

HE INHERITED THEIR OBSESSIONS,
BUT CAN HE LEARN TO LOVE BEFORE SHE BURNS?

LIKE FATHERS, LIKE SON

Mia Fury

Like Fathers, Like Son

Burning Depravity Next Generation

Mia Fury

Trigger Warnings



AS WITH BURNING DEPRAVITY, this book has serious, strong triggers, and once more, I'd rather share those in detail and avoid harming anyone who could be affected by the content of this book.

Blaze is the offspring of three very twisted people, psychopaths really. Hopefully you've read Burning Depravity, and therefore you know that the child of Gray, Dory, and Wilma, was never going to be a shining example of decency or normality.

From the age of ten, he already demonstrates obsessive behaviour, and stalking, and of course has a lust for making things burn. To list the triggers in more detail:

Stalking (both during early teens and adulthood)

Kidnap / captivity (well, like fathers, like son, right?)

Forced breeding (the non con variety)

Somnophilia

Virginity (yep, they're both virgins at the start of their adult time together)

Arson (quite a few instances)

Serial killer / murders

References to self harm / suicide attempts / murder to look like suicide

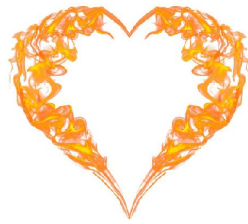
Revenge / bullying

Forced tattooing (yep, you heard that right)

Basically, Blaze is all the things you should definitely NOT like, or find hot... but I really hope you will.

This is dark romance, this is fiction, and this book doesn't contain much that I'd agree with in real life. If any of these triggers are on your personal list, please don't try reading it. Put your mental health first. Peace out, Mia xxx

Copyright & Disclaimer



NAMES, CHARACTERS, PLACES AND incidents within this book are either the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously, and any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, business establishments, etc. is purely coincidental.

Copyright © Mia Fury 2023

All rights reserved. No part of this text may be reproduced, scanned, transmitted, or distributed in any printed or electronic form without permission.

**Cover Artwork Copyright © Anya
Kelley Designs 2023**

Website: anyakelley.com

All rights reserved. No part of this image may be reproduced, scanned, transmitted, or distributed in any printed or electronic form without permission.

Contents

Stalk Me

1. 1

Blaze (aged ten)

2. 2

Blaze

3. 3

Anneka

4. 4

Anneka

5. 5

Blaze

6. 6

Blaze (aged eleven)

7. 7

Blaze

8. 8

Blaze

9. 9

Anneka

10. 10

Anneka

11. 11

Anneka

12. 12

Anneka

13. 13

Anneka

14. 14

Anneka

15. 15

Blaze

16. 16

Anneka (aged twenty two)

17. 17

Anneka

18. 18

Anneka

19. 19

Anneka

20. 20

Blaze

21. 21

Blaze

22. 22

Blaze

23. 23

Blaze

24. 24

Blaze

25. 25

Blaze

26. 26

Blaze

27. 27

Blaze

28. 28

Blaze

29. 29

Blaze

30. 30

Blaze

31. 31

Blaze

32. 32

Blaze

33. 33

Blaze

34. 34

Blaze

35. 35

Blaze

36. 36

Blaze

37. 37

Blaze

38. 38

Blaze

39. 39

Blaze

40. 40

Blaze

41. 41

Blaze

42. 42

Blaze

43. 43

Blaze

44. 44

Blaze

45. 45

Blaze

46. 46

Blaze

47. 47

Blaze

48. 48

Blaze

49. 49

Blaze

50. 50

Blaze

51. 51

Blaze

52. 52

Blaze

53. 53

Blaze

54. 54

Blaze

55. 55

Blaze

56. 56

Blaze

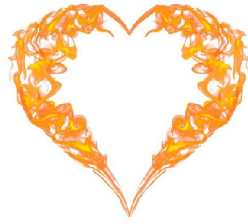
Epilogue

Blaze

Also by Mia Fury on Amazon/KU

Acknowledgements

Stalk Me



Join my mailing list to stay up to date and gain access to bonus materials:

Mia Fury Mailing List

If you want early access to everything, including bonus scenes, exclusive covers and more, come and join my Patreon group:

Mia Fury Patreon

Want to be involved in discussions and have access to tons of giveaways? Join my reader group on Facebook:

Mia's Furies

Mia Fury LinkTree

1

Blaze (aged ten)



THE NEW HOUSE WASN'T quite as cool as our old one. Our old one had nobody around it for miles, and it was bigger than this one. I still had my own room though, so that was something. I didn't want to share with my baby sister and brother.

Ember was pretty cool as a sister, as long as I didn't touch her stuff, but at seven and a half, she was hardly going to stop me. Ash, our little bro, was almost five, and an annoying little shit.

I'm not supposed to say words like 'shit', but my dads do, so why shouldn't I? They said a lot of crazy stuff to be honest, and they could really wind mum up, until she'd threaten not to let them have her. I had no idea what that meant, because men owned their women, right? That's what daddy Gray told me. Actually, he said he owned daddy Dory *and* mum.

The one exciting thing about our new house was neighbours. We had actual neighbours now, and as I looked out of my new bedroom window, I could see one of them in the garden. She was so pretty, with hair as red as fire. I wondered if she'd play with me.

She looked lonely to me, and my parents said we'd moved so 'the kids could socialise'. I thought it had more to do with that lady they took me to see. The one who said I was showing a disturbing lack of understanding of human emotions and consequences. Consequences for what? Daddy Gray taught me how to make fire. It was so pretty, and powerful, but there were no consequences as long as we were careful.

“Oi, Blaze, whatcha doin? Ooohhh spying on the neighbours already, eh? That’s my boy.” Daddy Gray ruffled my hair, and I pushed him away with a grimace.

“I’m not spying, but she’s got hair like glowing flames.”

Daddy Gray chuckled as he leaned on the window ledge beside me.

“Yeah, kid, she really has. Maybe we should go set another fire tonight, what do you say? I know a place I’d love to see burning.”

“Jesus, Gray, don’t keep taking him to burn things.” Daddy Dory was standing behind us, hands on his hips as he glared at my other daddy. They’d argued earlier about something, and I had no idea what it was, but mum was pissed at both of them, because she hated being pregnant. I think we had a big enough family already, but daddy Gray was always telling her that ‘we need to put more babies in you’.

“Dory, Blaze likes arson just like his daddy. Do I stop him creeping on people, just like his other daddy likes to?”

“Fuck’s sake! We’re supposed to be doing better than this. We moved here to try and fucking mainstream our kids, before they turn out worse than us. You think you could actually help us with that?”

“What, before one of them kidnaps a pet? Oh... hang on... you’d probably approve of that, right?”

I liked the idea of having a pet, so I eagerly listened to them, but none of it made any sense in the end, because they

sounded like they were talking about people. People as pets? I didn't think people were supposed to be pets... were they?



ANNEKA (AGED THIRTEEN)

We had new neighbours, and typically none of them were close to my age. The oldest was ten, and that meant they were kids, right? I'm thirteen now. I'm a teenager, a grown up. I'm old enough to stay home by myself now.

I was sunbathing in the garden, in my new tube top and shorts, and feeling so grown up wearing a bikini for the first time ever. Mum didn't want me dressing too, oh, what was the word she used... oh that was it, she didn't want to 'sexualise me' because I was still a kid.

That hurt, because being thirteen meant I was a teenager now, and not a kid anymore.

"Hi."

I lifted my head from the lounge, and searched for the source of the unknown voice.

"Who's there?"

"Blaze. Uh... I'm looking at you through a hole in the fence." My eyes darted straight to the knothole on the wooden fence. He was looking through the hole?

For some reason, that made me feel a little weird, but I took a breath and sat up, checking my tube top hadn't slid down, because my boobs hadn't really grown properly yet.

“Blaze? That’s a strange name.”

I walked over to the fence, and stood on a bucket to lean my head over the top. He lifted his face and fixed bright blue eyes on me. His hair was so pale blonde, that it gleamed in the sunlight, but his eyes, they were strangely blue. Intense. That was the right word, I was sure of it.

He grinned up at me, and I found myself smiling back.

“So Blaze... how did you get a name like that?”

He shrugged. “Daddy Gray likes fire, so we all have silly names like that.”

How strange that he called his dad by his name like that. I’d never heard anyone doing that before.

“Daddy Gray?”

He shrugged again, and pointed up at me.

“He likes your hair. It looks like fire.”

I glanced at the closed back door, and shivered a little. I didn’t like the idea of someone’s dad liking me or my hair.

“Uh... it’s just red.”

Blaze grinned again, and it was oddly infectious, my smile already returning.

“You didn’t tell me your name. That’s what you’re meant to do when someone tells you theirs.”

I shifted on the bucket, nearly slipping off the side of it. It really wasn’t big enough to stand on like this.

“I’m Anneka. I live here with my mum and dad.”

Blaze stepped closer to the fence, stretching one hand up towards me.

“Can I touch your hair?”

What? I slipped off the bucket and landed hard on my bum, taking a breath to hold back the wave of tears that threatened to escape from the shock. It didn’t hurt, not really, but it was scary. I mean, it did hurt a bit, but I could pretend it didn’t. I shook my long red hair out of my eyes, forced a giggle, and stood up again, rubbing against the sore patch on my behind.

“Are you okay?”

I moved over to the hole in the fence, and saw a startling blue eye staring at me, how were his eyes so blue?

“Uh yeah... just landed on my uh... I’m okay.”

Blaze sighed, and his eye moved back, a finger appearing instead, and tracing the small hole he’d been peeking through. He slid his finger through the hole and wiggled it, finally moving his finger to look through it again. There was a dull thud against the fence, which made me jump. Did he just kick the fence?

“We need a bigger hole. I can’t see you properly like this.”

2

Blaze



I'D ENJOYED CHATTING WITH her yesterday; Anneka, the girl with hair like angry fire. When she fell, I wished I could be the one to help her up, but the fence was keeping me away from her, and I didn't like it.

"What's up, Blaze?" Daddy Dory sat down beside me in my room. I was on the floor with my back against the side of my bed. He smoothed his hand over his bushy beard and nudged my shoulder.

"You can talk to me, son. Do you like it here?"

Yes. I shrugged though, trying to play it cool like Daddy Gray would.

"It's okay. I don't like the fence though."

Daddy Dory frowned, glancing around my room for a moment before he let out a chuckle.

"Oh. You mean in the back garden? I saw you chatting to that girl through the fence yesterday. What's she like?"

I shrugged. "She's pretty. I like her hair. It reminds me of flames."

He grinned, giving me that proud smile he used when I did well on my homework.

"You know, your mum's hair was what made me notice her, because it was like spun gold, only paler and more ethereal."

I didn't understand how the word ethereal could apply to hair, but the way he spoke reminded me of how I felt when I first saw Anneka.

“Mum hates her hair.”

Daddy Dory groaned. “She just finds it gets in the way when she’s doing mum stuff, that’s all. Plus, you know, each of you pulled on it a lot when you were babies. She might say she wants to cut it short, but she doesn’t mean it.”

I decided not to tell him that I’d seen her with the scissors again this morning, and a fistful of her hair in the other hand. Being observant was apparently Daddy Dory’s thing, so if he couldn’t tell she was cutting her hair a bit at a time, then maybe I was just better than he was.

“Are you looking forward to starting school next week?”

I shrugged, but truthfully I was a bit nervous, because the few bigger kids I’d crossed paths with just never seemed to like me. They called me creepy or weird. That mean lady had said we had to be around other children though. I wasn’t sure why she thought it’d be better than being homeschooled though.

“If you have any trouble with any of the kids, you have to tell us, Blaze. Kids can be cruel, because they don’t always have all the facts, and lack of knowledge leads to them making judgements that might not seem fair.”

“Like why I have two dads?” I still didn’t know why that seemed wrong to some people, because it was perfectly normal to me.

Daddy Dory nodded. “Some people won’t understand, but that’s okay. We’re the family we were always meant to be.

Your daddy Gray figured that out before me though.”

I stared at the window, sun beaming outside, and all I could think was that Anneka would be at school, so I had nothing to do right now.

“Bored?”

I shrugged again, and daddy Dory laughed.

“Come on, kid. You can help sort through some of the boxes we haven’t unpacked yet. Some of the books and stuff still need to be put away.”

I groaned, because now I had to do chores, and that didn’t seem fair at all.

The spare room was small, and my parents were calling it an ‘office’ or something like that, but it had bookshelves along one wall, which I’d watched my dads building a few days ago.

There was a stack of boxes to unpack, and I knew it’d take forever. I had no choice though, even as I felt this strange temptation to find daddy Gray’s arson kit, and make them all burn. If the books caught fire, it wouldn’t necessarily be my fault, right? *Fire is good. Fire makes things better.*

I opened the first box, and picked up a few books with half naked people on the covers. I shrugged and placed them on the highest shelf I could reach, and then I dug into the box again.

These weren’t the same kind of books though. There were quite a few of them, but they all said ‘Wilma’s Diary’ on the front in black ink. That was my mum’s name. She kept diaries?



WILMA'S DIARY

It's been a while since my last diary, but so much has happened since, that I wanted to start again.

Dory likes me having diaries, because the bastard has no boundaries, and thinks it's okay for him to read them. Reading my diary got me into this mess after all, so maybe I'm being an idiot by starting again.

Dory, if you're reading this, you should be ashamed of yourself.

Mind you, at this point, what have I got to lose by starting again with a diary? My freedom? Too late. My dignity? Yeah, right. My right to choose who fathers my baby? Nope.

I'd say I'm pissed about it, but strangely I think being kidnapped by Dory and Gray might have been the best thing that ever happened to me. That's weird though, right?

Kidnapping isn't love. Kidnapping isn't how you flirt, or win a woman over. I was drunk and they forcibly stole me from my home, my life. Kept me in a cell. Forced me into sex over and over. How the hell did it turn to love? I wish I knew.

Anyway, this is my diary one month after they first kidnapped me. Maybe I'm even documenting things in case at some point my good sense returns, and I need the evidence for the police. Who the hell knows at this point?



I reread those words twice because I didn't understand what I was reading. It sounded like mum was talking about my dad kidnapping her? That couldn't be right though, could it? My parents were so in love, like disgustingly so, even if they had those fights now and then.

Maybe it was mum's idea of writing a book, something she wanted to sell one day, but I didn't know if people would like a story like this. Why would she even write it?

I heard someone coming, so I tucked the stack of mum's 'diaries' out of sight, and went back to shelving the half naked people books. Mum poked her head around the door, and saw me hard at work.

"Oh, you're a good boy, Blaze. Nothing like those dads of yours. You want me to make you a snack, baby?" I glanced at the diaries, hoping she couldn't see them from the doorway, then nodded at her.

As soon as she was gone, I picked up the books and ran up to my room with them. I shoved them as far under my bed as I could, and slid a box of my own books in front of them. I wanted time to read those in peace, and definitely not get caught with them.

By the time I was back in the office with the books, mum called me to the kitchen for my lunch. As I sat there eating my jam sandwiches, all I could think of was getting back to mum's diaries, because I wanted to know more, and to work out if they were real or not.

My dads didn't seem like bad guys, although that lady they brought in to see me seemed to think there was something strange about our family in general.

She'd said all kinds of stuff about our 'irregular family dynamic' which I didn't really understand, but I'd memorised those three words, because I liked how they sounded. I liked our 'irregular family dynamic', and I knew we all did, so maybe it was a good thing. Maybe she was impressed by how our family was so close and happy.

She made comments about my maturity, and my emotions, but I had struggled to focus on much of what she said, because I got bored so easily. I wanted to go back and play with my cars, and she kept asking me questions.

She'd insisted on talking to me alone too, so I couldn't even let my parents answer the questions for me. What did I know about anything? Despite what she said about my intelligence, and she kept saying the words 'high IQ', I wasn't really following a lot of what she said in the end.

Basically, she was boring, because she kept asking weird questions, and saying weird things, and then apparently we had to move.

I'd asked my parents why they made me talk to that woman, and why my sister Ember had to talk to her, and all they did was change the subject, then they argued in private about it. I remember very clearly how mum seemed to blame my dads for it.



“What the fuck does she know, anyway? They’re our kids and we know what we’re doing.”

“For god’s sake, Gray! That was an official visit from child services, so we have to take this seriously. What if they decide we’re not good enough, and they... they...” Mum trailed off then, and daddy Dory spoke up next.

“Nobody is going anywhere, babe. We’ll figure this out, but if she’s right about Blaze, then we need to try and redirect things before he ends up worse than us. It’s time to try and fake being normal for a while. We’ll move somewhere in a good area with decent schools, and we’ll get the kids enrolled, and see how it goes.”

Daddy Gray cursed then, saying a string of words I’m not allowed to say.

“You know what schools are like, and I know I wasn’t the only one fucking bullied in school. Now you want to put our damn kids through that? We were meant to be doing better than our parents did.”

“We are, Gray, we are, but we need to take on board what she said. Genius or not, Blaze needs to be more socialised, and that doesn’t mean setting more fires.”



They realised I was listening at that point, and stopped their talk, but I had so many questions for them, about the lady, and

what 'child services' were, and why we needed to move. All they told me was that it was 'for the best', and we'd still be a 'kickass family', even if we had to live among the 'little people'. That part made me nervous, because little people were creepy, right?

I hadn't seen any little people yet though, so I was starting to wonder if that was just daddy Gray being weird.

3

Anneka



I HADN'T HAD THE best day at school today, so when I got home and went out to the garden to curl up with a book, I was frustrated to be interrupted almost immediately.

“Hi.”

I turned to the fence, recognising Blaze's voice, and immediately noticed something different. *The hole was bigger.* That small hole in the fence was now large enough that his face was visible this time.

“Oh my god, what did you do to the fence? My dad's gonna go mad!”

Blaze stayed silent, so I tossed my book aside and stomped over to the fence, to glare through the hole at him.

“Hi.”

“Don't 'hi' me, Blaze! Dad will freak when he sees this. Why would you do that?”

He let out a little giggle. “So I can see you better. Can I touch your hair now?”

Oh god. I backed away from the hole.

“No, dammit. You can't touch my hair!”

He wiggled his fingers through the hole he'd enlarged.

“Go on. It's just so shiny and fiery. I feel like it'll burn me if I touch it.”

“Then why would you want to?”

He giggled again. “I just wanna stroke it. Why won’t you let me stroke it, Anneka? I won’t hurt your hair, so why don’t you let me touch it?”

There was something so creepy about the way he was so keen to touch my hair, because that wasn’t how normal people acted, was it? None of the boys at school were interested in touching my hair. Some of them were more interested in other parts of me, that I still didn’t want anyone touching.

“You’re being weird, Blaze. You can’t touch my hair, and you can’t cut holes in fences like this. My dad will complain to yours, and it’ll be a whole big embarrassing mess.”

Blaze laughed, sounding like he didn’t care at all.

“He can try complaining to my dads, but they won’t care. Daddy Dory helped me do it, anyway.”

Oh my god, how weird was his family?? He said dads, plural? And one of these dads helped him destroy our property?

“He helped? But you shouldn’t vandalise people’s fences, Blaze! Your dad really helped you?”

Blaze wiggled his fingers at me again.

“No! Your dad should have stopped you from doing this, not helped you. No wonder you’re so weird, if that’s what your parents are like. This isn’t normal, Blaze.”

“Daddy Dory says ‘normal is overrated’. I think that means that-”

“I know what it means. I’m a teenager, so I understand these things better than you. Your family is weird, Blaze. You need to leave me alone now.”



BLAZE

SHE WOULDN'T TALK TO me again after that, so I went back indoors, feeling like a loser. Why wouldn't she talk to me? Why did she call me weird? What was wrong with wanting to touch her flame hair?

“What are you up to, baby? You want to do more of the books?”

Daddy Dory told me not to let mum know about the hole we'd made in the fence, so I couldn't tell her where I'd been, or what I'd been doing, but I really didn't want to do more unpacking.

“My tummy hurts.”

Mum immediately started fussing over me, and let me go to bed for a bit, even bringing me some Lucozade and a sandwich.

“Are you okay, baby? Do you want mummy to bring you some medicine?”

I shook my head fast because I hated medicines. They all tasted bitter and weird.

“I might just read for a bit.”

She pushed my hair back from my face, and kissed my forehead.

“Shout if you need anything, my sweet boy.” She walked out of my room and closed the door, and I listened to her heavy footsteps walking away. She was huge with the babies inside her, and both daddies said it wouldn’t be long before she ‘dropped these ones’.

They were both apparently also looking forward to putting another one inside her? I didn’t really understand what that meant, but mum would get really mad at them every time they said it, so I guessed it wasn’t good.

I leaned under my bed and pulled out mum’s diaries, finding the first one I’d started reading, turning to the second entry.



WILMA’S DIARY

I knew once I told them that my period was late that they’d assume they’d managed to get me pregnant. I don’t know who was being more smug about it, Dory or Gray. Let’s not forget that Dory was the one who kidnapped me specifically to force me into having his baby.

Since we all decided to be together though, Gray has really started to obsess about impregnating me too, and his new obsession has led to them both making sure they fill me each time. He keeps on about wanting his ‘equal chance to be a baby daddy’.

I wonder sometimes if I made a huge mistake by agreeing to this insanity. I mean, I'm sure they wouldn't have let me go, even though Dory was suddenly realising what a twisted fucker he'd been, and that I deserved to be free.

I know what's going to happen next though. They're going to make me take pregnancy tests. They're going to assume my delayed period is pregnancy, because men never seem to understand that there are plenty of reasons why a period can be late. You know, like stress, terror, being kidnapped, etc.

I wonder how they'll react if the tests are negative though. Will they be angry? Will they step up their babymaking sessions? Of course they will, and I probably won't mind at all.



SOME OF WHAT MUM wrote didn't make much sense to me, but what did make sense was the word 'kidnap'. What I didn't understand was how a grown-up could be kidnapped, because kids were kidnapped, right? Wasn't there a different word for grown-ups?

Was she saying that my dads took her away and kept her? Was that what they meant when they talked about keeping people as pets? Was mum just their pet? I wished I could ask them, but I knew if I mentioned the diaries that they'd take them away. I might not be a grown-up myself yet, but I knew diaries were supposed to be private.

I got up from my bed and peered out into the back garden, looking across to Anneka's garden. I wondered if she had a diary. If she did, I could learn her secrets too, couldn't I? I could find out what she liked and didn't like. I could find out if she liked me. What if she didn't like me? She'd stopped talking to me today, and I didn't understand why.

"Spying seems to be your new thing, eh kid?" Daddy Gray ruffled my hair, and I groaned and pushed his hand away.

"She's mad at me, I think."

Daddy Gray laughed, pressing his face against the glass over my head.

"Girls get mad, kid, but don't worry because they get over it eventually too."

"Like mum did?" He laughed again, and then pulled away from the window.

"When?"

He caught my shoulder, guiding me to face him, and crouched in front of me.

"When was mum mad, Blaze? Has Dory gone and upset her again?"

I shook my head, but I didn't know what to say because he'd learn about the diaries if I wasn't careful. I looked at my bed from the corner of my eye, realising the diary I was reading was right there. There was no way to hide it, especially when dad's eyes followed mine.

“Ohhhh... you sneaky little bugger. Reading your mum’s diaries, eh? Can’t exactly tell you off. Dory did the exact same fucking thing. See, you’re taking after your dad again. All this creeping and snooping. You’re a chip off the old block.”

I edged closer to the bed, before he could take it away.

“A chip? A chip of what?”

Dad stood up and leaned over me, picking up the diary and skimming his eyes over the page it was open to.

“Ah... this is just before we realised she was expecting you.” He sat on the bed, reading the next page too.

“Wow... she’s a sassy bitch in her diaries.”

“She says she was kidnapped.”

Dad shrugged at me, turning another page. “I mean, yeah, but she liked it really.”

Then he looked up from the page and closed the book. “Oh. How many of these have you read? Jesus, how many are there?”

I tried to nudge the others further under the bed with my foot.

“Just this one.”

Dad smirked. “Fair enough. Look, don’t let your mum or Dory know you have these. They’re both prissy enough that they’ll have a shit-fit. It’ll be our secret, okay? I’ll try to answer your questions when you don’t understand what she’s drivelling about. That, by the way, is just how women are.

They go on and on, and half the time we men never get what they're on about."

I sat on the bed beside him. "So grown-ups can be kidnapped too?"

He laughed, tucking the diary under my duvet for me.

"Anyone can be kidnapped, Blaze. Just know that Dory fell in love with your mum before any of us even met, and once she realised she was stuck with us, she grew to like it."

"The fuck is going on here?" Daddy Dory was standing in the doorway, glaring at daddy Gray, who just ruffled my hair again and got up.

"Hey Dory, I was just saying to our son how nice it is that his creeper of a dad is helping him spy on the girl next door." He winked at me, and walked over to dad.

"Gray! It wasn't for spying, it was so they could talk through the fence. It's not creeping at all. It's just getting to know the damn neighbour, okay? Who else does he have to talk to, apart from you filling his head with all kinds of bullshit?"

"Bullshit? Is it bullshit if you did that stuff yourself, Dory? Is it bullshit, if you were doing all this stalking shit before he was even born? You talk like I'm the bad influence, but at least when I take him to set fires, it's controlled and I'm supervising him. You? You're just setting him loose to creep on the poor girl next door. Next thing her parents are going to be banging on our door, and calling us psychos. Do you really want all that shit happening again?"

“Gray!” Daddy Dory dragged daddy Gray out of the room then, and they talked in angry whispers for a few minutes, while I picked up odd words like ‘stalker’ and ‘creep’ and most interesting of all... ‘murderer’.

I was starting to wonder just who my parents really were, because this all sounded like the kind of stuff that only happens in those movies they won’t let me watch, but I sneakily listen to through the wall.

What if my parents weren’t who I thought they were? What if they were secret agents or something? What if they were spies? It’d be so cool to have spies for dads.

4

Anneka



MY DAD WAS SO angry when he saw the fence. I didn't say how it happened, or who did it, but I guess he figured it out, because he went round to Blaze's house to yell at them. I didn't hear the conversation, but when he came back home, he was muttering something about 'bizarre fucked up threeway relationships' or something, and he stayed cranky all night.

I went to my room, and stayed out of his way so he wouldn't shout at me, but I heard him shouting at mum about it. He seemed to enjoy shouting at people, but I hated it. It made me jumpy, because it meant he was angry, and sometimes it was something that I did that made him that way.

I curled up on my bed with my diary, writing my heart and soul into it, just like I always did. I could have typed it on my laptop, but I enjoyed the feel of the diary pages, and the way I could pick it up anytime and just add to it.



Dear Diary

Dad's pissed again, and I'm staying out of his way. He got really angry about the hole in the fence that Blaze and his dad made, and went over to yell at them about it. I hope Blaze didn't get into any trouble for it, even though it did make me feel weird that they did it at all.

He has this weird thing with my hair, and he always wants to touch it. He says it looks like fire, or something. I looked up his name in the dictionary, because I thought it referred to fire

like he said, and it does. That's a weird name for a person, right? I heard him say that he has a sister called Ember, and a baby brother called Ash. If you think about it, those names are fire-related too. I wonder why everything is about fire in their family.

I still think it's strange that they have two dads, but I don't understand how it works, because it's not the normal way. Does that mean it's wrong though? Are they all married? Is that something people can do? I suppose if one dad is shouty like mine, it'd be nice to have a nicer one. One who doesn't shout so much. What if they both shout though? What if they're both mean and angry all the time?



I sat back against my pillow, staring out of the window while I pondered over the horrible thought of two dads like mine.

There was movement in the garden even though it was getting dark. There was light out there. Why would there be light? Wait. I sat up, and leaned closer to the window. That wasn't just light. It was fire. *The fence was on fire!*



BLAZE

THAT ANGRY MAN FROM next door was so rude to my dads and my mum, who sat and cried afterwards. Who makes women cry like that? I sat beside her and tried to make her less sad, but after she hugged me, she rubbed at her face, and said

something about ‘assholes everywhere’ and went to the kitchen to bake cookies. That’s the cool thing about mum. When she’s upset, she bakes cookies, or little cakes with icing on.

“You shoulda let me punch that fucker, baby.”

“Gray, don’t talk like that in front of the kids. I swear we talked about this. We swore we’d be great parents. We swore we’d do it all better than our parents did. We’re all failing. Actually, no, that’s bullshit. Wilma’s not failing. She’s amazing. She’s keeping three children sane and healthy, while she’s incubating two more, and what are we doing to help? We’re leading Blaze astray, that’s what we’re doing.”

I was sitting outside the utility room, where daddy Dory had dragged daddy Gray after that mean man came to yell at them. They didn’t know I was listening, but I couldn’t help it. That man had really scared me, and I was so glad my brother and sister were already in bed, and didn’t have to be there. I should have been in bed too, but sometimes I come back down and they let me stay up with them for longer.

“Dory, Blaze is an incredible kid. He’s so fucking smart. Did you ever imagine we’d have a kid as bright as him? You saw those aptitude tests they gave him. He’s practically a fucking genius. So don’t tell me we’re failing here, because we’re raising the next fucking inventor of something that’ll change the world. You mark my words.”

“If we’re not careful, we’ll be raising the next Ted Bundy or something.”

I didn't know who that was, but maybe it was a cool arsonist, because that was what I was becoming. Daddy Gray said that arson was in my blood, and it must be, because fire was so thrilling, and I couldn't wait to make some again.

“Dory, you're the one teaching him stalking and stuff.”

Daddy Dory was quiet for a moment. “He is amazing though, isn't he? We can't let this asshole from next door crush his spirit. He's going to change the world, like you said. It's up to us to make sure he does it in a positive way. That means we don't let assholes with fucking fence obsession get in his way, or under his skin.”

“Fuck his fence, Dory. That thing looks like a bag of shit anyway. He's lucky we don't insist he replaces the whole thing. It's on his side.”

The fence. It all came back to that stupid fence, didn't it? I already hated it, because it was right there in the way, keeping me from Aneka. And now it was the cause of the yelling, and making mum cry.

I walked to the back window in the living room, and stared out at the fence. It would be better if it wasn't there anymore. Then nobody could get mad about it, right?

I heard my dads go into the kitchen to talk to mum, and then they all went upstairs, leaving the cookies half mixed. If they were going for some grown-up time, it was like they were giving me room to do what had to be done. I gathered up dad's bag, his 'arson kit' as he called it, and then I headed outside.

5

Blaze



IT WAS MAGNIFICENT! It was my best fire yet. Daddy Gray was going to be so proud. I carefully squirted the petrol all over the wood as far up as I could reach. He'd taught me how to make sure I didn't cover myself in it at the same time, because that would be 'very bad' as he liked to say.

I picked up the battery powered firelighter, and lit it at one end, then ran the length of the fence, lighting it in several more spots. It was beautiful, watching the flames as they started to spread across the areas where the petrol had soaked in. From there, the rest of the wood started to burn too.

I could hear the shouty man again, but I didn't care about his words. The flames were too bright and alive, and magical, and I couldn't stop watching them as they ate up the fence that caused all the arguments. This would put a stop to it making everyone mad!

The heat from the fence was so intense, that I could feel it making my cheeks sting, but I didn't want to back away from its heat.

"Jesus Christ!" Someone grabbed me and pulled me back away from the fence, separating me from that connection I felt with the fire I'd created. The way it warmed me, and welcomed me closer.

"Blaze, what the hell did you do?!" It was daddy Dory holding onto me, and mum was standing in the doorway, both hands up at her mouth, her head shaking back and forth, but it was daddy Gray I was watching.

He was standing closer to the fence than we were, and he wasn't wearing a shirt. He must have been so hot standing so close, but he seemed to be in a daze as he watched it burn.

Icy cold water suddenly started spraying over the fence, or what was left of it, and daddy Gray let out a string of curses, and fell back a few steps.

“What are you doing?!” He yelled at the man on the other side, the evil man who was trying to douse the flames I'd given life. He was killing them. *Killing my fire.*

“Stop him, daddy, stop him! He's killing it!” Daddy Dory groaned, and pulled me further back, even as I fought him, trying to get back to my beautiful magical fire.

“Dammit, Gray, look what he did!”

“Yeah, it was perfect until that fucker started putting it out like that. What an asshole. He should have let the whole thing burn.” He patted my shoulder. “That was nice work, kid. Epic flames.”

“For fuck's sake, Gray! This is exactly what I'm talking about! You don't praise him for this, because it's a fucking crime! You don't say well done when your kid destroys someone else's property! If they call the cops, we're fucked!”

Daddy Dory started marching me back into the house, with daddy Gray behind him, muttering about 'killing the ethereal light'. The garden had been lit up with my 'epic flames' as daddy Gray called them, but by the time we were back in the

house, the garden was unnaturally dark after that much brightness.

“Dammit, Gray. This is bad, this is so bad!” Mum was freaking out, pulling at her messy blonde hair as she peered out through the door. The mean man next door was yelling again, so daddy Gray kicked the door closed.

“*Admittedly, this is a bit of a fuck up,*” daddy Gray said finally, and both mum and daddy Dory started yelling at him. He held both hands up.

“Blaze, son. I’m so proud of the amazing fire you made out there. It was fucking stunning, *yes, yes, I’m getting to that part.* The thing is, kid, you can’t go setting fires in your own garden. This is shit we do at carefully scouted locations, and only when we know we can get away with it. There’s no hiding this one. That bastard next door is going to-”

A heavy fist pounded on the front door, and daddy Gray sighed. “He’s going to do *that*. Dory, I swear to god, you’re gonna let me punch him this time, right?”

Mum pushed past all of us and closed the door, shutting us out from the hallway as she went to answer the door to the mean man.

“Will he hurt mum?”

My dads looked at each other, and daddy Dory pushed me in daddy Gray’s direction.

“Make it clear he can’t do this again, Gray. I’m going out there to back Wilma up.”

As soon as daddy Dory left the room, daddy Gray crouched in front of me, and made me look at him, because I was starting to feel like I'd messed up, and I was scared I might cry.

“Hey, look at me, kid. It's okay, you hear me? We still love you, no matter what mistakes you might make, especially when those mistakes happen because we failed you. Dory's right for once, but don't tell him because he's already too smug. This wasn't the right course of action, but I understand that it felt right at the time. We're so alike, kiddo, we really are. I would have done exactly what you did, but as enticing as it is to make things burn, we must always remember our three rules. Remember those?”

I nodded, feeling a lump in my throat, because I'd forgotten the rules, hadn't I? All I'd cared about was getting rid of the fence so I could see Anneka. Daddy Gray brushed his thumbs under my eyes.

“It's okay, honestly, kid. Don't get sad about it. Don't be afraid. Can you tell me the three rules, so I know you remember them?”

I nodded again, and took a deep breath.

“Never where people might get hurt, never anywhere we might get caught, and never without you there to keep me safe.”

He smiled, cupping the back of my head as he leaned forward and kissed my forehead.

“Exactly, Blaze. That’s my boy. Mistakes happen, especially when emotions get involved. I think I know why you did this tonight, and why it made sense to you. Just remember our three rules in future, and you’ll never go wrong. I’m proud of you for creating a contained, safe fire. Just... let’s not do it so close to the house next time.” He grinned and patted my shoulder as he stood up again.

“Why don’t I take you up to bed and tuck you in, while that dickhead yells some more?”

I couldn’t sleep for hours after I went to bed, because all I could see was the beautiful flames I’d created, before they were so cruelly destroyed by her father.

I wished she’d been out there, and had seen what I’d done for her. It was all for Anneka, and now all I could do was try to sleep, knowing that she’d at least be there in my dreams again.



ANNEKA

I STILL COULDN’T BELIEVE that Blaze had literally burned down our fence! My dad was absolutely furious, and went back around there to yell at his parents again, but I was a little excited by it.

I’d never seen fire like that before. I’d never watched something burn, and it was terrifying, but also thrilling. Like, it was really hard to not watch it burn. My mum wasn’t impressed, but wasn’t angry like dad, but he was angry enough for both of them.

“They’re not fit parents! You know what they said to me? Do you, Jamie? Maybe I should have kept my fence in a better state. Maybe my fence was due to be replaced. Basically, they’re saying it’s my fault that the fence burned. Like it wasn’t that little shit of theirs playing with matches. Those kids of theirs should be in care, because they aren’t being raised right!”

I felt so awful for the family next door, because sometimes people just make mistakes and yelling at them doesn’t fix it.

“Dad, I-”

“Go to your room, Anneka. It’s past your bedtime.” I didn’t hang around or argue, because I didn’t want any more yelling. As it was, when I went to bed, I had to hold my pillow against my ears to try and shut out the arguing downstairs.

I couldn’t help wondering what had possessed Blaze to burn the fence like that, because it had only made things so much worse.

My door flew open, and filled my dark bedroom with light.

“You stay away from that boy next door, Anneka, you hear me? He’s bad news. I won’t have him dragging you into his craziness too.” My dad waited until I nodded before he left again.

I wasn’t sure I even wanted to be friends with Blaze, and his weird interest in my hair, but now that I was being ordered not to, I had to be doubly careful that I didn’t go in the garden and bump into him.

Maybe if I did as I was told, my dad would stop yelling at me for a while. It wasn't like we were really friends anyway, was it?

6

Blaze (aged eleven)



IT HAD BEEN A month since the fire in the garden, my beautiful fence fire, and it had lost me the one thing I wanted most. *Anneka*.

All I'd wanted was to see her more, talk to her more, touch that glowing hair of hers. It was like a physical need to be closer to her.

Every time she was out in the garden, and I stepped outside, she quickly picked up her things and went inside. There was a small fence in between our gardens for a week or so, and then a new fence was built, taller than the last, and with no convenient little holes to snoop through.

I hadn't been at the same school as her yet, but after the school year ended, I knew that when it started again in September, I'd be at the same school, walking the same halls, and it'd be harder for her to avoid me.

"Hey, kid. You've still got birthday money to spend. Wanna go out for a bit?" Daddy Gray sat next to me on the doorstep beside that horrible new tall fence.

I shrugged, feeling so sad that I couldn't spend time with *Anneka*.

"I'm sorry, Blaze. I know you miss seeing her, but her dad's a total asshole. He thinks keeping her away from you is necessary, when he's a much bigger prick than any of us."

I groaned, resting my chin on my knees, with my arms wrapped around them.

“Maybe she hates me now, dad. I mean, I made her dad so mad when I burnt the fence. I’m such an idiot.”

Daddy Gray tutted at me, and scruffed up my light blonde hair. He was always doing that, and it was more annoying now that I’d been using mousse to try and make it look cooler. I was going to be in senior school when I went back in September. It was time to look the part.

“Dammit, dad.”

He laughed. “Look, just don’t take that asshole’s behaviour to heart, okay? And look... she’s playing hard to get now, but you’ll soon be in the same school, won’t you? It’ll be pretty hard for her to dodge you there, and besides, I think it’s for her dad’s benefit that she’s staying away. I bet he told her to stay away from you. Like that shit ever works.”

Mum called dad in then, so he patted my shoulder, and headed inside, and then daddy Dory sat with me instead.

“You okay?”

I shrugged again. “I miss Anneka.”

He sighed, nodding his head when I looked at him.

“I figured as much. Look, I’ve been there, Blaze, and it sucks, but if it’s meant to be, you’ll end up together anyway. It’s the natural order of things. I think your dad wants to take you out tonight to do what you guys do that makes you come home all smoky.” He never just outright said it. Burning things. Setting fires. *Arson*. It was the biggest thing that daddy Gray and I had in common, and I loved it.

“I’d like that.” Daddy Dory looked worried, but nodded again.

“See if he can’t cheer you up a bit, eh? Girl trouble, son, it never ends until you find the right one, and even then, sometimes they don’t feel it too.”

And that’s why they kidnapped mum, wasn’t it? She didn’t feel it at first either. I didn’t mention that, because I was enjoying reading her diaries too much, and I knew daddy Dory and mum would take them away.

“Oi, kid! Let’s go burn some shit up!” Daddy Gray had that wide grin on his face that always appeared when we were going to make fire. I couldn’t wait!



ANNEKA

STAYING AWAY FROM BLAZE had been easier than I thought. Once the new fence was up, we couldn’t see each other anyway, which meant I didn’t have to keep missing the sunshine by going inside every time he came out into the garden.

Since it was the summer holidays, we were going to France for a week, to visit some friends of my parents, and I was so excited to be going abroad!

I knew that when we came back, and school started again, he was probably going to be moving up to my school, unless he was going to some other secondary somewhere. Did I hope he

was coming to mine, or was it easier if he ended up somewhere else?

There was something wrong with him, I could tell from the first day we spoke. He made me nervous, but I didn't understand why. His repeated requests to touch my hair were really creepy too. Maybe it would just be better if he went elsewhere.



Dear Diary

Tomorrow we're going to France for a whole week, and I'm so excited, because then dad won't be so angry anymore. I think if he doesn't have to look at the fence, even though it's all nice and new, he might calm down a bit.

It didn't help that he'd tried to make Blaze's family pay for it, but I'd overheard the blonde daddy's response. He told my dad to go fuck himself with a pineapple! I'd never heard anyone say something like that before, but it almost made me giggle out loud, and then dad would have known I was listening.

I think Blaze's dads were probably pretty cute when they were young, but now they're just old, and also they seemed to like touching each other in ways I thought only mums and dads did. I saw them once from my bedroom window.

The blonde daddy marched up to the dark haired daddy and they argued for a minute, and then the blonde daddy grabbed the other daddy and started kissing him! I've never seen two

men kissing, but it went on for ages, and then they went into the house, so I don't know what happened after that.

Does that mean that Blaze's dads love each other as well as loving his mum? If we were still allowed to be friends, I'd have asked him about it. I'm sure he wouldn't have minded that.

Still, I hope they're all going to be okay, because I overheard dad telling mum that he's reported their family to the council, and also something called child protection. I think that means they might get investigated or something. I'm pretty upset with my dad for doing that. They don't mean any harm. Being different doesn't mean wrong, right?

7

Blaze



DADDY GRAY TOOK ME out that night, as soon as it was dark enough to be able to sneak somewhere and burn it. As usual, we dressed in black clothes, including black hoodies with our blonde hair tucked away.

“Ready, kid? This place has been abandoned for a few years, and I checked it out this morning to make sure nobody’s inside, but what do we do before we start?”

I knew this part, because he was always really strict about this.

“Check again to make sure nobody’s inside.”

“That’s my boy. You wait here by the door. Don’t go anywhere. I’ll check it out and be right back. This’ll be your biggest one yet. Are you excited?”

Was I excited? This building was bigger than our old house, so damn right I was excited! I stood impatiently by the door, watching for anyone passing by the crumbling building. We were out in the country a bit, so the most we’d have to worry about would be a car passing, but I hadn’t seen any since we arrived.

“Okay, all good. Now, I’ve brought plenty of accelerant with me, and this place is full of old wooden furniture and stuff, so there’s plenty to burn. What else did I check for first?”

I picked up the large bag, after dad dug out the bottles of firemaking fluid.

“Things that go bang.”

He laughed, patting me on the head.

“Exactly. We like things that go bang, but only when we know they won’t go bang in our faces. Let’s go!”

We made our way through the single floor building, covering everything that might burn with the fluid in the bottles dad held. We also tossed old newspapers around too, which dad dribbled the fluid on, because that would help the fire travel between the furniture items faster.

Once we were ready, dad sent me outside to keep watch, and a moment later he came running from the building with a huge grin on his face.

“Light the paper by the door, kid. I’ve started it further in too.” He never let me set fires deep inside buildings, but I was allowed to set things on fire just inside the door. See, daddy Dory thought he was careless, but he really wasn’t. He was always watching to make sure I was safe.

“That’s it, Blaze. Fucking beautiful, look at that.”

The flames were already starting to lick at the wooden door frame, and from further in the building we could see a glow, as the fire started to take hold. It was an amazing feeling, knowing that we’d made everything burn like that. That we were the ones powerful enough to burn a building to the ground.

“How’s that, kid? Can you hear the flames starting to roar? Isn’t it the most beautiful sound?”

It was. It was magical. I watched as the night sky started to light up around us, with flames and beautiful burning. The smoke in the air catching at the back of my throat, along with that crackling roaring sound, it was all there was. Nothing else existed at that moment, until small flares of darker red flames licked here and there, reminding me of Anneka and her fiery hair.

The fire started to curl around the outside of the doorway, and dad caught my arm, nudging me back a step, as it crept closer to us. While his focus was on me, he missed the one thing we should have been more aware of. *The bag*. His bag of firemaking kit. It was close enough that the flames were reaching for it. He had the bottles of fluid tucked back in there, but also the canisters for blowtorches. They would definitely go bang!

I lunged out of his grip to try and catch the handle of the bag before the flames reached it, and he yelled out, throwing himself in front of me.

As he turned to chew me out for getting too close, I caught sight of the scariest thing I'd ever seen.

His arm was on fire.



ANNEKA

I WAS WOKEN BY my dad yelling again, and crept to my door to listen to what was going on.

“They’re making a hell of a racket out there. They’re the worst neighbours we’ve ever had.”

Oh no. I wondered what had happened with Blaze’s family now, to set him off like that. I tiptoed back to my window and checked the back garden, but there was nobody out there, and definitely nothing on fire this time.

Mum and dad’s window faced out to the front of the house, and so did the spare room, so I crept out of my room, checking to make sure my parents weren’t in the hallway, and then through the dark room beside theirs.

At the window, I looked outside to see Blaze’s dads outside. It looked like the dark haired one was helping the blonde one into the car, and Blaze and his mum were... *were they crying?*

I wanted to find out what was wrong, but I couldn’t get out there without my parents catching me, and I knew I’d be in trouble for even trying, but what could be so awful that they’d be that upset? Was it one of the littler children in the family? Were they sick or injured? I watched as Blaze’s pregnant mum hugged him, waving to his dads as they sped away in their big four wheel drive car.

I carefully pulled the window open, doing my best not to make a sound and alert them. I could just about pick up a few words from them, but it wasn’t much. I definitely heard the words ‘fire’ and ‘burned’. What had happened to them?

They disappeared inside and there was nothing more I could do, but return to my own room, doing my best to ignore the angry muttering coming from my parents’ room.

Once in my own room, I picked up my diary and pen.



Dear Diary

Something went wrong with Blaze's family tonight. I have no idea what it was, but it looked bad. They were crying, Blaze and his mum, and his dads rushed out in the car like it was an emergency. I heard them mention fire and something being burned. Did Blaze burn down another fence? Or was it worse this time? Is he going to be in trouble for it?

I know he can be creepy at times, and his whole family can be a bit strange, but I really hope they're all okay. I don't want anything bad to happen to them. Even if it did set dad off again. He never used to be this angry. Ever since they cut his hours at work, he's been losing his temper more and more. I miss the way he used to be. Will he ever be like that again?



I didn't feel like writing any more tonight. Every time I focused on how awful it was becoming at home, it made me too sad to keep writing.

Blaze's family might have been a little different from mine and my friends' families, but at least they seemed happy. Happy sounded like fun to me.

8

Blaze



IT WAS A SCARY night. What had started off so beautiful and exciting had turned into a nightmare. After dad's arm caught fire, he managed to stop it burning by throwing himself on the ground and rolling until it went out. By the time he was sitting up again, I could tell that it wasn't just his clothes that were burned.

His eyes were squeezed tightly shut, and he was breathing really fast, his hand on the other arm clenched into a fist. The burned arm was hanging by his side like he didn't even want to move it.

“Dad?”

He groaned and held up his other hand.

“Gimme a minute, kid.”

He took longer than a minute, sitting there breathing in that funny way, like he wanted to cry or something. It was terrifying, seeing my dad in so much pain like that.

“Dad?”

He nodded, rubbing his one hand over his face before he opened his eyes and looked at me.

“Here's what we're gonna do, kid. We're gonna get in the car, and I'm gonna drive us home. Right now. We can't stay and watch anymore.”

I watched as he struggled to his feet, using just the one arm to push himself up.

“The bag's burning.”

He caught my arm with his good hand and shoved me along in front of him.

“In the car. *Quickly.*”

When he climbed into the car, he let out a sharp hissing sound, and rested his head back for a moment.

“Should I call mum and dad?”

“No! We’re going there right now. Look, I’m gonna need you to put the car in drive for me, as soon as I’m ready, okay? Thank fuck it’s an automatic.” He showed me what to do and then we were driving, and he was driving faster than normal. He was still breathing funny, and I was so scared.

I couldn’t bring myself to look at his burned arm again, even though it was the arm closest to me. I’d had a quick glance at the time, and knew that the fabric of his hoody was melted and sticking to his skin. *It was horrible.*

“Blaze, when we get home, I want you to run in and tell your dad I need him, okay?”

I nodded, feeling tears burning my eyes, because I was so scared. We’d never been burned before when we went out to make fire, and I didn’t know what to do.

“Blaze, hey, it’s okay. This was my fault, okay? I wasn’t being careful enough.”

“I got too close. You were trying to protect me.” Tears rolled down my cheeks then, and I felt ashamed of crying like a baby when dad was the one in pain.

“Hey, look at me. I’m okay, Blaze. It’s just... it’s just a little burn, okay? We’ll rub a bit of butter on it, and it’ll be fine.”

“You need to go to hospital, dad.”

He shrugged, and then let out a string of curses I knew I’d get grounded for using.

“Okay, we’re just at the top of our street. Remember, as soon as I park up, run in and get your dad, okay?”

As soon as the car stopped moving, I ran to the front door, and started banging my fists on it, my tears making the door blurry. I had no key, because it was on dad’s keyring in the car. My chest was burning with how frightened I was. I started yelling for mum and dad as I kept banging on the door.

“Jesus, Blaze! What’s... are you okay? Where’s your dad?”

Daddy Dory crouched in front of me, holding onto my shoulders as he questioned me.

“In... the... the car... he... he... he’s hurt.”

“Fuck! Wilma, stay with Blaze and the others, okay? I’ll see how Gray is.”

“Oh god, I hope he’s okay. Please let him be okay,” mum whispered, tears rolling down her cheeks, as she watched dad run to the car and open the passenger door.

“Fuck! No, don’t be ridiculous! Get back in the car!”

Daddy Gray was struggling out of the car, and daddy Dory was trying to stop him, running around the other side.

“Jesus fuck, Gray! I need to get you to A&E right now! How are you even walking right now? You must be in agony! Get in the passenger side! Wilma, I’ve gotta take him to the hospital. You guys get to bed. I’ve got this.”

“Jesus, Dory! It’s just a fucking burn, I’m fine!”

“Get in the fucking car, Gray. Don’t try me right now. Don’t even fucking try.”

Daddy Dory practically shoved daddy Gray in the car, but he was careful of that burned arm. He helped him with the seatbelt, and then he ran around to get into the driving seat, and they left.

I was shaking and crying like a baby.

“It’s my fault, mum.”

Mum hugged me tight against her big rounded belly.

“Don’t be silly, sweetheart. Your dad knows the dangers of what he does.”

“The... the bag was going to catch fire, and I reached for it. That’s why he got burned. He was saving me!”

“That’s his job as your dad, Blaze. Let’s get inside and get to bed. I think we both need a hot cocoa first. Just to calm our nerves. Come on.”



They were gone so long that I fell asleep. Mum was snuggled up on my bed with me, while we waited for them to get home,

and I didn't even know they were until I realised I could hear whispers in my room.

“Fucking stubborn bastard wouldn't stay. They wanted to keep him in.”

Mum gasped, pushing up from the bed.

“Where is he? I've been so bloody worried.”

“It's bad, Wilms. Seriously, he's probably gonna need skin grafts or something later. His clothes were melted into his skin.”

Mum made a choked sound and when I opened my eyes, daddy Dory was holding her tight against him.

“Where's dad?” I asked, sitting up and rubbing at my eyes.

“He's in our room, son. Don't worry, he'll be fine.” That sounded like the opposite of what they'd been saying before they realised I was awake.

“I need to go see if he needs anything,” mum muttered, coming back to kiss my forehead before she left the room. I started to push the bedding away.

“No, stay here, Blaze. It's late and you need to sleep.”

“I can't sleep, dad. I don't know how I even fell asleep before. I need to know I didn't hurt him too bad.”

Daddy Dory sighed, and took mum's place on the bed, tucking me against his side.

“You're not to blame for anything, Blaze. Your dad explained what happened, and it was just really bad luck. I

know you're both really careful when you're out setting fires."

He rolled his eyes then as I looked up at him. "I know, I'm talking about arson like it's a fun father son pastime, but I know you both love it, so who am I to judge?"

"It makes me feel grown up, like I'm in charge of something, even though dad never lets me near... *I messed up, didn't I?* He's hurt because I messed up." Dad hugged me tight as I started to cry like a baby again, feeling ashamed the whole time for being so pathetic when my dad was the one really hurt.

Daddy Gray had always told me how important safety was when it came to fire, and I now understood that in the most horrifying way.

I hoped dad would still want to set fires with me when he was better, because I knew we both craved the flames too much to give it up. I really wanted a chance to prove to him that I could keep us both safe next time.



The next morning, I crept into my parents' room, after mum and daddy Dory woke up and went down to make breakfast.

Daddy Gray was sleeping, his arm wrapped in bright white bandages and resting on a cushion beside him. I watched him for a few minutes, wishing I could talk to him, but not wanting to wake him, because surely if he was sleeping, he must not be in pain, right?

He suddenly squeezed his eyes tighter and then they popped open, and he moved a little before he gasped out that word I'm not allowed to use, but know one day I'll use a lot.

“Dad?”

He rubbed his face roughly with his good hand and finally focused on me.

“Hey, kid, what's up?”

I tiptoed a little closer. “I'm sorry I made you get hurt.”

He sighed and reached for me with his good arm, so I walked around and climbed up beside him, sitting down as he grabbed my shoulder and squeezed it.

“I told you this wasn't your fault, Blaze. I know what we do is dangerous, and I took my eye off the fire like an idiot. This is all on me. Never ever think anyone blames you for this. Nobody does, you hear me?”

“But you were saving me, if I'd just been smarter, this would never have happened.”

He shook his head again, moving his good arm so he could struggle up to sit against the headboard. He groaned and took a few slow breaths after, because he was clearly in pain now.

“Dad-”

“No, you listen while I speak, okay? You're a good kid, *despite my best efforts*,” he grinned and winked at me, and I couldn't help a small smile in response.

“I’ve been setting fires since I was your age, and I’ve made some big mistakes over those years. P... people died once, and that was *my* fault. Do you understand why I’m so big on being safe? It’s dangerous, and well... *okay*... some people insist it’s a crime, but whatever. The point is that when you have hobbies as dangerous as this, it can get you hurt. I almost made it to forty five without a bad burn, so I think I was just overdue.”

I was shaking my head, and he grabbed my shoulder again.

“Blaze, I’m serious. I know the risks, and it was my responsibility to keep me safe, not yours. Jesus, if you hadn’t gone for the bag, I would have. Do you get it? We both knew the bag was a risk, and that was my mistake. I stuffed the bottles back inside and I left it too close. Either way you look at this, I’m the fuckup, okay?”

“Don’t swear at our children, Gray,” mum stood in the doorway shaking her head.

Dad shrugged. “I’m hardly corrupting him, Wilma-ma, look what house he lives in.”

She rolled her eyes, and brought him what was in her hands. Water and some pills.

“Thank fuck. Am I getting coffee too? Fuck me, babe, you shouldn’t be waiting on me. You’re about ready to drop a whole mass of babies. Where’s Dory? Oi Dory! Get up here and nurse me like a good boy!”

9

Anneka



DAD WAS LOADING THE car with our suitcases, and it was parked down the road because ‘some asshole blocked our drive’ last night. He was angry about that, but then angry seemed to be his usual way these days.

Mum was in the house finishing up whatever it is that mums do when you’re going away, so I leaned against the front wall, wanting to be ready when dad shouted for me.

“Hi.”

I turned around to see Blaze standing by his front door, so I glanced over at dad to make sure he couldn’t see me, before I moved back up the front garden to stand closer to Blaze. He looked so sad, and I wondered if something worse had happened to his dad overnight.

“Hi. You look worried, is everything okay?”

He shrugged a little, glancing back at his front door.

“Dad got hurt last night, that’s all. They’re saying it’s not my fault, and it’s making me so mad, because of course it was.”

“Oh god. Is he okay?” It had to be the blonde dad, from what I’d seen, right?

He stepped closer to the wall, his eyes drifting to my hair for a moment, reminding me of that weird thing about him. Well, one of many.

“Blaze?”

He sighed, shoving his hands in his jeans pockets as he rested his hip against the wall.

“He says he is, but I heard my mum and dad talking about him needing skin grafts. I looked it up, and I know it means his burns are worse than they’re making out.”

“Burns? Oh my god, what happened?”

“It was my-”

“Oi, get away from my fucking daughter, you little freak!” I gasped, backing up as dad appeared at the gate. He was glaring at Blaze, and if he had been looking at me like that, I’d have been terrified, but Blaze? Yeah, not so much. He raised his eyebrows at my dad like he wasn’t afraid.

“I’m not so little anymore, and one day I’ll be bigger than you. Remember that.”

Oh! I couldn’t believe he was talking to my dad like that. Dad’s fists clenched, and he strode past our gate to Blaze’s. I wanted to grab Blaze and make sure my dad couldn’t get to him, because he looked like he wanted to hit him or something!

“Listen here, you little shit-”

“I’m all ears, neighbour, but if you’re gonna be an asshole, you better aim it this way, or aren’t you man enough to do that?”

Blaze’s dark haired dad was standing in the doorway with his arms folded. He was a bit taller than my dad, and younger. I had a feeling dad wouldn’t want to get into a fight with him.

“Keep him away from my daughter. I won’t be responsible for my actions if he comes near her again.”

Blaze's dad strode down the path, standing right on the other side of the gate, even as my dad took a hurried step back.

“Threaten my son again, and I will *absolutely* be responsible for mine. You're a nasty piece of work, but we've tolerated your shit for an easy life. That ends now. One more threatening word, or even a nasty look in the direction of anyone in my family, and I'll show you who you're really living next door to. Trust me when I say you really don't wanna know.”



BLAZE

DADDY GRAY MIGHT ALWAYS seem like the one who'd face off with anyone to defend us, but that just meant that people never expected my other dad to do it. I loved seeing how Anneka's dad backed off when dad stepped in like that.

She actually looked impressed, and as I saw that look on her face, I realised I wanted to be the one making her look like that instead.

“We're leaving.” Her dad started yelling at Anneka and her mum, and they left without another word to my dad or me.

“Are you okay?”

Dad grabbed my shoulder lightly until I looked at him. I'd been watching their car drive away, feeling that distance between Anneka and me growing, until I felt sick in my stomach. Where were they taking her?

“Blaze?”

“Oh. Yeah, I’m fine. He’s a complete bell-end, right?” Dad burst out laughing, shaking his head at the same time.

“Yeah, exactly that. If he ever talks to you like that again, you come and find me, okay? I’m not having him yelling at you, and calling you anything other than your name. You deserve to be treated with respect, okay?”

I pushed my hair out of my eyes and shrugged.

“I mean, I suppose he’s still mad about his fence. I thought it’d make everyone stop being angry at each other, but he’s definitely still mad. I keep messing up, don’t I?”

Dad shook his head, nudging me back into the house, and closing the door.

“He’s always angry, that guy. Needs to get lai... he uh, he’s a piece of shit. They’d be better off without him, if I’m honest. Wouldn’t be surprised if he gets violent with them both.”

I gasped, grabbing dad’s arm in panic. “He hurts her? We have to stop him!”

Dad groaned, slapping a hand against his forehead.

“Jesus. No, that’s not what I mean, son. I’m sure he’s just a bit angry now and then. Nothing for you to worry about at all. Go and get washed up for lunch, and I’ll go help mum in the kitchen.” I started to leave, but heard him when he walked into the kitchen, and hovered in the hall.

“What was that about?” Mum asked him, and he groaned.

“I sometimes forget he’s just a kid, you know? He’s so fucking smart. That bastard next door was yelling at him, so I had to put him in his place. Thing is,” he went quiet for a moment. “I’m worried he now thinks the guy hits his wife and daughter.”

“My god, Dory, why would he think that? What did you... my god, what if he goes doing something stupid like you used to?”

They went really quiet after that, so I went and washed my hands for dinner, but the whole time we were eating dinner, all I wanted to do was get back to mum’s diaries and see if I could figure out what it was that dad used to do, that they were afraid I’d do too.

It wasn’t until I’d gone to bed that night that I was finally able to dig out mum’s diaries, and catch up on where I’d got to. It didn’t refer to what my dad had done, but it was a bit weird.



WILMA’S DIARY

Being pregnant is sort of fun, because it’s what we all wanted, but it hasn’t made them slow down at all. I love having sex with them, but it’s like they’re still trying to impregnate me, even though they already succeeded.

Are they trying to put extra babies in me? Dory still does that creepy thing where he pushes his cum back inside me as it slides out, and although it feels kinda nice, it’s just weird.

Gray has returned to form a bit, waiting for Dory to fuck me, before he insists on fucking Dory. At least Dory doesn't pretend he doesn't like it anymore. It's weird to think that they kidnapped me, and while Dory was raping me because he wanted me to have his baby, Gray was raping him too. What a fucked up way to get together.

I still wonder if I've just lost my mind. Do I feel like I belong with them? Yeah, because I know that I must be at least as messed up as them to enjoy the things they do. Is it normal though? I'm pretty sure it couldn't be further from normal. In any other circumstance, they should both be behind bars.

The main thing, the most important thing, is this amazing baby we somehow created amongst all of that cruelty and bizarreness. We had no idea which one of them would actually be the father, but it wouldn't matter, because we would all be parents.

Now I just can't wait to meet our child, but I have at least two months left before we do that. In some ways I'm looking forward to the break after the birth, because they'll have to stop fucking me for a while. At least I can watch the two of them with each other during that time.

10

Anneka



OUR HOLIDAY IN FRANCE was nothing like I'd expected. I thought we'd go out seeing the sights and eating in pretty restaurants, lots of bread with garlic, stuff like that.

Instead we were staying in some ugly old building, too far away from anywhere to see anything, except green fields that looked just like something we'd see in England.

That wasn't the strangest part though. The strangest part was when we were three days into our holiday, and dad told us the real reason we were there. He'd been offered a job there. He was moving there. *He. Not us.* He was moving there without us.

I couldn't believe my parents were splitting up, and dad was just dropping us in it like this. Mum was a mess, crying and shouting at him, and I was just numb. He was shouty and angry and I was half afraid of him, but he was still my dad. I couldn't even imagine him not being around anymore. And it wasn't even just like he'd be down the road, and I'd see him each week. He'd be in another country.

Suddenly our holiday was being cut short, because dad wanted to get us back home and start packing, and getting on with his new life. I had no idea how we'd even manage without him, because he'd always been there. Mum worked, but was it enough for us to keep living in the same house, or would we have to move too? Would we leave town and have to start again? Would I be taken away from my friends as well?

The whole journey home, the atmosphere in the car and the train was tense, and filled with mum's quiet crying, and I just wished that things would end faster, because this was a horrible place to be stuck in, with no idea what the future held for any of us.



BLAZE

DADDY GRAY WAS STUBBORN enough that he grudgingly agreed to go back to the hospital for more appointments, but insisted on being up and around in between. He kept saying he was no pussy, but I wasn't sure what cats had to do with being burned.

My mind was still caught up in the diary entries of mum's that I'd been reading. I knew my dads were close and that the three of them were together, but reading about how their relationship had started was just weird.

I mean, at eleven years old, I knew some things but not many. Not enough to understand exactly what some of it meant. I did know that 'rape' was a bad thing, but the fact that my dads had done that to mum and each other, and they were together, made me wonder if it wasn't really as bad as people said it was. It was confusing, but when I tried googling it, I had some weird stuff come up, mostly helplines and support groups, so it wasn't much help.

The other thing that was bothering me was Anneka being gone. Even though I hadn't been allowed to see her since the

fence fire, I'd still watched her from my bedroom window as much as I could, and I still thought about her all the time.

Having read mum's diaries, I realised that Anneka might have them too, and maybe I could find out more about her if I read them. The tricky part was getting into their house to read them, because they were away and it was locked up tight.

I was pretty sure I'd seen Anneka use a key that was hidden in a pretend rock in the garden before, so I waited until it got really dark after they'd been gone a few days, and I crept outside to find that key. It took me ages to find it, because the rock was hidden among others in a muddy patch, but once I had it, that tingle of excitement had me checking the street for anyone who might see me. *I was going in.* I'd find her room, find her diaries, and fill my head with her thoughts and wishes and dreams.

I checked my feet before I stepped up onto the welcome mat outside the door, because my dads had taught me to always be careful to leave no trace of myself behind, when I'm doing things I shouldn't.

My shoes were a little muddy, so I scraped them on the far edge of the step, before I risked muddying the mat. I turned the key in the door, and listened just in case there was an alarm, because I'd seen on TV that some people had those.

There were no beeping sounds, so I stepped inside and closed the door. The house was dark and too silent without people in it, but it was what I needed for right now. I dug my

small torch out of my pocket and switched it on, flashing it down the hall and up on the walls.

There were photos on the wall, so I carefully made my way off the inside mat, checking my shoes again with the torch before I went to look at the photos. Anneka as a little kid, probably my brother Ash's age, and then her at various ages after that.

Her hair was always that glowing red colour, although it was brighter when she was really small. Would it keep getting darker until it no longer glowed? Would it end up a muted red-brown like her mother's? Why did that make me feel a little cold inside? Her hair was what reminded me of fire, of burning flames, curling and flicking at the walls as it devoured everything. I shook my head, because I could almost hear daddy Gray's voice in my head when I thought about fire like that.

I dug out my phone, and took some photos of the pictures on the wall, documenting Anneka's life before she met me. I wished we'd grown up together, so I'd be in them with her.

I turned my attention to finding her bedroom, locating the stairs and heading up them, the thick carpet muffling any sound I might make. I could have done this with them sleeping, and they'd never know.

There were several doors, and it took two tries before I found the room that must have been hers. It was painted in purple and white, and I could smell her. That sweet perfume I'd caught scent of the few times I'd been close enough.

I headed straight for her pillow, pressing my face into it, the scent of flowers and apples filling my nose. It was faint enough that I had to press my face deep into it, but it was worth it to be able to smell her. I roamed her room, opening drawers, and trailing my fingers through her clothes, and even her underwear, which was mostly white and plain.

“Diaries... where would they be?” I checked under her bed, and there was nothing, but then I looked at her pillow again. Would she hide them there, where they were close to her? She could have taken them with her, but I figured if mum had loads, maybe she did too. Maybe I could read older ones, just to get a sense of who she was inside her own head.

“Yes!” There was a single diary under the pillow, and when I lifted it up, I pictured it in her small sweet hands, and sniffed it. I could smell her perfume again, and I liked how it made me feel. Sitting cross legged on the floor, I opened the diary to the start.

Anneka Wilson, age 13

That meant it was pretty recent, because she had only turned fourteen a few weeks ago. I decided to flip to the back of the diary, and started looking for my own name. Had she thought about me? Wondered about me? Did she like me too?

Blaze... there! Oh.



Dear Diary

Blaze was the one who set the fence on fire, and dad was so angry about it. I mean, not that he wasn't always yelling at us, but this really set him off. Thanks to Blaze being so obsessed with the fence, and doing something so crazy, I was paying the price.

I couldn't blame Blaze, could I? Technically he was just a kid, acting out for attention. He didn't realise what he was doing, because how could he know that my dad would take it out on mum and me? I think it might have been better if they'd never moved in next door to us. There was something weird about them, wasn't there? Who has three parents? Why do they all have weird names? Who compares hair to fire? It's all so weird. Isn't it?



I felt sick. She thought I was weird. She said I was just a kid. She thought my family was strange because we had more parents than most. Why was that weird? It made more sense, because there were more of them to look after us, and keep us safe. It was easier to have their attention when there were more of them.

I wasn't acting out for attention. I was trying to remove the thing that caused the arguments. But she said... she said he took it out on them. Did he hurt her? Did he hit her? My dad had suggested he did that, right? Was she safe with that horrible man in her life?

I read a few more entries, some not saying such mean things about me, and one that really worried me. Her dad had reported my family? What if the mean lady came back? She said I wasn't normal before. That was why we'd had to move here in the first place. Something to do with me being around other kids, like that would somehow make me 'normal'.

Suddenly I realised I could hear something downstairs. Voices. Oh my god. Did someone else break in? I sat up, shoving the diary back under her pillow as I stood. What should I do? Where should I go?

I suddenly realised I could hear Anneka's voice, and she was running up the stairs. Oh no! I glanced around her room in a panic, suddenly diving under her bed as she came in and slammed the door. She was breathing hard, like she'd been running. No wait, that wasn't it at all. *She was crying.*

She sat on the bed, her legs and feet so close to me that I could have touched them. She was crying so hard that she was gasping for breath, and everything in me made me want to climb out from under the bed to try and comfort her. To hug her. To try and make her happy again.

I almost did it. I was starting to edge out from under the bed when I remembered her diary. Those hurtful words of hers. Calling me and my family weird. Saying I was just a kid.

Just in time I realised that my sudden appearance wouldn't comfort her at all. It'd scare her. It'd make her think she was right about me. I couldn't let that happen, so I pressed my

hands over my ears, to try and drown out the sound of her pain and sorrow. If I couldn't help her, I couldn't bear to hear it.

11

Anneka



BY THE NEXT MORNING, dad had moved out. He loaded his car in the night, and just left. How could he just leave like that? How could he just walk away from his family, without a care for how we'd manage without him?

The holiday I'd looked forward to had turned out to be the most painful experience of my life. I felt like I hated him for what he'd done. I didn't want to hate my own father, but I couldn't help it.

He'd left mum broken-hearted, and left me without a dad. Did he even tell us where he'd be? Nope. He had his mobile phone, but when mum tried the number later that day, it was playing a message saying it had been disconnected.

How would we reach him? How could we tell him about the things that would happen in our lives? How would he know when I was back at school, or when I achieved things, or won things? How would we tell him anything?

"Annie, baby?" I got up from the sofa and went to the kitchen, where mum was warming some soup up for lunch.

"Yeah, mum?"

She pointed to the table, and I sat down as she served up some tomato soup with toast. She watched me start eating before she touched hers.

"I'm sorry about all this, my darling girl. None of this is your fault, you do understand that, right? This was all... it's a grown up thing. Your dad just needs to follow his new path now with his new job."

“He left us, mum. I’m old enough to understand that. He doesn’t want to be our family anymore, and he left. That’s why we can’t even text him now.”

She set down her spoon and sighed.

“I know. I’m just trying to make sure you don’t blame yourself for anything, because it wasn’t either of our fault. He hasn’t been happy for a while, and who knows, maybe this is what he needs now.”

“Why aren’t you mad at him? Why aren’t you screaming and calling him all kinds of horrible names? He abandoned us!” I couldn’t eat my soup. I shoved the bowl aside, and mum shook her head, pushing it back to me.

“Regardless of why he did what he did, we need to think about us now. I’m due for a promotion at work, which means more hours. That’ll mean a bit more money than I’m earning now. If we’re careful, we should be able to stay here and have enough to survive, but that means no wasting food, love. You need to eat, and we need to make sure we don’t waste things we can’t afford.”

I picked up my toast again, dipping it and taking a bite while I absorbed her words.

“Mum, are we going to manage? I’m scared that we won’t.”

Mum reached over and squeezed my hand, but she looked as worried as I felt.

“We’re going to be fine, baby, don’t you even worry about that. I’m going to make sure of it.”

and watch her sleep for a few moments, listening to her calm breaths in and out.

I was so tempted to stroke her lovely hair as she slept, but if she woke up, she'd scream, and I'd get caught. Never get caught; the most important rule my dad's had taught me.

I tiptoed downstairs, and made it outside just in time to see a light come on upstairs again. I was so scared I'd woken someone up that I ran back to my house, and let myself in with the key I'd taken from dad's keyring.

As I was closing the door, I saw the strangest thing. It was Aneka's dad, and he was carrying suitcases out to his car again. Were they going away again?

"I can't wait to hear this," daddy Dory said from behind me, making me jump and drop the key on the wooden floor with a clang.

He locked up the door, and guided me into the living room, pushing me gently onto the sofa.

"What have we always said about being outside alone at night, Blaze?"

I lowered my head, feeling guilty and ashamed, and even more frustrated that he'd been waiting for me.

"Blaze, I'm waiting."

"Never go out alone at night. I'm sorry, dad. I couldn't help it."

He leaned forward, sitting on the coffee table right in front of me.

“Tell me. We’re not going to bed until you do.”

I fidgeted with the key I’d picked up again, and he held out his hand, taking it from me.

“I noticed it was gone earlier, and then realised you were too. I was about to come looking for you, but then Gray told me where he saw you going. You’ve been in their house all night?”

He knew! My dads both knew I’d been over there, so why didn’t they come and get me?

“You knew I was there?”

He nodded. “Tell me what happened. When I saw that bastard pull up outside, I was ready to go and make a scene to give you time to get out, but Gray said you were smart enough to not get caught.”

“Her dad’s out there now, putting their stuff back in the car. I think they’re going away again, but I don’t know why they came back so early. Anneka was crying for hours.”

Dad looked worried, reaching over and squeezing my shoulder.

“That must have been very hard for you to listen to, were you in her room at the time? Yeah? I bet you wanted to comfort her, didn’t you?”

I nodded again, and he smiled. I think he even looked proud.

“She’s lucky to have you watching over her, son. If you’re going to do that again, please tell me first, so I’m not over here freaking out. Okay?”

“You mean you won’t stop me? Isn’t it wrong for me to be in their house without their permission?”

Dad grinned, stroking his bushy beard. “Some say it is, but I think it depends on your reasons. Were you doing harm over there? Did you steal things or break things?”

I shook my head rapidly. “Of course not.”

“Exactly. You were probably just trying to learn more about Anneka, right? So you can be there for her?”

It was like he was in my head. How did he know these things? I hadn’t even really understood them, but he was right.

“Is it like you and mum? Every time I ask how you met, you change the subject.”

Dad laughed, ruffling my hair up, finding it even funnier when I pushed his hand away.

“That’s it, kid. Let’s get some sleep before it’s morning already. I’ll get you a key cut tomorrow, so you don’t have to steal mine again, and... what?”

I dug my hand in my pocket and lifted out the key I’d taken from the rock.

“I forgot to put their key back!” I was going to get caught for sure! Dad smiled, but it was the kind of smile he got when daddy Gray was winding mum up.

“Tell you what, let me have that one too, and I’ll get one made for you. You know, just so you can make sure theirs is safely back in their hiding place before they realise it’s gone.”

“I’d have my own key?”

“It’d make it easier for you to go back in if you need to, wouldn’t it?” Yeah. My dads always had the best ideas.

12

Anneka



I SAT OUT ON the doorstep that afternoon, the day that we'd woken up to find dad had gone without us, and when I saw Blaze stepping outside, I realised I could safely talk to him now, couldn't I? It wasn't like he'd understand what I was going through, but maybe that was okay.

“Hi.”

I nodded at him, letting my hair fall in front of my face again as I went back to my thoughts. How could dad just walk away from us? Didn't he love me at all? People could fall out of love, but could they just stop loving their children?

“Are you okay?” Blaze was standing right in front of me when I lifted my head again, making me gasp because I hadn't realised he'd even moved.

“Sorry,” he whispered, pointing at the step beside me. “Can I?”

I shrugged, and he sat down beside me, his shoulder brushing against mine as he did.

“You seem sad.”

I nodded, finally lifting my head, and squeezing my eyes closed against the stinging tears I was trying to fight back.

“I thought you guys were away for a few more days yet,” Blaze said, not making it sound like a question but I think it was.

“Yeah... things changed.” I scrubbed the back of my hand over my eyes, not wanting to cry in front of him. He wouldn't

get it, would he?

“Your dad’s car’s gone, so I thought it was safe to say hi, but if he comes back, I’ll leave so he doesn’t get mad at you.” If he comes back. He was never coming back. The tears returned then, and I couldn’t stop them, lifting my knees and pressing my face against them as I cried.

A light touch on my shoulder surprised me, then that touch firmed up, stroking my upper back. I hadn’t expected Blaze to be comforting, but he was. He didn’t speak at all, just kept rubbing my back in soothing circles, until I finally stopped crying, just making weird hiccup sounds now and then.

“Is he coming back?” Blaze asked softly, and I shook my head.

“I’m sorry,” he said just as quietly. It was surprising just how that helped to ease a tiny bit of my pain. He wasn’t trying to make excuses for my dad leaving, or saying we’d be fine, or any of that stuff that grown ups would say. He was just sorry.

His hand moved when I finally lifted my head, and I actually missed the comfort of his touch, even though it was Blaze, and I was surprised he hadn’t tried touching my hair while he had the chance.

“How’s your dad? You said he got burned or something?” I asked finally, trying to think of something to say beyond all of the horrible stuff in my house.

He sighed, leaning his arms on his knees, his eyes on something in the garden. The rockery, maybe? He didn’t

realise it but hidden among those smooth rocks was our secret hiding place for the spare key. We rarely used it, but it was there.

“He’s still in pain, and they’re arranging more appointments to look at skin grafts. Apparently they take the skin from somewhere else on his body. He said he wants it to be his ass.”

A giggle rose up and I covered my mouth in shame. He just came out with something like that?

“Sorry. You... they use skin from there?”

Blaze suddenly smiled, shrugging his shoulders at the same time.

“Who knows. My dad comes out with some crazy stuff sometimes. I’m just glad he’s acting like he always does, because I was so scared.”

His smile was gone, and I suddenly wished I could put it back there, but curiosity was eating at me.

“How did it happen? It wasn’t when the fence caught fire, was it?”

Blaze shook his head, and I found myself watching his pale blonde hair rippling with the movement.

“It was uh... another fire.” He sighed, shrugging again. “We like to burn stuff.”



BLAZE

SHE LOOKED SHOCKED, BUT wasn't it a better look on her face than that sadness? I probably shouldn't have told her, but I felt like I could trust her, and besides, she'd seen my fire skills first hand, hadn't she?

“Burn stuff? Like when you burned the fence?”

I nodded, picturing our last amazing fire, which was perfect right up until the moment my dad's arm caught fire.

“Not fences though, normally. Buildings... it's intense, watching them burn. Knowing that we created the flames, that we were powerful enough that we destroyed it.”

Anneka suddenly smiled, and it was like the sun came out from behind the clouds, beaming down on me.

“Your name makes so much more sense now! Yours, and your brother and sister. You're all named for fire after all. I did think it sounded that way, but I couldn't figure out why anyone would do that.”

I grinned, wondering why it took so long for us to have a normal conversation like this, and why it felt so natural and real.

“Yeah, exactly. Daddy Gray picked our names, because of how much he loves fire.”

Anneka glanced at our house, then looked at me again.

“Why do you have two dads? Most kids only have one... or none.” Her smile had disappeared in an instant as she remembered her own situation. Suddenly I hated her father so

much more for the way he made her smiles go away. I wanted her to always be smiling.

“They don’t really tell us much about how they met, but it seemed normal to us, at least until we realised most other kids don’t have three parents. It works though, especially with mum expecting twins, and there being three of us already. Both of my dads help out with us and spend a lot of time with us.”

I was making it worse. I could see it happening, I could see her mood sinking back down to where it was when I came out to talk to her. Maybe that’s why I invited her to my house, even though it was probably a really weird thing to do. Besides, she wouldn’t say yes, would she?

“Okay.” *Oh.*

13

Anneka



THEIR HOUSE WAS SO normal, for a family so strange, with three parents and family outings to set fires.

“Oh hello, Anneka. Would you like a nice cuppa?” Blaze’s mum was so pretty, with the palest blonde hair, twisted up in a complex braided pattern. She rested a hand on her swollen stomach as she watched us come over to the counter.

“I’m okay, thanks, Mrs uh... Mrs...”

“Wilma. Just call me Wilma, and you remember Blaze’s fathers, yes?” She pointed behind her, and I watched them both walk into the room, looking surprised to see me there.

“Hi Anneka, I’m Gray and this is Dory. What are you two up to then? Going up to Blaze’s room, eh?”

“Gray! Take no notice of him please. He doesn’t have an off switch, believe me I’ve looked.” I didn’t really understand Dory’s comment, but I smiled anyway.

“I um...”

“Ignore them, love, they’re just being dicks. Do you want to sit up in Blaze’s room? The little ones are in their own room so they won’t bother you. I don’t think you want to stay down here with these two idiots hovering over you.”

His room? His parents would let me go up in his room with him? No way would my parents allow that. Well... my dad wouldn’t have, but he’d walked out, so it wasn’t up to him.

“Do you want to?” Blaze was watching me with a nervous look on his face, so I nodded, purely because I didn’t know

how to behave around all three of his parents.

He walked past his dads, and I followed, taking care not to bump into the blonde dad's bandaged arm. Burns? His entire arm and shoulder were bandaged, even the hand. How bad had it been?

He'd seemed pretty relaxed and wasn't acting like it was hurting though. In fact, I distinctly heard him telling Wilma to get off her feet and let them bring her a cuppa, but then he laughed and said, 'well, Dory will, babe'.

"Your parents seem nice," I said lamely, as I followed Blaze into his bedroom. It was smaller than mine, with a single bed, small bookshelf, and a wardrobe in it, and when I walked to his window, I could see down into his back garden, and mine.

"They're a bit embarrassing sometimes, but I love them. So, do you want to sit on the bed with me?"

I shrugged, and joined him, sitting with my back against the wall like he did.

"So... you don't have a TV in here?"

"Nah, I read most of the time." I got up to look at his books, but they were mostly fantasy type things about wizards and stuff, and not my kind of thing.

I caught sight of a book just under his bed, and pointed at it.

"Is that what you're reading right now?"

He hurriedly reached down and pushed it further under his bed, which was really weird, but then it was typical Blaze

behaviour, wasn't it?

“Nah. That's just something I found.”

“You keep a diary?”

He shrugged, sitting back on the bed, and staring at me.

“So... now we're friends, can I touch your hair?” *Ugh.*



BLAZE

WHY WAS SHE SO weird about it? I asked, and she said no, but I remembered hearing my dad's saying that no sometimes meant yes, so I got up from my bed and walked over to her, reaching up to touch it anyway.

She slapped my hand away, and said no again, but didn't that still mean yes? I tried again and she shoved me away from her, and ran out of my room. Why was she running from me?

“Hey... what's going on?” We nearly ran into daddy Dory, who was almost at the top of the stairs at that point.

“I'm going home,” Anneka snapped, shoving past him and running down the stairs. What just happened? I tried to follow and dad caught my arm.

“Hold up, son. Just a minute, don't run after her right now. She's upset.”

I pulled out of his grip and stomped back to my bedroom, catching the slightest hint of her perfume still lingering in there.

“Sit down and tell me what happened, Blaze.” I did as I was told, because dad wasn’t going away until I did.

“She said no, but I remembered you saying it sometimes means yes, so I ignored her.”

“Jesus fuck, Blaze, what did you do to her?” For the first time since daddy Gray got injured, I could see worry on dad’s face.

“I wanted to touch her hair, but she kept saying no.”

He rubbed at his beard for a moment, a deep frown on his face.

“Her hair... the hair on her head, right?”

What did that even mean? “Duh.”

He snorted, shaking his head as he stood up again.

“Okay, gotcha. Leave her alone for now, and let her calm down. She’ll get over it, son.”



About four hours later, we had a chance to prove that point, when mum made a loud noise, and then my dads were rushing around to pick up the bag they’d prepared for when the babies were coming. The babies were coming?

“Okay, Blaze, you know we have to take your mum in now. Don’t worry about the wet patch in the dining room, just ignore it for now. Your brother and sister are in bed already, and I’ve just spoken to next door, and Anneka’s going to come back and sit with you, because... well, we can’t leave you

alone, but she's a bit older. Jesus... I sound like a moron, but I'm freaking out. Aneka will be your sitter, so be nice to her and leave her hair alone, okay?"

Mum was making these pained noises, and then they were hurrying out of the house, hugging me and telling me to behave, and a minute later, Aneka was back.

She had a few books in her arms, and she looked at me like I was a stranger to her. Why was she being like that?

"I'm going to be here with you while your dads are with your mum. I can't believe she's having the babies now. Is it early?"

I shrugged, because it seemed like she'd been pregnant forever, but I never really thought about the fact that at some point this would happen, and things would change again.

"She'll be fine. It's not like she hasn't done it before, right?"

Aneka nodded, pushing the door closed, and marching past me to the living room.

"I'm going to sit here and read for a bit. Don't get up to anything you shouldn't."

She was acting like I was a kid and she was a grown up, and I didn't like it one bit.

"Why are you being weird?"

"I'm not the weird one, Blaze. Look, I'm your neighbour, and now your sitter, but we're not exactly friends, are we? We're years apart in age, and we're so different."

“But we *are* friends, I know we are.”

Anneka pushed that glowing hair back with both hands, while I wished they were my hands stroking that golden red cloud of hair.

“Look, me and mum, we really need money right now, and your parents are paying me to be here, so please don’t mess this up for me. What time do you normally go to bed? It’s almost nine now.”

I shrugged, determined to not be sent away by her, because she was in my house again, and why couldn’t I just touch her hair for a moment?

14

Anneka



HOW WEIRD WAS IT that a few hours ago I was here as Blaze's neighbour, or maybe even a friend, at least until he freaked me out with his obsession about my hair, and now I was here as his babysitter.

Most boys would probably be embarrassed about that, but not Blaze. I'm not sure he felt normal emotions like the rest of us. He simply sat beside me, and watched me read, and when I wasn't watching him, I could feel him leaning closer.

"Don't touch me."

"I don't want to touch you, Anneka. I just want to stroke your hair. It's so shiny."

"NO! I don't want you to, and it's weird, and I'm sure you should be in bed, so go on. Go to bed."

He actually smirked at me then. "You think you're in charge here? This is my house, Anneka. This is my world, and right now you're trapped in it with me."

What was going on? He was being so uber creepy now. I walked over to the house phone and picked it up.

"What are you doing?"

"Calling my mum. She'll come around and sit with me, while we wait for your dads."

"No!" He stood up, rolling his eyes at me.

"I'll go to bed, but just remember that I'm here, and I will touch your hair one day. Whether you want me to or not."

I shivered like something cold had just dripped down the back of my neck, because that determined look on his face was the creepiest thing he'd done yet. He really believed that, didn't he?

Blaze's dads didn't come home for hours, and it was only one of them who came home at all, the dark haired one, and by the time he walked in, I was jumping at every creak and sound I heard. I kept thinking Blaze was watching me, and every now and then I'd suddenly dart my head around to check the hallway for him, certain he'd be right there.

"Sorry we took so long, Anneka. Wilma's still hanging on to the babies, so I thought I'd better come home and stay with the kids until morning, and take them in with me. Apparently I fuss too much... god, what am I doing? Ignore me, it's been a crazy night."

"I hope it'll all be okay Mr... uh... Dory, I was happy to help out."

He dug his hand into his pocket and pulled out his wallet, counting out several ten pound notes.

"Here, honestly you saved our bacon tonight." Wow, that was almost double what they'd offered to pay before. Suddenly I was realising just how lucrative babysitting could be, especially here for them, even with Blaze freaking me out.

We really needed the money after all, and maybe I'd just been letting my nerves get the better of me. Blaze had said that creepy stuff, but he didn't come back down, did he?

“Any time, I’d love to help, and it’s so easy with me being right next door.” Dory grinned, walking me to the door.

“You’re a lifesaver, Anneka. I hope all three of them behaved themselves. Let me watch until you’re safe inside.”



BLAZE

DAD CHECKED ON ME after he let Anneka go home, and told me that the babies weren’t quite ready to come out yet, but that daddy Gray was staying with mum.

It was weird, because daddy Gray was the one who normally drove mum up the wall most of the time, but for some reason I think he annoyed her less than daddy Dory when she was pregnant. He tended to run around trying to stop her doing things. I’d never seen him around her when she was actually having babies, but I could only imagine he got worse then.

“I’ll grab a few hours here, and then we’ll all go and wait at the hospital, okay? I wanted you kids to all get some sleep so you don’t mind waiting around there. Everything okay tonight?”

I nodded, wanting to get back to mum’s diary entry, which was all about when I was born. It was weird reading about it like this, but it made me feel closer to my parents to see this side of their life. It was also giving me some great ideas for how to show Anneka how important she is to me.

“Okay, lights out in a minute, yeah?”

I nodded, watching dad leave my room, but just before he pulled the door closed, I called out.

“Dad?” He paused, poking his head through the gap in the doorway.

“Yeah?”

“Mum will be okay, right?”

He smiled, nodding his head at the same time.

“Yeah, son. She’ll be just fine. She’s getting pretty experienced at this stuff. I think we might just aim for triplets next time.”

“Next time?”

“Funny, you sound just like your mother.” He winked at me and closed the door, walking to their room to get some sleep.

I dug out mum’s diary and went back to reading about my birth, and then the next few entries, which talked about how they coped with a baby.

I even found a really interesting part later, which left me wondering just how much I didn’t know about my family.



WILMA’S DIARY

Tonight was intense and scary, but it also meant a lot to all of us. It was like the culmination of our bond as a family, plus of course, it was as Gray kept saying; ‘Blaze’s first blaze’.

My neighbour, the bitch who hit me the night they took me, the one who kept assuming I was sleeping with her creepy ass limp dick husband... well she got hers and the weirdest thing was that we walked in just after she accidentally killed the limp dick! What were the chances?

Dory and Gray really wanted to punish her for the way she'd treated me, and for the things she said about me to Dory the other night. Like Gray said, only they can call me a whore.

After Dory killed her, Gray set the house on fire again, and then we watched it burn for a few minutes. We had to leave when people started coming out of their own houses to check it out.

It was more exciting than I'd expected, and yet... should I really be bothered that we killed someone tonight? I know it didn't bother Dory, I mean... the guy's practically a serial killer at this point. I'm pretty sure they say three kills is serial killer territory, even though there's no signature or similarity between the murders.

Anyway, the really weird part though? We were back where it all started, my old house. The place I was kidnapped from. I never even bothered to look at the house. All that mattered was the four of us being there together, taking our revenge, and then going home to our little world.

Were we three psychos creating a new generation of nutjobs? Maybe, but at least our kids would have the love and support that none of us had. Nature versus nurture? We'll see.



They killed someone, and she said it. She said daddy Dory had killed other people, so that meant my parents were all murderers. Killers.

It should have freaked me out, and I guess if I were a normal kid, who... what was it that counsellor lady said? Oh... if I processed emotions like a normal child, it should bother me. Instead I was proud. My family didn't take any crap from anyone, and neither would I.

15

Blaze



SOME SAY THERE ARE defining moments in a person's life, moments that shape who they become. I know this because I sometimes watch *Criminal Minds* with my parents. Apparently it's not the best thing for a 'kid my age' to be watching, but you know what? It's really good.

Anyway, the twins were born and really small, and wrinkly and noisy, just like Ash had been, and Ember. Honestly, I didn't really care about that. They were family and that was all that mattered. They were both boys, so I had two more brothers, and daddy Gray had named them, so of course they had weird names too; Phoenix and Cole. Mum said she'd finally drawn a line when he tried to spell it 'Coal', but anyway, that's actually not the defining moment I mean.

Almost a week after they were born, Anneka and her mum were away, staying with her grandmother, and I only knew because she came to tell mum she couldn't babysit for my family for a few days. That was fine because with mum being home with the babies, they were all busy enough looking after them, and going out wasn't exactly happening.

I'd been popping over to Anneka's house, and letting myself in when they were out, so I'd become familiar with the layout of the house, I'd been through every drawer and cupboard, especially the ones in Anneka's room, and I'd even laid in her bed, smelling her pillow.

This one night though, I was reading her latest diary, which didn't mention me at all since the first babysitting incident,

and just as I was putting it back, I heard the door close downstairs.

It scared me because nobody should be coming home, but when I peered out into the hallway, I saw a large figure going into her mum's bedroom. Were they being robbed? Should I try and do something about it? Shouldn't I just hide until they go away? No matter how weird Aneka was being with me, she didn't deserve to have her house robbed.

As the man came back out of that room, the light caught his face, and I realised it was her dad.

I thought he'd left, but he was carrying some papers in his hands, and didn't see me as I started following him down the hallway on the thick carpet.

When he reached the top of the stairs, he suddenly froze, tensing his shoulders.

"Who's there? I swear to god you don't want to fuck with me." He spun on the spot and stared at me for a moment, before he let out a string of the swearwords I pretended I never used.

"You little fucker! What are you doing in my house?"

I stared right back at him, hiding my sudden fear at being caught. What were my dad's rules? Never get caught was the biggest, and I'd just messed up again.

"Not your house anymore, is it?"

"Listen here, you arrogant little fuck, you get the hell out of here before I call the police."

I pretended to be my dad, Gray, because he was always so brave and sarcastic.

“How are you gonna explain that, old man? I was sneaking in to steal shit from my family I abandoned, and caught the kid from next door?”

He took a step towards me, his fists clenched by his sides, one now holding screwed up papers.

“Someone needs to give you a good hiding, Blaze. You’re a real little piece of shit already. What were you even doing here, huh? Snooping through our things? Stealing? You little pervert. Were you in my daughter’s room?”

I pushed away from the wall and smirked at him, feeling my dad’s courage as I approached the bigger, scarier man.

“I’m gonna scream until my family comes and then I’m gonna say you touched me. You know what I mean, the kind of touching that gets you arrested.”

“You little-”

“I suggest you get lost before I do just that. You’re not in charge here anymore. You walked out on them, you left them terrified and heartbroken. You’re the piece of shit, not me.”

He backed up a step, moving closer to the top of the tall flight of stairs, and I suddenly felt this energy inside me. Power, just like I felt when I was making things burn. I stepped closer to him, and grinned at him, suddenly certain that I would win this one.

“You don’t deserve to live, and you know why? Because you’re not fit to be around her. She deserves the best. She deserves me, and that’s what she’ll get.”

As he opened his mouth to yell at me, I rushed forward, shoving him hard in the chest, and watching as he staggered back, and tumbled down the stairs with several loud thuds, and then fell silent at the bottom of the stairs.

I followed him down, and stood a few steps up, staring at him and waiting for him to open his eyes again, for him to sit up and face me, realising that he’d underestimated me. That he thought he could scare a kid by trying to bully him.

When long minutes passed and he didn’t do that, I finally crept closer and rested a hand on his chest. He didn’t move, and he didn’t breathe. I pressed my ear to his chest and couldn’t hear anything.

I ran to the phone in the living room and dialled my number next door.

“Yello?” I was breathing fast now, panicking because what did I just do? Did I just kill Anneka’s father?

“Dad!”

“Blaze? What the hell are you doing ring-”

“I need help... next door... *I think I killed him,*“ I rushed, hearing dad suck in a sharp breath. He instantly shushed me.

“Dory! We need to get next door now. Blaze, be ready to let us in. Don’t call anyone else, got it?”

16

Anneka (aged twenty two)



I THREW MY BACKPACK in the backseat of my car and waved to mum.

She was such a worrier, but as an adult, I was perfectly capable of driving a few hours to meet my friends for the weekend. I'd been working so hard lately, and I deserved this break. My new job as a data analyst was mentally exhausting, but I loved it, and the money was great.

For now though, I was heading out to meet my friends and the guy I'd been on two dates with, and really liked. His name was Nathan, and he was sweet and intelligent, but why hadn't I slept with him yet?

Why hadn't I given up my stupid virginity to him? He didn't make me want him that way, not enough. I hadn't meant to hang onto it, but my teens were screwed up by my dad ditching us, and me having to babysit Blaze and his siblings so much, as well as other kids in the neighbourhood.

Oh... and then when I was nineteen, suddenly dad wasn't just living it up somewhere at all. Remains were found. That's what they called it. *Remains*. He'd been dead for years, they said. Dead. Shouldn't I have felt it when it happened? He was my dad, but by the time we found out, I hated him enough that I didn't even care. He didn't want us, so why should I care that something bad had happened to him?

When Blaze's family moved away, it was such a relief, because over the year or two that I had to sit for them, he got more and more obsessed with me. He'd started to follow me around, both at school, and outside, and he was making more

and more blatant references to wanting me, and me being his, like somehow he owned me!

He'd taken to touching me as he passed me in the halls, trying for my hair at times, with that weird fixation on my hair getting worse over time.

I even found out he'd been in my room when I wasn't there, and that creeped me out beyond belief. I stopped sitting for them when I realised, when I found a smear of mud by my bed, messed up bedding, and my diary wasn't quite tucked under my pillow. How did I know it was Blaze? *Who else would it have been?*

I steered down the country roads, my music blaring and my spirits lifting by the minute as I headed out of town, and towards my weekend of fun. Maybe tonight would be the night with Nathan. I was more than ready to get physical, even if he didn't exactly light my fire.

An idiot on a black motorcycle whizzed past me, nearly making me steer off the road.

"Asshole!" I pressed a hand against my chest, my heart racing as I realised just how close to an accident I'd just come. As always, I silently cursed at the idiot, telling myself if I saw that bike wrapped around a tree later, I wouldn't be surprised.

Even so, I was stunned and horrified when a few moments later, I turned a bend, to find it on its side by the hedge, one wheel still slowly rotating.

“Shit!” I pulled over and rushed out of my car, running straight to the fallen motorcycle, but there was no sign of the black leather-clad rider. What the hell? I turned around on the spot, trying to see where the idiot had landed. How could they just be missing?

I felt a movement behind me, just before a leather-clad body pressed up tight behind me, and a gloved hand looped around my throat.

“Don’t scream or I’ll make it hurt,” a harsh voice whispered, as I started struggling against his strong hold. It took everything in me not to scream for help, but I believed that voice. I knew he’d bring pain.



BLAZE (AGED NINETEEN)

FINALLY. FINALLY, I HAD her in my grasp, pressed against my body, her lush curves wriggling as she struggled. Yeah, keep fucking doing that. Already my cock was reacting to her panic, her writhing, and well, the fact that she was Aneka and finally I had her. It’d been too many years since I’d touched her. She had always been meant for me though, so it was time for me to have everything I’d ever wanted.

She’d cut her hair short since I last saw her yesterday. That was the first thing that hit me. It was still red, although not as bright as it’d been before, but it was short. Chin length. I wanted it longer. Why the fuck did she do that?

“Please, don’t hurt me.”

Her voice was as sweet as I'd remembered, and she still smelled like flowers and everything girly. I had the visor down on my helmet, but I could smell her anyway. I don't think I ever stopped, even when we moved, and I couldn't see her every day. Even when I couldn't let myself into her house anymore.

I tightened my grip on her fragile throat, feeling her trying to swallow while her pulse thrummed rapidly against my palm. The sense of power, in holding someone's life in my hand like this, was immense. It felt like that moment when a fire takes hold, and I know there's no way to save the structure I'm burning. It reminded me of that godlike feeling I'd felt when I pushed that bastard down the stairs. But this was Anneka, and I had her in my possession at last. *There was no feeling more powerful in the world.*

"Do exactly as I say, and you'll be fine." I almost tacked her name on the end of that, but I didn't want to give away my familiarity with her yet. I wanted her guessing, wondering, panicking... all of the worst thoughts to run through her mind, because surely then when she realised it was me, it'd settle some of that fear. She'd be relieved that it's just me. Right?

I marched Anneka back to her car, pushing her against the passenger door, as I drew her hands behind her back, and fastened them with a cable tie. I'd come prepared, and I'd planned everything perfectly.

"Please. That hurts."

I knew she was lying, because I'd left enough room for her to move her wrists a little to ease the burn, but I also wasn't an idiot, and there was no way I was giving her enough rope to hang me.

“Shut it.”

She let out a ragged sob, shaking her head so that her hair flew and caught the sun. Wow... it *was* vibrant red after all. It just needed the right light to really appreciate it. I wanted to touch it, but this wasn't the place. If someone drove by right now, while I kidnapped a woman in broad daylight, I was fucked.

I pulled out the syringe filled with sedative, and held it in front of her so she could see it.

“No! Oh god no, what is that?”

Why did I do that? To keep her afraid, to enjoy her delicious fear just a little longer, because I knew it would feel better than her hate. I'd experienced enough of that for a lifetime, and I was smart enough to know it'd be back when she recognised me. At least until she grew to love me, just like my mum had with my dads.

I slid the needle into the vein in her neck, and slowly pushed the plunger, chuckling at the panicked squeak from Anneka before I carefully withdrew it, and tucked it back in my pocket.

“Say night night, Anneka.” Her gasp was immediately followed by heaviness, as she started to sag in my hold, and I

loaded her into the back of her car.

Now it was time to get her and then my bike moved and out of sight, and that's why I'd picked this specific point on the route she'd be taking. She might be a high flying analyst, but I was a first rate hacker, and I knew every fucking thing about her.

17

Anneka



MY HEAD THROBBED IN time with my pulse, and I groaned, trying to sit up. I realised pretty fast that I couldn't move easily, although I had some limited range of movement. My hands were cuffed above my head, and even though I seemed to be on a bed, I was definitely trapped and in trouble.

“Ugh...” My stomach roiled and I struggled to roll over, my stomach cramping as I threw up all over the bedding. I half expected someone to say something, for someone to be watching me, but there was clearly nobody else in the room, because they'd have reacted, right?

Now I'd been sick, my head was throbbing harder, but my stomach seemed to settle at last. The smell, however, wasn't pleasant, so I rolled in the other direction, and that's when I saw it.

Pages of something stapled all over the wall in a haphazard random mess. Pages with handwriting on. I couldn't focus on them, but there was something familiar about them.

Wait. Something was coming back to me. The biker. The biker kidnapped me, but he called me by my name. How would he know my name? Was it someone I'd trusted in my day to day life? Was it someone I knew?

My mum would be freaking, because however long I'd been here, unless I got out in the next day or two, she'd know I was missing. Oh, and my friends. My friends would realise I was missing so much sooner than that. Nathan. Nathan would care that I was gone. He would, right?

A sound behind me caused me to freeze in panic. Someone had come into the room through the door I now remembered seeing there. I was too afraid to turn around and see them. What if I knew them? Oh god, what if it was some creepy stranger?

“Sorry about the drugs. I guess they made you ill, but I’ll change the bed for you.”

There was something oddly familiar about the voice, even though it was low and barely audible. It was definitely a man, but I couldn’t discern anything more than that, and I was still too afraid to turn around. If I saw who it was, he’d definitely have to kill me, right?

“I have painkillers for you, and water. You need to hydrate, or at least that’s what I was told. Aneka, let me help you.”

Help me? Help ME?!

“You can help me by letting me go, asshole!” I rolled over to glare at the man, my kidnapper, the monster, and gasped with shock. Recognition slammed into me, as I took in the longish white blonde hair, the bright blue eyes, and the smirk on his lips, even though he was older and so much bigger. He wasn’t overly muscled, but I could tell he was strong, and powerful, maybe six feet tall. A bigger threat than he’d ever been.

“Blaze? What the fuck!”

His lips quirked up fully into a smile, like somehow he thought I was happy to see him, when what I wanted to do was

run, but also kick him in the nuts, because it was fucking Blaze!

“How dare you kidnap me!”

He grinned wider, bringing the paper cup closer, as if he thought it was safe to approach me right now.

“Of course I brought you home, Anneka. You belong with me. You always did.”

Oh god. He was just as delusional as he'd always been. Just as messed up and twisted, only now he was big enough to overpower me too. I was starting to realise just how dangerous Blaze was to me now.

“Let me go.”

He rounded the bed, and held out the paper cup, while I struggled to sit up a little, so I wouldn't feel quite so vulnerable. He said the cup held water and I desperately wanted it, because my mouth tasted like crap and I was so thirsty.

“Gimme.”

He chuckled, stepping a little closer.

“Say please.”

“Go fuck yourself, but give me the water first.”

Blaze lifted the cup, taking a sip of water and sighing like it was the best thing he'd ever tasted.

“Say please, or I'll drink it here in front of you, and leave you thirsty. Might even leave the bed a mess, after all, it's not

my fault you couldn't at least puke over the other side of the bed."

How could he be so grown up, and dare I say, kinda hot, and yet be such a psycho at the same time?

"You made me ill, so the least you can do is help me. You wanted to help me, didn't you?"

Blaze took another sip of my damn water, raising his eyebrows at me.

"You have no power here, Anneka. No negotiation options, no chance of coercing me into doing what you want. You're mine, and you're here because I planned it carefully, and executed that plan with precision and, you know what else?" He smirked as he aimed the cup in my direction.

"I enjoyed every fucking minute of your terror as you realised you were being taken. I enjoyed knowing that I had all the power, and you? You couldn't do anything except let yourself be taken. That's how it works, see. That's your role here, to do what I want when I want, because I'm not some little kid anymore, Anneka. I'm a grown man, with a man's body, and a man's strength, and a man's needs."

Ugh. If he came too close, I'd claw his fucking eyes out. *Or I will, the moment he frees my damn hands.*

"So let's start easy. You want the water, you say please and you get it. It's that simple. You do anything else and you won't like how that goes."

The easy grin was gone, and all that remained was malice, cold hard deadly malice, directed right at me. Suddenly it didn't matter that it was Blaze, or that I'd known him as a kid. I didn't know him now, and I didn't know what he was capable of, but at the very least, he was a kidnapper. I was in worse trouble than I thought. And I really, really needed that damn water.

"Please," I finally whispered, watching his face relax a little as he stepped closer, and lifted the paper cup of water to my lips. I greedily gulped half of it the instant I could reach it, but he pulled back and stopped me from drinking more.

"You'll need it for these. They'll help with the headache." I had to pray they really were painkillers and not anything worse, but I needed them because with this blinding headache, I wasn't able to think clearly at all.

I fought the urge to bite him as he arrogantly expected me to take them from his palm with my mouth, but I had no other options in this moment. He helped me wash them down with the last of the water, and I stared morosely at the empty paper cup in his hand.

"Can I get more?"

Blaze winked at me then. "You can earn as much as you want; shall I tell you how?"

I nodded slowly, and watched as he pulled my phone from his pocket.

"Give me your passcode." *Oh god.*



BLAZE

She glared at me for a full minute, before she finally told me, and I unlocked her phone. Truth be told, I could have hacked it, but it was more about establishing trust right now. Proving to her that she had to obey me if she wanted any comfort here.

I checked her text messages, and sent one to her mother, confirming safe arrival at her destination, taking care to make it sound like her, adding her usual blushing emoji at the end followed by two hearts.

After that, I sent one to her friend Natalie, apologising for having to cancel, but something had come up with work.

Finally, I looked up that asshole Nathan, and messaged him to tell him that it was over, before I blocked his number.

“What did you just do?”

Anneka was just as beautiful as she'd been as a child, but even more so now. Her face was heart shaped, and her lips were fuller than they'd been. Her eyes were a little bloodshot from the drug I'd given her, but they were no less blue than they'd been as a kid. Her cheeks were a little pinker than they'd probably normally be, and as I watched her, scrutinising her, she lowered her eyes, sucking her lower lip nervously.

“Just made sure everyone knows you're safe and well.” I switched off the phone, and pulled it apart, removing the sim

card and shoving it in my pocket. The rest of the phone went in my other pocket, as if keeping them in separate pockets would somehow make it even harder to trace.

I knew what I was doing though. Right now there was no active GPS, nobody could force the phone back on to track it, and I'd taken every precaution to cover my tracks, both electronically and physically.

Nobody could find her here. It was isolated, impossible to find, and locked up tighter than a prison. That's exactly what it was though; her prison. Her cage until she accepted me as hers, accepted that she was mine. Only mine.

“You can't do this, Blaze. It's not right. People will look for me in the end. They'll find my car, and they'll-”

I grinned, knowing I'd covered my tracks perfectly, and gripped by the cruel urge to destroy a little more of her hope, just to see it dawn on her that there was no rescue coming for her.

“They'll never find the burned out shell of your car, Anneka. There's no trace of you now. You simply disappeared into thin air. Anyone who looks for you will eventually have to accept that you're gone forever.”

Tears rolled down her cheeks then, beautiful tears of pure distress.

“This is real, isn't it? This isn't some joke, or some spur of the moment thing.”

I sat on the bed, fighting my irritation as she scooted further away from me, narrowly avoiding putting her foot in the vomit beside her. Honestly, it was stinking, but this conversation was too important to put off.

“I’ve been planning this for years, Anneka. I’ve been looking forward to the day that you’d be mine, and I’d have you somewhere where nobody could ever disturb us or interrupt us. You could say that taking you is my life’s work. It’s not, but it’s the most important thing I’ve ever done.”

“You’re delusional if you think I’m not going to find a way out of here, Blaze. You think you’re smart, but I’m smarter.”

It was so cute how she thought she could outthink me. How she thought this wouldn’t go exactly as I’d planned.

I reached up to unlatch the cuffs from the bedframe, and Anneka flinched back in a panic in the same instant.

“Please!”

I grinned down at her, really enjoying the sight of her helpless beneath me, even as afraid as she was. In fact, her fear was clearly adding to my own excitement, because my cock was rock hard trapped inside my jeans, and I might have made sure I pressed her down with my weight as I unclipped the cuffs.

“Move off the bed when I do, Anneka, but don’t try anything, because I’m definitely going to be impossible to escape.”

She sucked in a gasp, which sounded more like a sob, and nodded frantically as I moved. She obeyed, moving up off the bed as I dragged her cuffed hands with me. I latched them again to the side of the bedframe, and guided her down onto her knees beside the bed.

“Wait there.”

Her eyes were wide as she watched me leave the room, dragging the soiled bedding with me as I went.

When I returned, she was still watching me from her position on her knees, and Jesus, all I wanted was to free my cock and drive it in between those pouty lips of hers. I could. I mean, I could do anything I wanted to her, couldn't I? She was mine now. Our life together had begun at last.

I rapidly remade the bed, tucking every corner neatly and sharply, until it looked perfect. I approached Anneka again, stopping in front of her, my groin level with her face, although she tilted her face up, rather than looking directly at my dick straining against my jeans.

“Thank you,” she whispered, and I quirked a grin down at her.

“I like you down there on your knees, being so sweet, Anneka. How thankful are you right now?”

She blinked several times and then frowned deeply.

“Are you seriously suggesting-”

“Not ‘suggesting’ anything. I asked a question, Anneka. I thought you were so smart that you'd pick up on that. Didn't

you tell me you're smarter than me?"

It felt like the perfect moment to finally give in to that urge, the one that had burned within me since the day I first set eyes on her.

I reached down, and lightly stroked my fingers through her flame coloured hair. It was silken, shiny, and perfect, just like I knew it would be.

"See, is that really so bad? All you had to do was say yes, Aneka. Why couldn't you just have said yes?"

18

Anneka



MY SITUATION WAS PRETTY dire, and I had no idea how to get out of it. I was handcuffed to a bed frame, and on my knees in front of Blaze, who was finally touching my hair like the little perv had always wanted.

Not that he was such a *little* perv anymore. He was tall, so tall, and his shoulders were broad, his arms firm and strong, and that part of him that I was eye level with? Yeah, that part looked big too. How was this Blaze? How had that creepy little kid from my childhood, my nightmares, grown up into this stunning man who was just as twisted as the kid had been?

“Please,” I hated speaking to him, particularly hated it sounding like I was begging, but I didn’t like him touching me at all, and the soft groans he made as he stroked his fingers through my hair, over and over, were really freaking me out. His fingers tightened in my hair, and I gasped at the pinch against my scalp.

“All I’m doing is caressing you, Anneka. Why do you have to make this such a big deal?”

I tried to pull back from his grip, but it was too painful.

“Because it is a big fucking deal, Blaze. I never agreed to being touched by you. I never agreed to letting you touch me in any way. You need to let me go, before this goes too far, and you can’t undo it.”

His fingers loosened and for a moment, I thought he’d listened to me, and was seeing sense at last.

When he reached over to unclip the cuffs from the bed, again I foolishly thought he was paying attention to my words, and what I wanted.

He shoved me hard, making me fall back on the bed, and then he crawled over me, his body pressing me down, even as my cuffed hands pushed against his chest.

“No,” I gasped, as he grinned down at me. I was receiving another terrifying reminder that he was stronger than me, faster than me. More brutal than me.

“*Yes.* You know I loved you, Anneka. You were all I wanted, the person I thought about when I fell asleep, and dreamed about. The person on my mind the moment I woke up each morning. You were my everything.”

He looped a hand around my throat, his palm lightly touching me, while his fingers and thumb squeezed either side of it, making me panic, struggling to free myself.

“Stop!”

He smirked at me, leaning closer, until he filled my vision, and everything was Blaze. He was all I could see, smell, hear, and feel.

“Never, but you wanna know why? Because I hate you, Anneka. I hate you enough that I want you to suffer here in this place. Suffer every time I’m around you. I want to see your pain, and your fear. I want to see it when you give up. When you realise that I’m all you have now. All you’ll have

forever. There are prices for being such a bitch, and you're about to pay every last one of them.”

Blaze moved fast, latching my cuffs to the bed again, and then he pushed away from the bed and strode out of the room, slamming the door behind him.

What? What did I do to him? I struggled to sit up again, as he reappeared a few moments later, and held up a paper cup of water.

“Because I keep my promises, and you earned this.” He let me gulp down the cup of water, then walked away again, leaving me confused and worried, because I thought this was all because he was obsessed with me. Obsessed, as in he wanted me, loved me, even. But he said hate. He hated me. How much worse would he treat me out of hate, than if he'd just loved me still.

I was left alone for hours, and wondered if he was ever coming back, and more to the point how fast he would come back, because suddenly all I wanted was to pee. I had a feeling he'd be pissed if I made a mess on the refreshed bed, and honestly, there was no way I could bring myself to let it happen. I couldn't help being ill after the drug he gave me, but peeing on myself was a choice I'd never make.

Eventually I started yelling his name, and when he came back, I suddenly regretted it because he looked pissed as hell.

“What?!”

I fell silent, suddenly remembering how afraid I was of this man who'd at least been only creepy as a kid, but now was a real threat to me.

“Anneka!”

I took a deep breath and tried to sit up again.

“I need the bathroom, Blaze. *Please.*”

He rolled his eyes at me. “Oh, is that all?”

“You won't make me pee the bed, will you?”

He crossed the room to unlock the cuffs and release my wrists, while I rubbed at the bruised skin.

“Stop being a wimp, your wrists are just fine.”

He grabbed my elbow and dragged me up from the bed, walking me into a pale, carpeted hallway, and into a room across from mine. He pointed at the toilet as he closed the door, leaning back against it with his arms folded.

“W... wait, you're staying in here with me?”

His lips twitched as he shrugged, keeping his eyes on me like I realised he planned to do the whole time I used the facilities.

“Blaze, please, I don't want you in here while I pee.”

He groaned, and grabbed my arm again, dragging me back to the door.

“Wait! What are you doing?”

“You don’t wanna pee, that’s fine, but if you make another mess in the bed, I’ll leave you there like that.”

“No, please! I need the bathroom, Blaze,” I practically whimpered, horrified at the thought that I’d been this close, and he was taking it away.

He shoved me back at the toilet again. “So pee, dammit. What’s the big deal? Feeling shy? I can pee too if you like?” He reached for the button on his jeans and I shuddered.

“God no, please don’t. Can you at least not look at me while I’m going? It’s... it’s too weird.”

He rolled his eyes again, resting back against the door like he had before, but this time he closed his eyes. Was that all the leeway I’d get?

I hurriedly undid my shorts and shoved them and my underwear down, so I could empty my bladder at last. It took a few moments before I finally relaxed enough to let go, but the moment I started, I heard Blaze chuckling.

“It’s not like I can’t hear you pissing, Anneka. Oh don’t stop, I know how much that hurts. Let it all out, so I can get you back to bed.”

I forced myself to finish going, even though it was mortifying to do it in front of him. I always knew Blaze was a creep, but this was a level of twisted that I never even imagined.

As I flushed the toilet, and started washing my hands, I suddenly realised he was right behind me, and lifted my head

to look at the mirror on the cabinet in front of me. He was watching me over the top of my head, leaning forward to rest his hands either side of the sink, trapping me with his whole body.

“I know you think somehow you’re going to get out of this, Anneka, but I just want to make sure that little flicker of hope dies sooner rather than later. Even if you somehow managed to overpower me, this place is locked up so tight, you’d never get out. Even if you somehow managed that, we’re in the middle of nowhere, and you’d never even find the road. You’d die out there wishing that you’d just stayed here with me. See, I might hate you, but I’ll keep you safe here.” His eyes narrowed at me then. “As long as you do as you’re told.”

I closed my eyes, and his hand landed on my shoulder, making me jump, before it trailed up to grip my jaw in a painful hold.

“Don’t hide from me ever. Your eyes stay on me whenever I’m in the room with you.”



BLAZE

Now I was so close to her, and touching her again, I wasn’t sure I could hold back from having her. I’d waited so long, watched her, monitored her online, and now she was right in front of me. *Mine*.

“When I touch you, you watch me as I watch you. I want to know how everything feels, because you owe me that. You

owe me for the way you messed up my life.”

“Messed... what? What did I do?”

I dug the knife out of my pocket and used it to slice the back of her top, opening it completely, and then I cut through her bra, proving to her that she'd never wear it again. I closed the knife and tucked it in my pocket again, before I shoved her clothes down, baring her chest to me, even as she gasped and tried to stop me.

“You ruined things for me. You made senior school a living hell, and you never even apologised, Anneka.”

I pinned her hands down against the sink, and cupped one of her full breasts, squeezing it brutally before I trailed my thumb over her nipple.

“Stop!”

“Nope. You owe me, Anneka.” I pinched her nipple and smiled as she hissed in a sharp, pained breath.

“When I fuck you, you'll fight me at first, and that's okay, but it won't stop me. Nothing will. I'm what you created, Anneka. I'm who I am because of you, because of what you did. This is what you deserve.”

I looped my hand around her throat, watching her eyes widen with panic.

“You walk with me now, or I'll choke you unconscious and carry you. Nothing will change the outcome though.”

She started frantically pulling at my fingers, even as I pinched her nipple again and pulled on it. It had to hurt more than my hand around her throat, but she was focusing on the threat, without realising it was me, *all of me*.

“Anneka.”

She sagged slightly in my hold. “I’ll walk, so you can let go of me.”

“Nice try.” I dragged her away from the sink and walked her back to her bedroom trapped against me, relishing every bump and rub against me as I propelled her forward. When we reached her bed, I turned her around and gripped her jaw, tilting her face to meet my eyes.

“You could have been nice, Anneka. You could have been my friend, but instead you ruined my life. I wanted to love you, just love you, and now I can’t get past how much I want to hurt you instead. All you had to do was be nice to me.” I shoved her back and unfastened her jeans, pulling them down her legs and tossing them behind me, removing her underwear and socks at the same time.

“From now on, you don’t get clothes, because I don’t want anything in the way of me.”

“Blaze, please. Talk to me, I want to understand.” She was holding her arms in front of her, as if she could block my view of her creamy skin, and that fucking abomination I’d just spotted. I grabbed her wrists, pulling them away so I could view the ink on her skin. *Was I really seeing this?*

“What the *fuck* is this? When did you get this bullshit?”

She blinked back tears as she pulled at my grip on her wrists.

“I don’t... it’s just a tattoo, Blaze. What does it matter?”

“What does it matter? What the fuck is wrong with you? Why did you even get this?”

She pulled at my wrists again, but she didn’t answer, and that was all the answer I fucking needed, wasn’t it?

“You got a thing for my dad? Is that what this shit’s all about? You fucking want to fuck my dad instead of me?”

She’d frozen in my grip, her eyes wide and confused.

“Why the hell do you think... oh my god. Oh my fucking god! I swear that’s not what’s... Jesus, Blaze! I didn’t... I was with the girls and we were getting cartoon tattoos, and I always loved those movies.” I stared at the blue fish tattooed on her naked skin.

“It’s the fucking fish from that Dory film. Why the hell would you choose that fucking tattoo of all of them? There were other fish in the fucking sea!” I pushed her down on the bed, my fingers latched around her throat, squeezing a little tighter than I’d planned.

“Please! I... I can’t... breathe...”

“Yeah? Maybe you should have thought of that before you got my fucking dad tattooed on your damn thigh! Seriously?! I can’t... *it’s got to go*. You’re not keeping it.”

“Tat...toos are... perm...anent... asshole,” she hissed at me, gasping for breath as she choked out the words.

“Nope. It’s fucking going, and I don’t care how we remove it. Maybe I’ll burn it off.”

She started struggling even more frantically, as her face darkened so red that I had to release her before I choked her too hard.

She fell back on the bed, coughing and rasping, while I paced beside the bed, plotting ways to remove that fucking monstrosity from her body.

I slapped my hand down over the offending tattoo, wishing I could erase it from her skin right now, wishing I could erase the sight of it on her body from my fucking mind. How could she?

How could she mark her skin with anything, let alone something that hinted at a crush on my fucking dad? I slapped it again, grinning when she whimpered, and tried rolling away from me.

“I can’t fucking bear to look at you right now, you filthy whore. I need to find a way to remove that abomination before I can fuck you.”

19

Anneka



I COULDN'T BELIEVE HOW nasty Blaze had turned out to be, and not just about the tattoo, but in general. He'd been creepy as a kid, maybe even a bit predatory, but this? This was a new level of twisted and cruel, but had this always been inside him, and it'd just been well hidden? Was it his unusual upbringing or something else?

I remember him being really intelligent, but could that turn a guy into a psycho, because this wasn't how I'd expected him to turn out. I thought he'd still be a creep, but not so vicious and brutal.

I grabbed the bedding and wrapped myself in it, swallowing against the bruised feeling in my throat. I should have tried to drink water from the tap while I'd been free, shouldn't I?

I looked back up at the door then. Did I hear it lock? Did Blaze lock it after him, or was he so pissed off that he'd forgotten? He told me I couldn't get out, but that could be some kind of mindfuck thing, right?

The thing I was realising was that I had literally nothing to lose by trying to get out, because he was already threatening to rape and abuse me, presumably just because he feels like it, or feels slighted by me in some way.

Surely I'd be a fool not to at least try. What if there was a way out, and he just thought he'd scare me away from even trying? Who doesn't try to escape a situation like this? Only a fucking idiot, that's who.

I got up from the bed, putting my underwear and jeans back on, along with my socks, then I ran to the drawers against the wall and pulled the first one open. There was actually a stack of t-shirts in there, neatly folded flat, bright and colourful, so I figured I might as well help myself. Who knew how long I'd have before he returned?

I had no idea where my shoes had ended up, and I didn't have time to look for them. I pulled on the darkest t-shirt I could find, and tied it at my waist because it was huge.

I reached the door, and carefully pulled the handle down, peering out into that carpeted hallway again. There were no sounds, so I tiptoed across to the bathroom and turned the tap on low, gulping a few mouthfuls of water, before I dried my hands and moved back into the hall.

There had to be stairs or a door to the outside, right? I found the stairs, and started carefully tiptoeing down them, my sneaking aided by my socked feet, and heavy carpeting.

The house was really smart, expensively done out, even if it looked a little dated, like it was decorated a long time ago. At the bottom of the stairs, I quickly realised I could hear Blaze talking, so I crept closer, drawn by the possibility of finding out something that could help me get out of here.

“Dad, that's not what I'm saying. I just wanted to know the best way to remove one, that's all. I could burn it off, but then... I remember what you went through with your arm.”

That meant he was talking to the blonde dad, Gray. I remembered he was badly burned years ago before they

moved.

“Yeah, but it’s got to go. No, I told you, it’s not on me! What? Yeah, I’m settled in just fine here. It’s just like I remembered it.”

He’d been here before. I wondered if this was where they’d lived before they moved in next door to us, because something about it just felt like it would be their home. It didn’t feel like a normal house at all. Blaze had fallen silent, so I figured I should go looking for a door or a window. A window sounded like the best option, didn’t it?

“Jesus, dad, no! There’s no reason to come and visit! YES, okay? Yes, she’s here, and she’s still settling in, so it’s not a good time.”

I froze on my way to the window in the kitchen. Was he talking about me? Did his dad know he was going to do this to me? What was wrong with their family that this wasn’t a big deal to them? It was kidnap! It was a fucking crime!

I ran for the window and pulled at the lever to open it. Locked. *Fuck*. Okay, desperate times! I ran to the kitchen and grabbed the biggest frying pan from the rack, turning back to return to the window.

“You gonna make me something to eat? Yeah, I could eat.” Blaze watched me from the doorway, a half grin on his face.

“Fuck you!”

He shrugged easily, watching me as I dithered in the middle of the room.

“I mean, yeah, that’s gonna happen, but let’s talk about what’s happening here... you thought you were going to attack me with that thing? Did you not get a good idea of how easily I can overpower you a little while ago? I’m strong enough to pin you down and fuck you, Anneka, and I intend to.” *The sick bastard!* I opened my mouth and he snorted.

“What? Unless you’re about to cook something, put that the fuck down right now. If I have to come and take it from you, it’s not all I’ll take. Got it?”

“Blaze, how is this you? You were creepy before but at least you were nice to me.”

His eyes narrowed as he strode into the room, heading right at me with purpose. *Terrifying purpose.* I screamed and threw the pan at him, as I ran in the opposite direction. A loud crash told me I’d missed the mark, but a fist in my hair stopped me in my tracks with a pained yelp.

“Blaze, you’re hurting me!”

He dragged me back against him, trapping me with an arm tight across my stomach.

“Seems like that’s what you want, since you pushed me into this. I don’t know why I keep thinking you’ll do something to redeem yourself. You’re clearly still the nasty little bitch you were in school, but the difference is that you’re stuck with me this time, and you can’t harm my family again.” *Harm his family?* What the hell was he on about?

“Blaze, I don’t understand! What did I do that was so awful? I sat with you and your brothers and sister. I helped your parents out. I... why do you hate me?” His fingers tightened in my hair, and I felt several strands get pulled out by their roots. It sent stinging tears to my eyes.

“You’re colder than I thought, if you can’t even fucking remember. It was so inconsequential to you, and yet it changed the course of our lives. Ruined things for me, nearly destroyed my sister. You should be forced to feel every moment of pain we’ve suffered.”

Blaze latched his hand around my throat, pinching the sides like he did before, while the lack of blood flow to my brain made me start to sag in his grip, feeling woozy and heavy until I passed out.

20

Blaze



I PUT THAT BITCH back on the bed, cuffed again and naked, because she deserved no home comforts at all. I couldn't believe she'd tried to take me out, thinking she'd get the upper hand, but then she'd always fucking skated through life without problems while my family had been plagued by them.

From the constant attempts by child services to get involved in our lives, to my youngest siblings being taken away for three painful weeks. Even though we got them back, it was hell with my mum crying all the time and my dads plotting all kinds of crazy shit to try and get them back.

All of it could be linked to what Anneka did, so of course I was fucking furious with her. We'd held our family together, but she'd nearly destroyed it. That bastard father of hers had lodged complaints against us before he left, so knowing what I knew now, I was even more relieved that I'd managed to kill that fucker back then. I just wished we could have avoided some of the hell my siblings were put through. Me? I can handle that shit, but them... not so much.

When I rang dad, I wanted his advice on removing a tattoo which just had him trying to work out which tattoo of mine I wanted rid of, and being his usual nosy self. I knew he was completely supportive of my taking Anneka for myself, after all it had worked for my parents, and he knew I'd read about everything they'd done back then.

I now understood just how twisted it had all been; stalking, kidnap, rape, forced 'breeding'... and yet I didn't see that as

the bad kind of twisted. *I saw it as a fucking blueprint for my future.* It was what I wanted to achieve with Anneka, it was what I'd always wanted, and even though she'd done what she did, and almost destroyed our lives, I still couldn't turn off those deep feelings... the part of me that wanted to own her, and control every aspect of her life until I was all she wanted.

None of this was the way I'd wanted it back then, when we'd first met, and were starting to get to know each other. Why couldn't she have just been a better person back then? Why did she force me to do this to her? Why did she act like such a bitch when I needed her friendship the most?

Our future could have been so perfect. *We* could have been perfect, but instead she proved that she couldn't be trusted. She couldn't be true to anyone. She couldn't even be nice, so why the fuck should I be nice to her?

While I waited for her to wake, I stripped off and lay beside her, trailing my fingers over her creamy skin. When they reached her thigh, I glared at that fucking tattoo again and reached over to the bedside table for my temporary solution; a roll of duct tape. I stretched several pieces over the tattoo, sticking them down firmly. It was still there, but at least I couldn't see it now.

“Wha...”

I pressed one hand over Anneka's mouth, as I used my other hand to stroke her stomach, and down her thigh. Her eyes widened as she suddenly realised all the things she should already know. She was cuffed, she was naked, and so was I.

“No!” Even muffled, I knew that was what she was saying. I snorted, tightening my hand over her mouth.

“Can’t hear ya, but honestly, Aneka, even if I could? It wouldn’t make the slightest fucking difference.”

She started rapidly shaking her head, as my fingers slipped between her legs and started rubbing back and forth. She wasn’t wet, but that wouldn’t be a problem for me. I straddled her stomach, my cock so fucking hard it was practically waving at her.

“So... either I fuck you right now, or I fuck your mouth. Decide fast, or I’ll do what I want.”

Aneka blinked against those fucking sweet tears of hers.

“Please don’t, Blaze. This isn’t you.”

“Not me? *Trust me, this is all fucking me.* This is who I am now. This is who I was always going to be, even without your betrayal. Born to monsters, and always destined to be one too.” I knew my parents weren’t fucking normal, and I also knew that they’d die to protect us, so did it matter if their morals were a little skewed?

I cupped both of her pert tits, tweaking the nipples hard while I watched her wince.

“If you’re looking for sweet and gentle, that’s not me, but don’t worry... I’ll have fun my own way.”

“Blaze, why are you doing this to me? You keep saying I deserve it, but you won’t tell me why!”

Fucking bitch, why does she keep making it so clear that the biggest torment my family went through matters so fucking little to her?

“Open your fucking mouth, bitch.” She clamped her lips closed, shaking her head, so I shrugged.

“*Fine*. Let’s see how your pussy handles being fucked like I hate you, because right now that’s exactly how I feel about you.”

“NO!”



ANNEKA

I WAS SO SCARED, I was shuddering beneath Blaze’s naked, vividly tattooed body. He was glaring down at me like he literally hated me enough to kill me, and yet that cock of his, that weapon he wanted to use to punish me, it was so hard. It’d only be that hard if he wanted me too, right?

Could he just be hard because he wanted sex, or wanted to hurt me? Could it not be for some reason that I could try and build on, to get him to stop? Was there anything I could do to get him to stop? Would I have to let him hurt me, just to get it out of his system? And if I did, if he did, would I even be able to look at him again? Would I ever be able to forgive him? We’d never really even been friends, and he seemed to think of us as enemies anyway.

“Blaze,” I whispered desperately, wishing I could stop this before it happened. Blaze let out a low growl, and moved onto his knees, guiding his cock to my face. He rubbed the head against my lips, my cheek, my chin, trailing his sticky pre-cum all over my skin.

I’d never had a cock in my mouth before, and I didn’t want that now, but the alternative was letting him take my virginity. I couldn’t do that, especially not if he was so intent on making it hurt.

“Mouth, bitch. And don’t be letting your fucking teeth touch me, or you won’t like what happens.”

I choked back a sob, and let my lips fall open, and Blaze didn’t hesitate for a second, pressing his cock right into my mouth even as I gagged and tried to pull back from him.

“Fucking stay still, Anneka. You need to take all of me like the slutty little bitch you are.”

Why was he being so cruel? I stopped fighting the tears burning my eyes, as he lifted my head and pressed deeper, a low groan rumbling through his chest.

“Finally,” he murmured, rocking back and forth a few times, his cock sliding over my tongue and hitting the back of my throat. I let out a panicked squeak and started shaking my head, and Blaze cursed quietly, gripping my face so he could press deeper. I couldn’t breathe, and started to choke, and he watched as my vision started to go spotty and I begged him with my eyes to let me free.

“Want to know why I hate you?”

I started thrashing beneath him as lack of air sent me into one last panic before I passed out.

....

Breathe...

I blinked a few times, realising I was awake and I'd clearly not been. It took me a few seconds to remember what had happened, aided by the musky taste in my mouth.

“Wow, you pass out really easily,” Blaze commented as he pressed my legs wider apart and thrust into me. I let out a pained scream, and tried to pull back as he met unexpected resistance, and started forcing his way in. He pulled back a little and tried again, and I gasped, starting to beg him to stop. It felt like I was being ripped open, as he kept savagely forcing his way into me.

He clearly didn't care that he'd just demolished my virginity, or maybe he didn't even know what had hindered him, but it hurt. He drew back and jabbed his hips again, his cock driving in deeper than before.

It felt like he was deliberately trying to make it as painful as possible, and I sobbed harder as he braced himself on his forearms, surrounding me with nothing but him. He was in me, on me, and all around me. All I could see, smell, and feel was him. All I could taste was him. *Blaze was torturing every last sense, and I hated him for it.*

“Stop!”

He groaned long and low as he surged deep into me.

“Fuck... I never thought it'd feel like this. You're so tight, Anneka. You're choking my cock, and it feels so fucking good.”

“Please, Blaze... you're hurting me,” I whimpered, flinching as he leaned down, pressing his forehead against mine.

“Shh... take it because you deserve it, Anneka. This is what happens when you hurt my family. This is what you get. You get owned, and taken, you get to feel every second of the pain you caused us. Your tears are beautiful to me, because I've earned them, and they're mine.”

He licked my cheek and groaned, thrusting harder and faster as he grew closer to finishing. Thank god for that. It wasn't hurting the same way it had at the start, but I didn't want it, and he knew that. I didn't want him to be my first. I'd never wanted that. I'd never wanted him.

“Please stop, Blaze. You got what you wanted, but I need you to stop.”

He let out a low moan again, rolling his hips so he pressed deeper into me.

“Beg, Anneka. Beg me to stop,” he whispered, his lips almost touching mine.

“Please, please stop!”

He froze, his hips jerking against mine as he gasped out, ‘fuck’. He'd just come! He'd just finished inside me. My first

time, and not only did I not choose him, but he'd just filled me with cum, and I wasn't even on birth control!

21

Blaze



THAT WAS FUCKING INTENSE. Finally I had Anneka under my control, finally I'd fucked her, and finally I'd made her pay for everything she'd done to my family. That vicious whore finally knew what it felt like to be... *what the fuck?*

I'd pulled away from her, dragging my cock free because I wanted to see my cum dripping from her beaten pussy, just like I'd read about. What I didn't expect was blood. Why the hell was there blood on my cock?

"What the..."

Anneka was still crying, and suddenly I wondered if I'd hurt her so much that I'd made her bleed inside, and then I wondered if I'd just fucked her at the wrong time and her period had started. It had to be one or the other, right?

"Anneka?"

"Go away, Blaze. You're a fucking monster!" She was sobbing into the pillow, having curled onto her side as soon as I'd moved off her when shock took over.

"Anneka, why the fuck is there blood? This is... it's your period, right?"

She fixed me with a savage glare, even as more tears coursed down her cheeks.

"You know exactly why, you sick sick fucker! Virgins tend to bleed when they're raped so viciously."

Raped. Yeah, I knew I was doing that, but virginity? Her? *No fucking way.*

“You weren’t a fucking virgin, Anneka, don’t be ridiculous.”

She buried her face in the pillow, sobbing harder, while I stared at my cock, at that blood. She hadn’t been a virgin, I was sure of it. She’d given it up to that asshole Nicky Boon back in school. Why was she lying to me?

More to the point, her blood was on my cock and I wasn’t wiping it away. I should be, I should be moving on, and getting on to the next stage of my plan, but that blood. It was consuming me, and suddenly I had no idea what I was doing anymore.

I grabbed the discarded bedding and draped it over Anneka, then I left the room. I couldn’t lock her door, because the key was in my jeans and they were still on the floor in her room. I didn’t want to go back in there though. I needed to think. I needed to understand what I’d just done. I’d always intended to force her, to make her take it because it was what I wanted. *It was how it was supposed to be, wasn’t it?*

I sat on the bed in my own room, and stared at my phone. I should call my dads. They’d know, right? They’d understand. They’d guide me, just like they always had.

“Hello?”

Shit. It was mum. “Uh... mum, it’s me.”

“Blaze! I miss you, sweetie. How are you doing at the old house? Do you need me to bring you some supplies?” God no,

she couldn't come here!

“No! Uh... I'm fine. Is dad there? Either of them?”

She paused for a fraction of a second.

“No. What's wrong, Blaze? Do you need help?”

Did I? I didn't want to worry her at all, but now it seemed like I'd managed it anyway.

“I uh... I had a sex question, that's all. I know we're all kinda open about stuff, but I thought I'd be speaking to one of them, ya know.”

She laughed softly, and I could just picture her blonde hair flying as she shook her head.

“Trust me, they aren't the best advisors when it comes to that stuff. Can I help?” *OH god*. Can my mum help? Can my mum answer a fucking sex question? This was the most humiliating thing... well, maybe the second... I stared down at my cock though, soft and flaccid, but still streaked with blood.

I tugged at my hair as I argued with myself, finally letting out a frustrated groan. It wasn't like I'd researched this shit specifically, because I'd been so certain Anneka was experienced, like the slut I knew her to be. Had I been wrong this whole time?

“Jesus... do women bleed when it's their first time? How... how do I know for sure if it's their first time?”

Mum was quiet for a moment, then I heard her telling the boys to go to their room. Damn. The door closed in the

background, and she cleared her throat.

“What did you do, Blaze? I know we encourage you to express yourself, but there is an age of consent in this country, and-”

“Jesus, mum! Of course it wasn’t with some kid. What do you take me for? It’s just... well, I don’t know enough to know, and there was blood, so...”



ANNEKA

I MUST HAVE FALLEN asleep after what he did to me, and I wasn’t even sure how that was possible, when I felt like my heart had been broken along with my poor body. Had he intentionally hurt me, or was he really so incredibly clueless that he couldn’t tell?

My arms were sore from being cuffed, even though I could move them enough to stop them locking up, and my pussy and thighs were sore, feeling beaten and bruised. Had it really been as bad as it had felt, as it felt now, or was I dramatising it in my head now?

I struggled to lift the light covers and tried to look down there. I could see a smear of blood on my left thigh, and that was enough of a horrific reminder for me. I’d been raped by Blaze. He’d taken my virginity cruelly, and brutally, and he’d probably impregnated me in the process.

The door suddenly opened and I flinched, struggling to cover up again, as Blaze walked in. He was wearing a pair of jeans but his chest was bare. It was then that I realised what I was seeing on his skin, what I hadn't absorbed during the horror earlier.

My name. My name over and over, tattoos of various colours and designs, and my name was incorporated into every single one of them. There was a lot of red, like the colour my hair used to be, and he was just covered in them. He really was obsessed with me, but some of these tattoos were violent and savage. There was a woman with a knife in her heart, and my name beside it. Another said 'Anneka is hellbound'. Hellbound? Like I was some kind of monster? Something evil?

"I brought you some water," Blaze said, almost sounding contrite as he approached the bed with a glass in his hand.

"Water?" Yeah I could use that, unfortunately, if for no other reason than to get rid of the taste of his damn cock.

"Yeah," he offered me a small smile, like somehow he was doing something special for me.

"Oh goody. That'll make me a virgin again."

His eyes lowered, and he rubbed the back of his neck as he stood there, looking awkward. Yeah, he was acting like he felt awkward about things. Seriously?

"I really hope it's not true," I said bitterly, as he met my eyes again, his eyebrows rising questioningly.

“What?”

“The thing about always remembering your first time. I never want to remember it. I never want to remember *you*.”

His shoulders dropped, and he brought the glass of water closer, even as I struggled to sit up, my arms up on my shoulder so I could feel a little less prone.

“You need to drink,” Blaze said, lifting the glass to my lips. I wanted to reject it, to reject him, but I desperately needed it. I took a few sips, hating the satisfied look on his face, that look that said he felt like he was making up for what he did. Finally I pulled away from the glass, after draining more than half of it.

“This doesn’t make up for what you did,” I hissed at him, shrinking away when he sat on the side of the bed, too close to me. *Too close*.

“I didn’t know, Anneka.”

Fury rose up in me at his ridiculous words. He didn’t know?

“Didn’t know you were raping me? When a woman says ‘no’ or ‘stop’, and you ignore her, that’s rape. You knew exactly what you were doing, and you enjoyed it too. I always knew there was something wrong with you, Blaze. You proved it today. Your actions and your enjoyment of them, none of that was right.”

He rested his forehead in his hand and groaned.

“*No*. I mean, I had no idea you were a fucking virgin. How the hell is that even possible, because you were a little fucking

where at school?"

22

Blaze



S HE LOOKED FURIOUS, PRACTICALLY hissing at me like an angry cat when I lifted my head again, but I was still bemused as fuck.

“I’m serious. You gave it up to that asshole Boon back in school, right?”

Her forehead relaxed and then creased again, as she realised what I’d said.

“Wait, what? You fucking idiot! How the hell could I have done that, and still be a virgin for you to destroy? I swear to god, you were meant to be some genius, but you’re a fucking moron.”

I left the room, taking a few moments to breathe through my anger, because I didn’t want to lose my shit at her right now. I needed answers, and I needed to get both of us calm enough to do that.

I went to the kitchen, pacing for about ten seconds until I remembered the syringes my dad had given me. They weren’t all sedatives. Some were... some were to incapacitate in another way... he’d said men used to use them in clubs to make women more willing and pliant.

She’d be easier to talk to if she’d just be more fucking ‘pliant’, right? I dug out one of the syringes, and made sure the cap on the needle was secure before I tucked it in my back pocket.

I grabbed a small towel from the bathroom and wet it under the tap, then went back to Anneka. It was time to show her a

little care, and see if that got me what I wanted. If not, I'd resort to the drug in my pocket instead.

"Oh good, it's you again," she grumbled, trying to adjust her position against the headboard.

"I could undo those, if you don't try anything stupid."

Anneka lifted her chin as she glared at me.

"Stupid is *your* thing, not mine."

I pulled the covers away from her, and she let out a yelp, trying to curl her naked body up to hide it from me.

"Stop that. I just... I just want to help clean you up, that's all."

She froze, her eyes taking in the towel in my hand before she looked me in the eye again.

"Yeah, because I was born yesterday. Is there chloroform or something on that towel? You think drugging me is the answer now? I mean, *again*, because you already did that, right? Are there any depths you won't stoop to?"

I started lifting the towel to her face to try and prove it, before I realised that it'd convince her she was right.

"It's just water, I promise. Let me clean you up, and you'll feel better then."

She rolled her eyes, but didn't fight me when I straightened her legs back down and pushed them apart. *Jesus*. As well as the blood, there was bruising developing on her thighs; bruises shaped like my fingers.

Despite the shame I felt for bludgeoning my way through her virginity, I had to admit that those bruises were seriously fucking sexy. As was the fact that I now knew she'd only ever been with me. I was her only lover. The only cock to ever be inside her. She truly was completely mine.

“Stop looking so fucking proud, Blaze. You hurt me, and you deserve to rot in hell.”

I blinked myself out of my thoughts, using the damp towel to mop the blood from her skin in gentle swipes, noting every wince and shudder at my touch. Once her thighs were free of blood, I pushed her legs further apart, and used the other side of the wet towel to swipe between them. Again, she flinched at my touch, and wouldn't meet my eyes, even as she watched my hands carefully, distrustfully.

A new urge was taking over though, because I'd hurt her, but I could make it better, couldn't I? I'd taken my pleasure, but I'd given none in return. That was the complaint so many women had about men, right? I could fix that right now.

I tossed the towel aside, and slid my fingers between Anneka's legs, seeing them twitch as she gasped.

“What the *hell* are you doing?”

“Making it better,” I whispered, as I lowered my face between her legs, pinning them in place to keep her still.



ANNEKA

HE WAS DELUSIONAL, RIGHT? He really thought he should be touching me again right now?

He licked between my legs, and trailed his thumb from my clit down to my pussy, before pushing it inside me. It didn't hurt, but it didn't feel good either. What the hell was he playing at?

Blaze used his arms to pin down my thighs, as he used his thumbs to spread my pussy lips apart, making me feel so exposed and insecure because it was him, and nobody had ever hurt me the way he had. I'd never even really been touched intimately before him.

I couldn't escape him, or stop him, and as his tongue started teasing at me, I realised the worst part was that it could end up feeling good. It shouldn't feel good. I shouldn't enjoy anything he does to me, because he's a monster.

He flicked his tongue over my clit, circling it and sucking on it, and how was it that Blaze *of all people* knew exactly where to find it, and tease it in just a way that my attempts to move my hips had changed from flinching away, to attempting to move closer for more.

Blaze's blue eyes lifted to mine, and he watched me as he slowly and languidly teased me with his tongue and his lips, kissing me down there like he would my mouth. It was starting to feel good, and I didn't want that, because he didn't deserve my pleasure as well as my pain, and my fear.

“Stop it, Blaze!”

He pushed me apart again and thrust his tongue inside me, fucking me with it, before he dragged his tongue up and back to my clit again, circling, flicking, sucking.

Tingles of something I really didn't want to call pleasure licked their way up my insides in sync with his tonguing, and I was suddenly so afraid that he'd make me come. I didn't want that. I didn't want him in control of me in that way. I held my breath, trying to force away that feeling that kept building inside me.

"No," I whispered as pleasure started to ripple through me, building up to a crescendo that I kept trying to fight.

As Blaze became more and more determined to push me over the edge, he became rougher and more frantic in his tonguing, adding a finger, and then two, to try and force me to come. It was less comfortable, but it succeeded, as pleasure and shame rocketed through me in equal measure, and I cursed Blaze's name, even as I rode the wave I'd tried to deny.

That smug, self-satisfied look on his face as he sat up, swiping his tongue over his lips, took the edge off for me, helping me back into anger after that orgasm kinda muddied the waters enough, that I almost stopped hating him for a few moments.

"I suppose you think that makes it okay," I murmured, trying to pull away from him again to curl up, to protect myself from more of his touch.

Blaze looked confused, even as he tentatively licked at his fingers and then sucked on them.

“Disgusting,” I hissed at him, starting to tremble as my body temperature started dipping again. For a while I’d been overheating during his attentions, but now I was desperately in need of something to wrap around me. Blaze sat up properly, releasing his fingers and wiping them on his jeans.

“I don’t get it,” he said, standing up and leaning over me with a key he’d produced from his pocket. He unlocked the cuffs and set them on the bedside cabinet, as I rubbed at my wrists for a brief second before I grabbed the bedding, and pulled it up around me.

“Get what?”

He offered me the remains of the glass of water, and I snatched it, even as my hand shook and nearly tipped it over.

“You came. You wouldn’t come like that if you hated me so much. You wanted it, and I gave it to you. *You’re welcome.*“ He ducked as I threw the glass at him, splatting the last of the water across his face as it shattered against the wall behind him.

“You fucking bitch!”

23

Blaze



WHAT THE HELL WAS wrong with that bitch? She waited until she'd earned her fucking freedom from the cuffs, and then she tried to brain me with a glass. Of course, I dimly remembered there being a stack of paper cups in the back of the cupboard, so I should have used those again, shouldn't I? I wouldn't make that mistake a second time.

I lunged at Anneka as she leapt off the bed and ran for the door, her legs wobbling enough that she was unsteady and almost staggering across the room. I caught her, and wrestled her down to the floor. See, what happened next should have been the easy part, right? Pull out the syringe, stick it in her, and make her go night night. *If only.*

I got the cap off the needle, and brought it down, and her panicked yelp came at the same time as she shoved my arms, and somehow that needle ended up in *my* leg.

The plunger was pushed down enough before I wrenched it free and tossed it behind us. Enough, as in it was enough to dose me, and must have been right into a bloody vein, because I was already feeling the effects of whatever the fuck it was.

My grip on Anneka was loosening, and I couldn't keep hold of her. I started to feel woozy, and sluggish, and fell back on my ass.

“What the...” My words sounded slow and slurred, as time seemed to slow down.

“Fuck.”



ANNEKA

WHAT THE HELL WAS that stuff? Blaze went from scary strong and holding me down, to kinda softened and almost dizzy, like his balance was going. It must have been so scary for him, but did I care? I didn't, right? He was trying to stick that stuff in me, so he deserved what he got.

He fell back on his ass, and seemed to be struggling to focus on me, his arms suddenly seeming too heavy to even reach for me.

This was my chance to get away from him. My chance to escape, to get free, to call the police. To get some kind of emergency contraception. All of those things I'd been desperate for, and yet, I was standing watching him as he sluggishly tried to sit up again, and rolled onto his side.

He kept trying to speak, but it was kind of slurred and hard to understand. I thought he was trying to say the word 'sorry' but why the hell would he? He probably meant that I'd *be* sorry, and that was the jolt I needed to kick me into action.

I tried the door, which was unlocked, and ran down the hall, wearing nothing but too scared to delay and find clothes. How would I get out? I ran throughout the house, starting with the scarily locked down door, checking all of the windows and finding them locked, and also frustratingly unbreakable. I tried, I even picked up a chair and tried crashing it through the

biggest window in the kitchen, but it fucking bounced. What the hell was this place?

The kitchen was useless, although it had knives at least, and the other rooms I found were just as hard to escape. There was a really creepy room in the basement that I stared at in horror, even as I wondered why the hell I'd even look down there for a way out. It was like a cell, or something, and I realised that Blaze could easily have locked me in there, but for some strange reason he hadn't. It didn't make sense, but then nothing he did made any sense.

In the end, I went back upstairs, raiding one of the other bedrooms for some clothes. Strangely there were t-shirts and sweatpants in abundance in some of the drawers, but nothing else.

Finally I crept back to the room that Blaze was in, peering around the door cautiously to find him prone on the floor, face up, and blinking languidly.

“Blaze?”

He didn't even respond, just stared around him, seemingly in a daze, before his eyes drifted closed. At rest, or whatever the hell this was, he seemed younger, and almost vulnerable. Was this really the brutal man who'd raped me? Who'd kidnapped me, and locked me up as his prisoner?

His pale blonde hair was a little long, and unruly, with a lock of hair draped over his cheek as he slept, his face now turned in the direction of the doorway. He didn't look so scary now, or so dangerous. He didn't look cruel while he slept. Instead

he looked almost angelic, and sweet. I couldn't reconcile this version of Blaze with the one I'd been tormented by.

Since I couldn't leave, and I seemed oddly reluctant to leave him drugged and alone, I draped a blanket over him, and tucked one of the pillows under his head. I even stroked his hair back from his face before I realised what I was doing. He wasn't to be protected by me. He was my captor. My rapist. The monster that I wish had only ever been under the bed.

I wrapped one of the blankets around myself and curled up in the corner, with my back against the wall and my knees hugged tight in my arms. I'd wait until he woke up, and then I'd make him release me.

After all, theoretically, I could have killed him while he slept, and I hadn't. *That had to mean something, right?*

24

Blaze



I WOKE UP FEELING sluggish and weak, and quickly figured out two things. I seemed to be on the floor, even though I had a pillow and a blanket like I'd made a makeshift bed.

The other thing that I discovered was a metal cuff around my right wrist, and it was connected to the leg of the bed. I tugged on the cuff, and rolled my head to my left, trying to figure out what the fuck was going on here.

Aneka was curled up in the corner, a few feet away from me, fast asleep with her head on her knees. I tugged on the cuff again, trying to use it to pull myself up, because that weakness was persisting.

Why was I so woozy? How had I ended up on the floor? I couldn't remember a fucking thing after... what was the last thing I could remember? I remembered licking between Aneka's legs and making her come. I remembered thinking that I hadn't done badly for my first time going down on a woman. Porn was my friend, after all. *Take that, child services people who thought I was too young to watch it back then.*

"You're awake?" I turned back to look at her, watching as she warily eyed me from her corner.

"What happened?"

She flinched when I tugged on the cuff again.

"You don't remember?"

I struggled into a sitting position, leaning against the wall by the bed, so my arm could relax. How the hell did she get me

cuffed like this?

“I remember going down on you, then it’s kinda hazy. Did you hit me with something?” I used my free hand to check the back of my head, but I couldn’t feel any bumps.

“You tried to inject me with something, but it... you ended up being the one getting drugged.” Fuck me, was that really what had happened? I could feel my face heat up with embarrassment. *I tried to drug my captive and drugged myself instead?*

Aneka shrank back into her corner as I turned to glare at her.

“You did it, didn’t you? There’s no way I drugged myself. How the fuck did you...” I trailed off as I realised that I couldn’t have made myself comfortable with the pillow and blanket, so she must have done it. She took care of me, even after what I’d done to her. Even though she locked the cuff on my wrist, she also cared that I was comfortable and warm. What the hell did it mean?

“You covered me up?”

She shrugged, almost dropping the blanket from her shoulder, which she’d wrapped around herself like a cocoon.

“You were just lying there, and I... I guess I was the idiot who cared that another human being was unconscious on the floor. I shouldn’t have cared. I should have taken the opportunity to kick you in the nuts, and locked you in. *Oh my*

god, why the fuck didn't I do exactly that?“ She looked horrified with herself, but thank fuck she didn't.

“Wait... why didn't you leave? You had every opportunity to get out while I was out cold.”

She turned her hateful gaze back in my direction.

“You know full well that there's no way out of this fucking hellhole, Blaze. You don't think I tried? The windows won't break. How the hell do you have windows that don't... break...” She trailed off as she stared at the window across the room on the opposite wall. “I never thought to check the ones up here. Maybe they're not unbreakable like downstairs. What a fucking idiot.”

I grinned, relieved to know that my dads had made the place so fucking inescapable.

“These are the same. Dad said it cost a fortune but was worth it to make it safe.”

“From what? The monsters are already inside the house!”

She wasn't wrong, but I wasn't going to admit to that.

“So... when are you going to let me out of the cuff?” She didn't really think she was leaving me here, right?

“You fucking wish! I'm not letting you free just so you can force me into more sexual stuff! It's bad enough that I could be fucking pregnant, you unbelievable asshole.”

I smirked, leaning my head back against the wall as I pulled my legs up. I tried to look like I didn't have a care in the

world, even though I seemed to be her captive for the moment. Not gonna lie though, the thought of her carrying my baby was oddly thrilling.

“I’m not wearing condoms with you, Anneka, but I’m sure you’re still protected by your birth control for now. I guess it’ll wear off though at some point, right? That’s how it works?”

“I’m not on any, dipshit. Why would I put my body through the potential issues caused by birth control when I’m a fucking virgin?”

My eyes narrowed as I rotated my head slowly in her direction.

“You’re not? I still can’t believe you were a fucking virgin at twenty two. Who waits that long these days?”

“We can’t all be like you, okay? Men get to sleep with whoever the fuck they want, because they can separate emotions from sex like the sociopaths most of them are. I wanted to wait for the right man, and FYI that person was never going to be you. Don’t look so fucking smug, rape doesn’t make you my perfect man, you know.”



ANNEKA

NOW THAT HE WAS awake, I was regretting my decisions. Why the hell did I almost worry about him while he was drugged and unconscious, even as I knew that he’d still be Blaze when he woke up again.

It was one of those epic dumb moves that women in movies or books made, where you'd be shaking your head and tutting at them, for being so dumb. I *was* dumb though, wasn't I? Because somehow I hadn't expected this from a guy who'd obsessed over me as a kid.

"Unlock me, Anneka," Blaze murmured quietly, his head lolling on his shoulders slightly. Was he still feeling the effects of the drug?

"No."

He groaned, a shudder running through him as his head thudded back against the wall, and I could see a pained look on his face.

"P-please..."

"What... what's going on?"

He curled in on himself, gasping out in pain and then his body started twitching rapidly. What the hell? Was he having some kind of seizure? What if the drugs had caused it? What were people supposed to do for someone having a seizure?

The cuff clanged against the bed leg, and I realised the first thing I should do is free him, so I scrambled across the floor, dragging the key from my pocket as I moved.

I lunged over Blaze's prone body, and struggled to get the key in the lock while he was shuddering so intensely. As I finally popped the cuff open, Blaze's hand slipped lifelessly from it, his body suddenly stilling and falling silent.

Oh god. Was he dead? If he died in here, I'd be doomed to die too! I rolled him onto his back, cupping his face in both of my hands like somehow that'd help me figure out what was wrong with him. His eyes flickered a little, but didn't open fully. Was he okay? Would he wake up?

His eyes popped open at the same time as he suddenly latched that same cuff around my wrist, locking me to the bed leg. A slow smirk appeared on his face, and I realised I'd been duped by the asshole.

“People like you are so easy to manipulate, Anneka. You might think you hate me, but you're one of those idiots who think everyone's worth saving. I'm not, but you missed your chance.”

He sat up, his hands looping around my neck as he moved.

“You're mine, Anneka, but no matter what you do, you can't fix what you did. No matter how much you try to make up for it, you'll always be the bitch who destroyed my family.”

He squeezed my throat with both hands, and I pulled frantically at them with my one free hand. Blaze's eyes were fixed on mine as I started to gasp and choke, my eyes pleading with him because he'd stolen my breath, and I couldn't utter a single word.

“Here's what we'll do. I like the idea of you being pregnant, so I'm gonna keep fucking you until you give me a child. Our baby. Our offspring. The culmination of Blaze and Anneka. Only at that time will I decide whether I want to keep you here.”

He grinned widely, even as the room started to dim as lack of oxygen became an overwhelming issue, even worse than his horrifying words.

“If I decide I don’t want you anymore, nobody will ever find your body.”

25

Blaze



ONCE ANNEKA HAD PASSED out, I got her back up on the bed, cuffed properly once more, and headed downstairs. I still felt off balance, and my memories of what had happened in that bedroom were hazy.

I sat in the living room with a coffee, and picked up my phone, surprised to find it was exactly where I'd left it. Had she not even tried to get help? It was locked and needed a passcode, and my eye, but still. It was almost like she wanted to be here.

I dialled home, and heard my dad, Dory, pick up.

“Hey dad,” I said, clearing my throat when it sounded a little weak. *Damn drugs.*

“Hey kiddo, how’s it going?”

I gulped some coffee as I pondered what to say, since I'd made such a fucking mess of things already.

“Blaze?”

“Yeah, sorry... it’s uh... she’s here, but uh... it’s going, I guess.”

He groaned. “How badly is it going, Blaze? She won’t be open to staying at first, but it takes time to build what you have now into something real. Trust me.”

“I know. I know all about what you guys did to mum, but I guess I thought it’d be easier than this.”

“What the fuck do you mean, you know about that stuff? We always swore never to tell you guys anything about how we

got together.” Well, if I hadn’t already known, I’d be suspicious now, right?

“Dad, I read mum’s diaries years ago, so I know everything. That’s the only reason I confided in you about what I wanted to do to Anneka. I get it, it’s fine, but it’s just not going the way I thought it would.”

He made a frustrated sound, that may have been a muffled curseword or two.

“What’s happening exactly? Have you uh... have you been intimate?” Now he’s being delicate? I couldn’t help but laugh at that.

“Did we fuck? Yeah, not that she was willing, and... uh...”

“Your mum told me... she was a virgin, yeah? That’s unexpected, but also pretty fucking perfect. You’ll be her only lover ever. What about birth control?”

Of course he’d go there. My dads had spent years making as many kids as they could, until mum had finally put her foot down. Five of us was enough, she swore, although of course, it almost became four of us because of that bitch upstairs.

“She’s not on anything. She said I’ll get her pregnant... and I kinda feel like I want to.”

“Yes, you do. I had that same urge, and you just have to go with it. She’ll come around, kiddo, she just needs time. Don’t do anything you can’t fix later, yeah?”

“Like don’t rape her? Too late for that, but how else was I going to punish her for what she did?”

Dad let out this long sigh, like he was trying to stall before he answered.

“Blaze, there were many people involved in what happened, so you can’t blame her for all of it.”

Like fuck, I can’t. She started it, and it all snowballed from there.

“I can, and I will. She’ll pop out a kid and then I’ll see if I want to keep her, but either way, I’ll keep the kid. You guys will help, right?”

“Not with the uh... early stuff, but yeah, come home with your child, and we’ll be here for you. You know that. Just remember though, some things can’t be undone, kid.”

“Thanks dad. I know I don’t say this very often, but I love you guys, and I’m so fucking relieved I had great parents like you, rather than that asshole who spawned Anneka.”



ANNEKA

I WOKE UP NAKED and cuffed to the bed again, and when I realised Blaze was leaning against the doorframe, watching me, I realised I was right back where I didn’t want to be; at his complete lack of mercy.

“Blaze, please,” I whispered, and shuddered as a grin spread across his face.

“Please what, babe? Please fill me with babies, because that’s all I’m good for? I will. Stop being so fucking

demanding, yeah? First I want to watch you for a minute, because you see, I *am* in control of absolutely everything now. The only way you get uncuffed is if I allow it. The only time I'll trust you again, is if you fucking prove to me you can actually be trusted. Not that you're particularly good at escaping. Say... on your little tour of the house, did you happen to spot the room in the basement?"

Oh god no. I started shaking my head frantically.

"You didn't? Oh, remind me to show you sometime. That's where my dads kept my mum, you know... when they first took her."

What? I lifted my head, staring at him in horror.

"Your mum?"

He grinned widely. "Oh it's a beautiful story, Anneka. See my dad, Dory, was obsessed with my mum, so he stalked her, and when he met my other dad, they kidnapped her."

Oh my god, what the fuck!

"They did what?"

He laughed, coming over to sit on the bed, resting a hand on my naked thigh. I flinched at his touch, but knew it wasn't going to dissuade him from touching me. Nothing would.

"Yeah, see, dad knew that mum wanted a baby, even though they'd never met. He figured he'd make one with her. And my other dad, Gray, well... We both know that you know my dads fuck too, don't we? Anyway, they raped mum until she grew to love them, and made all of us kids with them."

I flinched from his touch then, gaping in horror, wishing I could get further away from this monster, who'd been created by other monsters, and the only question was whether he was better than them, or much worse.

“That’s horrible! That’s sick and fucking insane!”

Blaze laughed again, leaning on one hand as he watched me edging away from him, panic making my attempts more erratic by the second.

“You say that, but we grew up with three amazing parents who loved us and taught us well.”

“Like how to be psycho kidnapping rapists? Blaze, this is so fucked up, I don’t even know where to start!”

“Still judging my family, eh? Still thinking you’re better than us. Fucking bitch that you are, you think you’re so superior, when your parents couldn’t even stay together long enough to raise you properly.”

“Fuck you!”

He moved fast, pinning me beneath his half naked body, and I let out a scream of panic and despair.

“Aw that’s so cute, babe. Screaming is kinda hot, so feel free to keep doing it as I fuck you. It’s not like I’m gonna bother making it feel good, what with you being such an unbelievably stuck up bitch.”

He unzipped his jeans, and shoved them down enough to free his cock, and I started struggling beneath him.

“Please, Blaze, don’t do this. Please. It won’t make me love you. I’ll always hate you for it.”

He shrugged as he forced my legs apart, and moved between them.

“I honestly don’t give a shit. You had your chance to deserve my kindness, and my love, and you threw it away.”

He spat on his hand, and smoothed it over his dick, and then he guided it down and started pressing inside me.

“Blaze, no! I don’t... no, please...” I started to cry, pure helplessness washing over me, as he kept rocking back and forth while he completely ignored my pleas.

When his cock was finally seated deep inside me, he leaned forward to stare down at me from so close, *too close*, that it made me feel even more overwhelmed by him.

“I’m your first, and your only, Anneka, but guess what? You’re mine too. I waited for you, for this. *For us.*”

26

Blaze



I DIDN'T MEAN TO tell her that. I didn't mean to give her anything personal that she could try and use against me, because that was the thing with Anneka. She couldn't be trusted, and she would use any tool at her disposal to hurt me and my family.

“Blaze-”

“Time to shut the fuck up, Anneka. You're here purely for my pleasure, and the sound of your voice doesn't please me right now.” I placed a hand over her mouth to stop her, because I knew she wouldn't just shut up because I told her to.

She was crying again, and it was pretty. Her tears suited her, like they were a decoration for my pleasure, and I appreciated the effort. Maybe she wasn't *all* bad.

“Keep crying, babe. I find it really fucking hot.” I relished the way she winced every time I thrust into her, every time my hips met hers. I was fucking her so hard I could hear my flesh slapping against hers.

I was glad I'd waited for her to be my first, and even more relieved that no other fucker had been inside her. She was always meant to be mine, even if she'd betrayed me in the worst way.

Thinking about that while I was fucking her was a bad move. My free hand closed around her throat and I squeezed, grinning at the panicked look in her wide eyes.

“It's such a shame I hate you so much, Anneka, because I think I could have loved you. We could have been doing this

because we both wanted it. Why did you have to fuck everything up?”

She was uttering muffled whimpers, as I slammed into her harder and harder. All I wanted was for her to hurt, for her to feel pain instead of pleasure. For her to understand what it felt like to not be fucking blessed, like she'd been her entire life.

Her eyes were starting to drift closed as lack of oxygen affected her, and this time I really didn't want her to miss the best part, releasing her throat and enjoying her ragged gasps for air, as I filled her with my cum once more.

I'd keep filling her and filling her, until it took root, until it created our fucking child. Or children. Who knows, maybe I could fill her with enough cum to make twins.

“I hate you,” she hissed as I stared down at her, bathed in the afterglow of my orgasm, and our second attempt at making life. She hated me alright, but she'd hate me more if I made her enjoy it, wouldn't she?

I brushed a thumb over one of her nipples, not missing the shiver that ran through her as I did it. Interesting. I lowered my mouth, sliding my tongue around the nipple, pressing harder on the second circuit around it. That made her shudder even more intensely. I grinned to myself as I sucked on it, and she gasped raggedly.

“Stop,” she whimpered as I did it again. Yeah... while my cock was still softening inside her, I wanted to make her come hard. I wanted her to suck my cum deeper into her, as she enjoyed the things I was doing to her.

I slid my fingers between us, stroking and teasing, and watching her for when I reached lower, and found what I was looking for. *They say that the clit's so hard for men to find, but if it's so fucking hard, why do I find it first time whenever I try?*

“Blaze, please don't!”

I went back to sucking on her nipples, one after the other, circling and rubbing at her clit, which was slippery as hell with my cum as my cock started softening.

I kept rubbing, watching for every twitch and shudder, every gasped breath, every ripple of pleasure. I wanted to know her so well that I could read every fucking tic, and know exactly how to manipulate her.



ANNEKA

I WAS DOING MY best to fight the way his actions were sending tingles of pleasure through me, because right now the last thing I wanted was to feel good. He was so brutal and cruel, and this was just another form of abuse. Another way to destroy my spirit, and my soul.

I closed my eyes, wanting to retreat from that satisfied look on his face as I lost the battle, and pleasure rippled through my body, emanating from where my pussy clenched around his softening cock, dragging a low groan from him.

“Bastard,” I hissed at him, and he laughed triumphantly, leaning down to try and kiss me, knowing he was pressing against my poor tender clit as he did.

“Most women would be fucking grateful for an orgasm like that, you high maintenance bitch.” He gave up his attempts to kiss me after I dodged him enough times, and pushed away from me, dragging his soft dick out of me as he moved.

Disgustingly, he leaned close again and started pushing his fingers inside me, what... was he pushing his cum back inside me? That sick bastard. As if he hadn't abused me enough already!

All I wanted to do was curl up and cover myself, and hide from his gaze. And all I wanted *for him* was for him to fall down the stairs and die, so I told him as much. He started laughing, a low chuckle at first, building until he was resting his hands on his knees, doubled over with laughter.

“What? Why is that funny, you sick asshole?”

He fought to catch his breath, standing up and bracing a hand on the bedframe as he did.

“It's just so ironic that you said that to me. I mean... well, it's almost like you know.”

We stared at each other for a long moment, presumably while he was waiting for me to ask what the fuck that meant, and I fought the urge because I really didn't want to give him anything he wanted.

Finally he just shrugged and turned to leave the room, leaving me uncovered and dripping cum, because he was a savage asshole who didn't give a crap about my wellbeing.

“Fine. Why?”

He halted in the doorway, that chuckle rumbling through his chest again as he turned to look at me. He had a hand braced against the doorframe, and he'd have looked so sexy if he hadn't been the creep who'd just raped me. *Again.*

“You really wanna know?”

I glared back at him, fighting the urge to tell him to go fuck himself, finally nodding jerkily. He grinned widely at me.

“Because that's exactly how I killed your dad.”

I felt like someone had just punched me in the chest, reacting with horror under his ever watchful gaze. Yeah, he was literally taking pleasure in my shock and devastation, as he confirmed that he'd murdered my father. Could it really be true? Was it him? Was he just taking credit for it, so that he could fuck my brain up even more?

“I don't believe... I don't believe you. You... you were a kid, I mean, they said he'd been dead a few years. You'd have been a kid, Blaze.”

He leaned his naked butt against the doorframe and folded his arms.

“Yep. Eleven actually, but back then I'd have insisted I wasn't a kid anymore. Do you want the story, or do you wanna

just sit there and pretend like you give a shit? He was an asshole, babe. Don't pretend like you're not glad he's gone."

I gasped, but at the same time I realised that he might not exactly be wrong. My only memories of my father were of an angry man, who mostly just made me afraid of him, because the wrong word or action could set him off yelling. He'd never physically struck me or my mother, but his rages were terrifying.

I *had* been glad when he'd left. Maybe not immediately, because it was so scary to suddenly be without his presence, but yeah... he wasn't the best dad, was he? Did he deserve to die though?

"See, you know I'm right. That guy was a monumental prick, with a major attitude problem, and he deserved to die. Shall I tell you? Yeah... let me tell you. See, I was in your bedroom, reading your diary... Jesus, probably jerking off on your pillow or something, I dunno. You and your mum were away at your gran's, and he let himself in to get something from your mum's room. We argued and uh... yeah, I shoved him down the stairs. At the time I was freaked out, even though it felt so fucking exhilarating to take his life. My dads helped me dispose of him, you know, because it wasn't a first for them. You were better off with him gone, weren't you? You're welcome, by the way."

Oh my god. *Did he just say his dads were killers too?* What the hell kind of family were they? No wonder he was such a psycho!

27

Blaze



WHY DID I JUST tell her that? I guess I thought she'd be horrified, or more afraid, although probably not heartbroken, because I was right about him being an asshole.

Instead she was just kind of stunned and quiet, and that was kinda boring. I closed the door and went downstairs, because outside of doing what I was doing to her, I really had no purpose right now, did I?

It'd been partially about paying her back for what she did, and partially about taking what had always been mine, even though I felt attraction and some love for her, and it had been crushed beneath the hate.

Had I imagined it'd go down exactly like this? No, I don't think I'd really thought that far ahead, had I? Take her, own her... then what? The idea of impregnating her was definitely my new burning urge, but then what? Keep her longer? Kill her? Raise a fucking kid on my own?

I was smart enough to realise that I hadn't been raised to be normal, and that was down to the twisted nature of my parents' relationship and beginnings. Was starting out with Aneka in the same way really going to do a better job of anything? I sat on a stool at the kitchen counter, and rested my chin in my hand. What the hell was I doing?

"Blaze?" *What the fuck?* I lunged up from the stool and turned to see my parents in the living room, all fucking three of them.

I immediately cupped my hands in front of my junk as I glared at them, as pissed at the knowing smirks on my dads' faces, as I was at the unexpected intrusion.

“What the hell are you guys doing here?”

Mum rolled her eyes, folding her arms as she stood between my dads.

“That’s a delightful way to greet your parents, Blaze. I take it you haven’t seen our messages?”

Messages? What the hell messages was she on about? I turned to look for my phone and heard my dads start laughing again. Oh Jesus, now I was flashing my bare butt at them, wasn’t I?

“Can I at least get dressed?”

They seemed to agree with that suggestion, so I ran upstairs to grab some of those dated looking sweats, and a t-shirt of mine that I’d brought here. I loved band merch, and mostly listened to rock and metal, so the *Five Finger Death Punch* t-shirt was a favourite of mine.

Back downstairs, I realised pretty fast that mum had disappeared somewhere else.

“Where’s mum?” Dad Gray was sitting down at the breakfast bar, while my other dad was making coffee.

“She’s gone to check on your uh *prey*,” he said, catching my other dad’s eye as he turned away from the coffee machine.

“She’s what?” Dad Gray caught my arm as I tried to turn and leave, and he winced and released me, as he wrapped his hand over his forearm. It was the arm he’d burned years ago. The nerve damage he’d been left with had left him with frequent pain and weakness in that arm, but he usually never showed any reaction to using it.

“Dad?”

He pointed to the stool beside him using the other hand, as he rested the injured one in his lap.

“Sit the fuck down.”

I frowned as I joined him, and dad Dory passed coffee to each of us.

“How’s it going?”

The weirdest question for the situation, right? How’s my kidnap and rape scenario going? And just as confusing was the answer to that question, because I had no idea right now.

“Uh... I... uh we... *Jesus*... I don’t know what exactly you’re asking me, dad.”

He grinned. “Dory said we should check that you’re not scaring her too much or something. I mean, with your mum, she kinda found some of it hot right from the start. Is that the case with Anneka?”

Was it? I had no idea. I slumped as I stared at my drink, ignoring the sympathetic look on dad Dory’s face.

“I don’t know, dad. It’s different from you guys, isn’t it? It’s just me, not two people, and I don’t know how much that changed the dynamic for you guys.”

Dad Dory surprised me by laughing.

“You mean she’s not getting to see you being forced into sex by another man, so that somehow affects how she feels about you? Trust me, that wasn’t planned, nor did I expect it to make your mother like me more. I think she got off on it right from the start.”

“Oh, she definitely did. That filthy little minx was always wet as hell after I’d fucked you,” dad Gray said, laughing even as I groaned and covered my ears. They never used to talk about this stuff with me, but since I’d decided on following in their footsteps, I guess they’d decided we’d somehow opened the door to this shit.

“Please don’t tell me stuff like that, dads.”

They caught each other’s eye and grinned.

“You’re a grown up now, Blaze. You’re the result of what happened right here in this house, before your mother was even fully on board with being with us. It’s gone full circle.”

“It’s fucking biblical, Dory.”

My dads... suddenly I was wondering if everything I’d done was because I was literally as fucked in the head as they suddenly seemed to be.

Was I just brutalising a woman because it was possible, and fun, rather than understanding that she maybe didn’t entirely

deserve it?



ANNEKA

I'D CURLED UP IN a ball, wishing I was at least covered up, and when I heard Blaze's footsteps thundering up the stairs, I winced, squeezing my eyes closed as I braced myself for whatever he was about to do next. He didn't come into the room though, and I was relieved to hear him run back downstairs again.

What I hadn't heard were the footsteps of the person now tapping on the door, and easing it open. A blonde head peered around the door, and then Blaze's damn mother stepped into the room and looked at me with sympathy.

What the hell was she doing here? Was he done with me now? Was she going to free me? Was I saved at last? Were they finally putting a stop to this hell he'd been putting me through?

"How are you doing, sweetheart?" Her voice was low and gentle, and she looked like she understood exactly how I was feeling, and maybe she did. She'd been here in this very position, hadn't she?

"I need help," I choked out, and she hurried over to the bed, reaching out to draw the covers up, tucking them tightly around me.

“Is he giving you food and drinks? Is he taking proper care of you?” Well, that didn’t sound like she was planning to free me, did it? Was she really not here to rescue me?

“What?” I struggled to sit up; my hands being cuffed to the bed making it really bloody difficult.

“Is he taking proper care of me? Proper care? Well, I don’t know. Is tying me to a bed and raping me ‘proper care’? I mean, I’d say hell no, but then in your family... what is that? Is that just how you say good morning? Is it normal behaviour for you and your evil husbands?”

Wilma sighed, sitting on the bed beside me and reaching for my hand, which I quickly tried to jerk out of her reach. *Nobody else was going to fucking touch me without my permission!*

“I’m sorry, dear sweet Anneka. I know this probably seems insane, and wrong, and cruel, and so many things. I understand, I really do.”

“And yet you’re not going to free me,” my voice, which wasn’t posing a question at all, was low and ragged, as tears stung my eyes and my throat burned with emotion.

“Blaze isn’t a monster, Anneka. He’s a highly intelligent young man, who’s been through hell along with his siblings, and his pain pushes him to be more aggressive than he’d normally be.”

I glared at her, tugging at the cuffs to make my point; you know, that I was chained to a fucking bed.

“So he’s only raping me because he’s pissed about something? Or maybe he’d rape me gently, if he didn’t have some kind of bug up his ass? He keeps telling me he hates me, and he wants me to suffer because of what I did, but he won’t even tell me what that was!” I was crying, sobbing by this point, so how she understood me, I had no idea.

Wilma caught my hands this time, squeezing them in hers.

“He’s... he loves you, Anneka. He just struggles with the past, but he will come around, and all it might take is-”

“What the fuck!? You’re seriously telling me how to win him over or some shit? This isn’t some cute little dating game! This is me being a kidnap and rape victim, because your son, YOUR FUCKING SON, kidnapped and fucking raped me! Twice! I was a virgin, Wilma, a... a virgin... and he hurt me...”

By this point, I didn’t even think my words were clear enough for her to make out as words at all, but she yelled for her husbands, and suddenly there were footsteps thundering up the stairs, and multiple people were coming here.

More people. Men. Men who raped women. *Three rapists stepped into the room, and I started to scream and scream.*

28

Blaze



S HE WAS A SCREAMING mess, and it was only after dad Dory insisted on dosing her with that weird stuff in the syringes I'd accidentally used on myself, that she finally shut the fuck up.

We stood and watched her as she blinked dazedly at us, I mean, her chest was still kinda heaving a bit, but she was calmer.

“What the fuck is that stuff, dad?”

He grinned, glancing at the syringe in his hand.

“Just a little something to make a person more uh, *pliant*.”

Pliant? Yeah, that was definitely a good word for it. If my parents weren't here right now, I'd definitely be testing Aneka to see how aware she was, as I slid deep inside her again. I groaned, casually manoeuvring my hands down to cover the boner I really couldn't hide in sweatpants.

Dad Gray started laughing. “That's my boy. You wanna do her while she's like that? We can leave.”

“Dammit, Gray!” Mum slapped his chest and glared at all of us in turn. Finally she fixed her glare on me, and didn't relent as she folded her arms.

“You haven't told her, have you?”

I reached up to scratch my face absently, forgetting what I was exposing to my parents by uncovering my dick. Who the hell thought sweatpants were a good idea?

“Told her?”

Did her glare just get more fierce? Yeah. Go figure.

“Don’t play stupid with me. This is all bad enough, but she doesn’t even know why you’re doing it.”

Did it matter? “Is it any of her business? Shouldn’t she fucking remember what she did? What she caused? Speaking of...” I looked from one parent to the others in turn. “How’s Em?”

They all sobered, but then dad Gray grinned again.

“More fucking goth every day, kid, but she’s still fighting. She almost has more tattoos than you at this point, too.”

“And the piercings, don’t forget those,” mum muttered, glancing at Aneka again. The bitch was still kinda awake, but definitely not really with us right now. I liked it. I already planned to use more of that stuff on her.

“How much of that stuff can I give her?” I asked dad Dory, and watched as he lifted the single syringe once more.

“Never more than one of these in the space of a day or two. Promise me, Blaze. Any more and you could lose her.”

Lose her... *lose her*? Like, I hated the bitch, but suddenly that idea was not as appealing as it would have been even a day ago.

“Got it. Uh... I accidentally told her some of the stuff you did to mum back then... and she knows I killed her dad.”

Everyone got a bit pissed about that, not least my mum who still seemed to like to tell herself that I was blissfully unaware

of what my dads had done to her when they first met.

After they calmed down, we watched as Anneka calmly drifted off to sleep.

“You can’t let her go now, kid.” I looked up and realised that only dad Gray was still in the room. How the hell did I miss my other parents leaving?

“I know.”

“No, I’m serious. What she knows... what she might be able to tell the police, kid, with your juvenile record, you don’t need the extra heat, yeah?”

That wave of shame that washed over me? Yeah, that had been happening ever since I broke their most important rule of all time; don’t get caught.

A few incidents here and there, one occasion of being seen ‘peeping’ in a woman’s window, and yeah, I had to be more fucking careful. All of those incidents had happened between the ages of eleven and thirteen, but still. *That stuff never went away, and neither did the shame.*

“Blaze, look at me.” I turned to meet dad’s gaze and he looked like he understood. That was the great thing about him. Unlike my other dad, he seemed to get how I felt about these things. I think we’d always been closer than me and my other dad, because of our love of fire and burning things.

“You’re an amazing young man, and I’m so proud of you. I’m proud of the way you think, and feel, and the way you look out for your brothers and sister the way you do. We all

make mistakes when we're young. You get that, right? I did, your other dad did. Hell, your mum probably did, but she never tells us that stuff.”

Dad squeezed my shoulder and I felt that usual calm settle deep inside me, that calm that came from our connection. In many ways, he'd always been my best friend, and now I was just messing this shit up, and still he wasn't disappointed in me. I swallowed hard as my throat felt a bit tight.

“Dad... what am I doing here? This isn't going right at all.”

He followed my gaze as I turned to look at Anneka again. She was sleeping peacefully now, almost smiling in her sleep, and the blanket had slipped a little, revealing redness and bruising around her delicate throat. I did that, didn't I? I choked her when I fucked her, and look, I'd left marks on that beautiful pale skin of hers.

“I'm sick, dad. This isn't right, what I'm doing to her. It's not, is it?” I suddenly wanted to wrap her in those covers and carry her out of here, but I was the thing she should be rescued from. I was the monster hurting her.

“Look, kid, I can't say if it's right or wrong, but I can say this; you kids were always meant for each other, and maybe the way we got together with your mum wasn't the sanest or most acceptable way, but look how it turned out. There's so much fucking love in our household, and that started like this. I'm not saying this is the only way, but it can work.” He cupped my cheek, patting it lightly.

“Don’t doubt the process, Blaze, but you know something? Show her a little kindness now and then, and gain her trust. Relationships don’t work without trust. You might want to start by telling her why this all happened, about the others. Help her understand.”

Help her understand. Could anyone understand what I’d done to her? Could anyone go through that and not want me dead? Why was I suddenly feeling guilty, when I knew my actions were justified?



ANNEKA

I FELT WEIRD, GROGGY, and kind of confused. Something had happened but I couldn’t really remember what it was. It took me a few moments to realise that I was still in that bed, but something had changed.

As I lifted shaking hands and rubbed at my eyes, I realised that my wrists were no longer cuffed to the bed, and there was something else; I wasn’t naked anymore. I looked under the covers and realised I was wearing a t-shirt, and even more importantly, a pair of sweatpants.

Why was I wearing clothes? Had I been rescued? Was this even the same room? The last thing I could remember was Blaze hurting me... no wait, someone was in here.

“Hey, you’re awake.” Blaze was standing in the doorway, fully dressed and holding two steaming mugs in his hands. The

smile on his face was gentle, nothing like the cruel grins and smirks he'd offered before.

“Uh...”

“Coffee?”

I sat up, holding the covers against me, even though I wasn't naked anymore.

“I guess.”

Blaze set the mugs down by the other side of the bed, and walked around to my side, reaching towards me. I flinched and he paused, his hands still in the air.

“I just wanted to pile the pillows up so you can sit back.” What? Why? I felt completely out of my depth, like everything had changed while I slept. Or had they not changed at all? Had any of it really happened?

“I don't understand,” I whispered, clutching the blankets tight against me, as I stared fearfully up at Blaze. He offered me another of those gentle smiles and when he did that, he looked so handsome, and it seemed so hard to believe that he'd be capable of the horrible things I was pretty sure he'd done to me. Hadn't he?

“Let's make you comfy, Anneka. It's okay.” He leaned behind me and propped up the pillows against the headboard, finally standing back with a satisfied grin. “There you go.”

I tentatively sat back, relaxing a little when I realised the hard wrought iron headboard was sufficiently padded for me.

“Thanks.” I was thanking him now? My god, I was so confused. Had all of that awful stuff really happened?

Blaze was already back around the other side of the bed, sitting down cross-legged facing me, and passing one of the steaming mugs to me. I took a deep breath, inhaling the delicious coffee aroma.

“Smells good,” I muttered, and he grinned widely.

“Only the best, yeah?”

Only the best what, and for who? For me? For him? I really felt like I’d been trapped in a nightmare, and I’d finally woken up. Was this my reality? Was he not the cruel monster I’d imagined him to be?

“I’m uh... my brain’s a bit fuzzy,” I admitted finally, watching Blaze as he watched me, both of us tentatively sipping at the too-hot coffee. He nodded, shifting those blue eyes of his downward, his long lashes momentarily making me jealous, because why did men get the best lashes? And why was I even thinking of that right now?

“You were hysterical, so we uh... we gave you something to calm you down.”

Hysterical? Gave me something to calm me down? I didn’t remember any of that.

“Like a sedative?”

He shrugged a shoulder lightly.

“No idea, but dad said it’d help and it did. You slept, and you were so peaceful and calm in your sleep. I hope the clothes are okay. I thought they might make you feel a bit more secure.”

His words triggered a ripple of ice water down my spine, because he’d dressed me, meaning I’d been naked when I was apparently ‘hysterical’. He’d mentioned his dad too. I was starting to realise that the drug had messed up my brain enough that I’d thought I dreamed all the horrors, but I hadn’t at all. They really had happened.

“Did you know it’d make me wonder if all the things you did to me were just some horrible nightmare? Was that part of your game to torture me?”

Blaze was still staring at the coffee in his mug, swirling it lightly in almost hypnotic circles. His t-shirt had a band name on it. A favourite of mine actually; *Five Finger Death Punch*. Was that some ploy of his, to make me think we had things in common? Some new brain fuck of his, like this pretence that he wasn’t a monster at all?

29

Blaze



I WAS TRYING, BUT she was already starting to wind me up again. Rage was always pretty close to the surface for me, especially since what had happened, and since she'd been the cause of all of it, she was the right target for it.

Dad had said to try and be kind, and gain her trust, and it had been easy when she'd first woken up and seemed so sweetly confused. Now though, she was starting to push me just enough that I was feeling less charitable again. I bit back a snappy comment, and that's when she spoke again.

"Nice t-shirt, by the way."

I glanced down at it and figured she was being an asshole, because she probably listened to girly music or something. Why had I never cared enough to check out her music taste when I was delving into her life online? Because it hadn't mattered for my purposes.

"Are you being funny with me?"

Her brow creased as she looked up from the t-shirt.

"No, I love their music. I particularly loved their cover of *Bad Company*. I thought you 'knew everything about me'."

Huh. Maybe I should have made more of an effort to look at stuff like that. Did it matter in the long run though?

"Yeah, that was a good one. Uh... that's your kind of music?"

She smiled, and I was reminded of that beauty that had drawn me to her even as a child. It was a bit shaky, but it was

there.

“I love music that means something. Music that has an intensity about it, and gets deep into your soul. Rock and metal do that for me more than anything else.”

I was thrown by her words, because it was almost as if she'd wandered around in my fucking head and pulled those words free. Or she'd somehow hacked *my* life, just like I'd hacked hers. It unnerved me enough that I was lost for what to say next.

“Uh... Yeah... I get that. I didn't know that about you, but I guess we don't really know each other that well. We barely had a chance as kids, right?”

Anneka sipped her coffee, almost shrinking into herself a little, like whatever she was thinking was too horrific to say out loud.

“Anneka? We should talk, right? After all of this, I feel like there's stuff that needs to be said.”

She wouldn't fucking look at me, and her voice was so soft when she spoke that I had to lean closer to hear her.

“You hate me. I just wish I knew why you'd hate me so much that you'd do all this.”

And that was the whole point of this fucking chat, right? That familiar rage was building in my gut again, peaking every fucking time she admitted that it hadn't mattered enough to her to fucking remember.

“Yeah. I’m gonna fucking tell you, since you seem so blissfully unaware of what you did,” I hissed at her, earning a panicked gasp as her head lifted and her eyes met mine. She looked terrified again, and I knew I shouldn’t, but I fucking liked that look on her so much.

“You’re as bad as that fucker you dated. Boon was a prick, and even though he remembered what you guys did, he just didn’t give a fuck.”

Anneka chewed her lip, staying silent but I knew that the mention of that asshole had surprised her. Was she really so fucking unaware of what she’d started all those years ago?

“He’s... he killed himself this year,” she finally whispered, like maybe she thought that somehow made up for his actions. Did she think his own guilt over his asshole behaviour sent him into oblivion? Was she really so fucking stupid?

I grinned widely, and I saw her shock at that unexpected and probably abnormal reaction to her statement. She hadn’t heard the best part yet.



ANNEKA

WHY DID I THINK Blaze would be shocked, or feel bad for talking about a person like that when they’d died, and had obviously been in real turmoil.

“How’d he kill himself?” He asked, reaching one hand down to smooth over his t-shirt, but it was almost like he was

preening or something equally fucked up.

“He... he slit his wrists.” Blaze smirked at me, and suddenly I was wondering all kinds of things that I really didn’t want him to confirm, but he was clearly about to.

“I-”

“Yeah... you’re figuring it out, aren’t you? You know men are usually more likely to do something more dramatic, like shoot themselves, yeah, like guns are so easy to get over here. They tend to do things like crash cars, or jump in front of trains. In the end though, I just wanted him gone, so I could move on.”

Oh god. He... he was really taking responsibility for it, wasn’t he?

“You did that to him?”

Blaze grinned again, and I’d noticed his smiles and grins were becoming cruel and twisted again. More like when he was abusing me, and less like the congenial version of himself he’d pretended to be since I woke up.

“I made him beg me to kill him as painlessly as possible, and like the pussy he was, he fucking undressed and got in that bath and did it. I just watched and enjoyed his terror and shame. It was less than he deserved, but he wasn’t the main target of my rage, see. *That’s you.*”

I’d been pretty sure, after the horrible things Blaze had done to me already, that I couldn’t be more afraid of him, but he’d just proved me wrong yet again. He was truly unhinged, and

couldn't be more deadly, or more of a threat to me, and he still hadn't explained why he was even doing this.

He was watching me, that small grin growing on his face as he absorbed my panic and dread.

“You're wondering if I'll kill you too, aren't you? I might. I honestly haven't decided yet. I really like the idea of us having a baby, and that's not something I ever thought I'd want, but something about you makes me want to see you filled with my babies.”

My god. There was no end to his sickness, was there? For that, he'd have to keep forcing me, and I didn't know if I could survive more of his brutality. There was just no way out for me, was there?

“Will you at least tell me what we apparently did to deserve this, Blaze? I feel like I need to understand what happened that impacted you so badly, and made you need to hurt me like this. Made you need to kill anyone.”

He moved, and I tensed, but he was only setting his empty mug on the bedside table. He pointed at mine too and I nodded, letting him take it, then immediately missing it because it had somehow felt like a barrier between us, and I'd just given it up.

He grabbed the spare pillow and tucked it under his head as he laid back beside me, but with his head nearer the foot of the bed, so he could watch me as he told me whatever horrors he was about to share. For someone about to bare their soul, he looked relaxed, lacing his hands behind his head.

“When I finally moved to senior school, I really thought my life would change, and things would be exciting and different, because I wouldn’t be a kid anymore, right? I was also going to be at the same school as you, and I’d waited what felt like forever to be able to walk the same halls as you, and sit in the same classes, maybe even the same chairs you’d sat in. You were a few years ahead of me, so I expected you to feel like you couldn’t hang with me, but I didn’t mind. I’d get to see you, to smell your perfume if I got close enough, and just be near you.”

I pulled my legs up and wrapped my arms around them, a dull ache between my legs reminding me of the things he’d done so far. They were so at odds with his words right now. The hopeful words of a teenager, who’d finally made it to the ‘grown up’ part of their school life. What had gone so wrong there? Why couldn’t I remember?

“You were all over that fuckhead Boon, like he was some kind of god, but he was a pure asshole. He bullied the smaller kids, and really didn’t like new kids in his school. Do you remember that first day I tried to talk to you when he was there? We were in the cafeteria, and I asked if I could sit at your table. I thought surely she’ll take pity on me on my first fucking week at this place. It was so big, so full of people, and I’m man enough now to admit that it was fucking terrifying too. The handful of kids I’d known in my last class barely even made up a fraction of the kids at this new school.”

I couldn’t understand how that moment was some kind of catalyst.

“I do remember saying yes, and you joined us, Blaze. Don’t you remember that?”

His face contorted, and he practically snarled at me in response.

“I remember everything, Anneka. Every. Little. Fucking. Thing. Like the way you let that asshole talk down to me like I was some loser. Like the way you just ‘let it slip’ that I had three parents. I remember him being so fascinated that he wouldn’t shut up asking about it. I remember us leaving the cafeteria and walking behind you guys out of there, and I remember what you fucking said to him.”

I hugged my legs tighter. We’d talked about his parents or his family as we left? Why would we have done that if we knew he was behind us?

“You thought I’d gone the other way, that’s the only thing I can assume, because you weren’t normally so cruel. He asked you how you knew me, if we were friends or more. You laughed. You laughed at the thought of it, and then you told him you didn’t date freaks. You said my family was weird and abnormal. You told him my dads FUCK EACH OTHER!” He was practically screaming those last few words at me, suddenly sitting and close to me, too close.

I tried pulling away but he followed me, until I was pressed tight against the pillows, tight enough to feel the metal of the headboard through the pillows. I was trapped with nowhere to go.

30

Blaze



I HAD TO TAKE a deep breath and let it out slowly, or I was going to choke her to death with my fucking bare hands.

She was playing innocent, and I didn't know how she even had the nerve to pretend. I mean, she was scared, obviously, and it suited her like it always had, but she was surprised too.

"I..."

"Yeah? What are you going to say to justify it? How did you even know that? My dads were discreet about that, because it was the kind of relationship they were always having to justify to outsiders. And it didn't even matter if it hadn't been true, because you must remember what happened next, right?"

She was really acting like she didn't remember. Like it hadn't fucking mattered enough in her pathetic selfish head, because she was popular and I was a nothing. Not worth her time.

"Blaze-"

"Jesus, what kind of fucking self-absorbed asshole are you? The rumours? You don't remember the fucking rumours? Suddenly I was 'the freak', the kid with the twisted parents who all fucked each other. The one with the gay dads. My school days were hell, with older kids bullying me, beating on me, pushing me down the stairs. *You remember that, surely?* I broke my arm in three places, and had to have surgery twice."

Her jaw dropped, and she started blinking rapidly, but whether that was recognition or just some pansy ass shit she

was trying for sympathy, I had no idea.

“I’m... I’m sorry. I remembered you being injured, but I just assumed it happened by accident. I didn’t... it was so long ago, Blaze. I’m sorry you went through that, but we’re grown up now, and we have to move on from... from...” Her words choked off as I grabbed her throat in one hand and squeezed.

“You’re seriously telling me to get over it? Aw poor Blaze was bullied in school and bears a grudge. What a pussy... that’s what you’re thinking, right? You wanna know the really awful part? That shit didn’t stop, but I hardened myself to it. I fucking soldiered through it, dealing with my locker being trashed regularly, and those messages they kept leaving on it. I dealt with it when they took my clothes, beat me and kicked me after school, and I went home each day and pretended like I was just getting into normal teenage shit. All of that shit, I dealt with it, because I fucking had to. You know who didn’t cope though? *My fucking sister*. My beautiful, sweet sister, Ember. She had to go to that same fucking school a few years after me, and they ate her alive. They destroyed her. They hurt her so much, she...” Suddenly I couldn’t fucking even voice it, I couldn’t breathe because all I could picture was the way she seemed to wither and fucking die inside because of them.

“Blaze!” My grip had loosened and Anneka was pulling on my wrist, grabbing vital breaths while she could. I should have protected Ember better.

I should have realised that by hiding what was happening to me at school, I was letting her go into it unprotected. I was

letting my parents send her to a school primed to destroy her, particularly after they'd failed to break me.

It was my fault, wasn't it? I was blaming the wrong people, because even though they were culpable, it was primarily my fault for not speaking up, for letting my pride keep all that hate a secret. I managed to rise above it, but I let Em go into that fucking place as blind as I was on day one.

Something that sounded scarily like a sob rose in my throat, and I scrambled back from Anneka as I covered my face with shaking hands.

My god. Any way you could look at it or break it down, *it all came back to me*. I should have been smart enough to realise that she should have gone to another school, or I should have at least told one of my fucking dads what was happening. Why didn't I?

Pride, definitely, but also that fear inside me. The one that said if I told them, what would happen? Would the school suddenly burn down? Would it burn down with students inside it for hurting me? Even if the risk might be that the wrong ones were in there when it burned? Would their homes be burned?

The one thing I knew about my dads was that retribution was always a guarantee if someone hurt our family. Except with what happened with Ember, when her health and her survival had to become the priority.

“Blaze?”

I drew in ragged breath after ragged breath, but I couldn't fight the overwhelming, agonising surge of despair at the realisation, too late, *that I was the cause of everything Ember had suffered.*



ANNEKA

DESPITE MY FEAR, AND the ache in my throat from being choked by Blaze yet again, I couldn't fight the desperate need to try and help him. To do something, to ease his pain.

Something had happened to his sister, and I realised I had nothing. No knowledge, no memories of what had happened with her. I was in my final years of school at that point, and so much of school had been a blur, because of one thing or another.

I remembered those last few years of school being rough for me, because my mum was having issues with her health, and was eventually diagnosed with fibromyalgia after months of being blown off by doctors, and suffering in silence. I remembered that it was around the time that Blaze started our school that Boon started hounding me to give up my virginity, even though I was only thirteen to his fourteen.

The pressure on kids my age was insane, and he expected me to remember something like a conversation with my boyfriend at the time? I hated the fact that it had led to so much hurt, but it had been an innocuous comment, and I hadn't even realised the knock on effect it'd had. In fact, I wouldn't have put it past

Boon to make sure nobody let on what was going on, to keep me out of it, even if it was just another way he tried to control my school years.

“Blaze.” He was fighting so hard to hold back the desperate emotion that was clearly destroying him, just like the cruelty of teenagers had attempted to destroy his sister. Maybe they’d even succeeded. My god, what if she’d died because of it?

I crawled across the bed, reaching out to grab his shoulder, as his whole body started to heave with guttural sobs that I couldn’t do anything to ease. He just kept muttering ‘it’s my fault’ over and over again, and for some bizarre reason I ended up holding him, cradling him against my chest as he cried.

It was a bizarre facet of my humanity, leading me to comfort the monster who’d tormented, raped, and threatened me with death. It was the inability to watch another human, no matter how cruel, in pain. He wasn’t holding me as he cried, but he was letting me hold him. Was it strange and messed up that I was holding my captor, my rapist, trying to offer him some semblance of comfort, when he’d offered me none at any point? I just couldn’t help it.

“Blaze, shh it’s okay,” I murmured, wondering if he could even hear me over that ragged chanting of his. He was taking the blame for whatever had happened, but he hadn’t even finished explaining everything yet. Was Ember still alive? I vaguely remembered that adorable blonde girl, who’d been so whimsical, and giggly, and sweet.

“It was my fault,” Blaze whispered, shuddering in my arms. He’d finally started to calm down, but I wasn’t fool enough to think he’d stay that way.

“How could it possibly be your fault? You were being bullied, Blaze, and I’m so sorry I didn’t know. I had... there was stuff going on with my mum back then, and I was distracted. I’m surprised I even passed my exams, because... anyway, you don’t need to hear that. What you need to hear is that you were just a kid, and none of whatever happened was your fault.”

“I blamed you. This whole time... I was so angry at you, so convinced that you’d destroyed my family, but it was me all along.” His whispers were so quiet, I struggled to hear him, but I felt it; that moment when he suddenly realised he was showing me his pain rather than causing mine. He stiffened, and so did I.

“Blaze-”

“This doesn’t mean I forgive you,” he hissed, but all he did was sit up, and kind of pull free of my hold. We were both sitting awkwardly on the bed, without each other to use for balance.

“I’m sorry for my part in this, I really am. I had no idea that my words had been passed on, or used against you. I was a kid, Blaze. I was a scared kid, trying to grow up without a dad, and with a sick mum, and with a boyfriend whose sole purpose seemed to be trying to deflower me as soon as he could.”

Blaze finally moved enough so that we could see each other again, and he looked so young and vulnerable, his face blotchy from crying, and his cheeks and eyes still wet. He caught my sympathetic gaze, and sneered at me, dragging an arm across his face as he sniffed and straightened a bit.

“She started cutting herself when she was eleven, Anneka. Eleven years old and carving lines in her skin, to try and gain some semblance of control over a life that was spiralling into hell. She was skipping school, drinking with some losers she hung out with. She was an alcoholic at twelve years old. And she was twelve the first time she tried to kill herself.”

Oh my god, his words felt like physical blows. His fury was making more sense with every word. *Did I do this?*

Wait... the *first* time. He said it was the first time, which meant that she'd tried again. How many times did she try? Oh god, had she succeeded?

31

Blaze



THIS WASN'T GOING THE way I'd planned, because I'd come to this horrifying realisation that I could have prevented everything, and it was killing me inside. I could have done something, so many different things, and I could have stopped Em from going through that hell.

What would she be like now, if I had? If I'd just had the balls to speak up, and tell my dads.

Would she still be that sweet little blonde fairy-like girl, who loved all things pretty and shiny, and giggled a lot? Would she have ended up darker anyway? Was our upbringing part of the reason she was who she was now? Tattooed, pierced, scarred, broken... she'd found new ways to express herself since she stopped drinking, but would she ever be whole again?

“Blaze?”

I realised that Anneka had cried with me. While I was being a complete pussy and losing my mind like that, she'd held me and cried with me, like she empathised with my personal hell. A hell she'd created with a seemingly offhand statement to the wrong person. Was she really to blame at all?

“Is Ember okay?”

Just hearing my sister's name from her lips made me bristle again, and I clenched my fists.

“*No.*”

“Is she... did she...” She looked afraid to ask, and so she fucking should be.

“She tried to end her life four fucking times, Anneka. Your little comment to that asshole set all of it in motion, and I thought killing the people involved would make amends, but I didn’t realise that I’m the one I should have started with. If I had just told my dads. If I’d just fucking let them know what hell I was going through and surviving every day, maybe she could have been put in a different school, and had a different life. Maybe she wouldn’t have scars from the many times she needed to open a vein to try and control her fucking emotions, and her life. Maybe she wouldn’t be so tattooed and pierced that she’d still be recognisable as that beautiful little girl I grew up with. She’s still beautiful, you understand. She’s a fucking goddess, a true phoenix rising from the ashes of her life. That asshole who assaulted her, he died first. I made him scream as he died, yeah... turns out a red hot poker up the ass of a guy will really put thoughts of raping teenagers out of his mind.”

I wanted to keep horrifying her, because I felt like she still hadn’t paid enough, but if I killed her, then I had to end this by killing myself too, because we were the last living perpetrators of my sister’s hell.

I lifted my t-shirt off, setting it gently beside me, because it was my favourite. I lifted my arm, even as she started edging back, afraid of the reason for my sudden striptease.

Under my arm, across my ribs, there were seven names, and six of them had lines through them. Nick Boon, Ed MacDougal, Sid Evans, Tel Rogers, Cal Collier, Steve Tiller, all crossed through because I’d killed them. The last name, the

one that wasn't crossed out yet, was just a first name, because it didn't need more clarification. *Anneka*. The list wasn't accurate though, was it? It needed my name there too. My list had never been complete, but I'd fix that as soon as I could.

Cool fingers touched my skin, shocking me out of my thoughts, and I watched as Anneka shakily traced her name on my skin on that offending list. Pretty much most of my tattoos were of her name, and some declaration of hate, or wishing evil on her. I'd marked my body with my hate, and now I realised each time her name appeared, it should have been mine instead.

“If you have to kill me, Blaze, I'll understand. I know that sounds crazy, but even though it was never my intention to cause what happened, I can't hide from the fact that it started with me. Without my stupid thoughtless comment, none of this would have happened, and I'm devastated to learn about my part in this. I'm so sorry, Blaze. Ember should never have suffered like that. Neither of you should, and that's... oh god, if you need to finish this list off, and cross my name off it, I forgive you. I want Ember to have her retribution.”

I let out a frustrated snarl, lunging at her, and pressing her down against the bed, my hand lightly resting over her throat.

“You don't get it. This isn't her retribution, it's mine. Seems I'm seeing a lot of shit really fucking clearly right now, and I can see it for what it is. My fucking attempts to make up for what I did, my anger directed at others, when it belongs aimed inward at me, and my fucking failure to protect her. You

shouldn't have said it, and Boon and his friends shouldn't have run with it, like some big news they needed to share with the world... *and then there's me*. I should have just fucking opened my mouth and said something, anything, to stop her going to that fucking school. If any name needs to be crossed off, it's mine, and I wasn't even brave enough to put my own fucking name on that list. Fuck!"

I shoved away from her, and got up, striding from the room and heading for the kitchen to find something, anything, to carve my name into my skin. To burn it into my skin. To add it in some fucking way, to admit my culpability and own my own mistakes.

Then we could cross it out together. Anneka could cross it out for me, once I'd finally grown some balls, and put an end to the real monster. *Me*.



ANNEKA

HE WAS LOSING IT, and even though I should have been taking the opportunity to escape from this crazed madman, I couldn't. I couldn't walk away from this man who was breaking right in front of my eyes. I couldn't just leave him to go through whatever torment he was going through alone.

He was right about me starting all of this, albeit completely unknowingly, and the crushing guilt those revelations had caused was telling me that I should help him.

I got up from the bed, and staggered for a moment before my equilibrium returned to me. That was because he'd drugged me, that small voice of reason whispered in my mind, but I ignored it and hurried out of the room, following the heavy thuds of his footsteps down the stairs.

I found him in the kitchen with a blade, and he was trying to stab or cut himself with it! He was clearly trying to add his name to his 'list', because it was the only thing that might have made sense to him in this moment.

"Oh my god, Blaze!" I tried to snatch the knife, which was a really dumb move, because he fought to keep it, and the result was a slip of the knife and an instantly bleeding wound on his side.

"Fuck's sake, Anneka!" He tossed the knife on the counter, and I eyed it for a moment, half entranced by the smear of blood against the shiny steel, and half tempted to grab it as a weapon to defend myself with.

Something had shifted though, because he no longer seemed to be wanting to control or threaten me, and not just because he was busy mopping at the cut with a wet tea towel.

"Let me help," I said, stepping up beside him to grab the towel from his hand. He let me, but he was glaring down at me as I tried to help.

"Wouldn't need help if you hadn't been so fucking stupid, woman."

“Get fucked, Blaze. I was just trying to stop you from hurting yourself!”

“Great job on that one. Give yourself a pat on the fucking back.” I wet the towel again and dabbed at his cut a little more sharply than I intended to, but feeling somewhat gratified by his pained hiss in response.

“Man up, dammit. What exactly were you trying to do? Carve your name in your own damn skin?”

“It needs to be there. Jesus... it should be at the top of the fucking list really.”

I pressed the towel harder against his cut, and he let out a low growl as he caught my wrist.

“If you think you have the upper hand right now, you couldn’t be more wrong.”

I reached behind me for that knife, missing it once he caught on to what I was doing, and tugged me away from the counter.

“Don’t even fucking try. Gimme that towel.” He snatched it from me and checked his side, like maybe he expected the cut to have closed already. Obviously it hadn’t and the towel was bloody, and drops of blood dripped down from the wound.

“Get me the first aid kit,” he demanded, and I raised my eyebrows at his tone.

“Get it yourself. I tried to help, but I’m not your fucking slave.”

Blaze tossed the towel on the tiled floor, and tried to grab me as I dodged him, finally catching hold of that knife and brandishing it between us. The fact that he started laughing at me was as humiliating as it was frustrating.

“I won’t think twice about stabbing you. You could say I’ve already stabbed you once, right?”

He held his arms out wide, and smirked at me.

“Fucking go for it then. Stab me. Here’s your chance, Aneka. You could kill me right now, and be free, because no matter what fucking happens, that’s the **ONLY** way you get away from me. Get it? Kill me, or you’re choosing to stay here and be mine.”

“What? That’s insane! You have to let me go, Blaze!”

He stepped closer, pressing his abs against the knife in my hand, which I hadn’t realised had been lowering by the second.

“Stab me. Gut me like a fish, Aneka. Do it. *Kill me.*“ He pressed closer, and trapped the knife between us, the point digging into his skin and piercing it, with more blood starting to drip from it.

“Stop it, Blaze.”

“Kill me, Aneka. Kill me and get away, it’s your only chance. You don’t kill me now and you’ll never get the chance again.”

He was insane, but then that wasn’t news to either of us, was it? I tried backing up, to get the knife back out of his skin, but he followed the half step I was able to take before I was

backed up against the counter. The knife dug in deeper, and I couldn't risk moving it in either direction without cutting him further.

“Blaze, get back before I do you real harm, you idiot!”

His hand moved fast, catching around the back of my neck, and he tried dragging me closer, even as I fought to resist the extra pressure on the knife.

“Fucking kill me, or you're gonna regret it. End me. Put a stop to the monster I've become... *please*...” his voice cracked on that last word, and when I risked looking into his eyes again, I could see how tortured he was, how much pain he was in. Not physical pain, but the intense emotion from before. The hatred he had for himself since he'd started turning the blame inward.

“Blaze-”

“KILL ME!” He roared, pulling hard at my neck as he stepped forward.

32

Blaze



IT SHOULD HAVE WORKED. It should have FUCKING worked, but that bitch, somehow she angled the knife and instead of it plunging into my gut like I'd hoped, it just skimmed across my skin, and somehow hit the floor beside us.

“FUCK!” My fingers slid into her hair and gripped tightly, both of her hands flying up to try and loosen my hold as she yelped with pain.

“That hurts, Blaze!”

“Why didn't you just fucking do it?” I screamed at her, getting right in her face. She was shaking all over, terrified and angry too, but I wasn't going to let her get away with failing me. I'd given her every chance to get away from me, to free herself *and me* at the same fucking time.

Stepping back, I dragged her with me and forced her to turn, shoving her forward against the counter with a thud and another yelp of pain from her.

“You could have ended this!” I grabbed the waistband of those sweats she wore and dragged them down, leaning over her to use my body weight to restrain her when she started to struggle again.

“Stop it, Blaze! You can't do this!” I reached between us and shoved my own pants down, freeing my cock and stroking the hard length as I smeared the precum over the tip.

“You're gonna wish you were wet, because this is gonna hurt.” I shoved her legs apart with my feet, and guided my

cock in the direction of her pussy. I couldn't really see what I was doing, but all I had to do was find the fucking hole, right?

Why the fuck was this so difficult? I couldn't get in because she was dry, and I was at the wrong angle. I reached around and slapped my palm over her mouth as I leaned close to her ear.

“Get my palm fucking wet, or I'll fuck you dry and tear you up.”

She bit me instead, the bitch, so I shoved her face-down against the counter and reached for my dick again. My palm was actually bleeding where her teeth had bitten down, but it wasn't enough, but then... I smeared my hand over my two shiny new stab wounds on my stomach, hissing with delicious pain as I brushed over them and renewed the stinging in both places. The blood made my hand slide a little, so I figured it'd be worth a try as lube, right?

I reached between us again and smoothed my hand over my cock, and then while she was trying to stomp on my foot with one of hers, I jammed a finger up into her, and wiggled it around, trying to spread the blood around enough to ease my way.

I managed to get a second finger in her, and fucked her with them, sliding them back and forth and twisting them, as moisture started to coat them. I don't think she was actually getting wet for me by choice. I think her body was just trying to prevent itself from injury.

I used her juices to wet my dick, and guided it inside her with a sharp thrust. It didn't just hurt her though, it hurt me too. Not enough to kill my boner, but Jesus, enough to remind me that I needed that wetness to protect me too. I'd read that men could tear their foreskin by going in too hard and dry, and fuck... if it hurt more than that, I was never gonna risk it.

"Please, Blaze, please please please don't do this. Please stop," Anneka whimpered, as I drew back and thrust deep again, a low groan rumbling through my chest at the way she felt around my dick. So hot, so silky, wet enough that it was feeling good for me now.

"You had a chance to stop this, Anneka. You had a way out, but you chose this instead. You chose me. Us. Take this now, because this is us, this is our future. Our first baby. Take every fucking stroke of my cock."

I'd stopped ramming so brutally, because there really wasn't much point. Hard already felt good, so why go overboard? She was whimpering still, but she'd stopped fighting me, so maybe it felt better for her now too.

Why did that suddenly matter to me? I leaned over her again, and pressed my lips against her shoulder, ignoring the way she flinched at my touch. I trailed my lips up the side of her neck, to her cheek. As my lips reached her ear, I whispered to her.

"It's all for you, babe. Take my cock like a queen who fucking stabbed her king. You fought back and it was beautiful, perfect. *You* were beautiful and perfect. This doesn't have to be painful. Let me make it good for you." She hadn't

been crying, but now she started to cry, silent sobs that made her body heave, and you know what? *That felt fucking good too.*

I kept adding caresses and soothing words as I fucked her, no longer intent on giving her pain, but on drawing pleasure from her. It wasn't just about guilt, or even specifically wanting to make her feel good, but as much about drawing more of those shamed tears from her, because now that I was being more gentle, she was starting to respond, even if she didn't realise it.

Her hips pushed back against me now and then, like she wanted to feel my dick hitting deep on my inward thrusts, and I was more than happy to oblige. It was different. It wasn't just an act of pure violence and cruelty this time.

I was feeling things I hadn't felt since I was a kid and first saw her in her garden, with that flame red hair. Eight years had passed, and now she was mine. Suddenly this felt more right than anything ever had in my life.

I practically wrapped myself over her as I kept fucking her, my lips trailing over her neck and shoulder, finally aiming for her lips, despite the odd angle.

She dodged me, and that pissed me off, but still, it wasn't going to stop me filling her with my cum, because this was how we'd make our baby, and start off a renewed future together. No longer fuelled by just my hate, but also by a remembrance of those warm feelings I'd had for her.

“Blaze, stop please.”

“No, babe. This has to happen, but I’m making it nice for you. You like it, right?” I eased my fingers around the front of her, easily locating her clit, stroking over it lightly as a shudder ran through her.

“Don’t.”

“Yeah, babe. I want you to come on my cock, I want your pussy sucking my cum from me, so we can make our baby.” I felt her shudder as my teasing of her clit started to push her closer, and suddenly all that mattered was pushing her over the fucking edge with me. Her breathing was becoming more ragged, and she was practically rippling against me. Who knew this stuff would feel so much fucking better if she was into it too?

“Blaze, please...” she moaned, but at this point I don’t think she even knew what she was begging me for.

“You’re doing so well, babe, look at you taking my cock and riding back against me. You’re so fucking perfect, and I...” I what? What the hell did I almost just fucking say? Love? What the hell did I know about love?

I pinched her clit, and she contorted as she rode out a sharp, unexpected blast of pleasure, and her pussy clenched and rippled around my cock. Fuck yeah. My own orgasm was kinda dragged from me by those delicious pulses of her body around mine, and against mine.

Jesus... it was the kind of intense I’d never experienced before, with not only the flood of pleasure searing through me,

but the fact that it made me even more attached to her. More overwhelmed by her.

She was mine, but I was just starting to realise that I was just as much hers, maybe even more so.



ANNEKA

WHY DID HE DO that to me? Not the rape, because I was starting to realise that he had no good fucking reason for that, but to make it feel good, to try and make it nice for me? It felt like even more of a rape, like he was trying to destroy my mind and my spirit, while he tormented my body.

He dragged himself free of me, and then he lifted me into his arms, and carried me from the kitchen.

“I’ll look after you, Anneka, you’ll see. I’ll make everything better.” What the hell? How could he fix anything he’d done? He carried me to the shower, and stripped us both off, getting the water to a comfortable temperature before he lifted me into it, and started trying to help bathe me!

“Get off, stop it!” I hissed, shoving at his hands as he tried to touch me again.

“It’s okay, babe. Let me get you nice and clean, get all this blood off you.” *Blood*. Yeah, his blood. He had blood smeared all over his stomach and... and lower down. And it was down there on me too, probably all over my back and ass. It was another sign of the wrongness and sickness of his behaviour,

but it just went over his head, just like all of my begging and pleading did.

“No! Stop touching me! Just stop!”

Just like he'd ignored me while he raped me, he ignored me now too, almost tutting at me like he found my protests too adorable for words. I think that was the scariest thing about Blaze. He really didn't seem to function on a normal scale, like a normal person, because his reactions to things were way too off the charts crazy to even understand.

Half an hour ago, he'd bared his soul, cried out his torment, we'd fought over a knife and he'd gained two pretty nasty cuts, and he'd raped me again. And during that assault, he'd suddenly changed his whole persona and instead of trying to hurt me, or punish me, he seemed to think he was being nice to me. Like that wasn't even more of a punishment.

We struggled with each other, until each of us had almost slipped over in the shower, and finally he stepped back and let me deal with myself, but he wouldn't leave me in peace.

Once we were dried off, and in that awful damn bedroom again, all I wanted was for him to get out and leave me alone. Fortunately, that's when he suddenly remembered that we humans needed food to survive, and went off to 'cook me a nice dinner'.

An hour later, I was dressed and sitting with him to eat a surprisingly tasty pasta dish, which I was surprised he was capable of even making.

“My dad taught me to cook,” he offered when I said as much, and then when I stared dumbfounded at him, he felt the need to elaborate.

“Gray, the blonde dad. He’s an amazing cook, and uh yeah, he taught me all kinds of stuff. We used to cook together when I was growing up.”

I was suddenly starting to remember a little more about the time before I was drugged, and I remembered his parents had definitely been here, but clearly they hadn’t been here to rescue me, or put a stop to their son’s depravity.

“What happens next, Blaze?”

He smiled, reaching for my hand and somehow looking entirely confused, when I pulled away before he could touch me. He tucked his blonde hair behind his ear, oddly shy as he responded to me.

“We stay here, and raise our baby together.” Raise. Our. Baby. Together? *What the actual fuck?*

“I don’t think that’s a good idea, Blaze. We don’t even know if I’m pregnant anyway.” What was I doing? He’d only decide to try and make sure, wouldn’t he? I needed a way out of here, and while he was being slightly more reasonable, I felt like it was my chance to make a plea for freedom.

“I’m sure you will be, babe. You’ve taken a lot of my cum these last few days.” Asshole. I wanted to drown him with his own fucking cum!

“Maybe we should go somewhere to get tested?” Just get me out of that door and I can do the rest. I’d run until I passed out, just to try and escape him. Somehow the nicer he became, the more terrifying this whole situation was, because he seemed to be settling into it, like it was some future he’d decided on. Why didn’t I get to make that decision for myself?

“We have tests here, I’m sure. My dads were always trying to get mum up the duff, well... until she put her foot down when she had the twins. They both had to get the snip then, or she said she’d leave them and take us kids with her.” I’d say smart woman, but too little too fucking late. She should have stopped before Blaze even happened.

“If I tell you that you’re a load your mother should have swallowed, you’re just going to get angry with me, but it’s true, Blaze.” His eyes widened, and for a moment he just stared in shock, and then he started to laugh. *It wasn’t supposed to be funny, you psycho.*

“Sorry, babe. It’s just sometimes you shock me, because you look so sweet and innocent, and then you say shit like that.”

“Go fuck yourself.” Apparently I was done with trying to get out of this by appealing to him nicely.

“Nah, maybe later. So, what do you want to do after we finish dinner?” *What, like this is a fucking date?*

“Go out. Somewhere, anywhere.” Blaze smirked at my response, because he could probably read exactly what I was thinking.

“Like where?”

“Even just for a walk. I haven’t had any fresh air for days and I’m an outdoorsy person, you know this if you’ve really been stalking me or whatever.”

He nodded like I hadn’t just insulted him.

“Yeah, why don’t we go for a drive up to the lake?” I didn’t care what lake, but I nodded vigorously because yes, anywhere away from these impervious windows and doors would be perfect.

“Okay, and after that we’ll come back and make love again. We’ll get you full of babies, Anneka.” Ugh.

One way or another, that was NOT going to happen.

33

Blaze



CLEARLY SHE THOUGHT I was born yesterday, but I was also craving some fresh air, so we wrapped up in some coats we had in the cloakroom, and went out to the car. I kept a tight grip on her wrist, and guided her into the car with a stern warning to stay put, while I went around to the driver's side.

That breathy response, which she clearly thought I was dumb enough to fall for, didn't make me let my guard down, but the whole time I was driving us to the lake, I just felt like I was making a big mistake.

Something in me wanted to try and please her though, to offer her something to make up for some of the cruelty I'd shown her. I couldn't promise I wouldn't get like that again, because it was a big part of me, but I could try to be nice at other times.

The lake was pretty, and there were no other people out walking there, since it was so remote, but only about twenty minutes on foot from the house. That was the only reason I even knew it was there.

"Wow, it's so quiet here," Aneka muttered, walking closer to the water's edge as I followed like her fucking pet. I wished the moonlight would shine brighter, so I could watch her hair glow in its ethereal light.

"Yeah, I guess. I mean, nobody would hear you scream, right?" She tensed, edging away from me a little.

“Do you have to do that? We came out here to enjoy this place, not have you scaring me again.”

Was that a pang of guilt? *Fuck that shit.* I didn't have to feel guilty for the things I'd done. Mistakes were just a fucking human gift, a way of explaining away all our wrongs. I'm human, and I made a mistake. Get over it.

“Don't see why we can't do both. I enjoy both.”

She groaned and stepped closer to me, as she hugged that coat tighter around her.

“Cold?”

Anneka nodded, tensing as I looped my arm around her.

“Easy, just let me keep you warm.”

I was pretty much waiting for something, a trick or some kind of escape attempt, so it was doubly humiliating that I still went head first into that lake, when she suddenly spun and shoved me.

The water was agonisingly icy cold, and I got a mouthful of disgusting lake water, as well as a lungful, before I managed to push my way back up to the surface. The fact that she was already gone was a sign of just how much she'd planned. Did she really think she could run for safety from here?

I scrambled out of the water, struggling out of that heavy wet coat, and tossing it on the ground. Jesus fuck, when I caught up with her, I'd really fucking make her pay for-

The fucking car! I heard the engine suddenly roar to life, and I charged down the road to get ahead of her. She'd have to run me down if she wanted to get away, and somehow, even though I'd deserve it, I didn't think she would.

As it was, she only just slammed on the brakes in time to avoid smashing the car into my numb, aching bones. I still ended up sprawled across the bonnet, cursing as the air was pushed out of my lungs, and the biting cold made it almost impossible to catch any breath at all.

“Get away from the car!” She screamed at me from her safe position behind the wheel. The fact that the bitch had managed to pick the key from my pocket, before she pushed me in the lake was oddly impressive, but something she'd also pay for, because she was never fucking getting away from me.

I stayed across the bonnet and not just because I couldn't breathe. She couldn't drive with me like this, or at least I hoped she wouldn't try. How the hell could I get the upper hand though, because this standoff wouldn't last indefinitely?



ANNEKA

IT HAD ALL GONE so well, right up until the moment that he'd practically made me run him over. He was draped over the bonnet of the car, dripping wet, his blonde hair dark and muddy and sticking to his face. His eyes though were bright and furious, and fixed right on me. If I got out of the car, he'd probably kill me. I couldn't let him win this one.

“Let me go, Blaze, that’s all I want!”

He glared through the window like he could melt the glass with his anger.

“Get out of the fucking car, Anneka. Right *fucking* now!” The usual power and fury wasn’t behind those words, but I think it was because he was struggling to breathe. That happens when you’re so icy cold that the air steals each breath. I shouldn’t be feeling guilty, or worrying that he’d get pneumonia, but I was.

“Blaze, just let me leave, and I’ll tell your dads you’re here.” I wouldn’t go anywhere near those monsters, but I’d send the police instead.

“Fuck that! You’re not leaving! You only get to leave when you’re dead.”

I revved the engine, and his eyes widened before that smug grin returned.

“You don’t have it in you to hurt me, Anneka, or you’d have done it already.”

I leaned on the horn, and he covered his ears as it probably deafened him, while I looked around inside the car for some kind of idea of what to do. I couldn’t get out or let him in the car, but leaving him freezing to death in the middle of nowhere really wasn’t my thing.

In the glove box, I found a mobile phone, not mine, so most likely his. If I gave him the phone, he could call for help, but would he use that against me?

“I want to make a deal,” I yelled as soon as the last echo of the horn quieted, and then had to yell it again when he uncovered his ears.

“No deals. You’re mine, Anneka.”

“The deal is,” I yelled, because I refused to let him win. “The deal is that you let me go, and I’ll give you your phone so you can call for help.”

Blaze narrowed his eyes at me as I waved his phone at him, and I saw his hands go to his pockets. I guess he’d meant to carry it, either that or he’d had one, and lost it in the lake. Only psychos had multiple phones though, right, so it was possible.

“All you need to do is get out of the car, Anneka.” He was leaning up from the bonnet now, both hands placed against the metal like he was priming himself for action.

“I’m not getting out, and you’ll die if you stay out there. Let me go, and I’ll toss the phone out the window.”

“GET OUT OF THE FUCKING CAR!” He screamed, slamming his hands against the bonnet and making me jump, but then he suddenly slumped, rubbing one hand over his face and shoving his wet hair away from his eyes.

There was a long moment of silence, and then he spoke again.

“Don’t hurt my family again, please.”

What? I cracked the window a touch so I could be sure of what I was hearing, and that nip of icy air made me feel a twinge of guilt for leaving him out there wet and cold like this.

“What did you say?”

He pushed up from the bonnet of the car and ran both hands up and over his hair, flicking wet mud away from him.

“If I let you go, please don’t hurt my family. You can call the cops on me, but don’t drag them into it. They’re good people really, and they don’t deserve that.”

Was he on crack?! “They’re rapists and murderers, just like you!”

“My sister has suffered enough, hasn’t she? Do you really want to take her parents away right now? Have the little ones taken into care again? Is this really fair on them?”

Fuck, that was the last thing I wanted, even though they were all psychos. The kids shouldn’t pay for who they were unlucky enough to be born to.

“If I promise, you’ll let me go?”

Blaze walked around to the window and I flinched, but he didn’t try the door, because obviously it was locked. He pressed a palm against the glass, staring down at me with a resigned look on his face.

“You could stay... things could be different.”

“They won’t be.”

He nodded, because we both knew he’d still hurt me.

“But if you go now, you leave my parents alone, no matter what you do about me. Promise, Anneka.”

I nodded again, feeling this bizarre urge to press my palm against the glass over his. What was wrong with me? That was the action of someone in love, not their victim. I clenched my fist so I wouldn't.

“I promise, Blaze. I won't call the police on any of you, but you have to leave me alone from now on.”

He squeezed his eyes shut and for a moment, I had the strangest feeling he was about to cry, but then he nodded.

“I will. I'll leave you in peace, as long as you keep your word.” He suddenly leaned close and his eyes practically burned with intensity. “But if anyone comes after my family, *I'll systematically torture and kill everyone you've ever known or loved, and then I'll come for you.*”

Fucking hell! I nodded rapidly, staring at the phone in my hand for a moment, before I pushed it through the thin gap between the window and the frame.

“Don't get pneumonia, Blaze. I'm leaving now.” Would he keep his word? Was giving him the phone a mistake? Would he use it to stop me from getting away?

He simply stood back and gestured to the road ahead, and I'm sure I heard him mutter the words ‘drive safe’. I didn't hesitate though, driving away from him like my ass was on fire.

34

Blaze



CALLING MY DADS FOR help was the most humiliating fucking experience of my life, but I already knew I was never going to make it back to the house like this.

I was so cold I was literally shuddering and staggering along, and by the time the car pulled up, I pretty much fell into the back seat with a pained groan.

“What the fuck happened to you?” Dad Dory was leaning around from the driving seat, and dad Gray was passing a heated blanket back to me, unplugging it from the central console.

As soon as I was wrapped in the blissfully warm blanket, he handed me an insulated mug of coffee. The car started moving, but he was still watching me.

“Sip that, kid, and then you can tell us how the fuck this came about. Anneka got away?”

My other dad cursed as he headed back out onto the country road from the dirt lane.

“She’ll go straight to the fucking police. This is bad, Blaze, this is so fucking bad.”

“Go easy on him, Dory. Let him tell us what happened, and then we’ll hunt the bitch down. She can’t have gone far, right? Blaze, the car has a tracker on it, right?”

I nodded, realising that the phone it was hooked up to was at the bottom of the fucking lake. We’d have to wait until I was back at the house and had my laptop. She’d promised though, so was tracking her immediately the right move?

“You ended up in the lake?”

I hugged that warm mug in my hands and sipped the coffee, completely ignoring dad’s question, because *duh*.

“Why the hell were you even out here? I know it’s the middle of the night, so it probably seemed safe, but Jesus, Blaze.”

“Look, obviously I never thought she’d try anything like this, okay? She seemed, I don’t know, like she was accepting things. She just wanted some fresh air, and so did I.”

“Any chance she’s pregnant already?” *Damn my baby-obsessed dad!* I glared at the back of his head while he drove.

“Well, I’ve dumped a few loads in her, so who knows.”

“When we get back, you’ll track that fucking car, and we’ll retrieve her. This time, don’t fucking let her out until she’s yours, yeah?”

I watched as we pulled up by the dirt path to the house, and realised I was dreading getting out of the car, and feeling the bite of that icy air again.

I reluctantly dragged myself out of the car, cursing at the cold air as I stepped outside, tugging that heated blanket tighter around me. Once we got inside, I went upstairs for a hot shower, while my dads did whatever the fuck it was they wanted.

When I was back downstairs, clean, dry, and finally feeling warmer, they sat me down, and practically glowered down at me with their arms folded.

“Details, Blaze. We need to get to her before she sends the police. Can she find the house?”

I shook my head, glancing around the room for my laptop, even though I still wasn't sure whether I should track her or not.

“I really thought she was coming around, I can't understand how this happened.”

“Kid, you haven't had her long enough to have that kind of power over her yet.” Dad Dory groaned at dad Gray's words, shaking his head.

“That's not what this is about. It's about making her love you, and I really thought you had more sense than to let her outside of the place. And how did she even get the keys to the car?”

I could feel the embarrassment heating my cheeks, and refused to meet their gazes as I responded.

“She picked my pocket for the key, right before she shoved me into the fucking lake, okay?”

I scratched at an itch on my stomach and grimaced, lifting my t-shirt to be reminded of the cuts from earlier. The largest one was bleeding again.

“What the fuck happened there? Did you... did she come at you with something?”

I shoved past my dads and went to the kitchen to get a towel to mop up the blood with, which led to them fetching the first

aid kit and patching up both cuts, after cleaning them thoroughly with antiseptic wipes.

“Blaze, we need to track her down before she brings all kinds of trouble down on you, on us.”

“She won’t. She promised she wouldn’t.”

They exchanged a smirk. “Yeah, I don’t believe that for a minute,” dad Gray said.

“Track her, and do it now.”



ANNEKA

I KEPT MY WORD, even though everything in me was screaming at me to make him pay for what he did. My first port of call, once I was back in town was to go home to my mum, but I didn’t tell her what had happened.

I simply said that I’d fallen out with my friends and came home on the spur of the moment, to try and explain why I was in a different car and didn’t have my things.

I said I’d borrowed the car after mine wouldn’t start. The lies were already spinning out of control, and I hadn’t even begun yet. I was so relieved that Blaze’s family no longer lived next door to us, because I couldn’t face any of them right now.

I soaked in the bath for so long that the water was cold, but I still didn’t feel like I’d washed the whole experience away.

I slept in my old bed that night, and the next day I made an emergency doctor’s appointment. I asked them for help getting

screened for STIs, and asked for advice about pregnancy. I'd lost track of my days since I'd been locked up with him, but it was probably too early to know if I was.

I was offered the morning after pill, and found myself refusing it, because I was too conflicted about whether it was the right thing to do. Was it really a baby's fault how it was conceived?

I was questioned about whether I needed support or counselling, and I lied through my teeth to cover for Blaze, even as I was kicking myself for not doing the right thing. Why was I covering for him? Was it just because I'd promised? Was there some feeling there other than hate now?

Over the next few days, I found myself wondering where he was, and if he'd called for help. Had he been rescued from freezing to death, or was he curled up somewhere dead and not being missed, because he wasn't expected anywhere?

I hadn't expected him to keep his word and stay away, and the longer I went without word from him, the more sure I became that something bad had happened to him.

I even contemplated going back to check, but that would have been ridiculous, and crazy, and there was no way I'd have been able to find the place again. I didn't even know where his family lived now, so I couldn't find out.

The not knowing was driving me crazy, because if he was okay, might he still suddenly turn up again and steal me away? Would I ever be safe again if he had survived?

I went back to work, and struggled to get back into my daily life, because everything felt like the wrong fit, as if I was trying to assimilate into someone else's place. I withdrew from the people I knew, stopped making an effort with friends and colleagues, and became more and more isolated over the next few weeks.

When my period didn't happen as expected, I bought one of those testing kits and had my suspicions confirmed.

I was pregnant with Blaze's baby.

35

Blaze



THE WEEKS WITHOUT HER had been bleak, but not completely lonely, and the reason was that I still saw her every day. I knew she was back living with her mother, and I knew she was back at work. I never let her see me, but I was everywhere she was.

I knew when she went out at lunch, to buy a sandwich from the local shop before she went back and carried on. I even stood behind her in the queue a few times, catching the scent of her perfume, and being blissfully reminded of what it was like to be in her presence.

Getting into her house wasn't as easy as it'd been as a kid. I was bigger and easier to spot, and her mother was almost always home. She had some condition that meant she was ill quite often, and worked from home.

The house we'd lived in was easier in many ways. An old guy was living there now, and he'd let me in one day to 'see my old home' and we'd become friendly. When he said he was looking for someone to rent a room, I moved back into my old bedroom and paid him weekly for the privilege. When I wasn't out stalking Anneka, we'd sit and play chess, and talk about everything from current affairs to the wonders of the cosmos.

At night when Anneka was in bed, sometimes I'd be able to let myself in and sneak around. On more than one occasion, I jerked off in her bedroom while I watched her sleep, wishing I could just climb in with her, and feel her soft curves against my skin again.

The urge to pull the covers back, and ease inside her body while she slept, was so strong sometimes that I would have to force myself away, just before I touched her. I started taking clothes from her room when she and her mother were both out, and then I'd wonder what the fuck I was playing at, because eventually she'd realise.

Twenty three days after she escaped, I found myself more desperate than ever to touch her, and I sat on the bed as she slept, reaching out to stroke her shiny red hair away from her face.

When it didn't wake her, I felt emboldened enough to lean closer and press my lips against her forehead, and that's when she woke. In a split second, I slammed my hand over her mouth and waited until she focused on me, and her breathing sped up.

"Shh." Her eyes darted around the room, and she started struggling to move, so I climbed on top of her and held her down, keeping her effectively gagged, until the strength and fight drained out of her.

"I won't hurt you. I just... needed to see you."

Anneka blinked fast, mumbling something, her warm breath caressing my hand as I slowly lifted it.

"Don't scream." She shook her head, and I moved my hand further back, but I stayed on top of her because I'd missed the feel of her beneath me. I wished the covers weren't separating us, so I could feel her skin and stroke her, cup her breasts, suck on them, and fuck her.

“What are you doing here? I haven’t told anyone, I swear!” She was hissing angrily at me, but I could see the fear in her eyes. She’d probably been waiting for this to happen, knowing I’d never stay away forever.

“I uh... I know you kept your word, Anneka. I’m grateful to you for that, but I missed you. I just had to see you, and and... uh...”

“You didn’t die,” she muttered, looking both relieved and gutted at once.

“What?”

“I sometimes wonder if you called for help, that’s all. Can you get off me?” I shook my head, reaching out to stroke her cheek.

“Just let me have this, Anneka. I’ve been away from you for so long.”

Her hand suddenly darted up and grabbed my wrist, and she tried tugging my hand away from her face.

“God, I missed you. I missed this beautiful face, and your soft skin. The way you smell. The feel of your body beneath mine.”

“Blaze, you need to leave. You promised you’d stay away!”

“And I did. It’s been killing me to stay away from you. Jesus, I really want to touch you, and fuck you, Anneka.”

“No, Blaze! Don’t make me scream for help, because I will.”

She struggled beneath me, and fuck, the feel of her moving beneath me like that, it had me hard as a rock, and before I knew what I was doing, my lips were on hers and despite her hands pushing against my shoulders, her lips parted and I deepened the kiss.

My hands threaded through her hair and I kissed her like my life depended on it, like somehow I could win her over with this one kiss. She actually started kissing me back, and then her hands were pushing harder against my shoulders.

“Please,” I whispered, taking her lips again, my tongue delving deep again to get more of her taste. I wanted her on me, and in me, and I wanted to feel, and smell, and taste her forever.



ANNEKA

WAKING UP TO FIND Blaze in my room was both horrifying and a strange kind of relief, because it meant I hadn't inadvertently killed him that night. Did I want him touching me like this though?

His kisses were hot, intense, and forceful, and for some strange reason I was returning them, my fingers suddenly in his hair. He groaned low in his throat, and trailed his lips down my neck, as I felt a ripple of pleasure tingle its way down my spine. What was I doing? It was Blaze; the man who'd kidnapped me, raped me, and terrorised me.

Why was I letting him kiss me, and why wasn't I arguing as he eased the covers down to gain access to more of my skin? Somehow, the covers were suddenly no longer separating us, and his weight pressed down on my barely dressed body.

I wore a thin t-shirt and shorts, and when Blaze pushed the t-shirt up and stroked my breasts, I should have said no. I'd learned that the word meant nothing to him in the past, but I should still have been saying it, because the important part was showing him that this wasn't okay.

I didn't want his touch, and I didn't want the tingles of electricity that kept shooting downward when he stroked my nipples. When he eased me out of my t-shirt, and sucked on one of my nipples, I found myself tugging at his hair, but I wasn't trying to pull him away. I was pulling him closer.

Together we helped him out of his jacket and t-shirt, and then his bare chest was pressed against mine as he kissed me again. What was I doing? Was I out of my mind?

There was an alarm screaming in my head to stop, to stop letting him do this, and call for help. There just seemed to be a disconnect between that alarm and my body, which was responding to him, and *oh god...* growing wet for him.

Blaze teased my nipple with his teeth, and while he had me distracted with that, he must have been easing my shorts down while I wriggled and writhed. I realised only when I felt his fingers sliding between my legs, and gliding through the wetness I hadn't wanted him to find.

The triumph in his eyes, as he sucked harder on my nipple, almost sobered me enough to put a stop to things, but suddenly his fingers and his mouth were clouding my judgement enough with unwanted pleasure, and I started rocking into his touch, my pleasure building and building, until I was panting and desperate for the orgasm I knew he could wring from me.

“Fuck yeah, look at you, babe. Look at how fucking sexy you are.” Blaze moved up from my breast to take my lips again, and suddenly his cock was driving inside me with a sharp thrust. What? How?

I’d been so lost in my pleasure and that bastard had been freeing his cock. He hadn’t even asked, or waited for permission, but it was Blaze, wasn’t it? He wasn’t one to wait for my consent.

I pulled away from his kiss to demand that he stop, and that’s when his hand eased back over my mouth, and his hold on me hardened enough that I was no longer a willing participant at all.

He had me pinned to my own bed, and he was ramming his cock inside me with abandon, a satisfied grin on his face as he watched me struggle to free myself.

“I missed you, babe. You feel so fucking good around my cock,” he murmured, reaching up to grab something. Suddenly he was stuffing my t-shirt in my mouth and then he used one hand to pin my wrists, while the other settled loosely around my throat.

I was back in the situation I'd been in before, and all because I'd given a little. I'd trusted a little, *like some kind of idiot*.

“Still want you filled with my babies, Anneka. You're still mine, and I'll keep fucking you until you're radiant and round with my spawn.” Spawn? What the hell? I kept trying to spit the t-shirt out, but the satiny fabric kept sticking to my mouth and fighting me.

Blaze tightened his grip on my throat, and leaned closer.

“I'm going to release your hands, and you're going to hold the headboard. If you don't do as I say, I'll knock you out, and go kill your mum. Understand?” Oh my god! I tried to scream and he rolled his eyes, tightening his grip on my throat until I started to panic, and the room started to get hazy as my vision blurred.

“No screaming, no fighting. Just take it, babe. Take my cock, take my cum, and be a good girl. Nobody gets hurt if you do as you're told.” Except me, but apparently that didn't matter to him.

“Nod to tell me you understand, and I'll release your hands,” he muttered as he rammed deeper, and I winced. “Now, Anneka.” I nodded frantically, and he squeezed tighter.

“If you're lying to me, I'll make your mum pay for your lies.” Oh god. I kept nodding and eventually he released my hands and throat, and I desperately tried to inhale enough air to shake the dizziness. Blaze reached for the t-shirt and glared at me.

“I’m going to take this out, so you can breathe, but you’re going to take it just like you promised, aren’t you?” I nodded again, because I needed the air. I was more desperate for that right now than anything.

Finally the t-shirt was out of my mouth and I dragged in a few deep breaths, even as Blaze reached down and pinched both of my nipples hard. I choked on my next breath, and he laughed quietly.

“You like that, don’t you? My sweet sexy baby, you love being fucked and you love pain. It’s why you’re perfect for me, because I’ll always hurt you while I fuck you.” He leaned down to kiss me again, and I had to let him, had to kiss him back, or risk pissing him off.

“That’s good, babe. Now you’re going to tug on my hair again like you did before. We’re in this together, remember? Make me feel how much you want me.” *Asshole.*

I did as he told me, because I had no other choice, and he groaned with pleasure as he seemed to somehow start fucking me harder, deeper, rougher. He was getting rougher by the moment, but all I could do was take it. All I could do was let him fuck me.

I’d thought I was safe now, but maybe I’d never been safe. Maybe this had always been destined to happen. Maybe I even deserved it somehow?

36

Blaze



I HADN'T PLANNED IT but it was happening, and she was kissing me, and even moving with me, although whether that was intentional or accidental, I had no idea.

I was losing myself in the way she felt beneath me, in the power I felt as I fucked her in her childhood bedroom, like I'd always dreamed I would.

As Anneka's body, and her tentative return of my affection, pushed me closer to spilling deep inside her, I focused on taking her there with me. Not out of kindness for her necessarily, but because I liked the way it felt when her pussy pulsed and rippled around my cock when she did.

My mouth returned to her nipples, sucking and rolling them with my tongue against the roof of my mouth, while my fingers rubbed at her clit. The change in her reactions to me was beautiful to watch, even as she frowned while her body rippled and writhed beneath me.

She really didn't want to feel the things I was making her feel, and when I saw her suddenly arch up and her mouth opened on a gasp, I quickly covered it with my hand before she made too much noise.

The pulsing and quivering of her pussy wrenched my orgasm from me, and I rode the surge of pleasure as I forced myself as deep as I could go to jet my cum right up inside of her, to fertilise her, to breed her.

It was only after I felt myself coming back down from that high, that reason started to edge back into my consciousness,

and I realised what I'd done. I'd only meant to watch her from afar, and I'd just forced myself on her again. Anneka trembled beneath me, her eyes nervously meeting mine as my bliss faded and horror set in.

I hadn't meant to hurt her again. Not yet. Not now. I'd been staying away like I promised, while she kept my secret, and my family's secrets. I'd just put every one of us in danger again.

I pulled away from her, kneeling between her legs as my dick dragged some of my cum onto her bedding, and she instantly curled up in a ball, and faced away from me.

“Anneka-”

“Please go, Blaze.”

No. I couldn't go. I couldn't leave things like this. Why the hell did I do that? Why the hell couldn't I control my damn urges around her?

“I... I didn't mean to,” I whispered, reaching out to rest a hand on her hip. She flinched as I touched her, but I didn't withdraw my touch. I needed her warmth to ease the chill inside me, even though I was smart enough to realise that I didn't deserve it.

Something about her seemed to draw out the worst of me, the darkest part, the shadowy part of my psyche that I was usually able to keep at bay just enough to appear normal. Why was she always the target of my viciousness, especially now

that I knew she hadn't intentionally caused what happened to me or Ember?

"I did what you asked," she finally muttered, her entire body shivering. I could feel how cold she was, how her warmth seemed to have fled, leaving her skin cool to the touch. I moved off her, drawing the covers up and tucking them around her. It wasn't enough though. I climbed back up beside her, and drew her back against me, trying to offer her some kind of warmth or comfort from me, if I had any of either to offer her.

She was stiff and tense in my hold, but slowly, surprisingly, she started to soften, and finally I realised she was asleep. Sleeping in my arms after we'd fucked. It wasn't lovemaking, but was it really rape? She'd participated, even before my threats. She'd kissed me back. She'd touched me.

Was it really rape, if she was into it at first? Okay, *yes*, it still was, but she fell asleep in my arms, like she felt safe with me. Maybe I could win her heart after all. Somehow I too drifted off to sleep, wrapped around my Anneka, where I clearly should always have been.



ANNEKA

IT TOOK ME A few moments after I woke, to remember what had happened the night before, and as I rolled onto my back in my empty bed, I wondered if it had just been some weird combination of a dream and a nightmare. A combo; because parts of it were... not awful... I couldn't let myself

call it anything more pleasant, because I should have seen all of it as a horror, but I didn't.

At first, Blaze had been tender with me, almost sweet, and when he'd changed, it was like he became someone else, but then after he'd finished, he'd acted like he felt remorse. I'd been pretty certain he didn't feel any emotions at all, but he was starting to reveal more of himself than I think I'd ever known.

There was more to him, and even though I was horrified that he'd sneaked into my home, and forced himself on me again, and made threats against my only remaining parent *thanks to him*, I couldn't hate him for it. Not completely. Like maybe I mostly hated him, but not fully.

God, I was such a mess! I rolled onto my other side, and that's when the ache between my legs reminded me that he really had been here, and he'd really been inside me again. My only experiences of sex had been with Blaze, and each of them had been rough, brutal, cruel, but he'd started trying to make them pleasurable too. I still wasn't sure if that was a good or bad thing, because it definitely confused things in my head.

For instance, right now, I should be screaming for my mum, and phoning the police. Instead, I was wondering if I should have told him I was already pregnant. I was keeping the baby, because there was no way I could punish it for his actions, but pregnant at twenty-two wasn't quite how I'd imagined my future, least of all because I was kidnapped and raped multiple times.

I wished things had happened differently, that maybe we'd bumped into each other somewhere, had coffee and got to know each other. Maybe the sex could have happened as a mutual act, rather than something he forced on me. Maybe my first time could have been sweet and gentle, and something I'd look on fondly, rather than something that nearly destroyed me.

“Are you up, love?” Oh god, *mum*. I sat up just as she let herself into my room, a steaming cuppa in her hand. She set it by the bed, and then frowned, and picked up my shorts from the floor.

“Were you too warm in the night? I know I keep it a bit warm in here, but it helps with the aches.” I shrugged, grabbing the shorts and tucking them under the covers with me.

“I guess I was warm in the night, I don't know. How are you feeling today? Up to going for a walk or something?”

Mum smiled brightly, and I realised it meant today was a good day, and god I wished she had more of those. I found myself smiling back as I sat up taller, tucking the sheet under my arms so I wouldn't flash her.

“I know it's cold out, but we could walk down by the stream? It's not too far, and it looks like it's bright out there today.” The sun was glaring in through a gap in my curtains, so it was a good bet.

Mum nodded, then frowned, leaning closer to me. “Is that a bruise on your neck? Did you bump yourself, love?”

Oh god. I reached up, following her gaze with my fingers. There was a definite tender patch on the side of my neck, where Blaze's lips had trailed last night. Had he given me a hickey? Or was it from his punishing grip on my throat?

“Annie?”

I shrugged again. “No idea. Maybe I caught myself on something. So, about that walk?”

She nodded, and left me in peace to get up and dressed. In the bathroom, I checked myself over and found several small marks, that could have been from the tight grip of his fingers, or intentional hickey bruises. I leaned down to look at my thighs, grimacing at the slightly crusted patches of semen on my skin. Yeah, it definitely wasn't a dream. Not at all.

Blaze really was here, and he'd really fucked me again. The chilling part was wondering if it was the first time he'd been in my room like that, since I'd escaped him.

Even more unnerving than that thought was the question of whether it would be the last.

37

Blaze



I WENT TO SEE my family the next morning, because I needed a distraction from the way I was feeling. It wasn't that I loved her, it couldn't be, not really because I didn't really think that was possible anymore, but I knew that I felt like an asshole for hurting her again. Something in me, some caveman asshole, just really wanted her pregnant, and that bastard took over once I was kissing her, and touching her.

“Bro, you look like you're doped up on something.” *Charming*. I forced myself to pay attention to Ember as I closed the front door behind me. She looked... I want to say *well*, but it was hard to tell with all the makeup, and piercings, and the way she was staring at me.

At almost seventeen, she was almost my height, and about as far from the kid she'd been as anyone could be. Being sexually assaulted by that asshole, on top of all the bullying, had been the last straw for her. The straw that broke the camel's back.

“Yeah, kinda proving my point, dickhead.” She turned to head out of the room, and I grabbed her arm, releasing it in a hurry when she spun and jabbed a fist into my stomach. *Shit*. I might have been her brother, but nobody fucking touched her without getting clawed these days.

“Sorry. Honestly, I was just trying to get you to stay and talk to me. I won't do that again.” My hands were up as I spoke, and I could physically see her body relaxing as her hackles went back down again.

She was permanently on edge because of that fucker, but I was her brother. I'd never hurt her like that. I'd... Jesus,

apparently there was one woman I'd willingly hurt like that though.

“Sit down before you fall down, bro. You look like I just kicked you in the nuts, and I definitely held back from doing that, out of respect for you being family.”

“Thanks,” I muttered, dropping down on the sofa. “Where’s everyone?”

“Out.”

“No shit.” Ember sat across from me, because she never sat close to any of us, and leaned her elbows on her knees.

“What’s her name?”

“What?”

She smirked, the black lipstick looking macabre with the gesture, or more macabre than usual.

“You’re fucked up over a girl. Any idiot can see that, oh... it’s her, isn’t it? Anneka?”

Shit. Had my parents told her something about what I’d done? God no, she definitely would have gone for my nuts if they had. After what she’d been through, with that asshole cornering her in school, and assaulting her so many times, this would send her over the edge for sure. My god. I was the asshole now, or maybe I’d always been one. What I’d done to Anneka was so far over the fucking line.

“Seriously, Blaze, are you on something? You’re so fucking out of it.” She punctuated her comment by throwing a cushion

at my head, and that helped a bit to clear my head.

“Uh... yeah, Anneka. I mean, it was always her, right?”

She pulled at her tongue piercing with her teeth.

“Are you guys together then?”

Jesus, were we? Was that the right word for me repeatedly forcing myself on the poor woman? Trying so hard to impregnate her whether she wanted it or not?

“I dunno. I’d... I want us to be, yeah. It’s complicated though.”

Ember looked unconvinced, but then we didn’t really talk like this, did we?

“How have you been? Still seeing that therapist?”

She rolled her eyes at me, digging her phone from her pocket and fussing with it.

“Yeah. For all the good it does, I mean, she’s all ‘it’s okay not to be okay’, and I’m like... well, she doesn’t know shit about my life, right? That’s where the others are, by the way; family session with Ash and the twins. Ash got into another fight at school, and they’re threatening to kick him out, and well, you know that Phoenix prefers wearing skirts and stuff, and that’s causing trouble for both of them, so yeah. Usual shit, right?”

Jesus. Our parents were great people, so why’d they end up stuck with so many fucked up kids? Was so much of this my

fault, because of the whole thing I could have protected my family from?

I clenched my fists, staring at my knuckles and wondering if I should get them tattooed too, maybe with something outing me as the bad seed I really was.

“I’ve never... Em, I fucking failed you back then, and I never took ownership of that. I should have, and, fuck, I’m so sorry. I should have just told them I was being bullied like that, and we could have kept you from walking into that hellhole, and, well yeah.”

Ember looked up from her phone, and wrinkled her nose.

“What would that have achieved? Assholes are everywhere, bro, and even if I’d been able to go to another school, I’d still have faced it somehow. You can’t just choose another school, you know. It’s all about postcode areas and shit.” Huh. I knew that, but I guess I was so busy blaming myself that I’d pushed that logic aside. I knew I had a tendency to do that.

“Still, I could have made sure you were prepared, or had mum and dad talk to the school or something. I was so busy trying to man up and soldier on, that I never even thought about what it would be like for you.”

She’d turned away during my little speech, but I saw a brief side-eye from her when I finished.

“Still... so many of the assholes from school seem to have died mysteriously this year, so I guess they got theirs, right?”

Rumour has it that a certain someone was found with a poker shoved so far up his ass, he probably choked on it.”

My baby sister... what a way with words.



ANNEKA

MUM MANAGED A SHORT walk, and then I made lunch for us, and we curled up in front of the tv to binge watch *Schitts Creek*, making it the perfect day together.

I'd booked the day off work to try and do some planning for the future, but since it was a good day for mum, that became my priority.

I still hadn't told her about the pregnancy, and I wasn't sure how to broach that subject since I'd have to answer for who the father was, and I didn't know if I was ready to say any of that out loud yet.

She didn't even know Blaze and I had seen each other since they moved away, and she'd always thought he seemed a little 'strange', so there was no way she'd see his reappearance as anything other than worrying.

That night as I went to bed, having changed the bedding to get rid of not only the smell of Blaze's cologne, but also the dried cum he'd left behind, I idly wondered if he'd return, and how I'd feel if he did.

My dreams that night were insanely weird and twisted, and among the parts that made so little sense, I had fragments of

moments where Blaze was here, and he was touching me, kissing me, making love to me. It wasn't the rough brutal sex from before, it was sweet, and gentle... *loving, even.*

He'd got into my head so completely that I was dreaming about him, and romanticising our twisted 'relationship' into something beautiful in my mind, and in my subconscious. Was I disappointed when I realised he hadn't actually come to my room that night?

No, for a very clear and disturbing reason. I woke up naked, but covered up, and his scent was all over me. Even creepier, when I pulled back the covers, once more there was dried semen on me, and on the bedding. Maybe they weren't dreams at all, but why couldn't I remember everything? Why was it so disjointed and confusing? How had he been here, and had sex with me, and I had no real memory of it?

There was only one possible reason, and it was even more horrifying than him forcing himself inside me the night before. He'd drugged me and taken what he wanted, leaving me used and covered in his fluids, like I was nothing more than some cheap whore.

Why did that hurt even more than the other things he'd done to me? I curled up in the shower, letting the sound of the water drown out my gasping sobs, as my heart broke all over again.

38

Blaze



AFTER THAT CHAT WITH my sister, I'd realised something important about the way I'd been treating Anneka, that my cruelty, that side of me that I was struggling to suppress around her, was causing her more harm every time I was with her.

How could I be with her and fill her with my seed, and yet not brutalise her and terrify her the way I had before? I already knew I couldn't stay away again tonight, that I needed to be with her, and I needed to sleep wrapped around her again, but I couldn't hurt her again. Not if I ever wanted her to return my rapidly re-emerging feelings and love me, right?

When I sneaked into her room, I watched her sleeping peacefully, and yearned to touch her and taste her, but I knew I had to be good to her and protect her from that dark side of me that always came out when she was naked.

I knelt beside the bed, and carefully injected her with the sedative, watching her nose wrinkle slightly as she moved her head. I stayed beside her, watching closely as she slept deeply, and seemed completely oblivious to my presence. I was hard as a rock at the thought of having her again, but first I wanted to make sure she was okay, even though she'd had that drug before.

"Anneka," I whispered softly, leaning closer to press my lips against her cheek. Not even a soft murmur or a reaction of any kind. Oddly, it was disappointing, because I wanted to see her beautiful eyes staring back at me, and I wanted to watch her

emotions as they crashed through her, one after the other, but this was about being kinder to her.

I dragged the covers down and groaned at the sight of the strappy thing she was wearing. It wasn't a top and shorts this time, it was a silky little slip dress thing. Had she worn it for me? Was she hoping I'd return? Was this part of a seduction meant for me?

I reached out and stroked a finger over her nipples, watching them press against the silky fabric. I dragged it carefully up her thighs, and grinned at the lack of underwear. She'd definitely been prepared for me! She wanted me, she wanted me to touch her, and fuck her.

It was a struggle to wrestle her out of that shiny thing she'd worn, but then I feasted my eyes on her nakedness, on her pale skin, the rosy nipples, peaking as I blew over them. The room was warm, but then I'd noticed the whole house was warm with the heating on full. Easier for me to get naked, right? I stripped off, so I could feel her skin with every part of me, and then I climbed up on the bed, straddling my sweet girl.

"I thought this might be easier on you this time, Anneka. I tend to get a bit rough when I'm faced with your sweet body, and the delightful way you struggle. I don't want to keep hurting you, but I still need to breed you." I leaned down to kiss her soft lips, again disappointed at her lack of response, even though it was the only way it could be right now.

I sucked one nipple, then the other, feeling them tighten and firm up in response to my touch. She might not be conscious,

but her body knew I was there, and it knew I was loving her.

I pressed her legs apart, and buried my face between them, inhaling and groaning at her scent, before I started to lick her. My god, the taste of this woman. I could do this forever and never tire of her sweetness. I used my thumbs to press her pussy lips apart, so I could feast on her, and tongue-fuck her, grinning with pride as her body started to prepare for me.

She was wet and she wanted me inside her. I'd never deny my sweet lady, so I kissed my way back up her luscious body, easing my dick into her as I moved. Fuck, the way her pussy seemed to drag me into her, the way her body just welcomed me, begged me even.

My phone buzzed, startling me and making me freeze in place, because for some crazy reason I thought she'd wake and find me inside her, but of course she didn't. My phone was in my jacket pocket on the floor, but a quick glance at my watch told me that it was my warning alert I'd programmed in.

I knew I'd get carried away once I was touching her, and I didn't want to risk her waking mid-fuck, and freaking out, so it was time to finish what I'd started and fill her with my cum once more.

Luckily, or embarrassingly, I was pretty fucking close already, because seeing her, smelling her, tasting her, was so intense and hot that I'd been worried I'd come, before I even got inside her. I cradled her sleeping face in my hands, as I started to stroke deep inside her with my cock.

“I wish you were awake, so you could feel this, feel me loving you, Anneka. I’m sorry it had to be this way, but I don’t have that urge right now. Something about you peacefully accepting me inside you has me calm enough, that I can just make love to you without the monstrous part of me taking over. One day, babe, one day we’ll make love like this for real, and you’ll love me for it.”

I pressed her mouth open, so I could try kissing her properly as I shuddered through my orgasm, filling her up with spurt after spurt of my babymakers. Get in there, boys. Make us a fucking family.

I froze, still spilling inside her, as I heard her mother moving around in the hallway. Being found like this would be the worst possible outcome. She’d scream, she’d call for help, and I’d have to kill her. I couldn’t be the man who killed both of Anneka’s parents. She’d never forgive me for that.

I carefully eased out of her warm, unconscious body, and picked up my clothes, hurriedly dressing as quietly as I could. If her mother came in here, I’d need to be able to hide, fast.

I heard a door close at the end of the hallway, and then there was silence once more. I’d dodged the bullet, but I couldn’t risk staying the night like I’d wanted to.

I stared down at that well-filled pussy of hers, frowning at the traces of my cum glistening as it dripped onto the bedding.

Out of desperation, out of that need to not waste any of it, any of those possible children of mine, I scooped it up with my forefinger and pushed it back inside that hot wet pussy of hers,

groaning at the obscenity of the gesture. If only I could stay and do this for hours. I could stop it from escaping, help it take root and grow.

Finally, reluctantly, I dragged the covers back over her sleeping form, and tucked her hair behind her ear as I leaned down to kiss her, finally dragging my cum-covered finger across her lips, leaving a trace of me where she could taste me later.

“Goodnight, my sweet angel. I’ll be back again and again, until we make our baby.”



ANNEKA

I NEEDED TO GET away, away from anywhere Blaze could find me. Away from the bedroom where he’d betrayed me by abusing me in my sleep, as if the previous night hadn’t been enough of a betrayal.

I told mum I was going away for the weekend, meeting up with a friend from work, and I packed enough things to tide me over for several days, even though I was pretty sure I was going to hide out for a lot longer.

In some ways I wanted to try and find Blaze, to confront him, to yell at him and tell him how much I hated him for the things he’d done to me, especially last night since it felt like the worst possible thing he could do to me.

I had no idea where to look for him though, and the fact that I was even thinking of looking for him was a sign that I was losing my mind, because of what he'd done to me. I shouldn't want to seek him out. I should start running and never stop, because the last thing I should ever do is let him find me again.

I drove out of town, literally out of our county and I kept driving, eventually finding a small hotel down by the coast. It was cheap, and I needed cheap right now. Money was an issue, because I was running out on my job for the second time, and they'd only just held back from firing me last time, back when I was kidnapped and took extra time off, to try and get my head straight.

I stood on the beachfront, one hand idly resting over my flat stomach. Inside me right now, a baby was growing. A child. Our child; mine and Blaze's. I'd never wanted Blaze or his children, but now that I was carrying this culmination of him and me, I knew I'd die before I'd ever let anything happen to the life inside me.

I knew that I'd die to keep Blaze from getting anywhere near him or her too. The cycle of monsters had to stop with him. I couldn't let his crazy, and his family's evil, anywhere near this child.

I stayed on the beach for hours, enjoying the cold bite of the sea air, and the wind whipping through my hair. A bag of steaming hot chips helped to ease some of the chill that set in,

because it was freezing on the beach, but it also seemed to soothe my soul in a way nothing else could have right now.

Blaze was never far from my thoughts, because he'd impacted so much of my life, and my future. He'd unnerved me as a kid, he'd creeped me out with the way he'd sneaked around, and watched me, and with the things he'd said to me sometimes.

He'd murdered my father, and that was something I was really struggling to even accept. How could he, a child, have murdered a full grown man, especially a man like my father, who could have probably caused him real harm if he'd got his hands on him.

The kidnap, the rapes, the sheer helplessness of being trapped with him, and at his complete lack of mercy, it all felt so far away now, but I knew it had happened.

Sometimes I felt like I could still feel him all over me, and inside me, but that was just the Blaze effect. He'd practically consumed me with his overwhelming obsession and hatred of me. Was hatred the only thing he felt though?

He'd come back for me, even after he promised to stay away. He'd been sweet, before he turned mean again. He'd seemed like he cared for me. Was I just trying to justify his behaviour, trying to give meaning to something which had none?

Complex thoughts like that were torturing me way into the evening, after I'd had a small meal in the hotel lounge, and gone up to my room.

It was only about an hour later when the phone rang by my bed, and when the reception of the hotel told me who was waiting downstairs for me, I should have said to keep him away, but suddenly I had to see him. To yell at him, and curse him for what he'd done to me.

“It's okay, he can come up.”

39

Blaze



SHE RAN. SHE actually loaded up her fucking car, and ran. I had my bike at the house, so I gave her a few minutes of a headstart, then I checked the tracking app on my phone, and headed off after her. I kept an eye on it every time I stopped at traffic lights, making sure to never get anywhere near her car.

Let her think she's safe for now, but if she seriously thought she was going to hide from me, she was about to learn what lengths I'd go to, in order to find her. There were three trackers on her car. On the offchance she'd found one, or even two of them, I figured she'd never look for a third. As it happened, she'd never even looked for one.

I'd lied about burning her car, but it had been towed away, way back when I first abandoned it far away from the house. She'd got it back when she first escaped from me, and I'd added the trackers the day I moved back in next door. She was never going to be out of my reach again.

She finally went to her room in the late evening, and that's when I went in to look for her.

The receptionist of the little shithole she was staying in wasn't all that helpful.

"I'm her boyfriend. She knew I was running late, but I'm to go straight up."

"I can't just let you into a guest's room. I'll need to call her first." I glared at him as I gritted out the word 'fine', and hoped she'd do the right thing. Two minutes later, I was

heading up the stairs to the room he'd confirmed was hers. She opened the door before I reached it, and even tired and frustrated, she was beautiful.

“Anneka.”

“I should have realised you'd find me. You can't stay away, can you?”

I stepped up close to her, reaching for her face to kiss her, but she pulled away, and there was this distance in her eyes that I really hated. What the fuck was her problem?

As soon as she closed the door behind me, I grabbed her and pulled her into my chest, holding her tight against me. Everything seemed right when I was holding her. The noise and panic in my head dissipated as if it had never been there at all. Had I feared losing her when she ran today? Obviously, because it's easy to ditch a car and do an actual runner.

“I missed you.”

She struggled and I released her, because it wasn't like I couldn't grab her again if I wanted to.

“You ran.”

She nodded, wrapping her arms around herself, looking haunted and vulnerable. Deep down inside, I knew I was the reason she looked like that. My actions had worn her down, and traumatised her.

“I was gentle.”

The fiery look on her face was my only warning, but I still wasn't prepared for the way she slapped me. Her hand crashed against my cheek so hard it jerked my head around, and I staggered half a step before I caught my balance.

“What the fuck?!”

“You. Raped. Me,” she hissed at me, wrapping her arms back around herself as she seemed to shrink back again.

“Yeah, so?”

“So? Jesus Christ, Blaze! On top of everything you've already done, the previous times you did that to me, how could you?!”

I was completely fucking lost. I dragged my fingers through my hair, tugging on it before I released it, while I tried to figure out what the fuck she was on about.

“Babe, I don't get it. You're talking about last night?” She didn't like the gentle version of me? That was probably just as well, because I couldn't be him very often, could I?

“You drugged me. You drugged me, and raped me while I slept! Of... Of all the... you... why, Blaze? Why would you...” She started to cry then, deep wrenching sobs that resonated inside me, like I could feel them too. What was going on? How was that worse than forcing her while she fought me?

“I don't... I didn't want to hurt you. I thought it'd be easier on you, because I could stay gentle if you didn't fight...”

Anneka, I did it for you,” I protested, reaching for her and slumping when she backed away again.

“You *can* be gentle. You did... you... you were gentle,” she murmured softly, swiping at her face to dash away those damn tears.

“I’m dark inside, Anneka. What’s inside of me, *what drives me*, is fucking evil. I know it, I can see it, and feel it, but I can’t help myself with you. I need you, and I need you all the fucking time. I can’t stop thinking about you. I can’t stop wanting you, and if I see you, I need to be inside you. And if I’m inside you, you fight me. If you fight, I can’t keep that side of me away from you. I was trying to protect you.”

She dragged her sleeve across her eyes, and even pink faced and tear stained, she was still the most beautiful woman on the fucking planet.

“Well, you didn’t. You hurt me more, Blaze. You took away my awareness as well as my consent, as well as my fight. You can’t do that again.”



ANNEKA

FACED WITH HIM, THE memory of waking up covered in his masculine scent, finding his cum, and knowing he’d fucked me, was just so overwhelming. I felt more used and violated than I had when he’d done those things to me when I was conscious. I had no sense of why that would be the case, but I couldn’t let him do that to me again.

“Anneka, I need to have you. I need you to be filled with me, and covered in me. You’re mine, and I can’t let you go.”

I swallowed hard, finally meeting his eyes again, surprised to realise that his words weren’t the horror or the shock they’d once been.

“I know. It can’t happen like that again though. I have to be awake... aware. I have to know when you’re doing it.”

“I can’t be gentle, Anneka, I tried. I can’t.” He dragged at his hair again, cursing softly. “I can’t be anything but the darkness in me.”

I nodded, stepping closer to tentatively lay my hands against his chest. His eyes widened as he covered my hands with his.

“You... I can still have you?”

I took a steadying breath, then another, before I nodded once.

“Yes, but only if you promise to never do that again when I’m not conscious.”

Blaze grinned at me. “I prefer you awake and fighting anyway.”

Dear god, he really was a fucking psycho. He kept showing me these moments of vulnerability though, hints of the damaged, fragile soul inside the beautiful, brutish exterior.

“What if I don’t fight?”

His frown started small, and deepened incrementally as he considered my words.

“I have no idea.”

My whole body was trembling as I moved up on tiptoes, to press my lips against his. There was a split second where he seemed to freeze on the spot, like he didn't know how to react, and then his hands cupped my face and a low groan rumbled from him and into me, as he deepened the kiss.

For long moments, that's all we did. We stood there, kissing each other tentatively at first, then more firmly, our tongues warring as we both gave us a chance, and just stayed in the moment.

Blaze couldn't know that I was doing this for the child we had already created, that my conflicted feelings for him were further burdened, by this crazed suspicion that I could somehow smooth all the wrinkles of our relationship, and his hard edges, in one fell swoop.

Blaze moved suddenly, lifting me with both hands under my ass, my legs looping around his waist as he carried me to the bed. He carefully laid me down on it, trailing his lips down my throat, and flashing me a small grin when I shuddered at his gentle touches.

“Yes, Blaze, god yes...”

He looked stunned, as if somehow my acceptance of him, and my willingness to risk being with him, were more than he'd ever expected. He shrugged his jacket off and let it drop on the floor, then he lifted off his hoody and t-shirt, baring that tattooed chest to me as he leaned close again.

“Wait!” I pressed my hands against his chest, and a low growl rumbled out of him in response.

“You said you wouldn’t fight, please don’t make me be him again,” he whispered urgently, as he increased his weight against my hands, trying to push us back to where we were moments ago.

“I’m not fighting... it’s... your tattoos...”

His confusion cleared suddenly and he rolled his eyes, but I saw the way his cheeks pinked slightly at my mention of them. He straddled my hips and sat up again, letting me see what had barely permeated my senses.

The tattoos had changed. Whether they’d been removed and repainted, or just tattooed over, I had no idea, but they were different.

Where my name appeared, it was no longer combined with words of hate. In some cases there were coloured patches covering them, and in others, there were objects covering them, a few hearts, and a lock and key in one place.

Where before there had been several images of a woman who looked like me in pain, or covered in blood, now the images had been altered enough that I could have been in rapture, pleasure instead of pain.

The longer I stared at them, and trailed my fingers over them, the darker that blush in Blaze’s cheeks, like somehow his choice to replace that hate with love was something to be ashamed of.

“I... you... Blaze, you did this for... for me?”

He shrugged, looking down at his chest instead of meeting my eyes.

“*For us.* You were the wrong target for my hate, and I wanted to try and erase it, only I can’t because so much of it is inside both of us now. I can’t undo that, but I can try to be better from now on.” He lifted his arm, and I saw the blacked out area where my name had appeared on the hitlist, and underneath that, in larger letters, his own name.

“Blaze-”

He moved his arm down and concealed it again.

“Yeah, well I’m not man enough to take myself out to complete the list, so yeah... at least I could acknowledge my part in everything. I could have made it all stop, and I chose to hide it. Ember is who she is because of me, and I own that now.”

I smoothed my hands over his warm, hard chest, looping them over his shoulders, so I could pull him back down to me for a kiss.

“Thank you, Blaze.”

40

Blaze



I GUESS I DIDN'T even think she'd notice the tats, because until this moment, I hadn't even known if I'd get to be with her again like this. Instead, she was giving me so much because she was trusting me, and letting me touch her.

Could I be normal if she didn't fight me? Would it feel as good or would it feel like a pale imitation of the way it had been before? She was the only person I'd been with, but I already knew that nobody else could ever be near me like this. I'd kill them first.

Anneka lifted her top off, and I helped her out of her bra, immediately paying attention to those firm breasts of hers, tweaking and teasing her nipples, as she gasped and practically rippled beneath me in response.

There was no fear, no fight, no refusal, just a pure true reaction to the sensations I was creating for her. I continued teasing her nipples as we kissed again, and then we were struggling out of the rest of our clothes, and I climbed back onto her. I could do this, right? I didn't have to hurt her to get what I wanted. Right?

"Blaze, don't think, just make love to me," Anneka whispered, pulling me close again as her lips covered mine once more. I hooked her leg up over me, and pressed my cock deep inside her with a smooth surge.

Fuck me... that wet heat enveloping my dick was as heavenly as it had been every damn time, but this time she was wet without me having to do anything except touch her and

tease her. It wasn't a risky thrust of my cock into a dry, protesting pussy. It was all heat, all wet, all fucking needy.

"Fuck yeah, babe. You feel so good," I murmured, kissing her deeply as I started to thrust inside her, filling her deeply with each jerk of my hips.

She held on tight as I started fucking her harder, driving us both to our... *wait*... I stopped moving, seeing her wincing as I held still.

"I'm hurting you?"

Anneka pressed her lips together, and slowly shook her head.

"You're lying, why are you lying?"

"So you won't get mad at me and hurt me more, Blaze." I was hurting her, even trying to be gentle, I was hurting her. *Fuck*. I forced myself to move, dragging my cock from her wet depths and landing on my back with a sharp curse.

"Blaze?"

"I just can't seem to be what you need, Anneka." It was killing me inside, that thought that I could only be brutal with her, even when I didn't mean to.

She moved suddenly, draping herself over me, her hand fumbling to find my cock so she could ease herself down onto me.

Fuuuck, she started riding me, awkwardly at first, like she couldn't quite coordinate herself to move in that way, and then more confidently as she figured out how the fuck to drag her

pussy up and down on my cock and send my eyes rolling into the back of my head.

“Jesus... keep doing that, babe.” I looped my hands around her hips, and helped her speed up her pace, as I started lifting my hips to meet her on each downward motion.

Her lips parted and her eyes widened, as together we fucked her deep, and both started to pant and moan as we fucked harder and faster. I knew I was gonna come and I wanted her to get there with me, so I grabbed her hand and shoved it down between her legs.

“Get... off... babe... I’m so... close...” She didn’t need my guidance on how to get off, not that I thought she would, and she started rubbing her clit and circling it as we crashed together over and over, chasing our orgasms together.

She erupted, and contorted on top of me, as her pussy tried to crush my cock and I gritted out a string of curses, as I ground her down against me, and jetted my cum up inside her.

This time, this would be the fucking one to make our baby for sure. How could this epic sex not create fucking life?



ANNEKA

FOR THE FIRST TIME, we got off together, and neither of us would be regretting it in the morning. That was what sex was supposed to be like, at least as far as I’d read and seen in movies. My body was still tingling and shuddering with tiny

aftershocks, as pleasure tickled its way along my nerves in ever reducing ripples.

“My god, Blaze!”

He chuckled, dragging me tight against his chest, our clammy skin clinging to each other’s.

“Yeah, babe, I am definitely your god. *Fuck*. If that didn’t create a baby, I don’t know what will.”

Oh. I should tell him, right? I lifted my head, making sure we could see each other before I spoke.

“We already did, Blaze.”

His brow creased even as his breathing picked up again.

“What?”

“I’m pregnant. We... we made a baby.”

His face lit up, and he let out a triumphant whoop before he pulled my mouth to his, and started tonguing me in a rough, but extremely hot, kiss.

He pulled back just enough to look at me again.

“For real? It’s confirmed?”

I nodded, feeling a huge smile stretch across my face as I shared the news I’d fully intended to keep from him, except for the way he was being right now.

This Blaze, this version of him, I think I could love. He was boyish and cute, and so fucking hot, all at once.

“A baby!” He was practically bouncing with excitement, even as his dick finally slipped out of me, probably trailing his semen all over him.

“A baby,” I confirmed, cupping his face with my hands. “So we have to be in this together, Blaze. No more psycho behaviour, okay?”

He snorted, dragging me against his chest again, and hauling the covers up and over us.

“I’ll do my best, babe. You and me, yeah? We can do this.”

“You, me, and our baby, Blaze.” I was either very lucky, or sinking mindlessly into the hell I’d tried so hard to escape, but I couldn’t tell which right now. I didn’t want to know.

41

Blaze



I SLEPT CURLED AROUND Anneka like we'd always been supposed to, like I'd never managed with her full consent before. It was everything I knew it would be, and my sense of being in the right place was solidified in my mind by the time I woke up.

She was mine, and being together wasn't enough. I had to keep her, and that meant getting her back to the house with me.

She wouldn't like it at first, I was pretty sure, because she'd returned to her life, and was used to seeing her mum and friends. Jesus, maybe she could live there with me, but I could let her come and go sometimes, so she wasn't so trapped. I had no idea how to make this work, but I knew I would.

I was woken with this desperate urge to watch the sunrise from the beach, something I'd never been in a position to do before, but I'd woken crazy early as I always did, so it had to be done.

"Anneka?" I lightly shook her shoulder, and she grumbled, rubbing her face against the pillow.

"Hey, wake up. Wanna watch the sunrise with me?"

She cracked one eye open to glare at me in the dim light, my phone screen providing the only light in that moment.

"Are you out of your fucking mind? It's not even light yet?"

I grinned, feeling oddly amused by her crankiness in the morning, and wondering if it was the norm, or if she was just cranky today for some reason.

“It’ll be amazing from the beach. Come with me.”

She promptly closed her eye again, and snuggled deeper into the covers.

“Nope.”

“I’ll keep you warm,” I promised, and she sighed, both eyes popping open.

“I’m pregnant, Blaze. Do you understand that sleep is important for the baby I’m growing?” Oh. She was right, I should be more respectful of that stuff, shouldn’t I? Once I had her back at the house, I’d make sure she got all the rest she needed.

“Fine. You rest while I go watch, then I’ll come back for you. We’ll go home together.”

She frowned, lifting her head from the pillow.

“You mean our separate homes, right?”

“Nope,” I mimicked her earlier response, as I kissed her forehead and eased out of the bed carefully, tucking the bedding back around her.

She glared at me before she settled back down.

“We’ll see about that, won’t we?”

I laughed it off then, but by the time I’d wrapped up in my clothes and made the icy walk down to the beach in the dark, I realised that she planned to fight me on that one thing. That one thing that was the key to our future. If she pushed me into

it, I'd have to take action she really wouldn't like, to force the issue. She'd come around again though, right?

I reached the beach just as the sun started to peek over the waterline, and it was every bit as breath-taking and beautiful as I'd imagined. I wished again that Anneka had chosen to come with me to watch, because it could have been one of those moments we'd look back upon years from now, and sigh over how romantic it had been.

I shouldn't have let her refuse. I should have forcibly dressed her and marched her down here for it, but then even I could see how that behaviour would prevent it from being that moment, instead being something else I'd forced her into.

I sat on the cold sand, and hugged my legs as I watched the sky turning beautiful shades of peach and pink, darkening to vivid orange as the world around me started to brighten. I'd seen the sun rising before, but it had been nothing like this. It had just grown lighter, which had been a big disappointment that time, but this? This was epic. A reminder that life went on all around us, that there was always something bigger than us, something more powerful.

It quieted my soul, leaving me calm and peaceful, kinda like I'd been last night with Anneka. I hadn't hurt her. She didn't fight me, and I didn't feel the need to hurt her. Could we be like that in future, or would I start to yearn for the fight just so I had a reason to hurt her?

I was smart enough to realise that genetically I hadn't exactly won the sanity lottery, and being raised by parents like

mine had skewed my understanding of what romance and love should be. Not that I wasn't raised happy, by parents who loved me and my siblings, but instead of trying to deter the kind of behaviour that put people behind bars, they supported it, enabled it, encouraged it even.

Between that and mum's diaries, I was never going to be normal, was I? Never going to look at a relationship with the kind of understanding that a large percentage of the population did. I saw things differently. I expected different things, and I expected people to bend to my will, and give me what I wanted, when perhaps I should be accepting the word 'no' every now and then.

As the sky grew light enough that the day had fully dawned, and I could no longer feel my ass after sitting on the cold sand, I made my way back to the hotel. It was time to take Anneka back to the house, regardless of her wishes, because we had a baby to raise together, and she knew that fighting me wouldn't make a difference.



ANNEKA

IT WAS SO FRUSTRATING that I couldn't get back to sleep for ages after Blaze left the room. The idea of watching the sunrise with him had been tempting, but I was exhausted, and in the end I figured I'd aim for more sleep.

I lay there for ages, staring at the ceiling, wondering if I'd have been happier on the beach with him, doing something so

romantic that even the idea of it kind of made my chest hurt.

Romantic? *Blaze*? Could anything with Blaze involve romance, or would it always involve pain, and fear, and degradation? He didn't want to be cruel to me, but he'd admitted that he struggled to be any other way.

My willingness to be with him last night had shown us both that he had it in him to be gentle and sweet, but what if that got boring for him? Was it as good for him when it wasn't coupled with hurting me, or betraying my trust?

See, thoughts like that were making sleep impossible, and so it was only as I was finally drifting off to sleep that I heard the door, and realised Blaze was returning. I stayed relaxed, until I felt his hand press over my eyes as a needle slid into my neck.

What was he doing? How could he do this, after everything we'd shared! *Blaze, why?* Everything faded to black, even as I felt him drag the covers back once more.

42

Blaze



I WAS FEELING PRETTY good by the time I headed back up to our room. See, I was no longer worried that Anneka would hate me for taking her back to the house, because I knew I could make it nicer for her.

We could live there as a real couple, without her being my prisoner, and then she'd have no reason to try and run again, would she? She'd know she was trusted to come back to me, because first and foremost, that baby in her womb connected us in a way nothing else ever could.

Did I want my ring on her finger, my name branded on her, and her never further away than right beside me? Of course I fucking did, but there was no way she'd willingly agree to that. Hell, maybe the only way I'd be able to achieve that would be to kidnap her again for real.

I pushed the door open and closed it gently, before I turned to make my way quietly to the bed. I didn't want to wake her, because she'd pointed out how important rest was for her right now.

I don't know how the fuck I made it halfway across the room, before I realised what I was seeing. The room was empty, and she was gone. The bedding was dragged half off the bed, like she'd gone in a hurry. I checked around for her things, but the important part was her car keys.

They were gone from the bedside table. I ran back outside and sure enough her car was gone, and even worse? My bike was on its side, and there was something stabbed through the back tyre, disabling it so I couldn't follow her.

Fuck! I ran back into the hotel, stopping at reception.

“My girlfriend, Aneka from room 42, did she leave?”

The receptionist wasn't the same one from last night, but she checked something on her screen.

“She hasn't checked out yet, no.”

“That's not what I fucking asked! Did. She. Leave?”

Now she just looked afraid of me, but then I was leaning close over that insignificant counter, and looming over her as she sat in her chair.

“Please, sir, don't yell at me. I don't know anything, I've been here literally for five minutes.”

Fuck. I ran back up to our room, and looked at it through new eyes. Would Aneka really leave the bedding draped across the floor like that? Would she leave her things? Would she just disappear like that?

I cast panicked eyes around, finally spotting my phone on the floor almost under the bed, and grabbed it.

I pulled up the tracking on her car, and saw that it was showing as still parked outside. Fuck, the tracker was found? I opened up the next app, and thank god, there was her car, heading into town from here. Where the fuck was she going?

I phoned back down to reception, as my mind whirled with panicked imagined scenarios, where her running from me was actually the best case scenario.

“Yes?”

“I’m calling from room 42, I need to know if anyone was given access to this room.”

“Yes, two keys were issued, one on arrival and one when someone arrived yesterday... wait... another one was issued an hour ago.”

“You gave some other fucker a key?”

“No! I told you, I haven’t been on shift long. We don’t randomly give keys out though, not with... not with... it’s just not what we do.”

“Find the other receptionist and find out who the fuck they gave that key to! Do you have cameras outside?”

“I... I don’t know!”

“Fucking find out!” I roared, slamming the phone down, then I dialled home from my own phone.

“Hey, kiddo.” Thank fuck!

“Dad, I need help. Someone’s taken Anneka.”



ANNEKA

MY HEAD WAS THROBBING when I woke, and even though I hadn’t opened my eyes yet, I could sense a few things. I was cold, like the room I was in had no heating. I was laying on something hard and uncomfortable, and my arms and legs were tethered. My arms above my head and my legs about two feet apart. I was also naked.

Why had Blaze done this to me? We'd been working on finding common ground. We'd been working on being a couple, and raising a baby together. Why would he betray me like this now? I felt like someone was literally piling bricks on top of my heart, and it was about to be crushed beneath that weight.

I couldn't open my eyes, because when I saw him standing there, with that smug little grin of his, I knew I'd never be able to not hate him. That's crazy, right? If he could do this to me, then I already hated him more than I'd ever hated anyone or anything.

Oh god, what if whatever he'd dosed me with hurts the baby?

"I know you're awake, little slut. You might as well open your eyes." My breath caught in my throat, and my heart raced faster, thudding painfully in my chest as a new wave of horror chilled me even further. *That's. Not. Blaze.*

"Open your fucking eyes, or I'll cut those out first." My eyes popped open, fixing on a dark, dirty ceiling, before I risked looking around me.

The guy was big, looming over me like a giant, with this maniacal grin on his face. His hair was dark, I think, but shaved so short, it was hard to be sure. His eyes seemed to burn into me with their intensity, and that grin grew wider as my panic escalated.

"You... who are you?"

“Doesn’t matter, cunt. I’m the last person you’ll ever see, and I’ll be the only one to hear your screams as you beg for death.” Oh god! I thought Blaze was the height of insanity, and depravity, but this guy... he had me somewhere nobody would find me, and he was clearly intent on killing me.

“Please, please don’t.” I wanted to mention my baby, but I was also terrified of mentioning it, in case he deliberately harmed him or her first.

“Begging is nice, so keep it up, but it won’t change anything. They all scream, they all cry, and they all beg. It’s part of the fun for me.” He trailed a finger down my arm, and I shuddered with horror and revulsion.

At least with Blaze, there was some recognition between us, but this monster was a stranger, and that meant he had no interest in my welfare, and every interest in my pain.

43

Blaze



THE RECEPTIONIST COULDN'T REACH the other fucker who'd obviously given out a room key, but they apparently *did* have a camera outside on the street.

Unfortunately it didn't reach where Anneka's car had been though, so I couldn't prove that someone had taken her, but I knew she wouldn't just leave like that. Would she? After what we'd experienced together, would she really just leave?

"Hey kiddo, sit down. We need to talk." My dads were in the room with me, and we'd all come to the same conclusion, that nothing in this fucking room was of use right now.

"I need to follow that tracking, dammit."

Dad Dory glanced worriedly at dad Gray, and I practically growled with frustration.

"What if she really did leave you, kid?"

"What if she didn't? Look, we can sit and chat about this all you like, but the only way we'll know for sure is if we fucking get after her car. What if they ditch the car while you're jabbering away at me?"

Dad Gray nodded, running his strong hand through his hair.

"Look, we heard some local news on the radio as we were arriving. Several women have gone missing around here, and they... they haven't been found."

"FUCK! So why the hell are we wasting time here?"

Dad Dory groaned, handing me his car keys, but halting me with a hand on my shoulder as I turned to leave.

“Because you need to consider the fact that Anneka may have run from you twice now. This could be yet another attempt to escape you. Is it time to accept that and leave her be?”

“No, I don’t fucking accept this attempt either. Or the tenth. Or the fucking hundredth. She’s mine, dad, and I’m getting her back if I have to drag her by her fucking hair, and lock her up for the rest of her fucking life.”

I ran for the door with them following me, and dad Dory sat in the front of the car with me, with my other dad in the back. I handed my phone across to dad Dory.

“Tell me where to go.”

He started directing me, and I drove as fast as I could, even though some of the roads were starting to get busy with morning traffic.

“Your mum says hi, by the way,” dad Dory said quietly, as he pointed at an upcoming turn. “*That way.*”

“She didn’t run. I know she didn’t fucking run, dad. We were planning for the future. She... fuck... she’s pregnant, I never even told you guys that. There’s so much more at stake than before.”

Both of my dads started congratulating me, but all I could think about was that someone was trying to take my baby away from me, and either it was some stranger, who was about to die today... or the woman I loved was trying to deprive me of her and our child.

In a strange way, I really hoped it was the former, because the rage building in me needed an outlet, and if it turned out to be her, she'd probably never trust me again.



ANNEKA

THE MONSTER TOUCHED ME way more than I wanted to be touched. It wasn't sexual exactly, more like he was trying to fuck with my head before he killed me. My tears had dried, and in their place was a kind of dim acceptance that after all I'd been through with Blaze, I still wouldn't get a chance at a future or happiness.

Would I end up screaming when this monster tortured me? I knew I would, but for as long as I could, I intended to withhold my reactions, and make it less enjoyable for him.

If only I'd gone with Blaze this morning. If only I'd said, screw it, I've never watched the sunrise from a beach, and I really should have. Had a part of it been an urge to say no to Blaze, just to see if he'd accept it? I think it probably had, but it had turned out to be the worst decision of both of our lives.

“Pay fucking attention, whore.” A burning pain spread across my left breast and I caught a flash of light and drops of blood, before I felt the same pain across the other. He was cutting me! He was slicing through my skin, and making me bleed.

The initial shock of the cuts was followed by intense stinging, and then horror, as he leaned down and dragged his

tongue over each cut. He groaned with pleasure, like the taste of my blood was some kind of enjoyable taste, or delicacy.

Oh god. Was he a fucking cannibal? Would he carve off pieces of me to eat, while he kept me alive? Panic started overwhelming me again, and my attempts at calm indifference went completely out of the window, as I started to scream and beg him to stop. To let me go. To at least not hurt me anymore.

You'd think I'd be stronger after what Blaze had put me through, but I wasn't. I was a coward. I was nothing more than a terrified girl who knew she was about to die, but not before she suffered unimaginable pain at the hands of a madman.

The monster looked like he was revelling in my terror, groaning and adjusting his jeans as he stroked the fingers of his other hand over my breasts, and down my stomach.

He picked up the knife again before he reached the area I was praying he'd overlook, dragging the cold side of the blade against my flesh as I trembled, and started quietly begging him to stop. My throat was raw from screaming, my voice hoarse and ragged.

He grinned, dragging the blade of the knife across my thigh, lightly enough to score through the skin without digging in deeper.

“How about you start screaming again for me, and I'll stick to cutting the outside areas. You go quiet, and I'll start carving you up from the inside out.”

Oh god. Please, Blaze, please find me. Please look for me and save me. If he could just save me, I'd give him anything he wanted. *Just save me!*

The knife dragged down my thigh again, and I screamed as the burning pain started to register.

44

Blaze



WE FOUND ANNEKA'S CAR, and it was tucked around the back of a fairly secure looking building.

I grabbed the handle to get out of the car and dad grabbed my arm, tightening his grip when I tried to pull away.

“Fuck’s sake, dad! If someone’s got her, they could be doing anything to her right now!”

Dad’s dark eyes looked sombre, and he glanced at my other dad before he spoke, like they were secretly deciding something, or agreeing on something at least.

“On the offchance that nobody has her, and she ran... what are you planning to do here?”

He finally released my arm, but my urgency had faded a little, because I had no fucking idea. We’d just come to some kind of agreement about our future together, or at least I’d thought we did.

What if she’d just been playing me? What if it had just been some kind of bullshit to get me to let my guard down? Was I going to just force her back with me? Did I even want her enough to keep having to force the situation?

There was a baby to consider now too, but did that excuse what she’d done if, in fact, she really had done yet another runner on me?

“Blaze?”

“I don’t know, okay? I need to know the situation to make that decision. She’s not keeping my fucking child away from

me. Now I'm going in, and I want you to wait here. I'll keep an open call with you, so you can come in if needed, but otherwise... *I need to be the one to rescue her*, if there's rescuing to be done. You get that right? I have to prove to her that I can be her saviour, that I'm someone she can rely on to keep her safe."

They didn't like it, but they grudgingly agreed, so we started a call on our phones, and I popped my wireless ear bud in, stuffing the phone in my back pocket. They had the call on speaker and were sitting at the ready.

They both nodded at me and I left, wondering what the fuck I was about to find in that building. What if someone else did have her? What if they were doing the things I'd done to her? What if they accidentally, or deliberately, killed our baby?

That last thought had me running, and I didn't stop until I reached the nearest window, and carefully leaned in to look for my woman. There was nobody in that room, and the door was right beside it, so I carefully checked it and, finding it unlocked, I let myself in. Maybe she really was in here alone, and hiding. A guy like me, I mean, he'd lock the fucking door, right?

Was I running in to rescue a woman who'd just keep running from me, no matter how many times it seemed like she'd accepted our future together? I hesitated in the dusty room filled with covered appliances. An industrial kitchen, perhaps?

A scream caught my attention, and the only thought in my mind then was 'save her'. I had to save my family from

whoever had them, and I'd tear apart whoever had touched her.



GRAY

I DIDN'T LIKE THE kid going in alone, even though I could kinda understand the fact that it was from some foolish need to be her fucking white knight, or something.

Dory muted the phone, so we could talk freely without distracting Blaze, and he looked as worried as I felt.

“I don't like this, Gray.”

“Well, duh, Dory. It's not exactly the ideal situation, is it? You're thinking she did a runner again? I think our boy has enough of both of us in him, to be able to lock that shit down next time. He might be making a few rookie mistakes, but he's learning along the way.”

I grabbed the back of the seat to drag myself forward to lean between the seats. The tingling pins and needles sensation in my arm made me curse under my breath. *It turns out burns are fucking evil.*

I'd had multiple treatments and skin grafts, and even though the finished result still looked a bit like *Freddy Krueger's* face, at least the arm was mostly mobile. It was just weaker, and hurt like a bitch more often than I ever admitted to Dory and Wilma.

“Gray, look, I know we’re fucking psychos and this worked for us, but maybe it’s just because Wilma was the right fit for us. Right now, we’re literally enabling our own son while he lives out a fantasy of recreating our past, or something. We’re both also smart enough to know that this is fucking wrong. We are, right?”

Blaze was muttering something quietly so we both paused to listen, in case our boy needed our help, but he fell silent again and we heard a shuffling noise, like he was moving around in there.

We’d seen him check the window and then go in, but now we were reliant on what we could hear to save him. We’d always fucking save our kid, even if it meant everyone else in that room had to die.

Dory knew this too, but sometimes that flicker of conscience got in his way. I’d have to fuck that out of him later, but for right now, Blaze might need us. He was our only priority right now.



DORY

IT WAS LIKE TALKING to a brick wall, because of course, Gray was way more fucked up than me, and he always had been. He definitely intended to keep helping Blaze with whatever he wanted to do to keep Anneka, and even though I’d thought I was completely on board with that, I had occasional doubts.

When we took Wilma, she'd also struggled with our behaviour, and treatment of her. She'd struggled with being a captive at our whims, and it was only when she started to focus on who we really were as people, that she recognised something in us. Something that matched something in her too.

I was pretty sure Anneka didn't suffer from the same affliction as us, or Blaze, for that matter. Our son was incredibly, scarily intelligent in terms of his IQ, but he could be just as dumb as us when it came to matters of the heart and soul.

A distant scream made us sit up and pay extra attention, but Blaze muttered for us to stay put while he checked it out. We both got out of the car anyway, and started heading towards the building, because when he needed us, we weren't going to be pissing around.

"You gonna be up to this?" Gray asked me, even though I should have been asking him. I knew that his arm was giving him extra trouble today. The cold always seemed to make it play up more, even though he always tried to hide it.

"Whatever our son needs, he gets," I said firmly, catching Gray's nod of agreement. We'd always said we wanted to do better than our own parents, and this was our chance to prove it. If anyone touched a single hair on his head, we'd both make sure they suffered for days.



ANNEKA

THOSE CUTS DOWN MY thigh were burning, and the scream that tore from my throat literally made it ache, like I'd been screaming for hours. Had I been screaming for hours? How long had I been here? Days? Weeks? Was I ever not here?

“Remember, when I fuck you with the knife, scream as loud as you can. I know a whore like you wants it, but I promise it'll hurt more than you can even imagine.”

He was... he was going to plunge the knife in... *in there...* like I wasn't already bleeding from so many cuts and wounds. He'd kept them shallow so they'd bleed slowly, so he could keep me alive as long as possible. That wasn't me making an assumption.

He'd actually made sure to tell me exactly what he was doing, and why. How much he was enjoying my pain. How good my blood tasted, and how it would keep him young and strong. It was like he thought he was some kind of vampire, or something.

I was starting to realise that Blaze's version of insanity was nothing like this man's. Blaze had wanted to punish me for what he thought I'd done, but once he realised he was wrong, he'd changed.

He'd tried, he'd tried to be good and kind to me, because he wanted me to stay with him. I wished he could find me before this monster killed me. I'd go anywhere with Blaze to escape this. Anywhere.

Save me, Blaze, please save me!

45

Blaze



FOR A LONG MOMENT, I froze just outside the room he had her in. The guy was making these threats about knife-fucking her, and I could hear her terror in the panicked gasps she made, even though she didn't beg him not to.

She didn't speak at all, or try to convince him otherwise. Was she just being brave, or had she given up? Was she so defeated that she'd stopped trying to survive? Had he already hurt our baby?

These thoughts tormented me as I stood rooted to the spot. It wasn't fear holding me back, it was a split second of peering into the room, taking in the dimensions, their positioning, and plotting out a plan of attack.

If I wasn't careful, I could inadvertently force him to hurt her more with my actions. *Step one*, take him down fast. *Step two*, make sure he doesn't get up again. *Step three*, check on my family, and make them safe. Only then would I allow myself to indulge in the pleasure of step four. *Step four* would be slowly dismembering the fucker, while he was still breathing and conscious, for as long as possible.

I ducked low and carefully eased into the room, listening to him taunting Anneka with his empty threats. He didn't know they were empty threats yet, but he was about to find out.

I drew my trusty pocket knife out and unfolded it as I approached him, getting close enough to reach my arm around, and press it right against his fucking dick. The way he froze, and sucked in a shocked breath, was beautiful. Perfect,

because it was his time to feel pain, and fear, and that knowledge of his impending death.

“The fuck,” he hissed, still frozen with his arm out, and the knife trembling in it.

“Drop the knife, assfucker.” When he hesitated, I pressed the knife harder against his pathetic little cock, and dragged him back, with one hand wrapped around his belt. He tried to catch me by surprise, lunging back at me, and we both hit the concrete floor, with him on top of me, and my knife now buried about an inch into his thigh.

“Shit!”

“Didn’t think that one through, did you?” I wiggled the knife and used his pained distraction to roll us to the side, and then I slammed his face against the concrete once, twice, three times until he fell silent. I kicked his knife across the room, and pushed up to my feet.

I kicked him hard in the face, and then I crouched by his feet and pushed up his jeans to bare his ankles. With a savage grin, I sliced through his Achilles tendons, effectively crippling his legs so he couldn’t escape.

“Blaze?” I grinned at the reminder that my dads were listening, and probably heard me take that fucker out.

“It’s okay, dads, the bastard is down. Gimme five, yeah?” I ended the call as I turned to check on my girl. She was cuffed to a fucking table, and whimpering like a terrified child, shuddering, bloody, and with her eyes squeezed tightly shut.

“Anneka?” She started to cry softly, but she still wouldn’t open her eyes and look at me.

“Hey, Anneka, come on, babe, it’s me.” I stroked her cheek and she flinched away from my touch. It pissed me off, because I thought we’d moved past all that shit, but then I realised she was mumbling something so softly that I had to lean closer to hear her.

“Save me, Blaze, save me, Blaze, save me, Blaze...” All at once, I realised that she was barely even in the fucking room with me, so traumatised that she was caught up in some panicked state that probably didn’t even register that she was safe now.

I searched that fucker’s pockets for the keys for the cuffs, and worked on freeing her from the restraints that bastard had her trapped with.

Even when they were removed, she didn’t move, just kinda curled in on herself, like she was beyond comprehending her freedom right now. With a frustrated sigh, I tucked my arms under her and lifted her away from the table, and hugged her against my chest.

“You’re safe, Anneka. It’s me, and I’m right here, you just have to open your eyes and see me.”

She buried her face in my chest, taking deep breaths, even as she whispered her response.

“He’s going to kill me. He’s a killer. He kills women and I’m next.”

Jesus fuck, that asshole fucking broke my woman. That was my job, and besides, I didn't even want that anymore. I wanted her to be her; *Anneka*. The woman I fell in love with when we were both just children, and fell in love with again, so recently.

“Anneka, please. It's me, Blaze. I'm the one holding you, babe. You're going to be fine. Did he... did he hurt the baby?”

Her head suddenly lifted, and her eyes popped open, trailing over me as she started to come out of her stupor.

“Blaze?”

I forced a small grin with the dim hope that it might relax her, even though I might not necessarily be the most comforting or calming sight right now. Maybe ever.

“It's me, babe. You're safe now, but you need to tell me. Did he hurt you down there? Did he hurt the baby?” She shook her head, swallowing hard as more tears started rolling down her cheeks.

“I didn't tell him. I was scared he'd deliberately hurt our baby.”

A groan on the floor a few feet away was my vital reminder that the fucker was still alive, and you know what? I was fucking relieved, because he hadn't experienced nearly enough pain yet. He hadn't suffered enough, but he was about to.

Helping Anneka into a single chair by the wall, I shrugged my jacket off and my jumper, and dressed her in them, hoping that it might help stop her from shivering so much. It wasn't enough, but I could hardly give her my jeans too. She pulled

her legs up and wrapped the jumper around them, hugging her knees as she stared warily at the bastard on the floor.

“What’s going to happen to him?”

The guy suddenly realised he couldn’t get up because his feet were no longer fully answering his brain’s commands, and he started to shriek at me. I laughed, stepping back toward Aneka and crouching beside her.

“You’re going to watch as I avenge every mark this fucker left on you. You’re going to get to hear *his* screams of agony, and hear *him* begging for *me* to stop. You’re going to see me spill his blood, and leave him dying on the floor. He dies in this room today.”

You know what, for someone so traumatised, I was impressed to see my words strengthen her, rather than further terrifying her. I could physically see her straightening up a little from that slumped position as she nodded.

“Blaze?”

“Yeah, babe.”

“Make him suffer for me?”

The grin that stretched my face must have made me look like some kind of psycho, but I didn’t care. I stood up, leaning down to kiss the top of Aneka’s head, stroking that lovely red hair of hers for a moment. Then I approached the asshole crying about his poor ankles. *He was about to cry SO much more.*



ANNEKA

I'D GONE FROM TERRIFIED, and resigned to my death, to being saved by the only person I knew who could rescue me from this monster. Suddenly the idea of watching him suffer the way he'd hurt me and even worse, was all I wanted.

He'd hurt other women like this, and probably killed them, and he deserved to pay for every moment of pain, every second of terror, every hope snuffed out by his presence and his actions.

"I can't wait to hear you crying for mercy, asshole. Not that you'll get mercy from me. You touched what's mine, and now you fucking die for it," Blaze muttered, leaning down and spitting on the guy who'd kidnapped me, but unlike Blaze, had only wanted to kill me.

"You think I'm... scared of you... kid? I'm a fucking... serial killer!" The guy gasped out, pain making his words stutter in his chest, making a mockery of his show of bravado.

Blaze laughed, crouching next to him, and trailing his knife lightly over the guy's cheek.

"Yeah? *Me too*. Who knew we'd have something in common aside from kidnapping Anneka? How many kills, man?"

The guy glared up at Blaze, but his face already looked beaten and bloody, and he was hissing with pain every time he tried to move.

“She was going to be my third.”

Blaze roared with laughter then, falling back on his ass, and eventually sitting cross legged in front of the bastard.

“You... you’ve only killed two?” He started laughing again. “Three is the minimum for you to even be considered a serial killer! How many have I killed, babe?” I suddenly realised he was talking to me, and I struggled to remember the list of names on his side.

“Uh... five?”

He turned to frown deeply at me.

“Seriously? *Six*... well, seven, if we count your asshole dad.”

He missed the glare I sent him for his words, because he was already looking back at his prey.

“Aw... two little kills, eh? Bless you, you almost did it. What did you do with their bodies?”

The guy suddenly lunged at Blaze, and the two of them scuffled on the concrete, before there was a sudden pained grunt, and then another.

That’s when I realised Blaze was now straddling the wannabe serial killer, and plunging the knife into him over and over. His chest, his stomach, his throat, pretty much everywhere he could reach, but suddenly he stopped.

His eyes suddenly fixed on me, and I grimaced at the blood smeared over his face and clothes. His hands were red with it

too. A slow grin crept across his face, and he leaned over the guy, checking his breathing and pulse.

He pushed up from on top of him, and started pulling at the front of his jeans.

“Stand up and bend over the chair, babe. Hands on the seat. Come on, do it now.”

“What?”

He pushed his jeans down to his thighs as he walked, freeing his hard cock and stroking it with a bloody hand.

“I’m gonna fuck you right here, while he dies beside us. I was gonna knife-fuck him up the ass, but he’s almost gone already. No fun if he can’t feel it, but he can see what he’s missing, and hear our pleasure as he dies.”

“WHAT?”

46

Blaze



ANNEKA SEEMED STUNNED, BUT I didn't care about that. All I cared about was how fucking horny I was after almost killing that guy, after watching his pain and his terror, and that knowledge that he was dying because of what he did.

I stepped around Anneka and grabbed the chair, moving it right next to the dying man, whose breath was rasping in his throat as he twitched and shuddered. His eyes seemed to roam around the room without focusing, and it was fucking beautiful to watch.

A man in the throes of a bloody death. It never failed to arouse me, but for the first time, I had Anneka with me. For once, I could do something about the throbbing arousal it had left me with.

She grimaced at the bloody smears on my cock, so I pulled off my t-shirt and used the clean back of it to wipe him clean, but then I was guiding her into position so I could fuck her.

"I can't believe I'm doing this," she muttered, sounding stronger and more like herself than she'd been when this all started.

I slid my fingers between her legs, and chuckled as I bent closer and nipped her ear.

"And yet you're wet. You got off on watching me stab him. Now you're gonna get off as you watch him die. Keep your eyes on his, babe."

“You are so beyond fucked in the... *oh god...* head...” Yeah, I didn’t wait for her to finish jabbering away, and just rammed deep inside her, my intrusion eased by the wetness she couldn’t hide from me.

The only thing better than slashing an asshole to death was being inside Anneka immediately after. Her warm wet pussy was already squeezing my cock, and I hadn’t even started fucking her yet.

I didn’t wait any longer though, taking a firm grip of her hips and starting to fuck her hard. Every thrust of my hips rammed me balls deep, with enough force that her arms almost buckled and every time, I hissed at her to hold still.

The dying guy made even more delicious rattling noises as he finally started to expire right beside us, and I watched him as the life drained out of him, and he finally stilled.

“How fucking hot was that? Fucking right beside a dying man, babe. He thought he could have you, but you’re mine, aren’t you?”

Anneka gasped out a ragged agreement, and then yelped, as I grabbed a fistful of her hair and used it to drag her back at me for each thrust. Those yelps became the soundtrack to our fucking, as my cock pounded her insides, and my orgasm started racing toward me.

“Are you close?”

Anneka let out a squeak, followed by some kind of argument, but I couldn’t hold back, my orgasmic pleasure

blasting through me, and filling her, as I shuddered through waves of rapture. I reached around and slapped my hand over her clit a couple of times, and then I felt her starting to clench around me, as I rubbed and pinched at it to get her over the edge with me.

Her orgasm weakened her legs enough that we both almost faceplanted on that chair, but I braced us just in time.

Grabbing her around the waist, I turned and dropped down into the seat, keeping her in my lap and just about still gripping my twitching cock, as we both trembled and panted in the aftermath of our illicit pleasure.

“Jesus Christ!”

“Oh yeah, that’s my boy!”

Perfect timing, right? Anneka actually started giggling, instead of freaking out the way I’d expected she might in such a situation. She was half-naked, still rippling lightly around my softening cock, and we were right beside a blood-soaked corpse.

My dads were taking in the scene with calculating expressions on their faces.

“You made a bit of a mess, kid. I say we torch the place.”

“You always think that’s the answer to a problem, Gray, even if you just don’t like the fucking wallpaper.”

Yep, my dads and their comic timing. Anneka made a new sound, and that’s when I realised her giggles had turned to tears, and that meant it was time to get her out of here.

“Dad, you got your kit?”

Dad Gray laughed, rolling his eyes.

“Always, kid. Get her outside and in the car, and we’ll sort this out.”

“Wilma’s going to be pissed when we both smell like smoke again, Gray. You know she hates that smell.”

“So you’re saying we should shower before we fuck her?”

Yep, that’s enough of that. I lifted Anneka up from the chair, and used one hand to drag my jeans over my ass, before I got her out of there.

Once she was safely tucked in the back of the car, I re-fastened my jeans, and checked the boot of the car for the usual blanket and emergency water my dads kept there. When you have kids, you usually have stuff like that for a day out.

I left the boot open for my dads to start unloading fire kit, and I got in the back of the car with Anneka. I handed her a bottle of water as I wrapped the heavy blanket around her, tucking it over her legs as much as I could.

“I know you’re bleeding and stuff, but I want to get you home and get those cleaned up properly, so you just need to bear with me for a little longer, babe. Can you do that for me?”

Anneka nodded, her sniffles subsiding a little as she sipped from the bottle, and offered it to me. I insisted on her drinking about half of it before I took the rest, and poured a little on my hand to rub over my face. It wasn’t like I could really clean

much blood off me right now, but if we were in traffic and someone saw me like that, they'd call the cops.

“You're coming home with me, yeah?”

Anneka nodded again, leaning over to press tight against me, clearly wanting my arms around her. Where fucking else would I want them, right?

I cradled her in my arms, doing my best to soothe her through her intermittent crying, alternated with numb silence, until my dads returned and the car started up. I turned in the seat as best I could, to watch the building as we drove away.

I barely caught sight of any flames before we were gone, but a fact that would have pissed me off before barely registered right now.

I had Anneka back, and she was coming home with me. Nothing else mattered beyond that fact.



ANNEKA

ALL I CARED ABOUT was being safe in Blaze's arms, not where we were going, or what would happen next. Just Blaze. He was all I needed.

I was still kind of numb about everything that had happened today, and was it really just one day? I didn't even really know. I'd lost all sense of time, and awareness of anything, outside of what was happening to me in that horrible basement.

“Babe? We’re here,” Blaze whispered, his words my only warning as he suddenly started to move. With a panicked gasp, I caught hold of his arm as he tried to release me.

“No! Don’t leave me!”

“I’m not fucking leaving you ever again, get it? That’s not a mistake I’ll make twice. We’re getting out of the car, come on.” He was still shirtless, but focused on keeping that heavy blanket wrapped around me, even though I still wore his jacket and jumper, and he’d used his t-shirt to wipe blood away.

Clarity was starting to hit me in a big way, and that’s when I recognised where we were. Not back at the hotel we’d been staying at, and not at my mum’s house. We were at that house he’d kept me in at the start. I started to pull back from him, even while he scooped me back up into his arms as soon as we were out of the car.

“It’s okay, babe. It won’t be like last time, I promise, it’ll be different.” He was already striding toward the door, with his dark haired dad running ahead to unlock the door. It looked weirdly like an abandoned building from the outside, but I now realised that it was just part of the external security.

“Take her on up and get her patched up, kid. We’ll go get her things from that hotel, then we need to get back to help your mum out.”

“Thanks, dad. Both of you. I uh... I couldn’t lose her.” His voice actually shook a little with emotion then, and I found myself focusing on his face, on the way he swallowed hard

and yet any hardness bled from his expression, as he looked at me and caught me staring.

“You’re mine, babe. I’ll never let anyone hurt you again.”

He carried me upstairs and straight to the bathroom. It wasn’t until Blaze was peeling the blanket and clothes away from me, that I started to remember the pain of my injuries, especially as we discovered that his jumper had actually stuck to a few of the larger cuts as the blood dried.

I was crying again by the time I was naked, and he was helping me into the shower. Blaze cradled me against him, my back to his front, as he carefully cleaned each cut, and helped me get clean in general, apologising every time I yelped with pain.

Once he’d carefully dried me off, patting my injured skin lightly with the towel, rather than rubbing like I probably would have done, he grabbed a first aid kit and started bandaging them. He used neat butterfly stitches on the largest ones before he covered them up. Finally, he handed me some painkillers, and a glass of water to wash them down with.

“They’re just paracetamol. I wasn’t sure what’s safe with the baby, but that’s stuff I can look into for later.”

He helped me into the bed in a room I hadn’t slept in before, but it was clearly his room in the house. The bedding was dark grey and the room was fairly muted in low grey tones, except for the dazzling printed canvasses on the walls; large fires depicted in glossy, glowing colour.

“Lay back, there you go, babe. I’ll get you something to eat, then you should rest, okay?”

I caught Blaze’s hand as he backed up, still wearing his soaking wet jeans, his wet hair plastered to his scalp.

“Blaze,” I whispered, and he leaned close.

“Yeah, babe? You need something specific to eat?”

“No, but I wanted to thank you. You saved me. You found me and you saved me.”

One side of his mouth quirked in a slightly savage grin.

“I’ll always find you, babe. Always.”

47

Blaze



I WAS TOASTING SOME sandwiches when my dads returned with Anneka's stuff from the hotel, and they hung around for a few minutes to check on us. I'd towelled my hair dry and changed into warm fleecy sweatpants and a t-shirt, with my bare feet feeling just a little too cool to be bare.

"How's she doing, kid?"

Dad Gray started pouring coffee for the two of them, since I already had one beside me. He slid a drink to my other dad, who was sitting at the counter on one of the stools.

"You got her patched up okay?"

I nodded, offering them food.

"Nah, we're leaving in a few, kid."

"She's resting, but she's clean and I've dressed the wounds. That fucker was carving her up with shallow cuts, so they'd hurt like a bitch but wouldn't bleed out fast enough. I should have done that to him, but I just... I lost my fucking temper!" I was glad he was dead, but the more I thought about it, the more tortured I felt about the fact that he hadn't suffered for long enough. I should have taken at least as long as he'd taken with Anneka, maybe ten times that, to really drag it out. I wasn't sure he'd been in enough pain as he died, and he should have been.

"Hey, look at me, Blaze." I lifted my head, meeting dad's blue eyes as he grasped my shoulder.

"You avenged her, yeah? You gutted that fuck like the piece of shit he was, but now you need to move on. You don't dwell

on kills, you move on and get on with things. You've got a baby on the way, and that needs to be your focus now. You look after that woman upstairs, you fucking treat her like the fragile creature she is, and help her incubate our grandchild." *Fuck*. Grandchildren. I hadn't even considered that, but of course, my three parents would be grandparents when the baby came.

"Does mum know?"

"Not yet. You should be the ones to tell her, don't you think?" Jesus, yeah probably. And on that note, maybe mum could help more than she knew. She probably understood how Aneka might be feeling, better than her own mother would, at least.

After my dads had left, I took the toasted sandwiches up with me, along with coffees and woke Aneka. As we ate, sitting together against the headboard of my bed, we talked about what came next.

"I'm not letting you give the baby a weird fire name or something, Blaze."

I nearly choked on my food, taking a moment to cough before I laughed again.

"Nothing weird about fire names, babe. It's no weirder than names of seasons, or months, or days, or flowers, or gemstones... shall I go on?"

She shook her head, her red hair rippling with the movement. I wanted her hair longer, and back to that glossy

red it had been before. Had she coloured it recently, or was it just a natural progression of hair colour over time?

“Is it dyed?”

She froze with her mug in front of her lips, and a frown on her face.

“What?”

“Your hair. It’s darker than it was back then.” Suddenly I felt ashamed of even mentioning it, and reminding her of my obsession.

Anneka rolled her eyes, reaching up idly to smooth her hair.

“Yeah, I darkened it when I had it cut. Why?”

How could she do that? It was irrational of me to be pissed, and I knew that, but I couldn’t help it.

“That stops now. We’re getting it changed back to what it was before.”

She made a huffy sound as she poked me in the chest with her finger.

“That’s not up to you, Blaze. It never was and it never will be. My hair is *my* fucking hair, got it?”

I reached over to stroke my fingers through her too-dark hair, and fisted the silky strands close to her scalp. She hissed with pain and reached up to try and pull my hand free.

“*I want it the way it fucking was, Anneka.* That’s not negotiable, unless you want to wake up with it all shaved off.”

She looked horrified as she finally pried my fingers from her hair, and pressed a hand against her scalp.



ANNEKA

EVERY TIME I FORGOT what a psycho he was, he found a way to remind me, didn't he?

“You're such a fucking caveman, Blaze! This isn't something you get to control, okay? We're having a baby together, and that's what's important. I'm willing to stay with you, to try and make this work, but demands like that, threats like that... they can't happen. You can't be dictating to me how I can look, and FYI, pulling my hair to try and make me comply is a real dickhead thing to do!”

Blaze glared at me for a long, awkward moment, then his face suddenly relaxed. He even rolled his eyes like he understood, and that just made me even more suspicious when he smiled and nodded.

“You're right, babe. I'm being a dick, aren't I? You should have your hair the way you want it.”

I narrowed my eyes, wondering what the hell he was even up to right now.

“If I wake up tomorrow with no hair, I'm never speaking to you again, Blaze. You get that, right?”

He snorted, getting up and gathering up our empty plates and mugs.

“Yeah, babe. That’d be crazy of me to do something like that, wouldn’t it? I’m just gonna bring us some water, so we don’t stay awake all night with all the caffeine.”

After he left the room, I sat and stewed over his sudden change in behaviour, because something wasn’t right there. Blaze didn’t just give in, so either he had some twisted plan, or he thought he could bully me into it over time.

The trouble was that it could be either, or some messed up shit I couldn’t even come up with. Did it really matter if I went back to the colour I’d had before? It wasn’t like I’d changed it because I didn’t like it. It was just an effort to look more grown up and mature for my new job. A job I probably no longer had after all the disappearing on them.

I liked the shorter haircut, but was I really married to this colour, or could I do something for Blaze just this once? Was I being stubborn for the sake of being stubborn? He’d saved my life today. He’d rescued me from a monster, and made sure that monster couldn’t hurt me again.

Of course, then he’d fucked me right next to the guy as he died, which was seriously creepy, and I didn’t know why I hadn’t refused, except that I hadn’t really been in my right mind at the time.

“You want anything else before I get into bed, babe?”

Blaze was stripped down naked and standing by the door, ready to close it. I shook my head, letting my eyes trail over his inked body, all firm and tight and deadly.

He wasn't aroused yet, at least he wasn't fully hard yet, but I didn't think it'd take much to get him there. Did I want that? Was I ready for that again right now? He'd been rough earlier, but not cruel, so would he be the same now, or would he go back to forcing me because he enjoys it that way?

“Babe? Seriously, stop fucking me with your eyes, and answer me.”

Answer him? I had no idea what his question had been, so I just shrugged and wriggled down into the bed. I wasn't wearing anything either, because it was easier with the bandages on me.

Blaze closed the door, and joined me in the bed, leaning over me to place a bottle of water on my bedside table. The smell of him, the feel of him moving over me, it was all enough to make my heart speed up, but he also brushed over the cuts on my chest by accident, and I hissed out a pained curse as he moved.

“Fuck! What did I do?” He pulled the covers down, even as I tried battling with him to prevent it, but all he wanted to do was check the dressings.

“Sorry, that was stupid of me. Guess you're not gonna want to fuck then?”

I groaned and rolled over onto my side with my back to him.

“Go to sleep, Blaze, I'm exhausted.”

He wriggled right up behind me, wrapping an arm carefully around my waist as he spooned me, his dick twitching

occasionally against my butt.

For once though, Blaze did exactly what I asked of him, and he let me sleep, safe in his arms where nothing could hurt me. Except him.

48

Blaze



I WOKE UP ROCK hard, and wrapped around Anneka, exactly where I fucking belonged. She wasn't sleeping easily though. She twitched in my arms, and I realised that was what had woken me.

She was having a bad dream, further evidenced by the way she suddenly panicked when I tightened my arms around her, and started screaming and flailing around, almost elbowing me in the face and narrowly missing kicking me in the nuts.

I couldn't hold her without hurting one of her injuries, but she rolled onto her stomach, still crying and moaning, so I did the only thing I could. I hauled the covers away and slapped her ass as hard as I could.

She shrieked, jerking awake and rolling and lurching up onto her ass.

"Ow! Jesus, Blaze, did you slap my ass?" She rolled onto her side facing me, and one hand was pressed against her butt, cradling the stinging cheek.

"Sorry. You were having a nightmare."

"And *that's* how you woke me?!"

I lay back down too, facing her. "I didn't know what else to do. You were trying to beat the fuck out of me, and then you lay on your stomach, and I knew you'd hurt all those cuts. I panicked."

"And smacking my ass was the best you could come up with."

“Actually yeah, now shut up and let me check those bandages, you crazy bitch.”

Anneka rolled onto her back and winced, as her butt cheek pressed against the warm sheets.

“Next time find another way, dammit.”

“How bad was it?” The bandages all looked intact, and I couldn’t see any fresh bleeding, so I decided to leave them as they were for now.

Anneka had fallen silent, blinking up at the ceiling as her hand reached blindly in my direction. I squeezed it lightly, glad there was enough growing light outside to let me see her face enough to read her expressions. She was freaked out, but thought she had to hide it. From me? She didn’t need to hide a fucking thing from me.

“Tell me, Anneka. This is the sort of thing you need to share, so you can get past it.”

She rolled her head in my direction, and her eyes looked bright with tears.

“He was killing me, not just cutting, but slicing pieces of me off, and tossing them aside. I could feel every cut, every part of me being removed, but I just couldn’t die. I couldn’t escape it, and in the dream you never came. I just had to suffer.”

“I’ll always fucking come for you,” I asserted, moving close enough to wrap my arm over her stomach, my lips a breath away from hers. “Always, babe. You’ll be safe from everything bad in this world, because you have me.”

“That means you’re the only thing that can hurt me, Blaze. Please don’t take advantage of that, because I’m trusting you. Trusting you with my safety, and with our baby. This can work, but only if you stop treating me like something to abuse. I’m a person, and I need you to respect me as one.”

Jesus. I had no idea how to respond to that. Ultimately, she wanted me to say yes, of course, but I knew myself well enough to know that I’d forget myself at times, and she’d see it as a betrayal.

“Uh...”

“Please just promise me you’ll try, Blaze. I can’t live in fear of you, or I can’t stay. You get that, right? This has to be a two way thing.”

I nodded, my lips twitching into a little grin.

“How about if I let you abuse me too? I don’t mind a little pain now and then.” She rolled her eyes and slapped my chest, and fuck yeah... that felt so good.

“Exactly, babe, do that some more and I’m definitely gonna be horny as hell.”

“Ugh! Everything with you is about sex, but that’s not what I’m talking about.”

Why were we having this deep fucking conversation at god knows what early fucked up hour?

“Why don’t we just shut the fuck up and sleep a bit more, yeah? We can talk about this tomorrow. Or not. Not works too.

We could just get the fuck on with things, and see how it goes.”



ANNEKA

WHEN I NEXT WOKE up, I was alone in bed, so I took my time getting up, freshening up as best I could without disrupting the bandages, and dressed in clothes of mine that had appeared since yesterday.

My bag from the hotel had been placed by my side of the bed for me, so clearly Blaze’s dads had gone back for it, since he hadn’t left me alone since we got back.

When I made my way downstairs, I was surprised to find Blaze’s mother sitting in the kitchen with a coffee. I couldn’t see or hear anyone else in the house.

“Where’s Blaze?”

She turned to smile at me as I entered the room, and headed for the coffee but as my hand settled on the handle of the coffeepot, I suddenly paused. Can I drink coffee while pregnant? I drank some last night, and I truly had no idea if it was wise, but hell, his mother would know right? She’d popped out a few over the years.

“Can I drink coffee?”

She frowned delicately, setting her own mug down.

“Do you normally need permission?”

Okay, that was embarrassing.

“No, I mean, can pregnant women drink coffee? I have no idea, and I haven’t read up much yet, so I-”

She’d frozen in place, her eyes wide and her mouth open. If I didn’t know better, I’d think she didn’t even know about the baby.

“Mrs uh... Wilma?”

“You’re pregnant? You’re having my boy’s baby! Oh my god, does he know?!” She was suddenly hugging me and practically bouncing with excitement, but then she paused.

“Shit, that makes me a grandmother in my early forties!”

Yeah, because that’s the important part here.

“Blaze didn’t tell you?”

Wilma guided me to a stool to sit down and filled the kettle, prepping a tea cup presumably for me, which was a pretty clear answer about coffee, right?

“I can’t believe he didn’t. I bet his damn dads know though, because those smug bastards have been grinning all night. Typical.”

“What’s it like... being a three... uh, like three of you?”

Wilma found some biscuits in the cupboard and pushed them at me.

“As weird as you could imagine. It’s not something I consciously chose, but at the same time, I can’t imagine life without either of them. They drive me crazy sometimes, but I love them.”

I picked up a biscuit and stared at it.

“They *are* crazy though, right? I mean, aren’t we all? You chose to stay with two men who kidnapped and raped you, both murderers, and your son grew up to be all of those things and more. I mean, I should be running like hell so he can never find me.”

Wilma looked worried, abandoning her tea-making to reach over and lift my chin with a gentle touch.

“Is that something you’re considering, Anneka? Running again?”

I pulled away from her touch, breaking the biscuit in two and eating half while I pondered her question. Was I? Wasn’t I? Why wasn’t I?

“No, I don’t think I am. Blaze is insane, and dangerous, but he’s also sweet and protective, and strangely we do have things in common despite all of that. He’s... he’s cruel sometimes, unnecessarily rough, and, god I don’t know. There’s something about him that makes me want to try. Besides, he found me before, and I wasn’t carrying his baby then, or at least he didn’t know about it. If he was that obsessive before, now he’d be even more so. Right?”

Wilma nodded, finishing making the cup of tea for me. I thanked her as she set it in front of me.

“Blaze is highly intelligent, like off the charts kind of intelligent, but it means he’s aware of so much that we overlook or miss. He sees things almost on another level

sometimes. He was a challenging child to raise, because he was smarter than us so early on, that I wasn't sure who the parent was sometimes. He's good, though, deep inside where it counts."

"I know he's very protective of his loved ones, particularly his sister." Wilma's face dropped, and I suddenly wondered if she blamed me too. After all, Blaze had been intent on making me pay for what had happened to Ember, and if he'd been that sure, then they probably had all thought that.

"You know I never had anything to do with that, right? I never bullied anyone, and if I'd known, I'd have tried to stop them."

She nodded, taking her seat again so she sat beside me, once more cradling her coffee.

"Despite our best intentions, and our stupid youthful declarations that we'd do better than our own parents, I know we failed them in so many ways. Blaze was always so self-reliant that we let him do his own thing from so young, but I know it may have affected his ideals and beliefs, as well as knowing what he knows about how we met. Ember was different. She was always sweet and naïve, and that made her an easy target. Ash and the twins were protected from what she went through, but they all suffered when child services took them from us. That took too long to resolve, and it was devastating for all of us."

I hadn't even known about that! Had Blaze ever mentioned it? Had he told me, and I'd just not absorbed what he was

saying? Either way, I didn't think she really wanted me to question her about it. I didn't think I knew her well enough to even try.

“I'm sorry that all happened, and if I could have prevented it, I would have. I know Blaze got his revenge, but...” I trailed off, suddenly wondering if I was telling her things Blaze had chosen to keep from her. It was a minefield, because I knew so little, and the things I knew probably weren't for his parents' ears, especially his mother.

She waved a hand at me. “Don't worry, I've seen the damn tattoo, and I get it. I recognised their names. I know they died, and they deserved it. I suppose that seems hypocritical to you, since you feel I support Blaze's actions with you?”

“You do, though, don't you... you feel like somehow, because what they did to you led to love, that it's some kind of magic formula. What if there was just something really wrong with you, that you didn't try to escape them?”

The moment I'd finished speaking, I covered my mouth with one hand, horrified that I'd just been so rude and judgemental to the woman who may just end up being my 'mother-in-law'.

She laughed softly. “I wondered all of those things back then, and I still do sometimes. None of us had the best upbringing, but that's not an excuse for what they did. The thing is, whether I wanted to admit to it or not, there was something about them that spoke to something in me. You know that what all of us really wanted was someone to love us, to actually care that we even existed. To notice us. To see

us for who we are. And yeah, I get that we seem like some kind of deviant freaks to you, but like recognises like. Our souls were always meant to be connected, and we're happy. We love each other and we're happy every day. Our children were raised with all the love we had to give, which turned out to be a lot. We wanted them to have all the things we didn't, but not just material things; our time, our attention, our respect. Was it so wrong to find something beautiful out of the darkness?"

49

Blaze



IT WAS KINDA HARD saying goodbye to the old guy, after living there so briefly with him. I insisted on paying him several months extra rent as an apology, because the guy needed the help, but I also found myself promising to stop by for coffee soon.

I had a feeling it wasn't just going to be the once, either. He was like a grandfather, and I'd never had one of those. I'd never met any of my parents' parents.

Obviously it would have been impossible with dad Gray, but my other two parents had no relationship with their own parents, and liked it that way. I sometimes wondered if that meant we'd missed out on something special, and before I met old Seth, I probably would have said no, but now I wasn't so sure.

“You take care of that nice girl of yours, son. Maybe bring her to visit?”

I grinned, looping my bag over my shoulder, and reaching over with one arm to hug him.

“Count on it, old git. I still need to whoop your ass at chess anyway. Not sure how you always beat me, but I'll figure it out.” It was the weirdest thing, because nobody could ever beat me at strategy games, but somehow he always did. I actually really enjoyed the challenge.

“You know, the nice lady next door said she recognised you from when you lived here.” *Oh shit.*

“Yeah? I guess I look kinda similar, maybe a bit taller.”

He laughed, swatting my shoulder as we walked to the door.

“She said you had a thing for her daughter.”

“She’s not wrong.” Should I tell him? I guess it’d be obvious soon. “Still do. She’s mine, uh, my girl now.”

“Good on you, son. Does she know?” Jesus. Did she? I highly doubted it, but we’d have to make sure we resolved that soon.

“Not yet, but we’ll tell her soon. You keep it to yourself, you old bastard, yeah?”

He laughed again, seeing me off and closing the door behind him. I glanced at Anneka’s mum’s house as I walked down the path. Should I go in? Should I go for some of her things? Would it be the smart thing to do? Would it just make her worry that I’d done something awful to Anneka?

And for that matter, hadn’t I? I knew I had. I’d been a complete asshole to the poor woman, and I wasn’t fool enough to think that wouldn’t happen again at some point.

While I dithered on the path, the door opened and Anneka’s mother stepped outside, wringing her hands together as she took in my frozen pose.

“I thought I’d seen you about again lately.”

I cleared my throat, stepping closer to the wall between the gardens.

“Yeah, I was lodging here for a bit. It’s been a while, eh?”

She nodded, eyeing my bag on my shoulder. She looked older, which was to be expected, but she looked tired too. She also looked like she was struggling to put her weight on one leg.

“Are you okay?”

“Yes. Have you seen my daughter? I know you had a thing for her back when you lived here.”

Shit, that was pretty clear, right? I could lie to her or tell her the truth. I rested my arm on the wall, watching as she tried balancing with one foot barely touching the ground.

“You don’t look okay, Mrs uh...” Was she still Mrs anything? What the hell was her last name? I’d drawn a blank, because for once I was caught unawares. Something I hadn’t planned for was happening, and it was making me act as dumb as people always expected me to be.

“Jamie. My name’s Jamie, and I’m fine. Just a flare up. Is she okay?” It was almost like she knew I knew something, so I nodded.

“She’s fine, we uh... we went away for the night, and she’s at my place at the moment. Do you need her?”

Jamie hobbled closer, leaning both hands on the wall and facing up to me, like she didn’t have any idea what I was capable of, which of course, she didn’t.

“You’re being good to her, aren’t you? She’s a sweet girl, and she deserves to be cherished and loved. Tell me she’s happy, Blaze.”

I had no fucking idea if she was, but I didn't want to get into too much of this shit without Anneka by my side. She'd know the right things to say, and I was way out of my depth right now.

“I love her, Jamie. I'll protect her with my life, and I'll make sure she visits you often.” I waited to see if I'd accurately responded, in a social situation that was as bemusing to me as listening to, and accepting, the word 'no'.

“You're a good boy, Blaze. Thank you.”



ANNEKA

BY THE TIME BLAZE returned, I was so ready to be away from his mother. It wasn't that Wilma was unpleasant, or unfriendly. She was just too damn aware of everything. In the know, when she really shouldn't be.

She was also obsessively instructive about being pregnant, going over what I should and shouldn't eat, and by the time the door opened, I just wanted to make Blaze send her away.

“Mum, you're still here?”

“Blaze... did you forget to tell me something?”

He turned wide eyes to mine and mouthed 'oh shit', which made me wonder if he hadn't wanted her to know at all. That'd be weird though, right? Still weird seemed to be his family's thing, so who the hell knew for sure?

“I uh... we were gonna tell you today, mum. I just had to move my stuff out of Seth’s place first.”

Seth. That name rang a bell, but I couldn’t figure out why it did, so I shrugged it off and stood up, going over to Blaze as he dropped his bag. I let him draw me into a hug, murmuring the word ‘help’ at him as he did. A low chuckle rumbled through his chest as he kissed my head.

“Mum, we kinda have some stuff to do here, so uh...”

“You want me to go away,” she said with a laugh, heading towards us. I really thought she’d just leave, but first she slapped the back of Blaze’s head.

“You told your dads before me, didn’t you? For shame, Blaze, *for shame.*”

He released me to hug her and accept multiple congratulations, and then I had to accept another hug too before she left.

“Was she giving you trouble?” Blaze asked as he dragged me to the kitchen with him, so he could grab a coffee. He waved the pot at me, and I shook my head glumly.

“Apparently *pregnant women shouldn’t drink coffee,*” I said in a high pitched voice, like I was mocking someone, but it was silly and childish, and didn’t even sound like his mother. He snorted, pouring his own drink, and then making me a tea when I confirmed I could drink that.

“So I saw your mum while I was moving out.”

What? Moving out of where? Oh god.

“Wait, when you mentioned Seth, you meant the guy who lives next door to my mum? Jesus Christ, Blaze! You were staying there and spying on me, weren’t you? That’s insane!” It was typical of him though, wasn’t it?

He was laughing as he watched my outrage and shock warring with each other. Why had I been so surprised? Why did it feel so damn intrusive?

“You act like you’re surprised by the lengths I’ll go to so I can have you, babe. You’re mine, and I might have let you ‘escape’ but I never intended to let you be away from me for long. You belong with me, and now so does our baby.”

The baby was yet another trap, wasn’t it? Another way to force me into what he wanted, and I hadn’t been smart enough to see that for what it was before. The miracle of life, albeit years before I wanted to be carrying it, had blinded me to just exactly what I was letting myself in for.

“Babe?” Blaze seemed to catch the change in my mood, as the sobering reality crashed into me like a ton of bricks. I’d been blithely accepting being Blaze’s property, like somehow it was okay now because he’d saved my life, and filled me with his child, but it wasn’t, was it?

What the hell had I agreed to, and how was I supposed to get out of it now?

50

Blaze



I WAS GETTING FUCKING whiplash from the way she kept changing her mind about me. I could read it all over her face, but I didn't understand why it took knowing I'd moved back in next door to her, to set it off.

"This is all because I moved in with Seth?" I knew it wasn't, but I had to push her for the answers, while I figured out how to force things back to my way.

I'd just fucking told her mother I love her, so now that was out there, this wasn't going any other way than with us together. She was already starting to fidget as she stood there, wearing way too many fucking clothes, her hands twisting together.

"Anneka, look at me," I snapped, catching her attention as my tone seemed to break through the cloud of whatever the fuck crazy she was now spiralling into.

"This is wrong," she whispered. "You coerced me somehow. You made me want this, but I don't think I do. How can I? You kidnapped me, raped me, stalked me, impregnated me, and you murdered my own father! How can I look at you with anything other than revulsion, Blaze?"

Fuck this shit! I stalked around the counter, and she let out a panicked hiss, lifting her hands between us as I approached.

"No, Blaze! Stop it, stop trying to intimidate me into doing what you want. My god, I must have been out of my mind or something." Her hands suddenly went up to her mouth, and I knew some new crazed fucking realisation had just hit her, but

was it a real one, or some bullshit she was making up in her own head?

“Talk to me, Anneka. Nothing’s changed in the last five fucking minutes, but you’re acting crazy. Think about what you’re doing, you’re suddenly running from me because you’re afraid of commitment. That’s all this is, and it’s natural. It’s normal to be afraid of committing to one person for the rest of your life, but I’m here and I’ll look after you.”

“That’s what I’m afraid of,” she muttered, backing away again as I approached. When I stopped, so did she, but I needed her in my arms, because when I held her, she tended to relax and realise it was where she belonged. In my fucking arms. With me. Under me. *Mine*.

She suddenly turned and ran for the door, flying past me like a rocket, but like a weird flash of precognition, I saw the accident before it happened, like my mind caught on even as we both moved.

Her foot caught the step up from the living space, and even as she was falling, I caught her and rolled with our momentum, taking the painful brunt of our fall against my back and shoulder.

We were still for a long moment after we landed, both breathing hard, even as pain started to bloom across my shoulders and spine.

“Fuck,” I groaned, as Anneka tensed again.

“Did you make him take me?” *What?* What the actual fuck did she just ask me?

I wanted to tighten my grip on her, and force her to shut the fuck up instead of spouting that shit at me, but instead I let go, and she kind of slid onto her butt beside me as I sat up.

“Did I make who take you? That fucking so called ‘serial killer’? Are you out of your fucking mind?” Was she seriously fucking thinking that?

“I... I don’t know... It was just this crazy thought.” She hugged her legs but she stayed beside me on the floor. I didn’t know why my parents had never carpeted this part of the room, but I really fucking wished they had, because any padding would have cushioned my fall a little.

My shoulder was throbbing, and my back already felt bruised. What a great fucking way to feel, when I find out she thinks I could set another serial killer on her.

“Why the fuck would I let another man near you? Why the FUCK would I send someone after you to kill you? You think I couldn’t kill you myself? You heard him, two measly fucking kills. He was an amateur!”

I somehow got up and strode out of the room, needing a few minutes away from her before I fucking lost it and hurt her. It wasn’t that she didn’t deserve that right now, but I couldn’t risk hurting our kid too, could I?



ANNEKA

HE WAS SO FURIOUS with me, but I felt like it was a valid concern at the time, because wouldn't that just be so Blaze, to set up something like that so he could 'rescue' me. It'd make me grateful for him, wouldn't it? I'd see him as my saviour, my protector. Just like I had seen him. *Exactly* how I'd seen him.

The part that maybe didn't fit was how he'd tortured the guy after. Would he do that to someone he'd been in cahoots with? Maybe he would. After all, it was Blaze, wasn't it? Wasn't he the most depraved, psychotic person on the planet?

I straightened up and pushed up from the cold tile floor and, as I stood up and looked around me, I realised just what a fall Blaze had just taken to protect me. He didn't have to help me. He didn't have to even try to stop me. It wasn't as if the door wasn't locked, was it?

We'd landed hard, and he had to be hurting. Why did I keep deciding he was a monster, when he kept proving that he wanted to keep me safe? Why was I going back and forth like some 'too stupid to live' moron, who should just make a fucking decision and go with it. He was the father of my child. Didn't we owe it to that little soul to give it a go?

I grabbed a bottle of water from the kitchen, and a pack of anti-inflammatories from the overhead cupboard, and then I went looking for him. I found him sitting on the end of his bed, his head in his hands. He looked young, and vulnerable, and a little lost.

He might have been the one who did awful things to me, but I hadn't exactly been all that nice myself. True, I hadn't raped him, but emotionally I'd harmed him.

I headed around the bed and he sighed heavily as he saw me.

"Please, Anneka, just leave me for a bit. I can't take any more of your accusations right now. I get it, I'm always going to be the bad guy in your eyes, but I don't know how to fix that, or if I even can."

I sat beside him and handed him the pack of pills, ignoring his urges to leave him alone.

"You need to take these for the pain."

He tried shrugging but I saw him wince, so he couldn't exactly pretend he wasn't sore from our fall.

"Please. I'm sorry, okay? You keep saving me, and I should be grateful for that. I'm sorry you got hurt out there."

He took the water once he'd popped the pills in his mouth, and washed them down.

"Thanks."

He was too quiet, and while Blaze had always been quiet and that had been part of what made him so creepy as a kid, I didn't like it while I knew I was responsible for it.

"It was stupid of me to think you arranged what happened. Of course you didn't. We were making it work, weren't we?"

Blaze stared morosely at the pack of pills in his hand.

“You know, at first I thought you’d left me. Thought you’d run off again as soon as my back was turned. It was like being stabbed in the stomach, because I thought we’d started to build something real, and then you were just gone.”

“I wish I’d gone with you to the beach. Was it pretty? The sunrise, I mean?”

He shrugged again and cursed, as he tweaked whatever injury he’d suffered.

“I thought so at the time. Now it feels like it was the biggest mistake of my fucking life.”

51

Blaze



SHE'D HAD EVERY OPPORTUNITY to run while I was up here. The front door wasn't even fucking locked after mum left. Why was she here, trying to tend to me like she cared? Why was she sitting on my fucking bed and apologising, when she could be free of me?

I mean, I'd chase her down. I'd ALWAYS chase her down, and bring her back. Reclaim her as mine. *But she stayed.*

She placed her hand on my back, rubbing lightly, and it hurt like a bitch. It was like she was literally slapping her hand against a brand new bruise, but it was also soothing in a way that I didn't really understand. *Yeah, I like pain, who doesn't, but this was about her wanting to make me feel better.*

I fought so hard not to wince at her touch, not to show her that it was hurting me, because it was also easing my emotional pain at the same time.

“Why didn't you run?”

She froze for a moment, her hand's travels over my bruised back pausing for a few seconds before they restarted. She was strangely silent though, and I had no idea what that meant, and if it might be a good or bad thing.

“Anneka?” She sighed, her hand slowing to a stop again.

“It didn't even occur to me, Blaze. Once I realised how hard you must have landed on that hard floor, the risk and the pain you took to protect me, all I cared about was looking after you. Clearly I'm as insane as you and your family are.” I risked a look at her then, catching a small grin before it disappeared.

“You must be. You didn’t run. You’re here looking after me. You willingly came to my bedroom, and... and you’re bleeding!” Shit! The white t-shirt of mine that she wore was showing bloody patches above her tits, as in where she should be bandaged. Had I hurt her when we fell?

Anneka glanced down at her clothes, finally spotting the blood.

“It doesn’t hurt, or... I mean, it didn’t, but it stings a bit now I know. We must have caught the bandages. I’m fine, Blaze, so let’s worry about you for now. Can I check your shoulder and back?”

She was already starting to pull my t-shirt up, and it took both of us to ease it off over my working shoulder, and the one I really didn’t want to move right now.

“Oh my god! Blaze, this looks so sore.” Yeah, no shit.

“You idiot! I was rubbing that part of your back, and you didn’t say anything!”

I grabbed her sassy face and made sure she was looking right at me.

“Because you were touching me. I don’t care if every touch from you causes me pain. *I’ll always let you touch me.*”

She looked confused by my words, like maybe she didn’t get that she’d been my reason for fucking existing since we were kids.

I went from wanting her and loving her, to hating her enough that I wanted to cause her pain and suffering, and now it was

deeper than love or hate. It was both and neither. It was an intense physical need to be in her presence, to orbit her like a planet orbits the fucking sun. It was bigger than everything, because we were meant to be, and no matter whether she wanted that or not, her only future would be with me. Me and our baby.

A baby; a future generation. A fragile life to protect and nurture. To pass on the things I've learned, so that the next incarnation of our family can be even better. Stronger. More savage. *Blaze 2.0.*

“You've gone quiet on me. What can I do to make this better, Blaze?”

I cupped her face in my palm, stroking her full pouty lips with my thumb. Just the sight of her lips as they pressed against my thumb, kissing it softly, was enough to make me need them elsewhere on my body. Wrapped around my cock, pleasuring me and soothing me, because right now I needed it.

I needed to know that she was in this with me and not humouring me, or enabling me, but because she fucking wants me.

“Kinda want this mouth, Anneka.”



ANNEKA

I'D SAY IT WAS a surprise, but it was Blaze, and his sexual needs were always right there on the edge of everything,

whether it was a simple conversation, or some kind of argument or escape attempt. Was he always horny? If that were the case, how had he waited for me, for us?

“You want me to... to suck you?” I wasn’t entirely sold on the idea, but I felt like it might help to heal the rift I’d created, when I somehow convinced myself that he’d sent a serial killer after me. Another serial killer, I should say.

Blaze just fixed me with a darkly wicked stare, his lips tipping up a little.

“You’ll have to help get me hard. I’m not quite there yet.” How the hell was I supposed to do that? I frowned, reaching up to catch his hand as his thumb pressed between my lips and I sucked on it briefly. I pulled it from my mouth to speak.

“How? Blaze, the only time I’ve had a... a cock anywhere near me was with you. I’ve never... I mean... I don’t know how to do this.”

His eyes softened a little, and he stroked his fingers down my throat, staying gentle, not grabbing it this time.

“Just free my dick and touch it, babe. Stroke it, kiss it, lick it. He’ll soon come up, but I can’t move from this seat right now, so you’ll have to be down there.” He pointed in front of him, and I pulled away from his fingers.

“On my knees?”

“Sorry babe, if I hadn’t just hurt my back saving your sweet ass, I’d lay back and let you suck me like that, but yeah... I’m kinda injured right now.”

“And yet you think you’re in the mood for sex.”

Blaze rolled his eyes, using both hands on my shoulders to guide me down onto the floor, and like an idiot, I let him. It wasn’t fear or some kind of self preservation thing going on. I liked it when he put me where he wanted me. If he’d expected me to get down there on my own, I’d have rebelled, but having him guide me down, it just felt right.

“Get him out, babe. I need your touch right now to help ease my pain, yeah?”

Manipulative asshole. Even as I thought that though, he pressed my hands on the fastenings of his jeans, and I automatically started undoing them. His cock wasn’t hard, but it wasn’t soft either.

It felt strange to touch it, willingly or otherwise, because I’d never been able to before. Although I’d been willing a few times now, he’d never let me be in a position to even really see his cock properly.

It wasn’t like I’d never seen one before; we’ve all watched porn or googled stuff, right? It was Blaze’s cock though, and that made it a bigger deal.

“You just gonna stare at it, or fucking get on with it?” He muttered in a guttural whisper. He could be such an asshole at times. Most times, in fact.

“I’ve just never seen it properly before, Blaze. It’s not like you’ve ever given me the chance, is it? It doesn’t look so scary when it isn’t being forced on me.”

“Yeah yeah, it’s so pretty, whatever, just get your lips around it, babe. Lick him, he likes that.”

“He?”

“You think my dick would be a chick? Not likely.” I felt like he was trying to make me giggle with that comment, to try and relax me a little, or even take some of the bite out of his earlier words, and it was working.

I grasped his cock in one hand, marvelling at how soft and silky his skin was, even as it seemed to firm up in my hand, stretching the skin even further.

Blaze let out a low groan at my touch, and a shudder rippled through him. Just at my touch?

I lifted my eyes to watch his face as I stroked him again, and smiled as I saw his face pleased and at ease for once. Not mean, not aggressive, not taking his pleasure at the expense of mine. Just enjoying my touch, and relishing the pleasure I could bring him. I leaned down and kissed the head of his cock, and he groaned again.

Adjusting my position so I could watch him as I licked him, I dragged my tongue along the length of his cock, which was rapidly growing more solid and thick in my hand.

Another of those delicious groans was my response from Blaze, along with his eyes closing briefly in rapture.

52

Blaze



IT WAS THE MOST delicious fucking torment. It was the actions of a woman who recognised her power in this moment, and was wielding it like a fucking psycho. Dragging her tongue along my cock again, she teased the head with the tip of her tongue, dipping it into the slit and sending a shudder of fucking sensation through me.

In some ways, I could recognise her actions as those of someone learning their way around a cock, but some of these things she did, they seemed like things a seasoned pro would do.

“I thought you’d never done this before,” I gritted out, threading my fingers through her hair with one hand, my currently good hand as it were. The wrong answer would get her choking on my cock, even though I wanted to let her maintain her sense of power over me for the moment.

She shook her head, pulling away from my cock to stroke it slowly.

“I’d never even seen one for real until yours, Blaze.” Should that have felt so fucking good to hear that? Should I have felt such a primal sense of pride at being the only cock she’d ever experience in any way?

“How’d you know what to do?” It wasn’t that I didn’t trust her, it was just that some sly vixen had taken over Anneka’s body right now, and I had to know.

“You think men are the only ones who watch porn? You think women don’t get horny too? You think we don’t watch

stuff like that while we ride our fingers at nights, if we don't have someone to do those things with? I was a virgin, Blaze. Virgins get horny as fuck, or at least I did."

Jesus Christ, if she said 'porn', 'virgin', or 'horny' again, I was going to lose my control and fuck her face like a savage. My fingers tightened in her hair, and she winced.

"I know you don't like the hair colour, Blaze, but if you pull out all my hair, you'll like that even less."

I grinned, tugging lightly at her hair, as in not enough to hurt, but just to be playful which wasn't the norm for me.

"You know, I was worried I'd broken you with all the shit I did, but you seem to be getting stronger and sassier, and I like it. Kinda want to shut you up with my cock though. You gonna demonstrate your depthroating skills from all your porn-watching, babe? I wanna feel you swallowing him down."

Fuck me, instead of bitching about it, or telling me to go to hell, she tried exactly that and it felt so fucking good. Even when she gagged and tried to pull back, it was just awesome. I let her move in the end, because if I let her breathe, she'd keep going and that was all I wanted in this moment. More of Anneka's mouth around my cock.

I grabbed one of her hands and guided it to my balls, because they were feeling left out, and I was feeling all about fairness right now.

"Cup them, babe. Rub them, but not too hard. They're *Jesus*... yeah, like that. Exactly like that, but fucking suck me

too, dammit.”

Her eyes narrowed at me in a glare, but she did as I demanded, trying to deepthroat me again. Suddenly all I could think about was those porn videos I’d seen where a woman would hang her head over the bed, so a guy could fuck her throat like a pussy. Jesus, I really wanted to do that right now, but I didn’t get the chance.

The next time she gagged on my dick and I kept it in her throat, her grip tightened on my balls in retribution, and that was all it took. I relished that surge of pleasure that rippled through me as I jetted my cum down her throat.

She choked on that too, but I let her breathe after, because I was feeling such strong affection for this woman who just gave her first fucking blowie, and mine, and nailed it.

“That was epic, babe. I’m gonna want a lot of those, but I’ll tongue-fuck you for every one of them, don’t worry.”

“How fucking generous of you, Blaze,” she griped, trying to get up from the floor, even as my hand on her shoulder kept her there.

“What now? I can’t give you another one just yet, can I?!” Sassy and getting sassier, and I was definitely getting off on it.

“Babe, you look so pretty on your knees, all teary-eyed and slobbery, with my cum still tingling your tastebuds like that.”



ANNEKA

HE REALLY HAD A knack for saying the most asshole things, but somehow it was like it was part of his charm. He didn't have much of it, so I couldn't exactly knock the little he did have.

He was giving me that usual arrogant look, but his fingers had gentled when they returned to my hair, stroking gently through it in an almost affectionate way.

“I really need to get off my knees, Blaze. I'm carrying your baby, remember?”

He rolled his eyes as he offered his uninjured hand so I could get up.

“Clearly you're going to milk that excuse for the entire fucking duration of being up the duff,” he commented as he pushed me down onto the bed, and rolled over me. The moment he tried putting any weight on his injured arm, he cursed as it refused to bear his weight and he almost fell on me.

“Fuck's sake. Guess I'm about to get on my fucking knees now then.” He scrambled off me, and looped his arm around my hips to drag me to the foot of the bed, and then he dropped to his knees between my legs. He was already easing my sweatpants down, and freeing up my vulnerable but wet pussy to his eager gaze.

“Babe, I can smell how turned on you are, and that smell is fucking sexy as hell. Can't get enough of it,” he murmured as he pressed my legs apart, and buried his face between them. My sweatpants weren't even fully off, still hanging off one leg

as he pinned my hips with his palms and started tonguing me in earnest, lapping at my wetness and groaning as he swallowed.

“You taste even better, so just shut up and lay there for a bit, babe... I’m gonna be a while down here.”

He wasn't kidding. He spent so long, licking and nibbling at me that he pushed me through not one, but two orgasms that threatened to snap my back in half, and then he was on top of me, gliding inside me, and there was no cruelty, no meanness, just delicious friction and intensity.

Intensity; because his eyes never left mine, even as he had to brace himself on one arm, and winced occasionally when he tweaked his back or his shoulder. He just stared me down, his lips taking mine now and then, as he rode me to his own climax.

For the first time ever, it was like it should always have been. Intense for the right reasons, because I could actually feel that he cared, that he maybe even loved me. Intense; because he was laser focused on me and my comfort throughout, and because he looked as desperate to fill me as he always had, even though he'd already impregnated me.

This version of Blaze was too easy to fall in love with, because I felt like I was seeing the real him, the version of him hidden under all the anger, and pain, and revenge. This Blaze was the sweet, intense man who'd had the weirdest upbringing, but was somehow still human and real.

This version of Blaze was mine; all I wanted, and the future I'd never expected but was now committed to. I felt like I finally understood him, which is why his behaviour the next day shocked the hell out of me.

53

Blaze



EVERYTHING WAS SO CLEAR when I woke up the next morning, wrapped around Anneka and our baby, and aching like hell from all the bruising I knew I had from our little escapades yesterday.

We'd connected yet again, but she had a habit of changing her mind on me, and I wasn't about to let it happen even once more. It was time to lock things down for good, so she couldn't back out or even consider it.

Easing out of the bed, and making my way downstairs, I grabbed a coffee and some strong painkillers as I dialled my phone. My arm was so stiff and sore from landing on it, but it wasn't about to slow me down in my plans. The sooner this was done, the better.

"Hey son, everything okay?" I'd called dad Dory's mobile, because I knew he'd be the one to help me make this happen.

"Yeah, dad, we're cool. Uh, I need your help with some urgent arrangements. It's time to make sure she can't disappear on me again."

Dad was quiet for a moment, and I heard him call out to dad Gray before he spoke again.

"You want a tracker in her?"

Holy shit. I hadn't even thought of that, but the second he said it, I knew it was fucking essential. This is why dad Dory was the best one to help me out.

"Actually, yeah, definitely at some point, but that wasn't the only thing. We settled things last night, and we're going to

make things work, but I still feel like she's a flight risk. Maybe it's hormones or some shit, right?"

I ignored their chuckles in the background, because I knew I was right, and that drastic action was needed. I explained what I needed, and dad Dory was suddenly not finding things so funny.

"You're sure about this, kid? You're only nineteen years old, and-"

"And that means I can't possibly know my own mind? Did I do all this for nothing? She's mine, dad. I have to be able to keep her."

Dad Gray muttered something in the background and dad Dory sighed heavily.

"Yeah, I can make some calls. When, Blaze?"

"Today."

"For fuck's sake, I can't promise that, son. There are things that have to be in place first."

"Make it happen, dad. It has to be today." As it turned out, that was completely fucking impossible, but there was something else I could do in the meantime, and I knew exactly who to call on for that.



"Where are we going, Blaze?" Anneka was bundled up in warm clothes, and holding her hands over the heater as I drove, heading straight to Pike's place.

“Just going to see a friend of mine. He’s gonna help us out with a little something, and I think you’ll like it.” I grinned at her, and saw her eyes narrow slightly. Suspicious as always, but then, didn’t she have good reason to be?

“Blaze, what the hell are you up to now?”

I shrugged, and then cursed because of my fucking shoulder. Driving was uncomfortable as fuck, but at least it was my left arm, and I drove an automatic, so I had some reprieve as long as I took bends and turns carefully.

I pulled up at Pike’s place, and parked up outside. As expected, there were quite a few motorbikes lined up in the closest spaces, and a couple of patched bikers standing around chatting with each other.

“Hey, Blaze,” one of them called, grinning at me as I helped Anneka out of the car, but then his eyes started to trail over her, so I stepped forward to block his line of sight. He caught my warning glare and started to laugh.

“Message received, kid.” *Kid*. Why the fuck did everyone call me ‘kid’? When would they start treating me like the grown man I was?

I led Anneka inside and saw Pike just finishing up a detailed inking job on one of his biker brothers, so I grabbed a seat, and dragged her down beside me. I wasn’t letting go of her fucking hand now we were out and about. This was why I needed things settled, set in stone, and unbreakable.

“You’re getting another tattoo? Or are they changing another one calling me a bitch or whatever?”

“Blaze, back already, eh?” Pike wrapped things up with the biker, a guy I didn’t recognise, and came over to see me, peeling black latex gloves off as he walked.

“Hey Pike, you know me. Can’t stay away. You got room for one today? Another cover up.”

He rolled his eyes. “You make me put all that shit on you, then you keep making me alter them. It’s like you just enjoy the way the needle feels, man.”

I squeezed Anneka’s hand as she tried to pull away, probably unnerved by the huge biker looming over us while we were seated.

“This is Anneka, Pike.” The biker’s eyes widened as he turned to look at her properly, his eyes staying on her way longer than I liked.

“*The* Anneka? The fucking whore of Babylon?” She made an angry spluttering sound even as I dragged her up, so we were facing the bastard on our feet.

“That’s my woman you’re talking about, Pike.”

He caught on fast, nodding slowly as he appraised her again.

“Fair enough. I’ve got a gap now, so let’s get you in the chair and get started.” He turned to walk away, and I stopped him as I shoved Anneka ahead of me.

“Not me, man. *Her*.” She turned horrified, betrayed eyes on me, even as I forcibly led her to the chair.



ANNEKA

WOW, BLAZE REALLY GOT off on betraying my trust, didn't he? Just last night he was acting like he'd start respecting me, and treating me right, and today he was forcing me into a tattooist's chair for ink I hadn't even agreed to. I had no idea why I was even here, but I definitely didn't want another tattoo!

“Blaze,” I started, as he pushed me into the chair and pressed a hand against my chest.

“Stay, babe. Let's show him what he's fixing.”

“Fixing? I don't... *oh for god's sake, Blaze!*” He was talking about my fucking *Dory* tattoo, wasn't he? The insane fucker couldn't handle the fact that he saw it as some kind of fixation with his creepy dad.

He started tugging at my sweatpants, trying to drag the side down to reveal my tattoo, even as I fought him the whole time. I didn't want to bare any part of myself to this stranger, or the two guys hanging in the doorway with their amused eyes on us.

Eventually, he used his knife to slice open the leg of my trousers to reveal the tattoo without removing my clothes.

“Don't do this, Blaze!”

“Shit, man. Is that... isn't your dad's name Dory? You stole your dad's side piece?”

Blaze's eyes were, well, *blazing* at both of us in response.

“You see why it's gotta go, man. Get the fuck rid of it. I don't care what... actually, I *do* care. I want my fucking name right there. Overwrite him with me.”

That asshole! I struggled even harder to get out of the chair, but Blaze used his full weight to contain me.

“Stay still, dammit!”

The guy was studying my tattoo, and shaking his head.

“I can't cover it with your name unless you want the letters to be a few inches tall.” Finally! Some sense, some fucking help with this moron!

“I could put blue flames over it though. That'd work, right?”
WHAT?

“You can't! I don't want this, are you listening to me, Blaze? I don't want you to do anything to it. It's my-”

“I can't fucking handle that being on your skin, whether you meant to have my dad on you or not. It's going, babe, so the only question is, are you gonna keep fighting or just fucking take it for me, huh?”

The bikers in the doorway were laughing now, and I could see I wouldn't get any help from them at all. They were big mean looking guys, not like the ones I'd seen outside, and they

all had the same patch on their sleeveless leather jackets. It was terrifying and humiliating all at once.

“You want us to hold her down, man?”

Blaze practically snarled in response.

“Don’t even fucking come near her. Pike, you got some rope or something? We’ll tie her down for it.”

Tie me down? I started struggling even harder to escape, and one of the bikers whistled mockingly.

“Nothing hotter than an unwilling woman, am I right?”

“Get the fuck out of here, you two!” Pike roared in their direction, as he passed some leather straps to Blaze. I was crying helplessly by the time I was immobilised in that chair, with my hip angled for Pike to get to my tattoo.

“It’s gonna take a while to cover this, man, but I’ll make it look good,” he murmured as he stroked his gloved palm over my skin, and the offending tattoo that I wished I’d never even considered having. There was no way out of this for me, was there?

Blaze pulled over a wheeled stool and sat beside me, reaching for my hand, even while he glared at Pike’s hand resting on my skin.

“Don’t fucking touch me, Blaze. Why would you do this? Why? Last night you seemed like you... ow! Oh god, that hurts!” The tattoo gun felt like a blade being dragged over my skin, reminding me why I’d only had that one small tattoo so

far. I had zero threshold for pain, and this felt worse than that serial killer trying to cut me to pieces.

“Please don’t make him do this, I promise I’ll keep it covered up, please, Blaze!” I was sobbing now, and Pike was having to lean his weight on my thigh to keep me still enough for him to work.

An hour passed in agony, while the bastard painted over my tattoo with flames to represent the monster I was trapped with. I cried for a lot of it, and there was only a brief moment where I thought I’d get a reprieve.

A guy with blonde dreadlocks came into the small tattoo parlour, also wearing a leather ‘cut’ as Blaze had referred to it, and he stopped dead a few feet away from us, his blue eyes assessing us in a split second.

“What the hell’s going on here?” He looked about my age, and horrified at what he saw.

“It’s okay, she’s just fighting through her nerves, prospect. Can you come back later for your lesson?”

The blonde guy was frowning deeply as he stepped closer.

“Come on, Pike, this looks like the lady doesn’t want that ink. What’s going on?”

Blaze lurched up out of his seat, but Pike stopped tattooing to step between him and the other biker.

“Later, prospect, unless you want to clean all the tools again?”

“Are you okay?” The guy was addressing me now, and ignoring his biker friend, at least until the guy got in his face and threatened him with god only knows what.

They argued briefly, and the young guy shot one last worried look in our direction before he left the building, and left me alone with the two assholes.

54

Blaze



BY THE TIME WE were home again, Anneka was completely ignoring everything I said to her, and flinching if I even tried to touch her.

I wished I'd had the chance to beat that dreadlocked biker to death, just to get rid of some of the brutal energy that had built up in me at the clubhouse.

I knew the bikers from way back, and even though they were a nasty bunch of fuckers, they recognised that in me too, I guess. I got on well with quite a few of them. Their president, Leif, was a complete fucking psycho though, but luckily he wasn't around the tattooists all that much.

“Anneka-”

“Get the fuck away from me, Blaze. I hate you for this!” She winced with every step as she headed inside the house, and marched upstairs and away from me. Jesus. Was it so wrong of me to want that fucking abomination covered up?

A text from my dad told me that arrangements were in place, for two days from now. Two days to try and get her out of her mood, and where I needed her. How the hell was I supposed to get her out of this sulk she was in?

I was pretty sure fucking her wasn't the answer, but there was an animalistic part of me that wanted to reclaim her after that bastard's hands had been on her. The tattoo had taken over two hours.

Over two fucking hours of his hands on her. Fuck the tattoo, because now her entire leg offended me. I couldn't exactly

make her shower right now, not with the damn thing needing to stay dry.

I followed her up the stairs and found her curled up on the bed in the spare room, her sweatpants pushed down to uncover the new tattoo. Pike did amazing work, and the flames were gorgeous, not lifelike like my dad's, but glowing and brilliant just the same.

“Anneka, can I get you a drink or something?”

“You can get fucked, that's what you can do.”

I disappeared and returned with a cup of sweet tea, and some painkillers. I was trying to do the right thing, even though I was starting to realise just how betrayed she felt. I mean, being a smart guy, I'd known all along that she'd feel that way, but as I cast my mind back over it, I was understanding things a little better.

Was it any different from me holding her down and forcing myself on her? Wasn't it just another form of rape? A forced tattoo? Something more permanent than even the baby I'd forced on her. I rounded the bed and sat beside her, gritting my teeth as she edged away so we wouldn't touch.

“Take these, babe. They'll help with the pain.”

Her angry gaze fixed on me again, but I could see the hurt in those beautiful blue eyes of hers. I'd hurt her again, and suddenly I realised that mattered more than some stupid need to mark her as mine.

“I’m sorry. I fucked up again, babe, but you’ll get used to it when the pain fades. It doesn’t last long.” I wasn’t so sure about that, because my pain threshold was clearly different from hers, and tattoo pain was something I actually quite enjoyed. Why else would I get so fucking many tats?

She was still glaring at me, even as she sat up and took the drink and the painkillers, which probably told me a hell of a lot about her pain threshold, and made me wonder how the fuck she was going to give birth, unless they gave her a shitload of drugs.

“I didn’t mean to betray you, but we’re moving forward, and that means that I don’t want another man’s name on you, especially my dad’s.”

“It was a cartoon fish, you fucking psycho! I loved that movie, and it was a fun thing to do which I realised hurt like a bitch, and never planned to do again. You forced that on me.”

“I know,” I said, because I really did, but I couldn’t let this be the final straw for her, and she needed to see that I was trying to show her my love.

“Anneka, you’ve seen a lot of sides to me, and I realise they’re mostly bad. You’ve pointed it out often enough, but I’m not dumb enough to think that my actions are okay. I get that everything I’ve done to you so far has been reprehensible, but I love you, and I just want us to be happy.”

She almost choked on a mouthful of tea at the word ‘love’, which was a little insulting, but instead of taking offence, I tried patting her back until she elbowed me away.

“Love? You don’t know the meaning of the word ‘love’, Blaze. I really hoped you did, but this... this thing you did to me today? That was cruelty. Brutality. *Abuse*. Just more of the side of you that you keep showing me, and I keep conveniently forgiving. You don’t have many sides, Blaze. You have one, and anything other than the monster version of you is pure lies. You really think that I can forgive you for this?”

Jesus fuck, it was only a tattoo, right? I leaned closer to focus on the offending tattoo, covered with clingfilm and practically glowing at me like a real fire.

“It’s beautiful though, look, babe. Pike is the best at his craft. I took you to the best, because I knew that-”

“You took me to the only guy you knew who’d let you force me into it, and you know it. That guy who tried to stop you both? He was the only good guy among you all, and he gave in too easily.” I was still sore over that fucker trying to get involved, and hearing her call him anything favourable made me doubly certain I’d find a way to kill him later.

“He’s a prospect, babe, and Pike’s apprentice, so he’s got a lot to lose if he pisses off the club. They’re a bunch of animals, they really are.”

“Guess that’s why you fit in with them so well.”

“Come on, Anneka, I said I was sorry. Please, forgive me?” I offered her my best attempt at an innocent smile, and she rolled her eyes.

“Oooh I’m sorry I forced you into something else, Anneka, but look how cute and baby-faced I am. How can you possibly blame this adorable boy?” She mocked in a high voice, but a heavy sigh followed her words.

“That’s the last thing you’re forcing me into, Blaze. I can’t keep trusting you just to have you turn on me again. I can’t, and I won’t.”



ANNEKA

BLAZE’S FACE DROPPED, AND he edged closer as he reached for my face, cupping my chin when I didn’t pull back this time. Why wasn’t I pulling back? Something about Blaze just always fucking won me over.

If I could forgive him for the other things, the worse things, how could I hold a grudge about a tattoo, right? The more I looked at it, the more I liked it, even though I’d also be reminded of the way it happened for a while each time I stared at it.

“Babe, there’s just one more thing I have arranged, but it’s for *us*, yeah? It’s... it’s for our future,” Blaze said earnestly, still trying the cute little boy look as he stroked my cheek. All at once I knew exactly what he was referring to, because how could it be anything else, right?

“Oh god. You’re going to make me marry you, aren’t you?” His eyes widened at the same moment he seemed to stop breathing, just for a few seconds.

“Jesus. I thought I’d have to explain that one to you, and talk you into it.” *Great.* Every time I thought I was in deep enough with him, he added another layer of soil over my coffin. If I was married to him, I’d never be free, would I?

But then, wasn’t a baby going to be trapping me with him anyway, regardless of a marriage certificate? Did it really make that much difference to me? After that, there would be nothing more he could do to me, would there? It almost seemed like an easy concession to make, to appease the snarling beast in him.

I made him wait another long painful minute before I finally nodded.

“Fine, but no fanfare, just something quick, and I need to see my mum first, and often. She needs my support with her fibromyalgia, and you know it.”

Blaze looked stunned, blinking rapidly as he processed the fact that I’d actually given in, rather than making it something else he had to force me into.

“Seriously?”

“Yes, but that’s it then, Blaze. No more methods of trapping me. No more treating me like a prisoner, or something you can manipulate into whatever crazed bullshit you have in mind. We have to be equals. We have to be in this together, with you supporting me. This baby needs to be born into at least some semblance of safety and normality. I won’t raise another version of you, do you hear me?”

That's when he dropped the bombshell that it was all arranged for two days time. That asshole just had to keep pushing things, not even waiting for me to make decisions with him.

"I want to see my mum today, Blaze. I'm not marrying you unless she's there with me too. I bet your creepy family are going to be there, right?"

A small crease appeared in his forehead.

"Creepy? My family aren't creepy. They're the best fucking family a guy could have. Do you realise how much they've done for me? For all of their kids? Do you realise just how much love there is in our household? I know you probably don't know what that's like, what with your asshole of a dad, but my family are fucking perfect."

Oh I'd poked the bear, hadn't I? I couldn't help feeling hurt though, because not only was he acting like an ass again, but I had a sneaky feeling he was right. My childhood, especially my early teens, had been tainted by living in fear of a man who lost his temper so fast that it was impossible to avoid.

He'd never laid a finger on me or mum, but that much anger all the time was still terrifying. I almost became afraid of my own shadow, but when he left, it felt like I was missing something I'd never even had. Was Blaze right? Was I just unable to see the rightness of his family, because mine was never that way?

I shuffled to the edge of the bed, and hissed with pain when I forgot the tattoo, and moved too fast.

“Aw babe, it’s so fucking beautiful though. Look at it! I’m on you now, forever.”

Ugh. As if that hadn’t already been proven to anyone with eyes. Still, at least it was just one tattoo, right?

“I can’t wait to see my name on your tits, and right above that sexy pussy of yours-”

“NO! Blaze, no fucking way. You forced one tattoo on me, and that’s enough. You promised, remember?” That determined look on his face seemed to give me a sudden insight into a future where I was covered with his name, in large letters emblazoned on my skin over and over.

Strangely, it didn’t fill me with horror, but almost a calmness. A sense of completeness. What had he done to my brain that suddenly even the idea of being forced into more tattoos wasn’t so horrific? It was a sign that he’d broken me beyond repair, right?

55

Blaze



TAKING HER TO HER mum's was the last fucking thing I felt like doing, but she was adamant, and since she'd grudgingly accepted the new tattoo, and seemed to be open to others, I had to give in on something, right?

She changed into a long skirt and hoody, and all I could do was think about how easy it'd be to get to her pussy without trousers in the way.

“Blaze, my eyes are up here, dammit. This isn't to turn you on! This is because my fucking leg hurts, and I don't want trousers pressing against it. It's definitely not warm enough for a skirt, and I'm still not clear on how the hell you have most of my clothes in here. You have so much explaining to do!”

I shrugged, because who gives a fuck, right? She's mine now, she said so, and that meant that nothing else was important.

I drove her to her mum's house, wishing the whole time that I'd taken a few painkillers first, but strangely I'd been more focused on her pain after her tattoo than my own. Maybe I was losing my mind too.

“When we get there, let me explain what the fuck this is, Blaze. You'll say the wrong thing and freak her out.”

I rolled my eyes as I parked up on the side of the road, a few doors down from our destination.

“My IQ is higher than yours, but sure, you're the one with the best words,” I snarked as I turned the engine off. Say the wrong thing? Hell yeah, I probably would, but who gives a

fuck, right? It wouldn't change a damn thing. *When I leave here, she's still coming with me, because she's fucking mine.*

“Try not to be an asshole in front of her, Blaze, please. God, why am I so nervous about this?” She was rubbing her palms against the front of her hoody, like they were sweating.

“Babe, chill. It's your mum, not the fucking Spanish Inquisition!”

“You don't get it, Blaze. Your family would accept the truth because they're psychos, but my mother is normal, remember?” I grabbed her chin and leaned close, so she wouldn't miss my point.

“Don't talk about my fucking family like that. EVER. Got it?” Her eyes flickered closed and she let out a slow breath, her tense body relaxing with it.

“Sorry. That's my nerves speaking, I promise. I'm just... if she doesn't accept this, you'll keep me away from her, and I need her in my life, Blaze.”

Whatever. I took her hand and led her to the front door, which opened before we even reached it.

“There's my beautiful girl!” Her mum actually looked pretty well for once, her cheeks kinda pink and glowing with health. That should help to keep Anneka from freaking out about leaving her alone, right?

“Blaze! Come on in, young man. Let me get a proper look at you this time.” Anneka shot me a suspicious glance at her words, but I shrugged as I stepped up closer to the older

woman. She was shorter than me, with reddish brown hair which was streaked with grey, but was probably once as glorious as Anneka's.

“So handsome, and so grown up,” she said excitedly, leading us both into the house. There was a man sitting on the sofa, and he stood up to greet us as we walked in.

“Mum?” The guy was older like her mum, so it wasn't exactly rocket science for a smart guy like me, but she was clearly confused.

“Darling, this is Michael, my uh... a dear friend of mine. Michael, this is my Anneka!”

The guy grinned and shook Anneka's hand, while I fought the urge to tear her away from his grip. I didn't want another fucking man's skin touching hers!

“And this is Blaze, he's uh... well, he used to live next door.”

I made sure to grip that fucker's hand good and tight when we shook hands, just a fucking silent warning the women wouldn't see, even as I tried to absorb every ounce of Anneka's touch from his palm.

“Anneka's mine, got it?” She let out a frustrated huff, and dropped onto an armchair, leaving me standing like a prick.

“Message received, son. Nice to meet you both. Uh, Jamie, you want me to go out for a bit?”

“Go out?” Anneka hissed, sitting up taller in her chair. Fuck this. I dragged her up and sat down, pulling her back onto my

lap, ignoring her brief struggle before she sighed and gave in. The moment I rested a hand on her thigh, she yelped and pulled my hand away.

“What’s wrong, dear? Are you injured?” The guy with Jamie, this Michael asshole, suddenly looked way too fucking interested.

“You look familiar, Michael. We met before?”

He shrugged, smirking slightly.

“Unless you’ve been arrested before, you’re probably just thinking I have one of those faces.” Arrested? He’s a fucking cop? She’s dating a fucking cop? *Fuck!*

Aneka shot me a worried frown, before she turned the heat back on her mother.

“You’re dating? When did you start dating?”

Michael laughed, leaning down to kiss Jamie’s temple as she dropped onto the sofa.

“Uh...”

“Let me get the kettle on, love, while you talk to your daughter. Uh, Blaze... you want to help me while the ladies talk?” *Fuck no.*

The last thing I wanted was stilted conversation, and pretending to be normal around a fucking policeman, while Aneka was talking freely without my supervision.

I hesitated just long enough that he started to look really fucking suspicious, but then I grinned, a sly asshole grin,

because I'd just worked out how to derail this shit-show.

“No coffee for Anneka, what with the baby, but yeah, sure.”
I lifted her out of my lap as she huffed angrily at me, and her mother started questioning her.

I slapped her ass as I walked away, leading the way to the kitchen ahead of the fucker, so I could scope out the closest weapons, aka knives, before I chose a position to stand in.

If I had to leave this guy bleeding to death, I'd do it. I wondered if he knew just how much danger he was in right now.



ANNEKA

MY MUM LOOKED LIKE she wanted to pass out, and scream from the rooftops all at once. I joined her on the sofa, taking both of her hands.

“Pregnant?” Her eyes were wide and blinking fast, like she was fighting tears. I felt the sting of my own tears at the sight, because, well I'm blaming hormones.

“Yeah... seems like Blaze and I are having a baby.”

She let out a squeal and squeezed my hands, letting those tears free at last. Were my own tears now escaping too? Obviously, but they were purely happy tears. Maybe the bittersweet tears of seeing my mother so happy. They certainly weren't like the tears I'd cried over Blaze before. It all just felt like it was how it was supposed to be.

“When did you even start dating Blaze?” Mum asked, and I wondered how the fuck to explain anything, without giving much away. Her boyfriend was clearly a police officer, and that was a dangerous element we hadn’t expected, when we’d turned up out of the blue like this.

“I should have called before we just showed up like this, mum, I’m sorry. But you’re dating? This Michael guy, he’s good? He’s nice?”

Mum smiled, her posture relaxing a little as I realised it was happiness softening her body like that.

“Oh he’s wonderful, love. We met at a singles night, and we’ve been dating for, well, we hid it while you were staying here, but he moved in just a few days ago.”

Wow, it *was* serious! And they hid it from me?

“Why did you hide it? Mum, I’m happy for you. My god, after how it was with dad, you deserve to be happy, and with a good man. He...”

I glanced at the kitchen wondering what the hell was happening in there. Blaze alone with a policeman? I couldn’t imagine it’d go well, and he was already on edge when he went in there. Why else would he have thrown me under the bus like that?

“He’s not mean or anything, right? He doesn’t yell?”

Mum squeezed my hands again, before reaching up to brush away her tears.

“He’s very sweet and caring, love. He’s protective, so he’s probably quizzing poor Blaze right now, but he means well. He... we’re in love. I’ve never been this happy.”

I watched her closely for any sign that she was covering for something, or making it sound better than it was, but all I saw was a lightness that I hadn’t seen in forever. He really was making her this happy, and for that, I realised I could easily accept him as a part of her life.

I glanced at the kitchen again. As long as Blaze wasn’t in there, gutting him like a fish or something. My god, my mother and an officer of the law, while I was living with a serial killer, arsonist, rapist, stalker, psychopath. What could possibly go wrong?

Finally I decided to proceed with what we’d come here for.

“Mum, we’re getting married in two days. We want you there, uh... both of you.” *Yikes.*

56

Blaze



I DIDN'T LIKE THIS guy, but I was stuck trying to pretend to make nice with him. I just had to keep telling myself it was for Anneka. If I could get through this visit without killing this guy, she'd have to reward me for that show of restraint, that's for damn sure.

"So what do you do, Blaze?" The smug bastard was pouring boiling water into mugs, after an awkward silence while the kettle was boiling.

"IT," I said shortly, leaning an arm against the counter, then moving with a hiss of pain when it sent a jolt of fire through my shoulder joint.

"That's both of you wincing with pain now. What's going on?" Suddenly his dark eyes were fixed on mine, and I had this weird feeling he knew exactly who I was.

"Fell."

"You know, I can tell just as much from one word answers as I can from verbal diarrhoea, right?" I didn't like guys this savvy and switched on, not when they could destroy my entire future, and my family along with it.

"Sorry. I accidentally fell and hurt myself. Better?"

He smirked, reaching for the milk and sugar. He'd already checked how we took our drinks, so it wasn't the welcome break in the conversation right now that I'd have wanted.

"And Anneka?"

I lifted my chin, showing him a little more of my aggression.

“New tattoo. Don’t ask to fucking see it, because it’s private.”

Another one of those fucking smirks, before he finished the drinks and slid mine toward me.

“Before we go back in there, Blaze, I should confess that I recognised you immediately.”

I fucking knew it! I braced myself for some kind of threat or warning about Anneka, but instead all he did was tilt his head.

“You’re not still setting shit on fire, right? That’s over now you’re growing up and starting a family?” Sanctimonious prick. I wanted to tell him to go fuck himself because I’d never stop setting things on fucking fire, but it was clear that he was trying to step up as some kind of stepfather figure for Anneka.

Jesus... was I going to be stuck with this asshole in my life now? Killing him was looking more and more attractive by the second.

“No way, sir. I’m a reformed character, me. All about responsibility and shit.”

A low growl preceded his approach, and I was already on the balls of my feet, ready for a fucking fight. If he thought I’d be easy because I was young and ‘inexperienced’, he was about to learn the hard way that I was nothing like he thought or expected.

“Relax, kid, I just want to make sure you’re going to do right by her. I love her mum, get it? I care what happens to Anneka, because she’s going to be family. Jesus, that means you will be

too, but just like you love Anneka and want her to be happy, I want the same for her mum.”

“That’s beautiful, mate. You should write greeting cards and shit like that,” I snarked, still not ready to back down, because I actually really fucking wanted a fight right now.

“All I’m saying is this,” he stepped closer, his taller stature towering over me just a little, even though I knew I could gut him before he even touched me. My fingers tightened around my flick-knife in my pocket.

“This is my family now, Blaze, and I will do whatever it takes to keep them safe. If that means removing you from Anneka’s life for her own good, then you’d better believe I’ll fucking do it in a heartbeat. You hearing me?”

I smirked up at him, wishing I could back up a step, while knowing I’d never give him that much of a reaction from me. I released the latch on the knife, ready to strike.

“Hearing you loud and clear, boss. Here’s the thing though, you clearly see me as some ‘kid’ you can intimidate and warn off, but wanna know the truth? I’m the fucking shark, always in the background and waiting for my moment. You think you have the upper hand right now, but you couldn’t be more wrong. You try and come between me and Anneka, and our fucking baby, and I’ll leave parts of you all over the fucking county, and nobody will find enough to identify-”

“BLAZE!”

“Are you two done with this pissing contest now?”



ANNEKA

THANK GOD WE WALKED in when we did, because that guy, mum's boyfriend oh my god, was probably seconds from death! No matter how tough he was, or how decent a cop, he wouldn't be a match for Blaze and his depravity! Blaze would happily murder anyone who pissed him off, and I had no idea what had been said for this to be what we were walking in on.

Mum rested a hand on Michael's shoulder, and his frame instantly softened as he stepped back with her, immediately drawing both of them out of Blaze's reach. They grabbed their drinks and left the room with them, while I took in the frozen posture of my insane man.

He still looked murderous, and his hand was in his pocket, the one where I knew he kept his knife.

“Blaze?”

His gaze flickered slightly from staring in the direction they'd taken when they left the room. He was still like rock, even as I pressed my palms against his chest. It was a risk, with how pent up he was, but I had to pray that he'd realise it was me before he acted.

His entire body flinched at my touch, and for a tense, terrifying moment, I thought he might hurt me, but then his body seemed to release some of the tension he'd been holding in.

“Come back to me, Blaze,” I whispered, moving up on tiptoes to press my lips against his. Another shudder ran through him, and suddenly his arms locked around me. He released a slow breath and then started kissing me, and with every move of his lips, he relaxed a little more.

Finally we broke apart, and he fixed those startling blue eyes on me.

“You just saved a life, babe.”

Jesus, that was what I’d been afraid of.

“I know, Blaze, but he’s going to be family, so you have to try and get on with him.”

“He threatens me again, and I’ll tear his insides out and feed them to the pigeons.”

Unbidden, a giggle erupted out of me at his words.

“Pigeons? Seriously, Blaze?”

He grinned suddenly, shaking his head slowly.

“Yeah, probably not, right? Corvids of some kind. Crows. I’ll feed him to the crows.”

There’s the Blaze I know, and strangely can’t help loving.
Were we really going through with this crazy wedding idea? I guess we were.

Epilogue

Blaze



IF YOU ASKED ME how we came to this point, I'd say that it was a beautiful journey filled with love, craziness, and some really special moments along the way.

That was probably part of my upbringing, and the fact that I was raised to go for what I wanted, regardless of what anyone else wanted. What I saw as love, I knew others might have seen as abuse, or something similar, but basically I just didn't give a flying fuck.

From the age of ten, I knew that Anneka would be mine one day. I knew that she'd be by my side, mine to own and love, and finally I'd be able to touch her hair as often as I liked.

I'm sure her idea or recollection of things would be slightly different, but that was the beauty of love. It brought people together, even despite their differences, and personal preferences.

My parents did the best they could, and they raised a strong, competent man, who'd be able to love and protect his new family as well as they'd loved and protected me. My parents were flawed, and they'd be the first to admit it, but they knew how to love, and even if you doubted whether they actually could feel it, they showed it every single day.

Finally, it was my turn to be the parent, and the husband, and the one who'd be the guiding hand to another life.

Our wedding day had been simple, attended only by my family, and Anneka's mother and the asshole she was boffing. They got married soon after us too, so I guess it was more than

boffing, but whatever. Parent sex really wasn't something I wanted to know about, unless I was the parent and it was Anneka I was fucking.

For a long time I hated her, blamed her for everything, but over time we'd learned that we were both to blame, and that we needed to forgive ourselves. It hadn't been easy, but it was a fucking journey, or so that asshole therapist she insisted on seeing kept telling her. *Journey into my fucking bank account more like.*

“Blaze! Stop fussing with the baby, because I swear to god if you wake him, I'll-”

“You'll what, babe? Choke on my cock again?” I watched as the little one in my arms blinked his little blue eyes open and stared up at me, making a soft cooing sound. Our baby. Our fucking child. We made this gorgeous little creature, with his wisps of blonde fluff on his head. Our son.

“You woke him?” Anneka hissed angrily, reaching for him. I dodged her again, just like I did the first four times. We'd only had him home a day, and already she was turning into some kind of mumzilla. As if she'd be able to stop me holding our kid.

“He still needs a name, babe, you've gotta stop dragging your heels, yeah?”

She rolled her eyes, shoving the wisps of glowing red hair back behind her ears. Yeah, she'd gone back to the colour she'd had as a kid, and it never failed to give me a boner every time I saw it.

Right now it was dragged back into a messy bun, with these sweet little tendrils slipping free. Was it possible to fuck hair? I wanted to wrap that hair around my cock and jerk off with it. She still wouldn't let me though.

“Give him to me,” Anneka demanded again, holding her arms out.

“Go rest, babe. I've got him, he's fine, aren't you, kid? Jesus, I can't call him 'kid'. I've gone through my fucking life being called that, and I've *got* a damn name!”

She sighed, lowering her arms again and smoothing the baby's bedding in his cot.

“What were your ideas again?”



ANNEKA

I SWEAR TO GOD, our son wasn't having a stupid name like Blaze's! We'd had this discussion over and over for months, since our hurried little wedding, and even while I was trying to squeeze a baby out of me.

Still, every time I laid eyes on our son, I felt something inside me melting. It was easy to understand how Blaze's mother had ended up where she was with so many kids, because once there was this little life that you created right in front of you, like this awesome reminder that beauty could arise out of chaos and evil... yeah, it was easy to get addicted. I even already knew I wanted more of them, not because I

wanted a sick family like Blaze's, but because I loved our child so much.

I still didn't really trust or like his parents, especially Wilma. That might have seemed like a weird thing to admit, because I could understand her position and how she came to love her men, but I'd never forget how she didn't free me that day.

Even though I'd grown to love Blaze, and my life with him, that had been a turning point that she'd enforced for him. It was weird that I couldn't forgive her, but I could just about cope with his dads. Hell, even my new stepdad was managing to get on with all of them, and he could tell they were a fucked up mess of psychos.

"Flame," Blaze said, distracting me from my thoughts, and completely losing me. *What?*

"Where?" I darted my head around, already on mum-alert and baby protection detail.

"Here in my arms, babe. *Flame*. Doesn't that sound perfect for him?"

"No fucking way. God no. Next?"

He smirked, gently kissing our son's forehead.

"Hell."

"What? You can't call a kid Hell!"

Blaze rolled his eyes, and grinned at me. "Satan?"

"Veto, you sick fuck!"

"Inferno?"

“Nope.”

He was enjoying this a little too much, but suddenly a slow grin crossed his face and he raised wide eyes to mine.

“How about Burn?”

What the hell? “That’s not a name, Blaze. That’s a... a... you can’t name a child Burn.”

He looked way too smug at this point.

“There’s at least one famous actor with that first name. Want me to prove it?”

He never asked unless he knew he was right. Burn. Could I really let my child be named Burn?

“Last chance, babe... three choices, pick one, or I’m naming him Satan.”

Ugh typical Blaze, but I decided to humour him.

“Go ahead, I’m listening.” I leaned forward to kiss our child’s head, breathing in that sweet baby scent.

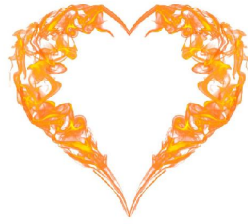
“Burn, Arson, or Pyre. Word of caution; if you choose Burn, his middle names will be ‘In’ and ‘Hell’. Jesus, I can’t wait to take him to his first fire.”

My frustrated scream set the baby crying, and put the decision off for just a little longer. Somehow I’d win, but either way, hadn’t we already won? We had our perfect baby now, and nothing could tear us apart.

We’re a family, now and forever.

THE END

Also by Mia Fury on Amazon/KU



Burning Depravity - very dark standalone

The Bennett Crime World series:

At Their Mercy – book 1

Show No Mercy – book 2

Cry For Mercy – book 3

Worthy Of Mercy – book 4

Bleed For Mercy – book 5

Bringer of Mercy – book 6

Stripped of Mercy – book 7

Free short stories on BookFunnel:

An Unexpected Offer – Christmas Short

An Unexpected Gift – Valentine Short

Christmas ‘Came’ Early – Halloween/Xmas Short

Hughes Stalker Duet:

Norton’s Obsession – book 1

Nico’s Mistake – book 2

Bennett / Hughes Summer Crossover Novella:

Sun, Sex & No Mercy

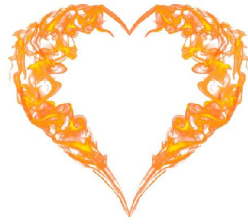
Available now – the complete trilogy:

Book 1 – Asher

Book 2 – Derek

Book 3 – Jase

Acknowledgements



WELL, IT'S BEEN A journey so far. This is my second dark as hell book, and honestly, I didn't know if it'd ever come together.

As usual, I want to thank all the amazing people who make this possible;

My family, especially my husband, who supports me tirelessly and unconditionally.

My amazing Street / ARC team, for the constant support, assistance, and daily shenanigans in our team chat, which I just couldn't live without now.

My badass goat-obsessed PA, Gwen Jarvis, who routinely motivates and whips me into doing the things I should be doing, especially when she catches me doing the things I shouldn't.

My hugely talented cover artist, and dear friend of many years, Anya Kelleye. It's always a dream to work with you, babe, and you always get me, and get the feel of the covers just right for the content!

To my wicked and sassy Furies... keep being the awesome minxes you are, and keep pushing those Bennetts back into their corner, please!

To anyone who reads, reviews, recommends, talks about, or otherwise shares the Mia Fury word, thank you SO much. Here's to keeping you all fed with plenty more dark and twisted smut in the coming years!