaching down, I rub myself through the fabric of my trousers, imagining what it might be like to take her like that.

A groan rumbles deep in my throat when she pushes up, this time literally bending her body in half as she wraps her hands around her ankles.

Jesus fucking Christ.

Unable to stop myself, I push from the wall and step right up behind her.

I lower my hand, letting my fingers trail up the back of her thigh.

The second she notices my touch, she shrieks and stumbles forward, but I'm ready for her and clamp my hand around her hip, dragging her arse back against my aching cock as my other hand wraps around her throat, forcing her to stand upright.

"Reese," she growls, but there's no heat behind it, and as she rubs her arse back against me, it loses any seriousness.

Releasing her hip, I pluck the white AirPods from her ear, moving it to mine. The dulcet tones of some random dude spewing meditation bullshit spills from it, and I quickly flick it away, sending it flying across the room until it bounces across her desk and falls behind it.

"What the fuck?" she barks, flinching as if she's about to fight against my hold. But the second I tighten my grip on her throat, she stills.

"I can think of something much more therapeutic for your anger right now, Olive."

"You need to get out of my room. Oak is—"

"Oak is pissed at you. I can't see him storming in here any time soon."

It's a lie. Oak is a big puppy dog when it comes to his sister, and I wouldn't put it past him crawling in here on his hands and knees and begging for forgiveness. Fucking pussy.

"Reese, you—" she starts again, but I cut her off.

"Are you wet for me, Olive? I know the period story is bullshit."

She tenses in my arms, and this time when she fights me, I let her go. Getting her fired up will only serve me better in the long run.

"How the fuck could you possibly know that?" she seethes, walking to the other side of the room before she spins around and gifts me the sight of her low-cut sports bra.

Fuck, her tits look insane.

"My eyes are up here, knobhead."

I let my gaze slowly roll up her body, not missing the way her chest is heaving and her cheeks are flushed. Granted, that could be from her being upside down when I walked in, but I can lie to myself well enough.

Her hands land on her hips as she continues to glare at me.

"So?" she prompts.

My brow lifts as I admit that I've forgotten that there was a question.

She huffs in irritation. "How do you know it's bullshit? You track my cycle or something?"

"Nah, I barely know what day it is, let alone that shit. I just... know. I can tell by looking at you."

Her eyes narrow.

"You're so fucking full of yourself," she scoffs.

"So prove it."

"P-prove it?" she parrots.

"Yeah." I smirk.

"Fuck you, Reese. I don't have to prove anything to you."

"You're right," I agree, prowling toward her. "You don't. Because I don't care. Even if I'm wrong, it won't stop me."

"Jesus. Are you even hearing yourself?"

I don't stop moving forward, and when she realises that I have no intention of pausing, she backs up until she bumps against the windowsill.

"Uh-oh, you seem to have run out of space to escape, sweet cheeks." Lifting my hand, I brush my fingers down her cheek.

For the briefest second, her eyes shutter at my gentle touch. But everything changes in an instant as fire blazes within them and she knocks

my arm away.

“Get your filthy fucking hands off me. I know where they’ve been,” she seethes.

“Oh?” I ask, tilting my head to the side, loving this jealous side to her.

“Not only am I not interested in anything you have to offer, Whitfield. But I certainly do not want Darcie Porter’s cast-offs. To be honest, I’m surprised your fingers and cock are still attached to your body after dipping them into such a poisonous creature.”

A smirk pulls at my lips as I lift my hand and hold the two fingers in question between us. Her top lip peels back in disgust as jealousy flares in her brown eyes.

It makes me fucking burn for her.

“They look okay to me, sweet cheeks. Did you wanna check my cock for damage too? Because I’d love to see you on your fucking knees for me right now.”

My hand darts out, my fingers twisting in her hair as if I’m about to force her to the floor, putting her at eye level with my dick.

My teeth grind as my boner presses against the fabric of my trousers. There’s no fucking hiding it, and if she were to look down, or better, comply with my demand, then she’d see exactly what she does to me.

“Seems to me that I had my fingers in you first, Olive. So there’s probably an argument that Darcie got your sloppy seconds.”

“Didn’t sound like there was anything sloppy about your performance on Friday night, from what I’ve heard,” she mutters under her breath.

“Oh? Care to share?”

“Like you haven’t heard her praising your massive cock like it should be fucking cast in stone and turned into a Saints Cross relic.”

I snort a laugh as the prospect of a statue of my cock placed in the town square pops into my mind. I’ve sure had worse images in my head.

“Sounds to me it’s something you should be worshipping right now.”

“In your fucking dreams.”

“Yeah, actually,” I confess. “I often wake up hard as fuck, thinking about what it might be like to push my cock past your full lips, to feel your tongue licking up the length of my shaft, tasting me.”

Her eyes darken and her lips pop open in shock.

“I want to know how deep you can take me. I want to see tears streaming down your cheeks as I fuck your mouth and listen to you moan as you take

me like the dirty, filthy whore you are, Olivia Beckworth.”

A bang comes from the other side of the room and we both still, waiting to see if Oak is going to come crashing through their Jack and Jill bathroom.

When nothing else follows, I use her moment of panic to my advantage and shove my non-poisonous hand into her shorts, not stopping until I get the answer to the question I first asked when I announced my presence.

“Oh, sweet cheeks. You really wanna suck my cock, huh?”

“Reese, no,” she warns, but it soon turns into a moan when I sink two fingers inside her soaking pussy.

“Tell me you’re a liar, Olivia,” I demand as I begin finger-fucking her harder.

Her jaw locks and her eyes blaze with hate.

When it becomes clear that she’s not going to say a word, I rip my hand from her shorts and hold my fingers between us.

“Liar,” I breathe before wrapping my hand around her throat again, dragging her from the window and throwing her down on the bed. “And do you know what liars deserve?”

“Reese,” she half warns, half moans as I tuck my fingers beneath the waistband of her shorts and drag them down her thighs.

“Punishment.”



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## OLIVIA

This cannot be happening.

The four little words flutter through my mind but don't linger. Because although I know it's wrong, although I know nothing about this is normal or right or logical, it feels too damn good to stop.

Jesus, what the hell is wrong with me?

Reese hovers above me, his eyes as dark as the night as he brazenly cups me, sliding a finger right through my folds and pressing it inside me.

"Oh my God," I breathe, my lungs constricting as he goes deeper.

"Admit it. You want me, Olive."

Anger flares inside me at his taunt, but I don't take the bait. I'm too lost in this moment of madness, the risk and anticipation.

My brother is right on the other side of the bathroom. But for a second, I want to be found. I want him to know what it's like to be constantly on the periphery of things.

I'm not an Heir—I never will be.

So as close as the two of us are, I'll never truly walk in his world. And part of me resents that.

Hates it even.

But this, messing around with Reese, letting him touch me like this, it feels like my own personal fuck you to a society built to keep women one step behind.

"Say it, sweet cheeks." He leans down, ghosting his mouth over mine. Touching but not. Breathing his mint-flavoured breath all over me.

"Say. It."

"Never." I bare my teeth and his smirk grows, that cocky glint in his eye

intensifying.

“Fine, have it your way.” He presses another finger into me, stretching me as his thumb rolls over my clit, making a cry lodge in my throat. I swallow it down, trapping it behind my teeth as he finger fucks me with vicious intent.

His touch isn’t sweet or tender. He’s brutal, forcing my body to bend to his will.

“I can’t wait to fucking get inside you.”

“Never going...” A moan rumbles in my throat as he curls his fingers, rubbing that magic spot deep inside me. “To happen,” I pant, bowing off the bed, seeking more.

More... more... more.

“I’m going to enjoy watching you beg.” Reese smashes his mouth to mine, stealing my breath and every ounce of my lingering anger as he kisses me like he wants to devour me.

My arms loop around his neck, pulling him closer as I ride his hand, needing more.

Needing everything he’s willing to give me.

I don’t understand why it feels so good, but in this moment, I don’t care.

I only care that he doesn’t stop.

“Are you going to come for me, Olive?” His lips move to my neck, caressing the skin there, teeth nipping and biting. “Let me feel your pussy soak my fingers.”

“Reese,” I cry, an intense wave building inside me.

“Your brother is right next door. Imagine what he’d say if he knew you were letting me get you off, begging me to let you come.”

“Please...” I choke out, pleasure saturating every inch of me. It’s not enough, though. I need more. I need him to get me there.

“Please what, Olive?”

He stares down at me with an intensity that makes my heart stutter. His fingers slow, teasing me, gliding in and out.

“Please, I’m so close...”

Reese tears away from me and I blink up at him, confused. “What are you doing?” I hiss.

He stands over me, bringing his glossy fingers to his mouth and sucking them clean. “Mmm, tastes like desperation.”

“Excuse me?” I grab the bedsheet and pull it over my exposed body as I

sit up.

“Admit it and you get to come.”

“Reese...”

“Admit. It.” He curls a hand around my jaw, tipping my head back so I have no choice but to look at him.

The pleasure evaporates as I glower at him, refusing to say the words he so desperately wants to hear.

“Such a filthy little liar.” He tsks.

“You’re one to talk.”

His eyes widen before narrowing as he studies me, no doubt trying to figure out what I mean.

“Something you want to tell me, sweet cheeks?”

“I know what you did,” I spit.

“And what exactly is it that you think I did?”

“It was you. You went to Huxton and you blew up Dale Starling’s car. But what I can’t figure out is why. Did you do it for my brother and the Heirs? To try to win back their trust...”

I hesitate, trying to swallow my next words. But I can’t do it.

I have to know.

“Or did you do it for me?”

His expression darkens as his mouth twists with wicked intent. “That’s an interesting theory.” Slowly, he begins to inch backwards to the door. “But you’re forgetting one thing.”

“What’s that?” I take the bait, right as his hand reaches for the handle behind him.

“I spent the night balls deep inside Darcie.”

My stomach sinks as I clutch the sheets tighter. “You bastard.”

“Aww, did you think you were special, Olive? Did you think I marched off to Huxton to defend your honour?” He snorts. “I don’t know what you think you know, but if you need proof that I was otherwise engaged, ask Darcie for a play by play. I’m sure she’ll be happy to recount how thoroughly fucked she was by the time I was done with her.”

“Get out,” I seethe quietly, rage and shame vibrating through me.

“Or what?”

“Or I’ll scream. I’ll scream so fucking loud Oak won’t be the only one running in here. My dad and your mum will, too.”

“Don’t play games you can’t win, Olivia.” My name is a dangerous



whisper on his lips. “Or have you forgotten about the photo evidence I have of you from that night?”

“Why do you hate me so much?”

Because I see it as clear as day in his eyes. He wants me, I don’t doubt that. The thick bulge in his grey sweats is telling enough. But his lust is laced with hatred, the two emotions woven tightly together.

I should know, because I feel it too.

“I—”

“Hey, Reese?” Oak calls out, and icy panic floods my veins.

“Shit,” I mutter, smoothing my hair down and grabbing my shorts. “Distract him,” I snap. “And don’t you dare say anything.”

“I don’t exactly have a death wish,” he growls back.

Reese smooths down his t-shirt and pulls the door open, stepping into the hall. Thankfully, he keeps it pulled almost closed, so I can quickly get dressed and try to calm myself down.

“What’s going on?” Oak asks. “Where’s Liv?”

“She’s in there.”

“Yeah, but what were you doing in there?”

Blood pounds in my skull as I strain to listen.

Please don’t come in here. He’ll know. One look at me, and Oakley will know something is up.

“What the fuck do you think I was doing?” Reese grumbles. “Checking she was okay.”

“Since when did you grow a heart, Whitfield?”

“At least I wasn’t sulking in my room like a child.”

“Fuck you, man. I wasn’t sulking. Is she... okay?”

“You should ask her. She wouldn’t say much to me.”

Relief slams into me, but it’s short lived when there’s a knock on the door.

“Liv?”

“Go away, Oak,” I yell.

I can’t see him like this. My lips are still swollen from Reese’s aggressive kisses, my skin still flushed from his possessive touch.

“Come on, Sis. Don’t be like that. I want to know you’re okay.”

“I’m fine. You don’t need to check in on me.”

“You let Reese in.”

I detect a trace of jealousy in his voice.

I want to tell him that I didn't let Reese do anything, but that will only lead to more questions, so I swallow the words down.

"Oak, serious—"

The door bursts open and my brother appears, looking so wounded I have to smother a laugh.

"Really?" My brow quirks with annoyance.

"I don't like it when you're pissed at me."

"I don't like it when you're lying to me."

"How many times do I have to tell you, I'm not—"

"Just go," I sigh. "I'm not in the mood."

Oakley stares at me, and I wonder if he spots it. But then an arm drops over his shoulder and Reese says, "Come on, Oak. Let's leave Little Miss Perfect to her PMS." He sticks his head inside, smirking over Oak.

God, sometimes I don't know whether I want to kiss the smug expression right off his face or murder him with my bare hands.

Probably a bit of both.

How can someone you despise get so deep under your skin?

It doesn't make any sense.

All I know is that since that night at the end of school initiation party, something ignited inside me. Something that reacts every time Reese is within close proximity.

Part of me wonders if all we need is to fuck the tension out of us. But I'd rather stick pins in my eyes than admit that out loud. Especially after he got with Darcie at the party.

A shudder runs through me. I can't believe I let him touch me after touching her.

"Friends?" Oakley asks with those stupid puppy dog eyes of his.

"Whatever," I murmur, barely meeting his eyes. "Can you leave me alone now?"

"You sure you don't want to come watch scary movies with me and Reese?"

"We're doing that?"

"Hell yes we are, Whitfield. Liv should come too, right?"

"Yeah, she should definitely come."

Heat licks down my spine at the low, gravelly quality to his voice.

"See, even Whitfield wants you to come hang out."

"No." I get up and pad over to my bedroom, grabbing the door handle.

“Liv, come on—”

“Goodbye, Brother.” I slam the door in his and Reese’s face with a smug smile.

Eventually, I’m going to have to fess up about finding Reese’s hoodie. But not tonight.

Instead, I need an escape plan. Because there’s no way I can be in the house with Oakley and Reese after what just happened.

So I grab my phone off the desk and text Charli.

Olivia: Hi, I know it’s out of the blue, but can I come over? I need to get out of the house.

Charli: Fuck yes! Want to stay the night? Arse-wipe is away on business, so it’s just me and Mum.

Olivia: Sounds good. I’ll be there soon.

Grabbing my bag, I shove a clean uniform, my phone charger, and my toiletry bag inside. Once I have everything I need, I glance at my bedroom door and let out a weary sigh.

Now for the difficult part—escaping the house without my brother and Reese noticing.



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## REESE

“S he knows,” Oak blurts the second I follow him into his room.  
He throws himself onto the bed with a groan, and my eyes shoot to the door that will lead me straight back to Olivia.

My cock still aches for her, but thankfully, Oak’s sudden appearance helped to sink my boner sharpish.

I swallow nervously. He’s right. She does know.

But how?

We covered our tracks. My alibi is watertight to the point that the entire school knows exactly where I was at the time, thanks to Darcie’s big, slutty mouth.

A shudder rips up my spine, and I wonder for the millionth time why I had to be the one lumbered with that bullshit.

Oak or Theo could have taken on the leech.

*But then you wouldn’t have been able to get payback for Dale fucking Starling touching what’s yours.*

I banish that little voice from my head, but another quickly pops up in its place.

*“Did you do it for my brother and the Heirs? Try to win back their trust... Or did you do it for me?”*

“Fuck,” I hiss under my breath, the image of her laid out beneath me with her legs spread playing out in my mind.

“What?” Oak asks, not missing my muttering.

Scrubbing my hand down my face, I walk deeper into the room and fall onto Oak’s beanbag chair. I’m instantly swallowed up by it. But I can’t help thinking how much I’d rather have something else wrapped around me...

Olivia's thighs.

Fuck.

I tug at my sweats as they begin getting too small again.

"How?" I finally ask when my silence on the situation begins to get uncomfortable.

"I don't know. Fuck. FUCK," he bellows, his feet slamming down on the bed in frustration. "I fucking hate lying to her."

*So don't*, sits right on the tip of my tongue.

Oak can trust her. She wouldn't sell him out and willingly get him tangled up in this shit. She might, however, sell me down the river to get rid of me.

"She's got me by the fucking balls, and now she'll barely even talk to me."

"She'll get over it," I mutter, more than aware of how good a grudge that girl can hold. Especially when it comes to Oak.

"Everything is changing, man." He sits forward and threads his fingers through his hair and rests his elbows on his knees. "We've got everything we've always dreamed of. Elliot has the key; the Chapel is ours. The power, the girls, the parties. I knew it meant that I'd be out of the house more, and that things would be different, but not like this.

"The distance between us is growing, and I feel like a pussy, but I don't know. She's... she's a part of me, and I want her to be in my life, but she's pulling away faster than I thought, and holding on to her is like trying to hold sand."

I stare at him unblinking as he opens himself up and lets his pain bleed all over the bed.

Guilt twists up my insides because I know I'm playing a big part in Olivia not wanting anything to do with us as a group, or to hang out at the Chapel.

But then I think back to the beginning of the summer and focus on the fact that Olivia was lying to us all, even Oak.

The truth burns through me like acid. I should tell him what she was hiding, the betrayal she was covering up. But then where would that leave me?

And selfishly, I want this. I want her. That lust-filled hatred she shoots my way every time our eyes connect.

I'm not ready to give that up yet. Not until I've done what I came here for.

Not until I see her and those who wronged me twisted up in pain and regrets.

“I know I can’t understand because I don’t have a sibling, let alone a twin, but all of this is kinda inevitable. It sucks. But you were never gonna be as close as adults as you were as kids. Life, other people, they’re all going to get in the way.”

“I know. Fuck. I know. I just... I fucking hate it.”

“You’re gonna have to get used to sharing her, man. One day, she’ll meet someone and—”

“Don’t,” he warns, finally lifting his head and shooting me a deadly look.

“Don’t pull that *no one can ever touch her* bullshit when I know for a fact you were with multiple girls on Friday night.”

A wicked smile pulls at the corners of his mouth as he predictably relives what he can remember from that night. “Man, it was crazy,” he says, rubbing his jaw, deep in thought.

“Sure sounds like more fun than what I was doing,” I mutter.

“Fuck off. You loved every minute of that. You wouldn’t have gone as far as you did if you hadn’t.”

“Maybe,” I mutter.

“Anyway, Darcie sure has made it sound like you had the time of your life.”

“Hasn’t she just. Do you know how many girls I’ve had come up to me since, wanting to know if the rumours are true about the size of my cock.”

Oak snorts a laugh.

“Why the fuck haven’t you forced them to find out with their mouths?”

I squeeze my eyes shut, the image of the only girl I want on her knees for me filling my head.

“I can confirm that most of them do a decent enough job.”

“I don’t want my cock sucked by some decent-ish whore.”

“Oh?” Oak asks, curiosity burning through his eyes. “Is there something I don’t know?”

“What? No, of course not. I forgot how fucking desperate the All Hallows’ girls were while I was away, and it’s such a fucking turn off.”

Anger twists at his features as I mention my absence, but he quickly recovers.

“Okay, so indulge me. What kind of pussy did you find this summer that’s made you so fucking fussy?”

My lips part, ready to shoot something back, but the truth slams into me with force.

The only action I saw this summer was my right hand and those photos I took of Olivia.

Fuck me. When did my life get so pathetic?

**A**s promised, Oak finally put on some horror film I've seen advertised but paid little attention to once he stopped bitching about Olivia.

Part of me revelled in the fact that there was a divide between them. It's what I wanted. To rip everything away from her and expose her as the lying, traitorous whore she is. But there was another part, a part of me that was desperate to be the kids, and the friends, we once were who wants to do anything I can to fix them. To fix us.

The boys—and Olivia, because she and Oak come as a package deal—used to be everything to me. My brothers. My family.

Walking away from them this summer was hard, but I had the promise of something better on the horizon, and I was a stupid, bitter boy who thought the grass would be greener.

Hell, I'm still that hopeful boy, because I'm still craving that green grass. But being back here, slotting back into my old life, sure makes me question everything more than I expected to.

I had a clear plan. All I had to do was play the game until I could get what I needed, then I would let off the atomic bomb I was working on and run into the sunshine.

Because all I need in life is myself, right?

A soft snore comes from the bed, and when I look over, Oak has slumped down so low that he's almost vertical.

Pushing from his beanbag, I find the remote that's hiding in the sheets and turn the TV off, plunging the room into darkness seeing as we watched the film with the lights off like we did as kids.

Slipping from the room, I have to blink a few times as the light from the hallway sears into my eyeballs like lasers.

The house is silent. I have no idea if Mum and Christian have gone out or are in bed, and to be honest, I don't really give a shit. The less I think about



them, the better.

I have every intention of going to my room, I really, truly do, but it seems that my legs have a different idea, because when I reach for a door handle, it's the one that leads me to the room opposite mine that I have zero right walking back into. But when the fuck did I care about what I should and shouldn't be doing?

My heart races, my cock hardening as her scent hits me the moment I push the door open.

That image of her on the bed earlier fills my mind once again, and I move faster, imagining dragging the sheets from her body and continuing exactly where we left off, only with my head between her thighs instead of my hand.

Adrenaline pumps through me as I surge forward, but I come to an abrupt halt when her room opens up before me and I find her bed suspiciously empty.

I spin around and throw the bathroom door open in the hope that I might find her mid-shower. I already know I won't. Something deep down inside me knows that she's not here. It doesn't stop me from wishing for the best and checking the room in case. But it's empty.

Dragging my phone from my pocket, I pull up our chat.

Reese: Where are you?

Her message shows as read almost immediately, but she doesn't reply.

Reese: Olive.

Nothing.

Reese: Are you so scared of admitting what you really want that you'd rather run away from me?

I can picture her teeth grinding as her eyes flash with that defiance that brings me to my knees every time I see it.

Reese: Pussy.

Reese: Are you still wet for me?

I walk back out of the bathroom and look around her room. Flicking on her bedside lamp, I bite down on my bottom lip as ideas flicker through my

head.

Reese: Guess where I am right now?

I pull open her top drawer, disappointed when I find socks. Boring.  
The next one is full of her lacy bras. Better.

“Bingo,” I breathe, reaching into the third drawer and pulling out a pair of pink lace knickers.

Lifting them to my nose, I inhale the scent of fresh laundry mixed with whatever that unique Olivia smell is. My cock jerks as I crawl back on her bed with my loot twisted in my fingers.

My phone buzzes, and a wide smirk stretches across my face.  
“Gotcha.”

Olive: Get out of my room.

Reese: No can do, sweet cheeks. I love your lingerie collection.  
Very sexy. I particularly like the pink set with the little heart  
charm hanging from the lace.

Olive: KEEP THE FUCK OUT OF MY STUFF.

A chuckle falls from my lips as I imagine her face getting all red and cute with anger.

Lifting my shirt up to reveal my abs, I half shove her underwear beneath the waistband of my sweats. Switching to my camera, I snap a picture and send it to her.

What I really want to do is send her one of my face with her knickers in my mouth, but that seems like a fucking stupid thing to do, and the perfect ammunition to come back at me with for the ones I’m holding of her.

The difference here is that I’ll never share those photos of her with anyone. But something tells me she’d happily spread any shit about me around school faster than Darcie gets on her knees.

Olive: I’m going to kill you in your sleep.

Reese: And I’m going to come on your pillow. Isn’t this fun?



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## OLIVIA

“So are you going to tell me the real reason you needed to escape the house last night?” Charli asks as I plait my hair into a loose braid over my shoulder.

“I already told you, Oakley was annoying me.”

“Oakley, right.”

“What is that supposed to mean?” I glance over at her and she arches a brow.

“So it had nothing to do with your new stepbrother?”

“He’s not my stepbrother, Charl. He’s... nothing.”

“You are a terrible liar.”

I press my lips into a thin line, and her soft laughter fills the room. “You know, I am an excellent reader of people. And you, Olivia Beckworth, are hiding something.”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

“So what was that at the party? With Brad—”

“Ben,” I correct, grabbing my bag and shoving the last of my things inside. I need to get going if I don’t want to be late for class.

“Brad. Ben. He could be called Bertie for all I care, but don’t even try to deny you were only dancing with him to make Reese jealous.”

“No comment.”

“Seriously, you’re going to pull that shit with me? Your friend?”

Giving her a little shrug, I grab my keys and say, “If we leave now, I can give you a lift on my way.”

“Thanks, but I’m taking the car. Mum lets me borrow it when Dan the Dickwad isn’t here.”

“That’s a new one.” I chuckle.

“Just trying it on for size. It’s so much easier when he’s not around.”

“Your mum still not budging on that?”

“Nope. She thinks he ‘makes our lives better’.”

“I’m sorry.”

“Don’t be. As soon as I’m done with school, I am out of here. You know, you should come with. We can hitchhike across the world, surviving on nothing but drinks from hot men and the clothes on our backs.”

“Yeah, I’m not really sure that sounds like my idea of fun.”

“Boring.” She snorts, touching up her lip gloss. “I’m going to buy the cheapest flight out of Heathrow.”

“And what does your mum think about your great escape plan?”

Charli shrugs, slipping on a diamanté embroidered hoodie. “I haven’t told her yet. She doesn’t give a shit though. So long as she’s got precious Dan the Wanker.”

“Charl, she loves you,” I say.

“Yeah, well, she has a funny way of showing it.” She glances at her phone and balks. “Shit, is that the time? You’re going to have to step on it or you’ll be late.”

**I** make it to All Hallows’ with two minutes to spare, but it’s probably a good thing. Less chance of bumping into my brother—or even worse, Reese—in the corridors.

Unease still ripples through me from his messages last night, that photo of his abs and my stolen knickers still burned into the backs of my eyelids.

Oakley tried to call me first thing this morning, but I ignored it.

I’m tired of the way they try to bulldoze over my life time and time again. I made him promise they wouldn’t do anything stupid where Dale Starling was concerned, and he broke it. Because reputation and appearances and exerting their power over anyone they deem a threat will always be more important to the Heirs than anything else.

It’s patriarchal arrogance at its finest, and I’m stuck in their world, whether I want to be or not.

As I hurry down the corridor to class, something snags my attention on

the sixth form noticeboard. Ugh. The first rugby game of the season is this Friday, which means All Hallows' is set to become a battleground as the Saints go head-to-head with their opponents with hopes of progressing to the county cup.

If my brother and the lads were unbearable before, they'll be insufferable once the season starts. All that testosterone and aggression. It doesn't help that Coach Walker is a drinking and golf buddy of Dad, and Elliot and Theo's fathers. It's why he's all too happy to turn a blind eye to the Heirs and their reckless behaviour.

With a heavy sigh, I hitch my bag up my shoulder and slip into class, mumbling an apology for being a tad late. The teacher throws me a disapproving glance and silently ushers me into my seat.

Of course, this class is the only one I share with Darcie Porter and her air-headed friends. She whispers something as I drop into my chair, and they all snigger. Glancing back, I pin her with a hard look and mouth, 'Problem?'

"Nothing." She gives me a saccharine smile, and I want to rip her perfectly styled hair out of her skull.

God, she and Reese really bring out my violent streak.

The teacher begins to lay out the topic for the day, a riveting dissection of life in Tudor England. I take some notes, distracted by the low din of Darcie and her friends' incessant chatter.

"Can you three shut up?" I hiss over my shoulder.

"Rude, much. We're discussing the work."

"Of course you are, and I'm running for Head Girl."

"Against Tally Darlington?" Darcie scoffs. "You'll never win."

"I was..." I shake my head. "It doesn't matter. Just please try and keep it down."

Thirty seconds.

They manage a whole thirty seconds before they start dissecting the size of Reese's dick.

"Grower or shower?" Tasha asks.

"Both," Darcie sniggers. "I swear he was so big, he hit my cervix every damn time."

"So lucky," her friend murmurs, and my stomach roils.

They continue like that for the next ten minutes. How many times he made her come, how loud she screamed, the scratch marks she left on his back.

My ears perk up as I glance back again.

“What?” Darcie sneers.

“How bad was it?”

“What?” she asks.

“Reese’s back?”

“Ew, why do you want to know?”

I shrug. “Your nails are practically weapons...” My eyes drop to her talons, and for a second, I imagine her raking them down Reese’s skin while she cries out with pleasure.

Stop.

I shake the unwanted and rather disturbing thoughts out of my head.

“You’re not jealous, are you?” Darcie smirks. “Because you know Reese would never touch you in like a million years. You’re Oakley’s sister and you’re... not exactly Reese’s type.”

Bitch.

Smug. Vain. Bitch.

Taking a deep breath, I face the front of the room again, giving Darcie and her friends the cold shoulder for the rest of the class. As soon as the teacher dismisses us, I dig out my phone and open up my chat history with Reese.

Olivia: Meet me before lunch?

Reese: What? Why?

Olivia: You’ll have to meet me to find out.

Reese: You seem to have forgotten, sweet cheeks, I make the rules.

So predictable. I roll my eyes as I file out of class.

Olivia: Fine. Don’t meet. No skin off my nose.

Reese: Behind the gym. Come alone.

Olivia: Oh, I plan on it.

A smirk curls my lips. Reese thinks he’s so fucking smooth.

Well, if my suspicions are correct, I’m about to bring him down a peg or

two.

**R**eese makes me wait seven minutes and twenty seconds.  
I know, because I timed him.

The smug wanker appears around the corner, looking every bit the posh bad boy that'll buy you Louboutins without so much as blinking and then fuck you in nothing but the red-soled heels.

"You're late," I snap, and he smirks.

"Feeling a little restless there, Olive?" He crowds me against the wall, pressing his hand onto the bricks beside my head. "You ran last night."

"You call it running, I call it regrouping."

"Is that so..."

"It is." I slide my hands up his chest and bat my eyelashes.

His eyes narrow in return as he captures my wrists in his big hand. "What game are you playing?"

"Actually, I was thinking we could call truce." Yanking my hand back free, I drop it to his trousers and brazenly stroke his dick through the stiff material.

"Fuck," he chokes out. "You're playing with fire..." he warns, but I keep stroking, applying more pressure to keep him distracted as I slip my other hand around his back and underneath his shirt.

"What are you doing?" His brow lifts.

"I want to feel your skin." I pout. Sweet and seductive.

I run my fingers up his back, stroking every inch of his smooth, warm skin. There isn't so much as a scratch on him. At least, it doesn't feel like there is.

"Fuck, that feels good," he groans.

I lean closer, brushing my lips over his jaw, letting them hover over the corner of his mouth. "Take off your shirt, Reese."

"W-what?" He blinks at me, confused.

"I want to taste you. All of you. But not unless you take off your shirt."

Suspicion dances in his eyes, so I quickly unbutton his trousers and slide my hand inside, grasping him firmly.

"Jesus, shit, Liv," he pants.



“If you want my mouth around your dick, I suggest... You. Take. It. Off.”

“Yeah, shit, okay.” He starts shifting out of his blazer and loosening his tie. Then, he’s unbuttoning his shirt and pulling everything off.

I give him a coy smile, letting my eyes trail over his toned, muscular body. So much tanned skin. Perfectly smooth, scratch-free skin.

“Let me,” I whisper, still stroking him as I step into him and kiss his shoulder, his chest and pecs, running my other hand all over him as I feed his lust. Moving around his big, imposing body, I smile triumphantly the second I see his back. The skull inked on his skin taunts me, a reminder of his obligations—his destiny. But I shove down those feelings and focus on the task at hand.

Pulling my hand free of his trousers, I keep moving until I’m behind him.

“Come on, Liv. Don’t keep me waiting. I want you on your knees, your mouth wrapped around—”

“You lied.” I spit the words.

“The fuck?” He spins around, cutting me with an icy glare.

“You didn’t fuck Darcie. She’s your alibi. You made me and everyone else think you were with her all night so you’d have an airtight alibi. It was you. You went to Huxton, and you blew up Dale Starling’s car. And I want to know why.”

He stares at me, the air crackling around us. “You don’t know shit.”

Reese grabs his shirt and blazer and pulls them back on.

“I found your hoodie.”

“What?”

An icy cold tremor goes through me at the hostility in his voice. But I refuse to cower now.

“You heard me. I found your hoodie.”

“You were snooping in my room?” His hand shoots out and grabs me around the throat, spinning me around until I’m pressed against the wall.

“You’re not the only one who can play this game, Reese.” Another violent shudder runs through me as he stares at me, through me.

I’m right.

It was him.

Reese did it, and he’s using Darcie as his alibi.

“Fuck. *Fuck.*” He releases me and staggers back, jamming his hands into his hair and tugging the ends.

“Reese, come on, just talk to—”

“Fuck you, Olivia.” He gets right in my face again and bares his teeth. “I swear to fucking God, Beckworth, if you tell anyone about this—”

Laughter and voices cut through the air and Reese releases me again, moving away.

“Reese,” I start, but he shakes head, loops his tie around his neck and takes off down the path.

I sink against the wall, wondering when life got so fucking complicated.



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## REESE

I take off down the path in a rage. The laughter that had filtered into my lust-filled mind has faded away once more as I fight the red haze of anger that's taking hold of me faster than I should allow it to.

I knew that Olivia knew, but she really *knows*.

Fuck.

She knows that all the bullshit that's spilling from Darcie's creative lips are lies. She knows I didn't take her down to the basement to fuck her six ways from Sunday, and she knows I was the one to blow up Starling's car.

But worse than all that...

I let her play me like a fool.

She offered herself up on a platter in a move that was a complete U-turn to anything she's done since I got back to town, and I fell for it the second she reached out and ran her fingers over my cock.

Fuck, I'm such a fucking idiot.

She doesn't want me. She hates me. So why would I think she did?

*Because you're a fucking fool.*

*Your desire for her, your need to claim her is beginning to overrule anything else.*

"Fuck," I roar, the door to the locker room right up ahead.

The few guys that are littered around doing lunchtime clubs jump out of my way and quickly scarper when they see me coming.

The door crashes back against the wall as I blow through into a space where I feel able to let it out.

What I really need is to go back to the Chapel, but seeing as those motherfuckers still haven't given me my key, I have little other choice.

“GET OUT,” I boom, when I find a couple of guys staring at me as I stand in the middle of the space like a raging bull. “GET THE FUCK OUT.”

Half dressed, they share a concerned glance before bolting toward the door.

“FUUUUCK,” I bellow before the door even slams closed. My fingers thread into my hair, and I pull until it hurts so bad it makes my eyes water. “FUCK. FUCK.”

Surging forward, my fist collides with one of the lockers that lines the wall, leaving a fuck-off dent in it that Coach will want to rip me a new one for, but I don’t give a fuck.

I hit it over and over. My knuckles split and pain shoots up my arm, but I barely feel any of it. I’m too lost in my haze, my anger, my frustration.

I let her play me.

I let her have all the fucking power, and she got exactly what she wanted.

That isn’t how this game is meant to be going.

I’m the one in charge. I’m the one with the power, with the plan, with the need for revenge.

Me.

My chest heaves, my body covered in a sheen of sweat as I finally fall back against the busted lockers.

But everything I was feeling pales into nothing when I glance at the door and find Olivia there, watching me as if I’m some caged fucking animal at a zoo. She’s gnawing on her bottom lip, her brow knitted in concern as she stares at me with wide eyes.

“Reese, I—”

“No.” I surge forward, twisting my fingers in her blazer and dragging her deeper into the room.

“Reese,” she cries, her small hands locking around my arm to try and stop me, but she’s got little chance of that happening.

“You played me,” I growl, continuing to back her up.

“You lied to me. You let me think...” She cuts herself off, still refusing to admit the truth. To admit that she wants me.

“I let you think that I fucked Darcie?” I growl, my voice low and dangerous as I drag her so close that our noses brush.

The taste of her is still on my lips, the memory of her tongue moving against mine still so fresh. It makes a whole new kind of fire burn through me.

Her lips slam shut, her teeth grinding behind them until I'm convinced she's going to crack one.

"Yeah, I let you think I fucked Darcie," I confess. "Do you know why?"

She sucks in a breath but doesn't say a word, just shakes her head, although the move is so minimal that I'd probably miss it if I weren't right up in her face.

"Because that motherfucker needed to pay." I release her blazer in favour of her throat as we continue to cut through the locker room.

She gasps, her eyes locked on mine.

"He touched something that belongs to me. And there was no fucking way I was ever letting him get away with that."

"Reese, I— REESE," she screams, cutting off whatever she was about to say when I finally get to our destination and slam my hand on the button for the shower. "What the fuck? Let me go," she demands, her hands flying, making contact with me anywhere she can as ice-cold water rains down over both of us, soaking us in an instant.

"Reese you can't—" I step into her body, taking hold of both of her wild wrists and pinning them against the wall above her head.

"Yes, I can, Olive. I can do whatever the fuck I want. Didn't you get the memo? I fucking own this school."

"A quarter of it," she seethes. "And when Oak finds out about this he'll..."

"He'll what, sweet cheeks? Beat my arse for ever touching his precious little Olivia?"

"You prick. You fucking—"

My words are cut off when my self-control shatters and my lips slam down on hers. Whatever she was about to spit at me gets lost in our kiss, in our desire.

Hitching one of her legs up around my waist, I grind my aching cock against her pussy, making her moan in delight.

"You did this," I growl without breaking the contact of our lips. "You did this, Olive. Just remember that when I've got my cock so deep inside you that you no longer remember how to breathe."

"Oh fuck," she pants, her hips happily rolling in time with mine, the sensation of her burning cunt making my cock weep for her.

I may have threatened it, but I didn't actually come on her pillow. Fucking wanted to. But knowing I was holding off for this makes it so

fucking worth it.

“I’ll give you everything you need. All you’ve got to do is tell me you want me.”

“Argh.” Her frustrated cry rips through the air as she still fights me.

“I think it’s more than obvious right now how much I need you, so why is it so hard to say the words? You know the truth. I didn’t dip my cock in that fucking bitch, so what’s the issue?”

The water still rains down on us, only now, it’s warm. Every inch of both of us is sodden. Olivia’s hair is plastered to her face, her dark make-up washed down her cheeks.

But fuck... it only makes her look hotter.

“Are you wet for me, Olivia?” Her eyes flash with realisation that I’ve used her real name before she surprises me once again.

“I think we both know I’m soaked right now.” But then her eyes flash with amusement, and I drag myself out of the depth of my lust for this girl.

“I should fuck that smart mouth right here, Olivia. Find out what good it can be used for when you’re unable to talk.”

Her eyes narrow, but not before flashing with heat.

Fuck. She wants it.

My trousers barely contain my cock as it fights to break through the fabric to find her pussy, her hand, her fucking anything that will help relieve the pressure that’s building up in me faster than I can control.

I squeeze my eyes closed for a beat to try and get myself in check before I do something I’m going to really regret. But it’s hard, so fucking hard—pun intended.

“Tell me. Tell me you want it.”

But she still fights it. The words are right there, swimming in her eyes, on the tip of her tongue, but still... nothing.

“Fine. But don’t forget that you chose this.”

Fisting her hair, I force her to her knees before me. “Take my cock out,” I demand. “You were so keen for it earlier.”

Hate flashes in her eyes, but instead of refusing like I expect her to, she shocks the fuck out of me and reaches for my waistband.

In seconds, my sodden trousers and boxers are around my hips, my cock jutting out between the two of us, needy and desperate.

“Darcie was wrong,” Olivia states, her eyes locked on my length as it twitches in desperation, starved of her touch.

“Oh yeah?” I grit out.

“I’ve seen bigger.”

“Fuck you, Olive.” My fingers return to her hair and I force her forward, pushing the head of my cock between her lips as a wild, feral roar rips from my throat, echoing around the silent locker room.

Her heat, the softness of her lips... fuck, her tongue as she swipes it up the underside of my shaft.

“FUCK.”

My fingers tighten, pulling her back and setting a frantic pace as my need to blow my load in her mouth consumes me. Reaching out, I plant my hand on the wall, hoping it’s enough to hold me up as my knees threaten to buckle.

The sight of her on her knees for me, her brown hair dark with water, her tiny hands resting on my thighs...

Fuck. All of it fucking wrecks me in a way it shouldn’t.

My balls begin to draw up embarrassingly fast. I rationalise that this has been a long time coming and try to put any male pride to one side as I focus on my end goal—Olivia being able to taste me for the rest of the day.

“Oh fuck. Your mouth is fucking sin, babe.”

Her eyes shoot up to mine, hate and desire colliding so fiercely, I’m almost sure she pulls away just to spite me.

Sadly, I don’t get a fucking chance to find out if she’s going to be a good girl and take all of me or not, because the locker room door slams open before a voice that sends ice through my veins booms through the deserted space.

“Whitfield, you in here?” Oakley booms.

Olivia’s eyes widen so far, I’m amazed they don’t pop right out of her head and roll across the floor.

Reluctantly, I pull her off my cock and drag her to her feet.

“Hide behind that door,” I hiss, pointing across the shower block. The door leads to the toilets. She can lock herself in a cubicle until I figure out a way around this.

Fuck.

What the fuck was I thinking?”

She looks around, ready to argue, but then Oak calls again and she takes off running, water dripping from her as she goes.

In a rush, I tuck my sad cock away and turn my back to the entrance of the shower. Pressing my palms to the tiles, I let the water crash against my



back as I wait for him to find me.

And only three seconds later he does.

“Reese, what the fuck?”

I suck in a breath, preparing to turn around and face him.

Three. Two. One.

Concern fills his eyes as I spin around and find them.

“I need the key to the Chapel, Oak,” I say in a voice that I hope sounds desperate enough.

“Uh... what the fuck is going on?”

“Please,” I beg. “I just need to get out of here. I need—”

“Fine. But you can answer to Elliot when he freaks the fuck out over this.”

I take off, leaving the shower running behind me, snatch up my bag that I hadn't even realised I'd dropped, and take off out of the locker room with Oakley hot on my tail, my mind spinning for an excuse for my bizarre behaviour.



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## OLIVIA

The door slams shut, reverberating through me, and I slip out of the toilet stall.

What the hell am I going to do? I'm soaked to the bone with make-up smeared over my face.

There's no way I can risk going back to school like this. I need to get out of here.

Panic rises inside me as I creep into the changing room and scan the place for something to cover myself up with.

Bingo.

I spot an All Hallows' hoodie hanging on one of the coat pegs. Yanking it down, I slip out of my blazer and pull it on over my saturated shirt.

Reese Baron Whitfield is going to be the death of me.

I didn't follow him back here to finish what I'd started. I only wanted to talk.

Stupid girl.

A boy like Reese doesn't talk.

But part of me wanted to hear him say it. I wanted him to admit that he went to Huxton for me.

I got more than I bargained for, though.

Bringing a finger to my mouth, I touch my lips, remembering what it had felt like to be on my knees for him.

But the fantasy is ruined when I hear voices beyond the changing room door. I need to get out of here, and fast. Instead of going out the door leading to the corridor and the rest of the building, I slip out of the door leading to the sports field. No one is out here. No one except—

“Abigail?”

She’s sitting there, staring out at nothing.

“Is everything okay?” I ask, approaching her.

She finally looks up at me and frowns. “What happened to you?”

“Nothing, I’m—”

“I saw you, Olivia.” She gives me a weak smile that sends a bolt of guilt through me.

“Saw me?”

“Go into the changing room after Reese.”

“I wasn’t... that’s not... it’s complicated.”

“I’m not jealous, if that’s what you’re thinking. Reese is... he scares me.”

“He’s an asshole.”

Her mouth quirks up. “He is. But you two are—”

“Nothing. We’re nothing.” The words sour on my tongue.

“Are you sure you’re okay? If he hurt you—”

“He didn’t, but I need to go home. I can’t stay at school like this.” I motion to the state of me.

“I could give you a lift?”

“Oh no, you don’t have to do that.”

“It’s fine. I wasn’t planning on staying much longer anyway.”

“Don’t you have class?”

“Yeah, but nobody will miss me.” Abigail stands and gives me a strange look. “My car is only over there.” She motions to the smaller car park at the back of school.

Unlike my own car, which is parked outside the main entrance, right in plain sight of a lot of the A Level classrooms.

I have a choice.

Risk going to my car and being spotted by half my year, or going with Abigail and finding out more about the girl promised to Reese.

“Uh, sure,” I say. “If you don’t mind.”

“It’s no problem, really.”

She takes off down the path and I fall into step behind her.

“So, do you want to tell me what happened?”

“Not really,” I whisper, aware that I must look like a drowned rat.

“But Reese was somehow responsible?”

“Like I said, it’s complicated.”

“Do you like him?”

“I... I shouldn’t,” I admit quietly, the truth of the words making my chest ache.

“Hey, maybe if the two of you fall in love, it’ll get me out of the stupid arrangement our parents seem insistent on following through on.” Despite her soft words, there’s fire in her expression that surprises me.

I don’t know Abigail Bancroft, not really. But like everyone else at All Hallows’, I see enough to know that she’s a shy, reserved girl.

She leads me over to a matte black Lexus SUV and I let out a low whistle. “Nice.”

“I think my dad would call it efficient and reliable. Get in,” she says.

Once we’re both inside and belted up, I ask, “It’s just you and your dad?”

Abigail nods. “My mum died in the accident that—” She indicates to her face.

“I’m sorry, I know how hard it is to lose a parent.”

“It’s been just the two of us for a long time.” Her voice cracks.

“Abigail?”

“Sorry,” she swipes at her eyes, “you don’t want to hear this.”

“No, I do. It’s okay, you can talk to me.”

“He’s sick. My dad is sick.”

“I’m sorry.”

“Me too.”

“What’s wrong with him, if you don’t mind me asking?”

“He has Huntington’s disease. He got diagnosed eight years ago, right after the accident.”

“I’m sorry,” I repeat, because what is there to say? I don’t have tons of knowledge about the disease but enough to know that the prognosis isn’t good.

“It isn’t your fault. I just can’t imagine a day where he isn’t there for me, you know?” She gives me a strained smile.

“Thanks for this,” I say, wanting to lift the heavy mood. “I really appreciate it.”

**A**bigail has no problem finding my house, not that I’m surprised. Most people in Saints Cross know where Christian Beckworth lives.

“Pretty house,” she says as she pulls into the long, winding driveway.

“Like you don’t live in a house just as big and beautiful as this.” I flash her a smile.

I like her.

Maybe that’s a weird thing to say, considering she’s to one day be married to the boy I’m fooling around with.

“I guess you’ve got me there. I’ll see you around, Olivia.”

“Actually, would you like to come inside?”

The blood drains from her face and I add, “I don’t bite, promise.”

“I... I’m not really used to—”

“What? Hanging out? Raiding the fridge for leftovers? I’m sure you can come inside for ten minutes? Reese and Oak are at school and then they have rugby practice. The house is all ours.”

Abigail hesitates, chewing on her bottom lip. “Fine, okay.”

“Great.”

Reese would flip his lid if he found out I was doing this, but he can go to hell right now for all I care.

He hasn’t even texted me since he fled the boys’ changing room like he was leaving the scene of a crime.

Arsehole.

I let myself into the house, beckoning Abigail to follow me. She’s nervous, tugging on the hem of her skirt, her big hazel eyes glancing around the place. It’s hard not to look at her scars. To wonder if they hurt. But unlike a lot of kids at school, I don’t see them as anything to ridicule.

In fact, a strange emotion bubbles up inside me as I think of all the times I’ve watched kids mock her or taunt her about them.

“You’re staring,” she says, and I begin to stutter out an apology. “It’s okay, you can ask me if you want.”

“I was wondering if they hurt.”

Her finger traces the biggest scar running from her jawline to right above her ear. “Sometimes they pinch, like the skin is stretched too far. It’s hard to explain it.”

“I’m sorry.”

“You say that a lot.”

“I guess I do. It was a car crash, right?”

She nods. “It’s how we found out about my dad’s disease. He had a seizure and lost control of the vehicle. Turns out, he’d been ignoring the

symptoms for years.”

“That must have been hard.” I motion for her to sit at the breakfast counter while I grab a container of homemade cookies.

“He still blames himself now. But I know it wasn’t his fault.”

“How is he now?”

“Struggling, but he’s a stubborn old fool and doesn’t like to make a fuss. His symptoms have been well managed for the last couple of years, but I’m starting to notice a deterioration in his health. He hides it well, but I see the signs.” Her eyes fill with emotion. “He and my mum were older when they had me. I know he worries about... leaving me.” She swallows over the words. “It’s one of the reasons he made that stupid arrangement with Mrs. Whitfield-Brown.” Anger coats her voice.

“One of the reasons?” I arch a brow.

“There’s more to it. There has to be. I’m his only daughter, the apple of his eye. I can’t believe he’d willingly hand me over to someone like Reese. He’d eat me alive.”

“Maybe he knows that Reese and his family can protect you. Reese is—”

“Dangerous?” Abigail stares at me.

“He isn’t scared to get his hands dirty, no. And the world can be a cruel place for—” I stop myself, realising how I sound.

“A girl like me? Scarred and damaged?”

“That’s not what I mean. I’m sorry, I shouldn’t have said that.”

“No, I get it. You’re only speaking the truth. Our world chews up and spits out anyone who doesn’t fit the mould. I know that. I’ve lived it for the last eleven years.”

Strained silence falls over us as I stuff half a cookie into my big mouth. I didn’t mean to make her feel less than she is. Something tells me Abigail Bancroft possesses an inner strength most of us at All Hallows’ don’t have. But I don’t say any of that, because the last thing I want to do is patronise her when I know how difficult it is for her to be here, in my house.

“We should hang out,” I blurt, swallowing the last of my cookie.

“Hang out? Together?”

“Yeah. I mean, we’re kind of doing that now.”

“I’m not sure I fit in with you and your friends.”

“What friends?”

“Your brother... the Heirs... Reese.

“You just named my brother and his friends. I’m sure you know me well

enough by now to know that I don't exactly have a huge social circle at All Hallows'?"

"Why is that? You're Olivia Beckworth. Life for you should be—"

"Easy? I scoff. "You have met my brother, right? Overbearing. Overprotective. An alpha-arsehole of epic proportions. I love my brother dearly, but he has never made life easy for me. Somewhere along the way, it got easier not to be wary of people's motivations rather than trust they didn't want to use me as a stepping stone to Oak and his friends."

"That sounds kind of tragic."

"It is. Which is why you and I make the perfect twosome."

"Oh, I don't know." A skittish expression washes over her. "I can't step into your world, Liv. It'll eat me alive."

"Not if I don't let it."

I like her.

I've decided. And we all need a friend now and again. Even if that friend is the future wife of the boy you're trying hard not to fall for.

Shit.

I am.

I'm falling for Reese.

I like his filthy, crass words and the way he doesn't handle me with kiddy gloves. I like the way he makes my body sing and heart race.

I like him.

And I think, that maybe, beneath his mean, cold, doesn't-give-a-fuck exterior, he likes me too.

But there are two very glaring problems with this realisation.

One. My brother will never accept it. I'm his sister. Off-limits.

And two, Reese doesn't belong to me.

He belongs to Abigail.





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## REESE

**T**he heavy door of the Chapel slams against the wall the second after Oak unlocks it for me and I storm forward, needing to get the fuck away from him and the questions filling his eyes.

“Reese, wait,” he calls, and damn it, my steps falter at the concern in his tone. “You wanna check out your room?” This time, there’s a smugness in his voice that tells me he knows he’s got me.

I spin around, finding him coming up behind me, holding his set of keys in front of him.

“M-my room?” I ask like an imbecile.

“Come on,” he says, scrubbing my wet hair like he’s my fucking father before taking off toward the stairs.

Since I’ve been back, the only stairs I’ve used in this place are the ones to the basement. The upper floor has been off-limits to me.

Until now, apparently.

I follow behind Oak, grateful that he’s not questioning me as to why he found me falling apart in the locker room.

Silence fills the space between us as we walk past the first two doors and come to a stop in front of the third.

“Elliot has the one at the end, obviously,” Oak mutters, rolling his eyes.

The room at the end stretches the entire width of the building and is the biggest and most elaborate master bedroom I’ve ever laid eyes on. Or at least, it was that one time Scott let us check it out before it became out of bounds unless you were personally invited. “That’s mine,” he says, pointing to the door next to us. “And that’s Theo’s.” He nods across the hall.

A million questions sit on the tip of my tongue, like asking how they

decided this was mine. I know it's not the smallest, so how did I end up with it when they all hated me?

"Theo lost a bet," he mutters as if he can hear my unspoken question.

The click of the old lock rattles through me before Oak swings the door open and gestures for me to head inside.

I was expecting it to be trashed. To have been left exactly as Scott and the others will have left the entire place so that I could have my taste of that part of the initiation that I missed.

But that's not what I find as I step inside and my sodden shoes sink into the grey carpet.

"What the—"

"We hoped you might come back," Oak admits quietly behind me. "So we... yeah." When I look back, he's rubbing at the back of his neck nervously. "Hope you like it."

His smile guts me as pain flickers through his eyes.

I really hurt him, all of them, when I disappeared from their lives without a second thought. Or at least, that's what I allowed them to think.

Truth is, I missed them every fucking day. But it wasn't them I was running from, not really. It was this life, the expectations, the betrayal.

Guilt burns through me as all the times I've got close to Olivia flash behind my eyes.

It's going to wreck Oak when he finds out what I'm doing, what I'm planning.

But is that enough to stop me from revealing the truth?

No fucking chance.

He deserves to know it as much as everyone else does. And I'm going to be the one to give it to them.

Ripping my eyes from his, I look around my room once more. The sun is streaming through the stained-glass window, casting all kinds of colours across the light grey walls and oak furniture.

It's stunning, it really is. And it only makes the guilt knotting my stomach hurt more.

"I'll... uh... I'll leave you to it. Figure out how I'm gonna explain this to Elliot," he admits with an unamused laugh.

"I've got your back," I say honestly. "I needed this today."

Oak nods, backing up toward the door.

My lips part, and before I get the chance to suck the words back in, they

spill from me. “I’m sorry, Oak. I’m sorry I abandoned you without—”

“It’s okay. I... I get it. I think. This place. Our lives. They can be intense. I can’t say that I’ve never thought about running a time or two. I just wish you’d have talked to me.”

I nod because it’s one of my biggest regrets too, although I’m not sure what it would have changed.

“I found out she was cheating on my dad a few weeks before initiation,” I admit, feeling like I need to give him something, because the truth of how we ended up here today certainly isn’t going to fall from my lips.

“Must have been a shock.”

“When Dad said he was leaving town, all I saw was an escape. I needed away from the pressure, from... my future.”

“Abigail?”

I wince as her name echoes around me and regret washes over Oak’s expression.

“Shit, sorry,” he whispers, realising he’s broken one of my rules.

“It’s fine, it’s— go and grab us a drink or something. I’ll shower and we can hang. There’s no point going back to class now.”

“You got it.” He hesitates as if he’s going to ask me why we’re even here in the first place, but thankfully he swallows down that demand and walks out of my room.

Years of friendship means we pretty much know each other inside out, and thankfully, that means he knows not to push me to talk. He knows that I’ll open up when I’m good and ready. Thank fuck, because I still don’t have a decent excuse for that earlier.

“Fuck,” I hiss, squeezing my eyes closed as I think of Olivia.

Did she manage to escape okay?

I dig my phone from my pocket—thank fuck it’s survived my impromptu shower with Liv—and pull up our chat to ask if she’s okay.

But in the end, I close it back down and head for the shower.

I’m probably the last person she wants to hear from right now—and anyway, I’d rather see her in person to finish what we started than exchange a few angry messages.

“**Y**ou’re hanging out with Abigail?”

The words I overheard Oakley say on the phone to Olivia earlier haunt me as I finally lie on my own bed in the Chapel.

Predictably, Elliot was pissed when he discovered that Oak had caved and let me in here. But the gruelling training session we endured in the hopes of preparing us for Friday night’s game sure helped to expel some of his anger, and he was almost over it by the time we got back here.

I didn’t stop him sulking about it and locking himself in his lair soon after we’d eaten though. Control freak.

But his temperamental emotional state is the least of my worries right now.

Why the hell is Olivia hanging out with Abigail?

I’ve typed out at least ten different messages since I eavesdropped on their conversation earlier in the hopes of finding out what her excuse was for ditching the rest of the day. I get fuck all on that front, but the Abigail thing has sure thrown me.

The only thing I can figure out is that she’s trying to get some dirt on me, trying to play games with things she has no right in poking her nose into.

Why else would she suddenly befriend a girl who I doubt is her kind of person?

I’m sure Abigail is lovely. But she’s so fucking quiet, I have to doubt she has much of a personality. She just... exists. Almost like a ghost in the room that you’re not entirely sure is there or not.

“Fuck,” I hiss, my need to know what the fuck is going on becoming too much to ignore.

As per Elliot’s earlier request, I should already be asleep. The game is approaching, and that means our wild, playboy lives get put on hold. The parties stop, the drink is banned, and we suddenly have to pretend that we’re professional sportsmen for a couple of days.

The whole thing is bullshit if you ask me, but I’m not about to rock the boat now I’ve got a king-sized memory foam mattress instead of that concrete sofa to sleep on.

The Chapel has been in silence for well over an hour, Oak and Theo following orders like good little Heirs and going to bed at curfew, and I wonder if they’d hear anything if I were to...

My eyes lock on the door, then flick to my trainers that I kicked off after practice.

Not only did I not expect to find this room all ready for me, but I also didn't think I'd find the cupboard full of all the shit I might need to live here, including condoms and lube in the bedside table, despite the fact that there's a no-girls-allowed rule up here. They sure did think of everything, those arseholes.

I push from the bed before I think better of it, shove my feet into my shoes, and silently pull my door open. Before I know it, I've escaped the old building without making a noise, and I'm in my car and heading toward the Beckworths'.

The streets are dead, and as I pull up to the house, I find it in total darkness.

I can't help but smile as excitement begins to stir, my blood heating as I remember how her lips felt wrapped around my cock.

"Shit," I hiss, palming my semi through my sweats. I really fucking need her to finish me off.

In only seconds, I'm letting myself into her room, my cock fully hard and tenting my sweats as I move silently through the darkness and pull her chair over.

Just like I hoped, she's peacefully sleeping, her cheek resting on her hand, her full and tempting lips parted, inviting me to take what I need.

My eyes drop down her body, which is exposed with the duvet bunched at her waist. If it were lighter, I have no doubt I'd be able to see the outline of her nipple through the thin fabric.

Just the thought of stripping her naked makes my cock weep, and I'm powerless but to push my hand into my sweats and fist myself.

A growl rips from my throat as I remember her tongue twisting around the head, lapping at my precum.

"Fuck," I bark, my release already in touching distance after she left me desperate earlier.

Reaching out with my free hand, I wrap my fingers around her duvet and slowly pull it down her body, needing more of her.

It's a risk, but I figure that I don't really give a shit if she wakes.

She might still be refusing to admit how much she needs this. But I'm not. It's more than evident every time she's felt my hard cock pressing against her. Darcie might be a lying bitch, but she sure got something right—the size of my dick is kinda hard to miss.

A groan falls from her lips as the covers brush over her bare legs, leaving

her exposed in a tiny pair of lace knickers that make me bite down on my bottom lip.

Abandoning the sheets, my fingers collide with her calf and I drag them up, loving the way her skin erupts in goosebumps at my touch. I trace over the edge of her underwear, and a moan spills from her parted lips before she rolls slightly onto her back, revealing more of her body to me.

With the light from the moon flooding the room, it's impossible to miss the way her nipples press against her vest.

Gliding my fingers up her toned stomach, I make it to her tits, circling her nipples, making her moans get louder and my cock even harder.

"Reese," she moans in her sleep, and I damn near come in my pants.

"You dreaming of me, sweet cheeks?" I murmur. "You imagining sucking my cock like a good girl again?" This time when I speak, she stills, and a smile pulls at my lips a beat before her eyes fly open.

Her lips part, ready to scream, but I'm faster, pressing my palm over her mouth and jumping on top of her, pinning her to the bed.

"Reese, what the hell are you doing?" she whisper-shouts, her eyes bouncing between mine and where my hand is still lost in my sweats.

"Finishing what we started."

Shifting, I shove my sweats down and expose myself, painting the tip of my cock over her lips.

"Gonna say it yet, Olive?"





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## OLIVIA

**M**y heart crashes wildly in my chest as I stare up at Reese, completely and utterly at his mercy.

He's here, in my room.

Why does that send a thrill through me?

I should be biting his dick clean off at the fact that he's here, looming over me like some creepy stalker, not flicking my tongue over the tip as I gaze up at him.

"Fuck," he hisses, gripping the headboard behind me and forcing his dick past my lips. Not that I resist.

Reese thinks he holds all the power. Thinks that I'm under his spell. But he's the one who can't stay away.

"What?" he growls, pulling away enough for me to catch my breath.

"You're here." I smirk.

"Don't read too much into it. I'm here because I want you to tell me why the fuck you were hanging out with Abigail."

"Abigail?" My heart sinks. "You're here... because of her?"

"What are you playing at, sweet cheeks?" His hand slides to my throat, grasping me there.

"She gave me a ride home. I invited her in. It was no big deal."

"You two friends now or something?" His fingers flex around my neck.

"Does it matter if we are?" My brow lifts, defiance burning inside me.

"Stay the fuck away from her, Olivia. I mean it."

Jealousy surges inside of me. Irrational, illogical jealousy.

Except maybe it isn't.

Because maybe part of me wants to be his.

“What?” he growls.

“Know what I think?” I grasp his length and slide my hand up and down, pumping him slowly.

“Olive...” he warns, involuntarily moving closer, but I grip him tighter.

“I think you’re lying. I don’t think you came because of her at all.”

“You don’t know what the fuck you’re talking about.”

“Say it.” I throw his words back at him. “Tell me you want me.”

Something flashes in his eyes. “I want to fuck your pretty little mouth.”

“Liar.”

“Takes one to know one.” His eyes darken, anger swirling around him like a storm.

We’re at a stalemate, neither of us willing to admit what my heart already knows. Lines are blurring between us.

Maybe they’ve been blurred ever since that night at the party before the summer.

I shouldn’t want him—I don’t want to want him. But I can’t help myself.

“Open up, sweet cheeks,” he croons. “Let me in.”

I part my lips, letting my tongue lick the tip of his dick again, savouring it like a lollipop. There’s something about Reese that makes me want to be wild and reckless, and I can’t get enough.

He rises up on his knees a little, pushing himself deeper. I swallow him down, hollowing my cheeks and breathing through my nose, refusing to let him win whatever game we’re playing tonight.

“Fuck, Olivia, you suck me so good.” His head drops back, his Adam’s apple bobbing as a deep groan rumbles in his chest.

I work him harder, faster, dragging my tongue up the length of his shaft and then sucking him back into my mouth. His fingers slide into my hair, holding me right where he wants me as his thrusts become jerky, his breaths choppy and ragged.

“Fuck... Fuck,” he groans, his entire body tensing as his dick thickens and hot, salty liquid hits the back of my throat. I swallow him down, greedy for every last drop.

“Fucking hell,” he croaks, stroking his thumb down my cheek. “You are \_\_\_”

The words never come.

Because he won’t admit it.

He won’t ever say it.

Infuriating prick.

“You got what you came for,” I snap, trying to shove him away. “Don’t let the door hit you on the way out.”

Confusion flashes in his eyes, but then a wicked smirk tugs at his mouth. “You’re not getting rid of me that easily.” He leans back a little and grabs me by the thighs, flipping me onto my stomach.

“Reese—” I start to protest, but he yanks me back onto my knees and hooks my underwear aside, licking the length of me.

“God,” I moan, trying to bury my face into a pillow. It’s too good. His fingers curl around my hip, pulling me closer as his tongue spears inside me, stealing the breath from my lungs.

“More,” I cry. “God, more.”

His dark chuckle sends shivers running down my spine as intense waves build inside me.

“You taste so fucking good,” he murmurs, and I wonder if he realises that he sounds bewitched. Desperate for more.

Desperate for me.

But when his tongue moves to my clit and two of his thick fingers slide inside me, all thoughts evaporate out of my head as my world contracts around us. At the dirty, filthy things he’s doing to my body.

Something wrong could never feel this good, this right, could it?

He eats me like a man starved, lapping at my core like I’m his last meal. My fingers twist into the bedsheets, holding on as everything coils tight. Close, I’m so fucking close.

“Reese... Reese... Reese,” I chant.

“Say it,” he drawls, the words rough against his throat. “Say it and I’ll let you come.”

I push my arse into his face, refusing to bend but demanding more.

“I mean it, Olivia,” he warns, his grip on my thighs almost vicious. I’ll have bruises tomorrow, but I don’t care. “Say. It.” His fingers withdraw, leaving me cold, but I’m too close.

Just one more—

I slip my hand between my legs and rub my clit just the way I need.

“Don’t you fucking da—”

My legs almost give way as my orgasm barrels into me and I cry out, cry his name, knowing it’ll torture him that I came.

“Fuck,” he hisses, and I wish I could see his face, the pure torture in his

eyes as he watches me ride through the pleasure saturating my body.

Reese climbs off the bed and I lie down on my side, sleepy and sated.

“Everything okay over there?” I smirk, unable to resist taunting him.

“Olivia,” he warns.

“I like it when you say my name. Like I’m in trouble. Like you don’t know how to handle me.”

His eyes narrow to thin slits, dark and deadly. He looks like he either wants to fuck the air from my lungs or smother me with a pillow and drown out my words.

Maybe even both.

“You won’t win,” he says coolly, erecting that wall of ice between us again. But it doesn’t feel as impenetrable as it used to. Every time we do this, the cracks grow, thawing some of the ice around his stone cold heart.

“So you’re not staying then?” My brow arches and his scowl deepens.

“You’re not fooling anyone, sweet cheeks.” His cocky, arrogant façade slides back into place.

“The only person trying to fool themselves here is you, Reese. Shut the door on your way out.” I turn over, close my eyes, and smile to myself.

**T**he next morning at breakfast, I don’t expect to find Reese sitting there, eating his cereal with Dad and Fiona.

“This is a surprise,” I say, barely sparing him a second glance.

“Reese needed to pick up some textbooks for class,” Fiona says.

“I bet he did,” I murmur, remembering how it felt to wake with him pinning me to the bed, the tip of his dick painting my lips.

A bolt of lust goes through me and I squeeze my thighs together. Jesus, I need to get a grip.

But he’s under my skin. And this game we’re playing is building to something. We both feel it. He’s just too damn stubborn to admit it.

“All set for tomorrow?” Dad asks him, trying to make small talk.

“Yeah, I’m ready. The team’s ready.”

“Well, we’ll be there, cheering you on, won’t we, sweetheart?”

Silence echoes around the room, and I glance up and realise Dad is talking to me.

“I... uh, yeah. Go Saints,” I say drolly, shoving half a blueberry muffin in my mouth.

“Olivia. It wouldn’t hurt you to be supportive.”

“Oh, I’m sure she’ll find her inner cheerleader tomorrow, Christian.” Reese smirks right at me, bringing his spoon to his mouth and licking it the way he licked me last night.

Smug bastard.

Challenge glitters in his eyes. He thinks he can embarrass me into submission.

Well he’s got another trick coming.

I scan the kitchen and my gaze lands on the fruit bowl. Bingo.

Going over to it, I pluck a banana out and peel it slowly, holding his dark gaze as Dad and Fiona discuss the case she’s working on over coffee and toast.

Reese leans back, eyes narrowed and jaw tense as I flick my tongue over the tip and then take it into my mouth. Slow, teasing licks, never once breaking eye contact. The muscle in his jaw tics, his hand curling into a fist on the table.

Power is such a fickle thing.

Wanting to show him he’s not the only one with tricks up his sleeve, I push the fruit further past my lips, practically deep throating it.

“Shit,” he blurts as his glass of juice goes flying, soaking him and the table. He leaps up and glowers at me.

“Problem?” I ask sweetly, biting the end of my banana.

“Reese, whatever is the matter?” Fiona asks him.

“Fly,” he rasps. “I thought a fly landed in my cereal.”

“A fly?” Dad chuckles. “You’re going to need to hold your nerve a little better tomorrow on the pitch.”

“I... I’m going to change.”

I fight a smile as he gives me one last seething glance and spins on his heel, fleeing from the kitchen with his hand practically cupping his rock-hard dick.

Olivia: one.

Reese: zero.

Fiona lets out a weary sigh. “I worry about him,” she says, and Dad pats her hand.

“He’ll get there. It’s a big adjustment for everyone. Sweetheart?” He

frowns at me.

“Yeah, Dad?”

He gives me a knowing look. “What’s going on with you two? I sensed some tension just now.”

“Just Reese being Reese,” I shrug, turning my back on him, hoping he can’t see the flush to my cheeks.

Fooling around with Reese won’t only destroy Oak. It’ll hurt Dad and Fiona. But I’m not sure I can stop.

“Don’t push him too hard, sweetheart,” he adds. “He’s been through a lot, and he’s carrying a lot on his shoulders.”

Fiona whispers something to him, and I glance back at them.

“Don’t worry, Dad,” I say. “I can handle the likes of Reese and his mood swings.”

If only he knew.

But when my phone vibrates and I dig it out of my blazer pocket and see his name, a trickle of anticipation goes through me.

Reese: You’re going to pay for that, sweet cheeks.

I smile to myself as I text back.

Olivia: Bring. It. On.



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## REESE

**A** deep, pained growl rumbles in the back of my throat as I violently fist my cock.

But like everything since the moment I walked out of her room last night, it's not enough.

Olivia Beckworth's fucking mouth has ruined me.

One hand presses against the cool tiles of my walk-in shower as the water rains down on me. Every single muscle in my body is locked up tight, yet it has nothing to do with our impending game and everything to do with the girl I can't get out of my fucking head.

All day... all fucking day, all I've been able to see every time I so much as blink is her with the fucking banana.

What the hell was she thinking?

It was obscene. It was... "Fuck." The growl of desire rips from my throat without permission as my balls begin to draw up.

But. It. Is. Not. Enough.

I haven't even come, and yet I know this release is going to be as unsatisfying as fuck.

In the past, the run-up to our games was never like this. Not for me, anyway.

The others might be doing their usual pregame ritual bullshit, but I've apparently been reduced to spending time with my right hand while rubbing one out to thoughts of my best friend's sister.

I always thought pregame sex was the second-best kind of sex there was. It was the perfect appetiser to the epic winners' sex that would undoubtedly be offered up from a number of the Heir chasers that follow our games in the



hope of getting some action with us.

But since Olivia, I've realised all that is bullshit.

Because the best kind of sex is hate sex. If only I could mix that with the anticipation of the game or the thrill of the win.

Fuck me. It would be epic.

Just the thought of that is enough to have my cock jerking in my hand as my cum drops into the water swirling around my feet.

My cock barely softens, the orgasm hardly scratching the surface of the tension knotting up my muscles.

I need to get rid of it, or I'm going to be good as fucking useless tonight.

But how?

There's no fucking way I'm dragging some faceless Heir chaser down to the basement like I know Theo did the second we walked out of our final class of the day.

What I need is her.

But I already know where she's going to be.

Oak's pregame routine is set in stone. It always has been. And it always involves Olivia. I don't stand a fucking chance of getting anywhere close to her, let alone dragging her away.

"Yo, bro. You still here?" Theo's voice booms through my room a second before my bathroom door swings open and he strides in as if I fucking invited him to join me.

"What the fuck, man?" I bark as his eyes drop to my semi.

"Dude." His brows rise as if I'm the one in the wrong right now. "I had enough to share, you know. You were more than welcome to—"

"Shut the fuck up," I hiss, turning the shower off and reaching for a towel to cover up.

"You haven't fucked anyone since you got back to town, have you?" he muses as I stalk toward the basin, pulling open the cupboard above and grabbing my deodorant, half tempted—fuck, more than half tempted—to spray it in his eyes instead of under my arms in the hope it makes him leave.

"Spit it out, Theo. I'm not in the mood for riddles."

"Just pointing out a fact. You're clearly up for it. What's the deal? You become a born-again virgin over the summer or some shit?"

I stare at myself in the mirror, inspecting the more-than-usual scruff I let linger on my jaw.

I had every intention of shaving it off before this game, but then the

sound of Olivia moaning as it grazed against her thighs echoes through my mind again, and I forget about making the effort.

“No,” I growl, reaching for some hair wax. “I’m not a fucking born-again virgin. I’m just...” I let out a sigh, my eyes catching his in the mirror.

Nostalgia hits me like a fucking truck as memories of us talking about girls, sex, and everything in between come back to me from before I walked away from them. And not in a seedy, braggy way either.

The four of us, despite what I’m sure others assume, were a family. We shared, we talked. We were fucking it for each other. And I hate that I ruined that.

Not that I’d have ever be able to admit to any of them that the reason I haven’t been sticking my dick in anything that wears a skirt was because of Olivia.

She’s been off-limits. Hell, more than off fucking limits to us since before we were even interested in girls. Sister and exes—and not ex-fucks, actual ex-girlfriends, if any of us were stupid enough to have one—have always been a hard limit for all of us.

“You’re just...” he prompts.

“Not fucking interested in your sloppy seconds,” I grunt, storming across the room and shoulder checking him on my way out in the hope it stops him from continuing with this bullshit.

The second I’m back in my room, I drag the towel from my waist, pull on a pair of boxers, and then tug on my All Hallows’ tracksuit that Coach expects us to turn up wearing.

“Since fucking when?”

“Since fucking now,” I boom, surging toward him and getting right in his face, more than ready to prove my point with my fists.

“Whitfield,” an ice-cold voice cuts through my room as my fists curl at my side. “That’s enough.”

My shoulders sag in defeat as I continue to hold Theo’s, but he sees it and a smirk tugs at his lips.

“You’re in the shit now. You fucked up his feng shui,” Theo taunts, loud enough for Elliot to hear him.

“Shut your fucking mouth, Ashworth,” Elliot seethes, “and go and wash your cock. I saw the girl you dragged down to the basement, and I wouldn’t be surprised if you’ll need antibiotics by sunrise.”

My brow lifts in a ‘told you so’ gesture, but Theo doesn’t give a fuck.

“I wrapped it. We’re all good.”

“Ashworth,” Elliot barks once more, and finally he takes a step back and stalks toward the door like a good boy.

“I’ll do as you say, but only because the scent of her pussy will put me off my game. Shame I can’t say the same for the two of you, frigid fucks.”

Elliot’s eyes widen in surprise, but he wisely chooses not to respond.

“We lose tonight, and it’s your fucking fault,” Elliot spits. “I was halfway through my routine and I—” He cuts himself off when a snort of amusement rips past my lips. “Fuck you, Whitfield. Fuck you.”

He spins on his heels and marches from my room, although not before letting me hear his muttering about how I shouldn’t even be in this room to distract him.

“Enjoy the rest of your routine,” I call after him, chuckling. He responds by slamming his door so hard the floor beneath my feet vibrates.

Jesus fucking Christ. If this shitshow is anything to go by, then we’re fucked tonight. And we can’t fucking lose the first game of the season. The Harriers are going to be watching our every move, and we can’t let them see any hint of weakness.

They’ve been suspiciously quiet since their beloved leader lost his prized possession, but we’re not naïve enough to think they’re not going to retaliate.

They never have taken anything lying down, and I certainly don’t expect it to start happening now.

Grabbing my packed bag from the end of the bed, I throw it over my shoulder and head downstairs, needing an energy drink or two to get me ready for the night ahead, although I already know I won’t find any.

Part of Elliot’s game plan is insisting we all go on a health kick in the days leading up to every match. I already know the options are going to be limited to water or the blended-up green shit he pays our cook extra to concoct especially for us.

Lucky us.

I expect the place to be empty, so the sound of voices throws me for a loop when I get to the stairs. I assumed Oak was going to go home to get ready as he usually would, but apparently, he’s brought temptation right to my doorstep.

“You’re bluffing.”

Her soft, amused voice cuts through me, making my steps falter the second they echo around the tall stairwell.

Fuck me, if I knew she was down here, I wouldn't have been jerking off in the shower to the memory of her.

"You letting him win, as usual, Olive?" I ask, jogging down the last few steps and turning around the corner to find them sitting at the dining table with cards in their hands.

"She doesn't let me win," Oak growls, his eyes not lifting from his hand while Olivia's shoulders tense with my arrival.

"Are you sure about that?" I mock, dropping my bag and walking up behind Olivia to check out her hand.

"Olivia has zero game face. She can't lie to me if she fucking tries," Oak states confidently.

Pressing my hand to the table, I blow out a breath, allowing it to race over Olivia's neck. Her grip on her cards tightens, and if I were to look, I know I'd find her skin covered in goosebumps.

"You've really got him fooled, huh?" I mutter, checking out her cards. A straight flush—impressive.

"Shut the fuck up, Whitfield," Oak growls, his eyes drilling into his sister as if he's going to see her cards reflected in them.

With him thoroughly distracted, I run my knuckles down Olivia's spine, delighting in the way she shudders against my touch.

"She's bluffing. Her cheeks heat when she's bluffing."

Olivia sucks in a sharp breath.

Oh yeah, that's the reason. Nothing to do with the way she burns up at my innocent touch.

"Reese," Olivia hisses. "I don't need your help."

"So I can see." Pushing to stand, I stalk toward the fridge, already dreading what I'm going to find as she demands for Oak to lay down his cards.

Silence crackles between them for a beat before Oak triumphantly barks, "Full fucking house, lil' sis. Read 'em and weep."

"Fuck," Olivia hisses, forcing me to turn around and watch in favour of the disgusting shit waiting for me. "Two pairs. You got me."

She throws her cards face down so he can't see her lie before she gathers up the rest of the pack to hide the evidence.

"Fuck yeah. The king still reigns."

"Better luck next time, Olivia," I mutter, watching her through narrowed eyes.

Oak's smug-as-fuck grin falters when his phone ringing cuts through the air.

"Who the fuck thinks it's a good idea to call me now," he growls, his previous joy gone as if it never existed. "Dad," he mutters, looking torn between answering or ignoring him.

"Just answer," Olivia tells him. "He wouldn't call if it wasn't urgent. He knows how important this is to you."

"Fine," he mutters, shoving his chair out behind him and stalking toward the front door, letting it slam ominously behind him.

"And then there were two," I mutter, stalking closer to Olivia once again like a magnet unable to resist the pull.

"I'm leaving," she says, hopping up from her seat, but she doesn't get very far before I slam my palms down on the table either side of her hips, pinning her in place.

"Why'd you let him win?" I demand.

She shrugs. "Because he needs his pregame ritual to run smoothly. Going into a game already a loser isn't good for anyone's ego. Even one as big as yours."

"Ouch," I breathe, the smirk on my face proving how little that insult really touched me. "You know, I've got a ritual I need a little help with before we leave for the game," I confess, pressing my hips to hers and allowing her to feel what I need assistance with.

"Unfortunately for you, the only ego I'll be stroking tonight is Oak's. You can go fuck yourself."

She gasps when my hand collars her throat. "I already have, sweet cheeks. While remembering how it felt to have your lips wrapped around my cock. Problem is that my memory isn't as good as the real thing. And if I don't get what I need in the next..." I glance over at the clock, "thirty minutes, your brother is going to be walking out onto that pitch already a loser."

"Don't you dare pin this on me," she growls, her eyes narrowed in anger.

I lean in, brushing my lips against her ear, letting my breath race over her skin once again. "Time to pay up for that stunt yesterday morning, sweet cheeks."

"Reese," she warns as I drag her from the table and shove my hand into her pocket to find her phone.

"Text Oak. Tell him you left and that you'll see him after the game."

“No, I can’t. I—” Her words cut off on a gasp as I push my hand inside her leggings and cup her pussy, delighting in how damp I find the lace that’s covering her.

“Text him, Olivia, and make it convincing.”



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## OLIVIA

**N**ervous anticipation hums in every inch of me. I slipped out of the Chapel without crossing anyone's path and took the track leading into the woods behind the school that joins All Hallows' with the rest of town.

Footsteps crunch behind me and my heart ratchets, but it's only Reese following me.

Right as he said he would.

The Rock looms up ahead and my pace quickens, his hungry gaze burning a hole in my thin hoodie.

"Good girl," Reese says, finally reaching me.

"How did you manage to escape?" I ask him, edging backwards until my back hits the weather-worn stone.

"Told them I had a pregame ritual I wanted to try out." His expression darkens as he reaches for me, sliding his hand possessively up my chest and flexing his fingers around my neck.

"I didn't think you'd agree to this." His thumb traces my bottom lip.

"I'm not some weak, spineless girl, Reese. You don't have to worry about breaking me."

His eyes flare again. "Is that so?" He smirks, but then his resolve cracks a little. "I haven't been able to stop thinking about you and that fucking banana. I should punish you for that little stunt."

"Do your worst."

"Why?"

"You know why," I whisper.

I'm tired of this dance. The part where we both pretend there isn't more



between us than these stolen, hate-fuelled moments.

“We don’t have long... maybe this wasn’t a good idea.” He pulls back, raking his fingers through his hair.

“You’re tense,” I say, reaching for him. “Let me help. Let me be what you need.”

His eyes darken as I run my fingers down his hard chest, desperate to touch him.

Reese’s body trembles as he stares down at me. Intense. Unnerving.

“What’s wrong?” I ask.

“It isn’t supposed to be like this,” he whispers before slamming his mouth down on mine. Questions hover on the top of my tongue, melting away when he plunges his tongue past my lips and devours me. His big, strong body pins me against the Rock as he grinds against me, showing me exactly how much he wants this.

Me.

“Hurry,” I breathe, knowing we don’t have much time. My hand slips between us, palming his already hard dick through the thin material of his tracksuit bottoms.

“Fuck, Olivia... fuck.” He murmurs the words onto my lips, gently thrusting into my hand.

“How long do we have?”

“Not long enough,” he replies, sliding his arms around the backs of my thighs and picking me up, laying me out on the flat edge of the Rock.

“This isn’t going to be soft or gentle.” His eyes glitter with lust and dark, wicked things as he yanks my leggings down and pulls his bottoms over his hips, enough to fist his dick.

This is happening.

Oh God, it’s happening.

But I’m so desperate for him.

Reese pumps himself a couple times, swiping the tip of his dick through my folds.

“I have dreamed about this.” His eyes hold mine as he slowly pushes into me, inch by inch until he’s seated fully inside. “You’re so fucking tight, it feels like you’re choking my dick.”

I clench my inner muscles, watching with satisfaction as his expression turns feral.

“Fuck, do that again,” he rasps.

So I do.

Holding him tight inside me.

I feel full, so stretched, but it isn't enough.

"Move," I say. "I need you to move."

"You want to get fucked by the big bad wolf?" Reese grins down at me, pulling back slightly and slamming forward.

"Yes," I cry, the surface of the Rock rough against my back as he fucks me like he hates me.

And maybe he does. Maybe underneath every perfect roll of his hips or every drag of his lips over my skin is a simmering hatred for me.

But something this good can't only be hate. The way he moves inside me, sliding his hands under my legs to lift me onto him, changing the angle and making it deeper, better... just more, is too damn perfect.

I fist his Saints hoodie and yank him down, needing his lips on mine and his tongue in my mouth.

"Christ, you're hot," he murmurs, kissing me hard and bruising, sliding his lips down my jaw and to my throat where he sucks on my skin.

"Reese, wait up—" But it's too late. There's no way he didn't leave a bruise.

He marked me.

Whether he meant to or not, Reese marked me and I like it. His hand comes to my throat, pinning me there as he thrusts into me, over and over.

"I need you to come first," he says.

"Such a gentleman," I sass and he growls at me, slipping his other hand between our bodies and touching the place where we're joined.

A small whimper falls from my lips when his thumb connects with my clit, adding an extra layer of pleasure that has my body shooting off like a rocket.

"That's it, sweet cheeks. Milk my fucking dick." His thrusts turn feral. Jerky and wild.

"God, Reese... I can't... it's..."

"You can and you will. Take my cum, Olivia. Take it all." He groans, his dick swelling inside me right as I shatter, crying out his name.

"Fuck... fuck." He pulls out and comes all over my pussy and thighs, smearing it over my skin with his fingers. I glance down and realise he isn't just smearing it, he's painting a word.

Reese.

“This body belongs to me now,” he says, eyes so black they barely look human. A chill goes through me as I try to catch my breath.

I’m a mess, wrung out with Reese’s cum all over me. Yet, I’ve never felt more alive. He needed this from me.

He wanted me.

He can spout about how much he hates me and that he thinks I’m a liar, but he’s only fooling himself.

Reese Whitfield cares—I’m just not sure he cares enough.

“Don’t you have a game to win?” I say, shoving him off me, suddenly feeling out of my depth.

This is what happens when you play in the lion’s den. For a second, you think you’ve tamed the beast, only to realise that you’re one wrong move from being eaten alive.

That’s how Reese makes me feel every time I’m with him. I think I’m breaking down his walls, finally getting to the bottom of what makes a boy like him tick, only to stumble and realise there are so many more layers to uncover.

I push up on my elbows and stare at the mess he’s made of me. I should feel disgusted, but I don’t.

“You like it, don’t you? My mark on you?” He strokes his jaw, watching me.

“You should go,” I say, trying to clean myself up with a discarded tissue from my pocket.

If only Oak could see me now.

What would he say about this? About the things I let Reese do to me?

But this isn’t about Oak or my father or Abigail or the other Heirs. It’s between me and Reese, and although I know we’re on a collision course for disaster, I can’t seem to stop myself.

“So eager to get rid of me?”

“You’re going to be late,” I say, dragging my leggings up and hopping down off the Rock. “The lads will ask questions.”

His eyes flash with something, but then he gives me an imperceptible nod. “You know what they say about this place?” he asks, his voice a quiet whisper that does things to me.

“What?”

Of course I know. Everyone knows what they say about the Rock, and the legends that surround it. But I’ve never believed in myths, and I want to hear

him say the words.

“They say whoever touches the Rock will be cursed for all eternity.” He hesitates, staring at me with an emotion I can’t decipher. But then his lip curls into that familiar snarl and he adds, “What do you think happens if you get fucked on it?”

His words land their intended blow, and I flinch at the hostility back in his voice. My Reese is gone, replaced by the Reese who claims to hate me and the rest of the world.

I step up to him, refusing to cower even when my heart is in shreds. “I’ll take my chances.”

“You’re fucking crazy,” he murmurs, reaching for my hair and twirling a strand around his finger. Dipping his head, he leans in, and for a second, I think he might kiss me. My heart flutters, anticipation firing off around my body, but it doesn’t come.

Instead, Reese hovers there, close but not close enough. “I’ll see you around, Olive. Thanks for the ride.”

He pulls away and saunters off down the path back toward the Chapel as if he hasn’t just destroyed my body...

And taken another piece of my heart with him.

**I** attend the game, but only because my father and Oak expect me to be there. What I really wanted was to go home and lock myself in my room and figure out why I keep letting Reese do this to me.

I’m not stupid, I know that what we’re doing is toxic, dangerous and reckless. But I can’t stop.

I don’t want to.

And the more scraps of attention he gives me, the more I want.

The Saints come out fighting, a well-oiled machine that commands the field with sheer skill and dominance. Their opponents barely stand a chance against Elliot and his soldiers. Because that’s what they remind me of. An army clashing with their enemy.

Reese is something to behold, the way his long, muscular legs eat up the field as he charges with the ball tucked under his arm. The rest of our players guard him, giving him the space he needs to make it downfield.

The crowd goes wild, cheering and shouting for their beloved Saints as he slams the ball down past the goal line. The guys all rush for him, falling into each other as they celebrate their first five points on the board.

“Reese looks good out there,” Dad says to Fiona, who beams as she clutches his arm. “Uh-oh,” he quickly adds when it looks like Reese and one of the opposing team’s players get into a scuffle.

My heart crashes violently in my chest as I slide my hand up my clavicle, watching as they get all up in each other’s faces.

*Walk away, Reese, I silently implore. Walk away.*

Elliot wades in, shoving Reese away toward the rest of their team.

God, I can’t take it. The thought that someone might hurt him. Or worse, ruin his season before it even gets started.

I’m not supposed to care.

He’s not supposed to be the boy I can’t take my eyes off, but he is. And it’s a giant fucking problem.

Pulling my phone out, I text Oak, knowing he won’t see it until later.

Olivia: I don’t feel well. Not coming to the party. But kick some Chiefs arse and enjoy your night. xx

“Sweetheart,” Dad notices me. “What’s wrong?”

“I... uh, I feel really sick, Dad. I think I’m going to head home.”

“But the game...”

“Sorry. I already texted Oak and let him know. My stomach is hurting. Maybe I have a bug or something.”

“Do you need me to—”

“No, Dad. It’s fine. Stay, watch the game and tell Oak I’m proud of him. I’ll see you at home later.” I lean in and kiss his cheek.

And then, with one last glance back at Reese, I get the hell out of there.



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## REESE

“**F**UCKING YES!” one of the guys bellows the second we all crash through into the locker room.

“We’re going all the way this year, boys,” Elliot booms as we all throw ourselves into a huddle in the centre of the room, whooping and hollering, celebrating our first win of the season.

Fuck, I feel good.

Everything hurts but in the best possible way, and I revel in it.

Shoving bodies out of the way, I get deeper into the pile to find my boys so we can celebrate.

“The Saints fucking rule,” Oakley yells when I find him. He pulls me into his body, hugging me in excitement as the lads around us begin chanting.

“We’re gonna do it this year, man,” he shouts in my ear before releasing me.

Despite the excitement and the thrill of the win, my stomach knots with the knowledge that I won’t be here to see it if they do manage it. Or at least, that’s the plan.

The second I get to the point where I can shatter Olivia’s heart, I’m gonna be heading straight out of town again, leaving them all to pick up the pieces of their pathetic little lives.

My chest aches at the thought of doing it, but I don’t have a choice. I can’t stay around here and watch Mum and Christian building their new life together, forgetting about how they lied to everyone. How they allowed Olivia to lie for them.

“Yeah,” I say when Oak stares at me like I’ve got three heads. “Yeah, man. All the fucking way.”

“Whatever ritual it was you went off for earlier, you gotta fucking do that again next game. You killed it out there.”

Guilt eats at me, but it’s quickly replaced by desire as I think back to my new ritual.

“I fully intend to, man,” I say as everyone begins to get to their feet once more.

“Are you motherfuckers ready to party?” Elliot shouts.

“Hell yes,” comes back.

“I didn’t fucking hear you. I said... ARE THE SAINTS READY TO PARTY?”

“WE’RE READY TO FUCKING PARTY.” The floor vibrates with the volume of the response before everyone slams their feet down and starts clapping their hands, chanting, *Saints, Saints, Saints*.

They’re all still going as the four of us head for the showers first. Stripping out of my muddy kit, I slam my hand down on the button for the shower, memories from a very different time in here not so long ago filling my mind.

Fuck. I haven’t had anywhere near enough of her tonight.

“Fuck, this feels good,” Theo says as the water pours over him. “We’re gonna be fucking champions. I can feel it in my bones.”

“Hell yeah, but right now, I need booze and girls. And a fucking lot of them,” Oak says, washing his junk in preparation for the night ahead.

“A-fucking-men to that,” I add, instantly regretting that I didn’t when Theo shoots me an inquisitive look.

“You actually gonna get your dick wet tonight then, Whitfield?”

“Keep it fucking down, Ashworth,” Elliot snaps.

“They ain’t fucking listening. And plus, Darcie has been more than descriptive enough for everyone to buy it. Pretty sure I heard her telling someone about a birthmark you’ve got on your inner thigh the other day.”

“I don’t have a—” I shake my head. “She needs to fucking tone it down. Anyone I’ve been with will start questioning her if she gets something wrong.”

“Maybe it’s time for another little chat with your favourite Heir chaser,” Oak suggests with a smirk.

“I could think of better ways to celebrate,” I mutter, reaching for the shower gel and squirting a more-than-generous amount into my hand.

“The girls are going to be all fucking over us tonight.”



“Like they aren’t any other night of the week,” Elliot deadpans.

“Surprised you’ve got any juice left after the screaming Olivia and I heard coming from the basement earlier,” Oak quips.

“Don’t you worry about my juice. I got plenty in the tank.”

“Fuck. I need alcohol,” I mutter, turning the shower off and pushing my hand through my hair, letting the excess water run down my body.

Grabbing a towel, I wrap it around my waist as the others follow suit to allow the rest of the boys to hit the showers.

Just like every post-home game party, we’re going to be spending the night in the clearing out by the Hideout. By the time we get there, the bonfire should be raging and the girls will be waiting to lavish attention on every member of the team. Although, our new little first years are going to have to wait to get their turn on a pair of perky tits. We’ve got a couple of extra games planned for them tonight.

We dress to the raucous chatter of the rest of the team and head out before them to swing by the Chapel to dump our shit and change out of our tracksuits so we can make a fashionably late entrance.

The second we’re spotted emerging through the trees, a loud cheer goes up. It’s fucking bizarre, but I’m totally here for it as girls descend on us and drinks are thrust into our hands.

“You were incredible tonight, Reese,” Darcie purrs, pressing her tits against my chest and leaning in as if she’s going to fucking kiss me.

Reaching out, I collar her throat before she gets too close. “What the fuck do you think you’re doing?” I growl, low enough so that no one around us can hear.

“Just making it look authentic, baby,” she purrs, making my dick shrivel. Talk about coming back to Earth with a bump.

Finally getting inside Olivia, winning our first game, and then putting up with this whore pawing all over me as if I’m her favourite pet is not what I had in mind for tonight.

A shudder rips through me, one Darcie stupidly mistakes for desire. I catch her wandering hand right before it makes contact with my dick. I forcefully shove her back, making her stumble in the grass on her fucking stupid heels and fall onto her arse.

“Whoops,” I say innocently, while Elliot scowls at me.

But fuck him, fuck Darcie. Fuck everyone who thinks I stuck my dick in her. It was a means to an end, and she played her part. Now, it’s time she

fucked off and got obsessed with someone else. Someone on the football team ideally, so she can get out of my face.

“Whitfield,” Elliot growls.

With a grunt of annoyance, I stick my hand out and offer Darcie help.

She stares at me. Her lips might be all twisted up in anger, but her eyes are still filled with desire.

After a beat and right before I change my mind, she slips her hand into mine and allows me to pull her up.

“Thanks, baby,” she coos, dropping a kiss on my cheek and refusing to let go of my hand.

“Come on then, let’s get this party started.” Glancing over at Theo, I find him with three girls around him.

“Looks like you already have,” I mutter.

“Jealous, Whitfield?” he quips.

“Nah, I only need one girl to get my dick hard, not three.”

Dragging my hand from Darcie’s, I march toward where a makeshift bar has been set up and grab a bottle of vodka.

Just like the last time I partied out here on initiation night, we get the good shit, while the minions get stuck with lukewarm beer. Fine by me.

“You’re going to get found out if you keep pushing her away,” Elliot warns as he and Oak follow me, leaving Theo behind with his fan club.

“She’s had a week. I’m done now.”

“So you’re happy to let everyone know the truth, are you?” Elliot taunts. “Because as far as I can see it, Darcie’s wandering hands seem like a better option than jail.”

“Haven’t you heard? My new stepdaddy is the best defence lawyer in the country. He could get me off.”

“Whitfield,” Elliot growls again, clearly not appreciating my joke.

“Dude, you need to go and get laid. You’re too tense,” I point out, much to his irritation. “That meditation isn’t doing you any good. Maybe you should switch it up and try out the Kama Sutra instead.”

“Fuck you, Whitfield. Fuck you.” He grabs a bottle of vodka and disappears into the crowd, leaving me with an exasperated Oak.

“What?” I bark before sinking at least four shots one after the other and not bothering to come up for air.

“Do you need to keep baiting him?”

“Maybe if he pulls the stick out from his arse once in a while, he might

actually get a joke.”

“What the fuck is with you tonight? We won, man. You should be buzzing.”

“I am.” Fucking buzzing to get back into your sister’s pussy.

I look around at the crowd, trying to seek her out, but I don’t spot her brown hair anywhere.

“Where’s Olivia? It’s unlike her not to congratulate you on your win,” I quickly add to look less suspicious.

“She went home,” he murmurs, clearly not happy about it. “I had a message saying she was sick.”

My stomach knots, guilt flooding through my veins. “That sucks.”

“Right?” he says, disappointment darkening his eyes. “I need my post-game shot with my number one fan.”

I stare at him, fighting to keep back my piss taking, but he must read it in my eyes.

“Fuck off, Whitfield. You don’t understand.”

“Nah, got no fucking clue, mate.” Big fat fucking lie. I get it now more than I ever have done. I need her as much as he does, just not in any kind of brotherly way.

“I need to get wasted and fucked.”

“In that order?” I ask lightly, passing the bottle of vodka to him.

“Yep,” he announces, lifting it to his lips.

Movement over his shoulder catches my eye as Tasha and Misty descend on us.

“Well, you might just be in luck, my friend.”

Hands slide around his waist before they both press their tits against his arms.

“Hey, Oak,” Misty purrs. “You were looking good out on that field tonight.”

“Pitch. We play on a…” His words tail off as their hands begin to wander. They couldn’t give a fuck if we play on a damn cloud. All they’re interested in are the players.

“Right, well, I’ll leave you to that then, bro. Just remember to wrap it this time. We don’t want crabs in the Chapel again.”

“Ew, Oak. Is that true?” Misty whines, the sound like nails on a chalkboard.

“Nah, baby. We’re all clean as a whistle. We don’t stick our cocks into

anything, you know.”

“Pfft.”

Something hits the back of my head, and when I look down I find a bottle lid by my feet before a wide-arse smirk across Oak’s face.

“Enjoy.” I smile, flipping him off and walking away, trying to convince myself that it’s too early to slink off and go and check on Olivia.

Pulling my phone from my pocket, I find our chat and come up with something to send.

Reese: You can’t hide from the big bad wolf, sweet cheeks. I need a celebratory fuck, and no other pussy will do.

Who says romance is dead?

“You look lonely,” a familiar voice says.

“And you look and sound fucking desperate,” I shoot back. Spinning around, I pin Darcie with a look that would make everyone else cower. But not this dumb bitch.

“I don’t like seeing you sad,” she says as if I never spoke.

She reaches for my waistband, and my fingers wrap around her wrist, stopping her. “Ow, come on, Reese. I want to know if all those rumours I’ve spread are true.”

“I can confirm they are. I’m hung like a thoroughbred. The birthmark isn’t so factual though, so you might want to squash that one in case anyone else I’ve been with has categorised them.”

Her lips open and close like a goldfish, her grip on my belt tightening.

“It’s not going to happen, Darcie. You can pout those dick-sucking lips all you like, but you’re not wrapping them around mine.”

“B-but I don’t have a gag reflex.”

“Good for you,” I mutter dismissively. “In case you hadn’t already noticed, I’m not interested.” Ripping her hand from my belt, I push it lower, much to her delight. “You feel that. Not even a fucking tingle.”

“I’m sure I could fix that in a heartbeat.”

Shamelessly, she drags her strapless top down, freeing her tits.

But still. Nothing.

“Do you want some advice?” I ask, dragging her hand away from me. Her wide, hopeful eyes stare into mine. “This shameless whore act isn’t sexy. It might have got your daddy’s friend on his knees for you, but that’s because he’s a fucking paedo who molests children. If you can find some self-respect,

you might stand a chance of getting a decent guy's interest. Now, fuck off and go and hang out elsewhere."

Spinning away from her, I storm into the trees.

Thankfully, she doesn't follow.

I don't stop until I get to the hideout. It's deserted, waiting for Elliot, Theo, Oak, or me to bring the private party back here.

Lowering my arse to the steps, I tilt my head toward the dark sky and once again try to convince myself to enjoy tonight.

But it's pointless. The only place I want to be right now is with her.

It's wrong.

So fucking wrong.

I'm meant to be using her. Playing her. Making her the pawn in my game of destruction.

I shouldn't be craving her this much.

My phone vibrating in my pocket finally drags me from my own head, my heart jumping into my throat as I imagine her on the other end demanding a booty call.

Finally, my cock stirs, the memory of taking her on that rock only hours ago the only thing I can focus on.

But the second I look at my screen, any hope I had withers and dies.

Mum's name stares back at me, and my thumb hovers over the cancel button.

I don't remember the last time she called me, and it's with that sad realisation that I swipe the screen and lift it to my ear.

She wouldn't call me for chit-chat. This is more serious.

"What?" I bark down the line, wanting her to think she's interrupting the best night of my life.

"Is Olivia at the party?" she demands without even bothering with a greeting.

"Uh... no, I don't think so, why?" I ask, pushing to my feet, my heart suddenly picking up speed.

"We don't think she came home, and she said that—"

"She was ill," I finish for her, not liking the panic in her tone.

"Oak isn't answering his phone."

"I'll get him. We're coming now," I shout, bursting through the trees and scanning the crowd. "OAK," I boom, but the music is too loud. "Fuck. I'll find him. We're coming, okay?"

I cut the call and push through the crowd, demanding to know where my best friend is.

“OAK,” I shout, shoving my way through the crowd in my search for him.

Grabbing one of the first-year players whose name I haven’t bothered learning yet, I drag him toward me, getting right in his face.

“Have you seen Oakley? Theo? Elliot?” I boom, making him pale.

“N-no, I-I—”

“Reese, what’s wrong? Elliot barks, the crowd parting for him.

Releasing the first year with a shove, I spin on my heels. “Where’s Oak?”

“I dunno. He disappeared into the trees with a girl a while ago. What’s happened?”

“Olivia never got home.”

“She probably changed her mind and went—”

“She was sick. She should be at home.”

Elliot must read something in my face, because he instantly stops trying to argue with me.

“Christian has been trying to call him. He’s not fucking answering.”

“Hardly surprising,” Elliot mutters as we storm through the crowd, who have all now turned to see what the drama is.

“Ashworth,” Elliot booms, twisting his fingers in the back of his shirt and physically dragging him away from the girl who was trying to suck his face off.

She wails like a banshee, and when I look down, I realise why. Her hand is stuck in Theo’s trousers.

“We need to find Oak. Now,” he tells Theo, his tone leaving no space for argument as Theo stares at him, gawping in shock with his fly open.

“Uh... y-yeah. Sure. I think he went that way,” he says, pointing toward the tree line.

The three of us run in that direction, Theo doing as he’s told for once.

“OAKLEY,” Elliot barks as we trudge through the trees, the twigs snapping beneath our feet.

“BECKWORTH. You’d better be close to blowing your load or we’re about to ruin your night,” Theo helpfully informs anyone who might be listening.

My phone buzzes as we continue searching, and when I pull it free, I find a message from an unknown number.

Swiping the screen, dread fills my stomach as I wait for the app to open.

Unknown: I have something that belongs to you...

Reese and Olivia's story continues in *Filthy Jealous Heir: Part Two!*

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# SHATTERED LEGACY SNEAK PEEK



## Prologue

Mia

“You’re not ready?” My mother freezes in the doorway, her expression slipping. “But we leave in less than an hour.”

“Do I have to go?” I protest. “The whole thing seems like such a waste of time when we all know he’s going to be paired with Brook.”

Not that I would ever want to hear my name called. But at least if there was even a shred of mystery around which girl was going to be chosen as Cade Kingsley’s prosapia, it would give the evening some entertainment value.

“Mia, sweetheart,” she comes up behind me and places her perfectly manicured hands on my shoulders, “the Eligere is a rite of passage, you know this.”

My stomach twists. “But it’s just so... so archaic. Dressing us up like virginal brides in front of all those people...”

No, thank you.

“Mia, this isn’t a punishment, it’s a gift.” She lets out a soft sigh. “I know Cade showed preference to Brook during the courting phase, but it doesn’t mean anything. Only Quinctus can decide the fate of an Electi.”

God, she makes it all sound so normal, when living in a town like Gravestone is anything but.

As soon as you start high school, you hear the whispers about this place, the traditions... the strange rules. And if you’re lucky enough—or unlucky enough, as the case may be—to descend from one of the founding families,

you get to reign supreme over the rest of us lowly folk, forcing us to partake in these ridiculous rites of passage.

Please. What girl with even an ounce of self-respect and aspirations wants to end up tied to one of the Electi?

The Chosen.

The heirs of Quintus.

If you ask me, it's just a smokescreen for some really messed up arranged marriage scandal.

A scandal I have no desire to be a party to.

I want to escape this town and its fucked-up traditions... but part of me can't deny I am slightly intrigued. Nobody gets to know what happens behind the doors of Gravestone Hall.

And tonight, I have an open invitation.

"Please, Mia, don't make this any more difficult than it needs to be. Your father—"

"Yes, mother," I snipe. "I'll be ready."

Because that's what you do in a place like Gravestone. You follow the rules, smile where necessary, and always respect your elders.

Of course, it isn't like that for every teenager in Gravestone. Some have the luxury of moving into the area and having zero ties with the founding families. Unlike me. Our name, Thompson, descends from the Cargill line. My great grams was a Cargill until she married a Thompson... and here I am, bound to this strange life, expected to fall in line just because of my name.

"The car leaves in,"—she checks her diamond-encrusted Rolex, an anniversary gift from my father—"forty minutes."

"I said I'll be ready." It's not like I'm trying to impress anyone. The dress code for the Eligere is written in lore. All girls of age from the founding bloodlines—or verus line, as we call it—must enter the choosing at least once.

Although they are rarely picked.

My mother leaves me alone, and I begin to dress. The white gown flows over my slender form like a waterfall. I take my time braiding my dark blonde hair into a crown across my head and then pin the remaining curls into place with golden tipped pins. Adding a dusting of blush to my cheeks, I smear a lick of kohl liner under my eyes. The girl staring back at me in the mirror looks meek and innocent. A girl on the cusp of becoming a young woman.

In mere weeks, I will start college. But tonight, I will stand in front of Cade Kingsley as a prosapia.

A trickle of trepidation races down my spine. Everybody knows Cade and the Electi, even those who don't understand what it all means. He'll be a senior at Gravestone University in the fall, but I can still remember Cade as a senior in high school. I was in ninth grade, and he was everything I wasn't. Popular. Confident. Gorgeous.

Cade Kingsley, heir to the Kingsley line and notorious playboy, is finally going to discover the identity of his future wife.

And I am one of the offerings.

Gravestone Hall is the imposing gothic building that sits at the end of Prosperous Street. The entire town has been built leading toward it, making it the beacon landmark. The huge limestone bricks give it an eerie quality as shadows dance over the frontage.

"Ready?" my father asks me, squeezing my hand.

I give him a polite nod, unable to speak over the nervous energy pinging in my stomach. It's silly, really. We all know the outcome of tonight's Eligere.

The car pulls forward outside the steps leading up to the entrance, and the door opens. "Mr. and Mrs. Thompson, welcome," a young man says, reaching in to offer my mother his hand.

She climbs out elegantly, her silk gown swishing around her body. Temperance Thompson is always the picture of refinement. She thinks a woman's worth amounts to the designers she wears. It's something I didn't inherit. I did, however, inherit her hazel eyes and soft, dark blonde curls. Usually I wear them down, hanging like a cape over my shoulders. Tonight, however, they are intricately arranged on my head, leaving my shoulders and neck bare.

Tonight, I have no armor.

My lips curve grimly at the thought. I'm safe here. Cade didn't even attempt to court me. I know of at least four girls he took out on a date. Maisie Godiva told her friends at school that she gave him head in the cemetery. But I'm hardly surprised. Maisie gives out blowjobs like Santa gives out presents.

At first, I was relieved he didn't come for me. I have never had any interest in entering *their* world. But I'd be lying if I said it didn't sting a little. I know I'm a wallflower compared to most girls in this year's choosing. I'm pretty but not beautiful, slender but without those voluptuous curves guys seem to love so much, and I prefer lounge pants and leggings to dresses and stockings.

I have no desire to be judged on what's outside. A person can be beautiful to the eye but rotten to the core.

And a place like Gravestone... well, it's full of bad apples.

My father slides gracefully from the car and waits for me. I gather the dress in my hands and climb out, thanking the young man. His eyes skate down my body, lingering on my chest and the soft curve of my breasts. Heat rises inside me. I've never had a man look at me so brazenly before. It's both thrilling and terrifying.

Lowering my eyes, I push a loose curl from my face and offer him a small smile.

"Miss Thompson," he stutters over my name, "you look beautiful."

"Mia," my father barks, his expression displeased when I meet his eyes.

As we head inside, I feel the guy's hungry gaze follow me. Does he know why I'm here? Does he know what happens after the formal dinner ends?

The founding families—or Quinctus, as we call them—aren't stupid. They know how to cover their tracks and dress up their stupid traditions as celebrations and invite-only dinners.

Tonight is no different.

"He's watching her," I hear my father grumble.

"Relax, Garth. She looks beautiful. He'd be a fool not to look." My mother casts me a reassuring smile, but I avert my eyes.

When they talk like this, it makes me feel like I'm nothing more than a possession. A thing. It makes me feel like my life isn't my own.

I hate it.

I hate that I'm bound to these silly traditions. Suddenly, I want to run. I want to slip off my brand-new kitten heels and flee. But the minute we enter the Hall, all the fight leaves me.

"Wow," I breathe, taking in the vaulted ceiling and stained windows.

"I can still remember the first time I stepped foot in here." My mother joins me. "It's beautiful, isn't it?"

I nod, too awed to reply. Other families mingle. I spot a couple of girls

from my school and we share an awkward wave. My father greets their parents, working the room like he was born to do it.

He wasn't.

It's my mother's bloodline that gives us the right to be here.

*Right.*

I swallow a derisive groan.

It isn't a right, it's an order.

"Come, Mia. Let's find our seats."

Of course, there's a three-course dinner to get through before the Eligere starts. I think it's just some kind of mental torture for the prosapia, but whatever.

The ballroom is a huge, elaborate room that has been dressed in white and gold. Flowers adorn the tables and huge floor-standing candelabras line the room. I pick out the other prosapia, six in total. Only Brook is missing. But she'll want to make a fashionably late entrance, no doubt. She was in my class, so we're the same age, but she's always acted superior. Probably because she's Phillip Cargill's stepdaughter. He's the town mayor *and* a Quinctus elder, one of the most powerful men in Gravestone. Brook was always full of herself, but the second her mom shacked up with Phillip, she became insufferable.

She honestly believes it's her right to be paired with Cade.

Good luck to her. Cade isn't exactly nice. Sure, he has those chiseled good looks and an arrogant charm, but there's something about him. Something dark lingering under the surface.

Something I want no part of.

As if I've summoned him from my mind, the room grows quiet and Cade and his posse make their grand entrance. Everyone—the other prosapia, the parents, even the servers handing out flutes of champagne—stops to watch them. The next generation. The Quinctus heirs... the Electi.

Cade Kingsley, Tim Davenport, Ashton Moore, Channing Rexford, and Brandon Cargill.

They move like a well-oiled machine, Cade slightly in front with Tim and Ashton flanking his sides, and Channing and Brandon coming up behind. They look ravishing in their matching black suits, although they all wear them in their own style. Channing has his collar unbuttoned, no tie. Tim looks the most clean-cut of the five, shirt tucked in and cuffs visible. Brandon's suit looks a little wrinkled, like he just rolled out of bed, or

someone has been grabbing at the material. It wouldn't surprise me; rumor has it he's the biggest player of them all. It's easy to see why, though, with his easy smirk, bright blue eyes, and hair as dark as the night. Ashton has left his jacket off, draping it over his shoulder like he's in a photo shoot. And Cade... Cade looks positively breathtaking. His eyes catch mine, only for a second, and a shiver rolls down my spine. He knows who I am, but he doesn't *know* me.

*Because he didn't give you a chance.* I silence the little voice. I never wanted to be picked, I never wanted any of this... but I am only human, after all. An eighteen-year-old girl with dreams and desires. I press my thighs together. It's hard not to look at the Electi and imagine things... dark, sinful things.

But then a gong rings out and the spell is broken.

They are the Electi. The chosen. The future of Gravestone.

And me?

I'm no one.

Dinner is a total bore. I don't know what I expected, but it wasn't two hours of listening to various prominent residents of Gravestone giving speeches about the town's prosperity and bright future.

By the time Phillip Cargill steps onto the stage, I'm half asleep.

"Good evening friends." His voice echoes through the room. "Now that the formalities are out of the way, we can move onto more important things. Those of you here tonight understand the history of our great town, the importance of our heritage. Tonight, we will uphold one of our most sacred traditions: the Eligere." He takes a sip of his drink. "I now ask the prosapia and their fathers to join me in the Sanctuary for the ceremony."

My stomach flutters as my mother squeezes my hand. "Good luck, sweetheart. Remember, if you are not chosen, it doesn't reflect on you."

I barely refrain from rolling my eyes.

"Mia," my father says gruffly as he stands. I gather myself and accept his offer of help. The two flutes of champagne I drank with dinner rush to my head as the room grows small around me.

Everyone is watching, waiting with bated breath to know who Cade will

emerge from the sanctuary bound to.

Of course, to anyone outside of tonight's ceremony, the engagement announcement that will follow the Eligere will be nothing out of the ordinary. Kids grow up, they attend college, date, and fall in love.

Only those with verus blood know the truth.

Everything is hazy as my father leads me out of the ballroom and down a simple stone hall. Maisie Godiva and her father are ahead of me. Her dress is slightly less demure than mine, cut low in the back and hemmed with pearls. It doesn't surprise me. Her mother is a bit of a show-off. Brook leads our quiet caravan. When she finally arrived, everyone had stopped to admire her dress. The prosapia are supposed to present themselves in a simple white gown, something pure and innocent to honor the union oath. But in true Brook fashion, her gown was something akin to a wedding dress, layered with lace and fine gold embroidery.

She is most definitely the sun, outshining the rest of us.

Eventually, we reach the Sanctuary, a place few people in Gravestone ever have the opportunity to visit.

"Ready?" my father asks me as we step inside.

"I guess," I murmur, wondering if anyone can ever be truly ready for something like this.

Candles flicker wildly in the cavernous room, bouncing shadows around the smooth limestone walls. It's simple in its decoration, nothing at all like the grand ballroom. But it only adds to the mystery and intrigue.

"Welcome to the Eligere." Phillip has slipped on a black robe that hangs to the floor. "Gentlemen, please present your daughters before the Electi."

I spot them then: Cade and his three sidekicks all standing poised and ready. Ashton isn't present because he isn't a true Electi. Of the four heirs, Tim is the only one already engaged. He and his fiancée, Fawn, were paired when he was just a freshman. But Channing and Brandon will both have to be paired eventually.

My father walks me to the line and kisses me on the cheek. "Whatever happens here tonight, I want you to know I love you, Mia."

My brows pinch, and I want to ask what he means, but he melts into the shadows.

"This is crazy," the girl beside me breathes. I've seen her around town, but she's older than me.

Phillip begins speaking again, regaling us with the history of the Eligere,

the importance of unifying families and continuing to strengthen Gravestone's influence. But his voice becomes white noise to the blood roaring in my ears.

It's silly, we all know whose name is going to be pulled from the calix.

Cade and Brook are written in the stars.

"Maddoc." Phillip calls forward another robed man. I vaguely recognize him but can't place where from. My heart is pounding wildly in my chest, and the air in the Sanctuary is thick with anticipation. I can practically feel the other prosapia hold their breath as Phillip dips his hand inside the calix.

"Are you ready to meet your prosapia, Cade?"

Cade steps forward, nodding. "I am."

He's as cool as a cucumber, smug even, as if he's enjoying having eight girls lined up for his entertainment.

Asshole.

My teeth grind together behind pursed lips as I try to focus on something, *anything*, that will help distract me from the fact that this is fucking crazy.

Phillip pulls out the small slip of paper and unfolds it, keeping his eyes on the prosapia. "Tonight, one of you will be chosen. It is a great honor, a great privilege, to be bound to an Electi." His eyes flick to the note, a deep frown marring his forehead. The blood drains from his face as he looks back to us. "I-I don't understand—"

"Spit it out, old man," Cade jokes, "we have a party to get to."

Oh goodie, the after-party. I can hardly wait for that.

"Ah yes, of course." Phillip clears his throat. "Cade Kingsley, on behalf of Quintus, please step forward and accept Miss Mia Thompson as your prosapia."

I blink, certain I must have misheard him.

"Thompson?" Cade balks at the same time as Brook shrieks, "What the fuck?"

"Mia." The girl next to me jabs my ribs. "It's you," she whispers. "You need to go up there."

"W-what?" I croak, unable to process what's happening.

But then Phillip steps forward, commanding silence. "The calix has spoken," he says more firmly this time, as if there's no confusion, no mistake. "Mia Thompson is Cade's prosapia."

Oh, fuck.



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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Two angsty romance lovers writing dark heroes and the feisty girls who bring them to their knees.

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