



step-

*Stalker*

JESSA KANE

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# STEP STALKER

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## CHAPTER ONE

Vale

I step onto American soil for the first time in four years.

The lights of the airport are bright, but they're nothing compared to the flashes that go off around me. Camera people wielding digital Nikons and pushing microphones into my face. It wasn't supposed to be this way. The media was never supposed to find out my identity, but an intelligence leak means my face has been all over the news.

I'm the Navy SEAL who killed the world's most wanted terrorist.

Civilians are cheering for me as I pass, calling me a hero. In my head, I know I did the right thing. Saved countless lives by taking a madman's. But the last four years is a blur of blood and explosions and near drownings. The kill they are cheering for was just a split second buried under a mile-high pile of harrowing shit. And I don't want the credit or the accolades or applause. I just want to get somewhere quiet and finally take a deep breath.

Is that going to be possible?

On the flight back to California, I kept waiting for the relief to kick in. I'm no longer going to be active duty, thanks to a fistful of shrapnel buried in my calf, courtesy of the very same terrorist I took down in a firefight. There will be no more live battles for me. I'd be lying if I said I wouldn't miss it. The

heat of the fight is in my blood now. But I was looking forward to letting my guard down for one fucking second—and it's not happening.

Even in this sterile airport, the adrenaline is surging in my veins.

I'm searching the crowd for a sniper, my palms itching for the gun in my bag.

The smiles on people's faces seem distorted. False. Their voices ring in my ears.

Somewhere above me, "The Star-Spangled Banner" begins to blare from a speaker and everyone sings along as I pass, taking pictures of me with their cell phones. The reporters shout questions over the din. *How does it feel to be a hero? What will you do now?*

As if I just won the Super Bowl, instead of taking a human life.

They don't understand.

They've never been there.

I feel like a fish out of fucking water, gasping for air, just trying to get out.

Get to my family.

Up ahead, I finally see my father, but instead of relaxing, I straighten my back automatically, harden my jaw. My limp is pronounced, thanks to my injured right leg, but I do my best to walk normally. No weaknesses have ever been allowed in front of the man. When I reach him, I hold my hand out for a shake, not a hug.

"Welcome home, son," my father booms, his chest puffed out. "I knew you'd return a hero just like your old man. Well done."

I nod once, transferring my attention to the woman beside him. "Ma'am." I take her hand and shake it gently, the bones as fragile as the rest of her seems to be. I'm worried if I grip too hard, I'll break them. There is nothing fragile where I've been. "You must be Vanessa, my new stepmother."

“That’s me,” she beams, smoothing her hair when a cameraperson sidles close for a better shot. “We’re so glad to have you home.” Vanessa looks around, a frown creeping between her arched brows. “Now where did Lula disappear to?”

Lula.

My stepsister.

At the mere mention of her name, my muscles lose some of their tension. Out of everyone back home, I’m most interested in seeing her. Meeting the girl for the first time in person. She’s been writing to me since our parents got married a year ago and those letters...some nights they were the only thing keeping me sane. Tethering me to the real world.

I scan the teeming crowd for a young girl, beginning to worry again. All these people. Is it safe for a young girl to be alone in a sea of people like this?

“Oh, there she is. Lula!” Vanessa reaches behind a pillar—

And pulls a female out into the open who is *definitely* not a girl.

*This is Lula?*

No. No, it can’t be.

I’ve been picturing some gawky high schooler in braces. This is a *woman*.

Young, yeah. But her body leaves no doubt to her maturity.

Unlike when I shook my stepmother’s hand, I wouldn’t be afraid of breaking Lula. No. She’s a curvy little beauty with hips I could grip, juicy breasts that would spill over in my hands. A plump, beautiful ass that would cushion a rough ride.

Oh my God. Why the hell am I thinking of my stepsister like this?

Every ounce of blood in my body has rushed south at the sight of her, turning my cock stiff and achy in my briefs. God, those wide green eyes of hers are pretty, too, surrounded by thick lashes. I almost choke on my tongue thinking of the

welcome home I'd like from that feminine mouth. How soft and pliant her lips would be around my dick, all that reddish brown hair tangled around my fingers.

These are not the thoughts of a hero.

These are not even the thoughts of a decent human being.

Everyone in this airport has placed me on a pedestal and it's up to me to remain there. All my life, I'm going to be the man who killed the world's most hated man. I'm a representative of the Navy. The son of a general. I cannot be lusting after my stepsister. It would be wrong even if I was a regular old Joe, but I'm not.

I'm Vale Butler, a decorated Navy SEAL.

I'm going to be a commander at the naval base, training recruits.

There is no room for slip-ups.

But lord, she radiates comfort. The same brand of sweet care her letters gave me.

Those lavish lips spread into a smile, eyes sparkling like emeralds, and she springs forward to hug me. *Fuck*. I almost groan the word out loud as her curves mold to my strength, her gorgeous body plastering to mine, soft on hard. She smells lightly of incense and I inhale greedily, closing my arms around her. Holding on tight.

And all of the noise around me disappears, leaving only Lula.

There's only the sound of her breathing against my throat, her heart rapping against my abdomen, on account of our height difference. She's the lighthouse in a storm. I've already been holding her an inappropriate amount of time, especially for a stepsister I've never met before, but I can't seem to pry my arms from around her.

"Welcome home, Vale," she murmurs, the husky notes of her voices hardening my shaft even more, pressing it to her belly. But when she looks up at me, I can see she has no idea I'm erect. No idea that this instantaneous attraction is burning



me alive. That I'd like to drag her into the nearest available room and work out this raw lust in a frenzy.

On top of being my stepsister, she must be a virgin.

*Don't even think about it, Vale.*

I'm not. I can't.

Still, when I finally manage to step back from Lula, the chants of my name sound like a mockery. An accusation. I'm obviously not the true-blue hero they think I am.

"I'm so glad you're safe," Lula says, her cheeks flushed from my too-close attention.

I'm staring. I'm holding her by the elbows, worried she'll get away. Or someone will try and hurt this sweet girl who has been sending letters to basecamp for a year. Letters that were witty and kind and didn't pry. She talked about herself a little, but mostly she spoke about nature and beautiful things happening around the world. Things that aren't war. Those stories transported me and I appreciated them, but damn, now I wish she'd talked more about herself.

I want to know everything.

"Thank you for writing to me," I manage, my voice sounding unnatural. Almost predatory. In need. "Your letters... I don't know what I would have done without them."

"Really?" She breathes huskily, causing velvet bolts to twist in my balls. "I didn't bore you with flower life cycles and meditation techniques?"

"God no. I only wished they were longer."

"Oh," she says, the stain deepening on her cheeks.

Jesus Christ, she's too sweet. Too good for the world I've been living in. And yet I want to rip her out of that flowery dress she's wearing and lick her pussy until she screams.

I'm not even sure she's legal. We never exchanged ages. I've been imagining her younger this whole time. No matter what, she's a damn sight younger than my thirty-two years. Add our age difference to the list of reasons I shouldn't be

rock hard right now. I'd like to fall on the excuse than I haven't been laid in a couple of years. That has nothing to do with this, though. It might make my need for relief more urgent, but I've never reacted to a female like this in my life.

Christ, not even close. I'm *starving* for her.

"All right," my father says, sounding somewhat uncomfortable. "I think the vultures have seen enough of our reunion. Let's go home."

Home.

The house where I grew up. I'll only be staying there for a few nights before heading to Coronado where I'll be stationed at the naval base going forward. As a commander. But for the next three nights, I'll be in close quarters with Lula. My stepsister. And I have no idea how I'm going to survive without feeling her naked body beneath mine.

Vanessa and my father turn and hustle through the crowd toward the exit.

Lula seems concerned when I remain rooted to the spot. Going home with her is going to be my salvation and my doom. Five minutes around this girl and I'm already infatuated beyond belief. It's taking an immense effort to control myself. To keep my hands at my sides. To keep from acting as her human shield against threats—they're *everywhere*. If something happened to her, I would go off like a fucking bomb.

When she reaches out and threads our fingers together, giving me a patient, coaxing smile, I follow after her as if in a trance. "Our rooms are right next to each other," she murmurs back at me. "I hope you don't mind the adjoining bathroom."

*I'm screwed.*

## CHAPTER TWO

Lula

He's even more perfect in real life.

At least, on the surface.

I've been looking at pictures of Vale since our parents married. His image is framed all over the house. Graduating from the naval academy, receiving commendations. The front page of last week's *New York Times* has been laminated and magnetized to the refrigerator.

*California SEAL Fires the Kill Shot Heard Around the World* reads the headline.

Another picture is there, too. Vale in his starched uniform covered in medals, his jaw firm, eyes serious. Back at the airport, though, I got a glimpse of the man beneath the tough military man exterior. He didn't like the attention and definitely wasn't comfortable in the large gathering of people. I could almost feel the nerves running roughshod through his system.

What has this man been through? I can't even imagine.

Every time I pictured our reunion with Vale at the airport, I saw him striding toward us confidently. Extending a hand to his father and slapping the older man on the back, making a jocular joke for the cameras. I never expected Vale to be stoic, limping, eyes tortured. Holding the bag over his shoulder in a

white-knuckled grip. There is more to him than a granite-jawed hero—although he is definitely that, too.

I've never met someone in real life with so much *presence*.

So much outward strength.

In this town, he's considered a god. The paragon of male perfection. Rife with muscle and power and intelligence. He jumps out of helicopters into foreign oceans, dismantles bombs, goes for days without sleep. He towered over everyone in the airport, his arms so thick with muscle they could barely be contained in his jacket. His blue eyes are riveting. Intense. His brown hair cut short, along with his trimmed beard. He's polished to a shine, while on the inside, I can almost hear the broken pieces of him rattling around. I know it's odd to hold my stepbrother's hand, but I couldn't help it. He needed someone to steady him. And he held it all the way home from the airport, connecting us across the backseat, those blue eyes fixed on me the entire drive.

Which leads me to my problem.

Letting out a breath, I close myself in my bedroom and lean my forehead against the door, willing the dewy heat plaguing my skin to subside. What is happening to me? Am I simply nervous from meeting Vale, a world-renowned hero? Or is it something else?

On the drive home, I turned wet between my legs.

Embarrassingly slippery.

Meanwhile, my mouth is dryer than desert sand.

I've read about female arousal. Of course I have. I'm going to school in the fall to study Eastern medicine. Meditation. Alternative therapy. I'm well-acquainted with how the human body should behave. I just never could have planned for my first ever sexual, feminine response to come courtesy of my stepbrother. Highly inconvenient.

*You. Are. His. Stepsister.*

Sure, he might have held my hand tightly, occasionally brushing his thumb over my knuckles. Sure, his gaze might

have meandered down to my breasts on the ride home, remaining there long enough to create the damp sensation between my thighs. But he's just a soldier who has gone a long time without female companionship. It isn't like we grew up together. Nor are we related by blood. Obviously, *nothing* can happen between us, but I don't blame a man with that much masculinity for feeling lust over the female form.

Even if I'm surprised he feels it for *me*.

My mother has been talking for weeks about all of the women she's going to introduce Vale to. All kinds of debutantes and daughters of their successful friends. And all of those women have one thing in common. They're rail thin. Svelte. A very different body type than my own—and my mother loves to point that out. She always has. Clucking over my jean size or suggesting I go for more walks. Truth is, I do go for a lot of walks. I love being outside and I *want* to love my curvy figure. It's just really hard to fully enjoy my extra padding when I'm constantly being told it's a negative thing.

There's a muffled click and I lift my eyes to the door that leads to our adjoining bathroom. Vale's shadow moves underneath, followed by the running water of our shower. My pulse picks up at the image of Vale stepping beneath the spray, water coasting down over his thick pectorals, dampening the dog tags hanging between them. The soap suds traveling down in rivulets to his buttocks, so high and firm. And in front...

His sex would be waiting. Long. Thick. Neglected.

"Oh my God, would you stop?" I whisper, shaking myself.

The cops should come arrest me for having these thoughts about someone I'm related to by marriage. I can't even imagine what my mother and stepfather would say. They are all about image. All about maintaining the perfect reputation of a four star general and his doting wife. She never makes a misstep. She would be mortified if she knew I was changing my panties right now because my stepbrother turns me on. How am I going to make it through the next three days without totally embarrassing myself?

At least I have that camping trip tomorrow.

A break from whatever is happening to me.

I finish tugging on the white bikini-style underwear and smooth my dress down over them, flopping down on my bed and looking around at my room. Speaking of my mother, she could not hate my vibe any more than she already does, so maybe there is no point in trying to keep her pleased with me? Just this morning she came in filing her nails and eye rolled the multi-colored hanging tapestries and strings of mini lanterns. But I love my space. I love the rich scent of incense and the invitation to stretch out in the cool darkness. And okay, I'm seriously trying to distract myself from the fact that Vale is fifteen yards away, naked, in the shower.

Although...he *has* been in there a long time.

That shower basin usually creaks, too. Under a man his size, it should definitely be making some noise, right? Is he okay in there?

When steam begins to curl out from beneath my door, I rise from the bed and cross to the bathroom, knocking tentatively, concern curling in my breast. "Vale?" I call. "Is everything all right in there?"

A long pause. Then a muffled, "Yeah."

His tone of voice tells me he's not fine.

"Do you need something? A towel?"

There's no response this time.

My fingers tap on the door handle. Do I dare go inside? There's a churning in my chest telling me there's something wrong. After the haunted look I saw in his eyes at the airport, I'm even more worried. "You are studying mediation. The human body is a temple. Nothing more," I whisper to myself, shifting side to side on my bare feet. "It's *just* a body."

I open the door and step into the steam, waiting for it to clear and yeah...

It's not just a body.

Vale sits in the basin of the shower with his legs bent and raised, forearms resting on his knees, back pressed to the tile.

He's soaked and glorious and muscular in the extreme, wearing nothing but dog tags and a far-off expression on his face. Which is what prompts me to set aside my admiration of his form, allowing my concern to come rushing back in.

"*Vale*," I say, opening the glass shower door and stepping inside, hesitating only a few seconds before kneeling down in front of him, staunchly keeping my eyes averted from the flesh between his legs. The warm shower spray rains down on top of me, soaking my dress instantly. "What's wrong?"

He snaps out of his trance and shakes his head. "I'm fine. I just..." His throat works in a rough pattern. "Everything is so fucking quiet, you know? I'm not used to it. Where I've been for the last four years, quiet means something bad is about to happen. Logically, I know there's nothing happening outside on the street. No tanks or landmines, but I can hear them in my head. It's like I'm still there, Lula, but I have none of what I need to protect you."

Before I register what's happening, he wraps me in a bear hug and pulls me onto his lap, pushing my face into his wet, corded neck.

"I don't want anything to happen to you, princess," he rasps, stroking my hair.

Oh my God.

I knew Vale was tortured by the things he'd experienced, but I had no idea his trauma was so severe. Heat presses to the backs on my eyelids. There's nothing I can do to stop myself from snuggling closer, wrapping around him and holding tight. I sense he needs it, needs the contact from another human being. Badly. "Nothing is going to happen to either of us."

"Don't say that, Lula." He's crushing me to his chest now, his mouth moving against my ear. "Those are famous last words."

My heart lurches. How many friends and fellow soldiers has he lost? "Vale, you're home now in California. Look at me." I press my forehead to his, waiting for his blue eyes to

meet mine, almost sobbing over the torture in them. “Focus on your breathing. Do you feel it in your stomach and chest?”

After a moment, he exhales, take a long pull of oxygen and nods. Just a subtle tip of his head. “Yeah.”

“Good.” On impulse, I slide my fingers into his hair and he groans, eyelids shuttering, pressing his scalp into my touch. His vulnerability is so real and honest, it packs such a punch, I can hardly catch my breath to continue. “In and out. Feel your abdomen expand. Focus on it. And we’re going to let that breath out into the rest of your body slowly. Let it wash into all of those places where you’re locked up.”

“God, Lula. I’ve needed your voice.” His parted mouth dips to my neck and he gathers me closer on his lap, like a man holding on to a lifeline. “Keep talking to me, sweet girl.”

I can’t pretend I don’t feel his erection growing underneath me. It’s quite huge and impossible to ignore. The hard flesh presses up against my panties, the material of them soaked from the shower spray still raining down upon us both. I’ve never been in any kind of sexual situation, but the impulse to rock myself on that bulge is fierce. Instinctive. Somehow, I manage to hold myself back, however. Vale is definitely not thinking clearly. God forbid we do something that he’ll regret when he’s back to his calmer self.

“O-okay,” I whisper, my fingers luxuriating in his hair, head tilting to the left so I can feel his breath more fully on my neck. I’m not a saint, apparently, and these things are too intoxicating to pass up. “Now become more aware of your body, Vale. Feel your arms and feet and shoulders. Come back into yourself, letting your breath expand into every region. Your body is the only world that matters right now, there’s nothing outside of it.”

My stepbrother turns his head, his lips dragging across my cheek to my mouth, hovering a breath away. Remaining there for several heavy breaths. “There’s you.” His lips graze mine, those blue eyes hot and intense, cutting through the dimness of the shower. “Your letters saved me. Now here you are, saving me again. My princess.”



“Vale.”

“I know. I know we can’t do this.” A low rumble takes place in his chest. “But God, I’d love to put you flat on your fucking back right now.” A muscle jumps in his cheek. “Make those titties jiggle for Daddy.”

I don’t know what happens to me.

One second I’m caught between burgeoning hunger and surprise that this flawless man wants me—and the next I’m being run over by release so potent, I can only sob and shake, my sex clenching madly inside my panties, his erection stiff and pulsing along with my climax, even though neither one of us dares to move and create friction. I’m having my first orgasm right on top of his rigid length—and he only had to say the right word to unlock me, make it happen.

Daddy. He said Daddy.

His eyes are bright with surprise and lust. “Goddamn, Lula. Is that your first?”

I drop my face into his neck and whimper, nodding. Shaking head to toe.

“Ahhh Jesus.” He rolls his hips beneath me and stars prick the backs of my eyelids. “Fuck it. Give me that mouth, princess. Give it over *now*.”

Is this really happening?

This famous, battle-hewn warrior is so desperate for me?

But he’s not merely a warrior right now, is he? At this very moment, in my arms, he’s Vale. He’s the lonely soldier I’ve been writing to. He’s a man who is facing a very different reality than the one he’s been living and it overwhelms him.

Maybe he only wants me because I’m convenient. Because I’m compassionate and he’s reeling. I don’t care, though. Not right now.

I only want to soothe him.

Be what he needs.

All it takes is a slight incline of my chin and his mouth is on mine, unruly and wet. His kiss is like being transported. My life is now divided into before my stepbrother's mouth and after. It's animal and desperate, lips twisting and taking, his hips lifting beneath me, his hands fisting in the sides of my dress. I've never been kissed before, but it wouldn't have mattered if I had, because no one could compare. He's male, unquestionably in command and yet somehow humble, groaning brokenly as he sinks his tongue into my mouth and rubs it erotically against mine.

"Lula, I can't slow down. I'm sorry." He surges forward, lifting me and dropping my back to the shower floor, his hands shoving up the hem of my dress and wrestling with my panties, jerking the sodden material down to my knees. Water from the above shower is dripping off the ends of his hair, the sharp blade of his shoulders. "Have to get my cock inside you \_\_\_"

There's a loud knock coming from somewhere.

We both go still, except for our sides which heave from exertion.

"Lula, dinner is on the table," calls my mother's voice. A few seconds pass, followed by another knock in a different location. "Dinner is served, Vale. I'm sure you're starved for a home-cooked meal."

Vale seems to come out of a trance, swallowing hard and throwing himself back against the tile wall. Dragging a shaky hand down his face. The shower spray is landing directly on me now, so I sit up and turn it off, trying to piece together what just happened. "Be right down, Mother," I call back, hurriedly pulling my panties back on. "I-I...better go change," I whisper, positive I'm blushing to the roots of my hair. "I know you didn't mean for this to happen. I know it's just been a long time since y-you've been touched. Probably. I don't know. Maybe you just needed comfort. But I'm not going to make a big deal out of it."

"Lula, it is a big deal. I'm your stepbrother. I'm older and know better. I'm..."

“Living under a microscope,” I finish for him. “I get it.”

And I also know he probably regrets getting caught up in the heat of the moment. I just happened to be here when he needed a distraction. When his male needs were—and still are—at a fever pitch. There’s no way I can let him think I’ve gotten the wrong idea. That he likes me. How humiliating would it be if he was forced to let me down easy? That has always been my greatest fear. That I would misread a guy’s interest and force him into telling me sorry, I’m just not his type. I’d rather be alone than have that happen. To find out my mother is right and my body is going to prevent me from living life to the fullest. From being happy.

“I’ll see you at dinner,” I say, scrambling to my feet and booking it out of the shower, thankfully without slipping.

“*Lula*,” he grits out, coming to his feet.

But I’m already closing the door and working my way out of the wet clothes, a pain in my chest forming when I realize that might be the first *and* last time I kiss Vale. It’s obvious that I formed an attachment to him through our letters and now meeting him in person? There’s a whole new dimension to the breathlessness he inspires in me. The sense of rightness.

There’s nothing I can do about it, though.

So I better just pull my head down out of the clouds.

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## CHAPTER THREE

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Vale

Sitting at the table with my father and stepmother with a dick that could shatter glass is uncomfortable, to say the least. There is no help for it with Lula sitting across from me, however. She's changed into another dress, and this one is tight, short and white of all colors, as if I need a reminder I almost fucked this innocent virgin on the floor of a shower. No condom, no foreplay. I would have burst her cherry and ridden like hell. After she was kind enough to fight my demons with me. Christ. I should be ashamed of myself. I should be more ashamed that I wish to God we hadn't been interrupted.

I can already feel this getting dangerous.

I'm a man with lethal capabilities and the ability to surveil someone unseen. I'm already planning on watching her while she sleeps tonight, this sweet, loving angel who happens to be related to me by marriage. I'm itching to get my fingertips on her things. To go through her laundry and find the panties in which she had her first orgasm, so I can drag them all over my body, tie them in a knot around my dick.

I'm almost too horny to eat, but my father is watching me closely, as usual, so I manage to chew and swallow, my attention straying to Lula's juicy tits. That dress is tight and worn, like she's had it forever. Molding to her soft skin and making me insane. That mouth of hers closing around her fork

and dragging turns my cock into a pulsing trunk, jammed up behind my fly.

*You can't have her.*

I know I shouldn't even be looking at Lula with these eyes that have witnessed so much horror. I'm too fucked up to be in her presence, let alone lay a finger on her. I haven't even bothered being diagnosed with PTSD because it's obviously one of my main problems. No doctor's note required. What is the point of addressing what's wrong with me when I know it can't be cured? Nothing can erase the images from my head. Nothing can rip the shouts for help out of my head. Or this feeling of being useless now that I'm a civilian again.

She makes me feel normal. When I read her letters, when she held me in the shower, the storm inside my head devolved into a tranquil lake. But that's not okay. It's unacceptable. I'm not going to make this girl—and that's what she is at *eight-fucking-teen*—with a normal life ahead of her become my cure. I have to stay away from Lula for the next three days and hope like hell I can overcome this growing infatuation once I leave for Coronado.

*Yeah right.*

She's already gotten to me.

At this point, all I can hope is that I'm as noble as everyone believes me to be. Noble enough to keep my hands off my teenage stepsister and walk away without ruining her life.

“So, Vale...” Vanessa sips from a glass of white wine and sets it down. “I know you've only been back for less than one day. And your father made me promise I wouldn't ask right away, *but*...some of my local friends have daughters your age. Some of them slightly younger. Career-minded girls who haven't had time to date until recently.” She winks at me and my stomach turns. “I know they'd love to meet a certain celebrated war veteran.”

It doesn't escape my notice that the fork suddenly becomes too heavy for Lula, her hand falling to rest beside her plate.

She must be embarrassed by her mother's inappropriate timing. Even my father, who is clearly enamored with Vanessa, seems irked. "Let the man have one day of peace before ringing the dinner bell, would you?"

Vanessa winces, but there's no remorse in it. "Excuse me for wanting to present this heroic SEAL with a lineup of stunning women. They might be professionals, but every last one of them could pass for a pageant girl. I am *very* discerning."

Lula is no longer eating and it takes every bit of my willpower not to march to the other side of the table, settle her on my lap and start feeding her bites of truffle mashed potatoes. "Thank you for thinking of me, ma'am," I say politely as possible. "But I'm not interested."

God help me, I can't imagine a set of hands on me that don't belong to my stepsister.

The thought of anyone else touching me turns my stomach.

A memory accosts me. Lula mewling around my tongue, her pussy shifting in my lap and I have to reach down and adjust myself roughly, barely able to keep from panting.

Vanessa isn't ready to quit, unfortunately, and her next comment sets my teeth on edge. "I can see it now. Someone with captivating looks to match your own. A graceful disposition. Long legs like a ballerina..." She smiles into her glass of wine. "Are you convinced yet?"

"No," I reply, sharply, the handle of the fork digging into my palm. "And trust me, the last thing I'd be interested in is someone exactly like me."

I'm being too abrupt. Too disagreeable. This is not how the media darling is supposed to act. I'm meant to have a humble attitude and a funny rejoinder for every question. Everyone's ideal Captain America. Even in front of my father. Especially in front of him.

Forcing myself to swallow a bite of chicken, I search for a way to soften my irritated response to Vanessa. "Two people

exactly like me would be a lot of baggage for one relationship, Vanessa.”

“Baggage?” she asks.

An uncomfortable itch forms on the back of my neck. I’m suddenly restless, but when I find Lula’s eyes across the table, the beginnings of an earthquake inside me become manageable. “You don’t leave combat without it,” I murmur.

My stepmother starts to ask another question, but she’s cut off abruptly when my father slams a fist down on the table. “None of that complaining in my house.” Once upon a time, I would have jumped sky high at one of his outbursts, but I’m a man now. A SEAL. I’ve been in countless battles and even spent a few weeks being tortured in a POW camp. Nearly had my leg blown off. I don’t flinch in the face of his temper anymore. “We show gratitude *only* in representing this country. If you want to take that honor and turn it into something to cry about, do it somewhere else. At least you got to live when so many others didn’t.”

I might not flinch at his anger anymore, but this rhetoric was repeated so often to me growing up that I can’t prevent the stab of guilt. He’s right. I should be grateful to be home. I should be strong and unshakeable like I was taught. I definitely shouldn’t be brought to my knees in the shower by flashbacks. My father and I hold each other’s gaze for long moments, neither one of us willing to lose the staring contest.

Vanessa clears her throat. “Um...Lula. Are you all set for camping tomorrow?”

That question splits my focus right down the middle. “*Camping?*” I practically shout at my stepsister. “Where? With who?”

She raises an eyebrow, clearly thrown by my reaction. “I’m going with two of my girlfriends, Santana and Jess. We’re heading up to Prairie Creek for the night.”

I’m genuinely doing my best not to spiral into a panic attack at the table. Mainly because it wouldn’t be a good look in front of our parents if they knew I’m already protective as

hell over the stepsister I only met this afternoon. Doesn't she know how many accidents can happen in the wilderness? She could misstep and fall from a cliff. She could be attacked by wildlife. Hit her head and fall into a body of water. The list goes on and on. Are they out of their fucking minds letting this young girl take off alone like this?

"You're sure that's a good idea?" I ask, stabbing the tines of my fork into some chicken. "Who is chaperoning you?"

Lula wrinkles that adorable nose at me. My cock swells so swiftly, I have to grit my teeth. "No one is chaperoning us," she enunciates. "Since we're all legally adults."

"Yeah? Well bears don't check ID, Lula," I fire back.

And she laughs. It starts out as a snort. She tries to muffle the sound with her hands, but the giggle bursts out of her and the craziest thing happens. I start laughing, too. I can't recall a single other time in my life that I've laughed at this dinner table. No, I've been lectured and shouted at and reprimanded. There was no mirth whatsoever until now.

Until her.

"I'm sorry," she gasps, fanning the tears of laughter in her eyes. "I'm just thinking of a bear on his hind legs asking to see my driver's license!"

She doubles over and Jesus, is that my own laugh booming through the dining room?

I mean, there is *no way in fuck* she's going camping without me there to protect her. But even I have to admit, a bear checking identification is too funny for me to stay pissed. And that's when I notice that my father and stepmother aren't laughing along with us. In fact, my stepmother seems more annoyed than anything over Lula's giggling fit.

Me? I'd like to seal the sound into a jar. Save it forever.

"Lula will be fine. She's a frequent camper," drones Vanessa. "She finds balance in nature or something. I don't know where she gets it. Certainly not from me."



“It’s the simplicity of wildlife,” Lula says hesitantly, as if she’s not sure her opinion will be welcome at the table. “I can’t teach people how to find their quiet place if I don’t stay well acquainted with my own.”

My father rolls his eyes. “Generation Z and their all-important self-care. Lula thinks she is going to make a career out of it.”

“Then she *is* going to make a career out of it,” I snap, gripping the fork until it hurts. “She’s good. And I’m pretty sure her methods are better than bottling up your aggression for decades until you’re nothing but an angry prick all the time.”

We square off, my father and I, him chewing his bite slowly, jaw grinding.

This is not how I was taught to speak to my father. As a child, a statement like that would have earned me a backhand across the mouth. But it will be a cold day in hell before anyone speaks to my sweetheart stepsister that way and gets away with it. And it feels good, too. Not saying the exact right thing. Saying exactly what is on my mind, instead of following the humble soldier script that seems to have been written for me.

My father laughs unexpectedly, slapping a palm off his knee. “Looks like the SEALs did their job and put some fire in him. He’s definitely not quiet and introverted anymore, is he?”

“No, certainly not,” Vanessa agrees quickly, visibly happy to have the mood lightened. “We have blueberry pie for dessert. Then I thought we could all watch a movie in the den. Won’t that be nice?”

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## CHAPTER FOUR

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### Lula

After dinner, I go upstairs to brush my teeth and put on a pair of fuzzy socks—a required movie viewing accessory, since it’s cold in the den—and when I come back down, everyone has already taken their spots. My mother is curled up on the love seat with her mini poodles, Tamsen and Boo Boo. My stepfather is reclined in his easy chair, frowning down at the remote controls. And Vale is on the couch, watching me beneath hooded eyelids.

The only available spot in the room is beside him.

Truthfully, there is no other place I would rather sit. I’m just so confused by what’s happening between me and my stepbrother, the idea of two hours beside him turns my stomach into a trampoline for nerves. After what happened in the shower earlier, I thought I had the situation figured out. Vale is lonely and starved for affection after being away so long. In such perilous circumstances.

I’m still pretty sure that’s the case. I’m just convenient.

A warm body to slake the urges of a big, testosterone-laden warrior.

But the way he stood up for me at the dinner table, the protectiveness he displayed for me when he found out about camping...it doesn’t add up. Is it possible there is more happening here than meets the eye?

Swallowing hard, I cross the floor of the den and sit down on the couch to Vale's right.

He's leaned back, one elbow resting on the arm of the couch, his magnificently thick and corded thighs spread in the pose of a man who can and does handle hard situations. After his shower, he changed into sweatpants and it's an effort not to look *there*. At the apex of his thighs where there is a clear outline of his manhood, fat and *definitely* not contained by underwear. Oh yeah. My stepbrother is one hundred percent free-balling it.

Vale runs his tongue along the inside of his lower lip when he catches me staring. I notice the flesh in his sweatpants rise quickly, pushing at the seam, bigger than I could have imagined. He mouths a curse and grabs a blanket from the back of the sofa, throwing it over his lap and hiding the evidence of his arousal. And we both stare straight ahead at the television, both of us breathing faster than before.

As the movie begins—a comedy about a dog and its scatterbrained owners—I begin to wish I'd worn pants. The simple act of sitting this close to Vale and knowing he has an erection is making my sex warm and achy. Wet. So wet that my panties are sodden by the time the first scene is over. A hot shiver passes through me. And another.

"Lula," my mother calls from across the room. "You're freezing. Share some of that blanket with Vale."

"I'm fine," I say quickly. Too quickly.

Vale grunts, lifts the edge of the blanket, his eyes almost black when they meet mine. "I see you shivering. Come here, Lula."

If I protest now, it's going to be weird. My resistance might even draw attention to the fact that I'm attracted to Vale, thus wary of getting too close, and that's the last thing I want to do. "Um...okay. Thanks." I slide closer to him on the couch, my tummy flipping over when our hips meet. The outsides of our thighs press together, softness to ample muscle.

Vale leans over and tucks half of the blanket around me, his brow furrowed in deep concentration. As if he takes my warmth very seriously. “That better, princess?” he whispers, right against my ear. And all I can do is nod vigorously, training my eyes on the television, praying I won’t have another spontaneous orgasm like I did in the shower. When I climaxed after barely being provoked. It’s him. This man. He has a crazy effect on me, and I don’t seem to have much control over it.

My nipples are stiff, my inner thighs buzzing with sensitivity. Every part of me that connects with Vale is rejoicing happily, wanting to snuggle and luxuriate in his power and masculinity, but I force myself to remain stock still.

At least until, beneath the blanket, Vale hooks his pinkie finger around mine.

Smooth and slow. Clutching possessively.

My clitoris throbs in response.

Head to toe, I’m sensitive. I’m physically aware of every single movement my stepbrother makes from the scratching of his eyebrow to the slow lift of his hips—and of course I see it. His bulging shaft beneath the blanket. He lowers his hips again afterward, but I know it’s there, mere inches from my left hand—which he is holding now.

I’m *holding hands* with my stepbrother, his thumb brushing side to side on the small of my wrist. He can almost definitely feel my racing pulse there. There’s no hiding it.

To our right, my stepfather begins to snore in the recliner, head tipped back against the cushion. My mother laughs at the sound and hits a few buttons on her phone, lowering the lights in the den even more. To almost pitch black, except for the flickering television screen. “To help him sleep,” she explains in a conspiratorial whisper, going back to petting the dogs. She’s on her third glass of wine, though, her own head beginning to nod on the pillows.

A few minutes later and she’s unconscious, too.

With both of our parents sleeping, the awareness between me and Vale is multiplied tenfold. He squeezes my hand and lets it go, but I'm not given a second to mourn his touch, because he slides that arm around my shoulders, tugging me more securely up against his side.

"You'll be warmer this way," he says, lips grazing my temple. "I'm sorry about dinner. My father being dismissive of the career you want."

"There's nothing for you to be sorry about," I whisper back. "You stood up for me. It was...nice. Someone having my back. Thank you."

"No one should have to stand up for you. Not in your own house." His upper lip curls. "I'll make sure to put an end to that before I leave for Coronado." The reminder that Vale is only here on a temporary basis makes my throat feel clogged. That reaction must be showing on my face, because he frowns, leaning down to roll our foreheads together. "Ah, princess..."

Our mouths open and release a breath, bathing each other's lips in warmth, preparing to launch into a kiss that neither one of us can prevent, but there's an eruption of snoring from my stepfather. Vale and I put a few inches of distance in between our mouths as the man shifts in the recliner, turning slightly away from us and resuming his nap once again.

I study Vale's chiseled face in the flicker of the television, feeling closer to him than I ever have with anyone. I felt that way the moment he walked out into the open at the airport, the emotion only increasing with every passing hour. Every exchange of knowing eye contact. I'm eager to know more about this man. What other chance will I have if he's leaving soon?

"I was surprised when your father said you used to be quiet and introverted," I breathe for his ears alone, barely checking the urge to touch his chest beneath the blanket. "I mean, you came across thoughtful in your letters. But the media has portrayed you as kind of..."

"A confident man's man with the perfect answer for every question?" He chuckles quietly, but the sound holds no humor.

“The press has given me this persona to make everyone comfortable with celebrating the kill. I’ve been coached by the Navy on how to respond. No one wants to hear it was a low-down and nasty business. They want to think it was something like they might see in a movie. Now the hero just has to look pretty and wave for the cameras.”

My heart gives a long tug. “How are you feeling on the inside?”

He blows out a breath. “Isolated. Displaced.” That muscular arm tightens around me, pulling me closer, his brow knit in thought. “I don’t feel that way right now, Lula. With you.”

Pleasure washes over me, warm and potent. I can’t let the confession go to my head, however. He’s been on US soil for a matter of hours and I’m the only person who is willing to show him some comfort. Even among his own family and friends. At least, that’s what I seem to be telling myself so I don’t get far-fetched ideas in my head about this hunky, heroic man developing an interest in me. “What about the other men on your team?”

A line hops in his cheek and he looks down at his lap. “They’re good guys. The best. We were closer before all of this happened, though. I’m getting credit for something that was a joint effort. They say they’re fine with it, that they don’t want the notoriety, but it’s hard to stay happy for someone when the president is thanking them in a speech without a single mention of anyone else. And now that I’m injured and my identity has been leaked...”

“There’s was just no time to make any of it right,” I finish for him in a whisper. “I’m sure that’s unsettling. Not even having that foundation of your friends.”

He gives me a dazzling half-smile, his white teeth flashing in the darkness. “Are you sure meditation is your jam and not psychology?”

I bite my lip to contain a laugh. “I’ve always been great at recognizing issues in other people and knowing how to correct them. But when it comes to my own, it’s a different story.”

A wrinkle of concern forms between his brows. “Anyone would have issues growing up in this house, but I don’t like knowing you have them. Talk to me.”

I’ve always tried to minimize my problems. It’s just a knee-jerk reaction. Logically, I know they are just as valid as anyone else’s. But when I start to talk about them out loud, I find myself rushing through the details and saying *it’s fine it’s fine it’s fine* a lot. “Nothing, really...”

He tips my chin up and gives me a stern look. “Lula...”

God, he is so handsome. No wonder good-looking people always seem to be in positions of power. Telling them no when they want something is extra hard. Not to mention, his worry is genuine. I can feel it radiating from him in waves.

“Well, our parents have everything figured out, at least on the surface. They always have a plan and a goal, whether it’s organizing a charity or rallying people around a political cause. And they seem kind of bewildered that I need to think and meditate before making most decisions. It’s not just my career choice they think is frivolous and silly...it’s me.” I struggle through a swallow. “I’m an outsider in my own house.” Somehow I find the courage to echo his earlier words. “I don’t feel that way right now, Vale. With you.”

I’ve just seriously put myself out there by admitting that. It’s so unlike me to take risks, especially with the opposite sex. But Vale doesn’t give me a chance to dangle on the line or feel self-conscious. No. He dips his mouth to mine and takes a long, slow pull of my lips. “To think my original plan was to go directly to Coronado from the airport. What if I’d missed out on you, princess?” In one smooth move, he lifts the blanket and drags me onto his lap. Effortlessly. I’m facing the television, my bottom wedged tightly against that bulge, the bare backs of my thighs resting on his clothed legs. My feet aren’t even close to touching the ground.

We’re in a room with our parents and I’m sitting on his lap.

If they woke up, there would be no mistaking what’s happening or explaining it away.

Especially when Vale winds my hair in a fist and gently tugs, bringing my back flush to his broad chest, his heart pounding against my spine, his breath feathering my neck. “There is nothing frivolous or silly about you. The way you help reach below someone’s surface just makes them uncomfortable, because they’re afraid what they’d find under their own.”

Emotion makes the tip of my nose sting momentarily. “Thank you.”

“I’m only telling the truth, Lula.” He exhales roughly, shifting his hips, his teeth grazing the sensitive skin beneath my ear. “You’re a fucking treasure. Don’t ever doubt it. Okay?”

“Okay,” I breathe, my nipples puckering painfully, my nerve endings waking up and dancing like they’ve been dormant, waiting for this man to arrive and touch me.

“You do have one serious problem, though,” Vale says in a gruff voice beside my ear, his chest rising and falling heavily underneath me. “And we need to discuss it.”

“I-I do? We...do?”

He unwinds my hair from his fist, trailing that hand over my shoulder, collarbone and down to my breasts. Kneading the left one once through my dress, before sliding his hand down the front of my bodice, dipping those long fingers into my bra and fondling me, skin to skin. “I’ve only been here half a day, Lula, and I can see...you’ve been parenting yourself. Isn’t that right?” He unsnaps the front of my bra, groaning deeply in his throat when my breasts tumble free into his waiting hands. “They live in their own world, don’t they? Letting you disappear into crowds at the airport. Camping. You’re not getting the attention you need. Or the protection.”

There is so much truth to what he’s saying.

Of course, I’m able to camp and handle myself in public alone.

But. There’s no denying that I do feel like I’m fending for myself all the time.



There's no denying how isolated I am in my own home. Isolated just like Vale.

My stepbrother lifts his head briefly, his lips leaving my neck as he glances around the room, making sure we're not being watched. He pulls the blanket over the top of us more securely, covering us from neck to feet. When he's finished with the task, his hand doesn't return to my breasts, though.

No, it cups my knee, squeezing. Slowly. Then his fingertips climb beneath the hem of my dress, traveling higher, higher up my inner thigh. Knowing instinctively where he's heading, I bite my lip and squirm a little in Vale's lap, earning a "*shhh*" from his gorgeous mouth.

When he's halfway to the juncture of my thighs, he seems to lose patience and grips my sex roughly, his breath releasing in a rush. I have to throw my head back against his shoulder and concentrate on holding back my climax. The very act of him touching me there is enough to blow my hormones sky high. His hand is warm and strong and possessive, his palm perfectly curved to my mons, his fingertips digging into the giving flesh of my femininity. "I mean what I say, Lula. You need more attention. Better care. My father obviously isn't qualified to parent you way you need." He begins to massage me gently, teasing the flesh inside my underwear. "This pussy needs a Daddy, doesn't it, princess?"

A seismic ripple passes through me, my thighs jerking closed around his hand, and it's everything I can do to keep from panting in the too quiet, too crowded den. I never would have expected my body to react to that sentiment so eagerly. But it does. I *do* want this capable man to care for me. I want to soak up his attention like a sponge that has been left out and forgotten too long. I've never had a strong male support figure in my life. Not one that made me feel safe. Not one that took an interest in me.

Even if Vale's presence in the house is only temporary, I can't help but gravitate toward it. Wanting to hear more. Wanting to live inside this feeling of being cherished and secure.

*This pussy needs a Daddy, doesn't it, princess?*

“Yes,” I finally answer, as quiet as a mouse.

I might as well have shouted it based on his reaction. He groans long and guttural into my shoulder, his shaft growing impossibly large beneath me, pressing up into the split of my bottom. Unfettered now, I open my thighs back up and rub against him, waiting in breathless anticipation to find out what his touch will do to me next.

I don't have long to wait to find out.

Those thick fingers slip into my panties, delving into the ample wetness, parting my folds with a slow, purposeful stroke. “Fuck. That is sweet.” His middle finger drags up and back in the valley of my flesh, making me whimper. “Actually thought I could leave in three days without a backward glance, but that's not going to happen, is it? This needs to be guarded at all costs. Needs to be raised right. That's what I'm here for now, Lula, you get me?”

There is no way to process the meaning behind what he's telling me—or if he means something more serious than my brain can currently grasp—I'm too caught up in the maelstrom of sensation. The winding up of storm clouds in my tummy. Especially when the pad of his middle finger grazes my clit for the first time, then moves faster and faster on the small, sensitive bud, shooting lust and urgency straight down to my toes.

“Never been a Daddy before, but I was yours the second I stepped off the plane, wasn't I? You knew it. And so did this pretty virgin cunt.” He pushes his middle finger inside my drenched entrance, both of us gasping, the sound of damp flesh barely drowned out by the sound of the movie. “And what does that make you, my too-tight princess?”

The answer is somehow obvious. “L-little girl. Your little girl.”

How do I know this? No idea. It's instinctive. Like slipping on a new, second layer of skin that is infinitely more comfortable than the first.

“That’s right,” he rasps into my neck, his hips starting to roll beneath me. Quickly. Desperately. “They want to slack off on parenting duties? *Fine*. I’m stepping in. I’m the one who gives permission and advice and buys your clothes now. Vale is Daddy. Say you understand.”

We’re getting too loud. Our breathing is out of control, the rasp of our clothing seems magnified in my ears. I can hear every slick stroke of his fingers through my sopping wet flesh. So I nod, instead of answering, tipping my head back so he can see the affirmation in my eyes. And whatever he sees in my expression riles him up, brings his mouth down on mine, kissing me over my shoulder. Now I’m being ridden in his lap, his middle finger pumping in and out of my previously untouched channel, his tongue sweeping into my mouth with ownership.

My orgasm sinks its teeth into me, and I whimper into the kiss, struggling through the tumult of sensations, my butt grinding down into his lap, my womanhood clenching and pulsating around his finger. *Oh God. Oh God*. This is far more intense than the release he gave me upstairs in the shower, because I’m being pumped full—and because he’s coming, too, this time. I’m still at the apex of my climax when Vale twists to the right and throws me face down on the couch, his hips jackhammering mine through my panties and his sweatpants. The springs of the couch creak underneath us and the blanket has been discarded on the floor. If our parents opened their eyes right now, they would see my stepbrother on top of me, humping me violently on the couch—and I still don’t think we’d be able to stop.

“Do you have any idea how fucking hot this lush, round ass makes me? Those big, juicy tits? *Jesus Christ*.” He thrusts against me even harder, his fingers burying in my hair, twisting the strands. “You were built for me. Built to get it rough. Built to take Daddy’s pounding.”

My mouth is open in pleasure, in sensual overload on the couch cushions. A moan works its way up my throat, but I turn my head at the last second to bury the sound. And that’s when my panties are yanked down, great, glopping wetness striping

across my cheeks. My stepbrother's spend lands audibly in the still, dark room, his strangled groans muffled in my neck, big, huge body jerking and jerking, over and over again on top of me until his release runs down the split of my bottom, all the way to my sated sex, mixing with the proof of my own pleasure. Only then does Vale collapse on top of me.

Almost instantaneously, there's a shift across the room, my mother changing positions on the couch. With a frustrated curse, Vale eases off me and adjusts his sweatpants, wiping me clean with a sweep of his T-shirt and tugging my panties back up into place quickly. We're in the process of sitting up, both of us still catching our breath, when my mother yawns loudly.

"Oh my goodness, don't tell me I fell asleep just like your father."

Neither Vale nor I have the wherewithal to answer. I can barely *think* straight, let alone speak. I just hooked up with my stepbrother. On the couch. Mere feet from our parents.

Was it a one-time thing?

It didn't sound like it. It sounded like Vale was claiming me...permanently.

But it's hard to trust that when I've been conditioned to be insecure. What if he was just saying words in the heat of the moment? Santana and Jess are always complaining about guys who make promises in the dark but ghost them the next morning. Is it fair to hold Vale to anything he said to me? Maybe things will be clearer in the night of day?

Again, my mother yawns. "Lula, you're leaving early for camping, right? Maybe you should head upstairs and get a good night's sleep."

A muscle flexes in Vale's cheek and I get the distinct impression his willpower is the only thing keeping him from pinning me down again. His blue gaze is fastened on my mouth, even more intense than I've seen it since he arrived. Those big fists are bunched on his thighs, that upper lip on the verge of peeling back. What does his demeanor mean? Does

he want to touch me again or—even more likely—is he annoyed at himself for getting carried away?

With a hard pinch in my chest, I get to my feet unsteadily. “You’re right, Mother. They’re going to be here early and I haven’t even packed.” Briefly, I meet Vale’s glittering eyes. “Good night.”

I go upstairs to my room and close the door, listening for Vale to follow—and he does, a few minutes later. His footsteps move in a pattern on the other side of our adjoined bathroom, giving me the impression that he’s pacing.

If he’s worried about my holding him to his promises, he doesn’t have to. I won’t.

A lump slides up and down in my throat when I swallow.

I’ll go camping in the morning and give him some space, maybe a chance to...go out. See other people besides me. After all, I’m the only woman he’s had any contact with.

*You’re convenient.*

Right before I go to bed, I turn the lock on my main bedroom door, as well as the bathroom bolt. I’m not sure why I do it. Maybe as a way to maintain the little pride I have if Vale, in fact, feels he made a mistake. It takes me a while to fall asleep, but I do eventually, intense blue eyes haunting my dreams.

## CHAPTER FIVE

Vale

I'm in the driver's side of a car, the seat reclined all the way back so I can't be seen from the road. I watch Lula exit the house across the street carrying a pillow and sleeping bag, a backpack slung over one shoulder. A low, animal growl leaves my mouth at the sight of my delicious stepsister, her soft skin glowing in the morning light. It takes every ounce of self-control not to throw open the door of this car—which I broke into with ease—and storm across the street to demand to know why she locked me out last night.

Yeah right. If I do that, I'll end up buried in her pussy in broad daylight.

Right there on the sidewalk. However I can get it. Get *her*.

Aware that I'm sucking in rattling breaths, I drag a hand down my face and order myself to rein in the hunger. The obsession that has grown into something uncontrollable literally overnight. I returned to my bedroom last night after the movie and forced myself to take some time and get my possessiveness under control. After damn near fucking her on the couch, I was almost unhinged with purpose.

I'm not leaving this house without her. Not going to Coronado unless she's at my side.

I'm going to be what she needs at all times. Going to take care of her. I wanted to hold her down last night and demand

promises. I wanted inside of her so I can start working on getting her pregnant and locked down before someone steals her from me.

What man worth a damn *wouldn't* try?

She's a fucking light in the darkness, so sweet and compassionate and understanding. She's got an adorable sense of humor. She's astute. Smart. Knows what she wants out of her future. And *Christ*, that body. My dick is standing straight up already just watching those titties shake inside her tank top. The palms of my hands itch like crazy to grip those wide hips, hold her steady while I rock deep, my stomach slapping up against the perfection of her ass. *Goddamn*, I'm going to make myself come thinking about being inside of her for the first time. Going to get my sperm so deep, it'll take a week for a single drop to escape.

A car pulls up at the curb near Lula and I reach for the gun at my hip, adrenaline firing on all cylinders, making every hair on my body stand up. I relax slightly when my stepsister smiles and waves at whoever is in the vehicle. They park and get out. Robotically, I register their facial features like I was trained, noting that one of them is blonde, tall, fair-skinned while the other has dark hair in a bun, a sepia complexion and two eyebrow piercings. That's all it takes.

Two seconds with my eyes off Lula and I'm starved for the sight of her.

The friends are forgotten as I zero in on her, watching with rapt attention as she loads her things into the back of her friend's car, chatting happily about how great the weather is for camping. Once she's finished putting her things in the trunk, she glances back at the house. Hesitates. It's wishful thinking that she's hoping to see *me* before leaving, right? Obviously I scared the living hell out of her last night. I went way too far too soon. For godsakes, she only met me in person for the first time yesterday and there I was, humping her like a beast and explaining that I'll be her Daddy going forward. No wonder she locked the doors.

I need to be more artful. More patient with her. She's a virgin. Inexperienced.

If she knew how high this inferno inside me has already built, she would probably never come home from camping. She'd take her chances among the bears.

I'm not taking any chances with her surrounded by wildlife, however. As soon as Lula gets into the backseat and her friend pulls away, I follow. I keep an inconspicuous distance for hours, even allowing other cars to get between us, reasoning that I know the name of the campsite and I won't lose her. I know exactly where Lula is going to be—and I plan on knowing her location at all times in the future.

Yeah, there's no way to douse this fire she's lit in me. I'm going to have her, damn the consequences. She's mine. She's fucking *mine* and no one is going to take her away from me.

I covet this responsibility to follow her on the camping trip and keep her safe. The privilege of being her man, her protector, is like air in my lungs. I'm not sure how we're going to deal with my parents, the military brass or the press, but whatever their reaction, being with Lula is worth it. By a damn sight. Bring it on. I've never needed anyone or anything so much in my life.

*Mine she's mine she's mine.*

After a long stretch of driving up a winding, mountain road, the car carrying my stepsister pulls off into a parking lot. I drive past just to be safe and circle back, driving into the lot behind them a few minutes later. Parking at the opposite end and watching them unload supplies from the trunk, wishing I could carry Lula's load. God, I would give anything to be the one going camping with her. The wilderness is a perfect setting for the animalistic things I want to do to her.

Eventually they start hiking down a path in the direction of the apparent campsite—and I follow, keeping to the trees, moving without a sound. Inhaling her incense scent from the air and dragging it into my lungs greedily. I'm still hard as a rock in my jeans. So stiff it's painful. But I refuse to stop long enough to jack myself off. I've come on Lula's perfect skin.



Now anything else will be inferior and I'll be hard again in seconds. There's no point.

They stop ahead and begin pitching their tent, organizing chairs around a stone ring. They've picked a nice spot with a bubbling stream not too far away and a dense canopy of trees that give them ample shade—and allow me to easily remain unseen. I perform a silent perimeter check of the area to make sure there are no recent animal tracks or venomous creatures that might sink their teeth into my Lula. Once I'm satisfied that she's safe, I rest a forearm on the trunk of a redwood and listen to their conversation.

"I'm seriously considering quitting this whole dating business," says the blonde one. The back of her nylon chair is embroidered with the name Jess, so the other girl must be Santana. "The guy I went out with the other night was a disaster. Word to the wise, if he's asking for anal after one date, run for the freaking hills."

"No. He didn't," Santana groans, leaning forward. "Did you do it, though?"

There's a long pause, then Jess says. "Yeah, it might have slipped in."

The three girls erupt into laughter, but I can see my stepsister is shifting uncomfortably in her seat, playing with the beads on her bracelet. If I was within reaching distance, I would have already pulled her into my lap. "How did it feel? Weird or good?"

"Oh, definitely weird," Jess laughs. "It's kind of like... satisfying, I guess? Guys are so turned on by it, they only last like, two seconds."

"It's kind of flattering," Santana pipes in, sipping from a mug.

"Why do they like it so much?" asks Lula.

Jess shrugs. "It's just tighter." She gives Lula a sly look. "Although you're still hanging on to your virginity, so you're probably tight no matter what."

“Lucky me,” Lula responds with a smile. “Is that, like... really important to a guy?”

“Depends on the size of his *you know what*,” Santana answers, nodding sagely.

Any other time, I would probably be pretty amused by this conversation. It’s obvious that teenage boys are just as clueless as they always were—not that Lula will ever have to worry about that. It’s also obvious that these girls have a lot of affection for my stepsister. She’s obviously innocent as hell, but they don’t seem to be judging her halting questions.

“Why are you asking, Lula?” Jess asks, leaning over the elbow Lula. “You never ask us about sex. Do you have someone specific in mind?”

Lula picks up her own mug and takes a hasty sip. “What? No. I’m...no.”

Santana perks up. “That wasn’t very convincing.”

“Yeah,” Jess agrees. “You’ve got your stepbrother staying with you now after all.”

Lula’s cheeks turn pink. “What do you mean by that?”

“I *mean*...” Jess draws out. “Did he introduce you to a hot Navy SEAL friend or something?”

“Oh,” breathes my stepsister, understanding dawning. “No, he...he didn’t. Introduce me to anyone.”

Goddamn right I didn’t.

If that ever happens, check on hell, because it’s frozen the fuck over.

“It’s only Vale staying at the house. No friends. Nothing l-like that.” She’s back to fidgeting and it’s like I can read her mind. She’s thinking of my finger pumping into her cunt, my tongue sweeping the sweet cavern of her mouth—and God, now I’m not just hard, I’m dripping. “I’m only asking about sex, because...well, if there’s ever an opportunity, I want to be prepared.”

“I’m not buying it!” Jess says, jabbing a finger toward the sky. “Come clean, girl. Who are you thinking of blowing?”

“Nobody!” Lula insists. A pause ensues. Then, “But if I was...what would you consider the proper technique?”

Santana and Jessa throw up their hands in victory. “Knew it!” crows Santana. “Hey, listen carefully. You need to worry less about your blow job technique and more about his cunnilingus skills.”

Lula nods, wide eyed. But her head slowly starts to shake. “Yeah, I don’t know about that. I don’t think I would like it.”

Jess chokes on her drink. “What? Why do you think that?”

“I think I would just be self-conscious, you know?” She laughs, as if trying to make light of the statement. “My mother is always saying men don’t like...the extra weight. On a girl.”

I almost blow my cover right then and there.

Almost march down and demand Lula get on her back, so I can devour her like it’s a pie-eating contest and she’s strawberry-rhubarb. How can this girl not realize she’s a smoke show? She’s insecure about her weight? I’ve never had a type, but as soon as I saw Lula, my type became her. Exactly what she is. If that’s heavier than whatever people deem normal, then this is how I want her to stay. My favorite things about her body are its softness and resilience and mouthwatering curves. My fingers are fucking *miserable* without touching her.

“Lula,” Jess says hesitantly. “If I man doesn’t think you’re sexy, he’s an idiot.”

“*And* dead wrong.” Santana adds.

“Thanks, guys,” Lula says, splitting a smile between her friends.

It’s slightly stiff, though, as if she’s not totally convinced.

Her friends seem to notice she’s uncomfortable talking about her body, trading a look with each other, before Jess says, “Let’s break out the s’mores and talk about blow jobs.”

Subject changed, they start rooting through supplies for marshmallows and chocolate.

But my mind is stuck in one place.

That pussy.

Burning her self-consciousness to the ground.

As soon as she gets home, I'm going to put my tongue to work.

That's what I should have done last night, instead of grinding on her ass cheeks. I was just in such a frenzy at the time, I wasn't thinking straight. Next time, I'm going to spread those legs apart and lick until she realizes she's a goddamn bombshell.

For the next hour, I groan into my fist, watching her lick melted marshmallow from her fingers. I swore I wasn't going to beat off, but she makes it nearly impossible just by being Lula. By being mine. Her sweet laughter drifts up through the trees and starts my heart thundering in my chest. I'm full of her, head to toe. Consumed.

So when she excuses herself to go wash off at the stream, of course I follow.

Keeping to the shadows. Licking my lips. Starving for the taste of her.

Will I make it through today and tonight without coming out of hiding to touch her?

I know I should. This level of obsession could terrify Lula. Put her out of my reach.

I'm stalking her—there's no other word for it.

But when she strips out of her clothes, my will rapidly begins to deteriorate...

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## CHAPTER SIX

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Lula

I didn't come to the stream to clean off.

Well, I *did*. The s'mores are sticky little guys. But I also snuck away to do a little communicating with nature. Santana and Jess are well used to my spontaneous meditation sessions—they just aren't aware of my preference to have them in my underwear.

With a smile curving my lips, I lift my face to the sun and hike to the waterfall. It's my favorite spot, thanks to the grassy knoll on the other side. It's a little hidey hole, away from the world. Quiet, dark, curtained by water. The white noise is perfect for blanking my mind, letting the beauty of my surroundings soak in.

All right, it's going to be pretty hard to blank my brain today when I can't seem to stop thinking of Vale—his eyes, his voice, his body—but I'm going to try. I can't let myself get too carried away with this infatuation or I'm only going to be disappointed. Already, I've gone way too far by asking my friends specific questions about sex. They're going to be relentless now. What would they say if they knew I'd hooked up with my stepbrother?

What would *anyone* say?

Maybe I won't have to worry about it? Maybe it was a one-time thing?

When I ponder that possibility, my chest aches even worse.

Determined to enjoy the beautiful day, I look around on the off chance someone else is hiking through. Then I unfasten my jean shorts and drop them down to my ankles, groaning in delight over the warmth of sunshine on the backs of my thighs, my butt. Wanting to experience the heat everywhere, my tank top comes next. My bra. I'm in nothing but a pair of black bikini-cut panties now and I turn to the sun, raising my arms up so its rays can reach out and touch me. I focus on my breathing, inhaling the splendor of nature and releasing gratitude slowly—

A twig snaps.

My arms drop abruptly to cover my breasts, alarm prickling at the nape of my neck.

“Santana?” I call. “Jess?”

There's no response.

It's not totally unusual to hear twigs and branches and leaves falling from the trees. The forest floor is littered with debris from above, so it's a common occurrence.

But the sudden electricity racing up my skin is not common.

I narrow my eyes and scan the trees, my gaze lingering on the shadows.

*There is no one watching you. Don't be paranoid.*

Taking a deep breath, I wade into the stream toward the waterfall, concentrating on the water licking at my thighs, then eventually my panties. How the cool, crisp quality of it climbs my belly and refreshes my senses. When I reach the waterfall, I don't hesitate to position myself beneath it, letting the water cascade down the front of my body, down my breasts, back, legs. My hair is gloriously drenched in seconds, the dull roar of falling water drowning out the forest sounds, leaving only my heartbeat—

And memories of Vale in the shower.

How water pooled in the valleys of his collarbone, how his hair sagged low on his forehead, dripping. How his harsh breathing echoed in the shower stall, mingling with mine.

I don't realize my fingers have dipped into my panties until the pad of my middle one grazes my clit and I shudder, my moan absorbed by the waterfall's rush. My toes curl into the smooth pebble floor of the stream, the waterfall caressing me everywhere—my nipples, the sensitive insides of my arms, my neck. But it's not the waterfall I'm picturing in my head as I rub myself faster, using my middle and ring finger now. I'm thinking of my stepbrother in sweatpants trying to hide his erection from our parents.

There's a slight chance of Santana and Jess following me here and I really don't want to get caught masturbating. Although they would probably high five me and inquire about my technique. Truthfully, I don't have one. I've never felt the pressing need for release until meeting Vale. Now my body is on edge. Sensitive and starved. And I have to appease it.

In the interest of privacy, I duck beneath the waterfall and walk on my knees to the center of the hidden grassy knoll, flopping down on my back. Letting out a long, low moan, knowing I'm the only one that can hear it. And that freedom makes me twice as hot, makes me tease the ring of my entrance and press a finger inside of me, my heels digging into the earth, hips lifting, my gasp loud in my ears—

There's a break in the sound of water hitting the stream and my eyes fly open.

I see the outline of a man and terror grips me.

I open my mouth to scream, but I never get the chance.

He moves like lightning, springing forward, through the waterfall, landing heavily on top of me, his big hand covering my mouth, catching the sound before it escapes. I buck and twist, my instinct to fight kicking in immediately. But it becomes obvious right away that there is no point. His arms are made of steel and there's a precision to his movements that tells me I'm not the first person he's had to silence in a cave. Oh God oh God—

“Lula, it’s Vale. You’re safe,” he rasps in my ear. “You’re safe, princess.”

Shock renders me motionless beneath his muscled body, my breath racing in and out of my nose. There is still a scream lodged in my throat, my claws out, ready to scrape. But now... now I’m just confused. Vale is here? How? I’m a hundred miles from home.

What is going on?

Keeping his hand sealed over my mouth, he looks down at me with glittering eyes—and I feel it. His hard shaft against my inner thigh. He was watching me. He was watching and being turned on by me. That was him snapping a twig out in the forest. Wasn’t it?

I know one thing for sure.

I shouldn’t be feeling relief right now because this man is Vale and not a stranger.

It’s actually more alarming to think my stepbrother might have followed me all this way.

Right?

So why is my fear ebbing? Why do I have the urge to let my thighs fall open?

“Good girl,” he whispers, nuzzling my hair. Still covering my mouth. “You don’t want to fight me, do you?”

How am I supposed to answer that? I *should* be fighting him.

Right?

“If I let go of your pretty little mouth, are you going to scream?”

I shake my head no, because what would be the point? He’d have my mouth covered again in a split second. And no one who came to my rescue would be a match for my stepbrother, the ruthlessly trained Navy SEAL.

His lips skate down the side of my neck. “I can’t kiss you if you’re screaming, can I?”



My clit throbs in response to that barely breathed question, my eyelids fluttering, trying to stay open. But his tongue bathes my throat, his teeth grazing the edge of my jaw and clamping down on my ear and oh lord, there's a rush of wetness between my thighs. I'm confused and aching and appalled at myself, but that last part is fading. Fading under the inundation of need for this man, no matter how he got here. Or why he came.

Vale takes his hand off my mouth, immediately replacing it with his lips.

His male groan fills my head, his taste coursing through me.

His urgency.

My hands are slowly manacled above my head, his powerful body settling more fully against mine, his hips in the cradle of my thighs, that long, hard part of my stepbrother pressed to my sex. Ready. Demanding placation. I'm trying to stay afloat. Trying to make sense of what is happening, but he won't let me. Won't allow me to think. His tongue invades my mouth over and over and over, fuzzing my thoughts and heightening my arousal until I'm fully participating.

As soon as my resolve slips, Vale grows more aggressive, angling his mouth right, left, raking his lips down my neck, then back up, capturing my mouth before I can breathe a word.

"I was only going to protect you, Lula," he says hoarsely against my jaw. "I was only going to keep you safe. But you went and got naked, didn't you? You went and fingered your virgin pussy. *My* virgin pussy. Didn't you?"

"I thought I was alone," I gasp, not even sure if I'm making sense.

"Oh, you're never going to be alone again." He rams his hips up into the juncture of my thighs, making me whimper. "Meet your permanent chaperone, princess."

His mouth stamps back down on mine, his lips urging me to open so he can tangle our tongues together. He keeps my wrists imprisoned with his left hand, his right one stroking

down the side of my face to my breast, squeezing, rubbing the knuckle of his index finger against my nipple until I start to whine into the kiss, his tongue muffling the sound.

“Nod your head if you understand I’m about to fuck you, Lula.” His tongue licks over my ear, his hips rolling roughly. “First with my mouth. Then it’s all dick.”

A finger of tension travels down my spine.

He’s going to put his mouth on me there?

I mean, I was going to meditate about it for a while. Get used to the idea before I ever let it become a possibility in my life. With anyone.

But it’s going to happen so soon? With *this* man?

As if I need a reminder that he’s a bronzed, battle-roughened god, Vale sits back enough to whip off his shirt, revealing a wall of rugged muscle. Scars. A dark forest of hair. He’s the definition of a man. Built for battle. And his blue gaze is fastened on my wet panties like they are earth’s greatest offense. A second later he’s ripped them clean off.

Because he’s going to perform oral on me.

*Oh my God.* I’m suddenly hyper aware of every dimple on my stomach and thighs. How I’m going to look from below. Everything. “I...I...”

“*Goddamn*, princess, look what you’ve done to me,” Vale grits out, unzipping his jeans, that long, hard appendage swinging up through the opening, curved and heavy. I bite my lip to keep from moaning when he fists it without gentleness, squeezing it up and down.

Still, I try to close my thighs, shield myself, some evil voice—that sounds an awful lot like my mother—whispering in the back of my mind that he must be mistaken. “Vale, I don’t think—”

I have no time to prepare before he lets go of his sex, flipping me over onto my stomach, a hard slap delivered to my bottom. So hard it makes me gasp. “This body of yours makes me stiffer than I’ve ever been in my life.” He comes down

hard on top of me, his harsh breath in my ear. “I’ll take a fucking bite right out of this perfectly plump ass if you ever close your thighs to me again. The pussy belongs to Daddy. Do you understand me?”

My self-consciousness starts to take a knee, but I’m still not sure.

Is *he*? Really sure about me?

Before I can voice my concerns, I’m flipped back over and he gets in my face. Uses his knees to shove my legs open and slaps his shaft several times against my damp, feminine flesh.

*Smack smack smack.*

“You see this cock, Lula? Hurts so bad it’s dripping come, begging for what you’ve got between these sweet-ass thighs. But not until I eat every soft, juicy inch of you alive. Understand?” He kisses me hard, tunneling his tongue into my mouth, groaning jaggedly, breaking away to speak in a rush against my lips. “Just so we’re clear, I’d fight another hundred wars for a shot at this tight little cunt. You’re built like a fucking woman. You’re built like what I *need*. Now spread your legs and take this tongue. Daddy’s starved.”

Whatever reservations I had are swept away on a tide of need so forceful, I actually shove him downward by those rock-hard shoulders. Needing to be pleased. Needing his mouth. I am staring up at the rock ceiling of the cave but seeing nothing. Sucking in air. And that’s before he even licks me the first time. Once the tip of his tongue wiggles open the sides of my flesh and mashes against my clit, rubbing it up and down, his groan vibrating my thighs, I start to sob and twist, my thighs falling wide, fingers clawing into the earth.

Oh Jesus.

Oh God.

Was I really going to pass on this?

Vale looks almost drugged, his pupils blacking out the blue, that incredible back rippling as his mouth works, tongue flashing pink in the cave. He pushes a long finger into me, twisting it, then drawing it in and out faster, faster, with more

pressure. It's a relentless assault. A thin layer of discomfort over a treasure trove of pleasure. *Just have to get there. Get there.* And it's easy when his tongue continues to bathe my clit, loving it side to side, up and down, Suckling it lightly while he adds a second finger, fucking me now with them. Hard.

Something inside me gives way and I choke on a scream.

Because on the heels of that gentle rip, a new tide moves in. It's huge and frothy and overwhelming and there's no way to escape it. I look down into his wild eyes and see the animal hunger there. The encouragement to accept whatever is happening.

Pleasure that is so intense it's almost painful careens through me, coiling every muscle I possess, squeezing my loins, and I watch through fevered eyes as moisture from my body lands on his face, leaving his mouth and cheeks and chin wet. Dripping. He licks it off with an expression of rapture, wiping his face off on my belly as he prowls upward. Up my body until we're face to face, me gasping for air, him darkly satisfied with the outcome of what just happened.

"My little girl squirts just like I knew she would. And she's fucking delicious." He comes down on top of me hard, pressing me down into the earth, lips flush against mine. "Now. Are you ever going to close your legs to me again?"

"No," I whimper, my fingers sliding into his hair. That's where they belong. His breath catches at my touch and my confidence grows even more. More. *He wants me to touch him. He's dying for it.* "N-no, Daddy."

"I didn't think so."

With a roar, he buries his sex inside mine.

"Vale!"

"Ah fuuuuuck." His eyes are delirious, jaw slack. "That's tight as *hell.*"

I'm coherent enough to know he brought down the barrier of my virginity with his fingers and I'm grateful for that now. Oh God, I definitely am because there's no time for

acclimating. He ruts me like he's dying. I was aware of his raw strength before, but it's so much more obvious now when he doesn't hold a single ounce of it back, grunting into my neck, his hips powering between mine in quick, brutal pumps, raking me up and back on the grass like a ragdoll. I've never felt more feminine in my life. Never felt so sexual or attractive or alive.

"Thought a girl was writing me those letters. Then you show up with these big, round titties and an ass that can take a good long pound. A fucking *woman*. That's what I need." He jerks my legs up around his waist and his pace turns bruising, his thickness squelching in and out of my channel, his balls loudly rebounding off my buttocks. "A woman who still needs a Daddy, though, doesn't she? A Daddy. A brother. An obsessed stalker who watches you finger your little, wet pussy from the trees. I'm all of those things to you now. Hear?"

"Yes! *Yes!*"

"Going to protect you." His voice is like gravel in my ear. "Going to keep what's mine."

A tingle chooses that moment to start beneath my belly button, sinking lower, lower and building in intensity, so I can't speak, I can only nod unevenly.

"Couldn't find any birth control pills in the bathroom cabinet. You hiding them somewhere else? Tell me now."

What is he asking me? My tummy is starting to ripple, the sensation carrying to my mons now, and when that delicious throb starts in my clit, I know it won't be long. It won't be long before another orgasm hits me and *I want it*. With every cell in my body, I want to climax while he's slapping in and out of me, our bodies slippery with sweat and stream water.

"Answer me. You on protection or fertile for me, princess?"

"I'm...I'm..." I whine, pushing up my hips to meet his thrusts, crying out when the thick base of his erection saws wetly against my clit, again and again and again. "No pill."

A great shudder goes through him and he groans, flexing every one of his many muscles and he bears down, flattening me between his big body and the earth, my knees shoved open wide as possible in his hands. His drives are so forceful, so thorough, I scream from the sheer brute strength of them, the fact that I'm being unquestionably claimed.

"I found you, Lula. I found my woman. And I'm not fucking around." He licks his thumb and brings it between our bodies, teasing my clit side to side, fast, jiggling it—and I come apart, screaming into his kiss, our teeth bumping because his hips are still rutting me at an unruly pace. I'm mid-orgasm, can't see anything but sparks, my sex constricting violently around him and I can only picture what we're doing. How it looks. This strapping soldier in the prime of his life on top of a curvy young girl, his stepsister, doing his best to nail her into the ground. And the image, the forbidden nature of it, takes me higher, makes me bite his mouth, makes my claws bury in his back, earning me a sound halfway between a gasp and a growl.

"Goddamn right I'll get my little girl pregnant," he grinds out, thrusting once more, the movement jagged. Grinding high and deep. "People will talk, but we know it's right, don't we?"

"Yes," I moan, eager beyond belief to provide him with pleasure. Whatever he wants.

With a wince, he starts to shake, his warmth spilling inside of me.

He starts pumping again, but there's no finesse to the movements. He's just a desperate creature trying to get rid of the physical lust. It's an animal all its own. His mouth finds mine and we wrap our arms around each other, my legs locking around his waist, anchoring him as he comes, that soldier's body quaking, sticky heat overflowing my channel and sliding down the cheeks of my backside. He moans long and loud into my neck, his shaft flexing and jerking inside of me, until he loses all power in his muscles, falling on top of me, breathless.

“Mine,” he whispers reverently, licking salty sweat from my shoulder.

I move on autopilot, offering him solace because my soul commands it, dragging my nails up and down on his scalp, kissing the side of his face. I’m not sure when my insecurities start to pile up again, but they do. One by one. I wish I didn’t have them. I wish they didn’t exist. I’ve grown up with them, though, and they’re a part of me. They’ve gotten worse since my mother remarried and I live with two perfectionists who obviously don’t approve of anything about me.

There’s still a part of me that worries I’m just what Vale needs *right now*. Someone who will care for him unconditionally. Someone close and convenient while he gets used to civilian life again. What happens when he suddenly looks around and decides he can have someone different? Someone of his stature and swoony good looks?

Of course, he did drive a hundred miles to stalk me.

There is something to be said for that.

But he’s a protective man. A tracker by trade. Maybe following me was simply him remaining within his military comfort zone? Maybe—

“Lula.” Vale’s mouth slants over mine, his tongue invading my mouth for a long, thorough kiss. “You’re getting tense on me. Let my seed work, princess. Don’t fight it.”

“Your seed?” My eyes fly open and everything he said to me in the heat of the moment comes rushing back to the fore. “Oh my God, you...you didn’t use a condom!”

Vale raises an eyebrow. “We’ve established that.” He cups and kneads my breast, wetting his lips. “Condom? You might as well forget that word even exists.”

“But...”

Oh no. His need to establish roots, his need to carve himself out a safe place, runs more deeply than I thought. So deep he’s willing to get me pregnant over it. What if he regrets tying himself to me, though? He’s only been back one day.

“Vale,” I breathe, scooting out from beneath him and sitting up, covering my breasts with one arm. “You...are you sure you don’t want to explore your options?”

Blue eyes grow sharp. Even sharper than usual. “What does that mean?”

“I mean...you haven’t even started living your new life as a discharged SEAL. You can’t just...you shouldn’t just make hasty decisions—”

“Lula...” His tone holds a stark warning. “I don’t know what puts these doubts in your head, but I meant what I said. I found my woman and I’m not fucking around.”

There’s a clattering of hope in my chest, but I’m apprehensive about trusting it. To fling caution to the wind and believe this could be real. That this gorgeous hero wants me. *Only* me. The girl her mother calls a “chubby hippie” when she thinks no one can hear. “I just think you should take some time to make sure this is what you want. I don’t want you to regret settling down so fast—”

“I’ve lived a lot of life in my thirty-two years, Lula.” His voice is firm. “I’ve met all kinds of people. Women? Sure. I’ve been in a few short relationships that didn’t have a fucking speck of the magic we make. I know this is right. I know what I want and need—and it’s you. If I’m moving fast, it’s only because I’m worried someone will steal you out from under me.” He swallows. “Someone who doesn’t have panic attacks in the shower.”

I suck in a breath, caught off guard by his show of insecurity. I’m not the only one. “That doesn’t make you *less*. That makes you more. It means you have a heart and a conscience and the capacity to feel.”

“If you believe that, then *trust* what I feel.”

My hands wring together in front of me, my heart begging for me to take a chance.

Vale comes closer and threads his fingers through my hair, tipping my head back and devouring me whole with a groaning kiss, his shaft hardening once again between us—



“Lula!”

I freeze at the sound of Santana’s voice, followed by Jess’s. “You better not have gotten eaten by a fucking bear, dude.”

My eyes lock with Vale’s.

There’s a question in his. It’s very clear.

He’s letting me make the decision about what I want to do. Do we walk out of here together and own this thing between us? Or keep it hidden? More than anything, I want to step through the waterfall holding his hand, but once that cat is out of the bag, there’s no putting it back in. He’ll have no chance to think this over. To be sure about us. How can he make such life changing decisions when he doesn’t even know what his new life will look like yet?

“Go back to your friends,” he says gruffly, kissing me. Stroking my cheek with a knuckle. “I’ll be watching you through the night. And we’re going to talk when we get home. As soon as possible.” He lifts my chin with the tip of his index finger. “Do I make myself clear?”

“Yes, Daddy,” I breathe, as if it’s the most natural response in the world.

Maybe it is.

I just don’t know if it’s the best thing for Vale.

His eyes darken with pleasure, nearly impossible to walk away from. But I do.

With my heart in my throat, I slide into the water beneath the falls and wade out into the sunlight to a round of cat calls and whistles. “Lula! Where are your clothes?”

“What were you doing in there?”

“Naked yoga,” I breathe, flushing to my hairline and searching the ground for my clothes, heading in that direction. “It’s totally a thing.”

It takes every fiber of control not to glance back and search for Vale behind the waterfall as we return to camp. And every

step of the way, I pray I made the right move.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

Vale

My hands twist on the steering wheel, my gaze locked in on the back of Lula's head. She's riding in the car ahead of mine, halfway home from camping. It's murder not having her in my passenger seat where I know she'll be safe. The girl driving my precious stepsister is more concerned with changing the radio stations than the road ahead. Every time she swerves, I swear my heart is going to jump out through my mouth.

For the time being, I have no choice but to keep a distance.

Lula's hesitance to be with me is my fault.

I knew. I fucking knew I shouldn't have revealed myself at the waterfall.

Revealed myself as her stalker.

But the sight of her tasty body in the sunlight was too much to resist. There was no stopping me. I had to possess. Had to claim what's mine.

And she will be mine.

There's no maybe about it.

I have some work to do first, though, and I've had the night to think about it. Hours of sitting in the darkness, guarding my girl. Replaying over and over again the way her pussy clenched around my dick, her eyes losing focus, her

teeth snapping at my mouth. All those sweet curves welcoming me home, her thighs struggling to get wider.

Hearing the way she sobbed for Daddy.

I exhale shakily into the car's interior.

I've been trained to be patient. Sometimes it takes days, weeks or months for a target to appear. To step into my sites. But Lula isn't a target and this isn't war. She's a female. The most important one. And her feelings are what I have to aim for. She thinks I need time. That I'm making a hasty decision to be with her, when that's simply not the case.

Like I said, I've done and seen a lot in my lifetime. I know brightness like hers isn't just available everywhere, especially for a weary soldier like me. It's unique and perfect. Like walking through a sandstorm and finding shelter. During my service, I saw the worst of humanity. Enough to know when I've come across the best—and I'm holding on to her.

Come hell or high water.

But apparently she's going to need...courting. Some convincing.

Since I can't take her out on a date in a stolen vehicle, I ditch the car in the airport parking lot and rent a luxury sedan. My plan is to buy a permanent car at a dealership near Coronado when I'm getting settled on base. For now, a rental will have to suffice. My instinct is to find something black, but I think of Lula's brightly colored energy, the lively pink and yellow fuzzy towels in the bathroom. Her aqua sandals on the shoe rack by the front door of the house. With that information, I go with a cerulean blue Jaguar and head toward the house.

When I walk into the kitchen, my father lowers his newspaper. "Well there you are, son. If I wasn't positive you can take care of yourself, I would have been worried."

Vanessa breezes into the kitchen with a clinking glass of iced tea in her hand. "I'm sure we can guess how a red-blooded man spent one of his first nights back on US soil..." She winks at me, stirring the drink with her index finger. "I'll

forgive you for not letting me fix you up. Maybe it's better you went out and blew off a little steam first."

"Always with the innuendo, Vanessa," my father grouches, going back to the paper.

"You knew what you were getting into when we started dating," she laughs.

Lula walks into the room and my senses are turned up to full wattage. I have to shove my hands into my pockets so I won't reach for her, settle her butt somewhere, wedge myself between her thighs. *Jesus*, she looks edible. The camping trip has been showered away leaving behind tan lines that peek out from beneath the straps of her purple tank top. She's barefoot, wearing these tight yoga pants that make her backside look like a meal and I have to grind my jaw to keep from growling.

Her eyes go soft when they see me, but then awareness moves into them.

Heat.

Curiosity, too.

As if she's wondering whether or not my intentions have changed overnight. They haven't. They're *never* going to change. And I try to communicate that to her with my eyes. I must get at least some of my point across, because she crosses quickly to the fridge and stands in the cool opening, fanning her neck.

"How was camping?" Vanessa asks Lula, trading an eye roll with my father.

"Oh, um..." Lula's throat works, her gaze drifting to mine briefly. "Beautiful. Peaceful. A family of deer walked right through our campsite this morning."

"Wow," Vanessa says, absently, reading the newspaper over her husband's shoulder.

I wait for them to ask her more, but they don't.

They don't encourage her. Their mild interest isn't even convincing.

Yeah, I need to get her moved out of his toxic environment as soon as possible. I grew up in it. The pressure to conform, to be a certain way—like my father—is immense. Having offbeat interests, like Lula, has made her a target for their disdain at the worst of times, indifference at the best. There is no way in hell I'm going to let them dim the light shining inside of her.

Not happening.

“I was thinking we could do something together tonight, Lula,” I say into the quiet kitchen, an even heavier silence ensuing. She straightens from the fridge, a glass of orange juice in her hand, eyes wide on me. “Get to know each other better. Since we're family now.”

“O-oh,” she breathes. Then, comically, downs the entire glass of juice, because she obviously doesn't know what to say. It takes an effort not to laugh. “I would like—”

“Are you sure, Vale?” Vanessa gives a skeptical laugh. “I have a network of beauties on speed dial—”

“Vanessa, I don't know how many ways I can say that I'm not interested,” I growl, holding my stepmother's startled attention for several beats, irritation making my fingers flex. “Do not bring it up again.”

I'm up against enough skepticism from Lula. I don't need Vanessa making it any worse.

There is only one woman I'll ever want. If it was up to me, I would tell our parents everything right now. But I've pushed Lula enough in the last twenty-four hours. Now it's time to have a little patience while she gets used to the fact that I'm not going anywhere.

After a moment, Vanessa nods reluctantly, dropping heavily into one of the dining room chairs. My father watches me curiously, like he wants to say something but chooses to read the sports page instead. As for my stepsister, she bites her lip and leaves the room, subtly indicating I should follow after her. As if I'd do anything else.

We meet at the base of the staircase, her incense and orange juice scent making my mouth water, along with her plump tits. Hell, every inch of her makes me hot. How in God's name am I going to wait until tonight?

I shoot a glance toward the kitchen to make sure we're not being watched, then I lean down and kiss her mouth, sliding my tongue in to pet hers once, twice, my cock unfurling in my jeans, in dire need of Lula's pussy.

She pulls away with a scandalized expression, but she's breathing fast. "Vale," she says in a furious whisper, looking over her shoulder. "You can't just d-do that."

"I could if we told them you're mine. They will eventually have to get used to it."

Lula hedges. "I'm...I'm still not sure—"

"You're not sure I'm thinking straight. Or that I know what I want." I tip her chin up, trace her lower lip with my thumb. "Don't worry, I'm going to clear it right up for you, princess."

After a moment, she nods and relief settles in my gut.

"I didn't sleep last night, so I'm going up to grab some now."

I press my thumb into her mouth, groaning when she sucks on it reflexively, seeming to surprise even herself. Her eyelids turn heavy, her nipples pebbling against the front of her tank top. It's on the tip of my tongue to order her upstairs into my bed. I'd love to spend the whole day there, riding her in every position known to man, but I need patience. She's an emotional soul. And didn't she tell me she has to meditate on decisions? Rushing Lula could only hurt me in the long run and I refuse to take chances with someone so important.

"Be ready to leave at seven." Reluctantly, I slide my thumb back out of her gorgeous mouth, using the wetness to coat her lips, leaving them glossy. "Wear the skimpiest pair of panties you own. Enough skirt to keep other men from seeing what's between your legs—what's mine—but not enough I can't yank it up when I need to."

When I speak her to like this, commanding her gently, Lula gets the same expression on her face she had in the woods. When she took off her clothes and let the sunshine warm her bare skin. It's an expression of belonging, relief, anticipation. Being my little girl is right for her in the way it's right for me. In the way *she's* right for me.

Tonight I'm going to make sure she realizes it fully.

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Lula walks down the stairs that night and tension ripples in the air.

Our parents might not realize there is something going on between us, but they aren't entirely comfortable with us going out together, either. Maybe they sense the truth. Maybe they could feel my arousal all the way downstairs throughout the day. Sleep never hit me. Every time Lula's bed springs creaked on the other side of the bathroom. Every time she murmured into her phone or laughed or *breathed*, I had to restrain myself from charging into her room, pinning her down, getting the release only she can provide.

Not too much longer and I'll be alone with her again. *Finally.*

Next time I'm inside of her, I'll have her promise. She'll be confident in my intentions.

I'm dressed for a date in black jeans, boots and a button-down shirt, which throws our parents even more. But they're extra thrown when Lula descends the stairs in a plaid skirt, a low-cut black shirt tucked into it. Knee high black socks.

I'm erect in seconds.

My fierce sudden arousal makes it necessary for me to turn from the room and adjust myself, back teeth grinding. Next time Lula tries to imply she's not sexy, I'm going to throw her over my knee and paddle that delicious ass, so help me God.

"You look..." *Fuckable. Hot. Like a little girl who's horny for a second round of dick from her stepbrother.* "You look



very nice, Lula.”

“Thank you,” she says, turning pink beneath her camping tan.

“Where are you going?” Vanessa inquires, her smile slightly brittle. “When will you be back? Lula is only eighteen, you know. She might legally be an adult, but she still has a curfew.”

Lula giggles, but sobers when she realizes her mother is serious. “I do? Since when?”

“Since now.” My stepmother waves a hand, as if conjuring an appropriate time. “Midnight sounds good. Please be home by midnight.”

“She’ll be with a goddamn SEAL, Vanessa,” my father says with forced casualness. “No safer place to be, right?”

Is there a warning in his eyes?

It’s hard to tell. I might be projecting because my feelings for Lula are so wild and untamed and possessive, it seems unrealistic that I’m keeping them hidden. I’d like to tell Vanessa that I’ll keep my future wife out as long as I damn well please, but that could cause a scene, and right now? I just want to get Lula out the door.

Without a word, I gesture for my stepsister to precede me out of the house and down the front walkway. I watch wolfishly as her ass bounces in that schoolgirl-style pleated skirt. If no one was watching us right now, I’d wrap her hair in a fist and push her face down over my car, flipping up the rear of the skirt to inspect her panties. But we’re definitely being watched. A glance over my shoulder confirms our parents are eyeballing us from the porch.

“This is your car?” She clasps both hands under her chin. “I love the color.”

Pride moves in my belly. “Good. That’s what I was hoping for.”

I open the passenger side door for Lula, watching her thighs settle on the seat. Inhaling the scent of her. Itching to

run my hands everywhere. Up her thighs to that round, generous ass. Down her tits to her soft belly. I'm not going to make it very long before the need to be inside of my stepsister—*fucking* her—overwhelms me.

Trying to even my breathing, I cross in front of the car and enter the driver's side, firing up the engine before I'm fully seated. Before I pull away from the curb, my possessiveness gets the better of me and I reach over, sliding my right hand between her thighs and cupping her lush little cunt, waving at our parents with my left hand. "They don't tell me when to bring you home. I decide that, don't I, princess?"

"Yes," she whispers, her head falling back against the seat. "You decide."

I hook a finger in the thin strap of her panties and rub her clit with the pad of my middle digit, slowly, once, twice, eliciting a gasp. "Wave at our parents."

She raises a hand and I press down on the gas, pulling into traffic.

I continue to stroke the little bud at the apex of her sex, making her hips writhe, until we reach a stoplight. Then I draw up the plaid material, adjusting the pretty blue material back into place over her pussy, giving it a final squeeze. "Going to bring this home dripping."

A rush of sound leaves her. "Where are you taking me? A...hotel?"

Pulling through the intersection, I glance over at her in surprise. "If all I wanted from you was sex, Lula, I'd have been in your bedroom all afternoon."

"I was kind of hoping..."—she fidgets with the hem of her skirt—"...you *would* visit."

I cock an eyebrow over her obvious nerves. "Why is it so hard for you to admit that?"

She searches for the right words. "I don't have a lot of experience flirting. I've always had this nightmare about guys...rejecting my interest, I guess?"

I'm torn between shock and jealousy over the fact that she's ever wanted to flirt with another male in the first place. "You must have grown up with a lot of idiots."

"Yeah..." She bites her lips and smiles a little. "Yeah, I think maybe you're right."

That's when I notice there's something different about Lula. I noticed it when she came down the stairs but was too horny to put my finger on the change. Now I know. It's confidence. She's wearing a short skirt, her eyes are bright, her smile coming easier. Those tanned shoulders are thrown back. Is it possible I broke through to her yesterday beneath the waterfall? Did her friends' encouragement help?

Is she starting to realize what a fucking catch she is?

God, I hope so.

With hope rising in my chest, I reach over and hold her hand, guiding us on to the highway. "If I remember correctly, there's a bar about half an hour up the coast. Live music." I bring her hand to my mouth, rubbing my lips over her knuckles. "I don't care who sees us together, but I figured you might want some privacy for now. There shouldn't be anyone who knows us there. Knows...how we're related."

Lula nods. "For now, I think that's best." Her nose wrinkles. "But won't people know who you are, no matter where we go?"

I jerk my head toward the console where I left a black baseball cap earlier. "Brought a hat. Plus, it's nice and dark inside this place. And that's a damn good thing, princess..." My gaze roams over her lavish set of tits, the blood in my body rushing south to my groin. "Because there isn't a hope in hell of keeping my hands off you."

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## CHAPTER EIGHT

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Lula

Vale brings me to a bar called The Coyote.

I don't have a fake ID, but the bouncer takes one look at Vale and doesn't question him leading me inside. He was right about it being dark in here. Comfortably so. There are flickering hurricane candleholders on every table, lit in a pale yellow glow. A cover band plays at the back of the expansive space, the sound of a harmonica pleasing to the ear. On the left, there is a scattering of tables occupied by couples and groups of friends. To the right is a long bar and that's where Vale brings me, all the way to the corner where he positions me against the wall, blocking me in with his big body.

It takes me a moment to realize he's pinning every customer at the bar with a steely glare. "Vale." Laughing, I tug his elbow. "What are you doing?"

"Letting them know you're mine. That you're leaving with the same man you walked in with." Out of sight, he settles a hand on my bottom, shaping it roughly. And after a moment, his intense blue eyes find mine through the low lighting. "Never felt like this, Lula. I'm worried what I'll do if someone looks at you. *Mine.*"

I play with the middle button of his shirt, surprised how easily I'm flirting with Vale. I wasn't lying when I told him I've rarely flirted in the past, but now...now I'm not worried he'll be uncomfortable with my intentions. He's made it clear

he's attracted to me. That he finds me desirable. And I'm starting to feel that way. I never would have worn this outfit before yesterday, but I love the way it makes me feel. Feminine and sexy and a little naughty. As if being out at a bar, illegally, with my stepbrother isn't more than enough naughtiness for one night. "How about you look only at me, Vale, then you won't know what anyone else is doing?" I bite my lip and twist the button of his shirt. "And it won't even matter."

His breath releases in a rocky rush. "Fuck, you were tempting before, but now...Lula, you're blossoming. You're going to bring me to my knees."

I can hear Santana and Jess in the back of my mind, cheering me on. "Maybe you'll bring me to *my* knees," I murmur, heat racing up my cheeks. Who am I anymore?

"*Lula*," he moans, dropping his forehead to mine. "Don't do this to me. Don't hint that you might suck my cock when I promised myself I'd give you a proper date."

"Okay," I say, breathlessly, my confidence growing at an exponential rate, excitement filling my tummy with fizzy bubbles. "I guess I'll just think about it," I say teasingly, dragging a finger down the thick slope of his muscular chest, continuing downward, scratching my nails against his belly button. "How it'll taste. How deep I can take—"

His mouth cuts me off with a growl and I'm backed into the wall, his fingers burrowing into my hair, his tongue licking deeply, past my teeth, stroking, stroking, stroking. He curls a hand under my left knee and jerks up my legs, notching his hardness flush to my sex, rocking roughly, his hard exhale bathing my wet, swollen moth. I'm up on my tiptoes and he lifts me higher now, off the ground. Are we going to have sex in this dark bar? It certainly feels like it—and knowing I made this powerful man lose control is a heady feeling. Exhilarating.

"Can I, uh..." A man to my right clears his throat. "Get you two a drink?"

We break apart, breathing hard. Vale looks almost delirious, and for some reason, I cannot keep the smile off my

face. *Look what I can do!* Unfortunately, my smile also seems to harden Vale's resolve. He plants a solid kiss on my forehead and throws a nod at the bartender. "I'll have a beer. Whatever pilsner is on tap. And she'll have..."

"A dirty martini, please," I say brightly.

When the bartender walks away to fix our drinks, Vale lunges at me, growling into my neck, and a laugh bursts out of me. "I'll give you a dirty martini."

He tickles my ribs and I squeal. "I wish you would."

"*Lula*. I'm hanging by a thread." Suddenly, he picks up me up by the waist and drops me into a stool. I'm still reeling from the utter delight of being manhandled with such ease when my stepbrother hits me with a stern look. "Behave."

"For now?"

His lips twitch with mirth, and my God, he's so mind-bogglingly hot with that baseball cap pulled low on his forehead and dark blond hair sticking out at the sides, I have to sigh.

"For now," he agrees, kissing me softly. With promise.

A few minutes later, the bartender drops off our drinks. Vale stands between my thighs, his left hand resting on my hip, his back to the rest of the bar. He hands me my drink with a skeptical light in his eye. A second later, I found out why. I sip the mixture of vodka and pickle juice, immediately wanting to spit it out. Vale chuckles, taking back the martini and setting it on the bar. Then he tips his beer to my lips to get rid of the after taste.

"Is this your first time drinking?" he rumbles, right up against my ear.

"Besides the wine coolers that Santana steals from her mom's fridge? Yes." I wince. "I thought it sounded like something a cool adult of legal drinking age would order. But if this is what the cool kids drink, leave me out of it."

His grin makes my stomach flip. "I'll order you something different."

“No rush,” I say, making him laugh, before a worry occurs to me. Leaning forward, I drop my voice to a whisper. “Hey Vale, could you get in trouble for bringing me here?”

He lets out a rush of breath. “Technically, yeah. I could.” A beat of silence passes. “Wouldn’t mind some trouble, though. Maybe everyone would stop...”

“Stop what?”

The muscles of his throat shift up and down. “Expecting so much of me. Putting me up on this pedestal, because of what I did. I never asked to be the face of an entire military branch and there’s just no way anyone can live up to the image. I love being a soldier. A lot of that love came from being anonymous, though. Now I’m this symbol of...I don’t know. Hope. And hope isn’t a bad thing, but it can’t come from a stranger.”

“No, it can’t. As a soldier, you want to make things right for the people. You want to do what the brass is asking of you, because you follow orders. But you’re only one person out of billions. All you have is the light in yourself. You’re allowed to guard it. You’re allowed to take healthy steps to keep the light burning.” I pick up his hand and thread our fingers together, using my thumb to rub slow circles into his palm. His pulse is tripping over itself in fast beats at the base of his wrist, so I lay my lips there and hum until it slows and Vale can take a deep breath. “And there’s no pressure here. Not right now. Focus on that.”

“God, Lula,” he crowds closer between my legs, whispering into my hair. “Look how good you are for me. No one can do what you do. You put me on solid ground.”

“Eventually you’ll learn to do this for yourself.”

“Maybe. Maybe I’ll learn to stop a panic attack before it starts, but knowing I have you on the other side is what’s ultimately going to bring me through it. You *are* my light, Lula.” His mouth traces over my temple, planting a kiss. “Let me be yours. Let me take you out of that house where you’re not being appreciated and make you happy.” He pulls me close, locking us together in a way that is indecent in public,

his erection flush to my sex, my thighs hugging his hips, his hands creeping up the back of my skirt to massage my backside. “We’ll have a family together. Our first child might be forming in your belly as we speak.”

A fog bank of lust is beginning to roll in, obscuring my inhibitions. Blotting them out into mere smudges. And it has a lot to do with his tongue dragging up and down the side of my neck, his hips rocking me on the stool. Of course, I’ve considered the fact that I might be pregnant. It seems so unlikely. I’d never even had sex before yesterday. But I remember the feel of his hot seed flooding into me, that determination on his face, and I know it’s more than possible. “What are people going to say, Vale? You’re my stepbrother.”

“All you have is the light in yourself. You’re allowed to guard it. That’s what you told me, Lula, and that’s what I’m doing. I’m keeping you. Yesterday, I thought the most important thing in life was meeting expectations, but baby, all I want to do now is meet yours.” His mouth finds mine and he French kisses me in a blatantly sexual way, his tongue provoking mine in an erotic dance. It feels scandalous to be kissing my stepbrother like this in plain view of the bar, our bodies simulating sex. My panties are sodden against the ridge in his jeans and he continues to hump me, the legs of the stool bumping on the wooden floor of the bar. Finally, he stops moving, both of us breathing like we just finished a marathon. “All this talk of light, princess...” he says choppily. “But right now, I need to give you some attention in the dark. Can’t wait anymore.”

With that, Vale throws some money on the bar, picks me up off the stool to settle me on my feet and hustles me toward the front of the bar, favoring his injured leg. The crowd has multiplied since we arrived and Vale keeps a protective arm around me, the ball cap pulled extra low over his eyes.

“Oh my God. Is that Vale Butler?” someone says as we pass.

My stepbrother’s muscles tense against me. “That’s him. That’s the terrorist killer. Holy shit.” Some murmurings go through the crowd. “Vale! Yo, Butler! Let us buy you a drink.”



A hand claps him on the shoulder. “You’re a hero, man.”

Vale curses and slows us to a stop. “Lula...”

“I know. You can’t just walk away and ignore them.” I squeeze his hand and give him a smile. “And I know it bothers you, having to maintain this hero image in front of people who don’t really understand what you’ve been through. But here’s the thing. While you smile and be kind and let them take pictures, your thoughts and your feelings remain your own. They can’t touch them. It’s okay.”

An intense expression transforms his face. “I’m going to marry you.”

Before I can answer, he drapes a protective arm across my shoulders and turns to face his admirers. He waves like the humble soldier he is, blinking against the sudden onslaught of cell phone flashes. “Evening, folks. I’ll pass on that drink. I’m bringing my girl home for the night. But if anyone wants a picture...?”

I don’t expect it when Vale keeps me glued to his side in every last one of them, his fingertips brushing up and down my arm. Occasionally, he leans over and kisses the crown of my head or my lips while everyone watches with growing interest. And with my heart in my throat, I realize the cat is most definitely out of the bag...and Vale ripped it wide open on purpose.

Maybe I should be nervous about the fallout to come.

Maybe I should be calling my mother to warn her.

I don’t, though. I can’t break the spell Vale is weaving over me, stealing my fears and worries with every glance, every whispered word of affection. He’s making me believe this relationship between us is real and lasting.

It is.

My heart is pounding with that knowledge.

Deep down, I’ve known it since our eyes met for the first time. We’re supposed to be together. A connection runs between us that can’t be undone or subdued. I need him and he

needs me. By the time he finishes taking pictures and signing autographs, he's touched and kissed me dozens of times, propelling my awareness to new heights. The knowledge that our relationship will probably be public by morning makes my core thrum with heavy heat.

Everyone will know he's been inside of me.

The act of claiming me publicly has turned on my stepbrother as well.

Even more than before.

We don't even make it to the car.

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## CHAPTER NINE

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Vale

I had visions of bringing my princess to a hotel. Laying her down in soft sheets and making love to her slowly, but that will have to wait for another night. I'm too goddamn horny. My dick is like a crowbar in my jeans, my loins in a fucking knot. Even walking the two blocks to my car is unacceptable. I need inside of her now. Need under that plaid skirt. Immediately.

As soon as those pictures start circulating on the internet, everyone is going to know I'm the man who has the privilege of riding Lula. The possessive animal inside of me loves that. Craves the title of Lula's man. The father of her children. Her husband. The one who shares her bed and keeps her tight pussy satisfied. Fuck yes. I can't wait.

My reputation is going to take a hit and I'm sure the Navy is going to come down on me like a ton of bricks, but they can bring it on. I know what I need to be happy now. To be normal. And it's this girl beside me, her hand curled trustingly in the front of my shirt.

Maybe I'm not quite earning that trust by dragging her around back of the Coyote, into the dark end of the parking lot, but these are desperate times—and she wants it, too. She wants this dirty hot fuck behind the bar, doesn't she? Yes. God yes. Our mouths are wet and desperate, tongues engaged in a sensual battle, her fingers fumbling with my belt.

I have to break free of the kiss to groan, the potency of having Lula undo my pants is such a stroke to my heightened senses. “Look how badly you want to get to that cock,” I push through my teeth, tilting my hips up blatantly. “One fuck and you’re a little fiend for it, aren’t you? Aching for Daddy’s ten inches.”

She nods, biting her lip, finally getting my belt unbuckled. Going to work on my button and fly next—and I somehow forgot about her teasing me earlier. About giving me a blow job. But I remember pretty fucking quickly when Lula kneels on the asphalt, her gorgeous tits nearly spilling out of her top, my hard dick in her hand. Mouth glossy and ready. My balls twist up and I almost ejaculate all over her beautiful moonlit face.

“Oh *fuck*.” I fist the hair on the back of her head, guiding her closer to my lap. “I can’t believe I’m letting you suck me off in a parking lot. I just need that mouth so bad.”

“I want to give it to you so bad,” she whispers, her tongue flicking my engorged head. Rendering me speechless, my lungs pressurized with the breath I’m holding. I let it out in a growling rush when she runs her tongue through my slit and takes me between her lips, half of my thickness sinking into the warm, wet cave of her mouth.

“Jesus Christ,” I pant, my eyes rolling into the back of my head when she starts to bob that pretty head, fucking me with her mouth, the suction and grazing of her teeth straight out of heaven. “Paid real close attention to that lesson from your friends, didn’t you? Goddamn. You were born to suck cock, little girl. That’s it. Deeper. Deeper. That’s my best baby girl.”

Lula moans around me, scooting closer on her knees, as if I’m a water tap and she’s dying of thirst. She cages my length in her fists, dragging them up and down along with her mouth, turning me inside out. It’s the thorough, sloppy, enthusiastic suck job of every man’s dreams.

“Going to fuck you so hard for this. Going to make you come like a horny back-alley girl,” I say on a gravelly exhale, my upper lip starting to perspire, along with my chest. My

forehead. The smooth, sexual treatment from my stepsister's mouth is making my clothes stick to my body, my balls humming with seed between my legs, aching to be empty. I could easily drain my spend into her perfect little mouth right now, but it has to be inside of her. In that hot, young cunt. We made a lot of progress tonight. She's starting to trust the promises I'm making her. But a soldier always has a back-up plan. If she hesitates to become my wife or gives me any more nonsense about taking time to think, to settle into my new civilian life, I'll damn well make sure she's pregnant. Unable to escape me.

Lula is mine.

I'll spend my life with her by fair means or foul.

Yeah, my release isn't going anywhere but straight to her womb. Problem is, the girl is enjoying the shit out of my cock. It's an incredible sight. One that makes me hotter than sin. The way her eyes are squeezed shut, the way she makes a savoring sound every time she sinks down on that fat johnson. Have to stop. I have to stop soon. But my fingers move of their own accord, wrapping themselves in her hair, pumping my dick into her suctioning mouth, precome firing from my tip and landing on the back of her throat, making her choke a little bit, a tear rolling down her cheek from the pressure of my growing length, the way I prod her gag reflex. And even those details seem to make her more eager, her hands jerking me harder, faster, saliva on her chin.

Jesus, she's perfect, perfect, perfect.

I'm on fire with lust, my climax beginning to peek over the horizon, an ominous tingle wrapping around the lower half of my spine. "Lula. Lula. You suck Daddy so good," I groan, rocking my hips. "But baby, baby, baby, you have to stop before I nut. *Christ.*"

Subtly, she shakes her head, taking me even deeper. Nearly collapsing my knees.

My nostrils flare, pleasure spearing me—and I can't stop myself from tunneling to the back of her throat, holding her face against my lap and grinding once, before using my grip in

her hair to tug her off me. She coughs once, whimpers my name and tries to slide me between her lips again. God almighty. If I allow that, it's game over, so I yank my stepsister to her feet, capturing her incredible mouth with mine, distracting her with a kiss while I gather the material of her panties and rip them clean off.

I look her straight in the eye and shove two fingers up into her cunt, making her cry out in pleasure, her arousal dripping into my palm, sliding down my knuckles. "Fuck yes, there's my wet princess," I growl against her mouth. "Get up here on this dick."

Some of the haze clears in her eyes and she glances down between us. "You mean just..." She gestures between our bodies. "How?"

"How what?" I'm too worked up to discern what she's trying to ask me. I wrap a forearm around Lula's back and lift her up, shifting my hips, searching for friction. Her friction. The perfection I never knew existed until her. "Get those hot-ass thighs around me. *Now*, Lula."

Her eyes widen and they snap up, locking around me and I can't wait, I can't wait. I'm about to come from the warm pillowing of her legs perching my hips, those delicious breasts that swell with her every breath right in front of my face. No, I can't go another second, so I rocket my cock up inside of her and bounce my tight little girl up and down, the wet slaps of our sex loud in the parking lot. "Y-you're holding me up so easily..." she whimpers, her fingers curling into my shoulder.

"Of course I am, princess," I grit out, pumping, pumping, reveling in the incredible tightness of my future wife. "I'm a fucking SEAL."

Lula climaxes with a shaky sob, shocking the hell out of me. Making me roar into her neck with male pride. I'm not sure what I said to give her such a quick orgasm, but I'm grateful as hell. To feel that rippling contraction, the spasming of her spread thighs, the drip of her moisture onto my balls. The innocent face I fell in love with on sight is flushed and rosy, her eyes glazed over, her tits no longer contained inside

her shirt, more than halfway out of her bra. They jiggle with every upward fuck of my hips, the sight of her big nipples pushing me to the breaking point.

“Say it. Say you’ll *be* with me forever,” I groan raggedly, kissing her, our mouths hot and urgent. “Say the words and I’ll give you Daddy’s milk.”

“I want to be with you forever,” she whispers, her eyes sparkling.

My heart goes wild in my chest, making me short of breath. Making my blood swim with pure joy. The tide is rising faster now that I’ve been given the ultimate gift. Now that she’s admitted out loud that I’m her man. I’ve claimed my female. Mine. Mine. Mine.

I try to be gentle, but she’s made me into an animal and I can’t stop myself from slamming her up against the wall of the bar and going for broke, my dick hammering up into her dripping little pussy, her cries filling my ears.

“*Daddy*,” she whines, clawing my shoulders, my back, her knees digging into my sides—and it’s her enjoyment of my brutal fuck that gets me off. Knew it the second I saw her that she could take it. That she would love my lethal soldier’s nature coming out to play, holding nothing back. And here’s my proof. The fact that my violent thrusts push her into another orgasm at the same time as mine, that tight channel closing up around me like a vise, drawing out my seed like cannon fire.

“*Lula*.” I rail her against the wall, driving upward several more times, fast and hard, then I hold deep, shoving her knees open and pinning her with my hips. “Look at it. Watch my seed coming up.” She does what I ask, moaning at the sight of my cock’s base flexing, flexing, rippling with the emerging semen. “Going right where it belongs, isn’t it, princess? Right into to that fertile fucking pussy. God yes. Right into the woman I love.”

Lula gasps, her eyes flying to mine.

I didn't mean to make the confession like this, behind a bar while I'm in the throes of a climax, but it's the truth that's written on my soul, so I let her look into my eyes. Let her see how much I mean it. "I love you, Lula."

"I love you, too," she breathes unevenly, throwing her arms around my neck.

Did she really just say that?

Oh God. This is real. I'm home. I'm finally home.

Those four words out of her mouth set off another round of spurts and I have to grind her into the wall to set those final drops free, bucking and grunting until we are both fully sated and I'm holding my stepsister as close as possible, breathing her in, the love I have for her threatening to swallow me whole. Maybe it already has.

I've pushed our luck taking her behind the bar. The last thing I want is her to be pictured in a compromising position. I'll protect her at all costs for the rest of my life. The need to do that has my chest in a cage. So I fix her clothing and mine, taking her hand and walking her to the car. I'm barely able to take my eyes off her the whole ride home. As soon as we're upstairs in the house, I'm going to walk straight through that adjoining bathroom and take her again, slower this time. Going to eat that pussy like a man at his final meal.

My intentions show on my face, too. I assume so, since she can't stop blushing, making my cock even harder. Even more eager to get upstairs and fuck. We only have a matter of hours before those pictures of us together at the bar start circulating, but honestly, it's the last thing on my mind. I just want to forget about the outside world and lose myself in this girl every day for the rest of my life. I don't want to think about anything else.

Tomorrow morning will be soon enough to deal with fallout. We'll have to speak to our parents and that discussion isn't going to be easy, but I'll shield Lula. I'll protect her from unfounded criticism and outside forces, because that's my job now and I crave it.



My father is in the living room when we walk inside. He nods at us over the top of his book, his eyes lingering on our proximity. Maybe he already knows there's something serious between me and my stepsister. Maybe not. But I want another night of making promises to Lula before she has to face their ugliness.

Reluctantly, I kiss her soft mouth and leave her outside of her bedroom door, wanting so badly to walk through it with her, to have no secrets from anyone, let alone our parents. However, I console myself with the fact that she'll be back in my arms in a matter of minutes.

Where she belongs.

Unfortunately, those outside forces that could keep us apart are much closer than I imagine.

## CHAPTER TEN

Lula

When I walk into my bedroom, I might as well be floating on air.

I lean back against the door and press my fingers to my freshly kissed lips, smiling with such abandon it actually hurts my cheeks. Tonight was a fairytale and an erotic sex dream all rolled into one...and I get to have this all of the time. I've finally accepted that I'm going to be with Vale because a relationship is what we both want. He wants me and I want him. Badly.

Any self-doubt has been thoroughly scrubbed from my brain by his promises, his lovemaking, the way he treats me. If he cares enough about me to face heat from our parents and the Navy, how can I doubt his intentions?

Now that I've stopped worrying about him regretting getting involved with me, my own feelings have blossomed. When I told Vale I loved him, I've never meant anything more in my life. Yes, I love the heroic SEAL. But I love the honest, passionate man under the surface even more—and I'm the only one who gets to have him.

Me. Lula Butler. Hippie, occasional nudist, high-pitched giggler.

Twirling toward my dresser, I mentally go through my wardrobe. Ooh, I have those purple silk panties. Maybe I

should surprise him in nothing but those? Internally squealing, I click on my hanging lanterns.

Something moves behind me and I gasp, turning to find my mother sitting on the edge of my bed. There is an empty wineglass lying sideways on her lap and her phone is lit up beside her thigh. Enough to see the picture of me and Vale on the screen. It was taken tonight at the Coyote. In it, he's kissing me full on the mouth, my face cradled in his hands.

There's no mistaking the less than platonic nature of how we're touching.

I'm surprised when a calm settles over me. We expected our parents to find out. I'm almost relieved our relationship is out in the open, so we can deal with the fallout and move forward. "Mother—"

"How drunk did you have to get him to kiss you?" She finds this question infinitely funny, but the sound of her laugh is ugly, embedding under my skin like a splinter. "God, Lula. How desperate do you have to be to throw yourself at your own *stepbrother*?"

My skin smarts like I've been slapped. My *mother* is saying these things to me. I've always kind of accepted her criticism, but now I see so clearly how wrong it is for her to treat me so poorly. I deserve better. Remembering there is a man on the other side of the bathroom who wants me to be his wife, I raise my chin. "I'm sorry you have such a low opinion of me. Vale wasn't drunk when he kissed me and I didn't throw myself at him. That's now it happened at all."

"*It*? What is it? Certainly you don't believe you're in a relationship with him."

"Actually, I do," I say softly. "I am."

She snorts, followed by a long pause.

Her eyes turn calculating and my skin starts to feel clammy, my pulse picking up.

"Well, well, well. I would be impressed if I didn't find your actions incredibly selfish and short-sighted."

My heart starts to pound in my ears. “What do you mean... selfish?”

She comes to her feet slowly. “Right now, Vale is the perfect American hero, but by morning, he’s going to be a pervert who sleeps with his barely legal stepsister. Do you have any idea how this is going to look? He’ll be lucky if he gets to keep his job!”

By the time she finishes, my mouth is dry and I’m feeling slightly dizzy. Could my relationship with Vale really threaten his position on base in Coronado? “We...haven’t gotten that far yet, but Vale isn’t worried—”

“If that’s what he told you, he lied.” She shrugs a shoulder. “Then again, men lie all the time when they need a quick lay. Is that what you provided him, daughter? You must have, since he’s been home all of two days. You made it really convenient and easy, didn’t you?”

Of all the things she could have said, this one hits the lowest below the belt.

From Vale’s very first touch, I worried my proximity made me attractive to him. The fact that I was close and... accessible. I shake my head, trying to fight off the doubts that are slowly climbing from the graves where I buried them. Coming for my newfound confidence with sharp, gleaming teeth. “No,” I breathe, hating the moisture that pools in my eyes. “That’s not true. We love each other. I don’t need you to believe me. Our opinions are the only ones that matter.”

“Oh yeah? You should see the snide comments on this photo,” she drawls, holding up her phone. “Do you have any idea what people are saying? What they think when they see you two together? Such...” She eyes my body pointedly. “Opposites.”

“I don’t care.”

That’s what I say out loud, but my confidence is skating on thin ice.

“Well you can imagine,” my mother snaps. “How long is he going to put up with that? He’s in the public eye, Lula.

You're forcing him to deal with laughter and criticism and taunts. You're forcing him to do that by being with him!"

"No, I'm not," I whisper, backing away from her until my back hits the dresser.

But is what she says true? If Vale was pictured with one of the society girls my mother wanted to introduce him to, wouldn't people be more satisfied with his choice? Wouldn't it make more sense and invite less negativity? And with one of those girls, he wouldn't face any potential discipline from the Navy, either. Is being with me bad for Vale? I don't want to hurt him in any way—I love him too much.

"You're obviously beginning to see reason," sneers my mother. "Good."

There's a knock on the door of the adjoining bathroom.

Quickly, my mother crosses my room toward the entrance. "Sometimes the hard thing is the right thing," she whispers—and then she's gone.

*Sometimes the hard thing is the right thing.*

Those words play over and over in my head as I unlock the bathroom door with partially numb fingers, my throat clogging up at the sight of Vale's grin. In sweatpants and bare feet, he's shirtless, his abundance of muscles highlighting our differences. He's carrying a plate of sandwiches that he must have put together in the kitchen while I spoke to my mother.

One look at my face and his smile crumbles.

"What the hell happened?"

I can't look him in the eye. "Nothing."

"Bullshit, Lula." He pushes into my room and sets down the plate on my dresser, turning in a quick circle to survey the room, his sharp movements reminding me he's a SEAL to the bone. When he spots the discarded wine glass on my bed, he holds it up, dread and irritation beginning to creep into his expression. "Your mother was here. What did she say to you?"

All I can do is shake my head.

There's a hole in my stomach and I can't stop myself from speculating on those comments. What are people saying? I'm no longer in doubt that Vale loves my body. And *I* love my body. It jiggles in a lot of places. It also camps and meditates and goes to school and makes friends and lives life. I'm not defined by how I look. Nobody is.

But other people can be so cruel and thoughtless and *vocal* about things that strike them as different. Not typically done. Vale and I are one of those things. Do I really want to subject him to people who are constantly going to point out the difference in the ways we look? Or that I'm his stepsister? Fourteen years younger? The list goes on. He might be able to salvage his American hero image without me. Am I being selfish if I don't let him go?

I take a deep breath and look him in the eye. "Vale, maybe...maybe it is for the best if you take some time to think. In Coronado. Alone?"

His jaw looks like it's about to shatter, his muscles rigid.

Blue sparks snap in his eyes.

"I've had enough of this," he growls, storming toward me

—

And right past me.

Out the door of my bedroom and down the stairs.

I run after him down the hallway and watch as he leaves the house, slamming the door behind him hard enough to rattle the hinges.

That's it then. I've finally pushed him away.

He's gone.

In a trancelike state, I pace back to the bedroom and crawl into my bed, pulling the covers tight around me. I lie very still for long moments before the crying starts. A huge, hiccupping sob wracks my body and I release the sound into the pillow, curling in on myself. I know I should try and slow down my breathing and center myself before this crying jag gets out of

control, but I don't want to find peace or be calm. I want to rage at the unfairness of what's just happened.

Because it *is* unfair. We're two people who found love with each other. Isn't that supposed to be a beautiful thing? Aren't people supposed to celebrate that, not try and tear it down?

As an hour ticks by, I think back to the people in the bar.

How they didn't seem judgmental at all. How they were kind and welcoming.

I think of Santana and Jess, instinctively knowing they'll have my back no matter what.

And Vale...

God, I love him so much. He won't give a crap what anyone says. He never wanted the squeaky-clean image, because it's not real. He's a soldier who has had to do hard, traumatizing things. And me...I'm his lifeline. Didn't he tell me that?

*You put me on solid ground.*

Vale wants me because I'm good for him. He cares about me. Enough to guard me overnight while camping and defend me to our parents. I make him happy. And he doesn't want to be with me in *spite* of my body type. This is simply the body of the woman he fell for. In turn, he's fallen for every inch of me.

He loves me.

He loves me like crazy. When it comes down to it, the only person who is making me feel terrible is my mother. Am I going to let her continue to do that to me? She's been doing it my whole life. *She's* the wrong one. Not me—and not us.

I sit up in bed, wiping the tears out of my eyes.

I can't believe I let him leave. After telling Vale I wanted to be with him, I stumbled and possibly hurt him. That knowledge is painful and unacceptable. I have to go find him.

Wiping my damp cheeks with more purpose, I swing my legs off the side of the bed and speed walk out of the room, down the stairs. Vale is probably long gone, but I have to try and find him anyway. I have to tell him I'm sorry and demand he forgive me for losing faith.

I throw open the front door of the house—and there he is.

Striding up the walkway, still shirtless and barefoot in sweatpants. Only this time he's not carrying a plate of sandwiches, he's holding a small black box in his right fist. There's a determined expression on his face and he's such a welcome sight, he's so gorgeous that all I can do is sniff loudly and say, "I'm sorry."

"No," he rasps, coming to a stop in front of me. Towering over me by several inches, his eyes the most intense shade of blue. "I'm sorry, Lula. I should have stayed and reassured you. I shouldn't have stormed out like that. I just thought actions would carry more weight than words." His throat works with a heavy swallow. "You're mine. All mine. And I *need* you. I don't give a damn what the world thinks or what our parents say—we know this is right and good and perfect. We know this was meant to be." He kisses my lips softly and goes down on one knee, snapping open the ring box, bringing a choked, happy sound past my lips. "There was only a pawn shop open this time of night, but I'll get you a better one. I just need to get a ring on your finger. I need you to know I'm positive about us and I'll never need time to think or consider it. I *know*. My heart knows. I only need time with *you*—every second, every minute, every day. Will you please give that to me, Lula?"

"Yes." Not a single beat passes between his question and my answer. I throw my arms around the man I love and we hold each other on the top step of the house, rocking together, the ring box still open between us. When he finally slides the diamond onto my finger and kisses me, I let the happiness blanket me and my heart. I let it cover the holes that were punched in my insides earlier and seal them up tight.

Never to be reopened.



## EPILOGUE

Vale

*Five Years Later*

I'm not supposed to be here. But I can't stay away from my wife.

Across the street from where I'm parked, she is having an outdoor potluck with some of the other SEAL wives. She's in her element in the outdoors, lifting her beautiful face to the sunshine, laughing along with the other women. Christ, I can't take my eyes off her. When I met her, she was perfect to me. I had no idea she would get even better with time.

How is that possible?

How am I even more obsessed with her than I was in those first few days? How is my body holding it all together without imploding?

I manage to seem normal, going about my duties as a commander of the new recruits. Training them. Preparing them for combat. But I never stop counting the seconds until I'm back in her arms, where I feel like myself. Where I feel loved and happy. With my wife.

Our parents never accepted our relationship and we've come to terms with that. Truthfully, I think we're better off without their negativity in our lives. It took me a while to coax

out of Lula the things her mother said to her that night in the bedroom. Forgiving Vanessa would have been impossible for me anyway. She almost lost me the light of my life.

After a few weeks of awkwardness when we moved to base, people here started to accept our relationship, along with the annoyed military brass. I'm not their golden child anymore, which is great, because I never wanted to be. Lula and I are stepsiblings who fell in love, and our new friends are not only used to it five years later, they would defend us to anyone. They adore my wife—rightly so—and she has many champions in her corner.

None bigger than me.

I'm Lula's number one fan. I marvel over her on a daily basis. While still in school and raising our first child, she started an outdoor meditation business that meets all over Coronado now. At the beach, in the parks, sometimes in our house. They do camping trips, too, of course. And I'm always there, quietly watching her from a distance. As I am now.

Over in the park, Lula takes a sip of lemonade and lies back in the grass, closing her eyes. Stretching her toes. Feeling the nature around her, I know. Communicating with it. Feeling totally uninhibited and comfortable in her perfect skin.

Normally I love to watch her meditate, but at the angle she's lying, I can see down the top of her shirt to those full titties and my dick stretches the fly of my pants. My groan of her name is loud in the quiet car, my mouth dry with need. There's always a need for her. It's incessant. I banged her on the kitchen table this morning before our son and daughter woke up, my hand over her mouth to muffle the screaming, but it wasn't enough. I need her pussy on a constant basis. I need it *now*.

She's been planning this potluck for the last couple of weeks, though, and I can't just interrupt the damn thing because I'm hard up for a Lula fix. Although it wouldn't be the first time I've gotten impatient and stolen my wife from her friends. They all laugh about it, saying they wish their husbands gave them the same level of attention. They think it's

romantic—and in a lot of ways, I suppose it is. What they don't know is that sometimes I have to bite down on a leather belt when I'm fucking Lula so I don't sink my teeth into her precious skin, instead. They don't know I lie awake at night watching her, counting eyelashes and freckles and breaths. They don't know I track her phone and beat off to pictures of her in my office.

I'm out of control. I know that.

There's just no way of reining in this passion for her.

She's my princess.

The savior who brought me out of the darkness, helped me control the panic attacks and flashbacks. Lula urged me to meet with a therapist and I did—still do—employing a combination of psychology and meditation to feel steadier as a civilian. My therapist doesn't know about this, though. How I stalk my woman.

How I unzip my pants, as I'm doing now, and slowly slip a hand inside, fisting my erection. Licking my lips at the sight of Lula's tits. Teasing my cock up and down, imagining it's her giving little mouth. She loves sucking me off. Especially when I'm in uniform. And now I think of the last time it happened. When we came home from a gala last week and she got down on her knees in that red dress, her matching lipstick smearing on my cock with every hungry suck of her mouth. How she whined and whimpered at the taste of me.

I'm breathing hard in the car now, my hand beginning to move faster.

I'm still watching her, wishing I was on top of that sweet body. Riding it.

My actions pause when she rolls onto her belly in the grass and sends me a pinkie wave.

Loud breaths echo in my ears.

I've been caught.

Hell, maybe I wanted to be caught. I barely hid my location.

I hold my breath when Lula stands up and says something to the other women. Then she walks to the far end of the park where way less people are congregated. Where there is no sunshine and dirt instead of grass. Big, towering trees that provide shade.

And cover. For what she's obviously going to let me do.

*Merciful princess.*

With my heart rapping loudly in my chest, I drive out of my parking spot and leave the car much closer to where she's now disappeared. I follow her with my dick huge and heavy in my pants, a single-minded need to fuck, my limp doing nothing to slow me down. Up ahead, I catch a flash of her yellow shirt, tucked into a white skirt, and pick up the pace. I'm aroused and sweating and desperate by the time I reach Lula. Her eyes are sparkling with love, and Jesus, she's so beautiful it hurts, but there's no time for flirting or greetings. Nothing.

I simply spin her toward the closest tree and yank up that skirt. Ripping the daisy-covered panties to her knees and burying my dick as deep as it'll go. "*Fuck!*" I bellow into her neck, already rifling in and out of her tight wetness, my stomach smacking up against that round, juicy ass that drives me insane. "Hold on to the tree and tilt your hips for Daddy, baby. Come on. I'm hurting. I'm hurting so bad."

"It's all for you, Daddy," she whimpers. "Take it."

I'm a tenacious fiend for this woman and I let her know it, fucking her with unleashed possessiveness. Violent need. Obsession beyond belief. I tunnel my fingers into her hair and draw her head back, fucking her mouth while I take her body, raking my free hand down over her bouncing tits, lower to her pussy where I play with that pretty little clit. She's wet as hell, dripping all around my thrusting flesh, down her inner thighs. All over my fingers while I stroke her, listening to her staccato breathing so I know when she's ready to pop.

As is wont to happen, I'm suddenly overcome by a wave of affection for this woman. My best friend, my wife, the

mother of my children. My stepsister. Love crowds into my throat and expands in my ribcage until I'm gasping for air.

"You look so fucking pretty lying in the grass," I choke out into her neck. "I just want to be in bed holding you all day. Doors locked so you can't get out. I want that all the time, princess. Is that bad? I want to be with you, inside you, looking at you all the time. *All the fucking time.*"

Her breath is starting to get choppy, her thighs trembling.

Close, close, close.

I crave her orgasm like a drug. More than my own.

"I love you looking at me. I love you inside of me." Our mouths mate over her shoulder, wet and nasty and raw. "I just love you so much," she finishes on a whisper.

And that's always what does me in.

Hearing she loves me releases the hold on my balls and I start to grunt, stooping forward and pumping, pumping, pumping into her pussy like a lion impregnating his lioness. Isn't that exactly what I'm doing? Isn't getting her pregnant always the goal? Yes. Yes. I want more babies with her. A big, happy house full of laughter forever.

Lula is my heaven.

"I love you, too," I ground out, stroking her clit as fast as I can so she climaxes with me—and thank God she does, back bowing, her channel tightening up and milking my length in that magical way of hers. I soak up the sounds of her cries, my own release ripping my stomach to shreds with its intensity. It's like this every time I fuck her. Like it's been years since the last time, when in reality it may have only been hours.

I'm insatiable for this woman. Always will be.

And as she turns in to my arms and sighs happily, looking up at me with unabashed love, I settle my mouth against her ear and let her know it.

THE END

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