

USA TODAY BESTSELLING AUTHOR

CC MONROE

His Christmas Vixen

A HER SHADOWS HIS SECRETS CHRISTMAS NOVELLA

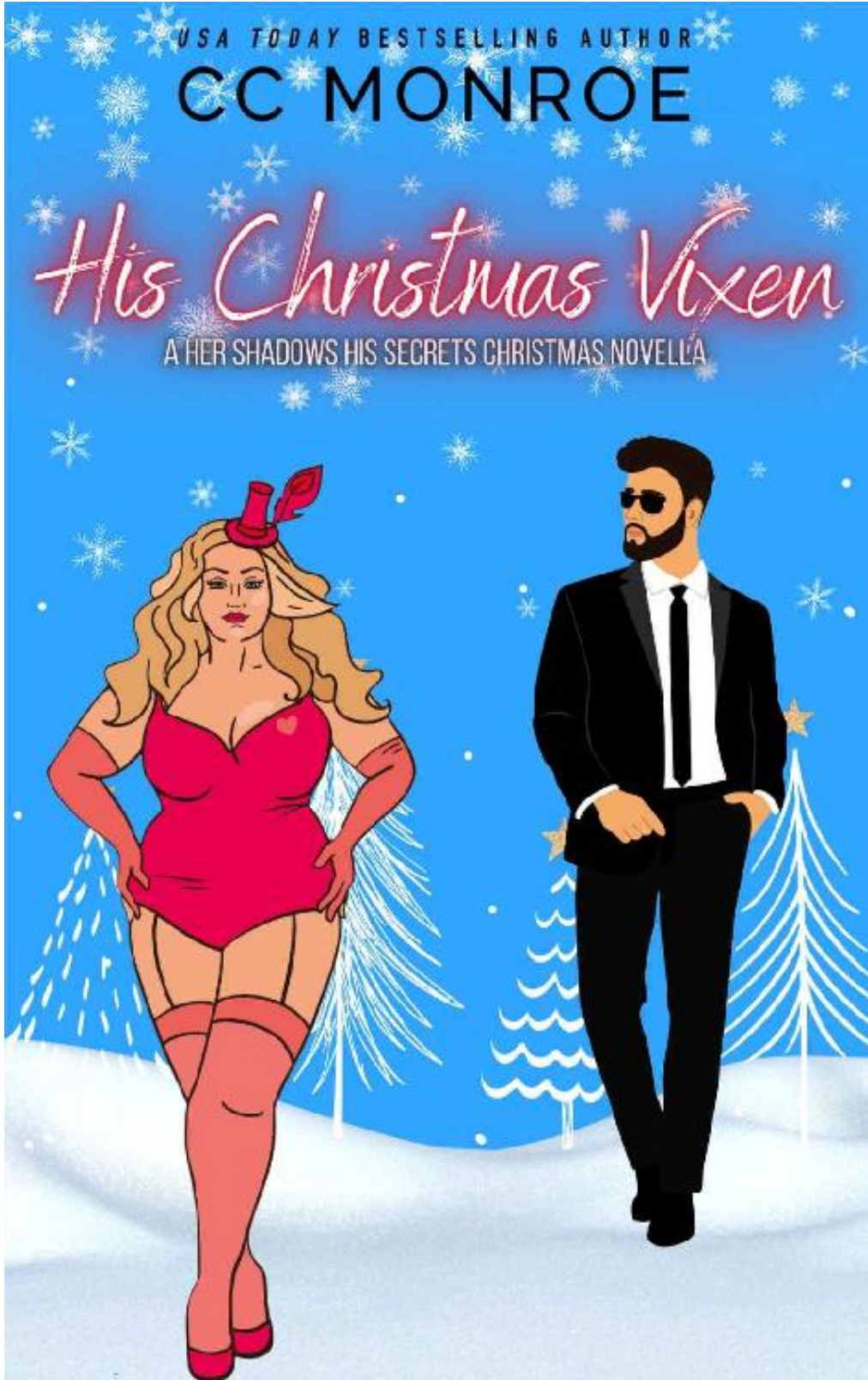


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His Christmas Vixen


A Her Shadows His Secrets Novella

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Trigger Warning

This book contains elements of BDSM. There is Praise, degradation, primal play and mentions of past internalized fat phobia.

To all the plus size girls like me, who are finally seen in the novels we loved. Have a Holly Jolly Christmas

XOXO,

CC Monroe

All works by CC Monroe

OTHER BOOKS BY CC MONROE

ALWAYS AND FOREVER SERIES

ALWAYS THE ONE

ALWAYS US

FOREVER THE ONE

FOREVER US

LANA

THE LOVING SERIES

LOVING BEN COOPER

LOVING KATE BECKETT

UNTIL WORLD

UNTIL KAYLA

UNTIL MERCY

UNTIL BREW

STANDALONES

PROTECTING HER HONOR

THE GUY FROM THAT ONE SUMMER

HER SHADOWS HIS SECRETS

CO-WRITTEN WITH KD ROBICHAUX

STEAL YOU

NUMBER NEIGHBOR

TO HAVE AND TO HOLD

BAD MEDICINE

Chapter One

T heo

“The storm is coming in. We aren’t going tonight, babe,” I yell up to Hanna, my fiancée, as she gets ready in the master suite of our rented cabin. I watch out the window as the snow flurries turn into a cascade of thick flakes that collect on the ground at a rapid rate.

“We’re New Yorkers... in New York, Theo. I think we can both handle a little snow.” She laughs with her response.

I smirk, her comment comical and accurate. My sister, Brenda, wanted to see New York for the holidays, since she’s never left Cherryhill, South Carolina for Christmas. We rented this cabin in upstate New York and had plans to spend tonight in the city, to eat a fancy dinner and then end the evening with a nightcap in a horse-drawn carriage ride around the snowy city.

But Mother Nature is angry outside and has other plans. No complaints for me, though. The idea of being snowed in with Hanna, the possibility of our service dropping so we can be completely unbothered—not one complaint would dare fall from my mouth tonight.

Besides, I have other plans of my own. Plans we have yet to get to, because my sister, mother, and dad have occupied all our alone time.

Why Brenda insisted on bringing my parents along is a choice I will not waste my time trying to figure out.

Every time my parents get together, it's like watching the wild brewing of a war, and we're all casualties. Part of me thinks my sweet but naïve sister, who still believes in true love, thinks she can fix my parents and bring them back together. As if she's the divine intervention, the miracle worker, the all-powerful fixer of broken people. I feel bad for her most days, but then again, I think of all the talks we've had, all the warnings she refused to listen to, and I can't help but let go and let be, I guess.

In time, she will learn. It's better I step away. Can't scold her for being a meddler when I too would meddle in her business. Brenda is hardheaded like me, and the only way she is going to stop trying to fix my parents is if she learns that harsh lesson on her own.

"We lived in the city, where you can walk or take a cab or the subway when it snows. Not in the mountains, where you have to drive on fresh ice. We aren't going, Hanna. I will call and tell Brenda we will go a different night and to shelter in place." I pull out my phone, seeing I only have two bars. I better hurry before I have nothing left.

"Shelter in place. We aren't in *The Purge*. Calm down, Theo," she smarts back, and I grumble but dial my sister.

"I already know what you're going to say. Mom and Dad already told me it's not safe to go," Brenda answers, and I hear the displeasure in her voice.

"Good. We have another two days on the trip. We have plenty of time."

"Well, your cabin is just up the road from ours. You could come stay here tonight, and we can have drinks and play terrible card games. I bet I could beat you at most of them," she offers, and I debate it, but the idea of being with anyone else tonight when all I want to do is be buried between my woman's thick thighs and in her tight heat... that's a game I'd much rather play.

“Not tonight. The snow is piling up at the door and around the rental car tires. Just get some rest, and we will make the most out of the next two days, okay?”

“Yeah, sure thing. We all know what you really want to do, you selfish man.”

My grin widens wickedly. “Goodbye, sis. I will see you in the morning for Christmas breakfast and presents.” I end the call and look out once more, seeing we’re surrounded by white mounds and a midnight-blue sky, with blackness beyond the trees. Closing the curtain, I walk to the fireplace and start to light it. The garland with lights and Christmas ornaments frames the red brick perfectly.

“Hanna, we aren’t going. My parents agreed as well. We can head for the city on our last day,” I holler over my shoulder, lighting a match as I drop to my haunches. It touches the wood and slowly starts to snap and crackle.

“And I’m guessing you aren’t feeling let down in the slightest. I would say you are more likely... elated? Aroused?” Her sensual voice comes from behind me, and I turn to say something mocking in return, but instead, words leave me, and my jaw does the only communicating—by hitting the goddamn floor.

“You tempting vixen. You thought you were going to wear that to dinner?” I eye her full, soft, and thick curves up and down, taking in every ounce of perfect flesh and material, or lack thereof. What a goddess. Wearing a red see-through bodysuit that hides not one part of her luscious body from me. Garters stretch from the bottom of the bodysuit, trail down her thighs, and snap onto sheer thigh-high stockings. Her blonde hair is curled and framing her face. That delicate canvas is painted in a smoky eye, thick lashes, and blush, which I know are going to bleed into one another when I’m done ruining her and fucking her like a goddamn plaything.

“I mean, I can always change. You’re right. It’s too much.” She turns to walk away, but that isn’t what she’s really doing. The bodysuit is a thong, and her fucking ass is a sight. Round, bitable, and all fucking mine. The heels she wears make her

ass stick out a bit more, and I remember the plans I have for that ass this weekend, and they'll be put to full fruition.

A night of raw, sinful, and hard fucking. Places I have dreamed of taking Hanna to but have yet to explore with her. We have been together a few years now, and while we have done things that would make old ladies clutch their pearls, there are still things I want to say would make her feel like the sluttiest fucktoy, the sexiest vixen, and the most wanted woman to have ever walked amongst men.

Tonight, she will scream out for more of me. I will push her past limits she's never been before.

"Hanna," I challenge, my hands tightening and my teeth grinding. I want her, but with... a twist.

"Theo?" She looks over her shoulder, placing her hand on the frame of the living room door.

"You're trying to get me to take you, and you know I will without any hesitating."

"I do. But my body is too beautiful for just anyone. Do you think you deserve it, Theo?"

My eyes narrow, and I grit out, "Every fucking inch. And that's Sir to you, puppet. Now take off the heels and turn off the lights."

Slowly turning, she looks me in the eye, and I don't miss her deep swallow, the fear and thrill building in her eyes like the snow outside. The grimace I give her tells her all she needs to know. The show is about to begin, and it's all because of what she started.

As she steps out of her heels, I watch her body shake with anticipation, and I see it all the way from here.

"What... what are you going to do to me, Theo?"

I'm still dressed in my suit for what was going to be our expensive night on the town. Now, I need it to work with me while I chase my woman around this cabin. A cat-and-mouse game, where I'll get to collect my meal at the end.

Reaching over, I turn off the light nearest to me, and she does the same, leaving the downstairs dark with the exception of the Christmas lights from the tree and the flames from the fireplace.

“You said your body is to be earned. Why don’t we make a fun *game* out of it? Wouldn’t that be fun, baby?” My question is menacing, and I watch it overtake her and sink in.

“Theo...?” she trails off.

“Run,” I growl, low and powerful.

“Theo. Ah!” she screams when I set into motion, and she turns and runs. I don’t follow as quickly as I could, because I would have her in my hands within seconds. The cabin is spacious, but my strides can handle more.

“Theo!” The lights are off, and it makes the game a bit more challenging. I follow her thrilled breaths and her trembling voice when she cries out for me to not chase her.

“I think you like this.” We make it to the kitchen on opposite ends, a large island separating us. I look her over like she’s my prey, and I can see the Christmas lights from the windowsill outside glinting in her eyes. Hanna is my prey, and I’m her captor. Her chest rises and falls, her large breasts trembling as each breath escapes.

“Bad girl, running while liking it. Look at you.” I slowly move around the counter, and she matches my steps, always staying parallel to me.

“W-What will you do if you catch me?”

I stop and put one hand in my suit pocket, and the other hand rubs at my beard. “Oh, puppet. I’m going to make your makeup run, make your ass turn a deep scarlet, and your pussy will feel my imprint for days. And to top it all off, you will be at my mercy.”

“Bu—”

She cuts off when I move again as she screeches, and she starts heading up the stairs.

“Lock that door and I’ll fucking break it down, Hanna.” Just as I get to the top, our eyes meet, and then she slams the door. I hurry and lurch forward to reach for the knob, finding she, in fact, locked it.

My naughty little vixen. She wants me to break things, become unhinged, destroying all the things in my path to get to her. Ever since she found her warranted confidence, she has become kinetic with new desire. With all new wants I have never seen in a woman. I’ve met my match.

I bang on the door, one hand on the handle as I bring my forehead down to the wood. I tsk at her. “Come on, baby. Be a good girl and open the door for me. You wouldn’t really want me to break it now, would you?”

“Theo, don’t, please.”

She plays the part so fucking well my cock swells in my slacks. How can it be like this after all these years? How can she still make me crave and want things I would get tired of very easily with anyone else?

Love. Trust. Playfulness. Desire. A match made in fucking heaven.

“You don’t want me to break down the door, do you, sweet girl?” I drag my flattened palm down the door, and I swear I can feel her quiver on the other side.

“No. Don’t. Just stop. I’m not opening it!”

The fact that I she adjusted into the roleplaying game and fell into it so easily, it’s like grasping a piece of paradise and keeping it stored peacefully in my hands.

“You’re playing with fire, Hanna. Open the damn door *now*, or I will break it down.” My approach changes again, soft to hard. I slam my fist against the door, and she whimpers.

Now, I truly have no patience left in me, so I decide to remove what’s keeping me from taking her the way we both want me to.

“Fine.” Stepping back, I remove my jacket, and with one swift kick, the door bursts open, the splintering sound

ricocheting from the impact.

She jumps back as my large frame takes up the opening.
“Theo.”

I slowly move toward her, tilting my head and gauging where she’s at, and that’s when I see the slightest little smirk tugging at her plump bottom lip.

“You know your word. Use it.” I stop what I’m doing and begin removing my tie.

“No!” she hollers, and I stop moving.

“What, baby?”

“Leave the suit on. I want you to take my clothes off and fuck me while still wearing it.”

“Then let me catch you and do just that,” I tell her.

“Earn it.” She moves first and climbs on the bed, trying to make it to the other side, but I’m too fast for her. I grab her ankle and pull. The cry of relief leaves her when I catch her, and it’s a musical masterpiece.

“There she is. You like when I chase you?” Grabbing the nape of her neck while my other arm bands around her waist, I push her head into the mattress and lift her hips. This puts her in the exact position I want her.

“Yes, I do. I want more. I need it. I’m hurting.”

God, I love when she tells me her pussy is needy for me. Dying for it to be used by me. Hanna is constantly telling me that I am the only one who can satiate her. I do what her hands can’t. Her toys could attempt but never succeed at. I’m the keeper of her pleasure.

Bending, I place my mouth to her ear. “You have no idea what I have planned. Your pussy will hurt, but you will beg me to never fucking stop.” Sitting up, I look around the room and see the garland above the bedroom fireplace, and this sparks a whole new idea that wasn’t in my plans. Going for it, I see its real and know that the rough material will add to the already heightened desire—not just mine but hers. Her head is turned, and I feel her eyes on me, curiously watching.

“You’re going to tie me up, aren’t you?” she asks as I round the bed and come back to her.

I slap her ass hard. Hanna jolts forward, and her loud, pleasurable cry fills the room.

“No. You’re going to tie up my hands so I can’t touch you, and you’re going to ride me. Drive me to the point of madness, because I won’t be able to grab you. And if you come.... God, if you come—” I bend and bite her ass. “—I will deny you my body for the rest of this trip. You’re going to make *me* come. Work for it, work hard. Be a good cumslut and take it all. Then we will watch a movie.” I flip her over, and her eyes are wide.

“Wait, I don’t get to come?” The playful arousal leaves, and it’s replaced by her displeasure.

“No, you will come, but you will have to wait. I want you so fucking wet I’ll be able to drink you.”

“Theo. No. I wanted you.... I wanted us—”

“This *is* us. You won’t be complaining when I finally let you have it. I’m going to make it so good for you, pretty baby. But we have to do some work before that happens.”

“You’re not playing fair. What happened to the original plan?”

“Plans change, but they will be in your favor.” I step up to her, taking her hand and pulling her up to a seated position. She eyes me over. Taking my thumb, I move it down her top lip, over the curve of the bottom, and drag it along her chin. “Do you trust me?”

She waits a bit but finally concedes, letting me do what I do best: Control her pleasure and set it free in ways she could never imagine.

“Yes, Sir.”

“Good girl. Now, tie my hands behind my back.” Helping her stand, I hand her the garland and turn.

I don’t normally relinquish my control. In fact, I never have before. This will be a first and is already filled with so much unmatched desire that I will let her do it again.

“You have never let me do this to you,” she voices what I was thinking.

“That’s the fun. Wait ‘til you see what power you hold.”

“I already know what my pleasure and body does to you, Theo. I like when you control *me*.”

I laugh sinisterly, feeling her tie the garland the best she can. “You’ve seen the pleasure in my eyes when I can touch and take you. Wait until you see the desperation in my eyes when I’m unable to.” Her green orbs are intoxicating when I meet them over my shoulder. They could hypnotize me into doing whatever she asks.

“How will you stop me from coming if I’m in charge?”

Leaning in, I bite her cheek, and she giggles. Moving to her ear, I groan. “Because you know the wait will be worth it when the payout comes.”

She tightens the garland with purpose. We separate, and already my hands ache and twitch to break free and worship her curves.

“Now what?” she asks, and I turn to face her, then lower to my knees before her.

“Now, you bend over and let me rip a hole in that material just big enough for my cock.”

Her legs rub together, and she moans out. “God, yes.” Turning, she backs up until the backs of her legs touch my chest, and then she bends over, showing me her sweet wet spot between her thick thighs. Beautiful. Leaning in, I take her pussy between my lips and suck, then bite. I nip the sensitive flesh before pulling back, letting nothing but the fabric linger in my mouth, and through her drawn-out moan, I pull hard with my teeth and rip the fabric, exposing her freshly waxed cunt to me.

I get to my feet effortlessly before falling to my ass on the side of the bed. “Now, spin around, unbuckle me, pull me out, and climb on my fat cock to ride it. Milk my cock, pretty puppet.”

Nodding eagerly, Hanna moves, and her delicate hands work at my slacks, but it isn't just a simple removal of the barrier between us. No, she takes me out and strokes me. My head drops back, and I swallow a sound of appeasement.

“Just like that... feels so fucking good. You're so good at pleasing me,” I praise her. “Oh fuck, good girl, get me ready for your pussy.”

“Can I have you in my mouth, please?” she begs, and I warn her with a look.

“No, Hanna, you do what we agreed. Do not stray. Got it?”

Nodding, eyes heavy with disappointment, she grabs my shoulders. Climbing on top of me, she places both knees beside me, and with one hand, she slides me through her slick heat. Preparing me. Preparing herself.

“Just like that. Right there. Good. Fucking. Slut.”

Chapter Two

Hanna

In the three years I have known and loved Theo—and made love to him, for that matter—he has never relinquished control. I’ve always been on the receiving end of the delicious control I crave more and more, year after year. How is that possible? To crave to be controlled. To desire possession, jealousy, and more. With Theo, it’s an insatiable need. And what’s more, I know he wants the same from me. The way I’ve watched the light and desire in his eyes only magnify and never simmer has me in a chokehold.

I look up into his eyes, ready to lower myself onto his large cock, anticipating that painful pleasure that comes with him being inside me. His honey eyes search mine, and in that moment, I see all the time that has come and gone and the love and trust that have grown between us.

“Theo?” I stop the roleplaying, the heaviness, the eroticism, and just feel us together.

“Yes, baby?” He softens too.

“I love you.”

Leaning forward, he kisses me, our lips joining as I slide down on him. The gasp of relief and the euphoric sigh we both release mold into one another, and as we’re joined both by lips

and our most intimate parts, I turn back on the power he gave to me.

“Such a tight little cunt. Fuck, baby.”

Fully seated, I roll my hips and squeeze a few times, eliciting moans of male appreciation from his full lips. Gripping a hold of his light-brown hair, I pull his head back and begin to trail hot, wet kisses along his neck and jaw, biting and sucking as I do.

He chuckles, and I raise a brow.

“What’s so funny, baby? You think I’m bluffing?” I ask, tightening my hand in his hair to indicate what I mean.

He must be mocking me, thinking I won’t go all the way with everything I want and plan to do to him, now that I’m holding all the control—which is to fuck him senseless. I want to make this the best Christmas he will ever have.

“I do. I don’t think you’ll be able to hold off from coming. I think you want me too much. Your cunt sure tells me how badly you are going to fail at this.” With that, I cease all movement.

“Hanna,” he challenges.

“Beg for it,” I tell him boldly.

God, this control. It makes sense now. Do I love receiving his? Yes. That always made sense. But being the one *in* control? That awakens something new in me, a fire burning from deep inside me and bubbling to the surface in a wild rage.

“You naughty, evil, little—”

“Beg,” I cut him off and slam down. He groans so loud I think the snow collecting on the roof outside must fall.

“Fuck,” he rasps out.

Biting my lip, I smile wickedly. “Beg me, and I will let you use me like a cumslut. Until then, you get none of me.” I stand then and begin to undress. He eyes me with bitterness,

but the underlying desire becomes more obvious. He is loving this challenge.

I undo one garter, then the other, and when they bounce and slap my skin, I moan, rubbing my thighs together, enjoying the bite.

“Baby, get back to doing what you were told.”

Ignoring him, I move to the strap at my shoulder and slowly remove it, feeling each inch of the fabric against my sensitized skin.

“Hanna,” he growls, the sound hitting me right in my core.

“God, I’m so fucking wet,” I tease, removing the other strap, then shimmying my hips as the red bodysuit falls from me.

“Fuck. Don’t you dare.”

My brows perk, and I grasp my heavy, bare breasts. Throwing my head back, I cry out as I tweak my nipples. Oh fuck, yes,” I hiss.

“Dammit, Hanna!” he yells, and I take it a step further. My bedroom eyes, filled with a vengeful type of lust, find his as my head lulls forward again, and I reach between my legs and start playing with my clit.

I see him trying his hardest to *not* get free from the garland. That turns me on more. He could easily break the strung pine needles, but if he does that, then I will win, and this pleasure he is seeking from me will be at his will alone. Theo wants to be at my mercy tonight. And damn does it feel so fucking incredible to be in charge of him, in control of my wildest fantasy, and right now, that is having him beg me for my body, for my pussy, for what only I can give him.

Me.

I pick up the pace, moaning and crying out like a depraved woman who has never had a passionate touch, and my eyes may be hazy, but they see him perfectly, and I know he is about to snap.

“Fuck!” I rub harder, and he can sense I’m close, knowing the telltale signs so well.

“Fuck, Hanna. Please, puppet. Please. I need you. Come back to me. Give me *you*,” he finally gives in, his chest rising and falling, a bead of sweat collecting on his forehead, where it meets his hairline. “Please,” he rasps out, swallowing past the dry need. His brows draw together in desperation.

“Yes, Sir.” I stop my fingers, all but crying at the loss, and step up to him slowly.

He licks his lips, looking thirsty. “Give me your fingers.”

I take the two fingers that were lost between my swollen lips seconds ago, and the moment they touch his lips, he licks at them, tasting them, sucks them in like they’re attached to a faucet and he’s just survived a drought. I get myself back into position and slowly slide down on top of him. His licking doesn’t stop on my fingers, but his eyes can’t stay focused on me, rolling to the back of his head as I become fully seated on his cock.

I start sliding up and down, circling on the down-fall, and we moan, the sensations starting at the tops of our heads and down to our toes. I love fucking Theo. Some would say I have become addicted to it. But I blame him for the addiction. I would kill for his touch; I’m that depraved from it. When he goes away for business, I ache, wake up craving it so badly I cry at times. Sex shouldn’t be that incredible, but here I am, being fucked deeply, passionately, roughly, and thoroughly nearly every night.

“Just like that. So good. Make me come. Milk me, baby,” his voice caresses my body. I keep moving, sometimes pounding down hard, but never repeatedly. I do this hoping to hold him on the edge. The frustration is building; I feel it coming from his body like a meteor’s about to strike. He’s burning for an escape, that escape being his orgasm.

“Puppet, beautiful fucking puppet, I need you to make me come.”

I shake my head, then lean in and start kissing him, sucking at his lips, turning them red with bites of aggression.

“Shit. Don’t you tell me no, Hanna.”

“I can do whatever I want when I’m the one with all the power. I’m in control, and if you want to fill me with your cum, you will do it when I’m ready to take it. Each—” I slide *up*. “—and every—” I slide *down*. “—drop.” I *circle*. The impact of me coming down has my clit hitting his pubic bone, and I nearly orgasm.

“Off, now, Hanna.”

I shake my head, and in a frenzy, I start fucking him like I’m within seconds of having it all ripped away from me.

“Hanna!” he barks, and I explode, that forbidden feeling laced with his authority setting me off. I pulse around him violently. “You bad girl.”

With that, the Christmas garland makes a loud snapping sound, and suddenly I’m ripped off his cock and thrown on the bed, my sex still not ready to lose the connection.

“No!” I scream out. But my scream turns into a louder screech when he slaps my ass so hard I already feel the mark forming.

“Theo! I’m sorry! I’m so—”

“Naughty women get spanked. You broke the rules, puppet. That was for me, not you!” he seethes, slapping my ass again, and the pulsing between my legs keeps going. In fact, instead of fizzling out, it seems to start all over again.

“I won’t do it again. I needed it,” I cry out, being vocal with my desire. The chasing, the control, the raw sexual way he lusted after my curves, it was all too much, and I needed the release. It was all I could do. I had no other option.

“You come again, and I will make you wait not just here but a week. You don’t break the fucking rules, puppet.” With that, he slams into me, fucking me with ferocity, showing me no mercy.

I cry, claw, and scream into the sheets, not knowing where I start and he begins. The room becomes a haze of animalistic pleasure. My soft thighs burn from the repeated slaps of his muscular ones. My pussy aches from the stretching and filling over and over again. I about pass out when he leans forward, clasps his hands around the column of my neck, and jerks me up and backward, my back bowing in a deep arch.

Through gritted teeth, he asks me, “Who’s owns this cunt? Huh?”

“You.” My voice sounds disembodied as I choke out the word through his tight grip.

“Who’s my personal little cumslut?”

“Me—fuck me.” I clamp down on him.

“No, no, puppet. This is mine.” He stops and squeezes my neck tighter, letting my pussy come down from the inevitable climb it was making.

“Please.” The desperation in my voice isn’t derived from stealing his pleasure. It’s the closeness. I want to be fucked like a whore, his whore, someone he can treat any way he wants, but then I want to be lost in the aftercare, where I’m the most precious thing in his life. A prized possession, a woman with feelings, feelings he holds to the highest tier of respect. What a beautiful, clustered mess we are. Torture and pleasure. Lust and love. Deprivation and satiation.

Reading me so well, he slams back in, and with a few more punishing thrusts, he lets go of my neck, shoves my face back into the covers, and aligns his front to my back as he empties inside me. As he kisses my shoulder and the back of my neck, I can feel him coming back to me.

“Such a good fucking girl,” he whispers.

“I am?” I implore, searching for the validation only Theo can give me.

“Yes, baby, so good. Come here.” With that, he climbs off the bed and takes my hand, helping me rise from the bed. My knees are weak, my ass is sore, and my core is aching. But I’m his, covered in all the markings only he gives me.

“Up-up, baby.” I never thought a man would be able to effortlessly carry my plus-size body like Theo can, but here he is, lifting me and letting me wrap my legs around his waist as he takes me to the bathroom. I wrap my arms lazily around his neck, and we share even lazier kisses. Our tongues caressing with the slightest of touches.

What a contrast it is from who we were a mere few feet away in the bedroom. Slowly, he sets me on the counter, being sure the pain of his spanking isn’t too much. The cool marble helps with the stinging when my flesh meets the surface.

“You think you can handle a bath?” he asks, starting up the tub.

I nod and take this moment to watch each step he takes. Precision, confidence, and he never misses a beat. His nakedness is the other thing I admire. There isn’t one ounce of fat on him. No body part is left without some form of definition or muscle. Old me, she would have believed—she *did* believe—she didn’t deserve it, but the new me? She knows her worth and believes she’s just as deserving of him as he is of her. I’m a woman worth having and begging to keep.

I’m perfectly flawed and thankful for the body that flourishes under his hands. No more hiding, only living in the skin I fought to love, love more than anyone, even more than Theo does. I’m my biggest lover.

The smell of cinnamon and pine pulls me from my wayward thoughts, and he’s approaching me with soothing balm in his hand.

“Hands on the counter and bend over, pretty baby.” I use his help to get off the counter carefully. I assume the position he ordered and watch in the mirror as he drops to his haunches. His plush lips are the first thing I feel, touching the sore skin with soft, open-mouthed kisses. I smile, a deep blush erupting over my face. The scents filling the bathroom remind me of Christmas, and it’s a reminder that tomorrow will be our fourth Christmas as a couple.

“Beautiful. Your body is so fucking beautiful, Hanna.” He rubs the balm in gently, small circular motions, and it feels

good against the tender flesh.

“Thank you, handsome. You’re beautiful too.”

Standing once more, he looks me in the eyes in the mirror.

“Don’t you tell anyone, but that made my heart go a little soft. Got it?”

I smirk, giggling. “I wouldn’t want to damage your image.”

Theo grips my hip and matches my smile. “Get in the bath. I’m going to make us something to drink.”

“Oh, hot cocoa!”

“No alcohol? I can make cider with something strong,” he tells me, and I shake my head.

“I’d rather stay sober and enjoy a long night of lazy lovemaking, please.” I bounce giddily, my hands clasped as I do.

“Damn, you’re cute. Fine. Cocoa for the both of us.” Taking my hand, he walks me to the large tub and helps me settle in. Once I am, he wraps a towel low around his lean hips and leaves me to the warm water.

There is a window next to the tub, and I look out into the snowy night. I missed this. A snowy Christmas. We don’t tend to get those in our small town of Cherry Hill, South Carolina.

Something about it just makes Christmas... Christmas. I know Brenda—my best friend, business partner, and Theo’s sister—is in awe over this. She’s never had a Christmas out of South Carolina. I feel bad she didn’t get to see the snow in the city lights tonight.

Sure, the scenery in the woods covered in white mounds of snow is stunning, but the city in dropping flurries—that’s a different world. An entirely different and beautiful sight. The only lights I can see from this window are the ones reflecting off the snow in hues of green, red, and a few different colors. It gives me the warm and fuzzy feeling that comes with the holidays. Who knew I would be here now? Safe. In love. And feeling like I always have a home. I wish my grandfather

could be here to see me now. Hell, to know me now. How could he have known the version of me before Cherry Hill?

“Where’s that head?”

How I missed Theo coming in and putting our mugs down, I don’t know. “Way too deep in thought.”

Stepping in, he sits opposite me, and I bring the warm mug to my lips and blow on it, watching the steam roll off the rim. “And you’re way too far from me, come here.”

Rolling my eyes, I carefully move, holding the mug above the water and doing my best not to spill it. Once my back hits his front, his hand goes around my neck loosely, and he cups a handful of water and pours it on my shoulder. It slides down my arm and back into the hot bath.

“Want to talk about it?” he murmurs.

“No. I want to talk about you. We talk about me all the time, Theo. Three years in and I still think we are stuck in my era.”

“You know me better than anyone. We don’t need to talk about me.”

Clicking my tongue, I nuzzle in closer. “I know you, but I want to know how you’re feeling.”

“Well-fucked and in the best spot—with you between my legs,” he muses.

“Funny. I’m talking about your parents being here. Are you okay? I know they got divorced years ago, but are you really doing all right?”

“Babe.” Tightening his grip at my neck, he moves me to lean my head back, and he kisses me atop it. “I’m fine.” His attempt to reassure me doesn’t work. Theo never talks about his parents and their divorce. There has to be some pain there. Some anger. Resentment even?

“Your parents are foul to one another. The way they speak to each other. That doesn’t hurt you?” This has him pausing for a long moment.

“It’s the way it is,” he finally answers, and I’m sorry, but that’s not good enough. We have shared our deepest struggles, pains, insecurities, and the most intimate parts, but his parents are a hard limit for him. Whenever I bring them up, it’s like I threw a grenade, and we have to clear the room to avoid disaster. If it doesn’t bother him, then why won’t he openly talk about their moments together? His answer isn’t enough for me.

I wiggle my way out of his grip and turn, putting my drink down, then I straddle him. Cupping his face in my hands, I kiss him with tenderness. He knows I need the softer side of him. This is the side that only I get to see and experience.

“You’re not gonna stop until I talk, are you?”

As he places his hands on my ass, I rub my nose against his and hum. “You’re correct.”

“What do you want me to tell you?”

“Anything.” I knead the muscles of his shoulders.

“My parents needed to separate. It was the right thing to do.”

“Correct, but was it always that bad? I know we’ve talked about how much they fought in the end. What about the beginning?”

“They fought constantly.” He pauses. “Well, more like bickered. The fighting intensified the older we got.”

“Did you leave because of that?” I push on, keeping up the kneading of his skin as he massages my thighs.

“No, I told you I outgrew Cherry Hill.”

Tilting my head, I quirk a brow, knowing he’s being facetious.

“Theo, I need the closeness. I need you to be bare with me. Can you do that?” I have tried for years to get him to open up about a lot of things. Most, he has, but this, this is the one thing he never talks about. There has always been more hidden behind what he has told. According to his sister, Brenda, it was

hell. Yet, she still hopes for some sort of reconciliation and redemption.

“Yes.” That one simple word holds years of pain. I could take that and hold onto it, but there is something in him that wants to push forward, and I won’t stop him.

Reaching under the water, I wrap my arms around his stomach and rest my cheek against his chest. Choosing to stay silent right now is the best thing. Once Theo decides to share, he does it without anyone needing to try to pry more.

“The way I watched my mother berate my dad and then saw him turn around and talk to her like she was less than his worst enemy... it was disgusting. First, I struggled. I was a teenager, and I didn’t know how to process the emotions. I felt weak for having them.” He moves his hands over the rolls of skin on my hips and back, massaging them right after. God, that feels nice—a contrast to what my heart is feeling.

I didn’t have parents to watch fight, so I can’t tell him I understand even just a bit.

“So, I took that anger, that pain, and turned it into aggression. I started fighting.”

“With other kids at school?” I ask.

“No, with my parents. I started talking to them like they had no authority, and it turned into one of the most toxic things I’ve not only seen but been in. My dad and I nearly came to blows a few times, when he would say awful things to my mom.”

“Like what?”

“Nothing I want to repeat. Things that no real man would say to a woman. Things I wouldn’t even imagine saying to you.” With that, he grabs my neck and tilts my head. Our eyes lock, and we search each other’s soul. There he is. My love. My best friend.

My heart hurts for him, and at the same time, I’m so thankful for the care he gives me. Knowing he would never talk to me in a nasty way like his parents, that makes the sore spot in my chest fill with warmth.

“I know you would never talk to me like that. You may talk to the entire world like they are the enemy, but I know you cherish me, Theo.”

“More than my own flesh and blood. I couldn’t live in a world where you and I existed like my parents do.”

I have seen, on the occasions we get together with his parents, what he means. They can rip each other apart, throw bricks, light fires, and start wars with each other, and it’s the kind of thing that makes you sick to your stomach. My skin crawls when I have to be with them as a pair. Apart, they are wonderful, but together, they are a matched made in hell.

“Is that enough emotional baggage from me on Christmas Eve?”

“‘Tis the damn season for emotional baggage and family drama,” I tease, attempting to lighten the mood.

“You think you can handle a little more, actually?”

Instantly, I know where this is going. This is how it always starts. The great war in our own relationship.

“I thought you had enough drama for the night?” I prompt, untangling myself from him and attempting to push away, but he pulls me back in.

“Hey, hey, don’t do that. Don’t pull away from me, baby. We need to talk about it.”

“Theo, I’m not ready to go back to the doctor and try again. It failed. My body failed us.” A year ago, Theo and I tried for a baby. Tried and failed *greatly*. Thousands of dollars, so many medications and shots later, and I couldn’t get pregnant. It wouldn’t stick. And my doctor said we can do things to help with the PCOS and work around it to try again, but the emotional damage was worse than any medication, trigger shots, and money gone.

“Who said we have to go back to the doctor? Why can’t we talk about other options?”

“Like what?”

“Surrogate? Adoption?” I scoff. Yes, I still have my inheritance, and Theo makes great money on his assignments, and now me being co-owner of Brenda’s grocery store, we can afford it, but still, we are talking more hardships.

“That’s just as emotionally draining and heartbreaking and not that easy, Theo. Please, can we talk about this later? It’s almost Christmas, and I wanted tonight to be about us. You and me.”

Sucking his teeth, he throws his hands up in mock surrender. “All right. Fine.”

Great. Not so holly and jolly tonight, I guess. Knowing I don’t want to leave us on this note, I take his hands and kiss each of his knuckles.

“I want a baby with you, and I will be ready soon. Just give me more time to come to terms with what that means for me. For us.”

I would have never believed that Theo would want a child when we first became friends with benefits—or hell, even in the beginning of our relationship. But a year in, something changed. He wanted me so badly, multiple times a day, eagerly yet with softness.

I thought he was just horny.

Nope.

He was literally breeding me. Trying so hard to get me pregnant. When I caught on, I was shocked that he had grown into the type of man who could want a family. But I wanted a family—and what’s more was I wanted it with him. So, we went to the doctor and began the IVF journey. It drained me. I couldn’t do it again. I had to heal from what I prayed could have been, what should have been, and what would have been if my body had not failed me.

“Okay, I don’t want to pressure you. I have no complaints about the trying process right now.” He winks, and just like that, he lets me breathe. And I do, letting out a sigh of thanks.

“I’m yours, and I will give us what we dream of. I promise. I love you, Theo.”

“I love you, puppet. Now, let’s go watch a Christmas movie. We could use some cheesy-ass cheer.”

Nodding in agreement, we both stand, and like always, we towel each other off.

God, if he only knew....

Chapter Three

T heo

The fire crackles, and the TV plays some type of corny Christmas movie that Hanna insisted we watch. After the heavy in our aftercare bath, I think I owe it to her. I don't want to push her to try for another baby, because believe me, watching her go through that was fucking brutal. But the idea of never having a child with her? *That* makes me feel equally fucking devastated.

I never wanted a family... until her. I never wanted love until her. I never had a fucking heartbeat until her. And just like this cheesy Christmas movie we're watching, I'm that lovesick over my goddess of a fiancée. In fact, you could change the name of the characters to ours, because we would fit the parts perfectly.

Look at me now. If twenty-one-year-old me could see thirty-three-year-old me, he would be repulsed, and I would laugh in his face mockingly and sadistically with pride. I'm proud of the man she makes me want to be. From playboy to daddy material overnight. This madwoman, making me this way.

"I think these movies are cute but so unrealistic," she speaks, shuffling her feet in my lap.

"Yet here I am," I add.

“Here you are, what?” She looks at me, pausing the movie. The embers from the fire make her green eyes look like crystals reflecting under the brightest light.

“Hanna, I’m in the middle of the woods, snowed in, in a cabin, begging you to give me kids and talking about my childhood bullshit, and all I want to do is hang the fucking moon and stars for you. I want to take the world and place it at your feet. I’m your cheesy fucking love story, baby.”

“Theo Fitzgerald, is this a Christmas miracle? Who are you right now?” Leaping up from her position, she scoots closer to me, then straddles me. I jerk my head back, her sudden move catching me off guard, but I won’t complain; it’s welcomed. My hands fall into place, taking residence on her luscious, full ass.

“You know, no one would believe you if you told them I’m like this with you. And I’ll deny it if you try.” I wink, then lean in and bite her chin.

Shrieking, she responds, “I have more credibility.” She shrugs.

“Why is that?”

“Because I’m nice to everyone, and you’re the Scrooge. Who will they believe?”

“Fair.” I nod, my declaration of losing.

“How about we keep it between us, and if you are a good girl and don’t spill my secret, I will reward you.”

Her grin begins to widen, but we are interrupted when her phone starts beeping, one after another, mere seconds between each sound.

“Who is messaging you that much? Is it my sister? Is she all right?” I question.

“Uh, no. Don’t worry about it.”

Instantly, my instincts to protect and pry are on high alert. “Hanna, don’t play me for a stupid man.”

She moves off me and starts toward her phone. But she keeps her front facing me as she backs up to the side table that her phone sits on. She looks like I put the fear of God in her, and I set into motion.

“Don’t make me be the crazy fiancé who has to check your phone. What’s wrong, puppet?”

Grabbing the cell, she places it behind her back and shakes her head briskly.

“Hanna. What is it? Is it Brenda? You? Do I need to worry?”

“No, it’s not that big of a deal.”

“You think I don’t notice the pulse in your neck or see the way your eyes clouded with worry? Don’t lie to me.”

“Fine,” she exhales after a good amount of time. “There is this man. He comes into work.” *We are not off to a good start.* “He started harassing me, and then he got my number, and after we told him he can no longer shop at the store, he hasn’t left me alone. It’s not that big of a deal. He will get bored soon.”

As I cock my head, the bones crack and pop with the movement. I can practically taste the blood in my veins; that’s how *big* of a fucking deal it is.

I grab the phone, and she tries to get it back, but my height has her at a disadvantage.

You think anyone wants you? I was just being nice.

How comical that you’d think I’d want you.

Answer me.

You prick tease.

Fuck, I bet you like this. The chase.

You and Brenda must be soaking wet with all this foreplay.

The messages get more insulting, then back to vulgar, and I nearly crack Hanna’s phone in my hand.

“Not a big deal, Hanna? How long has this been going on?” I turn to face her. My hairs are standing on end, and I fill with rage. This makes me just as furious as the last time it happened. The vulgarness, the heinous comments the man’s been making, they aren’t from just run-of-the mill annoyance. This is harassment and, believe me, stalking.

“A couple months.”

Her response is everything I did not want to hear. Would any response have been one I’d be okay with? No. Because someone is stepping into uncharted water—*my* water. My territory. My woman. My puppet. And her lack of telling me is a new level of betrayal.

Pinching the bridge of my nose, then full on rubbing at my eyes, I try to rein myself in.

“Theo?”

“Name?” I ignore her.

“What?”

“His name, Hanna. Now.” The tremble in my voice causes her to step back slightly.

“Colton.”

Running my hand through my hair one more time, my eyes focus on her. “Bed, now. Naked. Knees. Ass in the air.”

“Wait... what? Theo, what is happening?”

I step up to her slowly, prowling. Now, mere inches from her, I cup her chin. “I’m going to deal with the problem, and you are going to go upstairs and await your punishment.”

“Punishment? For being harassed? How is that my fault?”

Trailing my hand down to her throat, I grip it hard. “No, punishment for hiding this from me and not letting me protect you from danger. Again. I killed for you once. Don’t think I won’t do it again.”

“Theo, he hasn’t hurt me. He won’t. You can’t kill him for harassing me.”

“No, but I can put the fear of God and the devil in him so he will leave you alone. He won’t want to take it further, which is what should have happened in the beginning. Now, up the fucking stairs,” I bark and release her. Her eyes well with tears, and she looks afraid of me. Now suddenly in that moment, I beg her to say it. Our safe word.

“Sirius,” she whispers, and I turn, yelling into the room.

“Fuck!”

“Theo, listen, I know I should have told you, but if you’re going to protect me and have me on edge, I don’t want to be those people in the bedroom.”

“You hid this.”

“Well, look at you!” she yells back, and I drop my head, placing my hands on my hips and thinking about what to say next.

It hits me then. “I almost lost you to another fucking psycho like this one, baby. You get that, don’t you? You see why I’m so hurt?”

She nods slowly, but we don’t get close. “I know, and I shouldn’t have hidden it from you, but can we do this the right way? Can we turn off the phone tonight and handle this with the police when we get home? I don’t need you to save me. I need you to remind me.”

“Remind you of what?” I step toward her, my brows drawn in with desperation. I will do whatever she asks me to, to make this better.

“That I’m safe. That we have each other. That nothing can get inside our safe place. You are letting him inside it, when someone else can do it instead.”

“You want me to step back, let the police throw some sort of paper at him that says to leave you alone, and trust that you will be okay?”

“Yes. I am. And then you take me to bed every night and remind me that I am okay. Save your energy for being with me in my time of need and not out fighting the battles instead.”

She looks so raw and vulnerable. And I can't believe she's actually asking me to forfeit control and her protection, to hand it over to someone else. How can I do that?

"I'm calling Sirius on you. On what you want to do to protect me. Don't give in to him; give in to me. Let someone else do the outside work. Protect what's in your home. Us. Me." Dropping my forehead to hers, I close my eyes and grip onto the thickness of her hips.

"That is me protecting what's inside our house. You're my home, and I can't stand the idea that anyone could ever try to take it from me again."

She cups my face, her hands so fucking smooth, soft, delicate, and warm.

"Protecting me is compromising with me. Protecting me is taking me upstairs where we are safe and showing me who I belong to. Replacing those cruel words he said with your words. Drowning him out with *you*."

"You don't believe the cruel things he was saying about your body, do you? That's not true. You're fucking perfect, baby."

"I don't. But I do like it when you remind me. And I mean really, really remind me of just what my body is to you. How much you love it. How badly you want it." She backs up and starts to undress, pulling her long shirt over her head, leaving her bare except for the lace panties she wears.

"Look at you."

"Touch me in all the places that belong to you," she keeps saying, taunting me with her weapons—her seduction and her body.

"All of you. It all belongs to me."

"Why don't you take me upstairs, make me tremble under your touch. Make my pussy and ass ache from your reminder," she responds, turning and looking over her shoulder. I look at every dip, roll, dent, and curve of that body, and I get it. I see why men want her. Hanna has everything I fear being ripped away from me.

Without another word, she heads to the stairs, and I watch, mesmerized, as if I'm watching a goddess ascend the fucking steps. Because I am. But I won't just let this go. Tonight, I will give her what she wants, but there is no world where I just forfeit her protection and safety. But for now. I will give her what she needs.

The escape.

Chapter Four

Hanna

I would be lying, as I take each step up toward the bedroom, if I said another man harassing me hasn't triggered emotions from my past. I'd also be lying if I said I haven't been afraid to tell Theo. But there came a point where I wanted to reclaim my own strength, and Colton was just a bother, someone I believed would leave me alone after my silence.

But now he's been contacting Brenda and me.

I admit it wasn't right to hide it from Theo. But my fiancé isn't like other men. He is programmed to protect. At all costs. A cost that one day could take him from me forever. I won't let that happen.

My skin prickles. I'm aware of him behind me, matching the strides and steadiness of my steps. Both of us are trying to forget what happened back there.

Tomorrow is Christmas.

We're in our bubble.

Can't we just have that?

"Stop there." Now, at the top of the stairs, I halt. "Lose the panties and hand them to me, pretty baby."

With a trembly hesitation of my hands, I place my thumbs under the band of my panties and start to shimmy out of them.

“Such a beautiful ass. I can’t wait to fuck it.”

Smiling, my stomach does a flip. “What are you going to do tonight?”

“I have plans,” he responds. “Hand me the panties like a good girl.”

Turning, I watch in wonderment as he takes them, brings them to his nose, and inhales deeply.

“Fucking hell. You’re so wet.”

“Looking at you and the way you want me does that to me. I’ve never felt more desirable and wanted by anyone. That look could kill me, Theo. It nearly does every time.”

“I’ve never seen such a fucking beautiful person in my life.”

“Never stop looking at me like that,” I beg.

“I never could. Now, to the bedroom. I have a lot to do before we sleep.”

“Like?”

“You.” Winking, he starts walking, picking up speed, and I giggle, moving to the bedroom ahead of him.

We make it inside, and I turn, just as he meets me, and we collide. Breaths heaving, our chests rising and falling against each other, I realize the impact our love has. The relationship we have built and what kind of power it holds. He’s truly my lover, best friend, keeper of my secrets, and protector. I’ve never trusted someone the way I do him. Ironic, given the rocky start we had, compared to where we are now. Those moments were fleeting and led to a beautiful life together.

“I have some plans for tonight. I will give you soft tomorrow, but tonight...? Tonight, is for rough.”

“Even your rough is love. I’ll take whatever you have. Try me, Theo.”

“It never gets old.”

“Me trusting you?”

“That and you giving me control. Because you know what I’m capable of making you feel.”

“Sex addict,” I remark.

“No, Hanna addict.”

“Look at you being all cheesy before you fuck me like you have no respect or kind bone in your body.”

“You get to have the best of both sides of me, baby. Lie on the bed.”

“Yes, Sir.”

“Mmm. All fours.”

Strutting to the bed, making sure all my curves move like calming waves, I can feel as he watches me.

“You’re distracting me.”

“You’re a man. You can handle yourself. Get back to work then, Theo.” That gets me a slap on the ass.

“You’re going to really regret the sass, puppet.”

“I welcome it. I like that it adds a little extra edge to you.”

“Consider me edged then.”

I don’t miss his play on words. “Don’t edge me, Sir. I will be good. I promise.”

“I’m too impatient to edge you. Another night.”

“Good.”

Getting on all fours, I press my palms flat against the silkiness of the sheets. The bed is still a tousled mess from our earlier session. I pay close attention to all the sensations I’m feeling. The silk on my knees and hands. The warm yet somehow chilling air drifting across my back and the sounds I hear behind me. Theo unzips one of our suitcases, and I fight with all I have to not look back at him, wanting to be surprised by whatever he has planned for me.

“This will tingle a little, and you have to hold still.”

“W-What is it?” I stutter.

“You will see. Let’s just say it will add a little bit of sweetness to the night.” That’s when I feel it, something thin and long dragging from between my shoulders, down my spine, around the curve of my ass, traveling down one leg then back up the other. I try to place what it is, but I have no clue. That is... until I smell mint.

“Is that a candy cane?” I ask.

“Smart woman. It is, and it’s going to make this so damn delicious.”

“Are you going to put that— Oh fuck!” The invasion isn’t because it hurts or it’s thick, but more so from the tingle it brings and the knowledge he just slid a candy cane into my pussy.

“That’s it, my good girl. Soak it for me,” he praises, and the tingling feels oddly better than I would have guessed. I assumed it would burn. Nope. Not even the slightest.

“Squeeze down on it for me, baby, while I get the next toy ready.” I do as he says, and he gives me an audible groan of approval, watching the candy cane between my legs.

Next, I hear the cap from something pop open and the sound of liquid squeezing out. Lube? What does he need lube for?

My ass.

I clench harder, knowing he’s going to fuck me there. We do it on rare occasions, but it’s become a fond kink of mine. I wait and listen... or wait for some form of touch. The candy cane is eased from me, and I feel Theo move around the bed until he’s beside me.

“Candy canes and your sweet pussy juice. That’s a taste for the gods.” He licks and sucks on the candy that was just nestled between my legs.

“Can I try it?”

“Dirty slut. You like your own taste?” I nod. “Good. You should. It’s a fucking delicacy.” He brings the candy cane to my lips, and I’m delighted when it doesn’t just taste like me

and candy but him too. My eyes roll back, and I moan. He slowly drags it in and out of my mouth, just like I'm sure he plans to do with his cock, and I make sure to put on a show for him.

“Keep sucking. I'm going to put this in. How festive, baby.” He moves his other hand up to my line of vision, and I see the glass butt plug, but this one... this one has tinsel on the end, the traditional Christmas colors—red, green, and gold. The dim lights from the nightstand make it stand out. The shimmer reminds me of Christmas lights. I softly hum out a laugh at his comment, my mouth still working the delicious candy cane.

“You are fucking deadly. My cock is begging me for mercy and to get inside you, to fuck your slit so damn good, baby.”

Nodding, I keep my eyes on him as he leaves me, waiting for his next move when he's out of sight. I could look back, but I'm truly enjoying the thrill of what's to come—or better yet, *when* it's to come. A cool feeling hits my back, followed by Theo's fingers circling and dragging down to my back entrance. He rubs the same type of circular motion over my sphincter.

“Breathe in and relax. I'm going to put the plug in, pretty puppet.” Nodding again, I drop the candy cane from between my lips, breathe in, and there it is, the glorious sensation of the lubed plug entering me. The bite gets to me at first, and I let out a small whimper.

Theo rewards me with a kiss on my ass cheek. “Just a few more inches. Keep breathing through it, baby.”

“You. I want to feel you at the same time. Please,” I cry, craving to just have him filling me in every way.

“I would, but then who would fill that mouth?”

This confuses me. “I don't care. I want you inside me. Filling me. Please.”

“Oh, you will be filled. We have one more friend joining the party.”

“Friend?” I'm lost for what he could mean.

“All the way in. Now hold still.”

Not moving, I wait impatiently as he rustles around in his bag again, and I’m not prepared for what comes next.

Coming around to the head of the bed, he takes a dildo the size of him and attaches it to some kind of cushion.

“What is—”

“Turn around and don’t let the plug slip out. Line yourself up with the dildo, and I will help you slide the tip in,” he cuts me off, and I instantly start to protest.

“No. I want *you*. I don’t want to get off with toys. I want to get off on you.”

“Your mouth will be doing the job. But you will have to do some hard work. And I know you can handle it, baby. You’re such a good girl.”

I blush. God, you would think his praise would be something I got used to by now and that it wouldn’t even faze me anymore, but hell, I turn into mush under his words of affirmation.

“Turn around.”

Maneuvering myself, knowing the plug is locked into place, I do as he says, now facing the foot of the bed. I stay on all fours and slowly back up until I feel the cushion between my legs, and the tip of the dildo nudging follows.

“Perfect fit. Now sink onto it while I hold it still. Only take a couple of inches.”

“Yes, Sir,” I tell him. When I sit on it, a mewl that sounds tortured but pleased escapes me.

“I want you. Please, give me your cock. I’ll take you anywhere. Just let me have you.” As good as the toys feel, they are lacking compared to him. I need *him* in order to fully let the pleasure take me over.

He waits a moment, enjoying the agony in my eyes as I beg him for even an inch of him. He must decide I have shown him enough desperation, because he starts to undress, and I

watch, licking my dry lips as he exposes his perfect body to me. The contrast between us doesn't intimidate me; it turns me on. His strength gives him all he needs to throw me around like a rag doll. It makes me feel feminine when, for the longest time, I couldn't even imagine feeling that way.

I want to lick the salty skin between his abs, where the defined line concaves. The meeting point in the center of his eight-pack. And God help me, that deep Adonis V, leading to the thickest, longest cock that bends up just enough. Thank heaven for that, because when he is inside me, he hits that spot just right every time, and I come apart.

"I'm going to fuck those full lips, that tight mouth, so hard it'll force your body to slide up and down that dildo. You ready for that?"

Holy hell, someone call for help.

Am I ready?

I've had him in my mouth countless times, often roughly, but the force to make my body move the way he promises would have to be significant, and I'll be fuller than I've ever been before, having the butt plug in as well. I won't lie—it scares me a bit, all three of my holes being filled at once.

"You think I can handle that?" I look to him for reassurance.

"Oh, I know you can. We've been prepping you for this for years, puppet. But I'm asking if you're ready to try."

"I... I think so, if you believe I can."

Sensing my hesitation, he steps up to me, and lovingly, with the slightest touch, he cups my face and walks me through it, then he soothes me with his words once more. "You have to trust me and trust that I know your limits."

All reservations I had leave me. I trust Theo with everything, and more than anything with my body. He has never taken me to a place I couldn't handle.

"I trust you. I love you."

“I love you, baby.” Leaning down, he kisses my lips and then he begins. Getting into place, he sits up on his knees in front of me, his cock inches from my hungry lips.

“Your words and sounds won’t be distinguishable. If it is too much, give me three rapid blinks, and I will stop. This means you can’t break eye contact with me, okay?”

I concede. “Yes.”

“Good. Fuck, it will be so beautiful watching your makeup run down those rosy cheeks.”

I smile, biting my lip. “Will you make me a mess. Use me?” I question.

“We will be using each other thoroughly tonight, baby.”

“Don’t make me wait any longer then.” My sultry eyes try to seduce him, and I open my mouth without prompting. That signature, cocky laugh echoes through the room, and he taunts me. Putting the tip of his cock against my bottom lip, he then moves it in circles around my mouth, leaving drops of his precum. I moan, licking at the wetness when he stops for a brief second.

“Ready?”

“Impatient.” I want to do this. I want to be pushed to new limits. My response sets him off, and he grabs my hair and slams his cock into my mouth, instantly hitting the back of my throat and causing me to gag.

My eyes begin to water, and I choke even more. I’m doing my best to not pull back. I always need a moment to adjust to him in my mouth, but this time, he doesn’t allow it.

At least at first.

“Easy, baby. Breathe in through your nose on my retreat.” I take a deep inhale and keep my eyes locked on his when he pulls out, exhaling when he slides back in deep. His eyes are a storm of pride and lust. He’s proud of me for taking so much of him and following his orders.

After a knowing shared look, he starts to fuck my mouth, and I moan loudly when he picks up speed. The force has me

sliding down the dildo, and I nearly drop him from my mouth just to moan.

Here it is. I'm filled in every opening I have. And it may not be all Theo, but it feels like it is. Theo is invading me—my blood, my veins, my heartbeat, and so much more. He fucks my mouth, and I can feel it everywhere. The dildo and plug are almost extensions of him.

“Good girl, rub the under-part of my shaft. Oh fuck. Good. Fucking. Puppet.” I suck him in deep and roll my tongue up and down the bottom of his shaft, and the more vigorously I do it, the harder he fucks my mouth, thus making me slide up and down the dildo faster and faster.

Goose bumps erupt over my body. My hair prickles with overstimulation.

I think, *This is it*. He can't do anything else to make me feel him more or become turned on to a higher level, and then he does it. Reaching down the length of my back, he grabs the tinsel of the plug and starts to pull it out and press it back in, over and over, matching his thrusts.

It's too much. I'm going to come before I even get him off. The way he leans over my back, he covers nearly all of my face, making it hard to breathe.

Fuck! I'm coming.

I explode, coming so hard I have to drop him from my mouth and scream his name.

“Yes! Theo!” My ass and pussy clench down on the plug and dildo, and the orgasm keeps going. A rippling feeling shoots from my core to my stomach, then to my fast-beating heart.

“God... damn, to your back. Now. I need to come, baby,” he tells me, and I hurry, begrudgingly pulling off the dildo and moving to my back. He removes the plug, and that magnificent pull has another orgasm building.

“Theo, hurry, I'm going to come again. I need your cock,” I cry.

“Yes, pretty little mess.” He slams into me, pushing my knees to the bed and fucking up into me. I’m trying to pull my legs together as I come, but he’s too strong. Reaching up, I drag my nails violently down his chest, leaving red welts with my fingernails.

“Fuck. Hurt me. Just like that.”

Removing my hands, I try my hardest to come up on my elbows and beg him for a kiss, but the orgasm hits too hard. It’s like a collision of planets. Tiny black and white dots dance in my vision, and I throw my head back.

“Theo, stop! I can’t anymore!”

He keeps fucking me, the sounds of his orgasm mixing with mine, so loud.

“Say the word or I’m going to keep fucking you until I come again and you lose fucking consciousness. You feel too good to stop.”

“Theo, don’t make me have to.”

He slams harder, as if using his thrust to emphasize his words. “Don’t then. Let go and keep taking me, and come again when I tell you to.” One of my legs is released, and I am relieved as I go to lift it, but I’m halted when he reaches between us and slaps my clit.

“Fuck! Fuck!” I come again.

What is happening? How is he doing this? How is the pain this pleasurable?

He slams my leg back down and slowly slides in and out of me, the opposite of what he was just doing moments ago. The contrast confuses my wires, crossing and tangling them. I swear I leave my body then, feeling overwhelmed. I go limp, and my eyes begin to close, the darkness overtaking me, and once he comes again, we both groan out the word.

“Sirius.”

And like that, I fall into a slumber. Fucked out of orbit, back down to earth, and then to sleep.

Chapter Five

T heo

The moment I came again, alongside Hanna, we both fell into a deep sleep. The way she took all the things I gave her like such a good girl, she deserves an award for that. A day at the spa, then a week's-worth of uninterrupted slumber. She deserves the stars and the moon.

How lucky am I to have met a woman to match my insatiable hunger for fucking and doing it in such a brutal, rough way? I awoke sometime in the middle of the night and cleaned up our mess. Then I pressed a warm towel between her legs and cleaned her. Hanna didn't wake, but she made little sounds of appreciation in her sleep.

When I crawled back into bed, she nuzzled into me. The warmth of her on this chilly night put me right back under.

...

The rising sun peeks through the window, hitting me right in the face and waking me up. I look up at the clock above the bedroom fireplace and see it's 9:00 a.m. But something is missing.

Hanna.

Sitting up, I look around and see the clear view of the bathroom. She's not there, but the mirrors are fogged up, letting me know she just showered.

I hear some noise downstairs. It's her laugh, and it's accompanied by another I know well. My sister's. Rubbing the sleep from my eyes, I stand and put my sleep pants on with my hoodie. I head to the bathroom, brush my teeth, and rinse my face off, doing my best to be as awake as possible. I'm exhausted from all we did yesterday. My woman knows how to knock my ass down a few pegs. I didn't meet my match; I met my maker.

Opening the bedroom door, I smell coffee and sausage. My stomach growls. I need the refueling.

"Mom and Dad should be here soon. If they don't kill each other first," I hear Brenda say as I round the corner. The sight of Hanna nearly knocks me on my ass. Her hair is still wet and slicked back, her face bare and fresh, and she's wearing a white silk robe that hugs her body.

"Morning, sunshine!" Brenda says, always chipper.

Hanna looks over her shoulder and gives me a shy smile. I bet she's replaying all the ways I scandalized her body last night.

She and I both.

"Morning, B." I kiss my sister's head, then move to Hanna. Wrapping my arms around her body, I place my hands on her stomach and knead the skin gently. I whisper in her ear, "How is your body feeling today, baby? You need me to take care of you?"

Turning, she lazily kisses my lips. "No, I feel great. I promise, baby," she assures me, and I suck on her neck, knowing I'm leaving a mark.

"I'm not a prude, but can I *not* watch you two act like animals?"

We laugh, and I step back, but not before I give Hanna a soft tap on her ass.

“Oh God. What’s that like?” Brenda groans as I join her at the kitchen island.

“What’s what like?” I ask, taking the coffee as Hanna hands it to me.

“Being in love and obsessed with each other?” My sister hasn’t dated in years. There was one guy, but he turned out to be controlling, and we helped her get out of that one fast.

“The dating pool is terrible in Cherry Hill,” Hanna says.

“Clearly. Maybe I should move to New York, have a man fall for me while he hides the secret that—”

“Hey, watch it,” I warn.

“I will let that one slide. Just give it time, Brenda. He’s out there. Probably reading your file right now,” Hanna adds to the joke.

“Don’t make me ask her to leave so I can turn that gorgeous ass red,” I tease.

“Ew. Enough. I’m already drowning in a pity party, so don’t make it worse.”

There’s a knock on the door then.

“Mom and Dad. I’ll get it,” Brenda says, padding across the kitchen.

“I need to go put some actual clothes on. Can you dish up the plates?” Hanna asks, and I peruse her body. “Theo. Focus. Dish up the plates!” She laughs, and I get up.

“Yes, but don’t be gone long. I miss you already.”

“Careful. Your family might hear you being all mushy with me,” she singsongs, walking out of the kitchen.

“Did you not bring the gifts in your car from the cabin, like I asked?” My mother’s voice is whose I hear first. Rolling my eyes, I drop my head back. Our bubble is now busted. Here go the happy holidays with the Fitzgeralds.

Breakfast plays out like a Christmas movie—from hell. Mom and Dad had to be told to knock off the fighting by me

three times, like children, and made breakfast extra festive with bullshit. Brenda wore the guilt on her face, knowing it was her idea to bring them here, and while I dealt with my parents, Hanna comforted Brenda.

Next Christmas, I'm sneaking Hanna away to a fucking private island. My hell, this is a shit show.

"We are going to open gifts now. You two think you can do that without bloodshed?" I ask my parents, helping put away the dishes that Hanna washed.

"Yes, if your mother—"

"Nope," I interrupt. "'Yes' will do. Let's go. Baby, lead the way."

Hanna walks into the living room, with all of us following her and picking a place. She picks the floor in front of the chair closest to the tree, and I take the seat behind her, coffee in one hand and the other on her shoulder.

"I will pass out the gifts, and... we can do each person? Or do you guys want to do one gift each and just keep going in a circle?"

"One person at a time is good, baby," I decide.

"Perfect." She hands each gift out, declining my help. I learned Christmas is her favorite holiday. It used to be her least favorite, because she never had family or someone to share it with. The past three years, she has made it a mission to create new traditions.

"Can Brenda go first?" Hanna claps excitedly.

"Why me?"

"Because Theo went the first year, then me, then your dad. This year, I want it to be you, and I am so excited about your gifts. So, it's a not-so-hidden agenda, okay?"

I smile. Christmas is only exciting because of her. I have grown fond of it, and it's all in the name of Hanna.

"Say less!" Brenda starts with mine, then Mom's, and then Dad's, saving Hanna's for last. When it's time for her to open

Hanna's, my woman is barely able to contain herself, rocking back and forth and clasping her hands. Brenda opens the white envelope, and her eyes fly over the words, and suddenly she shouts, standing and moving toward us. Hanna stands and bounces with excitement. They embrace one another and jump up and down. My sister says "thank you" repeatedly, and I have no idea what the gift is. None of us do.

"What did she get you, honey?" my mother asks.

"A girl's trip to San Diego in April!"

I would be lying if I said I didn't just get a knot in my stomach. I like Hanna with me all the time. Nights away, work trips away? Fucking torture. But I keep it to myself, because my possessiveness needs to have *some* boundaries.

"I know you have been tired and overwhelmed, and I wanted you to have a nice break, and this gives us time to get the store all set up while we're away. It will be perfect!"

"Margaritas and hot men!" Brenda hollers.

"Amen!" Hanna agrees, and I sit up and smack her cute little ass.

"Watch it, baby, or it will become a girl's trip with a chaperone."

"I just mean for your sister. Trust me, no one there is going to hit on me," she brushes me off, and that comment, that brief lapse in her self-belief, pisses me off.

"Hanna, kitchen. I need help. Mom, start your gifts. We will be right back."

"Oh, all right. Are you sure? We can wait," my mother adds.

"Yes. I'm sure." Taking Hanna's wrist, I ignore her protest and move to the kitchen.

"Theo, what are you doing?"

I slam her against the kitchen wall, and my lips are on hers. At first, she doesn't kiss back, probably shocked by what

is happening, but she soon catches up and starts to kiss me back.

“Theo, what is going on?” She breaks free, breathless.

“You needed reminding of who you are and just how insanely fucking desirable you are.”

“What are you talking about?” Her eyes search mine.

“You had the nerve to say men wouldn’t want you.”

“Don’t you like that? Men not wanting me?”

“I’m not an insecure man who feeds off my woman’s insecurities.” I grip her throat.

“I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have said that. I know my worth. It was just a joke. I won’t do it again.”

I bait her more, tightening my grip.

“I’m not lying, Theo. I won’t say it again. Let’s go back before they call in a swat team to settle you down.”

I couldn’t help myself. Hanna doesn’t get insecure anymore. It’s not her thing. That isn’t the new her, the one who has put in so much time to love herself.

“You’re crazy. Seriously. Calm down a little. Jokes can still happen.” She takes my hand and leads me back toward the living room.

“Not at your expense,” I murmur.

We resume our spots, and everyone opens their gifts, enjoying each one, and when it comes time for mine, Hanna turns and rests her head on my knee, and I pet her hair. The room doesn’t see it or get it, but she does this move on purpose. My puppet shows me a small act of submission, worshiping me on a throne while she sits on the floor at my feet.

I open the gifts from my parents. My mother got me some clothes, and my father gave me a ticket to a basketball game in Charleston. Brenda got me a funny card and some gift cards.

And then it comes time for me to open Hanna's. I get an envelope from her as well. Opening it up, I read the words.

My gift to you is one I would like to give you in private. It's one I think you'll really enjoy, but I prefer we be alone for it. I love you, Theo. Yours always.

My cock jumps. She's going to give herself to me, and I feel she has it all planned out. I don't need material things. I just need her.

"I promise you will be over the moon. Later this afternoon." She winks.

Now, I'll be salivating, foaming at the mouth, dying to have her. Great.

"Oh, I bet. Now, you open yours."

And she does. Each gift, she delicately unwraps. Hanna has a thing about wrapping paper. She hates to rip it and ruin it, so she takes her time. You would think the gifts she receives are worth millions by how much she thanks everyone. So much love and excitement.

"Mine now, babe." I hand her a box, and she takes it. Looking up at me, she smiles. "Go on, you don't even know what it is yet."

"I know it's going to be amazing already." Dropping her eyes back down, she takes the velvet box and opens the top of it slowly. Inside it is a diamond bracelet with a locket on it. Her eyes glisten, tears welling behind her thick lashes. "Oh, Theo, this is stunning. You shouldn't have spent this much on me."

Ignoring that comment, I tell her to lift the velvet inside. When she does, she pulls out a piece of paper. Unfolding it, she reads it aloud.

"The second piece of this present is in the bedroom. Go find it, pretty baby." She looks up and quirks a brow.

I get what she's insinuating, and I laugh. "No. Go check the bedroom. It's sitting on the bed."

“All right. It better be something good.” Standing, she heads up the stairs, and I wait a moment.

“Does she have any idea?” Brenda asks, and I shake my head.

“What is it?” my father asks.

“B, you tell them. I’m going to go be with her. We’ll head to your cabin in a little bit for dinner.” It’s Christmas Day, and trying to find a reservation at a nice restaurant in the city isn’t going to happen, so we’ll make it for tomorrow night, on our last one here.

“Sounds good. Good luck.”

I stand, hug my parents and Brenda, then I take the stairs. When I get to the door, I can hear sniffing. She found it. I take up the doorway and lean against the frame, crossing my arms and watching her closely. She sits on the bed, completely fixated on the letter in her hand.

“I have family?” she finally asks. Sitting in the middle of the bed, she peers up at me.

“You do. She was born a few years after you. She was also put in the system, and she’s living in Idaho now.”

“Theo... h-how did you find this out?”

I step into the room, taking long strides until I reach her. Dropping to my haunches, I place my hand on her knees.

“How did I not sooner, baby? This is my job. It’s what I do. Just a couple of months ago, I got curious, started doing some digging, and I found her.” I wipe away her tear.

“Does she know about me?”

I shake my head. “I wanted to wait until you knew and gave you the chance to decide what to do with that information.”

“I can’t believe I have a sister. JD couldn’t have known,” she adds.

“No, your parents never told him. You read the letters; they kept it from him. But yes, they had her and placed her when

she was a newborn. It was a closed adoption.”

Hanna covers her mouth and cries. “I’m not alone. I’ve never been alone. I have a sister, Theo. God.”

I stand up, then sit beside her, pulling her into my side.

“I can look deeper, and we can see if she would want to meet up. I can do that for you if you want. But I wanted you to have control here.”

“Thank you. I can’t believe you did this for me. I just.... I don’t have words. Theo, what do I do with this?”

I hold her closer. “You do with this what you want. We can move forward now, we can move forward later, or we can leave it be for good,” I assure her.

“No, no, I want to meet her, but what if she doesn’t want to know me?”

I think about how to answer that. I don’t want to say the wrong thing. When nothing that seems like the right answer comes to mind, I take the safe route. “Then we cross that bridge if it comes.”

“I love you. So much. Do you know that?”

“It’s the least I could do for you. Besides, what a hell of a Christmas gift.” I wink at her, and this makes her smile. And the smile widens when I bring up her gift.

“So, I’m here to collect *my* gift.”

“I bet you are.” I hold my hands out.

She giggles but stands instead, leaving my hands extended. When she goes to the bathroom, I hear her rustling around.

“My gift is in the bathroom? Better be you wrapped in a bow.”

“It’s something wrapped in a bow.” Her voice is lower, closer, and I turn to see her holding a red-wrapped gift with a silver bow on top. She slowly walks toward me, but what’s more is she’s doing it naked.

“Dear God, you are so damn beautiful, baby. So perfect.” I stand and start to undress. Completely naked, I sit back on the edge of the bed, and she approaches me.

“Hold this. Don’t open it yet.” I’m hard looking at her body and bare face. Not a single inch of her is covered with anything. She is stripped completely bare to me. I take the box, and she straddles me. Gripping my shoulders, she slides down me, and we both moan, my head lulling back at her tightness.

We aren’t fucking. We are making love. I promised her soft, and I will give it to her. But who am I kidding? I will take her soft *and* hard, both equally as perfect.

Fully seated, she smiles. “Merry Christmas, Theo. Open the gift.”

I make work of unwrapping it. Within seconds, I remove the lid, and my eyes widen, my chest tightens, and my free hand... it has to grab onto her hip to help steady me. “You’re.... Baby, you’re pregnant?”

One tear escapes her eye, and she nods. “I am. That wasn’t the flu I was having last week.”

“Oh, baby, come here.” I set the box down and wrap my hands in her hair to bring her in for a soul-shattering kiss.

The kind that lets you know you have a place in this world. A home within a person. A love that surpasses time here on earth. You have your person.

Our tongues dance. Our lips and teeth sucking and biting at one another.

“You’re making me a father. You are giving me everything I ever wanted.”

She slowly starts to rock against me. “I promised you I would give you one, one day. Here it is.”

“Do you know what this means?”

She shakes her head and giggles.

“That I am going to be even more obsessed with you. I didn’t think that was possible.”

Throwing her head back, she laughs, the sound beautiful, just like the moment we are sharing. “I knew it was possible all along. You are absolutely insane.”

I stay quiet and just focus on helping her, slowly sliding Hanna up and down in the gentlest and most caressing way I can. As if I she’s fragile and might break.

“You won’t stop touching me like you do, right?” she asks, rolling her hips, her clit against my pubic bone, and she cries out.

“No, but we will have to be better with limits and positions, and we need to talk to the doctor. I want to make sure you and the baby are safe. How far along are you? Do you know?”

She shakes her head. “I think I’m at least six or seven weeks, if I’m counting right. It’s hard to tell with my irregular periods and how you can’t seem to keep your hands off me,” she teases.

I lean in and bite her nipple, eliciting a small yelp through another laugh. “You never complain. In fact, you tend to be the seducer most the damn time, you sex fiend.” I hit that spot deep inside her, and she lazily wraps her arms around my shoulders and moans. Lulling her head back and then forward, our foreheads connect.

“You’re going to make me come, Daddy.”

Oh, fuck me and all that is holy.

“Oh fuck, say that again.”

“Make me come, Daddy.” She winks, and that’s all I need. I bounce her on my cock, careful to not push too deep. We know what’s at stake and how fragile this pregnancy will be, and we need to treat it as such. “Right there, that’s the spot. Oh, baby, don’t stop. Yes, yes, yes!” she moans.

“Give me your pleasure, beautiful. I love you.”

“Oh God. I love you!” she screams and orgasms.

And I swear this one is different. I can make her come in less than thirty seconds on an off-day, but it's as if being pregnant has made it even easier.

Oh, this is going to be fun.

"I'm right there with you, beautiful. Take all my cum, okay?"

"Yes, come for me, please. Fill my pussy up." She bounces on me harder, and I want to slow her down, but her still-pulsating pussy is cosmic, and I orgasm.

"Fuck, fuck, fuck." I grab the back of her neck and use my other hand to hold her hips in place as I jerk violently inside her, filling her with every drop. Our foreheads stay locked, and she just whispers "I love you" to me over and over as I kiss any place I can from our position.

"I love you, puppet. So fucking much."

Then silence fills the room, but it is all but silent. No words are being said, but the knowing is louder than anything. Knowing we are going to have a baby. Knowing she has a sister she had no idea about. Knowing that, in three years, we have changed each other into two completely different people—it all lingers there... so loudly and fucking beautifully.

I'm the man who never believed in love. Now, I'm fucking drowning in it. And with Hanna. What a beautiful way to die.

Chapter Six

Hanna

“I have a sister.” I draw circles and shapes on his chest as we lie in the afterglow of lovemaking. We went again, but this time, we didn’t say a word. He laid over me, running his hands through my hair as he lazily slid in and out of me. It was beautiful, the way he was so gentle with me.

“You’re pregnant,” he adds, trailing his fingers up and down my arm.

“I know. What do we do with all this?” I thought JD was all the family I had. My parents are still alive, but I would rather burn in hell and feel all my flesh melt than ever be in a room with them. They might as well actually be dead; that’s how far removed I am from ever wanting to have them in my life.

But a sister? I think I want to know her. No, I *know* I want to know her. But what if she doesn’t want to know me? Can I handle that type of pain? Was it better to not know she existed at all?

“Talk to me,” Theo interrupts my self-deprecating thoughts.

“I worry that my sister won’t want to know me. What if she hates my parents as much as I do? Or she thinks I’m just

as awful as them? What if she doesn't give me a chance to tell her my story?"

"She will. I have a good feeling about it. Besides, no matter what—" He turns and sits up on one elbow, then moves his hand to my stomach. "—you have your own family now. And we will be here always. Our little one will fill all the places in your heart you have left for family. We are your family now, babe."

God, how can he be so damn perfect? All I ever wanted was a family. A place to call home. And I have that. I do. Plus, he's right. If my sister doesn't want to know me, then I will mourn her, but I'll always have a family.

"You're my home. This baby is my home."

"You are *our* home. We have a place to belong because of you too, Hanna. Give yourself the credit."

My eyes water, and I try to chalk it up to hormones, but who am I kidding? I've always been this way.

"This has been the best Christmas yet. You have no idea how much it means to me that you did this for me." I caress his face.

"I'm the lucky one. I found out I'm going to be a dad. Now I *have* to like Christmas. It has a whole new meaning."

I laugh. "Scrooge."

"Your favorite Scrooge."

We go silent again.

Then... "Theo?"

"Puppet?"

"Merry Christmas. I love you."

"Merry Christmas, baby. I love you too."

Epilogue

Hanna

That Christmas changed our lives. Forever. Who knew a stay in a cabin, on a holiday, snowed in, and with the one I love, could change the trajectory of our lives?

By the next Christmas, I'm holding our baby, with the strongest pair of arms wrapped around me, embracing me closely as I smile at my sister, who's looking down on her niece. We named our daughter Lily, and she looks just like her father, but I see so much of me in her eyes. She's my purpose. And she made our home full, completed it.

My sister, Riley, she was everything I hoped for in the lead-up to meeting her. We are almost identical. You can tell we're sisters, no doubt. But it's our hearts—they are a lot alike. We have compassion, empathy, and most of all, we both found love and a place to call home. And now, we have each other. But all of this wouldn't be if it weren't for the secrets. Or the shadows. Or for JD.

All those clandestine things. Fate collided, and I don't grieve any part of my life now. I don't look back and regret it; I look back and thank it. Each moment led me to a future that was made up of fairy tales. And now I live in it.

A family. Self-love. And him. Theo.

“This is all mine now, puppet,” he whispers, catching me smiling over my wayward thoughts.

“Yours,” I whisper back. “All yours.”

“Merry Christmas, baby.”

“Merry Christmas, handsome.”

THE END.

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About the Author

If you liked this story and want to know more about the mysterious Riley and her story, make sure to follow me on all socials!

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