



For I
Have Sinned

ALEX
USA TODAY BESTSELLING AUTHOR
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To anyone with sinfully sexy thoughts...

Chapter 1

WESLEY

SLIPPING OFF MY GLASSES, I toss them and my pen to my desk, then dig my thumb and pointer finger in my eyes. It's been a long day. Even my bones feel weary. I woke at three this morning from a phone call from a parishioner, whose mother had a massive heart attack and wasn't expected to live much longer. Tabitha was the caller, her mother was Marybeth, both of whom, along with their family, have been attending my sermons since I took over the church seven years ago. After rushing to the hospital, I spent the next hour praying over the elderly woman, her weeping family by my side. Sadly, Marybeth passed on to Heaven not long after.

It's always hard losing a member of my congregation, but it's even harder to watch their family in their grief-stricken state. Marybeth was no longer in pain, which is a blessing, but her family was.

The death of Marybeth isn't the only reason my day has been long. I'm becoming more concerned over the girl who keeps sneaking into the church and stealing food. That food is donated to the church to offer to those less fortunate, so if her situation calls for it, the church is more than willing to give her what she needs. She just won't request the help, opting to steal it instead. It's not the food I'm most concerned about though. It's what she took one of the last times she was here. Medical supplies and clothes for a young boy. Someone she knows is hurt, and it's apparent she must have a child with her. The more time I have to dwell on it, the more worried I become.

Opening my eyes, I slide the journal I write my sermons in closed and slip it inside the top drawer of my desk. It's just

past eleven. Most nights I'm home by now, but I was behind on writing down my next sermon and wanted to get it done before I left for the night. Now that it's finished, I can go home and get some much-needed sleep.

Grabbing my phone from my desk, I'm just sliding it in my pocket when it starts ringing. Pulling it back out, I look at the screen, then smile when I see the name. I prop up on the corner of my desk, crossing my ankles, and swipe my finger across the screen.

"It's kinda late for you to be calling, isn't it? Aren't you usually in bed by now?"

Penelope, my younger sister, sighs into the speaker. "Your sister is driving me crazy."

I chuckle. "*My* sister? I'm pretty sure she's *our* sister."

"I'm no longer claiming her," she says, frustration lacing her voice.

"Tell me. Which sister has caused you so much grief that you've disowned her?"

"Taylor." She says the name in a feminine growl.

"What has she done now?"

"She's harassing one of my new clients."

"Asa Sharpe?"

The guess is pointless. It's a known fact Taylor's had an obsession with the famous rock star since he made his record-breaking debut with the band Grey Water twelve years ago. He's been a hot commodity ever since. Even if Penelope tried to hide that she recently signed Asa with her lucrative PR company, which is impossible in a town this size, there's no way she'd be able to keep it from Taylor. Our crazy sister makes it a point to know everything about the man.

"Yes. Who else? If I see her outside my office one more time, I won't be held accountable for my actions, Wesley."

Stuffing my hand into my pocket, I look down at my black dress shoes. "Have you talked to her?"

“Yes. For all the good it’s done. I even recruited Camila and Harley. She’s ignoring everyone. Can you imagine having a client who has to have a restraining order against our sister?”

My brows scrunch. “It’s gotten that bad?”

“No.” Her breath crackles across the line. “But if she keeps it up, it wouldn’t surprise me if it heads that way.”

“I’ll stop by her house tomorrow and have a talk with her,” I tell Penelope.

“Good luck with that. I swear she has to be sleeping outside my office building. I had to tell security to not let her in.”

“Why? It’s not like Asa Sharpe is a regular there. I’m sure you do most of your business with him over the phone.”

“Yeah, well, she somehow found out he’s due to come in soon. She just doesn’t know when. She’s hanging out for when it happens.”

“I’ll take care of it, Pen. Stop stressing over it.”

“Thanks, big brother.” I can hear the relief come across the line. “Sorry for calling so late. I’m just at my wits’ end.”

“Don’t apologize. I know how Taylor is when it comes to Asa Sharpe.” I think all of Silver Falls knows of Taylor’s obsession with Asa.

“What are you up to? Are you at home?”

I get up from my perch on my desk, patting my pockets to make sure I have my keys. “At the church, but I’m heading out now.”

“Alright, well, I’ll let you go. Call me tomorrow to let me know how it goes with Taylor.”

“Will do.”

After we hang up, I pocket my phone and pull out my keys. Closing my office door behind me, I lock it. The church is always quiet this time of night, even though the doors are unlocked for anyone to come in to pray if they feel the need.

I'm always the last one to leave, and I like to keep the church accessible to anyone when I'm here.

On my way down the center aisle of the church, I notice a couple of the hymns on the pew, so I stop to put them in the sleeve on the back of the pew where they belong. My head jerks toward the back of the church when a crash sounds. On swift feet, I move in that direction, already knowing exactly what I'll find. I've only gotten brief glimpses of the girl. She always manages to slip out before I can stop her.

The hallways are dark as I navigate them toward the back room where the food pantry is. I pick up my pace to a jog when I hear a scuffling sound. Rounding the corner, I'm suddenly shoved backward into the wall. My hand reaches out, barely grazing a black sweater before it slips away.

"Hey!" I yell at the retreating back and start running after her. For such a small thing, she moves pretty fast. "Wait!"

Her steps don't falter as she darts around a corner into the sanctuary. I'm only about ten feet behind her. Determination to find out who this girl is, and to help her in any way I can, has my legs stretching into longer strides. Reaching out a hand to grab the back of her sweater, I miss when she suddenly takes a turn between a couple of pews and some cans fall from her arms. My foot lands on one as it rolls in front of me. Grabbing the end of a pew, I barely manage to catch myself before I fall. By the time I right myself enough to continue my pursuit, the girl is already at the end of the pew and running toward the door at the back of the church.

"I can help!" I yell at her.

This time, my words have her slowing. She comes to a stop, keeping her back toward me, but turns her head to the side. With a ball cap covering her head and her hair hiding most of her face, I can't see her that well. Just like the week before, from what I can see of her, she looks to be in her mid-teens.

I don't move, afraid if I do, she'll run off. Her shoulders rise and fall rapidly.

I keep my tone soft. “I know you’ve been taking food from the pantry. If you’re in some kind of trouble, I can help.” Her shoulders stiffen, so I quickly add, “Whatever it is, I’m bound by the church to keep it between us.”

Her head moves, and her chin drops like she’s looking at the floor. I take a hesitant step forward.

“Please, I only want to help,” I offer quietly.

When I take another step, it’s a mistake. She must notice the move, because she’s dashing toward and through the door. I take off after her again, but by the time I make it outside, she’s nowhere to be found. I slowly walk down the steps, my eyes moving back and forth down both sides of the street. I scan the darkness, looking for any movement, and don’t find any.

I stand there for I don’t know how long as disappointment sours my stomach. Shoving my hands into my slacks pockets, I take one more look around.

I’m not sure what it is, but something about the girl piques my interest. A whisper in the back of my mind tells me I’m supposed to help her.

Chapter 2

JERSEY

PEEKING my head around a tree across from the church, I watch Father Adair as he scans the streets. The light shining down on him from a nearby light pole illuminates his features enough for me to clearly see frustration lining his face.

Being a man of the cloth, whose sole purpose is to help people, not only religiously, but in life, I can imagine Father Adair's disappointment of me once again slipping away. This is the closest I've been to being caught, and that's one thing I can't afford to do. It was stupid of me to stop when he shouted he could help me. If only that were true. I wanted to believe him, but it's not just my life hanging in the balance. Someone else is depending on me. I could possibly chance my life, but I'll never do it with Sam's.

After several more moments of Father Adair looking around the area of the church, he shoves his hands into his pockets and finally turns away, walking slowly up the steps. I watch his retreating back, wondering why in the world a man such as him would be a priest. There's nothing wrong with the position. I just wouldn't have figured a man who looks like him would stay celibate.

Father Wesley Adair is gorgeous. Dark-brown hair long enough to touch the collar of his clerical collar, a body built with muscles he has no way of hiding under his clothes, incredibly tall, and if my eyes haven't been deceiving me, he has tattoos crawling up his arms. I haven't been close enough to see the color of his eyes, something that, for some unknown reason, sends regret churning in my stomach, but I imagine them to be a lighter color.

When the church door closes, I sag back against the tree and release a long breath. That was too close. I've been taking food from the church for weeks now, but I'm wondering if I should find somewhere else to get what I need. The next time, I might not be so lucky.

Hugging my bag to my chest, I check my surroundings before I dart off down the street, making sure to stay in the shadows. I take back alleyways, away from any lingering people who may still be out this late.

Coming to a stop at an old, abandoned building, that used to be office space, I look all around me before I push open the heavy metal door and slip inside. My lungs deflate, and I take in my first real steady breath since leaving the church. My feet echo off the walls as I walk through the trashed building and hit the stairs. Up three flights and a right at the end of the hall, I'm quiet as I go into one of the rooms. A bundle of blankets lay in one corner and that's where my feet take me.

I drop to my knees and immediately set my hand on the blanket. It stirs and a head full of shaggy blonde hair and dull blue eyes pop out.

"How are you feeling?" I ask as I set the back of my hand against Sam's forehead. I'm relieved when I'm met with cooler flesh. He's still warm, but not as much as he was earlier.

"My head hurts a little, but I'm better."

"That's good, sweetie." I try to add warmth into my smile, but I'm not sure I manage it. I'm glad his fever seems to have broken, but it's hard to be happy with the situation we're in. "Let's check out your wound."

Despite the warm temperatures outside, Sam's been racked with chills the last several days, so I keep the top part of him covered while I peel the blanket off his right leg. A bandage is wrapped around his upper thigh, hiding the gash underneath. I carefully unwrap it. My stomach pitches when I see blood seeping through the gauze.

The gash is a couple of inches long and is probably bad enough that he should have gotten stitches days ago. Now it's

red and swollen, and I'm pretty sure it's infected. Regardless of the danger it would put both of us in, if it doesn't start showing signs of improvement, I'm going to have to take him to the emergency room.

A shudder runs through me at what could possibly happen should certain people find out where Sam is. I couldn't care less what happens to me. Sam is my only concern.

Grabbing a few things from the bag beside me, I soak a rag with water and squirt some soap on it, then squish the rag until it lathers with suds.

"I'm so sorry, Sam." I hold the rag over his wound, "This is going to hurt, but I need to clean it."

His eyes are filled with trust as he gazes at me. "It's okay. I can take it." My eyes sting, and I have to forcefully push back the tears threatening to fall. My brother, only twelve years old, has endured more in his years than most adults. I hate the people who caused him pain. I hate even more that I wasn't able to prevent what happened to him.

With my throat tight and with trembling hands, I press the soapy rag to the gash. Sam, showing bravery that astounds me, only lets out a small hiss. My eyes move to his face to find his jaw clenched tight.

I clean his wound as gently as I can, then grab the water bottle to rinse away the soap. Letting it air dry for a moment, I slather on more antibiotic ointment before I carefully rewrap his leg.

"Are you hungry?" I ask him after I pull the blanket back over his legs. "I managed to get a can of peaches."

His eyes light up with his smile and it lessens some of the tension I've been feeling for weeks. Sam doesn't smile often, but when he does, it gives me hope that the bastards who hurt him haven't totally scarred him for life.

"Peaches," Sam says. "My favorite."

I pull the can from the bag. "I know it's not the same as fresh peaches." I work on popping the top. "But you can have the whole can all to yourself."

His brows pucker. “What about you? You have to eat too.”

With a grin, I reach in the bag and pull out another can. “I found my favorite too.” I hold up a small can of mandarin oranges for myself.

His nose scrunches in an adorable show of disgust. “Those are gross. I don’t see how you can eat them. They’re not even real oranges.”

I laugh as I set my can aside and dig in my bag for a plastic fork. “I don’t know what you’re talking about. These are delicious. And they are most definitely oranges. They’re just babies.”

He rolls his eyes and snorts out a laugh.

“Are you able to sit up?”

“Yeah.”

Seeing the struggle on his face as he sits up pulls at my heartstrings and has guilt churning in my belly. Grabbing the pillow behind him, I push it against the wall for him to prop up on. He presses his hands into the dirty mattress and scoots back. Once he’s settled, I hand him the open can of peaches and the plastic fork. He immediately stabs one and shoves it into his mouth.

“Slow down, Sam. You need to make sure they aren’t going to make you sick before you stuff your belly full of them.”

He eats at a slower pace, and I wait it out for a moment. When it looks as though he may be able to hold the fruit down, I open my own can of mandarins.

Our cans are almost empty when Sam asks a question that’s been weighing on my mind.

“What are we going to do, Jersey? He’s going to eventually find me.”

I set my can to the side, and crossing my legs, scoot closer to the bed. “I need a couple more weeks, and I should have enough money to get us out of Silver Falls.”

“Where will we go?”

“I’m not sure yet.” I prop my elbow on my leg and lean my chin in my hand. “Where would you go if you could go anywhere?”

Using the back of his hand, he wipes it across his mouth. His eyes move across the room, and he stares off into space. His contemplative expression looks way too old for a twelve-year-old to have.

After a moment, he brings his eyes back to me. “Alaska.”

Totally not what I was expecting. “Why Alaska?”

He shrugs and looks back down at his empty can. “Because it’s very far away from here.”

Pressure builds behind my eyes and my nose stings. If I could make one wish, it would be to take away all of Sam’s bad memories.

I reach over and put my hand on top of his, squeezing his fingers. “I won’t let them hurt you again. I swear, Sam.”

I just hope and pray I can keep that promise.

His head tilts to the side, and he regards me with a curious expression. “How are you getting money, Jersey? Are you stealing it from people?”

My smile is sad. “I’m not stealing from people. Don’t worry about how I’m getting it. You only need to worry about getting better. Leave the rest to me.”

It’s a non-answer, but there’s no way I can tell him the truth. What I’m doing to get the money to get us out of here makes my own stomach queasy. The answer is too much for Sam’s young ears. He’s been through enough.

My thoughts move to tomorrow night, and what I have to do. It’s vile and repulsive, but I’d do it a hundred more times to ensure Sam’s safety.

Nothing means more than that.

Chapter 3

WESLEY

HITTING my knuckles on the passenger side window, I don't wait for a response before I open the door and slide onto the seat. Taylor looks at me, her eyes wide in surprise, as I close us inside the car. I turn partially in my seat to face her. Out the corner of my eye, I notice several empty food wrappers and water bottles in the back seat. It looks like she's been in this car for days.

“What are you doing here?” she asks. From the look on her face and the way she's nibbling at her thumb nail, she already knows the answer.

Growing up with four younger sisters who were born only minutes apart was tough. It was made even more so because our mother was pretty much the only one who raised us. Our father was around at times, but when he was at home he spent most of his time screaming or using his fists against one of us kids or our mother. I was six and the girls were four when Mom got sick. Things were better with dad for about a year after that, then it went downhill again at a rapid pace. For years, my sisters and I dreaded when Dad would be home. Thankfully, it wasn't too often since his job required him to travel a lot. Despite my wild behavior at times as a teen, I grew up fast because Mom, in her sickened state, needed help with the girls. I became more of a father figure to them than our dad ever was.

I blink and stare at my sister, bringing myself back to the present.

“Never mind why I'm here, Taylor. The question is: why are you?”

Despite the girls being identical quadruplets, they couldn't be more different in personality if they weren't related at all. They've also learned of ways to make their appearances stand out from the others. Taylor's natural black hair has been dyed a sandy blond.

She looks out the windshield toward the front of Penelope's office building before she swings her eyes back to me. "I just want to see him once."

"Taylor." I sigh her name, lifting my hand to rub my fingers across my forehead. "This obsessive behavior has got to stop." I look back at her. "Do you want to be charged with stalking? Because honestly, that is where you're headed."

Her bottom lip sticks out into a pout, making her look ten years younger than she is. "I'm not that bad."

A snort leaves my lips. "Yeah, Taylor, you are. Tell me, if some guy were doing what you were doing right now, along with all the other stuff you've done, would you think it was creepy?"

Her eyes slide away from mine to stare out the windshield again. "Maybe," she admits reluctantly.

I grab her hand sitting on the middle console and press it between both of mine. I squeeze it until she looks at me.

"There's nothing wrong with being fascinated with someone, but you need to set limits. Sitting outside our sister's place of employment day after day wouldn't really be a problem, but we both know you wouldn't just sit here if he showed up. You'd be out of the car and in his face as fast as you could get to him. *That's* the line you need to draw and not cross it."

She looks down at our hands and wiggles her fingers. I let it go and she brings her hand to the steering wheel to wrap both around it. Her shoulders slump with her deep exhale.

"Okay."

"Go home, Taylor," I tell her. "Or Penelope said she's going to call the police and have you escorted away from the premises."

Her head jerks around. “She would really do that? To her sister?”

“She’s already banned you from the building. What you’re doing out here is just as bad. Your obsessive behavior is affecting her work. She has every right to put a stop to it.”

Her nose wrinkles and she lets out an unladylike growl. “Fine. I’ll leave.”

“And you need to stay away,” I state.

“Yeah, yeah, yeah. Whatever. I won’t come back,” she grumbles.

I eye her as she continues to look out the windshield. I want to believe she’s telling the truth. As a man of God, I truly believe in finding the good in people. Not that Taylor is a bad person. She just has this compulsive need to obsess over anything Asa Sharpe related. My sisters and I have dealt with this behavior for years. Now that Asa has signed on with Penelope’s PR firm, it makes him realistically within her reach.

Reaching over, I gently take Taylor’s chin and turn her face toward me, then lean over and kiss her cheek.

Letting her go, I reach for the door handle. “Be good. Go home and cuddle up on the couch with a big bowl of ice cream. I know how much comfort you always find in Rocky Road.”

She laughs and it makes me feel good to see the humor on her face.

With her lips still twitching, she nods and shoves me toward the door. “Out,” she orders playfully, “so I can leave before I change my mind.”

Flashing her an easy grin, I get out of her car. I stand on the sidewalk, my hands shoved into my pockets, as I watch her pull away from the curb. Looking down at my shoes as I turn to walk in the opposite direction, my smile is still in place.

“BLESS ME, Father, for I have sinned. It’s been three months since my last confession.”

The voice on the other side of the screen pauses for a moment, and I sit and wait. Coming to confession isn’t easy for a lot of people. Sometimes it takes them a moment to gather their thoughts and their courage.

A deep inhale of breath comes before the man continues. “I’ve been having... sinful thoughts about my step-sister. They started about a year ago, and I’ve been able to push them aside, but it’s getting harder and harder lately.” He pauses again, and I get the feeling there’s more, so I stay silent. “Not only that, but I’ve also been thinking about my best friend in the same manner. My *male* best friend.” He emphasizes the word male.

“Impure thoughts are common among people. They happen to everyone. Even the purest person will have them.” I’ve spent my own fair share of time in a confessional, confessing my sinful thoughts to a fellow priest. “It’s recognizing those thoughts as sinful and not taking pleasure from them that matters.”

The other side of the screen is silent for a moment.

“Yeah,” he says quietly. “It’s kind of too late for that.”

“I see.” I fold my hands in my lap. “And do you plan to continue to allow these thoughts in your mind?”

A quiet, “I don’t know” reaches my ears.

“Are you regretful for having these thoughts?”

“Yes.”

“I can only offer penance for sins already committed. It is up to you to condemn these thoughts from your mind if you are truly regretful for having them.”

I drop my head, and I can’t contain the small smile from tipping up my lips. I recognized the voice the moment he

spoke his first word. If I know anything about Jamison, and I know a lot since we grew up together, I know there will be no condemning his thoughts. Jamison grew up Catholic, but he doesn't live his life solely by Catholic beliefs. It's not my place to judge a person. Only God can do that. I can only help guide them down a righteous path.

Wiping the smile from my face, I send up a silent prayer, asking the Almighty to forgive me for my wayward thoughts during confession.

“For the transgressions you admitted to today, to earn forgiveness, your penance is to say ten Hail Mary's.”

“Thank you, Father.”

Bowing my head, I say, “Please recite the Act of Contrition.”

“Wash me from my guilt and cleanse me of my sin. I acknowledge my offense; my sin is before me always.”

After he finishes reciting Psalms 51:2-3, I conclude our session with a prayer.

“Your sins are forgiven. Go in peace.”

Jamison mutters a thank you before I hear the door to the booth open and then close. Looking at the watch on my wrist, I figure he's my last confession of the day, so I wait a few minutes before I rise from my seat and exit the booth. A couple of people linger in the pews, their heads bowed as they silently pray.

To not disturb them, I keep my feet light as I walk down the aisle toward the back of the church. I head straight for the food storage room.

There is no rhyme or reason when the girl will come to take some food. Sometimes it's during the day, and sometimes it's at night. I'm anxious to see if she comes today. A few nights ago, when I almost caught her, she looked as though she wanted to take my offer for help. But after a brief moment of hesitation, something compelled her to run away. This morning when I came to the church, I decided to try something new. I set aside a box of food and clothes with a note, telling

her they were for her to take, along with my contact information. I'm hoping this tactic will establish a line of trust and compassion. My ultimate goal is for her to come to me. There's something about the girl that makes me believe God sent her my way for a reason.

My steps slow as I approach the room. No noises come from within, and the light is off. When I flick the switch, disappointment hits when I find the box in the same place I set it earlier. Looking around, everything looks the same as it was when I left it this morning.

Turning to leave, I flip the light switch and close the door behind me. I'll check again before I leave for the night.

She hasn't been back since that night, so I hope I didn't frighten her off permanently.

Chapter 4

JERSEY

AFTER CLENCHING the belt of my long, black trench coat tight around my waist, I fluff up my hair then regard my reflection in the dirty mirror. I hate what I see. My normally long, straight, strawberry-blonde hair has been artfully piled on top of my head, which will show off my slender shoulders when I remove my coat. My make-up is thick but done so in a fashionable way. The silver, dangly earrings swish when I move my head. And my clothes underneath the coat are way more revealing than what I would normally wear. It's all meant to seduce, and unfortunately, I know it'll work. It has the other times I've gone out onto the street.

Smoothing my lips together to make sure my lipstick is still even, I turn away from the mirror. My stomach is already twisting into knots for what lies ahead. Mom and Dad would be so disgusted with me if they knew what I was getting ready to do.

My eyes slide over to the mattress where Sam is sitting with a book in his lap. He's better than he was, but he hasn't fully recovered from whatever stomach bug he had. The cut on his leg doesn't look quite as angry either, which is a huge relief. Going to the hospital was the last resort, and I'm glad it's looking like we may not have to.

I walk over to him and carefully get to my knees on the mattress beside his legs.

"Do you need anything before I go?" I ask.

He looks up from the book, and I tense when his eyes look all over my face and down to the coat I'm wearing. Sam's far

from stupid, but I like to think he hasn't figured out what I'm doing when I leave at night in a trench coat covering me from my neck down to my ankles. He may not know exactly what, but I'm pretty sure he knows it's more than what I've been telling him.

"No," he says, looking back at his book. "I'm fine."

He's not fine, but he's better than he was when he lived with Douglas Beckett and his rotten and twisted son Mark.

I slide the measly bag of food closer to the bed. I haven't been back to the church since the night Father Adair almost caught me, and I'm not sure if I should chance going again. Which means I'll have to figure out another way to get Sam and me food. We're almost out, so I need to find that source soon.

"I'll be back later tonight. Don't worry if it gets late," I tell him.

"Yeah, okay."

The way he's looking at me, like he wants to ask questions I don't want to answer, has me quickly getting to my feet. Only a few more nights and I can get us out of here. What I do at night won't matter anymore because I won't be doing it once we leave.

I pat the pocket of my coat. "I've got my cell phone. Call if anything happens or you need me."

One of the first things I bought when I could afford it was a prepaid cell phone for Sam. With me out at night and him being here by himself, I needed a way for him to get in touch with me if there was an emergency.

Sam looks back at his book and I leave. I don't like leaving him here by himself. He's only twelve, and while he's mature enough to look after himself, this area isn't completely safe. This is one of the few buildings around where the homeless don't go too often, but someone might stumble across Sam, and who knows what they'll do. I picked this room because it's on the top floor, all the way down at the end. Any time I leave, I pray no one finds him.

The night air is humid when I leave Sam and our temporary home. Making my way down the street, I receive a few lingering glances as I pass by several people loitering on street corners. During this time of night in this part of town, there's only two reasons a person is out. To score drugs or to sell their bodies for money.

Revulsion leaves a sour taste in my mouth because I'm here to sell my body. I need money fast, without leaving a trail, so this is my only choice. This will be the eighth time I've sold myself into the greedy hands of sick men. Each time I do, a little part of me withers away. The only thing I can do is hope I get those pieces back once Sam and I are away from this place.

I walk toward the corner I usually stand at but find it already occupied by two other scantily-clad women. Instead of confronting them and telling them they're in my spot—something I've noticed is typical in this line of work—I cross the street. I don't care where I'm at, so long as the man who approaches me has a fat wallet.

Once I've found a new spot, I untie the belt around my waist and remove my trench coat. Despite a slight breeze of warm air, goosebumps pop up on my arms. I feel way too exposed in the little black dress I'm wearing. But the more skin you show, the more men are willing to pay.

Draping my coat over my arm, I stand and nervously wait. Not much traffic comes at night. You can always tell when a car approaches and they're looking for a warm body. They slowly creep along the street, staring out of their tinted windows, checking out the choices. When they see who they want, they pull up and roll down the window. It's up to the girls to approach the vehicles.

A silver sedan turns the corner, and I hold my breath, secretly praying he passes by me. I always pray they pass by, even though I should be hoping for the opposite. I let out a little sigh of relief as the car slowly drives by, then pulls over to the two girls on my usual corner. I watch as they strut on their high heels and bend over to peer inside the car. The transaction doesn't take long. A shiver races up my spine

when both girls climb inside the front seat, and something tells me I dodged a bullet with that guy.

Fifteen minutes pass before I hear another vehicle. I hold my breath, my eyes flickering to the only other girl on this block. She's about a hundred feet from me, standing dead center under a street lamp. A black SUV comes down the street in the opposite direction the sedan came from. They're going to approach the other girl first, but it looks like they aren't looking for action because their speed is too fast.

I turn away from the vehicle, already forgetting about it and looking for the next car. Out of the corner of my eye, I catch the SUV slowing then swerving to the curb beside me. I turn to it when it comes to a stop, the window already halfway down. Inhaling a deep breath for courage, I slowly walk toward the vehicle. My hands sweat and my knees knock together, and I remind myself over and over again why I'm doing this. This is the only way to get Sam out of Silver Falls as quickly as possible.

I can't see the driver of the SUV because they're cast in shadows. Every time I do this, I take a chance with my life, but it's worth it.

I step down from the curb and bend over to look inside the vehicle. At first, I think my eyes are playing tricks on me. There's no way Father Adair—someone who is supposed to be celibate—is looking for sex. There's got to be a mistake.

I tense, ready to bolt away from the car, but his deep voice stops me. "Please wait."

Chapter 5

WESLEY

I TAP the steering wheel as I navigate the dark streets. I've just left the home of a member of my congregation who wasn't able to attend service this past Sunday. Mrs. Mallard, who's an avid church goer, fell a few days ago and broke her hip. She was devastated she couldn't attend church, so I told her I would stop by to pray with her. I'll continue to do so until she's on her feet again and can rejoin us on Sundays. While I was there, she was adamant I stay for the dinner her daughter cooked. Who was I to deny a home-cooked meal, something I usually only get when I visit one of my sisters?

It's well past dark, and I need to get back to the church so Father Gabriel can go home. I have a couple of things I need to take care of before I can go home myself.

I'm passing through a part of town that's been run down for years when something catches my attention. It's a woman dressed in a black dress that wouldn't be considered decent by any standards. I'm not sure what it is, but she seems familiar. I don't come to this part of town often, so unless they're a part of my congregation, I shouldn't know anyone.

I slow my SUV to try and get a better look. It only takes me a second to recognize her. Even just seeing the side of her face, I know it's the girl from the church. I pull my vehicle to the curb beside her.

Why is she here? Is she one of the prostitutes who frequents this area? How is that even possible? She's far too young to be selling her body for sex.

My window is down, and I'm leaning over the middle console when I see her coming my way. I hope my eyes have deceived me and this girl is not the same one who keeps taking food from my church.

When she bends down to the window, I get my first real glimpse of her, and there's no mistaking this is the same girl. She looks ready to bolt when her eyes meet mine, so I hold my hand out and plead, "Please wait."

She hesitates, and I'm not sure if she's going to run away or stay. I hold her eyes, hoping she sees the earnestness in my gaze. Neither of us speaks for several long seconds. I spend those seconds wondering what she's doing here. Wondering what made her so desperate that she's on this street, doing what she's doing.

Slipping past the red lipstick coating her lips, she runs her tongue over the bottom one. With her hand on the window frame, her eyes take in the interior of my SUV before she brings them back to me. Her lips curve up into a seductive smile, but the look doesn't reach her eyes. She appears nervous, in spite of the way she's trying to come off.

"Aren't priests supposed to be celibate, Father?"

Hearing her voice, I'm shocked when my first thought is that she sounds like an angel. An adult angel. Looking at her, from what I've seen of her body in her too-revealing dress, and fully seeing her face, she's not as young as I first thought.

"We are," I say when I find my voice.

She cocks her head to the side, regarding me with one brow lifted. "I know you're innocent and all, but you can't be so naïve that you don't know what a woman like myself is doing out on the street at night, in this part of town." She leans over more, propping her elbows on the window frame. "Why did you pull over?"

My eyes betray me by looking down at the ample cleavage she just put on display by leaning over. And what's worse, the appendage in my slacks takes notice as well. I grit my teeth in shame when my dick starts to harden.

“You’re the girl who keeps taking food from my church,” I say in a calm voice, so I don’t scare her off.

Her shoulders stiffen for a moment, like she’s holding her breath before they relax again. I’m surprised when she openly admits her sin. “Yes, that was me. I’m not going to apologize for it. I needed the food.”

I lean over the console more. “Let me help you.”

She laughs, but there’s no humor in the sound. “There’s nothing you can do for me.”

Her eyes move from my face to my chest then down to my lap. With her gaze on me, my dick grows thicker. Before I go home for the night, it looks like I’ll be spending time in front of the cross asking the Lord for forgiveness.

“Unless,” her eyes move back up to mine, “you want to hang up your priesthood for the night and spend some time with me. Money is what I need right now.”

Shamefully, my initial thought isn’t to deny this girl. An image pops into my head of her laid out on my altar, her head thrown back in pleasure. I don’t see the person who’s giving her this pleasure, but something whispers in my mind that it’s me.

I force those thoughts from my head. I haven’t had sexual cravings in years, so why am I having them now?

Lord, please give me strength, I send up the silent prayer.

“That’s not an option,” I tell the girl. Her features drop, as if she’s disappointed. “But there are other ways I can help you. Why don’t you come back to the church with me and explain your situation?” I look around where I’m parked. “You shouldn’t be out here.”

“Thanks for the concern, Father, but I can take care of myself. I’ve been doing it for a while.”

“How old are you?”

She does that head cock thing again. “Nineteen.”

Still too young to be out on the streets like this.

“What’s your name?” Her expression turns doubtful, and she looks like she might run again, so I add, “I only want your first name.”

It takes her a moment, but she finally answers. “Jersey.”

“Jersey.” I say her name slowly, it somehow fitting the girl in front of me. “I noticed you took some bandages several days ago. Are you okay?”

Her lips purse. “Yes, I’m fine.”

I’m not sure I believe her, but I leave that subject alone for now.

“Okay, how about you come by the church tomorrow so I can give you more food?”

She’s already shaking her head before I get the words out. “I won’t be bothering you anymore.”

She pushes herself away from the door like she’s getting ready to leave, so I call out, “Wait!” Thankfully, she leans back down. “Can you do me a favor, at least?” She doesn’t answer. “Go home. I can’t leave you until I know you’re safe.”

“Why do you care? I’m nobody to you.”

“You’re a child of the Lord,” I say gently. “It’s my duty as a servant of the Lord to watch after all of his children.”

She snorts, her eyes rolling to the ceiling then back to me. “The Lord forgot about me a long time ago.”

“God forgets no one, Jersey. You may feel alone, but you never are.”

She taps the window frame and takes a step back, still bent over, “If you say so. Anyway, I’ve got to go, and you need to leave before you scare everyone away. I have money I need to make.”

“Jersey!” I call.

Her eyes narrow in annoyance. “What?” she asks in exasperation.

I take my wallet out of the middle console and flip it open. “How much would it take to get you to go home?”

Her eyes move from mine to my wallet then back to me. Her bottom lip gets tugged between her lips.

She’s quiet for so long that I wonder if she’s not going to answer when she finally says, “Three-hundred.”

I’m already pulling bills out of my wallet. It’s a good thing I went by the bank today. I hand them over to Jersey. She takes them and counts them.

Her eyes jump to me. “This is five hundred. It’s too much.”

She tries to hand the money back to me, but I lean away from her. “Just promise you’ll leave here and go home.”

“Father—”

“Wesley,” I say. “My name is Wesley.” I don’t know why I give her my first name.

She glances at the money in her outstretched hand. “Why are you doing this? And don’t give me the ‘you’re looking out for God’s children’ speech again.” She lifts her eyes back to me. “This is more than that.”

“Honestly?”

“It’s a sin to lie,” she reminds me, her lips twitching.

“I don’t know. It feels like this is what I’m supposed to do.”

After a quiet moment, she takes the money and stuffs it between her breasts. I try to stop my eyes from watching her do it, but they move to her chest of their own accord. She catches me, and her lips quirk up.

“Are you sure there isn’t anything I can do for you... Wesley?” she purrs my name, and I feel it below my waist.

“Yes.” My voice comes out husky, so I clear my throat. “Actually, there is something you can do for me. Go home, Jersey.”

Her bottom lip sticks out into a cute pout, and the sudden urge to sink my teeth into that plump lip shocks me. Before I became a priest, I slept with my fair share of women. More than my fair share actually. Especially the last couple of years leading up to me giving my life to God. Out of everything I gave up to enter the priesthood, it was the touch of a woman's body that was the hardest to let go. But once I committed to that decision, I never once wished I could go back. As I sit here in the darkness of my SUV with Jersey leaning against the door, giving me tantalizing glimpses of her cleavage, I can't help but wonder what she would feel like under my hands. What she would smell like if I buried my face between her breasts. How her body would move if I trailed my fingertips along the curve of her hip. How tight she would be wrapped around my dick.

Becoming a priest doesn't mean we no longer have sinful thoughts of the flesh. It just means we have to work harder at banishing those thoughts. And we fruitlessly pray they leave us and never return. I've had more desirous thoughts in the last ten minutes thinking of Jersey than I have in the last twelve years since I started studying to become a priest.

"Fine." Jersey sighs. "But you need to leave first."

"Not until I know you're safe."

"Sorry, Father, but I'm not leaving until you do. I don't want you following me home."

She says the last sentence with a note of vulnerability in her eyes, and the whole mystery of Jersey piques my curiosity even more. I honestly can't say I wouldn't follow her, so she has a right to be leery.

I grab a piece of paper from my glove box and scrawl down my number before handing it over to her.

"I'll leave, but I want you to text me when you get home, so I'll know you're safe."

She eyes the paper critically. "And then you'll have my number."

“Yes, but there’s nothing I can do with just your number.” I look at her earnestly. “Just please do this for me.”

She thinks for a moment then nods. “Okay.” Her eyes linger on the features of my face before a small smile lifts her lips. “See you around, Father.”

I watch as she goes back to the sidewalk. Everything in me demands I don’t leave her on this street, but the sooner I leave, the sooner she’ll be off the streets. I keep her in my rearview mirror as I pull away until I can no longer see her. I’m tense the rest of the drive back to the church and my eyes keep moving to my cell phone sitting in the cup holder.

I’m walking into the church when my phone finally chirps. I quickly glance at the screen.

Unknown: *You’ll be happy to know I’ve safely arrived home. Sweet dreams, Father.*

It’s not until then that the weight on my chest deflates.

Chapter 6

WESLEY

CONFESSORIAL BOOTHS ARE KEPT dark for a reason. It gives the confessor a sense of security because between the screen separating the two rooms and the low light, it's almost impossible to see who's on the other side. Even so, more times than not, I know who the person is just from their voice. Many of them come to my weekly sermons. I always make it a point to get to know my congregation, so I've spoken to them all outside of confession. When they do come to confession, I ignore the recognition and give them advice and offer penance based solely on their transgressions.

That's what I'm doing right now. Or I will be once the next person enters the booth and reveals their sins. I sit and wait patiently, a rosary clasped tightly in my hands. The door to the room next to mine clicks open and a pinch of light filters through the slats of the screen. I keep my eyes pointed forward, and a second later, the door clicks closed.

"Forgive me, Father, for I have sinned. I'm ashamed to admit, this is my first time visiting confession."

I recognize the voice right away, and both my mind and body reacts. Two nights ago, after I left Jersey, I spent an hour kneeling before the cross, asking God for forgiveness. The next day, I confessed my own sins to a fellow priest, and he offered penance. I lose all of my progress with just the sound of her voice. My shaft is already growing in my slacks, and my mind is conjuring up scenarios. Ones in which I'll be once again praying to cleanse.

Why does this girl affect me so much? What is it about her that takes me off my righteous path?

I shake those thoughts away and come back to the moment. Jersey is here for a reason, and despite my sinful thoughts, my purpose here is to help people.

“What has brought you to confession for the first time?”

“Well, it’s kind of embarrassing,” Jersey says. “I’m kind of nervous to tell you.”

I look over at the screen, barely making out her shadow, and wishing I could see more. Would her cheeks be pink with embarrassment? Is she nervously twisting her hands in her lap? Is she biting her lip like she did two nights ago?”

“I’m not here to judge you. Only God has that right. I’m merely here to offer guidance and a chance to repent.”

She stays quiet for several long minutes, in which time I work at trying to calm down the appendage in my slacks.

My efforts are wasted when she begins speaking again. Not only from hearing her voice, but also by what she confesses.

“Two nights ago, there was this man. A very attractive man. He saved me from doing something I loathe. When I went home, I couldn’t stop thinking about him. In fact,” she lowers her voice, but moves closer to the screen to ensure I still hear her, “I thought about him when I went to bed. The thoughts were so vivid, I couldn’t help but touch myself.”

I realize how much trouble I’m in when I catch myself reaching for my cock. Gritting my teeth, I use the hand holding the rosary and press the heel against it, both praying for almighty strength and also wishing for her to continue talking.

“What—” I cough to clear my throat. “What kinds of thoughts?”

Hell and damnation. What am I doing? I should be discouraging this behavior, not asking her to give me details. Now that the words are out though, I can’t find it in myself to regret them.

I can hear the smile in Jersey's voice when she answers. "I kept imagining what he would look like under his clothes. Did I mention he's a priest? But he doesn't look like any priest I've ever met before. I've seen the tattoos peeking out of the cuffs of his sleeves. I wonder what they look like, and how much of his body is covered in ink."

My eyes move to my hands where a sliver of ink can be seen on my wrists. Both of my arms and chest are covered in multiple tattoos. I even have some on my thighs. I had them all done before I decided to dedicate my life to God.

"I have another confession to make, Father," Jersey says, her voice dropping into a sexy purr. "Do you want to hear it?"

My lips are moving before my brain registers exactly what she said. "Yes."

"This priest has caught me taking things from his church. But only things I really needed. What he doesn't know though, is I haven't only been taking things, but I've been watching this priest too."

My cock jerks against my hand, and I sin even more when I begin rubbing my palm against it. I squint my eyes, trying my best to see behind the screen barrier.

"What do you mean you've been watching him?" I ask in a hoarse voice. The thought of Jersey watching me sends shockwaves of pleasure through my body.

"Sometimes I stand outside the church, out of view, and wait for him to appear. I like looking at him. I really like the way it makes my body feel."

"And how does he make your body feel?"

Jersey giggles, and I feel it in my cock.

"Are you sure you should be asking me these questions, Father? It doesn't seem very priestly."

I grind my molars together. She's right. No real priest would dare ask these kinds of questions. I should be leading her away from these thoughts, not encouraging them. But Lord

help me, I'm apparently weak when it comes to this woman, because I want to know more. I want to know it all.

"You're right. I shouldn't be, and God will punish me later for it. But it doesn't change the fact that I still want an answer. How does watching the priest make you feel?"

I lean closer to the screen when I hear something that sounds like a soft moan, wondering if it's my imagination. I realize it's not when it comes again. My cock fills the rest of the way with blood, and I'm seconds away from undoing my slacks and pulling it out.

"It makes me wet in places it shouldn't."

Her whispered confession has a deep groan crawling up my throat.

"It makes me want to drop to my knees in front of him and worship what he hides behind his clerical clothes."

"Jersey." Her name slips out with a growl.

"Then after he's filled my mouth with his holy seed," she continues, undeterred, "I want to lay him down and ride his mouth until I've covered his face with my sinful juices."

"Fuck," I mutter, jerking my pants open. My hard cock falls in my hand, and I begin stroking it.

I hear shuffling on the other side of the screen, and when Jersey speaks again, I know she's moved closer.

"What are you doing over there, Father? Are you hurt? I heard a groan."

The little minx knows exactly what she's doing, and she's enjoying putting me in this situation. It's not entirely her fault though. I led us here. I could have stopped her from continuing.

"There's no need to ask questions you already know the answer to," I tell her gruffly.

Her moan reaches my ears, tempting me to lose all control and leave my side of the booth to enter hers. I still have a fraction of common sense left to not throw away twelve years

of my life by ending my celibacy. What I'm doing at this moment is bad enough, but it's not irreversible yet.

The rosary gets tossed to the floor as I use one hand to stroke my aching cock and my other to tug on my balls. Besides cleansing myself during a shower, it's been many years since I've touched myself in this manner. I do so now with visions of Jersey on her knees in front of me, her mouth opened wide as I guide my cock into the warm depths of her mouth. I'd fill both of my hands with her hair to keep her head still until I reached the back of her throat.

"Wesley," Jersey moans. "I'm so sorry."

She may wish she was sorry, but she's really not, because I know she's only feet away from me doing exactly the same thing I'm doing. And that thought brings on a whole new set of images. One of her sitting in a dark confessional booth with her hands between her legs. Her fingers sliding between her slick folds, pumping one in and out of her while she uses another to rub her clit.

I want to be sorry too. This goes against everything I've believed in for the past twelve years. But no matter how wrong it is, I continue to manipulate my cock.

I look over at the screen with slitted eyes. "Tell me, Jersey. What would you do right now if I were to slip inside that room?"

Her husky moans come just before she says, "The first thing I'd do is kiss you, because I've wondered what you taste like." Her breath hitches. "Then I'd turn around and lift the skirt I'm wearing, showing you just how wet you make me."

A pearl of precum forms on the tip of my cock. Using my thumb, I smear it around the head. Hissing out a breath at the sensation, I demand, "Then what?"

"I'd beg you to fuck me. Oh, God, Wesley," she moans. "Hard. I'd beg you to fuck me hard. So hard I'll never forget you were there."

"Shit," I grunt when my balls draw up and an intense sensation starts at the base of my cock. "What in the hell are

you doing to me?”

It was a rhetorical question, but Jersey answers anyway. “The same thing you’re doing to me.”

Locking my lips together to hold back my shout, my orgasm hits in a ripple of euphoria I haven’t felt in longer than I remember. Even before I went celibate. Cum jets out of my cock, landing on my lower stomach. On the other side of the screen, from the low noises Jersey’s making, I know she just found her release too.

I lean my head back against the wall and close my eyes as I catch my breath. I expect a surge of guilt to come at any second, but it never does. All I feel is relaxed and sated, and regretful. Not because of what I just did, but because I didn’t witness the look on Jersey’s face when she came.

I don’t know how long I sit there, but I notice the room beside me is eerily quiet. Sitting up, I look through the screen as best as I can. When I see no movement, dread drops like lead weight in my stomach.

Pulling a tissue out of my pocket, I wipe away my sins from my stomach before I shove my softening cock back in my pants. I get to my feet and stuff the tissue back in my pocket before making sure I look presentable.

Only one person is occupying the church when I leave the confessional. I’m thankful they chose to sit on a pew on the opposite side of the booths. I don’t want to think about what I would be facing if anyone heard Jersey and me.

I jog toward the doors at the back of the church and fling one open. I don’t know why I’m going after Jersey. I simply can’t stomach the thought of her leaving after what we just did. She and I need to talk.

Walking down several steps, I look around, searching for strawberry-blonde hair. My shoulders slump in disappointment when I don’t find her. Something tells me she won’t be back. To take food or to visit my confessional.

Just before I turn away to go back inside, a blur of long blonde hair grabs my attention. A woman in a sky-blue dress

is jogging down the street. I don't know for sure if it's her or not, but something compels me to follow.

Chapter 7

OH MY GOD! I can't believe I just did what I did.

When I walked in Saint Mathew's church I had no intentions of doing anything near what Wesley and I just did. I've never been to confession before. I'm not even catholic. But I figured now was a good time to confess what I've been doing at night for the last few weeks. I wasn't sure if it would be Wesley or one of the other priests I would be confessing to. I knew though, if it was Wesley, the church's rules would prevent him from confronting me in person about my transgressions. I wanted to tell someone, and I felt safe doing it this way.

But the moment I heard his voice on the other side of the screen, my thought process went the other way. To an even more sinful route. Everything I told him was the truth. I couldn't stop thinking about him after I got home the night he caught me trying to sell myself. And once I knew Sam was asleep for the night, I found a spot away from him and let my mind run wild. The orgasm I had to thoughts of Wesley was the most intense orgasm I'd ever had in my life. Until fifteen minutes ago, at least.

As I rush down the street toward the building Sam and I are hiding in, I look down at my hand. The hand I used to touch myself in a confessional booth. With a priest on the other side. I was so wet, the tips of two of my fingers are still sticky.

I've never been so bold. And I never thought I would do such a thing. I don't know what it is about Wesley, but he

makes me do things I would have never done before. He drives me crazy with lust.

Spotting a corner store, I walk around to the back of it and find the water spigot. Turning the knob, I run water over my hands to wash away the evidence. No matter how clean I get my hands though, the image of me sitting there with my hand up my skirt and Wesley on the other side of the screen is seared in my brain. This new-found naughty side of me tells me I won't be forgetting it anytime soon either.

Coming to the door of the building Sam and I are living in, I push it open and make my way up the steps. I told Sam earlier I was going out to find us some food. Guilt clutches my stomach because I'm coming back empty handed. My plan was to pilfer some food before I went to the church. Instead my feet led me to the church first, as if something was pulling me along. Sam and I ate the last of our food last night. I'll have to go back out later to find something for him. I can go a day without food, but Sam needs to eat.

Before I make it to the door of the room we're staying in, I hear Sam let out a belly laugh. It's something I've never heard from him before. Or rather, it's something I haven't heard in years. Not since he was a toddler.

Stopping in the doorway, I lean against the frame and watch my little brother. He's sitting with his legs crossed on the bed, a book set in front of him. A smile plays on my face as he reads one of the books I got him from the free bin at the library. From the humorous expression on his face, it must be the one filled with jokes.

Seeing the look on his face makes everything that's happened over the last few weeks worth it. I'd do anything for Sam. Anything.

Sensing my presence, Sam looks up and spots me at the door. The smile doesn't leave his face, and I give him my own smile as I walk across the room.

"I guess picking that book was a good choice?" I ask

“Yep. I’ve got a joke for you.” His grin grows. “What’s the difference between roast beef and pea soup?”

I sit down on the end of the mattress. “What’s that?”

“Anyone can roast beef, but no one can pee soup.”

He finishes the joke with another round of laughter, and I join in.

“That’s a good one!”

Once his laughter calms enough to talk, he goes for another.

“Why did Harry Potter go bald in his teens?”

“Uh, I don’t know.”

“Because he lost his Hedwig.”

I giggle and shake my head. “That’s just awful!”

His eyes crinkle with how big his grin is. “But it’s funny. What did the pencil say to the pen?” he asks.

I lift my shoulders in a shrug.

“I was Groot.”

My hand flies to my mouth, and my eyes widen in mock horror. “Oh my God. Poor Groot!”

He tells me a few more jokes, which has us both rolling around on the mattress in laughter.

A shuffling sound comes from over by the door, and I quickly sit up, my eyes flying in that direction. My jaw drops, along with my stomach, when I find Wesley standing in the doorway, his hands casually shoved into his pockets as he watches the two of us with a look of concern wrinkling his brows.

I jump to my feet and quickly make my way over to him. Grabbing him by the arm, I turn him away from Sam, whose wide eyes are firmly on the stranger.

“What are you doing here?” I hiss.

Wesley’s brows drop even lower. “I followed you.”

“Apparently,” I mutter, feeling like an idiot for not paying attention to my surroundings when I came into the building. How could I have been so careless? “Why?”

His eyes move back and forth between mine, the stunning grayness filled with questions. “Because I was concerned about you.” He looks over his shoulder toward Sam, and my stomach churns with dread. “And it’s obvious my concern was valid.” He looks back at me. “Who is he?”

I drop my hand from his arm and fold my arms over my chest, gripping each side of my dress tightly. Lifting my chin, I glare at him. “My brother.”

“What are you two doing here?”

I slam my mouth closed. Part of me wants to tell Wesley the truth. There’s something calming about him that makes me think he’s a man I could trust. But I can’t. It’s not just my life that would be put in jeopardy. Sam has been through enough already. I won’t risk him being put through more.

“That’s my business. Not yours,” I tell Wesley hotly.

His eyes do that assessing thing again before he speaks. “You can trust me, Jersey.”

I’m already shaking my head. “I don’t know you, so I don’t know if I can trust you. I won’t take that chance. There’s too much at stake.”

The muscles in his cheeks twitch, and from the look, it appears he’s not too pleased with my response. He’ll just have to get over it.

“Fine, you don’t have to tell me.” He steps closer, and it’s not until then I realize just how much bigger he is than me. I’m forced to tip my head way back to look at him. He lowers his voice. “But I want the two of you to come home with me.”

I lick my dry lips and shake my head again. “We can’t.”

Lifting a hand, he gently pries my arms loose then holds one of my hands. The way his fingers grip mine sends warmth up my arm. Are priests allowed to hold the hand of the opposite sex? The question is ludicrous, even to my own ears.

Not even thirty minutes ago, this same priest was getting himself off in a confessional booth. Something tells me the rules no longer apply.

And that makes me feel guilty. I'm the one who lured this man off his righteous path. I should be condemned to hell.

"Please, Jersey. There's no way I can leave the two of you here. It's either come home with me, or I stay here with you. I promise you nothing will happen. I don't know what's going on, but no one will know you're with me." He squeezes my hand.

Unwisely, I take a moment to consider his offer. Food, warm water, and something soft to sleep on sounds really good right about now. I look over at Sam, who's still sitting on the bed watching us with a wary expression, and take in his disheveled appearance. His clothes are filthy, and his face is smudged with dirt. Oil coats his hair, making it lay flat on his head.

I bring my eyes back to Wesley. I don't know how much trouble he'll be in for what we did during confession. Is he even still a priest? Just because he fell off the celibacy wagon, doesn't mean he's lost his religious values. I honestly don't think he'll tell anyone Sam and I are staying with him.

"Okay," I say quietly.

The relief that appears on Wesley's face makes me wonder why he cares so much. I mean, I get that he's a priest and part of being one is caring for people, but this seems like so much more. The way he looks at me, even the night he almost caught me stealing food from his church, was more intense than simply a member of the clergy worrying over his flock. So what could it possibly be?

He smiles, causing a dimple to pop out on one of his cheeks. That little indent sends flutters to my stomach, and I'm reminded once again of what we were doing in his church not long ago.

"Go grab whatever you need. I'll wait here."

His voice shakes me out of my daydream, and I walk around him on shaky legs. I try to smile at Sam as I go to him.

“Who’s that man?” he asks, his eyes darting around me to look at Wesley.

“He’s a priest,” I tell him, getting down to my knees by the bed to start gathering the few belongings we have. Everything should fit into one backpack. “He’s going to let us stay with him for a few days.”

Sam throws the blanket off his legs and scoots to the edge of the mattress. “Are you sure he won’t tell on us?” I bring my eyes to him when I hear the fear in his tone. “I don’t want to go back, Jersey.”

I lean closer to him, keeping my voice low, but adding strength to my words. “You will *never* go back there, you hear me? I swear on my life, Sam. Nothing or no one will ever hurt you again.” I glance back over at Wesley before looking at Sam again. “Wesley is a friend who’s helping us for a few days. We’re still going to leave as soon as I get enough money.”

He chews on his cheek in a way that kids do when they’re nervous. After a moment, his head moves up and down. “Okay.”

“Grab your books and put them in here.” I hand him the backpack.

I get up and go over to the old desk that’s on the other side of the room. Pulling the bottom drawer all the way out, I shove my hand to the very back and grab the envelope I put there weeks ago. It’s all the money I’ve made so far working the streets. This, along with whatever else I manage to make, will get Sam and me out of town.

Noticing Sam struggling to get up from the mattress, I rush over to help him. Wesley beats me to it. He’s got Sam by both arms, gently helping him get to his feet. The gash on his leg is a lot better, but it’s still pretty sore. Putting weight on it is painful.

Wesley's eyes drop to Sam's leg. He can't see the bandage because he's wearing a pair of pants, but I know he doesn't miss the way Sam wobbles and keeps his foot barely on the floor. Wesley looks at me in question, and I stubbornly shake my head.

His eyes narrow slightly, but he thankfully doesn't question me on the matter.

"I'm Wesley. Or Father Adair if you prefer," he introduces himself, his hand still on Sam's arm to make sure he doesn't fall.

Sam eyes him warily. "Sam."

"It's nice to meet you, Sam." Bending down, Wesley grabs the backpack from the mattress and throws it over his shoulder. "Is this everything?"

"Yes." I stuff the envelope of money in my dress pocket and move to Sam's other side. Grabbing his arm, I put it over my shoulder. "We're ready."

Wesley's eyes move back down to Sam's leg. "I can carry him," he offers.

"No thanks," Sam's answer comes so fast that it almost makes me laugh.

Wesley jerks his chin up. "Suit yourself."

He turns and walks toward the door, and Sam and I follow behind.

Chapter 8

WESLEY

LATER THAT EVENING, after Jersey and Sam each took a shower and I cooked dinner for them, both of which scarfed down the food like they haven't eaten in days, I'm in the living room, pacing the floor as I wait for Jersey to come back down after getting Sam settled in his room. My thoughts go a mile a minute, coming up with all kinds of scenarios of what kind of trouble the both of them are in.

Is she running from the cops? Did she commit a crime? And what is Sam's role in all of this? He can't be any older than twelve or thirteen. What could he have possibly done? Why were they in that abandoned building? And what happened to Sam's leg?

"Why is a priest living in a house of this size?"

I spin and face the stairs at Jersey's voice. She's descending them, her hand running over the smooth railing as she goes.

"My grandparents left me this house when they died years ago. I inherited it when I turned twenty-one," I tell her.

She stops at the bottom of the stairs, her eyes moving all over the living room. "It's beautiful," she states, finally bringing her eyes back to me. "Very cozy."

"Thanks," I grunt.

She comes further into the living room and stops at a wall with several hanging pictures. She asks without turning around, "Is this your family?"

I walk over and stand beside her. "Yeah."

“Wow.” She steps closer to the wall, looking from one picture to the next. “I can’t imagine how difficult it was to grow up with quadruplets for sisters.”

I chuckle. “There were times it wasn’t easy.”

“I bet.”

I turn my head and look at her. For the past several hours, I’ve found myself on more than one occasion watching her. She’s even more beautiful than I thought the night I found her out on the street. Her long, thick hair is loosely braided, the rope lying down her back. She’s wearing one of my t-shirts, the material almost swallowing her whole. She also has on a pair of my sweatpants, no doubt having to roll the waist several times, so they don’t fall down. I lent clothes to both her and Sam because all of theirs were dirty. Her face shines from the bath she took earlier.

“I don’t see your dad in any of these pictures.”

Her comment has me jerking my eyes away, and I look back to the wall.

I clear my throat and my brain of the Jersey-inducing fog. “He wasn’t around much, and when he was, we all wished he wasn’t.”

I feel her eyes on the side of my head, so I glance over. “I’m sorry.”

I lift a shoulder. “He made the choice to be the way he was. There’s nothing to be sorry about.”

I turn and follow her with my eyes when she moves away from the wall. She goes to the couch and plops down on one end, tucking her feet under her butt. I follow, but instead of taking the other end of the couch like any gentleman would, I find myself taking the cushion directly next to hers. I just feel the need to be close to her.

Leaning forward, I rest my elbows on my knees and clasp my hands together between them. I point my eyes forward.

“I get why you don’t want to tell me what’s going on with you and Sam. We hardly know each other, and I sense you

don't trust many people very often." Turning my head, I look into her eyes. "You can trust me, Jersey, and I really wish you would."

She chews on the inside of her cheek and stays quiet for so long that I'm afraid she won't answer.

"Sam and I lost both of our parents when I was sixteen and he was nine," she finally says quietly. "A semi-truck hit them dead on, and they died instantly. We had no other relatives, so we became wards of the state. Unfortunately, there were no families willing to foster us both. Sam was put with a family, and I stayed in the system. No family wanted to foster a girl my age. Sam came to Silver Falls, while I stayed in Willowbrook."

"I'm so sorry, Jersey. I know that couldn't have been easy. Losing both parents and your brother so close together."

Her smile is sad. "Thank you."

She pushes her hands between her thighs, like she's trying to warm them up.

"I hated being so far away from Sam because I knew he was missing our parents too. He was so young. I swore once I was old enough I would try to get custody of him myself. I was naïve and didn't realize living on your own was so hard. I got a full-time job after I turned eighteen and graduated high school, but even then, I could barely afford the one bedroom apartment I got for myself. There was no way a judge would grant me custody. Especially when Sam was living with a family who had plenty of money to care for him."

Jersey drops her eyes to her lap, a frown tugging down her brows as if she's thinking about something unpleasant. I stay silent and let her continue at her own pace.

"I thought Sam would be okay. The family who was fostering him seemed nice, and they let me visit him when I wanted. I still wanted him to come live with me, but it didn't seem as pressing because I thought he was being taken care of. And Sam seemed to be doing okay. I figured I would slowly

build up enough money to get a bigger apartment and then talk to his case worker about him living with me.”

The laugh she lets out is filled with bitterness, and the curl of her lips is made with disgust. I want to reach over and grab her hand, giving her whatever comfort I can offer. I keep my hands on my thighs though.

“What happened?” I gently prod.

Her eyes lift and meet mine, and I’m shocked at the pain darkening them.

“His foster family wasn’t what I thought they were. At least not the dad or his son,” she answers with a hint of anger in her tone. “Those two sick bastards touched Sam in ways no one should touch a child. And made him believe they would hurt me if he said anything.”

“My God,” I breathe, my throat tightening to hold back the bile wanting to come up.

“I didn’t find out until a month ago. They’ve never left any sort of visible marks on him, and they were careful enough to not leave him in pain. Except the last time. Apparently, the son got carried away one night and raped him so forcefully he could barely walk. I stopped by the house, which it just so happened that no one else was home, and found Sam in his bed crying. He didn’t want to tell me what was wrong at first, but I eventually got it out of him. I took him out of there. No one knew I was coming by that day, so they don’t know what happened to him.”

A tiny niggle forms in the back of my mind, but I push it aside for a moment and ask, “Why didn’t you go to the police?”

Lines appear by the corners of her eyes when they narrow, and her lips press together. “Because of who this family is. They wouldn’t believe Sam and me.”

“They would examine Sam and find evidence of abuse.”

Her head jerks up. “They would, but they wouldn’t find proof it was the man or the son. Only that someone... forced themselves on him. They always used condoms, so they could

easily say it was someone who broke into the house. These people have too much influence. And I'm worried the state would put Sam back in their home." She shakes her head emphatically. "I will *not* take the chance of him going back there."

The judicial system was put in place to judge people based on their crimes and to detain them if the crime warrants it. But it's God who is the ultimate judge and *He* will deliver a sinner's rightful punishment.

It's not often I question my beliefs, but now is one of those times. No one who would do such things to a child should be allowed to keep their freedom. And Lord forgive me, a part of me wishes painful retribution on the two men who hurt Sam.

I try to hold my mounting anger in check and look back at Jersey. "Who is this family?"

She watches me, her eyes gauging on whether or not she can trust me. I hold her gaze, silently telling her she can. In the short time I've known this woman, I've come to realize I would never betray her, and I would do anything to protect her. That includes her little brother.

"Mayor Beckett."

I'm not surprised by the name she gives. I already suspected as much because the disappearance of the mayor's foster son has been all over the news for the last few weeks. What does surprise me is how easily the mayor and his son are able to hide such a dark side of their souls from the public eye. I would have never guessed the pair would be so sick in such a way.

What also surprises me is the rage I feel on behalf of Sam and his sister. I haven't felt this much anger since I became a priest. Before I took my vows, I had bouts of anger because of how my father treated my sisters, mother, and me. I learned to let go of that emotion and embraced goodness. That goodness is nowhere to be found at the moment. All I want right now is to confront Mayor Beckett and his son, Mark, and plow my fist through their faces.

Closing my eyes, I take a calming breath and silently recite several bible verses in my head. Once I'm reasonably sure my anger has cooled, I open my eyes and meet Jersey's. She's watching me with an expression I'm not sure I can name.

"I know you believe there's nothing that can be done, but you and Sam can't be on the run forever." I grab her hand and lace our fingers together. The move is inappropriate, but I feel the need to touch her in some way. "I want to call a friend of mine. He's a detective." I squeeze her hand when she opens her mouth to interrupt. "I trust this person. I would never do anything that would put you or Sam in harm's way, and I trust this man enough to ask him for help. If it makes you feel any better, I won't mention any names until I know he can help us for sure."

Using her free hand, she brings it up to her mouth and begins chewing on her thumb nail as she contemplates my suggestion. Indecision wrinkles the skin between her eyes. I wait and hope she accepts my offer, because I'm not sure what else to do. Her and Sam leaving isn't an option I'm willing to consider. It's too dangerous and they'll eventually get caught, which means Sam may go back to the mayor's house and Jersey would be charged with kidnapping. Neither of those things are acceptable.

"Okay," she eventually says, and a huge weight falls off my shoulders. "Can we do it tomorrow? I want to let Sam get a good night's sleep before we start this."

"Sure." I smile and give her hand a little squeeze. "You should get some sleep too. I'll call Detective Erikson in the morning."

As if her body is in agreement, a big yawn has her mouth stretching open wide. She puts a hand over her mouth to cover it.

"I guess I am pretty tired. And sleeping on clean sheets sounds heavenly."

Getting up from the couch, I pull her up by her hand. "You'll be sleeping on clean sheets from now on." I make the vow and have every intention of keeping it.

“Thank you for everything, Wesley.”

Before I can stop myself, I pull Jersey forward until she’s against my chest. I’ve broken so many rules tonight already. What’s one more?

I close my eyes and soak in the feeling of having her pressed against me. Her slender arms are wrapped around my waist, and her head rests on my chest. She feels perfect where she is, like it’s exactly where she’s supposed to be.

“I promise I’m going to help you get through this. The mayor, nor his son, will ever touch Sam again.”

She tips her head back, her eyes intense as she stares at me. “I believe you,” she says quietly.

She rolls to her toes, and my first thought is she’s going to kiss me. And honestly, as much as I should, I wouldn’t stop her.

She doesn’t though. Instead she places her lips against my cheek and kisses it softly. Then she turns around and walks up the stairs, my eyes following her until she’s out of view.

Chapter 9

WESLEY

SLOWLY CLOSING the door behind me so only a sliver of light illuminates the hallway, I make my way toward the stairs. As I walk past the room Jersey's using, my eyes linger on the closed door, wondering if she's sleeping peacefully or if she's tossing and turning like I've been doing for the past couple of hours. My thoughts won't let me sleep. Not only because of what Jersey revealed tonight, but also because the only woman who's ever tempted me to forget all my vows was just down the hall. Memories of the confessional booth kept flashing behind my closed eyelids.

The stairs are quiet as I descend them, and I'm grateful there are no squeaky boards. The living room is dark as I walk through it; the only light is a small nightlight I have plugged into a socket by the front door.

I push open the kitchen door, then come to a stop. The light from the opened fridge door illuminates Jersey standing there with a carton of juice clutched in her hand. Her hair is still in a braid, but several strands have come loose to frame her face.

I must have startled her when I came in because her eyes are wide in fright, until she sees who it is.

"Sorry," I say quietly, letting the door swing closed behind me. "I didn't mean to startle you. I guess you can't sleep either?"

She takes the top off the carton and pours some in a clear glass. "Unfortunately, no." She holds the carton up. "Would you like some?"

“Sure.”

I walk to the bar and take a seat on a stool as she grabs another glass from the cabinet. After she pours some juice in it, she slides it across the surface to me then puts the juice back in the fridge. The room goes dark again when she closes the door, but a moment later, the light above the stove comes on. Jersey, with her glass in hand, walks around the bar.

My throat goes dry and blood rushes south when I get a glimpse of her naked legs. She’s still wearing my shirt, but she must have taken off the sweats when she went to bed. The shirt comes halfway down her thighs, so it doesn’t really show anything, but it’s apparent from the growing erection in my sleep pants that seeing any skin of Jersey’s is enough to wake up my dick.

Either Jersey doesn’t notice where my thoughts have gone or she’s ignoring it. She takes the seat beside me and brings the glass to her lips. My eyes pinpoint on her throat, the slow motion of her swallows doing nothing to help the situation below my waist.

Even before I took my vows of celibacy, no woman had ever affected me as much as Jersey has the last few days.

“So, what’s keeping you awake?” she asks as she turns on her stool to face me.

Her eyes drop to my chest. Thinking I would be alone, I didn’t put on a shirt before I came downstairs. It’s ironic. She’s sitting there with no pants on, and I’m here with no shirt. And it seems I’m not the only one having trouble keeping their thoughts innocent. Even in the little bit of light from the stove, I can’t miss the desire that flashes on her face as her eyes trace over the tattooed-covered cords and muscles of my chest.

Her tongue slides out and runs across her bottom lip, and I have to force back a moan.

“I thought priests couldn’t get tattoos?” Her voice comes out deeper than normal.

I pick up my glass and try to wash away the dryness in my throat. I set it back down on the counter.

“I got these before I became a priest.”

“All of them?”

I incline my head. “Yes. Once you commit to the church, it’s considered desecration if you mark your body in any way. It’s obviously not allowed. But if a man is already tattooed, he can still become a priest.”

“Oh.” Her eyes fall back to my chest, and I feel the heat of her gaze like a warm caress. It’s not an unpleasant feeling. “Why did you get so many?”

“Because my father hated it, and back then I did anything to displease my father.”

“I take it from what you said earlier, and the bitterness on your face now, he wouldn’t have won any father-of-the-year awards?”

I grunt as I pick up my glass. Before I take a swallow, I say, “He would have more than likely won the worst-father-of-the-year award.”

“I’m sorry.” The muscles in my upper body tense when Jersey lays her hand on top of mine sitting on the bar. “I can’t imagine how hard it was growing up with a father like that. I was lucky. Both of my parents were amazing to me and Sam.”

I barely hear her speak because all of my brain cells have moved south. All I can think about is her hand being on mine. It’s an innocent gesture meant for comfort, but it feels anything but innocent. Her hand is soft and so small compared to mine. My thoughts move to what it would feel like on other parts of my body.

It seems like I’ve been celibate for so long all I can think about is sex now. At least when I’m near this woman.

“Wesley?”

Jersey saying my name jerks me out of my thoughts. I clear my dry throat and try to remember what she said.

“My mother was great. Or at least she tried to be. She got sick when I was six and the girls were four. She never fully recovered from her illness, so it was hard to take care of us. I

learned to grow up fast because the more I helped her with the girls, the less we saw our father, and that's what we all wanted."

Her hand is gone from mine, so I pick up my glass and drain the rest of the juice, trying to keep my eyes above her waist line, which isn't much better because she's not wearing a bra and her breasts jiggle underneath the material every time she moves.

"You said your parents were amazing. Did you have any other siblings beside Sam?"

"No." She runs her finger over the rim of her glass. "Mom got pregnant when I was four, but she miscarried. Sam was a surprise baby. They were so happy when he came along. I think during most of the pregnancy they were worried she'd miscarry again." She lets out a small laugh. "He was my little baby doll. Mom would let me dress him up and push him around in his stroller all over the house."

I chuckle. "So you were one of *those* big sisters. I'm glad I came before my sisters did. I shudder when I think about them fighting over which outfit to put me in."

Her grin lights her face. "Instead, you were the one taking care of them. Your life could have ended up so different." She finishes with a giggle.

She takes a sip of her drink, and my eyes zero in on her lips when she puts the glass back down. A drop of liquid clings to her bottom lip, tempting me to lean over and lick it away. When her tongue darts out and does what I desperately want to do, I pull my eyes back up to hers. Her golden-brown gaze is locked on mine, and what I see past the gorgeous color has my thoughts going straight back to places it shouldn't. Places that are dangerous.

"Wesley?"

"Hmm?" I hum, my mind delirious.

"I want to say I'm sorry about what happened earlier in the church," she begins, her voice quiet. "But I can't. I enjoyed it too much."

“Jersey,” I croak her name. My battle to keep my dick from getting hard is a losing one.

“I know you’re a priest and it’s wrong of me to think this, let alone want it, but why does it feel so right to want to know what kissing you is like?”

And it’s those words that push me over the edge. One minute Jersey is on her own stool, and in the next, I have her on my lap with her legs straddling my thighs. I grab a fistful of her hair and yank her head down. Soft lips meet mine, already opening to meet the thrust of my tongue. Her taste is intoxicating, and I know from this moment on, I’ll never get enough.

Her breathy moans leave her mouth and whisper into mine. I match the sound with a deep groan of my own. Nails dig into my shoulders, and damn it all, I relish in the small bite of pain. My dick, which Jersey is currently grinding her pussy against, becomes excruciatingly hard.

Back before I made my vow of celibacy, I liked my sex on the rougher side. Apparently, that hasn’t changed. I want nothing more than to rip off her shirt and panties, bite down on her hard nipples at the same time as I ram my cock inside her so hard she’ll feel me for days between her legs.

Pulling my lips away, I move them to the side of her neck and trail kisses along the sweet-smelling skin. Her fingers tunnel in my hair and she tosses her head back, letting out little sounds that drive me wild.

“Wesley,” she moans. “Are you sure we should be doing this?”

I nibble on the side of her neck and answer in a husky voice. “There’s no damn way we’re stopping now.” I emphasize my words by wrapping my hands around her hips and pulling her forcefully against me.

“Oh, thank God.” She rotates her hips, sending delicious waves of pleasure through me. “I’m not sure I could stop either.”

I don't tell her it's not God she should be thanking. I'm pretty sure He wouldn't approve of what we're doing. But I'm past the point of reason.

I lift my head and stare into her dazed eyes. "We need to move this into the bedroom before Sam walks in."

The wisps of hair that have fallen from her braid slide across her face when she shakes her head. "No. I want you to take me right here. Sam's a heavy sleeper. He'll be out for the entire night."

My dick jerks, and I feel a pearl of pre-cum leak from the tip. Grabbing her waist, I lift her and set her ass on the counter in front of me. She sets her hands behind her and her legs immediately open. I drop my eyes to look at her treasure and my mouth waters when I see the wet spot.

"Lick me, Father Adair."

I don't think about why her addressing me as Father Adair has my dick turning to stone. I just drop my head and give us both what we want. Her exotic scent nearly has me losing it. Latching my teeth around her clit through the panties, I tug the sensitive nub. It earns me a delightful cry.

I slide her ass to the edge of the counter and hook my fingers under the seat of her panties, pulling it to the side. I dive forward, burying my face in her soaked pussy, using my tongue to fuck her. Her hips lift, but I hold them down with my hands, wanting her to stay exactly where she is.

I lick, suck, and bite down on her plump folds. I feel like a ravenous beast who hasn't feasted in too long. Jersey is my reward for abstaining for years.

"Fuck," I growl against her. "You taste divine."

I press a finger against her opening, then lift my head to watch her face as I slide the digit inside as far as it'll go. She's tight, but she's so wet it slides in with ease. Pulling it out slowly, I press forward again faster. Her tits jiggle under my shirt with her rapid breathing and her lips part, a look of intense satisfaction illuminating her face.

Pulling my finger out, I add a second one and dip my head to latch my lips around her clit. I suck hard as I fuck her with my fingers. She's so wet her juices leak out on the counter beneath her ass.

Her legs tighten around my head, and I lift it to look at her. She's gazing at me with so much heat I feel it scorching my cheeks.

"Fuck me, Wesley. Please," she begs so prettily. "I need to feel all of you inside me."

With a growl, I pull my fingers from her tightness and grip the side of her panties. They snap apart easily, and the ruined material falls to the floor. I get to my feet, the legs of the stool teetering when I push it back.

"Take off the shirt," I order hoarsely as I push down my sleep pants just far enough to release my cock.

The counter is the perfect height for fucking. I step between her spread thighs and look down as I line up my cock with her glistening opening. The view is so fucking sexy. There's a drop of pre-cum on the tip of my shaft, and I smear it over her clit.

Flexing my hips, I set the head at her opening again, then look up as I slide slowly inside. Hissing out a breath once I'm all the way in, I lock my hips in place, needing a moment so I don't come prematurely. Jersey tries to move her hips, but I stay her by holding them still with my hands.

"Don't move or this will be over before it starts," I warn.

"Mmm... You feel so good," Jersey pants, her eyes dropping to where we're joined, her tongue darting out to lick her lips.

After a few seconds, I rock my hips backward before slamming into her again. Dropping my head, I suck one of her hard nipples into my mouth, nipping the bud with my teeth. Her head falls back, and she cries out in pleasure. I slide my cock out then thrust forward, my movements becoming frantic. Over and over, I pull out, only to fill her again.

Her walls clamp around my shaft and my balls get tight, the muscles in my back twitching. Grabbing her hips, I lift her from the counter and her arms go around my neck. I take two steps back until my legs hit the stool. With her still impaled on my cock, I sit.

“Ride me, Jersey,” I tell her. “Fuck me like I’m the last person you’ll ever fuck.”

I will be the last person she ever fucks, my mind whispers.

Planting her feet on the rungs of the stool, she lifts herself up until only half of my cock is inside her then she drops back down. She bounces up and down several times before she stops and grinds her clit against my pubic bone. Her tits smash against my chest. Using her hair, I force her head down to meet my lips.

Curling my fingers around her waist, I lift her and let her fall back down at the same time I thrust upward. The sound of slapping bodies, her moans and my grunts, fill the room in an erotic rhythm.

All too soon, the walls of her pussy clench around me, signaling her release, which causes my own. My neck muscles strain, and a deep groan forces its way past my lips as I fill her with my cum.

I sag in the chair and Jersey’s limp body goes boneless, her forehead dropping to my shoulder. I lazily run a hand up and down her naked back as we both try to catch our breath.

“I’m going to hell,” she mumbles against my neck a few minutes later.

I can’t help but chuckle. “Why?”

“Because I made you break your vows.”

I lift my shoulder to indicate I want her to lift her head. She does so, but she doesn’t meet my eyes. Using a finger, I lift her chin until she’s looking at me. Her remorseful expression tears at my heart.

“I broke my vows because I wanted you. You didn’t force me to do anything.”

“But I seduced you. If I hadn’t—”

I press a soft kiss against her lips to get her to stop talking.

“I think it was more like we seduced each other. You did nothing wrong, Jersey. We were both caught up in the moment, and quite honestly, there’s no part of me that regrets it. What we did felt too perfect. Like—”

“—it was meant to be,” she finishes my sentence in a murmur.

I tuck a few strands of sweaty hair behind her ear.

“Exactly.”

“What are you going to do?” she asks.

“Right now, I’m going to take you to the shower where I’m going to slowly explore every inch of your body. As for what I’m going to do about the church, I’ll deal with it later.”

A small smile creeps across her lips. “I like the sound of the first part.”

Nipping her bottom lip, I growl against them, “Hold on tight.”

With my hands on her ass cheeks, I get up from the stool.

Jersey buries her face in my neck as I walk us out of the kitchen.

“I’ll never let go.”

I smile at her softly spoken words, and plan to hold her to her promise.

Chapter 10

JERSEY

WITH MY HANDS wrapped around my warm cup of coffee, I finish telling Detective Erikson about what happened to Sam and how he came to be with me.

“Sam said the abuse didn’t begin right away. It was close to a year before it started,” I tell Wesley’s friend.

Detective Erikson looks up from writing something in his notebook, his expression full of concern. I was surprised when he walked in the door, expecting someone younger since Wesley said he was a friend of his. It was through their greeting, when Wesley asked about Detective Erikson’s son, Bryan, that I realized it was through the detective’s son that they were friends.

“Is there any proof he was being abused? Photos?”

I set my cup on the counter and reach for my phone. Swiping my finger through folders of photos, I find the one labeled Sam and click it. I hand it over to Detective Erikson.

“These are the only ones I have. I snapped them the day I took Sam.”

He scrolls through the photos, his brows dropping lower and lower with each picture he looks at. Every time I see the bruises on the back of his thighs, his back, and his chest, they turn my stomach. I’ve never felt so much hatred toward a person until I found out what was happening to my baby brother. I’ll never understand how people can get off on hurting others in such a way. Especially a child.

“The wound on his thigh is still healing. It was pretty bad at first. There’s pictures of that as well.”

“Who cut him?”

My teeth gnash together. “Mark. Sam tried to get away the last time and Mark stabbed him.”

He swipes through the rest of the photos.

“I was afraid to take him to the hospital to have the wound looked at because I didn’t want them to call the authorities. I knew they would find out who he is and send him back.”

The detective pulls out a business card and hands it to me, along with my phone. “I need you to send me those photos. My email is on the card.”

I nod. “Okay.”

“Have you been in contact with the mayor since you pulled him out of the house?”

“A few times. I had to keep up the ruse that I didn’t know where he was, so I’ve called him a few times and asked for any updates. He called me the day I took him to find out if I knew where he was. I also went to the police station to talk to the detective overseeing the disappearance. I figured the more concerned I appeared, the less likely they would be to suspect me.”

Those phone calls with the mayor always turned my stomach because I knew what the man and his son had done to my brother. Each time, it was on the tip of my tongue to call him out on his evil doings, but I held the temptation back.

Detective Eriksom flips his notebook closed and slips it inside his jacket pocket. “I’ll be honest with you, Jersey. You taking Sam out of the house will be considered kidnapping.” My lungs freeze. “With just those photos and Sam’s statement, it would normally be a difficult case because of who we’re dealing with. He could have his lawyers spin it however he wants and most likely get away with it.” His expression softens when he sees the fear on my face. “However, it just so happens, the DA is already building a case against Mayor Beckett and his youngest son, along with several other well-

known prominent figures. It hasn't been made public, and I could get in trouble for telling you this, but something tells me," his eyes slide to Wesley's, who's standing just behind my chair, "you'll keep this to yourself."

"I swear, I will," I promise.

"Mayor Beckett and his son, Mark, are known participants in a child sex trafficking ring the state has been investigating for the last six months."

I suck in a sharp breath, horror and disgust twisting my stomach into knots.

"How in the hell could the state have allowed Sam to stay in their house if they were being investigated for something like that? He could have been removed months ago!"

"I understand your anger, Jersey," the detective states calmly, which only pisses me off even more. "It wasn't until a couple of weeks ago that definitive proof was found that the two were involved."

"Why haven't they been arrested yet?" I demand to know.

Some of my ire cools when a strong hand lands on my shoulder. I close my eyes and let Wesley's comforting touch soothe me.

"I don't know if you know much about the judicial system, but things take time," Detective Erikson explains, and I open my eyes. "The DA didn't want any mistakes to pop up when this moves to court. They're also trying to find ways to prevent the mayor, his son, and the other known offenders from being offered bail because the likelihood of them running is high. They're getting their ducks in order, but I suspect arrests will be made over the next few days."

"Do we need to worry about Jersey being arrested for kidnapping?" Wesley asks, talking for the first time since we entered the kitchen.

The last thing I'm worried about is being arrested. I'd take Sam from the Mayor's house a thousand more times and spend lifetimes in prison if it meant getting him away.

“I honestly won’t know until I talk to the DA. If she were arrested, I highly doubt the charges would stick. Not with the evidence stacked against the mayor and his cohorts.”

My shoulders droop and relief settles in my stomach. “So, what do we do now?”

He pats my hand and gets up from his chair. “I’d like to talk to Sam myself. It’ll be unofficial since he’ll be put back into the state’s custody, and I haven’t been given rights to take his statement.”

“He’ll be put back with the state?” I croak the question. I would much rather have him be part of the state over having him living with those vile people, but it still hurts knowing he won’t be coming home with me.

“I’m not exactly sure what will happen to him, but yes, for the time being, he’ll be put in a temporary home. The important thing is, he won’t go back to the mayor’s house. As far as the mayor’s wife and his older son, there’s no evidence to suggest they were involved with, or even knew, about the sex trafficking ring. Even so, I don’t see the state making him live there anymore.”

I vow right then and there, I will do everything within my power to make it so I can get custody of Sam. He belongs with family, and I’m the only one he has.

“Do you....” I swallow past the thick lump in my throat and will away the tears wanting to fall. I get up from my chair and roughly rub my sweaty hands down my thighs. “Are you taking him today?”

Understanding flickers in his eyes. “Not today. I want to go back to the station and make a few phone calls. The DA will want the photos, and he’ll more than likely stop by at some point to talk with you and Sam. With that said,” he adds pointedly. “You and Sam need to stay here.”

I nod, my eyes quickly darting to Wesley then back to the detective. “We’re not going anywhere.”

At least, I hope we’re not. I don’t think Wesley would make us leave, but how well do I really know the man? Maybe

he'll not want to be involved after hearing what the detective has said. His name is bound to come up in the investigation since we're staying with him.

“Do you think Sam would be okay talking with me?”

I look over my shoulder toward the kitchen door. Sam isn't too far beyond that door. We left him in the living room watching one of the Marvel movies. I hate to think of him reliving his real-life nightmare, but he's told me multiple times he's okay talking about it. He doesn't like it, but he knows it's necessary.

I swing my head back around. “Yeah, he'll talk to you.”

Detective Erikson holds out his hand for me to shake, and I settle my palm in his.

“You have my card, call me if anything happens. And don't forget to send me those photos right away.”

I nod. “I'll do it now. Thank you, Detective. For everything.”

“Just hang on for a bit longer, Jersey, and everything will be taken care of.”

While he talks with Wesley for a moment, I go ahead and attach the photos to an email and send them over to the detective.

“I take it you no longer need my help at the church?” I hear Detective Erikson ask.

Looking up when I feel Wesley's eyes on me, I find his mouth tipped up into a barely there smile. His gaze moves back to Detective Erikson. “No.”

The detective nods and moves to the door. He turns back before he walks through and addresses me.

“Spencer.”

“I'm sorry?” I ask, confused. I know it's his first name because that's what Wesley called him when he let him inside the house earlier, but I don't understand why he would give it to me.

“Call me Spencer. Something tells me I’ll be seeing much more of you from now on, and not because of what you shared with me today.”

I don’t get the chance to ask him what he means before he’s strolling through the door. I turn my questioning gaze to Wesley, who’s standing with his hands shoved into his jeans pockets. It’s weird seeing him in such casual clothing after only seeing him in his clerical outfit.

“What was that about?” I ask.

Pulling his hands from his pockets, he slowly walks toward me. “I’ll tell you about it later.”

He comes closer, and I don’t know why, but I walk backward. I’m forced to stop when my back meets the counter. He doesn’t stop until he’s right in front of me. Normally I don’t like people getting too close. I enjoy my personal space too much. But with Wesley, he could crawl inside me, and I’d be happy.

His hands settle on the counter on either side of my hips, his chin down while he gazes at me. I set my hands on his firm, t-shirt-covered chest, loving the hardness beneath my fingers.

“What did he mean when he said you no longer needed him at the church?”

One corner of his mouth tips up. He hasn’t shaved yet today, and I can’t help but wonder what the scruff on his cheeks would feel like against my skin.

“I called him when you first started taking food from the church.”

My eyes widen. “You did? You were going to have me arrested?”

“I didn’t know who it was. I had no intention of having you arrested. It was obvious you needed help, and I wanted to do more than just give you food. I wanted to know *why* you needed help. I would have tried harder to find you if I had known what you were doing on the streets at night.”

I drop my gaze to his chest, shame coating my cheeks from all the men I slept with. I'd do it all again if I had to in order to help Sam. I just wish I had listened to the inner voice in my head when I first saw Wesley. It whispered that he would help Sam and me. But I was so afraid to take any from anyone.

Using his finger, he lifts my chin until my eyes meet his.

"Don't be ashamed, Jersey," he says quietly. "You did what you felt you had to do to help Sam."

My throat bobs. "Just so you know, I always used condoms when I... was with those guys." Heat warms my cheeks. Wesley and I didn't use protection last night, and I want to alleviate any worry he might have.

"I trust you."

I frown. "Why? You hardly know me."

He steps so close that our chests are pressed together. His hands move from the counter and they encompass my waist. With him so close, I feel the rigid length in his jeans. I want to rub up against it. Climb him like a tree and dry hump him until we're both panting and feverish with desire.

"I honestly don't know. I just have this feeling you were always supposed to be part of my life. That I was meant to be there for you when you needed me."

His words have my heart racing. Not in fear or because I don't agree. It's the opposite, in fact. I have the same uncanny feeling that Wesley and I were supposed to meet. That our coming together when we did, my trusting him so easily, was something that was out of our control. Like some unseen force brought us together.

I move my hands up his chest and curl my fingers around his neck. I play with the hairs tickling my fingers.

Dropping my chin, I look at him through my eyelashes, suddenly feeling nervous.

"What exactly are we doing, Wesley? You're a priest. A relationship with me isn't something you can offer."

We've already had sex, so he's broken his vow of celibacy. I don't know if that's something he can come back from. Will the church forgive his transgressions? Will he still want to stay with the church if he can? I won't ask him to give up something so important, no matter how much it'll hurt to not have him again.

His arms tighten around me and his head dips closer. His lips are a hair's breadth away when he whispers, "We're doing what feels natural." He presses a soft kiss against my lips then pulls back. "Twelve years ago, I took vows to never have sexual relations again. In those twelve years, I've never been tempted to break those vows. Until I met you."

I love what he's saying, but at the same time an intense feeling of regret and shame bounces around inside me. It was me who tempted him off his religious path. What kind of person does that? A horrible person, that's who. He told me last night he made the decision on his own, but had he not met me, he would have never broken his word to the church.

"I'm so sorry," I say quietly, meaning those words with all my heart.

"Don't be. I'm not." He gives me a half smile. "Jersey, do you find me so weak-willed that I would break my vows for just anyone? Vows that I never had any intention of ever breaking."

"No. Of course not."

"Good, because I'm a stubborn man and when I set my mind on something, I do it. When I promised myself to the church, I had every intention of keeping that promise. Only something very important to me would alter my path. *You* were that important thing. *You* are more important than my vows. I have every faith that God's plans for me have set me on this new path."

I bite my lip. "Are you sure?"

"Absolutely."

After another minute of contemplation, in which Wesley's eyes never waver from mine, I launch myself into his arms.

My legs entrap his waist, and I press my lips against his in a scorching kiss. Had Wesley decided being with me wasn't worth forsaking his vows, I would have accepted it. But I'm secretly glad he wanted me more.

After a moment of sucking each other's face, I pull back, a big grin stretching my lips.

"This is kind of crazy, isn't it?" I ask, only partly joking.

"Crazy in the best way possible." With his hands on my ass, he grinds my center against the bulge in his jeans. "Crazy in the hottest way possible."

Chapter 11

WESLEY

WITH THREE BOTTLES OF WATER, I go out to the living room. After handing Sam one of them, I take a seat next to Jersey on the couch. Sam's on her other side, and she's clutching his hand tightly in hers. She takes her water without looking away from the TV. Both her and Sam's attention is firmly fixed on the breaking news report. Not that I can blame them.

On the TV, Mayor Beckett and his son, Mark, are being escorted from the mayor's house in handcuffs. They both dip their heads away from the camera as if that will prevent people from knowing who they are.

It's been ingrained in me to not take pleasure in a person's punishment, but I can't help the satisfaction I feel as I watch the two men be shoved in the back of police cars. This was the first of sixteen arrests. By the time this aired, all people accountable for the child sex trafficking ring have been detained. They'll go before a judge next to hear the charges against them and find out if they'll be allowed to post bail.

"I can't believe it finally happened," Jersey says quietly, still focused on the TV.

I grab her other hand and lace our fingers together. She turns her head and our eyes meet, the relief in her gaze a testament to the worry she's been carrying for weeks.

It's been five days since Jersey told Spencer about what happened to Sam. The day after, a couple of federal agents, along with one of the attorneys handling the case, came by the house to talk with Sam and Jersey and they repeated what she told Spencer. They've both been on pins and needles since

then, anxiously waiting for news that the mayor and his son were arrested.

I can't imagine how much relief they both must feel.

"Believe it, baby. It's done. Now it's up to the judicial system to take care of them," I tell her.

"But what if they get away with it?" She switches her gaze back to the TV before bringing it back to me. "They all have connections in high places, and we both know people like that get away with crimes all the time."

I squeeze her hand. "You heard what the attorney said. They have a crap-ton of evidence against them. The chances of them being found not guilty is small at best. You just have to believe justice will be served."

Her mouth curves down, but she nods. "You're right."

I know her worry won't completely go away until the verdict has been given.

I look over at Sam, who's still looking at the TV as the newscasters list off names of the offenders.

"You okay, Sam?" I ask. He's been quiet since the news report came on.

"Yeah," he answers quietly.

A couple of hours after the agents and the attorney left the day they took Jersey and Sam's statements, a social worker came by. She pulled Sam aside and spoke with him in private first. Jersey and I were both shocked when she asked if Sam could stay with me for the time being. Apparently, Spencer spoke with the Department of Child Safety and gave a sparkling reference on my character and suggested Sam be allowed to stay with me. They also took into consideration that Jersey is Sam's older sister. Of course, they still had to run a background check on her, but it unsurprisingly came back clean. For now, Sam officially lives with me. Jersey isn't official, but she hasn't left either. If I have it my way, she never will.

Of course, with the living arrangements and with social services monitoring us, Jersey and I sleep in separate rooms. Even if we weren't being monitored, we'd still need to be careful with Sam in the house. Jersey doesn't want Sam to know about the more personal aspect of our relationship yet, and I agree.

None of that means that Jersey doesn't sneak into my room each night. If she didn't, I'd be sneaking into hers. For a couple of blissful hours every night, I hold Jersey in my arms while we make love. Sometimes it's sweet and slow, and sometimes it's hard, rough, and hurried. When she leaves, she always takes a part of me with her. I don't have to have been with her long to know I'll never get enough of the tempting woman.

Grabbing the remote from the coffee table, I turn the TV off. I pull Jersey up from the couch with me as I get to my feet.

"Who's up for some pizza?"

"Extra pepperoni?" Sam asks excitedly.

"The only way to have it," I answer with a wink. "Go grab your shoes."

He darts off, acting more like a twelve-year-old than I've seen since he's been here.

I take advantage of the few minutes of private time I have with Jersey. Placing my hands on her ass, I pull her toward me. Her soft body molds against mine and she gazes up at me with gorgeous, golden-brown eyes.

"You doing okay?" I ask after I dip down and steal a quick kiss.

"Better than okay."

"Good."

"I haven't thanked you yet for everything you've done for Sam and me."

"I don't need any thanks."

She smiles and her eyes sparkle with happiness. “You may not need it, but I still want to say it.”

Rolling to her toes and snaking her arms around my neck, she presses a kiss against my lips. It’s a kiss filled with gratitude and gratefulness. It’s me who’s grateful though. Grateful this beautiful woman was brought into my life.

“Thank you for being there and helping us,” she says once she pulls away. “And thank you for letting us stay here with you. You’re giving Sam a real home by letting him stay here, which is something I can’t offer him right now. But I’m hoping to one day. And thanks to you, I have a job interview with your sister next week.”

A couple of weeks ago, at one of our family dinners, Penelope mentioned one of the secretaries at her office was taking maternity leave soon, so she’d be in the market for a new one. I called her a couple of days ago and mentioned Jersey. Apparently, Jersey did secretarial work for a realtor in Willowbrook before she found out what was going on with Sam. She said her job was still there if she wanted it, but she wants to stay closer to Sam. The lease on her apartment is up in a month and she has no plans to renew it.

Jersey tucks her hands against my chest and peers up at me. “As soon as I can, I plan to get a place of my own nearby. The social worker said the longer I have a steady job and a safe place for Sam, the better it’ll look for when I try to go for custody of him. Taking on a kid is a big responsibility for you, and you have no idea how much it means to me that you want to take that on, but I can’t ask you to do it for longer than necessary. I plan to do whatever it takes to take that weight off you as soon as I can.”

“There’s only one thing you just said that I agree with.”

Her brows dip in confusion. “What?”

Sliding my hands up her back and her neck, I cup both of her cheeks. “Getting custody of Sam is a good idea, and I have no doubt you can do it. But, baby, you aren’t going anywhere.” I smile as her confusion grows. “You and Sam are staying

right here with me. I found you, Jersey, and I've decided I'm not letting you go."

Her frown melts into a smile. "Oh yeah?"

"Yeah. And this gratitude you speak of?" I grin. "You can properly thank me later tonight."

Her giggle fills the room, and the sound goes straight to my dick.

Her eyes take on a seductive look, and she runs her tongue along her bottom lip. Tipping her head to the side, she regards me through her eyelashes. "Why, Father Adair. You wouldn't be trying to seduce me, would you?"

I press my lengthening cock against her. "I don't need to seduce someone who's already mine. And that's what you are, Jersey. You're mine."

"So long as you're my naughty priest," she counters with a coy look.

I'll be her naughty priest. I'll be anything she wants me to be.

"Always."

Her expression softens. "Always," she repeats. "I can live with that."

Epilogue

WESLEY

YANKING off my tie as I ascend the stairs, I start working on the buttons of my dress shirt next. The door to the bedroom Jersey and I share is left open only a couple of inches. A smile tugs up my lips as my cock hardens the closer I get. Anticipation mixes with arousal when I think about what's on the other side of that door.

Jersey sent me a text message an hour ago.

Forgive me, Father, for I have sinned.

Attached to the text was a picture of Jersey. The view was of her on her hands and knees on our bed. Her face, in which most was covered by her hair, filled the screen. Except for her bare shoulder and a sliver of her ass, which was sticking up in the air.

I don't recommend looking at erotic pictures of your wife while in a meeting at work. Sitting there while executives droned on and on about projection reports and marketing strategies while sporting a hard-on isn't a smart move. I retained not a single word after I saw her picture. All my thoughts had moved to how hard I would spank her ass for distracting me, then to how rough I'd fuck it to make the sting better.

I unbutton the last button of my shirt but let the material hang on my shoulders as I push the bedroom door open.

It's a good thing Sam is staying with a friend tonight, because fuck me, the sight I walk in on has all rational thought leaving my brain.

The room is bathed in shadows, the only light coming from the lit, scented candles placed on several surfaces. Directly in front of me is our bed, and on it, is Jersey. She's reclining back against a mountain of pillows, her top half in a sheer, black cami. Her bottom half is naked. Her thick, gorgeous, strawberry-blonde hair falls in waves over her shoulder.

To this day, Jersey is still the most beautiful woman I've ever met.

But at the moment, it's not her beauty that holds me captive and has me seconds away from coming in my slacks. It's what she's doing.

Eyes hooded with desire as she watches me intently, her thighs spread wide open, Jersey has a hand between her legs. With the low lighting, her pussy is cast in shadows, so I can't exactly see what her hand is doing, but from the way her hips undulate on the mattress and her panting, I know whatever it is feels really fucking good.

"Welcome home, husband," she purrs.

"And a mighty fine welcome it is." I slip my shirt down my arms and let it fall to the floor as I slowly walk toward the bed. "But it looks like you've already started without me."

A husky moan leaves her lips, and her ass leaves the bed as she hits a sensitive spot. "I'm only having a little fun while I wait for you."

My cock turns to stone behind the zipper. I palm my aching length and start ripping at the button of my slacks with my other hand.

"Don't let me stop you. Please continue."

I can't get my pants off fast enough as I stop at the end of the bed. Being so close, I have a better view of her hand. She has two fingers shoved in her soaked pussy, and she's using the heel of her hand to grind it against her clit.

"Don't come," I demand hoarsely.

One corner of her mouth lifts into a sexy smirk. "Then you better hurry." She pulls her fingers from her pussy, and *fucking*

hell, brings them to her mouth. Her eyes smolder as she opens her lips and slips her fingers inside. She moans and sucks her cheeks in, as if she's relishing and licking away every damn drop.

My pants and briefs are shoved down and kicked to the side, and in the next second, I have both of her ankles in my hands. I pull her down to the end of the bed. Her husky laughter bounces off the walls in the room, and her legs bracket around my waist.

Planting my hands on the bed by her hips, I loom over her. "That was mine to have," I growl.

With her eyes still dancing and her arms laying above her head, she looks between our bodies. "There's still plenty left."

"I want it from your fingers," I tell her. "Put that hand back down there and fuck yourself again."

Using her legs around my waist, she lifts herself until her pussy slides across my shaft. I groan and clench my jaw, on the edge of plunging into her as far as I can. Her eyes hold mine as she moves her hand between us. Instead of going for her pussy like she's supposed to, she grabs my cock.

Her palm is so fucking soft and feels too damn good. I flex my hips back. "Hands off and put those fingers in your pussy, Jersey."

Her eyes sparkle with mischief. "Yes, Father Adair."

My cock jerks with her use of the moniker she likes to use sometimes.

Maybe the name should bother me, make me feel guilty for turning my back on the church, for using it in such a carnal way. But it doesn't. I'll never regret my time spent as a priest. For those twelve years, that was my calling. That part of my life is over. I truly believe it was God who put Jersey in my path. For a time, His plan for me was to serve Him. I've been set on a new path now, and that path includes Jersey, and it will until the day I die.

I flex my hips against the back of Jersey's hand as she slides her fingers in and out of her pussy.

Once I know her fingers are covered in her juices, I demand, “Give me your fingers.”

Her hand leaves her pussy, and a second later, she’s holding it up between us. She scissors her fingers together, showing me how wet they are. I part my lips and suck both digits into my mouth.

Motherfucking hell, she tastes so fucking good. Better than the most delectable dessert.

I groan as I suck away every bit of her, then let her fingers slide from my mouth. Grabbing my cock, I press the head at her opening.

“Wesley, please,” she moans. Lifting her hips again, she tries to wedge more of me inside her. “I need—ah!”

I slam my hips forward, impaling her completely. Her head falls back with her shout. I take advantage of her exposed neck and suck a piece of skin into my mouth, purposely leaving a mark behind.

Wrapping one hand under her thigh, I pull it high up my waist. Pulling out until just the head is left inside, I plunge back in. With each downward motion, I grind down deep, hitting her clit and heightening her pleasure. The slip and slide of my cock against her snug walls sends me closer to the edge.

“You feel so damn good,” I growl. “Tight and wet, and all fucking mine.”

“All yours,” she breathes. “Always yours.”

A COUPLE OF HOURS LATER, after taking Jersey hard and fast, and another time in the shower much slower, we’re both lounging in bed. I’m on my back with Jersey laying on my chest. Her fingers gently trace the tattoos on my abs. We’ve been lying here, neither of us saying anything, for several minutes. It’s a comfortable silence.

“Did you see the news today?” I ask.

Her fingers pause for a second before she restarts tracing the eyes of the skull inked on my ribs. “Yes. Sam and I both watched it.”

“How did he take it?”

She lifts her head from my chest and turns it so I can see her eyes. “I could literally see the weight falling off his shoulders. I’m so grateful it’s over, but I’m sure Sam’s relief is so much stronger than mine since he’s the one who endured the pain the mayor and his son put him through.”

Pulling my arm from behind my head, I sift my fingers through her hair, using my thumb to rub her cheek. “I can’t imagine how hard it was on either of you.”

She closes her eyes, and a soft smile lifts her lips. “It’s finally over.”

Today, on national TV, the former mayor of Silver Falls and his son were found guilty on multiple charges. They’ll both spend the rest of their lives in prison. The other fourteen assailants were also found guilty and will spend many years behind bars.

Two years of waiting is finally over.

“Has Sam thought anymore about seeing Deandra and Carter?”

Deandra was the mayor’s wife and Carter is their oldest son. Neither of them knew that Douglas was the mastermind behind a child sex trafficking ring, or that Mark was right beside him. The shock and horror when they heard the news couldn’t have been fabricated. It was too genuine. Of course, Deandra filed for divorce as soon as she could, and Carter has cut any and all ties off with his father and younger brother.

A year after the arrests, Deandra approached Jersey, asking if she could see Sam. She said she waited so long because she was ashamed that she was connected to such a vile man and felt Sam wouldn’t want anything to do with her. She was afraid he may blame them for not knowing what he was going through. By the grace of God, Sam was never part of the sex ring, but he still endured horrific abuse under their roof.

Jersey left the decision up to Sam. Even though Sam said that Deandra and Carter were always great with him, so far, he's still refused to see either of them. Carter is thirty-four, so he was out of the house by the time Sam came to live there. He and Sam were never really close, so there's not really a bond between them. But Deandra played an important role in Sam's life for a couple of years. You could see just from looking at her she loved Sam.

Sam hasn't said as much, but Jersey and I both think he refuses to see them because they remind him of a painful time in his life.

"I think he's almost ready," Jersey says, pulling me out of my thoughts. "I know he wants to see Deandra. I believe with the trial finally being over, he can start looking forward to the future and really start to heal."

For the first year and a half, Sam went to a counselor twice a month. It wasn't until the last six months it's been moved to once a month. The sessions have helped him tremendously. Four months ago, Jersey and I officially adopted Sam. Three months prior to that, we were married.

"He'll tell you when he's ready," I comment.

"Yeah."

Jersey tiptoes her fingers up my chest, and she fingers the cross I wear around my neck. My sister, Camila, gave me the necklace a year after I committed my life to the church. I've worn it ever since.

"I was thinking..."

She trails off, and her eyes move from the necklace and meet mine. Her teeth tug on her bottom lip nervously.

I slide a piece of hair between my fingers, loving the silky texture. "What is it?"

"I know we talked about waiting for a while longer, but I can't get it out of my head since it was brought up."

I know what she's referring to, but I still ask. "What are you talking about?"

She scoots up my chest until our faces are only inches apart. Her expression is hopeful and earnest.

“A baby.” She says the word so quietly I have to strain to hear her.

“You want a baby now?”

“Yes,” she breathes. “So much, Wesley. I want a little you and me. It would be a dream come true.” Her expression turns doubtful. “But only if you’re ready too.”

Wrapping my arm around her back, I flip us both over so I’m hovering over her. She stares up at me, her eyes wide and filled with questions.

“Are you sure? I only wanted to wait because I figured that’s what you wanted.”

Her eyes glisten as she shakes her head. “No.” It comes out as a croak. “I don’t want to wait. I want to have your baby.”

My grin starts slow until it stretches across my whole face. “If it’s a baby you want, then it’s a baby you’ll have.”

“Really?” she squeals.

I drop a kiss against her lips. “Really. In fact.” Sliding a hand down the back of her thigh, I lift it over my hip, wedging myself more comfortably between her legs. My cock bumps against her pussy. “Let’s get started on making one now.”

That brings me a laugh, but it ends on a moan when I slide inside her.

“I love you,” she says softly, her beautiful eyes looking deep into mine.

“And I love you,” I say back.

For the rest of the night and the early morning hours, we work hard at making her dream come true.

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About the Author

Alex Grayson is a USA Today bestselling author of heart pounding, emotionally gripping contemporary romances including the Jaded Series, the Consumed Series, The Hell Night Series, and several standalone novels. Her passion for books was reignited by a gift from her sister-in-law. After spending several years as a devoted reader and blogger, Alex decided to write and independently publish her first novel in 2014 (an endeavor that took a little longer than expected). The rest, as they say, is history.

Originally a southern girl, Alex now lives in Ohio with her husband, two children, two cats and dog. She loves the color blue, homemade lasagna, casually browsing real estate, and interacting with her readers. Visit her website, www.alexgraysonbooks.com, or find her on social media!

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