



Missy Snow

N. Tetterton



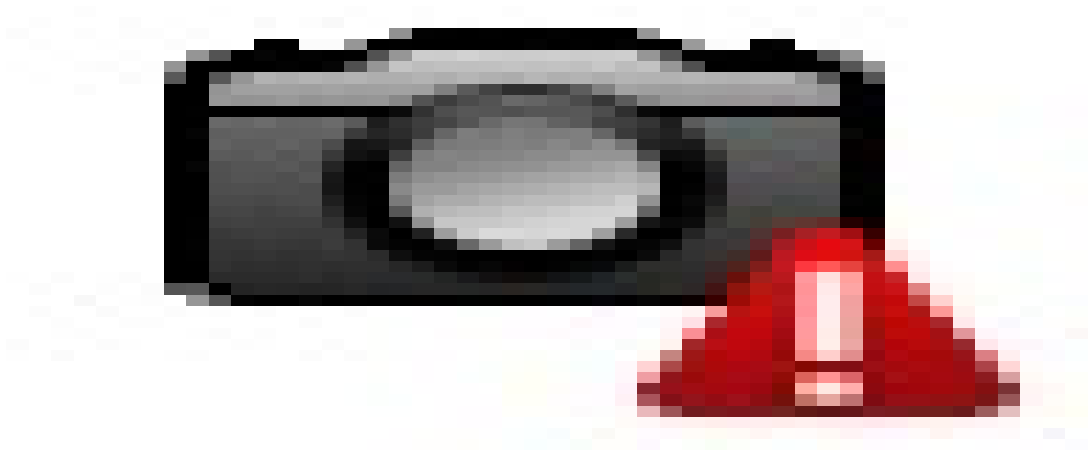
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The following story is the first book in the next-gen series, which means that there may be scenes or situations that may be completed in other series.



The following contains material that some may find disturbing or offensive. The following contains acts of violence, crime, murder, revenge, body mutilation, domestic violence, sexual harrasment, grief, cheating (not on main characters), pregnancy (just give it a chance), miscarriage, [slight] stalking, . As well as contains kinks including; gun play, knife play, branding, voyeurism, degredation, humliation, praise...

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Crown- WE ARE FURY, Brassie, Kyle Reynolds

Hollow- Belle Mt.

Kiss the Sky- Machine Gun Kelly

Monster- Fight the Fade

Kind of Anything- Remixed/Remastered- Beartooth

She Thinks of Me- Landon Tewers

Take Me Down- Ryan Caraveo

Mia Goth- Attila, Ekoh

Watch the World Burn- Falling in Reverse

When You Say My Name- Chandler Leighton

My Fault- s0cliche

Lovers in the Dark- Adam Jensen

Blood- Call me Karizma

Villain- Ekoh, Vin Jay

Wayside- Ekoh, Loveless

Fire Up the Night- New Medicine

Bodies- Bryce Fox

Young, In Love, & Depressed Af- Call Me Karizma

No Mercy- DeathbyRomy

Evil- Hollywood Undead

Vicious- Bohnes

New California- Highly Suspect

Love Like This- Highly Suspect

Dangerous- Not A Toy

Blood in the Water- Ayron Jones

Welcome to Horrorwod- Ice Nine Kills

Going to Hell- Bryce Savage

To evveryone who just wants someone willing to be morally
grey for them.



TATUM

“Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you, God?”

“I do.”

The District Attorney walks from the table that he’s sitting at and stands in front of me. “Morning.” He smiles at me. I hate his fucking smile. I can’t wait for this whole goddamn thing to be over. I’m tired of betraying everyone I know. Tired of betraying him.

“Now, Tate... is it okay if I call you Tate?”

“Sure.” I shrug.

“Thank you.” His smile grows. It was a fake smile before. Now I have no fucking clue what to call it. “Now, Tate, I just want to clear up why we’ve called you up to the stand.” He smiles. He knows that he’s already won. “You came to me, didn’t you? You told me you had information you wanted to give.”

“Yes.” I look up. For the first time, letting my eyes land on Zane, I can see the anger boiling over in them.

“Can you tell the court how you know the defendant?”

“We met 7 years ago.” It comes out in a whisper. I try not to glance over to where the defense sits. Zane is still glaring holes through me, so I refuse to make eye contact with him, and quickly move past him. I get a quick nod before I turn my

head again towards the prosecutor.

“And what is the nature of your relationship?”

He asks like it's so fucking easy to answer. Like there hasn't been years of baggage and emotions involved. Like we're normal, and we're not together because we don't want to be and not because life just isn't fucking fair sometimes.

“Tate?” the prosecutor tries to get me to focus again. “What is the nature of your relationship with Mr. Anderson?” I look back over at the attorney, but my gaze falls past him. Towards Darren, who looks as furious with me as I knew it would be, because he knows the nature, and he doesn't want me to admit to it on the stand. Because he thinks it will make Zane look bad.

“We would sleep together every couple of years.”

“And when you say sleep together, what exactly do you mean?”

“We would have sex.” I deadpan as I stare at him. He and everyone else in this fucking room knows what I meant by ‘sleep together’. He just wanted to embarrass me by saying it out loud. He doesn't know the failure I've set him up for, and I would almost feel bad if he wasn't such a prick.

“And you say every few years?” It's a question even if he doesn't phrase it as one.

“It wasn't like clockwork, really, just whenever we ran into one another.” I shrug out, letting myself look back over at Zane, and it breaks my heart as I see the hurt in his eyes.

I'm sorry, I'm so fucking sorry.



ZANE

“Zane!” my uncle shouts into the phone. “Did you hear me?” I’m actually surprised when I hear his emotions crack through its barrier that he was trying to keep them behind. He needs me to answer him, but I’m not sure I can just yet. My emotions strangle me as I sit up in the bed in my dorm room. “Zane!” He yells out, having composed himself this time.

“Yeah, I’m on my way.” My voice cracks as I attempt to answer him. I can’t take the failure that the crack conveys, so I just hang up the phone, moving over to the side of the bed.

“Zane?” Holly whispers from where I shoved her off of me to. “You’re leaving?” I’m sure that she’s pissed. I mean, I’m sure she got pissed when I answered my phone mid-fuck. I can only imagine that the realization of me leaving isn’t helping any.

“Yeah.” I cut out as I grab my jeans off of her bedroom floor. She shifts from behind me and I don’t need to look at her to feel her aggression building. “Fine.”

Sighing out, I turn and look at her. “We’re not like that, and you know it.” Rage fills me as I say the words. I can’t believe that she’s acting like this right now. “But even if we fucking were, it wouldn’t matter.” Pulling the shirt up over my head, tugging it down on my body and I stop, staring at her, forcing all the emotions that the conversation with Ro just brought up.

“My parents were just killed.” Her face falls at my confession. I don’t wait for her to say anything else. I just turn for the door, trying to clear the threshold before the pity that I saw forming on her face is complete. I pause for a second before as I open the door and saying, “This should be the last time,” before I shut the door behind myself, not bothering to look back. I’m sure that I heard her shocked plead with me as I left, but she’s the last thing I need to be worried about.

My phone rings as I’m walking down the hall, pushing the door to the building open before I’m outside. “What?” It’s abrupt, but I don’t give a fuck. I’m sure whoever is calling me at the moment knows what happened.

“Ro called you?” My brother’s voice filters through the receiver, just as curt as my answer was.

“Yeah. I’m on my way.”

“Okay. Ro booked a flight for me, but I won’t be able to get in until tomorrow night. And you know Drew is going to want answers immediately.” We both let out a small, sad chuckle, knowing how our baby sister can be.

“Yeah, she’s just like Mom. She’ll try to go after whoever she thinks may have done it.” I trail as a realization takes over.

“Yeah, I guess she really is just like Mom now.” His tone is somber as he says the exact words I was thinking.

Ro is standing at the gates of the compound as I pull up. His bike is sitting off to the side. I can see the hurt in his eyes over the situation. Pushing the shifter into park, I get out and immediately hug my uncle. I only gathered minor details on the phone with him earlier, so I’m confused why there isn’t anything going on at the moment.

“Does she know?”

“No, thank god, she wasn’t home tonight.” He looks down at the ground, kicking at the ground.

“Where is she?”

“At a friend’s house.” I nod my head as he opens the gate. I

walk with him. “I guess she had prom tonight, stayed with a friend afterwards.”

“Zane.” Liv shouts as she rushes over to me, hugging me tightly. We’ve all grown up together, in this compound, next door to one another, until we left for college. Now it’s just Drew. I’m not even sure why Liv is here right now. It’s been so long since she left here.

Dad always prepared me for the day he would die. Also told me that in the MC life, it would inevitably come sooner rather than later. He just assumed that Mom would still be here. He always told us to make sure and take care of her. That if we didn’t, he would haunt us until we died. It always made me laugh. Dad always had a way about him, saying something dark, yet humorous, and making everyone uncomfortably laugh, except for him. Not that he didn’t think he was funny, he knew what he said was hilarious, but what made it funnier was him not acknowledging it.

“Where’s Liza?” I whisper to my cousin as she lets me go.

“She can’t come back yet. It’s still too fresh.”

I nod my head understanding, because right now, everything feels like it has sped up and slowed down. The wound inside of me is still surging with adrenaline that it doesn’t hurt just yet. But I know that when I let myself feel it, when I slow down enough to process what is going on, the pain will most likely consume me.

“How’s your mom?” I ask her instead, like it’s not my parents we’re all worried about.

“Not good.” She whispers, shaking her head.

Liv’s dad was the president of the MC. He died four years ago. Club business that went bad, at least that’s all I know about it. Since dad was V.P., he stepped up as Prez, and has been running the club since then, until now...

My aunt hasn’t been the same since Khan died. Then Liza’s dad wrecked his bike. He was in the ICU for days before they pulled the plug. Her mom was a wreck. Liza was barely

holding it together. She ended up checked into a mental health facility a few months later after she found her mom dead, in their house, an accidental overdose. At least that's what the death certificate says. Currently, I doubt the veracity of it. It just seems too convenient. Liv and Liza have always been inseparable, just like their moms were. They're about 2 years older than I am.

The funny thing is, I think they may be closer than Zeke and I are, somehow. They didn't use to be, but since my brother left town, we've drifted apart a bit.

The club seemed to have fallen into some 'bad luck', at least that's what people were calling it. It started with the members slowly dwindling, and it seemed like within the last couple of years, one by one, the officers were dying off. Once that started, the rest were looking at the warning signs around them, tucked tail, running, going nomad, leaving for new charters, starting new charters. Dad used to try to hide it, but between seeing it wearing on him and the lack of members, I knew something more was going on.

But even with her husband dying and watching the club fall apart, Billie kept it together... roughly, but it was still together. She went to live with Liza's grandparents because being on her own was too much. But with mom dying, I can only imagine how much of a wreck she is now. She's the only one left.

My aunts met when they were 10 and then met my mom in college. They were always close after that and mom, well, she always was their protector.

Hell, she was everyone's protector.

The weight sinks into my chest, and I have to lean against the car behind me.

My parents are dead.

Dad feared for himself. I realize that now. It's why he sat me down over Christmas break and told me that if anything ever happened to him, to make sure and take care of mom. Not that

she needed taking care of, but hell... they were the ultimate love story. True fucking twin flames, if you want to believe in something as cheesy as that. He also asked me to make sure everyone else was okay and that he understood putting me in that position wasn't fair.

"Zane, you okay?" My cousin asks me, interrupting my thoughts.

"Yeah." I nod, attempting to turn around and look for my uncle who is standing off to the side, letting us have a moment.

But I need to figure out exactly what is going on. I need to go identify the bodies, and then go get my sister. Find which funeral home to go to, and figure out what the fuck to do about it all.

"I can't imagine." Liv says. "I know how hard it was when Dad died. I can't..." She trails her sentence as her eyes well up.

"Stop it." I snap at her. "They wouldn't want that."

"You know what they're saying, right?" Liv sobs and I swear to myself before I pull her into me, letting her cry into my chest. "They're saying that the club's karma is coming to collect." She sighs out a shaky breath before looking up at me. "They're saying that everything is happening because things that they did in the past."

Maybe they have done some shitty things in the past, but karma isn't fucking real, and they always had a reason for what they did.

"Liv." I look at her calmly, shaking my head. "That's not that case. Don't fucking listen to that bullshit."

"Zane..." She trails, but I just turn, leaving where we're standing and walking back towards her house.

I see Ro standing off to the side; stare off into the distance. Mom was the closest thing to a sister that he ever had. They ended up in the same foster home after my grandfather died.

Mom was 13. Whatever happened in that foster home was bad, though. They never provided specifics, but I'm certain it was a terrible experience..

Not only was he the closest thing to family that Mom had, but he and my dad have been best friends for as long as I can remember. Even if they hated each other at first, for some reason I don't know about, they grew close over the years. Dad was even Ro's best man when he and Sadie got married.

He's looking out over the cliff at the water moving below. I guess he can hear my footsteps, or maybe it's Liv sobbing from where she stands behind me, but he turns as I get closer and I can see the water in his eyes.

I look around the compound that the club owns, and I sigh. It's dwindled over the last few years, but now it feels utterly abandoned, or maybe it's just me who feels completely fucking alone.

"Ash and Care..." He starts, but I just nod my head. "Your mom saved my life."

"What?"

"I can't explain right now." He whispers, reaching up and wiping a tear away.

I'm not sure I can hear it right now, either. Hell, I'm not struggling to look at him as he fights away the tears. "Where'd it happen?" I whisper.

"At the club. They were leaving..."

"I want to see it."

"You don't."

"Ro..." I trail glaring at him and he nods his head, nodding back towards where my truck sits.

When I turn, I pause as I look at the house I grew up in. I see it all unfold, the cook outs, my cousins, siblings, and myself all running around playing throughout the years. Mom and Dad, staring back at one another like they always did, a look that let

everyone around know that even after all the time they were together, it was ever only the other.

I undoubtedly had what many would consider an unorthodox childhood. I mean, Dad was a 1%er, and even if he never told me specifically what, he did a lot of things that most would deem... heinous. My mother, while she had a profession that many would find normal, she was anything but. I know she had killed more than one person, although she never would have told me that. I overheard it at some point, and she raced. It was only a few times after we were born, but she still did it from time to time. While all that's true, love always filled my family, and my siblings and I never doubted what our parents would do to protect us. And I'm sure on more than one occasion they did.

Ro, Liv, and I all pull up to the club, Sirens. It's owned by the MC. Dad still ran it. It was still a strip club. People wondered how mom could deal with that, but she never doubted his loyalty, and from a few whispers I had heard, I don't think she really minded all that much, anyway.

"Where's the rest of the club?" I ask before we all stumble out from the truck, looking over to where the forensic team is packing up.

Ro sighs, shoving his hands into his pockets and looking down. "Everyone who's left, as soon as they heard, is trying to leave."

"What? And you're going to let them?"

"What am I supposed to do, kid? Make them stay? I don't think I have much of a choice. Everyone is understanding their concerns. When it goes up for a vote, I know they'll get it."

"So just let the charter die? Everything that they fucking built, it's just done." He just looks over at me, not answering, and it pisses me off. I'm out of the truck and walking over to the front, where it's taped off and duck underneath it.

"You can't be—" someone grabs me from behind.

"He's their son," It's rasped out as I look up to see Jeff

standing next to the officer who tried to pull me back. “Zane, I’m so sorry.” He retired from the police force years ago, but I’m sure he heard about what happened and came out. He was always close with the club, something about one of my uncles. I never paid attention or cared enough to remember.

The sound of an engine comes closer, causing us to turn around and look at the headlights. I don’t need to ask who it is, because I know, somehow, I know.

I’m not ready for this... not yet, at least.

“Zane?” my sister’s voice calls out to me as she opens the door and walks toward us. I look up at her and it’s all she needs. Between my face and the surrounding scene. “No...” she whispers, covering her mouth with her hand, somehow already knowing what has happened.

“Drew.” I move over to her, wrapping her up in my arms and pulling her into me.

She shoves me off of her and looks up, in the look in her eye doesn’t read sorrow, but rage. “How?”

She looks at each of us standing in front of her. “They—”

Cutting Ro off, I hold up my hand. “We’re not sure all the details, but someone shot them.”

“Where?”

“Here, last night.” I answer her next question before she’s able to ask it.

“And this is all they sent to investigate?”

“The rest just left.”

She nods her head. “So, the one I passed on the way up here?”

“Yeah, look...” Ro trails for a moment before he looks at us again. “They’re coming back later to talk to you guys. They want to call Child Protective Services.”

“What?” Liv, Drew, and I all shout, looking over at him.

“Yeah. Since I’m not legally related, they won’t let me.”

“Mom can.” Liv says as I turn and look at her, shaking my head.

“No.” The words tumble out before I’ve even thought about it. “I’ll come back.”

“Zane, you’re almost done with school.” Drew gasps, knowing what I would give up moving back.

“I don’t care.” I stare off as I look at the puddle of blood that’s already drying on the asphalt, all that’s left of them.

“It’s getting late. Why don’t we go back and get some sleep?” Ro mumbles out. It’s not actually a question. He’s telling us to do so.

When we pull back up to the compound, I get out of Drew’s car. She wasn’t able to drive herself. She cried the entire way back, just looking out of the window. She wouldn’t say a word. Sighing, Ro looks at me and nods to the side. “Take a walk.” It’s not an option. He’s telling me it’s happening. “We’ll meet you guys inside.” He says to the girls, nodding back to Liv’s house. We walk along the cliff side in silence for a moment. “I don’t know if you remember, but Sadie and I got married here.”

“Vaguely.”

“Do you remember we all got arrested that day?”

I can’t help but laugh out loud, shaking my head no.

“Yeah, they raided the compound, found nothing, but we all went to jail for the night. Both Ash and Caroline.” He laughs, shaking his head. “Your mother...” He trails off chuckling to himself, not as he’s trying to finish the sentence, but just saying how she was.

“I know.” I can’t help but let out a sad chuckle at the thought of the situation. I don’t remember exactly what happened, but I can only imagine.

“She was in the officer’s face screaming at him for how they were treating Ash. When the officer shoved your mom out of the way, she fell backwards, hitting her head so hard on the

ground we all could hear it, your dad head-butted him and then somehow beat the shit out of him with his hands still cuffed.”

It makes me laugh again because I can imagine my mother doing everything that Ro just said, and Dad flipping out when someone hurt her.

“It was the biggest shit show that I had ever witnessed. The cop didn’t like it and obviously retaliated, but then so did your mom.”

“That’s when Dad was in prison for a year.”

“Yeah.” Ro laughs. “I had threatened him if he left your mom to deal with the three of you alone. But I watched what he did and I couldn’t be mad about it. They dropped most of the charges except for assaulting an officer.”

“Why are you telling me all this?” I ask him.

“Because I have no fucking clue what happened there, but I know they didn’t go down without a fight.” Slowly, I nod my head. “Your parents fought everything for you three to have such a better childhood than they did...” He trails for a moment, stopping and looking out over the water. “Your mother wanted you to finish school. She wanted you to have a decision about your future. Not to have to live in this life, if you didn’t want to.”

“I’m 21. I can make my own decisions.” It’s the only thing I can think of what to say.

“If I let you quit and become your sister’s guardian. She will haunt me for the rest of my life.”

I look out over the water and nod my head. “You’re forgetting a couple of things, though.”

I can see him look over at me in my peripherals.

“My mother’s dead.” Quickly turning my head to look at him. “And ghosts aren’t fucking real.” I push past him, leaving him standing on the edge of the cliff, walking back up the mountain to find my sister.



ZANE

“Terri’s here.” My sister rolls her eyes as she sits down between Zeke and I.

“Why?” we both ask her in a unison groan.

It’s weird being back with my brother. It’s like nothing has changed, even if we haven’t seen one another since Christmas. It’s always been him and I. We know one another better than anyone else. We don’t even have to look at one another to know what the other is thinking... something about sharing a womb or some shit; I guess.

“Who’s Terri?” Ro asks as he sits next to Zeke.

“Our grandmother.” I can hear in her tone that Drew is rolling her eyes. “She tried to hug me.”

“How’d you get away?” I can’t help but laugh, knowing that our parents would find all of it quite comical, and then Mom would definitely curse Terri out.

“I pretended not to hear her and dodged through a door.” It makes my brother and I chuckle.

“That probably means she’s up Liv and Billie’s asses.” I groan out, looking around for my dad’s mother, whom I have only met a handful of times in my life. Dad didn’t carry any sort of resentment towards his mother. At least since I’ve been alive, he just didn’t want her around. It’s hard to trust someone who

consistently lets you down, abandons you, and then acts like she's the victim.

I catch my cousin and aunt with my grandmother and stand up, ready to go save them. As I approach, my grandmother's face lightens as she sees me. "Zeke."

Shaking my head, I roll my eyes as I look at Billie and Liv. "I have a seat for you guys with us."

"What about me?"

"No." I shake my head.

"What? But I'm the mother." She shouts, making a scene.

"Technically."

"But Zeke." She tries to plead with me.

"That's Zane, Terri." Liv cuts out at her, just as irritated with our grandmother as I am.

"Well, they're identical. How the hell am I supposed to tell the difference?" She scoffs this time.

"I dunno, Terri." My brother's voice starts from behind me.

"Everyone else, who has been in our lives for any amount of time, can." He laughs out, creating more of a scene... my brother, the attention seeker. It's the biggest difference that we have. He craves attention when he wants it, and only the amount that he wants, so he creates scenes he can control. It's why his chosen career path makes sense. Everyone around us starts to turn and look at us. "Maybe if you had seen us at all since we were 13... you could, too."

"That was because of your moth—"

"You say one negative thing about my mother. I won't just kick you out of here." Drew steps up between where we stand and Terri does. "Now, take a fucking seat and, for once in your life, pay your son some goddamn respect."

"You're just like your mother." She scowls out at my sister and I glare holes into Terri as I step in front of my sister, as if she needs anyone to protect her.

“Good.” she shouts, her arms coming onto my arm as she tries to push me aside.

Instead, I turn around, spinning her around and push her back towards our seats. I hear Drew mumble something under her breath about not being able to tell us apart when our eyes are so fucking different.

“I am curious.” I whisper over to my brother as we walk side by side. “If Terri and Drew got into a fight. Which do you think would outweigh the other, assaulting a minor or elder abuse?”

It makes my brother laugh out as we continue to our seats. “Dad would have loved that one.”



The funeral passes, and we all cry. How could we not? We convinced the funeral home to let us do a dual service. For both of them, it's what they would have wanted. Zeke and I joked about putting them in the same coffin, but the funeral home didn't find that one funny. I watched Terri roll her eyes and leave once she noticed it... fucking good. I'm sure that we haven't seen the last of her. She knew Dad was into some shady shit. She'll show up looking for a handout and trying to blackmail us into it.

“Ro.” I call after him as we walk into the clubhouse... possibly for the last time, depending. “I need your help.”

“Whatever you need, kid...”

“I need help hiding all assets.”

“Why?” He asks as he looks at me more concerned. “The three of you are the rightful next of kin. No one should be able to contest that.”

“Have you met Terri?”

“No, but I've heard nothing but wonderful things about her.” His words drenched in sarcasm.

“I just think that she may try to come after us for something...”

I hope that I'm mistaken, but just in case. Whatever is shady... that's what she'll come after."

"Your dad was pretty good about covering his tracks."

"But we need to make sure that they're buried." He nods his head again. "And one other thing."

Ro turns his head, looking over at me and I sigh, already knowing that the next part is going to be at the minimum a fight, at the worst... it'll be a fucking war.

"I want in."

"What?"

"Let me build the charter back up."

"No." He shakes his head, quickly. "Fuck, no!" He exclaims with an awkward laugh at the end and I can see his wife's interest now in our conversation. "Ash..." He trails, lowering his voice this time. "We made a deal a long fucking time ago. That all of you guys were going to be better than us."

"Well, he's dead now. They're all dead. Except for one, every single officer that has been in this charter in the last 2 years is dead. And most of their ol' ladies, too." He shifts, uncomfortably. "Everyone else is terrified to be here. Let me do it. Don't let whoever is doing this take their territory."

His eyes shift from side to side as he leans into me. "Did your dad tell you all of this?"

"No, there's just too many coincidences. Too many freak accidents... too many accidents in general." Ro lets out a slight laugh as he shakes his head. "What?"

"You are reminding me a lot of him right now. That was what he told me the last time we spoke."

"So you think so, too?"

"I think that there could be something. Could it be some coincidence, maybe, but there's enough to cause anyone to question? It's why your dad did what he did."

“What are you talking about?”

“Axe.”

“What about him?” I ask, glancing up to where Axe stands with his wife talking to everyone, the sole survivor of the recent officers of Sonston’s End charter.

“He didn’t leave by choice. Ash insisted he leave. He told me to force him to go somewhere else. You know Ash has always protected Ella. She’s always been more of a daughter than anything else.” I nod my head, understanding. Dad spent most of his teenage years watching Ella for her dad while he was off doing whatever it was he wanted. I guess, it benefited us, though, cause he made sure never to do that to us. “He watched what happened with Remy, what losing Fury did to Lucy. He knew how much it broke Billie when Khan died. He didn’t want that to happen to Ella. He tried to make your mom leave, but...”

“Mom would never leave.”

Ro laughs out loud. “Ah, so you remember all those times?”

“You mean whenever the club was in trouble, the three of us would end up at Gran’s house with Billie and Lucy, yet mom would still be here. Yeah... how could I forget?” Being that my living grandmother, at least who we knew of, was garbage and Lucy’s parents practically adopted mom, they became our unofficial grandparents.

“Your dad and I talked about it here and I watched them fight about it. She told him if he stays, so does she.” He pauses and shakes his head. “I don’t think that you should.”

“But ultimately, it isn’t up to you.” I stand up to him, realizing for the first time that I’m capable of looking him in the eyes as I do.

“It’s supposed to go up to a vote.” He nods his head. “If I bring it to them.”

“And if you don’t. Ro, we’re family, and I love you, but I’m gonna do it, anyway. You either back me or not. Either way,

I'm doing it."

The grounds are desolate. Everyone who used to be here has high-tailed it out. All the years I spent outside of the parties, wishing that my parents would let me tag along inside. Just a group of kids watching from the tops of the houses. We could hear the music in the distance, passing around whatever bottle we could sneak out of the house without our parents noticing. Although now, looking back, I'm not sure how they couldn't have not known.

Now that seems like something that happened so long ago, when in reality the last time that we did it was 5 years ago.

"Zeke already go back?" I jump as I hear the voice from behind me, quickly glancing behind me finding Axe, who was once my dad's VP, now the Prez of the charter in Vegas standing in the doorway.

"Yeah." I nod my head as I spin around in Dad's chair, facing him.

"What are you doing in here?" I can hear the concern in his voice.

"Just..." I trail not really sure what to say. I'm not even sure what words to say as I just shake my head.

"Trying to make sense of it all?"

"Yeah."

"You won't be able to..." He sighs, walking into the office and sitting down in what was once his own VP chair. "Ash tried too. I think it nearly drove him insane."

"Do you know what he had found?"

"When I left, nothing." He lets out a sad laugh, shaking his head. "Absolutely fucking nothing."

"I found this," pausing as I pull up the document that I found hidden on his computer. "He knew someone was behind it all, but he couldn't prove it and he couldn't quite figure out who." Dropping my eyes, I stare at the floor, not wanting to face the

next part. “I was sitting in here, trying to gain the courage of watching the security footage.”

“Fuck.”

I nod my head. Not really sure what I’m going to see, and not really sure if I actually want to see it, but pulling up the program for the security cameras on the computer, anyway. My fingers hover over the button to play it.

“Ro told me you want to build the charter back up.” Glancing back over at him, I nod, letting my hand fall back down. “Ella and I talked about it, and if you want, we’ll come back and help.”

“That’s the complete opposite of what Dad would want.”

“Well...” I hear come from the doorway as I look up, seeing Ella standing in it this time. “He’s not here to have an opinion any more.” Her voice wavers. I know what she’s trying to say, but what she’s saying scratches a wound that is still too raw in both of us. Reaching over, Axe grabs his wife, pulling her over to him and she sits down on his lap, something that makes me think of my own parents. A simple act they used to do all the time. I didn’t realize it until just now what it means. It’s so simple, but such a powerful sentiment. I can’t imagine something like that. Something that, after all they’ve been through, and after all that time, still being obnoxiously in love with one another.

“It’s your call.” He tells me as I weigh my options in my mind, not sure if I want to have to answer to someone. “It would be your charter. I’m just here to help.” Almost as if he could read my mind.

“You’d just go back to being VP to some 21-year-old kid?” I laugh out, shaking my head.

“First off, you’re not just some 21-year-old kid,” Axe starts. “You’re the fucking son of Caroline and Ash, and honestly, I don’t know who everyone was more afraid of.”

“Caroline.” Ella and I both say in unison, causing the three of us to laugh.

“But if Jag comes to me wanting in, I won’t say no.” I say, looking at Ella and she smiles, nodding her head.

“I wouldn’t expect you to.”

“And you’d just be okay with that?”

“I mean, if that’s what he wants... I can’t really stop him. And it’s kind of a rite of passage in our family, apparently.”

“Okay.” I nod my head, looking up at them. “If you guys want to come back.”

Axe nods his head again. “It still has to go up to a vote in LA, but I’m pretty sure we know what the answer already is.”

“Yeah.” I laugh, glancing back at the screen for a moment before focusing in further. “What the fuck?” I snap out before reaching into the side drawer, pulling out the 9mm, I knew Dad had in there, and walking out the door.



TATUM

“How could you fucking embarrass me like that?” Tom shouts at me as he swerves across the lines for our lane.

“Jeez, watch the road.”

“I know what I’m doing, Tate.” He turns and glares at me.

“You always think you know so much fucking better than me, don’t you?”

“What the hell are you talking about?”

“Tate, I give you fucking everything.”

“What are you talking about?”

“What you said tonight.” He glares at me again as I just look at him completely dumbfounded.

“All I said was that I like to read.”

He cuts his eyes at me. “It’s what type of books?”

“Jesus. Are you fucking kidding me? They asked me, did you

want me to lie?”

“It makes me look bad.”

“How? Do you think that because I read romance books, people think that I’m unhappy?”

He cuts his eyes at me again.

“Jesus fucking Christ...” I scoff as I look away. “Believe me, reading has absolutely nothing to do with me being unhappy. You did that all on your own.”

The car dangerously swerves, and he slams on the brakes.

“What the fuck are you doing?”

“Get out.”

“We’re on the other side of town.”

“I don’t give a fuck. Get out of the car.”

“It’s my fucking car.” I shout at him, but he reaches across me, grabs the door handle, and pushes me out. Somehow I failed to realize that he had unbuckled my seatbelt as he reaches across me. My knees hit the pavement first, hard, and I wince out before the tires squeal as he peels out next to me.

“ASSHOLE!” I scream out after him as I look around and groan. I can’t even call anyone because my fucking purse with my phone is still in the car. “Shit.”



TATUM

I hear the hammer being pulled back before the voice even starts. I freeze, spinning around and looking squarely down the barrel of a gun. “You have exactly 2 seconds to explain why I shouldn’t blow your fucking head off.” His voice is so raspy and deep that it sends chills through me.

“I...” I stutter, not sure what to say. “I...”

“You’re trespassing.”

“I—I didn’t realize. I just came out for a walk.” I attempt to look up past the barrel at the man behind it, but can barely make out anything about him. “Please don’t—” My voice trails off as I plead for my life, but he cuts me off anyway, unfazed by my plead.

“Was it you?” He shouts, pushing the barrel against my head, forcing my body backwards until I’m flush with the tree behind me.

“Was what me?”

I don’t need him to say anything else. I know he thinks I’ve done whatever it is.

“Whoa.” I hear a woman from somewhere behind the gun as leaves crunch underneath the footsteps. “Whoa. Z, lower the gun.” The voice tells him, and I’m surprised when the barrel lowers.

“Let’s walk before we run there.” Another man’s voice sounds.

I know it should sound like it's coming closer, but for some reason it sounds further away as the eyes in front of me look down at me. His nostrils flare in rage. Once his eyes land on my face, he exhales, and our eyes lock. I'm rapidly drawn in to his eyes, and how they're different colors. One blue and one half blue, half brown.

"What the fuck is that supposed to mean?" He snaps out at the couple behind him, but his eyes never leaving mine.

"That," the woman starts this time, but stops herself as if she's trying to consider what to say. "We're aware that you're invested in all of this, but let's pump the brakes before we start murdering people."

The word being the only thing that can break our trance.

"Murder." I whisper. I'm sure my eyes are so wide it looks like my eyeballs are going to fall out. "I just needed some air. I got into a fight with my boy—" I pause, immediately correcting myself. "Most likely ex-boyfriend, and I... I... I just got turned around, is all. I swear." Raising my hands in front of me as if I were surrendering. "Whatever it is you think I did, I swear I didn't."

I've never wished to be Dorothy and 'no place like home' my way out of this situation more. My life is still in his hands, even if the gun is no longer aimed at my forehead. He leans into me this time, trapping me between his body and the tree until he's speaking straight into my ear. "Now you know. This is private property. Don't be so reckless. Next time, whoever is here probably won't be as nice as me."

"Yeah, okay, nice." I can't help but roll my eyes, not realizing that the words are coming out of my mouth until it's too late.

He ignores the stifled chuckle that comes from behind him as he pulls back, still caging me against the tree, and looks at me. "What?"

"I'm just saying, real nice... you just pointed a gun at me, with full intent of shooting me." Sometimes I wonder if I had a stick, would I poke a snake... perhaps?

“My point exactly. I should have pulled the fucking trigger.”
He pushes away from me.

His words ring in my head as I realize he’s saying if I wander back on here again, he won’t hesitate next time. Would they kill me? Who knows... I mean, I don’t even know who they are.

Before I can register exactly all that is happening, I see him, as well as the couple that was out here with him, walking away from where I’m standing. “Wait!” I call out, rushing up behind them. “Can you point me in the right direction?”

“Where are you going?”

“North side.”

“Shit.” He scoffs. “I’ll take you where you need to go.” And just as abruptly, he turns around and starts walking away again. I hesitate, not really sure what it is I should do. The woman who has been standing off to the side this whole time smirks at me before nodding her head towards where they are walking, telling me to follow him.

“Remind you of anything?” I hear the other man asking her as I pass him. The woman just giggles from behind me.

I’m even more surprised when we come into a clearing and I see the house sitting next to the cliff, overlooking the water. The couple behind us walks in an opposite direction. So I follow behind the complete stranger, who told me he’d give me a ride home, yet also told me he’d shoot me next time he catches me on his property.

Pretty sure this is exactly how at least one true crime documentary starts.

He is paces in front of me when he walks around to the side and as I round the corner; I see him punching in a code into a garage keypad and the garage quickly opens. I’m trying not to seem as shocked as I am when I see inside it to the BMW, the truck, and three motorcycles inside. One of them catches my attention more than the other two and it causes me to tilt my head, squinting at it, seeing the scraps and bent metal as it sits

in the corner.

“It’s older than I am.” He says from behind me.

“And you’re fixing it up?”

“Nope.” He pops the ‘p’, shakes his head, sighing, just looking at the bike with a weight that I can’t even tell what it is.

“Then why is it still here?”

“My dad kept it all this time. He brought it back and put the pieces back together. Straightened it out just enough to be one piece.”

“That looks like a pretty serious accident.” I can’t help but gasp as I say it.

“It was. He always said it was the best and worst thing that ever happened to him.”

“How could it have been good?” As I walk closer to it, I can’t help but run my hands along the imperfect metal. Seeing the words that cover the painted, and the scraped metal, telling they added it after the accident. “Memento mori?” I turn, looking at him, and he nods.

“Means remember death.”

“That’s kind of fucked up.”

“No, it sounds worse. It really just means, ‘remember we will all die’.” He sighs as he shakes his head, walking up to where I’m standing with the bike. He stands right next to me and, as on edge as I should feel at the moment, I somehow feel totally comfortable. “My parents had broken up when it happened. Mom was on the phone with my aunts when they heard he had wrecked. All she remembered was hearing there was so much blood, and how my uncle was hoping he wouldn’t die. She was engaged to someone else, but she dropped everything as soon as she heard. She said she wasn’t even aware of what she was doing until she was here, but she got on the next flight and came out here. Said her excuse was that since she was a physical therapist, she wanted to make sure that he was in good hands, but she never left.”

“That’s really sweet.”

“Yeah. He kept it for the rough times, when they would fight, whatever, I would find him out here, just staring at it.”

I can hear his voice tremble before I look over and see the hurt written on his face. I want to ask him, but remember the hard shell I witnessed outside just a few moments ago. I know that whatever vulnerability that he’s displaying, he’s not meaning to.

I’m not sure if that just means it’s such a deep wound that he can’t control it, or if he feels comfortable enough with me to show it.

“Memento mori.” His whisper is barely audible. Almost as if he isn’t talking to me this time, but just working something out by himself. “This was his reminder that he was going to die one day. And this had showed him what was important.”

“They sound...” I trail, not really sure what I was going to say.

“Exhausting.” He laughs out so loud that it causes me to jump. “They were the best, though. They weren’t perfect, not by any fucking means, but they never tried to be. But to watch them, everyone knew, no matter how much time went by, no matter how much they irritated one another, that they were just as much in love with one another as when they first met. But that’s the thing with that much passion.”

“What?”

“When something burns that bright, and you’re watching the flame flicker from a distance, it’s beautiful. It lights everything around it. But with the wrong move...”

“It takes everything down with it.”

“If you’re not careful.”

“They fight a lot?”

“Not really. They were both so stubborn, and so similar, yet somehow also very different.”

I can hear the sadness lingering under his words, and I look

over at him as he studies at the motorcycle, intently. “Were?”

“Yeah.”

“I’m sorry.” I reach my hand over, placing it on his shoulder.

He shakes his head before looking back over at me. “It happens.” He shrugs me off before walking over and grabbing a helmet off of the wall, holding it out in front of me. “What d’ya say?”

“Which one’s yours?” I smirk before reaching over to grab it.

“None of ‘em?” He says it more as a question. “All of ‘em?” Finally understanding what it is he’s saying. “He would hate it just sitting in here for so long.” I’m drawn into his eyes again as I see them lighten at just talking about riding.

“And you know what you’re doing?” I can’t help but question.

“I’m pretty sure I knew how to ride a motorcycle long before I knew how to drive a car.”

“Promise I won’t die?” I laugh out as I grip a hold of the helmet and pull it over.

“Nope.” He yanks it back for a moment before he lets go, reaching over and grabbing another off of the wall. I can’t help but laugh to myself when he kicks over the bike, and I can hear the keys jingle as he picks them up off of the speedometer.

“Just kept them right there?”

“When it was here. Yes. If someone makes it this far back on the property, gets into the garage to steal it, they’re taking it, regardless.” He laughs, and I’m struck by his grin as he looks over at me, excitement in his eyes as he reaches over and holds out his hand for me. “You trust me?” His face seems to lighten more and I see a completely opposite version of what he was when he was holding the gun to my head.

“Absolutely not.” But I take his hand anyway and let him help me over the seat.

“Good.” I can feel the bike as he cranks it and then turns his

head slightly. “Hold on, tight.”

I nervously inch up the seat until the inside of my thighs are pressed against him. Something about riding on the back of a bike with someone seems so intimate, so personal.

He walks the bike out of the garage and presses a button for the door to close behind us. The engine revs as we move forward abruptly, jolting to a stop, causing me to slide even further forward against him.

“Fine.” I roll my eyes as I wrap my arms around this complete stranger and I can feel his laughter as he twists the handle and we actually move. I’m sure, kicking up some of the gravel from underneath us.

I watch our surroundings as we come closer to more houses that all seem vacant. A large garage off to one side, and I’m stunned when I see what looks like an old resort to the other. The entire property seems like an old ghost town.

Something that was once thriving, that somewhere along the lines, flatlined. I want to ask him about it, but after our conversation over the bike, I feel like the weight of all of this may be a bit more than I can even know. There’s a gate once we pass by the building and as he grows closer, it opens on its own. On the other side of it, I can’t help but glance back and watch as it closes on its own, as well.

We move down a small gravel road. He slows the bike as we reach the end and glances back at me. “Where are we going?” I can’t help but laugh and then giving him the address. There’s a small GPS next to the speedometer that he inputs it into and then glances back at me like he wants to say something, but he doesn’t. Instead, he kicks up gravel, and he peels out onto the highway.

I can’t help but think about him asking me if I trusted him, and how somehow, even as we’re gaining speed, I feel more safe than I have in a long time. I can feel him laughing underneath my arms as if the faster we go, the more of the weight that was surrounding him at his house leaves him.

I grow concerned when he takes a turn, which leads us in the opposite way of my house.

“This is the wrong way?” I shout. I’m not even sure if he can hear me, but he nods his head, pulling the throttle more and shooting us forward. “Where are we going?” I shout again, but he shakes his head. I panic, trying to figure out how I’m going to get off of this bike before he gets to wherever we’re going. He rolls to a stop at a light and I try to rip my arms from around him, but he grabs onto them, holding me in place.

“Stop.” He demands me. “You’re fine. Just taking a ride, clearing my head.” Something about his voice calms me immediately and I know it sounds completely insane. The light turns and we take off once again.

I lean my head against his back and, just like he’s doing, I let the sound of the engine attempt to clear my own.

I’m surprised when he suddenly serves to the side and quickly rolls to a stop. I unlock my arms from around him and he turns, looking at me as he turns off the engine. “Tell me something.”

“What?”

“Why were you on the property? You said you were getting some air cause you and your boyfriend had a fight.”

“Yeah, that’s what I said.” I nod my head telling him yes.

“30 miles away from your house?” I don’t want to answer him because I have a feeling the actual answer will piss him off, so I just nod my head as we just stare at one another. “Let me guess, you live with him, don’t you?”

I hesitate as I nod my head again.

“I had a feeling.” He shakes his head. “So tell me, why were you so far away from your house, lost?”

“Um.” I pause, breaking eye contact with him and looking down at the ground. I watch his hand as it comes up, and he tilts my chin to look at him. Something about his eyes drawing the truth out of me. “We were on our way home and we were

fighting. He pulled over and kicked me out of the car.”

“What the fuck?” He snaps out as he looks away from me and when he looks back, I can read the rage in his eyes. “He kicked you out of the car, 30 miles from your house, and left you there?” He asks as if to recap just to make sure that he had all the details correct.

“Yeah.” It’s a barely there whisper. He shakes his head as he turns back around. He cranks the bike up again before pulling the throttle back, and spinning the bike around. I can smell the burning of the rubber on the asphalt as he does so. I cling around him tightly before we’re moving back down the road.

I’m almost ashamed as I try to bury my face against his back, not looking at where we’re going. So I’m surprised when I feel the bike turn and look up, seeing the same gravel road that we rode down on the way out.

“Where are we going?” I shout as the bike rolls close to the gate and it opens. He doesn’t answer me, though.

When we roll into the garage, and he turns the engine off.

“This doesn’t look like my house.” I can’t help but mutter and he chuckles, looking back at me.

“I’m not taking you there. At least, not yet.”

“Why?”

“Because your boyfriend left you on the side of the road.” He shakes his head as he pushes the button and the door closes again. “He left you there, like you were trash.”

“Because you strike me as the chivalrous type.”

He laughs, nodding his head. “What do you mean by that?”

“I mean, we met with you having a gun in my face.” His smirk grows as he kicks off of the bike and walks towards the door, walking into the house, and leaving me. “Wait.” I mumble, stumbling off of the bike and walk after him into the house.

“Whoa.” I gasp at the inside of the house. Even if all the lights are off inside, I can still see the lavish kitchen. “Where did you go?” I call out, but he doesn’t respond, but the only light that’s

on is coming from a door across the kitchen.

The door leads to a staircase which I can only guess leads to a basement. I hesitate. “You’re not going to kill me down here, are you?”

His laughter echoing up the stairs as the only response.



TATUM

I'm uncomfortable as I walk down the stairs, but the further I walk, I see that it's not merely a basement, but a completely finished hallway. There are doors on both sides of the hallway, with one standing open with a dim light on inside of it.

I see him standing with his back to me as I walk in.

"Also, you strike me as the type who doesn't really date."

He turns around and shakes his head. "You're right."

"So, you're a fuccboi?"

"You make me sound cheap."

"Kind of are."

He laughs again, nodding his head. "Frivolous relationships aren't my thing, but I've still never left anyone on the side of the road."

"No, you just fuck them and leave them."

"Everyone knows what they're getting in to."

"And they're just so willing for that agreement?"

"Yeah." He nods his head.

"Why?"

But he doesn't answer, he just continues to smirk at me, stepping forward.

“Oh, I see.” I can’t help but smirk back at him as I nod my head. “I get it.”

“What is it you think you get?” He steps closer to me. The look on his face causing my heart to thump hard against my ribcage. I want to squeeze my thighs tight, but I’m sure with how intently he’s staring at me, he would notice.

I need to put a little more space between us, so I take a step back, but I see the interest that registers in his eyes. “You’re cocky.”

He laughs loudly again. “How am I cocky?”

“You think every woman wants to fuck you?”

“I don’t.” He shakes his head. “Not every one of them, but most.” I can’t help but roll my eyes as he leans into me. “But it’s only cocky if I’m wrong.” He steps closer towards me and I take a step back, only I’m sure my eyes widen as my back presses against the wall. He leans in, bracing his hands on either side of me, caging me against it. “So tell me, do you think I’m cocky?”

“So what? You refuse to take me home and bring me back here to fuck me?”

He shrugs. “It wasn’t my original intentions.”

“Sure. You think you tell me my boyfriend treated me like trash and I’ll just fuck you because I’m feeling bad about myself?”

“No.” He shakes his head.

“Sure.”

“It wasn’t.” He pulls away fractionally from me. “I turned around because he did a shitty thing, and I think he should have to sweat it out, let him worry. And if you don’t want me to fuck you. There are three bedrooms upstairs and my brother’s room across the hall you can sleep in. Shit, you can even sleep in here and if you don’t want me to touch you, I won’t.”

I can't respond. All I can do is swallow.

"But I'm pretty sure you don't want that, do you?" I look down, breaking eye contact, but just as he did on the bike, he tilts my head up to look at him. Slowly, I shake my head. "But you feel conflicted." I nod my head. "Because him kicking you out of the car isn't a clear sign to you that your relationship is over?"

I open my mouth but close it because he's right.

"Do you think it should be?" He whispers. I can feel his breath on my lips as he speaks.

I nod my head.

His eyes darken as he looks at me. "When's the last time he went down on you?"

"What?" I'm shocked as I look up at him, expecting him to be smirking, but finding him completely serious.

"When's the last time he licked your pussy until your legs were shaking around his head?"

"What does that have to do with anything?"

"Okay, when he fucks you, do you come?"

"Again, what does that have to do with anything?" My mouth dries as I try to evade the questions.

"Because he's an asshole. He only cares about himself. Which is why he doesn't pleasure you until you're screaming his name or even make sure you get off."

"And the no-relationship fuccboi, does?"

"You want to know why women are so willing to fuck me? It's because usually my reputation precedes me."

"And what is your reputation?" I murmur as he leans back into me, his lips perilously close to mine..

"That I'm the best fuck most have had."

"Again, you're awfully cocky." I laugh, shaking my head, placing my hands on his chest, and pushing him away from

me. He moves back, but just enough to grip my wrists and pin them to the wall above my head. His face hovering close.

“Trust me, I’m not cocky.” His face inches closer to mine.

“Because I’m not wrong. I can show you how you deserve to be fucked.”

“And how would you fuck me? That’s so different from the rest?”

The corner of his mouth tilts up as he smirks and leans into me again. “Like a goddess.”

“You don’t even know my name.” I can’t help but laugh out loud.

He seems surprised by my comment and leans away from me. “Honestly, I don’t really care what your name is.”

My mouth drops open as I look at him and he smirks before pressing his lips fiercely against mine, pushing my head back against the wall. Gripping my wrists with one hand, pinning them above the wall. He trails his other down my arm and casually brushes them to my neck. His gentle finger wrapping around my neck, applying pressure as his tongue runs along the seam of my lips. Parting them for him, instantly. His chuckle slips into my mouth.

Pulling away, he looks at me, a smirk forming on his lips as I roll my eyes. “Shut up and just fuck me.”

Gripping tighter around my neck, he pulls me off of the wall, spinning us around, and walking me backwards until the back of my knees push against the bed, causing me to sit down.

Reaching down, I slip the end of his belt out of the buckle before I unbutton and unzip his jeans, letting them fall to the ground. I watch him as he toes his boots off and grips the hem of his shirt, pulling it up over his head, exposing his abs. Reaching down, he slips his hands underneath my shirt, pulling it up over my head.

“Lay back.” He tells me. I can’t tell him no and I’m not sure why. I lay back on the bed and look up at him as his fingers

slip up under the hem of my dress, slowly pushing it up over my body.

“Move up the bed.” He demands and, yet again, I follow his orders. I watch him as he hooks his fingers in the waistband of his boxers and slips them down.

Reaching around to my back, unhooking my bra, and tossing it to the side. He bites his lip and crawls up the bed. Placing his body between my thighs. His hands trail up the inside of them, separating my legs further as he does. When they reach the creases of my legs, he pauses, looking at me, a sinister look in his eyes as he lowers his body. I’m astounded when he drops to his stomach between my legs, his tongue coming out and touching my clit..

“Oh, fuck.” I gasp, my hand coming down and slipping into his hair immediately. My body bucks against him when he flicks his tongue against me, bringing me close to orgasming already. I feel like I need to keep it under control. I’m not sure that I’ve ever had a man pay this amount of attention to me. Or a man who can rapidly have me melting around him..

I whimper when he pulls away from me and laughs, but his thumb comes down and rubs circles in his tongue’s place.

“Don’t hold back.” He says, shaking his head. “You’re not getting out of this bed until you come at least more than once.”

“I don’t know if that’s possible for me.”

“Oh, it’s possible.” He smirks at me, lying back down, his thumb still working circles on my clit. Gasping out loud as I feel his tongue push inside of me, fucking me with it. My back arches as he switches his tongue and fingers again, before his opposite hand comes up and pressing me back to the bed by my stomach.

His mouth latching around my clit. He sucks on it and causing my stomach to contract and his arms come around my legs, holding me in place as they shake and I totally lose control. Groaning out louder than I have ever before.

I’m breathing heavily as I look down at him, smirking as he

crawls back up my body, running his lips up my stomach as he goes.

“Shut up.” I tell him, making him laugh before he slips my nipple into his mouth and rolls it between his teeth. Another moan slips out. His lips come down, claiming mine as I hear the drawer next to us open, and he shifts. Pulling away long enough to open the foil package before he pulls out the condom, moving his hands down and slipping it over himself.

He looks at me before glancing down and lining himself up at my entrance.

I’m nervous, my heart is pounding in my ears. Feeling like this moment will change me forever for some reason, and terrified of what that means. Gasping as I feel him entering me, gripping onto his back as he slips thoroughly inside.

His eyes widen as a door above us slams shut.

“Shit.” He mumbles as he looks over at the still open door.

“Z!” a female voice calls out from above.

“Fuck.” He cuts out under his breath as he looks down at me and holds his finger up over his lips, telling me to be quiet.

“Yeah?”

“This is just...” The voice comes closer as he shakes his head, pulling out of me quickly and moving across the room quickly.

“Hey, give me a few minutes. I’ll be right up.” And he slams the door shut, reaching over and locking it.

I tilt my head as I look at him as he walks back over. “Sorry.” He whispers as he crawls back up the bed and lining himself up once more before pushing inside of me.

“Who is that?” I snap out, irritated now, but as he urgently pushes himself inside of me again, I gasp, no longer caring.

“Z!” comes from the hallway outside of the door before banging sounds on the door. “Zane!”

“Zane?” I repeat, quietly, looking up at him and he rolls his eyes.

Fuck off, he mouths at me before he looks back at the door. “Drew, I’m sorry I’m in the middle of something. I’ll come find you as soon as I’m done.”

I hear her sigh as she mumbles something and Zane looks down at me, deflating as if it’s killing him.

“Sorry, I thought I should wait a little longer before traumatizing my sister.” I can see the hesitation in his face as he glances back at the now quiet door. The sentiment of his woes for his sister tug at my heartstrings and I shake my head, slightly hating myself.

“Go.” I whisper to him before he looks back down at me. Shock lining his face.

“I’m sorry.” He whispers as he gets up off of the bed, grabbing his jeans off of the floor and pulling them up. “I promise I’ll make it up to you.”

I can’t help but laugh, shaking my head as he opens the door and I can hear him up the stairs.

I’m not really sure if he’s expecting me to stay down in the basement, like his dirty little secret, or if I’m even allowed to go upstairs.

Pulling my dress over my head, I leave the bedroom and up the stairs. I can’t help but be curious and to meet her, unsure if it will piss him off or not. And I’m hoping that they’re somewhere else in the large house; however, my trust issues needing clarification that it is actually his sister and not someone else.

I learn instantaneously as I reach the top of the steps that one of those things is not the case..

“Oh!” the same female voice says. “I see you were literally in the middle of something,”

Zane glances over at me and smirks.

“Sorry.” I whisper as I step into the kitchen. “I just needed to get some water.”

“Oh, no.” She smirks. “Come sit. I am much more interested in what’s happening here.”

“Nothing’s happening.” I tell her as I walk into the kitchen.

“There’s some water in the fridge.” Zane nods towards the large refrigerator.

“I’ll be out in just a second.”

“No, I’m serious, come sit.” She motions to the empty seat across the table from her.

Zane laughs. “She won’t stop until you do it.”

Opening the fridge, I grab a bottle, turning back and looking at him. He nods his head, so I grab another, close the door, and walk back over to the table, handing him a bottle and sitting down. Putting aside the fact that we just communicated without speaking.

“So...” She’s smirking as she’s staring at me.

“Tatum.” I mumble, smiling at her and can feel his eyes on me as he learned the information. “But everyone calls me Tate.”

“Cute.” she whispers, but still smirking. “I’m Drew. And how did the two of you meet?”

“Your brother pulled a gun on me.”

She laughs noisily this time, almost leaning completely over onto the table.

“In my defense, I saw her on the security cameras.”

“That’s how you knew I was out there.”

“Oh, yeah.” Drew nods her head. “This entire compound is wired up, unless you know exactly where they all are and then you can sneak around them.”

“Who knows that?”

“Only the kids that grew up here.” She pausing still giggling.

“Sorry, I needed a laugh.” She looks over at Zane before she giggles again, but it quickly trickles off and I see her expression slowly becoming consumed with grief again. “I

haven't laughed since..."

"Yeah..." Zane trails.

I look from Zane to Drew and back, trying to figure out how long it's been, but I can see the look of devastation in both of their eyes.

"How you're able to get any woman to sleep with you, I'll never understand." Drew laughs again. "But the amount of women I've met who've slept with dad back in the day..." she trails as she makes a disgusted face.

"They told you that?" I can't help but ask her.

She laughs, shaking her head.

"They don't have to." Zane looks over at me, shrugging. "It's the look that they give him. Most of the time, he didn't even remember them."

"Apple... tree?" I look at him as he just flips me off.

"I swear." Drew snorts out. "There were like 4 solid pews at the funeral of women who were devastated that he died. They haven't slept with him in what, 22 years..." We both see Zane make a face and grow curious.

"What?" Drew asks, but he just shakes his head.

"Nothing."

"Tell me. Wait?" She gasps. "Did Dad cheat on Mom. No, there's no way, mom would have gutted him."

The comment alone makes me smirk.

"Our mom was terrifying." Drew tells me.

"No, they never cheated on each other, but I feel like there's a lot about their sex life that we don't want to know about."

"Like what?"

"Like don't ask questions you don't want to know the answers to. I have been in the wrong place at the wrong time and talked to wrong people."

“But like what could... oh my god!” Drew exclaims before he makes a gagging noise. “Did they have threesomes?”

The look on Zane’s face makes me laugh.

“I’ve had people tell me they fucked both of my parents.”

“Who says that to someone?” I laugh as I ask him, and he just shakes his head.

“Wait?” Drew asks. “Was Mom bisexual?”

“I don’t think she ever labeled herself as anything, ever.” He shakes his head. “Why are we still having this conversation?”

“So.” She laughs, looking back at me. “Was he all like, fuck me or I’ll shoot you?”

“For fuck’s sake, Drew.” Zane shouts.

“No, he just refused to take me home.” I toy with him as he glares back at me.

“Oh!” She seems even more intrigued as she looks from Zane to me. “Please, finish the story.”

“He refused to take me home after I told him that my boyfriend kicked me out of the car and left me miles away from home. Which is how I ended up lost on the property.”

“Oh...” She looks from her brother back at me. “Good.”

“What?” He looks over at his sister.

“Sounds like a twat.” She shrugs. “You should break up with him.” She laughs this time.

“I think your brother proved that point to me earlier.”

Her phone dings from where it’s sitting on the table and she looks down at it, before looking back up at Zane and he nods.

“Good to meet you, Tate.” Drew smiles. “But I’ve got to go.”

“Drew.”

“Yeah, yeah, I know. Tell him if he does it again, you’ll fucking kill him.” It makes me laugh at how nonchalant she says it.

The door shuts immediately after, and Zane turns and looks at me.

“So, Tatum...” He trails. “Where were we?” I’m about to correct him on calling me Tate as he hooks his foot around my chair and pulls me into him.

Honestly, it’s a pretty smooth move.



ZANE

I hook my foot around her chair, scooting her along the floor until her chair is nearly touching my knees, my hand coming down onto her knee, and she smirks up at me.

“I’m going to forget that the last 20 minutes just happened.”

Her comment makes me laugh. “Good.”

“Good?” She cocks her head as if she’s testing me to see what I say.

“Yeah, can’t have you fall in love with me, can I?”

“Please.” She laughs out again, looking down at me as her eyes slightly lighten, bringing a sliver of sunlight into my gloom. “Your way more likely to fall in love with me?”

“You really think so?”

“I do.” She laughs. “It’s a blessing and a curse really, men just falling for me.”

Gripping onto the back of her neck and demanding her to look at me. “I don’t fall in love.”

“Sure, I bet before all of this is said and done, you’ll be in love with me.” I can see how hard she’s trying to remain serious, but she lets her slight smirk slip through.

“And when I’m not, I can show you just how much I don’t when I tie you up and let everyone one of my friends have a

turn.”

She snaps back briskly. Her eyes widen as she looks at me and I try to figure out how to backpedal the situation..

But she surprises me further when she tilts her head. “Oh, kinky. I like it.”

“Fuck, what have I gotten myself into?”

“Alright, fuccboi, show me what you’ve got.”

Her pet name for me makes me laugh and shake my head.

“You’re trouble.”

“You have no idea.” She laughs again until she slides off of her chair and straddles my lap. My hand slips into the back of her hair, letting me position her head just right so I can claim her lips. Her kiss is feverish. She becomes more forceful and I wonder if I could unlock something in her because I, at this moment, am positive it’s somewhere just below the surface. Locked away until the right person comes along and tries hard enough to tip the lid. Pulling her hair, I tilt her head and bite the side of her neck, causing a groan to slip out and a throbbing to start at the memory of feeling her wrapped around me.

Her hands come around my body and the feeling of her nails scraping down my skin causes gooseflesh to form.

“I’m pretty sure you said that you were going to make it up to me.”

I nod my head as I grip her ass, standing up from the chair and starting back towards the stairs. Her lips come down to my neck as I hold her to me. Her teeth scraping their way across, I force myself to look past her and down the stairs so I don’t cause us to topple down on top of one another.

Even if I’ve trekked these stairs, eyes closed, more times than I can count, I don’t dare risk that with her.

Reaching the bottom of the steps, and making it the remaining distance to my room, I move us through. Her hips grind against me as I reach my foot back, kicking the door shut, and

flipping the lock, just in case Drew pops back in.

Reaching around me, I unhook her legs from their locked position, and instead of lightly placing her on the bed, I toss her backwards. She bounces against the mattress and a laugh echoes around my room.

I'm not sure that I've smiled when a woman laughed, at least not quite like I am at the moment, and it's weird... that is if I let myself thinking about it.

Instead, I crawl on to the bed, separating her thighs as I crawl in between them. Reaching up, sliding my hand up her thigh as I continue. Reaching the apex of them, I run my hand up and chuckle.

"You came upstairs and sat with us with no panties on. Bad girl." I can't help but smirk as I say it... it's so fucking ridiculous... I know.

"Shut up." She rolls her eyes as I bunch her dress up more until she's pulling it up over her head. "You're supposed to show me all these skills. So just take your damn pants off and get a condom."

"Yes, ma'am." I wink at her before I'm pushing myself towards the end of the bed, quickly dropping my jeans. Leaning over the top of her as I reach into the nightstand, grabbing out a condom, opening it, and rolling it over myself.

I'm still too spun up from earlier, even if the conversation got weird with my sister a little while ago.

I look down at her and something in my head tells me that this is different, but I quickly shut it down. It's just sex. I've done this a hundred times.

Lining myself up with her, I slide inside, and we both groan out. Feeling just as good as it did earlier. Slowly, I pump inside of her and her hand grip at my back, her whimpering underneath me.

I'm so wound up and having to pull out earlier... well, was far from ideal.

“After that, I may not last too long.”

“Sure, after earlier, is the reason.”

“Woman, you better watch yourself. I’ll show you later just how much.”

“You keep saying this. I’ll show you later.” She mocks me, making me chuckle a little. “I feel like you’re just keep trying to put it off because you can’t actually hold up to what you claim you can do.”

“I can make you cum before I do, even if I don’t last long.” I growl out at her.

She rolls her eyes, giving me a sure you can look before I pull back. Pulling out of her, I flip her over onto her knees, pushing her head down into the pillows as I slam inside of her.

Her moan echoes around the room.

“You want to roll your eyes. You want to taunt me? You’ll see.”

I slam my hips into her again, harder. And she whimpers again.

“You’ll take my cock like a good girl, won’t you?”

I can hear her head nod against the pillow. Slamming into her again. The headboard hits the wall, but I don’t care; I don’t stop, I just keep beating her pussy inside, slamming into her inner walls. Bringing cries of a mixture of pleasure and possibly pushing her to the line of uncomfortable, but she doesn’t hate it.

Feeling myself starting to come undone, I pull her torso up until her back is flush against my chest. Reaching around her body, I slip my hands up between her thighs and caress her clit to the same rhythm as our movements until I feel her gush around me and propelling me over into my own orgasm.

Collapsing onto the bed, pinning her against it for a moment, before I roll off of her and onto my back. Slowly she follows and rolls over, gasping.

Gasping heavily, as I stare up at the ceiling, I can hear her attempting to catch her breath as well. Sure, the entire conversation in the kitchen was awkward, but it was nice, in a really fucked up way. I haven't seen Drew laugh like that in a long time.

Reaching over, I pull Tatum into my side, for some reason feeling at ease with her to be able to do this.

“When did it happen?” She asks me, and I can tell that it's something she's been wondering since we were looking at the bike.

“Last week.”

“What the fuck?” She gasps, sitting up and looking down at me.

“It is what it is.” I just shrug.

“How old is she?” She asks after a few moments of silence.

“16.”

“Jesus.” She mutters before looking up at me. “Where is she living?”

“Here.” I whisper.

“But...” Her voice trails as I see her look up at me and then gasp. “Oh, wow!”

I don't respond with anything because what am I supposed to say?

“That's amazing of you.” She whispers, placing her hand on my chest.

“Stop it.” I send her a warning glance and she laughs.



TATUM

“Stop it.” He glances over at me and I can't help but let the giggle slip out.

“Oh, trust me. I’m not finding emotions for you because of that.” I roll over onto my side, looking at him.

“Good.”

“But seriously, most people wouldn’t do that.”

“I’m aware.”

“You don’t have any other family?” I watch as his brows furrow and then he casually starts turning his head to look at me. I’m not sure if he’s thinking that I’m trying to talk him out of it, or something else. “Shit, I didn’t mean it like that. I was just meaning that I’m sure it changes a lot of things for you, changes your entire life. Plus, I mean, what, you’re twenty...” I trail, realizing that I never got the piece of information.

“One.”

“Exactly, you’re 21.”

“Yeah. And yeah, we have family, kind of...”

“What do you mean?”

“We have a lot of non-blood family. And the blood family, they all have a lot of shit going on. My brother’s off with his career, my aunt...” He pauses, shaking his head. “She hasn’t been the same since Khan died.”

“Khan?”

“Her husband. It was a road name.” He tilts his head and looks at me. “You’re not from here, are you?”

“No, I moved with my boyfriend from Tacoma. He got a job...” I can’t help but roll my eyes. “How did you know?”

He just shrugs before starting again. “And there’s my grandmother, but that’s not a fucking option. Sadly, that’s probably who they would have gone to first and there was no fucking way I let that happen.”

I look at him confused as I lie with him and I’m assuming when he sighs, he can sense my curious look.

“My parents didn’t get along with my grandmother. It’s a long

story, but the short end is, she essentially skipped out on my dad when he was young, left him with his stepdad, and had very little to do with him.”

“Jesus.”

“Yeah, it’s fucked up, and every single time we would see her, she would play the victim’s card. Even at their funeral. And let me just say that my mom and her hated each other. Like my grandmother disliked my dad, but she hated my mom. Anyway, at their funeral she tried to play this ‘I’m the mother I deserve sympathy’ card. She left not even halfway through the service.”

“Why did they not get along?” I can’t help but ask him.

He chuckles to himself, like he’s remembering a fond memory. “Everyone that my mom cared about, she would become extremely protective of them. I think it had to do with her seeing her dad die and then ending up in foster care for a while.”

“What the fuck?” I can’t help but shake my head as I look at him. “How were they, like, well-adjusted?”

“Oh, they fucking weren’t.” He laughs louder, shaking his head. “But they were perfectly fucked-up together. They were obnoxiously in love.”

“That’s amazing to have that growing up.”

“Honestly, it kind of puts a lot of pressure on me.”

“How so?” I can’t help but laugh.

“What if I never find anything that lives up to that?”

“You won’t.” I whisper it, not meaning to, and not realizing it until I feel his head move to look at me again. “Not like you’re not worthy of it or whatever, but things always look better from the outside looking in. This ideal image you have in your mind of what they were. It’s unrealistic because that’s not how they were. I mean, they could have been close, but that doesn’t come without work.” I laugh again, wanting to find my way out of this conversation now. “But seriously, most people

wouldn't give up their life to come and give anyone a safe place to stay."

"I'm aware." He shakes his head and starts again. "And Tatum, how old are you?"

"I'm, uh, 21." I hesitate slightly.

"Why do you say it like you're unsure?"

"Because I'm not sure if how I normally would have said that would piss you off or not."

"Why?"

"Because I'm 21, today."

"You're 21, today?" I nod my head. "Like today is your birthday?"

"Yes." I whisper.

"Wait and he kicked you out of the car?"

"Yeah, hence the 'it would piss you off more'."

"Asshole." He shakes his head as he sits up. "Get up."

"What?"

"Get up!" He almost demands as I sit up, shaking my head.

"Why?"

"Because we're going out."

"I have nothing to wear."

"Hm," He pauses as he picks up his phone, quickly pressing on the screen and then nods. "It's fine, we'll go raid Liv's closet."

"Who's Liv?"

"My cousin. She used to live in one of the other houses until her dad died. She still has a bunch of shit there."

"And she won't care?"

"She's kind of shit out of luck if she does... isn't she?"



ZANE

Tatum steps out of Liv's room looking down at the clothes and shrugs. "You sure she won't care?"

"Yeah, I talked to her."

"I guess you guys are close?" She questions as she looks around the room. I'm sure curious why the houses are all set up here.

"I mean, yeah." I shrug. "We are cousins."

"I mean, I have plenty of cousins, but I don't even think I have their phone numbers, but then again, my family isn't very close."

I can't help but laugh to myself. "I'm sure I have more cousins that I have no idea 'bout, but Liv's different."

"Because you guys grew up together?" She asks, I'm guessing assuming since our houses are so close together.

"Yeah, I'm probably just as close with her as I am Liza, and we're not blood."

"So it's not really about being blood?"

"Not at all." I laugh, realizing it has nothing to do with the fact that we are related. "But blood is just that, it's blood. It doesn't really mean a thing." She looks over at me, confused again. "I mean, sure, being related can be a perk, but it's not

everything.”

“I agree.” She nods her head as I walk over to her, looking down and smirking as I hold her face in my hand.

“I have a few cousins, but most of them are through the club. Besides my family within the club, I don’t know any others.”

“I guess that’s good. Choose your family.”

“Yeah, but not all the kids here feel that way.” She tilts her head as she keeps looking at me. I can tell that she wants to ask me something, but I just stop, walking towards her, leaning in close. “You should definitely wear that.” I whisper into her ear as my hand lightly trails back up her thigh. “You ready?”

“Yeah.” Her word comes out breathy.

Turning around, I wrap my fingers around her hand as I pull her along the house behind me.

“It doesn’t look like anyone has been in here in a while.” She says as I see her glancing around us in the mirror on the wall as we clear the staircase.

“They haven’t.”

“Why not?” I know she can feel me becoming rigid at her question, especially when she whispers out a sorry.

“No, it’s fine.” I pause before I look back at her. “It’s just, everything is fucked up, and I’m not sure how to fix it.”

“Why would you have to fix it?”

“Because who else is going to?” I shrug, not realizing that it’s how I feel about it at all. I can feel her looking at me, even as I pull her along behind me.

“Zane...” She trails off, causing me to groan as I slowly turn and look at her. I know there’s a million questions that she wants to ask me, and for some reason, all it will take is her saying the words and I think I’ll answer. I’ll tell her whatever it is she wants to know, but she asks nothing. She just continues to stand, staring at me. “Ne—never mind.”

For whatever reason, I want to answer her questions. I'm not even sure why. But I also don't want to put myself through the answers... not yet answers.

Nodding at her before I turn back around and we make our way toward the bike.

The vibrations underneath me have always seemed to numb the pain inside. Even if they bring back memories that bring a conflation of joy and pain, at least every moment that I had on them were good times.

Feeling Tatum on the back with me gives me a new sensation to associate with it. The mixture of her arms tightly wrapped around me and the taste of her pussy still on my tongue, it makes me feel like if I could break away from the weights holding onto me, we could float away. For some reason, she is making me feel free.

Rotating the throttle back, catapulting the bike forward, she squeals into my ear, bringing an actual smile onto my face. It almost feels foreign being there, even if it's only been a few weeks... at least, I think it's only been that long.

"Where're we going?" I hear her yell out into my ear.

"You'll see."

I can feel her press her face into my back as she tries to hide her smile.

Rolling to a stop outside of the club, I wait for her to stand up looking around the parking lot.

"Zane, where are we?" She asks as she slowly unclips the helmet, looking at the small worn-down warehouse sitting at the edge of the parking lot.

I can't help but laugh as I stand up, not wanting to give it away, but also wanting to ease her nerves. "You'll see." Lacing our fingers together, she walks off towards the ocean when I pull her back over to me. "Not there."

"Then where?" She asks, contemplating if she's made a grave mistake.

I can't stop the smirk as I point towards the building we're heading to.

I feel her hesitate for a moment as she comes to a quick stop before I tug her behind me again.

"Are you taking me here to murder me?"

Lazily, I shrug my shoulders, letting the smirk remain on my face as we slow to a stop in front of the door and I tap my knuckles against it. It's silent on the other side for a solid minute before Tatum pulls back on my arm.

"Looks like no one's here." She whispers.

I just look back at her again before I rap for a second time.

Silence once again meets my request.

"Zane, come on." She tugs on my arm again, but I tighten my hold on her hand, winking at her as I hear the lock sliding open and the door cracking open.

"Oh, shit!" The voice meets us as the door pulls open completely. "What's up, Z! It's been awhile." I watch as Dustin's eyes falter. "I heard what happened. Sorry, brother."

I don't respond to him, just nod before we clasp hands and he pulls me in for a hug. "Let me know if you need anything." He tells me before letting Tatum and me into the dark warehouse.

"Zane." Tatum whispers as her hand clutches into mine.

"It's fine." I finally whisper back, trying to ease her worry. I can't see her face as I stop, turning around and smirking at her before pushing the door in front of us open.

The light filters over her face and I see her becoming even more confused as the music flows, meeting us on the stairs.

"Where are we?"

"It's a club." Troy calls out from the door.

"Is it legal?" She asks me, leaning in.

"If it isn't, are you not going to follow me?"

"I never said that." She laughs. "I just need to know if

someone makes a sudden movement or if cops show up how quickly I need to move.”

I laugh again, leaning further into her, whispering. “Trust me, I’ll make sure you know when that happens. You’re not disappearing on me that easy.”

She tugs her lip between her teeth. “Did you just say when?”

“Come on, isn’t the danger half the fun?”

The music pumps into the room as I watch her dancing from the bar. She swings her hips, and it is already making me hard. I can see the guys surrounding her on the dance floor, as if she was their prey. Jokes on them because the slight jealousy that is engulfing me now will only make it better when I claim what’s mine.

Her eyes open, coming over and landing on me as she smiles. I finish the sip in my bottle, setting it down, I grab the 2 shots off of the bar walking them over to her. The smart hyenas groan, leaving the dance, while the denser ones will wait for a clearer signal.

Handing her the small plastic cup, she smiles as she presses the cup to her lips, downing it. When she looks over at me, a frown lines her lips. “You didn’t take it with me?” She shouts.

Shaking my head as I step into her, scooping her hair off of her shoulder,

“What are you doing?”

“Proving a point.” I tell her, causing her to look over abruptly at me. She’s still swaying to the music as I lift the cup, dribbling the liquor into the depression her collar bone gives.

Turning, she starts again. “What the fuck are yo—” she shouts over the music. Dipping my head, pressing my tongue against her exposed chest and retracing its path up to where the rest of the shot lies before sucking it off of her.

I lift my head to her and meet her eyes. “Really? You might as well just go ahead and pee on me.”

“I wasn’t sure you’d be into that.” Hesitantly, she pulls away from me, now concerned with what I’m saying, her eyes shifting from side to side. “I’m joking... mostly.”

“Mostly?” She laughs now, her arms coming up around my neck, pulling me closer to her as the music consumes her again, her hips grinding against mine.

“Look, I take nothing off the table. Everything’s situational.”

She pulls away, shaking her head this time. “Nothing?”

“Nope.”

“What about—?”

“Nothing.” I lean into her again. “Like I said, it’s all situational; however, some things will be more specific stipulations than others.”

“So, you’d watch someone else fuck me?”

“If that’s what you want?” I feel the jealousy rise inside of me, speaking through a clenched jaw.

“Sure.” She rolls her eyes.

“I would. Would it drive me insane? Yes. Would I make you scream my name immediately after? You better fucking believe it.”

“You don’t know how good they’re going to be.” She laughs again. Reaching up, I stop her face from looking away from me.

“I don’t have to. I’ve only fucked you once, so far, but this shit... you can’t fake.”

“What shit?”

“Chemistry.”

She pulls away from me, looking up, locking eyes with me as her lips part. “You’re real close to breaking your rule.”

I can’t help but laugh. “Not breaking anything. Some people just fuck better together, and Tatum, we do just that.”

She's fuckin' adorable when she bashfully looks away.

"Don't get shy with me now." I say to her as I wrap my arm around her waist, pulling her back over until her body is flush with mine. "Now Tatum, what is it you want tonight?"

"I have a couple of ideas."

"Whatever you want." I smirk down at her as she crooks an eyebrow at me.

"Whatever I want?"

"Yes."

"Okay." She slowly nods her head before looking around and tugging me back behind her towards the bar. "Wait here, I'll be right back."

There's a slight hop in her step as she walks away and I watch her as she struts back over to the stairs, which takes her back up the empty warehouse. Not being able to stop wondering what she's up to.

"Get you another?" I hear a call from behind me. Glancing around, I see a petite woman looking back at me.

"Sure." I nod my head before I turn back around, immediately fixated on Tatum again.

"Sorry about your parents." She says as she sits down the bottle on the bar and I glance over my shoulder at her. "Come on, everyone around here heard what happened."

"Thanks."

"She's special?" She says it and I can't quite decipher if it's a statement or a question, but she nods in the direction which Tatum just walked off in.

"No, just met her tonight."

"That doesn't matter." She laughs again. Before I feel a slight tug on my arm.

Turning around, I'm surprised when I see Tatum looking up at me, a smirk as her hand comes up, gripping around my neck

and pulling me back down to her.

I have every intention of making a comment about her being jealous as her lips press on mine. Until her mouth opens, causing mine to follow suit, and she aggressively slips her tongue in. I'm almost shocked when I feel her press a pill to my tongue before she pulls away from me, smirking up.

Her eyes lock onto my throat until she watches the bob of my Adam's apple as I swallow. Pressing her lips to mine again, my back smacks against the bar top, but I don't care. My hands skim over her body before I pull we pull away, both of us panting.

"You better watch yourself." I warn.

"Why?"

"Keep playing like that. I'm liable to bend you over the bar and fuck you."

The instant pink hue to her cheeks and her eyes widening causes my cock to press hard against my zipper.

"Bullshit." She whispers back, a smirk spreading on her lips as she completely pulls away from me and walks back towards the dance floor.

I'm pushing off the bar, following behind her. "Yeah, she's not special." Echoes from behind me.

I'm sure people are watching as I stalk towards her. I hear a couple of people call out to me, but I don't even falter as I watch the sway of her ass in front of me.

Catching up with her, I reach forward, gripping onto her arm, spinning her back into me.

"Don't tempt me like this. You won't like what happens."

"Doubtful."

"I already warned you."

"How'd you know I'm not in to that?"

I've never met a woman who has left me with a loss for words,

but right now, I just stand staring at her, and hoping like fuck she's being serious.

“But are you too much of a pussy for that?” She steps into me, challenging me. She doesn't know who she's talking to. I watch as her pupils barely dilate. If I wasn't so close and focused on them, I wouldn't even notice.

Pulling her into me, I laugh as I look down at her. “Bullshit.”

“Try me.”

Gripping her by the back of the neck, I pull her closer to me. Moving us over to the far wall. I know a few people send us questioning looks, watching us to see what's about to happen, but I don't really bother to look over and scowl at them. They'd be fucking stupid if they tried anything. If they want to fucking watch, let them.

Pressing her back against the wall, I cage her in with my arms and look down at her.

“I'll give you one last time to back out.”

“From the looks I've seen everyone give you, I'm surprised that you'd hesitate. Aren't you trying to intimate everyone?”

“I don't need to intimate a goddamn person.”

“And why's that?” She asks as my hand travels up her bare thigh.

“Because they all already know who I am.”

“And who's that?” Her voice is hoarse as she says it.

“Someone you don't want to piss off.” I tell her.

Lifting her thigh up, hooking it around my body, and then running my hand underneath the skirt. The breath of her gasp trickles over my ear as I slide her panties to the side and plunging my middle finger inside of her.

She gasps, bringing a grin to my face as her hands come around me again, gripping a hold of my body and pulling me in close to her.

“What?” I laugh into her ear as I slip another one inside. “I thought you were in to this?” I work them in her as she slightly groans into my ear.

“I—I...” She trails, not being about to finish her thought.

“Come on, baby. Don’t tempt me because I’m not ashamed to fuck you right here.” I whisper again, her walls clenching around my fingers. “That’s right. I want you to cum all over my fingers, right here.” She moans, gripping onto me tighter.

I hear the door slam shut from the other side of the room. I’m sure more people are watching us than paying attention to the loud noise coming from up the stairwell.

“Shit.” I whisper as I see Dustin emerge from the hallway. Our eyes lock, and he nods in my direction. I pull my fingers out from inside of her, causing a stifled whimper to come out before I lean into her. “We’ve got to go.” Moving her panties back into place and setting her foot down to balance herself.

Her eyes filled with lust. I let us have one more second as I reach my hand up, thrusting my fingers into her mouth. I don’t even have to say a word before she’s wrapping her lips around and sucking them clean on her own.

Grabbing a hold of her hand, I pull her in the opposite direction, which we came into the club. Then up the stairs before we hear the door burst in and feet moving on the stairs.

“What the fuck?” Tatum calls out from behind me as I tug her along, slipping into a tunnel and waiting for only a brief second until she is inside behind me before slamming the door shut. “Zane?” She questions me as I lace my fingers with hers, still walking only slightly slower now that we’re somewhat secure in here. “What the hell was that?”

“I told you I’d let you know. That was the club being raided.”

She pulls her hand out of mine, causing me to stop and turn to look at her. She stands, just staring up at me, in shock.

“So while you were trying to get me off, the club got raided?”

“First of, there was no *trying*, but yes.”

And the giggle that comes out of her brings a smile to my own face.

“This is fucking absurd.”

“At least, it’ll be a memorable birthday.” I shrug, feeling somewhat embarrassed at what I am saying.

“Aw.” She leans into me, placing a kiss on my lips, and I can’t help but smile. Pushing aside and sort of warning alarm that’s going off in my head.

I hear the door rattle from where we came into the tunnel, almost as if someone else was trying to come in through this way. I pull away from her, pulling her behind me, trying to keep the sound of our feet down before we come up to the clearing.



TATUM

My arms grip around him as we ride down the gravel path that leads back to the grounds where Zane's house is. I haven't asked him where we are, or who he is, but I am slowly figuring it out. I overheard a few people talking at the club, and one of the girls in the line for the bathroom asked me how I knew him.

And the worried look that he pulled from the men who were ogling me was fucking hot. But nothing was hotter than him pinning me against the wall.

I've had a killer case of lady blue-balls since we had to leave. The vibration of the bike underneath me has been edging me since we left.

I'll blame it on the drugs because I've never had any sort of public sex with anyone before. I'm slightly ashamed of how hot I found it. But then again, something about Zane drags me in. It hasn't even been an entire night and I already know this about him.

My hand slips down from where they're clasped around him to the waistband of his jeans. His head tilts to the side, looking down, but he's driving too fast for him to look back at me. I feel his entire being go rigid as I brush over his jean-covered cock.

Popping the button on them and working the zipper down before I'm slipping my hand inside. I push over the waistband

of his boxers until I grip onto the girth of his cock.

His body jerks as I work him in my hand.

We pass by the gate that we came out of earlier and he drives around as I continue to stroke him.

I can hear him swear under his breath, which makes me giggle to myself. Even if I can't make out exactly what he said.

He spins the bike in nearly an entire circle before I squeal out as he has somehow lifted me up, rotating me around his body, and straddling my legs around his body.

He moves so quick that I can barely track his motions as he reaches behind him and is then slipping a condom over himself. Just like earlier slipping my panties to the side, but this time he impales me on his cock.

I can't help but moan out as he slams inside of me. Gripping onto my thighs tightly, I'm sure I'll have fingertip bruises on them. He pulls me back over him. I swear I can feel the tip of his cock stretch me past my limits, causing an almost painful-euphoria.

The gunshot that's too close for comfort startles me as I look up at Zane. He continues to slam inside of me, but his arm is outstretched, holding a gun.

"What the fuck?" I mumble. "Where'd you get a gun?"

"Shh." He demands me as he presses my thighs apart wider and an evil smirk spreads. Slowly, he lowers the gun until the barrel runs along the outside of my panties. With each thrust, he grazes the barrel with his shaft.

"What are you doing?"

"Shh, Tatum." He slams into me, running the barrel again over my clit, again. "Do you trust me?"

"Fuck no!" I mumble, making him laugh again.

"Good." He leans into me, sandwiching the barrel between us. "The safety's on." He whispers. Pressing it harder against my clit, rubbing again, I'm sure it has to be pressing harder against

himself as well. I'm surprised that the barrel is still as cool. "Your pussy likes it." He whispers into my ear. "I wonder how much your pussy would like to play with it?" He runs the barrel lower and my eyes widen.

I'm shocked at myself that I don't even try to stop him, or for that matter, look over at what he shot.

"Wouldn't you?"

I hesitate for a moment before I shake my head, but I say nothing to him or try to get him to stop lowering it.

"You want to ride it?" He whispers into my ear and I hesitate because I'm not really sure if I want to or not.

"No." I finally whisper out. He tilts his eyebrow at me as I answer him before tilting his head.

"But you wouldn't stop me if I did, would you?"

"No." I admit to him, which brings a full smile to his face this time. He hovers over me, bringing his hand with the gun up and letting it rest next to my head on the throttle. He slams into me as his lips fall down, trailing bites and kisses along my neck before I can feel my walls closing in.

"Fuck." He mumbles. "That's right, squeeze me." He groans again. "Your goddamn pussy." He whispers out, but he doesn't finish his statement, just continues to press me into the top of the bike, pounding inside of me. "Imagine how fucking pretty you'd look with my gun stretching you."

I hate that I don't hate it, as I imagine him fucking me with it, slamming it inside of me. Feeling the sight rubbing against my insides, almost painful. As I clench around him, a mixture of a laugh and a moan comes out.

I'm startled again as a second gunshot rings out. My eyes popping open to see Zane looking to our right, but this time I watch his hand abruptly move as he fires another shot, and a grunt sounds off into the darkness.

I can't stop myself as I explode from everything happening around me, knowing that I shouldn't find it as fucking hot as I

do.

Zane groans out, the gun dropping to the forest floor, and he grips both of my hips, pulling me hard into him.

“Fuck yes.” He groans out, as I feel him slam into my inner walls, it building me up again. He grits his teeth before he squeezes his eyes tightly. “Goddamnit.” He groans out as I feel him quiver inside of me.

I lie on the bike, staring up at the stars. Zane is doubled-over, his head resting on my chest.

I take a few moments before I regain my composure. We both lock eyes before looking over at where he fired the two shots.

I see the crumpled body lying a few yards away from us, and I tap him, almost as if I’m afraid to speak.

“Did you have a gun all night?”

“Kind of.” He shrugs as he leans up and looks down at me, tapping the side panel of the bike. I’m sure my mouth drops open as a small section opens to show an opening.

“Well, that’s cool.” I shrug my shoulders before I look to my left again. “And who do you shoot?”

He tilts his head, looking down at me as if he’s confused.

“Dunno.”

“You just shot someone cause they were here?”

“Yeah.” He shrugs again. “Plus, they shot at us.”

“After you shot at them first.”

“It was a warning shot.”

I realize in this moment just how close I came to dying earlier. He would have killed me.

He leans into me and shrugs his shoulders before I feel the bike abruptly moving forward.

“What are you doing?”

“I’ve got to go get the truck to get rid of him.”

For some reason, this part doesn't even surprise me. I just continue to lie on the bike, watching the stars up overhead, outlining his body as we make it back to his house.

When we pull up, he unwraps my legs from around him, pulling himself from inside of me, and moves off of the bike as if not to knock me off. I watch him as he adjusts himself inside of his jeans and zips them back up.

Moving off of the bike, I watch him as he walks over to the opposite side of the garage. He grabs some plastic ties and continue to look around the garage collecting items.

“What are you doing?”

“I've got to get rid of the body.” He shrugs, but he doesn't seem concerned at all, just continues to put items in the truck.

I'm still struck, watching him, as he maneuvers the truck out of the garage and I know I have about 2 minutes before he's going back in that direction.

“What are you doing?” He snaps over as I open the door before he closes the garage.

“I'm going with you.”

“No, stay here. I'll be back.”

“Puh—lease.” I mumble, looking over. “I just watched you kill a man while we were fucking. I think I can handle helping to get rid of him as well.” I giggle for a moment before I add.

“Ya know, if you need to kill someone to get off, you could have just told me.”

I tell him as I look over, seeing a smirk spread on his face. But he doesn't acknowledge what I just said.

“Why are you so calm about all of this?”

I shrug my shoulders. “I dunno. Life isn't as black and white as some people make it out to be, or maybe it's just the drugs?”

I watch him as he reaches into the back of the truck and pulls out a shovel.

“Are you going to bury him?”

“Might as well.”

“Do you think people know he’s here?”

“I don’t know.” He shrugs his shoulders. “I would assume as much. I mean, I wouldn’t go anywhere without people knowing.”

“Do you think he has anything to do with it?” I ask, pulling myself up into the truck’s bed and walking its length.

He stops before just looking up at me, shrugging, but I can see the hurt in his eyes, so I assume that his automatic response is to assume the worst.

“If he’s connected to you at all, you can’t bury him here.” I say, sitting on the roof of the cab, swinging my feet slightly, watching him at the tailgate.

“Then what do you suggest we do with him?”

Rubbing my hands together. “A sink hole.”

“What?” he laughs out.

“Just hear me out. A sink hole, but from a collapsed mine shaft.”

“Yes.” He nods his head sarcastically. “Because those are just all around here.”

“There’s actually quite a few. The mine collapses, creating a sinkhole, and there’s like an air shaft that is hundreds of feet deep, if not more.” He looks up at me in awe as I just grin at him. “Just toss him in, I mean. They’re mostly marked, and how many people do you think are going to go fuck around in one that’s already proven to be dangerous?”

“I’m sure they do.” He mumbles to himself, but I can tell he’s not completely hating the idea.

“Sure, but how likely are they going to get around to it? Plus, with the elements, animals, and shit, I doubt by the time they get to him, if they ever do, they won’t be able to get

anything?”

“Except the bullet.” He tilts his head at me.

“Then let’s get the bullet out beforehand.”

“And how do you suggest we do that?”

“Dig it out.” I roll my eyes at him. “I mean, he’s already dead.”

I watch him as he contemplates my opinion, taking it all in, and listening to me.

He nods his head. “And do you know where one of these mine shafts is?”

Enthusiastically, I nod my head this time as he walks around the truck, looks at me, reaching up, and grabbing a hold of my hand to help me down.

As soon as my feet touch the ground, he pulls me into him.

“You’re kind of psycho.”

It makes laugh. “You know what they say about telling someone they’re psycho, right?” I ask him as he tilts his head.

“It upsets the ones who really are.”

“What have I gotten myself into?”

“Looks like a could be murder rap.”

He shakes his head again as he pulls me behind him back over to where the body lies and where he has already unrolled the tarp. I feel him move next to me as he slips on the gloves.

Flipping open his pocketknife, he walks over to the body and finds where he’s bleeding at. I watch him as he presses the tip into the hole, slicing it open wider, causing more blood to ooze from it.

I hear a slight ting as the blade hits the bullet, and Zane looks over at me with a satisfied smirk. He digs it’s out. I slip the gloves onto my hands and move over to the head of the body.

“Ready?” He asks me as I nod my head in response. “Good. On three.” He counts out, and we both turn the body over onto

the tarp. He looks up at me again, nodding, and I follow his lead as we wrap the body in the tarp, like a pig in a blanket. “This is gonna suck.” He mumbles as he looks up. “I can drag him.”

“Nah, I’ve got it.” I nod to him as I position myself, squatting down, and he counts out until we’re lifting him into the bed of the truck. Zane flips the bed cover down, concealing the crime, and he looks back at me. Pulling his gloves off quickly, he pulls me into him and presses his lips to mine.



I can’t help but look around Zane’s truck as we drive away from the compound.

It’s a pretty nice truck, even if it hasn’t seen a showroom floor in sometime.

“How long have you had this?” I can’t help but ask him, cringing over why I feel the need to make small talk.

“My parents gave it to me when I turned 16. It was my dad’s. He got a new one.”

“The other one in the garage?” I ask about the much newer one I saw earlier.

“Yeah.”

“You going to keep them both, or the newer one?” I’m not even sure why I’m curious about it.

“Honestly,” it comes out in a whisper before he glances over at me. “I have no fucking clue what I’m going to do about any of it.” He sighs and I can feel the tension building up in the cab. I can feel his anxieties radiating off of him.

“What?” I smirk over at him as he meets my eyes. “You think because we’re getting rid of a body together, you can just tell me anything, and it won’t affect your tough guy persona.”

He laughs out loudly as he looks back to the road, easing him for a moment. “Oh, psycho, I’m positive that my tough guy persona doesn’t get past you.”

He reaches over, clasping my hand.

The only time we talk for the remainder of the drive is when I tell him to make a turn.

We pull up to the old collapsed mine, and he parks the truck. I push the door open and he stops.

“I’ve got it.”

“No, I’m coming with. You’re not getting all the fun.”

He chuckles to himself, shaking his head, before he nods towards the bed. “Come on, psycho.” He shakes his head as I stand from the seat and walk back to the bed. As I walk around, I watch him flip the bed cover back. “Push him out.” He nods.

“What?”

“More weight will be on this end.”

“I can handle it.” I cut my eyes at him.

“Oh, I know you can,” he says in something between a laugh and a scoff.

“So let me do—”

“Goddamnit, Tatum, I’m trying to be a gentleman. Just get up in the fucking truck bed and push the body out.”

“Yeah, right, gentleman...” I can’t help but laugh out. “You?” I’m bending over, having to hold on to the side of the truck to keep myself upright.

I let myself have a moment for a giggle-fit before I straighten back upright. Only when I look at Zane, he does not seem entertained.

“Ya done?” He nods to the truck, and I can tell from where I’m standing if he’s annoyed with me.

Lowering my eyes, he helps me as I hoist myself up into the truck bed and push the body out of the back as Zane tugs on what I think is, the feet.

Before what I can only assume is the shoulders, make it off the

tailgate, I jump down, grabbing the head, and we walk towards the caved in hole.

“I’m just saying. I’m pretty sure that a gentleman wouldn’t have me out here the first night I met him, getting rid of a body.”

“I told you to stay back, that you didn’t have to come.” He shakes his head at me.

“Okay, by principle, I don’t think a gentleman would end up in this scenario.” I can see the smirk that he’s trying to keep off of his face.

We approach the hole. He nods to me as we toss the burrito’ d-body down the shaft. Both of us stare into it, even though it’s dark, and we only have the light from the headlights of the truck to see. A distanced thud sounds up what feels like minutes after we let go, but in reality, it’s probably only seconds.

I giggle to myself, looking over at him. The grin on his face makes me smile even more before I pat his chest. “I’m pretty sure I like the fuccboi better.” Pausing before I head back towards the truck. “Can we get something to eat, I’m starving?”



TATUM

It's still dark when I roll over to an empty bed. It's been days that I've spent in Zane's bed, okay and house. There's just something about him makes me feel safe, almost like I have known him my entire life. Something just feels comfortable with him. My mouth is dry as I sit up, looking around, looking for him, but not seeing anything other than the cracked door, light just barely streaming into the room.

Last night we went out again, just as we have this entire week, but we left the club early. All it took was a look from him and I was ready as he pulled me out of the dark bar. But not before he pushed me into the wall again and made me squirm until I came on his fingers again.

And when we got back, we fucked, and we talked and laughed. Something about it just felt too comfortable, and I let the alarms come through this time, warning me of this, of him. Only, I don't think I'm ready to give him up just yet.

"Zane?" I call out, but don't get a response.

I should ask more questions about where the hell we even are, why this house is enormous, and how he's able to keep it.

Who the fuck were his parents?

I know his dad seems to be fond of motorcycles, and that they are close with a group of people. But I have seen no others the entire week which we've been here, except for Drew.

“Zane?” I call out a second time as I stand up, reaching over and grabbing his shirt off of the ground and pulling it up over my head. Stepping out into the hallway, I climb the stairs. When I reach the top, I look around, but all I’m met with is a dark house.

“Zane?” I call out again, hoping that somewhere in the background he’ll call out, but I’m yet again met with silence.

I catch a glow coming from around the garage door that leads to the kitchen. I remember him telling me he would find his dad out there when he was having a hard time.

Maybe that’s where he is.

Creeping across the kitchen that I have grown to know in the last few days until my hand is resting on the doorknob. Slowly, I twist it and pull it open. I’m still disappointed when I’m standing alone inside, but the open garage door propels me forward. I know when we came back he made it a point to close it.

I debate walking back to the room and grabbing my shoes, but I slip on the ones he gave me to wear yesterday and walk out of the open door.

I take the trail which he had driven over every day, finally being able to pay attention to it. The dirt road isn’t lengthy before it opens up and there are 4 other houses. One of which is the house that we went to when he grabbed the clothes for me.

I assume he’s not in any of them, though, with as dark as they are, and the road narrows down once again. I pass a garage to my left. Before the gigantic building that I haven’t seen any sign of life at the entire time I’ve been here, but I’ve caught him glancing over at it as we pass.

I’m surprised as I come up to the door and find it unlocked. Pushing it open, stepping into a kitchen, there’s a staircase to my left and a countertop to separate the kitchen from the attached room. I can smell the stagnancy of the old building. And most likely, the scent of old beer that was spilled

somewhere, along with who fucking knows what else.

I think I see a slight glow of a light all the way across the room, off to the right.

I turn as I look. I can see a glow coming out of a room now.

I hope it's him in here. If not, I'll be standing essentially naked in only Zane's shirt, in front of a complete stranger.

As I step to the door, I hear someone speaking. His voice sounds similar to Zane's, but it sounds like it's at a distance.

"Come on, Care." There's a slight laugh as he says it.

"Ash, you better be fucking glad you can't resist me." A female voice says back, matching his humorous tone.

"Not even a little goddamn bit—" it sounds as if he was going to say something else, but he's cut off by the sound of squealing tires, and then there are gunshots.

I round the doorframe, coming into an office and I see Zane sitting in a chair, in only a pair of sweatpants. His feet falling from the left side of the screen, where he had them kicked up on the desk as the scene continues to unfold.

I'm stunned as I watch the older version of Zane on the monitor hold out his arm. I can see the flicker of light from the gun barrel as he fires it back at the car that is just off screen. Zane's mom even has a gun held out as she fires in unison with him.

His dad shouts something out as he keeps firing, but there's too much going on the screen to be able to tell what it is.

And then the shots stop.

I stand with my hand over my mouth as Zane's dad laughs out. "That's right motherfucker, come here again and see what it is ___"

"Ash..." His wife calls out and my eyes immediately flicker to her on the screen just below him. Instantly, Zane zooms in on the screen to where they are.

“Red!” Ash gasps before he’s rushing over to her, catching her as she collapses into his arms. “No, no, no, no.” His words submerged in the pain that is palpable on his face as he mumbles the word over and over again. He looks around. “Just let me get the truck—”

I watch as she slowly shakes her head, lifting her hand up from where she was covering her wound. “No time,” she whispers, trying to keep her energy. “Babe...” She pauses as she takes a deep breath.

“No.” His voice cracks as he says it.

“Shh.” She smiles up at her husband. “This life you gave me.” She takes a deep breath. “You’ve made me so happy.” Ash’s sniffles break up her words. Her hand shakes as she reaches up and presses it to his cheek.

“Baby, let me...” He grips her hand in his, pulling it to his lips and kissing it. Even from where I stand, I can see the blood from her hand transferring to his face, and him not caring about it being all over him.

“Ash, I’m not...” She trails as she looks down again to the bullet which in logged into her stomach, as she slowly bleeds out.

He sobs in response.

“I wouldn’t have changed a single fucking moment with you.” Her voice becomes weaker as she speaks. “I loved you the moment I met you.”

Ash sighs as he looks at her again, holding his wife’s face as the color starts to pale. “You changed my life. You loved me when I thought no one would ever be able to.” She looks up at him, smiling. “You will always be my one in a million.”

“I know.” She whispers.

He leans his head down to her, kissing her tenderly until her entire body goes limp in his arms. “Noooo!” He screams out, shaking as he breaks down right in front of us on the monitor. He’s holding her tightly, knowing that when he lets go of her,

it will be the end of his wife. His voice shakes as he whispers out something but I can only make out the words. "... carefully, Red..." His voice lowers again and I can no longer hear what it is he's saying.

I hear sniffles coming from in front of me this time, not just from the computer speakers.

"I'm going to kill every single one—" Ash is cut off as something right off screen engulfs in flames, but the glow illuminates the side of the screen.

At the same moment, a man speaks. "It's a shame, really." The voice is so low that I can barely hear it. "She was always your weakness."

"She was never a weakness." He snaps out, angry, but the man doesn't even hesitate.

"Knew if we got her first, taking you would be this fucking easy."

"You motherfuc—" Ash moves for his gun. But he's still careful with Caroline, not wanting to let his wife fall roughly to the ground even after all life has drained from her.

The gunshot startles me as I watch. Ash stalls and just looks at him, his arm falling limp, he looks down to his chest for a moment, and then falls over onto of Caroline. Only then am I able to see the blood pooling out of his chest onto his wife.

A cry escapes from me as my eyes glide over the screen, seeing their hands still clasped together.

Zane whips around and looks at me.

"What are you doing?" He says, reaching up and wiping his eyes to clear the tears.

"I came to find you." I whisper out.

Standing up, he storms to me and grabs me by the arm. "You shouldn't have seen that." He tries to push the pain away from the surface.

"You shouldn't have, either." I say to him, holding firm in my

stance and looking up at him. “Zane.” My voice softens and stops him as I reach up, placing my hand on his chest and looking up at him. He turns his head so I can’t see his eyes. “You shouldn’t have to see that.” Reaching up, I turn his face to look at me. “And you definitely don’t have to pretend like you’re not bothered by it.”

He lets out a shaky breath before he stumbles back to his chair, sitting down, and dropping his head into his hands. The sob comes out of him and I step over to him, pushing him up until he’s sitting and I move to straddling his lap, wrapping him in my arms and pulling him into me. My own tears falling down as he sobs and I only wish that I could make everything he just saw go away. I wish I could take away his pain.

I feel him lift his head up after he’s able to control his emotions.

He grips the back of my head, pulling me into him and aggressively claiming my lips, forcing his tongue into my mouth.

I understand this fuck is more of a make me feel something else. His hand falls down to the hem of his shirt and he slips his hand underneath, pulling back for a moment and smirking at me. His eyes turning insidious. I’m sure if he wasn’t so consumed with emotions at the moment that he would make a comment about me coming all the way over here in only his shirt.

He moves out of the chair and we fall to the ground with the thud. Pinning me to the ground as his hand roams my body, once again sliding up underneath the shirt as he slams his fingers inside of me. So I’m ready as he lets go of my hands and pulls down the sweatpants just enough for his dick to pop out.

He presses inside of me, thrusting hard and quick, to release the emotions which we were just both feeling.

Slamming inside of me, I lie on the floor of the office, feeling my release growing. Somehow, as fucked up as it sounds, the

surging emotions through us both driving us. Bringing us closer to the edge faster.

Or maybe we've spent so much time fucking the last few days that we have learned each other's bodies.

My hands slide down his body as I look up at him and we both hesitate, staring from one to another as his hips slow. He leans his head down to mine and he kisses me softly, taking his time. It's as if he takes in every ounce of me as he continues. His hand coming up and cupping my cheek, releasing my lips as he leans away and looks down at me.

His eyes lock with mine as he continues to thrust into me. I can't look away and I'm certain that he feels as if he can't either.

Somehow his constant stare causing my walls to tighten quicker than before. I feel like I should look away as if in this moment it's too intimate. Like I should run away, but I can't.

But I don't want to.

My release is still growing inside of me. I see his nostrils flare as he can feel his release coming as well, trying to hold off until I am getting ready to finish... my fuccboi-gentleman.

Knowing this brings me even closer. He whispers out a fuck as I continue to stare up at him. He picks up his tempo, pushing into me harder and faster, as if he's trying to fuck out any sort of feeling that he has.

I can't control it as it engulfs me fully, erupting around him as he groans out, spilling out into me.

Collapsing onto the ground next to me, he sighs out, lying, just staring up at the ceiling with me.

I think I should feel bad that we just fucked after what we just watched, but I can't, not at this moment.

"You were crying?" He finally whispers. I'm sure exhausted from his emotions coming over him. I'm not even sure if he realizes that he's speaking as his eyes flutter shut.

“It was heartbreaking and what they said... the way... that was beautiful.” I answer.

He falls to sleep; I think, even before I’m done answering him. Looking over at him, I sigh. I know I shouldn’t be here still. I should get back to real life. Something inside of me just screaming for something.

Standing up, I look at the screen and sigh. The bodies are still lying on the sidewalk, one on top of the other, as the time ticks on. I can see the flashing lights on the screen as I exit out of the program and look at Zane passed out on the floor. My heart aching for him.



I wake up on the floor in the office, alone.

Looking around, I see that the computer was turned off and I stand up, straightening out my pants before I’m moving back towards my house.

I’m not surprised to realize that she left. Something about last night was probably just too much for her, but I’ll never be able to repay her for what she did for me last night. That she was actually there for me.

I think back to the videotape. The man shooting my dad point blank and killing my mom just to make her like a pawn in his fucking game.

Who ever he is, I will find him, and I will kill him.



ZANE

I follow behind Ro out towards the desert, past Joshua Tree. Axe rides behind me. Not that he needs to follow anyone out here. I'm sure he knows the way better than we do. We veer off of the road and start trekking up the mountain. Until we reach a small cave, breeching the entrance, and continue to drive into the tunnel before it opens up and a large metal door sits in front of us.

I know where we are, but I've never driven here, and I haven't been here in a long time.

"Purgatory is now yours." Ro nods as he walks over to the keypad and punches in the number.

"Purgatory?" I ask.

"I think that was more of a club thing." Axe says from behind us. "Your dad made sure we never called it that around you guys, because of.... Well..."

"Oh, what he have some concerns over how his kids knowing that they were born in what everyone called purgatory would have on them?" It's mostly a joke, but I realize that's probably exactly why he didn't want us to know. They just turn and look at me, realizing for themselves that this could have affected us.

"It's just a nickname for it." Ro mumbles out, now uncomfortable.

“But your dad was one of the ones who came up with it.” Axe then says and Ro cuts his eyes at him. “What? It’s true. Him and Ace ended up building a lot, so they are the ones who started it.”

“Would seem fitting that his sons were born here then.” I laugh out, shaking my head.

Ro turns, looking at me, and sighs. “Are you sure you want to do this?” I know he’s talking about everything regarding the club.

“Yes.” It’s not even a question.

“You don’t have to. Look, kid, all of this... it will—”

I can’t help but cut him off as I laugh out. “What? It will change me?”

“Yes.” Him and Axe both say it as a matter of fact.

“I’m not a kid anymore. And you don’t know the things I’ve done or will do.” I let out a sad laugh, shaking my head. “The most important thing Mom taught me was that no matter what, you protect the people who you love. That you protect family. And I may not be able to protect them, but I can sure as fuck get revenge for them.” I look around the room once more before finishing. “That’s why everyone was so terrified of her. They knew if they fucked with the ones Caroline loved, she was ruthless. You’re worried about this shit changing me, but I was raised in this. This life, it’s my goddamn legacy, and I can’t let Ash’s infamy die in that fucking parking lot.”

Ro looks at me and just sighs. I know he’s not eager about all of this. And I know the only reason Axe is back is because he feels like he has to. “He would care if you were happy.”

“Well, I’m not fucking happy, so there’s that. This is what I know I need to do. And you’re right. I already know that if I didn’t want this. If I just wanted to keep my head down and finish school, get a fucking boring ass job, and work until I die, they would want that for me. But I don’t. I never belonged there.” I shrug, looking back at them. “And I see that he never talked to you about it, but we had already talked about me

joining the club.”

“You did?” Both Ro and Axe look at me and I nod.

“Yeah, right after I graduated, I had already gotten into school. I didn’t want to go, but... I mean we had compromised. He told me to go to school and finish and then we’d seriously talk about it.”

“See, he wanted you to finish.” Ro mumbles.

“Yeah, well, another part of that agreement was he was supposed to be here. So.” I pause as I shrug. “We both failed to fulfill part of our agreement.”

I can feel how uncomfortable that they grow. I know what I just said makes me sound like I’m whining about them dying, and fuck, maybe I am. But it’s barely been a month, aren’t I allowed to complain about it just a little?

“What exactly did we do here?”

“A couple of different things.” Axe shrugs. “Well, that is, until Dyno accidentally blew himself up.”

“When was that?”

“A few years ago.”

“After Khan?”

“Ugh, it was the same time.” Axe shrugs. “He had come up here for them to test out something new he was working on. The explosion threw Khan back with enough force that he landed and it severed his spinal cord. Dyno, well, he was too close, still.” He shakes his head. “There was nothing left of him when your dad and I got out there. The only reason we were able to find Khan was because they used the same test site.”

“I didn’t realize you guys are the ones who found them.”

“Yeah.”

“Do you think it really was an accident?”

“What are you saying?” Ro asks from behind us.

“Just thinking, what better way to take out the club than to take out the Prez and the guy who makes the explosives?”

“And drugs... their primary source of income.”

“What drug?”

“MDMA.”

I can't help but laugh as I shake my head.

“What?”

“Pretty sure I took some of it a couple weeks ago.”

“What?”

“Someone had some, but said they had gotten it.”

“Tatum?” Axe attempts to give me a hard time about her, cutting my eyes at him.

I don't need to look over at Ro to know he's looking at me with a curious, shitty grin. “Yeah, but she's gone now.”

TATUM

It's been months since I walked down that sketchy gravel road until I was able to make it to the freeway.

It was a long fucking walk, but I knew I had to get out of there before whatever I was feeling fluttering in my gut was able to solidify.

I roll my car into the gas station and I step out. Straightening out my dress, making sure not to flash anybody on the way out or bust my ass in my tall shoes. I slip my card in to pay before I lift the nozzle, shoving it into the tank to fill. Leaning back against my car, crossing my legs at the ankles, I notice the few bikes that are parked together to the side of the parking lot. There's one guy, sitting on a 4th bike, but he just sits, staring at them.

The bikes cause flashes of memories to come.

But it doesn't take much to remind me of him. I can still smell him as I held on while he drove us around. Feel his laughter

underneath me. See his eyes as he stalked across a room after me.

I can still feel him inside of me as I'm coming undone in front of him.

I remember how his skin felt pressed up against mine.

I can still hear him as he jokes around, laughing at me.

No, that's not something I can still hear, that something that I'm currently hearing. Standing up straight, I look in the direction of the doors to the store and watch as 3 men come walking out of the doors. They're all wearing the same vest.

No, they're all wearing a motorcycle club kutte.

My breath gets stuck in my throat as I watch Zane close in the distance to the bikes.

"What the fuck are you doing, prospect?" He shouts, startling the kid that's zoned out on the bike.

"What... What? I'm sorry Prez, I—" he stops abruptly, not really sure what else to say.

Prez? Zane was now the president of this club. I squint my eyes, trying to read the logo on the back of it.

Damned&Demented sits above the logo while Midnight Syn lays underneath.

The men are still shouting towards the prospect, giving him a hard time, but I can't stop staring at Zane. How he moves with a confident fluidity.

"Come on, guys, stop messing with him. We're already late." He nods as he picks up his helmet from the bike, putting it on his head and moving to the right, kicking his leg over it.

The bike roars to life before he walks it backwards, pulling down the throttle... I swear, I can feel the fucking vibrations of its rumble underneath me.

As he faces me, I see his glasses covering his eyes, and I think he's looking at me, but I also don't want to look like I'm too

desperate. So I just wait, hoping that he stops, saying something to me.

I let out a defeated sigh as the group passes me, pulling out onto the road, and opening up the engine and disappearing down the road.

I have to fight back the tears as I pull the nozzle out of the car and back into its spot.



TATUM

—4 years later—

“Tate.” Leon calls for me as he pulls me down onto his lap. I didn’t want to come out tonight, mostly because I knew it was going to be all of his friends. Like I even have friends, any more. I’m not sure why I’ve stayed here for so long. There wasn’t anything for me back home, any ways. And even if it’s been hard for me to make friends in this city, I’m at least away from where I grew up. When I left Tom, I should have moved back home, but for some fucking reason, I stayed.

I’m a goddamn liar. I want to act like I don’t know why I stayed, but I do. Even if I haven’t spoken a word to him in nearly 4 years, the brief glances I get of him around the city hold me here. And once my sister invited me to move in with her, it just gave me an easier excuse to stick around.

Leon’s feet come inside of my legs, hooking around my feet and spreading them in front of his friends.

“Leon, please... no.”

“But come on, baby, they love it. They love watching me play with your pussy. And I know you love it as well.”

Sure, from time to time I may be a bit into some vouyerism, but I don’t want to... with him... here. But the small voice in the back of my head tells me that if the rumors are true, maybe I do.

“Please, stop.” I please with him, but am met with a shitty laugh.

“Oh, that’s right baby, cry, they like it more when you cry.” His hand trails up my inner thigh before they’re pushing my panties to the side.

A glass shatters from behind the bar, which gives me just the distraction that I need. I slam my head back against his nose and jolt upwards, fleeing towards the back.

“Fucking slut, get back here.” He grips my hair, yanking my head backwards, and grabs me by the arm, gripping me so hard that I won’t be able to leave. “You will not disrespect me like that. You will do whatever it is I tell you to when I tell you to.”

I know, he probably charged them for what he was promising tonight, and even if I wanted to, I would never see a fucking penny of it.

“You belong to me, Tate. No one’s ever going to love you, but me.”

I’m aware he’s full of shit and that he doesn’t actually love me. It hasn’t even been long enough to ‘love’ me. He’s just another narcissistic bastard.

“Let her go.” The voice that has lived in my dreams for the last few years says from behind Leon. My stomach tightens, not needing to see who it is to know.

“This isn’t your fucking business. Keep walking.” He snaps out, not looking over, either.

The voice yanks Leon backwards, taking a few strands of my hair with him. The sound of his solid body being slammed straight into the metal wall is enough to stifle the entire room.

“See, that’s where you’re mistaken, motherfucker.” His face is now out of the shadows and although it’s been years since I’ve seen him. Zane stands, not looking at me, but his voice sounds more... traumatized. “You’re in my fucking club. And generally, I wouldn’t have given a shit if you finger fucked

your girl in front of the entire club, but I could tell from where I was that she didn't fucking want to."

And because you feel a slight possession of me? It's a wishful thought.

"You don't know what you're fucking talking about." He shouts at him. Leon looks terrified for the first time since I met him. "She wanted too. Tell him you wanted to, baby."

"Trust me, I know what her face looks like when she wants to fuck someone, and that wasn't it." The mention of our time we spent together years ago makes my heart race. Knowing that even after all the women he's fucked, he still remembers me... not that I've kept track of him or anything. I sound pathetic.

"You're full of shit." Leon snaps back at him.

Zane turns, looking back at me and for the first time in 4 years, our eyes lock again. Every ounce of feelings that I left in his bed all those years ago comes flooding back. I still dream about him regularly. I can tell by his look that he doesn't need to ask me. He can tell. "Tatum, go wait for me outside."

I nod my head and like so many years ago, there's still something about him that forces me to listen to his demands.

I walk out the front door and I see the MC standing around. I'm assuming waiting for him now. I recognize them from seeing them riding around town, watching as the charter tripled in size over the years. I emerge from the club and walk over to Zane's bike. The man who was in the woods that first day looks up, shocked.

"Tate?" He asks. I nod my head. "Oh." He shakes his head, chuckling to himself as he finishes. "This makes more sense, now."



The name "ZANE" is written in a bold, white, distressed font with a black outline, set against a solid black rectangular background.

"Tatum, go wait for me outside." I tell her after we make eye

contact for a solid minute, and I don't need her to tell me she didn't want to be there. I can read it all over her face.

"How the fuck do you know her?"

I press the blade just harder against his throat and his eyes widen.

"Now, Leon, this is what's about to happen. I'm about to ride out of here with her on the back of my bike. I'm going to take her wherever she wants to go, but I have a feeling she'll end up in my bed again. Tomorrow, either way, if she shows up or if not, you will never lay another hand on her or anyone again. Are we clear?" I ask him, but he refuses to answer me, so I press the blade just a tad harder into his neck. I can feel the second that the flesh cuts, not yet enough to force any blood out, but enough to leave some sort of mark.

"Yes!" He shouts, causing me to smirk and nod my head.

"Good, because if you do, if you lay a hand on anyone. I will personally deal with you."

He laughs this time. "You think you're your daddy?" He laughs again. "You're not Ash. No one is afraid of you."

This time it's my turn to laugh, letting a short, dark one echo. "You're right. I'm not my dad. I never try to be." I lean in further to him, presses the blade hard enough to feel the skin give underneath the pressure. I watch his face contort as he tries to reframe from vocalizing his pain. "Believe me when I tell you, I'm fucking worse than he ever was. So, Leon, if you ever lay another hand on Tatum, I will slit your eyelids first, so you have no choice but to watch me cut your hands off."

His eyes just widen.

"I feel like we're at an understanding." Nodding my head as I release him from my hold against the wall.

"You think you're so fucking tough?" He shouts out, only being able to fathom up enough courage to say the things to my back. "She's trash."

"You know." I laugh, shaking my head, stopping, and turning

back to look at him. “Tell yourself whatever you need to make yourself feel better.” When I step in to him, he takes a step back, pushing himself back against the wall. “I saw how much money your friends paid you for the little show that you were promising. To see her. I’m not sure they’re going to be all too happy that it won’t happen.”

“I’ll send them to you then.”

“Go ahead and try. I think they all know that’s not a good idea.” Taking one more step into him. “And after tonight, everyone will know that Tatum is off fucking limits and I’ll ban anyone who associates with you.”

“You can’t fucking block me.”

“We’ll see...” I pause. “Won’t we?” His expression alone makes me laugh. “Now, I’m going to go fuck my girl until she’s coming so hard, she’s screaming my name.”

His eyes darken and I know he wants to hit me, but he won’t. “She doesn’t cum.” Is the only thing he says.

I can’t stop the laugh as it rolls out of me, right into his face. “Oh, I know for a fact she does. Now her fault if you don’t know how.” His face hardens as I say it and he lunges towards me. “That’s not a good idea.” I know he’s furious because I just told him I can fuck his girl better than he can, and he doesn’t want to believe it, but he also knows my reputation.

Turning around, I walk out of the hallway and towards the door. Axe is smirking at me as I emerge and I shake my head and flipping him off, telling him to back the fuck off.

Walking over to Tatum, I reach over and touch her arm. “You okay?”

“You didn’t need to do that.” She snaps at me and I’m surprised. It’s been a long time since anyone has spoken to me like this.

“Are you fucking serious?” I shove the helmet over to her, pushing it into her stomach, and she glares at me.

“Yes. I am.” I don’t look at her as I kick over the seat and

settle down onto it.

Even without looking at her, I know she's glaring at me as she straps the helmet on her head and I crank the bike.

"Get on." I tell her.

"Why should I?"

"Because you want to."

"Do I?" She smirks, tilting her head, and I know the entire club behind me is loving this. Just as the guys back in the day loved it when my mom would pull this exact thing to my dad.

With the bike still idling, I stand up, just enough to lean in, just enough to tower over her. "Yes, you do."

"And how do you know that?"

"You don't think I can't tell you're squeezing your thighs together, trying to relieve just enough to be able to think rationally?" My eyes zone in on her mouth as she pulls her bottom lip in between her teeth and bites. "But it's fine. You don't have to think rationally with me, Psycho."

"What, cause you'll protect me?"

"Every time." I let the smirk pull up onto my lips. "You're always safe with me. You don't remember how you can tell me your deepest, darkest fantasies?"

"Why?" she gasps out, giving her best effort to ignore my last statement. "Why do you protect me?"

"Honestly?" I look up at her, and she nods, telling me that's what she wants. "I have no fucking clue."

I'm not surprised when she kicks over the bike and she wraps her arms around me. I am surprised that just like before, when her touch has some way of lifting all the weight from me. I catch Axe looking at me with a smirk on his face as I roll past him and towards the clubhouse. As I flip him off, it makes him laugh harder.

I dreamt of our short ride for years. Sometimes I still do. I

crave to hear that slight squeal she made as she hid her smile against my back, as if she was ashamed of enjoying it as much as she did.

I don't even think twice about it, rotating the throttle back and letting us jolt off ahead of the club. Her squeal is just as intoxicating as I remember it being.

I've fucked a lot of women, but ever since Tatum, not one has ever compared. Something about lying in bed with her afterwards that seemed so familiar, like I had known her forever. It was the feeling I had as soon as the rage left, around the time that I had opened the garage door. I don't think I realized it after I woke up to her being gone.

I craved it then, and I've never found it since.

But I know, when you deny yourself something for long enough, you're bound to overindulge.

When I turn off of the highway onto the gravel trail, I speed up. Her hands tighten around me, and the breath from her laughter trickles across my neck. The gate opens as we come barreling at it, and we slip through it before it's halfway open. Sliding around the drive and into my spot.

"You're insane." She laughs out as I look back at her smirking.

"You have no idea." She laughs as she hands me the helmet and I sit it down before we dismount from the bike. "Come on." I nod to the door, my hand splaying across her lower back.

"Oh, I remembered this looking..." she trails as if she isn't sure the right word to say.

"Abandoned?"

"A little."

"It kind of was." I laugh before reaching in front of us and opening the door for her.

"But now it's not."

"Nope." I laugh as we walk through the doors, into the lounge.

“Croft.”

“Z!” she exclaims from behind the bar as we walk over and she hands me a bottle. “What do you want?” I whisper as I ask her.

“The same thing’s fine.”

I roll my eyes at her comment before I look back over at Croft, and she laughs.

“I got it.” She tells me before she reaches over, picking up the bottle of whiskey as I down most of the beer in my hand. I look at her, nodding my head, and watch as she pours 2 glasses and sets them down in front of us.

“I thought you were just getting a beer.” She looks at me, smirking.

“If I’m not mistaken, you’re also more of a whisky girl.”

I sip the drink as she smirks at me over the ridge of her glass.

“Oh, you’re a whiskey girl, too?” She bounces back before she sips the liquid.

“Oh, I’m most definitely a whisky girl.”

She slightly chokes on the liquid, as I say it, then sits down on the glass as he looks back over at me. “How do you know I like whisky?”

I sip the drink as I look forward to Croft and just shrug my shoulders.

She gasps as I attempt to not look at her.

“Have you been watching me?”

“Where’s the rest of the club?” Croft asks me as she walks back over and I chuckle.

“We sped off before them.” I tell her as she smirks at the sounds of the rest of the bikes pulling in.

“Zane.” Tatum calls me. When I look back over at her, arms crossed over her chest, trying to give me attitude. “You’ve been watching me.”

Leaning into her, reaching over and pulling her closer to me by her belt loops, I whisper so only she can hear me. "Tatum." I lock eyes with her as she says it. "The club owns 4 bars in this town, and you drink at them pretty regularly."

"Are you saying that you've been there those times?"

"No, tonight was the first time."

"What was so special about tonight, coincidence?"

"No, it wasn't. I knew you were there. Some of the bouncers were telling me they were having an issue with a man who was pushing his girls around. The last few weeks said that they had a feeling he was more fucked up than that, and they were right." I run my hand along the back of my neck as I finish. "I was pretty surprised when I saw on the camera that it was you." She looks down embarrassed as I hear the backdoor open, and my brothers walk inside. "Don't be embarrassed." I tell her, tilting her chin up to look at me. "He saw you as a challenge, as something to break. But you didn't let him, did you?"

She shakes her head. "But there wasn't really anything there, anyway."

"It doesn't matter. You were still a challenge to him."



TATUM

“...you’re still a challenge to him?” I’m staring up at him, still in shock as the men filter into the room.

“What the fuck?” Zane looks up to whoever called out, and he laughs.

“He told me he was going to go get you.” I hear a woman say from behind me. Turning around to see the older woman who was standing with her husband in the woods that first day.

“Seems a little cocky that he was assuming I would just leave with him.”

“Don’t tell him that.”

“Why?” I laugh as I look back over at her.

“Because he is his father’s son. And I know exactly what his dad would have said.”

“Oh, I already know exactly what he would say, because we had that conversation last time.” I laugh, shaking my head again. “That he’s not cocky, because he’s not wrong.”

She laughs, nodding her head as she laughs. “That was Ash...” She trails and I see the sadness wash over her.

“You were close?”

“Yeah, I mean, he practically raised me.” I can tell by her face that I give her a strange look. “It’s a long story.” The photos lining the walls distract me as she continues to talk. “You

remind me of Caroline. She was amazing. More of a mother to me than my own ever was.” She shakes her head. “By the way, I’m Ella.”

“Tate.”

She glances back at where Zane stands, looking at me, and he smirks. Ella turns back around and looks at me. “He likes you. He doesn’t like most...” She doesn’t say most of what, but I’m not really sure if it matters. “But like I said, he’s his father’s son.”

“And what does that mean?”

“He doesn’t think he’s good enough. He’ll push you away. A large part because the mission that he’s on is too dangerous.” She smiles again. “And now, he doesn’t think he’s worthy of it.”

“Of what?”

“Of being happy, of being loved. He’s never told me this, but I’ve known him just about his entire life, and I know the fact that he hasn’t found his parents’ killer is still weighing on him. He feels like he’s failed them. It’s a weight that he shouldn’t be carrying. I’ve been trying to get him to see it. You know underneath the tattoos, the kutte, the whole biker exterior, he just wants to save everyone he loves and when he can’t... it eats him alive.”

“You’re saying he has a hero complex?” I kind of laugh.

“Fuck no.” She laughs, looking back over again. “It’s more like a villain complex.”

“What does that even mean?”

“He doesn’t aspire to be a hero. He doesn’t want what he does to be acknowledged. He doesn’t give a fuck about the world, and he’d sacrifice every single person in it to keep the ones he loves safe. And he’d especially sacrifice himself. It’s why he dropped out of school so Drew could live with him. If he wouldn’t have done that, their grandmother most likely would have gotten custody. And God knows Terri would have taken

her in, not even given their blood related aunt a chance, not that she would have even wanted to raise her. She would have done it simply because she knew how much Caroline would hate it.”

“Why would she do that?”

“Because Ash’s mother is a cunt.” Her use of the word makes me laugh out loud. “I’m serious. She took off, leaving her son when he was like 8. Then flaked in and out of both of her kids’ lives. Oh, and by the way, he didn’t know that he had a sibling until he was in his 30s.”

“What?”

“I’m telling you, she’s a cunt. And sadly, the only blood grandparent that they have.”

“That’s awful.”

“I mean.” She shrugs. “Caroline’s mother may be around here somewhere, but no one knows, or cares enough, to look for her. At least Terri showed up at the funeral. I never thought there would be a time where I thought Terri was a better example.” She laughs, shaking her head.



“Sorry.” I whisper into her ear as I walk up to her from behind, my head coming over her right shoulder. “I had some business I needed to handle.”

Glancing over her shoulder at me, she smirks. “And you’re finished now?”

“I am, all yours now.” I nod as Croft slides another drink for me on the bar. Glancing up at her, I nod before I send her a curious look. She nods her head towards Tatum and raises two fingers, letting me know that her still full drink that she’s sipping on is only her second. I give one quick nod to thank her before I shift my focus back to Tatum, who is still

smirking at me. “So, what do you think?” I look down at her, leaving the question vague just to see what she’s going to say.

“Of what?”

“Of it all.”

“Okay.” She pauses as she sips her drink. “I think you’ve changed a lot since last time.”

“Nah.” I laugh as I tilt my head slightly. “A lot has changed in my life, but I’m still the same.”

“You sure?” She giggles again. “You sure all of this hasn’t gone to your head, prez?” She tilts her head as she says it, still with a playful look in her eyes.

“Maybe a little.” My voice dropping as I finish. “I do like hearing you call me prez, though.”

“Well, then, thank god I’m here.” I keep my smirk hidden but just keep looking at her, waiting for her to finish. “Someone has to knock you down a peg or two.”

“Yeah.” I lean into her, pulling her into me again by her belt loops and causing her to have to strain her neck to look up at me. “I have a feeling you will inflate my ego even more.”

“Why? You think that you’re the best fuck I’ve ever had?”

“Am I not?”

She just shrugs her shoulders, nonchalantly.

“Really now?” My face remains stoic as I keep looking at her and she tries to hide her smirk by biting onto her lip.

“I dunno. I mean, it was so long ago and so just not memorable.”

I know she doesn’t mean it, that she’s just giving me a hard time. But I also know she’s waiting to see how I respond to it. And giving her a hard time back seems fun.

I know she’s expecting me to say something witty in response, so I can’t. Instead, I reach over, pulling her over to me by her neck and slamming my mouth to hers. Turning her until I have

her pressed between the bar and me, pressing my body flush with hers, knowing that she can feel my cock hardening.

Her mouth opens as soon as mine does, her tongue meets mine and her hands come around my body, pulling me closer to her as if there's anymore room between the two of us.

She kisses me back just as aggressively as I am. Her body responding to mine, pressing her hips into me. My free hand roaming down her body. Sliding up between her thighs. Rubbing her clit through her jeans before quickly removing it and bracing myself against the bar counter. Letting her neck go, I place my other hand next to her, caging her against the bar. Slowly pulling away from her, she tries to follow me away, begging for one last kiss. It brings a smirk across my face as I look down at her, leaning over so that I'm looking her in the eye.

"Not memorable, huh?" I whisper to her as I watch her chest rising and falling as she tries and catch her breath. "Your body seems to remember just fine." My right hand lifts off of the counter. I graze my fingertips along her arm, to her shoulder, across her neck, down her chest, to where her shirt hangs. Brushing my fingertips along her skin just underneath it. "I am curious about one thing, though." I don't look up at her because I don't need her to ask what. I don't care. I'm going to ask her, anyway. "How many of them?"

"Wha—what?" She gasps out.

"How many men did you think about me when you were fucking?"

"It's been what? 4 years."

"That's not an answer." Now I look up, locking eyes with her. "An evasive answer tells me that every single time, every single one since then, you have thought about me."

"Shut up." She tries to look away from me, but I won't let her. Moving my head so she doesn't have a choice but to look at me.

"I'll tell you a secret." I lower my voice, and her eyes perk up

as she looks at me. “I’ve fucked a lot of women. Hell, I’ve fucked a lot of them since you... Some of which are all staring and jealous of you, right now.” I trail and can see her getting ready to say something smart, so I cut her off before she can. “But not a single one of them has been able to burrow their goddamn way into my head like you have.”

“It was one week.” She whispers, shocked. “It couldn’t have been that impactful.”

“I agree. It shouldn’t have, but it did... for both of us, didn’t it?”

Slowly, she nods her head. “I remember the first time I realized you were running the MC.”

“Oh, yeah?”

“Yeah.” She nods her head. “I had pulled in to get gas as you guys were leaving. You walked out as I got out of my car. And I heard your voice before I even saw you. I spun around as you got on the bike. You looked over and I was hoping you saw me. But you pulled off anyway, and it hurt. I tried to tell myself that you had something else going on. That, I could see it in your eyes, but it still hurt.”

Sighing, I’m shaking my head as I debate what I’m going to do. “Come on.” I mumble as I pull her out of the lounge and up the staircase off of the kitchen, down the hallway and I punch in the code quickly before we’re stepping into my room.

“You’re right.” I sigh out before I even turn around, but I force myself to and I look up at her, ashamed of what I’m about to say. “I saw you.” I step into her. “Your hair was this pastel pink color.” She looks at the ground, biting onto her lip. “You were wearing a black summer dress and these shoes that were obnoxiously tall. All I could think about was pulling you into the bathroom, bending you over, and fucking you until everyone heard you moaning my name, but you’re right, I had other shit going on.” Her eyes darken and I step into her more, my hand finding its way to her hip. “I saw you again a couple of months later, but you didn’t see me.”

“Are you sure about that?” She whispers and I can’t help but laugh and nod my head.

“I was sitting outside of your house.”

“Why?”

“I guess just to make sure that you were okay... I dunno, it’s just something I did for a while.”

“How many times did you come to my house?” She whispers, after she’s finally able to catch her breath.

“I dunno, once every couple of months, for like 2 years.”

“What?” Her eyes light up as she asks it. A slight smirk spreading on her lips.

“Yeah, I just wanted to make sure you were okay.”

“But you didn’t want me to see you?” She whispers, and I can hear the hurt in her voice.

“It’s complicated.”

Nodding her head, she starts again. “And you stopped when you got arrested?” She whispers, looking at me again.

“Looks like I wasn’t the only one stalking the other.”

She looks down at me coyly before taking a step away.

“But yes, I stopped because I got arrested. Although I still had someone checking on you.” I whisper as I lean over her again.

Her head turns back to look up at me. “I was there the whole trial. When the judge sentenced you, I was so angry.”

I can’t help but laugh. “I mean, it was completely just. I mean, I did it. It was kind of hard to argue.”

“Wait...” she whispers as her eyes widen and she looks back up at me. “You did?”

“Yup.” The ‘p’ pops more than I intend it to.

“Why?”

I shrug. At first I think I’ll just leave it at that. Anyone else,

anyone except for her, I would tell to fuck off. “The fucking prick deserved it.” She doesn’t give up and I can feel her still staring at me. “He betrayed us.”

“What did he do?” She whispers.

I look at her and pause. Why do I want to tell her? Why do I feel like I can? I don’t even fucking know this girl. She’s just someone I hooked up with years ago and then we disappeared from one another’s lives. “He sold us out. Told a rival our business, when our meet was going down.” What I keep to myself is how he had dragged her name into the shit, telling these rivals that she was the only weakness I had. “You came to the trial?”

“Yes.”

“Why?”

“I can’t really explain it. I just had to.”

“Mmmhm, I think you know why.” I mumble to her as I step in until her back is flush against the door. “And I want you to admit it to me.”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about.” Comes out in a breathy whisper.

“Don’t lie to me Tatum, you say it and put us both out of the unnecessary torture.” I press my hips into hers and can feel her reaction.

She looks up at me, and I can tell that at first she wants to fight it. She has a shitty smirk on her face, but it falls the second that our eyes lock and her breathing hitches. “I had to go because you were the best fuck I’d ever had.”

“And...?” I lean my head down closer to hers, my lips hover just out of reach of hers.

“And I thought about you every time I fucked anyone else.”

I exhale as my lips still hover at her mouth, curve up in a smirk. “Atta girl.”

She slams her lips down to mine before she’s shoving me

backwards, but I spin us around, lifting her up, and walking with her towards the bed. Her legs come up, wrapping around my torso as her hands come up into my hair.

My cock throbs against my zipper.

“Fuck.” I mumble to her as I lay her down on the bed, her hands finding their way underneath my shirt, until she’s looking at me smirking and I’m gripping onto the hem, pulling it up over my head. I can’t stop another groan as I feel her hands coming down, running their way down my abs until she reaches my belt. Feeling her slip it out, undoing it, and ripping the button on my jeans open, letting them slide to the ground. Her hand gently wraps around my shaft.

“Oh.” She gasps as she looks down at my cock and then back up at me. “I feel like I definitely would have remembered that.” She bites her lip as she looks down at me, lifting it up slowly, and she smirks before looking back up at me.

I don’t know what to say. I just shrug and she laughs, keeping eye contact with me as she lowers her head, running her tongue along the barbells. As she reaches the tip, she slips her lips around me and I still can’t take my eyes off of her as she slides my cock into her mouth. My hands coming down, wrapping my fingers in her hair. Having to restrain myself from slamming my cock all the way to the back of her throat.



TATUM

“So, I know I would have remembered the piercings.”

He laughs slightly and I can feel him slightly tense underneath me. “Yeah.”

“I feel like there’s a story you’re leaving out.”

“Not really a story that I’m leaving out.” He pauses for a second. “It was more like when we opened the studio, someone told me I wouldn’t do it.”

“Well, you showed them.”

He laughs again. “Yeah, I was drunk and when I woke up in the morning, it was there. And I’m not gonna lie, I like it...”

“Don’t most people get like the tip?”

“I guess.” He shrugs. “But...” He pauses again. “I feel weird even saying this.” He laughs again, shaking his head. “Um, my dad had one and told me about the aftereffects.”

“Which are?”

“We’ll just say he sat down a lot to pee.”

I can’t help but look up at him, a little stunned. “I wouldn’t have ever guessed.”

“Right. I know.” He laughs again. “Ironically, I have still considered it. Even now, think about adding it.”

“Well, you should definitely let me know if you do. Because

that was different.”

“Yeah?” He laughs. “I’m assuming a good different.”

“Obviously. It’s like, I know you’ve seen those toys with the pearls that spin. Same concept, only they don’t spin in a circle.” I shrug, amusing him.

“Next time, we can try to spin you around.”

It shouldn’t, but my mouth still drops as he says it.

“What else is new, then?” He looks at me, confused for a moment. “I mean the ladder, the neck tat, what other ways have you taken on your role?”

“My role?”

“Yeah, your role as an outlaw.” I raise my eyebrows as I say it, making him laugh again.

Instead of answering, we just grow silent, just lying in each other’s arms.

“I hate the way I reacted to you in that parking lot.”

“You shouldn’t.” I whisper back. “You don’t have any loyalty to me.”

“Shut up.” He tilts my head to look up at him. “Okay. Just let me say sorry. I won’t say anything else. And I don’t want you to apologize for anything.” He glares at me, telling me not to even try to apologize for leaving in the middle of the night.

“Although you didn’t have your phone, how did you make it out of here?”

“I, ugh, called my sister. It’s the only number that I remember.”

“How I didn’t have any calls dialed out.”

“There’s a landline.”

He laughs out loud before adding. “It’s a secured line.”

“And what’s the different? Is that not a landline?”

“Fair enough.” He laughs before leaning into me. His lips

grazing mine.

Bolting up as soon as the pounding on the door starts. The sun shining into my eyes.

“Z, wake the fuck up.” Axe calls from the other side of the door.

“Yeah, yeah...” he mumbles. “Shit.” He yawns out, stretching his arms. “I’m sorry, psycho, but I’ve got to...” He trails again as I watch a delayed idea comes over him as he quickly wakes up. “What you are doing this week?”

“Nothing, I guess I’m in between jobs.” I can’t help but laugh out as I say it.

“You guess?”

“Well, since you threatened to slit my boss’s throat.”

“That’s your boss. What a fucking prick.” He mumbles the last part to himself.

“Was... I’m pretty sure if I try to show up, he’ll fire me.”

“Well, possibly my gain. Come with us.”

“What?”

“We’re going to bike week. Come with us.”

“When are you leaving?” I can’t believe that I’m actually considering this. I guess just like last time, there’s something about Zane that makes me do things I wouldn’t even consider with anyone else.

“In an hour-ish.”

“What?” I shout, sitting up, letting the covers fall from covering my tits. His eyes falling to them and he has to bite his lip to keep from smirking. “How am I supposed to be ready to leave in an hour? I have nothing with me.”

“Do you want to come?”

He leans into me, his lips hovering over my skin. “Of course.” Trailing down before taking my nipple in his mouth. When the warmth wraps around it, I gasp. “But you want me to come.

You have to stop doing that. I have to get my shit.”

“You don’t. I’ll get you whatever you need.” He says as his teeth latch onto the hardened tip.

“You don’t have...” A slight moan cuts me off as it escapes my mouth.

“I know.” He whispers into my ear after letting me go and rolling me onto my back. His lips press against my flesh, down my stomach.

“Zane...” I whimper, because as much as I want what he’s about to do, I know that I have to get up and get ready. “I have to go get my stuff.”

“I can have someone go get it.” He says, causing me to give into his unspoken demands. “Does that mean that you’re coming with?”

“Yes.” I moan out as his tongue runs up my pussy.

“Good.” He mumbles into me. Wrapping his arms around my thighs and pulling me closer to him as his tongue continues to lick against me, staring straight up at me. Sucking against my clit, and my back arches off of the bed and he chuckles against me. My internal walls start tightening and Zane presses my hips back to the bed before he slips his tongue inside of me, and I know that I’m clenching around him. The vibration from his laughter vibrates me and pushes me so close to the edge. Then Zane pulls away, standing up, and walks across the room.

“What the fuck?” I snap out, looking at him, shocked.

A sly smirk spreading on his face.

I match his smirk with my own. Standing up and walking over to him, wrapping my hand around his cock. “Why stop? Don’t want you all spun up...” I trail, but Zane smirks again, leaning into me.

“I can wait. You get half now and the rest when you make it there with us.”

“Are you edging me?” I ask him, surprised.

“Kind of. That and trying to make sure you don’t back out.”

“And you are just going to go without?” I laugh, nodding to him.

“I’m sure I can work something out.”

I sit back, shocked, looking at him. “I see invite me to go with you and go hook up with another chick?”

“I never said that.” He laughs. “But I guess that all depends on how good you are.”

“Then what are you saying?”

“I’m saying I’m going to have you so fucking wound up by the time we get there that you’ll be on your knees begging me.”

“Doubtful. How do you know I won’t just go off and take care of myself?”

He smirks again. His hand coming down between my thighs and running back up. “Because you don’t want to disappoint me.”

“What are you, some sort of dom now or something?”

“No, well, not more than I was before. I just know what I want, I know what feels good for you, and I know,” his hand comes up, cupping my face, “you love giving me control.” He runs his knuckles against my jaw. “Don’t you?”

I’m stunned as I continue to stare up at him. But I can’t stop my head as it nods.

“You just don’t want it easy for me, do you?”

Shaking my head this time.

“Good, because I’ve never liked things easy.” He whispers as he lowers himself back towards my pussy, licking his lips before he flicks his tongue against me.





“Ella.” I call out as I walk into the lounge. She pauses, looking over at me, Axe also looking up at me. “Will you please take Tatum to her house?”

“Why?” She tilts her head, questioning.

“Uh...” I hesitate as some of my brothers walk into the lounge.

“Wow...” she trails, her eyes widening as she looks up at me.

“It’s nothing like that.” I brush off her reaction.

“You sure?”

I glare at her, making her laugh before she nods her head. Tatum makes an entrance at that moment and Ella laughs again, shaking her head. Tatum smirks at me as she and Ella turn and walk out of the door.

“Bro, you sure that’s a good idea?” Axe asks.

“Yeah, why wouldn’t it be?” I don’t mean to snap at him, but I do.

“I was just meaning. Does she have your patch?”

“No.”

“Are you planning on giving it to her?” My head snaps over, eyes wide as I stare at him.

“You’re out of your fucking mind.”

“So I’ll ask you again, you sure this is a good idea?”

I hesitate and look at him for a moment. “It’ll be fine. We bring girls all the time.”

“Yeah, but—” he stops himself quickly as if he doesn’t really want to finish his thought.

“What?” I snap at him again.

He still hesitates, looking over at me. It’s almost comical. Axe

is nearly 30 years older than I am; however, he respects the hierarchy enough to not spout out whatever he wants to at me. I let the irritation fall off my face and he sighs. “We bring unpatched girls who don’t matter to us.”

“We’re just friends.” I shrug at him.

“Who you haven’t seen in years and after... what, 12 hours you decided you wanted to take her to bike week?” he pauses again and nods. “Just be careful.”

“I’m always careful.”

“You’re never fucking careful.” He responds, making us both laugh loudly.



TATUM

We stop in LA on the way out of town, meeting up with the national charter. Zane dismounts from the bike, walking over to the man standing in the front of their club and hugs him.

I see the older man that Zane is talking to look directly over at me and gives me a curious look. Zane nods his head at me to come over. Standing up and kicking over the bike, I walk over to where they are standing.

“Tatum, this is Ro. He’s kind of my uncle.”

“Kind of?” I can’t help but ask, causing them to laugh.

“It’s a long story. His mom and I went way back.” He says before I see sadness wash over his face and as quick as it appears, it’s gone again.

“Nice to meet you.” I nod to him and he smirks.

“You too.” He pauses as he turns to look at a woman standing behind him. “This is Sadie, my wife. If you need anything, ask her.” She smiles at me as she nods.

“I’m sure it’ll be fine.” I say and the men turn to talk about something that sounds very logistical-y with how we’re going to get there.

“You never know.” Sadie shrugs as she steps over to me.

“There are a couple of other guys bringing their ol’ ladies. They’ll look to you for guidance.”

“Oh, we’re not...” I instantly try to backtrack from what she’s thinking when there’s a squeal from behind me and I see a flash as Ella comes over, nearly jumping onto her.

“Sorry.” Sadie laughs as she pushes Ella off.

“Yeah.” Ella laughs again. “We go way back.” She laughs again. “But she doesn’t have a property patch or anything.” Ella shrugs again, bluntly explaining the situation.

“She doesn’t?” Sadie’s eyes widen as it registers, and she looks back at Zane. “Oh, this is going to end terribly.”

“What is that supposed to mean?” I ask, looking from one woman to the other.

“Tatum.” Zane calls out from behind me as he nods towards his bike and I watch the other men, along with their ‘ol’ ladies’, walk back to the respective bikes. I get a close look at the back of their kutties as they make their way, and I tilt my head in confusion.

“Tatum.” Zane calls me for a second time, getting my attention, and I pause as Zane places the helmet on my head, strapping it underneath my chin. “You coming?” he asks, standing with the bike between his legs and I nod as I kick over the seat, straddling it myself, and we sit down simultaneously.

Wrapping my arms around his waist, I sit close to him as he starts the bike and we start off on the road once again. There are two men, one with another woman, who is wearing her own kutte, in front of us. Ro and Sadie are on the bike to our right, but just in front of us. Sadie catches my eyes, nodding her head.

We head through the desert, and then trek up the mountains, which seems like it takes forever. I can’t help but continuously look around us as we ride throughout the country. Once we’re out of California, we drive through Reno, and then there doesn’t seem to be anything for a long time.

I’m shocked when the men in front of us all pull off of the road, in the desert, in the fucking middle of nowhere.

“Why are we stopping?” I shout over to Zane and I can feel him chuckle underneath me.

“We’re camping for the night.” He laughs while he says it.

“Well, that would have been fucking nice to know before I decided to come along.”

He rolls the bike to a stop before looking behind himself as he looks at me. “And would that have swayed your decision?” He leans in close to me, resting the front of his helmet against mine, looking me in the eye. “Huh?”

“No.” I whisper and he smiles.

“Good.” He pulls the helmet off of his head.

“My ass has been sweating this entire time.” I say, making him laugh.

“Don’t worry, the sun’s going down. It’s about to cool off, significantly.” He nods his head again. “In an hour, you’re going to be crawling onto me to warm you up.”

“Doubtful.”

“Oh, yeah?” He smirks at me this time. “What’d you bet on it?”

“If I do, which I won’t. I’ll suck your dick.”

“And you wouldn’t do that otherwise?” He laughs as he looks at me again. I can’t help but smirk at him and shrug. “I see.” I watch as he contemplates it. “In front of whoever’s there.”

“What?”

“You’ll suck my dick, right there where ever we are.”

“Uhhhh.” I hesitate and he smirks, shrugging his shoulders.

Kicking off of the bike, he walks over to the van that has been following behind the group as they toss him a tent and he walks over, setting it up.

“You’re joking, right?” I finally walk over to him, yelling.

I can see his shoulders jump as he chuckles to himself and he

turns, looking up at me as he holds the pole he's about to shove into the ground. "Tatum, look if you don't want too, if you're afraid you'll lose—"

I laugh, cutting him off. "I'm not gonna lose."

Shoving the last pole into the ground, and a slight grunt comes out of him. I can't help but feel it throughout my entire body. "If you're too scared. You don't have to. All you have to do is admit and say out loud that I was right and you were wrong."

I grimace at him, rolling my eyes and it makes him laugh even louder as he stands up, somehow putting up the tent, which looks to be much bigger than I thought it would be, as we bicker.

"That's what I thought. Your choice."

"And when I don't need you to keep me warm?"

"Well then, psycho, I'll finally let you get off." The throbbing starts again. "And I'm sure you want that. I'm sure the bike vibrating between your thighs all day has made it hard to concentrate." He smirks, looking over before looking back at me and licking his lips. "I bet it wouldn't take you much right now to turn you into a babbling mess in my hands." He steps into me, his hands coming down and resting on my hips. "I bet your pussy is throbbing." I mean, now that he mentions it. "I can imagine your poor swollen little clit, just begging for me to bite it." I have to force my thigh together.

"That's not playing fair." I gasp out and he laughs.

"Come on, psycho, I won't ever play fair when it comes to you." He smirks at me, leaning in again and this time pressing his lips against mine.

The fire crackles in the dark as I walk back over to Zane with a drink for both of us in hand. He looks up, smiling at me as I sit down, handing him a can.

Something about Zane when he smiles. It lights up his entire face, which otherwise seems intimidating. I lean into him as he wraps his arm around me after opening her beer and swigging

some. The rowdy group around us jokes with one another. One is playing a guitar. There are a few of his brothers around him singing. A couple of guys seem to have a heated conversation about something. I'm not sure if it's going to turn into a fight or not. Axe and Ella went to bed a few minutes ago.

Ro and Sadie sit next to us, and I'm surprised to see her sitting in-between his thighs and if you look close enough, you can see him running the tips of his fingers just inside of the hem of her shorts, but almost as if they can hear me looking at them Sadie leans over and whispers something into Ro's ear, his eyes light up, nodding his head before they make their way back towards the tent.

"That's crazy." I mumble.

"What?" He looks at me, kicking his leg over the log and pulling in between them.

"They're just..." I trail off because I don't know the right word to use.

"In love?"

"Yeah. What is it about everyone here? They all seem infatuated with their partner. That's not real life."

He laughs, shrugging his shoulders. "I like to think that people eventually get a couple of happy chapters. If you're careful, you can hold on to them."

"That's really cheesy." I mumble, sipping my beer and he laughs again.

"What can I say?" He leans into me again. "Deep down, I'm a hopeless romantic, but shh, don't tell anyone."

"I think what you mean to say is that you're drunk."

"Maybe a little." He laughs again.

"Maybe enough that you won't remember saying that tomorrow."

"Nah, not that drunk." He shakes his head. "Just buzzed enough to say it out loud."

We sit around the fire for longer and I can feel the chill sinking through me. Zane's arm is still around me and I can't help as the shiver cuts through me.

"You cold?" He whispers into my ear, raising an eyebrow at me, causing me to shake my head, telling him no, that I'm not. "Liar." He laughs into my ear again. "I was just fucking with you, anyway." He tells me as he pulls over the blanket that sits to his side and wraps it around us, pulling me in even further.

I take a couple more sips on my beer as I look around the fire, seeing how not a single one of Zane's brothers are paying us any attention, in fact no one in the vicinity is even looking in our direction, except for one of the girls that I remember seeing last night at the clubhouse, one of the girls who was giving me a side eye. I can see in her eyes that she knows I don't belong here, and even if I couldn't see it her bluntness earlier, telling me it definitely did.

For some reason Ella and Sadie's words resinate in my head and I can't help but stand up quickly.



TATUM

Maybe I've drunk just enough to let my emotions flow freely, just as Zane had done earlier when he told me he was a hopeless romantic.

I step out of the way of the circle as I act like I'm going back over to grab another beer, but I keep walking away, just to clear my head.

"What's going on?"

"Nothing." I murmur to him, not wanting to admit it to him.

"Come on." I hear him walk closer towards me until he's standing right behind me. "Where's my psycho that tossed a body down a mineshaft and got tacos on the way home?"

I'm not sure if the scenario or his nickname for me makes me laugh more. "Sorry, it's stupid."

He scoots in behind me before wrapping me up in his arms.

"Come on, if we're going to be stuck together for the next 2 weeks, you've got to talk to me."

"Fine." I groan out. "The blonde out there."

"Who?"

"I dunno, some blonde chick out there. She was staring at me. And she was there last night as well. She told me earlier that I don't belong here... with you."

"She can get fucked." He mumbles to me, making me laugh.

“I think I know who you’re talking about. She’s been around the clubhouse for a bit. In my face some of the time.”

“And you’ve slept with her.” I hate how jealous I sound.

He lets out an awkward chuckle before I can feel him shrug.

“Honestly, I have no fucking clue. Probably.”

“Really? Are women just all a blur to you?” I don’t mean for it to come out as aggressive as it does.

“No.” He shakes his head. “But women who constantly throw themselves at me. Yeah. Have I gotten drunk, sometimes maybe high, and fucked a couple of them I can’t really remember? Yeah.” He shrugs again.

“Yes, such a romantic.” I can’t help but laugh out loud this time.

“I meant that earlier.” He spins me around until I’m looking up at him. “It’s just complicated, right now.”

“How so?” I ask him, looking up again.

He stares down at me again for a moment, a smirk inching across his lips before he shakes his head. Feeling his hands at my waistband before popping the button open and unzipping my shorts, slipping his hand underneath the fabric.

His fingers graze against my pussy, pressing pressure just in the right spot, bringing back the sensations that I was feeling earlier on the bike. A muted moan slips just past my lips.

“That’s right, my little psycho.” He whispers back to me as he presses me against the tree. “You want to come apart so bad for me, don’t you?”

I nod my head, answering him.

His finger tips press inside of me and I can feel his palm resting against my clit, as his lips bruise mine. His tongue slips past my lips and dips into my mouth. I can taste the bitterness of the beer he was drinking earlier as it lies flush against mine. His fingers working my core.

His rhythm is almost painfully slow.

His fingers leave me. I whimper out before I feel the cool air making contact with my ass as he pulls my shorts down.

He leans away, looking at me, and I'm sure the shock on my face. "Shh." He whispers, leaning in and nipping my neck. "No one's paying us any attention. And even if they were, I know you hate to admit you like it, and it's much darker out here than over there."

I'm stilled in shock as I look at him and he bits his lip. Sinking down my body until he's kneeling in front of me, pulling my foot out of my shorts, looking up at me again.

I expect him to stand back up as soon as my feet are free of my shorts, and fuck me right here until I'm collapsing around him.

I'm not expecting when he picks up my thigh, placing it over his shoulder, and looking up at me again. Time seems to slow down as our eyes lock.. I'm not sure if he's waiting for me to tell him to stop, and I'm not sure I want him to.

My eyes drop to his lips as his tongue comes out, sliding across them. He leans in, still seeing into what seems like my soul, as his tongue presses flat against me, licking me. My lips parting as my hand comes down, tangling in his hair. He finally breaks eye contact this time, lifting my left leg and placing that one on his shoulder as well. I'm straddling his face and wedged against the tree behind me. His mouth circling around my clit as he gently sucks it in, rolling it lightly between his teeth.

Releasing me, he brushes his tongue down me until he slips through my slit and my head rolls backwards as a moan slips out louder than I intended it to. But at this moment, I'm not sure anything could make me care.

A second moan slips out as I pull against his hair. I feel the vibration of his own groan. Tilting my head back, to look down at him. Wanting to seeing how exactly this entire moment looks, wanting to sear it into my memories. Only when my eyes open, they connect with the blonde from earlier. She looks just as surprised as I am, but it's apparent that she's

been watching for long enough.

Zane's lips pull away from me, and he grunts out. "Goddamn Tatum, your pussy tastes fucking amazing." He tells me, but I can't look down to see if he's looking at me. I just continue to look at the blonde standing just away from the fire. A brief puff of air causes the wetness between my thighs to become more apparent as I hear him chuckle to himself. "Tatum." His voice is demanding, but I'm still stuck in shock to pay much attention to him. Still staring at the girl who told me I didn't belong.

But if she wants to watch, give her a fucking show. I think to myself before I glance back down at him.

"Stay right here. Fuck everyone else." He whispers to me before the corner of his lip tilts back up and he dives in on my pussy, pressing his tongue against me again, bringing this hand up and slipping it inside of me, curling it in until he grazes against my inner walls.

"Fuck." I groan out as he instantly brings me back into the moment. My head flings back as my hands slide back into his hair, pulling his face closer to me. Each tug pleading with him not to stop, to push me over the edge.

Each lap of me, he groans out, thoroughly enjoying it himself.

It's not until I feel his hand leave my thigh, do I look down and finally notice the movement of it, realizing that in his moment, he's also working himself.

"Are you..." I gasp out as he replaces his fingers with his tongue, shoving it as far inside of me as possible. I can feel it moving inside of me. The breath from his groan warms across my inner thighs as he enjoys just as much as I am.

I can feel my walls beginning to tighten around his tongue. He's bringing me to the edge. I can almost taste the sweetness of the release that has been building all day. I'm mewling underneath his assault on my pussy.

Only a moment before I'm about to topple over the edge, he stops, pulling away from me, and slipping my legs off of his

shoulders.

I'm now standing in front of him, Winnie the Pooh style, stunned.

His hand still works himself as he stands in front of me. My mouth hanging open as I attempt to pull myself back together.

"What's wrong?" The smirk spreads on his face again.

"That's fucked up." I whimper out to him, making him laugh again.

"Oh, I know." He nods his head. "Wanna know what's even worse than that?"

"What?"

"You're about to get down on your knees, suck my cock, and I'm gonna cum on your face."

"I'm—" the raising of his eyebrow is all that I need before I sink down to my knees in front of him.

"Atta Girl." He growls out. I look up at him, now completely willing to do whatever he wants me to. Ironic, that's all it fucking takes.

Grabbing the back of my head, he presses his cock inside of my mouth, shoving it all the way back until I'm about to gag on it before it pulls away from me briefly and shoving it back inside.

"Look at my little psycho. Looks so fucking pretty with my cock in her mouth." He grunts as he thrusts his hips back towards me again, fucking my face how I want him to fuck me right now.

He has me so wound up and so fucking horny right now I can feel my own arousal dripping down my thighs.

"I know you can take all of my cock." He grunts out as he pushes himself back down my throat. I can feel it stretching me and I can't help but groan out as well. "That's it." He stills himself, not removing himself from stretching around him, and I have to remain calm. Don't panic just yet. I look up at

him, feeling the water trickling in my eyes. “Oh baby, does that hurt?” His hand slips from my hair as he caresses my cheek. I can’t nod my head, but I keep just looking up at him. “But you’re doing such a good job. Making me so fucking proud.” He smirks at him. The tears slip out just past my lids and I can feel them rolling down my cheeks. “It’s okay.” He whispers before he slips himself back out of my throat, pushing his hand back into my hair and pulling my head so his cock hits the back of my throat hard and I gag, having to focus to contain myself. “Goddamn.” He groans out before a laugh slips out. “You think she’s still there?” His words almost shock me as he slams himself into me harder. Another gag starts, and he continues to grunt out. “You think she’s watching us right now? Wishing that she was you. Or wishing that we would see her there and invite her over to join.” He pulls out and I look up at him, shocked, as he thrusts himself hard into his hand. I jump as I feel the warmth of his cum squirting onto my face.

My mouth still hangs open as he looks down at me. Reaching down, he holds out his hands to me, waiting for me to grab them, as I can feel it rolling down my face.

“Goddamn.” He whispers as I stand up in front of him.

I want to ask him what, but the words get stuck, still stunned by what just happened. I want to look to see if she’s still watching, but I can’t. I’m embarrassed about how I look at the moment, but as fucked as it all somehow turns me on as well, I have to squeeze my thighs together to relieve some of the still building pressure.

He steps into me and I feel his fingers graze up my thigh until it reaches my pussy, slipping his fingers inside of me.

“Fuck...” He groans out. “You are so fucking beautiful right now.” His eyes blaze like he didn’t just cum on me. “You feel it, don’t you?” he slips a second finger inside of me. Quickly, I shake my head. “No?” He pulls away, his fingers remaining inside of me, but they still. “Your pussy doesn’t lie.” He smirks at me before nodding his head. “What? Do you feel a little humiliated?” Slowly I look up at him, nodding my head, feeling the thick liquid reach my jaw, slipping down and

touching my neck. “I see. Do you hate that you like how it makes you feel? Cause I can feel your pussy clenching around me just from feeling my cum rolls down your neck.” He chuckles. “Yeah, just like that. And that’s not mentioning how you were just fucking dripping all over the ground.” He slips his fingers out of me as he leans down, picking up my panties and shorts, and holding them out for me to step into. Then bringing them up and buttons my shorts back into place. “Now we’re going to walk back to the tent.” I nod my head, starting to raise my hand up to clean my face. “No.” He shakes his head. “You’re going to walk back, just like that.”

“But...” I finally gasp out something.

“But what? Are you saying you don’t like to be humiliated? Because I beg to differ.”

I can feel my eyes widen and I watch as him attempt to control his mischievous smirk.

“I just...” I trail because I’m not even sure what to fucking say.

He leans into me, and for a moment I think he’s going to kiss me, but at the last second his thumb comes up, trailing the lines that the cum created down my face.

“Now, open your mouth.” He demands. Looking up, his one eye catches me off guard, showing the perfect contrast to him.

My mouth is open without even thinking of it as he slips his finger into my mouth and I can taste the salty substance as I swallow it.

“Atta girl.” He growls down at me as he nods back towards the fire.

I see her still standing in the same spot, stunned, as he wraps his arm around me, pulling me into his side and we walk back over to the fire.

Neither one of us pays her any attention as we pass, walking back over towards the fire and sitting back down in our spot.

We sit watching the crowd for a moment in our own brief

silence. We don't need to fill it with noise. He keeps me close to him, wrapping me back up with the blanket.

“Zane!” The one who introduced himself as Spyder last night shouts. He stumbles over to us, leaning over. “You two look so fucking cute over here.” He laughs again before his head tilts as he looks at me. “Tate.” He pauses, leaning in a little, his hand comes out and even Zane looks at him, questioning what the fuck he's doing.

At the last second before Spyder's finger touches my neck, Zane's eyes widen and he lets out a child-who-just-got-caught-doing-something-wrong laugh, instantly looking away from me and refusing to make eye contact.

And I know what the fuck it is, glaring over at Zane.

“Are you fucking kidding me?” I scoff out and Zane still refuses to look over but tries to reframe from laughing, but failing miserably.

“Wait...” Spyder starts, looking from each of us to the other before he cringes. “Is this...” He asks, but before he gets out his question, he gags.

Quickly moving his hand over to the ground, attempting to rub it off of his finger, he gags again.

“Get it off!” He shouts, scrubbing his hand against the sand. Gagging once more, making even more of a goddamn spectacle than it already fucking is.

“What's going on?” I hear one of his other brothers asking and I just want to fucking die.

...this is my living-fucking-hell.

“I got Prez's cum on my—” One more gag before Zane stands up.

“Bro, let's be serious, not the fucking first time.”

“Not the same thing.” Spyder shouts back.

I want to look over at Zane, questioning what he just said, but I am fucking mortified. Jumping up from where I am, making

a beeline for the tent as I quickly unzip it, crawling inside. I'm not even sure how I end up in the sleeping bag, pulling it up and covering my face.

I expect for him to come in after me, but he doesn't... and as my eyes close, and the tears prick at them. I can still hear the guys outside yelling about him.

I'll just stay here to die in my humiliation, thank you.

For a moment I contemplate defying him as my hand slides down my stomach and into my shorts. I can still feel my slickness from earlier as I rub myself.

Halting as I imagine his words. "Asshole."

Flipping over and staring against the opposite tent wall.



ZANE

I should have gone back to the tent when she went, but I felt bad. Seeing the embarrassment on her face. I don't know how to handle it when I feel bad because I haven't in so long and really I'm not supposed to... for many reasons.

I was the last one up before I crawled into the tent with her, and I'm still not convinced she was asleep, but I wrapped my arms around her and let myself fall asleep.



As I wake up, I already know that I'm alone, but I'm curious how she got out of the bag and tent without waking me. Pushing myself up off the ground, I unzip the flap, standing up outside as I pull up my jeans, buttoning them.

I see her standing next to the bike; her phone pressed up to her ear.

I can hear her as I approach.

"It's fine, trust me." She says into the receiver. "I know. I know. Not the smartest decision. I mean, I'm pretty sure he won't kill me. I spent like a week with him a few years ago..." I can't help but chuckle as I walk up. She hears me approach and looks over at me, smiling. Pulling the phone down a fraction, she groans. "My sister wants to know if you're going to stuff my body in a barrel filled with chemicals?"

I laugh out first. “I mean, if you’re in to that sort of thing.”

She smiles back at me and in this moment, and it seems like she has forgotten all of what happened last night.

“See... yeah, yeah, I’ll let you know when I’m on my way back.” She hangs up the phone.

“She telling you it’s a dumb idea to go half-way across the country with a man in an MC, you barely know.”

“Something like that.” She smiles at me before stepping in and kissing me once. Pulling away, I hesitate, looking at her, wanting to make sure that she’s okay.

“I’m—”

“Stop.” She cuts me off. “It’s fine. It was nothing. Although I have one question.”

I brace myself, waiting for what she’s going to ask. I can only fucking imagine.

“What did you mean by it wouldn’t be the first time?”

I laugh out loud and I almost don’t want to admit it to her. “There may have been a time or two where I have finished with someone and then...”

“Gross.” She laughs, shaking her head.

“Sounds a little judgy on your part.”

“It should, cause I am judging you.” She laughs again as her hand rubs down my bare torso. Something about her pulling me back in. She looks around the campsite and nods to me as I look back to where I just woke up from as the 2 prospects pack up the area, moving it into the back of the van, and I shrug.

“When are we heading out?”

“As soon as everyone wakes up.”

Glancing over, I see Axe move out of the tent, groaning. I can’t help but laugh again.

“I’m getting too fucking old for that shit.”

“Oh, come on, old man. You’re all good.”

“You’re only saying that because you haven’t seen El this morning.”

Tatum giggles from behind me. Making me laugh as well.

“She doesn’t like it anymore?”

“Just don’t make direct eye contact.” He jokes again, even with him saying a mostly serious joke about his wife. There’s still no doubt in any of our minds how he feels about her.

“And she’s never fucking liked it.”

I let out an abrupt laugh as Ella moves from the tent and, turning around, looking at Tatum and she buries her face into my chest. Trying to conceal her laughter at Ella’s disheveled appearance.

“Both of you are fucking assholes.” Ella grumbles out as she walks past us and towards the small coffee station that the prospects all set up.

When Ro and Sadie get up, they find us propped up by the bikes. It’s not long before we head back on the road.

The first bike week I ever went to was when I was 16. Dad brought Zeke and I. I was in-fucking-awe.

Now, it’s not as much fun. I mean, it’s something that we still do, and we always make a thing out of it, but it just doesn’t have the same sparkle to it, I guess, or I’m just jaded now.

Until I look at Tatum’s face, her eyes wide, taking in every detail as we move our bikes down the street to the house that the club rented out.

“We’re staying in here?” She gasps as we roll up into the driveway.

“Yeah. Well, most of us.”

“What does that mean?”

“It means you’re going to be inside with me. And I’m going to be inside of you.” I lean into her and watch as the blush spreads across her face. “Now, I think I owe you something.” I grin at her, picking her up, tossing her over my shoulder, and

can't help but love it when I hear her fucking squeal out.

I'm already up the stairs and rounding the corner as I hear anyone else through the front door. Pushing our way into the room, I fling her down onto the bed and she looks up at me. "Pants off, now." I tell her, causing her eyes to widen before she's unbuttoning them, pulling them off as I match her movements.

As soon as we're both stripped down, I move over to her, pressing her thighs apart as I lean over, kissing each one of them. Leaning closer to her, I look up as I press my tongue flat against her, licking up until I latch around her clit and suck.

Her body bucks against me, making my grin widen as I slip my fingers inside of her. My cock twitches at the sheer thought of her lips on it last night.

Letting her clit audibly pop out of my mouth as I trail my way back up her body, running my lips over her skin, yet continue to work my fingers into her.

She gasps as my tongue runs along her neck.

"You are so fucking wound up." I groan into her ear. "Your pussy is so fucking wet." I position the tip of my dick to rub against her clit with each minuscule movement.

"Fuck." She whimpers out.

"What?" I ask her, toying with her, pitching her nipple and making her squirm underneath me, trying to press harder against my cock to relive the pressure. "What is it?"

"Fuck me." Her eyes widen, begging me. "You were fucking right, okay?" She screams. "I swear to god, if you don't fuck me right now. I'm going to go out and find whoever is the first ___"

I shut her up by slamming myself inside of her and she groans out. Her pussy is already clenching, choking my cock. Her reaction to me does exactly what I thought it would. It fuels my fucking ego. I feel like a fucking god with her wrapped around me, the way her body reacts to mine. The way her eyes

lock on mine. There's just something about this fucking girl that gets to me. I've only seen her again for a few days but I can already feel her burring herself into me.

And I think somewhere deep down I know I shouldn't have brought her here. I know that I should have just pried that toll prick's hands off of her and taken her home. Seen that she was safe, it would have been enough to satisfy my mind, but my selfish side... well, he's the one who took her home. He's the one who invited her here. He's the one that's going to end up hurting this girl who is way too fucking good for him. He's the one who's obsessed with being buried as far inside of her as is possible. He hasn't been out in so long though, that I forgot what he looks like.

I think he may have left when she did.

Maybe that's why I'll always protect her, because she's that reminder of who I used to be. Who I was before I had to become this person. Who I have to force back and to hide behind the walls of my subconscious.

"Zane." Her whimpering my name brings me out of my thoughts as her back arches off of the bed. "Ah, fuck." She groans. Reaching down, her nails digging their way into the flesh on my ass, pulling me into her further.

Her eyes roll back into her head before I can feel the convulsions start around me. Her groans come out with vibrations as her hand clenches against my flesh harder. I'm positive that I'm going to have at the minimum red marks, but most likely scratches that are at least giving droplets of blood.

The stinging of her nails only fuels me, slamming into her faster, watching the building of her.

Suddenly she goes silent. The liquid that comes up spraying me surprises me at first, and I can't help but pause as I look down at her in complete awe, watching the complete euphoria, making her not give a shit about anything,

"Did you just squirt on me?" I gasp. Feeling even more like a god as her eyes widen with the realization of what happened

and her entire face reddens as she tries to push herself up the bed, away from me. “No, you don’t.” I grip onto her thighs, pulling her back towards me, holding her in place as she tries to cover her face.

Slamming back into her harder this time, and reaching up, gripping onto her arms and pulling them away from her face and onto the bed, framing her face, forcing her to look at me. “Look at me.” I raise my voice and her eyes widen. Thrusting into as I demand her. “That was the hottest thing I’ve ever fucking seen.” Slamming into her with each word. “Goddamn. Tatum. I was right.” I groan, smirking down at her as I continue to move inside of her.

“What’s?” She pauses as a moan eludes her. “Was that?”

“You inflate my fucking ego.” I can feel her tightening around me again, squeezing her eyes shut. Her body convulses once again and my eyes widen as I look down at her pussy, just waiting to watch it, not wanting to miss a second of it. Her entire body tenses around me as I continue to slam inside of her.

“That’s fucking right, psycho.” I groan to her, watching her body moving underneath me. “Let go. I want to see how much you’ve got. Fucking cover me.”

Her eyes open as she looks at me again as I feel her humming all around me and spraying me once again. My eyes rolling back into my head as I lose myself inside of her.

Finally stilling, I lean over her and smirk. She again tries to hide herself behind her own hands.

“Oh my god, that’s so fucking embarrassing.”

“Stop it.” I can’t help but laugh out, pulling her hands from her face. “Seriously, that was the hottest fucking thing.”

“You trying to tell me you’ve never had a girl do that before?”

“I mean, yeah, I have, but it wasn’t the same.”

“How was it not the same?”

“Because I didn’t want them to...” I tell her, looking down.

“Watch out there, fuccboi. That sounds like something awfully close to feelings.”

“I told you last time.” I can’t help but laugh. “We fuck really well together, and it’s as simple as that.” I can’t help but laugh again. “Although, now I kind of just want to keep edging you, so that happens more.”

“Fuck that.” She laughs out.



Most days here are much of the same. We go around, fucking around at vendors during the day, occasionally buy parts for the bikes, drinking, networking, and just pissing around. Tatum hangs close by at all of these things. She knows the right times to say something and to keep her mouth shut. Not that I really care what she says or who she says it to, but some of the older guys around here is a different story.. It’s like the longer that she’s around here, the more apparent it is she would completely fit in to my world. And that alone should scare me, but we still aren’t more and she hasn’t so much as hinted at making things more permanent. Which I feel like would be where most people are at with the time that we’ve spent together, but she’s never been like anyone else I’ve known.

If I was able to end up happy, I would consider trying to further things, but that’s not something that’s in my story.

I’m sure of that now.

If you look at things, I never had much of a choice in my life. I mean, sure; I love my life, and I choose to follow my dad’s path, but sometimes I can’t help but wonder if I wouldn’t have grown up in it. Would I still strive to be here? Who knows?

I choose this and I’ve known my whole life if this wasn’t something that I wanted, my dad would have never pressured me into it. It’s the same reason Zeke isn’t here, but he always knows that he has an open invitation to it. All he has to do is say the word.

Walking into the bar, it's more packed than they have been this entire time. Probably because it's the last night, there was a large concert earlier, and now everyone's funneling into the biggest bar, because it's a tourist thing to do.

And there's a lot of fucking tourists. A lot of fucking ones who don't fucking belong here. Many who want to play biker for the night.

Tatum walks to the bar from the table. It's about as far away from me as I'll let her get in a crowd like this. If she disappears into the abyss of people, there's no telling where she'll end up. That's more true than I wish to admit.

"Hey." Is whispered into my ear as I turn around, looking at the woman who I've never fucking met before.

"Hi." I almost do a double take at her. "Do I know fucking know you?"

"No, but you can." She smiles at me again.

"No thanks. I'm here with someone."

"Who?"

Glancing over, I see that Tatum's still standing at the bar with her back to us. "Her." I point.

"Oh, I can handle her."

"Please don't." I can't help but laugh again. "She knows where to hide the bodies." It's only funny to me because I'm aware of how much truth there is to the statement.

"Well, it looks like that handled itself." She laughs in my ear as her arms come around me, over my shoulders.

"What?" I snap. Glancing up, I'm stunned as I see a man standing at the bar with Tatum, leaning into her, whispering into her ear, and I think it enrages me more when she fucking laughs at whatever he's saying.

"The fuck?" I snap. I'm already up moving across the bar, without even thinking about what I'm doing. I vaguely hear the screeching of the stool behind before it topples over onto

the ground from behind me. I'm sure she is now lying on top of it. Through the red fog that fills my brain as I watch his arm come around her back, slipping his hand on top of her ass.

Grabbing a hold of his neck, I slam his head into the bar, and Tatum gasps as the entire bar goes silent, gawking up at me.

“Really, that was fucking dramatic.” She says, shaking her head at me. I just glare at her as the man under my hand groans and my brothers are behind me, ready to have my back.

“No, the fuck, it wasn't.” I snap at her, glaring.

“Seriously, bro, sorry I didn't know. She doesn't have a patch. That's fair game.”

Ella's fucking words echo around in my head.



TATUM

“Seriously, bro, sorry I didn’t know. She doesn’t have a patch. That’s fair game.” The man whom I was just giving a polite laugh at his poor joke says. Zane has his hand pinning the man’s head against the bar top, yet Zane’s eyes are glaring holes into me. With his demeanor, the blue in his eye darkens and he reaches over, gripping around my neck and pulling me hastily over to him, until I’m tripping over the man he has pinned to the bar, but he doesn’t loosen his grip... on either of us, pulling me closer into him.

“You haven’t even fucking seen dramatic.”

“This seems to be something that doesn’t involve me!” Comes from below us. Zane doesn’t even look down at him, just lifts him up by his neck before slamming his face back into the bar top, stilling him again.

I can’t help but smirk back at him. “What are you going to do, fuck me right here, like a goddamn caveman?”

“Do. Not. Tempt. Me.”

“I already told you before. Maybe I’m in to that...”

His eyes somehow darken more.

I gasp as I’m suddenly looking at the floor over Zane’s shoulder as the surrounding ground is moving. The man’s friends finally make it over to him as he still lies overtop the bar, not moving, and I feel like I would have known if he

would have killed someone just now.

“Maybe we should stop ever coming around one another, since you seem to kill someone every time.” I laugh as the door shuts behind us and I now see the sidewalk underneath his boots as he moves.

He laughs from underneath me. “He’s not dead.”

“Are you sure about that?” I wheeze out as best as I can with my stomach bouncing off of his shoulder. I gasp out as he slaps my ass.

“Yes.” I watch him kick over the bike.

“What are you doing?” I shout, trying to move off, but the ground moves from underneath the bike. “Zane, what the fuck!” I shout again and even though I can’t hear it, I can feel the menacing laugh come from underneath me. I’m stunned as the bike picks up speed.

My entire body stills.

I watch the white lines move to the side as he turns right and a few cars behind us honk. I’m sure at what I’m positive is my ass hanging out of my dress, or just the complete fucking absurdity of the situation.

I don’t move again until I see the driveway underneath us, although he has already killed the engine and is standing up before I thrash around again.

“Stop it.” He growls at me. “Stop acting so fucking tough, like I can fucking smell how hot you think all of this is.”

My whole body stills again.

The door slams behind him as we walk into the house and I hear the couple of prospects come into the room.

“Why the fuck are you in here?” He snaps at them, shouting, before I see their shoes turning around and them leaving again.

He moves up the stairs towards the room, the door opens, slams shut, and he slings me onto the bed, hard.

“Ow.” I whimper, almost embarrassed that it slightly hurt. When I look back up at him, I still see the anger in his eyes and my mouth drops as the recognition forms. “Wait, you’re really mad about that?”

“What, you think you can make me look like a fucking idiot and I’ll just what... think it’s cute and fun?”

“Okay.” I roll my eyes as I roll off of the bed, walking into the bathroom. “That’s fucking rich.”

“Seriously, Tatum.” He snaps at me, grabbing a hold of my arm and pressing me into the wall. “I told you that you were here with me. Which means that you can’t just fuck anyone else.”

“Seriously?” I shout at him, pushing off of the wall, shoving him away from me with my body and spinning around.

“You’re fucking serious right now? I was trying to be fucking nice to him. He was saying something to me, so I gave him a pity laugh as you were over there, eye-fucking whatever chick was hanging all over you.”

He blinks as he looks down at me, his eyes seeming to search my face. His lips slam down to mine and his entire body presses me into the wall. His hands sliding up my dress as they slide up my thighs.

“What the fuck?” I snap as I shove him off of me. “You just caveman-ed me out of the bar, drove me down the street over your shoulder with my ass hanging out, screaming at me, and then just kiss me. What the hell is wrong with you?”

“You were jealous.” He smirks down at me.

“What, no?”

“Don’t lie. You were jealous cause you thought I was hitting on her. So you wanted to make me jealous.” He pulls his lips far enough away from me so that I can look up at him. “But had you just asked, I would have told you I was trying to explain to her that going to clear things up with you would be a terrible idea.”

“What?” I’m stunned as I continue to look up at him.

“I wasn’t hitting on her, I was warning her...”

“Warning her about what?”

“About hitting on me.” I just look up at him, surprised.

“Because you know where to hide the bodies, which is why I left her lying on the ground, face-planted into a chair.”

If I wasn’t in shock right now, I would be laughing. Somehow, I had forgotten about the look on her face as she toppled over the front of it.

Zane’s hand trails up my thigh and my breathing escalates.

We’re both just drunk enough to let the jealousy show.

He leans into me. I can smell the whisky on his breath. “Now, I’m gonna fuck you like I own you.” He shoves me back against the wall again. Gripping down onto my thighs and picking me up.

Parting my thighs and wrapping them around his body, I can feel his dick pressing into me through his jeans.

My hands falling down to his waistband, I fight with it as I’m trying to undo his belt and try to free his cock.

As soon as his jeans fall down his legs, he slips my panties to the side, slamming into me. My hips bounce off of the wall behind me as I loud moan comes out.

“That’s right, psycho. Let everyone fucking know.” He growls out into my ear.

I feel the friction that’s created as I grate my nails across his flesh. I’m sure giving him a similar wound to the ones that are nearly healed from when we first got here.

“Fuck.” He hisses out as I get a glance into the mirror behind him and see the blood droplets form under my nails as his ass squeezes with each thrust into me. “You drive me fucking crazy. You know that, right?” He asks. He pulls away from me, looking at me and shaking his head.

Nodding my head as I smirk.

“You try to drive me crazy, don’t you?”

Nodding once more.

A deep laugh rolls out of him as he leans in, right next to my ear, and starts again. “Tatum, don’t you know it’s not a good idea to make a man like me jealous?”

“Please.” I pull away, so I’m able to look him in the eyes as I say it. “Deep down you’re really a romantic.”

His thrusts into me slow as he studies my face, slowly pressing inside of me. A sly smirk comes onto his face before he’s lifting me off of the wall, somehow walking back over to the bed.

He’s not demanding this time, but gentle as he rotates us, sitting down with my legs still wrapped around him. He tugs them, bringing them to his sides, and he lies back, pulling me over top of him as he claims my lips.

His kiss isn’t forceful either. We create a slow, steady rhythm before I can feel him tensing underneath me.

Pulling away, I look down at him. Locking eyes, and I hear that same siren start in the back of my head, telling me to fucking run, but I don’t.

I keep my eyes locked with his, with him every beat before we’re panting, lying in the bed, staring at one another.

What the fuck just happened?

The sun shines into the room and even though my head is pounding, it’s not what doesn’t feel right. Looking around, I jump as I see one of the prospects leaning against the doorframe that leads out of the room.

“Good, you’re awake.” He groans out, shaking his head as I pull the sheet up over my tits.

“Where’s Zane?” I ask him, looking around the room and seeing his bag is gone.

The prospect has an attitude as he shrugs and just looks back at me. “Not sure.” He walks over to me, handing me a sheet of paper, and nods again. “Get up, though we gotta go.”

“Where are we going?” I ask him, but instead of answering me he just turns, walking out of the room, shutting the door behind himself. Rolling over, I pull my phone off of the nightstand and I pause.

How the fuck did I leave with him for 2 weeks and not once did I even think about getting his number?

I just stare at the door for a moment before I sigh out, unfolding the sheet of paper.

“ARE YOU FUCKING KIDDING ME?” I shout out loud. I’m sure that the man who just walked out of the room can hear me, and I’m also sure that he has no doubt what is going on. Which embarrasses me even more.



I don’t say a single word from Sturgis to Rapid City. I just sit, staring out of the van window, watching the trees pass me by.

When we finally pull into the parking lot, he stops the van, shifting it into park and opens his door, walking around to the back and pulling out my bag. I force myself out of the van. He gives me a slight look of pity before he rolls the bag to me.

“Before you go, what was his number again? Just, you know, to let him know I get home alright.”

He sighs, looking up at me, and shakes his head. “For the record, I think he’s being a fucking idiot.” I pause as I just keep looking up at him. “You can’t ever tell him I said that, though.”

“Why?”

“Why what?” He shakes his head, laughing. “You know why you can’t tell him that.”

I shake my head, angry that I feel like crying. “I mean, clearly it doesn’t look like I’m ever going to see him again.”

“I wouldn’t be too sure about that.”

“Why do you think he’s being an idiot?”

“You know why.” He laughs, shaking this head. “You scare him. And he ran.”

“I don’t scare him.” I shake my head.

“Yes, you do. He’s not ready for what you would mean.”

“We’re just friends.”

He laughs loud this time as he looks at me. “Sure, that’s why you’re totally not pissed off that he left you in South Dakota with a way home that wasn’t him, right?”

“That’s different...” I snap at him. “He left me states away from home.”

“With a plane ticket and a way to get to the airport.” He just shakes his head, walking back around the van.

“Thank you.” I call out to him and he nods his head.

“It’s my job.” He nods again before he gets back into the van and heads out of the parking lot.



I’m not sure why I rode out here this morning. I told the rest of the club to leave. Told Linc to fucking take her to the airport. I should have just fucking left when the rest of the club did, but I found myself veering off in the opposite direction and sitting here in the parking lot, to make sure she goes into the airport. At least that’s what I try to convince myself of.

As soon as I woke up this morning, last night came flooding back to me. The emotions that we both showed already had me ready to bolt, but when I realized we had fucked sans-protection. I completely freaked. Bolting out as quickly as possible.

I don’t do that.

Or at least in any situations that doesn't include Tatum... I don't do that. I pretended for years that I was remembering the night on the office floor wrong.

Linc talks with her for a moment and my fucking blood boils. He knows fucking better than to do that. He drives off, and she stands, staring off after him. For a moment I'm afraid that she will be able to see me in the car that I jimmed the lock open and slipped inside to hide. She moves her hands up in a frustrated motion before she lightly smacks her forehead with one and I watch her mouth as she says, *you're so fucking stupid*.

I feel a slight twinge in my gut as I see it all, especially as she reaches over, snatching her suitcase to her, and she swipes tears off of her cheeks.

As soon as she disappears behind the doors, I'm pushing myself out of the car, slamming the lock down and flinging it closed. Running across the parking lot, I make it to my bike, kicking over and peeling out of the parking lot.

Rage runs up through my body as I see the van up ahead and I pull back the throttle, catapulting myself forward until I'm matching its speed.

I'm off of my bike before it's slowed down at the light and I'm pulling Linc out of the van, pinning him against the van.

“WHAT THE FUCK DID YOU SAY TO HER?”

“Why are you here?” He says entirely too calmly, just simply raising his eyebrow.

“What?” I shout at him again.

“You're supposed to be in Wyoming. Why are you here?”

I'm seeing red as he just stares back at me, unfazed.

I yell out as I swing on him, but get my rage in check in the last possible second, shifting and slamming my force into the side of the van, the metal giving slightly from it.

Letting go of him, I turn around, breathing fast as I glance

around.

“Brotha, put your bike in the back and let’s go. You told her to leave, now you have to fucking deal with that shit.”

I glance back at him, glaring.

“Yeah, I get it. Take it out on me.”

He knows that I’m only letting him talk like this to me because we’re fucking family.

But I listen to him and he helps me put the bike into the back, securing it into place and then moving into the front.

I’m staring out the window just as Tatum was doing when they pulled up.

“She was asking for your number to let you know she gets back alright.”

“That’s not why she wanted it.” I mumble out, making him nod.

“I gathered that much.”

“What else did you say?” I turn, looking at him.

“Told her I thought you were a fucking idiot, but for her to never tell you, I said that.”

It actually makes me laugh out loud.

“I stand by that, though.” He glances back over at me, still not showing any sort of expression. And I don’t vocally agree with him, even if the little voice in my head is. “You ever gonna let yourself be happy?” He asks me as he comes to a stop again, looking over. He stares for a while before he shakes his head. “You don’t have to answer, but you should definitely think it over.”

“I am happy.” I seethe out, lying through my fucking teeth.

“Sure you are.” He nods his head again.



TATUM

—1 year later—

It was a spur-of-the-moment decision to pull into the parking lot of the bar, but I did anyway. Today was an exceptionally bad day at work so I need to unsee the things that happened, which means I need to befriend a glass of whisky.

Because all in all, I'm still a whiskey girl.

The bar is outside of the city, and halfway between my house and the site I was working at today. I fall onto the barstool and then lean my head into my hands until the bartender comes over. I smile as I start, “whiskey double.” It’s only a couple of moments before the small drink is sitting in front of me.

A man talking off to the side in a condescending tone, and I don’t even need to watch the conversation for it to piss me off. Flashes of Leon coming back.

When the red hair catches my attention. I’m up, moving across the room before I realize it, but I am moving with my drink in hand. I down the last bit of it and place on the bar.

I walk towards the bathroom when she falls over and knocks her purse onto the floor and her phone slides across the floor.

She’s too fucked up to even notice that her purse has fallen.

Crouching down, I pick it up before turning around and starting out the door. Stopping first and whispering to the bartender. “Don’t let them leave.” He nods.

The sun is setting when I step outside, lifting her phone until it shows the lock screen.

“Please...” I whisper to myself as I press the emergency button, then the medical ID button. “Please be in here.” I whisper again as I take a deep breath when I see multiple contacts, but press Zane’s name as soon as my eyes land on it.

“Drew, let me call you back.”

I hear him say as I punch in his number into my phone, just in case. “Zane.” I gasp out. As fucked as this whole situation is, I can’t help but feel my stomach tightening just at the sound of his voice.

I can hear him hush someone through the phone. “This isn’t Drew. Who the fuck is this?” His voice completely changing through the sentence, and I imagine him getting up and pacing around his office. I’m assuming that he’s only asking me who it is to verify who he already believes it to be. At least, that’s what I’m hoping he’s doing.

“It’s Tatum.”

“Why do you have my sister’s phone?” He doesn’t sound surprised.

I should talk faster, but I’m not worried about them leaving just yet... and of course, as soon as I think that, the door to the bar opens up behind me.

“Fuck.” I snap out as I see him dragging her in the opposite direction of where I am.

“Tatum!” I can hear him shout into the phone as I rush towards them.

“Wait, can you help me?” I’m shouting at the piece of shit who has his arm around her like he’s trying to help keep her stable.

“Do you know...”

“No.” He snaps back as I continue to run over towards him.

“I just need directions...”

“I’m not from here.”

“Is she okay?” I ask him.

“Yes.” He glares back at me.

“Are you sure, because it looks like...”

“Look,” He shouts as he turns around and she trips over her own feet, falling into the side of the car he’s standing in front of. “Mind you own fucking business, my girlfriend’s just had a bit to drink.”

I glance back at her again and her eyes open as she’s squinting, looking at me, and I can see in her eyes that she recognizes me, but she can’t remember where from. “Drew!” I call out to her and I see his eyes as he realizes I know her.

My head smacks the wall behind me as he shoves me away and I have to shake my head a couple of times to keep from blacking out, focusing. He’s backing out of the spot as I finally stabilize myself and I rush over to my car, flinging the door open, and turning the engine over. I can hear Zane shouting from where the phone is at in my lap.

“Where the fuck are you?” Zane shouts into the phone as I press it back against my ear. “What the fuck is going on?”

“I’m sending you my location. I’m following them. I’m right behind them.” I share my location with him from my cell phone

“Tatum, please don’t lose them.” His use of the word please shocks me.

I can’t help but chuckle. “I won’t.”



Bumper to bumper cars is all I see as we come flying around the turn. I split the lanes to weave through the cars, but I can already see the smoke.

“No, no, no.” I whisper to myself as I pull back on the throttle,

propel myself forward, putting distance between myself and the rest of the club. I know that Axe and the rest of the guys are behind me as we get closer to the smoke cloud. Swerving between 2 cars, moving onto the shoulder of the road, and I speed as fast as I can go until I see the cars. A car, I already recognize the white Volkswagen as being Tatum's car, is T-boned.

As we approach the scene, I watch a man exit the car. I'm guessing that from the force of the collision, it took him a moment to realize what happened. He's walking over to Tatum's car, he's eyeing her and shouting. I can't hear what he's saying, but I know that he's pissed. When he hears the bikes approaching and he looks over at me. I rushed out of the office and sped out of the parking lot so fast that my helmet was still on the ground there. So, when he looks at me, our eyes lock.

"I'm going to fucking kill you." I shout at him, even though I know there's no way he can hear me, but by the look in his eyes I can tell he knows what I'm saying.

He looks around quickly before he runs away from the scene. I motion back to the prospect and my enforcer as they speed off after him. Nitro and Axe both jump off of their bikes with me and I look over at them, torn between who to go to.

Which I shouldn't be. It's Drew, and I've only met Tatum twice.

Axe is already in the car, checking Drew when he nods over to the other car. He somehow already knows what's happening. I hesitate before I pivot and pull the passenger side of her car open. I hear the sirens approaching in the background, but I am trying not to focus on the smoke which is still coming from the engine.

Fire's eminent, I already know that.

She's lying limp in the seat, her head slung to the left, rest against the window, and her mouth agape.

"Tatum." I reach over, pressing my fingers to her neck and

sighing at the pulse. “Tatum. Come on, wake up.” The blood trickles down her face, dripping onto her jeans and the floorboard of the car. I watch her eyes moving under their lids. “Tatum, baby. Look at me.” Her eyes flutter open, barely, but our surroundings light up more and the flame from the engine of the other car catches my attention. “Look at me, okay.” She nods her head. “We’ve got to get you out of here. I need you to help, okay? It’s probably going to hurt, but...” I trail as I continue to look at her. “Then you can go back to sleep. Can you do that?” I’m whispering to her and she nods again. “Wrap your arms around my neck.”

One arm comes out, reaching around me, but then she gasps. “I can’t...”

“That’s fine.” I whisper to her, glancing up and seeing the fire spreading over to where we are. The sirens are even louder now. I’m sure they’re pulling up. I, as gently as possible, wrap my one arm around her back and the other underneath her legs and slowly slide her across the center console.

“Hurts.” She gasps as she rolls into me.

“I know, psycho, I know.” My voice gets caught in my throat.

Somehow, I lift her up over the console and get her out of the car when the fire spreads over to her car. Turning around, I’m carrying her over to the bikes where Axe has sat Drew down on his.

“Do you think you can stand up?” I ask her, but I don’t receive a response. When I look down, I can see her eyes closed. Her head slumped against my chest and her arm hangs limp.

Axe glances up at me, reaching an arm out until his hand lands on me, and nods. “Ambulance is here. Take her to them, send one over for Drew.” I nod my head as he keeps me stable for a moment, and then I move over to the paramedics.

“My sister, she’s over there. She needs... something...” The paramedic looks up at me, confused. “She was in the other car. Someone might have slipped her something, I’m not sure though.”

“Well, well,” I hear come from behind me as the paramedic helps me place Tate on the gurney. “If it isn’t my favorite group of felons.”

I can’t help but roll my eyes already, but it somehow also makes me laugh, turning around and seeing Elias Leach smirking over at me. “If it isn’t deputy save-a-life.”

“Funny.” He starts again, but I’m really not in the mood to hear this shit. “Yet another time that there’s some sort of crime and our friendly neighborhood gang is in attendance.”

“It’s my sister.” I point over to where the paramedic is looking at Drew. “And my girl. So, yeah, I’m going to fucking be here.”

He looks past me to the inside of the ambulance and tilts his head as confusion fills his face.

“It looks like she’s been drugged.” The paramedic tells me as he walks closer. “She should go to the hospital to be observed.”

“Yeah.” I nod again before turning back to look at Eli. “Look, do you want me to tell you what really happened, or do you want me to tell you just enough to fill out paperwork?” He rolls his eyes like he thinks I’m exaggerating. “The man who drugged Drew was driving the car. Tatum followed them. She hung up the phone before anything really happened, but sent me her location.”

“So, where is he?” He laughs, throwing his hands out and looking around.

I shrug my shoulders. “He saw me as I rode up, panicked, and he ran off as we were pulling up.”

“Why’d he run?”

“Come on, Eli. You know why? He knew what I’d do if I got my hands on him.”

“And what?” He laughs, looking back at me. “You just let him go after he supposedly drugged your sister.”

“Don’t ask questions you don’t want to know the answers to.” I whisper to him so that if he’s recording it, somehow it won’t really be able to pick it up. He shakes his head, attempting to tell me not to talk, just yet.

His eyes widen as he understands what I’m saying. I glance down at it and he nods his head, reaching up and turning it off.

“You have him, don’t you?”

“I’m not sure.”

“But you will?”

“Yes.”

“Let me arrest him. We can try him send him to jail.”

It makes me laugh as I shake my head. “So what? They sentence him to 3 years, serve a year and a half and get out for good behavior. If he even gets sentenced, if they don’t go up there and try to discredit anything my sister says... make her look guilty for what happened simply because of who her dad was and who her brother is.” I shake my head as I look back at the paramedic as he walks Drew to the ambulance. “Tell me, with those odds, would you put Becca through that?” I guess it’s the benefit of graduating with the deputy knowing who his sister is. Eli and I were friends. His sister liked me, I knew that, but never did I let her get too close to me. “Or would you phone an old friend and ask him to take care of it for you?”

He stands, staring at me, unimpressed, but also conflicted.

“We’re getting ready to go.” The paramedic calls from behind me and I nod my head, before glancing back at Drew, who looks up at me and looks so much like mom at the moment and it breaks my fucking heart.

“Please.” She whispers from behind me. And I nod my head, looking from her to Tatum and immediately crawling up into the ambulance and moving over to her as I look out at Axe and he nods back, telling me he has my bike.

When I sit down next to Drew, she bursts into tears. “Shit.” I whisper before I pull her into me to comfort her.



TATUM

I can hear the beeping first and I can smell the sterile environment.

“Hey.” I hear someone call into my room and I’m about to open my eyes when I hear another respond.

“What do you want?” I know it’s Zane, and I remembering dreaming about him calling out to me from a distance. “If this is about earlier man, you already agreed to it. It’s set in motion.”

“Nah, it’s not that. It’s something you said.” I’m finally able to place the voice as Elias’s.

“What?”

“She doesn’t have a boyfriend.”

“I never said that she did.”

“You said—”

“I know what the fuck I said.” Zane snaps back.

“Then what did you mean?” There’s a long pause and I’m curious now what it is Zane said. “Oh shit, I thought the rumors were just that, but... didn’t realize it was her.”

“Get the fuck out.”

Elias laughs. “One other thing.”

“What?” I can hear the patience in Zane’s voice tested.

“What you said about calling an old friend...” he trails off and I’m more curious what it is he’s asking.

“Come on Eli, you know I’m never opposed to cops owing me favors.” There’s a long pause. “Fine.” Zane finally says quietly. “You know I would do it, regardless.”

I open my eyes as I see Elias walk out of the room. All I can see is the back of Zane’s kutte.

“What was that all about, fuccboi?” It comes out in a whisper cause it’s been so long since I’ve spoken last, but it still causes him to spin around as he looked at me with a surprised face. “How’s Drew?”

“She’s okay, but she’ll be fine. They released her this morning, kept her overnight for some observations. She’s home, Ella’s with her.”

“I’m glad she’s okay.”

“I can’t even think of what would have happened if you wouldn’t have been there.” I watch his nostrils flare as he says it.

“I’m glad I was.”

He walks across the room and sits down in the chair, leaning over, placing his forearms on the bed and looking at me. “I’ll never be able to repay you for what you’ve done.” He reaches over, lacing his fingers with mine.

“I didn’t do it for you.” He bites his lip and nods his head, knowing that I’m right. “No one should have to go through that. And men who feel like they can just do whatever the fuck they want...” I stop myself, taking a deep breath. “What was he meaning?” nodding back towards where Elias just left from.

I try not to laugh when I watch the tough biker’s face turn red.

“What did you hear?”

“Oh... it’s like that. Did you say that you were—”

“No, fuck...” He laughs, rubbing his other hand along the

back of his neck. “I called you my girl.”

“Oh.” I gasp as a look of unease spreads across his face.

“Because... you are. And I know that doesn’t make any sense. We barely know each other, but...”

“I feel like you know me more than most people do.” I look away, almost ashamed of what I’m going to say next. I feel him stand and move closer to me, sitting down next to me on the bed and his hand moves my head to look up at him.

“What? Say it.”

“I know it sounds insane.”

“Believe me, I’m sure it doesn’t.” His eyes seer into me.

“I know we’ve only spent a few weeks together total in like 5 years, but I feel like I was able to be myself more in that time than with anyone else... maybe in my entire life.” His face reflects the fear that is pounding through me at the moment. I hate that I admitted that out loud. “Haha. I’m a little high right now.”

“Well, I’m going to say this, hoping you don’t remember it. When he came up, he asked why I was there and I told him it involved my sister and my girl.”

“Your girl, huh?”

He laughs, his face turning red again. “Look, in our real fucked up way, you are. It’s why whenever we see one another it’s not just a night... we’re there for days, weeks maybe.”

“And then we both get scared.”

“Exactly.” His other hand comes up covering where ours connect. “I’m scared, I’m going to get you hurt.”

“Uh, Zane, I think I get myself hurt all on my own... look around.”

“But you did this for my family.”

“No, I did this for Drew.”

“I think you may be just high because Drew is my family.”

“I mean, I know that.” I trip over my words. “I called you because I knew you could come down there and deal with it. When they left. I couldn’t let him take off with her.”

He laughs as he looks away and then back at me. “Did you swerve your car in front of his to stop him?”

I can’t help but laugh as I just look at him and grimace.

“You’re psychotic.”

“I mean, I think most people can figure that out solely based on our relationship.” I watch a smile spread across his lips and he nods his head, leaning into me and kissing me.



Zane waits with me at the hospital until I’m discharged. He helps me up into a truck before he drives me back to my house.

I can’t help but chuckle to myself as we pull into the drive. Just thinking about how last time he had admitted to me he watched me and this time I never even had to give him my new address... I should probably be concerned about it, but for some reason, I’m not.

“Seeing you in a truck is weird.” I tell him. He laughs out as he looks at me.

“It’s weird for me too.”

“How long has it been?”

“I dunno, try not to anymore.” He shrugs before looking at me and smirking. “I’m gonna stay with you for a couple of days.” I should find it slightly worrisome that he’s not asking me, instead telling that’s what is going to happen.

“And what if I don’t want you to?”

“Too bad. You have to have someone make sure you’re okay.” He doesn’t look over at me as he pulls the truck up into my driveway.

Just as before, almost as soon as we step inside my house, and

it's just him and me, we fall into some sort of calm rhythm. He does a few errands for the club here and there, but for the most part, he remains around my house with me. He makes sure I eat, most of the time ordering out, and helps me with freeing my arm out of the sling to shower. The first time he asked me if I wanted help, and even though I said no, he waited outside of it as if just to make sure. It wasn't that difficult since I didn't have to wash my hair.

The second shower I took, I decided not to wash my hair again, because I knew it would just be too much. And just as before, he sat outside of the shower, talking with me, just to keep me company.

Today is different because it's been too long. I need to wash it and honestly, I need to shave as well, plus I'm pretty sure it's given my shoulder enough time to heal.

Zane is careful with me as he lifts the strap up over my head.

"I can get it." It comes out as an unintended whisper as I look up at him.

"I know, I like to." His eyes lighten as he says it. The brown becoming more of an amber color. He next helps me remove my shirt and jeans. This time, for some reason, feeling more intimate than any of the others, maybe it's just the time that we have been spending together. He turns as I stand in front of the mirror, naked, and flicks on the water.

I reach up with my left hand and pull the hair tie from it and watch as it lays in creases from being up for so long.

He turns, leaving the bathroom as his phone rings and I feel like I can breathe again. Stepping into the shower in private.

I'm surprised when I hear the shower shut behind me and can already feel his presence radiating into my flesh. I force the shiver away when his hands come up and brush against my skin.

Glancing over my shoulder and looking up at him, I gasp. Something about the water rolling down his body with him standing so close to me... the droplets making the ink standout

more drastically against his skin, it's causing the rules to become foggy in my brain. "What are you doing?" I finally ask him and watch his tongue skirt out of his mouth and lightly graze his lower lip. I want to reach up and follow its trail with my own tongue.

"You can't wash your hair with your arm right now." He nods down at my right arm.

"I'll be fine." I try to put as much distance between us, shaking my head to make any emotion I have disappear.

"Tatum." His voice is so low as it rumbles in my ear and to my core. "Stop being so goddamn stubborn." He laughs out a puff of air, which rolls its way across my neck.

"Fine."

He picks up the shampoo and squirts out some into his hands before he's lathering it up and massaging it into my hair. The way his fingers work it onto my scalp makes my eyes roll back into my head. Scolding myself and making sure I don't let out an audible moan. Fuck, this man, I've fucked him more times than maybe anyone and he's given me some of the best orgasms in my life, yet somehow, this is more fucking intimate, and maybe more erotic than all of that.

"Rinse." He whispers into my ear, immediately causing me to turn around and face him as I lift my head up, allowing the water to rinse the suds from it. My eyes open, falling directly to his, and I watch as they ignite.

And we both purposefully ignore his hardening dick between us. Then he smirks as he twirls his finger around, telling me to turn again.

I follow, but not before I start again. "I can do it, you don't have—" I'm cut off as he pushes my head backwards, shoving it under the stream of water. I pull my face out as his hand releases me and gasp, looking back at him. "Did you just fucking waterboard me?"

"I wouldn't have to if you just did what you were told." He cocks an eyebrow at me this time.

“Well, if you think I’m going to do that, then you don’t know me very well, do you?”

“I think we both know how well we know each another.” He steps into me, leaning his head down. “Like I know, right now, if I run my hand up your thigh, your pussy will be begging for me.” His hair mats to his head as he steps in closer to me. “And goddamn, I want to fuck you right now, but...”

“But you’re too much of a pussy to?”

A smirk twitches on his lips as his hand comes up quickly, gripping into my hair and pulling me in to him, slamming his lips down onto mine. His hands coming down and cupping my ass, lifting me up until I’m level with him and pressing me against the wall beside us. Pulling away from me for a moment, leaning his forehead against mine, and whispering. “You don’t need to move at all. I’ve got you.” His eyes coming up as he looks at me and he becomes serious, a slight of emotion filling his face. “I’ve always got you.”

His lips fall back down to mine before I can respond, and I lift my left arm, slinging it across his shoulders and resting my right against his torso. His kiss slows down, passion radiating through both of us as he gently slips inside of me. His hand rising until he’s caressing my face, easing my face to match his. His thrusts inside remain steady, taking their time with me.

He pulls back and looks down as if he wants to take in every inch of this moment, as if he never wants to forget it.

My heart slams into my ears as his eyes lock with mine, and I swear they show the same emotion that I’m feeling.

The one rule we made. But maybe this time is different, maybe realizing that after all this time we keep coming back to one another is enough for us to... I don’t know, do something.

I’m about to say something to him about it when he presses his hips all the way inside of me, and his hand comes down, his thumb brushing against my clit and my body vibrates around me.

“Fuck.” He groans out. “I love the way your pussy grips a hold

of me.” His eyes coming back to me as soon as he finishes his statement.

In the bubble of our steam, we’re just two people, Tatum and Zane, no outside personas that we must adhere to, no rules, no trauma, no baggage... just us.

His other hand grips onto my hip, stilling me from trying to move as he continues to press me against the wall, each thrust methodical, but desperate.

I watch as every muscle in his body tenses and I know that it’s only moments before he’s going to be releasing, yet he continues to move circles along my clit.

“Cum for me, my little psycho.” He groans in my ear. “I want to feel you cum on my cock.” His words sending me over the edge as my body convulses around him.

Quickly he pulls out of me, sits me down, pumping his fist over himself, watching him stroking himself, turns me on once more.

His body cages me onto the wall after he coats the surrounding walls, and he attempts to catch his breath once more. When his eyes come back up to mine, they’re hidden behind his wall again as he nods, stepping away from me and positioning me back in front of him. I hear him pick up the conditioner and feel him working it into my hair.

“Rinse.” He repeats himself and I turn around, this time not arguing with him at all.

I quickly finish showering, washing myself and exiting the shower as he does the same.

I’m sitting on my bed when he comes out, the towel low around his hips, and I look up at him.

“You going to sleep?”

I can’t answer, so I just nod my head. I’m ready for today to be over, because the line which we just crossed, even though on the surface, is just the same as we’ve always done. There’s something much deeper about it.

He crawls into the bed behind me and pulls me close to him.

I don't need to look at him to know how he's looking at me, but I roll over anyway. His eyes are soft, just as they were in the shower.

"Stop looking at me like that." It's a whisper, but more of a plea.

"Like what?" he smirks back at me.

"Like you're about to break your rules."

He just blinks at me in response before he rolls onto his back at stares at the ceiling.

It shouldn't surprise me when I wake up and he isn't in bed with me. Like an idiot, I get up and go looking for him, for any trace of him.

Maybe he went to go get food this morning, but I'm stilled as I walk into the kitchen and see a set of keys on top of a piece of paper.

Don't argue with me about this.

It's all the note says. I'm confused as I pick up the keys and look at them, then walking towards the front door.

My mouth drops as I look out and see the sporty little BMW sitting in front of my house.

Pulling out my phone, I press his number.

"I told you not to argue with me." He chuckles into the phone. I have to shake my head to rid the images of last night.

"Zane, this is too much."

"It isn't that much." He laughs again. I start to argue, but he stops me before I can even start. "It's settled, Tatum, the car is yours. It's a thank you for totaling yours to save my sister."

"That's why I have insurance, to replace the car."

He sighs out as if he's irritated with the conversation. "If it makes you feel any better, you can send the insurance check when you get it." He pauses for a moment, and I swear I can

hear a girl laughing in the background. “Look, Tatum, I’ve got to go.”

“Yeah, okay.” I hate it sounds like I’m pleading with him not to.

“I’ll see you around.”

But I swear he sounds like he’s pleading as well, and I know with the quickness of which the line dies that he’s hating himself for how he just sounded.

The laughter rings through my head once more and I try to push aside the jealousy that is, for whatever reason, forming.

It takes another 2 weeks before the insurance check comes in, but as soon as it does, I make my way up to the bar.

I’m sure that he wouldn’t have cared if I mailed it, but there’s a small part of me that’s hoping I’m able to see him again. Maybe this time we won’t be able to force our mouths closed, force all the things which are floating around just beyond the surface away.

But when I find myself in the lobby, and they tell me that Zane isn’t there, I almost breathe a sigh of relief. A clean break is best.

My heart stings a bit as I’m walking back through the parking lot and see his bike sitting there, telling me it wasn’t that he wasn’t here, it’s just that he doesn’t want to see me.



TATUM

“Hmm.” He smirks as he looks at me. “I was expecting it to at least be another year before I saw you again.”

“Ha ha,” I mumble to him sarcastically as I step into the room. “It probably would have been if you wouldn’t have left this.” I smirk as I hold up the ring that I’ve seen on his middle finger the last couple of times that I’ve been with him.

“Where the hell did you get that at?” His head tilts as he looks back at me.

“I dunno. Where was the last place you had it?” I match his tilt as I walk over to the desk, placing the ring on the top as I look at him.

“Shit...” He trails off as he says it and then picks it off of the top, seeing the speckles of blood that sit on the inside. “How’d you get it?”

“I have found myself in the market of cleaning up some less than optimal scenes.”

This time, he smirks. “Crime scenes.” He fingers the ring as his eyes widen, looking across the desk at me. “Tatum.” He shakes his head as he makes a tsk noise a few times. “Aren’t you like supposed to report if you find anything like this?” He asks while slipping the ring back onto his finger, without taking his eyes off of me.

“Probably.” I shrug, nonchalantly, not wanting to give him that

much power at the moment.

“Probably?” He laughs out loud this time, leaning onto his forearms, pressing them into the top of the desk. “I think you know the actual answer to that, and why didn’t you report it?”

My eyes shift from side to side, but he doesn’t move his eyes from their lock on me.

“Tatum, look at me.” His voice deepens significantly from when he was just talking. He’s so assertive that I can’t help but bite onto my lip, nearly drawing blood, but I still follow his command, looking up and seeing the look in his eyes. He doesn’t need for me to tell him why I didn’t turn it in, he already knows. He just needs to hear me confirm it. “Come here.” He motions at me with his index and middle fingers. His husky tone makes it difficult to push myself up from where I’m sitting. But just like it’s always done, my brain follows his commands, even if my Bambi-legs shake as they push their way up and around the desk. He pushes his chair back slightly, reaching over for me and guides me to in front of him. His legs caging me into this spot. I lean backwards against the wood to stabilize myself so I won’t just collapse in front of him. “Tatum?” His hands fall from my hands down to the tops of my thighs, his hand then skimming its way in the opposite way I really want them to be.

I appear to take too long to answer him though before he pushes himself up, towering over me just as he always has, and looking down at me.

“Tell me.” His voice lowers somehow more, somehow vibrating right through me to my core.

“Because it’s you.” My eyes trail up his chest until I land back on his face.

A small voice in my head tells me he didn’t want to put distance between us last time. Maybe I just desperately want to believe that.

It almost takes me by surprise when he leans into me, pressing his lips to mine, using my hip to hold me close to him.

Out of instinct, my hands fall down to the waistband of his jeans, tugging on them and popping the button open. I'm surprised as he pulls back away from me, breaking our kiss and smirking down at me.

He chuckles out as he leans into me again, his lips lingering just above mine and I can feel his breath as he starts to whisper. "If I knew you could be this needy, I would have left things around crime scenes way more often."

"That's how you get caught."

"Worth it." He whispers just before his lips connect with mine again, his hands skimming down the side of my body until I can feel them squeezing on my ass as he slides me backwards on the desk. His hand coming up to the top of my own jeans and flicking the button open, slipping his hand inside.

His words ring in my head longer than I care to admit to. Him telling me that getting arrested again, going to prison... again, would all be worth it for this quick moment.

Or maybe he simply means that I'm worth it.

But after last time, I can't think about it right now.

His fingers graze over my clit. He swallows down my gasp as it escapes from my mouth. When his fingers press up inside of me, it causes my back to arch and a chuckle to escape from him, pulling away and looking at me. I'm not sure what I'm in for when the corner of his lips crook up, a devilish grin spreading onto his lips. His hands pushing the tops of my jeans down my thighs, his smirk growing with each centimeter of exposed leg. As they reach the bend in my knee, I watch him as he moves, lowering himself, pushing the rolling chair he was sitting in backwards until it smacks the wall.

I watch him as he pulls my jeans all the way down and kneels between my thighs.

"Wha—what are you doing?"

"Repaying you for what you did." A full grin breaks across his face as he slowly separates my thighs, pressing kissing along

the inside of them. Sliding my panties to the side as he reaches my pussy and running his tongue up, slipping into me as it trails over my slit and makes its way to my clit, his mouth latching on around it and sucking, slipping a finger inside of me and causing me to fall backwards onto the desk, gasping as I feel him caressing me inside.

My head tips over to the right, gasping, as I catch the reflection of us in the mirror on the wall. I watch him as he kneels between my thighs, even with my leg in the way I can see how he looks up at me. I watch as his head moves with each lick, with each thrust of his fingers into me. I groan as I'm distracted and my eyes fall from his face down to where his left hand has a grip around his cock, pumping his hand overtop of himself, a groan coming out heavy against my clit, causing my eyes to roll back in my head.

Opening my eyes back, they widen when they lock with Zane's in the mirror and I can see the crinkle at the corners of them as my leg conceals his smirk. His arm moves once more, and he glances down, as if to tell me to watch him, so I do.

My eyes trail down his body, watching his fist pumping over his cock more feverishly this time as his tongue comes to my clit, flicking against it, I feel his teeth press against it, causing my back to arch off of the desk, feeling over stimulated.

His mouth leaves my clit as he removes his fingers from inside of me. I whimper out loud, bringing a chuckle out of him before the pad of his thumb comes down, brushing against me. I can feel him as he pushes his tongue inside of me, slowing down the movement of his hand to match the rhythm of his tongue. My core tightens as I watch the little foil wrapping come into view and he releases himself before he pulls out the condom, rolling it over himself, and starts to stroke himself again.

And almost as if by now he's completely figured out my body, he brings me right up to the brink before he pulls away from me.

And I'm a whimpering mess for him again.

I can feel his warm breath as his deep voice comes out, caressing me. “Keep your eyes on the mirror.” He demands.

And who am I to deny him of his demands?

His eyes connect with mine through the mirror and I watch as he stands up, his jeans only pushed down enough to expose his cock as he looks away for a moment, I watch him as his eyes trail up my body, and his face softens as he looks down at me. His lips turn up, not in the mischievous look he normally has, but a look that I’ve never seen on him before. A look that causes my stomach to tighten and those goddamn bats start again.

Quickly those thoughts are gone and his face turns to complete euphoria, sliding his cock inside of me, feeling myself stretching around him. I watch in the mirror as his hand comes around, gripping onto my face and pulling it over to look at him as he squeezes my cheeks while slamming his lips down to mine, slamming himself inside of me. A gasp falls out of me as his teeth come down, biting down onto my lip, hard. This time I whimper at the slight pain.

“Oh, my poor little psychopath.” He chuckles sarcastically as he lets go of my lip, looking down at me. “Does that hurt?” Slowly I nod my head, and he lets out a dark laugh. “But you love it when I fucking do it, don’t you?” Again, I nod my head. “Oh no, Tatum, I need to hear you say it. Say what you want.”

“I want you—” I’m cut off as he thrusts into me so hard that all I can do is gasp out again. “—make me bleed.” I cry out, making him laugh as he leans into me again.

“What was that?”

“I want you to make me bleed.” His eyes widen as if he hadn’t just heard what I said a moment before. He bites down on his lip before his right hand releases my thigh as he moves quickly, removing his knife from his pant’s pocket.

I watch as the light glints off the metal of the knife as he flips it open. Revealing the blade and the lowering it as he slams

back into me. Stilling his hips as he presses the blade to my skin. I can feel the scratch as he moves it cautiously over my hip bone.

Not what I meant, but also not, not what I mean, either.

My eyes widen as he remains still before looking up at me. A slow smirk spreads across his face as I feel the knick of the blade as he presses it into my flesh a second time. I hiss out to as the sting consumes me.

“Fuuuck.” The word trails from him. Leaning over, he smirks as his lips press to mine again, slipping his tongue inside as he pounds into me and pulls away. “Your pussy clenched so goddamn hard just then.” He groans into my ear before he straightens up again, looking down at me, slowing to a stop and I watch him as he moves his hand, gripping the knife before he presses it into my flesh once again. His groan drowning out the sound of the gasp that again escapes from me.

Looking at him as he moves his arm, pulling the blade from my skin, he smirks at me and my eyes trail down his body to where my blood has smeared onto the leather of his kutte. He presses the blade to my skin one last time and I whine this time, the stinging from the other two making the last one almost to be too much, but I look up at him as he’s smiling still, looking down at his handy-work and moving his hand to the right, setting it down on the tabletop before he slams into me once more. Gripping my hips, pulling me hard against him, leaning over as he aggressively takes my lips. Grazing the seam of them until they part, his tongue meeting mine as we press against one another, the passion radiating from both of us as he continues to piston his hips into me, pushing me up the desk with each thrust, but wrapping both of his arms around my thighs and pulling me back to him, slamming into me.

I can feel my walls closing in around him, contracting, feeling every inch as it slips inside of me, pushing against my inner walls, my stomach tightening, his hands gripping onto me

harder, I'm sure I'll have tiny little fingertip bruises later.

Reaching up, I grab ahold of his arm, pulling him down to me, groaning into his mouth as he consumes my lips and swallows down one another's murmurs as my walls crumble down around him and he tenses, breaking us apart again, and moans out as he releases and stills completely inside of me.

Leaning into me, he kisses me once more before pulling out of me and smirking. He surprises me when he leans over and I feel a slight stinging as his tongue makes contact with where the knife sliced my skin. He laps up my blood before he looks up at me and I just shake my head as I see his bloodstained teeth.

"You're a freak." I jokingly mumble out, making him laugh as he leans overtop of me again, whisking his lips against my ear.

"You have no idea."

"Oh, I think I have a little idea." I laugh, sitting up. "You got blood on your kutte." Pointing down to where it pressed against my hip.

"Not the first time." He laughs as he steps back, looking down, and smirks.

"I can clean the blood out of the patch if you want." I run my finger over the still wet blood that is soaking into the fabric.

"Nah, it's all good." I just look up at him, tilting my head, asking with my expression alone. "It's kinda nice. Have a reminder of you at all times."

"Better be careful talking like that, fuccboi, one may think that you're catching feelings." I laugh out, pushing myself up from still sitting on the edge of the desk. Raising his eyebrows, he slowly shakes his head with a devilish smirk on his face.

Standing up, I wince as I reach down, grabbing ahold of the waistband of my jeans, and pulling them back up. Catching a glimpse in the mirror, I can't help but laugh again.

"Did you fucking carve your initial into me?"

His smile widens on his face as he nods his head proudly.

“You’re unbelievable.” I laugh out.

Reaching over, he pulls me back to him and pushes me back onto the desk.

“What are you doing?”

“Do you trust me?”

“Fuck no.”

Leaning over me, his voice drops as he starts again. “Would you stop me if I wanted to?”

I’m brought back to our conversation the first night and shake my head.

“Atta girl.” He mumbles to me again as I see him reaching over to where he sat the knife down. Picking it back up, he spreads my thighs before raising it up to his mouth, licking the blade, cleaning it.

“What are you gonna—”

He smirks as he stares me down again. “You’ll see.”

I’m already pretty sure I know what he’s going to do before he does it. Wrapping his hand carefully around the blade, I watch him as he lowers it. Moving it between my thighs until I feel the cool metal pushing against my opening, slipping it inside of me.

“You’re gonna end up cutting your fingers.” I gasp out as I watch him.

“Worth it.” He murmurs again as he leans into me, pressing his lips to mine, before I feel it push all the way into me.

Breaking apart our kiss, he leans over and whispers into my ear. “Fuck yes. Now, every time I use this, I’ll think about you lying here with it pushed up inside of you. Think about how it twitches in my hand and you convulse around it. I’ll think about you dripping all over it.”

The way he’s reacting to this is turning me on more than I ever

thought it would.

“Zane?” I groan out, just to grab his attention. “Have you killed anyone with this?”

All he answers with is a dark chuckle, causing my walls to tighten around it.

“How many?”

“3.”

I can't help but moan out as he tells me and feeling my second release exploding around it.

“Fuck yes.” He mumbles. “Turns out, my little psychopath, likes more things than she thought.”

“So, you know anyone who would work for some good money to not ask questions?” Zane asks as I pull my jeans back up my thighs, just turning and looking at him, nodding my head.

“Yeah.” I laugh out loud. “Me.”

“No.” He shakes his head as doesn't look up from the paper in front of him, but I see a hint of a smirk on his face.

“What the fuck, Zane, why not?” I scoff at him, pissed off that he won't even give me the chance. His eyes snap up. I'm sure not used to people speaking to him like this anymore. He pushes his chair backwards as he stands. “Give me one good goddamn reason I can't do the job.”

He rounds the corner and is now standing in front of me, so close that I can smell the scent that was soaked into my sheets just a few months ago.

“Because...” His smell is causing my senses to cloud my judgement. My heart slams in my chest as he leans into me, his eyes darkening as it seems like he's staring into my soul. “I have a pretty strict policy about not fucking people who work for me.”

“Oh...” The gasp that eludes me is unintentional. “That's a really good...” I trail, attempting to gather my trains of thought, but luckily I see a smirk spreading on his lips.

“Goddamn reason.” He finishes my sentence. I stand in front of him like a girl with a school crush, unable to think or say anything. “I was hoping you would think it was.”

This time, though, isn’t like any other time that we’ve been together in the past. Something is different this time. Maybe it’s because neither one of us is fleeing in the middle of the night. But instead he’s walking me to my car.

“How’s she running?” He cocks his eyebrow, looking down at it.

“I guess fine.” I mumble, not really sure how to answer.

“Good. If you need anything with it, just bring it to the shop. Even if I’m not there, the guys all know.”

I have a million questions that I want to ask him, but I don’t. I just nod at him. He leans into me, hugging me, and presses a kiss to my forehead before opening the door and letting me into the car.



ZANE

I'm like a little kid at Christmas as I sit in the office, waiting. I know it's only a matter of time before she comes walking through the door again.

"Prez." Jag calls out and I look up at him. "Someone's here to see you."

I have to make an actual effort to keep myself from grinning as Tatum comes walking into the room.

"Okay, now you're just being sloppy." She rolls her eyes as she lays the same knife that I used to cut into her skin a few weeks ago on my desk.

"I guess I'm really going to need someone to get their shit together, huh?" I toy with her as I nod back at Jag to close the door.

"But this is your knife..." she smirks at me as she walks around my desk and leans against the edge.

"See, in this beautiful world we live in, to make a profit. Companies make more than one."

"Yes, smartass." She laughs as I scoot over to where she's at, sitting in front of her. "But I'm sure I could pick yours out even if it didn't."

"And why's that?"

“Because you’ve fucked me with it.” My eyes widen as she says it and my cock instantly presses against my zipper.

“Oh, I forgot about that.” I raise my eyebrows at her and she rolls her eyes.

“No, you didn’t.”

I chuckle as I move her feet apart and roll the chair between her thighs, running my hands up them. “No, I didn’t.” She smirks as she looks down at me and I move her legs, bending them at the knee until they are draped across the armrests on the chair, her bare thighs on either side of me.

“Did you leave this there so I would come fuck you in your office?” I press a kiss into her inner thigh as I look back up at her. “You know you could send a text for that.”

“But that wouldn’t be nearly as fun. Think of it like Nikes on the powerline.”

“As what? You getting caught and going to prison?”

“I wouldn’t.” I laugh as I continue to move up her thighs, pressing a kiss each time. “I left a clue that only you would get.” I feel her muscles clench as I reach the hem of her shorts and I stand up, letting my hand take over from where my mouth stopped. “And you wouldn’t have me arrested, would you?”

“Are you saying you trust me?” She lets a hungry gasp out.

“Absolutely not.” I groan into her ear as I feel her hand come down onto the waistband of my jeans, tugging my belt open.

Suddenly she stops, still looking up at me. She smirks. “Tell me something, Z.” Now I’m intrigued. She never calls me Z. “How many women have you fucked in here?”

“I feel like this is a trap...” I trail, amusing her.

“No trap. Just curious.”

“I told you.” I lean into her, my hands running up the inside of her legs. “I don’t fuck people who work for me.”

“You’re evading the question.” She reaches down and stills my hands. “I only ask because the bed at my house, the one you fucked me on last, I can’t even begin to tell you the amount...”

“Woman...” It comes out as almost a growl and she looks up at me, smirking. “Oh, I see. You’re trying to make me jealous.”

“Would I do that?” She bats her lashes at me.

“Yes, yes, you would. The real question is, why are you trying to make me jealous, Tatum?”

She shrugs her shoulders, innocently. “I dunno. The sex is something else when you’re jealous.”

“Baby, the sex is something else every time.”

“I know.” She bites her lips as I shake my head, my hands stroking up the sides of her legs and to her hips before I’m pulling down her shorts.

“It’s generally not a good idea to make a man like me jealous.”

“You don’t scare me.” Her smirks breaks through her stoic face as she says it.

“You wanna see what happens when you’re bad?”

“What?” She rolls her eyes and I chuckle to myself. Sliding her panties off of her legs as I free her from them.

“Spread your legs, slide your ass to the edge, and put your feet up on the desk.” As I’m eye level with her pussy, I glance back up at her.

“This is really uncomfortable.”

“You’ll forget about that soon.” I whisper to her before I run my tongue along her, slowing enough to lick inside of her and continue, looking up at her our eyes lock and I can feel her pussy contract as we continue to stare at one another. Flicking my tongue as I reach her nub, she gasps out, growing louder as I engulf it in my mouth and gently suck on it.

Her head falls backwards as a second moan escapes and her

back arches. Separating the entrance of her with my fingers before slipping two inside and feeling her pussy clenching around me as I continue to devour her. Hooking my fingers around and stroking the inside of her clitoris. Her walls clench hard around me as I continue to stimulate her clit internally and externally.

Sliding a condom over myself, I stand up and am a bit caught off guard when she pushes me back with her body, spinning us around and pushing me down on the desk.

I'm not gonna lie. Her taking control is kind of fucking hot as well. Sliding her way onto the desk, she straddles my hips, and my thumb grazes my initial on her hip as I smirk to myself.

Sliding herself down my cock, I feel her inner walls clenching around me.

I shouldn't be surprised when I feel the prick of the knife on my hip as she straddles me on the desk. I don't even need to look to know what she's doing. Just as I did a few weeks ago, she's leaving her mark on me. Something from deep inside of me thumps as I think about her marking me as hers, because whether I want to believe it or not, that's what I was doing with her.

Somewhere I want to believe that at the end of everything, when I finally figure out all of this bullshit that there will be somewhere for me in her life, but the more realistic part of me knows that this is fictitious... it's my little made up dream I'm holding on to.

People like me don't get happiness. Maybe when Tatum first came to me, maybe at that point she was supposed to derail what I was trying to do, but now, the things that I've done, the way that I've lived my life... there's no way that any sort of justified world would give me happiness.

She pulls herself up off of me and I miss the warmth of her pussy wrapped around me already.

"I think this may be something better of me to keep around." She smirks as she stands in front of me, her hip bone showing

where the 'Z' I carved into her is still healing. I can feel the blood dripping down my side and I'm sure pooling up on the desk, but I couldn't fucking care less.

She wears a devilish smirk as she looks at me. She's waiting for my approval. I don't know how I know that, but I do.

But she hasn't gained my approval just yet, so I just shrug in response.

Her finger swipes some blood from the wound as she raises it to her mouth and slips it in, sucking off my blood into her mouth. And it may be the hottest fucking thing I've ever seen.

"There's my perfect little psychopath."

Her eyes light up, just as they always have, as I say it.

I don't even need to look in the mirror to see what it is. I already know that she's branded me just as I have her.

"There." She smirks. "Now we match."

"Like I haven't been walking around for weeks now, marked by you." I laugh out, sitting up from the desk. The slight stinging comes from the wound as she hands me a towel that had been sitting next to the couch in the office.

"That's different. No one knows that's my blood." She laughs again, but I grab hold of the towel and before she can let go, I pull her over to me again.

She's standing between my knees again as I look the few inches up at her eyes. "Everyone knows you're mine, so who's else's would it be?" I growl out, not sure where the territorial urges that I've been having for her for the past few months... fuck, the past few years, have been coming from.

"But I'm not yours." She matches my glare.

"Fine, everyone knows you're my girl." I say it like there's a fucking difference.

She laughs to herself before leaning in to me again. "Better be careful Zane, sounds like you're figuring out what feelings are."

Perhaps it's not a *figuring out* situation.

She attempts to pull away, but I just tighten my grip on her. There's so much that I should tell her, so much that I should admit to myself, but I can't. I can't bring her into all of this. I can feel her softening under my touch the longer I keep her close to me. I can see her eyes letting the pain show through. This is the look which always causes me to leave. Causes me to run. I know what she wants, even if she won't admit it to herself. And in the dark hours of the night, I know what I fucking want, too.

I'm convinced that she knows how I feel. How could she not?

"Tatum..." It comes out in nearly a whisper, but I trail off as I watch her shake her head.

"Stop." She pleads, before shaking her head faster this time as if it will clear out the thoughts and then she lets herself laugh, almost as if she's pushing away any ounce of emotion that she may be having. "I don't think most of us know what you mean by that." She smirks at me, letting her hand come to my chest. "Because plenty of men still hit on me."

"And you go out with plenty of them." It's not a question, because I know she does, and who am I to stop her? She's right. Most of us, myself included, have no fucking clue what I mean by that. All I know is when I say it, it feels right.

"Why shouldn't I? Does being 'your girl' mean that I'm not allowed to fuck other men, even though I have to hear all about the girls you fuck daily?" I furrow my eyebrows, curious about how she has to hear it. "You want nothing serious? That's fine, I don't either." I see a brief flash in her eyes, almost like she's lying about that. I should tell her that's not the case, I should explain to her, make sure that she knows, but fuck, I'm not even sure if I know. "We live our own lives, and when it's convenient, we fuck. Neither one of us expects anything else." Her eyes give her away as she lies to me.

I just stare up at her, confused. Never has Tatum lied to me.

She laughs, and it surprises me as she pulls away from me

again, this time walking over to the door. “Don’t be a hypocrite.”

“Tatum, stop.” My voice sounds almost pained.

And she does. Slowly, turning around and looking at me, pleading with me to say something... something to keep her from walking out of the door.

But I can’t tell her, I can’t say what I want to, and we stare at one another for far too long before she shakes her head, turning to open the door and leaving.

Go fucking after her. That voice screams in my head, but I know I can’t. I sigh as I turn, moving back to the seat and sitting down, the slight stinging as I do it.

Looking down, I pull the kutte away from my body and can already see the trickle of blood from where she ran the blade across my skin.

There’s a knock on the door as I look up and Linc walks in.

“Dad called. They need us.”



ZANE

We ride out to LA, ready. I'm not exactly sure what Ro needs help with, but whatever it is, I'm in.

When we pull up to what was once a church that the club had made into their clubhouse when I was a kid. I never realized how comical the whole thing was until I got older, and it still makes me laugh whenever I come here.

Linc walks into the clubhouse behind Axe and I. We nod to the club as we pass by, walking back towards Ro's office.

He's on the phone when we walk in but he quickly hangs up.

"Come on." He says as he stands up and walks around the desk. He pauses as he looks back at Linc. "Stay here."

"Come on, dad." He groans, one of the few times he shows anything bothering him. "I'm gonna eventually know."

"When you patch in, that's when you'll know." He nods back to Axe and I.

I get Linc's frustration as he stands with his foot propped up against the wall, like a pouting kid.

"Sorry." I mutter to him before I walk out of the room and follow the other men down the hallway.

Ro wasn't super thrilled when Linc came to me, wanting to patch in. But like I had told him when we were discussing it,

locality is the most important part. It's what makes the club stronger, and what can be stronger. We grew up together. And honestly, he's more of a fucking legacy in this shit than I am. And if I wouldn't let him patch in, he'd go to another club, which would be more of a problem for us.

Linc thanked me for it, though.

We walk well away from the building, leaving our phones on the table before we walk outside, and then Ro turns to us and nods his head.

"Something's not right."

"What do you mean?" I nod over to him and he groans, scrubbing his hands over his eyes.

"I can't explain it, but... something's not right within the club." He takes a pause. "I can't explain it, but I've been in this life for long fucking enough to know when something's off."

"So what is it?"

"There's a rat somewhere."

"Man..." I trail, trying to think quickly. "I feel like we would be able to tell, and I mean..."

"We've had some people transfer in from other charters. I just wonder if we got one."

"Alright, look, we can all watch out, but... maybe we're just thinking too much about this."

"I don't think so... not with this one." He shakes his head.



At this point, I'm so used to seeing the sight of blood, not that it bothered me before, but it doesn't even faze me. Some of the other things I've come into contact with... well, that's another story.

Doubled-over outside of the house that we're at, I can't stop myself as I dry heave into a bush.

“Are you alright?” The deep voice asks from my side. I can’t help but laugh as I look over at him. He’s handsome. His eyes hide some sort of danger, telling me I should stay away, but I can’t help myself. I need to rid my body and mind of Zane, and another pair of danger-eyes will do just that.

The man reaches his hand down to me and I hesitantly grasp it. When his jacket opens, I see the detective’s badge and I ease just slightly. Not saying that police officers put me at ease, because they don’t... well Elias and I became friends almost as soon as I moved here, in fact he’s the one who got me my job, but every other cop, I’ve watched my back with.

“You’ll get used to it.” He smirks at me as he pulls me to him and I roll my eyes.

“Have you been in there?” I snap back, putting distance between us. I watch as he hesitates and I laugh. “Good luck.” I pat his chest as I turn around, pulling my mask back up and walking back into the house.

Is it glamorous work? No.

But does it pay well? Fuck, no.

But it’s a job for now, and I’m trying to find something else. But what is someone supposed to do when they have absolutely no fucking skills?



I’m leaving the scene as I walk over to the car, stripping off the suit, and tossing it into the bin in my trunk. I may just fucking burn it than cleaning it.

“Wow.” The same deep voice says slightly away from me. “I mean, I saw you had a pretty face, but wouldn’t have imagined that.”

“What?” I snap my head back over at him, glaring.

“Look, with all due respect...” Why is it when someone says that it’s never really intended to be respectful? “That suit definitely hides your body... and what a fucking body.”

His forwardness, I can appreciate.

“How are you single?” He asks me.

“Never said I was.” I smirk at him before I walk around the car, opening the door.

He’s standing between the door and the car as I try to close it.

“Let me take you out.” He says, smirking down at me.

“Give me one good reason I should.”

“Because we all need to eat.” He laughs, looking away from the car for a moment, motioning to who I can only guess is his partner that he’ll be a minute. “Come on.” He smiles down at me. There’s something about him that sets me on edge, and I can’t explain it. “Okay look, I’ll be at Northend Pub at 8. Meet me there if you want.” He turns then and makes his way back to the car.

Shutting the door, I glance in the rear-view mirror and shake my head. “There’s no fucking way we’re going there.”

Coming to a stop at the red light, I gasp as I see the bike sitting in front of me. The kutte tells me that the chances of this being with him aren’t that odd. Slowly, I creep forward, trying to get a look at whoever is riding on the bike without being too obvious about it. But I don’t need to move much closer to know it isn’t.

I let out a sigh of relief when I see that it isn’t Zane.

Only the relief is short-lived because as soon as we go, the bike slows down and lets the 5 other bikes in front of him at the intersection. This time I don’t need to ride up further to see who it is, as his helmets off because the girl on the back is wearing it.

My foot presses more onto the accelerator, pushing myself forward, needing to see who it is.

I feel like an idiot as the red hair whips around Drew’s body underneath the helmet and I groan to myself before jerking the wheel to the left and turning off, taking another direction

home.

“Why even be jealous?” I look at myself in the mirror, seeing just how much of an insane person I look. “Even if it wasn’t his sister, he had his chance to ask you to stay. He doesn’t want that.” I lean against the steering wheel of the beater car that I use for work before I sit back again. “Fuck it.”

Rolling my eyes, I get out of the car, walking into the house and get ready. Should I be meeting Darren out? No, there’s something about him, but I just can’t explain it. He seemed nice enough earlier.

I mean, hell, maybe I can get over the 1%er by getting under his rival. Not that they are specifically rivals, but...

I pull up to the pub shortly after 8, don’t show up on time, see if he actually waits for me to get there. There’s still this nagging feeling in the back of my head about this guy, but I need to rid Zane from my brain. I feel pathetic for even thinking that.

I see him when I walk into the bar, but he’s not paying much attention to his surroundings except for the conversation he’s having with the bartender.

This whole thing seems so... typical, boring, but I know the real problem. If that there’s not a gun barrel in my face, or a knife in my pussy, it’s all just boring.

Slowly approaching him, the bartender sees me, but she doesn’t stop their conversation at all. When I sit my purse on the counter and slide up next to him, he turns quickly.

“You came.” He smirks at me.

“Well, you know, it’s kind of hard to turn down free food.”

He just smiles at me as he nods to the bartender. I’m assuming, trying to tell her he wants to order something.

It’s kind of nice to have someone drop something that they were previously doing for you.

I can’t help but shake my head at myself in the mirror,

knowing that I'm trying my best to make myself believe Zane hasn't done those things.

Dropping things has never been his problem, it's the maintaining things.

We eat dinner and make small talk. I fucking hate small talk.

"So Tate, why is it that someone like you doesn't have a boyfriend?" He says to me over the bite of his food.

"Well, I've been told that I have terrible taste in men."

He laughs out before he looks back at me again. "And who told you this?"

"A friend."

"Oh, I see, a friend who was jealous."

His reasoning makes me laugh again. "Nope, a friend who I'm pretty sure included himself in that list."

His eyes furrow together as he contemplates what I just said, and who would put themselves on a list of terrible taste.

It puts an awkward vibe between us, as I just continue to eat my food in silence.

He does the halfway decent thing, and he walks me back to my car. The car that I shouldn't have driven tonight because it just made me think about him the entire time I was heading here tonight.

"Where's your car?" He asks me as we walk through the parking lot.

"There." I point over to the BMW.

"That's not the car you were driving earlier."

"It's not. I bought the other one for work, so I don't ruin this one."

He pauses as he sways from side to side, and then he looks back up at me. "Forgive me for being forward, Tate, but how does someone on your salary own a fucking beamer?"

“I’ll tell you, but it has to be off the record.” I lean into him, whispering, having just enough to drink that I’m willing to flirt with him.

He leans in, matching me.

“I’m actually a drug dealer.”

The irony is that it’s probably not that far from how I actually got the car.

He rolls his eyes, shaking his head.

“No?” I ask him, making him laugh out this time.

“If you were,” this time he leans in, “I would have definitely known everything about you before today.”

I’m not sure whether to laugh or be concerned. “Okay, fine. I helped a friend of mine’s sister. And in doing so, I totaled my car. This was his way of repaying me for what I did. I told him it was too much, but he wouldn’t take it back.” I sigh, looking back at the car. “I gave him the money that the insurance company sent me, though.”

“Which was how much?”

“A few thousand doesn’t matter, though. He never cashed the check.”

“I’m gathering this is the same friend who considers himself on the terrible man list.”

“Yup. That’s the one.”

He leans into me, pressing his mouth to mine and I pull away, quickly.

“I’m sorry.” I shake my head. “I just wasn’t expecting that.”

I can see the hostility on his face as he turns, without saying a word, and stomps back to his car, as if he was a child who had gotten their hand smacked.

“What the fuck?” I mutter to myself as I slide back into my car.



I'm surprised when a week later I'm leaving a scene and walking back to my car as I see Darren's mustang pull up.

"You've got to be fucking kidding me." I mumble to myself as I pull off the suit, stuffing it into the trunk.

"Tate." He calls out and slowly I turn around. "Sorry about last week."

"What about you acting like a child?"

"Yeah, look, let me make it up to you?"

"How?"

"Go out with me again. This time, it can be like a real date. I'll come and pick you up."

I don't answer him, just continue looking at him.

"Look, if after this one you want nothing to do with me, I'll leave you alone."

Why do I feel like I'm going to regret this?



ZANE

“Z.” Someone calls for me in the lounge’s front. Pausing, I look from the girl who is crawling onto my lap and seeing Elias standing in the doorway.

“Officer save-a-life.” I joke him and he tilts his head. I can tell that he has something burning underneath the surface, but I’m not really sure if I want to know. “What are you doing so far from home... and playing a civilian?”

“I need to talk to you.”

It makes me laugh. There’s nothing he could say that would make me have a serious conversation with him right now. We’ve had one understanding over the years, we don’t bring up our past...

“I’m serious, Zane.”

“I don’t know what would cause you to come so far south of the tracks.” The girl giggles in my ear before she nibbles on it.

“It’s Tate.”

Okay, so there’s nothing he could say, except for that.

The girl gasps as I shove her off of me and sit up, resting my elbows on my knees. “What is it?”

“Do you have somewhere we can talk?”

I nod my head before standing. I turn and let him follow me

down the hallway towards the office. Stopping in front of the chapel and opening the box.

“What’s this?” He asks.

“Just put your shit inside.” I snap at him, growing impatient with him by the second.

“Why?”

“Because I don’t fucking trust you.”

He laughs. “Fair enough.” But he finally does so, reluctantly, and I lock the box, slipping the key into my pocket and having him follow me into the office.

I sit down in the chair nodding to one of the other ones and he sits.

“What’s going on with her?”

“Um.” He starts, but hesitates. “Can we just agree that the whole ‘don’t kill the messenger thing’ is upheld in this situation?”

“Elias, start talking.”

“I’m worried about her. And I dunno who to talk to. And after last time we talked...”

“Yeah, you mean when I told you she was my girl?” When I say it, all I can imagine is her sad expression as she walked out of my office last year.

“Yeah... that. I’m still not exactly sure what you mean by that, but I also didn’t know who else to come to.”

“Spit it out. What’s it is.”

“She started seeing Darren.”

“Sherman?”

“Yeah.”

“Why?” I scoff out.

“Fuck if I know. You know her, right? She doesn’t really date. I’ve known her since she moved here. I mean, she had that one

boyfriend that she lived with but since him, I dunno it was like she would see a guy for a month and then on to the next one. But Darren..." He trails.

I think about what he just told me. She hasn't seriously dated since the first time we were together... I'm not really sure why I find that interesting or why I hadn't realized that until just now.

"She started seeing Darren a couple of months ago. But she's been with him for longer than anyone else."

"Okay..." The thought hurts, and I wish it fucking didn't. I wish I could shut down those feelings that fester just below the surface for her.

"Do you know Darren?"

"Of him." I know 'of' the entire police force, though, just like they know 'of' me. "I mean, he was a part of the few that were tailing us for a while." He nods his head, telling me I'm right.

"I've seen him date quite a few women over the years."

"Okay?" I pause, looking at him almost territorial. "Why are you so protective of her all of a sudden?"

He sighs, rolling his eye. "Calm down. It's not like that." I just cross my arms over one another. "Fine. Look, you and I, we were friends back in the day, right?" I roll my eyes and he shakes his head. "Seriously? Shit, I mean, I know we ended up very different."

"Fine, yeah we were."

"That's why. You told me she was your girl. And even if I nor any fucking one know what you mean by that. I get what that means for you to say because we've known each other most of our lives. But you're way off track now." He shakes his head again. "All of these women end up broken."

"What?"

"When I saw them together, something started nagging me. But like that's my job, right? Ask questions, connect dots,

follow my gut. So I did. I went back and looked at all the girls I've known him to date... All of them end up as a shell of a person."

"Shit." I whisper.

"But it gets worse."

"Fucking how?"

"Z, this is where you can't kill the messenger." I just glare at him. "They're engaged."

"What?" I'm really not sure if I say it in my head or out loud but, I move forward in my chair quickly sitting straight up and I just stare at him.

"Z, he can't break her. Stop this."

"What am I supposed to do?" I can't help but laugh.

"She doesn't want him." I say something, but he cuts me off. "You know that. You may not want her to, but you know what she really wants, and you know what you want."

"I can't give her that."

"Bullshit. Don't sit there and try to tell me you don't feel the same way she does. You slept in her fucking hospital room." He shakes his head. "For days. And you don't know this, but I stopped by her place to check on her after they discharged her from the hospital." My eyes shift back and forth as I recall those days. I know what he's talking about. "Yeah. You know how she has those enormous bay windows in the front of her house. It was hard to miss the two of you. As much as you don't want to admit it anymore, but you and I were close at one time."

"I don't think it's just me that doesn't want to admit it." I'm upset over the situation with Tatum and now I'm taking it out on him. He's steered clear of me over the years, just as I have him.

"That's not my point. I have never seen you as happy as you were in the house with her. You may be able to walk around

here and fool most of them, but you can't look me in my eye and tell me otherwise. If you sit back and do nothing. You're going to lose her. And from the way he leaves all the women he dates as empty shells you may lose her forever."

"I'm pretty sure I've already lost her." It comes out more defeated than I intended it to.

"You haven't seen her since they got together, have you?"

"I've seen her. I've just kept my distance." He just gives me a look that tells me he knows I'm full of shit. "And what if she still chooses him?" I fucking hate how pathetic I sound right now. Even more so when the door opens and I see Axe step inside.

"Then at least you tried, and when things go bad, which they will, she'll know you'll be there for her." Axe finishes causing Elias to nod his head along with him.

"Great..." I mumble as I look up at the ceiling, now embarrassed that Axe just heard all of that.

"Z." Elias says again as I glance back over at him. "I know you have this whole MC prez reputation thing you're trying to uphold, but I miss my friend."

"I'm not different." I say, looking back away. "And we didn't end up so different." Looking back over at his curious face.

"We're both just trying to save the people we care about." He nods his head before he walks out of the office. "Shit." I glance over at Axe. "Can you unlock his shit for him?"

"You know he's right... about her."

"I know." I groan out, giving him as much as I can at this current moment. Lacing my fingers behind my head, I lean back and stare up at the ceiling.

I can see the moments playing out. 12 years ago, I found Dad sitting in the garage, drinking, just staring at the bike. I was 15 and didn't know what he was doing. It was the day he told me what the meaning behind the bike was. How he lived his life in a way so when he died he wouldn't think that he didn't spend

his life living it. Only that seconds before he wrecked he realized that after he knew what it was like to be with Mom, he was chasing a high that he couldn't replace with anything else. That, he realized in that moment, without her, nothing else could fulfill her.

I hear Axe walk back into the office, and I open my eyes again. As soon as I see the look on his face, I know what he's going to say.

"Look, it's fucking complicated."

He chuckles to himself as he walks over and sits down in his chair. "The best ones always are." He starts again. "Your dad told me that when I said the same thing about Ella." Turning my head, I look at him, contemplating what he's telling me and everything from that moment in the garage. "Granted." Axe starts again. "That was before he knew it was Ella and beat the shit out of me, so he may have not felt the same way had he known." It makes me laugh though. "Now my own piece of advice. My only regret in life is that I let her walk away, actually the day that Ash beat the shit out of me, I was so worried about my own ego that I lost years with them. Had I come up to Ash and the rest of the club before it came out and admitted to things? Who knows? It may have been completely different."

"What, they wouldn't have kicked your ass?"

"Oh know, they most likely still would have, but she wouldn't have left."

The plan somehow comes together in my head instantly. Jumping up and rushing out the door, to the front of the clubhouse, and hoping to catch Eli before he leaves the grounds.

I watch him at the gate, waiting for it to open, realizing that he still remembers the code for it... I should really change that.

He sees me as he's closing his door and rolls down the passenger side window.

"You're right, but I need your help."



TATUM

Looking down at my hand, I can't even grasp what is happening or how this even happened. I swear, it feels like I was just waking up to seeing Zane asleep next to me. I shake my head, trying to rid my mind of him. It hurts too much...

But when I walked out of his office, I knew what he was telling me.

Sighing out, I shove my hand into the rubber glove. Grabbing a couple of supplies out of the trunk and walking in, just to gauge what I'm really going to need.

I'm hoping that since Elias set this all up, and since it's just a cleaning job after a tenant moved out, it won't be so bad.

I unlock the door and walk into the house. "The fuck?" I whisper out as I look around the house. It looks like it's already been cleaned, like a thorough scrub. I would eat off of these floors.

But I'm thankful because I'm exhausted.

Everything hurts.

A floorboard creaks down the hallway. I'm getting ready to walk down and I stop.

"Hello?" It's a whisper. I couldn't speak any louder if I tried to. I see the outline of a man rounding the corner and start towards me.

Even though I should feel like someone's lured me into an abandoned house for someone to take me, I don't. I know I have nothing to fear at this moment. "Why are you here?" I ask, already knowing who it is.

"The club owns this place." Zane says as he steps in closer to me.

"Okay, then, why am I here? It doesn't need to be cleaned."

"I think you know why."

“Wait, Elias told me he set this up for me.”

“Partially.” He nods his head, agreeing with me as he moves closer to me. “He came to me.”

“Why?”

“He’s worried about you.”

“He has no reason to be.” I lie straight to his face, but by the look he has, he doesn’t buy it.

“You sure about that?”

“Why would he have any reason to be?”

My heart thuds in my ears as I feel him lift my hand and remove my glove. It seems like time slows down almost so that I won’t be able to miss a second of disappointment spread wide across his face. My fucking punishment; I suppose. My body can’t move fast enough to stop him. He pulls off the glove and lifts my hand up, looking down at it, causing the energy in the room to shift.

“Is this what you want?” The pain weighing his voice down. The water blurs my vision as I look up at him, shaking my head, but not being able to admit out loud what’s happening.

“Then why?”

“It’s not as simple as what I want.” My sob breaks through between the words.

“Then explain.”

“I can’t.”

“Why?” I can hear his patience with me fading.

“Because you won’t like it.”

“More than I won’t like you getting married?”

Slowly, I nod my head. He responds with just a glare. The surrounding temperature changing, even though I know in reality it’s not that it’s me. Beads of sweat form on my forehead and I see him noticing.

I try to focus myself, pushing down any uncomfortable feeling

that I have. “Are you okay?” He finally asks, breaking my concentration.

I push past him, rushing to the kitchen and double over into the sink, throwing up everything that I’ve been able to consume in the last hour. “Tatum, are you o—” He stops mid question and I don’t even need to look over to know his eyes are gaped open.

“Fuck.” He gasps. And there it is, the answer to his question, slapping both of us in the face.

Cupping water as it streams from the faucet, I rinse my mouth out before I look over at him and press my lips into a line, in an attempt to control my feelings, and wiping my mouth with the backside of my hand.

“It’s not that simple.” I whisper again. This time he doesn’t argue with me, just nods his head, telling me he understands. I move over to the small bag that I brought inside and left in the kitchen when I walked in the door and grab a toothbrush, cleaning the awful taste out of my mouth.

“Let’s go somewhere.”

Not until he talks do I realize how close he’s standing to me.

“Where?” I can’t help but laugh as I look over at him.

“Anywhere you want to go, as long as you talk to me.”

“I—I can’t.” I whisper again. “If anyone tells him they saw me with you.”

“No one’s going to know it’s you.”

“How?” I look down at how I’m dressed.

A devilish smirk spreads across his face.

“I don’t trust you when you smile like that.” I’m surprised when he laughs.

“Do you ever trust me?” He’s still smirking as he holds his hand out for me to take.

“Absolutely fucking not.” I smirk now as I take his hand and

he moves us to the backdoor.

“Wait.” He stops before we make it out of the door and looks at me. “Leave your phone.”

“Why?” I pause, nodding my head. “Right. When he tracks it...” I trail before I set it down on the mantel and we leave the house.



TATUM

“This isn’t your bike...” I trail as I look over at him.

“You’re right, it’s not.”

“Where’s your bike?”

“At home.”

“Why?”

“So no one recognizes it.”

“You had this planned.” I smirk at him as he just shrugs.

“I had a feeling you wouldn’t talk to me unless I got you away from here.” He reaches into one of the saddlebags and hands me a full-face helmet. I smile at him, pulling it over.

“See, no telling who you are.” He slides up my visor for a moment before handing me a leather jacket.

“Did you buy me a jacket?” I ask, not being able to stop from smirking, but also not trying to, since the helmet conceals it.

“Kind of.” I feel the panic set in about what ‘kind of’ means. Is it just someone else’s, and I misread the entire situation? Imagining all the women that I’ve seen on the back of his bike over the years.

“Yes, I bought you a jacket, but you don’t get to take it with you. It stays with me.” I feel dumb for how giddy this all makes me. “This jacket is only for riding when you’re with

me.” He punctuates the sentence with a wink that gives me butterflies.

“Uh.” He hesitates before he’s about to kick over and stops. “Let me know if you need me to pull over. I’ll take it slow for you.”

“No.” I look up at him. “I’ll be fine. The riding helps calm me.”

“Where do you want to go?” He asks me as he cranks the bike up and revs.

“As far away from my life as possible.” I know it’s fucking cheesy, but it’s how I’m feeling right now and we pull out of the neighbor’s backyard. And just as I’ve always done when I’m on the back of his bike, I lean my head against his back, feeling the safety surrounding me.

We’ve almost been driving for 2 hours when he pulls over on the side of the road.. We’re in the desert, but that’s all I know. Letting the bike idle, he reaches into the saddlebag again and grabs out a piece of cloth, turning around and looking at it.

“What are you going to do with that?”

“I was planning on blindfolding you.”

“Why?”

“Because you shouldn’t know where the place I’m taking you is at, and I don’t want you to have to lie to your husband.” I cut my eyes at him. “What? Too soon?”

“You’re an asshole.”

“I know.” He grins at me, making me laugh.

“I don’t even know where we’re at now. I think I fell asleep for a bit back there. Don’t you trust me?” I smirk at him, circling back to our first moments together.

“As much as I shouldn’t, yeah, I do.” I understand the importance of him not taking the moment to joke. “You can’t tell anyone about it. I mean, technically we’re not using it at the moment... just yet, but still.” He’s rambling, and it’s kind

of adorable. He reaches into the saddle bag again and I'm expecting him to just drop the blindfold inside, but he produces what looks like some sort of box. "It's a faraday cage." He mumbles as if he could hear my unspoken question.

"And what's that?"

"It prevents any signals." He says as he opens it and drops his phone inside.

"So no one can track you."

"Precisely."

We pull off the road onto a dirt trail, and up the mountain we go. There's a small cave that we're moving right towards and I grip on a little tighter, causing him to laugh.

"Don't worry, you're safe." He slows down as we enter the cave and drive inside. I'm surprised that the further we enter, the wider it opens up to.

When we come to a stop, I see the large door, the size of a garage door, in front of us. He walks over to the keypad and punches in the code, and I watch as the door opens.

"We haven't used it in a long time. Working on getting back out here."

"What is this place?"

"It has multiple purposes, which have changed over the years." He laughs, nervously. "And if you want some weird Zane's life trivia. Uh, I was also born here."

"Shut the fuck up, no, you weren't." I can't help but laugh and then, because of my current situation, imagine what his mom went through.

"Yeah. We've always used it as a safe house and well, they had come up cause something to do with the feds. Granted, this entire story is from my dad cause my mom would rarely talk about it. Said she had some PTSD from it."

"I could fucking see that."

“It’s not that bad.” He laughs as he nods his head in a direction. “Anyway, legend has it.” The way he’s telling it makes me laugh. “Mom was like 7 months pregnant when they came up here. And surprise, surprise, she went into labor early. But because my mom was so fucking stubborn. She refused to admit that she was in labor or tell anyone. One of my aunts realized it and when she timed, the contractions told her you’re either having us in the back seat of the jeep or here where it won’t be as chaotic.”

“A jeep? That seems specific.”

“It’s the only thing that will fit into the entrance of the cave. Oh, yes.” He laughs as he opens a door, and I’m surprised by how nice the bedroom is. “I forgot. The only way to fit the jeep inside is without the doors, so it didn’t seem like the best option.”

“I would imagine not.”

“Apparently, my dad almost missed it. He had gone for a meeting with Ro and got back just in enough time to change and have my mom yell at him as she pushed.”

“They sound amazing.”

“They were exhausting most of the time.” It makes me laugh again as he walks over to a door and opens up a closet. Grabbing a vacuum seal bag and opens it. Then he stops and turns around, looking at me. “I just realized how this is going to look, and I just want to clarify that it’s not my intentions.”

I can’t help but laugh when I see the set of sheets in his hands.

“It’s just the least MC and most comfortable place in here. Well, any of the bedrooms, but this is technically mine now.”

“It’s okay.”

I help him make the bed before laying on top of the covers.

“I know this is really selfish of me.” I whisper as I look at him. “But will you hold me?”

He looks over at me and nods his head. “As long as you talk to

me.”

I sigh as he wraps his arms around me. And then pulls the comforter overtop of us.

“I don’t know how it happened.”

“What do you mean?” I know that he’s about to make a joke out of it, and sure it would be funny but we’ll get sidetracked and if he wants to know what happened, I can’t explain it but in the fucked up reality of our situation, I feel like he has a right to know.

“I’ve been on the pill forever. And used a condom.”

“Are you sure he did? I mean, I know we’ve slipped up before.”

“I mean, I told him to. And he at least pretended to put one on. But it doesn’t make any sense. Why would he want to get me pregnant?”

“Really?” He laughs, looking over at me.

“What?”

“I don’t think you give yourself enough credit.”

“You also said I have terrible taste in men.”

“You do. This just further proves my point.”

“But...” I accidentally say a thought out loud and catch myself before I finish.

“What?”

“I have frequented your bed from time to time.” I say it even though what I told Darren before, I still believe.

He laughs as he leans into me, so close that I can feel the warmth of him on my lips. “That just further proves my point.”

“You’re not a bad guy.”

I make him laugh again as he shakes his head. “Baby, I am literally a criminal. I commit crimes all the time.”

“Just because something is a crime doesn’t necessarily mean it’s bad.”

He pulls away from me, putting the distance that I need desperately at the moment between us. “You can’t say things like that.”

“Why?”

He hesitates, like he’s arguing with himself over something something. “You’re marrying a detective.”

“Meh, semantics.”

“Why are you marrying a detective, Tatum?” I’m not sure what to say so I don’t I just look up at him, catching his eyes and shrugging. “You have options.”

“No, I don’t.”

His hand comes up and holds my chin, stilling my face and gripping just hard enough to tell me not to move.

“What are you doing?”

“I need to ask you something. And I need you to look me in the eye when you answer, so I know if you’re trying to lie.” I say nothing else, but wait for him to finish. “Does he hurt you?”

“No.” It’s a whisper, not because it isn’t true, but because I know it won’t always be true.

“Tatum.” Zane growls out my name so loud it makes me jump, and he quickly stands up, pacing the room.

“Zane, I’m telling you the truth. He hasn’t hurt me... physically... yet.” When I say yet, it stills him and he looks back over at me.

“Yet?” His jaw ticks as he says it through clenched teeth.

“He told me if I got rid of the baby, he would.” I shake my head. “And I can’t raise a kid on my own. I struggle to take care of myself.”

“You should have come to me.” He tells me.

“And tell you what. I need your help because I fucked up and got knocked up by another man.”

“Yes.”

“And what would you have done?” I look at him, demanding him to answer me.

“Given you more options. Fuck, you still have more options.”

“Like what?”

“Like... uhhh.” He groans as he paces a couple more times, as if he’s building up the courage to say it. “Like, let me fucking protect you.” He pauses and takes a step closer to me. I know what that statement means, though. “Do you want to keep it? If you don’t, I will protect you from him.”

“I don’t know if I do.”

“Okay. Then if you want to keep it, let me help you.”

“Zane, this isn’t a few days here and there thing.”

“I’m not that naïve.” He cuts out at me, slightly irritated with me, now. “I’m aware of how long kids are around until they’re an adult.”

I sit stunned for a moment as I realize what he’s offering, not to just help me out, but to raise this baby with me.

“I couldn’t ask you to do that.”

“Why?” He pauses, looking at me. “If it was mine, you wouldn’t have a problem then?”

“That’s different. It would be yours then.”

He hesitates, his eyes continuing to stare at me, though.

“Answer me one thing.” His voice drops as he steps closer to me.

“What?”

“Do you wish it was mine instead of his?”

“Don’t make me answer that.”

“Why?”

“Because wishing changes nothing, it’s not fair to either of us, and we both already know the answer.”

“You won’t let me help, will you?”

“No.” The tears are welling up in my eyes again and I look away, trying to clear them. He’s right. Out of every single man that I have slept with in my life, I wish that it was his.

His hand comes up, stopping my head from turning away.

“Somewhere, in another reality, you let me give you the world.”

“And in another, this is your baby.”

“That’s...” He trails off, stopping himself, almost as if he didn’t mean to start the statement in the first place.

“What?”

“Nothing.” He hesitates and then starts again. “If you ever change your mind, the door is always open.”

“You can’t make that promise.”

“I can.” He takes a step into me.

“What are you doing?”

“I’m about to kiss you.”

“That’s not fair to either of us.” My voice cracks half-way through.

“Look me in my eyes and tell me you don’t want me to.”

“It’s not that simple.”

“You keep saying that.” He shouts this time, throwing his hands into the air, and putting space back between us. “But it is Tatum, it really fucking is.”

“It’s not.” I feel the tears trickling down my cheeks.

He turns and glares at me, storming over until he’s standing in front of me, and even with the look in his eyes, I’m still taken aback when he wraps his hand into my hair and pulls me close to him. Slamming his lips down to mine, claiming all of me as

his... forever.

Reaching my hands up, I press against his chest, pushing him away. “Stop. Please.” My sob finally breaks. “You can’t do this. We don’t have that kind of relationship. You’ve expressed nothing like this before. In fact, quite the opposite. I mean, fuck, you left me at bike week with a plane ticket because I can only assume that things got too fucking serious for you, I gave you the chance last year to tell me not to leave, to see if this was something... fucking anything, and all of a sudden you just want to raise someone else’s baby with me?”

“You’re right. I may not have, and that’s on me.” He steps up to me again, his hands coming to my arms, and he looks down at me. “But that’s only because I was hoping you understood what I did.”

“Wh—what’s that?”

“We’ve always been that kind of relationship.”

I can’t help but chuckle as I look around. “Then why aren’t we together?” I scream at him before I erupt into tears.

His eyes widen before he’s moving over to me, pulling me into him. Wrapping me so tight in his arms that I can hear the vibration of his voice through his chest. “Because neither one of us has been ready for that.” He pushes me back just enough to look down again. “We’re playing with fire.” I know he’s not meaning the situation we’ve found ourselves in, but we are the candles and the fire is whatever you want to call this between us.

“And now we are?” It’s a whisper.

“No, but I’d rather burn down everything in my life than watch you get hurt.”

Reaching up, I can’t stop myself as I pull him down to me.

“I thought you wanted me to stop.”

“Shut up and kiss me.” I whimper out.

His lips slam down to mine and the tears spill from my lids

quicker as I realize that this isn't right, or maybe it's because I know that this is right. That he and I are right.

His hand skates around my back and he pulls me over towards the bed, sitting down and breaking our kiss.

He looks down as he sighs. "Come on." He taps the bed next to him.

"Why... why are you stopping?"

"Because you're crying right now." He pauses. "I don't want to push you one way or another. So come on and just lay with me for a bit."

I have no fucking clue where this Zane is coming from.



TATUM

I'm still hesitant while I lie in Zane's arms. I can't stop my mind from reeling.

"Shhhh..."

"I wasn't saying anything." I chuckle, turning, and looking up at him.

"I can hear you overthinking everything from here." He rolls his head, looking back at me, and smirks. "I'll make a deal with you."

"What's that?"

"If you do one thing for me, I'll take you back to the house and I'll respect whatever decision you make."

"Okay, what do you want?"

"Until we head back. Stop thinking, just let us have this moment. Let us have a moment where nothing else exists. Nothing we're trying to portray, no one else, no rules, no baggage, just us."

I just lie, blinking at him for a moment before I lean up and press my lips to his again, pushing him over until he's laying on his back, and I'm leaning over him.

"What are you doing?" He laughs as he pulls back from me.

"Letting us have this moment."

His eyes light up as I say it and he grips around the back of my neck, pulling me close to him and continuing our kiss.

His hand skims up my covered thigh until he reaches my apex and gently rubs me through my jeans, causing a moan to bubble up my throat. I haven't been touched in far too long.

I can tell that he notices my unusual reaction as he looks at me, tilting his head to the side.

"When's the last time...?" He trails as he asks.

"It's not just that." I whisper as I look down, shaking my head. "It's just not the same."

And his ego inflates as I say it, and he nods his head.

"Because your body was made for mine."

He leans back into me again, consuming my lips, pulling one into his mouth, bringing another light moan from me.

Breaking our kiss, he pulls away from me and smirks. "Lie back."

I can't help but follow his commands.

His hands come down onto my waistband as he pops the button of my jeans open and slips them down my legs.

My stomach is in knots as I look down at him, just as I had done the first time we met. He smiles up at me, our eyes locking as he hooks his fingers into the sides of my panties, sliding them down as well.

"You sure?" He whispers as he crawls up between my thighs.

"We're not gonna finish and then you hate yourself, are you?"

"Probably, but not because of this."

He gives me a sad look before he nods his head, understanding that we're both probably going to hate ourselves for the same reasons when this is done. That we didn't force more out of this. He glances up at me as a slow smirk spreads on his lips and he leans down his face between my thighs and I can't help but gasp as I feel his tongue come out, pressing against me.

Licking along with the entirety of me. Slipping inside for a moment before our eyes lock again, thrusting it inside of me a few times, then tracing his way back until he circles it around my clit. My body bucks against him.

He trails kisses up my stomach, pushing my shirt up as he moves, hesitating for a moment and I wonder if he's thinking about the situation, how fucked up this all is. Grabbing at the bottom, I pull it off, tossing it onto the ground before reaching around and unhooking my bra.

I don't care how fucked up this all is, how I shouldn't be here, and how I should feel bad about this, but I don't.

"Careful." I whisper as he makes his way to my chest.

"They're extremely sore." He just smiles down at me, nodding his head before lowering it. Carefully, he presses his lips to them, trailing light kisses ovetop of my boobs before slipping a nipple into his mouth, sucking on it, but causing my insides to twist.

He eases the slight pressure that he has on it before letting it fall from his mouth.

This side of Zane, the gentle, caring side, is almost too much for me right now. He shouldn't be here showing me this affection, he should live his life... not trying to clean up my mistakes. He moves away from me for a moment, toeing his shoes off and pulling his shirt up over his head, before popping the button on his jeans and slipping them down. I bite my lip, inhaling as he slides down his boxers, climbing back into the bed, over the top of me.

"Shit." He mumbles as he reaches over to grab his jeans and I stop him, looking up at him slowly, shaking my head.

"You don't have to."

He stops moving completely, his arm dropping from the air and he tilts his head. "Are you sure?"

"Unless you want to, I mean, what fucking else could it do?"

He nods his head before leaning into me, hesitating as he bites

his lip.

“I mean, if you’re concerned about anything that I may have —”

His laughter cuts me off. “It’s not that.” He shakes his head, embarrassed. “It’s just, I probably won’t last very long.”

“You’ve never?” I can’t help but ask.

“Never.” He laughs, shaking his head.

“I never thought I had.” I look down. “And honestly...” I trail, trying not to laugh.

“What?”

“I guess a dumb part of me, buried deep down kind of thought...” I trail again because I can’t force myself to say it.

I see the recognition in his eyes as I say it. He knows, he knows what I’m trying to say is that I always assumed he would be the only one that I would with.

He moves off of me before he rolls over, sitting up against the headboard.

“What?”

“Shhh...” He shakes his head, holding his hand out for me.

I take it as I move up, straddling his lap, and exhale as I lower myself onto him.

“Goddamn.” He whispers as he moves my chin, forcing me to look at him. “Don’t look away.” It comes out as a plea to me and there’s no way I could deny him what he wants right now, not when he’s being like this with me, so gentle, so caring, so not how he was trying to be the last time when I walked out of his office.

His eyes hold my gaze. I can’t look away as I take in all the emotion he’s giving me, even with his hands coming down, resting on my hips and guiding me along his cock. He doesn’t need to say a word. I can read it through them. I can see how much he regrets that he never gave in just a little. How much

he wishes he wouldn't have pushed me away last time, maybe every time.

I'm sorry. He mouths the words to me while his hands tighten, as if he was trying to hold on to me tight enough so there's no way I could slip through his fingers. I raise myself up off of him.

I shake my head before I close my eyes tightly, but let myself feel it as I slide back down him. Feeling his hand on my cheek, opening my eyes, and he shakes his head. "Don't." His thumb brushing against my skin, wiping away the tears that I am crying.

I wish I could, but as I look at him, seeing the water lingering in his own eyes, it makes them fall quicker.

"You don't either."

A watch a slow smirk spread on his lips as he nods his head.

"Then what is it you want me to do?" He asks.

"Give me something worth holding on to. Even if it has to live in my mind, I never want to forget it."

A low chuckle comes out of him as he nods his head.

Dropping his hand, he grips onto my hips and forces me onto his cock, causing a groan to fall from me.

"Goddamn, that's the sweetest fucking sound." His voice rumbles into me, before he grips around my neck, pulling me towards him, and slamming his mouth to mine.

My body jerks as I feel his hand slip from my hip and his thumb pressing circles around my clit. I moan into his mouth as he slips his tongue inside of, silencing me.

But we don't need to speak. I keep riding him as he continues to claim me, and bringing me closer to my release with each movement of his fingers.

Releasing my lips, he pulls away only enough to lock eyes with me again, still gripping onto the back of my neck so I can't move away, I can't look away, not that I want to. I rise

and lower myself again, feeling the moment. We remain in the moment, just continuing to look at one another. The emotion keeps trying to bubble up in me again as his eyes keep consuming me and filling me with all the feelings that he has inside.

I only wish that they would have come out sooner.

Or really, I wish I wasn't such a fucking idiot.

But the feelings are overwhelming, causing me to look away. But Zane shakes his head, telling me I'm not allowed to.

"Please." I whisper out and the tears fall.

"Shh." He whispers, this time letting me break eye contact, but instead he pulls me into him, wrapping me tightly in his arms. The only reason his thumb stops caressing me is for the embrace. "It's okay, Psycho. You don't have to, but you have to keep riding me." His voice causes my insides to tighten. "Do you know I can't walk into my office without imagining the last time you were in there?"

My body tingles at his words.

"And I bet you would love to know that on more than one occasion, your mark has kind of ruined a night or two."

I can't help but laugh, this time pulling away and looking at him.

"Dead fucking serious. Women don't really like it when you've been branded by your girl."

I can't help but still look at him, confused how he can still call me his girl.

"I don't care what else is going on. If you're married to him. If you have his fucking kid." He reaches up, holding my face and staring at me. I can't help but feel my insides tightening more, the more he speaks, his words filling me in all the spots that have been feeling so empty lately. "You will always be mine." He tells me with so certainty, his eyes beaming into me, telling me more than his words ever could.

And somehow also setting me no edge as he smirks at me, gripping me by the back of my head again and flipping me over onto my back, hovering overtop of me.

He presses himself into me harder this time, forcing the moan out of both of us.

“You understand me?” He hisses through his teeth.

I nod my head.

“No, I want to hear you say it.” He demands. “What do you understand?”

“No matter what...” I gasp as he slams inside of me again, causing my insides to squeeze tightly around him. “I’m yours.” I tell him, this time confirming what he said.

It doesn’t matter what it seems like is the reality. Deep down, where it really matters, I belong to him.

“Atta girl.” He smirks at me, growling out. That’s all it takes for me to completely collapse around him, groaning out, loudly.

I hear him chuckle out again as he continues to slam into me. “That’s right, psycho, fucking squirt all over me.” My eyes widen, yet somehow this time not embarrassed as my entire body continues to convulse uncontrollably, my moan increasing in volume as he groans out, slamming into me erratically before he squeezes his hand onto my hip again, so hard that it may bruise, but I couldn’t care less at this moment.

He slams inside of me once more before he stills, doubling over on top of me before rolling over to the side. Turning to me, he grins as he leans in, pressing his lips to mine.

The tears prick my eyes again as I can’t help but think how ironic it’s that this is the first time we’ve ever allowed ourselves to make ‘love’.

Or at least, I try to convince myself in this moment of that, and not that every single time since the moment I met him, we’ve made love to one another.



We walk out of purgatory and back to the bike. I'm not sure when I'll be able to come back up here because this day will forever live in my head anytime I come back. I stop in front of the bike as I hand her the helmet again, picking up the jacket and holding it open for her. She smiles as the blush spreads across her face.

"Oh, where'd my fuccboi go?" She asks me, making me laugh again.

"Can't it be the best of both?"

"Normally, I would say no, but somehow you have a way of pulling it off."

I lean into her, kissing her gently once more. Savoring every second of this, knowing that it will be the last time I'll be able to.

"Zane." My name comes out of her mouth like music. "I..." She just trails. Whatever she's about to say pains her just to think. "I... I'm not choosing him."

Reaching over, I stroke her cheek. "I know."

"Do you think that there's an alternative universe where you give me the world and the baby is yours?"

"Definitely."

"I hope that every night when I close my eyes, I'm there."

"Then that's where I'll meet you."

Any other time, anyone else, I would hate what I just said, but losing her right now, I could give a fuck less what it is.

"Can we just acknowledge how fucking cheesy we're being?" She giggles.

It makes me laugh as well. Shaking my head because I know

that it's not half as cheesy as I fucking want to be. "I want to do something..." I shake my head, hating the person she's turned me in to. "But you can't mock me."

"Well now, I'm intrigued."

I lean onto the bike, sitting sideways and then pull her towards me. "I meant what I said. My offer never expires."

"Don't promise that."

"Do you remember what I said when we first met?"

"There's a lot to ground there."

It makes me laugh again. "You had just called me a fuccboi."

She bites her lip. "About frivolous relationships?" she pauses and then shakes her head. "What does that have to do with this?"

"In my entire life, I have only met one person who I thought could be anything else but frivolous."

"Zane—"

"Shh. Tatum, just let me say this." Looking up at her and she looks interested. My hand seems to have a mind of its own when as it slides over her stomach. "Shit, I'm already jealous thinking about you showing. I'll always keep an eye on you, even if it drives me absolutely insane. And Tatum, I'm always here for you. Whatever you need. Just say the word."

"I want you to find someone who makes you happy."

"I will, as soon as you do."

"There's no need for both of us being miserable."

"Baby, trying to find someone else to be happy with and being miserable without you has the same end results." I shake my head. "Now, get on the bike before I change my mind and lock you inside." I joke. She knows I would never do that.

But she hesitates, smirking, looking up at me as if she wants me to do that. Shaking my head. "Get on." I demand of her before she pouts a bit. It's adorable, and it's killing me. I turn

around, switching the bike alive.

I drive through the desert slower than I ever have before. Normally the vibration of the bike underneath me and the open fucking road makes me feel alive, but now... it just feels bleak.

I feel her hand tighten into a ball and can feel her body behind me shake. I don't need to look back to know that she's crying into my back. I can't stop to console her right now, because my own goddamn tears are threatening because with each second, with each mile, I drive us closer to our end. Closer to when I have to let her go.

Linc told me years ago that I was reacting because I felt a certain way, and I know that deep down I knew it, but I couldn't let myself feel it. I couldn't bring her into whatever the fuck my life has become.

And I couldn't even tell you when it happened, maybe that's because I fought for so long against it, or maybe it's just been since that first night I've been fucking in love with Tatum, if only I could have let her know that sooner.

Now, I just have to live with the consequences of my action, or inactions, and let her be the one who got away.

But if I ever get a sliver of a chance, there'll be no one else for either of us.



ZANE

Pulling back up to the house, I move around back until we're concealed by the treeline and I sigh, not wanting to let her go, but knowing that I can't keep her either.

I don't turn the bike off as I press it into neutral and move the kickstand down, pulling my helmet off. Helping her off from behind me, she lifts her helmet up and hands it to me. I move without even taking my eyes off of her, securing it into place.

I stop, pulling her close again, and wrapping her up in my arms. Damning everything about her to memory, since that's where she'll be living, for me, now.

We don't say a word as she wraps her arms around me, holding me tightly, but I can feel her body shake with the sobs. I can't look at her crying without breaking again. Running my hand into her hair, I hold her even closer and she adjusts her arms, matching my grip.

She pulls away for a second, just long enough to slip her arms out of the jacket and hand it back to me, stuffing it into the saddlebag on the side, but without even taking my eyes off of her.

I don't stop her when she rushes into me, slamming her mouth to mine. I just lean into it, slipping my tongue into her mouth, being able to taste her one last time. Wanting to remember every moment, every inch, every single fucking thing about

her.

I cherish the length of the kiss as it continues to stretch, running my hand up into her hair, tangling my fingers in it.

I know this is as far as it will go, and I even know that we shouldn't be doing this... here. It's already pushing the limit, and the longer we kiss, the closer I come to not giving a fuck about anything else and taking her right here on my bike. Even if it's only been a couple of hours, my cock likes the sound of that as well.

Painfully, I force myself to break the kiss.

We just stare at one another, neither one of us knowing what's the right words to say in the moment are, but not wanting it to end yet. So we lean into the comfortable silence, the comfortable understanding, and into the pain that we're both feeling at having to be ripped away from one another.

She glances back at the house. I know, wondering how many times her phone has rung. I'm sure he likes to keep her on a fucking leash.

I mean, I'd like to keep her on a leash, only on a very different type of leash.

When she looks back at me, I nod my head, telling her I know she has to go, but I squeeze her hand tighter.

She exhales, leaning into me again, this time not for passion, but for comfort.

We both wrap our arms around one another again, and I hold her once more.

Slowly, I pull away, pausing for a moment and kissing her forehead. She looks up and I nod again.

She steps backwards and I want to tell her I'm here if she needs me, but she already knows that. I want to tell her so many more things, but they're all stuck behind my teeth.

She stops before she breaks the treeline, looking back and saying something but I just shake my head, closing my eyes.

Because I can see it in her eyes what she wants to say, and if she does, if she mutters those words, I don't know what I will do; I don't know how I will react.

When I open them again, she nods her head, knowing why I am asking her not to.

I watch her walk to the house, opening the back door, pausing before she breaks the threshold and looking back at me.

I nod one more time before she presses her lips into a fine line and then disappears into the house.

Walking through the door of the clubhouse, I have so many conflicting emotions.

Fuck all of these emotions.

Walking up to the bar, Croft hands me a glass and a whiskey. "Leave the bottle." I mumble to her and she tilts her head.

"Everything okay, Prez?"

"It fucking is what it is." I mumble as I gulp down all the liquid and refill it.

"Didn't go well?" I hear from next to me as I turn and see Axe.

"I don't want to talk about it." I mumble before I walk away with the bottle, leaving the glass sitting on the bar.

"Brother, what's up?" He asks me, but I just ignore him, pushing down the hall and entering the office. "Z?" Axe shuts the door behind himself and leans against it.

Sulking down, doubling over and running my hands into my hair and let myself feel everything as I tighten them into fists, knotting them into my hair, pulling strands out as I do so, but I could give a fuck less, and I let out a wail, that I've never heard myself make before.

"Z?!" He shouts, moving across the room and kicking the chair from underneath me.

"What?" I shout at him and his eyes widen. "What? What do

you fucking want to know?" I've never seen Axe react this way to me before. The sob escapes me before I have a second to stop it and I kick the desk in front of me, knocking the monitor off and it smashes to the ground, just out of view. Standing up, gripping a hold of the top, I scream as I flip it over, finally letting the severity of my emotions overwhelm me.

I move towards anything else that I can land my rage onto, gripping ahold of whatever is in my destruction and I yank on it, but I feel arms around me, pulling me back.

"Zane." He shouts into my face, somewhat clearing the bit of red fog that's filling my view. "What the fuck?" It's a gasp as he looks at me.

It's only with his expression that I realize I have tears streaming down my face.

"What the fuck?"

Pushing past him, I move out of the office and up the stairs, around the hallway, trying my best to avoid the looks from my other brothers in the process. Ripping open my door and slamming in behind me.

The dresser is the first thing to flip over as the door shuts, before the chair, and I'm making my way over to the opposite side of the room to find whatever I want. Who knows, throw something out of the fucking windows.

"Zane!" comes in a shout from the door. This time it's Ella. "Zane, open the goddamn door." She demands this time, as the knocking becomes more forceful. "I will come through this motherfucker if I have to. Just fucking try me."

Ripping the door open, I just look at her, subconsciously begging for her to be the surrogate mother that I desperately need in this moment, that she's been to me for the last 7 years, shit more like for my entire life.

"Oh, my god." She whispers, pushing herself into the room, shutting the door, and pulls me into her. "Shhh." She whispers just as I did to Tatum earlier today.

And she stands there as I finally lose control of all emotions, actually crying for the first fucking time since I watched the security footage.

“What’s going on?” She asks me, still letting me cry into her shoulder.

“She’s getting married.” I gasp out and I’m sure she nods her head.

“Axe told me.”

“And she’s fucking pregnant.” I whisper, forcing myself to say the words.



The knocking on the door wakes me up, surprising me a little since I didn’t even know I went to sleep. I’m still laying on the couch, I was sitting at with Ella, but she’s gone, and somehow my room is put back into order.

Opening the door, Axe looks at me, nodding his head. “You ready?”

“Aw, fuck, I forgot about the drop tonight.” I groan before I move over to the closet, opening the hidden compartment, wrapping myself in the bullet-proof vest, holster, and guns.

“Man, you can stay back and I can—”

“Fuck that. I need to get the fuck out of here.” Even though I can still smell her on me.

Opening the safe, I grab out the guns, placing them into their rightful places.

“Man, Ella told me.”

“I’m fine.” I look at him. “It was just a really fucking weird day. I just want to forget about it and do my fucking job.”

“Okay.” He steps out of the closet and we both move down the hallway.

A handful of us go down to the drop at the marina. Don’t want too many to come and spook them.

Axe and I stand with one another, not really talking as we hear a couple of our men at the lookouts talking with their comms in.

But I say nothing. All I can imagine is her as she was riding me, feeling the emotions radiating off of her.

I'm still zoned out when the men tell me they're coming and it's not until Axe smacks me and the revving of the engine's sound that I'm paying attention again.

"Z, my man." Lucas, the leader of one of the city's gangs, nods to me. "What you got for us today?"

"What we talked about." I snap out, trying to keep my attitude in check, and failing miserably.

"Alright man." He nods as his men help Linc load up the truck with the guns in tow.

"Oh, yeah." He laughs out, turning around and looking at me. "I heard your girl is marrying that dirty cop. At least she's consistent. But goddamn, what a piece of ass—"

I don't care what else he has to say as I'm moving over to him.

"The fuck did you just call her?" I slam him into the truck, causing all the men to freeze. I'm sure that every single gun in the vicinity, well except for mine and Axe's, are all pointed at me. I press mine up against Lucas's chin and I'm sure Axe has his pointed at one of Lucas's men.

"This isn't smart Zane. Don't make the same fucking mistake you dad did."

"Don't talk about my dad like that. You don't know what he did."

"Everyone knew your dad had a weakness for Caroline, and in the end, that's what got him killed. You don't want a female to be the reason you end up with a goddamn bullet in you, do you? But goddamn, I can see why you had such a thing for her, her tight little ass and I can only imagine—"

I can't help but laugh. "Don't you see, you spineless fuck? My

mother was never a weakness. She made him fucking stronger. And I'd do a lot worse for Tatum than die." I mumble to him, my hand finding the second gun in my holster milliseconds before I pull the trigger and Lucas's brains spray out of the top of his head.

I feel the burning of a bullet as it grazes by me, fucking thugs and not knowing how to shoot. Quickly spinning around, I see his second-in-command fall as Axe fires a shot, Linc downing one, and then I fire one last shot at the man who grazed me.

"Fucking seriously?" Axe shouts as I shrug my shoulder, making my way over to the bike as the rest of the club comes skidding around us to help us clean up my mess.

Should I have done that? No.

Was it careless? Absolutely.

Would I do it again? You're goddamn right, I would.

No one talks about *my* fucking girl.

"You're shot."

"I know." I nod my head.

"Wrap it so you don't bleed on the scene." Axe tells me, grabbing the bandana and we work to get my minor wound covered.

"Find the stray bullet, so it's not here." I tell my brothers who look around the scene before one pops up with it.

We work quick as we clean off the prints of the unregistered guns we have slipping them into the hands of the men who were shot, well all except for one, that one I clean off as best as possible, flicking it into the ocean, we grab our guns out of the back of the van, the duffle bags of money, and the entire club rides out.

We probably should have left the money, but now it just looks like something bad went on within the gang.

Passing by the garage, I react to seeing the car before I realize I've seen it. Swerving into the parking lot, kicking the stand

down, I move over to it.

For a second I think that she's thought it over and taken me up on my offer, but when I see how empty the inside is, I hate myself for the hope I had. What does it mean for the car to be here? Why would she just leave it here? It's hers.

Moving across the parking lot as the revving of the engine from Axe's bike finally makes it in, I unlock the door, moving in through the lobby, racking my mind with what is going on.

I hear the keys jingle as I kick them across the room. Looking down, the sheet of paper my foot is on catches my attention.

Kneeling, I pick it up, attempting to keep my rage in check as I read her handwriting.

Please take it back. If I keep it, he's going to sell it.

I'm sorry... for everything.



TATUM

“Your doing what’s right.” I whisper to myself in the mirror as I stand in the dressing suite. My dress hanging on the door behind me. Taking a deep breath, I turn around, reaching up, and pulling it down off of the hanger. I know I don’t love Darren, but is love really the only reason to get married. You can be in love without being married. Why can’t you be married without being in love? At the thought of love, I imagine Zane’s face as he took me back to the house from the desert. Reaching around my body, I hook the dress at the top of the zipper, attempting to zip up the back but becoming frustrated.

I feel nauseated, which I haven’t in a few days. I know that it’s because of what’s happening today. “Get it together.” I whisper to myself, closing my eyes and taking a deep breath.

I jump as I feel hands up on my waist, quickly looking up in the mirror, and I swear I think I’m imagining things for a moment. A sob escapes me as I watch him zip up my dress.

“You’re beautiful.” Zane’s eyes lock with mine in the mirror as I watch his lips moving at my ear. Turning around, I look up at him and I can feel the tears threatening me again.

“What are you doing here?” I whisper, reaching up, touching him, as if to make sure that he’s real.

“I came to give you an escape.”

I have to force myself not to smile at him as he says it. His slight grin doesn't take away from the sadness in his eyes.

"I'm kidding, mostly." He finally whispers again, but I know that neither one of us believes he is.

"Zane..."

"Shhh, stop. I was kidding. I couldn't help myself. I just had to come see you before..."

"I have to." I whisper.

"I know you *feel* you have to. But my offer still stands."

"It's not fair."

"None of this is fair." He brushes a lock of my hair behind my ear.

"How'd you get in here, anyway?" I ask, shaking my head.

"The patio door's unlocked." He looks down at my body, shaking his head, looking away, but I can see the water in his eyes as he fights off the tears. "You know, you should be more careful about your safety." His voice cracks as he continues to stare down at me.

"I'm so sorry." I whisper, my voice shaking.

"I didn't realize it was going to be this hard." He pauses, and I watch as he swallows, clearing his throat. "You're so goddamn beautiful."

"I look like a fucking cupcake." I say as I keep looking up at him. He laughs before I'm reaching up and covering his mouth so no one can hear it outside of the room. "I mean, this may be the worst dress I've ever worn." I pull my hand away as his laugh subsides.

"Why are you then?"

I just roll my eyes, shaking my head. "I kind of refused to do anything about it and this is what I ended up with."

"Yeah, it was a little surprising when I first saw it."

"Why?"

“I mean, you look beautiful, but it’s not you.”

“What would be me?”

“I dunno.” He shrugs as he looks down at me. “Something backless.” He whispers before his hand comes up and his finger trails down the front of my dress. “Something low cut to show off your incredible tits.” My breathing hitches and I have to bite my lip to keep my emotions at bay. “Something a little more...” he pauses as his hands come down, resting on my hip. “Something that shows off your incredible body.”

“You forget, I’m pregnant.”

“I didn’t forget.”

“Weirdo.” I whisper as he looks down at me, his eyes darkening. “You have some creepy kink about pregnant women.” I know it’s not actually a weird kink. To each their own. I’m just giving him shit.

“No.” He shakes his head. “I have a creepy kink about you, regardless of what else is going on. And knowing what it feels like to be inside of you.”

“We have a really fucked up relationship.”

Nodding his head, he stares down at me, and I can’t help but to look back, giving us this moment once more, just one more time.

He leans into me. “Tatum, I need you to tell me to leave.”

“Why?”

“Because if you don’t... soon, I’m going to kiss you, and I’m not sure if I’m going to be able to stop.”

I know I should tell him to leave, but I don’t want him to.

“Fuck, in my dreams, we have a beautiful family.” He whispers. Seeing this side of him still shocks me.

“I’ve dreamt of you every night since.” I match his tone, not really sure if I’m making any sense. Knowing that all of this isn’t fair to either of us.

“You sure you wanna do this?” He asks as he takes another step into me. His hand sliding up my side.

“Do what?” I whisper. I can’t think about anything but the way he smiles when we’re naked in bed together, the way he smells when I wake up in the middle of the night, how his hands cause gooseflesh where ever they touch.

“Get married. My bike’s right outside.” He smirks at me again, shrugging his shoulder towards the door.

“Is that what you really want to do?”

“No.”

“Then ask what you want too.”

“I don’t want to ask you anything.”

“Then what do you want to do?”

“I want to carry you out of here, take you home, and fuck you until you understand you will always be mine.”

“What about a compromise?” I whisper, looking up and biting my lip and my hands have a mind of their own as they pull him by his belt into me. His mouth crashing down to mine. I open his belt and unbuttoning his jeans.

Pulling away from me, he takes a step back, turns around, shakes his head, as if he needs to distance himself to say what he needs to, and pants out. “Are you sure? Remember, I’m not a good guy. I’ll completely take advantage of this situation.”

“Zane.” I whisper and I reach around my body, unzipping my dress, and letting it slip down my arms and body. It falls into a pool of fabric around me.

“What?” he says, his back still to me.

“Turn around.” I husk out.

Listening to me, he turns, looking at me as I reach behind myself once more and unhooking the strapless bra and letting it drop to the ground. “I want you to take advantage.”

“Holy fuck.” He groans out as he toes his boots off his feet

before letting his jeans fall to the ground. Shrugging off his kutte, placing it on the chair before pulling his shirt up over his head. Stepping into me, my eyes trail up his body and he stalks towards me, his hands sliding down my back as he cups my ass and lifts me up, sitting me on the countertop. His feet stepping to the center of my dress that lies flat on the ground, a perfect circle formed around his feet.

“This is new.” I trail my fingers over the tattoo that sits over his heart. “Burn it all.” I whisper over the words he spoke to me months ago, trailing my finger over the lighter that sits on top of it. I look up at him and he nods his head. My vision becoming blurry as I contemplate it all.

Reaching up, I grab onto the back of his neck, pulling him into me, his lips slamming to mine as he pulls my panties to the side and I feel him pushing inside of me. His arms come around my body, his hand pressing against my back as he presses inside of me. My back arching and my head falling back as his lips trail down my neck, his teeth grazing until he bites down on my collarbone. A slight whimper coming out.

“Look at me.” He whispers. Tilting my chin up to look at him, forcing our eyes to lock. This time is nothing like any other time that I’ve been with Zane. He thrusts into me as we continue to stare at one another and it feels like I can almost see into him, even more than the last time. He lets all of his walls down. I can see his soul. See him for who he really is.

I know, in this moment, even if I can never tell him I’m in love with him, somehow he’ll know. For this moment, I let myself imagine how my life could be if I ran off with him, if I let him help, if I chose me above anyone else, even him.

“Tatum,” he whispers. I know what he’s thinking. I can see it in his eyes. He’s pleaded with me last time not to tell him.

“Don’t.” I whisper out. “Please, don’t.”

He closes his eyes as he exhales and pulls me into him. Gripping a hold of me as his thrusts are determined, methodical.

“I’m sorry.” I whisper into his ear. “You don’t have to say it, I already know, but I can’t hear you say it out loud.”

Pulling away, he looks at me, nodding his head, the pain written all over his face.

“Me too.” I whisper to him as much of the thoughts as I can. His eyes widen as he nods, but I can see the tears that he’s forcing away.

Pulling him into me, I meet his lips as we move together, in sync with one another, his lips parting from mine as they fall back down to my neck, pressing light kisses. His hand slips between us, reaching for my clit and rubbing circles onto it. Every muscle in my body tightens before I feel the sudden release. The moan rips out of me and it only takes a second before Zane’s hand covers my mouth and he smirks.

My body vibrates around him until I’m gasping and he picks me up off of the sink once again, standing me on the ground before turning me around and bending me at the waist.

The atmosphere changes when he slips back into me, lifting me up until my back touches his back and my eyes look back towards him in the mirror as I watch his lips move at my ear. “Are you coming faster now?” he smirks in the mirror.

“I—I don’t know.” I gasp out as he slams into me and cocks his head to me. “This is the first time in a while.” I gasp. His eyes squint and he shakes his head, pushing me back down by the shoulders before he slams into me, ripping a moan out of me. His hand coming back up, covering my mouth, and using it to pull me back onto his cock.

“Can you be quiet?” he smirks as he speaks to me in the mirror. “I mean, I’m fine with fucking you until you’re moaning out my name so loud that everyone in the building can hear it.” He chuckles. “But I don’t think that you want that, do you?” I just look up in the mirror trying to speak, but it only comes out muffled by his hand. “What?”

He lifts his hand just enough to hear me. “I can be quiet.”

I watch a small sense of regret spread on his face before his

hand wraps my hair around it and he pulls my head back, causing my pussy to clench around him.

“It’s driving me crazy thinking about it.”

“About what?” I whimper out as I feel my internal walls tightening around him.

“How you’re gonna walk down that aisle, marrying him, with my cum dripping out of you?”

I see the look on his face and his eyes roll back in his head. His hand on my hip tightens, pressing his fingers into my hip. Slamming into me hard and more erratic until he grunts as I follow behind him.

His arms wrap around me and pull me backwards into him. He just holds me, right there, still inside of me as well. He presses a kiss into the crook of my neck before burying his face and sighing.

“I don’t want to let you go.” He whispers.

“I don’t want you to.”

“You know I’m going to kill him, right?” he whispers again, causing me to look up and tilt my head at him.

“Zane, you can’t.”

“Don’t worry, baby. It’ll be airtight. They’ll never be able to connect it.”

Pushing myself out of his arms, causing him to fall out of me, I turn around and look at him. “Zane.”

“No, Tatum. Listen to me. He’s backed you into a corner here. And it’s fucking bullshit. There will be a time that you will be free of him, I promise you that, and I’ll be here.”

“I can’t ask you to wait.”

“You never have, but I am, and I always will. But I’ll see to it that it’s sooner rather than later.”

I sigh because I know what he’s saying.

“I’m sorry.” I whisper. He pulls up his boxers and I sigh,

reaching down and pulling up my dress again. The regret of making him leave already filling me, as well as the dread of what this day will bring.

“Stop it.” He looks at me before turning me around to the mirror and zipping me back up. “I may not like or agree with your decisions. But I understand why you feel the need to make it. You won’t be in this predicament forever. And baby, I know you waited for me to pull my head out of my ass all those years.” He says as I turn around and look at him again, wanting to protest and tell him I wasn’t. “You look so goddamn beautiful, even if you hate that dress.”

“Zane, it’s always been you.”

“I know, psycho. It’s my turn to wait now.” He leans in, pressing his lips to my forehead. “It’s okay, you can have a practice marriage.”

I can’t help but erupt with laughter and shake my head as he says it. “Oh, a practice. Why are you going to be my last?”

He says nothing, just shaking his head as he looks at me, serious. His look makes me uncomfortable as I try to look away, but his hand comes up, stopping me and forcing me to look back at him. “Baby, like it or not, I’m gonna be the only one that’s gonna matter, and I’ll buy you whatever damn dress you want.”

I’m not sure whether to laugh or be shocked as I just continue to look up at him.

We jump, looking over at the door as it opens.

“Blair.” I breathe out a sigh of relief as her eyes widen and she steps into the room, shutting the door. “It’s fine, it’s my sister.”

She just stands inside the room, leaning against the door, just blinking at the scene she just walked in to.

Zane turns back around shaking his head and grinning, wide at me as he bends over, grabbing his jeans and stepping into them.

“What?”

“Oh, nothing.” He pulls them up, standing up and shaking his head. “You wanted to get caught.”

“What? No!” I exclaim.

“Really, so you just fucked me in here with the door unlocked?”

Well, if I was being honest, I’m not sure if I wanted to or not.

Blair finally shakes her head as if she’s finally piecing together what was just happening as Zane sits down on the chair and starts putting on his boots.

“You must be Zane.”

He gasps as he looks over at me. “You told your sister about me.”

I can’t help but roll my eyes at him.

“Yes, nice to meet you Blair.” He laughs, reaching over and shaking her hand before he pulls on his other boot. Grabbing his shirt off of the ground and I watch my sister check him out as he stands up, reaching up and pulling it over his head.

I smack her as I glare at her and she mouths what? Back at me. Zane catches part of our interaction as he tilts his head, reaching over and grabbing his kutte and slipping his arms inside.

“I should go.” He sighs as he looks up at us again. “Again, good to meet you, Blair. Tatum.” He says nothing to me, because we both know he doesn’t need to. We both know what we want to say. After a moment, he nods his head and turns, walking back over to the patio door.

Go! Blair nods towards Zane as his hand comes down onto the door handle.

“Wait.” I walk over to where he is, and I can hear the swoosh of my dress as I walk. He halts as soon as he hears me and turns to look at me. Standing up on my toes, I press my lips to his once more and his left hand comes down to my waist as he pulls me into him. His right hand cupping my cheek as he

kisses me one last time.

He pulls back as he looks down at me again. Our eyes lock and we both sigh out, pain radiating through both of us. “I know.” He whispers to me. “Now, go marry your first husband.” He says. He pushes the door open, looks around before he’s moving across the grass, and disappears into the tree line.

“What the fuck?” Blair shouts as she says it.

“Shhh.” I hush her. “Nothing happened.”

“You’re a goddamn liar. He was still naked when I walked in. Why was he here?”

“I don’t know. I was putting on my dress and he was suddenly here, zipping it up for me.”

“And then you fucked your biker boyfriend in your dress wedding?”

“No.” I pause. “I took it off first.”

“You whore.” She laughs loudly as she falls down into the chair. “I mean, I see why you fucked him, but it’s still kind of a grey area. And if Darren finds out.”

“He won’t.” I look at her, cutting my eyes.

“I’m not saying shit. That will go to the grave with me.” She laughs before looking over at me again. “How many abs does he have?”

I just roll my eyes at her.

“So, are you also going to fuck your husband tonight?”

“Doubtful, plan is to get him drunk enough he can’t. I mean, it’s not like he really wants to touch me, anyway. I haven’t had sex with anyone since Zane.”

“I know. I just walked in on that.”

“No, before this time.”

“Wait, but...” She points down at my stomach and I look back up as her mouth drops open. “Oh, so this isn’t the first time

you've cheated on Darren?"

"Is it really cheating? I don't really have a choice." My sister looks at me concerned, I confided in her last night about everything that has gone on.

"Also, did he say your first husband?"

"Yes." I laugh as I walk over and check my hair and makeup in the mirror, slightly. Blair's face pop up behind me in the mirror. "He said that Darren is a practice because he's going to be the only real thing. That was after he told me he's gonna kill him."

Blair falls backwards onto the chair and giggles like a little girl. I can't help but laugh at her reaction. "I think I like him."

"Yeah." I agree, looking out the window of the door to the patio. The door that he just went out of. "I do too."

"You're in love with him." She whispers and I just look over at her and sigh. "I'm surprised he's letting this wedding happen."

"He wouldn't if I hadn't told him not to do anything."

"Why would you do that?"

"Darren knows that Zane and I used to have whatever it was. I'm not sure if he ever saw how I felt about him, but he saw the scar. So he threatened his freedom if I did anything."

"Wait, what scar?" My sister asks me, curiously.

I sigh as I turn around. "Unzip me."

My sister does and I let the dress fall one last time as I show her my hip and she gasps. "Zane branded you?"

"Yeah." I can't help but laugh slightly. "I mean, he has a matching one, sooo..."

"And what did Darren say when he saw the scar?"

"He acted like he didn't see it. But how could he have missed it?"

"It's almost like he knew Zane had branded you, so he

knocked you up to say he owns you.”

I stare at my sister, contemplating what she’s saying.

“But why would he do that? They have no connection.”

“Maybe because Zane’s the president of the MC. They know he’s up to no good.”

All throughout the night, all I can imagine are his eyes and the sadness that they wore as he was leaving.



TATUM

I sit across from Darren at the table, not saying a word, only eating, or really pushing around my food on my plate. My stomach has been in knots since I saw the flash of his bike as he pulled into the parking lot and out of sight.

I swear I can hear him talking somewhere in the back, which causes me to look across the table to check if Darren heard.

But he hasn't, or at least he hasn't reacted.

I knew when he said that we were coming here, that the club owned the restaurant, but I also knew that it wasn't an option to offer that information.

I can breathe a sigh of relief when I box up the food that he can't finish. I don't even bother taking mine.

He stands up to pay the bill. I know he expects me to stand up with him and walk over to the counter.

The waitress swipes his card, and I sigh as he signs his name. He turns to look at me and my mouth speaks before I realize what I'm doing. "Would you carry this? I need to use the bathroom."

"For fuck's sake, Tate, can't you hold it?" He sighs and even the waitress looks at me, confused for a moment. He usually doesn't make a scene like this is public. He's annoyed about something. Who knows what it is, though.

"Everything I've read says not to hold—" my quiet voice is

quickly cut off.

“Jesus Christ, fine.” He rolls his eyes, snatching the box out of my hands, and storms out of the front door to the car.

“Sorry.” I whisper to the waitress as I move back towards the back of the building.

My hands shake as I grow closer. The back of my head urges me not to do this. That he’ll find out somehow, but if Darren saw Zane pull into the parking lot earlier, he wouldn’t have let me come back here alone.

I know I can hear him now. The bass of his voice causing a knot to grow in my stomach... and lower. Just his voice is enough to affect me like this.

The door to the kitchen is open as I walk past it, and I see the group of men, all wearing their kuttes, standing in a small circle talking.

I slow down as he laughs at whatever his brothers were saying, and it sounds like music to my ears. Zane is bracing himself on a table as the smile on his face brings one to my own. But I’m sure that unlike his, mine reaches my eyes.

Almost as if he can feel me staring at him, he turns his head to the side until his eyes fall down on me. His mouth falls first before the smile spreads wider this time, his eyes crinkling at the sides as he does.

It’s a second that feels like an hour before I keep walking towards the bathroom, pushing the door open, and closing it behind me, and just staring at my reflection in the mirror.

It’s only moments before the door pushes open again and Zane steps inside, behind me. His eyes locking with mine through the mirror. I watch him as his hand tracks behind his back and he flips the lock.

“I assumed you wanted me to follow you in?”

I nod my head, keeping my eyes on him.

“And why did you want me to come in after you?” The right

side of his mouth ticks upwards.

I drop my eyes and look away.

“Tatum.” He says and I can hear his boots thudding on the ground as he grows closer to me. “Tatum.” His voice falls slightly, as I can feel the heat from his body on mine, but I still can’t answer him. “Tatum.” His voice is a whisper as he leans into my ear, his hands gently resting themselves on my hips, before he forces me around, tilting my chin up to look at him.

“I...” I trail, not really knowing what to say. “I, honestly, don’t know.”

His smirk falls from his face as he places his hands on either side of me on the sink, leaning in to me again, “it took everything in me not to go over there to you.”

I feel the gasp coming out, not meaning to.

“Don’t worry, I told you, I’ll do whatever it is you want me to.” He’s so close to me, I can feel him as he shifts and it causes me to worry my lip. “You nervous that he’s going to come in here and find us together?”

“Yes.” I can’t help but laugh out as he asks it, breaking the slight tension that is building between us.

“You don’t have to.”

“Oh yeah, and why not?”

“I had Jag take my bike when I saw you over there.” He smirks at me again. “I’m glad I saw you. I was getting ready to leave, have to run some errands, then be at the shop later.”

“Busy man.” I don’t know what about Zane, where without even trying, it seems like I’m flirting with him.

“You don’t even know the half of it.” He stares down at me, intently.

“I shouldn’t be here.” I whisper to him as I try to pull away from him, even though I have nowhere to go.

“But you are.” He moves his arms around my body, forcing

me closer into him.

“Stop.” I plead with him. “He’s going to be able to smell you on me.”

“I have a smell?” He laughs, looking shocked. “What is my smell?”

“Exhaust and arrogance.”

He laughs before he leans into me again.

“I just wanted to see you. I know it’s fucked up and I shouldn’t have. I’m not being fair to you.”

“You can come and see me whenever you want.” He smiles at me, turning my hips again so I’m facing the mirror and a mischievous smirk spreading on his face. “But since you’re being unfair, I think I can be too.”

I swallow hard and look back at him in the mirror again.

“What’s that?”

“Lift your shirt up.”

“What?”

“Come on...” He whines in my ear.

“You do have some sort of pregnancy kink.”

“Nope, or at least, never have, before you.” He leans into me again as his lip brush against the crook of my neck and I swallow, wishing I could stop the growing need that I already feel for him. The images of him doing this after we fucked last floats around in my head.

“If this is how you are now, I’m not sure if you would have been able to handle it being yours.” It comes out of my mouth before I even think about it as he’s lifting my shirt up to find the barely there bump. His hand grazing it.

I hear a low hiss in my ear before I look up to see him staring at me, his hand still lingering on my belly.

“Oh, you don’t even know how I would be.”

“You’re right, I don’t. How would you be?” My imagination

won't let me give this one up just yet.

His eyes still staring at me with such intensity that I can't look away. He lets my shirt fall back down, smoothing it into place. "I'm not exactly sure." He admits. "But I know that if you were pregnant with my baby, there's no fucking way in hell you'd be in a bathroom with another man right now." He turns around, walking back towards the door, pausing at it to sigh before he pulls it open and leaves the room.

I'm mortified when I leave the room. I see the hostess from earlier, wide-eyed, and mouth agape.

"Fuck." I mutter to myself, looking down. "Look, it was—"

"You don't have to say a word to me. I saw nothing." She smirks at me and she continues to walk past me, she our arm touch I hear her whisper to me. "Your husband's a dick. Your secret is safe with me."

"It wasn't..." I plead as she continues by, turning around and watching her walk down the hall. She says nothing and I chuckle to myself as she motions with her hands as a zipper for her mouth and pretends to throw away the key.



When I walk through the door of the shop, I see everyone standing and staring at me, their eyes wider than anyone wants to see a group of people staring at them as soon as they walk into the room.

"What is it?"

They look around at one another, as if trying to contemplate which one is going to tell me what's happening. As if they're all trying to tell one another that it will not be them. That means whatever is happening will not be good.

"Z..." Axe trails as he steps into the front from the hallway, looking at me and nodding back towards the hallway. I follow

him down the hallways towards the office.

“What the fuck is going on?”

“It’s not good.” He whispers, looking back as Ella pokes her head out of the office and sees me. She holds up her finger over to lips to tell me to be quiet as she starts over to us.

“It’s not good, as in I’m going to be a little upset? Or it’s no good as in I’m going to fucking murder someone?”

The look on her face answers my question.

“Z, calm down.” Ella says as she stands in front of me. “You don’t need to scare her anymore than she already is.”

“Who?” I ask, already knowing the answer, knowing what happened earlier today. I know it was nothing, but if he saw...

“WHO?” I shout before I push past them and rush down the remaining hallway, grabbing the door frame and using it to swing into the office.

The initial image of her sitting on the couch, her knees pulled up to her chest as she’s just staring in front of herself. Her sister sits next to her and nods at me as I walk into the room.

Tatum’s not crying, not filled with rage. She just sits, staring in front of her... imploding in on herself.

I attempt to swallow, but it doesn’t even budge the blockade that my emotions have in my throat.

Blair stands up from the couch and moves out of the room as I stand frozen in fear. I can see her glance up at me as she passes by, touching my arm as if to jolt me back into reality.

The sound of the door shutting breaks the stronghold that our emotions have on us and Tatum looks up at me, her eyes showing me just how much trauma she’s holding. The cut on her trembling lip makes it difficult for me to remain somewhat calm.

We don’t say a word, I just walk over to her, as carefully as I can, because something inside of me tells me not to startle her, maybe somehow my mother’s fucking voice has become a

slight voice of reasoning at this moment and is reiterating Ella's words to me. Tatum needs me to be soft with her. Our eye contact doesn't break until I'm sitting down on the couch next to her and she finally feels safe enough to fall to pieces in front of me.

I pull her into me, wrapping her up in my arms as tightly as possible. If I could crack my chest open and keep her safe there, I would, even knowing it would kill me.

Her wincing causes me to stop.

"Fuck, I'm sorry, I didn't realize how—"

"It's not you..." She trails and sighs, looking up at me this time, the shame that she believes she should feel written on her face.

"Show me." My mouth dries as I prepare myself for what I know is coming. Balling my fists up as she looks down, her bottom lip quivering. Her hair slides as she moves, and her neck grabs my attention. Carefully and slowly, as to not startle her, I reach up, moving the remaining hair off of her shoulder, exposing her neck. She freezes as she realizes it, and I can see the 3 red distinct finger marks where I caved and placed my lips on her earlier.

"I didn't realize they were there, as well."

"As well?" I ask her, keeping my voice low and keeping Ella's words in mind as not to scare her even more.

Her eyes look defeated as she looks back up at me and nods her head.

"Where else, baby?" I hate how my fucking voice cracks.

"I shouldn't be here." She whispers, her eyes filling with tears.

"I just didn't know where else to go. I needed to get out of there. And he left for work."

"It's okay." I whisper, cupping her cheek. "I told you. I'm always here for you. You don't have to show me if you don't want to."

“It’s not that. I just know that this isn’t fair to you.” She looks away.

“Life isn’t ever fair.” I whisper and feel somewhat accomplished when she glances up at me and smirks as much as one can do without reopening the wound.

“But this is me not being fair to you.” She stands, but I reach up, not grabbing her arm, just touching her, knowing that’s enough to stop her and bring her back to me.

“It’s okay.” I whisper. “You came here for a reason. You trust me?”

She nods her head as she continues to look down, but she speaks instead. “Absolutely not.” The tears trickling down her face.

Even if she wasn’t nodding her head yes, I would know that she’s joking. “Then just tell me what happened.” I pause, realizing what must have happened. “He saw us talking?”

“I don’t think so.”

“Then what?” It just seems too coincidental...

“He had gone out to the car when I went to the bathroom.” She shakes her head. I don’t need her to tell me the rest. I mean, I already know. “I got out to the car, and he seemed fine. We drove home, and he fucking lost it once we walked in the door.” She pulls her sleeve up her arm and shows me the bruises that are already turning colors there. “He grabbed me and told me he wasn’t a fucking idiot. That he saw your bike in the parking lot and why else would you be there unless we were trying to see each other right under his nose?” She shakes her head before chuckling. “I told him the club owned it and so it would make sense that you were there.”

“I mean, yeah.”

She smiles up at me, shaking her head. “He backhanded me, telling me I should have fucking told him that before we went to eat there. And I couldn’t help myself. I rolled my eyes and told him he would have freaked out if I did because I shouldn’t

know that much information about you.”

“That just pissed him off more.”

She nods her head. “Yeah, he gripped my arm hard. I told him he was hurting me.” She pauses, shaking her head. “And he laughed in my face. Told me I didn’t know what it felt like to hurt, but he could show me.” Her lips tremble again. “And he slammed me against the wall and wrapped his hands—” a sob interrupts her story and I reach up, gently pulling her down onto my lap.

“Shhh.” Running my fingers through her hair, stroking it gently, trying to calm her. “It’s okay, baby, I’ve always got you.” I whisper into her hair as I plant a kiss in it. Holding her against me. Never wanting to let her go.

I keep her in my arms, soothing her until she’s calm again. “He won’t ever lay another hand on you.” It pains me just to have to say it.

Pushing herself up from where she’s lying against me, still sitting on me, but I can see it in her eyes that she’s serious about what she’s about to say.

“You can’t do anything.” She says it matter-of-fact.

“Oh, I can.” I say back quicker than I should. “And I’m going to.” Slowly pushing the hair out of her eyes, forcing her to look at me so she knows that I’m serious. “I’m gonna fucking kill him.”

“Zane, you can’t. Promise me you won’t.”

I can read it in her eyes everything that she’s afraid of; I shake my head as I smirk. “He threatened to hurt me, didn’t he?”

“No.” She shakes her head now. “He didn’t threaten to *hurt* you.” She stresses the word hurt.

“He threatened if I hurt him, he’d have me arrested.” It’s almost fucking comical.

“No.” She moves, standing up, and looking down at where I’m sitting. “If he knew I was here right now, he’d have you

arrested. He would find something, plant something, shit whatever he could.”

“That’s fine. I can protect you. And he wants to have me arrested, then I can still protect you until I get out.”

“Zane.” My name is a whisper on her lips as her eyes fill with tears. “You want to protect everyone? But who protects you?” A tear slips down her cheek.

“Is this really what you want? You want him?” I hate how pathetic I sound.

“No. You know that. I told you I don’t want him.” She steps into me, placing a hand on my chest and shaking her head. “I want you to be safe, and I’ll do whatever that takes.”

“If you’re so worried about that, then why the fuck are you here right now?” it’s more aggressive than I mean for it to be, but my pain is refusing to remain dormant.

But it doesn’t even seem to faze her.

“I covered my tracks. I went to the store and snuck out the back. Blair met me there and brought me here.” Another tear slips out. “And even if he finds out, I can explain it. Tell him I was coming to end any hope that you have for the future. That if I didn’t do it that way, you would never know.” Her eyes lock with mine and I see the shame again, realizing that it’s not just about what happened, but the shame is also for the whole reason she came here. For this reason. Ending things for good right now. “Please don’t hate me.” Her voice cracking through her sob.

“Hey.” I whisper, tilting her head up by her chin, so she’s looking at me again. “I could never do that. What if you just left? Go somewhere else.”

She shakes her head again. “He clarified that if I leave for any reason...”

“He’s trapping you by your feelings for me?”

“I told you, I didn’t have those.” She tries to smirk, but her eyes give her away, filling with tears as soon as she looks at

me. She nods her head, letting tears flow out now and I pull her into me one last time.

I'm strangling on my own emotions as I attempt to speak. "I'll do whatever you want me to."

"It's what I have to do." She sighs, looking up at me.

She should pull away, walk to the door and leave, her and I both know that, but she doesn't, because it pains her more to leave.

"Goodbye Zane." It's a broken whisper as she looks up, her tears still trailing down her face against her will, as her eyes beg me.

I lean into her, giving her enough time to back away, or tell me no, but as soon as she closes her eyes and leans in to me, I press my lips to hers.

My heart thumps in my chest so hard I can hear it in my ears. And I know both of our hearts are breaking simultaneously.

We break our kiss, painfully slow, as if to cherish every millisecond. I reach over, brushing the tears off of her cheek, and she leans into my hand as I cup her cheek for a moment. She turns and just as I did to her earlier today; she walks towards the door and I can hear her sigh.

"Until you're ready."

"What?" She turns around and looks at me, confused.

"It's only goodbye until you're ready. I'll keep my distance, but you know where to find me when you're ready."



ZANE

The sunlight streams in through the blinds and I groan out, rolling over. My head's throbbing, but I'm trying to grasp my bearings and figure out where I am. It only takes a second before I hear the phone buzzing, realizing what woke me up.

Across the pillow on the other side of the bed, the fanned out black hair contrasts the white sheets, my head flops back down on to mine.

“What?” I snap through the line without even looking at who it is, and low enough to try to not wake Roux, a special guest at the strip club last night, where she is still sleeping next to me.

“Chill out.” Axe comes through the receiver.

“Whatever.”

“Look, man, we've got a meeting today. Where the fuck are you, anyway?”

“Uh...” I pause as I look around, making him laugh slightly.

“You don't remember who you left with, do you?”

“Does it matter?”

“Kind of, since your bike's still at the club.”

“It's fine, I'll figure it out.”

“Chill the fuck out, bro. Linc is already outside the hotel.”

I grumble some incoherent words at him about how I know who's in bed with me before I hang up the phone, pushing myself off of the bed and looking around the room. It spins as I shake my head, looking back over at the bed, and feeling the twinge of guilt consume me as I sigh.

Of course, I know the feeling of guilt is ridiculous. Shaking my head, I reach down, grabbing my jeans and walking into the bathroom.

As I button up my jeans, I look at the bed again. It's a strange feeling to feel loyal towards someone who you're not even with. I only wish that I could convince myself every time I fuck anyone else. The girl looks up at me, maybe hopeful as I stand up from grabbing my shirt off of the floor, causing me to hesitate for a moment before she sits up, holding the sheet to her chest.

"You don't have to say anything." It comes out as disappointment, and I watch her frown. "I knew what this was. I'm not expecting anything." She pauses, looking up again. "Besides, everyone already knows who you're in love with." "What?" I pause, staring at her in disbelief.

She laughs, shaking her head.

"I'm not..." I stop myself, not being able to say what I want to... or not sure if, when I say it, that it will actually be believable.

"It's fine. Everyone knows. You're angry now because she chose him—"

"She didn't fucking chose him." I snap out too quick, wishing that I could backtrack what I just said.

Her eyes widen as she just stares at me for a few more moments and nods her head. "Oh... that makes way more sense."

"What do you mean?"

She smiles at me and nods. "Everyone knows. When she married him, everyone was confused. He trapped her, didn't

he?”

I don't answer; I fucking can't answer. It's not my story to tell, so I just stare at her, pressing my lips into a firm line.

“What a piece of shit.” She mumbles under her breath as she shakes her head. She finally pushes herself off of the bed, reaching down, grabbing her sheer shirt, and pulling it up and over her head before she struts the remaining distance towards me. “I get it. Last night was fun. Want to get your mind off of it again? You know where to find me, no strings, Z.”

“So, you're just cool with this?” I look after her, confused why I'm getting out of this situation so freely.

I hear a laugh follow her into the bathroom before she peeps her head back out again. “Maybe I'm trying to forget someone, too.”



Moving through the lobby, the front desk looks at me as if I'm about to make a scene in here. Shrugging them off, I exit the building and move over to the van that's sitting on the curb.

“You look like shit.” Linc tells me as he pushes himself off of the hood of the van and walks back around to the driver's seat, sliding inside.

I don't respond to him, but just grumble out another response. Pausing, I look over at him and nod. “You know how I ended up here last night?”

“Yup.” He nods his head quickly. I just stare at him until he talks again. “Man, you showed up at Sirens pissed off and started pounding shots. Roux finished her set and then you were gone.” He shrugs as he pulls out of the parking lot and I continue to stare forward.



“Pull over here.” I tell Linc as we pass a large medical office building.

“What?”

“Just do it.” I tell him as I point to the opposite side of the building I’m watching.

“Z, we have the drop to—”

“I don’t give a fuck. They’ll wait till I get there.” I snap at him again.

I almost feel a little bad about the amount of times he gets this side of me. Maybe it’s because I know he doesn’t take any offense to it. Maybe it’s because he’s just like a little brother to me.

“Fine.” He shrugs as he pulls the van over to the side and then into a spot with a clear view of the parking lot across the street. “What are we doing here?”

I don’t want to tell him why, so I just continue to sit and stare across.

“Z, what the hell, we’re gonna be late.”

“Shh. It’ll only take a minute.” I mumble as I watch the car pull into the parking lot.

Tatum gets out of the car, sighing and leaning backwards against it.

“Seriously, bro, you’re stalking her now?”

“Fuck off.” I mumble to him as I continue to stare across the street.

I expect to see him pull up with her, maybe having to take an hour out of work so he can also be there.

My goddamn heart breaks as I watch her look up at the sky for a moment before reaching up and wiping a tear away from her cheek. She stands straight, shaking out her body, and exhaling deeply before she nods to only herself and starts walks the door. Pausing for a moment she looks back around, behind herself, and I’m not sure if she’s looking back for one last second hoping that he’ll show up... or maybe she can sense that I’m here, that I’m watching her.

She sighs once more before she disappears through the doors.

“Go over there.” I tell him.

“Jesus Christ, Z.”

I would just get out of the van and go, but chances are higher that someone will see me, but Linc moves the van across the street. Before he even slows to a stop, I’ve shrugged out of my kutte, I’m up, and out of the van. Pulling the doors open and ascending the stairs.

The buzzing phone in my pocket stops me for a moment as I pull it out, seeing that Axe is calling yet again.

“What?”

“Where are you?”

“Man, push it an hour. I’ll be right there.”

“Z, seriously, where are you?”

“Believe me, you don’t want to know.”

“Z...”

“Come on, blame something. I’ll be there.”

I hang up before he can try to argue with me anymore and pull open the doors to the stairwell as I pull the door to the office open, stepping inside.

“Sherman.” The nurse calls her and I see her stand up, her shoulders slumped, and I can see the disappointment written all over her as she makes her way over to the nurse to go back into the room and I’m honestly not even sure what I’m doing here.

And I’m aware of how fucked up this whole thing, no, how fucked up I am.

The tech looks up at me, her eyes wide as I graze my fingers along the small of Tatum’s back.

“Oh, you must be the husband.” The tech says, flustered.

I feel Tatum freeze under my touch.

“I must be.” I nod my head, the thought alone making me feel

like I'm floating as Tatum's head snaps around and her eyes light up as she looks at me.

"I..."

"I know, I'm sorry I'm late."

"It's..." She trails as I lean in, kissing her cheek and she looks away, blush forming along her face.

"I wouldn't miss this for anything." I whisper into her ear before I pull away. The grin on the tech's face is so large that I'm almost surprised she doesn't have tears in her eyes.

"Come on back." She tells us as I reach down, lacing my fingers in Tatum's, and she bites her lip, trying to conceal her laughter.

She shows us into the room and tells Tatum to sit down on the bed before leaving the room.

"Why are you here?" She asks me quietly, and I just shrug.

"I can't let you find out the sex alone."

Her mouth just drops open. "How did you even know?"

"I can't share all of my secrets." I whisper, leaning into her.

"What would you have done if he were here?"

"He wasn't." I shrug my shoulders, leaning back. "I mean, I had no intentions of coming in when I originally stopped, but when I saw that look on your face, I had to do something. You don't deserve to be in here alone through all of this."

"So you decided to come inside?"

"I didn't really decide anything. I just kind of reacted." I lean into her again, so close that I rest my head against hers. "This is what."

"Huh?" she leans her lips close towards mine.

"If it was my baby, this is just one of the things I'd do. You'd never go to an appointment alone."

"Zane." She whispers, leaning into me. I shouldn't let her. I

know that she'll be upset with herself if she does.

The door opening causes both of us to jump back as we look at the tech walking in.

"Morning." She smiles at us. "Alright, mommy, daddy, are we ready to find out what you're having?"

"More than everything." I tell the tech, my eyes not leaving Tatum.

It only takes moments before the tiny sound of the heartbeat echoes through the room and I gasp, looking at the screen and seeing the baby's face that's inside of the woman who I will spend my life with as soon as I can figure out how to get out from under the fuckhead's control. How to take care of him without it coming back on me?

"Well, it looks like you're having a boy." She smiles.

I gasp as I look over at Tatum and her eyes are watering as I feel pride coursing through me.

"A boy!" I almost shout at there with excitement. Her smile grows wide as she continues to just look at me. "We're having a boy."

Tatum's eyes water over as she continues to look up at me, the smile growing so wide on her face that the sides of her eyes crinkle. And I think for a moment she lets herself live in the fantasy because she leans into me, pressing her lips to mine as we share the excitement.

She gasps as she pulls away from me and looks up, internally shaming herself for kissing me but I shake my head pulling her back to me and pressing my lips, hard against her, secretly hoping that they'll bruise, so she'll walk around with my claim on her.

"I'll give you two a moment." The tech says before I hear the door shut.

Pulling away from Tatum slightly, I look down at her, resting my head against hers again and smirk.

“I shouldn’t have.”

“It’s okay.”

“It’s not.” I can feel herself retreating into herself again.

“Stop it. I wouldn’t be here if he actually showed the fuck up.”

She cuts her eyes up at me for a moment.

“Don’t give me that look.” I cut my own eyes at her and, just like she’s always done, a small smirk spread on her face. “I will gladly be your stand in husband until...” I trail my sentence on purpose, tempting her to ask the question.

“Until what?”

“Until I actually am.”

“I don’t know why you’re like this with me.” She whispers, looking away, ashamed.

“Because you deserve it.” I whisper as I lean into her again and pressing my lips to her forehead once more. “And if I wasn’t such an idiot, none of this would have happened.”



I walk out of the office with her and down to the elevator.

She beams up at me and for a moment; I pretend that this can actually be how our life is. Walking hand in hand down the hallway, her rounding with my kid.

Once the elevator doors close, she looks over at me, whispering. “You can’t show up like this.”

“I know.” I nod my head, squeezing her hand in mine.

“I’m serious Zane.”

“I am too. I know I shouldn’t have come in.”

“No!” She snaps, slightly shouting, looking up at me and I can see the tears yet again in her eyes. “You can’t. If he finds out...”

“If he does anything, I’ll deal with him.” I’m gritting my teeth at her.

“You can’t.”

“I will.”

“Zane, you don’t understand.”

Turning and pressing her into the wall with my body. I can feel the slight bump pressing against my torso.

“You don’t understand. I want you to look at me when I say this so you know just how fucking serious I am.” I reach down, holding her face in place so she can’t look away from me. Her breath escalates. “I don’t give a damn who you’re married to.” Reaching down, I lift her hand up, bringing it up to where the waistband of my jeans sits. Her pupils wide with desire. I know she’s thinking I’m going to pull her clothes off right there and fuck her, or maybe she’s just hoping I do that. But moving her hand to the side, pushing it under my shirt and running her fingertips across the raised skin that sits on my hip. Leaning into her more, I stare down at her. “You will always own me.”

I don’t even realize that we’ve come to a stop until it dings and the doors open. Pushing off of the wall and making my way to the doors. It pains me too much to look back at her as I walk away from her, leaving her breathless in the elevator.

Pulling up to the drop, I move out of the passenger side of the van and over to where Axe and the rest of the brothers are standing.

“What was so important?” Axe snaps at me as we continue to wait for new buyers. Meeting them first, with no product, no exchange of anything. Testing it to make sure.

“Not a what,” Linc starts, “But a who, who was so important.”

“Fuck off.” I snap at him again.

“Really brother.” He gasps.

“Look, if you would have seen the look on her face when she was walking into her appointment to find out the sex of the baby, you probably would have gone in as well.”

Axe just shakes his head as we hear the sounds of the engines approach from behind. Turning around, I can't help but finger the paper in my pocket, the image of her face as it lit up earlier bringing light into my life.

"Incoming." comes in through the comms as I watch the unmarked car pull up, not the van which we were expecting. "Z, I think someone's here to pay you a visit. I'm calling Jag to tell them to hang back."

For a moment, I think that he may have seen me leaving earlier, but I know I was careful, that there's no way.

My phone pings, glancing at it quickly. Seeing a text makes me tilt my head as I pick it up

It's Eli. Watch your back. He's on your ass.

Well, that's good to know.

Looking up, I'm almost surprised that it's not Darren as the car rolls to a stop.

"I thought you said he was watching Z?" Axe asks through the comms as I just continue to stand, waiting for whoever is inside to get out.

The perpetual game of criminal chicken brings me too much thrill.

"He is. He just isn't rolling in..." Linc pauses. "My guess is that he doesn't want her to know he's watching Z cause she'll get pissed, so him and his partner are sitting back."

"He doesn't give a fuck what she thinks." I mumble into my own comms. "Spyder, do me a favor, get some intel on him. There's something I'm missing."

"Well, well, well..." the officer says as he pushes himself out of the car and looks at me. "If it isn't the infamous Z."

"Glad to know my reputation continues to precede me."

"Nah." He laughs slightly as he steps forward before leaning on to the hood of the car. "Your father's reputation preceded him. Yours, well, you only have yours because of your father."

He's trying to get a rise out of me, but I only laugh. "I mean, by proxy mine would too."

"As a footnote."

"Nah." I laugh again, shaking my head. Maybe at one point in time this was true, but I know without a fucking doubt that I've made my own name. "Only to an idiot, because anyone with any clue would know that just means he taught me. He molded me, fuck I'm his fucking protégé, don't you know?"

"Now, Z, that's not necessarily true." Linc says from behind me. "More people were afraid of Caroline than your dad."

"Yeah," I laugh again. "I think most forget about that."

Walking forward, I look down at the officer, using my 6 inches on him to make him feel even smaller. "You see, people seem to forget that my mother was more ruthless than anyone else. Not only would she do something, but then Ash would too."

He slowly takes a step backwards.

"Now, why would you come and interrupt our little outing?"

"We got an anonymous tip."

"About what?"

"That a drug drop was going on here tonight."

"From who?" I can't help but laugh. "A coworker who has it out for me?" Raising my eyebrows at him.

He says nothing, but hesitates as he stands in one spot.

"Someone who is a little pressed that once upon a time, I fucked his wife?"

There's a stifled laugh that spreads across the group behind me, but the officer still doesn't say a word.

"Don't you think that's a little juvenile, having it out for someone just because he knows what your wife sounds like when she cums?" I know that Darren's listening in somewhere, growing more irrational by the moment. A voice inside of me tells me I should calm down, that somehow this is

all going to backfire and Tatum's going to deal with it, but I just can't stop. I fucking despise this motherfucker, and taunting him out of hiding so I can deal with him is what I fucking need. "But I guess I don't know what it's like not to be able to compare to someone else and knowing that every time I fuck my wife, she's thinking about someone else. But I guess the jokes really on him cause that's what happens when you do shitty things."

He still stands, not knowing what all he should do because I just bluntly told him why Darren has it out for the club... or me, and he knows that this isn't where he should be.

"Anyway, no drugs here." I smile at him, holding out my arms before I turn around to my brothers. "Have you guys seen any drugs?"

A unison no sounds from behind me and I nod.

"Ugh." He mumbles.

"It's fine. You can stumble out the same way you came in and this time we'll let it slide. I won't report it to anyone, but you should probably be a little more careful about who you take tips from."

"He is fucking furious." Spyder says into the comms. "He's trying to drive over there, but his partner won't let him. He's screaming outside of the car."



ZANE

I walk into the hospital, turning to go up to the third floor.

The elevators ding before the doors slide open, and I exit. Turning the corner, I hesitate as I see her in the room's window.

I glance around, pulling my hood up, and walk towards her room. Stilling as I hear Darren talking from behind me, he seems in good goddamn spirits.

It makes my fucking blood boil.

I turn to walk away from the room, about to pass the nurses' station, trying to conceive another plan.

If I believed in God, I would think he was sending me a sign with a familiar face.

"Dan..." I say to the doctor, who's standing talking with a nurse.

"Goddamnit." He mutters to himself before looking over at me. "I thought I was done dealing with the MC."

It makes me laugh this time. "Oh, come on. How many babies have you delivered over the years?"

"None."

"Uhhh, that's not true. I'm pretty sure that there's a record around here somewhere of at least 2." He's not amused with

me at the moment, but I find this hilarious. I lower my voice as I lean into him this time. “Tell me. Is forging documents like that a crime?” I’m aware of how fucked up it is that I’m using something he did for the club, did for my family, shit for my brother and me, against him.

“What do you want, Zane?”

“Such few people call me by my name anymore. It’s weird when I hear it.” He shakes his head. “Seriously, do you have a minute to talk... privately?”

“Fuck... I’m going to regret this.” He mumbles as he nods his head and I follow him down the hallway.

He opens a door to an office and we walk inside. He moves around the desk and sits down as I sit in front of it.

“What do you want? You need me to stitch someone up?”

“Nope.” I pause. “Look, what I just said was fucked up, I’m aware. But I don’t have many other choices.”

He tilts his head. I’m sure curious why I’m showing emotions for the first time in a long time.

“I know you used to work in the ER from time to time. You still working there?”

“No.”

“You know I wouldn’t ask this if it wasn’t serious, and I had no other options.” I pause, not sure if he’s going to do it, because the man still has morals. “Room 336.”

“Zane... I can’t do what I know you’re going to ask for.”

“Dan!” Leaning forward and slamming a fist on the top of his desk. “Can you just look at the fucking chart?”

“No.”

“Her name is Tatum Lynn Sherman. Her maiden name is Mosby.” He looks up at me. “She has a scar on her left hip.”

“Stop it.” He looks at me again.

“Said scar on her hip looks like it’s a ‘Z’.” I snap at him before

I stand up.

“What the fuck are you doing?” He snaps as I loosen my belt and pull down the left side low enough so he can see my own scar. His mouth just drops open and he leans back again. A look of intrigue now on his face.

He looks up at me as I fix my belt and sit back down. “Dan, please.”

“I could lose my license if I told you anything about her.” He says it, but I know he’s curious now because he’s typing on the computer.

“I know. So you don’t have to tell me. I’ll tell you why I think she’s here.”

He doesn’t agree, he just stares up at me.

“I think she had an *accident*.” I air quote the word accident. “The accident is vague as fuck, though. I would bet that there’s either a note in there somewhere and if not, it’s at least a nurse or someone questioned if there’s a possibility of domestic violence.” He doesn’t do a very good job of controlling his facial expressions as he continues to read her chart. “She’s also right around 26 weeks pregnant.” I sigh as I try to say the last bit. “And I’m scared he made her lose the baby.”

“Is the baby yours?” I don’t even know if he meant to ask the question.

“Unfortunately, no.” His eyes widen at my statement. “That’s how he tricked her into marrying him along with the good ol’ if you get rid of it, I’ll kill you.”

Reaching over, he picks up the phone. “She needs to report this.”

“Stop!” I snap, looking up. His eyes widen as he looks back down at me. “He’s a detective. Do you know the chances of them trying to bury it? And then it’ll just piss him off more. He’ll blame her.”

“She needs to leave him. We can talk to her about a safe haven program.”

“That would be too easy, right? She won’t do it. I’ve already tried.”

“What did he use?”

“Me. He told her she leaves him. He’s coming after me. She’s vaguely told me this, but never how.”

“Fuck me.”

“My thoughts exactly.”

“Do you have a plan?”

“Yeah, it’s not a good one, though. I’m trying to figure out all the details.” I pause, looking at him. “Did you ask me if it was my baby because she lost it?” He doesn’t answer, just stares at me. “Fuck, it’s going to break her.” I just shake my head, falling backwards in the chair, and scrubbing my hands over my face. “I just wish I could talk to her.”

“It’s risky.”

“That’s why you’re going to do it for me.” I grin at him and he just shakes his head.

“What?”

“Make some shit up. Whatever...”

“Zane.”

“Dan.” We match stares towards one another. “Please...” I hate that my voice breaks halfway through the word, but I immediately watch his face fall as he looks back at me.

“Goddamnit.”

“You know as well as I do, he’s going to end up killing her. And you fucking believe me if he does. I will go to prison for the rest of my fucking life.”

He exhales deeply and drops his head into his hands.

“You remind me so much of your dad right now.”

“What does that have to do with anything?” I snap at him.

He smirks as he looks up at me. “It has everything to do with

me agreeing with this.” I lean back now, letting him finish. “Because he never caved when it came to your mom.” He shakes his head again and then looks back over at me. “What do you want me to tell her?”

I feel a bit more hopeful as I walk down the hall, leaving the hospital.

“Z?” I hear and already know who it is before I turn around.

“Darren.” I groan before looking over at him. As soon as I see the smirk on his face, I want to hit him. If he doesn’t know why I’m here, he’s trying to antagonize me, thinking that he’s won.

Fuck, that’s why he sought after Tatum. Once he found out about her and me, it became a competition for him he had to win. Even if I was completely unaware of it.

It’s the first time that we’ve ever had a conversation after he and Tatum got together.

“What are you doing here?” He tilts his head because he knows.

“Oh.” I laugh. “You know, just visiting with some friends.”

“Yeah. Okay. I really believe that you have friends here.”

I can’t help but laugh. “Oh, you don’t know. See, my mom worked here my entire life. Everyone loved her. Tons of family friends in there. Lots of people who adore me. Would do anything for my family.” I move past him.

“Z.” I let him stop me when he grabs ahold of my arm, but don’t even bother to look at him. I can hear him step closer. “You ever come near my wife again. I’ll make sure you regret it.”

Turning around, I look at him. He’s standing close enough so no one else could hear what he just said. So I don’t have to speak loud, at all. Dropping my voice even more, I step in closer that way, just in case he is trying to record anything. And you know, using my height against him. “Do you wanna know what I told the last man I saw putting his hand on her in

a way that she didn't want?"

He doesn't answer, just looks up, almost curious.

"I made a promise that I would make him watch me cut his hands off. And the only reason I haven't done that to you is because—"

"You'll go to prison for the rest of your life."

I laugh again, shaking my head. "She asked me not to. See for her, I'd commit crimes they'd kill me for." His eyes widen. I smirk as I step into him again. "And I promise you, give it time and I'll do more than *come* around Tatum again." I can't keep the smirk from my face. "And I would never have to trap and manipulate her. Oh, and speaking of that, I'm curious. Was your plan from the beginning to trap her but to kill the baby before it was born, or was that an accident?"

"I'll fucking kill you."

I can't help but laugh in response to his overreaction. I step into him. "Oh, come on, Darren, jealousy looks real bad on you." And I condescendingly pat his face with my hand before turning around and walking away.

Should I have antagonized him?

Absolutely not.

Because that's all a part of my terrible plan.



TATUM

Darren glares at me as he walks in through the door. I know the look, I've seen it a few times before, I saw it before I ended up in here, yesterday.

The looks I've gotten from the staff here make me feel ashamed. I'm not sure if that's a part of his plan or if it's just a fucking bonus.

"You thought you could get past me again." He cuts out as he walks up to where I'm lying.

“What?”

“Don’t play fucking dumb with me.” I watch his jaw clench as he says it, his eyes cutting at me. “Tate, I know. Stop trying to fucking pull one over on me.”

“What are you talking about?” I shake my head, my eyes welling up... fucking hormones.

“I fucking saw him, Tate?”

“Saw who?” I ask. I’m confused what he’s talking about, knowing that the only person he would be this pissed off about would be Zane, but it’s not like I’ve seen him at all since he showed up to my appointment, I’m kind of surprised that I haven’t, I wish he would have come by, but Darren has barely left the hospital.

He glares at me as he leans over. “You’re trying to make me look fucking stupid.”

“Believe me, there’s no way I can do a better job than you already do.” My eyes widen as soon as I realize what it is I said.

“What is that supposed to mean?” He’s leaning completely over the top of me, but I’m refusing to look at him.

Someone clears their throat across the room. “I hope I’m not interrupting anything.”

Darren pulls away from me as he whispers. “We’ll finish this later.” And he changes his expression, looking sad. “Oh no, we were just discussing how difficult this all is.”

“Well, that’s part of the reason that I’m here.” The man says as he steps into the room. “We like to offer a bit of grief counseling.”

“That sounds like something we could benefit from.” Darren says as he sits down.

“No need for that. We would like to speak with both of you individually first.”

“What?” Darren instantly gets defensive. “I’m not leaving her

in here with you.” He moves forward as the older man presses into a tight smile.

“I promise you that this is strictly protocol.”

“No. Absolutely not.” Darren screams.

“Mr. Sherman. I need you to calm down.” The doctor steps into him, keeping his voice low and calm. “There are just different things that we would like to talk with you two about. I understand you are just concerned about your wife. But you have to calm down. If you don’t, I will have you removed.” I deflate at the statement and want to crawl up inside of myself. “My colleague will talk with you just in the other room, and you will be able to see your wife at all times through the window.”

Darren glares as he stands in front of him and then the woman steps into the doorway. “Mr. Sherman, we’ll just be in the room across the hall.”

Darren hesitates before he follows the woman out of the room. When he clears the doorframe, he looks back at me through the window, not letting me out of his sight even when he sits down.

The man says nothing to me at first, just sits down and scribbles something out on a piece of paper.

Does he have anything recording in here?

I shake my head ‘no’.

“Are you sure?”

“Yes.” I look up and see Darren’s distracted by the woman across the hall now. I know he doesn’t because if he did, he would have just broken it out to prove that someone was here.

“Okay, I’m still going to speak softly, just in case. Okay?”

“Okay.”

“Keep your face stoic. Don’t show any emotion.” I nod my head again. “Tatum, I’m really sorry that you’re going through all of this.” I furrow my brows and he nods his head. “My

name is Dan. I am a doctor here. I'm not a part of this program, and I'm positive that this isn't protocol, either."

"Then why?" I ask him, quietly.

"Because we have a mutual friend."

"I find it a little hard to believe that you two are friends." I somehow immediately know who he's talking about.

He smirks. "That's a long story, but his mother's death, it left a hole in this hospital, and is also why my name is associated with his birth."

"You were in the desert with them?"

"Has he taken you out there?" Slowly, I nod my head and he looks really surprised. "Wow." He pauses as he nods his head. "He was just here. He came and asked me to tell you something."

"What's that?"

"I don't understand it, but he said his offer still stands, and he's ready to set the fire. Just say the word. Does that make sense to you?"

"Yeah." I whisper before I have to bite down onto my lip to stop from smiling.

"Tatum, I understand your circumstances are difficult."

"That's fucking putting it mildly." I whisper.

"I understand. I've known him since he was born. I knew his parents very well. None of them care easily, but once they do. They do to a fault. He has resources. If he says he can protect you. He will do it."

"That's what I'm afraid of. If he does, what will he do to him?" I nod towards where Darren is still infatuated with the woman he's talking to is at.

"Trust me, that family's tougher than they look."

"I'm not worried about him being tough. My husband's not a good man. He won't fight fair."

Zane telling me he'll never fight fair when it comes to me, sounds in my head again.

"What do you think he'll do?"

"I think he'll have him arrested. He'll do whatever it takes to make sure that I'll never be able to be with him."

"And Zane will do whatever it takes to make sure that you don't have to be with him, even if that means going to prison." He says it very quickly.

"That's just it. I don't want that."

"Tatum, let him do this. They have some of the best lawyers on their side."

"And what if they can't prove he's innocent of whatever Darren tries to frame him for? He can't sit in prison because I'm an idiot."

"You're not an idiot." He shakes his head. "Your husband is a manipulative asshole." He snaps back. "And Zane's scared for you. Because what's going to happen... I'm going to be blunt what I've seen happen on more than one occasion. Your husband will keep a hold on you until he kills you or you kill him. And what happens if you stick it out and you kill him? You'll be tried and I wouldn't be surprised if because it's extreme situations, defending yourself, they'll be no doubt that you were there and you did it. They'll either try, and possibly successfully, make it seem like he never harmed you, or they'll try to say that because of what happened, you are so traumatized that you will end up in a facility. And what do you think he's going to do if that happens?"

"I don't know."

"I don't either, and that's terrifying to me. What do you think is going to happen when Darren tries to kill you? When he gets close or actually does it, what do you think our friend's going to do?"

"Kill him."

"Yeah, in a way that's so emotional that he's not gonna give a

fuck if he gets caught or not. So Tatum, tell me if your reasoning is that you're worried about him. What's the best-case scenario?"

"O—okay..." I trail for a moment and take a deep breath.

"Can you do me a favor?"

"Somehow, I have been doing them for the damn club for the last like 30 years." I have to keep myself from laughing. "I'm kidding. Of course, I can."

"It's actually a couple of things. When he told you, did you automatically believe him or did you ask around first?"

"Both. I asked a couple of my colleagues, but I also saw the look in his eye when he was telling me."

"So people here know?"

"They suspect, at the least."

"He has to work later tonight. Can you have everyone who suspects document it in my file, yourself included?" He nods his head. "Then afterwards, can you make a physical copy and can I have it?"

"Of course."

"Can I have it without having to document me taking it?"

"I can't do that, but I can give you my suggestions on what to do with it."

"But shortly after he leaves, I need to be discharged with my file."

"I understand." He nods his head. "Do you want me to call him and tell him?"

"No, Darren saw him leaving the hospital. There's a good possibility that he will watch him after he leaves, at least for a while."

"Okay. Now, when he comes back in and asks what we talked about. Tell him I told you it wasn't your fault. These things happen. Asked you if you had concerns, reassured you."

Explained that it's okay to be angry, but don't let it consume you... Things along those lines."

"I think I get it. Even though I feel like my situation doesn't really relate to most of that."

"What do you mean?"

"I'm angry, that's about it. The only thing I did wrong was not taking Zane up on his offer when he said it. But I didn't feel like I had much of a choice. Still, I did nothing wrong. My body was taking care of everything. He did this. Just when I thought he couldn't do anything worse. He killed my fucking baby... yeah, I'm fucking angry."

"What'd he offer?"

"To protect me, help me with whatever I wanted to do. That whatever I decided, he would help."

"He offered to help you raise the baby?"

"Yeah. I told him no, because it wasn't fair."

"Tatum, I'm going to give this little insight on him. The MC is a family." I nod my head, understanding that. "None of them are blood, yet all of them act like they are. He grew up in that life, and has known from the day he was born that blood doesn't mean shit. But..." He pauses and looks at me again.

"If Darren knew you were pregnant, and you took his baby away and let Zane raise it. Darren wouldn't just frame him for something. He would be out for blood. So no, you did what you thought was best in a situation with no good outcomes."

"Thank you."

"You're welcome."

Darren walks back into the room as soon as Dan leaves.

"What did he talk to you about?" He snaps at me as he sits down next to the bed.

"He just wanted to assure me that sometimes these things happen and that I did what was best for the baby, and sometimes that just doesn't work out." He snickers as I say it,

and I glare at him. “But did you?” I have no clue where all this courage is coming from.

“I dunno, are you sure you did?” He laughs, leaning into me.
“I mean, if you weren’t such a whore, none of this would have happened.”

“Don’t you have to go to work?” I roll my eyes as I look at him. Watching the rage flame up in him.



TATUM

Dan walks up to me as I'm signing my discharge paperwork and nods his head. "You have a ride home?"

"Um, I'm just gonna call a car."

"I can take you home." I'm surprised when the nurse offers it to me.

"Oh no, I couldn't ask you to do that."

"Why?" She crosses her arms across her chest as she looks at me. "Because when he finds out, he's going to come after everyone who helped you." My eyes widen as I look at her. "He's not the first asshole I've dealt with." She smirks. "And, well, Caroline helped me with my first, anyway. So it seems fitting."

"Okay." I whisper, nodding my head and then turning back to look at Dan. "Thank you."

"Let me know if you need anything."

I nod my head.

"And Tatum." I look back at Dan before I walk with the nurse. "Don't let Darren's guilt trip you or scare you into anything. Zane'll keep you safe."

It's kind of funny, because I've never doubted that Zane will keep me safe. In fact, that was the part that worried me. The distance that Zane would go to keep me safe.

I sit in the passenger seat of her car, as she doesn't press me to talk. We remain silent for longer than most would probably feel comfortable with until I hear her clear her throat. "By the way I'm Lynette." I can't help but laugh to myself as I realize I've been in the car with her for this long without knowing it. "I can go inside and help you pack."

"That's okay. I'll just be a few minutes." I pause. "But don't pull into the driveway."

"Cameras?"

"Yeah."

"Okay, just tell me where."

"Park in front of the house next door and I'll go around back."

"You sure you don't want me to come in with you? We can get everything twice as fast. Then I can take you up to the grounds."

"How do you know about the grounds?" I smirk, looking over at her.

"I told you Care helped me once upon a time. She convinced me to leave. Saved my life. They let me stay with them for a while. I think Ash threatened my ex at least once."

"I've heard so much about them." I smirk as I shake my head. "I wish I could have met them."

"Caroline would have loved you."

"I doubt that." I laugh, shaking my head, but when I look over, she glances over at me. "I mean. If you would have seen his face when he found out about everything. I dream about it all the time. He was so hurt."

"That was the thing with her. Hell with both of them." She chuckles to herself. "When I was staying with them, I was having one of those moments. I'm awful. It's all my fault. Whatever. She told me that life is fucking messy, but eventually, we figure our shit out."

I look at her and smirk. "That's actually encouraging."

“And she would love you because she would see how her son feels about you. And she would see how you’re willing to do whatever it takes to protect him.”

“I don’t know about that. Because of me, he’ll probably end up in prison.”

“She wouldn’t consider that not protecting him.”

“Then what would it be?”

“Sometimes one is in more danger than the other and needs them to sacrifice more.”

I gasp before I look over at her. “That’s what killed them.”

“What do you mean?”

“The first time I, um... stayed with Zane. I woke up, and he was watching something on his computer. He was watching the security footage of the night they died.”

“Oh, my god.”

“It was bad. Caroline was shot and Ash rushed over to her.”

“I was so sad when I heard they died, but when I found out, they were together. I knew that’s what they would want.”

“That’s what Zane said.”

“How did he react to watching that?”

“Um, well, it was rough. He was sad, but also I think it was also relieving for him to know that Ash died shortly after Caroline, after they consoled one another about it. It was morbidly beautiful. And heartbreaking. We both cried. I didn’t know them and I cried. And then we had sex, so I’m not really sure what that says about us.”

She laughs. “I think it says that both of you handle grief the same. How’d the two of you meet?”

“I was on the club grounds. I had gotten lost. And he threatened to shoot me.”

She laughs again. “Maybe it was fate.”

“What?”

“All I know is that if we get a dying wish, theirs would have been for their kids to be happy. Maybe bring you into his life.”

I nod my head as I don't want to think about all of that, and I sigh. “I'm gonna go pack some stuff.”

“Okay. I'll be here.”

Moving around the back of the house, I look around. “Fuck.” I mumble as I think about the alarm on the doors. It will notify Darren and then I have 20 minutes, tops, before he's here.

Moving over to the bedroom, I try to push each window up, and for the first time, I'm pissed off that I didn't accidentally leave a window unlocked.

Moving over to the spare room, attempting to move open the windows. “Shit.”

The last room, the nursery. I hesitate outside of the window on the side of the house and I shake my head. Reaching up, the window moves. “Of course.” I had just painted the room yesterday. “Come on Tatum, you can do this.” I sigh, pushing the window the rest of the way up. Reaching up, I grab a hold of the window frame and pull myself inside. My body screams at me to stop, but I can't... once I get out of here, then I can relax and grieve. I just need to keep my head in the game at the current moment. The room mocks me as I look up. The light green walls. The partially assembled crib in the corner. He didn't even bother to clean the blood off of the floor from when I started bleeding.

“Focus.” I tell myself as I move out of the room and down the hallway, as quietly as I can.

I grab two suitcases and begin pulling the clothes out of the closet and the drawers, shoving in as much as possible. Filling the first bag before I move it over to the nursery, dropping it out of the window, rushing back to the bedroom again, I fill up the second suitcase, listening as best as I can for a car door, or anything.

Once I fill it, I carry it over to the window, dropping it next to

the other, and stopping in the room. Looking around the room, grabbing the baby book where all the ultrasounds are stuck inside, and hold it to my chest. “I’m sorry, I didn’t leave sooner.” I whisper, stifling a sob as I clutch onto the book.

The pinching on my fingers from where my rings press against the book reminds me I still have them on. So I look down at my left hand, at the diamond on my finger as well as the wedding band. Keeping the book pressed to my chest with my biceps and elbow, I use my right hand to slip them off, walking them over, and dropping them in the pool of my own fucking blood. Seems fucking cynical enough. Looking down at it, I shake my head, “Fuck you.” I shake my head and then walk back over to the window, climbing back out of the window, sliding it shut, and pushing both suitcases to the car. Lynette gets out of the driver’s seat and helps me lift the bags into the trunk.

“It’ll be okay.” She whispers as she squeezes my hand. I hold the baby book on my lap as I stare down at it. Leaning my head against the window, I watch as we drive through the city. Feeling that it’s appropriate for the sky to be crying the tears I should be.

I’m surprised when we pull up to the gate. Lynette leans out of the window and punches a button.

I’m not sure if I should expect someone to come through a speaker or what.

“Come on.” Lynette mutters before she looks around and then reaches down, picking up her phone and pressing on it twice. “Hey... yeah, I know it’s been a while.” She pauses. “Are you at the clubhouse?” Another pause. “Yeah, it’s me.” She pauses again. “Um... yeah.” Then she hangs up. The gate slowly opens and we slide in through it before we pull up to the front of the clubhouse and park. I get out of the car, sighing deeply.

“Tate.” I hear Ella call out and I look over, pressing my lips into a fine line. “Well, now it makes sense why Darren’s been clocking them for the last hour.”

“He doesn’t know yet.”

“Oh.”

“Yeah, I just got discharged.”

“You just got what?”

“Oh, I assumed Zane told you guys.”

“Told us what?”

“Let me get my stuff inside, and then I’ll tell you everything?”

“Oh. It’s... oh.” Is all she says before she nods her head. She walks over to the car with me as Lynette pops the trunk. As I reach over, I gasp as a sharp pain shoots through me. Gripping onto the lip of the trunk to stabilize myself. “Are you okay?”

“Yeah.”

“She’s not.” Lynette says as she hugs Ella. “I should go.”

“Thank you.” I whisper before she hugs me, tightly.

“You take care of yourself. And let us know if you need anything. You’re family now.” She smirks before she looks back at Ella and then glances at me.

“Come on.” Ella touches my arm as she calls out. “Jag!” She calls out and a man who’s around my age, and I’m pretty sure was here when we went to South Dakota, comes out the door.

“You remember, Tate?”

“Oh, yeah.” His eyes widen. “Hi.”

“Great, I can see that I am gossip around here. Maybe this was a bad idea.”

“Not gossip.” Ella and Jag both say.

“It’s my kid.” She tells me before he looks back over. “Can you grab her bags and carry them inside, then can you call Z and ask him to come back?”

“Yeah, mom.” He shakes his head.

“Oh.” She stops as we walk up the few steps again. “Don’t tell him why, yet.”

“Obviously.” He laughs. “I mean, her husband is already following everyone right now. And we both know that Z will love nothing more than to rub it in.”

“Darren doesn’t know yet.” Ella and I both say.

“Oh.” Jag nods his head before he lifts both bags as if they weigh nothing and carries them up the couple of steps and into the clubhouse.

I follow both Ella and Jag inside of the clubhouse and into the lounge. I sit down at the bar and Croft smiles at me. “It’s been a while.”

“It has.”

“I’m glad you’re back.” She laughs before sliding me a glass across the bar. Instantly, I lift it and sip it before I can hear Ella gasp and reach out.

“Tate... what are you...” She trails as I set the glass down and look over at her. “Oh, no.” She pauses, sighing. “Do you need anything?”

I press my lips together as I just look down at the drink, sitting in on the bar, and sighing. Although, I am glad that she’s intuitive enough to connect the dots.

“Do you have any food? All I’ve had is hospital food for the last two days.”

“Of course.” Ella moves off of the stool and I can see her walking into the kitchen as Jag talks on his phone.

It’s only me sitting in the lounge now. “Can I ask you a question?” I look across the bar at Croft, who fills my glass again. “I haven’t seen you in what, 3 years. How do you remember me?”

“I don’t know if I should answer this.” She laughs.

“I mean. I’m not dumb. Or naïve, no matter the fucked up situation that I have currently found myself in.”

“Tate, it’s like this. Z is... Z. There’s really no other way of explaining it. He doesn’t spend time on people.”

“What does that even mean?”

“Out of the women I’ve seen him, you’re the only one I remember, even if it’s been years.”

“Why?”

“I told him the first night, when you guys got together, that it was something different and because you have been constant more than they have.”

“But I was only here for like a couple of weeks.”

“Yeah, still longer than anyone else. And I have never seen him as happy as he was in those days. When he got back from your house. It was like he was fucking glowing. It was obnoxious. When he came back from the desert with you. I can’t explain that one. He was happy cause he saw you and you guys talked, but he was sad because of everything.”

“Yeah. I was too. It was like I felt I was air until we hit the city limits, then my entire being just bursts.”

“Then when you came to the club. He was so broken. He told me a million different ways he was going to kill your husband.” I laugh as I shake my head. “Also, she looks over at the kitchen. He told me what he offered to do for you, about raising the baby. Tate, I’m so sorry.”

“He tell you I was in the hospital?”

“No.” I tilt my head, looking at her, now confused why she poured me a drink when I walked over. “I assumed what pushed you over, that you were here with bags, and I can see it in your eyes that you’re devastated.”

I can feel the water filling my eyes again.

“He deserves to die.”

“And what did you mean you knew the first night? We had been together before that—”

She laughs at me, shaking her head. “I saw quite the show you two put on. Maybe that’s why I remember you. I’m not sure.”

I'm sure I'm blushing now, as I'm remembering that night, as he had me pressed against the wall.

She laughs, leaning across the bar and whispers. "It was hot. Don't be embarrassed. I was out through the tunnel right after you guys. I ran into Z a few weeks later. He remembered me and offered me to work here."

I sit, staring at her, wanting to simultaneously laugh and cry. "You actually told him I was different?"

"I did. And I was right. Maybe that's why he's always talked to me about you."

I hear Ella walk back into the room with something that she has heated. I take a bite before I look back up at Croft and ask her for another drink.

"I can't do that." She shakes her head. "Z will not be happy if I do." She slides me a water and I nod again.

"Speaking of..." Jag walks into the lounge and flops down on the couch across the room. I take a bit before I spin around on the stool and look at him. "They're on the way back. He'll probably be here in like 10 minutes, max."

My nerves spin as I look at the forkful of food and then set it back down on the plate.

"What's wrong? Is it okay?"

"Yeah." I nod. "I just got really nervous about this. What if I misread it? Fuck, I'm going to bring so much shit on him. It's going to be my fault he gets arrested again." I rub my hands on my face.

"I mean, wouldn't be the first time." Jag says from across the room, making his mom laugh. "But it will probably be the best reason that he has been."

I'm sure I'm blushing as they tell me, looking down at the food and trying to take at least one last bite, but my body has me wincing in pain.

"They didn't give you anything for it?"

“They did, but I don’t want to take it just yet.”

“Why not? Take what?”

“I want to have a clear head when he gets here.” I watch as Ella smirks and nods her head.



ZANE

I'm sitting on my bike talking with my brothers, as I know Darren's watching me. It's an unmarked police SUV and I'm not sure if he's trying to be stealthy about it.

"Why is he on us again?" Axe asks us but I just shake my head. It's not my business to tell.

"We ran into one another earlier and I pissed him off." I shrug as they just shake their heads.

"Man, you gotta be careful with that shit."

"Fuck him. He better be glad I haven't fucking murdered him yet."

"He's a cop." Coop tells me, as if I've somehow forgotten this.

"He's a terrible human being and deserves to die." My face doesn't even waver when I say it and my brothers just look at me. I'm assuming, realizing how serious I am about what I just said.

"What has he done?"

I shake my head. It's not my story to tell.

"Worse than when she showed up a few months ago."

I nod my head as a response.

"Did—"

My phone rings, cutting off the question as I look down, seeing Jag calling me.

“What?”

“Um,” He pauses as if he isn’t sure what to say. “You need to come back here.”

“Why? What’s going on?”

“Um...” He pauses and I know that he’s trying to figure out what exactly to tell me.

“Bro, why the fuck do you need me there?”

He sighs. “You know, I’m terrible at lying.”

“Jesus Christ.” I hear Ella in the background. “Z, there’s a bit of a situation here that needs your attention. Not dyer but important... Was that, that fucking hard?” I know that the last sentence she doesn’t say to me but to Jag and it makes me laugh.

“Okay, we’re on our way.”

“Good.”

“Uh.” Jag is back on the phone. “How long you guys gonna be?”

“I dunno, 10-15 minutes. Let us lose our tail.”

“Yeah, that’s probably best.” He laughs through the phone before he hangs up.

“What’s going on?” Axe asks me, but I just shake my head and shrug.

“I don’t know. All your wife said was I needed to come back, and basically, don’t act like an asshole.”

He nods his head, laughing, knowing exactly what Ella just said. “So how you wanna lose em?”

“Wanna hit the 5?”

“What, right during rush hour?”

I laugh, nodding my head.

“Absolutely.”

Cranking the bikes, we all put our helmets on before we move out onto the road. I watch as both of the men in the SUV perk up and I come to a stop at the exit of the gas station, looking directly at them, and then waving them to go ahead.

Darren just glares at me, and I toss my head back, laughing.

“You’re an asshole.” Coop laughs next to me and I nod my head.

Shrugging my shoulders and just to make myself laugh, I lift my hand up to my mouth before tossing my hand out to the side, sarcastically blowing him a kiss from across the street. Pulling the throttle back on the handlebar and we roll through the city. Merging onto the freeway, in the opposite direction of the hospital, and as soon as we get to the top of the on-ramp, the three of us open-up the throttle, propelling us forward. Weaving in between cars, trying to lose the large SUV behind us as traffic thickens. Once I can no longer see them, we merge off of the freeway and slow back down. The three of us turn and head down back towards the clubhouse.

The gate is opening as I come up to it and am able to slide in to it.

Parking the bike, we dismount, laughing with one another as we come in through the front door and into the lounge.

My mouth drops. Seeing Tatum sitting at the bar, her suitcases on the floor in front of her.

A sea of conflicting emotions hit me all at once as I stare forward.

She stands up slowly, and as soon as our eyes lock, she erupts into sobs. I rush over to her, wrapping her up in my arms and bringing her into me.

“Shhh.” I whisper as I stroke her hair. “I know baby, I’m so fucking sorry.” I whisper, placing a kiss against her head. “You wanna go upstairs?” I look at her, seeing the shame in her as she just looks down at the ground, taking a deep breath. “You

wanna go out to the desert?”

“Yes, please.” She gasps as she looks up at me. “He doesn’t know I’m gone, yet.”

“What?”

“Dan discharged me when he left to go to work.”

“So, like, an hour and a half?” I chuckle.

“Yeah, how’d you know?”

“Cause he started tailing us then.”

“I’m sorry.” She shakes her head.

“It’s not your fault. You think we should bring everyone?”

“He may try to raid you guys once he figures it out.” She presses her lips into a fine line.

“You sure? It can be just us. That’s not a problem.”

“No. Everyone around here is fine. I just need space from...”

“Your husband, when he finds out you left?”

“Yes.”

Turning around, I look at them. “You guys wanna go up to Joshua Tree tonight?”

“That’s probably a good idea.” Axe laughs.

“Okay, Croft, you too.” Turning, I look at Axe. “Can you reach out to everyone and let them know? Call the prospects, tell them to come out, we’ll lock everything down. Jag, will you take Tatum’s bags downstairs?” He nods his head.

“Downstairs?” she asks me as he grabs the bags, moving them into the chapel.

“Baby, you have a lot to learn about this place.” I nod towards where Jag is taking the bags. And we follow behind him.

“Shit, never mind. I got them brotha.”

I feel jittery, like I don’t know what to do with all of this energy and my complex feelings I have about this situation. I

walk over to the table, pressing some buttons and watch Tatum's face as the floor lowers.

"Holy shit." She looks up at me with a smile.

"Unless you know how to get in, you're not getting in. It's essentially like a panic room. We'll keep your bags down here. In case they raid it. They won't find them. And if they do, oh well, what is he going to do? They don't know where purgatory is?"

"What?"

"Oh, it's what we call it. Purgatory."

She just laughs and nods her head.

"I'm gonna go get a duffle bag from upstairs. I'll be right back. Grab whatever you need for a night or two." I kiss her forehead as I move up the stairs and walk through the kitchen.

"Zane." I hear Ella as I punch the code into my door and it unlocks. Glancing beside me as she looks up. "Look, she's a little fragile right now?"

I smile and nod. "Why do you think I offered for everyone to come up? She just lost her baby. I'm not going to fuck her tonight. Or tomorrow. Or until she's ready. She's here, and I know she's safe and that's all I give a damn about." Her eyes moisten as I finish. "What?"

"Your mom would be so proud of you right now."

I look down and nod my head. "I'd like to think so." I nod. "I gotta grab some stuff." She nods her head again before she reaches over and wraps her arms around me, hugging me.

"I'm really proud of you, too."

"You don't know how much that means."

"When did you find out?" She asks, asking me when I found out about her losing the baby.

"I heard she was in the hospital this morning."

"How?"

“Ella, don’t ask questions you don’t want to know the answers to.”

“You hacked the hospital system, didn’t you?”

“No, well, not the entire thing. Just admitting.”

“What did you do when you found out? You conned Dan into telling you, didn’t you?”

“Not really. I conned him into talking with me. And then explained, and he never told me.”

“But he didn’t have to because you already knew and he didn’t tell you that you were wrong.”

“Yeah. And he was then willing to help me get a message to her.”

“You know you’re in love with her, right?”

I just nod my head.

“You gonna tell her?”

“Not yet. I’m not even sure if my body will let me say the actual words.” She laughs along with me. “I’ve gotta grab a bag and get back down to her.” Ella nods her head. “Oh, I want her to ride out with you in the Jeep, just in case.”

“Good idea. She’s in some pain. She needs to take one of the painkillers they gave her.”

I’m pulling some clothing from the closet and shoving them into the bag. Extra clothes, just in case.

“Shit.” I mumble to myself and pull out my phone, punching in the number to my sister.

“What?” She answers, almost sounding like she’s out of breath, and I’m almost certain that there’s whispers in the background.

Nope, I don’t want to think anything about my baby sister and that combination of things.

“Damn, I love you too.” I laugh into the phone. “Look, we’re going up tonight. Stay in LA until I let you know we’re back.”

“Damn. Thanks. No invitation.”

“We’re leaving within the next 30 minutes.”

“What?!”

“I’ll explain when I see you next.”

“She finally there?”

“I’ll explain when I see you.” I laugh into the phone and hang up.

“Zane...” I hear Tatum call out as I look out into the bedroom.

“Shit, I’m sorry. I was going to come back downstairs to you.”

“Stop.” She laughs.

“What?”

“I’m not glass. I know you’re worried and yeah, this whole situation is fucked, but I’m not gonna break.”

I sigh, stepping in to her. “Honestly, I don’t know what to do. And I have a lot of conflicting emotions.”

She laughs. “Understandable. As do I.” She steps into me, reaching over and grabbing my hand. “Yes, I’m upset that I have to go through a divorce, that I’m in pain, and I’m fucking angry about everything else. But I’m glad that I’m here with you. Because it’s given me a little sunlight in a really fucking dark time.” She pauses, sighing again. “And I’m really sorry.” She bites her lip as she looks at me again.

“For what?”

“I just show up here. And I can’t have sex.”

It actually makes me grin when she says it.

“What?”

“You just lost our baby. I wouldn’t expect you to.” She furrows her eyebrows. “You’re going through a lot right now, and I’m just here to support you. Just because we’re here together doesn’t mean that I have to be fucking you. I mean, I really enjoy fucking you. It’s possibly my favorite thing. And I

really miss fucking you, but I don't have to.. All the time.”

“Did you say our baby?”

“What? No...” I trail, realizing my slip up.

“I'm pretty sure you did.” She whispers, stepping into me.

“Fine, I did. I didn't mean to, but that's how I've always thought of it... as ours.”

“But.”

“Shh.” I say to her. “I've always thought of him as mine, because he was yours, and I know that Darren's a piece of shit. I knew that one day you would leave him and take me up on my offer. And then both of you would be mine.”

I can see the water in her eyes. “Zane.” Her voice is so small when she says it.

“Yeah.”

“Kiss me.” She shakes her head. “Not like I'm going to break. Kiss me like you haven't seen me in months.”

Her eyes are still watering as I reach around her neck, gripping ahold of it and pulling her into me. Meeting her lips half way as I press mine to her, forcefully. Her tongue comes out, meeting mine as I taste her for the first time in months, for the first time since we left purgatory last time. Sliding my hand up into her hair, cupping her head so I can move her. I groan as her teeth pin my bottom lip between them and she giggles as she lets it go.

“You can't do that...” I laugh as I look at her, shaking my head.

“Shit, you're right. I'm sorry.” I just look at her, confused. “I didn't really mean to. I still have a lot of hormones and as much as I can't have sex... I really want to. But I also would probably cry in the middle. I'm so confused.”

“It's okay.” I laugh as I lean in and plant one gentle kiss on her. “One more thing.” I whisper to her.

Her eyes come up, looking at me, and I soften to her.

“It’s okay for you to break now, if you want. I’ve got you.”



TATUM

The desert is almost like I remember it, although it seems like they have started using it again. As I make my way into the bedroom that Zane and I spent *that* day in when I first found out, I still see the ruffled sheets, almost exactly as we left them.

“I couldn’t change them.”

Quickly I turn around, looking up at him, surprised.

“I’ve stayed up here a few times since.” He admits, looking down and running his hand along the backside of his neck. “I could still smell you on them. It was...” he trails as if he doesn’t know how to finish what he’s thinking.

“Comforting?”

“Yeah.” He nods his head before stepping into me. “I was just biding my time, waiting for you to come home.”

“Please.” I can’t help but laugh. “Are you trying to convince me you were all alone, pining over me? You know, I know you better than that.” I tilt my head, looking at him again, walking over to the bed and sitting down.

“No, I never said all alone.” He grins at me, causing me to roll my eyes. “Regardless of where I was and who I was with, I was missing you, but when I was here, I was alone...”

“I was about to say.” My laugh cuts me off, causing me to pause before I talk again; he walks over to me and stands looking down at me, slight interest to his expression. “I know when you showed up at my appointment, you had just left some girl.”

My gut tells me a moment too late, whilst I’m finishing my sentence, that I should have taken his expression as a warning.

“Do you?” His lips tilt up as I continue to sit, now stunned and mortified that I just called myself out.

“Uh, I mean, well... I assumed.” I start, quickly looking away from him.

I watch as his foot pushes my feet apart, and he steps in between them.

My eyes bulge as I try to figure out what to say, quickly, to get myself out of this conundrum.

His fingers pinch my chin before they’re tilting my head up, forcing me to look at him. “Tatum...” The vibrato of his voice rattling my insides.

But I don’t start again. How am I supposed to explain how I knew?

I feel relieved he breaks out into a full smile and nods his head. “You know.” He stops, looking down and laughing as he lets my chin go, moving over to my side, and sitting down next to me. “I thought the tears were because he didn’t show up, but...” He nudges me with his shoulder.

I shake my head, biting onto my lip, and trying to force the betrayal-smile back. “No.” My lip slips from my teeth’s hold and I’m matching his expression as I turn and look at him. “He didn’t even know I had one that day. He never came.”

“You were sad because you knew?”

“I know it sounds stupid, and I shouldn’t have been because I mean, fuck, I’m still technically married, but I dunno. I can’t really explain it.”

“I understand.”

“How?”

“Because I’ve been the same way since I met you. You told me so yourself.”

“I didn’t really tell you so. I told you not to be a hypocrite.”

He laughs again. It’s a laugh that I’ve only ever seen him do

with me. “How about this?” He turns, looking at me, and I’m intrigued. “From here on out. Neither one of us are?”

I can’t speak. I’m not even sure what I want him to say. It’s all the things I wanted him to say as I was standing in front of him, in his office, begging with him.

“I should have gone after you.” It’s a whisper as he leans into me.

“Why didn’t you?”

“Cause I’m an idiot.” He chuckles as the words leave his mouth. I guess he can see that I’m not exactly amused by his response. “Fine. I had convinced myself I was gonna get you hurt, but...”

“But?” I can’t help but be curious about what else he’s going to say.

“I realized when Eli came to me and told me about everything that you... that this,” he gestures between us, “scares the shit out of me.”

“Please.” I can’t help but laugh again. Standing up, trying to get away from the bullshit that he’s spewing. “You’re not afraid of anything.”

His hand is on my arm, tugging me back around to look at him. Forcing me forward to come to stand between his feet. “I’m serious.” His eyes are searching mine for something. “This scares me. You scare me. You always have. It’s why I didn’t go after you after you took off in the middle of the night. It’s why I left you in South Dakota. It’s why I took off after I felt like you could take care of yourself. It’s why I let you walk out of those fucking doors and didn’t go after you. It’s been a long time since I’ve allowed myself to be happy, psycho, that it scares the shit out of me now.”

“It scares me, too.”

“I know, but you let yourself feel things a long time ago.”

“I told you, I don’t have those.”

I can tell by the look on his face that he knows I'm full of shit, but he says nothing else.

"Okay." He whispers, reaching up and cupping my chin between his thumb and indeed fingers, guiding me towards him until my lips meet his.

His kiss is soft, delicate, almost comical how much different it is than what he looks like he is on the outside... if you don't know any better.

He starts to pull away, but I don't let him just yet. I can't let him. Something inside forces me to hold him to me. Keeping him close. I heighten the kiss as I quickly move myself, now straddling his lap. His groan creates a vibration in my mouth that tears through my body, causing a need for him to start low in my core.

Pulling away from me quickly, he growls as does so, looking at me, exhaling and shaking his head. "Woman..." he looks at me, leaning his forehead against mine. His breathing is heavy as he's shaking his head, but I can feel his hardened cock pressing hard against me.

"You know." I pause, just for some dramatics. I look up at his eyes perk up as I speak. "I'm pretty sure not all things are off the table."

He doesn't say anything, but his head tilts as I smirk, sliding off of him and kneeling between his knees. "Tatum..." His voice causes me to hesitate as my hand reaches for his zipper. "You don't have to... I don't want you to if..." he trails, almost as if he has conflicting feelings about it. Like he doesn't want me to do it if I don't want to, but he also doesn't want to completely ruin it.

"Zane, shut up, and stop thinking." It's a demand, and his eyes widen, as a slight smirk shows, almost as if he didn't know that being told what to do would turn him on as much as it did.

His teeth graze his bottom lip as he sighs in reaction to the sound of me pulling down his zipper. I lock eyes with him as I free him from his jeans and can feel him twitching in my hand,

begging me.

“I’ll tell you if I get uncomfortable.”

He nods his head.

“This time, you’re not in control.”

“Have I ever really been?” He nods his head again. Not wanting to break whatever is happening by saying too much.

“You’ll sit back and enjoy me thanking you for everything you’ve done for me.”

He groans as his head leans backwards and my lips come down around the tip of him. Slipping him slowly into my mouth, I can feel him move underneath me.

It isn’t the way we fuck, it isn’t forceful or aggressive. Instead, I move him in and out of my mouth as I work the base of him with my hand.

“Goddamn.” Slips out of his mouth quietly, but I can’t help the smile that it brings to my face.

His hand coming up and resting on my head, wrapping his fingers into my hair, but he doesn’t use any force, his hand moves along with my movements.

“You are my fucking dream girl, you know that.” It’s strained, as if it’s difficult to focus on the words that he’s trying to say.

Quickly, I start moving my mouth around him and I glance up, locking eyes with him once more. Working him quicker in my hand, seeing the lust spreading in his eyes as they darken, but he keeps his darkness at bay for a moment. Because he knows that this is what we need at this moment.

I keep my eyes on him as his drop for a moment, a groan coming out of his mouth as he sees his cock in my mouth and my hand still wrapped around him.

Feeling the grip he has in my hair tighten as his eyes glaze over, and he loses control. His hand forces my head down hard, my hand releases from around him, and I let him shove his dick down my throat as I gag slightly, and feeling the salty

warm taste filling my mouth.

“Holy shit.” He whispers, gasping.

I can see him about to speak again, so I just shake my head, telling him not to.

Reaching down to me, he pulls me up and presses his mouth to mine again, spinning us around and pinning me on the bed.



TATUM

“What are you doing?” I giggle, hating myself at the reaction he always pulls out of me.

He just smirks at me before his hand slides up my leg and I realize his plan.

“Zane...” I trail reaching down and grabbing his hand, stilling it. When his eyes reach mine, I know he understands what I’m trying to tell him.

He pulls away from me, and he doesn’t have to say anything. I can see the shame on his face.

“It’s not... it’s just.” Reaching over, I pull myself to him. “You probably wouldn’t want to right now, anyway.”

“Why’s that?” He laughs this time, looking at me and nodding his head. “What? It wouldn’t be the first time I’ve had your blood in my mouth.” I can feel my eyes widen. “But I understand. You’ve got a lot going on right now.”

I lean into him, planting a gentle kiss on him, trying to keep the moment until he pulls me down next to him as he leans back, reaching down, adjusting himself back into his jeans. As he lies back, he lifts his arm, creating a perfect pocket for my body to lie in.

“I have one question, if you don’t mind answering. You know, just so we’re on the same page with everything.”

“Of course I will?” I ask him, rolling to my side, and looking

at him wearing an expression that says whatever his question is, I won't want to answer.

"How did you know?" His smirk spreads wide.

"What? Know what?"

"You said you knew I had just been with someone. How'd you know that?"

"Uh..." I trail, making an audible laugh come out of him.

"Come on, psycho... fess up." He laughs again. "You want to know how I knew you had an appointment? How I knew you were in the hospital?"

I nod my head. Maybe if I hear all of this, it will make me feel a little better about what I had done.

"I hacked into the doctor's office and found your file. I would check it after every appointment, for the next one. Then I set an alert through the hospital for your name."

"You know how to hack?"

My question makes him laugh as he shakes his head, leaning into me. "You always remind just how psycho you are." He presses a kiss into my hair. "I think most people would find the invasion of privacy as the more important fact." He mumbles to me before he subtly pulls away. "But yes, I can a little. Not much and not through a lot of security. We have another guy for that, but one of my uncles taught me some."

I contemplate this information for a moment before I feel his shoulder nudging against me.

"Ugh, fine..." I groan, wanting to cover myself and hide away.

"I saw you leave with her."

"Huh?" His eyebrows furrow until the recognition on his face starts. "You were watching me?"

"A little." I look away from him before he's turning my face yet again. "Fine. I know your schedule, or as much of a schedule that you have. I know which nights you spend where. I knew that night you would be at the club. I was sitting in the

parking lot because Darren's working nights."

"Monday night?" It's a question, but I'm not sure what he's asking me.

"What?"

"Where am I Mondays?"

"The garage. Usually until well after they close. The club would meet up with you every few weeks and you guys would go somewhere... I didn't want to know where. It would just ease me to see you."

We lie for a moment as he just looks at me and I can read what he's thinking in his eyes, only I'm not sure if I'm ready to hear it. Maybe he can sense it because it looks from me and nods his head towards the door, and I know we're both thinking that we should get back, leave this room before I concede to my desire to him and not care about anything else. And Zane puts me in that mindset with ease every time.

Walking out of the room, I can hear the music playing before we even reach the main room.

"Isn't this kind of sketchy?"

"What cause we're in an old abandoned mine?"

"Yeah, and you and I know that they have a tendency to cave in."

He just smirks at me as I mention the first night we met.

"Nah. It we reinforced it years ago. And every few years we come out and make sure it's all good."

Wrapping his arm around me, we make our way into the party. As soon as we breach the threshold, I notice some of the club girls' heads turning, looking at me. I'm sure they have all heard the gossip, although most of them have slight pity in their eyes.

Zane walks over, getting us both something to drink as I move to the side, leaning against the wall.

“Hey.” I hear a voice that I don’t really recognize say to me. Once I look over, I smile at the hostess from the restaurant that saw us walking out of the bathroom months ago. “I’m Slee. I think we met a while back.”

“Yeah.” I nod my head as she looks down, sighing.

“Sorry.” She’s looking at my stomach as I shift uncomfortably. “I heard that’s the only thing that sucks about around here. The girls can talk a lot. And they talk a lot about you in particular.”

“What? Why? I haven’t even been here.”

“They’re jealous. All the club girls know about you. They’ve heard your name mentioned and seen him react to it. And many of them would bring blood to get that from him. You may want to go stake your claim on him, so that stops happening.” She nods her head across the room. I watch as a few girls walk up to him, saying something to him, but his eyes find me before he responds. Watching his mouth move as he says something, causing their faces to contort. “Or not. Damn.” She whispers, shaking her head. “I’m glad you’re here, though.”

“You don’t even know me.” I can’t help but laugh as I turn, looking at her.

“No, I don’t, but no one deserves that, especially after what he did. Plus, it makes my job easier when the boss is happy.”

But just like the first time we met, I can’t quite make out what she’s saying, because all I can feel is Zane’s eyes still staring at me. He smirks before he motions with his fingers for me to come over.



Every time Tatum follows a command I give her, it makes me so goddamn hard, but I know I’m still stuck on what happened back in my room. And when she fucking admitted to me she had been watching me.

I know that any sane person would find that concerning, but given our situation and who we are as people, as a couple, I fucking love it. And just being able to think about us as a couple brings something coming across me.

My eyes follow her as she walks across the room until she's standing in front of me and I'm handing her a glass.

"Thanks." She whispers, raising to her lips, lips that were just wrapped around me, and she gulps a large sip.

"I'd do everything for you."

She stares at me almost in disbelief

"What?"

"You're a complete contradiction."

It makes me laugh out loud. "How's that?"

"You have this really rough exterior, more so now than when I met you, but it was still there then. You keep everyone out."

"How's that a contradiction?"

"Because when you finally let yourself feel, you feel hard. You're intense."

I don't say anything because how am I supposed to say anything to it when she's fucking right?

It's been a couple of days since we came up here. I'm sitting in the office, as I hang up the phone with Axe. A light tap comes on the door as I look up. Her eyes give her away that she's just waking up.

"Where's everyone at?"

"They all just headed back down."

She nods her head, walking across the room and leaning against the desk.

"Oh. When are we..."

"As soon as you're ready."

She nods her head, but I can tell that there's more she wants to

say.

“Yes.” I nod my head, looking over at her.

“What?”

“Yes, it’s safe for everyone, including you. They raided the compound yesterday, but we had already scrubbed everything. They found nothing.” I laugh. “He can try all he wants, but there’s nothing he can pin on me.”

“You say that now.” She mumbles and I pull her over to me, forcing her to stand in between my knees as I cage her into the desk, looking up at her.

“Whatever he tries to do. It’ll be worth it.”

“If you’re in prison?”

“Worth it.” I reach over, grabbing her hand. But I see her expression and know that she thinks I’m full of it. “Knowing that you’re safe, and not with that piece of shit. Baby, it’s all I’ve ever wanted. I’ll take whatever obstacles come with that.” I pull her into me, kissing her and pulling away, as I start again, close enough that I know my breath is tickling her lips. “Go get everything packed. I’ll be right there.” I see a slight smirk spread out this time, and I feel like I’ve done something fucking right in my life.

Closing out of what I’m working on, I walk back towards my room and open the door. My mouth falling open as I push into the room.

“Wha—What are you doing?” I stumble over my words as I look at her, lying on the bed, completely naked.

“I was waiting for you.” She smiles up at me, pushing herself off of the bed and walking over to where I’m standing, my mouth still hanging open.

“I thought—”

“Shh,” she whispers as she comes up to me, her hands coming up to my belt. “Stop talking. Stop thinking. I’ve wanted to fuck you again since the day I got married. It’s taken so much

willpower to go this long, with you in the same bed.”

I let her pull my belt open as she continues to talk. Pulling me forward by my waistband until she’s sitting down on the bed, pulling my jeans down with her.

“I don’t want to hurt you.”

“I should be fine.”

“I don’t want you feeling bad about it.”

“I’ll be fine. And I need this.” Her fingers hook around my boxers. I guess she can sense my hesitation still when she looks up at me through her lashes, she says. “I need you, Zane. I need you to fuck me. Neither one of us has ever been a mistake for the other, so why should I feel bad? You’ve always got me.”

Ripping my shirt up over my head, I lean in, slamming my mouth to hers, and pushing her backwards on the bed.

Wrapping one arm around her torso, I move her up the bed with me before I break our kiss, looking down at her. Already so hard that I know it’s only going to take one thrust before I’m filling her up.

“Are you sure?” I ask her once more, just to make sure. She nods her head, smiling. “Okay, tell me if it hurts.” I whisper as I line myself up with her and sink inside.

We moan out in unison as I do.

I keep my eyes locked with hers as she nods her head, telling me she’s okay and, as gently as possible, I move my hips out of her.

Her hands come around my body, flattening out on my back as her eyes roll into the back of her head, her mouth gaping open.

“Goddamn, I’ve missed you.” I tell her, causing her eyes to open back up and she looks at me. Both of us are aware of what I’m meaning. She’s been here for a few days, but now she’s mine-mine, again.

We keep eye contact as I slow my pace, rocking inside of her

and then back out. I watch her face with each motion, making sure it's not too much for her.

Her teeth graze her lip and she pulls me down to her, kissing me again, our kiss matching the tempo of our hips.

She smirks as I pull away from her. I know my face contorting as I try to repress my release to keep the moment.

“Zane.” She whimpers underneath me as I feel her walls already tightening. “Fuck me.” She moans, her hand sliding down as she grips ahold of my ass, squeezing it and pulling me into her again. “I’m gonna cum, fuck me.”

My eyes roll back as I slam into her once, looking down, trying to make sure that she’s not in pain, but at this moment, I’m not sure I can stop myself. I know what she’s asking me to do. So I slam into her repeatedly, losing myself in the moment, hearing her moans that are only fueling me further.

And then I feel it, the most satisfying of this, maybe even more satisfying than my own orgasm and also spurting me into my own release. She squirts out on me, our moans mixed into a perfect melody.

As I open my eyes, looking down at her, I realize I should feel fucking exposed, but I don’t, with her... it just feels right.

This is what people mean when they say making love.



TATUM

“Tate.” Darren’s voice calls to me. I knew that this was coming. It’s why I haven’t taken any isolated jobs. I see Darren standing, leaning against the doorframe, and I cross my arms over my chest, glaring up at him.

I say nothing because with everyone around us, I’m sure the police department discourages telling how you want to run their balls through a grater, but then again if they knew that this piece of shit beats his wife, they wouldn’t *love* that either. They still wouldn’t turn their backs on him.

I say nothing to him, instead; I turn around him and move into the kitchen.

“Tate...” He trails, but I don’t look back at him. “Come on, you’re being ridiculous.”

“Me?” I laugh out loudly, spinning around and glaring at him. “I’m being ridiculous. I think my reaction is pretty fucking logical, considering what happened.”

“Where are you staying?”

I don’t answer him, just laugh, shaking my head.

“You left your rings.”

“Oh, you mean you actually found them? I’m surprised by that.” The sarcasm drips from the words.

“You don’t have to be a fucking cunt about it.” He steps into

me, dropping his voice.

A month ago, when he would step into me like this, I would have backed up, except this time I match his step, moving even closer to him. He can't even hide how it shocks him.

"You haven't even seen me acting like a cunt. Keep it up. Come around him, anyone there, anything that they fucking own again, and I'll show just how much of a cunt I can actually be."

He glares at me, stepping even closer. His fist tightening into a ball at his sides.

"Go ahead. Hit me. Show everyone here who you really fucking are."

"You want to paint me as a villain, but I can give you such a better life than he ever can."

"Yeah, right up till the point where you kill me."

"You're being dramatic."

"Am I?" I shout before dropping my voice again. "You. Killed. My baby."

"Our baby."

"No." I point at him. I can see my finger shaking from the rage that I am holding in. "You lost the privilege of calling it yours when you hit me. No, fuck that. You lost that privilege when you backed me into a corner to marry you."

"You know your little fucking boyfriend isn't so peaceful, either. You are this upset with me. You don't know who he is."

"I'm aware of exactly who he is. I can give you the list of ways that he's better than you are. But I have a feeling that will just piss you off more, won't it?"

He glares at me. "I can give you a better life, an easier life than you can ever have with him. You're going to die doing this job if you stay with him."

"Whatever you need to tell yourself to help you sleep at night." I push past him.

His hand grips hold of my throat as he backs me up against the fridge. I glare at him, not letting him know how much panic I'm having to fight through to keep a stoic expression.

"What the fuck?" His partner snaps as he rushes next to him. "Darren, what the fuck? Let go of her, man." The grip on me loosens, and he lets Stu pull away from me.

I can't help but laugh. "Fuck, you really have everyone fooled, don't you?" I snap, glaring up at him.

"Tate, don't antagonize him." Stu pleads with me.

"Oh yeah, poor perfect Darren." My eyes remain glaring at Darren as my voice makes a mockery of the rumors I've already heard circulating around the city. I couldn't give a fuck less about them, but I know he thinks that I'm oblivious. "His wife must have gone crazy when she lost the baby. That's the only explanation for why she left the hospital and immediately shackled up with *that biker*. How could she feel safe with a criminal? Doesn't she know he hurts people? How can she feel safe with him? I mean, there's no way she could know that he wouldn't purposefully get her pregnant to trap her into marrying him. There's no way that she could know that he wouldn't threaten people who she cares about to keep her from leaving. There's no way that she could know he wouldn't hurt her." I can see my nostrils flare as I step closer to both men. Darren's eyes are wide as he pleads with me not to say anything else. The turning tables makes me feel a sense of success that I know will most likely be short-lived. "That he wouldn't beat her, beat her to the point she ends up in the hospital, to the point that would make her lose *her* baby." I emphasize 'her' just to reiterate it.

I watch Stu's eyes widen as he looks at me.

"How," my voice becomes normal again, "could she feel safe with a man who rather go to prison for the rest of his life because someone hurt her, then ever laying a goddamn hand on her?" I shake my head. "That must sound clinically insane, doesn't it?" Turning my head, I stare at Stu this time.

Darren shoves Stu off of him and storms out of the house. Turning around, I look at the work that I still need to do at the scene when I hear Stu talk behind me. I can hear the shock in lining his voice. "I didn't know."

I shake my head, laughing, before I turn around and look at him. "Bull shit. You knew."

"I swear, Tate."

"I've heard you laugh at the things he's said about me."

"I thought they were just jokes..."

"And do you joke like that about Harding?" He doesn't answer, just continues to stare at me. "I didn't think so."

"Tate, I... I — how can I make this up to you?"

"I don't think there is anything." I can feel my jaw clenching. "My blood has stained the flooring in the nursery. That's where he killed my baby, and where he very well could have killed me. So no, you can't make this up to me. The only thing you can do is the next girl, whether it be him or someone else, don't make the same fucking mistakes."

I sit in the BMW in front of the clubhouse, just trying to process how this day has been.

"Psycho?" I hear Zane call out for me through the window and as soon as I see his face, the anger quickly subsides. He walks over to the car and leans against the door as he looks at me through the glass. "You okay?" I look over at him, nodding my head. "What are you doing?"

"It was just a real fucked up day." I say as he nods his head.

I'm confused when he stands up straight, opening the back door and getting in.

"What are you doing?"

"Drive back to the house."

"Why?"

"I want to show you something."

“Okay...” I trail as I shift the truck into drive and we roll across the grounds.

“Why was today fucked up?”

“Darren showed up.”

“What?” He snaps and I can see him come around between the seats as he leans over the console.

“It’s fine. His partner was there. He wouldn’t do anything.” I laugh as we roll to a stop in front of the house and he jumps out of the back, rushing and opening my door.

“Come on.” He laughs as he reaches up, holding his hand out for mine.

“Zane, why’d we come back here?” I tilt my head and he laughs. “When was the last time you were even back here?”

“This morning.” He smirks at me, making me even more curious.

“Why?”

“Let me show you.” He whispers before he’s pulling me out of the car and up to the porch.

“Okay, before this morning?”

“When Drew left for school.”

“You haven’t been back here in 5 years?”

“Didn’t really have a reason to.” He shrugs.

“And now you do?”

“I don’t feel like it was right having you live in the clubhouse. You can come and go as much as you want to. You can stay over there as much as you want to. But this also gives a lot more privacy.”

“In a giant ass house.”

He laughs. “It is. I never realized just how big it was until it was just Drew and I.”

I walk through the house, back to where I stayed with him the

first time I was here, but he grabs my arm. When I look back at him, he's shaking his head *no*.

"Upstairs."

"What?"

"If you're going to live back here, it's upstairs." He pulls me up the steps behind him and then to the right. I gasp when he opens the bedroom door and I see the view.

"Fuck me." I mumble, his laugh echoing behind me.

"That was indeed the reaction I was hoping to get." It makes me laugh as I look over at him. He leans into me, kissing me once before he pulls away. "I put your bags in the closet." Walking over to the closet, I open the double doors and gasp again.

"It's huge." The lack of things I have in the closet is almost comical. Then I tilt my head and turn around, looking at him. "Where's your stuff?"

He troubles his lip for a moment before he looks back up at me with a concerned face. It's kind of adorable. "I don't want to push you too much, or rush you. I know you've got a lot going on right now. I want to give you the space and time that you need. I came over here this morning and had to move out my parents' furniture, because that would have been too weird for me. But this is your room, no strings attached."

"Except for the string of, you know, sleeping with you in here."

"Nah, this has nothing to do with it. If you wanted to take a step back, if it's too much for you. You can still stay here. It's not being used."

"So..." I trail as I step into him. "Say I wanted to stop seeing each other."

"You can still stay here. I really hope that's not the case, but I would accept what you want. I mean, eventually I would. After you know, I tried to make some sort of effort."

I keep a serious face as I nod my head and look up at him.

“I’m really regretting saying that already.”

I can’t help but laugh before I shake my head and whisper.

“You’re too good to me.”

“I’m not. I’m not enough for you.” His hand comes out, his fingers grazing my cheek. “You deserve the world.” He smiles down at him and his eyes lighten. “You’ve lightened the darkness in my life for a long time. And nothing I could ever do could compare to that.”

“I don’t think you give yourself the credit you deserve.”

I want to tell him I love him, but my brain tells me I shouldn’t. That right now it wouldn’t be appropriate, that things need to happen in a certain order before I say it.

Abruptly stepping up onto my toes, I slam my mouth to his before he’s spinning us around.

The bed’s underneath me as I push his kutte off of his arms and then pulling at his shirt, exposing his chest and tossing it on the floor. His hands are on my pants as he’s pulling them off and I gasp as his hand grazes my pussy.

His hand runs over his initial that sits on my hip and I can’t help but giggle. “You’ve always owned me, too.”

And I mean that in more ways than one.



“I can see the stars reflecting off of the water from here.” I whisper to him as I point, his arms wrapped around me still.

“Yeah, that’s the way they built it, and so they could watch the sunset over the water.”

“It sounds like your parents were hopeless romantics as well.”

“Where you think I got it from?”

“Yeah, they built it on their spot.”

“What do you mean?”

“It was a spot that they would go to a lot. I guess they ended up fighting here a lot when they were broken up. Mom jumped off of the cliff once to get away from Dad.” I can’t help but laugh when he tells me this.

“What?”

“My dad had a fear of heights. Hated them. And him and mom got into a heated conversation, dad called her out on something and instead of answering, she jumped off the cliff, and he went in after her.”

“He jumped.”

“Yeah, said that his fear of losing her was more powerful.”

“The more I hear about them...” I trail off.

“Yeah, it was amazing having parents who were so perfect for one another, but it’s also kind of intimidating.”

“How so?” I ask.

“They say half of marriages end in divorce.” I look down as his hand presses against mine, our palms facing one another’s, then his fingers slide down mine. “Not the same thing as what I’m talking about.” He presses a kiss behind my ear. “But growing up with them, I used to worry that if I put all of my effort into something and it falls apart, then I’m a failure.”

“That’s why you don’t like frivolous relationships?”

“Yeah. I want what they had. I still watch the security footage now and then.”

“It was beautiful. In such a dark way, but...” I exhale as I roll over and look at him. “I can only hope that my last moments in this world are just like theirs. With someone who I love more than anything and us telling one another and just how happy we were.”

“I’ll tell you every day how happy you make me.”

“God, you’re corny.”

“Fuck you.” He laughs as he rolls over on top of me.

“Who knew that the big scary biker was so fucking cheesy?” I attempt to keep a straight face.

“You’re an asshole.”

I actually fucking giggle this time. His face comes down towards me, his lips finding mine, pressing hard against mine. His kiss is forceful, but not aggressive. His hand comes up, his touch gentle as he holds onto my face. Pressing my hips up, he laughs as he shakes his head, pulling away just enough so he can whisper to me. “Stop. I want to take my time with you. I want to cherish every inch of your body. Damn it to memory.”

“Why?” I pull back just fractionally more and look up at him, confused.

“Because I’m terrified that I’m going to wake up tomorrow morning and this is all going to be a dream, that you’re going to be ripped away from me.”

“I’m not going anywhere.” I whisper, reaching up and wrapping my arms around his neck. “In fact, I want you to move all of your stuff in here, too.”

His eyes light up as he searches my face. “Are you sure?” he whispers. A smile lingers just below his face, a smile that he’s forcing away, almost as if he’s afraid that all of this isn’t real.

“Yes. I don’t want to waste another second and I don’t want to make another dumb decision.”

“Okay, tomorrow, then, but just know that if the day after tomorrow, the end of the week, the end of the month, you feel different, and you need some space, just say the word. I want you to feel completely ready. And I’m here as long as that takes.”

“I know you are.”

He reaches up, brushing my hair out of my face and just looking down at me. “Tatum...” He trails, his eyes becoming serious as he looks at me and I feel the emotion already locking up my throat.

“Don’t.” I whisper.

“Don’t what?”

“Say something you’re going to regret.”

“Who says I’ll regret it?” He caresses my cheek. “Tatum, you don’t know what you’ve done to me, what you’ve brought into my life. Every single time we crossed paths. For a while, I thought we were just destined to be star-crossed, but then I realized when I pulled up and saw you save my sister by sacrificing yourself, that we’re destined to be together. No matter how much we try not to be, we’ll always find each other, but it scared the shit out of me. I didn’t want to do anything to get you hurt, so I fought it for a long fucking time. I was an idiot. I knew in that moment that—” He stops as a door slams from downstairs, both of us snap our heads to look at one another. “Stay here.” He tells me as he stands up from the bed, I hear the drawer open in the nightstand and he stands up, pulling on his boxers and moving out of the door.

“Zane...” I trail. “Shit.” I whisper out as I push the covers back and fumble off of the bed, stumbling to the floor, but catching myself and standing up. I grab Zane’s shirt off of the floor, pulling it up over my head.

“Zane...” I call out in a whisper again as I peek out of the door, but I don’t see him at the top of the stairs. “Zane...” I whisper as I near the bottom of the staircase.

I struggle to hear his bare feet on the floor as he comes back over to where I am.

“I told you to stay upstairs.” He snaps out at me in a whisper.

“I’m not staying upstairs with this sketchy shit going on.”

“It’s fine. Go back upstairs.”

“Zane.” A crashing comes from downstairs and I jump, grabbing a hold of his arm as he looks back quickly.

“Shit. Stay behind me.” He snaps out as he keeps the gun in front of him. I’m almost surprised, although I know I shouldn’t be, that his hand never once shakes. In fact, I know the only reason he had an ounce of fear in his eyes a moment

ago was because he realized I was down here.

I keep a grip on his arm as we continue. I can hear someone walking downstairs.

“Zane.”

“Shh.” He whispers behind himself. “I know.”

We move into the kitchen and I can see the light coming from the hallway that leads down to the basement.

Light streams through the small crack of the opened door.

As I hear footsteps stomping on the stairs, Zane pushes me back behind him, shielding me with his body. “Go. Duck down.” He’s so demanding when he says that it causes my stomach to clench. He nods his head across the room to duck behind the island in the kitchen. Gripping the counter, I kneel, keeping myself just high enough to see over it.

Zane presses himself flush against the wall, his arm stretched out against it as well, pointing to where whoever is about to emerge will have to walk past.

Everything seems to slow down. As the door opens fast, Zane keeps his gun pointed in front of him.

I gasp as a man clears the doorway.

“Goddamnit, Zeke.” Zane shouts as he looks at the identical version of himself.



ZANE

“Goddamnit, Zeke!” I gasp loudly, lowering my gun. “I almost blew your fucking head off. Why are you here?”

“You remember when you told me to just say the word and I’m in?”

“Yeah?” I look at my brother, confused at what he’s getting at because I told him that the last time we saw one another, 4 years ago, right before I got locked up. Right before he told me to go fuck myself.

“I want in.”

“Why, now? I haven’t heard from you in what, almost a year?”

“Zeke?” Comes from behind him and my eyes widen at the recognition of the voice. The voice that had once been so strong, but now just seems torn and tattered.

“Liza?” I look past Zeke to her standing in the hallway on the top step. “Why are both of you here?”

“I was just coming over to find you... but...” Zeke starts, looking down at me, and laughing. “I see you’re making the place your own.”

“Why are you here?” I cut my eyes at him.

“Z, it’s...” Liza starts. I can see a brief flash of the girl that I remember growing up with, the one completely void of fear.

“What is it?”

Liza doesn't answer me, but I watch her eyes trail into the kitchen and I glance back to where Tatum is standing.

“She's fine. You can trust her.”

“Are you sure?” Liza's voice seems muted.

“Yeah, don't you know Liza? Z doesn't make any mistakes.”

“Fuck off, okay.”

Liza's eyes widen as we snap at one another. I haven't seen her in a while and, well; she hasn't seen my brother and me together in even longer.

“No, Z, we all know how fucking perfect you are.”

“Stop!” Tatum shouts from in the kitchen. “Fuck!” I can hear her slam her hands down on the counter. “Clearly, something more important than whatever issue you two have is fucking going on.”

“Who the fuck even are you?” Zeke snaps over at her, pissing me off further.

I'm about to tell him to back the fuck off, but I stop when I hear her start again. “Uh, someone who apparently has been around a lot more than you recently.”

Zeke looks taken aback by Tatum's attitude and I see Liza look down with a smirk on her face.

“You're right.” I look over at Tatum, nodding my head.

“Good.” Her eyes widen before she's stepping around the island and walking over to where we stand. “Now we're going to go to separate corners and calm down, maybe put some pants on. And readdress this in a few minutes.”

She doesn't wait for me to answer, but pushes me back into the living room and up the stairs.

I can't help but smirk as I hear my brother grumble to himself after Liza says she likes her.



I know she's looking at me as I'm shutting the door. I turn around, looking at her and give her an awkward smile.

"I mean, I knew you had a brother... but I feel you left out a couple details."

"Like how my twin brother hates me?"

"Why?"

"Who knows?" I shrug, before walking over and grabbing my jeans up off of the floor.

"Zane." I don't even look at her, but I can see the look she's giving me right now.

"He blames me for some things."

"Like what?"

"It's not important."

"It is. I get it that there are more important things going on right now, but it's still important." She says as she picks a pair of jeans and pulls them up.

I follow behind Tatum as we walk down the stairs, and I hear Liza laughing in the kitchen.

"How long have they been together?" Tatum whispers.

"They're not."

"Really?" She tilts her head at me and I just shrug, telling her that if they are, I have no fucking clue about it.

We're walking into the kitchen and I see Liza looking at my brother and I just shake my head. But honestly, if they were, it wouldn't surprise me.

"Where's Liv?"

"Her and Billie are at the clubhouse." Liza tells me.

"Why are they there?"

"Someone's been following them."

"Are you sure?"

“Yeah.” Liza whispers. “They’ve been following me, too.”

“Why didn’t you guys call us sooner?” I ask, leaning over the table.

“It’s only been going on for a few weeks. I didn’t think it was serious...” She trails, and I know she’s keeping something from me.

I look over at my brother and nod, now no longer worried about them being in immediate danger. “And you’ve been up there for a few weeks? Which antagonized whoever more?”

“Possibly. I’m supposed to still be on tour.”

“Yeah, why are you back?”

“We did a show in Bakersfield. They came out, and well—” He trails off.

“You finally got your head out of your ass?” I’m surprised when Zeke and I both laugh at my comment.

“Something like that.”

“What is that supposed to mean?” Liza asks.

I watch the look pass between them and she smiles, looking down.

“I have an idea.” Tatum says.

“Why are you here?” Zeke snaps at her.

“Come on.” I look over at him. “We were doing so well.”

“A momentary lapse in judgement.”

“Tatum, what’s your idea?”

“Well.” She smiles. “Let’s lure whoever it is out.”

“How?” Zeke asks from across the table. “In case you didn’t hear it. He’s after them.”

“So, give him,” I can see that Zeke is about to explode, as she’s saying it. I hope she can get it all out before he does, but knowing my brother, his brain has already exploded and he won’t hear the rest. “Who he thinks is Liza.”

“She’s not fucking going out there!” He shouts from across the table, standing up.

“Whoa.” I stand up, matching his stance and I see his fists ball up. “Calm down.”

“Calm down?!” He screams this time, finally all the years of resentment boiling over. “You want me to calm down? Your fuck buddy over here wants to send Liza out to get fucking taken.”

“You’re not listening.”

“Oh, I think I am listening pretty fucking well.”

“Brother, you’re being irrational.”

“Don’t fucking ‘brother’ me. I’m not one of your fucking *brothas*.” He air quotes the word ‘brothas’. “Oh, you just get to tell everyone what to do, right?” He shouts as he moves around the table. “When you’ve always been the fuck up.”

“Not this shit again.” I roll my eyes as he steps over, standing in front of me.

“ENOUGH!” Both of our eyes widen, merely inches apart, as we look over at Liza. “I’m sick of you two either fighting like this or just not speaking at all. Get your shit together, Fuck!” She screams. “You’re mad that he hasn’t found who killed them yet. But somehow you also blame him for you and Ash’s relationship.” She screams at Zeke and I look over at him, watching the shame wash over his face. “Yeah, I know. I know you well enough. And Z, you’re pissed because you feel abandoned by your brother to take care of everything else.” I drop my eyes this time, ashamed of how I feel. “Well, fucking talk, for once in your goddamn lives.” Zeke and I just look back at one another. But we both have some relief since this is the first time in years that Liza has been able to speak to anyone in this tone. “This, watching this bullshit that’s going on between you two, it would break their fucking hearts.” Liza looks back over at Zeke and starts again. “And if you would have paid attention more than a knee jerk reaction, you would have heard the plan for what it really was. She suggested that

she pretends to be me.”

“No.” I look back at Tatum, shaking my head.

“I wasn’t asking for your permission.”

“She remind you of anyone?” I cut my eyes at Liza as she says it to Zeke and they both laugh.

“I’m sick of fucked-up men trying to push their ways on everyone.” Tatum snaps.

“You can’t get revenge on him by doing this.”

“Oh, that won’t even going to scratch the surface of the revenge I will get on him.” She seethes over the thought.

“Who?” Liza asks.

“My husband.”

I don’t have to look over. I can feel Zeke’s eyes on me, and I can feel his shitty grin.

“Zane, I’m not asking for your permission. I can and will go by myself or you can come with me. Those are your fucking options. Decide.” Tatum storms past me, hitting my shoulder as she does, just to prove a point.

“So, your girlfriend’s married?” Zeke smirks, crossing his arms over his chest.

“Fuck off.” I snap at my brother, causing Liza to groan as she follows passed Zeke after Tatum.

“I would love to hear this story.” He smiles condescendingly as he looks at me, leaning against the counter.

“Too fucking long to tell you about right now.” He gives me a questioning look. “Why are you down here with them?” I give him a curious look, and he rolls his eyes again. If he’s not ready to talk about it, I won’t fucking push him.

“I already told you. I was in town. They came out, they told me their concerns, so I went over to see if I could tell what was going on, and...” He trails.

“Just got in a little over your head?”

I hear what I've said and I'm expecting the hot-head to snap out, but he nods his head.

"Yeah..."

"I didn't mean like you can't handle it."

"No, I fucking can't handle it."

"Which is why you came here?" I nod, knowing that he's only here because he has nowhere else to go. And he won't risk their lives. Okay, he won't risk Liza's life because of his pride. "Okay." I pause for a moment. "Look, you don't have to say that you're in for us to help you. You guys are family." Then I can't help but laugh at myself. "What's going on with you two?"

"Huh?" His voice raises an octave as his head flings back over to look at me. "What? Nothing's going on."

"Sure there's not." I can't help but laugh again.

"If there was, it wouldn't be your business, anyway." He glares at me. There he is.

I can see his anger issues are still as prominent as ever.

"Not my business, okay? You made it my fucking business my whole life." I can't help but chuckle to myself. "Listening to you obsessing over her. And like the one time you tried to fight her boyfriend, and I got my ass kicked for it."

He laughs this time. "I mean, I stopped him."

"Eventually." I laugh this time.

"I'm sorry." I get serious for a moment. "I've followed every lead, and it's come up with nothing, every time. I had to set it aside for a while cause I was getting careless. It was making me crazy, and Axe told me I was falling down the same path dad did."

"I shouldn't have been upset about that. I can't even imagine."

"And I'm sorry I held a bit of resentment about everything."

"Oh no, I totally get that part." He laughs. "I just couldn't. I

thought they were indestructible, and dad and I didn't have the best of conversations the last time I talked with him. I held a bit of resentment about your relationship with him. I don't know how you stayed here."

"I refused to let Terri raise Drew and I couldn't ask you to come back." I pause before I start again. "I know this doesn't fix everything, but..."

Liza walks past us and into the kitchen to the fridge.

"Thanks. We needed you to call us out." Zeke says to her.

"Welcome." We're both confused when it's said from the living room.

"Aha." Tatum laughs as she spins around and looks at me.

"You won't give in at all on this, are you?"

"Nope." She pops the p before she walks over to and kisses me once. "Let's get going."

"Well." I sigh as I look over at my brother. "We're gonna need your car." I watch the hesitation on his face before I laugh again. "Come on, man. He's going to be expecting you to leave in your car. We want to lure him out."

He scours as he reaches in his pocket, handing me his keys.

"You think you should change?"

"Nah." I shake my head. "I feel like we look enough alike."



TATUM

"This is such a bad fucking idea." Zane says as he looks over at me.

"Yes, but it's going to work." I stop as I look at the car we're approaching. "Oh, and I'm really glad now that I insisted on this." I grin as we walk up to the Porsche. "Can I drive?"

"Oh, he may actually kill me if I do that. This is the first time he's ever let me drive one of his cars."

“Okay, one of his cars? What does he do? I know you guys said tour.”

“He plays guitar.”

“Really?”

“Yeah, he went on the first tour right after we turned 18. It’s why I never even asked if he wanted to come back to stay with Drew. I wouldn’t have let him.”

I just nod my head as we pull off of the road where the clubhouse sits, off into the woods.

“Do you think whoever has been following them is whoever killed your parents?”

I can feel the energy in the car shift, as if he hadn’t thought of it until now.

“It would make some sense.”

“How?”

“Whoever is behind it, they didn’t mean to kill Lucy. At least I don’t think they did.”

“Then how?”

“Liza found Lucy weeks after Fury died, and ended up checking herself, after a very blunt conversation with the rest of us, into an in-care facility.”

“Her mom committed suicide?”

“They ruled it an accidental overdose.”

“But you don’t think so?”

“I think she had just lost her husband. It broke her. They had just buried Khan before that and then Fury. I don’t think she knew what was happening, and that was terrifying.”

“So, has anyone come after you or anyone else?”

“Not yet.”

“Yet?”

“I know it’s only a matter of time. It’s why we’ve taken precautions.”

“Like what?”

“Extra security stuff.” He just shrugs as he continues to drive.

“You see ‘em?” Zane says and I look at him like I’m crazy.

“Who are you talking to?”

“Zeke.” He points up to his ear.

“Oh. Well, now I won’t say anything.”

He grins as he looks over at him, his hand coming off of the gearshift and he places it on my lap. “It’s fine.”

I’m silent for a few moments before I look back over at him curiously.

“What?”

“It’s been, what? 7 years. Why wait that long?”

“I don’t know. Why do serial killers go dormant for years? Who knows?”

“Usually because they’re incarcerated or had a vast change in their life.”

“What, you think he had kids?”

“Or, more likely, arrested.” I answer him as he slows to a stop at a red light. A car coming close behind us. “What, is that dumb?”

“No, I think you may be on to something.” He looks away for a moment before he starts again. “Axe, get Spyder to find anyone released from prison in the last 6 months.”

“He can do that?”

“He can do just about anything with a computer.” He pauses, looking away again. The phone rings and Zane looks at me, nodding for me to pick it up. “What d’ya got?”

“It looks like Sonny Lays was arrested outside of the city a week after their deaths for Burglary with a Deadly Weapon.

Just got out within the last 6 months.”

“Who’s Sonny Lays?”

“Son of Malcolm Lays.”

“Am I supposed to know who that is?”

“Road name was Cain.”

“Fuck.” Zane murmurs before reaching over and ending the call.

“Who’s Cain?” I can’t help but ask him.

“Someone who had bad blood with the charter.”

“Why?”

“Because the charter wasn’t always a part of the Damned. They were once a part of The Midnight Syn, whose national Prez was Cain.”

“You can switch clubs like that?”

“It’s more of a faux pas. It’s frowned upon, and it pisses a lot of people off, at least depending on those people, but there’s no way of really stopping it.”

“Oh...” I trail as I think of something else to say. I know what I want to ask, but I’m pretty sure I shouldn’t.

“Cain was forcing them to do shit that was putting them on the radar. They were getting a lot of heat. He didn’t know they had options. They went over to my uncle and asked for him to do a patch over. Shit, did not go over well with the Syn, though.” He tells me and I nod my head like I have any fucking clue what he’s talking about.



“Someone’s on us.” I say, looking over at Tatum and she nods her head.

“You sure?” Zeke asks in my ear.

“Yeah, grey Malibu.”

“I see ‘em,” He mumbles in my ear. Reaching over, I grab hold of Tatum’s hand as we continue to drive as if we don’t know what’s going on.

The car comes up on our side, cutting us off. Tatum gasps, but I swerve at the last second, anticipating it.

“Come on, fucker. Want some.” I laugh out as I press the accelerator and shoot off past him, swerving through the traffic, until I find the off ramp. The PCH may not be the best place for this, but it’s the best place in the short time we had to prepare.

The Malibu comes up around me again, swerving in front and causing me to slam on my brakes, downshift, and speed back up.

I’ve driven these mountainous roads my entire life, and my mom taught me how to drive them.

The car zooms by us again as it disappears around the mountain and when we come around the bend, I see it.

“Zane.” Tatum gasps and grabs my arm as we both stare ahead to the gun barrel being pointed at us.



TATUM

Even though the sunrise isn't within view of the windows, you can still see the colors as it's coming up.

"It's beautiful." I whisper.

"It's perfect." He nips at my earlobe as he says it, causing me to giggle. Rolling over, I look at him, smirking and everything seeming right in this moment. Maybe just this one, but something inside of me is saying to be careful.

His lips press down to mine as his hands come up my body, resting on my hips, just below his T-shirt that I covered myself with before we fell asleep.

"It sounds so awful, because I mean, everything that happened is horrible, but this is perfect." I whisper between kisses. "I feel like I'm fucking floating." I giggle this time. Opening my eyes. "I feel like..." I trail not really sure how to explain it.

"Like it's such a good high you could kiss the sky?"

Pulling away, I look at him again, nodding my head. Somehow, even with how ridiculous the whole thing sounds, it makes complete sense.

I've done drugs, but not one of them has ever given me the feeling that being with him, how being able to be with Zane, does.

His eyes shine down at me as he leans in, pressing his lips to mine again and rolls me onto my back, pressing himself into

me, and I gasp as I feel myself stretch around him. His eyes suck me in with a look that I've seen in them before, but every other time I've also seen him trying to conceal it. This time, he's free, free to let himself feel however he wants too, and therefore letting me feel all of those things as well.

In this moment, I know I love him, and I know just how long I've been in love with him.

He thrusts into me in a rhythm. He only breaks eye contact with me as his eyes roll back into his head and he groans out.

The opening of the door breaks my attention as I panic.

"Zane..." I trail, but he doesn't stop. "Zane!" I shout this time and he looks over, the look of defeat written all over his face.

"Zane Anderson." I know the voice before I even look over at it. Darren is attempting to make good on his threat. "You have the right to remain silent." I can see Darren now as he comes into the room. "Anything you say can and will be used against you in a court of law." The men are already pulling Zane out of me, off of the bed, and the floor shakes as they slam him onto it. I can still hear Darren speaking, but the actual words that he's using aren't registering. Locking eyes with Zane. I feel like I can't breathe, and I also feel like I'm going to throw up.

I try to scramble off of the bed, but a man grabs hold of me, stilling me. I'm stuck in nothing but Zane's T-shirt. While he's lying on his stomach, naked, the officers pulling his arms behind his back and cuffing him.

I'm sorry. I mouth to him, but he just smirks, shaking his head.

Worth it. He mouths back, a smile growing on his face.

"Do you understand your rights that I have just presented?"

"Fuck you." Zane glares out, only breaking our gaze for a moment as he looks at Darren.

"I'll take that as a yes." He grips his arms, hoisting him up.

"Jesus Christ, Darren, let him put some fucking pants on first."

I scream.

“Ma’am.” Darren glares at me. “Calm down, or I’ll have to arrest you as well.”

Zane laughs this time. “You trying to see how you compare?” He leans into Darren, who absentmindedly looks down at Zane’s still extremely hard erection. That is still wet from being inside me. In any other scenario, the look on Darren’s face as he realizes his mistakes would have made me laugh my ass off.

“Get ‘em some fucking pants.” Darren now snaps out.

I watch as one of the officers picks up a pair of pants off of the floor and holds them out for Zane. “And how the fuck do you expect me to get into them?” He asks as he rotates just enough to show his handcuffs. He laughs.

“What are you arresting him for?” I snap out, standing and blocking Darren’s departure.

“That’s none of your business.” He gives me an evil look.

“This is a police matter, Tate.”

“If you don’t drop the charges on him, I’ll report what happened.”

His eyes darken and he moves into me. “No one will believe you.”

“Stu does. He will testify that I’m telling the truth.”

“Well,” his eyes remain dark, but a smile creeps onto his face.

“Stu’s dead, so have fun with that.”

“You killed him. And you’re trying to pin it on Zane.”

“Tate, the evidence at the scene says that your boyfriend was there. It doesn’t look good.” He sneers the word boyfriend out at me before he pulls me down the stairs. “I warned you.” He grunts into my ear.

“What the hell is going on?!” It’s shouted from the back of the house and Zeke comes out from the basement, more officers holding him and Liza back.

I look back at them, pleading with him to do something, anything, but I'm not sure that there's anything they can do.

"You're coming home." Darren quietly snaps at me as he grips around my arm, pulling me out the front door.

There's more shouting coming from outside as they drag Zane away from the house.

"She's not going any-fucking-where with you." He shouts as my feet scuff the floor while Darren continues to drag me behind him. "Keep. Her. Fucking here." Zane shouts, this time looking somewhere outside of the house.

"Is she under arrest, too?" I hear Axe ask as we breach the threshold of the house.

"Yes, matter of fact, she is." Darren swears.

"Cool, so her name will be all over the arrest report."

I can feel Darren's hand loosening on my arm and I pull myself away from him as I watch the other officer shove Zane into the backseat by his head, yet his eyes never leave me.

I feel arms around me as I put distance between Darren and myself, not caring who it is, as long as I'm away from him. Axe steps in front of me, shouting things I can't quite make out.

It's not that I don't understand what he's saying, it's just I'm not paying attention enough to. All of my attention is on Zane, as our eyes remain locked and he tilts his head, smirking. I mouth the word I but he shakes his head.

I know. He responds, not needing me to tell him, and also knowing that this is not the time for us to have that moment.

Shit, the moment that we should have said it passed a long time ago.

"It's okay, Tate." I think Ella is the one who's speaking in my ear. "We're going to get him out." She whispers again.

"You don't know that." I whisper as I watch Darren stomp around the car to the driver's seat, I'm sure that it's not the car

he drove in here, but he's pissed off enough with me that no matter what he's going to have a bit of alone time with Zane.

"There's no telling what he's going to do to him." My voice shakes as the tires kick up the gravel and the car leaves the rest of the group behind.

Axe glances over at me. "Z can handle his own." He tries to reassure me, but the look on his face doesn't convince me he believes it himself.



When Darren sees the club won't let him take her with him, he gets pissed and storms over to the car I'm sitting in.

He slams the pedal down, and we kick up gravel before we're moving. I just lean back against the seat, looking out the window. I don't break eye contact with her until we're pulling away from the house. My rage boils over as she grows smaller while we're driving away and I watch her reach up, brushing a tear away from her face.

"All you had to do was stay away from her." Darren slams his hand on the steering wheel.

"Yeah, we both knew that wouldn't happen."

"Because you can't accept that someone would want anyone else but you."

"More like I refuse to let someone I care about being deceived and hurt. Fuck, D, if she loved you I would have backed off, no questions asked, but she even told me she didn't have a choice shortly after she found out." He slams on the brakes so hard that I slide forward, almost slamming into the barrier, but manage catch myself just in time.

"When the fuck did you see her, then?"

Shrugging, "After someone came to see me, concerned that you were going to hurt her. I reached out to her."

“How, I had everything of hers monitored.”

“That’s for me to know.” I laugh out loud.

“I’ll find out.”

“You won’t.”

“What did you do?”

“Man, don’t ask questions you don’t want to know the answers to.” I laugh as he bolts out of the driver’s seat and yanks the door open, pulling me out to stand in front of him.

“Fucking tell me.”

“Okay, but you asked for it.” I know I shouldn’t, but I can’t help myself as I laugh. “I set a job up for her, surprised her there, then I told her to leave her phone, we left, talked... and whatever.” I can’t stop the smirk on the last word.

It doesn’t matter if you’re expecting it, if you’re egging it on, whenever you’re punched in the gut you can’t help but groan. But then I laugh because I see how I’ve gotten to him.

“You fucked my wife?” He shouts in my face.

“No.” I can’t help but cough out, still laughing to myself, though. “Technically, I fucked your fiancé, at least at that point. It wasn’t until recently that I fucked your wife.”

“You’re going to rot in fucking prison.”

“Yeah?” I laugh again. “Doesn’t matter. You’re never going to fucking get her back.”

“We’ll just see about that.”

“Trust me, D. You’ll be lucky if you ever lay eyes on her again. The club will keep her safe. And get revenge for this.”

“I’m going to make sure that you’ll never see the light of day again.”

“Go ahead.” I look down at him. “I’ll sleep sound as fuck knowing that you’ll never touch her again, and playing your wedding day, on repeat, in my mind until I die.”

I'm assuming that he understands what I'm saying by how red his face turns.

"I mean, at least one of us got laid that day."

I cough out a second time as he lands a second punch to my gut. He glares at me, but I can see him balling his fist up again.

The tires crunch behind the car as they come to a stop.

"Whoa!" I recognize Elias's voice as he shouts, running up, pulling Darren back from me.

"Hit me one more time and see what fucking happens." I seethe out at him.

"You..." He points at me shouting, moving towards me again, but being pulled away once more.

I can't help but laugh this time. "Just because I smell like your wife's pussy on me doesn't mean I won't hit back."

His nostrils flare and his face turns red as he breaks out of the grasp that the man had him in as he rushes me again, but I wait, patiently, plotting in the brief seconds my moves.

I watch his fist ball again. He's not paying enough attention, or maybe it's simply because I'm handcuffed that he thinks he's safe. The last second, as he pulling his fist back, I lunge at him.

Expecting it or not, when your forehead makes contact, it hurts, but I'm prepared for it. Darren, on the other hand, wasn't. And he screams, staggering backwards as I look at him, laughing.

I know I look insane, because I can already feel the blood trickling down my face. But Darren's holding his nose, and I heard the fucking cartilage cracking as I made contact. I know he's in fucking pain, but it's what he deserves.

And I fucking warned him.

"Just add assaulting an officer to the list of charges." He groans out, nasally from the broken nose.

"Hmm." I shrug, looking over at the cruiser to my left. "Pretty

sure the dash cam got everything, including at least one of the gut punches you already got in.”

Eli stands in shock as he looks at me, and I smirk. “I’m thinking that him alone in a car with me is a pretty bad idea.”

Eli nods his head before looking down at Darren and nodding. “He’s right. I’ll take him up to the station. You take my car.”

I’m sure Darren’s grumbling about something else as I sit back down, sitting on the seat, before swinging my legs back into the car.

The door slams behind me and I’m not sure who exactly shuts it, nor do I care, but I find a fraction of relief when Eli actually gets into the driver’s seat and we pull away from where Darren is still pushing himself off of the ground.

“What did you do to piss him off that badly?”

“Told him the truth.” I see his eyes as he glances up in the mirror back at me. “Don’t worry, I kept your name out of it.” *Even though I fucking shouldn’t have.*

“I tried to call you this morning and give you a heads up, but no answer.”

Now, I feel like an asshole for debating whether I should have outed him. “Thanks man.” I let my guard down for the first time since the door burst open in the room. Watching Tatum’s eyes as they carried me out, watching her breakdown, I couldn’t let her see me afraid as well. “How bad is it?” It comes out as a whisper.

His eyes come back up and look at me in the rear-view mirror and I exhale, defeated, onto the seat.

“If I was to look just at the evidence without knowing everything... I would assume it was you.”

“What makes you think it wasn’t me?”

“You had no reason to kill him, and Darren knows that putting you in prison will hurt her. It’s his Hail Mary play.”

“They won’t let him take her back.”

“You know that. And I know that. But he has no fucking clue.”



TATUM

I watch the car disappear through the gate and the rest of the cars following suit a few minutes afterwards.

“Don’t worry Tatum, they have nothing on him.”

“No, they do.” I whisper, looking over at Zeke, my eyes dropping to the ground.

“They can’t. He’s not that stupid. What could they even have on him?”

“Murder.” I look down, ashamed, knowing that this is all my fault.

“There’s no fucking way. We were all there. We made sure it was airtight.”

“That’s not the one.” Axe answers. “That was Tate’s husband.”

“That...” Zeke points where the cars had just disappeared through. “That was your husband.” He shakes his head, turning and walking away from us before he raises his arms, interlacing his fingers, resting them on his head, and looking up. “I thought my brother was at least smarter than that.”

“Zeke.” Axe calls after him.

“No, you know what, maybe he fucking deserves it for this,” Zeke points at me, “dumbass decision he thought was a good idea.”

“Really?” I shout back at him. “I’ve been in your brother’s life for the last 7 years. Where have you been? You show up here what a week ago, and I am more than fucking willing to help you and your girlfriend and you want to talk about me, like I’m not right the fuck here. Why don’t you check your ego, take a step back, and fucking ask me?”

“Ask you what?” He shouts again, stepping into me.

“Zeke.” Axe warns him again.

“What is there to ask? My brother is a 1%er fucking a cop’s wife.” I watch as Liza puts her hand on his arm, trying to console him.

“You mean the cop’s wife who, when your brother found out was getting married, came to ask her why because it was so unlike her, to find out that her soon-to-be husband trapped her into marrying him, and threatened to kill her if she got rid of the baby? The cop’s wife who your brother offered to raise the baby with?” I watch as his face falls. “But she wouldn’t let him do that. Because even though she knew it was the wrong choice for her, she knew it would cause nothing but problems for him because her husband used your brother as means to keep her there.”

“Tate—” Zeke starts, but I cut him off.

“No.” I shout. “You want to know why I’m here? Why did I finally take him up on his offer to help me? Because your brother changed my life 7 years ago, and this may be the first time we’ve ever technically had a relationship, but we both knew that we were it for one another. He didn’t have to send the doctor in to talk to me 2 months ago when I was in the hospital, I already knew I was coming here, that I was taking him up on his offer after my husband beat me so badly that I miscarried.”

I can hear the small group of girls all gasp from behind Zeke.

“So you want to blame me for this go ahead, but just know that you can hate me for this, but I guarantee you I hate me more.” Turning around, I leave the group standing around, I’m sure, most of them staring after me.



TATUM

Opening the door to the house, I rush up the stairs and into the room, over to the nightstand and unlocking my phone, calling my sister.

“Tate?” She’s groggy as she whispers into the phone. I haven’t told her yet about what happened because I don’t know what my sister would do.

“Hey, I need you to come get me.”

“Okay, I’m on my way.” She immediately sounds wide awake and I imagine her grabbing her clothes and about to rush out the door.

“Blair, I’m not at my house. I left, a while ago. I’ll send you my location and I’ll explain everything after.”

“Oh, I already know where the club is at?”

“How?” I’m surprised as I ask her, not sure if I’m more surprised that she assumed where I was or that she knew where the club was.

“When you first told me about him, I looked into it. I remembered picking you up near there. Found out where their clubhouse was. Found property records. Looked at aerial images. If my sister is going to be having an affair with a biker, I’m going to know everything I can about him.”

Her words make me laugh as the tears fall faster.

“But why are you leaving there?” She asks, concerned.

“I’ll explain when you get here.”

I hang up the phone before moving into the closet that Zane had all of my things hung up and ready for me in. Still only a fraction of the closet filled with clothing. Grabbing my bags, I pull the clothes from the hangers and shoving them into the bags, wiping the tears from my cheeks every so often.

“I should have never come here.” I whisper before I sink down in the middle of the closet, surrounded by all of my clothing.

“What are you doing?” Zeke mumbles from the door.

I ignore him as I straighten up and keep shoving clothing into the bags.

“Tate, I’m sorry.” Zeke says as he walks into the closet. “I’m trying to work on my temper.” He hesitates. “You love him, don’t you?”

I look up at him, not being able to answer.

“I get it. It’s complicated right now?” He sighs, as if he’s not just speaking about my relationship with Zane. “I realized when I was coming back over here, in my shame, Zane told me about you years ago. It must have been after you guys first met. It was before we had our falling out. I just didn’t put it all together. Told me he found you out here, lost, and that he held a gun on you.”

“Yeah.” I smirk.

“Can I ask you a question that I’ve wondered since he told me about that?”

“I can’t explain why I slept with him after he pulled a gun on me.”

He laughs at how I knew what he was going to ask beforehand.

“I mean, I was looking down a gun barrel when I first turned around, but when he moved it and I saw him, something deep down told me he would never hurt me. And now he’s going to

burn it all down because of me.”

“You don’t see it, do you?”

“See what?”

“He’s not willing to burn it all. Because to him, you are everything. And as long as you’re safe, that’s all that matters.”

“I feel the same way.” I stop and look up at him, shaking my head. “I thought I was your brother’s dumbass decision?”

He cringes as he looks back at me. “I’m an asshole.”

It makes me laugh and I just shake my head before looking back at him. “Well, I guess you and your brother are alike in that regard.”

“Then what are we going to do to get him out?”

“What can we do?”

“You were with him all night.”

“I think I have a plan.” I grin as I look up at him and he nods. “But it’s not a good plan. And he’s going to be really mad when he finds out.”

“He’ll get over it.”

“And if it goes just right, I think it’ll make everything better, permanently.”

“Sounds worth it. What do we gotta do?”

“You can’t do this with me.” I tell him, and he just cocks his head. “Look, the two of you are just now working on your relationship, so you can’t know the entire plan.”

“He’s going to hate it that much?”

“Oh, yeah... so I’ll tell you as much as I can, but don’t push for any more.”

He stares at me for a moment and even if they’re identical, somehow, as I’m looking at Zeke, the differences are unmistakable.

But maybe that’s what happens when you know someone’s

soul, you know them; you see them, see them for who they are, so much so that even when there's an exact copy of them, you know.

“Okay.” He nods his head. “I can do that. Just tell me what you need.”

I pull some additional clothes out of the closet and shove them into a bag.

I hear footsteps out of the closet and look over as Axe walks in next to Zeke.

“Oh, you're packing.”

“I'm leaving here.” I nod before Zeke turns around and stares at me with wide eyes.

“Yeah.” Axe agrees and I watch as Zeke slowly just turns and looks back at him. “I agree, you should.” It hurts. I turn around, to conceal my hurt, kneeling down and shove more clothes into the bag. “But not because of the reasons you're packing your things right now.” Slowly I stop, turning back around and looking at him. I can see both Ella and Liza glancing into the closet behind the men. “Z wants you safe. He wants us to take you somewhere safe.”

“And how could you know that?”

“Eli just called. He ended up switching cars with Darren for some reason. Z told me to take you up to purgatory. Keep you safe there. That Darren will probably come back... soon. Apparently, he antagonized him a bit.”

“That sounds nothing like him.” I laugh out.

“But regardless, he wants you safe, so we leave in half an hour.”

“What?” I look at him, shocked.

“I can't...”

“You have to.” Zeke tells me. “Z understands what Darren's going to want to do. My brother's calculated. He antagonized him for a reason. But he knows we have to get you out of here.”

He's going to be coming back for you when he thinks we're not paying attention."

"I'm going to go crazy up there all alone."

"We're going with you." I hear come from the bedroom in a softer voice and look back to see the girls standing there as Liv says it.

"My mom's going back to Bakersfield, but we're going to go up there with you. I don't think this is over. Someone's still out there, and until they figure out who it is—"

"They're staying up there as well. And it looks like I will be part of the watch up there." Zeke tells me as he shrugs. "I guess I gotta earn some shit around here. Huh?" He looks over at Axe, who nods his head.

"No nepotism here."

The statement alone makes everyone laugh. Cause to look around the grounds, it seems to be a pretty sizable portion of nepotism.

We quiet down as shouting starts from downstairs. After the morning we had, it's a wonder, there's isn't just guns shooting. We all look at one another, moving closer to the door, trying to gauge what is happening.

"You can't fucking be here!" The shouting comes from downstairs.

The group moves out of the closet. Of course I'm the last one, but as soon as I hear my sister shout. "I don't give a fuck where you say I can and can't be."

"Blair." I push past the group. Rushing down the stairs and meeting her in the living room. "You can't just barrel in here." I'm trying not to laugh, but I can hear the rest of the group, who was just in the bedroom now, starting down the stairs.

"Who the fuck are you?" Linc shouts in her face.

"I'm none of your goddamn business." She shouts as I pull her away from him.

“It’s fine, Linc. It’s my sister.” I turn to look at the group and shake my head. “I forgot. I had called her to come get me just before we started talking upstairs.”

“Does she need to come as well?”

“What?” Blair snaps.

“You can try.” I laugh out as I turn around hearing Blair gasp. I don’t need to look over at her to know what has gotten her attention. I haven’t called her since I went into the hospital, so there’s no way that she knows.

“What the fuck?” She whispers. “That’s why you left?”

I nod my head, not able to look back over at her.

“I’m sorry.” She whispers before she pulls me over to her, squeezing me tightly against her body. “I’m gonna fucking kill him.”

The way she says so matter of fact that I hear at least one person cough out to cover up a laugh in the room. As soon as I glance over to the stairs, I see it was Zeke at how Liza is leaning in to him, telling him to be quiet. I also don’t need to look over to know that my sister is glaring holes into them right now.

“Before these gets a little uncomfortable. I’m gonna go talk to her out back for a second.” I mumble as I grab my sister by the hand and pull her through the living room. She fights against me, and I know that she’s still glaring at Zeke.

I don’t have the door shut yet before she shouts. “Are you fucking kidding me? Right the fuck in front of you?”

“Blair, calm down.”

“No... how could you... I mean first you let Darren just treat you like shit and then you leave him for a man who eye fucks someone else right in front of you.”

The door opens from behind me as she’s yelling and I’m growing embarrassed.

“Blair!” I shout at her, stopping her in her tracks. “Darren

arrested Zane this morning.”

I can tell by her face that Zeke’s standing behind me. “Twins and not in the fad way of saying it, either.” He laughs, stepping closer to her. “See, different eye.”

Blair stands, shocked as she looks at him, nodding her head. “And that was your girlfriend inside that you were...”

“Eye fucking?” He laughs. “I mean, I’m not really sure what we are exactly. Lines can get a little confusing around here from time to time, but yeah... and probably in about 15 minutes, there will be a girl who looks oddly like us flying through here.”

“Drew’s coming?” I ask him and he shrugs.

“She somehow always knows when shit’s going down.”

“Well...” Blair trails before swallowing her pride and looking back up at him. “I’m sorry for almost punching you in the face, then.”

“Nah, it’s all good. I probably would have done the same thing.”

“Now, what did you mean by do I need to come as well?”

“They’re taking me somewhere safe. Darren tried to take me with him this morning, but they wouldn’t let him. It’s only a matter of time before he comes back.” I tell her.

“And we have a place in the desert that no one knows about. She’ll be safe there. Liza and Liv are going up as well. There’s plenty of space if you want to come as well?”

“For how long?”

He just shrugs. “I don’t know.”

“I want to meet with the lawyer first.” I tell Zeke, who nods his head.

“She can come out there as well, if we need her to.”

“Okay.” I nod to him.

Blair turns and looks at me. “If they’re taking you some place

why'd you call me?"

I hear Zeke let out an awkward chuckle as he steps over. "That was probably my fault. I'm an asshole. It's something I'm working on."

I nod to my sister, confirming what he's saying.

She nods before turning to me. "You're okay going where ever it is?"

"Yeah."

She sighs, looking down. I know, thinking about the fact that I'm no longer showing. "I'm so sorry. How long ago?"

"It's been a few weeks."

"And you waited this long to tell me?"

"I know." I look down, ashamed of myself.

"Hey, it's not that. I just wish he wouldn't have cut you off from everyone. I tried, but it got to be too hard."

"I know." I nod my head again. "I'm sorry. When all of this is over..." I feel not really sure what it is I'm going to say.

"We'll fix our relationship." I finally mutter out.

"Wasn't broken." She smiles at me. "Just needs a little polish." She hugs me one last time before letting me go. "Okay..." She looks back at Zeke and nods. "If you let anything happen to her, I won't hold back hitting you next time."

"You won't be the only one." He laughs, nodding his head.



ZANE

Processing takes for fucking ever.

But it's nothing quite like staring at the ceiling for 12 hours.

The door opens and I hear footsteps, but I don't look up. I don't need to. I know who it is.

"You know." He starts. "All you have to do is stay away from her forever, and you can get out of here." I still don't answer him. "Come on, Z. I mean, her pussy isn't that good. She's just like everyone else."

"That's the difference with us, Darren. I know exactly what I have. And you never cared enough to notice. It was all about winning for you." I still don't look over at him, just continue to stare up. "She tell you what I offered her?"

He doesn't answer.

"Sometimes I wonder how mad you would have been about that. Fuck, how mad you would have been for just knowing that she contemplated it." I know he's dying to ask me what. I know the club is keeping her safe, so regardless of how much I piss him off, he's not getting her. "I wonder how many times she imagined taking me up on it. Imagined that she left you that night. I mean, I know she fucking wished she would have when she came to me. She blamed herself. She told me had she taken me up on my offer, she'd still be pregnant right now."

“It would have still been my kid.”

I laugh again. “Yeah, but it wouldn’t have been anything like you. I would have made sure of that.”

“There’s a reason they say blood is thicker than water.”

I laugh again. “Ya know, there’s some debate about that. Some say it came from the saying that the blood of the covenant is thicker than the water of the womb.”

“What the fuck is that supposed to mean?”

“That the bonds with the family you chose are stronger than the one you’re born into. Tell me, how much would it have pissed you off if I would have raised your kid?” I can’t help but antagonize him. “Teach your son how to ride a bike, how to drive, you know, teach him how to be a man, but not all the bullshit ways I’m sure you think it means to be a man, but the real way to be a man.

I watch his face redden as I continue talking.

“How mad would it have made you for your son to call me dad?”

If this was a cartoon, smoke would come out of his ears.

I sit up on my cot and look at him.

“What?” I shrug. “It was so close, too. On your wedding day. Fuck, at the ultrasound,, it wouldn’t have taken much convincing her to leave.”

“Then why didn’t you?”

I look to the side, shaking my head. “See, you don’t get it. People have free will for a reason. I want her to live her life and make her own choices. And I would never make her have to choose because that’s not fair to her, especially when someone else is trying to force her.”

“You’ll never deserve her.”

His comment tries to hurt me, but he’s not telling me anything I don’t already know. “Oh, believe me, I’m well-fucking aware

of that.” I laugh out. “But I can live everyday trying to be better for her.”

“And you think what you do, your life, is every going to give to the opportunity to be better?”

“I may venture into the grey from time to time, but that doesn’t mean I don’t have morals. I understand that just because something’s a crime doesn’t mean that it’s a bad thing.” I laugh loudly. “In fact, *your wife* told me that. So yes, I think I can be better for her. And I damn sure can be better than you are.”

“She’ll regret that.” He mumbles under his breath.

“Do you remember that promise I told you?” I ask him, this time standing up and walking over to the bars. “That had to do with the last man who put his hands on her?”

He fucking laughs this time. “It wasn’t the last man who put his hands on her.”

“You’re right. Because that was me. And let me tell you, she hasn’t missed you at all since she’s been with me.” I laugh. He starts to lunge for the bars but someone slams the door shut and distracts him. I just shake my head as he leaves. I’m not sure why it brings me so much joy to make him so angry. I just hope that Axe already has her out of the city.

And the reality sets in that I’m not sure when the next time I’ll be able to see her is.

I lay in the cell for more hours until it opens again. This time it’s not Darren that walks in. “Your attorney’s here.”

I sit in the room, just waiting for her.

“Z.” She smiles at me as she walks in, sitting down across from me. “It doesn’t look great. But you have one brilliant piece of information that could save your case.”

“What’s that?”

“This...” she says before she reaches into her pocket and produces her phone.

“Mrs. Sherman, how do you know my client?”

“No.” I shout at her, reaching over and turning it off.

“Z, I think you really need to think about this. She gives you a solid alibi and puts doubt in the case’s integrity.”

“No, Sherri, I said no.”

“Z—”

“Look, Sherri, you decide to put her up there. You’re fired. Figure out another way. That’s why we’ve paid you so much fucking money all these years.”

She sighs, gritting her teeth and looking at me. “Z, the evidence—”

“I don’t give a fuck about the evidence.”

“Just listen to it. Then decide.”

“No!” I shout, slamming my fists on the metal table. I can see as she tries to hide the fact that it startled her. “I don’t want her up there. Do you know what’s going to happen to her if she goes up there?”

“They’ll try to pick apart her life.”

“No, they will pick apart her life. And just to place doubt in how credible she is. They’ll paint her out to be a horrible person, a woman who cheats on her husband, and what will that do for us? Nothing.”

“It will place doubt. That’s all we need.”

“I. Don’t. Care. Her name does not go on your witness list.”

She sighs, rolling her eyes.

“Sherri.”

She looks up at me and I glare at her harder. “Fine.” She gasps. “She won’t go on my witness list.”

“Good.”

“Zane, what the fuck happened to your head?” She asks me as I’m assuming my hair shifted just right for her to see what I’m

assuming is the bruise which is still forming.

“I head-butted Darren.”

“You did what?” She shouts, shuffling through some paperwork.

“Don’t worry, it’s not in there.”

“And why wouldn’t it be? That seems pretty important.”

“Because it was in defense. After he hit me twice, while I was cuffed and he was coming for a third time.”

“We should submit something.”

“No.”

“Why?”

“Because I was antagonizing him.” I laugh.

I’m being ushered through the hallways for an arraignment, but everything happens in a blur. I’m pushed through the doors. It’s nothing I haven’t done before, but this time it feels different. Immediately my eyes fall down to where Tatum sits, between Ella and Blair with Liv and Liza on their sides, and I can’t help but breathe out a sigh, knowing that at least she has some sort of support. She smiles when she sees me, but I can see the pain underneath it all.

When I’m asked how do I plea, I know I say not guilty but I’m not sure if I even registered that the judge was talking to me or if Sherri had to hit my leg for me to respond.

Then I’m being marched out of the courtroom as the words flight risk ring around in my head.

I’m in my cell again, staring up at the ceiling, trying to rid my head of the way her eyes looked as I saw them. Wishing I could rid her of all the pain I am causing.



TATUM

The desert is different without Zane here. It’s muted, even if

the Liv and Liza are just in the other rooms. I've gotten to know them a little over the last few days.

Zeke walks into the room and looks at me. "You ready?"

I nod my head, pushing myself off of the bed and walking towards the door. I feel bad making everyone have to come out here to get me, but apparently it's what Zane wants.

"I want to see him." I tell Zeke as we make our way to the highway, heading back to Sonston's End. He sighs as he looks over at me, his expression heavy with uncertainty.

"He won't like that."

"He'll get over it."

"I'm pretty sure I'm going to end up getting yelled at for this one."

"He can deal with me then."

"You know," he pauses as he sighs, like he's not really sure how to say it to me. "This is the reason he kept you at arm's length."

"Why? So I didn't have to see him locked up?"

"No." He says it harshly, looking over at me again, his eyes hard as he starts, and for the first time I can see the similarities between him and his brother. "I mean yes, but no. Because he didn't want you to have to worry, to wait, have to put everything on hold. We watched our mom have to do it, and it was so fucking hard for her. We were young, and it only happened once, but... Well, I don't know many people who could actually deal with that."

I can't help but scoff out as I shake my head. "He doesn't have to worry about that."

"Why's that?"

"Cause I don't need him. I don't need someone to take care of me. I'm here cause I fucking want to be here, no, because I have to be." I roll my eyes this time, groaning and turning back to look at Zeke. "And believe-fucking-me, he's how I

know we don't get to choose who we... ugh..." I trail not really able to say the words, but Zeke lets me off when he just nods his head that he understands. "Because if it was up to me I would be in a relationship that was much fucking easier than him."

Zeke laughs to himself this time, shaking his head as he looks back out to the road.

"What?"

"It's..." He trails as if he's not sure if he wants to say it or not.

"I get it."

"Get what?"

"Why you're it for him."

"What's that supposed to mean?" I don't mean to sound as confrontational as I do.

"It's just. We all have a type. Z, our dad, myself. We like women who give us hell." He shrugs, laughing to himself. "Isn't afraid to put us in our place." He smirks again as he glances back over. "It's a compliment. Few people can handle my brother."

"Including yourself?" I joke with him.

He nods his head. "Sometimes. We may look almost identical, but we couldn't be more different."

"I wouldn't say that." I shrug my shoulders, catching his curious expression as I glance back over. "You're both just doing your best, trying to protect the people you care about while being broken yourselves."

"I don't know about that. If I was trying to protect them, I wouldn't have left after our parents."

"You knew Zane was taking care of Drew, and you can't hold what you did in the moment of grief against yourself. We all handle grief differently."

He nods his head, looking over at me. "How's that going for you?"

“Grief?”

He nods his head.

“I hate myself for what happened.” I whisper, looking away from him in shame. “I know it’s my fault.”

“You can’t blame yourself.”

“How can I not? If I would have never met Zane, then he wouldn’t be in jail right now on a fucking murder charge?”

“Wait?” Zeke looks over at me, surprised. “You’re talking about Z being arrested.”

“Yeah, what are you talking about?”

“Um...” He trails again, as if he’s afraid to even mention it.

“Oh, the baby?”

He nods his head.

“When you’re in an impossible situation, you do the best you can with what you have. I was trying to bide my time, wait until I could leave Darren. I was trying to plan my exit or give him a reason to leave. I was trying to do so without Zane getting caught in the crosshairs.” I sigh, looking back out the window. “The only thing I regret is forcing myself into that predicament. I should have trusted Zane when he tried to give me choices.” I pick at my nails for a moment before I finish. “I wished desperately that it was his.”

He moves around, reaching into his pocket and handing me a folded paper. “I found this in his pockets when I was going to steal some of his clothes.”

Opening it, I gasp before a mixture of a sob and a laugh comes out. I don’t need to look over to tell that he’s staring at me, confused.

“He kept this.” I sob/laugh again. “He showed up for this appointment. I was sure someone was going to call us out, but I didn’t care at that moment. I didn’t want to be alone for it, and then there he was. I never understood why he was so accepting of everything that was going on.

“He’d ever tell you about our mom?”

“A little.”

“Her dad died when she was young, and her mom wasn’t around.” I nod my head. “Growing up, our house was always the place everyone went because she treated everyone like they were family. Our parents instilled in us that family isn’t necessarily blood. It’s great when it is. But family is somewhere you know you’re safe, something that you build.”

I just look at him, not knowing what to say before I turn, looking out the window, realizing just how stupid I was for not letting Zane in earlier.



ZANE

I'm angry as I'm being walked down the hall towards the visiting area. I told my brother no, but he fucking showed up with her anyway, and I can't tell her no as she's waiting here.

I just didn't want her to see me like this. I know that's fucking pathetic.

However, as I see her through the glass, it draws a smile out of me... okay, maybe her being here isn't so bad.

Almost as if she can feel my presence, her eyes come up as soon as I look at her, her teeth scrap against her bottom lip to keep the smile from spreading.

My focus stays on her as I'm moved through the door before it's secured behind me. Walking me over to the table, the guard then reaches over, unlocking the cuffs.

Tatum jolts up, wrapping her arms around me for a moment and I don't want to let her go, but I know it's only going to take a couple of moments before we're getting yelled at.

Forcing myself away from her, she sighs, and it kills me to see her like this, keeping a front up so I don't see her hurting.

A fantasy of the ways I could torture Darren for causing her even more pain than he already has flashes through my head.

"I'm so fucking sorry." I whisper, looking down at her, and she shakes her head.

“No, I should be sorry.”

I can't help but smirk at her, knowing if I keep this up, it's the only thing we're gonna talk about, glancing over at the table next to us. She nods before we both sit down.

“You have nothing to be sorry about.” I look over at her, speaking low enough that only the three of us can hear. “This was part of it. I knew sooner or later I would wind up back here.”

“Zane.” She gives me a look that makes me laugh, shaking my head again.

“It's true.”

“You don't think I knew what was at stake when I watched you thr — erg — protect me...” she quickly corrects herself, looking around to see if anyone noticed. “Or better yet, you don't think in the first 5 minutes that I knew you, I didn't know what was possible. If I was worried about haivng to deal with any of this, would I have kept coming back?” She tilts her head, giving me a curious look.

“I guess I didn't think about that.”

“Yeah. I guess you didn't.” She snaps this time, irritated with me.

“I'm sorry.”

“Stop it.” She rolls her eyes, making Zeke laugh as he attempts to look away from my groveling. “Stop apologizing. Things get shitty sometimes, and it sucks, but that's what it is. Now, can you stop pitying yourself and let's actually visit?”

“Fine.” I smirk, looking back at her, my heart slamming into my chest. “You doing okay up there?”

“Yeah.” She shrugs. “It's not the same without you there.” She cringes as she says it, almost as if she's embarrassed to admit it.

“And someone got fired.” Zeke chimes in next to her.

Tatum's face snaps over to him, and she's glaring. I'm glad

that I'm not the only one who gets it from her. "That's not exactly true."

"Then what would you call it?" He looks over at her. I can't help but laugh again as she sticks her tongue out at him.

"That's bullshit." I bough out behind a laugh.

"I know. I told her to let me talk to them."

"And that's an even worse idea." I tell my brother. "All we need is for your hot-head to go up there flying colors, and have us even more on a radar than we already are."

Zeke nods his head, hesitating, agreeing with me.

"What ever you need..." I trail as she opens her mouth.

Shaking my head, attempting to stop her from arguing with me, but as she says something, I continue, cutting her off.

"Stop it. I'm the reason you lost your job. I've got it until..."

"Until when?"

"Whenever." I shrug.

She doesn't look like she wants to agree to anything, but she finally sighs. "You're not the reason I got fired. He is. It's his fault."

"And things will eventually get evened out." I say, leaning my head down and looking her right in the eyes so she knows what I mean.

I watch her eyes slowly grow sad as she looks back up at me.

"What if... what if this doesn't work out how you want to?"

Swallowing, I look up at her. I know what I'll push her to do, but it guts me to fucking say it out loud.

"No." She shakes her head, raising her hands and her voice. She knows what it is I'm saying. That if I stay in here, she should move on.

"Tatum." I call to her, trying to get her to remember where we are and that she needs to keep her voice down. "If it comes to that. We'll deal with it then."

Her eyes gloss over as she looks at me, and I smile at her again, reassuring her.

I can hear everyone around me moving and I know that the time is almost up. For whatever reason, they came and got me late. Maybe my charges pissed the guards off? Which I will most likely have to deal with at a later time.

Tatum takes a deep breath, as if trying to keep a strong front for me until she gets out of the doors. Standing up, I reach over, wrapping my arms around her for a moment and looking over at my brother. *Make sure she's okay.*

He nods.

And closing my eyes for a moment, not wanting to let go before I look back up at him. *Thank you.*

I'm surprised when a smile spreads across him and he nods again.

Pulling away as the guards call us back over, I look down at her. "I—"

"No." She says sternly, shaking her head.

"What?"

"No. Not here." She shakes her head as she nods her head with a smirk on her face, telling me she knows.

The guard yells my name again, and I'm being pulled away. Cuffs slapped on my wrists again. But it doesn't matter because she's just staring back at me.

Tatum comes by a few times a week. After the first time, it gets easier to let her see me in here and talk to her about what's going on. Although, every time I almost feel like she's keeping something from me. Probably just her worries about the outcome of it all.

I never thought that I'd be okay with her having to be in here, but we somehow grow closer in those moments we have.

With each laugh that echoes around the visitation room from her, I feel myself somehow get deeper in this whole thing, and

each time I come back to my cell, trying to find another way to get out of all of this so I can get back to her. So I can give her all of these things that she deserves.

I dream about how she looks underneath me every night.

And believe me, I find it fucking ironic that the last moment before Darren had me arrested; I was inside of her.

When Axe came in just days after I got here, and asked how I felt about Zeke prospecting, I almost fell out of my fucking chair. Told him he didn't need to just because he felt like he owed us something for what he did, but that wasn't it.

Apparently, watching his brother getting arrested for something he didn't do was enough to make my brother stick around.

I'm fucking shocked when I walk into the visitation room to see my brother sitting there, alone. I hesitate as I approach the table, not sure if he's going to stand up and if he expects me to hug him or not. He looks up at me, almost as confused, and I nod my head, sitting down across from him.

"Thanks." He starts the conversation.

"For what?"

"For letting me."

"I told you, if you ever wanted in..."

"I know, but after everything I've done."

"You have done nothing."

He laughs. "That's the fucking problem. I have done nothing, yet I've been pissed at you for it all. You didn't deserve it."

"Brother, you needed someone to take out your grief on. I understand. I can take it."

"But you don't deserve it."

I laugh to myself. "None of us deserves any of this. Life is really fucking messy sometimes, but eventually, we figure our shit out."

“What’d dad tell you that?” He laughs out, but his expression grows curious as I slowly shake my head.

“No, mom.”

His eyes well up and I look at him, stunned for a moment. “I fucking miss her so much.”

“I do, too.” I sigh, finally looking up at him. “When you go back out to the desert. Go into the office and look in the desk, bottom left drawer, dad left you something in there.” I’ve known my brother for long enough to know the flash in his eyes as the rage takes over as it does. “Calm down, you weren’t ready for it. Dad gave me pretty specific instructions and, well... now you are.”

“I really want to be pissed about it all.”

“I know you do.” I laugh.

“I’m so angry with myself.” He whispers, confiding in me as I sit across from him, stunned. “That last fight him and I had. I never got to tell him I was sorry, that I was wrong.”

“He knew.” I smirk.

“How do you know?”

“Cause dad was more observant than most people gave him credit for. He didn’t notice some things because he didn’t care to, not because he just didn’t see them. The things he cared about, he never missed a thing.”

“You guys were so close.”

I can’t help but laugh as I shake my head. “You don’t see it, do you?”

“See what?”

“You two butted heads so much because you are exactly like him.”

“No, we’re no — how?”

“You just are. You both have that slight chip on your shoulder, too.” He glares at me a bit. “It’s true. He always did.”

“Fuck you.” He laughs as it says it, though. “You’re probably right, though. But you’re a lot like him as well.”

“I am.” I nod in agreement. “We argued a lot, as well. Sometimes I hated him. I mean, he could be a real fucking dick sometimes.”

“I don’t remember that.”

“I know you don’t.” I laughed, nodding my head. “Because you didn’t care enough to pay attention to it.”

“I’m a dick.” He shakes his head.

We talk for a few more minutes, finally clearing the air of everything that we’ve needed to over the years. When I’m called back, we both stand, and we hug... for the first time in a decade we hug. I feel him squeeze before we both let go and he nods. “I’m keeping my eyes out for her as well.” For the first time mentioning Tatum, as if that’s why he was here all along. I just nod my head, knowing my brother all too well, and watch as he turns around and walks out of the visitation room.



It’s dark in the cell as I hear my cell mate snoring from the opposite side of the room as I just stare up at the ceiling. Images of my entire life flashing through in my mind, growing up, my parents as happy as they could be, yet images of sitting in the same visitation room while my dad was in jail also play in my mind, for the first time remembering them. I see Tatum and our times throughout the years, seeing her standing in front of me, terrified as I held a gun in front of her eyes, her eyes crossing as she looks at the barrel.

The hands on me shock me, somehow not hearing as door unlocked and opened.

I’m being hoisted through the air, feeling the tape covering over my mouth, and a bag coming down over my eyes. Kicking my limbs out as they’re all grabbed, yet I’m still attempting to lash out, hoping to free myself, only to find the more I kick the tighter they grip.

I pay extra attention as I'm being sat down, launching back with my elbow as soon as I can, connecting with something. I hear a crunch as if I caught the bridge of someone's nose before a scream echoes through the room. I wish they didn't make this entire fucking building out of concrete so I could figure out where I am.

The punch in the gut takes me by surprise. The pain shoots through me because I wasn't expecting it and partially from the bruises that are still healing there from when I was arrested. A second fist catches me on the side of the face.

Unlike the pussy who I caught, I don't scream. I'm used to the fucking pain.

Swinging out, I catch another one and they scream out; I wish I could fucking see at least, but I know if I take the second to pull the bag from my face, I won't be able to defend myself at all.

My head ping-pongs off of fists as they strike, and I'm still trying to hit any of them, landing a few more blows before one fist lands on my temple. Instantly, my feet fall out from underneath me, slamming onto the ground. It's the only time I groan out, curling as much as possible into a ball.

I'm not even registering the pain from the feet as they connect with all parts of my body. I only feel the motion that each one jolts me in.

My head swims with images as I force myself out of the moment, forcing myself away from this bullshit that's happening as a way of self-preservation, knowing the only way I can survive this, is if I check out and stop fighting back.

"Fuck!" I hear whispered. "Go!" It may be a voice I recognize, but I'm not paying enough attention. I feel the bag being pulled off of my head. Attempting to open my eyes to see who the fuck is doing this, who I need to get back at, but the swelling prevents it.

One of them pulls the tape off my mouth and I'm finally able to cough out, and can hear the blood splat on the ground at my

side.

My head flings backwards with another force...

And then there she is, smiling back at me.



TATUM

“What do you mean?” I ask the women behind the glass as she’s handing me my ID back.

“I just know what it says here. He isn’t available for visitation today

“And why the fuck not?” I snap, shouting at her.

“I don’t know, ma’am, but you need to lower your voice, or I’ll have someone remove you.”

“I don’t give a fu—”

“What’s going on?” Zeke says at my side, coming over. I can only imagine because of the scene that I’m creating.

“He can’t...” I know I’m growing hysterical, but I woke up this morning with the worst feeling and I just needed to come and see him to calm myself down. “They said he can’t... but won’t tell me why.”

“Miss.” Zeke smiles at her as he leans in. “Why is it that?”

She gives him a hard time as well, but Zeke’s phone rings, and he looks down, confused, before he answers it.

“Yeah?” He turns to walk towards the door and nods for me to follow.

Reaching over, I snatch my ID back and sigh. “I’m sorry, it’s just...” I can feel the tears burning my eyes and the woman actually sighs, looking up at me.

“I can’t give you any information because his paperwork is still processing.”

I want to ask her fucking how it’s been months already.

“And any information I give out could break HIPAA, so they tell us to err on the side of caution.”

“He’s hurt?” I whisper it as she looks at me, not confirming or denying, but I know she’s giving me as much as she can.

“Tate!” Zeke shouts at me from the door.

I glance back at the door before looking at her one last time.

“Thank you.” I whisper to her before I bolt for the door and look at him.

“Well, how the fuck do they not know?” Zeke shouts into the phone as he’s stomping back over to the SUV. “I don’t give a fuck, Eli, get us the fuck in there.” He hangs up the phone as he flings his door open, throwing the phone inside and yelling.

I slide into the passenger seat and look over, seeing him gripping the top of the door as he settles himself.

“Let me drive.” I tell him.

He looks up and I can see him visibly shaking from where I’m sitting. And he shakes his head as he slides into the car.

“Zeke, seriously...”

“You don’t understand!” He screams at me.

“Whoa, you need to calm the fuck down.” I’m shouting now too. “I know he’s in the hospital.” He looks at me curiously.

“And you’re not furious.”

“Sure, I’m mad, but reacting like that will not do any good for any of us. The only thing it may do is get us killed on the way there. And regardless of how mad I am, I’m worried more than anything.”

Looking over, he nods again, sliding out of the car, and we switch spots.

Walking into the hospital, we see Elias as he looks around, like

he checking to make sure no one sees us. He nods towards the floor and we follow behind him, trying to look as inconspicuous as possible.

I hesitate as we move past the hallway. My room was in a few months ago.

“Tate?”

I’m not sure who calls after me, but all it takes is a second before I’m moving behind them, feeling bad that I even paused.

“I got us a few minutes.” Elias tells us before he looks at me and I nod my head, but the look in his eyes alone tells me how fucking bad it is.

He turns back towards the door and pushes it open.

The beeping sounds as I look over at him. He’s lying perfectly still in the bed.

“They have him on a lot of meds to help with the pain.” Elias assures me. “They say he’s going to be fine. He’s going to make a full recovery. Had they not heard whoever was coming...” He trails, but I know what he’s trying to say.

If someone wouldn’t have walked in and scared away the group, they would have fucking killed him. They were trying to fucking kill him.

“He fought back.” I tell them.

“What?” Eli asks.

“His knuckles are busted and bloody.”

“He was trying to fight his way out.”

“There were too many of them.” Zeke says.

“How do you know?” Elias asks.

“Cause I know my brother. I’ve seen him fight.” He pauses as he looks at Eli. “So have you. Do you really think if he wasn’t severely outnumbered, that this would have happened?”

I tune the rest of what they’re saying out as I move closer to

the bed, damning all of his injuries to memory, knowing that somehow Darren is behind it all. My eyes trailing over the stitches holding a part of his face together. How his eyes are so swollen and bruised that I would be surprised if he could see me if he was awake. I can only imagine how his chest... or the rest of him looks.

“He did this.” I whisper, not letting my voice grow any louder because I know how quickly I will lose control over it.

“What?” both of them men asked from behind me.

“I’m so sorry.” I whisper as I walk over to Zane. “I’m going to make this right.” Touching his arm as I say it.

“Tate, we’ve got to get going.” Elias calls from behind me.

A hand comes to my shoulder as I let go of Zane’s arm. “I’m gonna make it fucking right.” I turn to look at Zeke, who looks concerned for a moment before we’re all leaving the room.

With every step, I feel the weight of the situation. They were trying to fucking kill him. How is he going to stay safe until we can get him out? The rage forms inside of me, growing as we make our way out of the hospital.

The laughter to my right stills me and I see fucking red.

He wouldn’t have the goddamn balls for that, would he?

“You’ve got to be fucking kidding me.” I hear Zeke whisper.

“Eli, hang back.”

I’m not sure if Elias is putting distance between us because I’m making a beeline for Darren.

“Goddamnit.” I hear Zeke say from behind me.

For the first time since everything started, I’m not fucking afraid of Darren. I am fucking furious. I want to make him fucking pay. Grabbing him by the shoulders, I slam him on the side of the building.

“I know it was fucking you.” I shout into his face.

It silences the small group he was, I’m sure, bragging to.

“Oh look, it’s my *wife*.” He stresses the word wife as he glowers at me. “I heard about what happened to your little boyfriend. It’s a shame, really, but I don’t know why you’re here. It’s not like you’re allowed to visit inmates in the hospital.”

I want to tell him to ‘go get fucked, I already did’, but I know that he’ll find out who let me in.

He grips my arm, pushing me backwards as Zeke clears his throat. “That’s not a good idea. I’d keep your hands off of her if I were you.”

I watch as Darren does a double take for a second before it registers who it is.

“You should watch yourself.” He shouts back at Zeke as I turn and look at him. He’s looking at another one of the men standing in the group, curiously. “Or you’re going to end up right next to your fucking brother.”

“Is that a threat?”

“Yes, it fucking is, and you should heed it, unlike what he did.” Darren laughs again. “You know what Tate? I really hope you’re fucking happy because of you. I’m going to make sure that your boyfriend up there doesn’t walk away from this... in the end. But at least when he’s gone, you’ll have a backup.”

“What?” Zeke and I both say before I realize what it is he’s saying.

“You’re fucking sick.” Zeke snaps at him.

“Don’t even bother.” I hold my hand up, stopping Zeke from moving forward. “He just wants to get a rise out of you. The more you give him, the happier he is. If he even has feelings.” I roll my eyes.

I don’t hear what he says next as I look around, I can hear Zeke shouting something else, but I’m not exactly sure what it is, my eyes land on each one of the men who he was talking to, my mind recognizing them, but not entirely sure where from.

“...we’ll deal with it.” I hear Zeke say from behind me, and an image lands. The man to my right flashes in my head as he was standing in the visitation room with us. He was the one who had walked Zane over to the table at least once. Another one I know I’ve seen in the waiting room.

But the one who grabs most of my attention is the man with the two black eyes, and his splinted nose.

Zane’s knuckles are all that come to mind.

I see Elias come over, but I can’t make out what he’s saying either, yet I know whatever it is pissing Darren off and he’s sticking up for Zane, Zeke, or myself, and painting a target on his own back.

I’m running across the parking lot and hopping into the SUV, flying backwards in reverse, and I hear the tires squealing as I peel out of the parking lot. I find myself as I’m swerving into a parking space and whipping the door open.

“You can’t—”

I don’t listen to the secretary as she tries to stop me. I just continue on through the large doors.

Sherri looks up at me and nods. I’m sure she can see it written all over my face.

“Let me call you back.” She says into the receiver and I walk across the room.

As I watch her lean over, pressing the button, ending the call, her eyes don’t leave me.

“I know. I’m working on getting him protection.”

“It won’t matter.” I shrug as I sit down in the chair. “He’s already gotten to everyone inside the prison. We’ve got to get him out of there.”

“I can do my best.”

“You’re best isn’t fucking good enough.” I accidentally shout before I sigh. “I’m sorry. I know it can’t be easy.”

She nods her head. “I know, it’s stressful.”

“I don’t care what he says, put me up there.”

“Tate, you know I can’t.” She shakes her head. “He’s already said if I do, he’ll fire me and hire someone else.”

“He’ll get over it.”

“He won’t. He won’t have time to get over it. He’s privy to see my witness list before we go to trial and with me already bringing it up, you know he’s going to look.”

“Yeah.” I sigh as I shake my head.

“He’s willing to do whatever it takes to make sure that you don’t come away looking bad.”

“Yeah, and Darren’s betting on that.”

“I don’t know what else to do.” She seems defeated as she looks down at the paperwork in front of her.

“What if...” I trail as try to put my plan together as quickly as possible. “What if there was a way which they wouldn’t cross examine?”

“How are we going to do that?” She asks me.

“We’re not going to do a fucking thing.” I laugh as I shake my head. “You are going to be oblivious to it, but you’ll know when you see it.”

The door swings open as Zeke looks at me, flustered, gasping for air as it looks like he ran the entire way here. “You left me at the fucking hospital.”

“Sorry.” I grimace, but Sherri laughs out.

Although, in my defense, I wanted Zeke to be oblivious as well.



I barely remember the night when I finally wake up in the

hospital room, cuffed to the hospital bed.

“Zane...” I hear the familiar voice say to me as she walks into the room.

“Lynette.” My voice is gravely as I say it.

“What have you gotten yourself into?” She snickers to herself as she comes over, looking down at me. “Don’t worry, I’m not letting any of those men inside here. They can stay right outside this room, and none of the other staff will let them as well. Many people here remember Caroline.”

“Thank you.” I whisper as the door opens and a second pair of shoes comes inside.

“For fuck’s sake, kid, you gave us a fucking scare.” I recognize Dan’s voice as he comes to stand next to her. I can’t help but laugh out as I shake my head, looking at them. “And you’re gonna be mad, but they came by earlier.” I somehow know that he’s talking about Tatum and someone else, maybe my brother. “We set up a diversion.”

“How mad was my brother?”

“Your brother wasn’t that bad,” Lynette starts. “However, when that little thing of yours slammed her ex into the wall, I thought I was seeing things.”

It brings a fucking smile to my face, or as much as I can smile before I wince at the feeling of the split in my lip trying to separate.

“How you going to get yourself out of this one?” Dan asks me, sitting down in the chair next to the bed.

“I don’t care if I do. She’s out, and that’s the most important thing.”

Sherri comes and meets with me a few times in my room and I’m surprised when she tells me she’s got the trial date moved up, and only a few days before the date am I released from the hospital. With thanks to the staff and them trying to keep me safe.



ZANE

I meet with Sherri in a conference room before we're about to go into the courtroom, and I look over the documents when she hands them to me. Looking over the witness lists, my brother, a couple girls from the club, a couple of character witnesses.

Yeah, I'm going to be convicted of this.

She explains to me that there wasn't murder weapon found, even after they combed through my house, the clubhouse, every single business that the club owns, which is a plus. More than that, I'm so glad that Tatum was up in purgatory cause I have no doubt Darren was there the entire time, trying to snag her and drag her back to his home.

The first day drags on. I don't pay a lot of attention to what's being said, because really, what control do I have over all of this?

And if I pay too much attention, all I'll be able to think about is Tatum watching me and the tears which I've caught a few times trailing down her cheeks.

Day 2, I'm not expecting anything much better than the one before. The prosecution calls several witnesses. We break for lunch, and then the prosecution gets to the end of their witness list.

"The prosecution would like to call Ms. Tatum Mosby." I look

over at Sherri, but she won't look back at me, which means she fucking knew about this.

"Sherri... what did you do?"

"Let me do my job." She tells me.

Reaching over, I snatch the sheet she handed to me earlier back over and flip through the pages... there she fucking is, right at the end of the goddamn page. She knew if they did not list her as one of our witnesses, I wouldn't even fucking catch it.

"Goddamnit." I mutter, shaking my head.

"There is nothing we can do if they decide to call her."

"Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you, God?"

"I do." Tatum says as she holds up her hand.

"Good morning." I can hear the joy in his voice. He knows that no matter what she says, it's somehow going to make me look bad.

"Morning." She whispers back.

"Now, Tate, is it okay if I call you Tate?"

"Sure." She shrugs. I want to tell him that no, he can't fucking call her Tate.

"Thank you. Now, Tate, I just want to clear up why we've called you up to the stand." He smiles. He knows that he's already won. "You came to me, didn't you? You told me you had information you wanted to give."

"Yes."

She fucking did what?

Turning, I look at Sherri now, but she won't look back over at me, telling that she knows more of what's going on than she is giving away.

"Can you tell the court how you know the defendant?"

“We met 7 years ago.” She whispers as I glare holes into her, but she refuses to look back at me.

“And what is the nature of your relationship?”

She hesitates, taking a deep breath, and I know it’s because she’s fucking about to sell me out. She’s about to put the final nail in my goddamn coffin.

“Tate?” the prosecutor walks over to her. “What is the nature of your relationship with Mr. Anderson?” I can see her expression change to fear and I follow her eyes to where Darren is sitting in the front row of the audience.

“We would sleep together every couple of years.”

“And when you say sleep together, what exactly do you mean?”

“We would have sex.” The way he makes her spell it out pisses me off.

“And you say every few years?” It’s a question even if he doesn’t phrase it as one.

“It wasn’t like clockwork, really, just whenever we ran into one another.” She shrugs before she finally looks back at me. I’m so fucking furious with her, and as soon as her eyes meet mine, she is fully fucking aware of it.

“And what was Mr. Anderson doing when you first met him?”

“Well, I had gotten into a fight with—”

“That was not the question, Tate. In those first few moments which you met, what was that scene like?”

“I was on—”

“Tatum, I don’t think you’re understanding my question.” He pauses and even if I’m mad at her, him not letting her speak is pissing me off even more than I already am. “When the two of you met for the first time, what was he doing?”

I know what he wants her to say. She doesn’t answer, just continues to look down at her hands.

“Tate, answer the question.”

In any other situation, I know I would find her glare that she just looks back up at him with would make me laugh. Everyone in this courtroom can see that she’s telling him to go fuck himself.

“Fine. How about this, is it or is it not true that when you first met, he was holding you at gunpoint?”

“It’s complicated.”

“It’s not though. It’s a simple yes or no answer. So again, when you first met Mr. Anderson, was he, or was it not holding you up at gunpoint?”

“Yes.”

“And have you not witnessed him holding a knife to someone’s throat?”

“Yes.” She looks down at her feet, ashamed at what she’s saying. And she fucking should, because the only goddamn way he would know any of that is if she had already told him. “But...”

“And he’s even made threats towards your husband, who is a detective with the Sonston’s End police department, correct?”

“Yes, but—”

“There isn’t a ‘but’, it’s a pattern of violent behavior that you cannot deny and it shows that he will harm law enforcement.” He cuts her off again and then looks up at the judge. “I have no further questions.” And this motherfucker looks up at me with a goddamn smirk on his face as he walks back over to his table.



TATUM

I can’t look at Zane as I walk back into the room. I know that the next round of questions is going to be more invasive. I know that Sherri’s coming up and even if she and I had

discussed all of this, it's still going to be pretty personal for me to share.

And all the questions, well, they're all a part of the plan.

And Zane is going to be pissed.

"Hi, Ms. Mosby." I nod to Sherri, and she smiles. "Now, there are parts of your testimony that Mr. Clayton wouldn't let you get to."

"Yes." I slowly nod my head.

"If you want, finish."

"Okay." I nod my head, still looking down. "Yes, when I first met Mr. Anderson, he was pointing a gun at me. But it was a week after someone had shot and killed his parents and I accidentally stumbled onto the property. He lowered it pretty quickly and then offered to drive me home."

"But you didn't go home, did you?"

"No. I stayed at his house for at least a week."

She nods her head. "And with regard to the knife."

"Yes, I have seen him hold a knife on someone, but that was only because, as he would tell you, I have a terrible taste in men."

A couple jurors chuckle to themselves as well as many of the audience.

"And why is that?"

"A nice way to say it is that the man he had threatened with a knife was attempting to violate my space."

"So, he was protecting you."

"Yes."

"And then what happened?"

"He told me to go out and wait by his motorcycle. I rode back to his place and ended up going to South Dakota with him for a couple of weeks."

“You would end up staying with him for weeks and went out of town with him.”

“Yes.”

“Why?”

“I can’t really explain it. The only reason we were never in a relationship is because we were both terrified of it.”

“You didn’t leave because he was violent.”

“No, the first time we met, it was quite the opposite. The second time he left while we were out of town for the same reason.”

“He left you, states away from your home because he was scared.”

“Yes, but...” I pause, smirking over the entire situation now. “Yes, he took off, but he left me with a plane ticket and a ride to the airport, not to mention that when my flight had gotten in, he had someone come and get me to take me home.”

“Even though the seriousness of your relationship made him want to run, he still stopped long enough to make sure you were, okay?”

“Yes.” I smile. Looking back over at Zane and finding his confused expression. “Mr. Anderson takes care of the people he cares about.”

I think Sherri nods her head, but I don’t look over to find her doing so.

“Now, Ms. Mosby, is it true that you came to me first, wanting to testify in his defense?”

“Correct.”

“Then why didn’t you?”

“Because Mr. Anderson told you no.”

There are muted gasps that echo through the courtroom before they’re cut off.

“Objection.” The prosecution shouts, standing up.

“Your honor.” Sherri starts. “This is pretty significant for the case and, from my understanding, Ms. Mosby has attempted to notify people of this.”

“Is that true?” The judge looks over at me and I meet his eyes.

“Yes, sir.”

He looks back over at Sherri and nods his head. “Hurry up and get to the point.”

“Now, if you have information that could actually show his innocence, why would he say no to you presenting this information?”

“Because he knew if I did, how bad it would make me look.”

“And we’ve already established that he would risk his entire life to protect you.”

“Correct.”

“But why would it make you look bad?”

“Because I was with him that night in question.” I pause, exhaling. “When he was arrested, I was with him.” Both Zane and I smirk knowing exactly what I mean when I say that we were together.

“But they don’t mention you anywhere in the arrest record.”

“That doesn’t surprise me.” I scoff out.

“And why’s that?”

“Because my husband is the arresting officer.”

There’s a gasp that spreads throughout the courtroom again.

“So you were having an affair with Mr. Anderson?”

“Not exactly. I had left my husband at that time. I had gone to Mr. Anderson because not only did I need help, but I knew I could trust him.”

“And how did you know that?”

“Because I’ve been in love with him since the moment I met him.”

“You mean the moment you mentioned earlier where he was holding you at gunpoint?”

“Yes.” I can’t stop myself from smiling. “I can’t explain, but when I could see past the gun barrel, and I saw him, I knew I could trust him. And even with as, I don’t even know what to call our relationship, but whatever it is, the will they won’t they. I’ve always known I could trust him. He’s the only person in my life who’s never let me down.” I look over, locking eyes with Zane and can see the water that he’s forcing to hold back.

“And did your husband know this?”

“Objection, relevance.”

“Your honor I would think that the integrity surrounding Mr. Anderson’s arrest would be pertinent to the case.”

I watch the prosecution toss his pen into the air.

“I agree. You can answer.” The judge tells me.

“I think he assumed. He was aware of my previous relationship with Mr. Anderson, yes. He did not want me even speaking to him. And would get upset if we ever ran into him. I hear the rumors around the city about me. I’m sure my husband did as well.”

“Which rumors are those?” She asks me. I know I don’t want to say what they are, but also that I have to.

“That I was so distraught after my miscarriage that I left my husband and went to shack up with *that biker*.” I air quote the last bit. “I’m not even sure if anyone had seen us together, or just assumed.”

“Why would they assume that’s where you went?”

“Because for years everyone has known there was something between the two of us, and I think it confused everyone else just as much as it had us.”

“Had your husband known about this before you got together?”

“I don’t know.” I pause as I contemplate the question. “I mean, he was aware there was something there. He hated Mr. Anderson and any time anything may have gotten brought up he would become furious, but yeah, I think he very well could have known I was in love with Mr. Anderson from the beginning.”

The judge decides that it’s a good place to break for the day.

I’m nervous as I walk into the restaurant, meeting Ella for dinner. We had made plans before we left the courtroom this afternoon. I’m not looking forward to the rest of the evening, which I have a pretty good idea of how it will go.

“Tate!” I hear shouted at me, right on cue.

Turning around, I see Darren and his pissed, the fuck off, look coming towards me.



ZANE

I told Sherri that I should fire her as we left the courtroom yesterday. She laughed and nodded her head, but she refused to meet my eyes, which means that there's more to come. I didn't realize that until I was back in the cell for the night, with a heavy feeling in my chest.

She came to collect me earlier and we're walking back into the courtroom again. The bailiff un-cuff my hands and I sit down next to her.

I glance around the room, looking for Tatum, but I don't see her. That alone sets me on edge. Every other day she had already been in here when I got here.

"I'm almost afraid to ask what you have up your sleeve today." I whisper over to Sherri, but she won't meet my eyes, and I still have the eerie feeling that I got last night when I was sitting in my cell waiting... an overwhelming worry.

"Your honor, may I approach the bench?" Sherri asks as everyone sits down. I watch her and the prosecution walk up to the bench before I'm glancing around the courtroom again, then down to my watch, knowing that in a few moments Tatum will be late, and that's not like her. Something has to be wrong.

Sherri and the prosecution walk back towards the table and both of the attorneys look at me but divert their eyes. Almost

as if neither of them knows what it is exactly I'm going to do. Which isn't fucking good for anyone. Looking over at my family sitting in the crowd and, just like the attorneys, none of them will meet my eyes.

"Where is she?" I ask Sherri as she sits back down, but she doesn't look at me.

"She's running a couple of minutes behind." Is all she says, but she won't look at me still.

I hear the large doors open and instantly turning around. The gasp spreads throughout the courtroom and I'm already up, moving towards to the doors. I've already seen enough.

"What the fuck?" I gasp as the bailiff holds me back.

"Your honor, because of the circumstances..." Sherri trails from behind me.

"You have 2 minutes." The judge says as the bailiff lets go of me, hopping over the wooden gate, and moving over to her.

Her sunglasses are still sitting on her face as I move towards her. Approaching her, I reach for her glasses, lifting them off of their resting place to reveal the bruising around her eyes.

"I'm gonna fucking kill him." I whisper to her, making her laugh.

"I don't think you're supposed to say that while you're actually on trial for murder." She whispers back to me, but I'm not listening to her. I just pull her closer, kissing her forehead, and I look down at her, shaking my head. "Zane, I'm fine."

"This was your plan, wasn't it?"

"I knew it was a possibility." We continue to whisper to one another.

"You're so goddamn stupid." I tell her, keeping my lips still on her forehead, neither one of us believing what I'm saying, but understanding why I'm saying it.

"I know." She laughs again.

Pulling away, I look down at her, searching her face and trying to calm my rage from the looks of it, but when her eyes soften as she looks up at me, I can't help it. Pulling her into me again, holding her to my chest, my heart swells because I know she knew saying all of those things yesterday would piss him off. She didn't go back to the safe house on purpose. The words tug at the back of my throat because I want her to know. No, I need her to know.

Feeling her pushing back away from me, I look down at her. Her eyes widen, and I watch a smile tug on her lips. "Don't." She whispers, almost like she can hear my thoughts. "Not yet. Tell me when this is all over."

"I really want to kiss you right now." I whisper to her.

"I'm pretty sure that's against the rules we're already breaking." She responds as the judge calls for order and I nod my head at her.

The judge clears his throat behind us and she looks past me.

"I think he wants me up there."

Nodding my head, I turn around, lacing my fingers with hers and walking with her up towards the stand. Opening the gate for her, she smirks at me. There's a murmur through the crowd and I'm sure if I was paying attention, I could hear a couple of women swooning over the display we just had. As we reach the table for me to sit at, Tatum separates our hands.

"I got it from here." She whispers and I nod my head, letting her walk away and watching her, even as I move around Sherri and sit down.

Leaning over, I cover my hand over my mouth as I whisper, "You knew she was going to do that, didn't you?"

"I had a feeling, and I knew I couldn't stop her." I glare at Sherri. "She would do anything to help you, and honestly, she really didn't have to try hard."

"And you couldn't tell me. Or you couldn't fucking tell me what happened."

“No.” Is all Sherri says as I hear Tatum being sworn in for the day.

“No.”

I glare at her.

“We needed your sincere reaction. The jury and everyone here saw your genuine reaction when the ones you care about, no, when she’s injured.”

“And how did you know I was going to react that way?”

“Because I’ve known you for a long time. I’ve never seen you look at anyone the way you look at her.” She says, looking away from me and standing up, she leans over, lookign at me. “And I’ve never had someone threaten to fire me over calling someone as a witness.” And then she straightens up and walks back over to where Tatum sits on the stand.



TATUM

“Good morning.”

I nod my head. “Morning. I apologize for being a little late.”

“It’s understandable. We should probably address the situation, though.”

“Yes.” I pause as I look over at Zane.

“I saw that your ex-husband was arrested last night for the incident which led you to the hospital.”

“Yes, he was.”

“But him hitting you didn’t surprise you, did it?” she asks.

“No. It wasn’t the first time. It wasn’t even the first time that I ended up in the hospital.”

“That would be 8 months ago, correct?”

“Yes. For the last 6 months, I have been essentially in hiding, barely coming out—”

“Objection.” The prosecution shouts. “Relevance.”

“We’re discussing the integrity of the arresting officer. If he was more than willing to hit his pregnant wife, who, let’s not forget, was in a relationship with the defendant at the time he was arrested, what else is he capable of? Planting evidence? Framing someone? And maybe even possibly committing the crime and framing someone else for.”

“Hurry up.” The judge motions towards me.

“Continue.” Sherri tells me.

“I left my husband when he caused me to lose my baby.” I don’t need to pause to hear the gossip start, but at least now I can have my story out there. Believe me, don’t believe me, I don’t fucking care, but here’s the truth. “Which was the only reason I was with him. He had threatened me that if I had gotten rid of it, he’d hurt me. And if I left him, he would...” I pause looking over at Zane, who gently nods his head, hesitantly. Telling me he still doesn’t like it, but since I’m in it, finish it. “That if I left him and he couldn’t find me, he would make sure Mr. Anderson spent the rest of his life in prison.”

She walks up to the stand and sighs. I’m sure that the jury and everyone else can still hear her, though. “I am so sorry you had to go through that.”

I nod my head again, not really sure what to say to that.

“Because your husband knew about your relationship with him?”

“Yes.”

“And you wouldn’t let him harm Mr. Anderson.”

“No, I couldn’t. He’s done nothing but protect and look out for me. I had to do what I could to protect him. So I stayed until I couldn’t.”

“And if we were to look at those hospital records from your last accident.”

“Depends on which ones you look at.” I scoff to myself. “I had

a hard copy printed for me when I was discharged, where there are notes about concerns about abuse. I actually made a copy of them and I kept the copy with my things at Mr. Anderson's house, and kept the original in a safer place. I knew that Mr. Sherman would know I had them and want to destroy them. When we checked my things after the arrest, the records were missing."

"Why would he want to do that?"

"Well, according to my doctor last night, there was nothing in my file anymore."

"And I have one more question, Tatum." I look up at her. "You said that Mr. Anderson would do anything to protect you. Did he have any reason to hurt Detective Torres?"

"No. In fact, Mr. Sherman showed up to my work. Detective Torres tried to intervene. And I told him what happened when Mr. Sherman walked away. It appalled Detective Torres. He had told me he was going to do what he could to help."

"So, Mr. Anderson would never have harmed him, because he had no intentions of hurting you."

"Correct. He never threatened me or, for that matter, anyone."

"One more question, Ms. Mosby." She smirks at me. "What do you think happened?"

"I have my own suspicions, but it would all just be speculation at this point." I nod at her.

"Thank you, Tatum."

I walk off the stand and pass Zane as I make my way back to my seat. Ella scoots down, making room for me right behind where Zane and Sherri sit.

"Your honor." Sherri starts as I feel Drew and Ella both reach simultaneously for my hand, gripping it and knowing what's coming. "May we approach the bench?" The judge nods and both attorneys walk up. Zane doesn't look at me even as much as both of us want him to.

We watch the three of them interact for many minutes before they turn around and walk back towards the tables.

“Your honor, considering the recent evidence, the state of California is dropping the charges against the defendant, Zane Anderson.”

Harding’s eyes find mine immediately and she moves over to where I am, pulling me in and hugging me. “Stu was really upset when he came home for dinner. He told me he couldn’t tell me just yet. That was it, wasn’t it? He had just found out that his partner was a horrible person.”

“Probably.”

“Darren did this?”

“I can’t prove it.” I pause. “But if they have an inkling of what he’s done. I hope they’ll take it seriously.”

“I’m so sorry. I should have said something.” She hugs me again. “I knew that something was wrong. I should have said something to Stu.”

“None of this is your fault. It’s all his.”

I feel Zane’s hand on my back as he comes up. “I’m all good to go,” He says as he looks over to Harding. “I’m so sorry.” I can hear how genuine he is, in his voice. “If you need anything at all, don’t hesitate to let us know.”

I watch her eyes as she contemplates what he just said. Even with him in the courtroom, standing with me in a suit and tie, everyone knows who he is. Everyone knows who his dad was, who his family is. Everyone knows that Zane Anderson is the club Prez, who has a reputation for being worse than his dad.

“Baby, you ready to go?”

“Yeah.” I nod my head. I reach over, touching Harding’s arm before we walk away and out the door.

Reaching over, he laces his fingers with mine and I look back over, smiling at him. For the first time, ready at what my future seems to be presenting to me.

I'm not even sure if there are people in the parking lot. I mean, there should be this was supposed to be a huge murder trail, but I can only see him as he stops, pulling me back to where I'm facing him. He's smiling as he looks down at me.

"What?" I tilt my head, looking back up at him.

"I love you." He whispers, his eyes searching my face.

"Sometimes I wonder if they sent you to me because none of it makes sense, you're way too fucking good for me what you just did..." He pauses.

"I did it because I love you, too, you idiot."

He smiles down at me as he leans over, before his lips connect with mine and I finally feel like I'm back home.

"Z!" Harding shouts from behind us as breaking us apart from our moment. We both turn around as a frazzled Harding walks up to us. "What did you mean?"

Zane smirks as he looks over at me, then back at her. "You need anything at all. Let us know."

"Who do you mean by us?"

"Whoever you feel comfortable with me saying." He laughs.

"Why?"

"Because your husband was looking out for Tatum, and we don't forget things like that." He nods his head before turning back around and looking at me. "It's the least I can do."

"Ok..." She trails off like she's thinking about something, but Zane and I walk back through the parking lot. "Wait!" She whispers out the gasp. "You guys weren't there by chance, were you?"

I hear him chuckle before he looks back at her for a second, but continues to walk.

"What's she talking about?" I ask him as he walks over with me to the car.

"Nothing, psycho. Don't worry about it." He laughs as he

walks me over to the car, opening the door.

“Zane.” I tilt my head, looking at him as he shuts the door. I watch him as he walks around the car and slides into the driver’s seat. “You already have people watching out for them, don’t you?”

He’s still smirking. I’m not sure if it’s from how the trial ended. He just glances over at me and I don’t need him to answer me to know what he’s thinking.

“Why?”

“Darren said as much. I could just tell, so I asked Jag to check on her from time to time.”

“So, what happened?”

“Baby, how would I know? I’ve been in prison for the last 6 months.” A grin spreads across his face as he leans over the center console and kisses me once again. “And speaking of which, I have really missed you.” He whispers as his hand comes across, skirting its way between my thighs, pushing upwards between them.

“We can’t fuck in the truck in the middle of the courthouse parking lot.” I laugh out.

“I mean, we could we both know how much you like that, but I don’t think the news really needs all of that, do they?”

I just look back over at him as I shake my head.

He backs out of the parking spot and I just now notice all the camera crews which are trying to look at the truck as we pass. I have never been more glad for Zane’s tinted windows.

“I do have an idea for a place, though.”

“And where would that be?”

An evil smirk spreads across his face as he drives in the opposite direction of the clubhouse.

He pulls the truck into the neighborhood, amusing me, and shake my head.

“No.”

“Oh, come on, just one last fuck you.”

“Zane.” I look over at him and just shake my head.

“I mean, I had Spyder check, and technically, your name is still on the mortgage, and you still have a key, right?”

I nod my head. “You’re sick.”

“And you love me for it.” He laughs again.

“You’re right, I do.” I shake my head again as I reach down to my purse, pulling out my keys and moving up to the door.

“What if he’s already made bail?”

“He hasn’t.” He calls from behind me.

“How do you know?”

“Because I’m that good.” He laughs as his voice grows closer to me. His hand coming out and cupping my ass as we close in the distance to the door. He pulls me back just as he had done in the parking lot, his right hand coming up and gripping my face, and he kisses me.



ZANE

It's dark in the parking lot as we roll to a stop in the SUV. Zeke looks at me from the driver's seat, nodding his head.

"I still think I should go it with you."

"Nah, this is something I have to do on my own."

"Zane." My brother calls my name to me and I pause. He hasn't called me Zane since we were kids, causing me to look over more confused. "I've got your back."

"I know you do." I nod before I open the door, stepping out of the SUV. "It's all set. If I'm not back in 30 mins come in."

The door opens as I jog up to it and the man nods at me as he lets the door open. I slip in before he shuts it again.

"Here." Casey presses the items into my hands as I pull the hat low on my head and slip my arms into the shirt. "Stay away from anyone else," He reminds me. "Cameras will update until midnight. That's all you got."

"That's all I need." I feel the weight of the blade swinging against my chest underneath my hoodie.

He hands me the key before pointing in one direction. "Don't forget the way you came in. Oh, and Z..." He trails, forcing me to look back over at him. "This makes us even."

"Not even fucking close." I shake my head, moving over to

him. “It just means that when I kill your friends, I won’t kill you.”

I nod to him before I walk down the hallway, calmly. Finding my way to the right door and I slip the key inside.

I feel like a goddamn kid going to Disney, knowing that there’s no way in hell this could be any kind of letdown.

He looks at me as the door opens. The shocked expression comes over his face just as fast. He jumps up from the bed, coming towards me, but I move faster at him.

He swings on me once, but I’m faster, striking him once in the face while I take the brief second as he recalculates to swing the first knife on him, driving it through his hand and into the cement wall behind him.

“What the fuck!” Darren screams as I drive the machete into the second hand, securing him to the wall.

Laughing, I produce an additional pocketknife, my carry knife, and look down at him.

“What the fuck, Z?” He shouts as I grin, flipping open the pocket knife.

“You know, I don’t think I ever really told you the threat I made.” I laugh, as I can feel him trembling underneath me.

I look at the knife as I grin. “Wanna know the real be-ute of the whole thing? This blade is what I carved my initial into her with. She got revenge and branded me with it as well.” I can’t help but lick my lips as I think about it. “But I also fucked her with it. She came all over the handle. Fuck.” I groan out just thinking about it.

Bringing the blade up to his face, I laugh as he tries to pull his face away while I reach for his lids.

“What the fuck are you doing?”

“I made a promise to her a while back.” I laugh as he flinches away from me, but I still pull his eyelid back just enough to press the blade against it and it opens up easily; however, his

scream echoes through the cell. Moving the blade over to the opposite eye and do the same.

He screams again.

“See, the promise that I made was I was going to slit the prick’s eyelids so he couldn’t look away when I cut his hands off.” I can’t help but laugh again.

It takes a slight bit of effort to pull the blade out of the wall, but once the machete is free, I hold it out in front of his face. I made sure that the blade was sharp enough that it would take the hand off, no problem.

“You see this, Darren?” I laugh, holding his arm out. He’s not even fighting me anymore. I can only assume because he’s not sure exactly what’s happening right now.

As he closes his eyes to help relieve the pain, I can still see the irises peeking through the slits.

“I’m glad that actually worked.” I laugh out as I bring the blade up, slashing the blade down until it connects with his wrist.

I’m pretty sure that there should feel like more resistance going through the bones and nerves like that, but I’m not sure I’ve ever actually cut someone’s hands off, thinking about it until the screams echoes through the cell again, bringing me back to reality.

Blood squirts from the wound, covering the surrounding walls. He holds his arm up, just looking down at the stump, and I’m certain I hear him sobbing.

I don’t even remove the knife from his other palm, I just swing the blade, connecting with his right wrist this time.

I watch his eyes roll back into his head before he slowly slides down the wall. I can’t help but giggle at the hand which is still speared to the wall behind him. Reaching over, I pull it out, letting the hand fall to the ground beside him.

Leaning over, I smirk at his limp body before I thrust the blade into his abdomen.

“All you had to do was stay away from her.” Thrusting the blade into him again. “And you know...” I trail hearing him grumble, as if he’s attempting to answer me. “You’ve had it out for me. You tried to take me down years ago and when you couldn’t do it, it hurt your fucking feelings. So what else could you do? You watched, you saw how we were, and you figured the only way you could get me was to take her. Thinking you could make her fall in love with you. That she’d tell you all these terrible things I had done and take me out that way.” He gasps as I thrust, but I’ve lost count of how many. Looking at one another, a smirk spreads on his lips, proud of his idea. His smile widens, and I can see the blood smearing his teeth already. “Only you underestimated her. She didn’t give you anything. Her loyalty was always to me. Even when she was pregnant with your kid. That made you more furious. And you knew if she kept the baby that I’d end up raising your son, didn’t you? So you made sure she miscarried.” His face falls. “You’re fucking transparent. You think you’re fucking clever, but I had you figured out a long time ago.”

Thrusting the knife several more times, making sure that he’s going to be dead when they get in here in the morning. Stepping back, I wait, watching the blood seep from his wounds, still smirking to myself.

Gathering my thoughts, I turn towards the door again, stepping out of it, and pulling it closed behind me. I move down the hallway and the turn towards the right.

I feel as if someone’s watching me and I stop, glancing around me, but feeling nothing before I continue out the door and jog back over to the SUV. Slipping inside, and we’re out of the parking lot before the cameras reboot.

Zeke and I don’t speak the entire way home. We don’t have to. We’ve turned a page since he’s first gotten back and he was serious. He’s in.

It’s dark when we make it back to the house. We’ve decided at least for now to both live in here together. We’ve only tried to kill each other a handful of times, since, but nothing more than

brothers do. He's been going to meetings for his anger, which is good, and I think he's finally forgiven himself for all the shit with our parents.

I step into the bedroom and I sigh as I look at Tatum lying in our bed; the moonlight reflecting off her. I may not be close to figuring out who murdered my parents yet, but I know they would consider all of this to be more important.

Moving over to her, I gently kiss her forehead as she grumbles something in her sleep, rolling over, just barely awake.

"I'll be in soon. I just have to shower and take care of a couple of things."

"Okay." she mumbles out, still not really awake. I will never get over how adorable I find her doing that. I open the bathroom door, flipping on the light as I hear a gasp this time. "Zane?" She calls out to me, causing me to spin around and look at her. "I love you. Hurry to bed."

I smile back at her, walking back across the room until I lean over the top of her, resting my hand on the sheet next to her body and kissing her lips. "I love you, too."

Then moving back over to the shower and stepping in.



Sitting in the garage, I sip the beer that I have just pulled out of the fridge when I hear the door open again. Glancing up, I see my brother nodding at me as he opens his own bottle. We say nothing still as he walks over, leaning against the car and looking at the bike just as I am.

"Memento mori." He whispers.

"Yeah." I nod again.

"Does it scare you?"

"Does what scare me?"

"Being happy?"

"The being happy with her, no. But the calm... that scares me,

I'm just waiting for the other shoe to drop."

"Need a reminder for tomorrow?" he asks me, making me laugh.

"No-fucking-way."

The next morning

Zeke, Axe, and I all walk into the building as I look around.

"This isn't anything I ever thought I would be doing." I whisper, shaking my head as Blair comes walking over and I reach into her, hugging her.

I hear my sister's squeal, as she says something about not believing that this is all happening before she's hugging me as well.

She looks at me as if she wants to say something, but she stops herself as we hear Tatum walking up behind her. "Zane?"

"Yes, Psycho?"

"I just got a phone call..." she trails off.

"From who?"

"Who do you think?" she's smiling at me, shaking her head. I don't give in to her, causing her to sigh and roll her eyes.

"Apparently, if you have an active restraining order on someone and something happens, sometimes they notify you. And apparently, someone murdered Darren in his cell last night."

"Hmm..." I smirk at her as I shrug my shoulders. "I guess karma is fucking real, after all."

"They cut his hands off." She tilts her head as she lowers her voice. "What time did you get home last night, again?" Zeke snickers next to me as Axe just looks confused.

Stepping into her, I lean in and kiss her, running my head along her exposed back of her dress. "Seemed like an appropriate gift for today."

"How did you even...?" she trails.

“I have my ways.” I laugh as she lifts herself onto her toes and kisses me again. “You know they say it’s bad luck, right?” I laugh as my eyes run over her cleavage.

“Fuck, luck.” She laughs. “We’ve got each other, and I’m not sure anything can break us.”

“You’re right about that.” I smile at her. “Now, you ready to go do this, for real, this time?”

She rolls her eyes, nodding her head as her entire face lights up as she smiles, spinning around and the white material flares around her.

I watch my life for a moment from a far. As the only woman I’ve ever loved spins around and looks at me, happiness shining back at me. I take every second in. Her smile, her laugh, the new lighter tattoo on her back that matches mine, as the light reflects on the relatively new ink.

It’s weird, it’s almost like I sense it before it happens.

Like I can hear the shoe before it even drops.

The tires are squealing around the corner and I’m running towards her.

As the first shot fires from behind me, I see the look of shock on her face as I launch myself into the air, wrapping my arms around her and tackling her to the ground, shielding her with my body. Bullets ricochet off of everything over top of us and she’s screaming in my ear. The sob shredding through me.

It only takes a second before the tires begin to squeal again and then it’s silent once again.

Silent, except for the sob rattling underneath me.

“Tatum.” I whisper to her, lifting my bodyweight off of her until I can look her in the eyes. “Are you okay?”

Her eyes wide, she quickly nods her head and I kiss her. Thanking every God that I don’t believe in that she wasn’t hurt.

I move up to standing as I reach down and pull her up after

me, wrapping my arms around her, and tugging her into the safety of my body.

We look around the small chapel, trying to take note of everything that had just happened.

“Blair!” Tatum cries out before she’s moving her to where her sister is lying, holding her arm.

“Shit.” I mumble as I pull out my phone, calling 911, moving over to them, pulling off my kutte, handing it over to Zeke, who’s attempting his best to console Liza. Popping the buttons of my shirt open and pulling my arms out of my shirt as I kneel.

“Blair, look at me.” I demand her. Both girls sitting in front of me crying, breaking my fucking heart. “You’re gonna be fine.” Carefully, I attempt to wrap the shirt around her arm, reaching down and tugging my belt open before I wrap it above the hole to stop the bleeding as much as possible. She winces as I tighten it. “I know it hurts. I’m sorry. I’m so fucking sorry.”

I watch the chaos of what was supposed to be our wedding day around us. Watching the mascara-tears stream down Tatum’s face as she climbs up into the back of the ambulance with Blair, riding with her to the hospital, still in her white dress, a mixture of dirt, blood, and mascara stain it. Zeke pulls the SUV up behind the ambulance, nodding for me to get in. I look back as the back door opens and watch Drew slide into the backseat.

The whole situation reminds me of what Liv said so long ago. I’m not sure if luck is a real thing, or if this is what people mean by karma coming to collect.

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50% cynical romantic

50% hopeless a**hole

N. started writing at an early age as a means to escape her reality. Throughout the years she has tried to do other things, but that seduction to writing has always managed to pull her back in. Since she knows how hard life can be at times, she enjoys giving broken characters a happily ever after, because she likes to believe that no matter how much life tries to break us that we all still have the opportunity for happiness. We are all beautifully broken. (P.S. I despise talking about myself in third person!)

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