

REBEL BLOOM



Meet **THE**

SURROGATE

Meet the Surrogate

A Reverse Harem Romance

Rebel Bloom

Copyright © 2023 by Rebel Bloom

All rights reserved.

No portion of this book may be reproduced in any form without written permission from the author, except as permitted by U.S. copyright law.

Copyright © 2023 by Rebel Bloom

All rights reserved.

No portion of this book may be reproduced in any form without written permission from the publisher or author, except as permitted by U.S. copyright law.

Contents

1. 1.

2. 2.

3. 3.

4. 4.

5. 5.

6. 6.

7. 7.

8. 8.

9. 9.

10. 10.

11. 11.

12. 12.

13. 13.

14. 14.

15. 15.

16. 16.

17. 17.

18. 18.

19. 19.

20. 20.

21. 21.

22. 22.

23. 23.

24. 24.

25. 25.

26. 26.

27. 27.

28. 28.

29. 29.

30. 30.

31. 31.

32. 32.

33. 33.

34. 34.

35. 35.

36. 36.

37. 37.

38. 38.

39. 39.

40. 40.

41. 41.

42. 42.

43. 43.

44. 44.

45. 45.

46. 46.

47. 47.

48. 48.

49. 49.

50. 50.

51. 51.

52. 52.

53. 53.

54. 54.

55. 55.

56. 56.

57. 57.

58. 58.

59. 59.

60. 60.

61. 61.

62. 62.

63. 63.

64. 64.

65. 65.

66. 66.

67. 67.

68. 68.

69. 69.

56. 56.

57. 57.

58. 58.

59. 59.

60. 60.

61. 61.

62. 62.

63. 63.

64. 64.

65. 65.

66. 66.

67. 67.

68. 68.

69. 69.

1.

1.

Memphis

“I sunbathed my vagina in preparation for this. I’m centered, as I’ve ever been, and I feel so ready to take on the world. G was right.” A blonde bombshell sitting two chairs down from me tossed her long, wavy, silky hair over her shoulder and flashed a million-dollar smile. If she noticed the ends of her hair hitting me, she didn’t acknowledge it. “I knew I had to be perfect as soon as I heard who the client was.”

I tried to appear as if I wasn’t listening, but my mouth practically sagged at the potential for information. I had no clue who the client was and I didn’t feel centered or ready to take on the world. It’d never even crossed my mind to sunbathe my vagina. I didn’t even know that was something women did. All I could envision was the time I’d fallen asleep outside of Jenny B’s above-ground pool and woken up the next morning with blistered skin.

“Oh, I’ve been doing a green juice cleanse for a week. I wanted to be perfect.” Another blonde across from the first ran her hands down her thighs. “I fit into my high school jeans again.”

My stomach knotted. I’d tried a green juice once. A new store in my neighborhood back home had passed out samples and I’d taken one, not wanting to offend the sweet woman handing them out. Swallowing that green poison had ended any will I had to go on in life. I definitely didn’t fit in my high school jeans, either. As far as I could tell, I was zero and three against the odds around me.

“Anna Sergei.” Diane Hathe’s polished voice hushed the low level conversation as she stepped out of the conference room and called to the

applicant. Another of the perfect applicants stepped around her to leave, and she nodded. "Thank you for coming, Megan."

The blonde who'd sunbathed her vagina stood up and straightened her perfect pencil skirt. It hugged her slim body and the heels she wore made her legs look miles long. I might've even sighed with envy as I noticed the blonde nod. "Wish me luck." Anna nodded to the other blonde and pushed her shoulders back before following Diane into the conference room.

I strained to see into the room, to see the client who'd sent me around me into a tizzy. The solid wood door closed before I could see anything other than Diane's disapproving look. I swallowed down the urge to yell and squeezed my hands together in my lap. I knew the pristinely dressed woman didn't approve of me. She'd nearly spit her coffee out when I'd walked in that morning and she'd taken in my basic sundress and worn flats.

With the way the other women spoke about Diane, it was clear to me she was the boss of the surrogacy company we were there for. She controlled everything, and the whispers had suggested the client was a VIP for her, working the application process herself. So, I didn't understand why she'd offend me stay once she'd laid eyes on me and deemed me unworthy. It was nearly as if she didn't like me, with each glance my way more scathing than the school would've thought she'd just toss me out on my butt and let the better ladies applicants move forward.

The conference room door opened and Anna walked out with her chin held high and her arms crossed. She didn't glance at the few of us who remained as she marched away. Diane stepped out a moment later and her expression on her face was alarming.

Her eyes landed on me and my back stiffened. I knew my name was

ave and to leave her mouth and I suddenly wanted to change places with Anna

flooded my body and my flight response demanded I run. It was a stupid
ed herto do what I was doing. It was irresponsible and wrong, immoral even
ade herone more con in a long history of cons that I didn't want to carry out
m. I knew that when Diane said my name, I'd get up and pretend to be as g
ied heras Anna Sergei while straightening my dress. I had no choice, and in
telling myself that, I might not feel lower than trash.

women "Memphis King." Diane even said my name like it tasted bad on th
a thing, her tongue.

o vomit I stood up on shaking legs and took a deep breath. I could hear
dressed boyfriend's voice in my head as I ran my hands over my hips and
hen I'd raised daisies crocheted into the white cotton of my dress. He'd coac
slightly through a hundred cons, all of which I felt sick walking into. He'd
been there to force me to carry things through, and without him I
hat she wanted to put a few more miles on my flats while running straight ou
ntrolled city.

er to be "Well?" Diane put her hands on her hips as she stared at m
he'd let expression showing every bit of her frustration.

as clear I took another deep breath, held it for a few seconds, and then blew
e last. I while silently going down the list of my lies as I walked towards h
r suited application I'd submitted to be considered for her incredibly rich-t
surrogacy program had been so thick with bullcrap that it would've
er head tractor to get through it all. Slightly tipsy on bargain wine the ni
us who created the fictional version of myself, I'd taken creative liberties tha
and the going to have to walk into that conference room and stand behind
straight face.

is about When Diane didn't move from the doorway, I stopped in front of l

1. Panic met her deep brown gaze. Her mouth tightened and turned down in a f
oid idea winced as she began to speak but was cut off by a deep voice calling o
. It was the conference room.

it, but I “Mrs. Hathe. Is there a reason you’re blocking Ms. King from enteri
graceful Diane snapped her mouth shut and stepped to the side so I could e
f I kept room. “Not at all, Mr. Hawke.”

My stomach soured and my body tightened with nerves as I moved
e tip of room and kept my eyes on my feet while Diane shut the heavy door
us. It was just one more con. One more and then I’d never do it again
my ex-only doing it then because I had to. Still, I felt like a monster as I strai
felt themy back and lifted my chin.

hed me “Ms. King, these are the Hawke brothers. Remington, Wells, and I
always Diane cleared her throat. “They’re each seeking a surrogate.”

there, I My hand lifted to my throat to clutch the pearls I’d never owned a
t of the eyes on the three men sitting across from me. For one perfect mo
forgot where I was and who I was. Suspended in time, I almost believ
ne, her the gods playing mere men in front of me were there just for me,
viewing pleasure. I felt heat branding my neck and higher as I stared.

w it out The only time I could remember feeling the way I felt in that mom
er. The the one Christmas I could remember before my brothers were born. I’
looded into the living room and found the stuffed monkey I’d wanted, sitting i
taken a used plastic car that I could just fit inside if I didn’t close the doc
ght I’d monkey sitting shotgun in that car had my eyes wide and excited as I
it I was devour everything at once. The Hawke brothers had my eyes shiftir
with a and forth quickly as I drank in every detail of them. It was the mon
car all over again, but on steroids.

her and “This is Memphis King, age twenty-nine, from Georgia. As I me

rown. I previously, Mr. Hawke, I haven't-

ut from The Mr. Hawke she addressed was the brother sitting in the middle
from where I stood, I could see how vibrantly blue his eyes were
ing?" narrowed on Mrs. Hathe. "That's quite enough, Mrs. Hathe. We can
nter the from here."

She gestured for me to take the single chair in front of the men and
into the her arms over her chest. "Go ahead."

behind Even as I lowered myself into the chair, I couldn't force my eye
1. I was from them. They were all gazing back at me with intense focus, the th
ghtened of eyes all distinctly different in color. The brother in the middle w
bright blue eyes and styled light blonde hair wore a suit and a five

Boone." shadow better than anyone I'd ever seen. They were all large men, pr
even larger than I was imagining when standing, and they each had th
is I laid strong jawline and strong features. On the right, one of the brothers
ment, I back at me with eyes the color of the ocean and tattoos creeping ou
ved that neck of his shirt. His dirty blonde hair fell over his forehead and he pu
for my back without disengaging. The brother on the left had darker blonde l

short and a neatly trimmed beard, with eyes that almost danced depen
ent was the angle of his face. I couldn't tell if his eyes were dark blue or haz
d raced wanted to figure it out. His teeth were perfectly white as he smiled at n
inside a "Well, Ms. King. Should we start?" The smile grew as his eyes crir
r. That the corners. "I'm Boone Hawke. It's nice to meet you."

tried to I took yet another deep breath and sat up even straighter. "It's nice
ig back you, too. All of you. Please, call me Memphis."

key and

ntioned

previously, Mr. Hawke, I haven't-

The Mr. Hawke she addressed was the brother sitting in the middle. Even from where I stood, I could see how vibrantly blue his eyes were as they narrowed on Mrs. Hathe. "That's quite enough, Mrs. Hathe. We can take it from here."

She gestured for me to take the single chair in front of the men and crossed her arms over her chest. "Go ahead."

Even as I lowered myself into the chair, I couldn't force my eyes away from them. They were all gazing back at me with intense focus, the three sets of eyes all distinctly different in color. The brother in the middle with the bright blue eyes and styled light blonde hair wore a suit and a five o'clock shadow better than anyone I'd ever seen. They were all large men, probably even larger than I was imagining when standing, and they each had the same strong jawline and strong features. On the right, one of the brothers stared back at me with eyes the color of the ocean and tattoos creeping out of the neck of his shirt. His dirty blonde hair fell over his forehead and he pushed it back without disengaging. The brother on the left had darker blonde hair cut short and a neatly trimmed beard, with eyes that almost danced depending on the angle of his face. I couldn't tell if his eyes were dark blue or hazel and I wanted to figure it out. His teeth were perfectly white as he smiled at me.

"Well, Ms. King. Should we start?" The smile grew as his eyes crinkled at the corners. "I'm Boone Hawke. It's nice to meet you."

I took yet another deep breath and sat up even straighter. "It's nice to meet you, too. All of you. Please, call me Memphis."

2.

2.

Remington

The sweet southern lilt of her voice made my cock stir. Her words just a bit slower and I found myself leaning forward to devour a single one. She was even better than her picture. Wide green eyes, a mouth meant for pleasing a man, and fucking freckles. She looked like the girl next door, if the girl next door had curves for days and the ability to fuck a man hard with a single batting of her long lashes.

“Memphis. I’ve never met a Memphis before.” Wells rested his hand on the table that separated us from Memphis and I could see the veins in his knuckles were white from the pressure of him squeezing them together.

“My momma was a romantic at heart. She named me after the place she met my father.” A smile tipped her lips upwards. “I’m told it could’ve been worse. They had a missed connection in Florida before meeting in Memphis.”

Boone laughed easily. “I think Memphis works for you. Did you ever have a nickname, though? I was Boo growing up. Wells was Welly and Remington here is still Remy to us.”

A flattering blush stained her cheeks and she crossed her legs, flaunting a tantalizing amount of thigh as she did. “I plead the fifth.”

“Ms. King, all of your medical exams came back healthy, as is required of course. However, your application was received last minute and I haven’t been able to vet your information yet. Why don’t you tell us about your background? Mrs. Hathe refused to look my way as she addressed Memphis. She knew she was overstepping, pushing when I’d said to stop.”

“Sure.” Memphis lost her smile and uncrossed and recrossed her legs the other way. She was nervous. “I grew up in Georgia with a small family.”

graduated from St. Katherine School at the top of my class and attended the University of Georgia for the next four years. I double majored in business and English. After graduating, I went to Yale and continued my business and literature education. I know that I should've followed through with business, especially considering that's what my father wanted to bring me on like the family business, but it wasn't in my heart."

I stepped my fingers as I studied her. "The business program at Georgia is solid. That's impressive."

Her eyes moved to my hands and stayed there. "I stated in my application that I'm also a champion swimmer and my tennis game is top notch. I also make a coconut cake that would make you cry happy tears."

"What made you want to do this?" Wells' leg bounced under the table. I knew he was anxious to be done with the entire process. He hadn't jumped on her English degree, despite his time studying some of the best schools abroad.

"I've done a lot in my life. I'm nearing thirty and I'm now settling down myself. I feel like it's just right to help out a family in need. I can do this, I want to." She tugged at the hem of her dress. "I also saw that the surrogacy would be spent here, in Chicago. While I would be sad to leave the family home in Georgia, I've never lived in Chicago and doing this haven't a surrogate, will allow me to help someone while getting to experience life here. And to be quite honest, that English degree and my desire to follow my love of literature into a career has created a rift with my family. They want me to follow in their footsteps and master the art of business. I have my own plans."

Frowning, she looked away and shook her head. "It's unfortunate, but I'm not on great terms with my father. Until I settle into a career and find

ded the place in the world, I'm feeling slightly adrift."

business Truthfully, the moment I'd spotted Memphis' headshot sitting off Englishside on Mrs. Hathe's desk, I'd had a feeling about her. When I skimmed her application, I saw that she was an intelligent woman from a good family board that she'd been raised to understand our societal needs. She'd give me who would hold up the family name just fine. I didn't need Mrs. Hathe's Georgia is any tests or checks to know that I was going to choose Memphis. That the reason I'd demanded she be brought in last minute. I didn't call her a lication Mrs. Hathe thought. I wanted Memphis and I was going to get her.

1. I can "I also practice the same sunbathing techniques as Gwentyth Paine." Memphis nodded hard enough that her hair fell into her eyes. She tucked it behind her ears and pressed her lips together, like she was trying not to even herself from talking more.

classics "Ms. King." Mrs. Hathe shifted in her seat and shot an apologetic look my way. "I don't think that's necessary information."

re near I frowned and held up my hand at the older woman. I understood that she needed. If I was well respected in her field, but I didn't like the way she was talking about Memphis. "Mrs. Hathe, I'd appreciate it if you stepped out for the rest of the day to leave of the interview."

s, being Memphis looked between the two of us and sat up even straighter. "I'm not a new hire."

low my "I assure you, Mrs. Hathe, that you are not needed for the rest of the day. I wanted interview." I held Memphis' shocked gaze and sat back in my chair. "I'd like to know if you be able to start immediately if one of us chooses you?"

"I would." Nodding quickly, Memphis gripped her hands tighter in her lap. "I can start immediately."

ind my Boone grinned, turning his charm up a degree. "Your application is perfect."

great. Tell me one thing, though.”

Her eyes moved to Boone and she swallowed. “Anything.” Boone’s answering groan under his breath barely reached my ears and I knew it hadn’t reached Memphis, but knowing that he was feeling the same as a kid of Memphis’ sweetness bothered me. I stretched my arm out along the table to touch his chair and squeezed the back of his neck. He needed to keep his hat on. We weren’t hiring Memphis to be our girlfriend, or whatever she was that day Boone was tasting. I needed to remind myself of that, too.

“Are you as sweet as your accent? Second question. Can you assure me that your baby will have your accent and your eyes?” He stood up and moved to the table. “I think I-”

Wells stood up and cleared his throat. “Boone.”

I let out a frustrated sigh and joined them. Standing on the other side of the table, closer to Memphis, I froze for a moment. Looking down at the woman, a wave of awareness washed down my spine and left a pleasant tingle. Having her in front of me, looking up with her innocent eyes, I had a dangerous desire to dominate her sweet little body until those eyes finally shut with pleasure.

“Give us a few minutes to talk, Memphis. Wait outside.” I bit my lip. “Oh...” and watched as she stood up and still didn’t come up to my chin. She was a tiny woman, but she still felt small in front of us. “We’ll call you back of this momentarily.”

She met my gaze and then nodded quickly before all but running out the door. Just when I thought I’d found a submissive little bunny in my hands, she paused with her hand on the door and looked back at us. “I’m not as sweet as the accent would have you think. I’m sorry if that’s disappointing.”

Boone’s groan was more than audible that time, judging by the

darkening Memphis' cheeks. "It's not, sweetheart. Not at all."

The second the door closed, Wells turned a dark look on Boone.
rs, so Imine."

effects Boone grunted. "Hardly. You can take the accountant from
ne backMemphis King is mine."

shit in Growling out my frustration, I rested my hands on my hips and sco
avor of them both. "We've got a fucking problem, then, because I want her, to

me the
around

e of the
woman,
behind.
felt the
luttered

tongue
wasn't
back in

to the
net, she
weet as

e blush

darkening Memphis' cheeks. "It's not, sweetheart. Not at all."

The second the door closed, Wells turned a dark look on Boone. "She's mine."

Boone grunted. "Hardly. You can take the accountant from earlier. Memphis King is mine."

Growling out my frustration, I rested my hands on my hips and scowled at them both. "We've got a fucking problem, then, because I want her, too."

3.

3.

Boone

Mrs. Hathe moved back into the conference room and raised her eyebrows at the three of us. “Should I dismiss Ms. King?”

I sent her an easy smile and shook my head. “No. Ms. King stays.”

“We’re done with interviews for right now. The three of us have something to discuss before we move forward.” Remy was pissed, I could tell he had never been able to hide his feelings from me or Wells. “Wait outside, please.”

“There are women waiting to be interviewed, Mr. Hawke. Should they stay?” The woman was probably just as pissed as Remy, but she knew the money she’d make from us was worth dealing with our shit.

“Fine. Sure.” Remy turned his back to her and walked back to the door, knocking his knuckles against the smooth surface. “This isn’t going to work.”

Wells waited for Mrs. Hathe to leave before responding. “She’s beautiful. Smart, beautiful, sweet. She comes from a good family and that accent is sexy as hell. I’m dying to hear her say my name.”

I sighed as I sat down in the chair Memphis had just been in. “It’s sexy as hell. I’m dying to hear her say my name.”

“I’m sorry. Are you confused about what a surrogacy is?” Wells shook his head at me. “We’re not fucking her. We’re picking her for her perfect genes. At least, that’s what I thought we were doing.”

“What are we doing? Rock, paper, scissors?” Ignoring Wells, I focused on what really mattered. Who was going to get Memphis and how would I be sure it was me?

Remy loosened his tie as he turned back to me and scowled. “Remy could’ve sworn you were only three years younger than me, not thirty.”

“I’m waiting to hear your grand idea, big brother.” I ran my hand over my beard and then dug my fingers into my jaw muscles. I’d been clenching my teeth for weeks and I was feeling the consequences.

“A month ago I was positive I was never having kids, Boone, so I’ll tell you now if I’m not full of grand ideas here. I just know that playing rock, paper, scissors to decide who gets a whole *woman* is probably shitty.” Yanking my tie completely free, Remy balled it in his fist and shook his head. “Please, please.” Don really did it this time.

I stretched my legs out in front of me and watched as Wells pulled himself up on the table to sit. I could tell he was struggling with the idea just as much as we were, even though he was the only one of us who thought he should have kids someday.

“There’s no changing what Don did; we already tried. He guaranteed perfect will was iron clad. We have kids in the next five years or we can kiss our inheritance goodbye. Let’s skip the part where we feel sorry for ourselves and just get on with it. If I’m being forced into having a kid, I want Memphis.

She’s got it all. She’ll make a kid I can deal with and if I’m lucky, she’ll want to cozy up to me.” I thought of her big green eyes looking at baby-me and groaned. “Are we settled? I take Memphis, you two figure out whoever is left?”

“The fuck we’re settled. I’m not backing down. I’m taking Memphis.” Wells glared at me. “If I’m being forced into doing this shit, I’m going to do it as much my way as I can.”

Remy knocked his knuckles on the table again and shook his head. “Neither of you are taking Memphis. I’m the oldest. I’m choosing her.”

I stood up. “Don’t pull that shit. I don’t care if you’re the oldest.”

“Do you care that I’m the richest?” Remy met me toe to toe. “I’m

over mythe bill for this. I get to pick who I want first.”

ing them “You’re only paying because you jumped at the chance to thro
money around. If it’s a matter of putting up the money, I’m in.” I t
forgivegrin in Wells’ direction. “Matter of fact, I’m sure Welly is, too. You
, paper,talking to two chumps from the street corner, Remy.”

ing his He frowned. “It was worth a shot.”

ucking Wells squeezed his shoulder and grunted. “I’m starting to thin
paper, scissors is a good idea.”

himself “Against a surgeon? No, thanks.” Remy flashed me a rare grin a
is muchwalked back around to take his seat, scowling again by the time he sa
'd ever“I wish our dear father was still alive so I could kill him myself. T
waste of time. None of us want this.”

eed his “Don would never have given us the pleasure of killing him, the bas
riss oursank back into the chair again and looked up at the ceiling. “He couldr
ves andfucking die without giving us a hard time.”

emphis. “I’ll never understand why he was hell bent on forcing us to ha
maybewhen he hated us so much for so long.” Wells let out a bitter
g up at“Although, maybe this was just another part of his torture. He pi
ht overthought having kids would be the worst punishment we could ever fac
all, he seemed to think that’s what we were to him.”

nphis.” I swallowed around a sudden lump in my throat and sat up straight
g to dojust get this over with. We pick a surrogate, she has the kid, nannies r
kid. It’s fine.”

s head. “Except we can’t all pick Memphis.” Looking at Remy, and th
” Wells furrowed his brow. “Right?”

Remy frowned. “If we all picked her, she’d be under contract with
footingthe duration of three pregnancies. That’s not realistic.”

“Isn’t that a question we should pose to Ms. King? Maybe she’s looking for a long-term escape from her family home.” I felt a sliver of excitement growing. “She can pick one of us, or all of us. So, either me or all of us are not.” Remy rolled his eyes at me and stayed silent for a few moments, then he finally looked up at us and shrugged. “We offer her more, since the time period would be drastically different than what we originally worked out. Roll out the red carpet, too. She’ll have the house, the amenities. We’ll pay for everything she could ever want, for the entire length of time she’s with us. And then on top of the money she’ll agree to be paid for giving us the children, we’ll pay her to stay down. “And after she has the first kid? Does she stick around, caring for the kids? Won’t that make it kind of hard for her to leave it after she pops out the second one?” Wells folded his arms over his chest and raised his eyebrows at me, expecting our oldest brother to have all the answers.

“We’ll have nannies. She won’t need to care for the kids. Nothing different, except that she’ll stay on for all three contracts, instead of bringing in two other women.” Remy was talking himself into the deal, making it work in his head. “We’ll offer her an amount she can’t refuse. I thought of those big eyes and full lips once more and grinned. “Good to me. I’m ready to hear that sweet southern accent telling me yes.”

“Keep it in your pants.” Remy tapped away at his phone and looked at me. “Let’s make sure we should all remember that this is for a surrogacy and nothing more. It shouldn’t matter that she’s fucking gorgeous.”

Wells snorted. “Tell that to my dick.”

“I’m not telling a goddamn thing to your dick, asshole.” Remy shot me a dirty look as the door to the conference room opened and Mrs. Hatfield entered. Immediately, he was back in business mode. “Mrs. Hatfield. We’ve made our decision.”

looking
itement
s.”

nking it
nce the
wanted.
e’ll pay
with us.
,

for it?
he next
: Remy,

will be
l of us
ie idea,
e.”

Sounds
s.”

d up at
nore. It

us both
walked
made a

4.

4.

Memphis

I was going to throw up. I bounced my foot faster and chewed on the end of my thumb until it was raw. The Hawke brothers had been in the conference room by themselves for several minutes after I'd been dismissed. That had been scary enough, trying to imagine what they were talking about. When Mrs. Hathe had been summoned in and her raised voice had been heard through the walls of the conference room minutes later, I'd nearly run out of the building. I couldn't make out her words, but the tone wasn't great.

It didn't help that the remaining women kept staring at me. Somehow I had broken the process and everyone knew. I had been found out and the brothers were probably firing Mrs. Hathe for bringing in a fraud. She was probably going to walk out any moment and attack me for costing her a client. I knew she was already close, just judging by the looks she'd been giving me.

I hadn't been able to keep it together in front of the three brothers. My years of conning men had vanished in the blink of an eye when they'd all looked at me. I blacked out. I didn't even know what I'd said. Words came out of my mouth and I knew it, because I'd felt my mouth moving, but I had no recollection of what I'd said. I'd never botched a con before. I'd always had my ex with me, though. Charlie had been the one in charge of everything. I was a failure on my own. Clearly.

The conference room door opened after what felt like forever and Mrs. Hathe came out, red-faced and scowling. "Everyone is dismissed. Please stop by Lucy's desk on the way out and collect a token of our appreciation for your time. I'm very sorry about having to cut this short today, but something's come up."

I stood up with the rest of the women and felt a surge of emotions. because I wasn't in trouble for lying. Disappointment, because I'd ne the edge the Hawke brothers again. Mostly, though, I felt dread. What waited in the back in Georgia was a whole lot of nothing. I had more problems than missed, and that didn't seem like it was going to change anytime soon. g about. "Not you, Ms. King. You stay." Mrs. Hathe spit out my name reached striding out of the waiting area with the rest of the women, leav of the standing in front of my chair, more than a little confused.

I hesitated, unsure of what to do. She was so angry that I knew she ow, I'd know that I was a fraud. Were the cops on their way? Was it even il rothers do what I did? I'd lied on the application, but I hadn't clicked anythi robably swore me to tell the truth or be penalized under the law. I w I knew remembered something like that!

As I stood there, waiting on the cops to burst in and arrest me, I f All the and cursed every moment of my relationship with Charlie. If I had looked him, I never would've learned to con people. I wouldn't have lost my t of my to that asshole, either. Even thinking about it made my blood boil a had no eyes water. He was the first step in the journey that led to me mak ays had terrible mistake of lying on that surrogacy application. If I went to ing and would be his fault.

"Ms. King?"

id Mrs. I screamed and jumped about a foot in the air when my name was ise stop and someone touched my arm. Clutching my chest, I spun to face a n tion for a few years older than the Hawke brothers. He was handsome, but no ay, but as handsome as the men in that conference room.

He flashed me a big smile and wrapped his hand around my upp
"I'm so sorry, Ms. King. I didn't mean to scare you. My name is E

Relief, Morgan and I'm an attorney. I work closely with several of Remington's lawyers, so he reached out to me."

for me My stomach dropped and I just stared up at the man blankly, unsure of how to save myself. They'd called in their lawyer. I was dead meat.

"Are you okay? Do you need anything? You look a little pale." Easton moved into the chair closest to me, he disappeared for a moment and then reappeared with a bottle of water. "This is very unusual. If you have your own lawyer you'd like to call, I'd be more than happy to step aside for them. The judge had just known that they wanted this handled immediately and that you probably didn't have a lawyer licensed in Illinois. For this matter, I'm yours." "I'm sorry. I don't understand." I looked back at the conference room as the door opened and Remington walked out. My chest thumped because of it.

Edgerton "The Hawke brothers are offering you the surrogacy contract. No comment yet?" Fletcher glanced over his shoulder and spotted Remington. Standing, he walked over and shook the larger man's hand. "I sprang the news on Ms. King, it seems."

ing the "Wait inside, Fletcher. I'm sure Boone has something to say." In the jail, it waiting to see if the lawyer would listen to him, Remington walked where I sat and stood over me for a beat longer than was comfortable. When the chair Fletcher had just left, he moved it so it was facing me and said "Memphis."

man just I swallowed as his long legs stretched out on either side of the table. "Remington."

His mouth lifted at one corner and his eyes crinkled just enough to show he was amused. "We're offering you the contract. We want you as our surrogate."

ngton's Shocked, I barely stopped myself from asking why. Instead, I for
shoulders back and nodded. "Okay."

sure of "It's different from what we'd originally thought we wanted."
forward and rested his elbows on his knees. The position put him fully
sing me personal space and the scent of citrus heightened my senses. "We
appeared that we'd each choose someone to be our surrogate. The problem, how
lawyer that we all want you."

Hawkes I blinked a few times. "I'm sorry?"

robably "We each came into this with an idea in mind of who we wanted to
our surrogate. It seems that us Hawke men don't vary much from bro
om just brother. You are the first choice for each of us." He gripped his
harder between his legs, leaving them resting barely an inch from my ba

"We've changed the offer to reflect the time commitment you'd be ma
me told us. I called in Fletcher Morgan to help you go through the contract we
ington. you. He's on your side completely and won't accept less than you c
ing the He'll probably even add an extra million just to make me pay for not b
him over to my team yet."

Without Everything in my body came to a screeching halt. My breath
over to somewhere in my chest and stayed there until Remington gently touc
Taking leg and asked if I was okay. My eyes filled with tears as I swallowe
t down. the urge to choke. Nodding too quickly, I cleared my throat and pus
hair behind my ears. "Did you say an extra million? The original contr
mine. for two hundred thousand."

"That contract would have been for one pregnancy. What we're ask
o let me is a lot more." He stood up and offered me his hand. "Why don't yo
u to be into the conference room and we'll go over everything?"

I took his hand and fought the need to blurt out every question

ced mythink of. Before I could appreciate the sheer size difference in our ha
dropped my hand and rested his hand on the middle of my back,
He satguiding me back into the room where his brothers waited with n
y in mylawyer.

thought “Don’t worry, Memphis.” Remington stopped just outside the do
ever, islooked down at me with a surprisingly gentle expression on his face.
take care of you if you decide to do this.”

hire as
other to
; hands
are leg.
iking to
'll offer
leserve.
ringing

lodged
hed my
d down
hed my
act was

cing for
u come

I could

think of. Before I could appreciate the sheer size difference in our hands, he dropped my hand and rested his hand on the middle of my back, gently guiding me back into the room where his brothers waited with my new lawyer.

“Don’t worry, Memphis.” Remington stopped just outside the door and looked down at me with a surprisingly gentle expression on his face. “We’ll take care of you if you decide to do this.”

5.

5.

Memphis

The original contract had been for two hundred thousand dollars. The surrogate would be housed and provided full care by the client. A one-year long contract, with an additional stipend provided if the surrogate got pregnant right away and the year didn't allow enough time for pregnancy to be carried to full term. A percentage of the money went to Hathe's company, but most of it went straight to the surrogate. When I saw the sample contract on the website and signed the paperwork, I'd hoped I would be picked. No part of me believed it would happen, though. If I had a chance to be lucky five times, I'd be unlucky five times. That was how my life went. So, to say I was shocked to be looking up at Remington Hawke while he promised he and his brothers would take care of me would be like saying the sun is a little bit up close. Understatement of the century.

I rolled my lower lip between my teeth and bit down on it. I was close enough to Remington to see that his eyes were solid blue, without a tinge of another color. They looked like a clear morning sky and his thick eyelashes curled naturally to highlight them even more. It wasn't fair. He was so tall and so tall that I knew I would fit against his chest so comfortably. I had never been that close to another man—who wasn't family—since Charlie was painfully aware of the way my body was responding.

Remington opened the door and eased me into the room. "Hear me, Memphis."

I wanted to laugh. He thought I was silent because I wanted to run away. If he only knew I was silent because my brain was slowly catching up to

the fantasy my body had started without it.

Boone and Wells stood next to the conference table, their eyes on me. There was a lot of attention for me to take on at once. I bit my lip harder and it was a let out a gasp of surprise when Remington gripped my chin and tugged. I didn't slip free.

For the first time, "You're going to make yourself bleed." His touch was gone as quickly as it had appeared, but the burn of his skin on mine lingered. He met my gaze and I'd read a stern expression on his face and shook his head. "You left marks."

I resisted the urge to reach up and touch my mouth, but just barely. "I'm truly all a little more nerve-wracking than I expected it to be, I guess."

Boone walked over and gripped his brother's shoulder. "You can probably tell that some of us are a little stressed, too. Remy wouldn't just make a mess of you like that, otherwise."

I designated Fletcher as a safe space in the room and hurried to sit next to him at the table. He didn't make me feel nervous or fidgety. I crossed my legs close under the table and bounced my foot. "Thank you for being available on such short notice. I don't think I said that outside."

He patted my hand. "I'd just sprung some big news on you. If you've been off your game a little, I would hire you for my office immediately. I hadn't need someone with nerves of steel to run my life for me."

"Are you looking for an employee or a wife?" I smiled when he looked at me. "Not that it's any of my business."

"It could be, Ms. King, if you're volunteering." He winked, his expression light and happy. "It would bring me eternal joy to steal you away from me." "Three."

Remington's voice was bored as he sat across from us. "Are you going to tell your *client* what our offer is?"

“Don’t get frustrated with me yet, Remington. I still haven’t raked in me. I’ve got to get over the coals.” Fletcher leaned in close to me and lowered his voice and then wrote the number they’re offering you down in the folder in front of me. I just wanted to annoy Remy more by whispering. Look at him and tell me his eyes are shooting fire yet.”

As quick as I covered my smile with my hand as I glanced up and found a size with Hawke brothers glaring at my new lawyer. “Yep, yep, and yep.”

He pulled back and cleared his throat. “Okay, back to business.” “This is *Fletcher.*” Remington scowled darkly. “Stop fucking around.”

With a smile still etched into his face, Fletcher opened the folder and probably closer to me. He tapped a number with so many zeros behind it that my hand felt like it skipped a few beats.

“The offer is five million. One million per year that you’d be next to contract with us. We will give you lodging and every amenity you may request during that time period. There are no limits. You will also have access to a credit card, so you will complete the contract with the five million.” Remington stopped and folded his hands together on top of the table. “You will give us each a child in that five year period.”

Immediately, I felt my stomach flipped and I suddenly felt like I was making a huge mistake.

There was no way I would ever get that amount of money without breaking every law known to man. How? That kind of thing didn’t happen to me.

The five million dollars was four point eight million more than I ever thought I could have in my entire life, and that was only if I got the original contract.

In these moments, I had to do it. I had to pull myself together and take the new contract. With that money, I could provide for my brothers for the rest of our lives.

They could go to school. I could live my life without the constant stress of what

ed you would be coming from. I had nothing to lose. Five years was a long time. “It was five years of a really pathetic life. I wasn’t going to miss anything from you. I’d forgotten everything else that Charlie had ever taught me, but tell me if that you never took the first offer. It was greedy, but if I could get as much money as possible, every worry I’d ever had would be easier to face. All three would be gone completely.”

Putting my hand over Fletcher’s to get his attention, I shook my head and looked at the Hawke brothers. It was hard when they looked back at me with such intensity. “I don’t think I can do it. I imagined myself carrying a child and sliding it for a family who desperately wanted a kid. This doesn’t feel the same.” My heart ached. Boone looked at his brothers and then back at me. “We do want to live in Memphis. Our family has been through some big changes and we’ve never realized that we don’t want to wait for love to start our families. Our father died a month ago. Life is too short to wait when we can have the family we want now.”

“Oh, no! I’m so sorry.” I pressed my hand to my chest. “Bless your heart. That’s terrible.”

“It was definitely something.” Wells sighed and cut his eyes at his brother. “We need this, Memphis. We would be missing out on so much if we don’t take it. We’re making give ourselves this chance. We’d never considered using the same surrogate before, but the idea of our children being brothers and sisters is so special.”

Remington tapped his fingers on the table as he leaned forward. “Six million. Six million for five years of your life, Memphis. You’ll live like a queen and have everything you could ever want.”

Fletcher gripped my knee under the table and I knew that he was fighting for me almost as much as I was. “Let me talk it over with my client, guys.”

me, but I gripped his hand and felt like we were celebrating together for a moment. “I’m really going to miss my family home in Georgia.”

I knew “Seven million and I’ll personally fly you home when you want as much as you want.” Boone held my gaze and grinned. “I’m no pilot, but it can’t be that hard. Most of Fletcher’s grip was painful as he squeezed. “Georgia isn’t that far from Memphis.”

and I would’ve laughed if I didn’t feel like throwing up. “I feel for you, but you’re going through this has to be tough. I just never thought I’d be coming home to so many years. On the other hand, this would give me a chance to find my own path, without the pressure of joining the family business. I don’t want to do that. I’ll get another chance like this...”

we just Fletcher had stopped breathing. “Memphis?”

my father I took a deep breath and finally nodded. “Okay. I want to help. I’ll be in the contract that I may need to go home on occasion.”

Remy nodded back at me. “Done.”

my heart. And just like that, I’d signed five years of my life away.

brother.

he didn’t

interrogate

is pretty

d. “Six

is like a

reaking

”

I gripped his hand and felt like we were celebrating together for a moment. “I’m really going to miss my family home in Georgia.”

“Seven million and I’ll personally fly you home when you want to go.” Boone held my gaze and grinned. “I’m no pilot, but it can’t be that hard.”

Fletcher’s grip was painful as he squeezed. “Georgia isn’t that far, Memphis.”

I would’ve laughed if I didn’t feel like throwing up. “I feel for y’all. What you’re going through has to be tough. I just never thought I’d be committing to so many years. On the other hand, this would give me a chance to find my own path, without the pressure of joining the family business. I don’t think I’ll get another chance like this...”

Fletcher had stopped breathing. “Memphis?”

I took a deep breath and finally nodded. “Okay. I want to help. I’d like it added in the contract that I may need to go home on occasion.”

Remy nodded back at me. “Done.”

And just like that, I’d signed five years of my life away.

6.

6.

Memphis

“Ms. King? We’re pulling up to the gate now.” Jake, just according to his basic introduction, didn’t look back at me from the driver seat of the expensive SUV he drove. He hadn’t glanced at me the entire time I’d been in the backseat. “The property is surrounded by a twelve-foot fence on all sides, with two main access gates. Both stay closed and locked at all times. You’ll always have access to me or another driver here, so you don’t have to worry about the codes.”

I unbuckled my seatbelt and scooted forward on the bench seat to look out of the front windshield. “A twelve-foot fence? Wow.”

Jake finally cut his eyes at me. “Ms. King, your seatbelt?”

I caught sight of the gate to the fence and my jaw dropped. It was a combination of brick and iron that probably cost more than my entire house back home. I’d never seen a gate so huge. “Wow. This is dramatic.”

“Seatbelt?”

I smiled at Jake and patted his shoulder. “If you wreck and kill me while you’re going less than ten miles an hour, Jake, it was just my time. I can’t see anything when I’m buckled in and I want to see *everything*.”

He grunted even as he rolled down his window and tapped in what I was guessing was the code to open the gate because a second later, it swung open. “I bet you get away with a lot of shit because of the accent. Am I right?”

“I refuse to answer self-incriminating questions.” I gasped as the driver’s door opened up in front of us and I could see rolling hills just past the trees that lined the road. “Holy crap. This is beautiful!”

“Wait until you see the house.” He drove slowly down the driveway until it straightened out and the hills flattened into the best manicured lawn I’d ever seen. There were even lines mowed into the grass that intersected and created a pretty criss-cross pattern.

The trees thinned out and finally the house opened up in front of us. A twelve-circle drive that made a border around a large fountain with a statue of a woman sitting on top of a branch in the middle. It was dramatic. The house itself was the largest I’d ever seen. Calling it a house was probably wrong. Mansion made more sense. Three stories of dark brick with more dormers and windows than any normal house would ever possess. I could count at least six chimneys. A wide staircase led up to the front doors, which were at least ten feet tall and another display of craftsmanship with iron and glass. The porch was stretched up on either side of the entrance and ivy grew up the brick walls. The trailer was trying to drag the home back to nature. Overall, it was a little dramatic. “Impposing. It loomed.

“Batman would live inside this house.” Jake parked and looked back at me while “If Batman was wealthier.”

I frowned up at the way the house looked as if it was trying to block the sun from shining intentionally. “If Batman was creepier.”

“The front of the house was Don’s. He wanted to make an impression. The back was Maggie’s. It’s a different world back there.” Jake got out and looked around to open my door but I was already climbing out. He frowned at me. “I open the door.”

I grabbed my purse and ignored the second thing he said. “Who are you and Maggie?”

He picked up my small suitcase from the back. “The parents.”

“Jake, dear, take the suitcase. Ms. King will be staying in the guest room.”

inding A middle-aged woman with bright red hair came out of the house and
e most down at us. “Come, Ms. King. I’ll give you a tour of the property if yo
ie grass for it.”

I felt a wave of relief that I wouldn’t be staying in the main house. I
s with at the guest house wasn’t as dark and oppressive. “Of course. Please,
f a bird Memphis. And thanks, Jake. I’ll see you around.”

elf was “I’ll leave your suitcase in the guest house for you. You’ll love it. I
 mansion wouldn’t step foot inside it.” Jake flashed a quick smile and then
l gables standing there on the steps.

st four “Memphis? I’m Sophie Gardner. Call me Sophie.” The red-headed
east ten had come down the stairs to gather me. She tucked her arm through m
opiaried led me up towards the door. “Memphis is a neat name. I bet there wer
c like it any name twins in your class at school.”

ark and “No, ma’am. Not a single one.” I looked her over and tried to fig
who exactly she was. “Are you Remington’s...”

c at me. She threw her head back and laughed. “No, no, sweetheart. I’
property manager. Remy’s head would probably explode at the thought
ock theas his girlfriend or wife. I drive him crazy enough without being in
very often.”

on. The “You drive him crazy?” I couldn’t imagine anyone bothering the r
d came very long without being corrected. He had a vibe to him that made m
lown at the didn’t tolerate a lot of things.

“Oh, Remy loves being in control. Not everyone is a sweet little
re Don’t though.” Sophie read the confusion on my face and cleared her

“Ignore me. I just don’t listen to every little thing he says. That’s all
come on, Memphis, and let me show you around.”

house.” She showed me into the house and watched my face as I took in the

looked “It’s a lot, right? Fifteen foot ceilings, original wood molding and details. You’re up three separate staircases. There’s a fireplace in every bedroom, two kitchens, and a fully functional dungeon in the basement.”

I hoped I didn’t catch what she said at first. I was too busy taking in the overwhelming magnitude of the house. Heavy furniture sat atop thick rugs, the lighting ornate but dim, and it felt like I was standing in a dark cave. Any moment a Batman bear might’ve come trotting out. Finally, my brain snapped to attention. “You say dungeon?”

She laughed. “I’m only teasing. This place feels like it should have a dungeon, though, doesn’t it? I expected one when I started working here and that’s for sure. This is all still Don’s life. I’m sure the brothers will do something with the place eventually, but they only just moved back in.

“After their father died?” When Sophie nodded, I looked around again and decided to keep my mouth shut about the decor. “I’ve never been in a house quite like this.”

“No? No dark mansion back home missing you?”

I felt my cheeks darken at my slip. I was supposed to be wealthy and from an important family. Mansions would’ve been in my background, probably.

“No dark mansions, no. I don’t think they make them like this in Georgia. For all that southern heat, no one would think to make a house this dark.”

She nodded. “That makes sense. I guess I should finish showing you around and then take you to the guest house so you can get settled in. Subby, sure you’re ready to rest after traveling and meeting the guys today.”

I’d taken a bus from Georgia to Chicago, so I was beyond ready to go to bed. Now, in bed and asleep. I wasn’t sure I’d be able to, though, not with everything going through my mind as fast as it was. Seeing the house and property made everything real. Hearing twelve million dollars was one thing,

ils, and heard a lot of things in my life. Seeing that the Hawke brothers would
itchens, no problem paying that twelve million was completely different. I suddenly
felt like an even bigger fraud. I didn't fit in and it had to be obvious to
everyone with eyes. My shoes looked even more worn while standing on
perfectly shined hardwood floors.

inute, a “Are you okay?” Sophie gently touched my shoulder. “You checked
n. “Did me.”

I forced a smile. “I guess I really need that rest, huh?”

She tucked my hand into the crook of her elbow and patted it. “I’ll
g here, the tour quick. Remington just wanted me to give you a general idea of
will do things were in the main house, in case you ever needed them when t
” wasn’t around. I tried to tell him that you could just stand in the middle
ain and house and scream for them, but he didn’t find that amusing.”

a place “I have a feeling I could scream in this house and no one would h
It’s massive.” I did my best to pay attention to the layout of the home
was too easy to get turned around.

By the time we got to the back door and Sophie pushed it open, I th
obably was going to have to fake whatever excitement the woman was
rgia. Inexplicably from me as she stood back and motioned for me to look out
walked out and a jolt of energy hit me as I took in the most beautiful
ng you’d ever seen. I even gasped.

in. I’m “I know! This was Maggie’s handiwork. She died when the boy
young, but Don kept someone on staff to take care of her flowers.
curl up magical?” Sophie’s voice held the same wonder I felt.

I inhaled deeply and pulled in scents from so many different flow
erty was plants. All around us was a specially curated collection of natu
ing. I’d followed a path out of sight. The flower beds were everywhere, we

ld have design that I was desperate to fly over and see. I just knew it was so
iddenly special. Color filled every point of vision and as dark as the house v
ious toyard was that light. Magical was putting it lightly. I felt like cryin
ling on butterfly floated by and landed on one of the daisies on my dress.

“Magical.” Sophie grinned at me and sighed. “The gardener, Pet
l out on angel. You’ll see him, I’m sure. He’s everywhere, all the time. It’s t
gossip, I know, but I think the man makes more than the presiden
this.”

ll make I inhaled deeply again and watched as the butterfly fluttered awa
f where deserves even more. This is the most beautiful thing I’ve ever seen. I’r
he staff to spend all my time here.”

e of the “Wait until you see the roses.”

My heartbeat sped up. “Show me.”

ear me.

3, but it

ought I

clearly

itside. I

garden

7s were

Isn’t it

ers and

ire that

aving a

design that I was desperate to fly over and see. I just knew it was something special. Color filled every point of vision and as dark as the house was, the yard was that light. Magical was putting it lightly. I felt like crying as a butterfly floated by and landed on one of the daisies on my dress.

“Magical.” Sophie grinned at me and sighed. “The gardener, Pete, is an angel. You’ll see him, I’m sure. He’s everywhere, all the time. It’s tacky to gossip, I know, but I think the man makes more than the president doing this.”

I inhaled deeply again and watched as the butterfly fluttered away. “He deserves even more. This is the most beautiful thing I’ve ever seen. I’m going to spend all my time here.”

“Wait until you see the roses.”

My heartbeat sped up. “Show me.”

7.

7.

Memphis

The roses formed a maze halfway through the walk from the main house to the guest house. There was a path around it, but walking through to a fountain and a bench in the middle of the maze. The scent was heavenly and I would've happily gotten lost for hours in the rows of deep red roses.

The rest of the path to the guest house was just as stunning as the garden with flowers leading the way. I could've stopped and picked out different kinds if Sophie hadn't been so eager to show me the guest house. I wanted to sit down on the plush grass and get my hands dirty working in the flower beds. It was too beautiful to not want to touch. My mind racing with excitement, reality still too far away to sink in. Seeing the magic flowers made everything feel even more surreal.

"And this is the guest house." Sophie put her hands on my shoulders and turned me away from the flowers. "It's private and all yours."

Tears filled my eyes and spilled over when I laid eyes on the house. Slightly narrow, with one sharp gable and wooden shingles, it could've come from a fairytale. Ivy covered the lighter brick and wooden shutters framed arched windows. A white-picket fence surrounded a small front yard that was filled with lemon trees and wildflowers. Ferns and wild herbs grew freely in groups around a pebbled path leading up to a small front porch. The front door was painted bright green and there were planters on either side of the door filled with more flowers. A princess could've strolled out here and wouldn't have been surprised.

"Isn't it so beautiful?" Sophie's voice was full of wonder. "I'm jealous of you for getting to live here. It's a dream."

I could feel a lightness tugging at me, calling me closer. The house felt alive with possibilities and adventure, and most important, it felt like the house wanted me. I grabbed Sophie's hands and tried not to embarrass myself, but I just bounced in place. "Let's go in. I need to see inside!"

She squeezed my hands and laughed easily before reaching up to wipe away her tears. "You're even more of a mess than I was when I first saw this place. I was a little terrified it was going to be a smaller version of the whole house, so seeing it be this slice of heaven on earth is such a relief." I followed Sophie through the small gate and up the pebbled path to get to the porch. "This isn't a slice of heaven. This is the whole thing. Do you smell anything? Citrus and floral and even something piney. Can I leave the windows open? I never want to stop smelling this."

She pulled a large key out of her pocket and held it out to me. "That's the skeleton key."

I let out a squeal of delight before I could stop myself and took it from her. Tall, Inserting the heavy key and turning the lock, I pushed open the door and I've been gasped again. Sophie inched her way around me and went in, talking to me all the while, but I was stuck at the threshold, wondering how I'd ever gotten so lucky.

"Do whatever you want. Leave the door open, for all I care. The porch is the safest you'll find. No one will bother you here. There's a stray dog that comes and goes, but it doesn't come near anyone typically. I put down a bowl for him and he eats when he wants to. I can't imagine any other animals coming near the house. It's cooler at night, but you'll regret not cooling off the house at night as soon as the sun starts rising. Talk about heat stroke!"

Large, white-washed wood slats made up the walls and ceilings, with knots still present in the wood. Artwork hung everywhere, framed

use feltwood frames that matched the wide oak planks on the floor. They were like it windows everywhere, looking out at the flowerbeds and beautiful garden. I felt as if I had stepped into a world beyond. Thick, luxurious curtains hung to the floor and were kept back by strings of gemstones mounted to the wall. The house was open on the first floor, except for a small back corner that I assumed was a bathroom. The kitchen was light and bright, with a vintage teal fridge and a built-in farmhouse sink. The furniture was plush and slightly worn, begging to be loved again. Colorful rugs decorated the floor everywhere, except in the small porch. Houseplants hung all over, sat everywhere. Books were stacked all around just as abundantly, spilling over from the open to ceiling bookshelf between the kitchen and living room.

It was the most beautiful home I'd ever seen. It felt so full of life. "A real intention that it dripped with it. Everywhere my eyes landed, there was another story waiting to be told. Magic slept in the gaps between the floor planks, I was sure.

"The bathroom is in there. The bedroom is upstairs. You're going to see all of it." Sophie waved to get my attention and pointed at the ceiling. "Lofted so high." I hurried back to where she was and sure enough, the ceiling over the kitchen was twice as tall as the living room. A loft space was separated by a raw wood railing, covered in flowering ivy. I looked back at Sophie and took a few deep breaths. I was overwhelmed. The house was worth more than the twelve million. Selfishly, I felt like I would've had a hard time choosing the money for my family over the house for myself, if it came down to that.

"The stairs are hidden in the nook just before the bathroom. Upstairs, the square footage is used for a closet. Go on." She motioned me through the doorway next to us and laughed at my shocked expression. "I

re were Memphis. You're going to regret every second you didn't know that be-
nature as your own."

ck with I took the narrow stairs up and found a large closet on my left. I
ie main biggest bed I'd ever seen on my right. It sat in the middle of the room
m. The canopy around the thick bedding and lush pillows. I'd never had a ca-
eautiful bed, but I'd always dreamed of it. In whites and creams, the bedding
g to be to be slept in. It looked like a cloud. Behind the bed, I had huge view
front of into the backyard and beyond. I could see a pond and more flower
re else. what looked like a swing.

ie floor The rug underfoot felt like a marshmallow as I crossed over to the
side of the room, where a dresser sat with a few more books neatly
ove and on top. I glanced at myself for a beat in the large mirror over the dresser
re was couldn't face myself, not when I was lying to be in such an amazing home.
the oak "Let me show you the backyard, Memphis, and then I'll leave
explore on your own." Sophie called up to me, cutting my self-incrimination
to love short. "If you want, I'll even have dinner brought here tonight. I'm so
ed." is a lot of change for one day. You can unpack and settle in before eve-
ver the gets busier around here."

ed by a I nodded absently as I pushed open the double doors out onto the
and had patio and sighed wistfully. A round metal table with two chairs sat
h more middle of the space, a space made private by wild vines, flowers, and
rd time trees. A small pond existed in the fray several yards from the table,
e down tinkling of the fountain was ever present. As I walked deeper, I found
touches of someone's heart and fell in love with the house all over again.
airs, the forgotten fairy garden, metal butterflies, painted rocks too faded to re-
ugh the tree swing in the back corner that was so tucked away that it felt
Go on, secret to even see it.

edroom “Well. What do you think?”

I looked back at Sophie with both hands clasped to my chest. “I th
and thethe luckiest woman in the world. I’m going to spend all my time rea
1 with athis swing.”

anopied “Enjoy this place. It deserves love.” She took a long look aroun
beggedhave dinner brought up around six-thirty. Do you have any dietary nee
s down I shook my head. “No, none. Thank you, Sophie. I appreciate the toi
s, even “Just call up to the main house if you need anything. Every numl
could ever need is listed next to the phone. Don’t be shy.” She squee
ie otherhand once more. “See you around, Memphis.”

stacked I watched her leave and then rushed to sit in the swing. It held my
er, but Ijust fine and after testing it for a moment, I felt comfortable enough
ome. off and let the swing rock me back and forth while I stared up at the
you toof trees overhead. Magic. I’d somehow stumbled into a storybook.

ination

ure this

rything

ie back

t in the

nd fruit

but the

nd little

gain. A

ad, and

t like a

“Well. What do you think?”

I looked back at Sophie with both hands clasped to my chest. “I think I’m the luckiest woman in the world. I’m going to spend all my time reading on this swing.”

“Enjoy this place. It deserves love.” She took a long look around. “I’ll have dinner brought up around six-thirty. Do you have any dietary needs?”

I shook my head. “No, none. Thank you, Sophie. I appreciate the tour.”

“Just call up to the main house if you need anything. Every number you could ever need is listed next to the phone. Don’t be shy.” She squeezed my hand once more. “See you around, Memphis.”

I watched her leave and then rushed to sit in the swing. It held my weight just fine and after testing it for a moment, I felt comfortable enough to kick off and let the swing rock me back and forth while I stared up at the canopy of trees overhead. Magic. I’d somehow stumbled into a storybook.

8.

8.

Memphis

The bed felt like a cloud. Looks hadn't deceived. I stared up at the canopy and sighed happily. Two nights before, I'd been staring at the water stained ceiling of the trailer I rented in Benny Poole's trailer park. It was the same trailer my momma had rented before she'd passed and the trailer I'd always just assumed I'd die in, too. Like mother, like daughter. Even if I wanted to change, *desperately*, life had proven insolent before meeting with the Hawke brothers.

The Hawke brothers. I sighed again and rolled onto my side. My suitcase landed on the small cardboard box I'd packed last minute. My suitcase held everything I owned that was nice enough to bring to Chicago and it barely had space when I finished packing. Grabbing the small box that held my battery operated boyfriend, had been a last second decision that I was suddenly grateful for. Reaching out for it, I grabbed it and took Jeremy

Moving onto my back, I closed my eyes and let the fantasy that had been building in my head since I'd first spotted the Hawke brothers take hold. Remington was intimidating and he had an energy I couldn't understand. Wells was almost aloof. Boone, however...he was easiest to conjure in my imagination. With his easy smiles and flirty attitude, he felt safer than the other brothers.

I rested my hands on my stomach and thought of the way Boone's blue eyes flashed as he joked. I liked the way he kept his beard and in my imagination how it would feel if he ran his mouth down my chest. A little rough, but his mouth looked soft enough to soothe any sting. The Boone in my imagination was a breast man and he took his time teasing me. I s

hands under my shirt and cupped my breasts, pinching my nipples the
liked with Boone's face in my mind.

at the Losing myself, I imagined Boone coming up the stairs and finding
g up at way I was, wantonly stroking my nipples and whispering his name.
park. It almost see his tall frame filling the doorway, his broad shoulders fle
l it was he reached up and yanked his own shirt off. He'd stalk closer and pl
ughter. knee on the bed, pausing to stare down at me.

fore my I would've tried to scramble away, embarrassed to be caught that w

Boone would catch my ankle and jerk me down the bed to him. My
ly eyes quickened as I grabbed my toy and pushed it inside my pantie
ase had vibrations started just as fantasy Boone spread my legs wide and
t'd still fingers through my wetness. He would push his fingers into me and cu
Jeremy, high while his thumb rolled over my clit with dangerous precision, a
t I was slowly stroking himself through his pants.

r out. My body stiffened and I came hard, faster than I ever had before. I
ad been Jeremy out of my panties and shoved him away, a sense of shame v
e over. over me. I dropped my arm over my eyes and groaned. What was wro
erstand. me? I'd just masturbated to the idea of a man I met that morning. I wa
into my to be living next door to him. Getting off to fantasies of him would ma
han his uncomfortable.

I groaned again and rolled onto my side, away from Jeremy. The w
's dark the situation hit me with the thought of how I was going to pull off
magined classy woman from money when I was diddling my fiddle on night on
l, I was job. I was never going to be able to pull it off. They were expecting a
e of my from the Ivy league, but they were getting the Trailer Park Princess.

slid my With that name ringing around my head like a dumbbell, I pul
heavenly pillow over my head and let out a frustrated scream. I was g

e way I fail so hard, I just knew it.

*

me the faint sounds from somewhere around me woke me up and I sat up, I could disorientated. After a life of waking up in the same place, it took me a rixing asto remember where I was and to realize that I should've been alcant one wasn't. A surge of panic hit me when I heard a drawer slide open dow

Someone was in the house.

ay, but I silently shifted to the side of the bed, my hand hitting Jerer breathlatching onto him as I quietly stood up. I figured he'd be the only thin es. The comfortable using as a weapon in the house, anyway. No way was I b ran his anything that wasn't mine in the perfect little home. I tip-toed do irl them stairs, my body preparing for a fight. No way was I dying easy after or ll while in my dream home.

When I got to the bottom step, I took a deep breath and decided to yanked on the attack. Gripping Jeremy tight, I ran out and let out a war cry. M vashing things happened at once, all of them terrible. I saw that the person ng with screaming at was a cute, tiny woman holding a vacuum cleaner. The v s going cleaner was plugged in and I tripped over it, hard. My body didn't v ake that fall, however, so I stumbled several feet, all while the woman st

horror, hands reaching out like she was going to catch me. When I eight of went down, Jeremy went flying as I attempted to save my face fr being a hardwood floor.

e of the "Oh, my god! Are you okay?" The woman dropped the vacuu woman covered her mouth with her hands. The rest of her words trailed off

looked up, past me, and her eyes went wide. "Mr. Hawke."

led the I jerked my eyes up towards the front door and saw that it was indee going to and that Remington was indeed standing in the doorway, his eyes on

knocked the wind out of myself, but that didn't stop me from forcing
and a wheezy 'good morning'.

feeling "I'm just going to...yep, here we go." The vacuuming burglar, who
moment realizing wasn't a burglar at all, gently covered me in a throw
one but offered me her hand while whispered. "Your whole back end was shown
stairs. didn't know if you wanted Mr. Hawke to see that. I can uncover you, if
like."

ny and I sputtered out a negative in shock and let her help me to my feet, but
g I was quickly wrapped the throw around my waist. Day two of being the
reaking surrogate the Hawkes wanted and I'd already flashed the man my ass.
wn the for a fact the panties I had on did nothing to hide my butt. I barely
ie night the urge to smack my hand to my forehead.

I looked back at Remington, but my eyes snagged on Jeremy. My husband
just go battery operated boyfriend was sitting less than six inches from the
multiple Remington's shoes. My already hot face turned scalding and I figured
I was looked like a fully ripened tomato. One glance up at his face told
vacuum everything I needed to know, too. Not only had he seen it, he was
want to looking at it.

ared in "We're having lunch at the main house at eleven. Will you join us
finally deep voice gave away nothing of what he was thinking. He was as level
om the I'd accidentally thrown a napkin at him.

My own voice was squeaky as I answered. "Yes. Sure. I'd like that."
im and Then, like he wanted me to die of embarrassment, Remington be
as she and palmed Jeremy. I watched his fingers flex over the pink silicon
closed the space between us and held it out to me. "What exactly do
ed open plan on doing with this, Memphis?"

me. I'd His scent, clean and citrusy tingled my senses and I wanted to swoon

a smilefeeling of being the focus of his glacier blue eyes. He was teasing me
least I thought he was.

o I was I took Jeremy from him and hid him inside my blanket skirt. “At le
id thenknow now that in the case of a robbery, I won’t break any of your thing
wing. I His eyes moved over my face like he was committing every bit to m
f you’d“Just yourself and your toys.”

I looked down, his gaze too intense to hold. “I’m okay. Good as new
where I “Good.” He touched my chin with the tip of his finger and waited
: classymet his gaze to continue. “When you get the card today, be sure
I knewyourself some new toys. Maybe something a little bigger.”

resisted My mouth must’ve been on the ground. I waited for him to crack
or laugh, but he did neither and I realized he was serious.

not pink “We’ll see you at lunch, Memphis.” He moved back to the door
front ofhadn’t just touched me or suggested I buy new sex toys. “Don’t be late
gured I He left the door open behind him and as the breeze filled the space
old meme, cooling me off slightly, I swore under my breath as I noticed th
was stillthat surrounded the house was all Remington. Citrusy and fresh, it w
the man had bottled nature around my perfect little temporary home ar
s?” Hisit as cologne.

vel as if “Wow.”

I jumped and spun around to face the woman I’d forgotten about.
’ rude, I tried to shake her hand and froze when I felt Jeremy in one ha
nt overthe blanket in the other. “Um. I would shake your hand, but
efore heMemphis.”

lid you “Memphis, you’re my hero.” Her face lit up and her rosy cheeks r
perfectly as she smiled. “Remington Hawke just eye-fucked you ten w
n at the

e, or at Sunday. Whoa. I'm Bea, by the way. Beatrix Summers. I'm part of t
here."

ast you Fighting the urge to go to the door and stare after the man, I sh
gs." head. "No, that's crazy. Nice to meet you, Bea. I'm sorry that I tried to
emory.you."

"With a sex toy. If I had a dollar for every time that happened..."

v." I hesitated. "Would you have more than one dollar?"

l until I She laughed and shook her head. "Nope."

to get

a smile

like he

!"

around

ie scent

vas like

id wore

Feeling

and and

... I'm

ounded

ays till

Sunday. Whoa. I'm Bea, by the way. Beatrix Summers. I'm part of the staff here."

Fighting the urge to go to the door and stare after the man, I shook my head. "No, that's crazy. Nice to meet you, Bea. I'm sorry that I tried to attack you."

"With a sex toy. If I had a dollar for every time that happened..."

I hesitated. "Would you have more than one dollar?"

She laughed and shook her head. "Nope."

9.

9.

Wells

Sitting across from my brothers at a dining room table that was too small for a dozen people, much less the three of us, I found myself bouncing my knee. I'd come down from my makeshift studio to have lunch with Memphis, but there was no Memphis to be seen. Having lunch in the middle of a work day with my brothers was strange, but waiting around for a woman to join us was something we'd never done before. I wasn't sure I'd ever waited on a woman, come to think of it.

Sophie strode into the dining room with her hands clasped behind her back and an amused look on her face. She kept her thoughts to herself, "Should I go check on Ms. King?"

Remy grunted and looked at his watch. "Please."

Boone stretched his neck from side to side and rubbed at the muscle. "We should've asked if she gives massages."

"She's not here to work for us, asshole." Remy checked his watch and stood up. Walking over to the wall to wall windows that looked out onto the backyard, his shoulders stiffened as he seemed to focus in on something in the yard.

"What is it?" Curious about what could get Remy's feathers up, I walked over to see what he saw. It took me less than a second to spot Memphis. "Shit."

She was bent over, her face shoved so far into a bunch of flowers she almost wondered if she was inhaling or eating them. The curve of her back was on display in another dress and I couldn't remember why I thought any other figure on a woman was attractive. Pete, our gardener,

off to the side, so inconsequential next to Memphis's curves that I didn't see him. He pointed to something else and Memphis went down on large knees and leaned forward to do something in the dirt.

tsy and "What the hell is she doing?" Boone stood on the other side of Re e lunch voice amused. "Is she playing in the dirt rather than having lunch w 1 in the Should we be insulted?"

nd on a Memphis came up with something dirty in her hands and I could re if I'd was grinning, even in her profile. She handed the thing to Pete and back to her feet. Suddenly she turned around to face the house and I cc er back the way her cheeks turned red from that far away. She started : though. immediately and then turned back to Pete, saying something that m man smile, before stepping back onto the pathway. She dusted her together, trying to clean them, but she hadn't even noticed the dirt s there. knees yet.

I watched as Sophie joined her and linked her arm through Men h again The two women disappeared from our view and the three of us move ut over to our seats like we hadn't just watched that scene. It took me a mo nething notice I was smiling.

"That was interesting." I rested my elbows on the table and saw th moved Remy and Boone had thoughtful expressions on their faces. "She's g Memphis. be different, isn't she?"

Remy's mouth quirked up in a rare grin and he nodded. "She thr s that I vibrator at me this morning."

full ass Before I could demand an explanation and a detailed description o 'd ever the thing looked like, Memphis's presence filled the room. The dinin r, stood was like every other room in the house, dark and somehow opp despite being massive and roomy. When Memphis walked in with

almost pink sundress on, a wide smile on her face, the room brightened. I almost like watching the clouds part over the table.

“I’m so sorry! I ran into Pete on the way in and I had a million questions, his ask him. Poor guy. He looked terrified at first. I think I came on with us?” She seemed to realize there were twenty chairs around the table and stopped. “Wow. This is big.”

Her southern accent wasn’t something I’d known I’d find sexy as she moved when she spoke, it was like each word stroked over my skin a little more than the last. Her cheeks were red, but her skin was bright and clear, her green eyes wide and alert as she looked around.

Remy cleared his throat and motioned for her to sit in the chair next to him. I was sure he was as uninterested in talking about the flowers as Boone was on her, but none of us were willing to start that conversation. “I’m sure you were happy to talk to someone about the flowers.”

“Oh, they’re lovely. I hope it’s okay, but there’s a breed of dahlias I’ve never seen before and I begged Pete to plant one of the tubers near the front porch.” She sat down and the sweet scent of honey and vanilla tea filled the room.

“Not that there aren’t already a ton of amazing plants there. One more wouldn’t hurt anyone, though. I joined the horticulture club my first week at college. Flowers were always my first love, so this is my heaven.”

I noticed a spot of dirt on the bottom of her dress and grinned to myself. She wasn’t what I’d expected. Boone and Remy seemed speechless.

Memphis seemed happy to fill the silence.

“The guest house is amazing. I don’t know how to thank you for it. The living room is beautiful and magical. I’m going to read so many books in that swing chair on the back porch.” She looked around the dining room and some of the light fixtures caught a light

It waseyes dimmed until she saw the windows and the flowers beyond. “If
around all these flowers, I’d never get anything done.”

tions to Remy finally snapped out of whatever trance she’d put him in
a littleSophie came in carrying two plates of food, with Rork carrying the oth
ier andRork, our chef, looked at Memphis and I swear the man looked like
going to speak. It would’ve been a welcome change from the man who
ell, but said two words a month to us.

slower Memphis sat up straighter and her mouth stretched into an ever
ear, hersmile as she eyed Rork. “That smells delicious. Thank you so mu
cooking for me. I hope my being here doesn’t make your job any harde
t to me. I’d never seen a fully grown man blush before, but Rork’s face da
ie and Iand the effect next to his white hair was almost comical. He almost c
re Peteput Remy’s plate down and then just held Boone’s as he smiled at Me

It looked like his face was cracking open after being in the same scow
lia I’ve many decades.

ie guest “Oh, my gosh. I’m busy for the next five years, but after that, I mi
sed me.ask you to marry me. If this tastes as good as it looks, and I’m sure
e neveryou’ve got a fan.” Memphis leaned closer to her plate after Sophie
it Yale.down and moaned as she inhaled. “I’m Memphis, by the way. It’s
meet you.”

myself. Rork let out a laugh that cracked like thunder and roughly put E
ess andplate down, too focused on Memphis to care about Boone. “R-Rork
Diamond.”

all. It’s “Fancy. Well, I don’t know if I’ll take your name, Rork Diamond, b
g in thebecause Memphis Diamond is a little obnoxious.” With a few word
t in herwarm smile, Memphis won over our chef, a man who’d been uninter
us for as long as I could remember.

I lived “I can make you anything you request, Ms. Memphis. You just know.” Rork flashed another toothy grin and then hurried away.

just as The four people in the room who knew Rork were all left stunned for two. staring at Memphis like she was a witch who’d just cast a spell in front of he was Sophie finally backed out of the room, leaving us alone, but after that I barely with Rork I wasn’t sure I wanted to be left alone with Memphis. She had some sort of powers and I wasn’t sure I was interested in finding out if I was immune.

much for

er.”

darkened

slumsily

Memphis.

and for so

might just

it will,

and put it

is nice to

Boone’s

and Rork

but only

is and a

is interested in

“I can make you anything you request, Ms. Memphis. You just let me know.” Rork flashed another toothy grin and then hurried away.

The four people in the room who knew Rork were all left stunned and staring at Memphis like she was a witch who’d just cast a spell in front of us. Sophie finally backed out of the room, leaving us alone, but after that show with Rork I wasn’t sure I wanted to be left alone with Memphis. She had some sort of powers and I wasn’t sure I was interested in finding out if I was immune.

10.

10.

Memphis

“Is there something wrong? Are we supposed to pray or some-
They were just staring at me. I looked back down at my food
out a mournful sigh. I didn’t want to be a pig, but I was starving and
food smelled delicious.

Boone snorted. “In this house? There’d hardly be a point.”

Remington shot him a glare and then nodded to me. “Nothing’s
Let’s eat.”

I dug in, feeling like the cat who ate the canary. I felt like I was
spoiled on a magical vacation. I grabbed my glass of water and took
gulp, nearly choking as the carbonation hit the back of my throat. I closed
and sat back as my eyes filled with tears.

“Are you okay?” Wells leaned over and rested his big hand on
shoulder. Tattoos streaked down from his shirt sleeve, covering his skin
mixed over the tattoos on his hand were several vibrant colors of paint.

I shot a dirty look at the water glass and forced myself to nod. “I’m
was expecting regular water and I just got shocked. Silly me.”

“Here. Take mine.” He handed me his glass and watched as I drank
cautiously. “It’s regular water, no bubbles. Promise.”

I took a small sip and then drank down half of his glass. “Sorry.
embarrassing.”

“Remy’s the only monster who can drink that shit. We’ll make sure
knows that you’re normal and prefer your water to be water.” Boone
and lifted his glass to me in mock cheers. “Should we tell her she tried
you?”

I gasped and shook my head. “No! No, don’t make her feel bad. She knows.”

“What?” Remington rolled his eyes at Boone. “He’s not going to harass her and let her know she’d probably laugh in his face, anyway.”

It felt like I was embarrassing myself constantly in front of them. I managed to get dirty before coming in for lunch, like a toddler. Walking through the room like I wasn’t mortified had been hard, but they hadn’t mentioned the state of my dress or knees, thankfully. I’d at least had time to wash my hands and get the dirt out from under my nails. Everything I said was off, though, and I felt like a country bumpkin and I knew they had to notice how out of place I was.

“We have an appointment this afternoon.” Remington finished his glass of water and leaned back in his chair. “The fertility clinic and doctor I highly recommended.”

I paused, shocked by how quickly we were going to a doctor. I don’t know why I’d thought there would be more time to adjust. A bolt of fear struck me and I had to put my fork down to hide my shaking hands. “Okay.”

“Are you okay?” Boone’s eyes roamed my face and body, but it felt like it was medical. “Take a drink of your water.”

I grabbed the first glass I saw and nearly spit the bubbly water back out. That’s how I managed to swallow it, but not without making several awful faces.

“Shit. Get that away from her before she chokes herself to death.” Remington pushed away from the table like he was going to come and help me.

Holding up both hands, I shook my head and forced out a laugh. It sounded flat, but I did my best to sound unbothered. “I’m okay! I’m sorry. I’m being weird. I’m just surprised by how fast this is happening, I guess.”

It didn't make complete sense, though. Of course. It's a big thing that's happening for all of us. Y'all will be daddies after this."

Sophie. A pained look crossed Remington's face and he nodded. "Yes. And I'm all really ready for that. We want it to happen as soon as possible. They'd even we can make sure to have all three kids in the five years allotted."

Boone said, "Sure! That makes sense." I closed my eyes and took a deep breath. I think it's really special that y'all are starting your families now, in a hands-on unconventional way. Most people wait for life to happen to them and then it's too late. I'm taking what you want in your own time. That's admirable."

Wells grunted from beside me. "What can we say? We're just men."

Boone snorted, but when I looked at him, he was all smiles. "It's strange to think of us that way, when there's no family yet."

"No family? Don't be silly. The three of you have each other and you don't know how close. That's really nice." I thought of my brothers for a moment and how they'd threatened to consume me as always. Knox was in a prison just south of Birmingham, Alabama, and Jackson was in the rehab I'd paid for in Atlanta. "We want kids." Remington stood up from the table and gripped the back of his chair. "Our appointment is at two. Try not to get lost with Peter. I mean time."

I watched him walk away and felt like I'd somehow done something wrong. Glancing between Boone and Wells, I stopped myself from looking around about Remington's sudden departure. Looking down at my food, I took my last bite and felt like running out of there. The feeling of not being grounded enough was weighing on me more and more the longer I sat at the dining room table and drank out of their crystal glasses. It was a feeling I'd had been with me my whole life, but it never felt any better.

pening. “Remy’s cranky when he doesn’t get a full sixteen hours of work. Ignore him.” Boone nodded after his brother and glanced down at the phone. “Sorry, this is the office. I have to take this.”

At that way, I looked over at Wells as we were left alone and smiled. “Do I smell like I cleared the room?”

He smiled back at me and shook his head. “You smell good, so good, in that. They’re just tied to work. Remy owns and operates a large company in the city and Boone’s a surgeon. They’re both at work more than home.”

“And you?” I pointed to the paint on his hands. “You’re workaholic?”

He absently rubbed at the paint and shrugged. “I don’t know if you’d call a painter a workaholic. I paint a lot, but it’s not...work.”

“Well, sure it is. That’s your career, is it not?” When he nodded, I sighed and tapped the back of his hand. “I think categorizing different types of work or not work makes it too easy for people in the creative fields to demand the respect they deserve. You may not be running a company, but the time you put in painting is the same as the time Remington puts in at the office.”

He stared at me for a second longer than was comfortable and then nodded again. “You’re passionate about literature?”

“I’m a reader. I love books more than anything in this world, besides my family. If writers didn’t respect their time and effort, so many of my favorite good books probably wouldn’t have been written. And that’s just not fair.” I reined myself in before I got carried away talking about books. “If you’re ever willing to share your paintings, I’d love to see them.”

Bea came into the dining room and froze. “So sorry. I thought even

work in.was gone.”

the table I grinned at her and stood up. “Don’t apologize. Come on in and I’ll take care of you. Wells will probably be grateful for the chance to escape me.”

!? I feel Wells grunted. “See you for the appointment.”

Bea stared after his retreating back and fanned herself. “Wow.”

it’s not I wasn’t willing to admit outright that I found the man sexy as sin in company inNot out loud, anyway.

they’re “You’re not helping clear the table. I get paid to do this, Memphis. You seemed to finally catch up with what I said. We’d had the same argument this morning when I’d tried to help clean up after the quick breakfast. You insisted on making me.

can call “I’m not going to just sit here like a knot on a log and watch you vibrate. I wagged my finger at her. “With all the delicious food I’ve already eaten, I’ve reachedafter just a few meals, I need all the extra movement I can get. One day, my jobs asturn and I’m going to look pregnant before I’m pregnant.”

s to not “Go for a walk through the maze, then. That’s better for you, anywhere, butBea gently patted my arm and guided me away from the table. “You’re the timeyourself. Take advantage of this time. You deserve to be spoiled.”

I gave in and found myself outside with the flowers again. I was finallyBea was right. I wasn’t sure I deserved to be spoiled. I was a liar and I didn’t belong. Still, when the floral scents washed over me, I could almost imagine a world where I did belong in the garden and I could make it my own favorite to cut that fantasy short as the Hawke brothers threatened to appear. “I’ll be there, kay.” IAgain.

you’re With hot cheeks, I hurried to the maze and hid away inside its vast, manicured rose bushes. Like a kid, I giggled when more than one person was a dead end. It was, like everything else, magical.

'll help

ust yet.

s.” She
ent that
t she’d

work.” I
en here,
wrong

lyway.”
“Enjoy

1’t sure
I didn’t
magine
1. I had
ar in it.

valls of
athway

11.

11.

****Remington****

I looked at my watch and adjusted the sleeves of my suit. Tapping my fingers on my thigh, I stood next to the car and waited on Memphis the second time in one day. She was two minutes late. I hated being waiting. We should've thought to ask her about punctuality when we were busy asking about whether or not she was educated. To say we may have been impulsive about this whole thing was an understatement.

“Relax, Remy. She’s coming.” Boone climbed out of the car and stood next to me. He’d changed out of his scrubs and into a pair of jeans. He was always good at coming off easy-going. “She’s probably just finishing her makeup or something.”

I scowled at the t-shirt he wore and ran my hand through my hair. “Both of them both look like slob.”

“And you sound like Don.” Wells was smart enough to keep his mouth shut about the car after making a comment like that.

“I’m coming!” Memphis pulled my focus and I turned to see her sprinting towards us in another dress, one that floated dangerously high on her hips as she ran. The neckline was also daring, the tops of her breasts barely covered, alluringly, threatening to come free. Suddenly, I felt the urge to hold her and scream ‘Free the nipple’. “I’m sorry! Am I late again? I left early because I met the cat and one thing led to another. I’m sorry. I promise I’m not like this. I’m just adjusting, I guess. It’s a new place and maybe I’m still getting used to Chicago than I was in Georgia. That’s something I’ll have to look into.”

When she finally stood in front of us, there was a light sheen of sweat on her skin that made her skin glow and her chest heaved from running, the rise and

her breasts tantalizing. She reached out and grabbed my arm to look at my watch, shocking me. When I pulled my arm away from her too quickly my look of hurt passed over her pretty face.

"This for I'm so sorry. I just wanted to know what time it is. I didn't think people probably don't want to be grabbed and manhandled like that. It looks like I *am* late, but only by a few minutes. That's not as bad as it may be. Should we go?" Memphis forced her eyes up from the ground and when she spotted Jake. "Hi, Jake! I'm sorry to keep you waiting."

Jake's eyes stayed on her face, but I still felt a strange need to bite my teeth at him. He'd been on our team for over ten years, but seeing him with Memphis made me want to cut him loose, which made no sense. He looked broadly back down at her and gripped the doorframe. "Oh, I don't want to keep you waiting around, Ms. King."

She rested her hand over his and leaned in closer. "Call me Memphis. This Ms. King stuff is starting to make me feel old."

I cut short whatever Jake was going to say by clearing my throat and printing "We're going to be late if we don't leave soon, Memphis."

Her cheeks reddened farther and she ducked her head. "Sorry, boss. I'll get my car I go."

Boone snorted. "Good going, boss."

I followed them into the back of the car and bit back a groan when I saw Memphis usually was going to be sitting across from Memphis and her dress. I watched her put her seatbelt on and rested her hands in her lap. That position, her submission, it fucking called to me. I wanted to pull her into my lap and eat that until her juices soaked the front of my pants. Just looking at her sit like that fall off such an innocent way across from me made it hard for me to breathe. My pants were painfully tight on my erection and as I watched her thigh

at my out from where they pressed against the leather of the seat, I won't quickly, choosing her hadn't been a terrible fucking idea. I didn't know how going to get much of anything done while lusting after her.

Most "Aren't you going to put your seatbelt on?" Memphis crossed her legs. Well, it would've bet my entire worth that she had no clue she'd flashed it could lavender panties.

smiled I gritted my teeth. "No, Jake's a good driver."

She frowned and sat up straighter. "Remington, I'm sure Jake is the best driver, but that doesn't mean everyone else is going to be good. Please look at seatbelt on."

smiled I narrowed my eyes on hers and watched them widen. I felt like moaning the way her throat bobbed with her swallow. She reacted to me, whether she knew what it was, or not.

his. All "Please." She bit her lip and gripped her knee, her knuckles whitening. "Better if I say please, right?"

loudly. Shaking my head, I fought the urge to grin and put on my sunglasses.

Flashing a stern gaze her way, I grunted. "I'm typically the one who gives directions, Memphis."

She looked up at me through her lashes and sent me a shy smile. "That's good. Next time I forget my seatbelt, feel free to boss me around, thank you." I saw I shifted the seatbelt away from my throat and looked down at my lap as she let her think I was past whatever we'd been talking about. Really natural staring at the same screen, wondering how I could get her closer. It was a tease idea. She tested my control by merely existing. Touching her would ruin it. "Thank you." Memphis looked away as soon as I met her gaze, turning her head. My face the landscape moving by. "This is so different from Georgia. I've been here for a while now. Everything feels brand new."

lered if Wells leaned closer to look out the window with her. “Wait until
v I was You’ll curse our names for ever thinking of asking you to stay.”

She looked back at him and seemed surprised by how close he wa
egs and didn’t miss the way she looked at his mouth as she spoke. “I would n
me here you don’t see me for the duration of the winter, you know why, though

He pointed out the window and her hair brushed his arm as she tu
see what he was showing her. “That lake freezes over in the winter
he best perfect for ice-skating.”

ut your She leaned in closer and pressed her hand to the window. “I’ve neve

I was too busy at school and the only place to ice-skate near home wa
ning at mall and it was still too far away. I always stayed inside during the
her she It’s sad. The flowers all die and everything turns gray. It always m
think of things ending.”

e. “It’s Wells leaned in even closer and I would’ve sworn I watched him bre
the scent of her. “Well, now you’ll have a different experience. Thin
eat belt. but other things begin. Ice skating and skiing, sitting by the fire, watch
giving snow come down...it’s pretty great when you’re ready for it. Plus, I kn
a fact that there are more fireplaces than you could ever use to rea
Change books in front of.”

ough.” The way she looked back at Wells like he’d hung the moon made n
phone, to kick my own brother out of the car. I scowled at him, annoyed at s
7, I was things.

is a bad “Okay, I’ll give it a chance.” Memphis looked over at me, saw m
in me. and immediately deflated.

ning to I hated that. I hated that I hated it. “How much longer, Jake?”

ve been Boone groaned. “Seriously, Remy? We just passed the gate.”

I cracked my neck on each side and pinched the bridge of my nose

winter. got shit waiting on me. I should've brought my laptop.”

I'd successfully ruined the mood in the car. No one spoke again u
s, but I were walking into the doctor's office and I checked us in.

ever. If

l.”

urned to

and it's

er been.

s at the

winter.

ade me

eathe in

gs end,

ing the

ow for

ad your

re want

o many

ry face,

e. “I've

got shit waiting on me. I should've brought my laptop.”

I'd successfully ruined the mood in the car. No one spoke again until we were walking into the doctor's office and I checked us in.

12.

12.

Memphis

The silence filling an auditorium after a comedian bombs a show was the energy in the car as we left the fertility clinic. Tension filled the air and I had too many thoughts racing through my head to try anything about it. The longer it stretched on, though, the worse it was. No one was saying a thing, no one even dared breathe at an audible level. We were all too traumatized by the appointment we'd just walked out of.

"Find a bar, Jake. Any bar." Remington barked out the order and thirty seconds later, Jake was letting us out in front of a small bar with a western vibe.

I recognized the country song playing instantly as I followed the brothers into the bar and to a round booth in the back corner. Remington slipped in before him and I ended up between him and Boone. Well, Boone was on the other side of Boone and immediately busied his hands with the menu.

It seemed like the silence had followed us and I could feel an inappropriate laugh bubbling inside of me. I tried to stop it. It was insane to laugh at what we'd just gone through. The guys were all clearly frustrated. In any matter, though, the laugh was building. When it finally escaped my control, Remington flinched like I'd scared him.

The laugh started big and stayed that way until tears leaked from my eyes and I had to hold my stomach from the pain in my weak muscles. Boone snorted once and buried my face in my hands, trying to make myself stop. It was useless. I was slaphappy.

Wells joined me first. He chuckled once and it quickly became as
control as my laughter. Boone followed almost immediately. The three
w, thatguffawed like idiots while Remington seemed to fight to keep a straight
n filledWhen he finally cracked and laughed with us, it was like the spell broken
y to dothe tension evaporated.

was. No Remington sat back in the booth and stretched his arm out behind
rel. We“That was fucking humiliating.”

Tammy Wynette sang in the background as I giggled once more. “Did
I barelynot look into the process?”

with a Wells groaned. “Not exactly. I thought today was just a discussion
that nurse handed me the sample cup and asked if I’d like a magic
Hawke thought I was missing something.”

ton had “You p-peed in it!” I was crying again, nearly doubled over.

s sat on “Yeah, it’s hilarious now. I didn’t see you laughing when she asked
e drinkwhich one of us you’d like to assist.” Boone rubbed his hands down his

“I wasn’t sure if I wanted to fight for your honor or flee the building.”

appropriate Remington growled as he shifted in his seat. “I never thought it would
gh afterso fucking awkward to have a conversation about jacking off as a forty
t didn’told.”

mouth, “Oh!” A waitress in a pearl-buttoned shirt and cowboy boots had
to join our table at the wrong time. “Um. What can I get you to drink?”

ny eyes I sank lower in the booth as I laughed harder. I was crossing over

I evenfrom giggle to gargoyle-laugh and I’d never planned to share that
top, butmyself with the Hawke brothers.

“Whiskey. The entire fucking bottle.” Remington handed her his
card and looked down at me. “What would you like, Memphis?”

I waved him away as I fought to control my laughter. I managed

out of something out that got across that I'd drink the same. Ladylike? Probably not. One of us I'd just sat with the three hottest men I'd ever seen while a doctor talked to the other two. The doctor's face about masturbation and sex schedules. When it became clear to me that the doctor thought we were all in a relationship, I was too embarrassed to say anything. I wasn't sure what they thought we were seeing them for exactly, but I just needed their sperm to put inside me, I'd just have sex with them. If we were in a relationship, I mean...I flushed hotter as that thought whirled around my head.

"What did you tell them we were coming in for, Remy?" Wells shrugged. "When I'll never forgive you for having to see the look on that nurse's face in the magazine, I handed her back a cup of urine."

"I didn't set it up. My assistant worked with the surrogacy agency and everything worked out." He ground his teeth together. "Ex-assistant." "Did you see me?" I made myself sit up and fanned my eyes. "I'm sorry. I don't remember his face. Last time I've laughed like that."

Boone looked down at me and smiled. "You have an interesting laugh." "I could be better." I scoffed and made a show of inching closer to Remington. "Intelligent. Thanks a lot. Just what a woman wants to hear."

Remington shifted and his thigh pressed into mine. "It's a great idea. Especially if you're ever lost and we need a signal to find you."

"I looked at Wells. "Anything you'd like to add?" "Nope." He quirked an eyebrow and slowly shook his head. "Not about the line. Laugh."

A wave of heat hit me just as the bottle of whiskey showed up. I'd never been so grateful for strong liquor. I barely waited for Remington to start pouring my shot before I threw it back and put my empty glass back on the table. "Again."

bly not. He filled my shot glass again and held my gaze. “Shots without a
ed to uslike sex without foreplay, Ms. King.”

that the I wanted desperately to look away, but something at my base being
correctlooking away would mean losing. I didn’t know what was on the lin
but if Isuddenly, desperately wanted to win. “So, like sex.”

1. If we Laughing easily, he licked his lips. “Maybe with the wrong man.”

banged I gripped my glass harder. “Go on then.”

With a teasing smile, he leaned in closer. “No matter how beautiful
ddered.and full of class, to somebody, somewhere, she’s a major pain in the as
when I Wells and Boone both laughed and took their shots. I took mine a
my stare-off with Remington going. When he refilled the glass, I lifte
/ to getto his. “Slainte bradan bod mor agus bas in Eireann.”

We took the shot and he pushed the bottle away. “What was that?”
lber the I laughed and hiccuped. “Something about the health of a salmon,
penis, and dying in Ireland.”

gh.” He threw his head back and laughed. “I guess you win.”

resting. Boone and Wells thought of their toasts while I listened to the
secretly enjoyed the heat of Remington’s thigh against mine. It’d beer
: laugh.time since I’d let myself drink. With my family history, it wasn’t some
did often, so I was a lightweight when I did it. That proved to still be t
hiccuped again and realized I needed to pee.

at your “I need to go to the restroom.” I looked up at Remington and sigh
looked at his perfect face. It really wasn’t fair.

d never He slid out of the booth and offered me his hand. “I’ll walk you.”

o finish I stood on shaky legs and shook my head. “You stay. I’m fine.”

: on the I slipped away before he could argue and hurried through my ba
business. I stared at my reflection as I washed my hands and wincee

toasted smeared mascara under my eyes. Cleaning it up as best as I could, I
got out of the bathroom and stumbled into a hard chest. “Oopsy.”
He told me “You okay?” Remington held both of my upper arms in his big hands,
but I leaned down slightly to look at me. “You nearly wiped out.”

I noticed that his tie was askew and reached up to straighten it. That’s
that’s what I meant to do. When my fingers unknotted the silky material
started working it loose, I realized the plan had changed. “I fall all the time,
I’m clumsy. Maybe I should’ve put that on my application. Would you
still want me if I’d admitted how clumsy I am?”
He swallowed and his Adam’s apple bobbed against my knuckles.
“Memphis, I still would’ve wanted you.”

I brushed his throat with my fingertips, fascinated by the strength that
was strong all over. Pressed against him like I was right then, I could feel
the hardness of his body against my softness. “That’s cool.”

His mouth moved up in a smile as he caught my hands and lowered them
to my sides. Pulling away, he raked his eyes over my body and then
took the rest of the way off. Balling it up in his fist, he took another
longback. “Let’s get you back to the table.”
I looked down at my feet, feeling embarrassed by how touchy I’d
been as I “Okay.”

I hurried across the bar with the feeling of hell’s hounds nipping at
my feet. I heard Remington release a growl that sounded animalistic
following me. Closely. When I slid into the booth, he was nearly on top
of me.

Boone looked at me and grinned. “You can’t hang, Memphis. You’re
already going glassy-eyed.”
I pouted. “I am not.”

pushed Wells leaned forward and lightly tapped my chin. “Let us know
need to go.”

ands and A song I knew and loved came on and I didn’t resist the need to r
the music. I sang along with Dolly and let myself go.

At least

rial and

ie time.

ou have

l. “Yes,

ere. He

feel the

ed them

yanked

ier step

d been.

g at my

before

l top of

You’re

Wells leaned forward and lightly tapped my chin. “Let us know if you need to go.”

A song I knew and loved came on and I didn’t resist the need to move to the music. I sang along with Dolly and let myself go.

13.

13.

Boone

I turned in the booth completely to watch Memphis dance to a country song was playing. It all sounded the same to me, but when I watched Memphis roll her body from a seated position, I suddenly understood the appeal of country music. She sounded like a couple of drunks fighting in the kitchen behind the bar, but her face was lit up with happiness and the sound of the music made it all matter.

Watching the woman who'd blushed while talking to us dance like a paid stripper in a sweet sundress was a new kink for me. I was hard to remember being and I had to sit back to keep from reaching out and grabbing Memphis. She was sweet and wholesome, in her sundresses, but she was moving her curvy body like she'd ride a man like a gold mine.

She ran her hands through her hair, leaving it messy, and bit her lip letting out a sexy little sigh. As the song came to an end, she opened her eyes and focused on me. Her mouth opened in a smile as she leaned in and said, "Boone."

I leaned in. "Memphis."

She reached up and tapped my nose lightly. "Boop."

Remy's laughter was as surprising as it was warming. He'd been so quiet for so long. Hearing him laugh again made Memphis booping my nose feel like a gift.

I raised an eyebrow at her. "Did you just boop me?"

She cupped my cheek and scratched her fingers through my beard. "Your beard. It's soft, but still a little prickly. I bet it feels great."

I wanted to press my face into her hand and purr like a goddamn cat. Her fingers felt amazing on me. Her last sentence made me snort out a surprised laugh. “Excuse me?”

She sat back and ended up leaning against Remy. “Nothing. I didn’t love anything.”

Wells pulled out his phone and I saw him snap a picture of Memphis sat against Remy, the way Remy curled his larger body in

“Lean your head back a little more, Memphis.”

She tipped her head towards him and they locked eyes. I heard the softest breath from Wells as she dropped her head back, still gazing at him. He snapped more pictures. Memphis nodded at Memphis.

“Stunning.”

She blushed and shifted like she was going to sit up, but I watched before Remy’s hand curled around the front of her throat and caressed her from her eyes to collar bone. The look in her eyes was so full of need that I wanted her closer, her under the table right then and there.

Remy said something to her and let her go. “We should probably go. It’s still too fucking early to be drinking in a bar.”

Memphis ran her fingers down her throat and nodded. “Yeah.”

Wells held his phone out to me and showed me a shot he’d captured. Memphis wrapped his hand around her throat. It was somehow beautiful and erotic as fuck. I groaned and nodded at it. “I want copies.”

Memphis stood up from the table and turned on her heel, walking to the exit quicker than any of us had expected. I was used to the women with taking a little bit of time to adjust and make sure their clothes were falling perfectly, in case we were photographed on the way out. Memphis

at. Her didn't seem to have a care in the world as she hit the exit and pushed surprised letting a swath of light in the darkened bar.

I swore and rushed after her, old fears hitting harder than they had in a long time. I slammed through the exit and nearly ran Memphis. She grabbed her and pulled her closer to the building, away from the street. The way chest moved too fast as my heart raced.

to hers. Memphis, unaware of my feelings, reached up and scratched her hand through my beard again. Somehow, the feeling acted as an immediate adrenaline intake for my frayed nerves. She sighed and stretched up to press a kiss to my forehead and cheek. "It still tickles just enough. I love it."

Remy and Remy joined us on the curb, his eyes focused on me and where Memphis was basically petting me. His shoulders relaxed slightly and a small smile lifted his lips as he shook his head.

Wells just laughed when he saw me.

Memphis tried to move her hand to look at what he was laughing at. I dragged her hand and held it against my face. She got the hint and continued stroking me. "I was right to boop you, Boone. You're like a big puppy who gets loves being scratched."

Both Wells and Remy laughed at my expense, but I didn't give a damn. They didn't get it. Having Memphis's hands on my face was the most relaxing thing I'd felt in years. Maybe longer. Working as a surgeon carried with it a lot of stress and finding something that soothed me was rare.

"I probably shouldn't say that. It definitely makes the rest of my time towards inappropriate." Memphis booped my nose once more and spun away. I was big smile when Jake pulled up in the car. "Jake's here!"

I looked at my brothers and gestured at Memphis. Had she just said what Memphis thought she said? My mouth was open and I had to force it closed as I

it open, towards the car.

Wells opened the door before Jake could and let Memphis inside. I had in at last one in, but I still ended up with the seat next to Memphis. I had a over. I knew why. I'd watched Remy's face earlier when she'd crossed her seat. My front of him. They were both trying to catch peeks.

Jake had barely gotten back inside the car when Memphis figured out how to lower the partition and was hanging over it to talk to him. Her dress barely covered the bottom of her butt, but when she moved a certain way, it lifted enough to flash us the bottom curves of that sweet ass. I was in her

“Remington ordered whiskey. I don't really drink and now I'm Memphis drunk. Do you think you could swing by a bakery? I have a sweet tooth right now all I want is a piece of chocolate cake so rich it'd make the look poor.”

Jake laughed. “I know just the place, Memphis.”
“You're like James Bond *and* you can get me cake? I'm going to continue you, Jake. After my marriage to Rork fails because my insatiable desire for that cake drives him insane, of course.” Memphis swayed her ass back and forth as she waxed on about how great Jake was. It was starting to piss me off a fuck. “Seatbelt, Memphis.” Remy's bark proved that I wasn't the one who was most irritated.

“Gotta go. See you later, Jake.” Memphis moved to put herself back on her seat and fell into my lap. She grunted and looked up at me with her bright green eyes. “Oops. Sorry about that.”

I wrapped my arm around her without a second thought and held her steady. I saw the partition go back up and sent a silent thank you to the universe. Holding Memphis in my lap, I rested my head on the headrest and moved

her. “You’re marrying all of our staff, Memphis. You haven’t even proposed to me, yet, though. Should I be worried?”

feeling She shifted on top of me until she noticed the way I winced. “Oh, G, legs into heavy. I’m sorry!”

I locked my arm around her and held her steady. There would be no doubt how my painful erection once she paid attention to what she was sensing just “Avoidance, Memphis? It’ll never work. I’m like a dog with a bone in my way, it wants an answer.”

heaven. Her eyes flew open even wider and her lips parted on a sigh that I could barely swallow. She looked at me, confused and unsure, but whatever she saw on my face reassured her that she was the cause of what she was feeling. “I’m just thinking of the children... A divorce, which would be a sure thing, would be so hard on little Benji, Ginger, and Kurt.”

I spread my fingers out, palming her lower back, touching as much as I could. “Our divorce would be a sure thing? That’s hurtful.”

sure for “Boone, you’d be my third marriage. Get serious. After the first marriage, the chance for each one is statistically more likely to fail. By the third? We’d be talking about a percentage so small that your money manager would never allow it. Even if you and I were both know you’re probably into blondes and I’m not bleaching my hair for a man.” She shrugged like she hadn’t just crushed my fake cock in the “We’re just not meant to be, sugar.”

er wide Wells laughed. “It’s so mean, but when she says it with that accent, it doesn’t feel so bad, does it?”

eld her Remy scoffed. “I don’t trust it. Any second, she’s going to blow up Remy’s hearts.”

atched Memphis twisted around to face my brothers and tried to stay decorously sitting on my lap in a short dress. “Only if you deserve it.”

tried to I placed my hand over the gap at the front of her dress, my fingers
to brush against her inner knees. I did it under the pretense of helping l
od. I'mcovered, but I was just desperate to touch her soft skin. "This is a muc
way to spend our time than listening to someone tell us how and when
) hidingoff."

feeling. Leaning into my chest, Memphis rested her hand on top of mine, ke
when Iin place as her legs naturally spread open with the angle we were sittin
going to be honest. I never thought about the process of this. I gues
wantedshut my mind to all the awkward parts. I just knew I'd get pregnant a
saw onyou babies."

g under That sentence shouldn't have sent a pleasurable shiver down my sp
ld be ait did. I squeezed my eyes shut and tried to come back down to earth.

"I feel like an idiot now. Of course, you need our..." Wells paused.
1 of herthere's no nice way of saying that. You need our sperm to get preg
don't know why I didn't think about how you'd get it. We decided we
arriage,kids and jumped in with both feet, I guess. The agency and Remy's se
have ahandled everything else. I wasn't prepared to be told to jackoff
besides,walked into that appointment today. Even if I should've been."

ny hair "And what? You're just going to do it into a cup and then the docto
dreams.going to put it inside me?" Memphis's voice was quieter, a little br

"Talk about an awkward middle man. The old-fashioned way seem
cent, iteasier."

Remy leveled an intense stare at Memphis. "The old-fashioned way
ess oursomething you'd be interested in?"

it while

I placed my hand over the gap at the front of her dress, my fingers dipping to brush against her inner knees. I did it under the pretense of helping her stay covered, but I was just desperate to touch her soft skin. “This is a much nicer way to spend our time than listening to someone tell us how and when to jerk off.”

Leaning into my chest, Memphis rested her hand on top of mine, keeping it in place as her legs naturally spread open with the angle we were sitting. “I’m going to be honest. I never thought about the process of this. I guess I just shut my mind to all the awkward parts. I just knew I’d get pregnant and give you babies.”

That sentence shouldn’t have sent a pleasurable shiver down my spine, but it did. I squeezed my eyes shut and tried to come back down to earth.

“I feel like an idiot now. Of course, you need our…” Wells paused. “Well, there’s no nice way of saying that. You need our sperm to get pregnant. I don’t know why I didn’t think about how you’d get it. We decided we wanted kids and jumped in with both feet, I guess. The agency and Remy’s secretary handled everything else. I wasn’t prepared to be told to jackoff when I walked into that appointment today. Even if I should’ve been.”

“And what? You’re just going to do it into a cup and then the doctor is just going to put it inside me?” Memphis’s voice was quieter, a little breathier. “Talk about an awkward middle man. The old-fashioned way seems a lot easier.”

Remy leveled an intense stare at Memphis. “The old-fashioned way. Is that something you’d be interested in?”

19.

14.

****Remington****

Memphis licked her lips from her position on top of my brother. She held my gaze and I could almost feel the wheels in her brain turning. I started to worry that I'd overstepped when she nodded. It was the smallest of movements, so minimal that I asked her again to make sure. She nodded with more force the second time. "Yes. That's something I'm interested in."

I sat forward in my seat, cursing the seatbelt I'd put on for her, despite the hatred I felt for the things. "I'm not talking in general terms here, Memphis. I'm not talking about you getting knocked up with your future husband the old fashioned way. I'm talking about you spreading your legs and letting the three of us fuck a baby into you. Three babies, to be exact."

Her chest rose and fell faster. "I understood the first time."

"The contract is still the same. The only thing changing is the method of impregnation. Understood?" When she nodded I reached out and gripped her ankle. "Words, Memphis. I want to hear you say you understand what I'm saying."

Her pulse throbbed under my thumb. "Yes, Remington, I understand. I'm going to spread my legs and let each of you fuck a baby into me. I understand that it changes nothing in the contract. Don't worry. I'm not having the impression that sex means love."

My own pulse raced at the hint of fire in her voice. It triggered my instincts to conquer and I tightened my grip on her ankle. "I clarified for your understanding, Memphis. We're breaching the original contract and I don't want you to think that we'd back out of our agreement. If you want to fall in love with me, that's your own problem."

To my surprise, a smile stretched her mouth. “As hard as it’ll probably be, Remington Hawke, I think I’ll manage.”

I’d never admit that her saying that edged under my skin and stayed turning. I let her go and sat back in my seat. “Wells? Boone?”

Boone gripped her hips tighter. “Yeah, I’m a thousand percent behind change.”

“Even if I didn’t want this, I think I’d do it simply to not have to spite the face at that fertility clinic ever again.” Wells winked at Memphis. “Lemme, I do want it. Just a small problem. At the risk of sounding like a cock’s kiddick...who goes first?”

I tilted my head at my brother and glared at him. “Really?”

Memphis shocked the hell out of me again when she opened her mouth to think we should wing it.”

Wells laughed. “I fucking knew we chose the right woman.”

“What does that mean?” I sat forward again, itching to pull her over my head and see how she’d respond to having her ass spanked raw.

“I guess we just see if the baby comes out holding a checkbook, a paintbrush, or a scalpel. After we know who touched base first, we move on. I also She pressed her thighs together, but with Boone under her, she couldn’t do so much. “Or...I sleep with one of you until I get pregnant and then have one of you after that baby is born.”

“The alternative being we all fuck you at the same time.” Boone grinned at me. “Not at the same time, I mean. You know what I mean. I think.”

Wells handed me his phone and showed me the picture he’d taken of her hand over Memphis’s throat while she arched into my touch. I stared at it and fought to get control over myself. Handing it back to him, I blew a rough breath. Sex for procreation wasn’t the same as fucking for the fun

ably be, Memphis was volunteering for the first, not the second. I wouldn't
darker desires on her.

d there. "Do you really want this, Memphis?" Wells shoved his phone back
pocket and patted the other pockets, looking for the pack of smok
ind the given up over five years before. When stressed, he still looked for a c
without realizing it.

ow my "I'm only saying this part because I'm drunk and if you bring it up
cky for I'll throat punch you." Memphis took a deep breath and blew it out
omplete "I've only had sex with one person and he didn't toast before taking a
you know what I mean. Am I right in assuming y'all do?"

I was going to embarrass myself with a wet spot on the front of my
outh. "Is he didn't stop talking soon. My dick was leaking precum like a
faucet. "I toast before each shot, Memphis. Fucking longwinded at
too."

my lap She shivered and closed her eyes. "I want that. Just because it's se
reason doesn't mean it can't be good. I want good. I want to come like
ook, and scream the roof off. Like in my books."

ve on." Wells groaned and tugged at his hair. "Yep, yep. So, do we start now
only do I saw Boone's hand moving under the hem of her dress and rai
another voice. "We do nothing until Memphis is sober."

Boone growled but put his hand back on her knee. "I hate being a
grunted. gentleman."

Memphis decided to test my patience and restraint by crawling
of my Boone's lap and straddling me. With her dress bunched around her
down at could see the front of her lavender panties were soaked. She rested he
w out on my shoulders and stretched forward to rub her cheek against min
in of it. not too drunk, Remington."

put my I gripped her ass and yanked her forward so her wet panties rubbed
my belt. I waited until she looked at me again to stop her from r
into his “You’re drunk enough that our touching you would be wrong. We
es he’d you off at the guest house and talk about this again tomorrow.”

igarette Her bottom lip poked out in the sweetest pout and I was a fucking
because I leaned forward and sucked that lip into my mouth for ju
o again, enough to rake my teeth over it and then let it go. Her eyes were twin
slowly, on fire as she met mine. “Mean.”

shot, if “Rest knowing that when you’re sober, if you want to orgasm
fingers, my face, my dick, I’ll be ready for you.” I met Boone’s gaze c
pants if head as she tucked herself in under my chin. “We’ll all be ready for yo
n open She rested her cheek against my chest and sighed. “Jeremy is going
: times, all the glory for this tonight.”

Wells grunted. “Jeremy?”

ex for a “My boyfriend.” She felt me stiffen under her and let out a low
: a river “You met him, Remington.”

“I think I’d fucking remember meeting your boy—are you talking
v?” your vibrator?” I felt her shaking against me as she laughed and had
sed my the urge to swat her ass. “That was mean.”

She was still giggling to herself when Jake pulled up outside of th
fucking house. “Thanks. Today was...interesting.”

I got out and lowered her to her feet, to Jake’s amusement. I kept my
off of on her as he turned away to give us privacy. “Make sure this is w
hips, I want.”

r hands She rolled her eyes at me and leaned back into the car to tell We
e. “I’m Boone goodbye. Then she tossed me one last look over her shoulder
walking into the house.

against I waited until she was inside to slide back into my seat. Looking
moving brothers, I shook my head and rubbed my face. “She’s a fucking brat.”

’ll drop “And you’ve already got it bad.” Wells laughed. “You wanted to w
to her door and sing her a song, didn’t you?”

sucker I hit him and stared out the window. “This is probably a bad idea. A
st long of us fucking the same woman. What could go wrong?”

forests Boone grinned. “You’re asking the wrong questions, brother. The
question is what could go right?”

on my “She’s not what I was expecting when we decided to do this.” Wells
over her his phone out and stared at it again. “I’m going to paint this tonight. If
u.” have her, this will have to do. It’s going to take me some time to c
g to get ugly mug out of the picture and put mine in its place.”

“You cut me out and you’re no longer my brother.” I tried to redi
thoughts back to work, but it was useless. “I’m going to get drunk or
giggle.expensive liquor and pass the time the best way I know how.”

“Jacking off?” Boone grinned.

g about “Watching baseball, asshole.” Although, if I was being truthful,
to fight going to have to do something about the state of my dick. A cold sh

fucking my fist both sounded terrible, but I had to do something to e
e guestache until I could have Memphis. “I’m also calling and cutting ties wi

Hathe. She’s been calling persistently, despite my telling her that I’m :
y hands busy running a company. Her notes to my assistant said it’s importar
hat you don’t think that woman and I prioritize the same things as important.

this with Memphis this way means I can get rid of one more pest in my
ells and

before

I waited until she was inside to slide back into my seat. Looking at my brothers, I shook my head and rubbed my face. “She’s a fucking brat.”

“And you’ve already got it bad.” Wells laughed. “You wanted to walk her to her door and sing her a song, didn’t you?”

I hit him and stared out the window. “This is probably a bad idea. All three of us fucking the same woman. What could go wrong?”

Boone grinned. “You’re asking the wrong questions, brother. The better question is what could go right?”

“She’s not what I was expecting when we decided to do this.” Wells pulled his phone out and stared at it again. “I’m going to paint this tonight. If I can’t have her, this will have to do. It’s going to take me some time to cut your ugly mug out of the picture and put mine in its place.”

“You cut me out and you’re no longer my brother.” I tried to redirect my thoughts back to work, but it was useless. “I’m going to get drunk on Don’s expensive liquor and pass the time the best way I know how.”

“Jacking off?” Boone grinned.

“Watching baseball, asshole.” Although, if I was being truthful, I was going to have to do something about the state of my dick. A cold shower or fucking my fist both sounded terrible, but I had to do something to ease the ache until I could have Memphis. “I’m also calling and cutting ties with Mrs. Hathe. She’s been calling persistently, despite my telling her that I’m fucking busy running a company. Her notes to my assistant said it’s important, but I don’t think that woman and I prioritize the same things as important. Doing this with Memphis this way means I can get rid of one more pest in my life.”

15.

15.

Memphis

“**Y**ou’re kidding! I always wanted to plant an all black flower bed. I sank into the grass next to Pete and pulled up a few weeds. I saw someone online who grew a large bed of black irises and I was obsessed. Do you have pictures?”

Pete, an amazingly sweet man around my age, pulled out his phone and went through his pictures. “This is Henry.”

I pulled his phone closer to see the muscled hunk standing next to Pete in a parade, their arms around each other. I fanned myself and whistled. “You are probably ruining women’s days everywhere you go.”

He laughed and scrolled through more pictures. “We both did pushups before taking that picture so we’d look a little sweaty and buff. Let me tell you, posting pictures to Instagram as a gay man in his early thirties is a full time job. There’s no such thing as a candid photo. If one of my friends posts me in a picture without my approval, I’d murder them. That’s how it is.”

I laid back in the grass and covered my eyes. “That sounds awful. I don’t have any of that stuff anymore. It’s nicer this way.”

“What do you mean? How do you not have social media?” He handed me his phone and kept ranting. “I mean, sure it’s terrible, but how do you live when anything is happening?”

I couldn’t take my eyes off the flowerbed captured in his phone. A bed of black flowers, it was a gothic masterpiece. I might’ve even moaned when I zoomed in on a black dahlia that was more beautiful than any supermodel I’ve ever seen. “Oh, God, Pete!”

Heavy footsteps came towards us quickly, startling me into sitting down. Wells appeared over us a second later, his face pinched in anger. He said, "Care to join us for a meal?" I were focused on Pete, but he spoke to me. "Care to join us for a meal?" "I saw Memphis?"

I hopped to my feet and dusted off my butt. "Look at this first, Wells. I planted an all black flowerbed. Isn't it amazing? Look at this dahlia! I want to kill to have this dahlia, Pete. Do you understand what I'm saying to you?"

Pete took his phone back and shot a weary look at Wells. "Yep. Got it." I smiled up at Wells and bit my lip when he finally focused on me. His blue-green eyes reminded me of the ocean I'd seen in so many photos from the coast. I loved the sharp angles of his face that he didn't keep a beard. Even the dimple in his chin was hot. "Is this a good meeting?" He looked like he lost a battle against a smile as he looked me in the eye. "Maybe."

I gripped his arm and waved to Pete. "I'll see you later!" Wells pulled me to the house and upstairs to a floor I'd never seen before. I was breathing hard by the time we got to a set of massive double doors. I don't remember practically running and my flats were working hard to keep up.

"Wells, I'm going to have an asthma attack if you don't slow down!" I pulled my arm free of his grip and took a deep breath.

"You have asthma?" He looked concerned as he ran his eyes over me.

"No. Still. You shouldn't make me walk so fast. My legs are short and black." I grinned up at him, in a good mood that wouldn't quit. "What room?"

He pushed open the doors and led me into a tall room that would've been the entire guest house inside it. Every single wall was covered in books.

ing up and every single bookshelf was full of books. From floor to ceiling, it was his eyes library of every little Belle's dreams. I couldn't believe what I was seeing, "This is the library." Wells gently pushed me inside. "We thought you'd like it."

ls. Pete I rushed over to the closest wall of books and let out a happy little cry. "I would!" Wells! This is the best thing I've ever seen! This is my dream come true!" A rolling ladder called to me and I wasted no time in climbing it, sending myself flying down the wall of books. A big hand on the side stopped me from hitting the opposite wall and crashing. I looked down at the postcards Remington and smiled, unfazed.

behind "If you're not careful, I'll have the ladders taken out, Memphis. You're breaking your neck in here." He lifted me off the ladder like it was a piece of paper and pushed it away. "Do you think you can tear your attention away from books for a few minutes?"

I nodded hurriedly, but my eyes were already scanning the walls of the library. The options were limitless. I could read a book a day for my entire five years here. He was at their house and never run out of things to read.

Boone looked up at me from a low club chair and winked. "Hey, new kid." I leaned against his chair and teasingly slapped his arm. "Better a new doctor than a surgeon. You know what they say about surgeons, don't you?"

Remington leaned against a big wooden desk in front of me and raised an eyebrow. "Please, tell us."

at's this "Narcissists with god complexes." I laughed when Boone grabbed my arm and tickled me. "Total sadists!"

He pulled me into his lap and narrowed his eyes at me. "This is why your marriage fails. Fuck statistics. It's because you're cruel to me."

I patted his cheek and couldn't help scratching my fingers through his hair.

was the beard. I loved the feeling. I also loved the way his dark blue eyes went
ing. sleepy when I did it. “Today’s cruel is tomorrow’s honest.”

t you’d Wells cleared his throat. “Not to break this up, but I have to
question. Why were you moaning the gardener’s name when I found y
scream. I laughed until I noticed they weren’t joining me. Remington was
ue!” out the window like he wanted to murder someone and Boone had go
; it and under me. Scoffing, I stood up and put my hands on my hips. “Serious
ladder Boone frowned. “Well? Were you moaning his name?”
lown at “Yeah, I was.” I watched as their tiny little man brains combusted.
to hear how it sounded?”

I’m not Remington cut his eyes at me. “Memphis.”

nothing “Oh, God, Pete! Oh, Pete!” I really put my all into it. “Oh, Pet
rom the garden is beautiful and your flowers make me want to rob you blind
you fools. I was moaning over a flower bed. It’s an all black flower
books. you’re curious. Absolutely stunning and I really would rob Pete bl
e years could get my hands on those plants.”

Boone laughed and tried to grab me, but I moved away from his
rd.” Wells had the decency to look embarrassed. Remington, though, still
rd than like he would gladly murder Pete and find another gardener.

“I’m not going to get knocked up by Pete and break our contract
odded. three can relax.” I met Remington’s eyes and lifted my chin defiantly.

clear, though, there was nothing in the contract about me not dating
ed my the five years I’ll be here.”

“I’ll add it in.” He straightened and stepped towards me. “How
why our feeling about what we discussed last night?”

I wilted into the chair next to me as my entire body blushed. I
ugh his expected him to come right out with it, although that was clearly a mis

t a littlemy part. “Sober. And shy.”

He stood over me and didn’t budge until I looked up at him. When he knelt in front of me and rested his hands on my knees. My dress was ridden up enough that his warm skin was directly on mine. “You know nothing is permanent. The original contract is still in play.”

“No.” I took a deep breath and ran my fingers over his stubble. “I still don’t know what we talked about. I’m just nervous. Being sober and pretending to be confident is a lot harder.”

He stroked his thumbs along the inside of my knees and studied me with an intense stare. “Why would you need to pretend to be confident?”

I groaned and covered my face with my hands, peeking out from between my fingers to look at Remington, kneeling in front of me in a perfectly tailored suit. “I made a mistake last night.”

Wells moved closer to us and pulled my hands away from my face. “Do you mean?”

“I Googled y’all. I just... I don’t know. I was curious and I saw the sex reach you normally take out. You date supermodels. A lot of supermodels. I’ve never been with one man. I have all the experience of a virgin, with none of the virtue. I’m feeling very inadequate.” I sighed. “I didn’t even get to see Jeremy last night. I got in my head about how disappointed y’all are going to be when I get undressed and just lay there like a dead fish.”

Boone’s explosive laughter wasn’t expected, or very welcome, but when he glared at him, he didn’t seem capable of controlling it. “I’m sorry. There are just so many things wrong with that statement.”

“You tried to ride my dick in the car last night like a snake charmer. I hadn’t even had my sweetheart. I don’t think any of us are worried about you being a dead weight on the sack.” Remington’s hands inched higher. “And the idea of

disappointed when you undress for me? Not a fucking chance. I'm a
n I did, man most of the time, but I'm dying to see you stripped bare for me."
ess had "I want to do it this way. I meant what I said." I looked at all three c
ow that acting as if my heart wasn't racing from Remington's words. "I don'
what happens next."

ill want "One of us takes you first, Memphis." Wells didn't look at his brot
g to be he stroked my cheek with the back of his hand. "Your choice."

My body responded to his touch the same way it respon
ne with Remington's touch. I was eager to experience pleasure with them.

incredibly out of my league and nervous, though. "I think... This is g
etween sound insane, but I think I would feel better if you were all three her
erfectly we do it."

"What

women

ve only

e of the

to use

going to

when I

ere are

harmer,

l fish in

being

disappointed when you undress for me? Not a fucking chance. I'm a patient man most of the time, but I'm dying to see you stripped bare for me."

"I want to do it this way. I meant what I said." I looked at all three of them, acting as if my heart wasn't racing from Remington's words. "I don't know what happens next."

"One of us takes you first, Memphis." Wells didn't look at his brothers as he stroked my cheek with the back of his hand. "Your choice."

My body responded to his touch the same way it responded to Remington's touch. I was eager to experience pleasure with them. I was incredibly out of my league and nervous, though. "I think... This is going to sound insane, but I think I would feel better if you were all three here when we do it."

16.

16.

Remington

My brain couldn't make sense of Memphis's words at first. She us all there. She wanted us all there when we did it. Our must've stretched out too long, because her cheeks went bright red and rushed to clarify.

"I know it sounds like I'm asking for something so far out of left field it's not that. I'm more comfortable with the three of you together right now. I feel safe..." She shoved her hair behind her ears and swallowed so hard I watched her throat bob. "Let's just forget I mentioned that. I'm sorry."

I glanced over at Boone and read his interest in his gaze. He'd try again twice, just to be sure, so I knew that coloring outside of the lines wasn't going to scare him away. Looking up at Wells, I expected hesitation, but instead he was staring back at me without a hint of doubt on his face. That just left me.

My sexual interests veered heavily towards the darker side and my brothers both knew it. They'd even been to some of the same clubs I'd frequented heavily before I got busy with the company. Public sex wasn't something I was shy away from. Having sex in front of my brothers was different, but I did it with them with my life and everything else. If it meant that I'd get Memphis's body under mine, I'd probably have done a lot worse.

"Okay."

Memphis's eyes snapped up to mine. "Okay?"

"We'll do what you want, Memphis. Even if it feels differently at times, you're always in control. If something doesn't feel right or you want to stop, just say so." I stood up and looked down at her, sitting so pretty with

thighs pressed together so tight. I walked around to the back of her chair and leaned down so I could press my lips against her ear. “Are you wanted sweetheart?”

silence She shivered and nodded. “Y-Yes.”
and she “Upstairs. Go to the very last room and wait inside for us.” I moved my lips lightly over her neck. “Naked.”

held, but Her gasp was exactly what I wanted. “Naked?”
at now. I I smiled to myself and gently rested both hands on her shoulders. “I’d like to undress you here and then send you up.”

She stood up quickly and hurried to the door. Looking back at us, she was bright eyed and looked like she could’ve been running from a predator. She was sexually nipping at her heels. “Will you be up soon?”

to see Wells grunted. “Already am.”
doubt on “Go on, sweetheart. We’ll be up soon.” I didn’t realize I was holding my breath until the door closed behind her. She was testing all of my brothers. Running my hands down my face, I shook out my hands and looked at my brothers. “Well, that was unexpected.”

thing I’d Boone shrugged. “Let’s not play shy. We’ve all been in weirder situations. I’ve trusted for less enthralling women. I can’t even think of a single one right now. I want to feel when I’ve got Memphis flouncing around my head.”

“No one doubted you’d be down, Boone. Wells?” Facing him, I read his expression and couldn’t.

“If it was anyone else, I’d never be able to do it. It’s not anyone else’s fault, though. It’s you two. And it’s the three of us because we make her feel like she has to stop. Just try not to be embarrassed when I outperform both of you.” He smiled at her and nodded towards the door. “Why are we waiting? I’m dying here.”

“Remy is playing his sex games. He can’t help himself.” Boone pointed towards the door.

hair and mint and tossed the tin to me. “Memphis seems into it.”

ready, “I’m not...” I sighed and sucked on the mint to give myself time to my thoughts in my own head before trying to verbalize them again. “going to put all of that on her. You heard her. She’s inexperienced and nervous. The last thing she needs is a man slapping her ass and demanding she not come until he says so. She’s looking for pleasure, not kink.”

Wells lifted a shoulder. “You don’t know that.”

I could I wasn’t going to admit that my control was weak around her. It something I was comfortable with myself and I knew telling them she was we’d have to talk about it. “I know enough.”

predator “Whatever. Can we please go now? If I stand around here for much I’m going to rip my clothes off like an animal and pounce on her.” growled. “My patience is non-existent when it comes to this woman.”

ling my “Are we just going to fight for first touch when we’re up there?” Wells control his eyes at us. “As middle child, I think it’s fair that I take my time to deal at my now. You two have had enough glory.”

I scoffed. “Fuck off.”

ations, “Beauty before age, assholes.” Boone strode towards the door and I now, not fight the urge to rip off my brother’s arm and beat him with it.

“Let’s just see what she wants.” Wells rushed out behind Boone. “You tried to can pout when she chooses me.”

I rushed after them, tugging at my tie. It occurred to me that we were else, acting like idiots, but I wasn’t going to let them have Memphis before we were safe. Wells could help it.

grinned Elbows were thrown and grown men shoved each other into walls, second we reached my bedroom door, we each pulled ourselves together and dropped a

stepped inside. The moment we did, all thoughts of who got Memphis clarify vanished. Almost every thought was snapped away as the sight of her I'm not Memphis was kneeling at the foot of my bed, naked, with her ed and together over her thighs. She looked up at us and took a deep bre anding this...?"

I moved to stand in front of her and tipped her chin up so her face presented fully to my gaze. I searched her eyes for any signs of regret, wasn't I saw was an openness that sucked me in. Finding her kneeling for us, meant a submissive position, was enough to bend any resolve I had about leaving my darker desires away from her.

longer, I kept her chin up as I slowly ran my eyes down her long neck and to Boone shoulders. Her collar bones made soft angles that I wanted to fill and out of. Two freckles marked the center of her chest and then I drank wells cut sight of her breasts. Full, round, and tipped with small pink nipples to shine were fucking perfect and would fill my palms just right. Her stomach soft and her navel dotted with another single freckle. Her thighs were pressing together tightly to hide her sex from my hungry gaze. Creating had to each hip that showed the promise of her curves made my blood pump

Clothed, she was sexy as hell. Naked, she was a goddess, built for you two and giving pleasure. Her wavy hair was suddenly tousled and read tight fist in it. Her forest green eyes were suddenly the green of a soft re were moss, made for fucking. Her pretty mouth was an invitation, written me if I me personally.

My fingers tightened slightly on her chin as I met her gaze again but then out a sound that was pure desire and need. Memphis shivered and pushed her and shoulders back farther, presenting herself to me like I hadn't just de every inch of her.

his first I lifted her chin higher, so she had to go up on her knees and there I
hit me. sex, tightly protected by her clenched thighs. I leaned forward and let
my handshuddering breath against her ear. "Spread your knees."

ath. "Is

ice was

, but all

in such

keeping

reckled

d drink

in the

as, they

ch was

e thick,

ases on

harder.

taking

y for a

bed of

out to

and let

hed her

evoured

I lifted her chin higher, so she had to go up on her knees and there was her sex, tightly protected by her clenched thighs. I leaned forward and let out a shuddering breath against her ear. “Spread your knees.”

17.

17.

Memphis

Remington's gritty voice demanding I spread my legs made my stomach clench and my insides flutter. His eyes were darker, nearly swamped up by his pupils as he kept his grip on my chin. His demeanor was different from what I'd seen in our few interactions. He felt larger and dangerous, like he was prepared to chase me if I dared run. His body was tense and I could see a muscle in his jaw flexing. While I burned alive, he was a block of ice, frigid in his control.

I swallowed my nerves and shifted my knees farther apart. His duvet felt like a very expensive linen and I sank my teeth into my bottom lip. I thought about what he could see of my exposed body and what he would think if I was wet enough to drip onto his costly bedding. My breasts were everywhere all at once and yet none of my thoughts felt full, completely real. I was caught in a fantasy and I was struggling to believe it.

Remington didn't give me much choice but to believe it when he pressed my sex in his other hand and growled low in the back of his throat. "You're drenched. Is this all for us?"

The feeling of his thick fingers touching me there made me feel like a virgin. I felt like I'd never been touched before, not if what he was touching me. Nothing had ever felt like it. It felt like he was claiming me, taking and gripping what he wanted. My body responded by becoming even slicker. I nodded and glanced behind him at Wells and Boone.

"Out loud, M." He turned my gaze back to him and tightened his grip on my core. "You're going to be vocal with us. Tell us what you want, with

need, and what you don't like. Did the piece of shit who took your
ever ask you what you wanted?"

tomach Shaking my head, I couldn't get my mouth to function so easily. I'
allowed been vocal during sex. I wasn't loud. I maybe whispered Charlie's r
ifferent pretend I was coming, but that was it.

us, like Remington's hand left my core and I wanted to cry out and beg him
I could it back. I shouldn't have worried, though, because a second later, h
of ice, returned in a swift slap that shocked me more than it stung. The se
sent tingles all over my body and the gasp that flew out of my mou
at cover loud and breathy.

lip as I "There we go. That was better. Now, answer my question." He
would stroked my lower lips, teasing me. "Quickly."

ain was I tried to remember his question but my mind blanked. The second
or even my sex was enough to have me stuttering out anything I could thin
ve it. I wasn't sure what to make of him spanking my core, but the sensation
cupped better than anything Charlie had ever done. "I don't r-remember wh
'You're asked."

He raised his eyebrows and moved closer, dropping his mouth to
e I was "I asked if the piece of shit who stole your virginity from me ever ask
s doing what you wanted."

ing my I shivered. "No. No, he never...he didn't ask."

coming Petting my lips, Remington's voice rumbled over the sensitive skin
neck. "I'm asking, sweetheart."

grip on My eyes widened as he stepped back and lifted his hand from betw
hat you legs, showing me and his brothers just how wet I'd made his hand. M
coated his palm and fingers and shame washed over me. I tried to g
hand and push it away, embarrassed by my body's response to them.

cherry from romance novels that being wet was a good thing, but they hadn't done anything to me yet. I felt... somehow loose, like they'd never believed I'd never only been with one man when my body responded like I'd hit the same commercial sized bottle of lube up it.

Remington caught my wrist and held it away from his hand. When I noticed he was watching, he lifted it to his mouth and slowly licked his fingers clean of his handjuices. His eyes never left mine. "You're delicious, M. I'm going to let you taste sensation pretty cunt until you soak my face. Did you ever ride his face?"

With a gasp, I shook my head fast and hard. Looking at Boone and Wells, I wanted them to clarify to Remington that me riding his face was a very bad idea. I smiled lightly. When I saw Boone licking his lips and unbuttoning his shirt, I knew I was on my own. "I didn't. He didn't do that. I don't think it's safe. I'm not going to slap your tiny supermodels."

Wells growled and came closer. His sea-colored eyes stroked over my ass as if he were body hungrily. "Thank fuck for that. I want to feel your curves dip under my fingers, Memphis. I want to watch your ass bounce while I fuck you. I don't want to go with you riding my face, what a fucking way to go."

Boone leaned over the side of the bed and planted his hands on either side of my thigh. "What do you mean, he didn't do that?"

They were all so close. I could feel the heat radiating off of their bodies and smell the note of citrus that ran through all of their scents. I was torn of my where to look first, but Boone's hand gripped the inside of my thigh and pulled it farther out, so my sex was hovering over the bed. I gasped at Boone's gaze, needy for things I didn't even understand. "He didn't go there with my fluids she thought it was gross."

Boone laughed, but it sounded dangerous. His eyes flashed with a warning. I knew he stroked my thigh. "And did you suck his dick?"

It even All I could do was nod, the weight of their stares heavy as I admit I believe I'd what I knew was an unfair sexual relationship. I didn't know why I suddenly started talking so much. I wasn't sure I liked it. They were flaying me open, exposing the ugly underbelly of my sex life and insecurities.

While I Remington gripped my chin again and made me face him. "Did I do anything for you?"

Ick this I wanted to spill my soul to them right then. All Charlie had done was use me for seven long years and then rob me blind. I was already humiliated enough for one day, though, so I just shook my head.

Bad idea. "That changes now. You come first, every time. First and often. If I was not floating on a fucking cloud when you leave us, you're not leaving one of us behind. Welcome to grown men, sweetheart. Pussies are delicious, if there's a hole in your mouth it'll be because you begged for it, and you're fucking better never turning us on. Understand?" Remington ran his hand into my hair and gripped the back of my head. "Say you understand, Memphis, because my time for talking is running short."

I gasped at the feeling of fingers stroking over my sex and could barely hold myself steady with my head held so steady. I watched as Remington lifted his hand to grip the side of my face. The fingers parting my lower lips and the understanding that two men were touching me at the same time washed over me like a tidal wave. I opened my mouth, unsure of what I was going to say, but all that came out was a low, needy moan.

And met "Say you understand, sweetheart." Remington stroked his thumb over my lips and leaned in closer, until his breath mingled with mine.

"Yes!" I squeezed my eyes closed and licked my lips, my tongue brushing his tongue. "I understand."

"You like that Boone and I are touching you at the same time, don't

itted toAs he spoke, he pushed his thumb past my lips and growled when I
re weremy tongue around it.

oen and Boone's fingers parted my lower lips and he slowly slid one long
finger into me. He swore and pressed an open-mouthed kiss to my
l he do "You're so tight, Memphis."

"I like it!" I blurted out the truth and felt my body burn with sham
for meadmission.

y naked "Again I say thank fuck." Wells' voice was rough as he moved cl
don't think I can sit back and wait my turn to touch you."

you're Remington's face filled my vision as hands joined the others alre
ring us.my body. He dipped his mouth lower and licked my bottom lip. "How
cock infeel, M? Boone's fingering your dripping cunt and Wells is strokir
uilt forbeautiful stomach. You've got all three of us dying to know what it fe
air andto slide inside your perfect body."

use the My lips parted and I had to grip his shoulders as a second finger joi
first inside me and Wells' hands cupped my breasts. He stroked arou
r't looknipples, teasing me. Remington cut off a moan by kissing me. His mo
is otherminty as he stroked his tongue into my mouth and tightened his grip
weren'thair. His lips were softer than I expected, his stubble prickly as he ti
ne timehead and kissed me deeper. His kiss left no room for confusion; he
it I wascharge. He bit my lip and set the pace of the kiss, stroking my tong
submission and growling into my mouth before pulling away.

ver my I panted as he kissed across my jaw and down my throat. Soft and
from his mouth and beard, he left chills in his wake as he moved acr
rushingshoulder. His mouth, Boone's fingers, and Wells' teasing drove me
into a state I'd never been in before, until I was writhing in their gra
t you?"fighting the urge to cry out.

swirled When Boone's thumb shifted to settle over my clit, I lost control
finally pinched my nipples with a sharpness that spiked my pleasure,
thick Remington sucked the skin over my collar bone, marking me. With
thigh. keening cry, I came. My body pulsed as pleasure throbbed through me
and radiated outwards. I dug my fingers into Remington's shoulders
and curled into them as much as I could.

"That's it, sweetheart. Enjoy that gentle orgasm. The next one will be
without you screaming." Remington kissed me softly and pulled back
his shirt open. Buttons went flying and his tie was jerked off. "You're
ready onto ride my face, M. You're not stopping until you've come all over
me. Does it scream my name?"

ing your
feels like

ned the
and my
mouth was
in my
ltd his
was in
que into

l rough
ross my
higher
asp and

When Boone's thumb shifted to settle over my clit, I lost control. Wells finally pinched my nipples with a sharpness that spiked my pleasure. Remington sucked the skin over my collar bone, marking me. With a loud, keening cry, I came. My body pulsed as pleasure throbbed through my core and radiated outwards. I dug my fingers into Remington's shoulders and curled into them as much as I could.

"That's it, sweetheart. Enjoy that gentle orgasm. The next one won't hit without you screaming." Remington kissed me softly and pulled back to yank his shirt open. Buttons went flying and his tie was jerked off. "You're going to ride my face, M. You're not stopping until you've come all over me and screamed my name."

18.

18.

Boone

I pulled my fingers out of Memphis and groaned at how wet my hair was. Sucking them clean, the thought of shoving Remy out of the way so I could bury my face between Memphis's sweet thighs crossed my mind. I closed my eyes at him and saw a wild look on his face.

"Don't even think about it, Boone." He went around the bed and lay on himself onto his back behind her. He was rough as he gripped her thighs and pulled her backwards, until she was kneeling over his face. When she leaned forward on her hands, he took it as his chance to pull her thighs farther apart so she had no choice but to ride his face.

Memphis threw her head back and released a howl of pleasure that rang like a growl from my own mouth. The sound was sexy as fuck and knowing she'd made it because Remy was burying his face into her sex and eating it out somehow made it hotter. Her hair went everywhere as her face twisted in pleasure. Wells gripped it and pulled it away from her face so we could see her.

Remy's fingers bit into her thighs as he held her down and growled at her wetness. Seeing his large hands on Memphis's cream-colored thighs while watching her back arch and her breasts swing as she rocked her hips over his face was one of the sexiest images I'd ever seen. I ripped my shirt off and moved closer, needing to touch her.

Kissing her back and up to her shoulder, I caught her face in my hands and pulled her mouth over to mine. Her eyes focused on mine just before our mouths collided and I saw her process that one brother was eating her out while the other kissed her open mouth. As I stroked my tongue in

mouth, she sucked on it and nipped me before opening her mouth and moaning. I kissed her again and again as her moans grew louder and louder. I was desperate. I felt my own desperation rising to possess more of her. My pleasure crested.

I cut The sounds coming from Remy made clear that he was loving what he was doing. He'd also pulled Memphis down even harder over his face and powered using his grip on her thighs to force her to ride him.

Thighs and Wells grabbed my shoulder and pulled me back. "Let Remy hear her scream for him, Memphis."

Her apart Her head dropped towards the bed and I could tell that she was fighting to release and the sounds building behind her tongue. Her knuckles were gripped where she gripped the bedding. I watched as a flush turned her body pink as I heard her gasping. Below her, Remy did something that had her head banging up. Her eyes squeezed shut and her face twisted in what could've looked like pain if her mouth hadn't dropped open to release a loud moan. When I looked at her again, her body tensed and vibrated over him before a wild cry tore from her lips.

I led into I popped the button on my pants and shoved the zipper down in an effort to release some of the pressure, but watching as Memphis came on my back over his face made my dick even harder. "Fuck."

Remy off and Remy moved out from under Memphis and she collapsed on top of him, breathing hard. Remy's face was shiny with her juices and he was still looking at her lips as he came up. "You're far from done, M."

Wells ore our Wells traded places with him and grabbed her hips. "Up, princess." Memphis her out Memphis moaned but she lifted her hips, leaving her chest and face pressed into the bed. Remy pulled her hair out of her face and growled at the blissful look he'd put there.

ith and I watched as Wells spread her lower lips from behind and lowe
d moremouth to push his tongue into her tight little hole. I shifted closer and
as hermy dick into the side of the bed as he stroked higher, over her perine
across her little rosebud.

he was Memphis jerked forward, but Wells dragged her back where he war
nd wasand Remy grunted his disapproval at her movement. She twisted h
unused to the feeling, but quickly moaned and dug her fingers i
ear youblanket. I moved closer and filled my hands with Memphis's ass. H
was silk under my palms and her throaty groan when I spread her chee
ting herpure pleasure to me.

e white Wells leaned back on his heels long enough to look at her spread
ink andhis feasting and then buried his face against her again. He drove his
jerkinginto her ass and pushed two fingers into her wet core.

ced like "Oh, god!" Memphis's back arched severely as she went up on her
ie did itand pushed her hips back into Wells. "Please!"

past her Remy gripped her head in his hands. "Please, what?"

Wells growled and pumped his fingers faster. Lifting his mo
ffort towatched his fingers drip with her desire. "What do you want, Mempl
rother'syou want to come? Do you want me to keep fucking your ass w
mouth?"

he bed, "Yes! Please! I need everything!" Memphis screamed as Wells fuc
lickingharder with his fingers and dove back into eating her ass with ferv
sounds became garbled as Remy put his fingers in her mouth and l
suck them.

flat on "Everything, sweetheart?" Remy pushed his fingers in and out
sed outmouth while staring into her watering eyes. "We're all going to come
sweet pussy, but it'd be a shame to ignore this mouth."

red his I felt her quivering and let out a dark chuckle, ready for my turn at :
pressedher come. “Is that what you want, Memphis? You want a brother at ea
um andpinning you between us?”

Wells stroked her once more before sitting back and lightly slapp
ted her ass. “She’s getting even wetter at the idea.”

er hips, Remy popped his fingers out of her mouth and gripped her hai
nto thenicely.”

ler skin Wells looked at me as he moved off the bed and nodded. “Don’t em
eks wasyourself.”

“Please let me have you in my mouth.” Memphis’s sweet southern
out forsaying something so dirty made us all groan. “I’d like to suck your
tonguePlease.”

I swore as I stripped off my pants and moved behind Memphis
elbowsgoing to embarrass myself faster than acceptable if she kept talking. M
pulsed painfully when my tip brushed against her wet folds. “Look
first, Memphis.”

uth, he She looked over her shoulder with lust-filled eyes. Her lip was
ais? Dobetween her teeth and she tilted her hips just enough to have my d
with myagainst her harder.

“Look at me while I fill you up.” I gripped myself and lined up our
ked herTaking a deep breath, I held her gaze while I pushed into her tight cc
or. Herwet heat sucked at me and I growled like an animal as I sank my
had herlength as deep as I could get. “You feel fucking perfect. I’ve never go
before and goddamn, your pussy is heaven.”

of her Memphis’s nostrils flared and her eyes fluttered when I shifted m
: in thatand bumped against her cervix. “*Big.*”

I gripped her hips and rolled mine against her soft ass. “Too much?”

making She licked her lips and shook her head. “No. I need it.”
ch end, Using my grip on her body, I pushed her forward and then drag
back over my full length. She cried out and her walls clenched down
ing her “I’m going to fuck you, Memphis, and I’m going to come so deep in y
you’re never going to get all of me out. Now, turn around and su
r. “Askbrothers’ dicks.”

I watched her twist around and heard her low moan as she saw both
barrassand Remy standing naked and hard before her. Her sex pulsed arou
length when Remy gripped her chin and lifted her face. Instead of feed
t accenthis own cock, he turned her head and nodded to Wells. It was all so
r dicks.filthy, but I’d never been more turned on in my life as I watched M
become ours.

. I was Waiting until Wells had the tip of his dick inside Memphis’s m
My dickpulled out and then thrust forward hard enough to rock Memphis de
k at meWells. He tilted his head back and moaned, savoring the feeling. M
gagged, but then just bobbed her head on his length like it was exact
caughtshe wanted.

ick rub “Such a pretty little cocksucker.” Remy’s voice was dark as he h
hair away from her face and stared down at her. “It’s only been a co
bodies.days and you’re already pinned between two Hawke dicks.”

re. Her Hooking my arm around her thigh, I lifted her leg so she was spre
wholefor me. Dropping my hand to play with her clit, I moved my hips fas
ne bareharder. I told myself to slow down and ease her into a harder pa
everything about her fucked with my head. I couldn’t go easy, not t
y angletime. I needed to rut into her like a beast and show her what she’
missing. She was going to come all over my cock before I filled her v
, seed.

Wells pulled out of her mouth and the sound of Memphis panting filled her room. She grunted with each thrust and cried out my name as he came on me, tightened around me. The sounds she made as her pussy tried to milk me were wild. She was out of control.

“That loser never made you come like that, did he, Memphis? He

fucked you so hard you made sounds like a fucking wildcat, did he?”

In my mind, I fucked her harder, too hard for our first time, but her sounds and my bouncing with each thrust and the sound of my thighs smacking against her were only drowned out by her cries of pleasure. “You never made a sound like this in this bed, did you, baby? Come for me one more time and I’ll give you what Memphis can give you. You want that, don’t you, Memphis? You’re hungry for our first time, aren’t you?”

She threw her head back and screamed as her walls clenched down on my dick. I swore and gave her one more thrust before she came harder than I’d ever come before. My vision had darkened around the edges by the time my orgasm eased up.

“That’s it, sweetheart.” Remy’s voice sounded far away as I gently held her out and managed to press a kiss to Memphis’s ass before falling back to bed.

and open

ster and

ice, but

he first

’d been

vith my

Wells pulled out of her mouth and the sound of Memphis panting filled the room. She grunted with each thrust and cried out my name as her walls tightened around me. The sounds she made as her pussy tried to milk me dry were wild. She was out of control.

“That loser never made you come like that, did he, Memphis? He never fucked you so hard you made sounds like a fucking wildcat, did he?” I’d lost my mind. I fucked her harder, too hard for our first time, but her soft ass bounced with each thrust and the sound of my thighs smacking against hers was only drowned out by her cries of pleasure. “You never made a mess in his bed, did you, baby? Come for me one more time and I’ll give you my come. You want that, don’t you, Memphis? You’re hungry for our come, aren’t you?”

She threw her head back and screamed as her walls clenched down like a vice around my dick. I swore and gave her one more thrust before I came harder than I’d ever come before. My vision had darkened around the edges by the time my orgasm eased up.

“That’s it, sweetheart.” Remy’s voice sounded far away as I gently pulled out and managed to press a kiss to Memphis’s ass before falling back into the bed.

19.

19.

Memphis

“Come here, M.” Remy grabbed me under my arms and lifted the bed, like I was a child. He held me to his bare chest and when I wrapped my legs around his waist. “You feel good wrapped me.”

I giggled and then buried my face against his neck, embarrassed sound. “Sorry. I just realized I can’t call you Remington anymore. No did what I did to your face.”

Boone let out a weak laugh. “So that’s what it takes, huh?”

“I’d be happy to hear you scream either.” Remy kissed my shoulder gently bit it. “Are you okay?”

I bit my lip as I lifted my head to meet his gaze. I was better than was pretty sure I’d died and found my way into paradise. I wasn’t sure religion gave women three sexperts in heaven, but I loved it. “Okay is simple word. I’m fantastic.”

Wells pressed into me from behind and moved my hair to the side could kiss my neck. “Do you need a break?”

“No.” I needed to experience all three of them. I hadn’t planned on a wildly out-of-character afternoon, but I’d accidentally led us into the style sex we were having and I wanted to finish. “I need both of you now.”

Remy eased me back to my feet and turned me to face Wells. The way his tattoos rendered me speechless. “What’s it going to be, Wells? Are you ready for heaven?”

I pressed my ass into Remy and felt his hardness against my lower back. Looking up at Wells, I traced the tattoos from his neck down both shoulders.

and arms. His chest was covered, down to his stomach, and even more stretched down his legs. He was a work of art, with so much me offdecorating his strong body that I couldn't help reaching out to touch him. Scars marred the tattoos on his right shoulder and chest, but the aroundeffect somehow seemed like it was meant to be. I ran my hand over them and over a dark set of wings across his throat.

by the Wells caught my hand and brought my palm to his lips to kiss. He t after I his tongue between my fingers and nipped the tips while staring into my eyes. He reached out and wrapped his hand around the back of my neck and dragged me into his hard body before lowering his mouth to mine.

der and I tipped my head back and kissed him hungrily. He lifted me into his arms and kept exploring my mouth as he sat on the edge of the bed with me. It was okay. His erection was trapped between our bodies, but Wells ignored it. He took his time with me. He ran his hands up my back and stroked my shoulders before running them down again, over my ass. I felt like

memorizing my body as he took his time touching every bit of me he could. I threaded my fingers through his hair, loving the thickness of it. The way it felt like silk against my flushed skin. All of my senses were heightened after orgasming so many times and being with Boone. The sound of my arousal, the sound of our gasping breaths, and the taste of his tongue felt larger than life as I straddled Wells and kissed him like I'd never get another chance.

Are you His fingers tightened on my hips and he lifted me. "Guide me to Memphis."

er back. Gripping him in my hand, I stroked the tip through my slippery folds. I rubbed him against my clit until I dropped my head back and moaned.

tattoo sound of Wells growling just turned me on even more as I continued to stroke his length. Stroking his length, I focused my hazy gaze on him and bit my lip. Wells' neck and shoulder muscles flexed as he narrowed his gaze. His lips parted on a groan when I ran my thumb over the head of his erection. "Memphis..."

"You like teasing, sweetheart?" Remy spoke into my ear, startling me. "I'll remember that." I positioned Wells' hard length against my opening and let out a scream of pleasure and shock when Remy pushed me down hard by my shoulders.

Wells filled me completely and the stretch from Boone had left me in his arms enough that Wells felt a little too big at first. Remy gripped my hair and turned my face to his, his expression stern. Just as he opened his mouth as if to say something, he snapped his lips closed and let go of my hair. I wanted to protest, but Wells shifted his hand around so he could drop his thumb and stroke me.

With his free hand, Wells cupped my breasts, one at a time, and pinched my nipples until I bucked my hips against him. He stroked my thighs, my cheek, and through my hair until his size no longer stung. "Ride me. Show me how strong these thighs are and bounce for me."

I gripped his shoulders, one smooth and the other ridged with scars. He never squeezed his length inside me while I started to ride him. I'd never been on top in any way before, but I wasn't going to admit that. I tried a few different things until one felt like absolute heaven and had my clit rubbing against my hard stomach with each bounce I made.

"That's right, Memphis. Take it all. You're going to be so full of my seed. I'm only sad I won't see it painted all over your face." Wells gripped my thighs and used that grip to drag me up and down his length faster. F

to tease flared when he felt my body pulse around his. “You liked that, didn’t you? Do you want our come coating you everywhere, baby?”

He stared at me. Tension built in my core and I gasped like a fish out of water. Wells’ reaction, fucking me hard enough that I couldn’t speak. I cried out his name as he yanked at his hair while I came closer to another massive orgasm. “We’re going to come together, me and you. He tucked his head and sucked one of my nipples into his mouth and I moaned slightly before letting it pop free. His fingers bit into my hips, his head reared and he jumped inside me, and he looked feral as he stared at me. “I shouldn’t have touched your mouth if I wanted to last. You’re squeezing me so tight.” I stiffened as pressure built throughout my entire body. Sucking in a sharp breath, I threw my head back and felt the dams break. I convulsed as pleasure shot through my limbs from my core and had me clenching down on my teeth even harder. Wells growled and jerked me down on his length once more before I felt his hot seed jetting inside me, coating my insides. He came and pulled me close to his chest and held me tight as we both came together. I had a silent orgasm, one that took my breath and voice away until it was finally over, and even then all I could do was whimper and gasp against Wells’ cheek, baby. His big hands stroked my back and pulled my sweat-dampened hair over my face. “Damn perfect.”

Wells’ eyes, and “Remy?” Boone’s voice was still thick with pleasure.

Boone’s face lit up. “Just give me a minute.” Remy, on the other hand, sounded terribly different angry.

Against his chest, I lifted my head and looked back to see him standing against the wall, as far away from me as he could get. His face was pinched and his body tense. I glanced back at Wells and he gently kissed me before lifting me up and helping me stand. My balance was shot, but I still managed to look across to Remy on shaky legs without stumbling.

’t you? He kept his eyes closed, but I knew he knew I was close by the way his muscles in his jaw ticked. “Go back to Wells or Boone, Memphis.”

Wells was How my feelings could still be hurt after the orgasms I’d just had, I didn’t know, but they were. Still, I reached out to gently touch him, my fingers barely brushing his hard stomach. “I-”

and biting Remy grabbed my hand and yanked me into his chest, knocking the air from my lungs as he looked down at me with fire in his eyes. Breathing hard, he gripped a handful of my hair and tilted my head back so I was arching into him. “Goddammit, Memphis. I’m trying to regain some semblance of control. You need to walk away until I can be sure I’m not going to be too rough on you.”

on him My hurt feelings turned into something else entirely, something more and sexy. I looked up at him through my lashes and smiled sweetly, arching my bare chest even farther into him. “I’m not made of glass, Remy.” He growled and pulled my hair harder. “You don’t even know what you’re asking for right now, sweetheart.”

st. My arms were trapped by my sides, but I could still touch his hips with my fingers into his hard body and lifted my chin in a defiant way. “If you’re mistaken, I asked for this whole thing. Me. I’m a big girl. I can handle it.”

Before I could utter another sound, I found myself pressed against his chest and cheek squished against it. Remy ground out his words into my ear while he slapped my inner thighs to make me spread them against the wall, as “You’re not ready for me, *little girl*.”

body was I opened my mouth to argue with him when he pushed three fingers inside me. I went up on my tiptoes and scrambled to find my balance. Remy immediately began fucking me hard and fast with his fingers.

out his name, unsure if I needed a break already or if I never wanted

way the stop. It was too much, too fast, but I could already feel another orgasm rushing forward.

I didn't "Put your feet flat on the fucking floor, M." He nipped my shoulder, his fingers rubbed his thumb over my ass. "Now."

I sucked in big gasping breaths and tried to do as he said. I felt a wild desire to please him and show him I wasn't some little girl. I could handle it. Every time I managed to get my feet flat on the floor, he curled his fingers into my ass and I went back on my tiptoes. "Please, Remy!" He pulled his fingers completely free and let me sag against the wall within the shower.

Confused and upset at him, I opened my mouth to argue, but one look at his powerful hand sent me scrambling for my clothing. I'd go shower, I guessed. "In my bathroom, sweetheart." He caught my arm and nodded toward the closed door. "Hurry."

you're

s. I dug

I'm not

you."

the wall,

next to

is open.

ers deep

ance as

I cried

him to

stop. It was too much, too fast, but I could already feel another massive orgasm rushing forward.

“Put your feet flat on the fucking floor, M.” He nipped my shoulder and rubbed his thumb over my ass. “Now.”

I sucked in big gasping breaths and tried to do as he said. I felt a wild need to please him and show him I wasn't some little girl. I could handle him. Every time I managed to get my feet flat on the floor, he curled his fingers or pressed into my ass and I went back on my tiptoes. “Please, Remy!”

He pulled his fingers completely free and let me sag against the wall. “Get in the shower.”

Confused and upset at him, I opened my mouth to argue, but one look from him sent me scrambling for my clothing. I'd go shower, I guessed.

“In my bathroom, sweetheart.” He caught my arm and nodded towards a closed door. “Hurry.”

20.

20.

Remington

Looking back at my brothers, both looking about as happy as I seen them, I nodded towards the bathroom. “One of you should Make sure I’m not pushing too far.”

Boone waved me off and Wells chuckled while falling back into r “If I come to watch, it’ll be for the fun of it. If she didn’t like what putting out, she wouldn’t be here for it. We trust you.”

I glared at them. “Useless fuckers.”

“You’ll see. I think she sucked my soul out of my dick. I’m not s ever move again.” Boone sighed happily. “This was a great fucking pl

I looked towards the bathroom and heard the shower start. Truth didn’t trust myself. I felt out of control. I wanted to do things to M that I had no business doing to someone not in the lifestyle. I had no put my shit on her, but when she looked up at me with that bratty look face, her bare body against mine, I just wanted to bend her over and her ass red before forcing a plug into her and fucking her harder tha ever been fucked. I wanted to treat her like my submissive and have he across the floor to me just so she could choke on my dick.

That shit wasn’t okay to just thrust on someone. I needed to calm t down.

Memphis’s face poked out of the bathroom, smeared makeup and hair making her the picture of the female orgasm. She raised an eye me. “Am I showering alone?”

Boone and Wells’ laughter did nothing to help me. I was moving l could help it. I drank in the helpless *yelp* Memphis let out as she tried

away from me, but I was already on her, grabbing her and lifting her on my shoulder. Slapping her ass, I growled at the warmth coming from her. I'd never had a handprint I left and at the sound she made.

watch. Putting her down inside the walk-in shower on the bench, I stood over her getting soaked by the hot spray of water. I leaned forward and braced my hands on either side of her head on the wall behind her. "On your knees, Memphis. You're kneeling in front of me. She went down faster than some seasoned subs. Kneeling in front of me, she stared up at me, waiting. Normally, I'd have a sub keep her eyes on the ground, but I liked how Memphis looked at me. Even if I didn't trust my gut, I'm sure I'll do it."

an." "Tap my leg if it's too much. Say stop at any time. I'll snap my cuffs if you're not fully offering. Do you understand?" Memphis Her gaze softened and she leaned forward to rub her cheek over my hand. "I understand."

on her "Take my dick as far as you can. I want to hear you struggle." My slap spank tightened as I waited for her to punch me and leave. Instead, she grabbed the base of my cock and opened her pretty little mouth. "No hands, sweetheart." She put her hands under her thighs and looked up at me once more. "I'm stretching forward and taking me into her mouth. She sucked on just the tip for a moment, moaned, and then leaned forward even farther. I watched as the inches disappear and felt her tongue stroke the underside of my length. I bumped into the back of her throat and she gagged.

brow at "That's it, M. Suck my dick like a good girl. I want it messy. I want to know how much this dick fights your little throat." I stroked her hair out of her face and then locked my hands behind my back, determined not to rush her. Memphis went deep again and gagged before moving back all the way. She peering up at me with those wide eyes. "Can you help?"

ver my I knew I had to look feral as I tightened my hands together. “I don’t
the red to push you.”

She rolled her eyes. “Which is it, Remy? Do you want to make me
ver her, or do you want to coddle me to boredom?”

ced my I gripped her chin and pulled her to her feet. Pushing her back into t
s.” tile behind her, I invaded her space and braced myself on either side
of me, head. “It’s not smart to poke a beast, M.”

on the She licked her lips and searched my face before reaching out and
me, sheme in the chest. Her lips curled up in a sexy smile. “Poke.”

I pushed her back to her knees and trapped her head between the
lick off wall and my body. Holding her gaze, I guided my dick back into her
” and moved my hips forward until she gagged. Then, I pushed a little
y thigh. Pleasure stroked up and down my spine as I watched her battle her ov
to fight the thing trying to block her airway. When I pulled out, she su
tomacha deep breath and held her mouth open, tongue out.

bed the “How many dicks have been here before tonight, Memphis?” I thru
heart.” and ground my teeth together when her eyes watered and she pra
before gurgled around my width in her throat. I fucked her mouth then, push
he head farther than I’d meant to. Her wet mouth suctioned around me and he
d a few swallowed every time my tip touched it, milking me. Her head bum
i before wall behind it, her gags grew loud enough that they drew Boone and
from the bedroom. Still, when I pulled out, she moaned and tried to t
t to see back in.

er face She had a mixture of spit and my precum on her chin and her hai
. mess, but I’d never seen anyone sexier. She wiped her chin and gaze
way and me with need clear in her big green eyes. “One. One before tonight.”

I smiled and reached down to grab her and pull her to her feet. Ins

It wasn't wanting to stop there, I lifted her higher and pinned her to the shower wall with my dick pressed against her dripping core. "Good. Less fucks for me and more chokes down and kill. This mouth was made for my dick, sweetheart. Now let me see what other parts of you were."

She cold Memphis wrapped her arms around my neck and locked her thighs around my waist. "Why wouldn't you assume that your dick was made for my mouth?"

I poked her hips and shifted until our bodies aligned and then I stared into her eyes as I thrust deep. I loved watching the way her eyes fluttered, she tried to stay contrary. "Do you want to talk or do you want to fuck?" She dropped her head backwards and thumped it against the wall deeper. Her pussy squeezed me like a fist and she wasn't even trying to work me over her own muscles. She was just that tight. Her nails bit into my scalp as she locked her lips around me. "Remy, please."

I rolled my hips and gripped her ass hard while watching her react to every move. She was so responsive. I pulled out until just my tip was in her mouth and then I slammed deep, ripping a scream from her. Closing my mouth over hers, I swallowed her noises of pleasure as I fucked her hard for a few minutes. When I felt her walls start pulsing around me, I pulled out and pushed her back to her knees. Stroking my length deep into her mouth, I let her taste both of us together...it drove me insane.

She glared up at me, even as she hungrily sucked my dick. When I lifted her up and bent her over the shower bench, at an angle she could see that there was no audience, she let me know she was annoyed. "I was so close, why'd you stop?"

I thrust deep and growled. "You've been a brat. Brats don't just stop whenever they want to. They ask to come and maybe they're allowed to

with my Memphis's body flushed and I knew she was processing the word to huntsaying and the fact that my brothers were hearing them. She braced her back against the bench and pushed back against me, bouncing her full ass against me.

“I can't stop it.”

I pulled out again and spanked her ass, loving the way my hand glowed red against her creamy skin. Holding her bent over like she was a starfish, I pushed two fingers deep into her and then teased them over her ass. Straddling her, I ran one hand up her back and gripped her hips. Pulling her to a standing position, I let her hold my dick between her legs as I pushed my finger into her ass. “I can.”

She tried to reach between her legs to finish herself, but Boone pulled her into the shower and grabbed her hands. She hissed at him and started moaning against us both. “Please!”

I rocked back and then thrust deep into her again. With my fingers in her ass, she felt even tighter and I could tell by the moaning and whimpers inside that she felt it, too. I looked at my brothers and used them to further the slow torture of Memphis. “Her nipples need attention.”

I drove my hips into her hard and steady while I stroked the inside of her ass. Boone and Wells both joined in and sucked her nipples into their mouths, letting Memphis's gasps and screams reach a new level. I dragged her head back and twisted it so she was looking up at me. Kissing her hard, I stroked her mouth in the same way I fucked her pussy. I could feel her walls fluttering that she knew she was too close to keep teasing.

Letting go of her hair, I reached down between her thighs and slapped her clit once. Her responding howl had my balls tightening. “Do not come without permission, M.”

She struggled between us. “Please! Please, let me come! Oh, God,

s I wasto come!”

r hands I slapped her clit again and growled into her ear. “Come f
nst me.sweetheart. Come now.”

She went off like a rocket, screaming my name and bucking so ha
ndprintshe nearly forced my dick out of her tight and pulsing core. I moved
was, I my hands to her hips to hold her steady as I stroked into her harder and
aring atdrawing out her orgasm until my own wouldn’t hold off another secon
er hair. I’d never come inside a woman before, having never wanted to risk
r thighsI had a twisted moment of feeling glad it was Memphis I’d waited for

first jet of come sprayed into her quivering sex. I dropped my mouth
steppedneck and marked her unblemished skin, lost in it all.

ruggled Memphis sagged in my arms. Her breathing was ragged. I heard her
a gasp and felt her walls pulse around me in what felt like another, s
r in herorgasm. Boone and Wells had both stroked themselves to a second fi
ing sheMemphis’s soft stomach. Knowing she’d come again from that m
her mythink she was even more perfect than I’d already grown to believe.

Boone sank on the bench and rested his head against the wall. “E
e of herhell, that was unlike anything I’ve ever experienced.”

nouths. I gently eased out of Memphis and cupped my hand over her s
ad backdesire to hold in my seed almost unconscious. I looked down at the bi
ked herI’d left on her delicate neck, felt the way I wanted *my* come to stay in
utteringlongest, and didn’t like it. That’s not what we were doing. Fuck if

knew what we were doing, honestly.

ped her Just a month earlier, I’d been blissfully disconnected from my life
t comeadulthood, besides my brothers. I’d been a single man, living a gre

Suddenly I found myself back in my childhood home, trying to have

I need

and fucking the same woman as my brothers, while we all thought for me, enjoyed it. I didn't like how out of control life had gotten.

Forcing myself to let go of Memphis, I stepped out of the shower and thatyanked a towel over my body as fast as possible. I mumbled something both ofgoing to work and got out of there. I didn't look back to see if I'd left faster, Memphis. I told myself it didn't matter.

d.

it, and

r as my

n to her

let out

smaller,

nish on

ade me

fucking

sex, the

te mark

her the

I even

before

eat life.

a child,

and fucking the same woman as my brothers, while we all thoroughly enjoyed it. I didn't like how out of control life had gotten.

Forcing myself to let go of Memphis, I stepped out of the shower and yanked a towel over my body as fast as possible. I mumbled something about going to work and got out of there. I didn't look back to see if I'd upset Memphis. I told myself it didn't matter.

21.

Memphis

After Remy left the bathroom, the energy shifted. It was I forgotten my place with all of his *sweetheart* talk. His de reminded us all that I was an employee and nothing else. We were hav to get me pregnant. I'd dried off clumsily and gotten dressed at bre speed. I gave Boone and Wells an excuse about needing to get back guest house to check on something I'd left in a crockpot. I didn't eve if the little house had a crockpot, but I didn't care. That'd been tw earlier.

Sitting in the swing in the backyard, I put my finger in my book to h place and leaned into the thick rope. The flowers surrounding me m feel like a fairy, but my emotions were quick to bring me back to E was silly of me to feel upset about not being sought out again a afternoon we'd spent together. I wasn't their girlfriend. I'd neve anything like that, though, and all the strong, sexy emotions I'd fel moment were gone. All that was left was a lot of self-doubt and qu about what was wrong with me.

The wind blew and gently rustled all the nature around me. I business feeling sad when my position in life had changed so dra without any real work on my part. I'd spend a few years living in th beautiful space I'd ever seen and then I'd be set for life with the n made. I'd be able to do everything I'd ever wanted to do. If the brothers knew that everything I wanted to do in life centered around g college, I was sure they'd think I was a joke.

Sighing, I ran my finger over the spine of the book in my hand. The money Charlie had stolen from me had been my life savings and it'd be like I'd meant to pay for college. I didn't care that I wouldn't be going until my departure over a decade older than other freshmen. I only cared that I went. My father never understood my dream. He thought college was a waste of money. My father could make us money just fine without a brain in my head. His work took him to the mine. I wanted more, though. I wanted to graduate college and experience walking across a stage. More than even that, I wanted to find a job within 70 days of my new degree as a librarian.

I'd spent so much of my young life in the library back home that I'd inevitably grown close to the librarian who worked there. On the day she showed up dirty and hungry, she wiped my face and snuck me into her back room to give me snacks. She got me a backpack when it became clear that the stacks of books I took home were too heavy for my small arms. She'd done nurturing when no one else had. I'd loved books before her, but after her, it in the keeper of the books had become a coveted position. No matter how old I got, no matter how ugly the world was, my view of librarians never changed. They held a superhero status in my mind. I wanted to be like her. I had no person to other little kids.

So, really, I had no reason to be sad about the Hawke brothers ignoring me after our sex session. I was on the road to becoming everything I wanted to be in life. I just had to spend a few years having kids and living like the Hawkes first.

Still, my feelings were on my sleeve, as they'd always been. The hurt. I'd had to stop myself from walking up to the main house sometimes, just to ask them if I'd done something wrong. I was terrified that my behavior had shown them my true roots. Did Ivy League women ask to

ds. The three brothers at the same time? It felt like a stereotype put on trashy v
all been and I'd forever felt trashy, being the poor kid from the trailer park v
I I was active parents. Did the men know that I wasn't a proper lady with pea
Charlie family wealth? Were they figuring out how to get rid of me, ev
y when planned my future?

rds, not I was driving myself insane and being so alone wasn't good for me
erience was worried. Unfortunately, I'd read so many novels in my life that
with my million ways any given situation could crash and burn. My imaginat
been nurtured into a giant, muscled beast. It could leap to conclus
hat I'd single bounds with the best of them.

s that I I heard movement in the house and jumped up. I'd gotten used
r office coming in and out and looked forward to her visits. Funny how qu
hat the person's privacy could expand to include others. When I rushed thro
'd been back door of the house, I startled Bea, who'd been bent over with her
her, the the fridge.

v much She jumped up and spun around to face me with her hand clutch
ans had chest. "Good grief! You just about gave me a heart attack! You can't
be that up on a woman like that. Especially not when I've been working in th
house all morning. That place wrecks my sanity. I swear it's haunted."

ring me I grabbed the cloth she used to wipe my counters and started doi
nted to that. "You think it's haunted? Really?"

a queen "Memphis, how many times do I have to tell you? I clean, you don't
tried to grab the cloth from me, but gave up when I made it clear I
y were letting her have it.

multiple "How many times do I have to tell you that I'm not just going to
that my and watch you clean up my mess? That's weird." I shuddered
o screw awkward. I can't even imagine."

women, She shook her head, but I could see her fighting a laugh. “I don’t have anything to make of you. I can assure you that you’re not like any of the other girls and women I’ve ever seen around the brothers. *They* would not mind when I come in as I have to clean up after them. They’re much messier than you, too.”

I frowned at the thought of the other women and wondered if that was what was happening. Did I have a right to care? Probably not. Definitely not. I had a hard time not helping myself. “Do they still have women coming around?”

Bea cocked her head to the side at me and wagged her finger. “Is someone being jealous?”

I scoffed. “No. Of course, not. Why would I be? I’m just the surrogate mother for Bea.”

“Uh huh.” She went back to stocking the fridge. “The answer is no. I haven’t seen any traces of another woman being in the house. Just you and me.”

My face burned with shame and I made myself busy with the counter in a few minutes. When the silence had gone on for long enough, I cleared my throat. “So, you think the main house is haunted?”

“Nice change of subject. Watch this, though.” She smirked at me and then sneakily pushed her dark hair out of her face. “I really do think the house is haunted. The main house always feels like something is watching me while I’m working there.”

A couple of days ago, I kept hearing this moaning coming from upstairs. It was just loud and it lasted a long time. There was even some screaming. It couldn’t have been anything but a ghost. *Right?*”

“I scrubbed at the counters harder, fear of being judged strong enough to make me panic. “Um, yeah. A ghost...”

She placed her hand over mine and laughed. “Relax, Memphis. I’m just teasing you.”

“And...” Meeting her gentle gaze, I swallowed. “You’re not judging me?”

Bea threw her head back and laughed. When she looked back at me,

t knoweyes were bright. “Hell no. I’m jealous. I’d let you clean this entire
ie otherwhile *I* sat around watching if you agreed to give me some details.”

atching I groaned at the sensation of my entire body blushing. Rubbing my

I looked at her through my fingers. “I don’t think I’m mature enough
vas stillabout it. Look at how hard I’m blushing. I’m such a dork.”

Still, I She rolled her eyes and waved a cucumber at me. “Speak thro
blush, honey, because momma hasn’t gotten laid in months and I need
omeonevicariously through you.”

ite.”

s no. I

.”

ters for

red my

ne and

nted. It

e and a

. It was

ouldn’t

ough to

’m just

me, her

eyes were bright. “Hell no. I’m jealous. I’d let you clean this entire place while *I* sat around watching if you agreed to give me some details.”

I groaned at the sensation of my entire body blushing. Rubbing my cheeks, I looked at her through my fingers. “I don’t think I’m mature enough to talk about it. Look at how hard I’m blushing. I’m such a dork.”

She rolled her eyes and waved a cucumber at me. “Speak through the blush, honey, because momma hasn’t gotten laid in months and I need to live vicariously through you.”

22.

22.

Boone

I checked my watch and shook my head. I opened my mouth to comment about Memphis running late again when she came running up to me from the guest house. Her hair was in a cute bun on top of her head with plenty of pieces already escaping and flying around her face as she ran. She was dressed in the same sundress she'd worn the day of the interview, confirming what Remy had thought about her clothing situation. We thought we needed to rectify the situation and buy her more, seeing that the sundress made me think she had just what she needed and I didn't want to change a thing.

When Memphis got closer, I saw her eyes were wider than ever, they had darkened with makeup that made them seem impossibly long. Her cheeks were flushed and she looked like she'd gotten a little sun. Her smile when she reached our side was forced. "I'm sorry for keeping you waiting. I wasn't sure what to wear and I only brought a few things with me, so I had to wear them all on a dozen times. I should have my things delivered, but—"

Remy opened the car door and grunted. "We're taking care of that."

She bent forward and climbed into the car without question. The back of her dress rose up enough to flash her delicious ass at us. The pattern on her panties seemed too innocent for the vixen we knew she could be. They were covered too much.

After she was settled in the car with her seatbelt on, she crossed her legs and squeezed her hands in her lap. It was the first time we'd seen her nervous since we'd fucked her and she was clearly nervous. "What are we taking care

I sat next to Remy across from her and took my time taking her in. Remy held her attention. Just seeing her was enough to get the complaint pumping to my dick. I fought to control my desires, but it wasn't easy. She path "You didn't bring much. You need clothes and other things, I'm mad with Remy didn't look up from his phone. "You can hardly be expected to own. She the few dresses you brought for the next five years."

interview, "I'm going to have my parents' housekeeper send me some of my while he They're not exactly happy with me, though, so it may take some time he little frowned and shook her head. "I'm fine, honestly. There's a washer and it her to in the guesthouse. I can do my laundry just fine. Haven't you ever had clothing waste?"

her lashes I bit back a grin. "You don't want new clothes?"

her cheeks She shook her head again, making her bun wobble. "Not really. I'm as she with what I have. I'll need...maternity clothes...but that's later. Much wasn't Remy put his phone down and tapped his fingers on the back of it. "I'd to try a debate. You need more than what you brought. There's a yoga instructor coming to start doing prenatal yoga with you. Will you do crowning whatever the fuck they do in your pretty little sundress?"

back of Despite his rough tone, Memphis smiled a real smile for the first time le pink day. "You think my sundress is pretty?"

they also He picked his phone back up and ignored her. I knew him well enough know that she'd gotten under his skin and he was doing his best to s her legs out. Too bad for him, I wasn't sure there was a way to give Memphis t er since shoulder, not with her accent and her genuine sweetness.

he of?" "It is pretty, Memphis. You need more, though." I ran my eyes o body, remembering all the places I'd touched. My stomach tightened dick was a steel rod. "Most women would be happy."

n while Her eyes flashed and a touch of her fire slipped free. “I’m not
: bloodwomen.”

“No, you are not.” I nearly laughed at the way she pouted when I
i sure.”with her. “We took time out of our schedule to go with you.
o live in something we’d normally push off on one of our staff.”

“So, it’s something you do a lot? Treating the women around
things.shopping sprees?” Memphis crossed her arms and looked out the v
e.” Shebeside her. “Then I really don’t need it.”

d dryer Remy growled and tossed his phone down next to him. “You’re
eard ofbrat. We pushed off important work tasks to be here with you.
would’ve come if he could. Do you think you could just say thank you
us do this very simple thing for you?”

m okay Red cheeks and downturned lips, Memphis uncrossed her arm
later.” gripped her knees. “I’m sorry. You’re right. Thank you for thinking
It’s notfor me. It’s not something I would’ve thought to do for myself.”

structor “Good girl.” Remy’s voice had lost the annoyed edge and he even
; kid ora small smile.

Memphis shuddered and then stared down at her hands. Her react
me thatRemy’s words made me think she’d be more than interested in explo
sexual needs, if he’d allow it. The thought of seeing her on her
ough toblindfolded and bound while Remy played with her made me shift in r
hut herI’d never given a shit enough to even think about Remy’s darker
he coldbefore, but with Memphis, I wanted to watch and play along.

“Was Wells painting?” She looked between the two of us and judg
ver hersilence as what it was, an omission. “What is it? Is he okay?”

and my I felt warmth at the concern in her voice for our brother. It was wha
me speak when normally, I never would’ve said a word about Wel

It most doesn't care about going out all that much. Especially to stores and places."

agreed She sat forward. "Is he agoraphobic?"
This is Remy tensed beside me. "And if he is?"

"If he is, it's a really terrible thing to go through. My little you tostruggled with it for several years." Her face darkened and she looked window "He did seem different at the interview."

"Struggled, being past tense? How did he manage to get through being awatched as her eyes pinched, like she was in pain, and my stomach dropped. Wells Memphis busied her hands with the hem of her dress and blew out and letbreath that felt heavy with a lot of ache. "He found drugs. If he was enough, nothing bothered him. Each come down was a little worse, ns andand now...he's in rehab."

of this I wanted to pull her into my lap and comfort her, an alien emotion but I could tell by the way she straightened her shoulders and clearedemotion from her face that she didn't want to be comforted in that manner.

"Wells gets by," I said. "He's okay. If there's something he doesn't tions todo, though, he'll pass."

ring his "This isn't something he'd appreciate us talking about." Remy ran his knees,through his hair and rolled his neck back and forth. "Let's just lean ny seat.that."

games "That's fine with me. You should know that it doesn't change the see Wells, though." Memphis looked back out the window and sminged ourcrowning kid really a yoga pose? Second question. Can I see you do it?

I laughed at Remy's shocked expression. He hadn't been prepared at madewit, I could tell. I loved watching him lose his footing and it happens. "Herarely that when it did, I felt like a kid on Christmas morning.

smaller Remy grunted. "Cute."

Memphis relaxed into her seat and then pushed the button to
partition down. Twisting around to face Jake, she spoke to the man
was her oldest friend. "Hi, Jake! I'm sorry I didn't say hello before, but
brotherdistracted by being told I'm being cast as the newest Pretty Woman.
I away.shopping by these rich guys, I just hope no one snaps a jewelry box
my face."

it?" I Jake's shoulders shook as he laughed. "I don't think anyone will
pped. you as a prostitute, Memphis. You're just too sweet and innocent."

a shaky Remy's snort wasn't unnoticed by Memphis, but it was i
as highThankfully. The last thing I needed was to find out if the stereotyp
though,southern women being sneakily tough was true.

for me,

red the

moment.

have to

his hand

ve it at

way I

led. "Is

?"

for her

ened so

Remy grunted. “Cute.”

Memphis relaxed into her seat and then pushed the button to roll the partition down. Twisting around to face Jake, she spoke to the man like he was her oldest friend. “Hi, Jake! I’m sorry I didn’t say hello before, but I was distracted by being told I’m being cast as the newest Pretty Woman. Taken shopping by these rich guys, I just hope no one snaps a jewelry box shut in my face.”

Jake’s shoulders shook as he laughed. “I don’t think anyone will believe you as a prostitute, Memphis. You’re just too sweet and innocent.”

Remy’s snort wasn’t unnoticed by Memphis, but it was ignored. Thankfully. The last thing I needed was to find out if the stereotype about southern women being sneakily tough was true.

23.

Memphis

I walked between Boone and Remy into the first store they chose and I tried to hide my horror at being in such an expensive place. I could tell from the scent in the air alone that I was too poor to be inside. I just had to put on a brave face and play the part that I'd written myself. Remy's hand was solidly planted on my shoulder, keeping me from running like I wanted to. If not for that hand, I would have been sprinting back to Jake in the car.

A stunningly perfect blonde woman appeared and beamed at the three of us with the whitest teeth I'd ever seen. She clasped her hands together in front of her very perky boobs and practically bounced in place. "Mr. Hawke, it's so good to see you again. Thank you for choosing to stop in with us today."

Remy nodded and his fingers flexed over my back. "This is my brother, Dr. Hawke, and this is your client for the afternoon, Ms. King."

The woman turned her megawatt smile on first Boone and then finally on me. "It's so nice to meet you, Ms. King. I'm Amanda and I'll be your stylist today. I've dressed several of Mr. Hawke's friends and I've never let anyone leave without making sure they were dressed for success."

I wanted to narrow my eyes at Remy and maybe even kick him in the shins. He'd brought me to the place where he dressed all of his women? I shrugged his hand off my back and smiled back at Amanda. "I appreciate your help, Amanda."

"I have your sitting area ready for you, Mr. Hawke. If you need anything else, Stacy will be right outside, waiting for instruction." Amanda gently took my hand. "Now, let's get started."

I could hear Boone whispering at Remy as I was led away. “You idiot.”

and tried “Do you have nude undergarments on? Strapless? They’d be better from today.” Amanda dropped her bright smile and let her face slip into sorrow the more natural as she looked me over. “If not, it’ll be okay. We’ll just lay back, assistant pick up whatever size we need.”

could’ve I looked down at my body like I’d never seen it before. “Um. underwear and a white bra. I didn’t know where we were going until three o’clock too late to change into something more appropriate.”

either in Amanda nodded along like my words made sense, so I hoped Hawke, pretending to be wealthy well enough. “We have a few options that with nudity underneath so we’ll try those on first while I send for the underclothes. Come, come. Let’s get you out of this cute dress and another, something much sexier.”

I was too floored by the idea of not wearing anything under my clothes to protest when I was led into a large changing room and helped out by a stylist. When my bra hit the floor and disappeared, I wrapped myself around myself and wondered if wealth made you more comfortable exposed in front of others. Amanda seemed to think stripping me naked the most normal thing in the world. I might’ve giggled while I imagined being the protocol at all clothing stores, even Target or Wal-Mart.

to appreciate Amanda took measurements, getting way too familiar with my body did, and then spent a minute on her phone before approaching me with nothing first costume. Costume, because it was so far out of something anyone would wear, with a neckline down to my belly and tiny black masquerading as fabric.

I stared at myself in the mirror after Amanda stepped away and I

u're anagain. Not only was the dress too small, the beads were stretching o
my full breasts and my nipples had fully poked through the new
rest foropenings.

nothing "Would you like to show the Hawkes?"

have an I full out laughed and shook my head. "No. No, I would not."

Taking the thing off was a job and a half, leaving the perfectly put t
.. PinkAmanda breathing heavily and slightly sweaty. She adjusted her dr
l it wasnodded to herself. "This next dress will work, for sure."

The next dress did not work. It made me look like ten pounds of h
I wasfive pound sack. Each dress after was much the same. Around the tent
requireit stopped being funny. After the fifteenth dress, I wanted to slap so
ie rightNamely Remy. He'd made it very clear that his previous flings were
nd into much smaller than me. He'd brought me to a store that didn't carry my

"I am so sorry. I don't think this is going to happen, Ms. King." A
thing tolooked even more defeated than I felt. She sagged against the wall beh
of myand pulled at her hair.

y arms I pulled my own dress back on and patted her shoulder. "It's not you
e beingAmanda. It's okay."

ted was She shook her head. "I can't face Mr. Hawke. I've dressed do
ied thatwomen for him over the years. I've never failed him before. This is ho

Dozens? My mood soured even farther. "You know what? Let me t
/ as sheof the dresses. I can always gift it to someone later. You can tell Rem
with thejust didn't like any others."

normal "No, no. It's okay." She fanned her face and I hoped with everyth
k beadsdidn't start crying. There was something wrong with me that made me
moment I saw someone else cry.

giggled "Here. I'll take this one. At least it made me laugh." I grabbed the

out overbeaded number and forced a smile. If I ever wanted to put on a real
widerstrip tease, it would come in handy. I did what came naturally to me
I looked at the price, even if I wasn't the one paying. What I saw made me
screech. I could've bought a new used car with that kind of money.
one. I looked at Amanda again. "Is this right?"

together She shrugged. "Yeah. Why?"

ness and "Everything okay?" Boone's calm voice clashed with how I was feeling
he joined us.

am in a Amanda tried to correct her smile into perfection again, but she couldn't
h dress, it. She dabbed at her eyes and hurried out of the room.

meone. Boone's eyebrows furrowed as he looked at me. "What the hell was
so much, about?"

size. I put the dress down, because there was no way I was letting anyone
Amanda that much money on a pity buy. I reached up to straighten my bun and
sweat from my upper lip. I was in fine form. "It seems like Remy brought
to the store he always dresses his *women* at and it seems like he prefers
r fault, women a lot smaller than me. There's not a thing in this store that
me."

zens of Boone's eyes narrowed and his face looked thunderous. "You're
ridiculous." kidding me. You're normal sized, Memphis. How do they not carry
one size?"

y that I Remy appeared behind Boone and looked me over. "Why aren't
wearing something new?"

ing she I swallowed a lump in my throat and counted on him moving as I
cry towards him. Thankfully, he did, and I marched past him and out of the
store.

For some reason, the moment I saw Jake standing outside, waiting for me with
a ruined giant smile on his face, my resolve to not cry broke. Big tears filled my
eyes.

illy sad as his face fell and without thinking twice, I walked into his open arms and let him hug me. He reminded me of Knox in that moment and I missed my brother more than anything.

A nice He hugged me there on the sidewalk for a while, until I felt like I could pull myself together. His hands gripped my shoulders when I pulled up. “Do you need me to kick someone’s ass?”

elling as I laughed and wiped the last of my tears away. “The clothing industry

couldn’t do

was that

we spend

and I wiped

my eyes

and he

will fit

fucking

try your

isn’t you

walked

to the store.

with a

my eyes

as his face fell and without thinking twice, I walked into his open arms and let him hug me. He reminded me of Knox in that moment and I missed my brother more than anything.

He hugged me there on the sidewalk for a while, until I felt like I could pull myself together. His hands gripped my shoulders when I pulled back. “Do you need me to kick someone’s ass?”

I laughed and wiped the last of my tears away. “The clothing industry?”

29.

24.

Memphis

Remy was standing at the back of the car with the door open, gl Jake when I looked around for them. Boone was on the phone feet away, casting dark looks all around, like he wanted to punch th patted Jake's chest and thanked him before moving towards Remy inside the car.

He caught my arm before I could step inside and stopped me betw body and the door. His hand was hot against my skin and his fir brushed the side of my chest as he stared down at me. "I made a n Bringing you here wasn't a conscious decision. It's the only place I' gone to and I didn't think about it."

I nodded and tried to get into the car, but he stopped me again. Sig looked up at him and met his gaze. "I think I just want to go home."

His fingers tightened ever so slightly as his face pinched. " Memphis, there's no reason to leave us. I fucked up, but I can guar won't happen again. Seeing your face right now will make sure of that

My hand moved to rest over my stomach at the thought of leaving shook my head and shifted closer to his body. "To the guest house, Re

He pulled me the rest of the way into his chest and I breathed in h hungrily. Wrapping his arms around me, he lowered his mouth to my growled. "I didn't like seeing him hold you. I've known Jake for fore I want to fire him right now. I'm right here if you need comfort, swe I'm right here for whatever you need. Do you understand me?"

I was torn between melting into a puddle of desire at his feet and him to take a flying leap. I could feel his heart racing against my

though, and I lost all desire to correct his behavior. I pressed a light
his chest, hoping he wouldn't feel it, and looked up at him. "Are you
aring at about that?"

e a few "I have five stores in walking distance that aren't sizeist assholes. L
hings. I people." Boone tugged me away from his brother and slung his arm o
r to get shoulders. "Remember me as the brother who didn't take you to th
where he dresses his playthings."

een his "Where do you dress your playthings?" I smiled at Jake as we wal
igertips "We won't keep you waiting too long, Jake."

nistake. "Jake." Remy's voice was angry as he stopped next to Jake, but I c
ve ever hear what he said because Boone tugged me farther down the street.

"I don't dress anyone but myself. And that's hard enough. Why
ghing, I think I picked a career with an outfit?" He led me into another high-er
and it was almost an exact repeat of the earlier debacle with Amanda,
'Home? woman didn't know the brothers or how they liked their women t
antee it Thank God.

." "We'd like to be a part of the experience." Remy surprised me as he
them. I us. "I want to see each outfit as it's put on and styled."

my." I turned to him in shock. "What? Remy, no. That's ridiculous."

is scent Nina, my new stylist, deferred to Remy. "I can move some things ar
ear and that's what you want, sir."

ver and He nodded and sent her away before looking down at me. "I
etheart. watched last time, we would've known immediately and not had you
on clothes that didn't fit for an hour. That was cruel."

telling My stomach fluttered. "If you'd watched last time, you would've th
cheek, was already pregnant and not doing well."

Remy's eyes narrowed, but it was Boone who wrapped his arm aro

kiss to waist and spoke in a low, dangerous voice against my ear. "Don't blame your surebody for what those clothes lacked. Remember, Memphis, we've seen you naked and spread out under us like a goddamn buffet. There's nothing else to go with this body."

Over my head I forgot how to speak as his words washed over me. I knew I was being placed, but there was nothing I could do about that.

Nina rejoined us before I could respond. "Everything's ready." I was led by Nina to another large dressing room and stood in front of the mirror while Boone and Remy sat in two high-back chairs facing me. Once I couldn't wait to be undressed like it was the most normal thing in the world. Naked and exposed, I looked everywhere but at them. I didn't want to know what you were thinking.

Nina and another woman came at me with clothes then, dressing me but this undressing me faster than I could even decide if I liked something. I could only look when Remy stood up and told them to leave us alone that they stopped. Of course, the women did as he said.

I finally got the chance to inspect the dress I wore and felt a sense of pride as I took in the way the soft material hugged my curves and highlighted the best parts of my body. The green silk matched my eyes perfectly and I felt like a princess in the floor-length gown.

Remy pressed into me from behind and stroked his hand over my stomach. "You're absolutely gorgeous, sweetheart."

I leaned into his chest and smiled at his reflection in the mirror. "I like this one. A lot."

"It's yours." His hand moved up to my breast and he slipped under the fabric and found my unprotected nipple eager and ready for his touch. "Tell me what you think about my

ne yourthat most people don't get pregnant after one time. We're not being fair
en youprocess by keeping our distance."

; wrong Boone moved to stand in front of me and knelt there. "We'll go home
this so Wells doesn't murder us, but I need to make you come, Memphis
s brightlyour leg on my shoulder."

Remy gripped the bottom of the dress and lifted it over my thigh
him eat your sweet pussy, M."

e room Lost to desire, I lifted my leg and rested it over Boone's shoulder,
again, Iso I wouldn't crush him. He had other ideas, though. He grabbed my
ed andjerked me into his face. My weight settled mostly on my thigh, on him
at theyhe cared, he didn't show it. He buried his face in my core and didn't c
for air until I'd come twice.

ng and My body was so relaxed and loose that I wasn't sure how I'd
It wasstroked my hands over Boone's scalp and moaned as he pressed
tornadomouthed kisses to my thighs before gently easing my leg back down
floor. I sagged against Remy and tried to remember which way was
of pridewhich way was down.

nted the "Now that everyone in the shop knows what you sound like wh
id I feltcome, I think it's time for us to go home and try again at the pre
thing." Remy pressed his hips into my ass and rocked his erection in
omach."We should try a lot."

Boone stood up and wiped his wet face on the back of his arm. He
"Thanklike a hungry wolf while capturing my face in his hands and taking my
in a hard kiss. Tasting myself on his lips, I stroked my tongue over th
the silkfelt him shudder.

ney say "We've got to get you home or Wells is going to be left out." Boone
me once more and then helped yank the perfect dress off of me.

ir to the Remy went to settle the bill while I pulled on my own dress and underclothes. Moving on unsteady legs with Boone holding my arm, I came to the front of the store just as Nina read a number off to Remy that matched his. Putstumble. Jerking a shocked look up at Boone, I shook my head.

“That can’t be right. That’s a mortgage. No, that’s too much. Tell me.” “Let Boone.” I gripped his shirt and tugged his face lower. “I don’t need that.”

He kissed me again and cupped the back of my head. “You act like you’ve never gone on a shopping spree before. That’s not a big deal, Melissa. Knowing my brother, he’ll have even more clothes ordered in for you, but if price is a drop in the bucket.”

come up I turned to look at Remy as he slid his black card back into his wallet and signed something. My stomach sank. “It’s too much.”

walk. I Remy glanced at me and frowned. “What’s wrong?”

I open- “She’s freaking out over the cost.” Boone grunted. “Maybe stop at the cheaper in Georgia.”

up and I knew by Remy’s stare that he was questioning me and I knew I wasn’t acting like a wealthy woman from family money. I was acting like a poor girl. I forced myself to breathe normally and shrugged. “It’s just a lot of maternity clothes that I won’t fit into soon.”

nto me. “I can afford it.” Remy turned away from me again and I could hear him telling Nina where to have the packages delivered.

grinned I felt gross as I walked out on the street and saw a man sitting in a wheelchair, catching his breath. He wore tattered clothing and looked like he’d been through hell. His chair was weighed down with multiple bags and I knew they were his only possessions just with one look.

he kissed I didn’t have my purse with me, so I took a deep breath and looked at Remy. “Do you have any cash on you?”

ss and He frowned but reached into his jacket pocket to retrieve his wallet. I got to “Some. Why?”

ade me “You can take this out of what I make.” I took his wallet and pulled out several bills before pushing it back into his chest and moving around him, the man in the chair. “Sir?”

it. I...” The man was much younger than I’d thought at first, and when you’ve closer, I could smell that he was as dirty as he looked. He reminded me of my youngest brother and I knew that Jackson could easily be in his shoes.

u. That He looked up at me and blinked a few times. “I’m moving. Sorry.”

I smiled and gently rested my hand on his, pushing the money into his palm. “You’re not in my way. How are you doing today? This hill is a little intense. How about I help you up it? What do you say? Please don’t be like those guys too proud to let a woman help them. I’ll push you back down the hill the other way, I swear.”

A beat passed before he smiled up at me and nodded. His hand closed around the money that had moved into his lap and I could see him holding it protectively. “Thank you.”

ney for I got behind his chair and gripped the handles. “Sure. What’s your name by the way? I’m Memphis. I know, I know. It’s...different. I promise I’ll never hear him heard anything you can say about it, though, so don’t waste your breath on my name?”

; in his “Tanner.”

d dirty. I struggled up the hill and was about to take a break when Remmy’s hands replaced mine on the handles. Smiling up at him, I pressed my forehead

his chest and slipped out from under him so I could walk next to him. I looked up at “Well, Tanner, it’s nice to meet you. You’re a talker, aren’t you?”

I watched as Tanner shifted to see who was pushing him and started

t again. panic at the sight of Remy's large body. He started to struggle and I
he'd hurt himself.

lled out Leaning down, I gently touched his shoulder and gave him a rea
him to smile. "It's okay, Tanner. That's just my friend, Remy. Turns out I'r
and he stepped in to help get you up this hill. You're safe."

n I got After focusing on me for a long moment, Tanner swallowed and r
e of my "Don't like surprises."

"Then you're not going to like her, friend. She's full of them." I
voice was quieter than usual and I could tell he was making himself
into his for Tanner's comfort.

s pretty We got to the top of the hill and I bent down in front of Tanner. "I
one of need anything else?"

own the The young man suddenly lurched forward and wrapped his arms
me, hugging me tight. His voice was thick with emotion as he spoke.
utching you."

ctively.

r name,

ise I've

h. Your

y's big

hand to

Tanner.

arted to

panic at the sight of Remy's large body. He started to struggle and I worried he'd hurt himself.

Leaning down, I gently touched his shoulder and gave him a reassuring smile. "It's okay, Tanner. That's just my friend, Remy. Turns out I'm weak and he stepped in to help get you up this hill. You're safe."

After focusing on me for a long moment, Tanner swallowed and nodded. "Don't like surprises."

"Then you're not going to like her, friend. She's full of them." Remy's voice was quieter than usual and I could tell he was making himself smaller for Tanner's comfort.

We got to the top of the hill and I bent down in front of Tanner. "Do you need anything else?"

The young man suddenly lurched forward and wrapped his arms around me, hugging me tight. His voice was thick with emotion as he spoke. "Thank you."

25.

25.

Remington

If the kid in the wheelchair noticed three large men lunging toward him when he reached for Memphis, he didn't show it. Boone, Jake, and I pulled up short when we noticed he was just hugging her, and she was hugging him back. My heart still thumped painfully when we were in the car heading home. She was sitting across from me in that little white dress that was smeared with whatever dirt the kid had all over him. If she noticed, she didn't seem to care. She had her chin in her hand and was staring out the window as the city passed by.

"Do you know what the money you spent on my clothes could do for Tanner?" Her voice was quiet as she sat up and looked at me. "I think I should send those clothes back. That money could go to so many other things. Better things than dressing me."

I blew out a slow breath, trying to find some sense of calm and composure after thinking she was about to be attacked on the street. It wasn't easy to not send the clothes back.

"Why not? I don't need them. I don't mean to sound ungrateful, Remington. I could wear clothes that cost so much less. The difference could go to people who need it to survive." She looked at Boone, but he was on his phone, focused on something pertaining to his office.

"We donate money every year, Memphis. A lot more than what I just spent on your clothes." I rubbed my temples. "Can we drop this? I'm not sending the clothes back and that's the end of it."

She studied my face as she thought about her next move. I could see wheels turning in her mind and almost feared what would come out

mouth. “Why did you dress dozens of women? Didn’t they have the things?”

Boone swore and hit the intercom to the front of the car. “Jake, sw
d I had by the office.”

he was “Please.” Memphis kept her gaze on me. “Were you their sugar dad
the car, I choked on my inhale and coughed for several minutes as I tried
ess that my lungs. Boone’s laughter just annoyed me even more.

ed, she “Why else would you buy their clothes?” Shrugging, Memphis pi
t of the her nail polish. “I’m not judging. I’ve read books about it. It seems t
for some people.”

do for “I’m not a fucking sugar daddy, Memphis!” I couldn’t believe we
ink you so close to being inside her again and now I was having to deny being
y other daddy. “They needed clothes to wear to the places I went. That’s all.”

“So, you prefer small women?” There was a vulnerability in her vo
control felt like it would gut me.

y. “I’m Jake stopped the car right then and Boone leaned across to
Memphis’s cheek. He winked at her before opening the door. “I’m s
my, but bail, but there’s an emergency. Turns out I’m pretty important here.”

people “There’s that god complex.” She waved goodbye to him and the
phone, quiet as the car started moving again.

I unbuckled my seatbelt and reached over to do the same to hers so
st spent drag her into my lap. She fussed until I kissed her. Her soft lips mo
sending mine and her hands clutched the front of my shirt. “I don’t prefe
women.”

see the She played with the buttons on my shirt and sighed. “I mean, I l
: of her doesn’t matter. I just thought maybe that was why you hadn’t tried to

air own again before now. And if we're going by the numbers, I'd say you do
preference."

ing me I rocked my hips and let her feel the erection I was sporting.
preference is your perfect ass and full tits. It's your angel face and
dy?" attitude that makes me want to bend you over and spank you. I w
to clear been dragging you into my bed nightly, but I've been busy at work
taken more time off in the past week than in the past decade and I've
cked at playing catch up."

o work She slowly worked the buttons on my suit vest free and pulled it
"How are you going to handle a kid? They're going to need more than
'd been afternoons a week."

a sugar I swallowed back my canned response about nannies and all that
figure it out. Maybe I need to delegate more."

ice that Her fingers slipped between my shirt collar and neck as she
another button open. "Haven't you thought about it? You three want
stroke much, but have you planned for it?"

sorry to My hands gripped her hips tight. "We'll figure it out."

She raised her eyebrows, like she didn't believe me, but she drop
n grew She turned her full attention on undoing the rest of my buttons and
raking her fingers down my chest. "You want to spank me?"

I could I nodded and bit my lip as she got rid of my belt and opened my
lded to Letting her take control wasn't easy, but I wanted to give her what
r small wanted after the fuck up I'd made with the store. "Yes."

"Why?" She reached into my pants and gripped my dick. The angle
know it right so she could only hold me, but that was nearly enough to make me
see me roll back in my head.

"I like the way your skin looks with my handprint on it. Your ass

have asuch a beautiful shade of pink. I like...control. I want to push you until
think you might hate me and then make you come so hard you beg
g. “Mynever leave you.” I leaned my head back against the seat and watch
d sassy“When you’re a brat, I think about spanking you until you apologize
ould’ve like the good girl I know you are.”

rk. I’ve Her breath came faster and her grip on my dick was almost painf
ve been shifted back on my legs until she could free me from my pants com
Then, she lifted herself until her panties brushed the tip of my shaft. W
t open hands on my shoulders, holding herself up, she couldn’t get her pantie
n a few the way. She bit her lip hard as she gave me a pleading look.

I hooked my finger into the side of her panties and yanked them ou
at. “I’ll way. Memphis sank on my length in one hard thrust and I saw sta
pussy squeezed me hard enough that I worried about coming early
worked first time since I was a teen.

kids so “Oh, God!” She buried her face in the crook of my neck and whim
the invasion. “Shit. Oh, shit.”

I reached between us to stroke her clit and watched her face as sh
oped it comfortable around my size. “Okay?”

nd then She sucked at my neck and slowly kissed her way up to my mo
forgot how big you are and got excited. I don’t think I’ll walk straight
/ pants next week.”

ver she I pinched her clit and swallowed her cry. “We were supposed to v
all of us to be together. You broke the rules. Do you know what that
wasn’t M.?”

ny eyes She rocked her hips over mine and shook her head. “Tell me.”

I flipped us over so she was pinned beneath me to the bench se
ss turnsthighs stretched wide around my hips and her breath caught at the new

until you pulled out and then thrust back into her harder. “It means I’m going to fuck you like the brat you are. Hands up, Memphis. Grip the door and don’t let go.”

and act She did as I said and stared up at me with her breasts pressed to my chest, nearly coming out of her dress. When I jerked the cups of her dress down, she moaned. She let out a low moan. When I jerked the cups of her dress down to free her breasts, she grunted, but didn’t argue.

pletely. I licked the skin between her breasts and thrust into her again. “You want to know what brats get? Brats get fucked hard to teach them to be good. Brats get kept close by so corrections can be given at any moment. Brats get even keep you under my desk at work, Memphis, so I can bury my dick down your throat when you feel like being bad.”

Her sex pulsed around me and I saw the muscles in her arms strain as she gripped the door hard. I bit her nipple, tugging it until it slipped from my mouth. Her cries were muffled by the sounds of the car engine roaring on the highway.

“You like that idea? You want me to keep you under my desk and use your mouth and throat when I need you? Or maybe you need more than that. Maybe you need me to bend you over my desk and fuck you while I’m in meetings. You’d have to be quiet, little brat. Seen and not heard.” I pushed into her faster and harder, feeling her wetness gathering at my base.

“Don’t worry, though, sweetheart. I may be okay with sharing you with my boss, but I’d rip any other man’s hands off if he tried to touch you.”

She grunted in time with my thrusts and arched her body into me. “Remy!”

I lowered my mouth to hers and sucked her lip before biting it. “Sir.” Memphis went bow-string tight under me and then screamed in my ear as I kissed her. Her walls clamped down on my dick and sucked me in.

“Remy!”

I lowered my mouth to hers and sucked her lip before biting it. “Sir.” Memphis went bow-string tight under me and then screamed in my ear as I kissed her. Her walls clamped down on my dick and sucked me in.

to fuck orgasm out of me like she was practicing magic. I came hard and fast not lether with my come as I did. I watched her come apart and then slowl down, her arms still stretched over her head. She was the pic together, perfection, a natural submissive for me.

and bra Her head lolled to the side and a smile lazily lifted her lips. "Sir... that."

ou want I lifted her into my lap again, never letting my dick slip out of her, e d girls. an inch. I held her tight to my chest and stroked her back. "That's m I might girl."

vn your She shivered and curled into me even tighter. "No one's ever cal that before you."

1 as she I brushed her hair out of her face, but she kept it buried against m ree and "Not even when you were a kid?"

on the She shook her head and I could feel the pain radiating off of her.

"They were idiots then. You're a perfect good girl, sweetheart. M se your girl."

an that.

e I lead

umped

"Don't

rothers,

) mine.

”

nto my

ked my

orgasm out of me like she was practicing magic. I came hard and fast, filling her with my come as I did. I watched her come apart and then slowly come down, her arms still stretched over her head. She was the picture of perfection, a natural submissive for me.

Her head lolled to the side and a smile lazily lifted her lips. “Sir... I liked that.”

I lifted her into my lap again, never letting my dick slip out of her, even by an inch. I held her tight to my chest and stroked her back. “That’s my good girl.”

She shivered and curled into me even tighter. “No one’s ever called me that before you.”

I brushed her hair out of her face, but she kept it buried against my neck. “Not even when you were a kid?”

She shook her head and I could feel the pain radiating off of her.

“They were idiots then. You’re a perfect good girl, sweetheart. My good girl.”

26.

Memphis

That night, I slipped into the main house and found my way to room. I needed to see him after knowing why he didn't come to work. I knocked lightly on the door and waited nervously while he came closer to the door. When he pulled it open, I melted at the sight of his bare chest and bare feet. His tattoos were shining beneath a layer of oil and I imagined licking his chest clean.

"Memphis, hey." He braced his hands on the door frame and smiled at me. "What are you doing here?"

I licked my lips and tried to remember the lines I'd practiced, but they vanished at the sight of his muscles. "Um...I just came to see you."

He chuckled lightly and stepped to the side. "Come on in and see me." Stepping into his space, I was pleasantly surprised at how neat it was in a living space, with a couch and coffee table stacked with different books. I looked around and turned to face him. "I think I missed you too."

He raised his eyebrows. "You think?"

I shrugged a single shoulder and perched on the edge of a couch. "There was a lot going on, but yeah... I just wanted you to know that."

When I went to stand up again, he pushed me back down and sank onto the couch next to me. "Come here, Memphis."

I felt a massive sense of relief as I crawled into his lap and pressed my hands into his chest. "I'm being weird. I know I'm being weird. I just can't stop it."

He tugged my hair out of its bun and worked his hands through it, massaging my scalp as he did. "Tell me about today."

I let my eyes drift closed as his strong fingers worked through my hair. “We went to a clothing store that didn’t sell clothes my size. Wells’ embarrassed and cried on Jake a little. We found another store that dealt with us to my size and Remy spent way too much money on clothes for me. Even though I tried to tell him not to. We were coming back here to...hang out with Boone had an emergency at work.”

“Fuck that store and any other store that excludes you.” Wells leaned back on the couch and stared up at me. “I heard a few more things, though.” I bit the inside of my cheeks and nodded slowly. I was scared he’d say something for some reason. “I had sex with Remy.”

“And let Boone eat you out.” He still just stared at me with an expression I couldn’t decipher.

I nodded again and looked down at my hands. “Does that...does that mean you were?”

He nodded, sending my heart crashing to my feet. “Jealousy is a bitch. You didn’t do anything wrong, though, Memphis. I just want to see you eating me out and fucking me in the car on the way home. I should have been there.”

I moved even closer in his lap and gripped the back of his neck. Pulling my face to his, I kissed him softly and slowly until it grew more heated. When we parted to catch our breath, I stood up and held out my hand. “You’re here now.”

He led me to his bedroom and I saw it was messy, with blank canvases and piles of art supplies. He undressed me next to the bed and dropped me on the floor next to a pile of paints before kicking off his pants and crawling into bed with me. Both naked, we took our time kissing and rubbing against each other. I liked the way his coarse hair tickled me and the feel of his hard body against mine.

my hair against my own. His big hands were rough as they stroked me all over. I was still.

When I crawled lower under the blanket and took his length into my mouth when sucking him deep and working my mouth up and down until his cock tightened in my hair and he pulled me off of him. He pulled me up until I knelt over his face on the pillows, gripping his headboard. I rode backface to a strong orgasm and then worked my way back down until sinking down on his length and riding his dick. Bracing my hands against the bed, I rocked my hips and worked us both higher and higher until I bit into his chest and his fingers bruised my thighs. We came together in a session. Our mouths locked together, still unable to kiss deeply enough or long enough to satisfy the need.

Afterwards, I was stretched out across his chest, listening to his heartbeat and telling him more about the day when I realized he'd fallen asleep and I'd snored lightly, with cute little sighs in between. When his arms were wrapped around me and I could slip out of his embrace without waking him up, I'd slipped out, dressed and scribbled him a quick note, letting him know I'd gone back to my guest house.

It was fast and I found myself wanting to stay in his arms all night long. I didn't know if that was something we were doing. So, I crept through the dark house and made my way back home.

I crawled into my own bed after running through washing my face and brushing my teeth. Curling up under the blankets, I stared at the ceiling and wondered if I was making a mistake. I wasn't the type to not care. I cared and I cared hard. Sleeping with the Hawke brothers, sharing moments with them, it was a dangerous game. I'd forget the reason for moving there eventually and then be crushed when I had to face the facts. I w

r, nevertheir league. They didn't want me with the kids, just the kids. I'd lea
nothing and I had to remember that.

mouth, I was a coward, because by the time the sun came up, I'd decide
; handsneeded to take some space of my own from the men. I sent a messa
the bedBea that I was sick and just needed some time to rest and feel better.

ode hishid in my swing, reading and trying not to think about what I was doin

l I was

on his

ry nails

er with

enough

artbeat,

æp. He

it slack

I did. I

k to the

it, but I

ugh the

ace and

ing and

always

ig little

1 I was

asn't in

their league. They didn't want me with the kids, just the kids. I'd leave with nothing and I had to remember that.

I was a coward, because by the time the sun came up, I'd decided that I needed to take some space of my own from the men. I sent a message with Bea that I was sick and just needed some time to rest and feel better. Then, I hid in my swing, reading and trying not to think about what I was doing.

27.

27.

Memphis

“They’re starting to circle like sharks. You’re going to have to get out eventually.” Bea stood with her hands on her hips in front of me and shook her head. “They’ve asked me everything from if I thought you had the flu to if I thought you’d somehow contracted Havannah Syndrome. I’ve never seen them hover before and I have to say, I don’t like it. They’re needy little boys. I have plenty of those at home. I can’t even find you attractive anymore, Memphis. You’re killing my spank bank material.”

I gaped at her. “Did you really just say that?”

She grinned and shrugged. “What can I say? They’re sexy.”

I closed the book I was reading and stood up from the swing. “I’m not ready. I just need a few more days.”

“It’s been a week!” She threw her hands up. “They’re halfway cornered you’re dying.”

I chewed on my lip, unsure of what to do. I knew it was crazy to think I could avoid them until I felt stronger, because I wasn’t ever going to be the kind of stronger I’d need to be to face them and walk away unscathed. “Okay. I’ll come out and see them. I need to go to the pharmacy for some antibiotics though.”

“Whew. I’m so glad you said that because I already told them you were feeling better and would be coming out today.” Bea smiled sheepishly. “Sorry.”

I felt nerves bubbling to life and made my way inside. “You’re not going to let them in? What if I couldn’t do it?”

“I would’ve dragged you out. You don’t understand, Memphis. I’ve been driving me crazy. Every time I walk out of here, they’re on me. It’s not the most sexy way I’d always imagined, either. It’s terrible.” She followed behind me and even trailed me into the bathroom. “I’m so close to ending you had *Snapped*.”

I stared at my reflection and quickly brushed my teeth. I pulled my hair back from my face with a few clips and met Bea’s gaze in the mirror. “Are they acting like that?”

“Obviously, they like you.” She grunted. “Or they like trying to nail the floor, through the bed. Whichever, they’re being nuts.”

I groaned. “You’re awful, you know that? Stop saying it like that.”
“Well, it sure as hell didn’t sound like they were making sweet, gentle love to you.” She shrugged. “I’m not judging. I’d pay to have my husband convinced me like he hated me.”

I motioned for her to leave the bathroom. “You’re not helping!”
“I’m so helping! What did you need from the pharmacy?” She pulled out the medicine cabinet that I hadn’t bothered searching through. “If you’re cathetered here, you may need an actual doctor.”

My eyes landed on the pregnancy test and I slowly reached out to the top of the package. “It’s been long enough that a test might show, right?”
She grabbed the test and pushed me towards the toilet. “Oh, my God, I think. I never used these things with my kids. I just got a nice surprise another one came. Sit down, sit down!”

I grunted as I stumbled. “Jeez! Can I get some privacy or are you going to watch me pee?”

“I’m freaking watching! Go on, it’s nothing I haven’t seen before.” She ripped open the plastic around the test and handed it to me once I was

They're on the toilet. "Okay, pee!"

It in the I narrowed my eyes at her. "You're kidding, right? I can't just pee blind with you standing here. You're so close!"

Up on "Ugh, I'll back up a little. I can't leave, though. I'm too excited." She bounced on her feet and kept right on staring at me. "Do you feel pregnant? My hair I held the stick between my thighs and sighed. "I don't know. What do you think? "Why feel like? I'm not throwing up in the mornings, or anything like that. I don't know. I feel like it worked. The sex, I mean."

It you to She heard me start peeing and cheered. "Well, we'll find out soon!"

A knock at the front door startled both of us and I dropped the test stick. I sank before wiping and jerking my pants up. I felt caught for some reason. "The love" "Who is it?"

It screw Bea rolled her eyes. "I'll give you three guesses. Go answer it!"

I shook my head, scared to face the men after not seeing them for so long. "I don't think so. I think I'm sick again."

It'd open "Come in!" Bea's voice rang out through the house and I heard the door open a second later.

"Memphis?" Boone's voice rang out. "I've been sent to collect you. I know that's a lie. I fought for the privilege, but you didn't need to know that." Bea shoved me out of the bathroom and I stumbled into Boone's side. "Yes, I stood at the door, not more than a foot inside. I let out a sigh at seeing each of them again. He was so handsome.

"Boone. Hi." I took a step closer and twisted my fingers together. I felt like I was going to be a fool for how I'd been acting, and worse, I felt immature.

"Hey. Are you feeling better?" The look in his eyes said he didn't like my answer. "Shebullshit, but he didn't call me out and I appreciated that.

It seated I took a step closer. "Yes, thank you."

He grinned and crooked his finger at me. "Come here, beautiful."
I rushed into his arms, thankful for his willingness to break the tension. I crashed into his chest harder than I'd meant to and wrapped my arms around his waist. "Hi."

He reached down to cup my ass and lifted me into his arms. "Go to bed, Beatrix. You're terrible at spying."

I heard her laughter before the door shut behind us. Boone held me and walked towards the house.

"You can put me down. I'm too heavy for you to carry me. Also, why are you taking me? I'm in pajamas."

He grunted. "Who says you're too heavy?"

"Me! You're going to hurt yourself." I leaned back to search his face but saw only happiness.

"Like you hurt yourself? No, wait, you were sick." He raised his brows at me. "Sorry, I got mixed up with all of Beatrix's excuses."

I scratched my fingers into his beard and stared at his mouth. I was embarrassed, but I'd been trying my best to protect myself. Not that I was. Okay, admit that, though. "What's important is that I feel better now."

He laughed. "You're right. That's what matters. Moving on from here. Hey, you clearly aren't ready to talk about, there's a surprise waiting for you in his house. That's where we're going. And your pajamas are fine."

"What kind of surprise?" I spotted Pete working in the flower beds on the left side of the walkway and waved. "Hey, Pete!"

Boone growled. "I could plant flowers if I wanted to."

My face jerked back to face his and I frowned as I searched his expression. "Are you jealous of Pete?"

"If I were a jealous man, I'd be jealous that both of my brothers go

time with you before you went MIA. And maybe I'd be jealous
nsion. I attention the gardener gets. But, thankfully, I'm not a jealous man." H
around his mouth. "Now kiss me before I go back and rip Pete's arms off."

I cupped his face and leaned closer. "I spent a lot of time thinkin
odbye, what our alone time would've been like. If that helps."

He kissed me and held me tighter before pulling back and groanin
ne tight surprise is waiting. I hate it right now. Just so you know."

I went back to scratching his beard but froze when I saw what
ere are inside the normally bare dining room. "Oh, no."

ace and

rows at

I was

I could

l things

u at the

; on the

s tense

ot alone

time with you before you went MIA. And maybe I'd be jealous of the attention the gardener gets. But, thankfully, I'm not a jealous man." He lifted his mouth. "Now kiss me before I go back and rip Pete's arms off."

I cupped his face and leaned closer. "I spent a lot of time thinking about what our alone time would've been like. If that helps."

He kissed me and held me tighter before pulling back and groaning. "The surprise is waiting. I hate it right now. Just so you know."

I went back to scratching his beard but froze when I saw what waited inside the normally bare dining room. "Oh, no."

Boone

Four hours later, I was in a bad mood and thinking of drinking happier. I'd been waiting to get close to Memphis for over a week when I finally got a few minutes with her, she was snatched away through hours of beauty and hair to get ready for the gala we were taking to. It'd been Remy's idea. He'd thought we needed to show her that we cared about kids after a conversation they'd had. I didn't give a shit about what they'd talked about. I just knew that I didn't appreciate having to wait to spend any time with her. I didn't know if there'd ever been a time that a woman had held me so captivated, but Memphis had my attention and I didn't feel like it was going anywhere.

I glared at Remy and considered the pros and cons of kicking his legs from under him, just to see him fall. "I'm going to remember this."

He cast an exasperated look at me and sighed. "Jesus, Boone, you relax."

I scoffed. "Are you not going insane? I'm not a patient man."

"I'm not loving the wait, but what the hell do you want me to do?" I glared back at me. "If you say that we should blow off the gala on time, I'm hitting you."

"Blow off the fucking gala." I hoped he would go for a punch. I was feeling antsy and sparring with him might've made me feel better. I would know until I tried it.

Instead, Wells moved to stand between us, not bothering to say anything but just physically blocking us. He stood with his arms crossed over his chest in an all black tux, with only a few of his tattoos showing. He looked

like the blue blood Hawke brother our father would've loved to show another life.

myself Before Remy and I could kill each other, the doors to the dining room opened and Memphis walked out, looking like an absolute vision. She had put the green ball gown I'd eaten her out in. Her hair was slicked back in a bun, exposing the beautiful bone structure of her face and her delicate features. Her curves looked too fucking perfect and the tops of her breasts were a balancing act that made me hard with wondering if they'd spill out at some point. Her smoky makeup made her look mysterious and her bright eyes filled my head with images of her mouth around my cock. She was perfect and the three of us all seemed to be speechless as we stared at her.

"Well, it can't be that bad." Memphis moved to look at herself in a mirror and studied her reflection. The back of the dress was cut low and I cried at the sight of all that exposed skin. "One of you better say something or I'm going back to the guest house and I'm never coming out again."

I stammered and had to stop to clear my throat and start over. "You're fucking stunning, Memphis." "More beautiful than anyone I've ever seen."

Remy moved to stand behind her and trailed his fingers up her bare neck, gripping the back of her neck. "It'll be torture to look at you all night and not touch every inch of you right away."

The makeup they'd applied hid the blush on her face, but I knew it was there. "Okay, tone it down. You don't have to go that far. I need beautiful compliments."

almost Remy's fingers tightened and bent her head back slightly, just so she arched at an unnatural angle. "If a single word of it was a lie, may

off instructed down.”

Her chest rose and fell faster. “Maybe not while you’re holding room though.”

His lips tilted up before he rolled his eyes and let her go. “You’re too tight at being a brat, sweetheart.”

Memphis shuddered and pressed herself against Remy. “Sorry, Sir.”

His growl filled the room and it was only the sound of Jake clearing his throat to gain our attention that saved Memphis from being bent over. I had expected a hard slap to her ass as a punishment, but instead, Remy delivered a dark look that was full of darker promises.

Memphis regained her balance and walked across the room to where the mirror stood, smiling brightly back at her. He took her hand and spun her. “You look beautiful, Memphis.”

“You’re all charmers, aren’t you? Unfortunately for y’all, I was raised in the land of charm. Paired with a little *bless your heart*.” She stretched and kissed his cheek, leaving a burning distaste in my mouth. “But, thank you.”

Wells pulled Memphis away from Jake and wrapped his arm around her shoulders as he led her out. “If you’re giving out kisses, I’ll take one.”

I fell into step next to Jake and cupped his shoulder. “You’re lucky to have someone who likes you so much.”

Jake, having been an employee for so long, was still a friend. He laughed before patting my chest. “I’m not so sure Remy feels the same.”

Remy grunted from behind us. “You’re goddamn right. As I’ve previously suggested, keep your hands to yourself.”

I grinned and shook my head. “Big brother is jealous, huh?”

“Need I remind you of the fit you threw when you found out that you were the odd man out before Memphis got sick?” Pushing me out of the way,

sent one last look at Jake before marching ahead. In his own all black
ng me, dark brooding look, he was the picture of angry.

Jake grunted. "I've never known him to be this contrary over a v
o good Over anything and everything else? Yeah, of course. Never a v
though."

Looking ahead at Memphis, I swallowed down an uncomfortable
ring his Sticking to my go-to agenda for avoiding things I didn't want to talk
ver and forced a grin to my face and chuckled. "Well, you've seen her ass."
nd sent "Seriously, Boone?" Jake shot me a dirty look. Without saying a
else, he hurried ahead to get the car door.

re Jake I felt a sense of shame, but I told myself I had no reason to. Memp
around. hot and sweet, but we were paying her to have our kids. She was a m
an end, a way to secure our inheritance and childhood home. The Haw
aised in weren't capable of more than sexual relationships. In all our years, nor
up and had ever been in a relationship. Why would we start so late in the gam
ou."

As I slid into the car across from Memphis and she smiled warmly
nd her felt my stomach ache with memories from so long ago that the
basically black in white in my mind. Memories of our mom and our
y that I before she'd died. The same anger I always felt when I thought of h
right there with me, like I was still the kid hearing what'd happened
rst. He first time.

way." "You okay?" Memphis studied my face and frowned. "You look sac
already I coughed into my hand and cleared my head of all the old gho
haunting me. Smiling wide, I winked at her. "You could come over an
me up."

ou were She tilted her head and stared for a few seconds more before
way, he smiling back at me. "I'm not showing up at whatever place we're

tux and looking wrinkled and sweaty. This is a car ride for keeping our h
ourselves.”

woman. My smile felt brittle. “Worst car ride ever.”

woman,

feeling.

about, I

nything

his was

leans to

ke men

ie of us

e?

at me, I

y were

family

ier was

for the

l.”

sts still

d cheer

finally

going

looking wrinkled and sweaty. This is a car ride for keeping our hands to ourselves.”

My smile felt brittle. “Worst car ride ever.”

29.

29.

Memphis

Jake pulled up outside an ornate hotel and opened the door for us. Wells, and Boone all stepped out of the car before me and when my turn, I considered playing dead so I didn't have to go. The women fixed my hair and makeup had spoken nonstop about the gala we were to. Everyone who was anyone would be there, apparently. The fancy they'd described terrified me.

Remy leaned down and held his hand out to me. "Are you coming?"

I was supposed to be used to galas. Memphis King, classy woman high society, went to galas and got dressed up all the time. The woman wanted would walk into the ballroom of that hotel and strut around damn peacock. Too bad the real Memphis King was more likely to be at a petting zoo, trying to get close to a peacock.

Still, I had a part to play. I gripped Remy's hand and was str flashing lights as soon as I was on my feet next to him. He gripped my arm and turned his body into mine while Boone stayed close to Wells carpet welcomed us into the hotel and voices rang out around us, directions and calling out questions.

I couldn't understand any individual comment, but then Remy's voice in my ear, speaking calmly to me. "Up the stairs, sweetheart. This normal bullshit. I've got you."

The noise faded completely as soon as we were inside the hotel large glass doors closed behind us. I glanced back at the small gathered people standing on either side of the red carpet, their cameras aimed ready. "Is that really normal for y'all?"

Wells twisted his head back and forth while taking a deep breath, blowing it out slowly. When he looked at me, his gaze was unfocused. "Remy, need a drink."

A wave of dread rolled through me and I moved forward quickly to wrap my arms around his waist. Unsure if they wanted me that close to them in front of their gala friends, I cleared my throat and stepped back to put some distance between us. He immediately dragged me back into his side. I could feel his hands shake as he held me. It broke my heart for him to know he was suffering. It also terrified me. Jackson had turned to substances for help and I'd watched the downward spiral his life went on afterwards.

"It's been worse since Don died. It'll fade soon enough." Boone walked over to Wells and adjusted his bowtie. "Let's get inside and find our table. I'll get you that drink."

Remy and Boone walked in front of us as we made our way through the immaculate hotel. The ceilings looked like carved stone that'd been gilded with upper gold and the marble under my heels was so pretty that I wanted to get down on my hands and knees to study it. Large vases of flowers decorated the flat surface, a soft jazz played throughout, and everyone I saw was dressed like royalty.

Wells kept his arm around my waist as we entered an even larger and more beautifully decorated ballroom. A jazz band played on one side of the room and a long bar ran the length of the other side. Tables lined with lush linens circled a dance floor and even more floral arrangements sat on top of the many tables. The room was lit with a soft glow and it would have been magical if I wasn't going insane with anxiety. I could see the table settings and the impressive line of silverware on each side of the settings. The

ath and multiple glasses in front of each setting and I knew that I was g
ised. “I embarrass myself. I was in over my head.

Remy led us to a table at the very front and center of the room,
to wrap meant for special guests, judging by the placement and the way heads
hem into see who would be gracing it. That was as far as I could look at the
it space around us. I didn’t want to see who I’d be rubbing elbows with. I just
feel histo keep my head down and then get the hell out of there. I missed th
he washhouse already. I missed not feeling scared of saying the wrong thing
elp, too, of people who would know instantly that I was a joke.

“The gala is for a charity we donate to.” Remy held my chair out
atched and trailed his fingers over my bare skin before sitting next to me. “It
e. Then funding for kids who lack the resources kids like us had growing u
charity supports several after school programs, as well as summer can
ugh the sports teams. At no cost to parents or guardians.”

My heart thumped a little harder, but I told myself that the Hawke b
t down were just donors. They just threw their piles of money at the charity
d every was no reason for me to get all soft. “Are resources available for c
dressed who may not have parents or guardians all that involved?”

“An adult has to sign off on participation, for liability reasons.” He
id more at me and I had to stop myself from squirming. “Maybe th
ie room work around, though. I’ll mention it to Megan. She runs the charity v
xurious wife, Sam.”

I crossed my legs, trying to put a stop to the fluttering between ther
’ve felt attentive way Remy listened to me and considered my question. ‘
setting there’s something. I knew a few kids growing up that would’ve been
re were of any assistance programs because there was no one to sign for them.’

He leaned closer. “Where were their parents?”

going to I fought to keep a neutral face. “The dad ran off when the young was born. As far as I know, they never heard from him again. The mom was a table too busy with men to care for them. Then she died, too. Even when she turned alive, though, she was never around to care for the kids.”

people “Jesus. That’s rough.” Remy’s hand rested on the back of my chair. “I wanted to happen to them?”

the guest I licked my lips nervously and looked around the table, seeing that in front of people had joined us. I stared through them as I thought about my brother.

“The same thing that happens to most of the kids raised that way. Jail for me, poverty, the works. Nothing good.”

secures “Shit. That’s depressing.” He frowned. “Surely there’ll be a way to help. The charity to offer programs to kids who have no one to speak for them. Maybe we can raise the funds for it, whatever it is.”

“Remington Hawke! In the flesh.” A booming voice spoke from behind me, startling me. “You’re a hard man to get a hold of.”

There Remy stood up and shook the man’s hand. “Good to see you, Frank. Let me introduce you to our guest. Frank, this is Memphis King. She’s new to the area from Georgia. Memphis, this is Frank Cartwright, another major player in the charity. And this is his wife, Presley Cartwright.”

There’s a Cursing Remy for calling attention to me, I stood up and smiled brightly at the couple. Frank looked like he could’ve modeled for any golfing magazine.

while Presley looked like an actual angel. She was so dainty and beautiful. “Ethereal was a great word to describe her, I decided.

‘I hope “Hi! It’s nice to meet y’all. Remy was just telling me about the charity. I’m just in love with it. It’s amazing.” I questioned every word I said

” as it came out of my mouth. I didn’t sound like I belonged at a

gest kidsounded like an idiot. Digging my nails into my palms, I kept my s
om wasplace and tried my hardest not to make a bigger fool of myself.

she was “A real life southern belle, huh? Leave it to one of the Hawke bro
find something so rare in Chicago.” Frank smiled at me. “What’s you
“WhatMemphis King? Your name promises something great. Don’t let me do

I panicked and felt my stomach roll. I didn’t know what to say.
at morequestions like that. I didn’t know my story. “I’m sorry to tell you that
rothers.the name that’s exciting, Frank Cartwright.”

, drugs, Remy rested his hand on my lower back and smirked down at me. “
just the name. Memphis is also brilliant. She and Presley have
for thiscommon. She also attended Yale.”

We can Presley fanned her hand at me. “Oh, wow! What program?”

My stomach was in knots. “English. Much to my daddy’s chag
mind us,never saw much use for literature in the family business.”

The woman’s heart shaped face tilted as she studied me. “I was
nk. LetEnglish program, as well. What a coincidence!”

v to the I was going to shit myself. I’d somehow met someone who went
r donorschool I supposedly went to. We looked to be around the same age

“Small world!”

ghtly at She named a class year and Remy chuckled. “That’s the ye
agazinegraduated, right? I remember seeing it and feeling old because I gradu
autiful.years before you.”

My mouth was bone dry. I could tell by the calculating look on Pi
rity andface that she knew I was full of shit. She knew I’d never gone to Yale
as soonprogram. I nodded at Remy and was saved by Boone before I had
gala. Ianything else. I couldn’t hear what he, or anyone else, was saying as I

mile in my eyes to and from Presley. She knew that I was a liar. In the big picture, it was pretty fucking terrible.

Her eyes stayed on me and I could feel her considering her options. Her story, the conversation naturally dipped, she smiled. "I'm just floored that we met in the same program and didn't know each other. I mean, what are my chances? I thought I knew everyone."

I took a deep breath and tried to prepare for the other shoe to drop. I've always been a loner. My nose was probably buried in a book ninety percent of the time. I don't think I left much of an impression on anyone."

She raised her eyebrows and nodded. "Sure. It looks like dinner is a good start. We should get to our table, Frank."

We said goodbye to the couple and sat back in our seats, just as she stepped on the stage where the band was to start the evening. My whole body was shaky and I knew I wouldn't be able to come down until I was back in the familiar territory.

It took me
a while to get
used to the
stage, too.

But when you
start to get
used to ten

minutes of
Presley's
stage, it's
not for any
one else
to say
I didn't
flicked

my eyes to and from Presley. She knew that I was a liar. In the big picture of grifting, it was pretty fucking terrible.

Her eyes stayed on me and I could feel her considering her options. When the conversation naturally dipped, she smiled. “I’m just floored that we were in the same program and didn’t know each other. I mean, what are the chances? I thought I knew everyone.”

I took a deep breath and tried to prepare for the other shoe to drop. “I’ve always been a loner. My nose was probably buried in a book ninety percent of the time. I don’t think I left much of an impression on anyone.”

She raised her eyebrows and nodded. “Sure. It looks like dinner is about to start. We should get to our table, Frank.”

We said goodbye to the couple and sat back in our seats, just as someone took the stage where the band was to start the evening. My whole body felt shaky and I knew I wouldn’t be able to come down until I was back on familiar territory.

30.

30.

Memphis

Stumbling my way through dinner, I managed to at least sort of locate my seat. I knew what I was doing. I followed Remy's lead with the silverware and listened politely while they spoke to the people sharing the table with me. I'd been introduced but I couldn't remember their names. I could barely remember my own. I wasn't even sure what the point of pretending was. Presley was going to expose me. I had to keep telling myself that but I was breaking out in tears and running away wasn't the answer. It was all I wanted to do but I couldn't though.

Growing up, I'd never had the time or chance to feel ashamed of my life. Everyone I knew was poor. Being at the gala and experiencing the rich life snatched all my security away. I felt like trash. I felt like I was being looked at by people around me, the richest of the rich, would be able to see through me in one glance. I wasn't like them. I was Trailer Park Princess. That in itself was a painful reminder of my lack of belonging. In the trailer park, when the other kids saw how I read all the time and heard how I wanted to go to college, they made fun of me for dreaming and thinking I was too good for my life. I didn't fit in anywhere, but at least in the trailer park, I knew that I was part of something. Around me could buy and sell my life ten times over.

I hated feeling stupid. I'd dropped out of school early to take care of my younger brothers and I'd always had a chip on my shoulder about it. I'd gotten my GED earlier than most of my peers, but it didn't matter. I loved school but I'd failed at it. Feeling dumb triggered my insecurities and sitting in a room full of accomplished people talking about the stock market and the economy in Europe was making me feel several different types of dumb.

Wells bounced his leg next to me, never seeming to calm down. I tried to comfort him, but he didn't know I knew about his condition. I also looked like comfort, though, so I reached over and gently rested my hand on his shoulder. He grabbed my hand and squeezed right away. For a moment, I felt like I wasn't so adrift. It was scary to know that whatever comfort I barely find in Wells could be so easily snatched away by Presley, so that is when I was short lived.

reaking “I'm going to go talk to a donor really quickly. I'll be back.” I tried to do, touched my shoulder and nodded. “Everything okay?”

“Oh, yeah!” I would've groaned if I wasn't paralyzed with the my status making a fool of myself. Things had been easier with Charlie. He knew how to handle a monster, but he told me what to do, gave me clear instructions. He liked to play like the soul of his own, I was pretty sure, so it was easy for him to be a charmer and trick people. He'd taught me a lot, but there were some things that I myself couldn't be taught. My discomfort at scamming men out of their money never faded, much to Charlie's dismay and frustration.

college, I'd also always been paranoid. I couldn't have counted the times I'd been caught. I shouted at me for trying to jinx us with my talk of getting caught. I had never been able to manage pulling things off with his help. I was glad to have it and that he was gone, but I was drowning in my mess.

end of my “I'm going to run to the powder room.” I slowly got to my feet and watched as both Boone and Wells did the same. I smiled at them. “I've got you from here, y'all.”

a room A man across the table laughed heartily. “She's adorable, Boone. You guys find her?”

I rushed away, not wanting to hear the sordid details. Sticking my head outside wall of the ballroom, I found an exit into a hallway and walked

wanted it, grateful to be out of there. I didn't care where it went, and when it needed a small balcony at the side of the hotel instead of the bathroom, I didn't let myself out onto the balcony and took a few deep breaths of...not so much better, air.

I could hear I coughed as the smell of city hit me. I was not in the country and that much was for sure. The sounds that filled the night were loud and constant. I couldn't imagine sleeping anywhere so loud. The trailer park was full of fights and pickup trucks, but most of those noises settled down when it got too late. I could imagine the noises I was hearing stretching through the night. They felt never ending. Someone shouted in the distance and an alarm went off in another direction. My head filled with the noise and I found myself rushing to escape again.

In no hurry to get back to the table where I'd have to poorly pretend that just belonged, I walked through a few more hallways, thinking of a library I had seen pictures of from another country. It lived in a building similar to the hotel I was in, and I imagined books lining the beautiful walls around Charlie. The knots in my chest loosened.

The sound of jazz grew louder each time I got closer to the ballroom. I didn't think the hotel had enough offshoots that I could just slip down another and not even look towards the source of that sound. I had a feeling I was going to hate soft jazz when I made it out of the gala.

I was about to turn into another one of the offshoots and make myself scarce again when I heard Remy's voice close by. I didn't want to be there, avoiding the ballroom and I didn't want him to think I was seeking help, so I stopped and turned around, set to leave until I heard what he was saying to the crowd. "You guys enjoying the new field? I haven't been able to stop by and say hi yet." His voice was softer than normal and it did something funny

led to ainsides, almost as much as his demanding tone did.

mind. I A small voice replied to him. "It's awesome! Mr. Greg won't let so freshfootball, but we've been playing baseball."

"No football? Man, that's tough." Remy grunted. "Maybe I'll talk ymore,Greg. If I can get you guys pads and helmets, he might be okay with it ud and More little voices spoke all at once. They were excited to be tal ark wasRemy, I could tell. The moment he opened his mouth, they all fell silen i before "How about I come by one day this week and we see if you guys straightbetter at smack talk now?" Laughing easily, Remy sounded like a con listancedifferent man. "Jones, don't think that I haven't noticed how much ise andgrown in just a few weeks. You're going to have to play as an adult you don't slow down."

d that I That set off a gang of demands to be measured and when I peeked ary I'dthe corner and saw Remy kneeling in front of a group of kids who coul : to theolder than seven or eight, I melted. The little kids were all so cute, dre ind me.khakis and nice button-down shirts. They were looking up at Remy li hung the moon.

om, but "Who's that?" One of the little kids had noticed me and before d neverplaster myself against the wall to hide, Remy shot a look over his sl oing toand spotted me.

I winced and decided to leave him to the kids. It was probably begin myselfget suspicious that I wasn't back from the bathroom, anyway. Before caughtanywhere, though, Remy's hand gripped my arm and pulled me back im out,the corner and into the middle of the group of kids.

aying. "Guys, this is my friend, Memphis." Remy pressed his hand aga id see itbare skin of my back and pointed to each kid, naming them to my

hesitation. “Megan and Sam thought it would be really special to have us playkids involved tonight. These guys were lucky enough to get picked.”

“Memphis? That’s not a name.”

to Mr. I grinned at the boy who’d said it. “It’s *my* name. Memphis King. I .” to meet y’all.”

king to Giggles erupted from them and I even felt Remy chuckle from beside me. It was clear that my accent amused them, but I didn’t mind.

are any “Okay, okay. *Y’all* had better go back with Mr. Greg. You’ve got a completely different accent.” Still smiling, Remy high-fived each kid. “I’ll be by this week to see you’ve the floor with each of you.”

soon if After the kids made their way through an open door halfway down the hallway, Remy turned to me and wrapped his hands around my waist, holding me around my sides. I looked up at him and felt a surge of heat surge between my thighs.

pressed in “Spying on me?” He leaned against the wall behind him and pulled me closer.

I braced myself with my hands flat on his chest, loving the feeling of his muscles flexing under my palms. “No. I was exploring. I’m not a voyeur. I’ve never witnessed that, though. You’re great with them, Remy. I can’t believe you’re worried about you wanting kids.”

ming to His jaw muscles worked as he studied my face, his smiles all gone. “I brought you to the gala so you’d see we do care about the kids present. I didn’t plan on you seeing me with the guys, though. I would never have brought them.”

inst the “Remy, I never would’ve thought that. You’re genuinely great with them without me. That’s not something you can fake.” I stroked my hands up to cup his cheeks and smiled. “It was nice to hear you happy.”

ave the He grunted. "I'm happy plenty."

Patting his cheek, I made a face that made it clear I doubted him. "broody and cranky plenty. You don't laugh or smile very often, though t's nicethem, you were all smiles. It's adorable."

"Are you trying to compliment me somewhere in there?" He ide me.tightened just slightly around my waist and he made a sound of

"Adorable? Jesus, sweetheart."

song to I stretched up and pressed a kiss to his chin. "You're going to be to wipedad, Remy."

He stiffened against me, but was back to normal so quickly that I own theI'd imagined it. I leaned forward, thinking he was going to kiss r ist, justinstead he dropped his mouth next to my ear and whispered. "I'm a to lifedisciplinarian already, sweetheart, and I do believe you sneaking arou spying calls for a lesson."

lled me I shivered and felt my body react like a match to gasoline. I'd never

I had a darker sexual appetite, but when Remy said things like that g of hisready to bend over and ask politely for whatever he planned on givi t sad I"Can we leave after the kids sing?"

e I ever Nodding once, Remy guided me back to the table and shot a look a and Boone. "Text Jake to have the car ready and the partition up."

without

e about

ver use

h them.

his face

He grunted. "I'm happy plenty."

Patting his cheek, I made a face that made it clear I doubted him. "You're broody and cranky plenty. You don't laugh or smile very often, though. With them, you were all smiles. It's adorable."

"Are you trying to compliment me somewhere in there?" His grip tightened just slightly around my waist and he made a sound of disgust. "Adorable? Jesus, sweetheart."

I stretched up and pressed a kiss to his chin. "You're going to be a great dad, Remy."

He stiffened against me, but was back to normal so quickly that I thought I'd imagined it. I leaned forward, thinking he was going to kiss me, but instead he dropped his mouth next to my ear and whispered. "I'm a better disciplinarian already, sweetheart, and I do believe you sneaking around and spying calls for a lesson."

I shivered and felt my body react like a match to gasoline. I'd never known I had a darker sexual appetite, but when Remy said things like that, I was ready to bend over and ask politely for whatever he planned on giving me. "Can we leave after the kids sing?"

Nodding once, Remy guided me back to the table and shot a look at Wells and Boone. "Text Jake to have the car ready and the partition up."

Wells

Anger. That and shame. They'd become so familiar to me since the accident. Every time my hands shook or my heart raced when I was in a public place, I wanted to break shit and scream at the top of my lungs. Feeling like my body and mind were betraying me was unlike anything I'd ever experienced before. Even when I could look around the ballroom and see that there was no threat, no danger coming for me, my body reacted as if it was still fighting to escape my car after the crash. I could still feel the heat licking at my body. Heat still engulfed me and I could still smell my own blood.

I didn't want to be fucking broken. I didn't want to struggle to do anything outside of the house. The person I was sitting in that ballroom was not the same person I'd been before the wreck. Traveling across the country, touring every artist hotspot I could find, I'd been an adventurer. I'd done things that would've made both Boone and Remy go gray early, if they were still around. All that was gone, though. I was just...a shell. Worse than a shell, I was filled with fear and anxiety.

I'd barely been aware of anything during the dinner. I just knew Boone had stayed close to my side. That's what my brothers did when they'd joined them out in the world. One of them babysat me. I'd only managed to rejoin the conversation once we climbed back in the car to go home. Then, I could only listen. I was too angry at myself to join in.

Staring out the window, I balled my fists at my sides and tried to get my mind back down. I didn't want to waste more time feeling insane. I wanted to spend some time with my brothers, and Memphis, if I was lucky. I was so f

that I couldn't pull myself out, though. That kind of night typically required a large bottle of scotch and a session in the gym hitting something.

Once my I flinched when a soft touch grazed my face and then ground me together when Memphis settled her soft weight on top of my large lungs. She wrapped her arms around my neck loosely and smiled at me. Squeezing my eyes shut, I fought against the need to take it out on her body. Coming from her, taking her hard, it would make me feel better, but I wouldn't want to hurt her. I wouldn't even touch her while I felt so volatile.

She straddled me fully and peppered kisses along my jaw and neck. "Touch me, Wells."

I pressed my body into the seat and growled. "No."

Her soft, small hands wrapped around my wrists and she dragged them up to her hips. "Touch me."

The silk of her dress and the warmth of her body tempted my hands to unfist and grab hold, but I couldn't do it. "No, Memphis. You need to know. She cut me off with a kiss, stroking her tongue over my lips and really, I'm snapping something inside me when she sucked my bottom lip into her mouth and bit down. It wasn't gentle, nor were her nails digging into my wrists. I shook under her, fighting my needs, but she just sank her mouth into my neck and bit me again before speaking shakily into my ear. "Relax, Wells."

Her surprised yelp filled the car as I flipped her around and had her on her fours in front of me, my hand landing across her ass in a hard slap. For a moment she pressed back into the open space between my knees even as she wanted to enjoy it, horrified that I'd hurt her.

"Relax, Wells." Remy sat forward and stroked Memphis's hair. "Let her help you. She's offering herself to you, asking you

quired her to feel better. I can help you get what you need without taking to
from her.”

My teeth I stared from my hand to her arched back and ass and shut
up. SheSomething deep inside me screamed at me to do it again. I need
ing my control. My body buzzed with a new kind of energy, a desperate need
trolling exactly what Memphis was offering me. Looking up at Remy, I nodded
in chance “I’d already promised Memphis a punishment, so you’ll step in :
Wells. You’re in control and I can tell you need it, brother, but this is
I’ll neck her. Control her pleasure while controlling her pain. Watch the way
she moves and her body will tell you what you can do.” Remy lifted Mem
phis’s face and smiled gently at her. “Are you ready, sweetheart?”

When she nodded, Remy looked at me and waited. My hand shot
up and raised it but when I landed a hard spank on Memphis’s ass, the
hands stopped. Her hips shifted forward and she let out a hiss of pain. Too
hard. I rubbed the spot I’d hurt and almost called it off completely. If
I had thenus was going to hurt, I’d rather it be me.

“Again.” Remy stared down at Memphis and I felt like she was giving
me into my just as much as she was giving me. When I landed another slap a
mouth pressed her hips into my legs, Remy chuckled darkly. “Again.”

I did. I spanked her again and again, finding the spots that made her
arch and the spots that made her jerk away, just to immediately mo
an r on all press into my hand again. When Boone pulled her dress over her h
er hipsexposed her red ass and bare pussy, I saw just how much she was d
ained. I over what I was doing to her.

Slipping two fingers into her, I pumped them hard and fast, den
air and more of her body. I wanted her come and I wanted it to bowl her
1 to use slapped the backs of her thighs and growled at the sound she made. I

so much clamped down around my fingers as she came with a flood of juices
over my palm and wrist. Still, I didn't stop. I owned her body in that r
ddered, and I felt an emotional release building in myself. I fucked her harder
led the back of the car with the wet sounds of her walls trying to suck me
to take hold me there.

d. Memphis went ramrod straight and jerked her head back as she
for me, again, harder and messier. A puddle formed under her knees and m
s about dripped with her come as she screamed my name. "Wells!"

ay she I grabbed her up into my arms and held her pressed to my chest
nphis' stroked her back. As I rocked her gently, I could hear ragged breathi
realized it was my own. I was panting, like I'd just run a marathon, s
ok as I heart was pounding painfully against my chest, but there was Mem
shaking soft and giving. She curled into my body and held on tight with h
fucking buried in my neck.

one of "Better?" Remy sat back in his seat, his own chest rising and fallin
than it should've been.

ing him I swallowed around a lump in my throat, so thankful for Memphis
and shemy brothers. Nodding, I pressed my lips against the side of her head.

a sense of peace that I hadn't felt in years. My head was quiet for a cha
er back "There's aftercare, creams for her skin after a hard punishment,
an and now, you're doing the perfect thing. Holding her, comforting her a
lips and extreme session, is what matters most." Remy wiped sweat from his fo
ripping and I saw that he'd had to fight his own needs and desires to let me tal

I needed.

standing I closed my eyes and held Memphis even tighter. I wanted to get ho
over. I give her whatever she needed.

Her sex

rushing
moment
, filling
in and

e came
y hand

while I
ing and
and my
his, so
ier face

g faster

and for
and felt
nge.

but for
after an
orehead
ce what

me and

Memphis

I felt lighter as I stepped out of the car, with Remy's help, and started the steps to the main house. Last minute, I turned and waved at Jake. "See you tomorrow, Jake."

He grinned back at me, his eyes full of mischief. He'd definitely done some things. "Until tomorrow, Memphis."

Remy scooped me up and carried me the rest of the way up the stairs. My little growl of annoyance at Jake probably meant to be quieter than it was. He pushed open the door and carried me into the house, his direction set for the stairs. "You've taken your punishment, sweetheart, and I'm so proud for it, but now you get your reward."

I sighed happily and curled into him. "I already had *two* rewards."

"Tip of the iceberg, Memphis. It's time to show you just how perfect you are." He stopped short and grunted. "Beatrix?"

I struggled to get down, but Remy didn't make it easy. "Bea! What are you doing here so late?"

Remy patted my ass and the fire reignited to settle me. His easy confidence was too proud. "That's better, sweetheart."

Bea's eyes were wider than I'd ever seen them. She looked behind her back at Boone and Wells and giggled. "I just need to talk to Memphis about something in the guesthouse."

I felt the world shift as I remembered what we'd done before I got to the house. The test. My heart was in my throat as I looked at her. "Are you positive?"

She snorted and rested her hand on my arm. "Yep."

That time when I struggled to get down, Remy let me. I left standing there, just in front of the stairwell, as I followed Bea into a barred updown the hall. As soon as we were inside, she pulled the test out of Jake's pocket and thrust it at me.

"Pregnant as hell, Memphis! It practically screamed at me before they heard was even up." She waved the test around and fanned herself. "I don't know why but I'm feeling emotional. That's dumb, right? So dumb." I grabbed her and hugged her, needing the connection myself right now. He was pregnant. It was something I'd never planned on being in my life, on top of the after what I'd gone through as a kid raising kids. I'd been willing to do anything for the money to take care of those same kids—now men—but really pregnant was terrifying.

"Are you okay, honey? You're very quiet." She pulled back and kissed my cheek, lightly patting it. "You're not going to faint, are you?"

I laughed and shook my head, but it sounded hollow to me. I was pregnant. We'd done what we had to do. There was no need to try anymore. "I'll go tell them."

"Well, maybe don't do it in that melancholy way. I thought you'd be happy. This happened fast!" She gripped my shoulders and lightly shook me. "This was the plan, right?"

I nodded and sucked in a sharp breath. "Yes, it was. I mean, it is. I know I should be thrilled, but..."

She read my mind. "You think it'll mean no more practicing with you guys?"

I bit my lip and pushed my shoulders back. "It's fine. I'm just being Okay, here I go. How's my face?"

"Looks like you just had a few orgasms, but what would I know

the guys that?" She winked. "I'm pretty sure you have nothing to worry about in Memphis. Pregnant, or not, they're still going to want you."

of her With her words ringing through my head, I went out and found them standing just where I'd left them. Looking at each of them, I felt a very strange emotion try to pull me under and I fought it off. "Hey."

I don't know Boone stepped forward and tucked my hair behind my ears. "Everything's okay?"

Well, then. I My smile felt shaky, but I pushed on. "Um. Everything's great, and I'm pregnant. I...I took a test before we left."

Well, so it for Boone raised his eyebrows. "And?"

Well, I'm being I took a deep breath, afraid that everything was going to change after they heard them the news. "We're pregnant."

Well, I cupped Silence met my announcement and I felt my body burning with embarrassment. I wanted to crawl to the guesthouse and pretend I wasn't pregnant. I never taken the test.

Well, I should "We did it. Fast, too." I laughed awkwardly. "So, I guess we don't need to try anymore?"

Well, you'd be More silence.

Well, I took me. Bea came to my rescue, thankfully. She popped out of nowhere and wrapped her arm around my shoulders. "I heard the great news. Congratulations, you guys. This is amazing."

Well, I That seemed to snap the guys out of whatever trance they were in. Boone and Wells gave me a gentle hug and smiled. "We work fast, huh?"

Well, I'm being silly. Wells stroked my cheek. "Congratulations to us." Remy didn't budge from his spot, but his face had shifted to something harder and unforgiving. "Yeah, congratulations."

Well, I'm about I looked down at my feet, thinking they'd stop me if they wanted to.

about, stay with them. “I guess I’ll head back to the guest house. Good job, te

I don’t think I’d ever moved so slowly, but they didn’t stop me. Re
ie guyssay something to Bea, keeping her from following after me. I walked
vave of guest house all alone, not noticing a single flower as I went. I walked

into the shower and pretended I wasn’t crying as the water ran over m
rything When it stung my ass, I braced myself against the tile wall and welcor
pain of the hot water over Wells’ handprints.

ctually. I’d just been hiding from them and faking being sick to avoid them,
changed my mind and wanted that time back. My stupid heart on my
had done the dumb thing of wanting each of the Hawke brothers. I
er I told done with them, but it didn’t matter. The first part of the contract ha
filled and they wouldn’t need me again for over nine months.

g with I slouched up to my bed and flopped on top of it, not bothering to
like I’d under the blanket. Staring up at the canopy above me, I put my hand c
stomach and tried to imagine it huge and rounded with the baby.

need to I desperately missed Knox, the way I always did when I felt like b
down and needed him to tell me that I was strong. He’d been in pri
over two years and would be in for a while longer. I talked to him c
re and phone once a week, but it was never enough. I’d never missed a call, e
news! week before when I’d had to run to Bea and beg her to tell me how to
phone in the guest house to work. It’d just been unplugged.

Boone Knox wasn’t aware of where I was or what I was doing. He was n
brother and I’d raised him, but he was still protective of me. He’d
kick Charlie’s ass more than a few times. I knew he would worry if I t
jack to that I’d moved to another state with strangers to get knocked up. Rig
so.

l me to The jig was up, however, because I needed to talk to him and I didr

am.” to hide anything. I just wanted his comfort.

my did

l to the

straight

ry face.

ned the

but I’d

r sleeve

wasn’t

ad been

o crawl

over my

reaking

son for

over the

ven the

get the

ry little

tried to

old him

ghtfully

i’t want

to hide anything. I just wanted his comfort.

Memphis

Knox was silent after I explained everything to him. I was just sick of men being at a loss for words after I announced this might've been stomping through the house while I waited on him something. It was strange to feel like I was going to get in trouble with somehow, like we'd switched roles momentarily.

“Knox, if you don't open your mouth right this second and say sorry to me, I'm going to scream.” I plopped down on the couch and grunted. “Please?”

He grunted once. Then again. Finally, on his third grunt, I screamed in his ear and he figured out words again. “Fuck, Memphis. I need to be able to hear shit in here.”

“And I need to hear shit right now, out of your mouth.” I threw my hand over my eyes, in true dramatic fashion, and sighed. “I'm dying here.”

He let out a sigh, a signature of his that meant he was about to say something he didn't want to. “I really, really wish you'd talked to me about this before you just up and did it. I also really wish you hadn't told me you decided to sleep with all three of these guys. That's not something I needed to know, sis.”

“Sorry! I was just...it doesn't matter. What does matter is that I'm not using my head. Right?”

“I'd fucking say so, Memphis Mae King! If they decide you've broken their contract, they'll bury you. You don't fuck with rich assholes, not my calibre. Not to mention that you're so fucking far away that anyone who knows you on the outside couldn't help you if you needed it.” He grunted,

signature of his. “Why, Memphis? I know you. You’re not hungry for
like the rest of us. You have your dreams, but they don’t require millio
t about I was quiet for too long and I could tell that Knox was going
gs so Ipretending to be my big brother again, so I just spilled all the beans. I
to sayof them, anyway. “Jackson.”

ith him “Sonofabitch, Memphis!” His explosive outburst caused a commo
the background and I held my breath while he swore at someone else.
nethingyour fucking business, asshole, or I’ll make you eat this fucking teleph
roaned. “Knox, stop it!” Tears filled my eyes, the same way they always di

I thought of my little brother in prison. He’d been a thief, just like
d in his sister, but he’d done it with less finesse. He was sharing spac
able to murderers, though, and that scared me so deeply that it was hard to
when I thought about it. “Please, stop. I can’t hear you fighting.”

ny arm “Aww, come on, little MandM. Don’t cry. You know I hate it wh
cry. I’m just playing around with a friend. Okay?” Knox used the n
y or doand Jackson had called me until they’d learned to say Memphis witho
e abouta struggle. “Now, talk to me about our fuckup little brother.”

me that “He’s sick, Knox.”

g I ever “Yeah, he’s fucking sick in how comfortable he is with manipulat

Growling out his anger, he didn’t hold anything back. “You’ve got
in overplaying his mommy, Memphis. Stop saving him. You’re not doing h
favors.”

reached Sitting up with a good amount of my own anger, I gripped the
t at that tighter. “He’s in rehab. I paid for his rehab. I had a little saved up aga
e I stillCharlie robbed me blind and I would spend it again and again to send
another rehab, just on the chance that it might work. If I could’ve bought you

moneyprison, I would've. I'm your big sister. I'm *his* big sister. I'm supposed to help y'all. I'm supposed to take care of you and make shit right."

to start "Jesus, Memphis, listen to yourself. You're our sister. The best sister the rest could've ever asked for, but still, just our sister. You did more for anyone could've ever expected of you. We know that. Jackson knows that. You aren't supposed to keep taking care of us. We're grown men."

"Mind your own business." "Maybe I didn't do enough. I should've done more to protect you. I know you saw things, Knox. I know he did, too. If I'd protected you better when that happened, maybe—"

his big brother. He sighed. "You were a kid yourself. You needed someone taking care of you with you, Memphis. You did everything for us. You can't keep holding on to that breath of shit. Every time you give in to Jackson, you enable him. He's never going to get sober if he doesn't have to do anything for himself ever. Spending your last dollar and putting yourself in a dangerous situation doesn't help anyone. Now you're trapped in a five year contract, popping out babies like a dystopian breeder, and your feelings are already hurt."

I rubbed at my chest and sniffed. "They are now."

"You're already upset about these men. I know my sister, Memphis. You're not a no-strings-attached kind of person." "I could be." I stomped my foot and growled. "I'm not. I'm already in as deep as I can get, Knox. There's no way out, though. So, what do I do?"

He laughed. "Can't say I've ever been in this situation. You're not a phone woman, though, and I'd trust you with my life and my money. You'll figure it out. Then, you'll call me and tell me about it. Not the sex, though. I'll be there for you. I'll come to Memphis. Seriously, that was weird. I'm your brother, not your girlfriend." "I said I was sorry about that, Knox. Jeez. At least I think I'm sorry."

I shrugged and stood up to go to the kitchen. "I wonder when I'll start

used to weird cravings.”

“Get a female friend, Memphis.”

ster we “I did!” I looked at the small vase overflowing with flowers that E
us than left for me. “She’s great. She’s working, though.”

vs that. “Shit. They’re taking us to the yard early today. I’ve gotta go, M

You, too, sis. Keep your shit together and call me earlier next week.”

both. I “You most, Knoxy.” I sighed sadly as I hung up the phone and w
u from back to my swing.

You, too. You most. Our ways of avoiding saying I love you after s
care of as an empty promise made to us a million times by parents who
nto this should’ve been parents. We each knew what the other meant and w
going to know that the promise was as far from empty as possible. Knox was r
ing your friend and hanging up with him, knowing I wouldn’t get to speak to
anyone. another week, left me feeling down every time. I missed him. I miss
e some Jackson was before the drugs.

I didn’t want to be trapped inside with my negativity, filling up th
house with darkness, so I pulled on my shoes and decided to go for
is, and Some time in the sun would make me feel better.

of girl.”

y in too

a smart

l figure

though,

end.”

did.” I

getting

weird cravings.”

“Get a female friend, Memphis.”

“I did!” I looked at the small vase overflowing with flowers that Bea had left for me. “She’s great. She’s working, though.”

“Shit. They’re taking us to the yard early today. I’ve gotta go, Memphis. You, too, sis. Keep your shit together and call me earlier next week.”

“You most, Knoxy.” I sighed sadly as I hung up the phone and went out back to my swing.

You, too. You most. Our ways of avoiding saying I love you after seeing it as an empty promise made to us a million times by parents who never should’ve been parents. We each knew what the other meant and we each knew that the promise was as far from empty as possible. Knox was my best friend and hanging up with him, knowing I wouldn’t get to speak to him for another week, left me feeling down every time. I missed him. I missed who Jackson was before the drugs.

I didn’t want to be trapped inside with my negativity, filling up the warm house with darkness, so I pulled on my shoes and decided to go for a walk. Some time in the sun would make me feel better.

39.

34.

Wells

I was drinking a bottle of water on my balcony after my second work the day when I spotted Memphis walking around the property. She was sniffing flowers and looked as beautiful as ever, but there was a heaviness to her that I didn't like. I instantly thought of the way I'd spanked her there before and worried that I'd pushed too far. There was more than just going on, though. She was pregnant. Did she regret it? Did I?

I leaned against the railing and watched her. I knew we hadn't handled the news very well. All of us had been in go mode and hearing that we'd found her pregnant, which was the plan and supposedly the reason we were staying together, had just been like a bucket of ice water over our heads. We were disappointed and cheated. I wasn't done with Memphis. Far from it.

She'd made that comment about us not sleeping together anymore and it had just shut down. In that moment, I'd wanted her out of the house and away from me because I was frustrated and feeling rejected. Rejection was a constant for the Hawke brothers. To say we had mommy issues would be an understatement of the century.

Memphis wiped her eyes like she was crying and I threw caution to the wind. I could be upset on my own time. I couldn't stand the thought of her being upset, though. The thought that I could've caused that upset gutted me.

I jogged downstairs and out to where she was, startling her when I appeared up next to her. She jumped and clutched her hands over her chest. She couldn't get past the redness rimming her eyes. "What's wrong?"

She forced a laugh and stepped back. "You scared the crap out of me. Where'd you come from?"

I searched her face and shook my head. "I'm not going anywhere until I tell me what's wrong."

Fire filled her eyes as she glared up at me, but it faded just as fast as it came. "I don't really want to talk about it."

I looked back at my balcony and down at her again. "I have an idea. I won't push you to talk to me if you let me paint you."

Her cheeks darkened and I was grateful to be able to see that blush. "Silly, Wells. Why would you want to paint me?"

I caught her hand and tugged her along with me. "Those are your chances. Memphis. I paint you and don't ask questions or you tell me what's wrong. She lifted her chin in defiance. "Fine. Paint me. It's your time to waste. I felt wasting."

I had to force myself to not run up the stairs to my room. I'd wanted to paint her since the moment I'd seen her face. Finally getting to finish winning the lottery. "Why would I be wasting my time?"

She stumbled on the thick carpet on the stairs and smile shyly. I caught her and helped her up the rest of the steps. "Thanks...I think you're wasting your time because no matter your skills, it'll still just be a pair of pants to me."

I stopped just outside of my door and stared down at her, shocked and confused. "You're not kidding, are you? You really believe that?"

"No talking. You said I wouldn't have to answer any questions at all, but I'm initiating that right now."

"Fine." I pulled her into my room and yanked a sheet off my bed. "Put this on while I get my setup together."

She laughed. "What do you mean, put this on? This is a sheet, Wells."

I nodded and sent her a look that conveyed how serious I was. "Strip."

until you and wrap it around you.”

Her mumbling reached me on the balcony as I set up a chair there. “I... I wanted it, in the right light, and got my camera ready. I always took pictures before starting a painting, in case the lighting changed drastically. I had my idea. I had my paints arranged and my canvas prepared on my favorite chair. I looked back and smiled at the sour look on Memphis’s face.

“That’s... “People are going to see me out there.” She wrapped the sheet around tighter and looked down at herself. “Let me guess, though. You’re not really choices, to budge.”

“Wrong.” I shook my head and bit my lip to hold in my laughter at the exact you’re reexpression she gave me on her way past me, onto the balcony. She set the chair and glared back at me. Closing in on her, I worked the sheet away from her death grip and draped it over her the way I wanted it. It was a soft felt like of fabric over her chest, a hint over her thighs, and the rest trailed off beside the chair. She looked like a goddess in the early afternoon sun.

when I “Wells, I’m practically naked.”

“You’ll be... I gripped my camera too tight and moved closer to her. “You’re counting of But I’m not opposed to painting you naked, if that’s something you’re interested in.”

“I’d and... She settled into the pose I wanted and sighed at me. “Well, since I’m not opposed to it. That just makes me want to rip this sheet off and have you and I’m paint me like one of your French girls. Too bad we’re not on a giant beach.”

I watched her through my lens and resisted the urge to tell her just what I Put this eager I’d be to paint her naked. On canvas, on her skin, whatever she could do. I just wanted her naked. I didn’t think that’d go over too well, so I kept my mouth shut. Snapping pictures that I knew I’d print out and keep close to my p down I was aware of her body intimately.

The rise and fall of Memphis's chest, the way she licked her lips, the way her eyes appeared even brighter than normal—I took it all in and snapped more pictures than would ever be necessary for a painting. I just didn't want to stop looking at her.

By the easel, I asked, "Wells?"

I lowered the camera and looked at her. "Yeah?" Her lips parted like she was going to say something but then she shut them and shook her head. "Nothing. Never mind."

I moved closer and tipped her chin up with my finger. "What's bothering Memphis? Talk to me."

She stammered on. Her lip wobbled but she didn't cry as she cleared her throat and spoke. "I talked to my brother today and I just miss him. I'm lonelier than I thought a caress would be. And...I'm upset. I don't think I have a right to be, though."

I knelt in front of her and rested my hands on her knees. Her sadness made me feel like I'd just kicked a puppy. Her eyes were so big and almost as she stared at me, and I got the feeling she was silently begging for answers. I just didn't know the questions. "Your feelings are your feelings. No matter what they are, you have a right to them."

"I'm an idiot. It doesn't matter. Let's just do this." She forced a smile and gently patted my cheek. "You're going to lose your light if you're not careful."

I could tell she wasn't ready to talk and I couldn't push her. I did the only thing I knew how to. I stepped behind my canvas and I painted her.

I let me

to I kept

lose by,

The rise and fall of Memphis's chest, the way she licked her lips, the way her eyes appeared even brighter than normal—I took it all in and snapped more pictures than would ever be necessary for a painting. I just didn't want to stop looking at her.

“Wells?”

I lowered the camera and looked at her. “Yeah?”

Her lips parted like she was going to say something but then she snapped them shut and shook her head. “Nothing. Never mind.”

I moved closer and tipped her chin up with my finger. “What's wrong, Memphis? Talk to me.”

Her lip wobbled but she didn't cry as she cleared her throat and spoke. “I talked to my brother today and I just miss him. I'm lonelier than I thought I would be. And...I'm upset. I don't think I have a right to be, though.”

I knelt in front of her and rested my hands on her knees. Her sadness made me feel like I'd just kicked a puppy. Her eyes were so big and almost scared as she stared at me, and I got the feeling she was silently begging for answers. I just didn't know the questions. “Your feelings are your feelings. No matter what they are, you have a right to them.”

“I'm an idiot. It doesn't matter. Let's just do this.” She forced a smile and gently patted my cheek. “You're going to lose your light if you're not careful.”

I could tell she wasn't ready to talk and I couldn't push her. I did the only thing I knew how to. I stepped behind my canvas and I painted her.

35.

35.

Remington

Boone and I were waiting in my office for Wells, both of us feeling throttling our brother. It wasn't like we'd explicitly made rules away from Memphis, but we knew we needed to talk about where to and we'd made plans to have that conversation. Apparently, that didn't to Wells, though. Coming back from a jog, I'd nearly face-planted I'd glanced up and spotted Memphis all but naked on a balcony, exp whoever happened to be working in the backyard that day. Her bare b fully exposed and I could tell she was only in a sheet. A fucking sl front of whoever happened to walk by.

Boone cracked his neck and rubbed his hands together. "I de remember saying that we'd talk about it today. I definitely don't re saying that we should just pursue her and go for it. If I'd known that we were doing, I would've gone to her last night. You know? Las when we all could tell she was upset?"

I swore. "I know, Boone. I thought we needed time to think. I did how we left things either, but I didn't think it was wise to rush ar She'd just found out she's pregnant. Fuck. *We'd* just found ou pregnant."

"Which was the plan, unless I hit my head at some point." He around at the sound of my door opening and let loose on Wells the r the door closed behind him. "What the actual fuck, Wells? You could for us to talk and figure shit out? You just had to jump on her right aw,

Wells laughed, which was a mistake. He saw Boone's mood dark farther and shook his head. "I didn't jump on her, assholes. I painted

the two of you could fucking relax, I'd fill you in on a few things."

I blew out a rough breath. "Go on."

ing like Boone sank into his chair but didn't stop glaring at our brother. to stay said she was basically naked. I'm supposed to believe you had M go next naked in your room and you didn't touch her?"

t matter "Let him talk, Boone." I grunted in annoyance, missing my simpler because have a fucking headache."

osed to "I saw her crying in the yard. She wouldn't tell me what was wrong. ack was semi-bullied her into letting me paint her since she wouldn't talk to r heet. In my finest moment, probably. I only painted her. Did I want more? Fu

I didn't do more, though. She was upset." Wells rested his elbows on his knees and I could tell it was bothering him. "She said she misses her member and feels lonely, but there was more. She wouldn't tell me that part."

's what "Let's just go get her and make her tell us." Boone was already on t night, when I shot his idea down.

"No, we can't just force her to talk to us." I rubbed my temples n't like night didn't end well. I'm sure that might have something to do with it ything. "She did seem a little more standoffish than normal. Maybe I'm a t she's but pregnancy hormones aren't supposed to hit that fast, are they?"

rolled his eyes at himself. "Of course not."

swung "She walked away from us. Why would she be upset about that?" noment spoke the painful part out loud.

n't wait I jerked open a desk drawer, and then another, to find a bottle ay?" medicine. I didn't want to have the conversation we were dancing ar an even had no interest in rehashing our old family shit.

l her. If "Were we supposed to ask her not to leave?" Wells sighed. " probably why the situation we're in isn't one that people put themselves

choice. Everything's confused. The point was to get her pregnant and
If we keep having sex, it's crossing into something else. I want to
"Remy having sex, but I don't want to misread her signals. She may not want
emphasize sex with us until the next time she has to."

I looked back and forth between them and they did the same for
life. "I seconds before we all started laughing. We were cocky assholes,
knew when a woman enjoyed herself during sex. Memphis came alive,
but she was between us. She fucking glowed and shot off like a firework.
Not course, she wanted to have sex with us.

Oh, yes. "I don't understand her." Wells jerked his thumb over his shoulder
on his made a confused face. "Instead of going back to the guest house, my
brother Beatrix dusting and went to help. She's in the hallway downstairs
right now."

his feet "She's not like anyone I know. Things must be different in Georgia
helps out in the yard whenever she can, too. Beatrix told me that she
s. "Last barely do a thing in the guest house. Memphis doesn't want her cleaning
." I thought about her face during our shopping trip. "When she saw the
n idiot, of the clothes, she begged me not to buy them for her."

' Wells "What?" Wells sat back in his chair and shook his head. "Sorry, that's
my mind. We've all been around women from the golden side of life.
Boone have expectations so much of the time. Gifts, money, trips. I mean, we
dating Memphis, but she *begged* you not to buy the clothes?"

of pain "She told me to donate the money and if I needed to buy her clothes,
ound. I could just buy her something cheap." My senses tingled, but I didn't
them when it came to Memphis. My dick was too strong when it came to
This is wanting her. "Maybe she was just raised differently. It's not terrible
as in by

we did. actually kind of refreshing. Seeing her befriend a homeless kid, for no reason other than to do it, was amazing to watch.”

to have “We can’t let her clean our house, though, right? That’s weird.”

shifted in his seat like he was truly uncomfortable. “She’s not a housekeeper. She’s... Fuck if I know.”

but we “Our surrogate who happens to be pregnant with our kid.” A streak of sweat went down my back. There was something about knowing she was kicking. Fuck with a baby that might be mine that got me painfully hard. I’d spent the night cursing my dick because of it. “Fuck.”

Wells held up his hands. “I’m not telling her to stop cleaning. She’s not a housekeeper. She’s... Fuck if I know.”

My palms tingled, the idea of Memphis being defiant almost ended me.

send me downstairs to find her right away. If she wanted a fight, I’d give it to her. She’d fight. I’d also end it with her bent over my bed, fucking her senseless.

she can “I’m just going to say it. We’ve all lost our fucking minds.” Boone stood up and checked his watch. “I have a surgery in two hours and I’m

at the hospital, wondering how long it’ll be until I can get any part of my body back.

part of hers. And that’s after spending half the night feeling like a little boy because none of us ever fucking bothered to take care of her.

They’re mommy and daddy issues. Well, guess what? I don’t have time to waste. They’re not shit out now, so I need one of you to do it for me and just tell me what your plan is. I have to go now.”

Wells and I watched our little brother storm out and chuckled. Even if it didn’t seem bad, Boone could always make us laugh. Even if he didn’t seem to.

same shit.

Well. It’s

reason

Boone

not our

of heat

knocked

sent the

s ready

ough to

give her

3.

e stood

. sitting

on any

1 angry

of our

ork that

what the

n when

't know

Memphis

Boone stomped down the stairs and frowned when he saw me (c
Marching over to me, he grabbed the duster out of my hands and
it over his shoulder. “If you’re going to be dusting in this house, you’
be in my room, wearing a sexy little maid’s uniform. Go rest or someth

I watched him continue his stomp out of the house with my mouth
open and could only turn to Bea after the door slammed behind him
hands were still up from where I’d been dusting. “What the hell was th

Bea threw her head back and laughed. She had to sit down on the stairs
cross her legs until her giggles faded. “I nearly peed on myself. You’ll
experience this, too. Wait until after that second or third baby. Every
will be a gamble.”

I walked over to grab my duster and shook my head. “Don’t make it
too good, okay?”

She laughed again and pointed at the door Boone had just tar
through. “He must be all mixed up if that’s the mood he’s in. He’s ne
grumpy one.”

“I don’t know if I’m offended, turned on, or amused.” I heard
footsteps coming down the stairs and looked up to find Remy staring
hid the duster behind my back, in case that was the catalyst for E
behavior, and tried to smile. It was challenging under his heated attenti

Bea stood up and rushed to stand just out of sight, but where she
definitely hear everything that was said. I could still hear her breathing
waited desperately for something juicy to happen.

uching of those implements wouldn't come with a nice big orgasm, either.
g at theyou know.”

ook that I swayed as arousal made my knees weak. My heart thumped wild
replayed his words in my head. Then, a part of me that was unwelco
“Can I unknown reared its ugly head again. Placing my hand on his c
narrowed my eyes. “The bounce of an ass? *Any* old ass, Remy? Interes
g.” Before he could reply I grabbed the duster from his hand and storr

r's face of the house, not all that differently from Boone. I gestured angrily v
ht? I'm duster and mumbled to myself as I strode towards my house. “Stupi
yet. Do Stupid men. Plural. What did I expect? One man is bad enough. Did
or nine think adding in two more would somehow make them less idiotic and

He just wants to feel the bounce of any ass under his hand, huh? Grea
not all to hear it! Stupid, stupid man. I should spank him with this duster.
show him. Clearly, no one ever did spank him. He's way too entitl
bratty.”

xy and Bea's voice called for me to slow down as she ran after me, her f
from laughter. When she caught up with me, she grabbed my arm a
e duster over to catch her breath. “I think you broke him!”

fingers I huffed. “Good! Did you hear what he said?”

ter. “No, he wasn't speaking loud enough. I heard what *you* said, though
sten in you stormed off, I snuck a peek at him and he looked like a robot t
heart? I shut down. Or like he was trying to solve a math problem in his head
ere are he growled so loud the windows shook and tugged at his hair like I'v
of this seen him do in all my years of working for him!”

ce of an I started to feel a little bad. “Oh...I didn't mean to break him.”

with one She waved me off like I was worried about absolutely nothing. “Oh
He needs it. I don't think he's ever been challenged before. It's kind o

Just so watch. I don't know what's coming next and normally I can predict it fairly easily."

ily as I "Bea, he thinks I should just sit around. He knows nothing me and pregnancy. That's the challenge he needs. They all do. They know chest, I about babies, I'm sure." I thought of Remy with the kids at the charity." smiled. "Remy seems to be really great with older kids, though I should've seen him with those kids at the charity."

with the She tapped her chin and then grabbed my hands. "Forget the charity id man. whatever else that's making you soft towards them right now. What if I really challenge them? I happen to have a heap of kids that we could use."

d rude? "Use for what?"

it. Love "Let me draw it out for you. Verbally. I suck at drawing." She took

That'd duster from me and talked at me with it. "This is what we'll do."

led and

ace red

nd bent

h. After

hat had

l! Then

e never

1, hush.

f fun to

watch. I don't know what's coming next and normally I can predict them all fairly easily."

"Bea, he thinks I should just sit around. He knows nothing about pregnancy. That's the challenge he needs. They all do. They know nothing about babies, I'm sure." I thought of Remy with the kids at the charity and smiled. "Remy seems to be really great with older kids, though. You should've seen him with those kids at the charity."

She tapped her chin and then grabbed my hands. "Forget the charity and whatever else that's making you soft towards them right now. What if we do challenge them? I happen to have a heap of kids that we could use."

"Use for what?"

"Let me draw it out for you. Verbally. I suck at drawing." She took the duster from me and talked at me with it. "This is what we'll do."

37.

37.

Memphis

“**M**aybe I won’t divorce you after all, Jake. This is the cool house through several different security monitors. I reached over and grabbed his arm, full of excitement. “This is going to be great.”

Jake had kindly volunteered to help me and Bea after she’d explained to him what we wanted to do. Turns out, he also thought it would be a good lesson for the guys. They were going to be fathers soon. They had to learn to handle kids. We were really just helping them out.

“Bea better bring the popcorn back like she promised.” Jake propped his feet up on the desk in front of us and nodded towards one of the monitors. “There she goes.”

I squeezed his arm and sat forward, watching closely as Bea banged on the front door of the main house, her four kids in tow. I’d met them earlier and they were all handfuls. I’d raised two rowdy boys, but Bea’s kids and their brothers look angelic. “Oh, my gosh. I’m a mean girl, aren’t I? I’m taking so much joy from what I know is going to be their suffering.”

He laughed. “They have it coming.”

I looked over at him and raised my eyebrows in a silent question. I had the impression that they were friendly. Was there more that I didn’t know?

“No big secrets here, Memphis King. Don’t give me that look. I just think they deserve to eat a little humble pie every so often.” He wagged his eyebrows at me. “Plus, from the sounds I heard coming from this house the other night, I might want to see them suffer a little. It felt like I was listening to my kid sister get spanked and it was *not* pleasant.”

I turned bright red and groaned. “That is mortifying, Jake! Don’t know you heard that!”

lest!” I “I’m pretty sure people in your home state heard it.”

the main I slapped his arm playfully and then paused. “Aww, you think of me
I patted little sister?”

He rolled his eyes. “Don’t be weird about it.”

briefly “I’m going to be weird about it.”

it would He grabbed the top of my head and turned it back towards the man
they had “Don’t look at me, look at the action.”

I felt another sliver of my loneliness chip away and squeezed Jake’s
ped his I watched Boone open the door to a harried looking Bea. “What
monitors. saying?”

He tapped a button and Bea’s frantic voice filled the room.

I on the “I have to go and I need help, Boone. My Uncle Ray tripped over a
ladder and we think he’s okay, but the ladder hit Grandma Norma’s boy
ade my Please, just watch them until I can get back.” She passed a car seat to
king so then pushed her double stroller at him. “Thank you! Thank you so much

The look on Boone’s face made me snort with laughter. He immediately
turned his head and shouted Remy’s name, then Wells’. Bea was
got the back in her car and rushing down the driveway, leaving her four kids
? very shaky hands of the Hawke brothers. We all figured if anything
st think wrong, we would see it immediately and save the day.

ged his “Shit. Look at Remy’s face!” Jake slapped his knee and hit another
car the to zoom in.

stening Remy stared at the kids in horror and started shaking his head
holding his hands up. “No. No fucking way. Get her back here right now

Bea came into the guardhouse just as her oldest kid, Sara, opened

let memouth and let out a loud F-word. While Remy nearly choked, B laughed. “She knew that word by the time she was two. It was the word she ever said. Right after shit.”

e like a I wiped tears from my eyes as Remy awkwardly pulled the stroller : house and Boone put the carseat down next to the other kids. Wells : up with a towel around his waist and a toothbrush hanging out of his They all just stood back, staring at the kids like they weren’t sure if onitors.safe to speak or not.

“Wow, hot.” Bea fanned herself and tapped the screen over Well arm aschest. “Zoom in on that, Jake.”

it’s she “No. I’m not helping you perv on them.” He shook his head and lo me. “God, you too? You’re drooling.”

On screen Sara turned her head from side to side, looking about, a laddershe took off running away from her siblings and the guys. Boone shif yfriend.he wanted to chase but stopped himself.

him and “Are you supposed to chase after them? Or will she just come back h!” own?” He made a face and pulled at his shirt collar.

mediately “This isn’t a fucking love song, Boone. Go get her!” Remy : alreadytowards the stroller and gagged. “Oh, my God. No, you stay here. I’ s in thethe kid. I think one of these is rotten.”

ig went Wells was slowly backing towards the stairs, but Boone caught h grabbed him. “You’re not getting out of this! I’ll find the runner. One : buttontwo handle the funky one.”

Remy grabbed Boone and a pushing and pulling match ensued as th l whileto decide who would deal with the smell. Wells lost his towel and I fo w.” keep Bea’s eyes covered so she didn’t see all of his business. Whe red herreleased himself from the stroller like a little magician, I let out a wil

Bea just at the fear on their faces. Levi took off in the opposite direction of Sara and second stopped just a few feet away to turn back to the guys and stare directly at them while grunting and straining.

“Is he...?” Wells fumbled with his towel and gagged so hard the towel showed of his body lurched forward. “He’s shitting. Oh, God. He’s staring right into our eyes as he shits! What’s wrong with these children? Did Bea refer to it as fucking bear?”

Julie, Levi’s twin sister, Houdini’d herself out of the stroller and the kids’ bare immediately fell over and started scream crying. That set the baby screaming then two out of four kids were screaming so loud that Jake muted the video. “I think I feel bad for them.” He shook his head and gave a big sigh. “Why are your kids clothed animals, Bea?”

She slapped the back of his head. “I gave them sugar before bringing them into the house. They’re all hyped up on kid cocaine and this is their American moment. There’s a reason we don’t allow it in the house. They literally turn into monsters. Look at them. I wouldn’t let these kids into my house.”

“I can’t believe you just referred to American Psycho while talking about your children.” I couldn’t help giggling, even if it was terrible. “What are they doing? Are they huddling?”

Jake unmuted it and the screaming was just as intense, but just under a roar, I could make out the chanting of ‘rock, paper, scissors’. We all fell into another fit of laughter and watched as Remy approached Levi slowly with hands raised while Boone took off in search of Sara. That left Wells and Julie and baby Lily.

We laughed so hard my stomach ached while Remy attempted to convince Levi that he could change his own pull-up and Boone chased Sara in and out of rooms like an old *Scooby-Doo* episode. Julie had stopped crying, but

Sara but because she'd taken interest in trying to pull out Wells' leg hair, one
exactly at while he clutched his towel like a lifeline in the middle of the oce
toothbrush had ended up tucked behind his ear and one wrong move
top half into Julie's curious hands, which then sent it into her wide open mouth
ght into "At what point do we put them out of their misery?" I fell into an
narry aof laughter when Sara ran out of Remy's office with a cigar in her m
was unlit and I hoped she wouldn't eat the tobacco, but Boone's h
id then expression told me he was thinking the worst.

off and "It's been fifteen minutes." Bea nearly choked on the popcorn she'd
volume. brought out when Levi kicked off his shorts and pull-up before runnin
hudder. from them, poopy butt still on display. "Remy's throwing up. Code vo

Jake was dark red from laughing so hard and all he could do
g them. another button so the sounds of Remy's heaving reached us.
Psychobackground, Boone could be heard shouting. "Don't eat that! Jesus, w
lly turn you made of? That's not normal!"

The last thing we saw before Bea and I left to rescue them wa
g about shoving her brother ass-first into Wells' bare legs. I bit my knuckles
that are laughing as Bea parked in front of the house. We could hear the n
through the closed door.

ider the Bea hiccuped and fought to control her own laughter. "Okay. I'll g
fell into and Julie. You think you can take Sara?"

with his I nodded and we opened the door and stepped into what had to be
ls with Dante's levels of hell. The stench was out of control. There was p
more than just Levi's little butt, Remy's vomit was filling a vase next
onvince as he continued to heave, and Julie was brushing shit through Wells' l
and out as he gagged violently above her. Without saying a word to the guys, I
ut only I engaged parent mode, level hard.

by one I found Sara hiding under a hall table while Boone ran from room to room. He called out for a 'little girl'. She still had the cigar in her mouth, though I sent it very wet from where she'd been chewing on it. I scooped her into my arms. Boone dodged a wild swing as she cried out, and snagged the cigar from her mouth with another fitful swoop.

Boone's mouth. It "Nobody found me! They left me hidden!" Boone sprinted toward the terrified sound of her voice and bent over with his hands on his knees, winded and stressed. Sara glared at him. "You left me, mister. You mean!"

Boone finally Boone snapped up and glared right back at her. "You better hope you're going away retired by the time you potentially need heart surgery, little girl." "Don't hit!" I tossed the soggy cigar at his chest. "Be nice to her, Boone. She's just a little girl who was hit by a baby."

In the As soon as my back was to him, I had the biggest grin on my face. Boone's hand that slapped me on the side of the head once, but I didn't even mind. I was probably karma for putting the guys through real torture. Downstairs, Julie had the twins in their stroller, both cleaned and smelling fresh. The baby was asleep in a stopa bottle and was slowly starting to doze off. Wells was nowhere to be seen. Rayhem and Remy leaned heavily against the wall he'd been standing by the time.

Boone Levi I handed Sara to Bea and smiled calmly. "I'm so glad the emergency was just up being a case of mistaken identity. Let me help you get the kids back to the car."

Boone's swoop on Bea and I managed to hold it together until the kids were all buckled in. Boone's face to him already starting to fade. They were quickly becoming little angels again. Bea's leg hair held her hand low and I high-fived it. "Well, that was a crash course in parenting. Bea and I have never seen one. They may decide one kid is enough after this."

I shook my head. "Nah. They seemed to really want kids. It melted my heart."

o room, heart a little to hear them talk about it. We'll let them panic for a night
h it was and then let them know this was sugar induced torture."

y arms, Looking away, Bea nodded with less excitement, but when she
: in one back at me, she seemed normal again. "Maybe let them suffer for a l
longer than a day or two. Anyway, I can't wait to get home and tell
rds the about this."

led and I hugged her close. "I'll see you tomorrow. Thanks for lending yo
for a mean cause."

pe I'm She winked. "Honestly, anytime."

s just a

re. Sara

It was

rs, Bea

aby had

be seen

e whole

y ended

k in the

l in and

uin. She

if I've

ted my

heart a little to hear them talk about it. We'll let them panic for a night or two and then let them know this was sugar induced torture."

Looking away, Bea nodded with less excitement, but when she looked back at me, she seemed normal again. "Maybe let them suffer for a little bit longer than a day or two. Anyway, I can't wait to get home and tell Adam about this."

I hugged her close. "I'll see you tomorrow. Thanks for lending your kids for a mean cause."

She winked. "Honestly, anytime."

Boone

“Just a little baby, my ass.” I stared out at the backyard, wishing I could see the guest house from where I stood. It’d been over a week since Bea released her demon kids on us and I still got a shiver every time I heard the laughter of children.

Wells wasn’t doing any better. He’d scrubbed his legs so hard that he had bald patches. He still swore it was from the little girl pulling the hair out of his head. “Sugar. She said it was sugar that made them act like that. Is sugar causing a possession?”

“That little shit ran away from me the entire time she was here and as Memphis swept in, she cried that I hadn’t found her, like I’d locked her away or something. Sugar doesn’t do that. Bea’s raising ten demon kids.” I looked back at Remy and saw him tapping his chin in thought. “What?”

“I feel like she planned it, but I can’t prove anything. She looks nervous though, tiptoeing around here, giggling with Beatrix. Those two are somehow.” He scrubbed his hands down his face and groaned. “I can’t smell it.”

“You didn’t have it smeared up your legs. I don’t know what you’re bitching about. Smeared up my legs, Remy.” Wells shuddered. “That’s not what we wanted to talk about. Let’s just...never mention Bea’s case again.”

Remy sat up and nodded. “There’s another charity event this week for something the Browns are starting, for mental health awareness. They’re asking that we be there.”

I looked at Wells and shrugged. “Well, it seems that obsessing over a woman who lives in your backyard really clears up the social calendar for me. I could be free.”

Wells looked up at the ceiling and cleared his throat. “Yeah. It’s not like I heard cause.”

“Are you sure, Wells? We don’t ever expect you to do these things, but he wouldn’t think less of you for not doing them.” Remy spoke gently, knowing full well that anything could send Wells running from the conversation.

“I know.” Wells gripped his knees and let out a tired sigh. “I know I can’t stop trying. Not now.”

As if on cue, I gazed back out the window, looking for our left hand troublemaker. “I’m just going to go in one day. She’s been able to do anything because we’ve always considered that place off-limits.”

Movement at the corner of the yard caught my attention and I stepped closer to the window to see what it was. Pete was standing up, dusting his hands, and pointing to something on the ground. From somewhere else in the yard, which had been hidden from my viewpoint, Memphis stood up and dusted off his pants. She was nodding and talking excitedly with her hands.

“Guess who’s rolling around in the yard with Pete again.” I stepped towards the door, planning on cornering Memphis and making her pay for this. “She makes me want to get on the spanking train, and I’ll be a good child to God.”

Remy and Wells were on their feet and right behind me. Remy grinned. “It’s my comment. “She makes me want to fire every male employee we have.” I asked “I’m damn near ready to plant my goddamn self to see if she’ll pay attention to me then.” Wells took the lead and then looked back at me. “I don’t even know where I’m going. This is how messed up she’s got me.”

over a I led the way to the edge of the yard where the sounds of her laughter. I'mthe air and rolled over me like a warm wave. Then, the sound of laughter joined hers and my teeth clamped together painfully. I'd a goodexperienced jealousy before, never worried that someone would someone better than me. I welcomed it. With Memphis, I found gs. We seeing red and wanting to dig a hole big enough to kick Pete into. nowing Pete saw us first and his eyes widened. His hand reached over to get Memphis's and I growled under my breath. Why the fuck was he to . I do. Iher like that?

Memphis looked up from the hole she was digging and let out a little ir littleShe had dirt across her face, up her bare arms, and all over the front to hidadress. She was wearing that white dress again, the one we'd first met and I felt angry that she wasn't cherishing it as much as I'd begun to movedhead.

off his "Do you mind, Pete?" Remy rolled up his sleeves and forced a tight e that'd"Looks like I'm going to be getting dirty today."

her ass. Pete wasted no time in making himself scarce. Memphis seemed a at that and crossed her arms over her chest. "I wish y'all would be walkedPete."

r spend "Why aren't you wearing your new clothes? I remember there being I swearbetter suited for playing in the dirt." I dropped to the ground next to

looked at the dirt she seemed so obsessed with. "What are we doing? mted athappening here?"

ve." "I'm not wearing that stuff out here. That's crazy." She reached behind'll payand held out a knobby looking thing. "Pete and I were planting bulbs me. "Icorner of the yard isn't as colorful as the rest. Since you three ran P e." you'll have to help me."

er filled “Why won’t you wear your new clothes out here? They’re ma
Pete’s swearing, Memphis.” Remy grabbed the bulb and tossed it into a hole
l neverwas a grenade. “Look. I can plant shit in the ground, too.”

ld find “Those clothes cost hundreds of dollars, per item. Just the cheapest
myselfThere’s no way I’m going to wear a five-hundred-dollar pair of pants
dirty in.” She gestured at her dress. “This thing can get dirty and be bl
ntle patclean. Also, that’s upside down, Remy.”

ouching Wells sat on the other side of Remy and flipped the bulb in the hole
dress is special. You should be careful with it.”

le gasp. “Have you worn any of the clothes we got you? Remy tossed another
t of her in a hole and turned to face Memphis head on. “Besides the green dress
her in, “I just...I haven’t had a reason to wear anything that nice. I’ve ju
o in my hanging out around here.” Memphis flipped the bulb that Remy h
planted and held another one up to show up. “See how this part look
t smile.rounded and perfect? That’s the bottom.”

“If we buy you more affordable clothing, will you put this dress a
nnoyed special occasions?” I wiped at a streak of dirt across her forehead and
nice to completely forgetting that I’d been annoyed at her for some reason or
before. “Did Pete teach you how to plant things?”

ng stuff “I would love some inexpensive shorts or leggings. Some overs
her and shirts would be nice, too. I could just wear y’all’s old ones. I’m not j
What’s still don’t get your obsession with this dress, though. I got it for two do
this store just outside of town back home.” She shrugged. “But, n
ind her didn’t teach me how to plant things. He has given me amazing p
s. This though. You’re lucky to have him.”

ete off, “Did you say two dollars? That’s impossible.” I refused to believe
dress so stunning on her would’ve cost so little.

ade for “It’s very possible. I prefer it like that. If I messed up this dress, I w
e like it feel bad about recycling it into a pillowcase, or something like th
messed up one of the dresses y’all bought me, I’d vomit. That’s too
er ones. money to gamble with.” She brushed off the conversation like it
s to get bothersome gnat. “Fancy things were always my parents’ specialty.
leached happily spend thousands of dollars on absolutely nothing, just to hav
it. I refuse to be like that. The cheaper the clothing, the better. I don’t
e. “That be like them. Anyway, get your hands in the dirt. Feel it.”

Remy grunted and then growled when a clump of dirt hit him squar
ier bulb chest. “Just can’t help being a brat, can you?”
s.” Memphis smiled brightly. “Nope.”

st been
ad just
is more

way for
smiled,
another

ized T-
picky. I
ollars at
o, Pete
ointers,

e that a

“It’s very possible. I prefer it like that. If I messed up this dress, I wouldn’t feel bad about recycling it into a pillowcase, or something like that. If I messed up one of the dresses y’all bought me, I’d vomit. That’s too much money to gamble with.” She brushed off the conversation like it was a bothersome gnat. “Fancy things were always my parents’ specialty. They’d happily spend thousands of dollars on absolutely nothing, just to have spent it. I refuse to be like that. The cheaper the clothing, the better. I don’t want to be like them. Anyway, get your hands in the dirt. Feel it.”

Remy grunted and then growled when a clump of dirt hit him square in the chest. “Just can’t help being a brat, can you?”

Memphis smiled brightly. “Nope.”

39.

39.

Memphis

“I learned all about plants and flowers from a neighbor back home, Mrs. Moore. She’s gone now, but when I was young, she’d let me come over and take care of her garden. I’d make a few dollars and she’d have me over every day.” I wiped my hands on Remy’s pants, the way I always did when I was doing since he sat down next to me. For some reason, it made me feel better.

“What’d a silver spoon kid need with a few dollars?” Boone held a coin in his hand the wrong way and I flipped it in his big hand.

When I realized what he’d said, and what I’d said, a wave of panic washed over my head. I stammered as I tried to explain myself. “O-oh, my mistake. I thought I needed to learn the value of a dollar. The hard way. They were raising the next CFO of the company, I’m sure. They could have spent ten thousand dollars on a dress for my first dance, but I needed to learn before I learned to spend that way. I guess it worked.”

“There’s valuing a dollar and there’s being a miser, Memphis.” Boone leaned back on his elbows in the grass and watched me. “It’s easier for you playing in the garden as a kid than it is to imagine you doing bullshit we had to do. The cotillions. Oh, God, the cotillions. Etiquette for days, so many rules, and then there was school. If each grade was somehow better than the last, it was a failure.”

I curled my legs under me as I faced them, forgetting my plants and how the sounds horrible.”

Remy barked out a humorless laugh. “That’s one way to put it. Don’t blame me for taking you to this designer boarding school right after Mom died. She’d only been

for a few weeks when we found ourselves the odd men out at this school of rich assholes who'd never been taught to be human."

ne. Ms. "Oh, that's awful!" I pressed myself into his knees and looked at them with a gentler gaze. "What was life like before that?"

re some They all sat in silence, seemingly lost in thought. I waited patiently. Boone spoke up. "I was three years younger, so I didn't get as much special with her. I remember things being easier, though. She played with us but I don't remember ever being bored."

Remy nodded. "She didn't want us to be like the kids at that boarding school. She made us do chores and we didn't get everything we wanted. Parents had dinner together every night and talked to each other. It was almost normal life, just spent in this massive house."

I spend "She spent her free time out here, planting flowers and trees." Boone stretched his legs out in front of him and got in a more comfortable position.

"I was nine when she died. Remy was ten and Boone was seven. It wasn't Boone been world-altering enough, but Don was so angry that he wanted us to picture like he did. He sent us away after making sure to tell us that Mom had all the on her way to meet her lover when she crashed and died. He let us know we'd been abandoned and was sure to blame us for it all."

wasn't My body shook with anger at what they'd been put through. "That's a

bunch of horseshit. She tried to abandon *him*, maybe, but she clearly didn't

. "That you three so much more than that. It would've been so easy for her to

go into the lifestyle of nannies and hands-off parenting, but you're telling me she

sent us wasn't willing to let you three become three more rich dickheads in a

dead world. She wanted more for you and that's enough for me to know that she

was a great woman. I would've loved her, I'm sure."

Boone tilted his head and looked up at the sky. "It's complicated."

ool full I didn't push the subject. "So, boarding school was bad?"

"Yeah. Wells and I were in the same class and we were together three for each other. Boone was alone." Remy nodded to his brother and I then saw a flicker of emotion in his eyes. "He was seven, showing up with only until noses and black eyes. The teachers wouldn't do anything about it each time headmaster was this prick of a man in a senator's pocket. The senator a lot. I was the meanest kid of all. He's a senator himself now."

"Did you kick his ass?" I went up on my knees, so furious for the boardingselves. "I hope you stomped him into a mud hole. What a bunch of idiots. We you know where they are now?"

almost a Boone laughed, the sound welcome after hearing his sadness of mom. "We've come across a few of them. It's always sweet to turn 'Wells away."

osition. "And we did kick the shit out of that kid Taylor Clark. He was a year old've than us and we caught him cornering Boone in the bathroom after to hurt Remy had him on the ground before he knew what was happening had been ended up calling for his mommy like a little bitch while we made now that knew to leave the Hawke brothers alone." When Wells' smile faded, I wouldn't like what came next. "We got in trouble for that one."

What a "Well, that's bullshit!" I pressed myself into Boone's chest, y loved between his legs. "I bet you were so precious as a kid, too."

to give He wrapped his arms around my waist and held me. "I had a bowl me shetwo missing front teeth."

in the "Even cuter than today then." I smiled up at him and held my breath that she lowered his mouth. Just when I thought he might kiss me, he pulled away sent me a challenging look. "Hey. What's that for?"

He grunted. "Avoiding me."

I looked down at the grass next to his knee and plucked at a piece to fight me more about the people from this boarding school. I'd love to find a way to teach them a thing or two about being bullies."

bloody "Smooth subject change. I don't think anyone even noticed." Wells gave me a wide smile at me and stretched his foot forward to gently nudge my brother's kid. "Why don't you tell us about your childhood? It has to be nicer to hear about your childhood than this shit."

My little brother I swallowed around a lump in my throat. They were telling me their own personal stories and I couldn't share much of my life without it being exposed. I didn't want to lie to them. I hated it. For a moment, I considered calling the whole thing off and exposing myself, but imagining the looks on their faces as they realized what a loser I was wouldn't let me do that.

"Memphis?" Boone gently squeezed me to get my attention. "You okay?" I cleared my throat and forced a smile. "Yeah, sorry. I just zoned out for a second. Um. My childhood. It was fine. Yeah, you know? Nothing to mention."

sure he Remy narrowed his eyes. "Bullshit."

knew I "It's a little hard to talk about right now. I'm basically estranged from my parents. They're so obsessed with the business..." I thought of how difficult it was to tell parts of my story without lying and chewed on my lip as I ripped up a piece of grass without paying attention to it. I guess it was challenging at times.

cut and two younger brothers and my parents just stopped parenting at a certain point. I didn't want them to be left to nannies or babysitters, so I decided to take care of them myself. Knox is five years younger than me and Jacob is seven years younger."

"Seriously? You were so close to their age. How'd you take care of them?" Boone dropped his hands to my thighs. "Also, your mom really did love you."

a. “Tellocation names, huh?”

id them “Yes, she did. You can tell that I once lived in Tennessee and Miss
by their names.” I smiled. “I was a mature kid. I aged fast. So, five years
flushed more like fifteen. I fed them and made sure they were bathed and re
e mine.school. I walked them to school before going to my own school each
r about fought the people who bullied them. When they were big enough, they
the people who bullied me. It all worked out.”

private Wells sat up. “Where the fuck were your parents?”

t being “Who bullied you?” Remy growled as he put his hand over my ki
thoughts squeezed.

ing the “Working. Building that wealth they care so much about.” I look
: do it. across the yard and sighed before looking back at Remy. “A lot of pe
kay?” was different and that’s a target when you’re young. I’ve also hear
ut for a looked like a bug until I grew into my eyes and mouth, so there’s th
hing to I’m sure a lot of the other kids’ animosity came from me never connec
them. I had other things to worry about, though. I didn’t have ti
friends. I was making sure Knox and Jackson were okay and ther
om my whatever I could to prove that I knew the value of a dollar. When I v
I could enough, I worked multiple jobs around our neighborhood. I don’t thi
up more ever really stopped going until now.”

. I have “Your parents sound like monsters, sweetheart.” Shifting closer,
n point pulled me into his arms and I listened to the racing beat of his hear
to take pressed my head into his chest. “I’m not sure you can say you’ve
kson is stopped going, though. You’re constantly working here. Clean
gardening, you’re always going.”

them?” “I’m making friends.” I looked up at him and smiled. “I have more
ove then now than I’ve ever had. Even at Yale. Cleaning with Bea lets me have

chat with her. Gardening with Pete is just a treat for me. Pete is great Mississippi to play with flowers. It's fantastic. And Jake reminds me of Knox. I've felt Talking with him eases the homesickness."

ready for "Where are your brothers now?" Wells watched my face and for a day. I "Don't stop sharing now, Memphis. Please."

I fought "Jackson...he didn't escape my parents without a few battle Wounds, really. Festering things that never healed. He's...complicated mind never really gave him a fair chance. He..."

see and Boone spoke up. "Go on, Memphis. Wells is a big boy. He can handle

I met Wells' confused gaze and blew out a breath. "He was, probably had PTSD, agoraphobic. He started having severe panic attacks at a young age. I just never got better. Until one day, it did. Not really, though. He'd just found that I had a special cocktail of drugs that took away his ability to care. One thing that, too. another and he's been an addict for eight years. He's in rehab right now. Not the first one he's been in. It's hard to have any faith that it'll be his last time for Wells' entire body seemed brittle, like one strong breeze would shatter it. I'm not doing "So, you know."

was old I nodded. "I do."

think I've "Do I remind you of him?" Six words and Wells had split my head open. The pain in his eyes as he waited for my answer was nearly tangible. Remy Remy loosened his grip on me before I even started to move. He knew that as his brother needed comfort. I crawled into Wells' lap and wrapped myself finally around him. "Not even a little bit, Wells. Not even if you tried. You're the bravest person I know, whether you know it, or not, and the bravest person I know."

He snorted, but I didn't give him a chance to argue.

friends "You are. Even when the world feels too big and terrifying, even when you probably feel like passing out or running, you just do shit." I smiled.

it *and* I my finger over the scar on his cheek. “You’re brave, Wells. You should give yourself some credit.”

He pressed his face into my neck and inhaled deeply. His arms scooped around me almost painfully tight but then they were gone. He passed to Remy and stood up so fast that he was already striding towards the scars by the time I realized what happened.

ed. His Remy stopped me from going after Wells. “Just give him some credit. Showing your vulnerable spots isn’t a fun time. He’s fine, I’ll live it.” sweetheart.”

bly still I sagged into his chest. “I hate not fixing it.”

e and it “Nothing’s broken.” Boone stretched out in the grass again. “That foundfucking heavy. I came out here with a plan to throttle you. For hiding the kids, *again*, and for setting us up with those kids. Instead, I feel like I’ve been through a few hours of therapy.”

last.” Remy growled. “You just froze when he mentioned the kids. You should have been better than him. Didn’t you?”

I shook my head, but it was too fast and clearly desperate. “No, I didn’t. Why would I do that? I’d never.”

rt wide Boone scoffed. “You little shit. You set us up.”

ible. “Fine! I did set you up. I didn’t know it was going to go so spectacular. I just thought that you needed to start spending some time with your arms to prepare, you know?” I peeked up at Remy’s face and winced. “You’re always also being spiteful. You hurt my feelings when you suggested there were other women.”

“What?” His face twisted in confusion. “I never said anything about other women.”

and ran “You made that comment about any old ass. Asses have bodies attached to them.”

ould give them, Remy. Other women and other asses.”

Boone whistled. “Wait until I tell Wells that he had shit smeared and squeezed his legs because you made a stupid fucking comment, Remy.”

me off I was saved from whatever punishment Remy would think was fair. The house his phone rang from his pocket. He swore and I took it as my cue to cover. Waving at them, I said a quick goodbye and ran to the guest house space, probably already shared too much, anyway. It was time for me to hide, though, and shut my mouth.

his was
ing from
just sat

it did it,

. No, I

cularly,
th kids.
Okay, I
at there

it other

ched to

them, Remy. Other women and other asses.”

Boone whistled. “Wait until I tell Wells that he had shit smeared all over his legs because you made a stupid fucking comment, Remy.”

I was saved from whatever punishment Remy would think was fair when his phone rang from his pocket. He swore and I took it as my cue to run for cover. Waving at them, I said a quick goodbye and ran to the guest house. I’d probably already shared too much, anyway. It was time for me to hide away and shut my mouth.

40.

40.

Boone

I shoved my hands in my pockets and stared at the front door of the house. It was late, but her lights were still on. If I could just get a hangup and go inside, I could see her. It wasn't easy, though. I was tired of turning around and going back to my own bed when I saw Memphis through the window in the door. Memphis walked into the kitchen with a book in her hands, reading even as she walked. Her T-shirt stopped at her thighs and her legs were bare, except for a pair of fuzzy socks on her feet.

With her bare face and messy hair, I knew I wasn't leaving without a closer. I wanted that image of her, so natural and beautiful, in my mind forever.

My blood pressure was probably sky high and my hands shook, but I managed to knock on the door. Inside, Memphis jumped and clutched the book to her chest. When she saw it was me, though, her face brightened and she hurried to unlock the door.

"Boone! Hi." She smiled up at me as she leaned against the door. "You came over. You never come over."

"Can I come in?"

She blushed and stepped aside. "I'm sorry. Of course, you can come over to your house."

Just over the threshold, I stopped and looked around. The space was smaller than I remembered. It was more weathered, too. In my head, the house was perfectly polished. "You need something bigger and nicer than this."

Memphis reacted like I'd physically struck her. "No!"

Frowning down at her, I searched her face for any sign of bullshit not?"

She held her hands out and gestured around the house like she was showing me the Taj Mahal. "Look at this place, Boone. It's beautiful. I've never lived anywhere that felt more like me."

I looked at the house again and felt a headache forming. "I hate this with a Memphis gripped my arm and cupped my face with her other hand. She came for a reason. Do you want to sit while I get you something to drink?"

I picked her up and carried her over to the old couch, figuring it'd be better than the bed. Back when I sank into it. Surprisingly, it didn't. It wrapped around me like a fucking cloud and even smelled sweet, like Memphis. With her straddling my hips, it almost felt good enough to make me consider getting one just like her.

Memphis sat back with her ass resting on my thighs and watched me. "You're upset."

I gritted my teeth, frustrated with myself. I was being stupid. It wasn't just the house. Memphis was just another woman. Even thinking it made me feel like a piece of shit, though, because I knew she wasn't just another woman. No one had ever captured me like she had so easily.

"Boone?"

I rolled my neck back and forth and gripped her thighs. If I was going to talk about my feelings, I was going to do it while touching her as much as I wanted. "This house was our mom's. Her pet project, I guess."

She took my hand and pressed a kiss to my palm. "No wonder you came here."

"It's complicated." I held my breath as she pressed her lips to each fingertip. "Like I said earlier, it's just...complicated."

Memphis pressed my hand to her chest and held it there, between her breasts.

. “Whybreasts. Her heartbeat was strong and the steadiness of it calmed me
don’t have to talk about it. If you’re not ready to unravel the knots
he wasokay.”

ful and “It’s fucking pathetic, Memphis. This anger I feel towards her. S
abandon us and I’ve waited most of my fucking life for it to feel differ
place.” it never has. Seeing this place, it’s like stepping into who she was. I f
l. “Youa child, still angry at his mommy, but everywhere I look in here, I wo
ak?” there’s another secret waiting. You think you know someone and th
kill myfind out they had this entire other part of them, this other life. I me
e like afucked up.”

ling my Her heart beat harder against my palm. “Have you ever given your
ike it. space and grace to feel all of that? Instead of insulting yourself for l
ied me.maybe you should just let it happen.”

I dropped my head back against the couch and closed my eyes to the
s just aof emotion attacking me. “I can’t.”

eel like Instead of pushing me, Memphis moved my hands and curled i
ad everchest. She shoved her arms between my back and the couch to hold r
warmth soothed some of the pain, and when she pressed a soft kiss
chest, I felt the rest of the tension seep out of me. “That’s okay, then.
oing tohold you until it feels okay enough to pretend again.”

ich as I I wanted to argue, to deny that I pretended about anything, but
words lingered in the air, I felt just how true they were. I spent a few r
u don’tbreathing, focusing on packing everything away again. “I’m holding y
the other way around.”

1 of my She sighed into my chest. “Uh huh.”

I grabbed a throw from the back of the couch without thinking abo
een herit was, whose it was, and pulled it over her. “Why are you still awake,

2. “Youway?”

3, that’s She rubbed her face into me like a kitten. “Couldn’t sleep. I was v
about Wells. I was overthinking how much I said about myself. I w
She *did* thinking about the fact that there’s a baby growing in me. It’s strange.’
ent, but I smiled down at the top of her head, amused by her openness. Liste
eel like her voice as it grew groggier made me feel something warm and big fo
onder if could almost picture how she would’ve been as a kid, and that hit me
en you in the chest like a truck. I’d never thought of a woman I was sleeping
an, it’s anything other than that. I’d never imagined a tiny version of any c
talking themselves to sleep.

self the I had to swallow down a mixture of fear and something softer, sor
nurturing, unknown, before I could talk again. “Wells is okay. And you shou
more about yourself.”

2 waves She turned her head and rubbed the other side of her face against me
the baby?”

nto my The baby. Our baby. It was supposed to be a transactional tool. I
ne. Her thought much about it beyond securing the house. That felt wrong, r
s to my while holding Memphis and thinking about a mini version of her. Wo
I’ll just kid look like her? Another hit to the chest had me struggling to get w
around the lump in my throat.

as the “I hope it’s a girl.” And that she looked just like Memphis. I kept t
minute to myself.

ou. Not “She’s only the size of a sesame seed right now. Isn’t that weird? Th
sesame seed in my stomach that’s going to grow arms and legs soon
shuddered. “Sorry. It’s a little gross if I think of it like that.”

ut what I laughed into her hair and silently agreed.

, by the “I hope it doesn’t hurt.” She was fading fast.

“Birth?”

worried “Walking away from them.” Her arms went slack around me. “I was also thinking.”

’ My gut twisted as a whole other layer of what we were doing unfolded into her words.

or her. I

square

with as

of them

nothing

could talk

and. “And

hadn’t

though,

could our

words out

that part

there’s a

line.” She

“Birth?”

“Walking away from them.” Her arms went slack around me. “Wishful thinking.”

My gut twisted as a whole other layer of what we were doing unfolded at her words.

41.

41.

Memphis

After several days of tiptoeing around each other, I found myself enclosed in the back of the car with all three Hawke brothers, heading to another charity event. Another glam squad afternoon makeover transformed me from drab to sparkly drab. At least that's how I felt. I didn't want to go to another fancy event, not ever again, but especially not with these guys and I had been awkwardly trying to navigate our shit. I'd barely gotten to Wells, things were weird with Boone after I'd fallen asleep on his shoulder and woken up alone, and Remy had been too busy at work to do much more than nod at me in passing.

I hadn't wanted to disappoint Remy when he'd asked me to come to the event with them, but I'd spent the day dreading every moment of how much amount of makeup and hairspray was going to change that.

Sitting next to Boone, I couldn't help swooning at the three of them as they were dressed up. They'd all three gone for the all black tux and they looked like they could be mob bosses. I didn't know that was something that was going on, but apparently it was. I was in a black floor-length dress that was perfect for the modest skirt with a neckline that had me holding my breath a little. The girls were sitting up and showing off. The squad had decorated me with a stunning emerald necklace and bracelet set. The diamonds were all fake but they sparkled like the real thing and I never would have been comfortable in something so expensive. The dress was enough of a change for me.

I crossed my legs and looked out the window, forcing my eyes away from them. I needed to play it cooler than I had been. That meant cooling

emotions and letting the silence stretch, even when it wasn't natural for

“Do you think I could lean over and spank you a few times at myself tonight if I get too anxious?” Wells asked the question without cradling his smile. “It really seemed to help last time.”

I stared at him with my mouth wide open. He couldn't be serious. I didn't move my mouth and opened to speak, but I had nothing to say. That was when Remy laughed and Wells' lips stretched into a wide smile. Choking, I spoke in a sputtering laugh, I shook my head at him. “That was mean.”

Boone grinned at me, the tension broken for the moment. “Were you here more to figure out how to politely tell him to go fuck himself?”

I felt myself blush like a fool and I had to look away from them. I tried to try to figure out how to recover after getting spanked at a charity event in front of people.”

“No fucking way would you have let him do it.” Boone seemed to look at himself until he met my eyes. “Shit. You would've. Why?”

I straightened my shoulders and pretended I was stronger than I was. I got me to do whatever I could to make any of you feel better. Don't take that as an invitation to spank me in public, though. I think my face would cook a few times from the blush that would cause.”

They all silently stared at me, their expressions unreadable. That was a fake, I thought. Jake stopped the car at that moment. Remy saw on my face that I would've run if I could and he gripped the door handle, holding it closed. “It's a push too good for any of us, sweetheart.”

Shame burned deep in my stomach. “No. No, I'm not.”
Jake knocked once on the window and Remy glared at the door. “Get off my back, finish this conversation later.”

I saluted him. “Whatever you say.”

r me. Boone chuckled, but it was darker than his normal laugh. “You’re dinnermuch trouble and you don’t even know it.”

cking a I forced out a big sigh and shrugged. “What’s new?”

Remy helped me out of the car again and stared down at me. “Brat.”
I closed I put on a sweet smile and lowered my voice. “It’s not like you’re g
as untildo anything about it. I haven’t seen hide nor hair of you in days, not
g out areal way.”

Boone got out behind us and grunted. “Get a move on, Remy.”

1 trying The group of people taking photos was smaller and no one screame
guys. It was much calmer. The hotel was a much newer building and v
“I wasthrough the entry felt a little like being in a hospital. It was stai
vent, inballroom was much less of a ballroom and more of a white box that
decorated with black accents. Instead of the candles from my first
sure ofevent, there was uplighting around the room and centered on the DJ.

I looked at the guests already milling around the large room and at t
as. “I’dof us. Everyone matched. I must’ve made a face because Boone l
it as anwhen he looked at me.

nk itself “Does it not pass the Memphis inspection?” He scanned the roc
shrugged. “Feels fine to me.”

nkfully, “You work in a sterile environment. Of course it feels fine to
s goingslapped my hand over my mouth and looked around, hoping no one e
‘You’reheard me.

They all laughed at me and didn’t seem to care that I’d just i
whoever had taken their time to decorate. I was a guest and I ne
“We’llremember that whatever I did reflected on them. That put a stiffness
spine that hadn’t been there before.

Remy pressed his hand to my back and led me to our table. “It loc

we in some way are sharing a table with Frank and Presley. If he traps me in a conversation about business, save me.”

I looked ahead and saw that the woman I was supposed to have gone to Yale with was sitting with her husband, staring right at me. My mood was going to get into something even darker as my fraud was put right in my face. I was in a tug up the neckline of my dress and wipe off my red lipstick. While I felt cheap looking at myself earlier, I suddenly felt every bit the trash I was. Presley’s eyes moved over me and a small smile lifted her mouth. “I’d see you again, Memphis.”

I smiled back at her as Remy held out my chair for me. “Oh, yeah?” Wells settled on one side of me and rested his arm along the back of my chair. I could feel tension radiating off of him, but when I glanced at him he still seemed clear-eyed. Remy sat on my other side and Boone from him before sitting next to Wells.

“Yeah! I couldn’t get it out of my head that we were in the same place at the same time. It was driving me crazy.” She rested her hand on her husband’s arm and smiled up at him. “Frank can tell you that once I thought, I have to trace it all the way back to the source.”

“Like a dog with a bone.” Laughing, Frank leaned over to say something to Remy.

I trembled in my chair, unable to prepare myself for what was coming. Holding Presley’s gaze, I nodded at her. If she was going to do it, she might as well just do it. I’d been a fool to think I could ever pass as anything other than myself, anyway.

“I reached out to one of the professors I still talk to and she had some great things to say about you.” She didn’t react to the shock on my face like “She mentioned a class you took and it triggered my memory, I guess.

conversation believe I didn't connect the dots immediately, but I remember you now weren't kidding when you said you kept to yourself."

gone to I couldn't understand why she was covering for me and I needed to slipped we talk more while you show me to the ladies room?"

wanted to "Of course!" She kissed her husband and gracefully stood up. "I hadn't girl's trip to the bathroom. There's never anyone here I'd want to go with was. I'm excited that you're showing up at these things."

"I was Remy helped me out of my seat and trailed his fingers down the length of my arm as I moved away. "Try to be good."

I shot him a dirty look before Presley took my arm and pulled me away from my We were both silent as we left the main room and went down a long hallway in this way, to get to a bathroom that was out of the way. I felt like she was going to pounce around and bite my head off at any moment, so I was surprised when she pulled me into the bathroom and smiled.

program "A word of warning? Never go to the bathrooms designated for women here unless you want your business being discussed all over town. I have pulled out a vape and took a long pull from it. "I'm sorry I scared you. I want to get your number so I could talk to you and let you know that your information is safe with me, but you're a better kept secret than Diana Fines' face lift."

I shook my head when she held the vape out to me. "I can explain the coming of."

one might She rolled her eyes. "In this circle, everyone is lying about something other than baby. Your business is *your* business. I don't give a shit. Plus, I'm pretty sure the Hawke brothers are smart enough to figure shit out on their own. I don't know the truth, it's because they aren't interested in it."

my face. I braced myself on the counter and stared at her through the mirror. "I can't sure you were going to expose me."

w. You “I’ve got better things to do.” She put her vape away and pulled out
of gum. “Plus, I’m currently hiding like four things from Frank. One of
o. “Can being that I’m smoking again. We women have to stick together. Or
not tattle like little kids. And I like your accent. Frank and I sometime
love aa third over for a night, if you’re interested.”
with, so I giggled like an idiot and shook my head. “Thank you, but I’ll
pass. My dance card is full right now.”
back of She shrugged. “That’s too bad.”

e away.

allway

to turn

en she

r these

n.” She

. I tried

secret’s

.”

in. Sort

ething,

tty sure

If they

“I was

“I’ve got better things to do.” She put her vape away and pulled out a piece of gum. “Plus, I’m currently hiding like four things from Frank. One of them being that I’m smoking again. We women have to stick together. Or at least not tattle like little kids. And I like your accent. Frank and I sometimes invite a third over for a night, if you’re interested.”

I giggled like an idiot and shook my head. “Thank you, but I’ll have to pass. My dance card is full right now.”

She shrugged. “That’s too bad.”

42.

Remington

The night stretched on too long. Another dinner, another set of speeches and more than my fair share of business talk from Frank Carver had left me agitated. Then there was Memphis. She'd been stiff and distant with herself the entire time. She'd barely touched her food during dinner. I thought I saw tears in her eyes after she realized she was using a dinner fork than everyone else at the table. I'd thought it was cute, see her so flustered, until I saw how upset she seemed by it.

Boone was caught up on the other side of the room with a couple of people I didn't recognize and Frank had finally taken a hint and moved closer to his seat. I took the chance to pull Memphis's chair closer to me.

Her expression when her chair squeaked on the floor was horribly uncomfortable and intense that I immediately stopped pulling her and leaned into her space. Her eyes were pinched, like she was in pain, and I hadn't seen a real smile from her the entire night.

"What's wrong, Memphis?" I glanced behind her to make sure Boone was okay, but he was talking to the founder of the charity.

"Nothing." Memphis pouted when she heard my unhappy grunt. "I'm fine, Remy."

"Liar. What's wrong?"

Her jaw set in defiance. "I said I'm fine."

"And I said you're a liar. You're not yourself tonight." I brushed her hair over her shoulders and smiled to myself at the stubbornness radiating from her. She didn't have a clue how much that bratty streak in her turned her into a brat.
"Tell me."

She crossed her arms under her chest and I held my breath while waiting to see if the dress was going to stay up. “You don’t know even I’m fine,” Remington Hawke said. “If I say I’m fine, I’m fine.”

Her tone must’ve caught Wells’ attention because he leaned over my shoulder, unlike Memphis’s space from behind. “Everything good?”

I didn’t break eye contact from her as I spoke to him. “No. She won’t tell me what’s wrong, though.”

“That’s because I’m fine.”

Wells grunted. “I’ve seen you be more social with a plot of land in Memphis. Something’s wrong.”

The sound of her foot stomping brought a big smile to my face. “I’ll start. Let me have the rest of it. What’s wrong, sweetheart?”

“I said nothing. That means nothing.” She moved to stand, but I placed my heavy hand on her shoulder and set her back down in her chair. She glared at me.

“Remy, I once wrestled a pig to the ground with nothing more than my bare hands and sheer will. If you think I won’t do the same to you, you’re sorely mistaken.”

Boone chose that moment to appear. “Wait. Why’d you wrestle a pig?”

Wells grunted. “I don’t know, but she’s upset about something. She’s swearing she’s fine.”

Memphis’s ears went red and I thought she might tackle me to the ground for a moment before she shook her head and sagged against her chair. “Her curls don’t belong here.”

A hot fury shot to life inside me. “Did someone say something to you?”

“They say *that* to you?”

She quickly put her hand over mine and shook her head. “No, no. I don’t like that. I’m just...I’m so uncomfortable. I don’t want to pretend anything.”

...ing to I'm not this kind of woman. I can't stop thinking about what I should
...ything, shouldn't do. It's a miracle I haven't embarrassed y'all yet. It's only a
... of time before I make you look bad with something I do or say wrong.
...ed into I sat back in my chair, shocked. "You're serious."

She nodded and looked down at her hands in her lap. "I never di
...n't tell things. I'm more of an eat at home date. I don't want to embarrass y
... hate myself if I did."

Grabbing her chair, I jerked her as close to me as she could get and
... grass, my hands in her hair before closing my mouth over hers. She pushed
... chest weakly and then clutched at me while I stroked my tongue i
... That's a mouth and growled. Her breathy little moan against my mouth nearly
... me over the edge and I had to pull back before I said fuck it and took
... placed atop of the table, in front of everyone.

lared at "The only way I could be embarrassed with you at one of these
... han my would be if everyone noticed how fucking hard I am for you at all
... you're There is nothing you could do that would make me regret dragging y
... with me. I won't do it again if it's something that stresses you out so
... g?" though, sweetheart. I selfishly wanted to steal time with you but I
... ng and another way."

She looked up at me with a starry-eyed expression on her beautif
... ground "Wow."

hair. "I I stood up and held out my hand to her. "Dance with me."

She looked around and saw that no one else was dancing. "You dor
... ou? Did to prove anything, Remy."

I took her hand and hauled her out of the chair and into my
... Nothing Searching her face, I laid more of my cards out on the table for her. '
... ymore. you're the best person in this room, Memphis. You're smart, kir

ould orfucking hot. If I'm proving anything right now by taking you out
matterdance floor and dancing with you, it's that I'm man enough to have a
" like you with me."

She looked down in an attempt to hide the wide smile on her face,
d thesealready seen it and felt the matching surge of happiness at having put i
'all. I'd"Okay. Let's dance."

I took her to the center of the dance floor and held her close, too c
l buriedproper society. The slow beat of the music filling the room had me
l at mymy hips against hers in a maddening way. Her fingers played with the
nto herthe back of my head, tugging it and raking her fingers through it. H
pushednever moved from mine and I dug my fingers into her hips at the chal
her onneeded more. I needed to feel her fully submit to me or I was going
my mind.

things Her lips parted on a sigh. "I wish it had taken longer to get pregnant
l times. I had already made up my mind. I didn't care that she was
ou herepregnant. I wasn't finished with her. I opened my mouth to tell her ju
) much,but the music faded and she pulled away from me with a giggle
'll findhurrying back to the table.

ul face.

r't have

r chest.

'I think

id, and

fucking hot. If I'm proving anything right now by taking you out on that dance floor and dancing with you, it's that I'm man enough to have a woman like you with me."

She looked down in an attempt to hide the wide smile on her face, but I'd already seen it and felt the matching surge of happiness at having put it there. "Okay. Let's dance."

I took her to the center of the dance floor and held her close, too close for proper society. The slow beat of the music filling the room had me moving my hips against hers in a maddening way. Her fingers played with the hair at the back of my head, tugging it and raking her fingers through it. Her eyes never moved from mine and I dug my fingers into her hips at the challenge. I needed more. I needed to feel her fully submit to me or I was going to lose my mind.

Her lips parted on a sigh. "I wish it had taken longer to get pregnant."

I had already made up my mind. I didn't care that she was already pregnant. I wasn't finished with her. I opened my mouth to tell her just that, but the music faded and she pulled away from me with a giggle before hurrying back to the table.

43.

43.

Memphis

I couldn't think of anything other than Remy's words as we left the car. Wells and Jake drove us home. No one spoke, but it no longer felt strained silence. It felt tense, but in another, more promising way. Each shifted and accidentally touched Wells sitting next to me, a jolt of awe and arousal hit me like lightning. I wasn't going to my house, no matter how much I wanted to. I needed them and they wanted me, by some miracle. I couldn't deny myself anymore. Whatever happened, I'd survive. Broken hearts I'd be fine.

I was thinking of how to invite myself inside when Jake parked in front of the main house. I cleared my throat and was about to blurt it out when Wells spoke up.

"That dinner was not enough food. Want to come in and see if we have anything left in the fridge? Sophia always leaves great snacks." He flicked his gaze between my mouth and eyes as he spoke.

I nodded right away and got out of the car as fast as I could in the car. Jake was waiting by the door, doing his best not to laugh when he looked at me. I lightly slapped his arm as I passed him. "Shut up."

Remy stood back and said something that Jake nodded to, something that had Jake's grin growing even more shit-eating. I felt like I was doing something of shame, just the before instead of the after. It felt so obvious that we were all going inside to do anything but everything holy.

Wells took my hand and led me into the kitchen. Boone had his head in the fridge, looking for snacks. Remy leaned against the passway into the living room and crossed his arms over his chest as he watched me. My body buzzed.

awareness as Boone slowly looked up from the fridge at me. It was clear the choice was mine.

the hotel I took a deep breath and turned to Wells. "Unzip me?"

like a His blue-green eyes turned darker as he found what he wanted in minutes. As I turned my back to him, he slowly dragged my hair to one side and pushed it over my shoulder. His fingers were hot and rough on my skin. He moved them lower to grip the zipper and tug it down.

couldn't I walked forward a few steps and let the dress fall to my feet, the sound of the material hitting the floor like a bomb going off in the silent kitchen.

Standing in front of them in just a lacy black thong, I gathered all the courage I could and walked towards the stairway. Looking back at them over my shoulder, I bit my lip and smiled. "Well?"

I didn't make it another step before Remy caught me and hauled me into the kitchen. He set me down on the island, with his body between my legs, and forced me backwards until my bare skin met the cold marble.

He arched away from it. His hands framed my ribs and skimmed up to my breasts, his fingers framing my sensitive nipples but not touching them. He looked at me with a stern expression.

"Things are different now." He looked down at me with a stern expression before dipping his head to circle my navel with his tongue. "This isn't sex under the premise of procreation. This is pure, raw fucking. We can't keep our hands off of each other and that changes things."

I grabbed his hands, needing more contact, but he caught my wrists and pinned them to the counter on either side of me. Tugging against his restraints, I let out a desperate moan and lifted my knees to cradle his hips. I just wanted more. "I could use some of that pure, raw fucking now, please."

He smiled but it was somehow filthy. "There are rules. If you decide you want this, you're going to get all of me. That includes the part of me"

ear that needs to control you and break you until you're screaming for relief.

things that you've probably never thought of, sweetheart. I want to control you and make you crawl across the floor to beg at my feet. I want to fuck you with my gaze. You're my personal whore and then lick me clean so you know you're my good girl. I want your ass. I want to hear you scream for me as I pump you as cherry and I want to do it with a fucking audience, Memphis. The shit I want to do to you should make you run."

Sound of His words scared me almost as much as they turned me on. I knew the kitchen was something darker with Remy's desires and I'd wanted that fire in my life. I'd thought about it more than a few times while in bed all alone. Ever since my days I'd woken up with handprints fading on my ass, from him or Wells. I'd been so turned on that I used the shower head to make myself come. I'd never done the things he wanted, but I'd read about some of them. I was a naive girl that I didn't know what he was, a dominant.

He and I I held his gaze and lifted my chin, daring him to do what he wanted. "Sound like you're trying to warn me away, Sir. Maybe you should be careful of yourself if you're ready for this."

Expression Watching his face transform to show his true dominant nature was a thrill. "This is to have my hips grinding into the counter as I tried to get him to touch me. Because his jaw hardened, his shadow of a beard darker in the dim lighting of the kitchen, and his eyes shifted from a clear blue sky to a stormy one, ready to unleash.

Restraint, "I'm going to be the center of your world in a few minutes, M. Are you sure you want to ruffle my feathers?" His eyes shifted to Boone and then to Wells, who'd moved to stand on either side of me. "Hold her arms."

Side you I looked up at Wells as he gripped my arm and watched me with that unbending focus. On my other side, Boone stared back at me with an intense

I want smile on his handsome face. I pulled against their grips and then sc
llar you when a sharp tug ripped my panties from my body. The material bit in
you like before snapping, leaving a stinging mark.

I're my I lifted my head to glare at Remy, but he didn't look up at me. H
op that were on the red mark across my hip. He leaned over and ran his tong
t I want the mark. "Your skin holds a mark so prettily, sweetheart. It turns so
easily and the color lingers."

w there Wells swore when Remy's hand landed on my thigh with a loud
to burn barely stung, but the sound was intense enough to make me cry out. I
ne. The down to see a perfect outline of his hand on my skin.

ells, I'd "I've been dreaming of seeing you covered in my marks, sweethe
me. I'd more sneaking away and hiding after. I'm going to inspect every inch
asn't so in the morning and take note of all the places you're still showing my

He cupped my breasts again and finally pinched my nipples, turn
l. "You moaning into a loud and broken scream as he played them perfec
asking never known I loved having my nipples pinched and tugged until h
never had anyone manhandle me before and I loved it.

enough "Wells. Would you like the honor of feasting on our midnight snac
ich me. I go find a few things?" Remy and Wells exchanged a look. "Edge her
; of thenot allowed to come until I'm sliding into her ass."

eady to I jerked my head up and glared at him. "No!"

"No to having to earn your orgasm or no to taking my dick up your
Are you ass?" He licked around my belly button again and then nipped me v
Wells, teeth. "I'm only taking a no one one of those."

"I need to come. You can't stop me!" I felt feral at the idea of him c
with an me my orgasm.

amused "Wrong one, M." He moved away and watched Wells wedge

reamed between my thighs with his broad shoulders stretching me wide open
my hips have all the control, Wells. We own each of her orgasms and she gets
when we give them to her, when we've decided she's earned them
his eyes moment before."

ue over I thought about kicking him, but Wells didn't start slow on me. He
red so his fingers on either side of my lower lips and spread me wide open
could ravage me. I swore at the top of my lungs and tried to grab Wells
slap. It Boone was there, holding both my arms over my head, his eyes drink
looked in.

"I've never been as excited by Remy's games, Memphis, but seeing
art. No like this, hearing your anger and your begging...I get it. I don't want
of you control you, but fuck if it isn't the most beautiful thing to see you spr
touch." and at my mercy." Boone leaned down and kissed me, his mouth as
ing my ass mine as he stroked his tongue over mine and growled as I bit him
tly. I'd never cared to share, but you unlocked a new kink in me, love. I want
him. I'd you stuffed full of all three of us. I want you airtight."

Wells lifted his head to groan. "Yeah, that. Fucking hell, *that*."

k while
r. She's

perfect
with his

denying

himself

between my thighs with his broad shoulders stretching me wide open. “You have all the control, Wells. We own each of her orgasms and she gets them when we give them to her, when we’ve decided she’s earned them. Not a moment before.”

I thought about kicking him, but Wells didn’t start slow on me. He hooked his fingers on either side of my lower lips and spread me wide open so he could ravage me. I swore at the top of my lungs and tried to grab Wells, but Boone was there, holding both my arms over my head, his eyes drinking me in.

“I’ve never been as excited by Remy’s games, Memphis, but seeing you like this, hearing your anger and your begging...I get it. I don’t need to control you, but fuck if it isn’t the most beautiful thing to see you spread out and at my mercy.” Boone leaned down and kissed me, his mouth as hungry as mine as he stroked his tongue over mine and growled as I bit him. “I’ve never cared to share, but you unlocked a new kink in me, love. I want to see you stuffed full of all three of us. I want you airtight.”

Wells lifted his head to groan. “Yeah, that. Fucking hell, *that*.”

44.

44.

Remington

“Cameras have been off for fifteen minutes, boss man.” Jake’s voice just annoyed me in that moment.

“Keep them off until I text you.” I hung up and grabbed the prepared the moment I saw Memphis. My hopes had been high, or maybe just known there was something there.

I could hear her cries of pleasure and frustration throughout the house. I stopped outside of the kitchen to just watch as Wells ate her out like she’d been starved for years. Boone held her arms to the counter with one hand while he sucked her nipples, driving her need higher. Memphis’s cries grew louder as she drew closer and closer to coming. Just before she crossed over that edge, Wells lifted his mouth and sank his teeth into her thigh. She growled.

“No! No, you asshole!” Memphis arched her body back and forth, trying as hard as possible to take what she wanted.

I smiled as I moved closer and dropped the bag on the counter next to my head. Slowly, I removed the top half of my tux, piece by piece. “Sorry, being mouthy.”

She twisted to look back at me and bared her teeth. “It’s too much!”

Wells looked up at me from between her thighs, his face shiny with sweat and wetness. “Think I should stop? We could just call it a night. If it’s too much for you.”

Growling angrily, Memphis glared at me. “Please, Remy. Let me come.”

I leaned over her on my elbows and brushed my finger over her clit. “I don’t think so.”

She struggled and yelled at me while I took my time opening my legs, pulling things out one at a time. It was the glass anal plug that I had used that amused her speechless. Her eyes were wide as she twisted to watch it.

Wells buried his face between her thighs again, dragging her attention to his mouth. I rested my hand over her stomach, feeling her muscles contract as he took her close to her orgasm again.

Boone lifted his head from her chest, mouth wet from playing with her breasts and nipples. He looked over the stuff on the counter and licked his lips while he saw the leather straps. "Great minds think alike."

I ran my hand down to cup her sex while Wells stroked her thighs as she grew wet. "Say stop if you need a break, sweetheart."

She whimpered when I lightly slapped her core and then she let out a surprised grunt as I flipped her over onto her stomach. As her breasts hit the cold marble, she tried to lift herself off the counter, but I was holding her by hooking the leather strap around her wrist and tying the other end to the cabinet doors below. I shifted her body so her lower half hung off the edge and she was twisted at an angle that would make it possible for us to have sex in one's mouth.

Boone tied her other arm down and watched as I moved behind her. I lifted her legs until her knees were under her on the counter with her head lifted for the taking. He stepped back to appreciate the view and took his shirt off. "Fuck."

Memphis tried to move, but the tension from her arms being tied to the counter didn't allow it. She was fully at our mercy and there wasn't anything she could do about it. The part of her that responded to the dominance came alive as she settled into the pose and twisted her head to the side.

bag and offering her mouth to us, whether she knew it or not. She looked graceful and left her perfect.

Wells gripped her ass and stroked it before landing a solid slap to the back. He then backtipped his head backwards and swore. "What the fuck were we waiting for?" I moved around to stand in front of her while I picked up the small flogger.

I ran the tip of it over her mouth and felt a surge of adrenaline at the very moment. Her eyes followed me. "Open."

When he said that, she parted her red lips and allowed me to push part of the leather into her mouth. Without me asking, she stroked it with her tongue and then sucked on it.

I pulled it free and lowered my voice as I spoke just to her. "You're not too good, sweetheart. You look like every wet dream I've ever had. I'm impressed by you, but you wouldn't be letting me down if anything already is too much. I'm going to push you to a point that you think will break you, but I'll never push you too far. You can trust me. I need to trust you to take care of yourself if you need a break, though. Will you do that?"

She said, "Yes, Sir."

Pulling her head back by her hair, I leaned down and kissed her forehead. "Good girl, sweetheart."

She flushed and stretched her fingers out in an attempt to touch me. I ripped the flogger from her hand and stood up. "I want to touch."

Torturing myself, I straightened and pushed my erection into her. The feeling of her trying her best to stroke me was enough to make me shudder. "That's enough."

Moving behind her again, I shifted the flogger from hand to hand. The weight of it felt nice in my palm and I twirled it once before flicking it across her ass. She gasped at the light touch and I let the next strike hit hard.

ful and shocked cry might've made a less observant man stop, but I watched t
her hips shifted back every so slightly as she silently asked for mo
o it. He next three snaps of my wrist came fast and sharp, leaving pink flesh
; on?" wake.

flogger. Screaming, Memphis twisted and arched her back but was unable
way her away from the stinging flogging. When the next tap landed over her
clit, she jerked so hard that the leather snapped taut and her body flush
into her "Fuck." Wells rubbed her ass and then sucked her clit into his mouth
cked on I tapped up her back and over her shoulders with the flogger.

Boone had moved to the other side of the island and watched the
e doing move over her perfect skin. He braced his hands on the counter and
I'm soup at me. "As much as I appreciate your games, brother, I'm holding
r of this thread. Is there a faster kink button?"

ak you, Possibly for the first time in all my time having sex, a gut deep laugh
tell me through my collected demeanor. I dropped the flogger and ran my hand
my face, trying to squelch the sound but it was useless. Sex had never
light for me. I'd been a serious asshole since losing my virginity w
er hard. early to a teacher's aide at boarding school. Somehow, while having s
a woman I'd imagined dominating since seeing her picture, I'd lost s
e after I the heaviness that bore down on me all the time.

When I looked down at Memphis and saw her grinning back
fingers. everything seemed to fall into place. I cupped her face and ran my
ake me over her lips, wanting to imprint that impish grin onto my brain. "Perfe

id. The

, it over

ler. Her

shocked cry might've made a less observant man stop, but I watched the way her hips shifted back every so slightly as she silently asked for more. The next three snaps of my wrist came fast and sharp, leaving pink flesh in their wake.

Screaming, Memphis twisted and arched her back but was unable to get away from the stinging flogging. When the next tap landed over her swollen clit, she jerked so hard that the leather snapped taut and her body flushed red.

"Fuck." Wells rubbed her ass and then sucked her clit into his mouth while I tapped up her back and over her shoulders with the flogger.

Boone had moved to the other side of the island and watched the flogger move over her perfect skin. He braced his hands on the counter and glanced up at me. "As much as I appreciate your games, brother, I'm holding on by a thread. Is there a faster kink button?"

Possibly for the first time in all my time having sex, a gut deep laugh broke through my collected demeanor. I dropped the flogger and ran my hand down my face, trying to squelch the sound but it was useless. Sex had never been light for me. I'd been a serious asshole since losing my virginity way too early to a teacher's aide at boarding school. Somehow, while having sex with a woman I'd imagined dominating since seeing her picture, I'd lost some of the heaviness that bore down on me all the time.

When I looked down at Memphis and saw her grinning back at me, everything seemed to fall into place. I cupped her face and ran my thumb over her lips, wanting to imprint that impish grin onto my brain. "Perfect."

45.

45.

Memphis

Wells moved his tongue over me almost lazily compared to his torture. He didn't seem to be in as big of a hurry as Boone. I was ready to orgasm that I didn't care that I probably looked like the Chatham ham all spread out on the counter like I was. I needed to come or I was going to lose my mind.

I opened my mouth and sucked Remy's thumb inside, swirling my tongue over it and gazing into his eyes as I did. I nipped it as he pulled it free. He stared longingly at his tented pants.

"Are you trying to top from the bottom, sweetheart?" He picked up the flogger and moved it down my back. "Wells. I think Memphis wants your hands on her ass. First, we need to do something with my thumb. It's all wet."

He stepped out of my sight and no amount of twisting let me see what he was doing. I felt it a second later, though. His thumb teasing my ass. I tried to jerk upright, but I had no control over my limbs in the position he was in. Instead, I let out a whine that would've been embarrassing in any room for shame right then.

Remy pushed the tip of his thumb just inside and then I felt Wells lick his tongue faster. A second after, a hand came down hard on my ass. A stinging pain lit up nerve endings in my body that I'd never known before. There was so much stimulation. I couldn't focus on one thing and everything together was almost too much.

"It seems like Memphis wants something in her mouth, Boone." I heard Boone's deep voice and his hand on the center of my back as he pushed his

deeper was something I never wanted to end.

Boone appeared in my line of sight and I moaned when I saw him earlier naked. I wanted to touch and feel, to explore his body like I hadn't felt before. He kissed me, easing me into something hungry and desperate. The added sensation of his tongue tangling with mine while his hand gripped my hair was just what I needed to go over the edge of my orgasm.

Just when it was about to crest, Wells' mouth disappeared, Boone's tongue kissing me, and the only thing left was Remy's thumb going deeper. My head swayed over the line of pleasure and pain, frustration and relief. I throbbed in time with my heartbeat and I waited, so close to what I wanted but I couldn't go over.

I screamed in frustration and tugged at my restraints. I was going to feel like I had since Remy. I was going to tie him up and—

He pushed two fingers deep inside my core and curled them, finding what he's had since he'd known my body for years. My scream turned into a moan as he gasped, pulled his thumb partly out of my ass and then pushed back in, in the same position. Another slap landed across my ass and Wells focused on my clit with his expert mouth. It was happening all over again.

When Boone angled his body against the counter and offered me his head, I opened my mouth greedily. He rubbed the head over my lips, leaving a trail of his precum and slowly fed me a few inches at a time. In my position, I realized I couldn't do anything to help; he had to fuck my mouth and I had to let him. All I could do was stroke him with my tongue and take his length as deep as he gave it to me.

Remy's thumb again. My body tightened with another almost release and they all moved again. I screamed and demanded more, but Remy enjoyed hearing me. Again and again, they took me to the edge and pulled me back. When

finally pushed the plug I'd spotted deep into my ass, I was so desperate that the stretching and slight stinging just added to my madness. I lost track of time and space, of everything but my men and what they were doing to me. My world narrowed to a kitchen island and I didn't even notice them undoing my restraints, I was so far lost in my pleasure.

My almost pleasure.

"Come on, sweetheart." Remy lifted me off the counter and eased my body onto my feet. When my eyes went wide at the sensation of my ass still being touched, he touched the plug and wiggled it just enough to make my knees buckle. "I'm not taking your ass for the first time on the kitchen counter to my room."

Wells growled when I took a few steps and moaned at the new sensation.

"We're getting more plugs. Something colorful to match our girl."

I wasn't too far gone to notice he'd called me their girl. I shifted in his direction and moved into his chest. Staring up at him, I felt an overwhelming amount of happiness and an eagerness I'd never known. Hope, with his "Yeah?"

He held me as he searched my face and slowly grinned. "Yeah."

Boone surprised us both by scooping me into his arms and rushing to the stairs. He called over his shoulder at his brothers. "Once again, my younger and more handsome brother steals the girl."

I kissed his neck as he carried me to Remy's room. "I'll give you anything I own if you lock them out and make me come."

Remy spoke from way closer than I thought he'd be. "Just for now, you should make you wait until tomorrow."

Fury was all I felt for the few moments it took me to realize he was Remy. At least, I thought he was.

erate to Boone put me down on Remy's bed and kissed me before moving and settling in one of the armchairs Remy had moved closer to the bed that they sat in the other and that just left Remy, staring me down like he was taking care. I to devour me whole and sending a flutter of butterflies racing through my pleasure stomach.

"This time you're going to be in control, sweetheart. You're going to get me to straddle me and take me deep in your ass, as slow as you need to get going full, stripped his clothes the rest of the way off and kissed me gently, nearly settling on the bed. "Facing me, M."

After. Up I watched as he prepared his length with lube and motioned me closer. I gasped when he pulled the plug out and pushed two of his lubed fingers into my oration inside me in its place. It still stung, but I knew I was going to have an orgasm to end all orgasms soon, so I didn't care. He removed his fingers and my then helped me settle over his hips. I held my breath as I leaned back, feeling him nudge my ass with the blunt head of his cock.

maybe? "Keep breathing. I promise you that I won't let anything hurt you, sweetheart."

Of course, he meant during sex, but my silly heart still thundered towards with more of that hopeful feeling. I braced my hands on his thighs, then watched as Remy's eyes dropped to my fully exposed sex. Seeing the desire in his gaze gave me the courage to lower myself over his shaft. I moved slowly and stopping to adjust to the feeling, I sank onto his cock and he held me in a way I'd never experienced before.

that, I When I'd taken his entire length, I panted like I'd run a marathon. I stayed still, poised on top of him like a cowgirl frozen in place. I kept my eyes on his face and watched as he struggled to stay still. His eyes were blazing as he looked at where we were joined.

g away “Tell them how it feels.” He growled the words out. “Tell them wh
l. Wellsdick is, M.”

coming I looked over my shoulder at Boone and Wells and saw they we
igh mynaked and stroking themselves as they watched me. “I feel so full. Str
I can feel him everywhere.”

oing to “Tell them where I am.” Remy flexed his thighs and his cock felt
to.” Hetwitched inside me. “Say all the dirty, filthy words that you’d never
beforeloud. Tell them I’m about to truly fuck your ass in that sweet
Memphis.”

loser. I I moaned. “Remy’s dick is in my ass. I’ve never had anyone there
fingersand he’s going to fuck me while y’all watch. He’s going to fuck
ave thehowever he wants and I’m going to take it all.”

ers and “Why are you going to take it all, Memphis?” His voice was harde
and feltgripped both of my thighs.

I somehow knew what he wanted. I could read it in the pinch of a
rt you,his eyebrows. “Because I belong to y’all.”

“That’s right, sweetheart. You belong to us.” He held my hips o
d awaybody, easing his shaft out of my ass slowly, and then pumped his hi
ghs andme. “This ass belongs to us.”

hunger I braced myself and held on while he took over, fucking me slowly
Movinguntil my cries turned desperate and needy. I’d never felt anything lik
et it fillhe thrust into my ass faster and harder, it was like there were nerve c
connected to my clit that were being massaged with every thrust. W
on andsting gone, there was only pleasure, but a different kind. I needed
ept mysomewhat.

as were Remy pulled out and flipped me over onto my hands and knees. At
of the bed, I was just a couple of feet away from Wells and Boon

ere mystares ravenous. As Remy sank his full length into me with one str
spoke over my moans to his brothers. “You waiting for an invitation?”
re both While Remy took me harder, Boone and Wells stood in front of
etched.took turns giving me their cocks. I took them deep and stroked w
wasn’t in my mouth, wanting to make them all feel as good as I felt.
t like it “Fuck, Memphis.” Remy’s growls were growing louder and his
say outgripping my hips were holding so tight I knew I’d be bruised. “Spre
accent,legs just a little more. Right there.”

Wells stroked deeper into my mouth, his tip at the back of my thr
beforethen deeper. I gagged around him and the feeling pushed him into h
my assorgasm. Pulling out until just the head rested on my tongue, he came
panting my name as he did.

er as he Remy stroked his fingers through my wetness and somehow man
push three of his big fingers into my core. The feeling of bei
nger ineverywhere sent me into another dimension. I screamed around Wel
and dug my nails into the bed under me. The feeling building in me
ver hisgoing to be stopped. I’d been teased enough.

ips into Boone slid his length into my mouth and held my head as he pum
hips faster. Remy shifted his hand and the second he touched my
at first,exploded like I never had before. My screams vibrated around Boone
e it. Asthat he came at the same time I did.

endings My body pulsed like one giant nerve as pleasure, hot and cons
/ith theslammed through me. I felt Remy coming and heard him shout my na
l more,my blood rushed through me so loudly that it was muffled and felt far
felt every muscle tighten and release, every pump of blood. Eve
the enddarkened at the edge of my vision and I sucked in a gasping breat
e, theirbefore collapsing forward.

oke, he Shaking and panting, I wasn't sure how much time passed or if I was still alive. Everything felt so perfect and peaceful.

me and At some point, I opened my eyes and saw that I was lying on Remy's chest. On one side, Boone watched me with a lazy smile on his face and on my other side, Wells stroked my back while humming quietly. Remy snuzzled my face into his chest and sighed happily.

ad your "There you are, love." Boone reached out and stroked my cheek. "How do you feeling?"

oat and I did a scan of my body and winced when I felt the familiar ache in my neck and the new ache in my backside. "Sore, but I'm good."

harder, "Very, very good." He winked and then rolled to the side of the bed. "Need water. Anyone else?"

aged to I forced myself to sit up and looked around the room before remembering that I'd lost my clothing downstairs. Groaning as I remembered that I had to pull that dress back on, I stood up on wobbly legs and reexamined myself to see if anything else felt sore.

"Where are you going?" Remy sat up, in a pair of black briefs that showed off his wonderful things for his body, and frowned.

clit, I I looked between the three of them and saw that they were all looking at me with varying degrees of disapproving expressions. "To the guest room."

It's late and I'm probably only going to be able to stay upright for a short little while. I want to get back before I'm forced to crawl across the ground like a snake."

away. I Wells snorted and stood up. "Sometimes you say things that make me wonder what part of the world you came from."

1 of air "You don't have to leave, Memphis. We're not kicking you out." Boone moved to the edge of the bed to watch me. He had nice feet, I realized.

as even put them on the floor and rested his elbows on his knees.

I looked back up at his face and smiled. "I'm not accusing you of top ofcoital rudeness, Remy. I know you're not kicking me out. I just figured his facetime for me to go. Heaven forbid I force the hottest bachelors in Chi uetly. I cuddle. I'll see y'all tomorrow. Thank you for tonight."

How are

my jaw

bed. "I

nbering

'd have

ned my

hat did

oking at

thouse?

another

ass like

ake me

' Remy

'd as he

put them on the floor and rested his elbows on his knees.

I looked back up at his face and smiled. “I’m not accusing you of post-coital rudeness, Remy. I know you’re not kicking me out. I just figured it was time for me to go. Heaven forbid I force the hottest bachelors in Chicago to cuddle. I’ll see y’all tomorrow. Thank you for tonight.”

46.

Boone

Sitting at the dining room table the next morning, I was mentally through what I needed to do to get ready for the week ahead at v was going to be a busy one. I had several surgeries that were going extensive and I wanted to be focused. Focus wasn't something I'd had since Memphis came into our lives, however.

I looked out the windows to see if I could see her, but of course I couldn't. Memphis came and went like a thief in the night. I told myself not to be angry about her repeated disappearing acts, but I was angry. I was pissed that she'd so thoroughly disrupted my life and seemed to be just fine with us.

After one of the hottest nights of my life, she'd strolled out of the house like she'd stopped by her local male escort service, had a little fun, and was on her way to had better places to be. She wasn't in better places, though. She was locked away in that fucking house, reading. At least that's what Beatrice told me she did all day. She didn't ask to go out anywhere, she didn't let anyone who wasn't on our staff, and she still hadn't worn any of the dresses we'd bought her, with the exception of the ballgowns.

I wanted to go back into her little hidey-hole and demand she come out and play, but after being in that house the first time, I wasn't sure if I was ready to go back. I wasn't a rip it off like a bandaid guy when it came to old wounds. I apparently preferred to pick at the scab, throw some salt on it, and just ignore it until the scab got itchy again.

The woman Remy had hired to do yoga with Memphis came strolling down the path from the guesthouse, a frown on her face. I fought a smile

tried to imagine what she was going to say. It was her second session in Memphis and the first one hadn't gone well. According to her, Mrs. Hall didn't appreciate the art of yoga. She'd just giggled the entire time.

I stood up and walked to the doorway to watch as the woman started going down the stairs just as Remy was coming down them. He spotted her and frowned a lot. "What now, Mrs. Hall?" He had half of his attention on his phone, but he looked like he'd run right over her if she didn't get out of the way.

"I can't work with her, Mr. Hawke. I'm sorry. I've tried. She refuses to take it seriously." Mrs. Hall followed Remy as he made his way toward the front door. He was dressed for a run and he was in just as foul a mood as I was, so I wouldn't have been surprised if he just sprinted away.

I wouldn't have been surprised if the determined Mrs. Hall ran right after him. "Will the yoga help with the birthing process?" He stopped and rubbed his temples. "If yes, then we'll triple your pay and go to every other week for sessions."

Mrs. Hall still hesitated. "And you'll speak to her?"

Remy's eyes narrowed on the woman. "She's a grown woman, Mr. Hawke. I'm not going to talk to her about behaving for you."

"Well, I'm not sure I can keep the job."

Remy looked back down at his phone and shrugged. "That's fine. Good day."

I made my way back to the table, grinning as I wondered what Memphis had done to the woman to make her turn down three times the normal exorbitant rate. I was still laughing to myself when Remy strolled into the room, already ranting.

"If she doesn't come out of that house soon, I'm going to bulldoze it and have it moved in here." He stared out the window and shook his head.

on with you eavesdropping. Somehow, our sweet little Memphis managed to
Memphiswoman off who lives by relaxation and meditation. I would be impres
wasn't so fucking frustrated."

l up the "She has to come out one day this week. A friend connected me wi
ed. OB/GYN. He'll be doing a house visit when he can stop by. A house
me and *this* house." I checked my phone. "Dr. Steve Braddock."

"A man?" Remy had the decency to look embarrassed by hi
uses to jealousy. "You know what? Great. I don't care. I don't care if it's a ge
ards the unicorn. I need to go burn off some of this energy."

ood as I I caught movement out of the corner of my eye and turned in time
I also Wells hurrying down the path. I could tell by the set of his shoulders
er him. was pissed. I sighed as I stood up. "Well, I can sit here and wond
bed his that's about or I can just go see. I'm going to go see."

week for "Have you always been such a nosey asshole?"

I grunted. "I see that you're following me."

He grunted back at me. "This is just the way I'm running today."

s. Hall. "Let's both save our pride and just go be nosey together." I pulled o
back door and groaned as a wave of heat hit me. "This had better be ge

We heard the shouting before we spotted them. Running the rest
Have away, we found Wells angrily shoving Pete away from Memphis, who
the ground, sweaty and bright red.

the hell "If you wanted to help, you should've sent her in before now!"

nes her "Stop, Wells. I'm fine. I just stood up too fast." Pulling herself to h
tamped Memphis swayed slightly before rushing over to a bush and throwing u

Pete looked almost as worried as I felt. "She was fine and then she
t so she over. I don't know what happened."

"I saw Wells looked like he was ready to punch the poor man so I pushed

to run towards him while I went to Memphis. She tried to wave me away
used if I rubbed her back and held my fingers to her inner wrist to check if he
was elevated.

th a top “How long have you been feeling sick?”

visit to She groaned as she stood up and wiped her mouth. “About a week.”

“So you weren’t just avoiding us?” I scooped her into my arms and
s clearer towards the main house. “You should’ve said something, Memphis
oddamn Remy pushed Wells towards the house and nodded to Pete
following us. “Get that doctor here, Boone.”

to see I looked back at Wells, who still looked shaken and turned to him
that heher while I make the call.”

er what Snapping to attention, he held Memphis close to his chest and breath
a hard sigh. “I saw you fall back. Do you understand how much you
scared me? I’ll live at least ten years less now.”

Memphis wrapped her arms around his neck. “You shouldn’t have
spying, Wells Hawke. This is called karma.”

pen the Wells sputtered in frustration before grunting at her. “Funny. I’m la
ood.” so hard right now.”

of the “You’re about as much fun as my yoga instructor right now, Seriou
was onShe yawned and then giggled. “Farts are funny. I’m not wrong about t
I?”

Remy looked at me and then back at her. “What are you talking
ier feet,Maybe we should take you to the hospital.”

up. “Oh, hush. I’m fine.” Memphis carried on like she hadn’t just s
just fellRemy by telling him to hush. “I’m just tired. I haven’t been able t
much. Morning sickness is not a good name for what really h
l Remyapparently. Anyway, farts. Mrs. Hall got mad because she was in the

y, but Iof showing me Rocking Baby or whatever and she passed gas. I l
er pulseWas I supposed to ignore it? I told her it was fine. We all fart. I
stomped out of there so fast, I wasn't sure if she was just that angry c
fart hadn't been just a fart. You know?"

Unfortunately, Dr. Braddocks's assistant answered the phone rig
carriedand I choked on a laugh while trying to convey the seriousness
s." situation to her. It was probably hard to believe while she listened
beforechuckling. Eventually, I got through to her, though, and she said she
Dr. Braddock call me right back. True to her word, he did call me in le
. "Taketwo minutes and agreed to come by within the hour.

With the doctor arranged, I was free to be consumed by the massi
hed outsitting on my chest that something was wrong with Memphis.

rou just

ve been

ughing

is Sal."

hat, am

about?

hocked

o sleep

appens,

middle

of showing me Rocking Baby or whatever and she passed gas. I laughed. Was I supposed to ignore it? I told her it was fine. We all fart. But she stomped out of there so fast, I wasn't sure if she was just that angry or if the fart hadn't been just a fart. You know?"

Unfortunately, Dr. Braddocks's assistant answered the phone right then and I choked on a laugh while trying to convey the seriousness of the situation to her. It was probably hard to believe while she listened to me chuckling. Eventually, I got through to her, though, and she said she'd have Dr. Braddock call me right back. True to her word, he did call me in less than two minutes and agreed to come by within the hour.

With the doctor arranged, I was free to be consumed by the massive fear sitting on my chest that something was wrong with Memphis.

47.

97.

Memphis

Seven weeks. That was how long it took me to feel murderous toward the guys. Seven weeks, two days, and fourteen hours to be certain I wasn't sure we'd make it to the fifteenth hour.

"What are you doing up?" Wells put his easel down and rushed over. "Back on the couch, Memphis."

"I'm just getting a new book to read, Wells." I gritted each word through my clenched jaw. "I thought we agreed that you weren't going to move in here to hover over me all day?"

Remy strolled in with his laptop and phone in one hand and a pregnancy pillow in the other. "Alright, the woman at the baby store said this is the best thing for everything. Why are you up?"

I put my hands on my hips and took a deep breath. "I don't need a doctor or babysitters! Y'all, I'm fine. I had that spell over a week ago and I've been fine ever since."

"Oh, is *fine* what we're aiming for?" Wells pointed to the couch. "I found a bunch of articles about the things that are happening in your body right now and you need to sit down."

Remy hesitated. "What's happening in her body?"

"I'll send you the links. The baby is sucking all her life out of me, basically." Shuddering, Wells pointed to the couch with both hands. "I'll carry you. You know I will."

"Guess who doesn't have surgeries this week, unless someone does a very selfish thing of having an emergency!" Boone preened his way into the library and stopped when he saw both of his brothers. "What the hell

two doing here? I'm trying to impress the lady with my willingness to health over others and you two are ruining it. Also, why aren't you towards couch, Memphis?"

exact. I stomped my foot and balled my hands into fists. "That's it! You're driving me up a wall! I'm not dying. Women have been having babies for a lot longer than you three have had the internet and an internet! I'm dehydrated from the morning sickness and maybe stumbled over a word last week, but I've been poked, prodded, and pinched in every orifice imaginable by your doctor friend and the nurse that you have coming today. Now, I don't mean to be rude, but if y'all don't leave me alone, I'm going to set this whole place on fire and walk out of here smiling. So, how will you fix it going to be? You leave me alone and I don't murder the three of your sleep? Or do you want to keep hovering over me and find out if I've gotten my pregnancy strength yet? I've got nothing but time, so y'all better know."

Silence stretched out after my tantrum and I had time to feel embarrassed. I read about it before the three of them shared a look and all started laughing like a pack of hyennas. I grumbled under my breath and snatched the pregnancy pillow from Remy before settling on the couch with it.

"Can you bless our hearts, too?" Boone wiped his eyes and gripped the sides of her.

I flopped into the embrace of the pillow and had to resist the urge to melt in pleasure as it held me just right. I didn't have a bump yet, one that comes from eating all of Chef Rork's food anyway, but that pillow was a miracle. "Looks like someone likes the pillow I brought her." Remy sank into the couch by my feet and lifted them into his lap so he could rub them.

put hersomething he'd been doing every day and it was one of the things I
on thegoing to complain about.

“So, are we pretending that whole foot stomp didn't happen?” Boone
'all areacross from us and grinned. “Or the threatening to murder us thing?”
es for a I nodded. “Only take from that the part where y'all stop hovering c
I waslike I'm going to die any second.”

bit last “I'm not listening to any of it.” Wells moved his easel next to the v
nd wayand arranged it just right. “I had to see you pass out and now I tense u
once atime you stand up. I'll stop worrying so much when you're not knoc
ne, I'manymore.”

what's “Okay, great, in five years from now, you might be normal ag
you ingroaned out loud when Remy hit an especially good spot. “And none
if I'vehave even tried to have sex with me. It's really rude.”

just let Boone laughed hard enough that I worried he might rupture som

Remy and Wells were almost as bad. I didn't see what was funny, th
irressedwas being treated like a injured bird and all I wanted to do was flip th
g like abird after a week of it.

ignancy “And Bea told me all about how she thinks there might be shadow

in this house. The same house you keep dragging me to every mo
ped hisdon't know what the hell a shadow person is, but do I look like I want

out? You're probably going to get our baby possessed by one of the
o moanfreaks.” I sucked in a giant gulp of air and kept going. “The only r

wasn'thaven't truly lost it yet is because you set this freaking Memphis
acle. library straight out of a fairy tale, amazing cushions, snacks, and mass:

into the Remy's hands had frozen and Boone's laughter went silent. We

It wascomically paused with a glass of water halfway to his mouth. I frov
them. What was their deal?

wasn't "You said *our* baby." Boone sat back on the couch and smiled at
think you might like us more than you're letting on."

one sat I thought over my words and realized I *had* said that. Ting
embarrassment went all over me and I would've run out of there if I
over me been tangled in my new pillow and Remy's hands. "Nope."

Remy started rubbing my feet again. "She definitely likes us."

window "Let's focus on the shadow people. That's a much more interesting
p every I crossed my arms over my chest and looked away from them. I did
oked up the direction of the conversation and I just wanted to drop it. "Or w
talk about how none of you want to have sex with me now."

gain." I "Let's talk about that." Remy dug his thumb into the arch of my f
of you raised his eyebrows at me. "You ran and hid after we had sex. You ch
to tell us about how sick you were because you were in hiding mo
ething, didn't even stay the night. Since we're talking about it, we could al
ough. I about how you haven't made any moves on us, either."

rem the I frowned. "I can barely stand up without one of you freaking c
made a move, you'd shoot me down faster than I could cry about it
people wasn't hiding..."

ring. I "I call bullshit." Boone met my gaze. "You're a chicken. You run a
: to find every time we get a little closer."

n. Sick "According to the gossip pages, that was y'all's number. A new
eason I every day of the week? That screams fear of commitment if you ask
trap. A was reaching, but it was okay because I'd stretched plenty beforehand.
ages?" "What have the gossip pages said in the last two months?" Remy
lls was me his phone. "I doubt your vintage phone has internet, so feel free
vned at mine."

"Hey! Don't bring my phone into this. It's sentimental." I push

me. “Iphone away. “I haven’t looked and I’m not going to. I don’t see y’all night. If you went out with super models still, I wouldn’t know. I would like to know, either.”

Wells raised his voice from across the room. “You’re kidding, right?”

I buried my face in my hands and groaned. “I’m sorry. I’m just cranky. I ran out of candy and I think I might be hormonal already. What’s the topic?” research say about how early pregnancy rages start, Wells? Not that science hasn’t likely points weren’t valid. Y’all need to worry less and give me space to breathe. And if you want to have sex, you should probably get that started.

“If you don’t want to look, just listen to me.” Remy’s voice was dangerously low. “Another woman hasn’t crossed my mind since I met you. If I’m not in you, I’m obsessing about when I can be in you again. You’re pissy and making my office staff hate me because you’re hiding from me. I miss seeing your smile. There’s no one else. You already know I’m wrapped around you though, because I think you know that you have us wrapped around your finger. You’re lucky I’m finding this rage sexy. Otherwise I might not be. And I’m being threatened so much.”

All the rest of my crankiness melted away. “You miss my smile?” “Don’t make me regret saying it. Now get over here and let me get a kiss.” He tried to pull me towards him, but the pregnancy pillow blocked him and didn’t allow for much movement. “I’m going to regret buying this, I can already tell.”

I pushed it aside and crawled into his lap. “Promise y’all will stop hating me so much?”

I got a bunch of grumbled nonsense and no guarantee that they’d let me be. However, I did get multiple orgasms, so it made the first issue seem less important.

ll every
ouldn't

?"

anky. I
's your
ome of
pace to
ted."

ce was
neeting
gain. Or
from us
w that,
id your
t enjoy

this sex
im, but
1 extra

overing

ave me
m a lot

Remington

Dr. Braddock came out of the guesthouse smiling, as he did most time when leaving Memphis's side. I wanted to punch the guy in the face, but Boone swore that Braddock was the best and that he was married to his wife of ten years. Still, Memphis had unlocked a jealousy in me and I didn't like his shit-eating grin as he left her side.

"Everything good?" I stretched my neck from side to side and tried to release some of the tension I felt at every checkup. "Did she mention that she was up again last Tuesday?"

Laughing gently, he put his hand on my shoulder. "Why don't you just come into the appointment, Remington? It might make you feel better if I come with me checking everything out."

I frowned at the window of the guesthouse, where Memphis stood with her hands on her hips. "Apparently, I *overreact* and make things *stressful*."

"You're going to be a first time dad. You're supposed to be this way," he shrugged easily. "When Sheila was pregnant with our first, I spent most of the night waking up almost hourly to check on her. This last one, though? I think we both forgot she was pregnant until it was time for the delivery."

I shook my head as Memphis stuck her tongue out at me and disappeared farther into the house. "It's complicated."

"You sound just like your brother. We ran into each other at the hospital and we grabbed lunch in the cafeteria. I wanted to know more about Memphis's situation here and he said that exact phrase a dozen times." Braddock looked back at the house and his grin grew even larger. "It's a tough one. One of the ones who stares into the needle just to spite the

having your blood drawn. You're going to worry, of course, but just remind yourself that she's going to be fine."

of the "What's everyone's deal with settling for fine?" I ran my hands through my hair and gestured towards the main house. "Come on. I'll walk you happily "The thing I will say, and it's none of my business so feel free to

s streak that, is that pregnancies are easier when there's stability and security stress on the mom is always a good thing." He walked along the trail to ease me and stopped in the middle of the maze. "I'm also supposed to tell you she can work in the flower beds. She didn't want me to add the part that shouldn't do it during the hottest parts of the day, but I'm going to.

you just garden and do whatever else she wants, as long as it's not dangerous for to see watch her in the heat, especially as her body continues to change and grow

I looked at the fountain Mom had installed decades earlier and tried with her sound bitter as I replied. "Stability and security. Sure."

' "Most men go through this stuff alone. You have your brothers say." He side. Lean on them. And talk about your shit. It's obvious that each of you have issues that you don't touch. I'm a big supporter of therapy. I go to I think month, unless work happens. All this brooding and talk of complacency won't help you." Patting me on the shoulder once more, he walked

appeared "I'll see myself out, Remington. Go back and hang out with Memphis.

I lifted my hand at his retreating back and sank onto one of the beds in the hospital instead of going back to Memphis. Thinking about stability and security about tripped me up. We could give Memphis all the financial stability and security she could ever want or need. It was everything else that scared me.

She's a "Hey. I just passed Braddock. He thought you were going to see Memphis. I'm pain of yet here you are." Wells sat down next to me and looked over at me.

to try to coax the little minx out for an afternoon of debauchery.

I'm getting the vibe that you're not in that right headspace for that."

through I gave him a look. "Any headspace is right for that."

out." "Well?" He smiled. "You're still not moving."

tell me I picked up a pebble and rolled it between my fingers. "Braddock. Less some shit about taking care of our issues and giving Memphis stability beside in my head about it now."

you that "And now you want me to be in my head about it, too? Fine. Show that she the class." Stretching his legs out in front of him, he sighed. "But let her think we can work through our shit before Memphis takes her afternoon. Just you know catching her a little sleepy makes her so much nicer these days." I did know that. Her napping was new and before her nap, she was a

and not all purrs and nuzzles. After her nap, she was refueled to take on the world and we seemed to be the world she wanted to take on most days. "Something that your has changed in the last few months. It seemed so natural, but what if you're not able to give someone that emotional shit? What if we didn't have someone once a time in a stable family to learn how to do it? Am I just going to wake up one day and be fucking Don?"

ahead. Wells jerked his head around to face me. "Jesus, Remy. There's no chance in hell of you becoming Don."

benches "We're bringing three kids into the world that we didn't even want to do without security planning on putting them off on nannies and after that will be back to security school. How am I not Don?"

"You're just not. Maybe our intentions sucked, but I think we can do something more with Memphis. It doesn't have to be what it started as."

"I was We can just pretend that shit never was and leave it in the past and focus on everything else." He looked down at his hands. "What would we get out of that?"

ery, but rehashing old shit, Remy? You want to talk about Mom's affair and how
left us to sneak out to him and got killed in the process? You want
about Don's verbal abuse or the physical abuse we dealt with at that time?
There's so much bad shit we could talk about, but I've got to tell you,
ck said it sounds like a lot of fun."

ity. I'm I tossed the pebble into the fountain and rubbed at a knot forming
back of my neck. "I don't know, Wells. I don't want to leave a v
re with destruction."

do you "Then don't." He stood up. "Our paths weren't determined by w
on nap? parents did. We make our own choices and if you choose to take care
ays." people around you, you will."

a kitten, I stayed on the bench, firmly planted in my shitty mood. "What w
world, even look like?"

o much "What would what look like?"

I'm not "The four of us. I don't give a shit about the public reaction to the t
enough us, but what about for Memphis? What about her family? Friends? F
up one people treat her when they know about our relationship?" I got ang
thinking about what people could say. "More importantly, how does it

s not a I don't see a lot of situations like ours walking around, happily n

Before moving back into this house, we were all living apart and do
. We're own thing. Are we just going to live together forever?"

boarding Wells laughed, a big laugh that shook his shoulders and made his fa
red. After he calmed down a bit, he shook his head at me. "We've spe
there's months with Memphis and we're this crazy about her. Add another fou
out as. and nine months, Remy. Do you think you're going to want to let her g
st with all that time with her?"

et from The thought didn't sit right with me. "No."

low she “Then stop fucking worrying. When the brother with anxiety issues
to talk you to stop worrying, you have to know you’re being ridiculous.” He
school?back over and pulled me into a short hug. “I’ve spent so many years
none of for us to feel this connected. After the crash, all I wanted was to fit
family again. Feeling myself dying and having this clear picture of what
going at the could’ve been like for the three of us made me fucking hate myself for
waste of time. I was the one who left. I chose to be gone and not see the two of
you run away. If you think I’m going to give a shit about what anyone
has to say about us after getting a second chance to be a family again, you’re in
error. I don’t care that it’s not conventional. Nothing about us ever was.”

I squeezed his arm and blew out a shaky breath. “Thank you. I need
to hear that.”

He jerked his thumb towards the guesthouse. “Are you coming? As
much as I love talking to you, I love touching Memphis more.”

Smiling slowly, I nodded. “I’m coming. A word of warning, though
how do you still mad at me for hiding her gardening tools.”

“Well, she’s pissed at me for popping by the library one too many times
to make sure she was okay.” He laughed. “She’s most angry at Boone, I
married. He caught her at the top of the sliding ladder dusting books and lost his
mind. I can work with that. Sorry, Boone, but you’re about to get thrown
off the bus for the good of your brothers.” We both jogged towards
the guesthouse, eager to get Memphis back to our house so we could meet
them a few more times.

in years

go after

“Then stop fucking worrying. When the brother with anxiety issues tells you to stop worrying, you have to know you’re being ridiculous.” He came back over and pulled me into a short hug. “I’ve spent so many years waiting for us to feel this connected. After the crash, all I wanted was to feel like family again. Feeling myself dying and having this clear picture of what life could’ve been like for the three of us made me fucking hate myself for a long time. I was the one who left. I chose to be gone and not see the two of you. I ran away. If you think I’m going to give a shit about what anyone thinks about us after getting a second chance to be a family again, you’re insane. I don’t care that it’s not conventional. Nothing about us ever was.”

I squeezed his arm and blew out a shaky breath. “Thank you. I needed to hear that.”

He jerked his thumb towards the guesthouse. “Are you coming? As much as I love talking to you, I love touching Memphis more.”

Smiling slowly, I nodded. “I’m coming. A word of warning, though, she’s still mad at me for hiding her gardening tools.”

“Well, she’s pissed at me for popping by the library one too many times to make sure she was okay.” He laughed. “She’s most angry at Boone, though. He caught her at the top of the sliding ladder dusting books and lost his shit.”

“I can work with that. Sorry, Boone, but you’re about to get thrown under the bus for the good of your brothers.” We both jogged towards the guesthouse, eager to get Memphis back to our house so we could make her ours a few more times.

49.

49.

Memphis

“Taste the gravy. If it’s bad, don’t tell me.” I fluttered around the kitchen, half excited and half terrified that I’d made a huge mess and was going to make a fool of myself. “No, if it’s bad, do tell me. I’ll just put it outside until they leave.”

Bea tried it and smiled. “It’s good.”

I frowned at her. “You’re lying.”

Swearing, she spit it out in the sink and gagged. “How much salt did you put in that?”

I grabbed the pan and shoved it out the back door. “I added it once, then forgot I added it. Then I added it again. Maybe twice. I don’t know what I’m freaking out.”

“If you’re not a good cook, why’d you have this bright plan?”

“Hey! I didn’t say I’m not a good cook. I said I forgot how many times I salted the gravy. There’s a big difference.” I stared at the pork chops that were overcooked and the mashed potatoes that were more like cement than anything else. At one point, there’d been rolls, but those went about as well as the gravy. “Okay, I’m not a good cook. I wanted to make a good dinner, though. You know?”

She looked around, too. “Oh, you’re making a gesture.”

I swung my dish towel at her and sent her out of the kitchen. “This dinner is perfect. I’m not worried at all. Dinner’s ready, I’m ready, and you’re leaving. Everything is perfect.”

“Just because of that last comment, I shouldn’t tell you that your dinner is still wrapped in a towel.”

I grabbed my head and groaned when I felt that I really did still have a towel on my head. “Oh, shit. Okay, this is not a problem. I’ll just step into the bathroom really fast and brush it out. I probably even have time to blow-dry it. Who shows up perfectly on time for dinner, anyway?”

I’ll just A knock sounded at the door and I looked up and straight into Boone’s amused eyes. He opened the door and stood at the threshold. “I like the way you think. Bea cackled as she grabbed her purse and moved towards the door. “I’m sure the kids don’t do anything I wouldn’t do.”

did you “That leaves like two things.” I laughed at her expression and said goodbye. “Have a good night. Be safe driving home.”

rice and She wedged past Wells and Remy, stopping behind them to fan herself. I’m sure then she was gone. Leaving me alone with the guys, just like I’ve always had her to do. I swallowed hard and yanked the towel off my head, not wanting to do it with myself.

times I “It’s so nice out that I thought we could eat on the back patio.” I went towards the back door and then remembered I’d shoved the gravy into the pot there like an idiot. “Um, just let me grab one thing.”

as well Remy slowly came farther into the house and looked around. “The way you must like you being here. When I checked to make sure the place was ready before you moved in, they were not this full of life.”

I shoved the hot pot into the oven and pretended nothing had happened. “Plants like to be around humans. I know it sounds crazy, but it’s true. I’ve found out, say if you talk to them or sing to them, they grow faster, too.”

“I bet you do sing to these plants, don’t you?” Boone walked over and wrapped his arms around my waist. “I saw that pot. What was in there?” I turned my face to avoid his kiss. “Did you see a pot? Are you sure?” He pulled my mouth to his and kissed me so thoroughly my toes

have a “Yep.”

Wells kissed my shoulder as he moved past to the patio. “You look beautiful.”

I remembered my hair and slapped my hands over my head. “I’ll let Boone’s back.”

Remy followed me into the bathroom while Boone and Wells stood outside. He leaned against the doorframe and watched as I pulled my hair into a bun. “Wells was right. You look stunning, Memphis. The way you were made for you.”

I smiled and walked into his arms. “I’m so nervous.”

“Why? You have nothing to be nervous about.” He kissed the top of my head and rested his hand at the top of my ass. “We definitely know you like us now, but that’s no reason to be nervous.”

“The only giant crush is going to be outpush a piano on your head. How’s that sound?”

“Sounds like a great time. Ten out of ten, would recommend.” He kissed me then, slowly making love to my mouth the way he’d quickly cleaned made me feel extra needy. When he pulled away, I sighed breathily. “for dinner?”

I forced myself back to reality and took his hand as I told him what they made. “I think it’s going to be bad, though. I’m nervous.”

“It’ll be great, Memphis, because you took the time and effort to do something like this for us.” He patted my ass and nodded to the back door. “I’ll be out there. Unless you need me to do anything in here.”

I could tell he was not a fan of being in the house. None of them curled. I hoped that changing their perspective on the place, letting them see

new light, would help them move past hating the guesthouse. It was a
ou lookplace and I couldn't help wondering if being in a place their me
painstakingly put together could start to heal some of the anger t
e rightseemed to hold for her. They'd been so young when she died that I c
they'd truly gotten to know her, but you couldn't help but learn about
s wentHawke while existing in the guesthouse. She was everywhere.

still wet "Go on. I'll be right out."

at dress He stopped just outside of the door and grinned at me. "You're bare
the kitchen and knocked up. I think there's a joke in there somewhere."

I fought a laugh, but seeing his smile killed my resolve. "Get o
of myidiot."

w how Not even ten minutes later, he was probably wishing that he'd gone
We'reother door. The silence stretched on as they each tried to cut their porl
and chew them. The chewing was the worst. The meat never gave up.
when Ishort amount of time, the water pitcher I'd put out was empty and even
on the table was dry.

: kissed Wells coughed and made a choking sound while reaching for h
learnedempty water glass. I watched as his eyes widened in panic and gaspe
What'sinto the kitchen and grabbed more water from the tap, but by the tin
back outside, he was fine.

t all I'd I looked between them and narrowed my eyes at the guilty looks o
faces. I was confused about what was going on until I looked down
t to doplates and saw that they were empty. My mouth fell open and I plan
k door.hands on my hips.

"I know y'all didn't have Wells pretend to choke so you could thr
were. Ifood away." I moved around the patio looking for their uneaten scrap
it in agoing to find this food and shove it down your throats."

special I must've gotten close because Boone's arms wrapped around me and he had lifted me off my feet. I wiggled uselessly and slapped at his arms. "You're all jerks! I can't believe you made me think I'd killed Wells. I should kick your asses and pound your dumb asses." "I should kick your asses and pound your dumb asses."

Maggie He settled with me on his lap and held me close. "I'm sorry, love. You're the most beautiful woman I've ever seen, you're smart, and you make me laugh, which isn't easy, but your food would've killed us all if we ate it. I'm so sorry about the foot in the door. I crossed my arms over my chest and pouted. "I was nervous. It's my fault."

but, you "Why were you nervous, sweetheart?" Remy pushed his plate away from himself and shuddered. "Was it to eat the food?"

out the "Not funny, Remy." I relaxed into Boone's embrace and sighed. "I know that all the chicks don't like being here, but you were willing to come anyway. I want to be perfect. I thought if I could make it better, maybe you all would consider staying here sometime. The big house scares me and this house doesn't scare you all. Should we just put a bed in the maze?"

his own Wells smiled softly at me. "You want to have sleepovers?"

d. I ran I knew I was blushing, but I did want sleepovers. Having to leave the house to sleep alone at night when all I wanted was to cuddle sucked. There's no other way to put it. It sucked. "I do."

on their Boone pressed a kiss to my neck. "Then we'll do sleepovers."

at their Grinning back at him, I wiggled excitedly. "Really?"

ited my He grunted. "Careful, love."

"Too heavy?" I tried to stand, but he held me tighter.

ow my "Not too heavy. You're dancing all over my dick, though, and I'm not ready to be spread across this table, I suggest you be still." He looked at me and smiled.

me and dramatic sigh when I stopped moving around. “I know I asked for t
'all are I'm still sad it stopped.”

ck your “Should we order a pizza? Since I botched dinner and y'all probabl

Carter with my cooking.” I saw the confusion on their faces and poi
You're the place where I'd arranged stones leading up the side of the fence.
e Remy the cat Carter. He wants to be back here with me but he doesn't like
it.” inside. I might've tried that. Twice. It did *not* go well. I thought that j
not my over the fence over and over again might hurt his old man bones, so
him a little ladder. You probably just fed him my cooking, though, an
y from probably run away when he finds out what a failure I am as a chef.”

As if I'd called him, Carter appeared at the top of the fence and froz
I know he saw the guys. One of his ears was half gone and he had a large s
anted it kept part of his head bald, but I thought the little guy was adorable. A
onsider with bright green eyes, he would've been the perfect cat for a hal
presses party.

When Carter hissed at the guys but strutted down the stairs and ove
anyway, I reached down and scratched behind his ears. He jumped
em and table like he always did to get his loving and walked over to the pl.
was no still had my pork chop on it. He sniffed it and then gave a big, dramati

“Hey! That's rude.” I got up from Boone's lap and reached inside t
to get his food. “I don't gag when I open your wet food. How did I
surrounded by four males who have no manners?”

Remy stared at me with an unreadable expression as I dumped C
food onto a plate and replaced my plate with his. He watched as
unless stooped over to eat his food at the table and then looked back up at m
et out a have a cat?”

I rolled my eyes. “No. *You* have a cat. He's a stray. Well. He *was*

his, but He hangs out back here most days now. Sophie delivers his food with
and Jake is bringing over a cat tree that his friend is getting rid of.”

y killed “Everyone knows about the cat?” Remy looked at his brothers. “I
intended to two?”

“I call Wells shook his head. “Not a clue.”

coming Boone stared at the cat and tilted his head to study it. “You have a
umping life back here, don’t you? All those weeks you hid away from us, I
I built you were all alone, but you created your own family, didn’t you?”

and he’ll I shrugged. “You have really great people here. My brothers are
and for the first time in my life, I found myself with nothing to do dur
e when day. I didn’t have the excuse of being overwhelmed and too busy to
car that making connections with people. I like it.”

ll black “We all have those excuses.” Wells looked around the yard and ble
lowe en hard sigh. “Is the bed comfortable?”

Grinning, I hurried to his side and hugged him tight. “It’s the best be
r to me Way better than Remy’s.”

on the He pulled me down onto his lap. “Just tell me one thing.”

ate that “Anything.”

c gag. “How the hell are you scared of the main house but this cat doesn’t
he doo you out?” He looked at Boone. “Right?”

end up I rolled my eyes. “Carter isn’t scary. He’s a sweet boy. The main
however, feels like it wants to eat my soul. Carter would never.”

Carter’s Remy shifted and Carter hissed at him before going back to his

Carter With a stern look, he shook his head at me. “Yep. Seems like a sweet
a. “You me.”

a stray.

th mine

Did you

n entire

thought

i't here

ring the

o avoid

w out a

ed ever.

't creep

. house,

dinner.

: boy to

50.

50.

Memphis

They all stayed the night that night. It was different, quieter than I Sex was slow and sweet. It felt like our first time together in way, with a new understanding. They knew I wanted them to stay o that I was choosing them to come into the little family that had forme guesthouse. It was special to me and I think that made it special fo While we laid in bed after, they talked more about their mom and the had on their lives in the big picture.

I'd so easily managed to shove my guilt for my lies deep, deep do when I listened to them talk about their trust issues with women after the sordid details of their mom's affair, I couldn't stop the gui bubbling up and threatening to choke me. I wanted to be open and with them, to tell them exactly what I really was. I was terrified of the the real me disgusting, though.

They'd sought out a certain kind of woman because that was wh wanted. If I opened up about being a high school dropout and all loser, I couldn't imagine them being excited to take me to their fanc anymore. I would be the dirty little secret that their rich friends woul accept. I was Trailer Park Princess and there was nothing I could d that. I still had one brother in prison and one in rehab. I was stil comfortable cleaning their house than being in it.

We were three months into our time together and the last month ha amazing. They annoyed me half to death with their hovering and managing my health, but I could tell it was out of fear. They'd fa fragility of life head-on multiple times and I wasn't sure that was sor

you ever got over. I'd been able to ignore most of their mothering and of our time together just fell into place. They took care of me completely normal. They set what I called Memphis traps and got me to rest by giving me a new amazing massages and orgasms. So. Many. Orgasms.

However and I knew myself well enough to know that I'd not only screwed up the money, but I'd potentially screwed up my life. I was in love with them. Part of me had been since the moment I'd spotted them. If I really thought about it, it would've taken me more than money to sign away five years of my life. After getting to know them and becoming closer, I knew I was in love with them. My silly little heart was fully in and I also knew that eventually hearing would break. I didn't want to lie to people I loved. I'd watched my parents do that enough for a lifetime. I'd be honest with them when I couldn't stay honest the lie anymore, and then I'd probably find myself homeless, in breach of a very expensive contract, and alone again. Only it would be worse than experiencing the fun and peace I had with the guys. Being alone after that would be like standing in one of those experimental sound rooms around there's absolute silence. Most people don't last ten minutes in those rooms. My galas would be looking at forever.

Still, I knew I'd tell them. That budding hope I felt around them would convince me that they'd love me back and it would all be okay, but it was still better than that. I lived in the real world, despite currently existing in a world that felt like a fairytale.

Finding myself alone in bed the next morning wasn't surprising. I woke up early and did productive things, even the artist. I was deliciously tired from our night together and starving. I found one of their T-shirts laid out at the end of the bed for me and pulled it to my face so I could inhale the citrus. It was Remy's.

the rest I pulled it over my head and grabbed the latest book I was reading
stantly. heading downstairs. Seeing the back door open surprised me. Seeing
ing me sitting at the table with the newspaper spread out in front of him surpris
even more.

he con to He must've heard me and looked back over his shoulder. "Good m
h them. There are muffins out here."

thought I hurried out to sit next to him and crammed half a muffin into my
ears of right away. I watched him while I ate and noticed the way he played w
I loved edge of the paper while reading the articles. His hands were always mo
ually, I was still waking up so I ate in silence and then finished my juice
ents do opening my book and pretending to read.

tomach I watched his eyes move over the lines of the paper and saw his
ch of a pinch when he didn't like something he'd read. After a few more min
se after that, I started feeling left out and sighed. I'd gotten used to having a
er the attention so fast that sitting across from him without touching him or
where him touch me was odd. Before my feelings could get hurt, I stood
ooms. I gently lifted his arms and slid into his lap. He brought his arms bac
around me and folded the paper in half so he could still read it. I
tried to move against my shoulder as he silently read along.

I knew I opened my book and read happily against his chest until he said he
in what go to work soon. I was still feeling emotional so I twisted around so
straddling him and ran my hands over his chest. "Thank you for
They all breakfast with me. I think it might be my favorite breakfast of all time.
sly sore He dropped the paper and gently tossed my book onto the table or
d out at it. "I bet you say that to all your boyfriends."

e them. Shaking my head with a big smile on my face, I innocently played w
shirt buttons. "Nope. Just you."

before If he noticed me pop open the top few buttons on his shirt, he did
Boonelike it. “So you think I’m your boyfriend?”

ised me I jerked when he asked and a button went flying. Wincing, I patted the
I’d just ruined on his shirt. “I didn’t say that.”

orning. “I think you implied it.” He looked down at his shirt and raised his
at me. “I felt that.”

r mouth “If anything, *you* implied it.” I scooted back on his legs so I could re
with the belt. “Now, tell me about your work schedule this morning. Is it
oving. I Light? Are you going to be performing surgeries in the next hour?”

before “It’s not too bad. I’m meeting patients today.” He stared at me pul
belt free and unbuttoning his pants. “I think I can fit in one more pati
mouth morning, though.”

utes of I slipped my hand into his pants and cupped his already hard bulge.
all their do I need to do to get you to see me this morning, Doctor Hawke
having important and I’ll do anything you want me to.”

up and His face twisted in pleasure as he stared at me. “Anything?”

k down I licked my lips and nodded. “I know how busy you are. I’d make it
his lips your while. I can pay you. As much as you want.”

“It’s not money I want, love.” He yanked my shirt over my head
e had to cupped my breasts. “It’s your body.”

o I was I pretended to be scandalized. “Doctor Hawke! I can’t...I can’t let
having me like this.”

” Pinching my nipples, he kissed me hungrily. “You can and you a
n top of already seen it all, love. Doctor Hawke is very busy, though, you’re g
have to give me what I want fast.”

with his My heart raced. “Tell me what to do, Doctor Hawke. I’ve never
anything like this.”

didn't act His hand cupped my sex and he felt how wet I was. "You want me, soaking wet for me. Take my dick out."

the spot I pretended to be shy as I pulled him out of his pants and looked at his angry looking length. He was painfully hard. "Now what? Do you want me to suck it?"

He grabbed my hips and lifted me. "Oh, we'll have time for that later. Right now, I'm going to fuck you."

heavy? I didn't have to act as I cupped my breasts and cried out as he entered in one deep stroke. "Doctor Hawke!"

ling his He swore and stood up. "I'm going to fuck you like you need to get this. That's why you really came to see me, isn't it? You weren't even wearing your panties."

"What I gasped as he swiped his arm across the table and sent everything flying. He locked my legs behind his back and shook my head, still able to play the game for a few more seconds, until he started fucking me and I lost a little of my function. "Doctor Hawke, you're so big in me. God, how are you fitting in?"

had and He gave a dark chuckle against my ear and nipped me. "Yeah, so loud so my brothers can stop wondering who's the biggest."

you see I tugged at his hair and laughed. "You're a fool."

He tugged mine right back. "You fucking love it. Now hold on and let me have my way with you before I have to go."

going to I flushed at his words and held on as he did as he said. I ended up lying back flat on the table and my legs spread and held open by him as he performed his hips in and out of me. It was a quickie, through and through, and he was coming with a shout.

You're Boone came in me a second later and stood over me panting from exertion. "Fuck. You're going to kill me one of these days."

lown at I moaned as he idly played his fingers over my clit. "You want backwards, Doctor Hawke. I will surely be fucked to death at some point."

"I never got into the doctor kink before, but I'm going to be bringing it back again and again. Say it again." He looked down with his blue eyes on full force and I would've said anything he wanted right then.

urred me "Doctor Hawke, you're my favorite doctor and I can't wait to come for more of your attention and time." I giggled when he smiled at me. "I fucked. When he pulled out of me after, I tried to sit up, but he pressed his hand against my stomach and held me down. I watched as he watched his seed slowly come from my sex. "God, Boone! Don't just watch that!"

g flying He dipped his fingers through my lower lips and pushed them inside me. "Before you, I never came in anyone. I'm not sorry anymore. See how I come in you is the hottest thing I've ever seen and this is where it belongs. My brain melted back against the table and covered my face with my hands. "Does that make me want to cry? Talking about your come is not ruining Boone Hawke, but somehow you just gave me butterflies."

ream it He pulled me into his arms and carried me into the house. "I'm going to tell Remy and Wells that I gave you butterflies. Little brother wins again." I groaned. "And you ruined it."

l let me He walked me into the shower and put me down while he undressed. "Come here and let me wash your back."

with my I waited until the water was warm to join him. "Do you really want me to wash your back or are you trying to be very late for your next appointment?"

His erection pressing into my side answered for him. He softly kissed

om theand pressed his forehead to mine. “I can do both.”

My stupid feelings got the best of me and I had to squeeze my eyes
have itto keep him from seeing that I was tearing up. I lifted my mouth to hi
int.” and he kissed me, even gentler.

ing this “What’s wrong, love?”

edroom I groaned. “Don’t notice. I’m just hormonal.”

“Is little Boone making you sad?” He cupped his hand over my
ae backnormal belly and it was the first time any of them had done anything
iappily.“Oh, shit. I made it worse.”

nd over I laughed through my tears and pressed my hand over his
/ly spillinterlacing our fingers and moving it away. “I just have a lot of big f
these days.”

nto me. “What kind of big feelings?” He stroked my face with his other ha
ing myseemed so calm when my own heart was pounding away.

ngs.” “Just...things I’ve never felt before.” I pressed my forehead to hi
. “Why“Even feeling safe enough to crawl into your lap. I’ve never had that
mantic,I’ve never felt safe enough to take what I want or trust the other pe
give it to me, if that makes sense.”

oing to He tucked his finger under my chin and lifted my face to his. F
in.” waited until I opened my eyes to look at him before speaking. “It
sense. It’s a new feeling for me, too. It goes both ways, love.”

ressed. “Did I ruin your fun?”

He pressed his hips into me and let me feel that he was still hard. “I
want toseem like it.”

orning I playfully pushed at his chest. “You stayed hard while I was
That’s something you’re going to need to get looked into.”

sed me He cupped my ass and lifted me so just my tiptoes were on the grou

had a lot less to do with you crying than it did with you crying while
is closed and wet.”

is again

mostly

like it.

before

feelings

and. He

s chest.

before.

erson to

le even

. makes

Doesn't

crying?

and. “It

had a lot less to do with you crying than it did with you crying while naked and wet.”

Memphis

I sat next to Bea on the couch and looked at the door for the hundredth time. Any second I was expecting it to come flying open with the cops chasing the guys in or the guys chasing the kids in. I wasn't sure who was the top dog in that match. Bea and I had organized another play date with the guys, to prepare them, as we told them. Really, Bea needed a night off, and I was eager to see her while she wasn't griping at me for helping her clean up.

Instead of hunkering down like spies in the guardhouse, though, we were in the guesthouse, unable to see what was happening. Jake had the night watch and he'd really cramped our style by refusing to let us use the security cameras without him. There was another guard, a man named Nico, but he was a no-show. I knew if I even suggested he let me spy on the guys that he'd probably tie me up with zip-ties until he'd run a full background check on me.

"Stop it, Memphis. You're making me nervous." Bea drained her glass of sweet tea and made another face at me. "And you just drink it like the pure sugar. Has Doctor Braddock checked you for diabetes yet?"

I scowled and pulled my own tea glass closer. "I don't have diabetes."

"And you know this because he checked you?" It was her turn to glower at the door. "I thought I heard something."

"Should we just go and see what's happening? It's been two hours. I can't handle the suspense." When she nodded, I lunged off the couch and stopped to groan at the heartburn threatening to make me vomit or cry. Or both. "How do I have five more months of this? My body is trying to kill me."

She made baby noises at my belly. “But it’s so cute, though! Look at this cute little baby bump. I wish you’d just let me hold it. It wouldn’t be weird.”

I glared at her. I hadn’t known what to expect, not really. Doctor Brando had mentioned I’d possibly start showing at three months, but when I thought maybe I was going to be one of those people who don’t put on a lot of baby weight and I’d maybe celebrated a little too hard with a cheer. Overnight, the bump had dropped out of nowhere. Then, it just grew by the day. I was having a hard time fitting into my clothes.

“Stop talking about it.” I grimaced as my throat burned with acid. “I’ll be right off me again in another couple of months when my back hurts.”

“I’ll mark it on my calendar now.”

“You don’t have a calendar. Sometimes I think you might not even watch.” I slipped my feet into the slippers I’d started wearing for Christmas. Wells had found them for me through some online boutique and they fit like heaven. “You make me look punctual. And that’s really saying something.”

“You’re getting on my nerves. Have you been laid today?” She asked, Bea. “failed to tease me about my relationship with the guys. “If you have, I want to tell me about it?”

I laughed and pushed her out the front door. “You’re such a pervert. I can’t hear a thing about being a pervert.” She cackled as I walked away. “You shouldn’t have told me that one. I’ll never let it go. I didn’t have to what I’d walk in on that morning. Leather straps, lube, and enough evidence left behind for me to know that you did not go quietly into that good night.”

I groaned loudly to drown out her words. “I made Remy apologize for that!”

look at it, “Oh, and that went swimmingly.” She put on a deep voice. “Sorry I have to do the sex stuff, Beatrix. It’ll probably happen again, but I’ll add hazard pay

“And I made him apologize for that, too!” I laughed at the memory of my dead-end face when I told him to go back and apologize for acting like Beatrix hadn’t, responsibility for cleaning up sex toys. Hazard pay or not, there were a lot of things you just didn’t do.

secake. “Yeah, that one was even worse.” She laughed. “I’m pretty sure I’ll never get a larger drive-by apology. I wasn’t even sure what he’d said until you told me I

“They’re still such little boys at times. Stubborn and petulant when they want to be. Remy calls me a brat, but you should see them not get the

You’d think the world was ending.” Of course, I was complaining with a goofy grin on my face. Every day I spent with them made me fall more in love with them. I wasn’t sure I’d ever get out of my Hawke brothers sized hole. I wanted to.

felt like “But he also calls you his good girl.” She pretended to fall over. “I almost wish you’d never told me that. I think I’ve been horny ever since

and never “Bea!” I laughed hard enough that I had to stop and cross my legs behind me. I do you peed on myself. I hadn’t even hit that part of pregnancy yet. I’d just been guzzling down water since Remy the Tyrant took away all caffeine from

” It took us forever to get to the house but once we were at the door I turned sneaky and quietly crept inside, wanting to catch the kids or throw them out. I flushed, being wild again. Everything was silent, though. Beatrix and I exchanged a look and she rushed farther into the house, her eyes wide.

evidence “Kids?!”

right.” Wells stuck his head out of the informal living room and put his hands over his eyes. “If you wake them up, you’re in so much trouble.”

I smiled into his kiss as he greeted me and looked past him, doubt

y about they'd gotten the kids to sleep. To my shock and surprise, all four kids had passed out on the couch, tucked in under blankets. They all looked peaceful.

"How the hell...?" Bea stared at the guys and then pulled out her phone to take a picture of the kids. "Did you drug them? I won't be mad, but I know."

Remy scoffed. "No, we didn't drug them!"

Boone motioned for everyone to leave the room. "If you wake up Sena, they never tell you where she hid your husband's keys."

"She told you where she put them?" Bea walked into the hallway in a huff. "We've been begging her to tell us for weeks."

"There's a little hole in the back of her play kitchen. She said she put them inside and can't get them out." Boone bit back a laugh. "Of course, in admitting her mistake, she just dug her heels in and decided that getting more trouble would be better than saying she messed up. She's a terror."

Bea nodded. "I know."

I pressed my knuckles to my mouth and tried to fight my urge to laugh. "How did you go from Code Red, kids destroying your room, wein fifteen minutes to putting them to bed before bedtime? And I didn't see any poop!"

Remy met my eyes and actually looked a little bashful for the first time ever, that I'd seen. "I did some research. After what happened last time, I knew I didn't want to go through that again. I read a few things and figured out. And the kids in the program that you met that day of the gala were given me some advice."

My heart grew even fuller with my feelings for him, even as my

ls were became uncomfortably wet in a moment. “You went to see the kids first, right? You asked the neighbors for help, and they gave you the sogala and got advice from them?”

He nodded. “They had some good ideas.”

hone to “And the diapers?” Bea looked back in on her kids and rubbed her face. “Someone changed their diapers?”

Wells grunted. “Turns out, after scrubbing shit out of your leg hair, you can’t be all that stunned anymore.”

ara, I’ll She patted his arm. “Oh, honey. I don’t want to discourage you, but shit can always surprise you.”

shock. “And you researched about taking care of kids.” I said it matter-of-factly. “Just in case?”

ut them He looked down at my belly. “I wouldn’t say just in case.”

stead of I tried to tell myself to calm down, but I felt like if I didn’t get that feeling out of my system as soon as possible that I’d explode from all the tension. “Thanks for a good night. Take your kids and go now.”

She laughed. “I don’t even blame you. If my husband ever resented me for anything I’d be on him so fast.”

which I looked around desperately for the tools to get the kids out of earshot. “What was going to happen very soon. “Okay, everyone grab a kid and get them to the van.”

Remy took me into his arms and looked at his brothers. “We’ll be out of here in five minutes. Help Bea, please. We can’t all be cute and needy and get away with it. Get your friends out of the house.”

gured it I looked back at Bea and waved. “You understand. I know you do.”

ight’ve “Hey, I didn’t say a word. I’d have my pants off already if I were you.”

She winked at me. “Clean up your sex toys, Remy.”

panties He ignored her parting shot as he carried me up to his bed and started

rom the would end up being a night of marathon sex. When the sun came up
just collapsing between Wells and Boone while Remy pulled on a suit.

“I’ll be back before you know it. It’s just for the night, sweetheart.”
er eyes. on the side of the bed while pulling on his shoes. “You won’t even mis

I crawled to him and pressed myself into his back. “I will.”
air, you “Yeah?” He looked back at me and I saw so much softness in his g
I couldn’t stop myself from crawling into his lap. He held me clo
a kids’ inhaled next to my hair. “You could always come.”

I looked up at him, surprised that he’d asked. There’d been sever
-factly. times throughout our four months together that I wasn’t even inform
he was gone until I went to find him. I always felt sad to be left ou
knew he wasn’t used to letting anyone know where he was and if he w
at man “You want me to come with you?”

. “Bea, He cleared his throat. “Sure, if you want. I mean... Yes, Memphis,
it if you went with me.”

earches I squeaked out a happy noise and threw my arms around him so tig
he grunted from the force. “I want to go!”

shot of A very sleep Boone sat up and looked at us through bleary eyes. “C
nd let’s fifteen and I can be ready to go.”

Wells held up a hand. “I’ll need half an hour.”
upstairs. Remy gently patted my ass, knowing it was sore from our earlie
kicking “You’ve got ten, both of you. Jake’s already waiting outside.”

“And me? I need to pack a few things.”
“It’s already taken care of.” He shrugged when I frowned at him.
e you.” hoping you’d ask to go soon.”

The words were on the tip of my tongue, the words that would eithe
ed what what we were doing very real or that would blow it all up. I knew it

), I wastime. I just hugged him tight again and stood up. “I need something
for now, at least.”

’ He sat He groaned. “I’m not so sure. Look at you, sweetheart.”

is me.” I rolled my eyes at him. “Yeah, that’s the problem. This baby is mak
look all sorts of ways that I’m not ready to see.”

aze that His arched eyebrows were a warning. “I know your ass is still sore,
ose andhate to let you feel a true punishment for insulting yourself.”

I stepped out of his reach. “You don’t have time for that, Remy. Y
al otherbusy, busy man. No rest for the wicked. All that jazz. Should we go?”

ied that Wells sat up laughing. “Remember when Mom spanked you that or
it, but IRemy? I don’t remember what you did, but she sat you down and ga

as safe.plenty of warning before she lost her cool and sent you to your room

for her. I could see her pacing outside of your room because she de
I’d likedidn’t want to spank you, but you’d been such a shit to her.”

A small smile lifted Remy’s mouth. “I drove my bike through h
ght thatflowerbeds. After she sat me down and got on to me, I was mad tha

just assumed it was me, so I went stomping through them. The breakir
ive mewas when she saw me pick up a flower and bite its head off, Ozzy style

I gasped. “Remy! I want to spank you for that now and it’s been d
How did she not murder you?”

er play. Wells was laughing harder. “He turned into a fucking old
auctioneer. I’ve never heard him talk as fast since that day. I could h

screaming from his room and mom trying not to laugh. It was a
“I wasrambling pleas and stumbling apologies. You just sounded a little like

I hit him with a pillow. “Hey! We were picking on Remy. Keep i
er makeWells.”

wasn’t He grabbed me around my waist and tugged me back into bed. ‘

to wear Memphis. Never.”

king me

, M. I’d

ou’re a

ie time,

ive you

to wait

finitely

er new

it she’d

ig point

e.”

ecades.

school

ear him

l lot of

it.”

t clean,

“Never,

Memphis. Never.”

52.

Memphis

“Drop me off at the guesthouse, please. I need to grab something to wear that didn’t cost more than this car.” I patted Jake’s shoulder through the window and sank back into Wells’ lap. “I’ll change and walk over so we can figure out how to pick the winning movie. And don’t say penis size again, Boone.”

“I’m just flaunting what life gave me, love.” He winked at me and stretched out. “I doubt I make it through a movie. If I’d known the quality was out of the country, I never would’ve agreed to go. I’m exhausted.”

Remy rolled his eyes. “I do that trip all the time. Don’t be a baby.”

“Don’t call me a baby, asshole.” Boone slapped Remy’s hand away. “Get out of this car and have Jake kick your ass.”

I laughed and kissed Wells on the cheek as Jake parked in front of the house. “Keep it together, boys. If you fight, I’m not letting you cuddle me tonight.”

Remy opened the door for me and waited to help me out while I kissed Boone on the cheek. “I’d better get more than the cheek.”

I sank into his chest, giggling when my bump touched him first. “It’s going to get interesting.”

“Why don’t I stay and walk back with you?”

From inside the car both Wells and Boone shouted no. Boone stepped over to stare up at us. “No. If he goes in, he’ll do his best to keep you locked to himself. We’re eating a snack and watching a movie before we go to bed together. So get in the car, Remy.”

I covered my mouth to hide my laughter. “He’s like a baby who doesn’t get all the sleep he needs.”

“I heard that.” Boone leaned over again. “Clearly, a man has to be hauled to spank to get some respect around here.”

I leaned back into the car and kissed him. When I pulled back, he didn’t look at me with sleepy eyes. He looked like such a boy at that moment I could see the baby I was carrying looking exactly like him. “You’ll get a snack and your movie soon.”

“And you.”

“And me.” I kissed him one more time before standing back up. Remy. “I’ll be right over. Try not to get into any tussles before I get there. I will watch and cheer.”

He slapped my ass as I walked away and groaned when I flipped the little back of the dress he’d bought me to flash him. “Dammit.”

I rushed up the sidewalk to the house and hurried inside, eager to get to the guys. The flight had been rough on the way back, but on the way home it’d been great. I was officially in the Mile High Club and knew that private jet felt like. Even though we’d only spent the night, I was so “That’s that Remy had wanted to take me with him. Things were getting serious. I thought I was getting something close to love for me. I just wasn’t sure.

I tossed my purse on the couch and rushed upstairs to change. Everywhere, all I could even slip a single shoe off, however, movement on my bed caused my eye to bedevil and I let out a scream that would’ve gotten me a role in any horror

Charlie. Charlie stood up from my bed and grinned at me. “I’ll be damned. Little Fish. You caught yourself some fucking whales! Come here and give me a hug, baby.”

hen he I backed away to stay out of his reach. “What are you doing here
can’t be here. You have to leave. Right now!”

willing “Come on, baby, don’t be like that. I know you’re running a con here
me help you. You were never good without me.” He tried to come
looked again, but I turned and hurried down the stairs. “What the fuck is wrong
it that I you, Fish?”

get your I don’t know what came over me, but I ran to the other side of the
and grabbed a knife from the knife block. Charlie was a monster and
baby to protect. I just wanted him away from me and the guys. If he
to kiss them before I could explain everything to them, they’d hate me. I could
there to that happen. “Don’t come any closer to me, asshole.”

He stopped and glared at me. “What’s your—”

up the I saw his eyes go down to my stomach, where my hand was protect
shielding it. I lifted the knife higher in my other hand. “You need to
get back Charlie.”

y there, His face went red. “You stupid bitch. You really did it. You got y
what a knocked up. That’s not how the game is played, Memphis! You can’t
happy shit work with a baby slowing you down. Who’s going to want to have
rious, I their money when the lady seducing them is a pregnant cow?”

hey felt “Leave! You’re not welcome here. You robbed me blind the last
saw you and now you’re going to come in here and pick back

before I nothing’s different? Fuck you, Charlie. I don’t know how you found
right my whatever we had back then is long gone. Don’t waste your breath here

film. He slammed his hand down on the countertop and it felt like the
damned, house rattled. “I didn’t rob you. I took what I was owed. I spent years

and give you from a stupid fucking kid to a grown woman who could make sor
of herself. I took care of you when no one else wanted you. So that

e? You was mine. What were you going to do with it anyway? Give it all away
college that would've just told you in four years that you were too stupid
ere. Let do whatever you thought you wanted to do? So stupid. Now you're looking
e closer up and you look like you've gained weight. I taught you better than that
ng with don't tie yourself to the mark."

"You're not hearing me! I don't want you here. I don't know how you got
e island in and I don't know why you're here, but you need to leave. You don't
I had anything about me or what I want anymore. You never did. For you to
e got to that you took care of me, fucking ever, is a joke. You did nothing for
dn't let me make the money, I paid all the bills, and I paid for everything Jack
Knox needed. I went without. You didn't do a thing for any of us." I
my palms into my eyes, the knife still in my hands. When I saw him
actively jerked it back in his direction. "This isn't what you think it is. I'm in love
o leave, The front door slammed open and I saw the last person I ever expected
see. Jackson.

yourself
't make
nd over

time I
up like
me, but
."

e entire
raising
nothing
money

was mine. What were you going to do with it anyway? Give it all away to a college that would've just told you in four years that you were too stupid to do whatever you thought you wanted to do? So stupid. Now you're knocked up and you look like you've gained weight. I taught you better than this. You don't tie yourself to the mark."

"You're not hearing me! I don't want you here. I don't know how you got in and I don't know why you're here, but you need to leave. You don't know anything about me or what I want anymore. You never did. For you to think that you took care of me, fucking ever, is a joke. You did nothing for me. I made the money, I paid all the bills, and I paid for everything Jackson and Knox needed. I went without. You didn't do a thing for any of us." I pressed my palms into my eyes, the knife still in my hands. When I saw him move, I jerked it back in his direction. "This isn't what you think it is. I'm in lo—"

The front door slammed open and I saw the last person I ever expected to see. Jackson.

53.

Memphis

Remy shoved Jackson farther into the guesthouse, his face a n
rage. “What the fuck is going on here?”

I rushed over to my little brother and grabbed his shoulders. “Ja
Why are you here? How are you here?”

Wells took the knife from my hand and pointed it at Charlie. “Who’

I shook Jackson when he just stared right through me. “Jack. Jack,
me.”

“He’s high out of his fucking mind, Fish. He wanted to stop on the
so I helped him find something to take the edge off. That rehab you h
in was a piece of shit, by the way.” Charlie leaned against the isla
smirked at everyone around him. “And I’m Charlie. This one’s ex bef
got a taste for the good life, apparently. Although this house is l
pathetic compared to the big one up front. Maybe your shit just is
good anymore, baby.”

“You got him out of rehab? How? How did you do that? He was su
to stay for a year and...why did you take him out? He was getting o
used every last dime I had to make sure he’d be okay and you just to
out and gave him drugs?” I was crying as I grabbed Jackson again. I
his cheeks harder. “Jackson, honey, look at me.”

“You know how the trailer park works, baby. It was easy to find the
of shit place you stowed Jackson in. Once I promised him a hit and g
out of there, he was all too happy to spill his guts. Seemed you told
about your plans before you left. You never were that bright.”
snorted. “Finding a surrogate named Memphis wasn’t hard, either. Yo

really pissed off that rigid bitch from the agency you used. She was happy to share the details with me.”

I stroked Jackson’s face, ignoring Charlie. “Jack, buddy. Hey, it’s not you look at me?”

“He was in our mother’s room, stealing her jewelry.” Remy’s voice black as night as he spoke and I knew he would never forgive me.

Jackson finally turned his glassy eyes to me and he smiled crookedly. “You look just like Mom when you cry, Fish.”

I stumbled back a step and clutched at my chest and throat, feeling like I couldn’t breathe. I spun around until my eyes landed on Charlie and unlike any I’ve ever felt surged through me. I charged at him, ready to punch him with my bare hands if I had to, but Boone caught me from behind and she struggled against him as I screamed at Charlie. “You monster! Why would you do this to him? Why would you hurt him like this? We need to do something to you!”

“Someone had better explain to me what the fuck is going on.” Remy stepped between me and Charlie. “The truth.”

Charlie’s cruel laugh filled the house. “You knocked up a con artist, didn’t you? I don’t know who you thought you fucked, but this here is Trailblazer’s Princess. She was the kind of poor that the trailer park folks felt bad for.”

Between her whore mother and her runaway daddy, she was destined to be a piece of trash forever. But it looks like she got her hooks in the money now. “You got him boys prepared to support a trailer park?”

I stared down at the floor, feeling my world shatter apart around me. Charlie’s heart was beating so hard it hurt. My entire chest hurt. I shook my head. “You guys tried to stop Charlie. “You don’t know me, Charlie. I’m not that girl.”

all too wanted to be that girl. You need to leave. I don't know why you fought but I don't want you anywhere near me."

ne. Can "He's not going anywhere. None of you are." Remy growled so loudly I flinched away from him. "I want to know everything, starting from where it was as beginning."

Tears were steadily streaming down my cheeks. I'd been so close to happiness. It was in the palm of my hands.

Jackson's faded voice grew in volume. "Stop yelling at my sister!" I turned and watched in horror as Jackson swung a wild punch in a different direction and fell forward. He hit one of the many shelves and a beautiful piece of pottery fell to the floor and shattered. Jackson slumped on the floor and tried and failed to get up over and over.

I sobbed as I watched him, my baby brother. I'd changed his diaper and rocked him to sleep when I was still a kid myself. I knew him before the zombie scrambling around in the living room floor while everyone was put on at the horror show.

I knelt by his side and tried to calm him down. "Jackson, it's me. It's just boys. You're okay. I just need you to calm down, okay? I don't want you to hurt yourself."

He was so strong that when he shoved me I fell back on my ass, but I managed to get right back up and grabbed his face. He struggled but for one small second. My eyes connected with mine and I jumped on it.

"Hey, hey. Look at me, kid. I've got you. Just like the time you fell off your bike. My you could ride your bike off the roof and land a trick on concrete. Remember what happened? Would you believe me if I said I caught you?" I let out a nervous laugh while Jackson got calmer. "Well, I didn't. But I was there to pick you up and carry you to the hospital. And I carried you back home at

and me, got that cast. I'm here, honey. It's me. You know I won't let anything happen to you. You just have to try to stay calm for me. Please."

ably that "Watch this. It's hilarious." I saw Charlie move closer and before I could stop him, he shouted over my head at Jackson. "What happened to your momma, Jacky?"

lose to I jerked around to push Charlie away but Jackson was already reaching for me, probably to the image in his head of our mother dead in our bathtub. He'd stayed by her side until help arrived. He'd taken the blame for it, the one's that trauma.

ied as a Before I could slap the shit out of Charlie, I felt Jackson's hands grip my shoulders before shoving me with what looked like all of his weight. I fell backwards hard and cracked my elbow on the floor as I landed. My head jerked back and hit the floor next to Charlie's foot. I felt darkness creeping over me and I tried to fight it. I could hear a commotion around me and the sound of Jackson screaming.

Unable to breathe, I tried to make myself as small as possible, in a ball around my baby. I couldn't hear anything but screaming and fighting. Everything faded to nothing.

ut I got
nd, his

thought
nember
t out a
to pick
ter you

got that cast. I'm here, honey. It's me. You know I won't let anything bad happen to you. You just have to try to stay calm for me. Please."

"Watch this. It's hilarious." I saw Charlie move closer and before I could stop him, he shouted over my head at Jackson. "What happened to your momma, Jacky?"

I jerked around to push Charlie away but Jackson was already reacting, probably to the image in his head of our mother dead in our bathtub. He'd found her. He'd stayed by her side until help arrived. He'd taken the brunt of that trauma.

Before I could slap the shit out of Charlie, I felt Jackson's hands grab both of my shoulders before shoving me with what looked like all of his might. I fell backwards hard and cracked my elbow on the floor as I landed. My head jerked back and hit the floor next to Charlie's foot. I felt darkness creeping in and I tried to fight it. I could hear a commotion around me and the sound of Jackson screaming.

Unable to breathe, I tried to make myself as small as possible, in a tight ball around my baby. I couldn't hear anything but screaming and fighting as everything faded to nothing.

59.

59.

Remington

“Get off me!” I spun around, ready to attack whoever was grabbing me from behind, and saw Jake with his face set in stone. He pushed me towards the door and I stumbled over a rug before catching myself, preparing to get back into the fray. I wanted to rip that stupid fucker apart from his skull.

Boone ran at me, holding Memphis in his arms. She was limp, with her head and arms hanging loosely. The sight of her body so lifeless cleared my bloodlust from my head and I moved out of the way so he could run past. I saw Wells on top of Charlie, punching him in the face over and over.

Jake grabbed Wells by the back of the neck and jerked him to the side. “Go! You leave now or you’re going to be trapped here answering questions for the cops. Memphis needs you.”

Wells looked around wildly, searching for her. “Where?”

“Take the car. Leave the gate open and I’ll handle this shit.” Jake pushed me to Jackson cowering in the corner. “Who the fuck is this one?”

“Memphis’s brother. He doesn’t go to jail. Keep him somewhere safe until I get back.” I ran out of the house and saw Wells already climbing into the backseat.

Boone threw the keys at me when I looked into the back at Memphis’s still unconscious body in his lap. He was holding his finger to her wrist while scowling. “Drive.”

I flew into the city, breaking every traffic law. The image of Memphis’s limp body scorched through my head nonstop and I banged my fists

steering wheel as fear overwhelmed the rest of my emotions. “Talk to her, she okay?”

“Systolic pressure is high. Her pulse is racing. I don’t see any obvious trauma, but that doesn’t mean a fucking thing. How much longer?”

He barked out everything he said, all signs of the calm surgeon gone. “Wells, that isn’t your blood.”

Wells’ voice was dark as he responded. “I’m only sad there isn’t more with her.”

“He got what he wanted.” Boone growled. “How much longer?”

Instead of answering, I took a turn going way too fast and squealed again. I stopped in front of the emergency room entrance. I left the car running and jumped out and ripped open the door for Boone.

He passed her body to me and I felt just how limp she was in my arms. My heart sank as crippling fear nearly kept me standing frozen. It was only the shove of the car shoving me towards the door that got me moving. I ran into the emergency room and saw Boone already speaking with a couple of nurses. The room was full of people, but the nurses spotted Memphis and came over to help her.

Everything moved so fast after that. Wells and I had to wait while Boone used his influence with the different doctors and nurses to stay in the back. I saw Memphis. Sitting in the waiting room with a ton of people shot my nerves to frayed nerves so Wells and I waited outside.

“Car’s gone.” Wells rubbed his hand down his face and looked at Memphis’s smears without saying anything.

I didn’t respond. My head was being split in two by a headache unlike I’d ever experienced before. Worry and fear for Memphis and the co-

me! I saw anger from finding her brother in our house, touching our things, twisted me up until I couldn't figure out what I should do.

signs of “She didn't deny any of it. Right? Did I miss it? Maybe I just didn't. Boone never deny it.” Wells rubbed at his knuckles and looked over at me, feeling “Jesus, my younger brother more than ever.

A deep ache radiated out from my chest. “She didn't deny anything, Boone. He said “I don't understand.” He looked out at the night around us. “Which one is fake? The kid she's carrying isn't fake. The sex isn't fake. Her feelings aren't fake. Her feelings can't be fake. I mean, she cares about us. Nothing anyone could do would make me believe otherwise.”

As I squatted against the brick wall behind me and let my head rest against it, I said “I don't know.”

My younger brother said “Her brother...that kid isn't okay. None of this is okay.” Pushing away from the wall, Wells pulled out his phone and looked at the screen. “I remember a few people from a long time ago who became rehab success stories. I'm going to find out the places they went and start looking into it. The next time you see Boone, just shout and I'll be back.”

I lifted my hand and watched him walk away. My younger brother took control and I was crumbling against a dirty sidewalk in downtown Chicago.

When my phone rang, I fumbled it out of my pocket and cracked the screen before managing to answer it. “What?”

“Charlie Brennan has been charged and arrested. A cop buddy of mine will keep me updated about any changes when he goes before a judge. I swear like any other. “And I've got one high as a kite kid brother who thinks he kills his sister and won't stop hitting himself. Tell me she's okay.”

I swallowed around a lump in my throat. “I don't know. Boone's

mother's back with her. Wells is calling around to find a rehab for Jackson. I
take long once he picks one."

"I can't hear that shit stain Charlie has a rap sheet as long as my dick. He's not
being like petty criminal, but he's bad news." Jake sighed, and I knew he had
information that he was hesitating to share. "Her other brother, the one
" who's locked in a bathroom right now, he's doing time at a prison in Georgia
for a part is theft. He's been in for a few years and has another several to go. I saw
her only called one number the entire time she's been here. She calls her
brother can say weekly. Every week at the same time, down to the minute almost. She
has something set up at the prison before she left to come here. She paid to
be against it. certain amount of money put on his books each week. It's not much,
more than most guys ever get."

"I'm going away" "Why are you telling me this, Jake?"

"I know a" "Because I think you need to hear her out before you make any deci
sions. I've listened to that asshole for far too long before the cops took him away
and he's second tried to paint Memphis out as this career criminal, but it's bullshi

"She's a good woman. She's still taking care of her fuckup brothers
and she's seemingly doing anything she can to survive." After hesitating for
a moment, he cleared his throat. "I don't know a lot of people who would
give up five years of their life, Remy, especially when the only big pu
nishment she's made in years have been for her brothers. She's not greedy. She
would sign up to be bred for five years for herself. Even the most basic of
lines that I ran while sitting here showed that much."

"I'll call you if anything changes here." I hung up the phone and pu
lled his arm back to throw it at the brick wall as hard as I could. Watching it
shatter into a hundred tiny pieces made me feel marginally better.

is in the

t won't

mostly a

d more

one not

rgia for

w she's

brother

she had

o have a

but it's

sions. I

and he

t, boss.

s while

another

uld give

rchases

e didn't

checks

lled my

shatter

55.

55.

Boone

“S he’s okay. Braddock came by and checked her over. They’re safe and healthy, but he said she needs to rest and take it easy to avoid more stress. When I laughed in his face, he thought maybe I’d hit him too.” I cracked my neck and considered the benefits of getting her there right then and there. “They’re going to keep her overnight for observation. I called Jake and asked him to call in a guard to sit outside her room, just in case, but he’s going to do it himself.”

Remy nodded. “Figures.”

I looked Wells over and saw that he’d at least cleaned the blood off his face. His knuckles were fucked, but he didn’t seem to care. He was looking down and shook his head. “I’m fine. I don’t want to talk about my knuckles or anything else that could lead to talking about feelings. I found a rehab center for Jackson. They’ll pick him up within the hour. Someone needs to be there to sign off of it.”

It wasn’t a great time to be impressed with Wells’ ability to find a rehab in the city on such short notice, but I was. Rehabs filled up fast and soon people were just left to die on the streets without help because there wasn’t enough space for them. “Private, I’m assuming.”

He nodded. “It’s only the price of a small country, but who cares if you’re supporting your surrogate’s druggie brother, right? Do you think it’s a con? It was brilliant, if so, because that rehab just bent me over and said please. What the fuck is rush pricing? This isn’t a couch. Jesus, this is never going to end. I’ll go. I set it up and I’ll know all the details.”

I winced at the word con. I wasn't ready. "One of us should stay here while Jake's here to take watch."

Remy patted his pockets and then swore at the mass of phone pieces on the floor. "No ground. We have to call her other brother."

I shrugged. "That's fine. Should we wait until morning, in case she wakes up sleeping like a normal person?"

"Well. Considering that he's currently in prison and I'm going to have to just piss a prison warden off to do this, maybe he'll enjoy it." Meeting both

confused expressions, Remy laughed bitterly. "Yeah, Jake started

through some stuff. Memphis calls her little brother in prison once a

month. He's in for theft, in case you were curious. So, just a great family all around

me. I felt myself start to defend Memphis and turned away as grief hit

me. I didn't know who she was. The person Charlie was talking about

wasn't anyone I knew. How could she lie so easily?

"You two figure that out. I ordered a car. I'll get home to take

care of Jackson and send Jake here." Wells rubbed his eyes and looked up at

me. "At least something's going right. Let me know if anything

changes."

Remy and I took up a private waiting room and I paced the hall

in front of Memphis's door while he woke people up and got

information for the warden. I didn't think to doubt him because that

was never a time when Remy didn't pull through. That night wasn't any different

from any other. In no time, I was sitting across from him at a small table with my

back to him and a surprisingly alert voice shouting at us.

"What's wrong? Where's Memphis? If anything happened to Memphis

swear to God, I'll find my way out of here and break your—"

I cut him off. "She's okay. Do you know Charlie Brennan?"

re until “Why are you asking about Charlie? Memphis cut that piece of sh
while back. What happened? I don’t need to be finessed right now, m
s on the let me have it.” His southern accent was somehow thicker than Men
but it felt familiar.

se he’s “He showed up at our place tonight. He broke in and was wai
Memphis. Your brother was in our house, trying to steal our dead m
have to jewelry, but that’s neither here nor there.” I blew out a sharp breath.
1 of our was—”

looking “No, Jack is in rehab down here, buddy. Not to say that he would
a week. your dead mother and every grave your family has ever filled, but M
round.” paid for him to go to rehab before she left. He’s...” He swore viciousl
it me. I heard a couple of loud bangs before he was back. “You’re not shitti
wasn’t are you? Jackson is in Chicago?”

“Yeah, he is. On his way to another rehab, thanks to our brother. C
care of he won’t be able to walk out of. He was out of his mind tonight. He
as a car Memphis and she fell and hit her head.” I looked down at my har
nything watched in horror as they shook. I was a surgeon. My hands didn’t

Seeing Memphis hit her head had fucked with me. “We got her to the l
lway in and the doctors checked her out. She’s okay, but they’re keepi
contact overnight for observation.”

ere was “Which one are you? The doctor or the fancy businessman? Or the a
fferent. I shoved my hands under my thighs. “Doctor.”

r phone “Boone, then.” He lowered his voice. “Give it to me straight, Boon
scale of one to FUBAR, where are we at with all of this?”

nphis, I “What do you mean?”

“I know my big sister. That girl raised me when she was still a baby
and I probably know her better than I know myself. I know the situati

it out ay'all. I'm guessing by the tone in your voice that you're not just s
an, just because she hit her head." He blew out a breath. "I know she
aphis's, completely open about our upbringing, but if you knew the whole
story, you wouldn't be either."

ting on Remy snorted. "She wasn't just not completely open. She lied."
mother's Knox made a sound of aggravation. "I don't even have to
"There Remington, or Remy as Memphis calls you as she's waxing on and o
you. You sound just as fucking cranky as she described you. Though s
ln't robyou had this sexy voice thing and I'm just not hearing it."

Memphis "Whatever you're trying to do, kid, save it. We just needed to let yo
y and Ishe was hurt but she's okay." Remy stood up and started to leave bu
ing me, right back. "Are you all thieves? Is it a fucking genetic thing?"

Knox was silent for so long that I thought he'd hung up. It was clea
ne thathe started talking, he was biting back anger. "I'm going to let that on
shovedI'm assuming that you had your shit rocked tonight. You thought M
ids andwas a perfect little rich girl with blue blood running through her ve
: shake.now you know that she's as country as a hound dog barking at a tract
ospitalthought she was going to pop out kids who came readymade to
ng hersymphonies and shit like that. Instead, you knocked up a kid from the
park whose big dream in life is to become a librarian because a librari
rtist?" nice to her once. You knocked up a girl who has more heart than
probably ever known or seen. The shit she's been through, you'd pi
e. On arich boy pants and run home crying. I get that you're upset, *Remy*, bu
my fucking sister you're talking about and you'd do best to watch h
talk about her."

herself Remy was quiet for a while before he sat back down. "Tell us about
on with "Let's make one thing clear first. I may be in prison, but I'm really

stressed holding a grudge. If you hurt my sister, I'll break your faces. Cons
wasn't how fond Memphis seems to be of them, I'd really rather not have
sordid grunted. "And that ain't an idle threat, boys. We have lots of places
the bodies down here and you should know that any jury in the south
hear my sister's story and let me go free for killing the assholes wh
guess her cry. Do you get me?"

n about I sighed. "We get it. You big and country, we weak and city. Can w
he said on now?"

He laughed. "No wonder she likes you best, doctor man."

u know Remy's head shot up with a glare. It looked like he barely resisted t
it came to hit something.

"Kidding. I knew it would set Remy off, though. That's how mu
r when talks about y'all. I'm honestly sick of you three already."

ie slide. Remy growled. "Just tell us about your sister, asshole."

Memphis

ins and

or. You

play in

e trailer

ian was

you've

ss your

it that's

ow you

her."

good at

holding a grudge. If you hurt my sister, I'll break your faces. Considering how fond Memphis seems to be of them, I'd really rather not have to." He grunted. "And that ain't an idle threat, boys. We have lots of places to bury the bodies down here and you should know that any jury in the south would hear my sister's story and let me go free for killing the assholes who made her cry. Do you get me?"

I sighed. "We get it. You big and country, we weak and city. Can we move on now?"

He laughed. "No wonder she likes you best, doctor man."

Remy's head shot up with a glare. It looked like he barely resisted the urge to hit something.

"Kidding. I knew it would set Remy off, though. That's how much she talks about y'all. I'm honestly sick of you three already."

Remy growled. "Just tell us about your sister, asshole."

56.

Memphis

Doctor Braddock looked down at me with a kind smile on his face. “The ER doctor did several scans before I got here and then I ordered my own set. The baby is fine. Doing great, actually. On the ultrasound, it looks like they were kicking up a storm in there.”

I tried to sit up and my head throbbed, reminding me that it was a bad idea. “They? What do you mean, they?”

“Don’t worry, you’re not having twins. I just didn’t know if you’d know the baby’s sex.” He squeezed my hand. “Doctor Reyes already talked about keeping you overnight and watching you. I agree. You have a good bump on the back of your head and your elbow is probably going to be hurt for a while. Might as well stay and be taken care of.”

I looked down at my hands. Did he know? When I’d woken up alone in the hospital room, I didn’t have that hazy confusion. I’d understood immediately why I was alone. The guys were not going to stick by my side after I found out about my lies the way they had. My staying at the hospital was probably the last I was going to be taken care of for a long while.

“Don’t look so down, Memphis. You and the baby are healthy and it’s just a bump in the road. You’ll be back home tomorrow and be spoiled by the guys.” He released my hand and stepped back. “I have to go home, but you have my number. Call me if you need anything, Memphis.”

I nodded. He was almost out of the room when I called out to him, and he turned back. “One more thing. “The baby. Boy or girl?”

He grinned back at me. “The Hawke family is getting a little feminine blood, thank goodness.”

A girl. I was carrying their daughter inside me, growing her and feeling little flutter kicks. The first daughter in a family of so many men. She. “The going to be smothered in love and overprotected until she wanted to spread my probably.

looked A sob had just managed to break past my control when the door opened again. I wiped my eyes quickly and looked up, hoping that I was going to find the guys standing there, angry but willing to forgive me.

Jake saw the crestfallen expression on my face as he walked in and wanted to “I’m sorry, Memphis. It’s just me.”

old you I bit my lip and nodded jerkily, the motion making me nauseous. “I’m glad to see you.”

going to “Don’t be sweet right now. You’ve been through a lot tonight and you deserve the night off. It’s okay if you’re not happy to see me.” He leaned against my bed and sighed. “I know I’m not who you want to see right now. I gripped his arm and let out a frustrated laugh as another sob escaped. “I’m glad to see you. And I don’t think what I want matters anymore. Not after tonight.”

“It matters. I’m sure this will blow over, Memphis.” The tone of his voice said otherwise. He sounded as hopeless as I felt. “Right now, you just need to get on feeling better.”

The door opened again and when I looked up, I saw it was Remy. Memphis. “I’m glad to see you.” He raced instantly and the sound of the monitor beeping next to me was ringing double speed. Remy was there. Maybe he’d listen to me and forgive me. A small ray of hope was all I needed to cling to.

The look on his face was flat, as unemotional as I’d ever seen him. He looked at Jake and held out his hand when the other man started to leave the room. “This won’t take long. Stay.”

ling her His words crushed that little ray of hope. My breath came faster as he was made my body tingle with awareness. Danger approached, but no scream, my body that it wasn't the physical kind. While it braced for impact, my dumb heart plopped to the floor like a water balloon, bursting on impact. "I just wanted to update you on your brothers." He stayed as far away from me as possible. "Jackson is already being taken to a rehab that he was able to check himself out of. Unless he's medically cleared, he'll stay there," he swore. I should've been relieved. I should've felt anything other than crushing depression. Jackson hadn't been arrested. They'd taken care of him for a while. "It's not that bad. We let Knox know what happened. He's up to date and if you do anything to him tomorrow, he knows why."

nd you Confusion chipped at the edge of the darkness consuming me. I leaned back, couldn't think of anything else until I knew for sure that they were done with me. "And you? Are you okay? And Boone? Wells?" He met my eyes with a coldness I'd never seen from him. Instead of a warm smile, Jake anything, he shook his head like he couldn't believe I'd even ask. His anger with me was almost palpable.

is voice I shied away from his anger. I made myself as small as possible and tried to focus away the stubborn tears that wouldn't stop. "I'm—"

He was already gone, my apology meeting empty space where he had once been. My heartbeats were silent. I lost it then, sobbing into my hands like I never had before. The tears went into my hands. I'd lost them before I got to tell them I loved them. Jake tried to comfort me the best he could and when it was clear that I was just going to cry the whole night through, he made me scoot over and crawled in next to me. He held me against his chest and stroked my hair. He talked to me about anything and everything. It was his comfort and the gentle drone of his voice that let me sleep finally.

anxiety
ne told
ny poor
ct.

ay from
on't be
here."

rushing
me.
n't call

, but I
ne with

saying
disgust

I wiped

e'd just
ey were
tried to
going to
nto my
ir while
and the

57.

57.

Memphis

It seemed like I'd cried all the tears I could by the time I was discharged the next day. There was a gaping, vast hole in my chest and the pain was indescribable, but at least I wasn't crying. I was wheeled out of the hospital by a nurse who left me sitting in the wheelchair because there was no one to pick me up and I had nowhere to go. I sat in the midday sun in two-piece clothing with a killer headache and no idea what I was going to do. I had less money than when I'd arrived in Chicago and what I had wouldn't buy a ticket back to Georgia.

I stared down at my baby and put my hand over it, protecting the life who grew inside. I couldn't be homeless. I had to think of something.

"Smoke?" A small man had come out of nowhere and stood beside me. He looked me over and frowned as he waited for my answer.

I stammered as I shook my head. "No, thanks. I don't smoke."

"I'm not offering, lady. I'm asking if you've got one." He scowled at me. "That necklace real?"

I looked down and saw that I was still wearing everything I'd worn on the plane, which included the jewelry Remy had insisted on buying me when we went shopping the night before. I touched the delicate chain and the diamond charm move across my skin. "Probably not."

He leaned closer. "Looks real to me. Just like those shoes you're wearing."

I knew what was coming. Inner city, country, suburbs, wherever you went, the language of robbery was universal. I covered my stomach with both hands as he reached towards me. It was over in less than five seconds, with the

damage done to me being a slight stinging on my neck from where the
had dug into my skin before snapping and an awkward tickle on my
charged when he yanked off the shoes.

ain was “Are you okay, ma’am?!” A woman hurried to my side. “I saw every
hospital I’ll call the cops. That was awful! Robbing a pregnant lady... men t
one to swear.”

day-old I wiggled my toes and sighed. “Don’t bother. Thank you, but I’
ad less they’re not going to prioritize my shoes and necklace. He didn’t h
my bus That’s what matters.”

“I think you’re in shock. Why don’t I wheel you back inside and
ttle girlcops from there?” She was determined. I could see by the horror on h
ething, that she’d probably never seen someone get robbed before.

Thankfully, before she could take me back into the hospital and fo
me. He to talk to the police, a car door slammed and Jake came jogging o
looked pissed. “I told them not to discharge you until I was bac
shouldn’t just be sitting out here on the sidewalk. Where are your shoe
l at me. “She just got robbed! I think she’s in shock because she isn
reacting.” The good samaritan looked like she was going to cry. “We
on the call the police. He stole her necklace, too. Just ripped it right off her.”
hen we I’d never seen Jake look so furious. He patted my knee and then sh
felt the woman’s hand. “Thank you for staying with her. I’m going to get her l
have a friend on the force that I’ll call from there. He’ll get the surv
aring.” videos and we’ll handle it.”

er. The He didn’t wait for her reply as he wheeled me over to the car he’d
arms as out of. It wasn’t the normal car he drove, but it was still a sleek black
he only that fit into the Hawkes’ car persona.

“What happened to your normal car?” I insisted on sitting in the fr

he chain with him, standing and waiting next to the door for him to unlock it. When my feet finally did and opened the door for me, I slid into the cool leather seat. I looked up at him. "This is nice."

Nothing. He squatted next to the open door and looked at my neck. "Friction today, I did he hurt you?"

I shook my head. "Nope. Overall, it was probably my top favorite room I'm sure I didn't get hurt and I didn't lose anything that I'd worked my butt off for. Ten out of ten."

"Are you in shock? You want to talk about my car and you're calling them robberies? Should I take you back inside?" He pressed his fingers to his forehead like he was checking for a fever.

"If I'm in shock, it's not from being robbed. By now you know I'm not a prince. I didn't grow up in the nice neighborhoods. I got mugged at gunpoint in Jackson when I was seven. A grown man took my bike and pushed me down." I shrugged. "To be fair, I'd taken it from someone else first. As a kid, I know that I'm thinking about it, maybe that was the kid's dad. Never mind, I don't even think that one counts as a robbery."

He should. Jake rubbed his hands down his face. "I don't want to hear any more robbery stories right now, Memphis. You could've been hurt, all I can do is look at them. They didn't listen to me. I was gone for less than an hour."

Home. I patted his cheek. "I'm back to being a nobody. They don't keep me in surveillance for longer than absolutely necessary, Jake."

He swore under his breath and shut the door hard enough that I flinched. I thought I'd gotten him hadn't been so nice, I might've felt like reminding him that I had a headache the size of a bull's ass. As he got behind the wheel, it was obvious he already knew, though. "Sorry. I'm sure that didn't feel good on your head. I'm on the front seat. I'm okay. I just have a quick question." I buckled myself in and

When he opened the window. "Where are you taking me?"

eat and "Home. I think you've had enough adventure for one day."

Rubbing my temples, I tried to make sense of what he was saying. "Georgia?"

"The guesthouse, Memphis. Of course, I'm not driving you to California. Not only would I rather tie my balls together than drive that far, ever, I had to stop for gas. I inadvertently got me a brand new car. I'm not adding that much mileage that fast." He glanced over and saw my confusion. "You were rushing to get home last night and my car was left outside, still running. I doubt even a few minutes passed before it was stolen."

I swallowed down all the guilt and shame I felt. I could tell that he was looking at the new car. "Why am I going back to the guesthouse?"

"Because that's where you live." He merged onto the interstate. "What do you think was happening?"

"I thought I was going to be homeless." I groaned as my nose burned. "I don't know what they're thinking, Memphis, but you just need to be strong."

"Never. I'd let you live with me before that ever happened." He looked at me. "I don't know what they're thinking, Memphis, but you just need to be strong."

I turned to face him. "What does that mean?"

"Just try to remember that hurt people hurt people. They're thinking about you. I've seen them hurt before. I'm always around if you need me, though I had to slow down as traffic came to a crawl around us. "I hate traffic."

I stared out the window the rest of the drive, running through a thought. "I hate traffic." things that Jake could've meant. I hadn't expected to go back to the guesthouse. It was a world better than being homeless, so I wouldn't

complain, but I didn't know what was expected of me. Remy's face haunted my dreams all night. I saw it every time I closed my eyes. He was saying, "Why would he want me around?"

Too soon, I was letting myself out of Jake's car and looking up at the house. Nerves filled my body as I thought about what I was walking into. Jackson had broken so many of their mom's things. I was going to have to clean up my mess in so many ways.

"I thought we talked about letting me open the door." Jake looked down at me, two feet and frowned. "Here. Let me carry you."

I didn't get a chance to refuse before he had me in his arms, carrying me inside. "Thanks, Jake. For everything."

He put me down and gripped my shoulders. "We're friends, Memphis. That's why I need to be held while I'm pregnant and alone in a hospital bed, and you'll spend the night taking care of me, too."

I hugged him hard and kept my face buried against his shirt as my tears proved that it wasn't out of tears after all. "I'm so sorry, Jake. I lied to you, and that's not how friends treat their friends. I messed up and I don't deserve your kindness. I'm so glad to have it, though."

He rubbed my back and his sigh ruffled the top of my hair. "You're my friend, Memphis. Everyone makes mistakes. Seems like you never lied about anything important, Memphis, like who you are as a person. I can handle your mistakes. About the robbery?" I stepped back and looked up at him. "Don't worry about it. Hey, your time. You've done enough."

He frowned over my head before leaning down and kissing my forehead. "I'm not going to waste my time."

"Because you won't try to solve an unsolvable, victimless crime?" He backed out. "Because it's not a waste of time if I catch the asshole."

ice had teach him a lesson.”

e hated I opened my mouth to argue, but I was tired and my head was pulsing
my heartbeat. Jake left before I had a chance to add anything more, and
I watched as the car drove away and turned to see what all needed
ing into. cleaned up, but my eyes landed on the open back door and Boone sat
have to with his hands on his hips on the other side of it.

lown at

ring me

his. If I

I know

y body

to you,

d don't

deserve

out the

that.”

t waste

rehead.

ole and

teach him a lesson.”

I opened my mouth to argue, but I was tired and my head was pulsing with my heartbeat. Jake left before I had a chance to add anything more, anyway. I watched as the car drove away and turned to see what all needed to be cleaned up, but my eyes landed on the open back door and Boone standing with his hands on his hips on the other side of it.

Memphis

I cautiously approached the back door and saw that all three brothers were standing around my back patio. They all looked at the same time and I'd never felt so small and insignificant in my life. I couldn't meet their eyes. I could feel their anger. Maybe it was selfish of me to want to see it, too, but I didn't. I wasn't strong enough.

"There was a robbery?" Boone's relaxed voice was gone, replaced with a cold voice I was sure he reserved for telemarketers and patients who come to see him after heart surgery.

I stayed just inside the doorway and watched my bare toes on the floor. "A guy stole the necklace and shoes y'all bought me. I'm sorry."

"Were you hurt?" Still tight and cold voiced Boone.

I shook my head. "No. I'm okay."

Remy cleared his throat. "Good. We have business to discuss and we'll be going."

I finally lifted my face to look at them and bit my lip so hard I tasted blood to avoid crying out loud. They looked like my guys, but they weren't. They were closed off, shut down to anything I could say or do.

"You're four months pregnant and the kid is ours. None of this nega contract you signed, unless you have the money to pay the fees that would accumulate for breaking said contract." He saw me open my mouth and narrowed his eyes. "You'll stay away from the main house. You understand that you're simply a guest in this house and you should act accordingly."

Every word was a physical blow. I put my hand over my belly with a second thought, protecting our daughter from her father's anger. She needed to hear him angry. He deserved to be angry and had every right to be angry at me, but I felt the need to shield her from it. I didn't want her to see him the way I saw him then. Cold, angry, and hard.

"When the baby is born, we will have to find a legal way to create a contract that works for everyone." Remy watched as I sagged against the doorway. "We'll all just continue forward professionally. You'll receive money at the end of this pregnancy and you can be on your way."

I pressed my knuckles to my mouth and moved out of their way. They stepped around me like I was a smear of shit on their mom's beautiful dress. I was nothing to them. I was worse than nothing. I was trash and they had finally seen all the gross parts of me.

They'd already reached the door when I found my voice. "It's a girl then baby, she's a girl. Congratulations."

They didn't even slow down. They were gone and they were finished with me.

I slowly made my way upstairs and shivered at the memory of waiting on the bed for me. I stripped the bedding and crawled on top of the bare mattress, crying until it was dark outside and the mattress was cold beneath my face. I thought about calling someone, but everyone I knew worked for the Hawke brothers or was in some sort of facility that shouldn't allow for phone calls after a certain time.

The silence stretched through the night and I felt every minute of it completely alone. Well, not completely alone. I had their baby growing and I could feel her kicking. The understanding that she would be taken after I gave birth and I wouldn't see her again kept me from speaking to

without a wasn't sure I would survive becoming attached to the little life in me, I didn't lose her.

it to rip I stared at the wall next to the bed until birds started their morning chorus and a lawn mower started up somewhere on the property. I listened until the mower drew closer and moved away. Each time it moved closer, I found myself holding my breath, hopeful. Maybe if it would just park outside the house and make enough noise to drown out the silence. Each time it drove away again, I felt one more little piece of me break off.

When the morning turned into afternoon and the clock downstairs told me as they know it was noon, I decided the silence was the problem. If it wasn't too late, I was sure I could sleep and get some relief. I turned the radio on downstairs and turned it up as loud as it would go, until it hurt my ears. When I got in bed, the music filled the loft space, leaving no room for silence.

As the room grew dimmer in the evening, I held my head in my hands and panicked as the thought that I might never sleep again embedded itself with my mind. Nothing was helping. I was just slowly going insane.

Another night without sleep and I found myself staring into the bathroom mirror the next morning, wondering who the lady staring back at me was. I had dark circles under my eyes and I looked ashen. My hair was greasy and damp falling out of my bun. My lips were chapped and cracked. I could never remember a time when I'd looked so sick.

I knew I needed to eat and shower, but I didn't know if I could. My body was physically hurt from the losses and no amount of food or soap was going to make it better. I was just leaning on the age-old adage about time being the best thing. Time was one thing I had plenty of. Five more years of it.

I'd lost track of time completely when Bea showed up. I could tell from the look of horror on her face that the mirror me was an accurate depiction

, just to me. I looked like a zombie. Another King zombie, I thought to myself.

Bea pushed me towards the couch. Maybe Jackson had spread his legs, his condition and I was rotting away, too. I wondered if a heartbreak could be as the way at flesh and bones.

I found Our mother's demise had started with a heartbreak. I looked like outside the when I cried. Maybe Jackson had been telling me something.

moved A sharp sting across my face and ice-cold water raining down on me brought me into the present. I opened my eyes and found Bea breathing harshly, her eyes glaring at me. She was soaking wet. I gasped as I realized I was soaked in silent, it too. Blinking up into the rain, I saw that we were in my shower.

upstairs "If you think I'm going to let you do this to yourself, you're really not as smart as I thought you were." Bea slapped my face again and shook her head.

"You've had time to pick yourself up and you haven't, so now you need to finish your shower. You stink and your hair could fill an oil fryer. I bet you'll have scrubbed pink skin and clearer eyes when I come back in here."

I let out a shuddering breath and started crying again.

in the room "That's fine. You can cry while you shower. You can even cry while you're in the shower. Dry off and come out to the kitchen to eat." She gripped my face and pulled me even closer. "You're going to be sorry you met this side of me."

I couldn't I wasn't. When I was clean, fed, and fading quickly on a freshly made bed.

I wasn't sorry at all. I tried to thank her, but I was asleep before she could even step away from the bed.

going to

healing

by the

of real

me. I looked like a zombie. Another King zombie, I thought to myself while Bea pushed me towards the couch. Maybe Jackson had spread his zombie condition and I was rotting away, too. I wondered if a heartbreak could eat away at flesh and bones.

Our mother's demise had started with a heartbreak. I looked like our mom when I cried. Maybe Jackson had been telling me something.

A sharp sting across my face and ice-cold water raining down on me jerked me into the present. I opened my eyes and found Bea breathing hard and glaring at me. She was soaking wet. I gasped as I realized I was soaking wet too. Blinking up into the rain, I saw that we were in my shower.

"If you think I'm going to let you do this to yourself, you're really not as smart as I thought you were." Bea slapped my face again and shook me. "You've had time to pick yourself up and you haven't, so now you get me. Finish your shower. You stink and your hair could fill an oil fryer. I better see scrubbed pink skin and clearer eyes when I come back in here."

I let out a shuddering breath and started crying again.

"That's fine. You can cry while you shower. You can even cry when you dry off and come out to the kitchen to eat." She gripped my face and leaned in even closer. "You're going to be sorry you met this side of me."

I wasn't. When I was clean, fed, and fading quickly on a freshly made bed, I wasn't sorry at all. I tried to thank her, but I was asleep before she could even step away from the bed.

59.

Memphis

Carter sat across from me at the patio table and ate his breakfast and drank a smoothie. He lifted his head to look at me every so often, but mostly he didn't need company. He was a solo boy, through and through. Meanwhile, I was desperate to speak to someone who could speak back to me.

I was doing everything I was supposed to do, according to Bea, but I thought might have a dominatrix streak to her, but I still couldn't escape the truth of what I'd done and what I'd lost. No amount of food, soap, or therapy was going to fix me.

It didn't help that their mom's books were made up of a large percentage of romance novels. I'd read through everything else, from a homeschooling book to a book that just described illnesses and medical procedures. If I wanted to read anything else, it had to be romance and I couldn't do that. It had only been a week since all hell broke loose. I couldn't remember the conversion formula for how much time was acceptable for grief in a relationship, but I was still in my allotted time frame. Probably.

I'd been avoiding going outside the front door because I was terrified of seeing the guys again. Throwing myself at their feet and begging for forgiveness probably wouldn't get me very far, but it was what I'd do. Staying inside the house day in and day out was slowly driving me back to the point of insanity. Seeing how easily I'd slid into that pit of despair really made me aware of how fragile I was at that point in time.

Bea stopped by once a day, but she said she was so busy at the mall that she couldn't come more than that and she never got to stay

worried that I'd made her hate me, too. There were a lot of hours in for me to just sit and think. I was going to have to venture out.

while I Carter finished his breakfast and cleaned himself while staring ten, but When he was done, he strolled over to the steps I'd made him and through, sitting there.

k. "That leaves me no choice." I finished my smoothie and washed who I before looking through my clothes and wondering if I could make the wardrobe last through a pregnancy. Most of my clothes being too or sleep wasn't a good sign.

I had one dress made of out a T-shirt material and while it technically looking at myself in it made me feel beyond strange. It hugged my belly hooling made me look way more pregnant than I felt. It was also fire-engine red es. If I felt like the Kool-Aid man.

it. It'd I wasn't going to let a dress stop me from going out and hopefully I ber the into a friendly face. I just wouldn't look at a mirror again. No problem riving a The front door felt like a portal to a land I wasn't supposed to enter like I was breaking all kinds of laws when I walked quietly down the frankly and out of the gate. I almost felt like a cat burglar, if cat burglar regging starting to waddle and wore the least sneaky outfit ever.

figured I kept to my side of the maze and just walked around the path, looking me the flowers and hoping to run into Pete, especially. I nearly cried despair wound my way around a curve in the path and saw Pete trimming a across the way. I moved off the path and rushed across the yard to see n house "Pete! Oh, thank God. I've—" I cut myself off when I saw the look long. I face as he saw me coming at him. "What's wrong?"

He started gathering his tools and just held them to his chest as he quick beeline towards the main house. When I called his name a second

the day he stopped and turned to face me with a sad look on his face. "I'm so
Memphis. I can't lose this job. You know it's perfect for me."

at me. I held out my hands, trying to show that I had no ill intent. "I don't
want you to lose your job either, Pete. I was just coming to see if I could help
with anything. I...what's going on?"

my cup He looked around us and moved closer. "They told us all if we
like my with you, they'll fire us. They're serious, honey. I've never seen the
so small this."

I froze. "They said they would *fire* anyone who talked to me? Are you
really fit, they said that? That's so crazy, Pete."

shilly and He looked over his shoulder and started backing away. "They made
me clear, Memphis. I'm sorry."

I stared after him as he rushed away from me, dropping to the
ground scrambling to grab them as he went. I couldn't understand it at first. I
couldn't make a difference if I talked to their staff. Unless they wanted to hear
from me. I felt cutting me off from their staff meant taking my friends away, leaving
me miserable and all alone at the back of their property.

As were Anger was slow to build, but once it did, I'd worked myself into a

It was wrong, what they were doing. I was stomping across the yard, talking
at the main house, without taking a moment to consider if it was a good idea
when I was going to give them a piece of my mind. I deserved their harsh
rejection, but making me suffer all alone was cruel.

him. I burst in through the backdoor and went towards the dining room, where
I could hear speaking and could smell something delicious. If they were shocked
to see me standing at the end of the dining room table, blazing mad, they
wouldn't show it.

At that time, I planted my hands on my hips and opened my mouth to shout the

o sorry, down, but seeing them was a hit right to the chest. They looked d
somehow. I wasn't sure what it was, but they did. Their coldness wa
t want second skin that disguised the men I loved. I hated it. I hated eve
elp you about what I'd done and how I'd hurt them.

Jake's words came back to me then. Hurt people hurt people. I'd hu
interact and they were getting even. I didn't like it, but I'd started it.

am like I let my arms fall loosely to my sides and did what I'd tried to
hadn't been able to. "I'm sorry. I am so incredibly sorry for hurting
ou sure didn't think past my own selfish needs when I lied about where I'm fr
my background for the surrogacy application. I should've known bette
it very should've been a better person. I deserve your anger. I earned it with
lie I told. I hope you know that my feelings, our time together, that
ols and real.

t didn't "You probably don't trust a single thing I say and I understand tha
urt me. I felt everything. It was me, through and through. I talked to Knox ab
ing me constantly, so much that he probably knows everything about all of yo
of you mean so much to me and I'm just so sorry I didn't tell you the
frenzy. truth before all of this."

owards They didn't look up at me. I knew they heard me because they'd fr
l idea. I place, but they wouldn't even look at me.

ate and "Please, give me a chance to explain everything. Give me a ch
make it right. I'll prove to you that I'm the woman you spent so mu
where I with. I don't want it to end. I don't want to lose y'all. I...I love you
cked to each of you and it's killing me that I hurt you." I'd started crying a
y didn't point and the tears poured out of me. They still didn't look up at m
you hear me? I love you! I love each of you so damn much in a wa
e house never thought I would feel. Just...look at me! Please!"

ifferent Nothing changed. They didn't budge.

s like a "I don't need the money. Let me prove to you that it's not ab
rythingmoney, or anything else. I just want the three of you in my life. I
something right now that says I'll forfeit the money. I'll move out and
rt themjob. I can support myself and show you that it's not about any of th
give me a chance. I'm begging you."

do but The silence was deafening again. I felt fingers wrap around my ha
y'all. I looked back to see Bea, her face etched in pain. She gently pulled me
om andthe room and down the hallway that would leave me on the outside ag
er and I "I'm so sorry, Memphis. Let me walk you back to the house and
h everyjust cry together tonight. Okay?" She wiped tears from my chee
was allclenched my hand hard. "I think it's time we talked about some
should've told you from the start."

it, but I

out you

u. Each

e whole

ozen in

ance to

ch time

. I love

it some

e. "Did

y that I

Nothing changed. They didn't budge.

"I don't need the money. Let me prove to you that it's not about the money, or anything else. I just want the three of you in my life. I'll sign something right now that says I'll forfeit the money. I'll move out and find a job. I can support myself and show you that it's not about any of that. Just give me a chance. I'm begging you."

The silence was deafening again. I felt fingers wrap around my hand and looked back to see Bea, her face etched in pain. She gently pulled me out of the room and down the hallway that would leave me on the outside again.

"I'm so sorry, Memphis. Let me walk you back to the house and we can just cry together tonight. Okay?" She wiped tears from my cheeks and clenched my hand hard. "I think it's time we talked about something I should've told you from the start."

60.

60.

Wells

I shoved back from the table and drained the last of my scotch. I would have needed two more bottles to numb the constant ache in my chest. If I hadn't drunk to feel better anymore I skipped the scotch. "Well, fuck it. Not much, I'm going upstairs to try and burn that out of my memory."

Boone's hand shook as he finished his own scotch and got up to get himself another. "I...I'm going to go get drunk. I don't want to think about this anymore."

Remy stayed at the table, his hand still clutching his fork, knuckles white. "Bring a second bottle."

I left them to it and went upstairs. I'd been trapped in a vicious cycle of needing to paint but only being able to paint Memphis. I was surrounded by my room by Memphis in different states and poses. The ones of late had been dark and featured her weakly clinging to the wall while tears streamed down her cheeks. It wasn't helping anything.

I stopped outside my door and took a deep breath. It was hard to look at her inside and face Memphis's broken eyes. They looked so real. Her expression had felt so genuine. She was a liar, though. She'd used us. There was a part of me I never opened myself up to a relationship before her and she'd proven me right I was. No one escaped a relationship unscathed. You couldn't trust anyone, even sweet women with big eyes and southern accents. Even the woman who'd raised you and promised she'd never go anywhere.

I glanced past my room at the dark end of the hallway and found Boone moving towards our mom's old room. We'd just shut the door and everything the way it was after Memphis's brother had trashed it. It was

painful to look at, but after hearing Memphis's confession and it seemed easier to face my mother's broken things than to look at a would've images of Memphis hurting.

Since I I opened the door and the scent of her perfume still hung in the ne very stepped inside. Her room had been a snapshot in time of the day she'

Before Jackson touched everything, I could look inside the room a to pour remember that day like it was happening in a movie right in front of r k about nightgown and robe had been across the bed, with her slippers on th close by. Her vanity had been messy from her rushing to get ready.

white. Moving farther in, I saw the framed photo of her wedding to Do picture had been replaced after her death. When Don found the three c ycle of the floor in that very room, crying our hearts out, he'd lost it. He'd g nded in that picture frame and shoved it in our faces before throwing it acr had all room, where it shattered and sprayed us with glass.

treaked I could still hear him screaming about our mom being a liar and a

Remy had defended her and taken a backhand to the mouth for it. Don to step how he knew she'd been cheating on him and she was planning on notions the family to run away with the other man. He forced us to say thing i reason still couldn't face, things about our mother that had been cruel and unu

en how We'd gone into the room that night heartbroken, and we'd come i't trust fucked up little boys who couldn't understand why their mother h ven the them so badly. We'd gone from loved and well-adjusted kids to ang who felt like no one had ever loved them and like no one ever would.

myself own mother didn't love you, who would?

nd left I could still hear Don's screaming as I stopped at her vani was too straightened her jewelry box. High or not, I still wanted to kick Jacksc for touching her things. He had no right. I started putting pieces

sobs, it jewelry back and frowned when it felt like my finger almost went through the bottom of the box. When I turned it over, the bottom looked fine, the wood was still solid. Turning it over again in my hands, I saw it. A false bottom. My heart stopped as I lifted the lining and saw that inside the compartment there was a small notebook. I pulled it out as carefully as I could and held the brittle paper in shaking hands. What could it be? I needed to stamp down the excitement. Most likely, it would be a book of her notes or something. Opening the top cover blew that theory out of the water. It was my mom's handwriting, small and curvy, lined page after page of the notebook. That sinking to the floor, I devoured every line. I read our mom's most private thoughts and then read them again before I stood up on shaking legs and grabbed the stairs to find Boone and Remy. Still holding the notebook, I found them in the living room, the backshots.

They each jerked upright when they saw me and I wondered what they thought I was. My face that startled them so much. Remy even stood up and left towards me. "Wells? Are you okay?" I felt my face and realized why they were freaked out. I was crying. My heart in my throat, I held up the notebook. "I just meant to pick up some jewelry. This was inside a secret compartment in her jewelry box. It had her diary."

Remy paled and sat down heavily. "What's it say?"

"Don lied. He fucking lied." I sat down next to Boone and opened the final page. "This is the last entry before...you know. She's not talking about leaving us and running away. She went on a page-long rant about Don's ass to her about her plans to go out with a woman named Bridgette. She talked about Bridgette moving into her cottage, as she called

ugh she talked about finding the space to build on to the cottage so her boy
ough. I have enough space to be happy.”

om. “Who’s Bridgette? I don’t remember anyone named Bridgette.”
secretly leaned closer as I flipped to another page.

lly as I “Bridgette was Mom’s friend from school.” I hesitated. “She was c
tried to see Don. With Bridgette.”

umbers Remy stared at me, dumbfounded. “What?”

ter. My “She was a lesbian. She writes about Don knowing and being fine
book. because he had a lot of women on the side. She’d been with Bridget
erson all long time. I don’t know how long, because this only goes back so
ags and what if there are more? There could be boxes of them in the attic.”

k like it Remy stood up and shook his head. “Why...why the fuck would Do
rowing the way he did if he knew about it?”

“She wanted to move into the cottage with Bridgette and take us w
ey saw She loved Bridgette and wanted her to be in our lives. She makes so
moved weird jokes about Bridgette being called step-mommy that made n
uncomfortable, but that’s fine. So, our sweet mother was a freak. I
g. With business.” I shuddered. “Don started fighting with her about Bridgett
up her he realized it wasn’t just a fling. Sex was fine, but Mom was talking lo
’s...it’s family.”

“She wanted to move us in with her and Bridgette?” Boone’s voi
barely above a whisper. “That’s a far cry from leaving us behind an
l to the coming back.”

g about I swallowed a wave of emotion at knowing she wanted us. “I wi
n being was still alive. He deserves far worse than dying in his sleep.”

idgette. Remy held out his hand. “I need to read it. I can’t wrap my head
it. She this.”

s could I reluctantly handed it off to him and watched as he and Boone lean
read it together. I looked over at the scotch they'd been drinking and g
Boonethe bottle. I needed something to take the edge off as I waited for them

heating

with it
te for a
far, but

on react

ith her.
me real
re very
Not my
e when
ove and

ice was
d never

sh Don

around

I reluctantly handed it off to him and watched as he and Boone leaned in to read it together. I looked over at the scotch they'd been drinking and grabbed the bottle. I needed something to take the edge off as I waited for them.

61.

61.

Memphis

Bea paced in front of the couch, clutching a bottle of water in her hands so hard the plastic was making awful noises. She still hadn't said whatever she needed to say, but I wasn't sure it mattered. After seeing the way the guys had responded to me, I was one hundred percent sure everything was over. I'd lost them.

I sighed and went to the kitchen to pour myself a glass of sweet tea. It didn't even taste good after what had just happened. "I think I'm going to take a shower."

"Yeah, yeah. Do that. This can wait." She practically ushered me into the bathroom and went right back to pacing.

I took a hot shower and scrubbed myself pink. I took my time, unhurriedly going through the motions while my brain tried to torture me with a replay by replay of the things I'd said to them in the dining room.

When I was dried and dressed, I found Bea in the kitchen, putting bread in the oven. I frowned and looked around. I hadn't even known there were ingredients for baking.

"I thought chocolate would help." She set the oven timer and then looked at me in a gaze. "I'm just going to say it."

"Okay."

"Like ripping off a bandaid." She started stretching for some reason. "I go."

"Anytime is good for me."

"Just going to give you bad news and that's okay. It's okay." She held out her hands and then blurted it all out. "They never wanted kids. I'd

thought they hated kids. They were giant man whores, living like Pe
Syndrome is a cute condition, and then Don died. He wrote into his v
r hands they would get nothing if they didn't each have a kid within five year
r't said couldn't get out of it. They didn't want to lose their family home,
ing the figured out that a surrogate would work. I overhear things all the tir
re that know, and I heard them losing their minds about being forced to hav
They tried everything to get out of it."

t tea. It I sat down heavily on a stool. Her words were jumbled in my he
oing to when I started to unjumble them, I shook my head, because that coul
right. "No, they told me they wanted to start their families now. Th
into the that losing their father had really made them see that life was short."

"They hated Don. They probably would've loved it if he'd die
rriedly earlier on." She watched my face and winced. "I'm sorry. I didn't kno
onstant to say anything and then it seemed like they were changing for you
seemed softer. I thought they'd see the light and be happy. But after
ownies couldn't hold it in. They're punishing you for lying, but they lied to
re were their lie leaves three kids in a world they weren't really wanted in."

I felt my body burn hotter and tingles break out everywhere. I
met my professed my love to them and had them ignore me, all the while the
lying about wanting a family. They were having kids as a currency
what they wanted. I wasn't giving them blue blood kids, but they
. "Here giving the kids a real family, so what did it matter?"

"Memphis?"

I stood up and jabbed my finger in the direction of the house. "I'n
e shook over there and I'm going to show them what it looks like when you
always southern woman off."

"Should I come?"

After Pan I looked at the brownies and knew I'd want them later. "Would you be willing to make sure the brownies don't burn?"

She let out a giant sigh. "Thank God. I'd fight them for you, but I'm so tired they love to keep my job."

I all but ran to get back to their house. I could feel my blood rushing through my veins. The kids felt like breaking something. Maybe a whole man. Or three.

Letting myself into the house again, I stomped to and fro until I found them in the living room. I gagged at the smell of liquor and vomit that wouldn't be as soon as I crossed the threshold. Once again, I'd managed to work up a good rage and once again, I had to put a cork in it. Strewn out in front

looking like a bunch of drunk coeds, the guys were clearly drunker than I was. A lot of kunk and at least one of them had already thrown up.

"What the actual hell is wrong with y'all? How did you manage all this in the little bit of time I was gone?" I tapped Remy's prone body with my foot and nearly screamed when he rolled onto his back and stared up at me through bloodshot eyes. "Jesus, Remington. What is wrong with you?"

He reached for my foot, but I stepped away. "Come here, sweetie, I'd just know a secret."

Wells' head popped up from behind the couch for a second before I had to get down again and the sounds of vomiting filled the room. I had to walk through the room to find Boone. He was passed out behind a grouping of plants.

I looked around the room and decided that I was leaving. I wasn't going to their games anymore. I couldn't leave them to choke on their own vomit. After I got them away from certain death, I was gone. The men I'd been a chance and cried that I loved were drunk off their asses like the

you behaving a fucking party after breaking my heart. They couldn't keep me in prison and make people stay away from me. Screw them. I was done and really. After trying and failing to lift Boone by myself, I took Remy's phone from his pocket and rolled him onto his side. The phone at the guardhouse rang a few times before Nico picked up. I barely bit back a sigh. Nico didn't care about me in any way at all.

I found "Mr. Hawke?"

It hit me "Nico, it's Memphis. I need some help at the main house."

He spoke over me. "What are you doing with Mr. Hawke's phone?"

"He's drunker than drunk and I need help getting him and his two brothers to bed. Would you come and help me?" I looked down at

Remy moving his fingers like they were a camera square and he was taking fake pictures up my dress. "Stop it, you ass."

"Excuse me?"

"Just get up here, please. They need help."

I hung up and shoved Remy's phone in my pocket without a second thought. Glaring down at him, I did my best to push my heartache away all the way to the back of my brain.

"You look so beautiful when you're mad." Words slurred and all of it across still chipped away at my resolve.

"I'm going to wait on the porch for Nico. Try not to choke when he gets here." I went to the front door and stood with my back to the house.

Thankfully, Nico was already coming in through the front door. I stepped out, but he turned towards the living room and watched as the smell hit him. He stepped back at me and then down at Remy, who'd probably never been anywhere other than a professional boss in front of him.

"Nico, bring Memphis to me. She's being mean right now, but she's

deep meloved me earlier. Can't take it back, baby."

Nico looked back at me with panic in his eyes. "What do I do?"

I growled. "You sure as hell don't bring me anywhere. Help me get
rang into their rooms."

"Are you sure you should be doing that in your condition?" He pointed
my stomach.

"My condition? I'm pregnant, not dying, Nico." I grabbed Remy

"Help me or I'm about to drag him up the stairs like this, just so he hits
step on the way up."

Remy gagged. "Gonna throw up."

I threw up my hands and went to find a bucket. I had just made it
kitchen when Remy's phone buzzed in my pocket. Startled, I took it
saw it was a notification from the gate. I turned to go give the phone
when video popped up on the screen.

Three women were standing in front of the gate, already out of the
secondThey were barely dressed and as I watched on in horror, they flashed
lovecamera and laughed together. "Let us in, guys! I thought you were ready
party. Remy, Boone, Wells! *Hello?* Would it help if we showed you
, Remyagain?"

I turned off the screen and looked away, horrified and crushed. I
while I'mback into the living room and saw Nico had already managed to get
onto one of the couches. Without saying a word, I helped him do the
pointedwith Boone. Wells had to be cleaned up first, but not too long after, the
lookedall settled on the couches, propped up by pillows so they couldn't rest
nythingtheir backs, and I'd sent Nico to the gate to get rid of the women. The
had partied too hard before they arrived. Too bad.

With my heart wedged in my throat, I found a notepad and pen

kitchen and wrote out a simple goodbye. I didn't plan on being around
they woke up the next morning.

et them

inted to

's legs.

s every

t to the

out and

to Nico

ieir car.

hed the

ly for a

our tits

walked

t Remy

ie same

ey were

oll onto

ir dates

t in the

kitchen and wrote out a simple goodbye. I didn't plan on being around when they woke up the next morning.

62.

62.

Boone

I shoved my way off the couch and barely made it four feet before I stop and vomit. I had the worst hangover I'd ever felt in my life and concerned my head was split open by the degree of pain I was in. I around the room, squinting at the bright light, and saw both Remy and still trapped in their pillow cages. I ran my hands over my body, check injuries, and tried standing straight up again. The pained sounds startled Remy from his sleep. Or unconsciousness.

“You’re being too damn loud.” He flopped around, trying his best up. “What the fuck kind of jail is this?”

Wells pushed the front row of pillows away from his chest and immediately rolled into the floor. He swore wildly and then did one pained sounds. “This is hell. I’m in hell.”

I walked very carefully to the coffee table, where several water bottles had been left with a bottle of pain relievers. “Did we do this? That was us.”

Remy managed to sit up and shrugged. “I don’t know. I don’t remember doing it.”

I took a big swig of water and noticed a note next to the bottles. I picked it up and looked it over. Seeing it was from Memphis, a feeling of dread washed over me. We had to talk to her and figure out how to move forward. I'd just taken another big drink when the first lines of the note hit me. I choked on the water and ended up spraying most of it across the table.

“We have to go to Memphis.” I clutched the letter in my hand and started moving. “Now. She’s leaving.”

“What do you mean?” Remy stood on unsteady feet and scrambled on a mound of pillows. “She can’t leave.”

I had to I shoved the note at him and watched the blood drain from his face. I read it next and clutched his head while moving towards the back door. I looked “Should we take a car?” I groaned when I saw their looks. “It was a question. I just feel like fucking death.”

Looking for “Just run.” Remy cringed away from the sun like some kind of nocturnal animal, arms raised to protect his head and everything. “Okay, running is a stretch.”

It took to get Wells came out of nowhere and jumped the flowerbed. Once he was in the yard, he sprinted not even ten feet before he bent over and threw up. To his credit, he finished and wiped his mouth and then took off again.

None of my I knew there wasn’t a chance of me jumping in my current state so I ran to the path and walked as fast as I could without moving my upper lip. I felt Remy behind me and heard him dry-heave. “Don’t fucking throw up on me, Remy.”

He dry-heaved again before he was able to talk. “I can hold my tongue as a asshole. I’m not going to throw—”

It would’ve felt better and more like a win if I hadn’t bent over to throw up. I kicked it right after him. We both just kept moving, unwilling to chance Memphis leaving. Her words echoed around my brain and I fully understood just how much we’d fucked up. We had to make it right.

It took me. I Wells got to the house just before us and walked straight in. I was behind him, searching the place for her or her things. I didn’t see anything started but she hadn’t brought much. Against my body’s wishes, I climbed the stairs to the loft and found the bed made, but no sign of Memphis. I looked

I over a closet and felt a wave of panic. Her things were gone. Just her things, clothes that we'd bought her were still hanging with the tags on.

Wells "She's gone." I looked out the back door and shook my head. "She's gone. Her stuff is gone."

Remy sank into the couch with his head in his hands. "It's my fault. I was so angry. I was cruel to her. I was so sure that I was right."

Wells "We all thought we were right." Wells sat next to him. "We just didn't know she'd be gone while she begged for a chance to talk to us."

I sat on his other side. "She loves us. I didn't believe Knox when she did. I thought he was crazy. We thought we knew everything. To his credit, he was convinced that since she made a mistake, it meant she wasn't capable of doing anything else. I can't even blame Don and his head games, because he's a grown man. I should've known better."

Wells "We'll find her." Remy didn't sound so sure, though. He sounded doubtful. We sat there in the quiet of the house, feeling shitty and so out of ourselves. When the door opened, we all jumped; we were so out of our heads, when Memphis walked in carrying a basket of fruit and a scowling face that would've scared the hellhounds, my body lit up.

Wells "You didn't leave." I stood up, desperate to pull her into my arms.

Memphis "Well, how the hell was I supposed to do that?" She dropped the basket on the coffee table, planted her hands on her hips, and let loose. "You made me believe that no one would let me out of this God-forsaken place! I've sacrificed everything from money to my body and no one would help me escape. It's your choice, three of you. So, no, I didn't leave, Boone, but it sure as hell wasn't your choice."

I in the end It was wrong but I almost smiled. Hearing her shout at me with her voice growing stronger by the word and watching her stomp her foot as she

gs. Thewas cute as hell for some reason. It also didn't hurt that she was we
dress that didn't fit her belly anymore and was way shorter than
he left.because of it.

“Keep your eyes to yourself, Boone. Better yet, keep your eyes ou
t. I washouse, since apparently I'm not allowed to leave. You'll have to
leaving for me.” She looked at all of us and hissed. “I am done wit
ignoredyou. You self-righteous hypocrites. And you're all messy drunks. If yc
you're asking Bea to clean up after your disgusting little party, yc
he saidanother thing coming. If I'm not allowed to leave, then I'm sure as hel
. I wasto allow myself the prerogative to call y'all on your bullshit. Let's sta
able ofshall we?”

use I'm I sank back down on the couch and nodded. I was down to be yelle
Memphis for a while. She deserved the chance to yell and we deserve
efeated.screamed out.

orry for “Let's start with the fact that you three sat there yesterday and list
it. Andme pour my heart out. I begged you for a chance and you treated m
wl thatwasn't even there. Immature and hurtful just to be hurtful. Then the
way you isolated me from anyone who would be kind to me. That
abusers do, for the record. Think about that long and hard while
sket onpatting yourselves on the back for throwing money at some cha
de sureanother.

offered “And you know what? Guess who else in history tried to breed
ape thelittle children, assholes? The fact that you even deemed every womar
sn't bya seven-figure worth unworthy to accept your semen, like it's God's
gross and you should be ashamed. More than that, however, is the f
: accentyou don't even want children.”

e did it My stomach sank.

aring a “That’s right. I know about your daddy’s will and you creating little normal children to prance out to some lawyer so you can keep your inheritance

Memphis, we’re just so ready to start a family. We lost our dad and I don’t know how short life really is. We don’t want to wait. Oh, yuck! You’re all doing the lying liars who had the audacity to lock me away in your backyard for all of the same thing. Only my lies didn’t end with three unwanted children. You think I dragged through the same shitty life that you had at boarding school. You have lives created life. Your lies are living inside me right now, kicking the hell going out of my kidneys. The fact that you would snatch this little girl away from me right now, and put her in some room somewhere with a couple of nannies...I was talking about you three. I thought there was substance and soul behind your eyes. I can see now that I was just being an uneducated jackass.”

I felt my body sinking lower and lower with her every word. She was talking about us. We’d fucked up so bad.

ened to “That should be the final nail in the coffin. There’s clearly something wrong with me, though, because the final nail? It was showing up to find out that we all passed out drunk last night and then seeing three women show up at your party. You’ll be sorry you missed them. Great tits on you’re them.” Her voice broke but she somehow got herself together right away or “Now, I’m going to cut this fruit up and I’m going to eat it while I read one of your momma’s romance novels. I’ve been too upset before now, but I perfectly know that love isn’t what’s to blame for this mess. It’s trying to love a below jerks that’s the problem.”

gift, is I stood up, my body vibrating with anxiety. “Mem-”
act that “If y’all could make yourself useful and shut my door on your way out, I’d appreciate it.” She picked up the basket and cut each of us down with a

le robotlook. “Maybe I’ll let you come around to apologize in a week or so, b
ce. Oh, then it won’t be to listen. That’s how it’s done, right?”

now we “Listen—” Remy stood next to me and found himself cut off, too.

all liars. “Bye, y’all.” She cocked her hip out as she watched us and the
r doing something so powerful in her stance, in the way she carried our baby
n being wanted to drop to my knees and beg her to listen to me. “Don’t let tl
l. Your hit ya where the good lord split ya.”

shit out One by one we filed out of her house and before I could turn ar
om me close the door, it slammed shut. The sound of the lock engaging w
; wrongicing on the cake.

yes, but Remy looked at me and then at Wells. “What the fuck women v
talking about?”

as done Wells let out a relieved breath. “Thank fuck. I had no clue, bu
worried one of you had done something stupid.”

nothing I glared at him. “You think I might’ve had three women come to c
ind you and apparently flash their tits? Are you insane?”

p at the “Let’s go.” Remy looked back at the little house and frowned.
n all off figure it out. We’ll figure out how to fix this, too. First, we have some
t away. to clean up.”

ead one

it now I

ve three

out, I’d

a single

look. “Maybe I’ll let you come around to apologize in a week or so, but even then it won’t be to listen. That’s how it’s done, right?”

“Listen—” Remy stood next to me and found himself cut off, too.

“Bye, y’all.” She cocked her hip out as she watched us and there was something so powerful in her stance, in the way she carried our baby, that I wanted to drop to my knees and beg her to listen to me. “Don’t let the door hit ya where the good lord split ya.”

One by one we filed out of her house and before I could turn around to close the door, it slammed shut. The sound of the lock engaging was just icing on the cake.

Remy looked at me and then at Wells. “What the fuck woman was she talking about?”

Wells let out a relieved breath. “Thank fuck. I had no clue, but I was worried one of you had done something stupid.”

I glared at him. “You think I might’ve had three women come to our gate and apparently flash their tits? Are you insane?”

“Let’s go.” Remy looked back at the little house and frowned. “We’ll figure it out. We’ll figure out how to fix this, too. First, we have some messes to clean up.”

63.

Wells

I held my phone between my ear and shoulder as I finished the last stroke of my painting. “I’m sorry, I don’t think I heard you right did you say?”

Tony from Golden Flowers seemed more than a little put out. “Tim opened the door, saw the flowers, screeched at me, and invited me in for a glass of sweet tea. She’s great. Sure did make me dislike you guys, though. Did you really invite three birds over right after she told you she loved

I dropped my phone into my can of paint thinner and went to find Boone and Boone. They were both looking out the window and jumped when I asked what they were doing.

“Come look at this.” Boone waved me over and pointed down behind the back patio. “She’s insane. But hot when she looks a little unhinged

I looked down and saw Memphis using several large bouquets of flowers to make something on the stone. “What’s she doing?”

We all watched as she worked and when she stepped back to reveal she arranged the flowers in the shape of a hand flipping the middle finger out a bark of laughter. “So hot. I know she didn’t go to art school, but she’s pretty artistic.”

Remy grunted and sat back in his chair. “So much for flowers working. Boone dusted off his hands before shoving them into his pockets. “It’s only phase one. And she’s engaging with us. That’s a good sign. I think

“Something will work.” I watched as she walked back towards her car holding her back like it hurt. “Does she need to see Braddock?”

“I already called. He said pregnancy hurts and of course she’s hold back.” Remy tapped his fingers on his desk. “Tomorrow will work. It’s just brush adding in this belly band thing that’s supposed to help her back.”

What Only when tomorrow came we were once again gathered at his window.

Memphis stacked the boxes of gifts and very purposefully set a bottle of the lady lighter fluid and matches next to the pile. It was impactful, to say the least. I waited in for a moment. “She needed that belly band. Dammit.” Remy watched the window though. She was out of sight and then moved back to his desk. “Okay, so gifts for you?” work.”

I Remy “She’s going to take that belly band. She’s still walking funny.” I shook my head in frustration. “I’ll be right back. Or she’ll murder me. Either way, I’ll just move on without me.”

How on I had to stop at the stairs and go back to his office to ask what a belly band looked like, but after that I was on my way to battle. That’s what it felt like. I found the band thing in the pile and marched the way to her door.

I knocked once on her door and then pushed it open. She looked up from her seat on the couch with fire in her eyes, but I cut her off before she could say anything. “I let me out.”

It that’s “Remy ordered this for you because we can all see you walking around here, holding your back like someone’s grandmother. It’s supposed to help with holding your belly, or something. You’re going to put it on and wear it.” “It was going to put it on for you. You’re not hurting anyone but yourself by not using this.”

House, She narrowed her eyes at me and seconds went by in silence before she stood up and grabbed the band from me. “I wanted to keep it anyway.”

“You’re welcome.” I turned and went back to the house, my head pounding. She was somehow more and more beautiful every day. He

ling her was getting bigger and I missed touching it. It wasn't easy to walk away. I'm her but I knew it was a process.

Remy and Boone were waiting for me on the back patio. They said I didn't have the band and Remy grinned. "You did it."

of "I'm going to lose my mind if she doesn't talk to us soon. She's so sweet and we're missing it all being this far away." I looked back down the way until they say we move up the baby furniture."

Boone shrugged. "I'm tired of waiting, too."

Remy pulled out his phone and tapped a button. "It's done."

A wave of nerves hit me and I shook out my hands. "It'll work. In any way, work."

"She's at least going to let us apologize and set the record straight." Remy rubbed his jaw and sighed. None of us were sleeping well and hadn't felt like since everything fell apart. "I don't care if we have to tie her to a chair. If her mouth is closed, she's going to listen to us tomorrow."

The next day, we were all waiting around to see how Memphis would react. I'd slept like shit again and spent the morning unable to do anything at all. Boone had taken some time off work, sending his patient to his close friend. I never knew what Remy was doing with his business, but it never slipped. During our time with Memphis, he'd been home most of the time, but I never, though.

I was sitting on the back patio, waiting for the beginning of what had been the end of our fighting, fidgeting and counting out a beat with my fingers. Every breath felt like it took too long and wasn't enough. My anxiety felt like it was getting better before the falling out with Memphis. I'd felt like my heart that maybe I was going to be normal again. I was pretty sure no therapist would ever suggest spanking therapy for their anxious patients, but

ay from back control had helped. Being so out of control with everything had made me feel like that progress had never happened.

It was my own fault for not fixing things when the ball was in our court. I'd just been so caught up in feeling wronged again. I put so much pressure on Memphis being exactly what I thought I needed that I didn't give her a path. "If freedom to be who she was. It was like I was counting on her to help with my anxiety and to complete the feeling of family I'd been needing with my brothers. With all that riding on her back, one mistake had felt monumental. We'd been incredibly unfair to her.

I knew that I couldn't put the same pressure on her going forward. She couldn't heal me or my brothers. She couldn't fix the things that we needed. Remy had her power. I'd decided sometime in the middle of the night that I hadn't been myself in therapy. Instead of depending on Memphis to heal my shit, I was going to heal myself and bring her a healthier man to love.

"Hey. You seem deep in thought." Boone sat down across from me. I paint looked down the path. "Memphis?"

I chuckled. "Something like that."

"We're the blind leading the blind with stuff like this. Maybe we were better than understood love better if Mom and Bridgette had moved in together." Boone smiled and shook his head. "I've been thinking about that a lot. I've learned to be angry at her for so long. She didn't deserve any of that anger. She put her fingers in her ears. She had her flaws, but she was a good mom. It seemed like she was trying to be a good partner, too."

"I think it's been easier to be angry. Back then and now." I tilted my head back and looked up to the sky and steeled myself for his response to what I said next. "In some ways, we're our father's sons."

opening “I want to be mad, but I know you’re right. He held onto anger all the bitter end. I think we would too, if it meant avoiding pain.”

r court. Looking over at him, I smiled and felt a little piece of our puzzle sh pressureplace. “Well. I won’t if you won’t.”

her the Remy sat down between us. “What are we not doing?”

ure my “Holding onto anger and bitterness anymore. We’re going to try be with mylike Don and more like Mom for a change.” Boone shrugged. “And ma mental.to therapy. Seems like we could probably use it.”

Remy was quiet for a minute and when he spoke, he shocked both rd. She“I’m starting to think the old bastard was doing something kind in the ren’t in I raised my eyebrows. “Did you hit your head?”

l to put He grinned. “Nope, this amount of insanity came from being too c it whenyou two lately. And Memphis. A very healthy amount of it is directl ny ownher.”

“So, you think Don somehow knew we’d agree to have kids to k me andhouse and then fall in love and understand the meaning of family and even Christmas?” Boone snorted. “Yeah, and my dick isn’t the biggest

“I don’t know. It’s just a feeling I’m having.” Remy went still and ould’veunder his breath. “Tornado at twelve o’clock. Here goes nothing.”

er.” He

been so

robably

to be a

ly head

‘I think

“I want to be mad, but I know you’re right. He held onto anger almost to the bitter end. I think we would too, if it meant avoiding pain.”

Looking over at him, I smiled and felt a little piece of our puzzle shift into place. “Well. I won’t if you won’t.”

Remy sat down between us. “What are we not doing?”

“Holding onto anger and bitterness anymore. We’re going to try being less like Don and more like Mom for a change.” Boone shrugged. “And maybe go to therapy. Seems like we could probably use it.”

Remy was quiet for a minute and when he spoke, he shocked both of us. “I’m starting to think the old bastard was doing something kind in the end.”

I raised my eyebrows. “Did you hit your head?”

He grinned. “Nope, this amount of insanity came from being too close to you two lately. And Memphis. A very healthy amount of it is directly from her.”

“So, you think Don somehow knew we’d agree to have kids to keep the house and then fall in love and understand the meaning of family and maybe even Christmas?” Boone snorted. “Yeah, and my dick isn’t the biggest here.”

“I don’t know. It’s just a feeling I’m having.” Remy went still and swore under his breath. “Tornado at twelve o’clock. Here goes nothing.”

69.

69.

Remington

I couldn't help but smile as I watched Memphis coming up the stairs towards us like an angry bull. She was actually kicking up rocks on each fuming step. It felt like her bump got bigger each time I saw her, but she carried it beautifully. I felt fluttering in my stomach as I watched her and I stared at her stomach in awe.

"I fucking have butterflies." I uttered it in amazement, not meaning to be heard, but when I looked up, I could tell Memphis heard it by the way she seemed to hesitate before she said anything.

She stopped in front of the table and looked at each of us. "I don't know if your most recent gift is supposed to be some kind of joke, but it's not funny."

I waited for her to continue, because I knew that couldn't be all she had to say. I was angry, but she didn't add anything else. Thrown off, I searched her face for a sign of distress. More than what we naturally caused her. "Are you okay?"

Her eyes flashed as she looked at me. "No, I'm not okay. I'm fat and out of breath from running over here to tell you what a pig you are and I can't do that because your demon spawn is sucking the life right out of me."

Boone made a strangled sound that might've been a laugh, but he cut him off. Instead, he stood up and pulled out a chair for her. "Sit down, please."

She held her belly as she sat. "Thank you. If you give me a few more minutes, I'll be able to start yelling."

I laughed. It was probably the completely wrong thing to do, but I couldn't help myself. She was fucking magic. Everything about her was like lightning.

in a bottle and I knew life would never be as good without her. “So convinced it’s *my* spawn now?”

ie path She blushed and the sight of it went straight to my dick. “Only when she was trying to kill me.”

and she “I did make kidnapping plans for today if you weren’t willing to let her and us grovel but the plans ended at kidnapping. No murder for me.” I held my gaze and felt more of those butterflies. “If you want to yell some fire for it to wait, though.”

may she “I’ll be honest. I don’t have it in me to yell. I used my energy to get here and now I think I’ll have to ask Pete to get the wheelbarrow to know if I can get back home. I’ve got heartburn, my hips hurt, and if I even look at da baby, I can’t be able to set up a supply of natural gas on the back acre. I feel gross, like the gross of her, and I look gross. And my feet are swelling. This pregnancy is not aging well and it’s almost time for my nap, so I’ll just say this. If they say the furniture is for anything other than what I think it is, I have a whole lot of money saved up and I’ll spend it all on the three of you.”

it even Boone put his elbows on the table as he leaned closer to her. “I love you.” He was off track but I knew he was just going with his heart. Judging by the dopey grin on his face, I wasn’t sure he even knew he’d said it out loud. “Are you kidding me, Boone Hawke? I just told you I have gas and I can’t tell me you love me?” Memphis threw her hands up. “I don’t know what’s wrong with y’all. You love me? Boone, I have gas and fat feet and soon as you can see the baby moving and it’s like I’m a science experiment, I can’t love me.”

ghtning He smiled wider. “I can and I do. You can’t stop me.”

“Give me a reason why I should forgive y’all for how you treated me.”

“Is my love not enough?” Boone’s leg bounced under the table

you're should forgive us because we know that we fucked up. Listen to this. I'm just going to say I'm sorry. That's cheap. I'm sorry for holding you to a higher standard than we held ourselves and for expecting you to be better when we are so far from it. I'm sorry for treating you with a sickening level of disrespect when you came to us trying your hardest to make things work. I'm sorry that I pushed you away and let you feel lonely for a moment. I'll be there for you."

She looked down as her eyes grew red. "Okay, that's a pretty good apology."

"Instead of running with our tails between our legs when you kicked us out, I should've made it very clear that we didn't have a single clue about the women you were talking about. Everything else was fair. I can't stop thinking about you believing the night you told me that you loved us, we had three women over to party." I shook my head. "I saw the video. I don't know any of them. None of us do. We were an emotional mess and drank too much out that night pretty much. Two more things. My dick doesn't work for you." It's for you. And those women did not have great tits. You're a liar." Memphis looked so fucking hopeful that it nearly killed me. "What are they here?"

"I don't know, sweetheart. I can promise you that it wasn't for us. It's our doing, anyway. I don't want anyone else. I just want you." I gripped her hand, doing my best not to rush her.

"That night we got so drunk because I found our mom's old diary. We had to have your brother to thank for it. What was in it proved that the narrative we'd been told since she died was wrong." Wells sat forward and took a deep breath. "We thought she didn't want us and was fleeing to be with her partner." "You were wrong when she died. That wasn't true. She was going to have her partner, a

I'm not named Bridgette, move into the guest house with her. She was trying to figure out how to add space so she could move us in with them without being cramped."

"Whoa." Memphis blinked and giant tears rolled down her cheeks. "That's right. Sweet. She wanted y'all even closer, in a space she made her own. Why would dad not going to notice or...?"

"He knew about it and had his own things going on, I guess. That's why good for another day." Looking at me and Boone, Wells took a deep breath. "The thing is, Memphis, we want to live in the guest house."

"She shook her head automatically. "I'm not moving into the dark, like what with shadow people. No way."

"We were kind of hoping you'd stay, too." He laughed a little. "When we called there, the baby furniture is there. It just makes sense for us to be there, I don't know. I held my breath and tried to be patient. I was nervous, though not black nervous. "This is where the kidnapping comes in, depending on your answer."

She laughed and the sound did so much to soothe my fears. "Let's just try to break from that conversation really quickly, so I can point something out."

"You three are toddlers. You were happy to have me wait as long as I wanted to forgive me, but now that you're ready to be forgiven, you're going to resort to kidnapping after three days? What are you going to do to make sure that we don't repeat a pattern of raising spoiled brats who think they can have kind whatever they want when they want it?"

My mouth fell open and I stuttered as all of my planned thoughts vanished. Looking at Boone and Wells, they looked just as surprised. I snapped my mouth shut and cleared my throat. "Ouch."

Wells grimaced. "Yeah, I think crawling into a hole might be fun."

ying to about now.”

hout us Boone shrugged. “I already knew I could be a spoiled brat. I’m a s

What do you expect?”

“It’s so “It’s something for y’all to work on. Maybe especially you, I
as your Memphis smiled sweetly and my chest ached at the sight of that s

want it to be fair between us. There’s three of you and just one of me

a story get mad and shut me out, there’s no one but me. If I get mad, the three
h. “There are all together. I don’t want to be the odd man out. I may not have

Yale or even graduated high school, but I’m an equal or I’m nothing.”

κ house Boone nodded with a little less patience. “We don’t think less

Memphis.”

‘You’re “And we’ll be sure that we’re not teaming up on you.” I saw her e
too.” lift at the innuendo and groaned. “Don’t do that, sweetheart. It’s been

h. Too time without you and I’ve missed you more than I want to admit.”

n your “Are we agreeing to this?” Wells was just as on edge as I was.

“I don’t think there was ever a question posed.” Memphis leaned f
s take a and the way her breasts nearly spilled out of her dress just about killed

ng out. Wells groaned. “I love you, Memphis, but maybe today isn’t the

as you work on our patience.”

e going “I still don’t hear a question.”

ensure I stood up and moved around the table so I could pull her into m
hey get Just feeling her pressed against me again made breathing easier. “M

King, of some trailer park in Georgia, can the three of us move in w
nished. and raise our babies together?”

ped my “You did not just bring the trailer park into this.” She rolled her ey

as she wrapped her arms around my neck. “Oh, wow. This is going

m right some getting used to. Our daughter is already a cockblock.”

I shook my head at her. “You can’t call our daughter a cockblock.”
urgeon. “If Boone can tell me he loves me after I say I have gas, I can call
daughter a cockblock. All’s fair in love and gas.” She looked over at
Boone.”and smiled. “I love you, too, by the way. It’s not cute gas, though
nile. “I might want to wait to move in until this passes.”

. If you “Stop talking about your gas. I’m trying to tell you I love you.” I looked
at the annoyed look on her face.

gone to “This is not a romantic declaration of love, y’all. We’re going to
tell our grandbabies one day that y’all told me you loved me
of you, conversation about my gas.” She stomped her foot. “This
embarrassing.”

eyebrow “I love you, sweetheart.” I pressed my lips to hers gently, savoring
a long feeling I’d been missing. “Tell me you love me now.”

She giggled against my lips. “I love you, Wells.”

I growled. “That’s mean.”

forward “Fine, you big baby. I love you. I love all of you and nothing I tried
me. to stop it worked, so I guess it’s here to stay. Congratulations.” She tucked
her hair. “You had butterflies?”

I closed my eyes and nodded. “Still do.”

Boone clapped his hands as he stood up, drawing our attention. “I
my arms packed and ready to go in ten minutes.”

Memphis frowned. “Where are you going?”

I leaned closer and whispered against her ear. “We’re still doing
a kidnapping plan.”

es even “And it involves not telling you where we’re going.” Wells stood
to take pressed a kiss to Memphis’s shoulder. “You don’t need to worry
about clothes, though.”

“I can’t just leave, y’all. I have a cat now. Carter and I bonded. He call ourfan of y’alls, so I don’t know how he’s going to feel about you movi : Boonealso have my call with Knox. And Jake promised me he was going to 1. Y’alla copy of this really funny thing we did one time. We have plans to v together with Bea.”

ughed I blew out a sigh. “You don’t understand kidnapping, do you?”

Her mouth stretched into a wide smile. “Fine. But someone has to ta have toof Carter.”

over a Boone grunted. “I think I heard Jake volunteer.”

is so

ing the

d to do

gged at

can be

ing the

up and

7 about

“I can’t just leave, y’all. I have a cat now. Carter and I bonded. He’s not a fan of y’alls, so I don’t know how he’s going to feel about you moving in. I also have my call with Knox. And Jake promised me he was going to get me a copy of this really funny thing we did one time. We have plans to watch it together with Bea.”

I blew out a sigh. “You don’t understand kidnapping, do you?”

Her mouth stretched into a wide smile. “Fine. But someone has to take care of Carter.”

Boone grunted. “I think I heard Jake volunteer.”

65.

65.

Memphis

“As you know, I’m the best brother with the biggest dick and the biggest brain. To firm up my position in the lead, I present to you a little one man show called I know who sent those women to our house.”

I looked up from my lounge chair at Boone and grinned. “Come closer and show me, oh humble one.”

He wagged his eyebrows. “The dick, the smarts, or the show?”

I pretended to consider my options. “For right now, I’ll have the show.”

“Fine. I could’ve done all three at the same time, though.” He sat next to me and scooted closer. Without me having to ask, he picked up a bottle of sunscreen and warmed it in his hands before massaging it into my back. “Charlie Dickbreath Brennan made a call to a not so legal brothel that he arranged for the ladies to visit us. I don’t know what he thought he could accomplish, but he used an illegal phone in jail to call an illegal brother. He’s brilliant. Jake’s buddy on the force took the snapshot we sent of the women and it didn’t take long to work out the details, especially since Charlie bragged to the lady at the brothel that he was Charlie Dick Brennan and he was sending the ladies to his rich friends’ house.”

I cackled. “No! What a moron.”

“Yep. I’m impressed by his ability to fail.” He leaned over and kissed my cheek. “His biggest failure was letting you go. Have I mentioned how hot you are?”

I cringed. “Stop it. I can see myself right now and it’s not great.”

Remy appeared on the deck and sent me a look that made my quiver. “I was hoping you’d say that. Stand up, sweetheart.”

Boone helped me and stood behind me with his arms wrapped around me and his erection pressed into my back. “Now you’re in trouble, love.” I stared up at Boone and lifted my chin. “Give it your best.” Remy’s dark laughter made me think I’d made a misstep in challenge. He pulled a mask from behind his back and held it over his face. The mask from Phantom of the Opera and it immediately turned up to look at us. He held out another that was a soft white masquerade mask with large white feathers and small dangling pearls to accent the edges.

It was beautiful and I wanted it on as fast as possible. “What are you next to for?”

Wells stepped out of the house in his own black leather mask covering the top half of his face. “Did you think we flew you all the way here just to get to the beach?”

I nodded. “Um, yeah. Have you seen it? This is the most beautiful I’ve ever been.”

“There’s something else here, M.” Remy stepped closer and pulled a white mask over my face. It fit like it was made for me. “There’s a club for people with...darker needs. It’s something I would like to show you’re willing.”

My pulse quickened. “Like a sex club?” He smiled. “Something like that. There’s more to it than sex for some people. For others, it’s purely about getting off.”

“And for us?” He put his own mask on and stared down at me with the stern expression he wore when he was Sir. “For us, it depends on how much you trust us.” “You know I trust you completely.” I swallowed and looked down at my growing belly. “I’m not sure pregnant women are supposed to go

und meclubs.”

Boone hummed in agreement. “Yeah, I did see the sign that said that I think they might make an exception for us.”

I gently elbowed him. “I’m not sure I look the part.”

Remy lifted my face. “And that’s the main reason we’re going to the heatpunishments are going to push you. This will probably be one of them.” I pouted. “Why am I being punished?”

“For the amount of times you’ve put yourself down, sweetheart. We’ve been cruel to yourself. We’re going to show you what we see when we look at you, when we fuck you.” He tapped my lips. “And we’re going to do it the way that leaves no doubt in this pretty head of yours just how much we want you and how attracted we are to you.”

My mouth watered, but my brain was screaming out that he was in the wrong place. Being pregnant didn’t suit me. I had to stop myself from blurting those thoughts out as I listened to him talk about me like I was the most beautiful woman in the world. “Okay.”

His mouth lifted in a hungry grin. “We’ll help you get ready.”

Getting ready had consisted of them edging me all afternoon, and I wanted to murder them. My body had never felt so on edge and I couldn’t think if I was close to an orgasm or death.

They had me wear a pretty white dress that matched my mask and high-heeled flats that were comfortable for my feet. When I’d asked for the undies, I’d received three smiles that could’ve started a forest fire. Besides being insanely exposed without my panties, they’d made sure the outfit was comfortable for me and I loved them even more for it.

They’d all three dressed in full black suits that made me want to strip naked and have my way with them. When they added the masks, I

cried from how badly I needed relief. They were beautiful and mysterious, but I felt a little like the Easter bunny next to them. I didn't share that thought.

My nerves started to fray the closer we got to the club. I didn't know what to expect and I wasn't sure if I'd be welcomed. I held onto Remy's hand so tight that I worried I might be hurting him, but as we drove through the gate and parked in the circle drive of a beautiful mansion, I was too disoriented to worry about his hand.

Wells looked at me. "This is not what I was expecting."

Wells took my other hand. "Don't worry. The inside will meet you. We don't want stereotypes you've read about."

"How do you know I read about sex clubs?"

Wells pulled me into his side and lowered his voice. "It was a hunch. I thought you suggested fucking all three of us at the same time."

I gasped and slapped his arm. "Wells! You're not supposed to bring up a lady's indiscretions like that."

Boone slapped my ass. "When you see a lady, let me know."

I looked up at Remy and frowned. "Maybe we should leave them alone. Don't tell me."

The door to the mansion opened for us and a darker version of Jake walked out. "Hello, Mr. Hawke. Dr. Hawke. Mr. Hawke. And this must be the doctor's wife, Mrs. Hawke."

My cheeks flushed and I started to correct him when Remy interrupted. "Correct. Is everything ready?"

"Yes, sir." The man stepped aside and ushered us in, sending me a conspiratorial wink as I passed.

"Maybe I should pretend to be a professor so the greetings aren't so

rious. I awkward. Professor Hawke has a nice ring to it.”

thought, “You didn’t seem fazed by my being called Mrs. Hawke,” I said.

Remy smiled down at me. “It’s easier for paperwork. Besides, it’s
w whatmatter of time.”

and so My mouth fell open and I stared up at him in shock. “Did you j
a largethat?”

stracted Boone kissed my neck and groaned. “I’m going to get hard eve
someone calls your name.”

I fanned myself and tried my best to stay rational. They weren’t pro
all theThey were just playing around. I didn’t want to even think about m
because if they didn’t really want it, it would be crushing. “Are we rea

“Are you excited to start your punishment, sweetheart?” Remy cup
h whenbreasts and stroked my nipples so they were hard and pressing aga
thin fabric of my dress. “Welcome to Desire, Memphis.”

ng up a Boone and Wells opened a set of double doors and a whole othe
opened up in front of me. My eyes tried to take in everything at onc
lighting made it more difficult but I could see several small stages aro
1 in the room, all occupied by couples in varying stages of play. Bars lined th
of each stage and I could see bartenders flipping bottles and pouring
greeted from over their heads. A large dance floor filled the center of the ro
: lovely booths with low backs filled most of the other spaces. There wer
leading up to a long catwalk of rooms, most with large glass windo
noded. several people stood outside of, watching.

I felt like we’d just walked into the grown up circus and I wa
; me a explore. I looked at Remy and nodded. I was ready.

quite so

s just a

ust say

ry time

posing.

marriage

dy?”

ped my

inst the

r world

ie. Low

und the

ie front

; drinks

om and

e stairs

ws that

nted to

66.

Memphis

“This way.” Remy took my hand and led me to a booth near the floor. It was elevated more than the other booths and when I and looked around, I felt like we were almost on display.

Remy slid in on one side of me and Boone took the other. Wells sat other side of Boone, but if he was sad to be on the outside, he didn't. They all seemed excited and their energy was almost predatory. I knew edging they'd done to me had tortured them as well.

“Good evening. Mr. Hawke, I have the usual for you and your brother. Mrs. Hawke, I have a Shirley Temple for you. Virgin, of course.” A blonde dressed in a few straps of leather handed out drinks with a smile on her face. When she looked at me, her eyes dropped to my stomach and her smile somehow got brighter. “Congratulations. You're glowing!”

I waved her off. “Thank you. It's the sun on this island. I can't take for it.”

Remy gripped the back of my neck. “Thank her for complimenting without adding anything else.”

I narrowed my eyes at him but when I looked back at the waitress smiled. It wasn't her fault. “Thank you.”

She winked at me as she tucked her tray under her arm. “Good honey.”

I looked back at Remy. “Why'd she say good luck? Why would luck?”

Boone laughed and rested his hand on my thigh. “Relax, love. They're going to be fun. Trust us.”

Remy's hand landed on my other thigh. "We're going to show you how desirable you really are."

I took a nervous drink and looked around. On the stage in front of me I could see a man kissing a woman and cupping her breasts. My body reacted to such a public display of sexuality. The man ran one of his hands down the woman's leg, and I could almost feel her gasp where I sat.

Remy turned my face to his and kissed me. His tongue stroked my mouth and he squeezed my thigh, lightly pulsing his grip so my thighs gently shifted closer to his body. He pulled back to look at me. "You're beautiful, what to say to make it stop if it's ever too much. There's no pressure. It's for you, sweetheart, so you say when you've had enough."

I gasped when he gently slapped my thigh and then he and Boone pulled my thighs apart. I naturally tried to squeeze them shut, but they wouldn't budge.

"Watch the show, sweetheart."

I looked at the stage with my heart pounding wildly in my chest. There had been the woman on her knees in front of him and she was taking his cock in her mouth and looked like she loved it. I moaned as the sounds reached my ears.

Boone took his turn kissing me and when I felt a mouth against my knee, he just kissed me harder. I knew it was Wells from the feel of him spreading my thighs wider, but knowing that he was below the table and I needed something so private, it felt like the first time. As his mouth moved he could hear the man and woman on stage and it was all so animalistic.

I gasped into Boone's kiss when Wells' tongue stroked me for the first time. Remy pulled me back around to face him and held my gaze while

you just slipped his hands under my thighs and lifted my sex to his mouth so he could feast on me.

of us, I While I fought to stay quiet, Remy slowly pulled the sleeve of my dress down, inch by inch until the tops of my breasts were exposed. He dipped his fingers into the dress and caressed my nipple. "You're safe here with me, don't you know why?"

I moaned and nodded. "Because you're you."

He nipped my bottom lip and then stroked his tongue over it. "Although very often, I take care of you. Sometimes I'll take care of you in ways that might not make sense to you at first. But I'll take care of you. In a place like this, that means I push you and give you what you need."

Wells ran his fingers through my wetness and then teased me with his tongue against my ass, all while his tongue never stopped moving over my clit.

"In any other place, I'd kill a man rather than let him see you exposed. We don't share. No one else will ever know how sweet this cunt tastes or what it's like to have the pleasure of taking your ass. No one else will ever know your innersweat from your back after you've been fucked for hours. You belong to me, sweetheart. I want this all to myself and if I could, I'd put you in a sack to keep men from looking at your sweet, sweet body. I'm not in any other place, though, are we? We're safe here because people know that you're mine. They know touching you would end in disaster for them. For tonight, though, I'm going to let them see."

I felt the dress slide under my breasts and the cool air touch my nipples. I gripped his shirt in my hand and cried out as Wells pushed his finger

he could suck and sucked my clit harder. Boone bent forward to suck my nipple
mouth, tugging and biting without giving me a break.

my dress “You don’t understand how beautiful you are, but you’re going to
understand tonight that your body holds power in its curves. You can use
us. Dominate them to their knees with any part of you, sweetheart.” Remy gripped my
and I felt the way his hands shook. “Look, Memphis. Look at what
doing to them.”

part There were people watching us. Hungry stares were locked in on
between my thighs and my bare breasts with Boone’s mouth attached
My eyes couldn’t focus on any singular person, but instead I felt every
always eyes raking over my body.

what “You’re driving them wild, M. We’re going to show them how pretty
come on Wells’ face.” Remy bared his teeth as I found his length under
table. “Careful or we’ll show them how pretty you are with *my* come
face.”

I arched my back as Wells pushed a second finger into my ass and
touch me harder. Everyone watching could see his arm pumping and they
it felt was so close, but I was scared to let go in front of so many eyes.

“Our waitress liked you, sweetheart.” Remy turned my head so I could
the pretty blonde bent over a table at the edge of the dance floor. There
dressman behind her, thrusting into her, but her eyes were locked on me
would think she’s there for him, but she hasn’t taken her eyes off of you.
see how hard you come with Wells fingering your ass. Show them a
poorly they’ll never have.”

Seeing the waitress watching me as something so intimate happened
people. I know that I was safe with my men, safe enough that I could
into my exposed and never have to worry about anyone getting closer, it was

into him much. I screamed as my orgasm hit me like a sledgehammer. It was in its intensity and then just as pleasurable. I lost control and rode Wells faster, letting them drive me higher until I felt like a star exploding in a night sky.

My men were there, holding me, caressing me, and loving me as you're down. I tucked my face into Remy's chest, shy after putting on such a

"Come on, love. It's time for our private show." Boone pulled me from Wells' arms and carried me like a bride away from the crowd and down a hallway to me. I hadn't noticed.

Remy used a code to let us into a darkened bedroom that had a lot of room enough for all of us for a change. He closed and locked the door behind us and then we were alone, just the four of us.

Boone laid me in the middle of the bed, spread my thighs, and swung his cock around his pants and pushed them down enough to free his cock. Wet with my come, he stroked himself while staring at me. "Fuck, Mr. Wells, this pretty pussy belongs to us and no one else. I don't know if I should fight everyone in there or thank them for setting the stage for what is about to be one very hot fuck, love."

Wells settled on the bed next to my head, naked. He tipped my face away from him as he stroked himself. "Do you get it now?"

I nodded and opened my mouth to him. I was ready for them and glad that no one else would see their bodies. Only me. He slowly fed me his cock while Boone moved between my thighs. I reached out to find Remy and felt his dark chuckle.

"Don't worry, sweetheart. I'm right here. We're pushing tonight. You and Wells are going to make sure you're nice and ready for the next party. I knew what it would be and moaned around Wells. I'd wanted them

painful me at the same time for months, but they were so careful with my
ls' face careful. I knew I could take them and I wanted them all. They were
; in the only greedy ones.

Boone slowly fucked me, thrusting at a pace that drove me mad. I
I came everywhere all at once and then nowhere and it just repeated until I c
show. stand the teasing and had to beg to be fucked harder.

into his They knew my body so well. As I got close to another orgasm, t
llway I moved. Remy stretched out on the bed and I lowered myself onto his

with a loud moan. Boone stood on the bed, his hard shaft wet with my
bed big When I felt Wells gently press me forward, I dug my fingers into l
hind us chest and waited. They did what they often did, overwhelmed my se

something that might be uncomfortable wouldn't matter so much.
ore. He rubbed my clit as Boone and Wells each eased their lengths into my be
ting his I moaned so hard around Boone that he gripped my hair and pul
emphic. mouth off of him. "Fuck. Your mouth is goddamn amazing."

want to Remy's face was strained as he held still, waiting for my body to a
about to both of them being inside me. He felt huge in my core while Wells st

my ass and together, they made me realize how perfectly we co
ice so I together. I was so full that I couldn't move, couldn't do anything but l
do what they wanted and enjoy every bit of it.

lad that When they each began to thrust into me, I saw stars. Their hand
ock as I everywhere, their mouths touching every part of me they could reach.

d heard world in a moment between them. It happened fast, the newness a
heights of the night driving us all to our release faster than ever.

Boone My orgasm triggered theirs, the squeeze of my body around them to
urt." for them to take after the day we'd had. As I took all of their orgasms i
n all in

ie. Tooheard the guttural sounds of them swearing their love to me in voices
en't the pleasure.

I felt them pulling out with a soreness I'd never experienced before.
He was while we recovered, I let out a tired laugh. "I might've overestimated
couldn't abilities."

Remy tugged me onto his chest and wrapped his arms around me.
they all go back to the house soon and get you in a warm bath. You deserve a
length of pampering tomorrow. And every day for the rest of your life."

fluids. I stretched out my arms so I could hold all of them. "Thank you."
Remy's Boone grunted. "Just as long as we're all clear about this not being
so frequent thing. Other people looking at our lady. Not the other thing."
Remy was great."

ody. "Can't do it. Maybe on your birthday, baby." Wells patted my arm
led me gently and sighed. "It was hot, though."

I smiled into Remy's chest. "I don't think I need it again. And in
just to clearing things up, I don't ever want anyone else seeing my little guys."
retched Three collective groans went up, with Remy's being the loudest.
could fit all them little guys."

et them I laughed and then winced. "Your daughter doesn't like it, either. She
kicked the crap out of me."

ls were "That's our girl. She's already on Team Daddy." Remy caught me
I felt and shrugged. "It's just what she wants, clearly."

and the "What she wants is for you three to carry me home and give me
massages." I flicked my tongue over Remy's nipple, knowing how ticklish
so much was, and laughed when he snorted. "This bed is nice. Do you think
in me, I ask the owner where they got it?"

Boone patted the top of Remy's head. "Go ahead. You've definitely

lost inattention.”

ore and
ted my

“We’ll
full day

being a
g. That

ss very

f we’re
”

“Don’t

she just

y glare

lots of
klish it
I could

got his

attention.”

67.

67.

Remington

“**Y**ou stupid asses! Why did we do this? When I can walk again going to find three men of normal size and stature who normal sized babies!” Memphis screamed at the top of her lungs and shattered every bone in my hand as she squeezed. “I’m going to miahhhh!”

“Yes! There we go, Memphis. That was it, honey.” Braddock held the bloody baby who looked too small to me, if anything. A nurse took her and scrubbed her before suctioning her and letting us cut the cord.

What had felt like forever to finally get to was over. I leaned down to Memphis and kissed her sweaty forehead and cheeks. Tears filled my eyes. I looked at the love of my life and watched her take our daughter and hold her chest to chest. “I’m so fucking proud of you, sweetheart. Look what you did.”

Memphis cried and looked up at me with her big green eyes, as she had ever. She found Boone and Wells and once she knew where her mother was she let out a big breath and kissed little Maggie’s head as gently as she could. “She’s so little. Just a tiny little thing.”

Wells wiped his eyes. “She’s perfect.”

Boone kept counting her fingers and toes, like he was amazed by her. “We made this little human. Your body grew these little fingers and toes. You’re amazing.”

“I want four more.” Memphis leaned back against her pillows and smiled happily. “Maybe more. We’re going to need a bigger house.”

“We’ll give you as many babies as you want, sweetheart. We’ll give you anything in the world. I love you so much.” My voice broke as I tried to explain the enormity of my emotions with words that just didn’t cut it. “Alright, Dads. Who wants to hold Maggie first? Momma needs to hold her a bit.” Braddock moved like he was going to lift Maggie and Memphis—almost bared her teeth at him. “Alright, we’ll just wait for that to happen.”

I hugged my brothers and enjoyed a moment of the five of us holding up a perfect little family. When Memphis had rested and we’d all taken turns holding our daughter, we found ourselves in a debate over who we thought had the strongest swimmers after all. Each of us swore that Maggie would be more like us, but Memphis shut us all down by making the same silly faces that Maggie was making and proving that she hadn’t used any of the swimmers’ attributes to make the kid. It was like looking at a mini version of Memphis. A mini bald version.

Jake messaged me with the text I’d been waiting for after we’d had breakfast with Maggie and I felt a jolt of excitement at what was coming. I nodded to my brothers and dropped a kiss on Memphis’s forehead. “I’m going to go grab something from the vending machine. Do you need anything, Memphis?”

She shook her head. “Just you back here soon.” If it hadn’t been so important, I wouldn’t have been able to tear away. Even so, I ran down the hallway and nearly plowed Jake over in my urgency to get back to Memphis.

“Well, shit, buddy, you are a big sonofabitch, aren’t you?” Knoxville stood next to Jake, a big grin on his face. He yanked me into a hug and I could feel just how excited he was to see his sister and his niece.

ive you personality quieted as he spun his hat in his hand. “How is she? She
ny best And Maggie?”

it. I wrapped my arm around his shoulder, my good mood nearly per-
rest for “She’s great. She did amazing. Threatened to murder us, but that’s
emphis normal Tuesday with Memphis. And Maggie is perfect. She looks j
en.” Memphis.”

being a “I can’t wait to see her. I can’t thank you enough, Remy.” He look-
n turns as he teared up and sniffed. “I owe you a lot, man.”

thought I’d made a few calls. Knox had had a shitty lawyer and deserved a
looked With a little sweet talking, the new DA didn’t want to retry a case
lly faceknew he’d never win. So with a little grease, the wheels of justice tur-
of our right way.

rsion of I saw Jake turn to leave and scoffed. “If you think I’m going back in
room and telling Memphis that I didn’t bring you in while I could,
a quiet nuts. Come on, asshole, and stop trying to get me in trouble.”

ming. I Jake shrugged. “I didn’t want to intrude if it was just family.”

“Last week Memphis asked if I thought it would be weird if you
ou need the wedding, on *her* side. As in a fucking bridesmaid. If that doesn’t
you family, I don’t know what does.” I saw his face drop in hor-
laughed. “I told her I thought it was a great idea.”

myself Knox laughed easily and shook his head. “This already feels more
r in my family than anything we ever had before. It was always just the three
kids. Now look at us.”

x King “Wells is getting Jack on a video call, too.” I tried not to run to get
g and Imy soon to be wife. It was hard, though.

His big The look on Memphis’s face when she saw her little brother walk in
room made everything worth it. Everything. Even back to Don’s bu

is okay?and his maybe not bullshit. I would've moved the whole world to see
look on her face again.

manent. She went back and forth between sobbing and accusing Knox of being
is just about of prison. When we explained that he was a free man, she cried
just like harder.

I handed Maggie to Jake while the siblings got out all of their tears
and awaywatched him stare down at her with wide eyes. "We made that."

He laughed gently and swore when her little fingers grabbed at his
retrial.shit. I'm not going to cry. I said I wouldn't and I'm not going to."

that he "Just do it. Maybe if I see you doing it, I'll be able to quit." I
needed the around the room filled with my family and couldn't stop smiling. Maggie

had brought so many people together by just existing. She was amazed
into that I'd never stop telling her.

you're The door opened and I laughed as I watched Bea and Pete try to smile

Looking every bit the secret agent reject, Bea tiptoed over to Memphis
threw up her hands while doing what looked to be a silent scream

were in caught me looking at him and froze until I motioned him over. Since
it wasn't makeout he had no interest in Memphis, I actually liked the guy. Not
horror and seemed to know it.

His eyes were on Maggie as he got closer and he covered his mouth
more like shook his head. "She's a mini-Memphis! May God be with you."

one of us Jake sniffed and shook his head. "Take her. Take her before I lose it

I nodded to Pete and watched as he cradled her in his arms with the
back to smile on his face. Boone stood next to me and clapped me on the

Before he could say anything, I cut him off. "She's clearly mine."

into her The energy never dropped. Our friends and new family were
bullshit—supportive and happy for us than I'd ever imagined possible. Everyo

see that their turn holding Maggie, most of them more than once. They also
praised Memphis with praise, telling her how she's made such a perfect baby
rearing herself.

and even I finally took my daughter back to her mother and hovered, feeling
the luckiest man in the world. The nurses were slowly running every
hour and telling them that Memphis needed to rest. When just Jake and
I remained, Wells cheered into his phone and we all held our breath
for a moment. "Oh, watched him hand it off to Memphis.

Seeing her see Jackson for the first time since the night thin
she looked crumpled was beautiful. Her eyes lit up and she stumbled over her
feet telling her little brother how healthy he looked and how proud of him
she was. He cut her off, though, and asked about her and Maggie. M
aggie laughed through her tears as she tried to tell him how happy she was. J
ackson cried plenty of his own tears when he saw Maggie for the first time.
Knox and I settled next to her on the bed and they took some time tal
king to their little brother while my brothers, Jake, and I stood on the other
side of the room, watching with full hearts. Seeing their love for each other,
that hell odds, made me appreciate Memphis even more.

Another hour passed before we finally got Memphis to ourselves. S
he was exhausted, but she was fighting sleep. Her eyes were heavy and h
er head would tip to the side every few minutes, but she still clung to us. "I do
n't want to be sleeping alone anymore. Can we go home?"
Boone kissed her gently. "Tomorrow, love. Tomorrow, we'll ta
ke our daughter home and crawl into bed just to get up every couple of hours
for the next five years or so."

more Wells looked down at Maggie as he rocked her. "It won't be so bad
if we took her."

spoiled “Maybe twins. Twins would be faster.” With a big sigh, Memphis
; all by let her head drop back on her pillows. “Seeing y’all with Maggie g
Remy’s butterflies.”

like the I stroked her hair out of her face and kissed the tip of her nose.
me off, weren’t my butterflies, sweetheart. I’ve still got mine.”

l Knox

t as we

gs had

: words

im she

emphis

Jackson

king to

side of

despite

he was

er head

n’t like

ike our

. for the

d. Look

“Maybe twins. Twins would be faster.” With a big sigh, Memphis finally let her head drop back on her pillows. “Seeing y’all with Maggie gave me Remy’s butterflies.”

I stroked her hair out of her face and kissed the tip of her nose. “Those weren’t my butterflies, sweetheart. I’ve still got mine.”

* **Memphis** *

Epilogue

5 years later

“Memphis King-Hawke.”

Mine was just one name in a long list of names, but from the reaction section of the audience gave, you’d think the whole day was about focused on climbing the stairs and tried my best to ignore the obvious amount of screaming the men in my life were doing. I didn’t want bright red from embarrassment in my pictures.

“That’s my wife!” Boone’s voice was clear above everyone’s and he’d snuck in the wireless microphone that we’d mistakenly bought for Christmas. We’d been sure that it couldn’t be *that* loud. Wrong, that loud and then some. “That’s my smoking hot wife!”

I cut a glare at him and gasped when I saw that Jackson was sitting there. We’d saved him a seat, but none of us thought he’d make it. He helped start a drug program back in Georgia and it wasn’t easy for him to get away. I waved at him and felt the same happy thump in my chest.

always felt when I got to see him those days. He was five years sober and looked better than I'd ever seen him.

"It doesn't count if you don't finish crossing the stage, love." Boone's voice gained my attention and I waved a hand at him to be quiet and finished crossing to shake the hand of the president of my college.

She leaned a little closer as we posed for a photo. "The offer still stands for Memphis. We need a librarian and you'd be perfect."

I took my diploma and switched my tassel to the other side of the graduation cap. "I already accepted a job. Thank you, though."

She sighed before pulling me in for a hug. "You're going to do great wherever you go. Stay in touch."

I squeezed her back and then hurried down the opposite stairs to rejoin the rest of the graduating class to finish their walks. I was so excited that the program to be over so I could run and find my family. I was the odd one out in my class, being over a decade older than almost every single student there, and I was finally done. I would no longer find myself stuck in a toxic project with a girl crying over a prick who treated her despicably. I would no longer find myself getting the stink eye when I told her that said prick was a prick and she should find better because, of course, they got back together. I knew just what I wanted to be with my men and our kids.

Maggie With Maggie being five, the conversation was starting to include her. It was about boyfriends, but it was still all play, thankfully. I'd have several more years before I had to start dealing with my own daughter talking herself into going with overcrappy boys. I just hoped she paid attention to the way her father treated me and expected the same amount of respect and love. Judging from the attitude she was capable of showing, I was pretty sure we were safe. I thought that I When the last name was read and the ceremony finished, I did my

and he not plow through the crowd. I was carrying precious cargo and had accordingly, even though all I wanted to do was jump on someone's back, his loud demand they carry me to my men.

finished That precious cargo was a big secret I was keeping from everyone. Maggie, we'd had William less than a year later. There'd basically been stands, recovery time. I hadn't minded, but the guys were a lot less stressed wasn't pregnant. We still had to have three kids in five years, but the of my okay with taking a longer break. That wasn't in the cards, though months after William was born, I found out I was pregnant with our third thing, baby, Elizabeth. We'd had our three kids and that was supposed to last at least for a long time.

wait for Three babies under five was a lot. If there hadn't been four of us, I'm sure we would've made it. Even with four adults to three kids, it was person times. Everyone had gotten a lot more comfortable with bodily fluids, but they weren't their own, unfortunately.

a group Elizabeth was supposed to be older when, or if, we decided to get pregnant again. I was supposed to stay not pregnant for long enough for the work was a relax for a moment. Somehow, birth control had failed. I'd gone together. I bradock after missing my period for three months, thinking we'd need to adjust the birth control. Finding out I was three months pregnant with talk of had not been what I was expecting. That had been two weeks before graduation and I'd had too much on my mind to process the news. My circles starting to show, however, and the guys were going to notice my belly. fathers I finally saw a parting of the crowd and hurried through it in the direction of my family. After what felt like forever, strong arms lifted me into the air and growled against my ear. Remy.

best to "You're beautiful. I'm so proud of you." He pressed his lips to my

I to actkissed me slowly, dragging it out until someone cleared their voice behind me. Boone pushed Remy out of the way and lifted me into his arms. My dress and dress beneath didn't let me wrap my legs around his waist though. Afterwanted, but he kissed my pouting lips and smiled against them. "I'm been nobastard to get to hold and kiss the smartest and prettiest woman here." when I "What's a bastard, Mommy?" Maggie tugged at my hand and I vey wereaway from Boone to scoop her into my arms. She looked identical to n. Fourphotos I had of myself from when I was her age, except she looked ar thirdHer eyes were bright and she almost always had a giant smile on her face it, at "It's a swear word. Remember what we talked about with swear words. I leaned into Wells as he wrapped his arms around my waist and held me wasn't "Swear words are for adults and on special occasions, if it's ; hell atimportant, a kid can say them." She glanced around the auditorium kids thatlooks special, Mommy. Can I say shit now?"

William screeched from Knox's arms. "Shit!" regnant I glared at Boone. "Boone Hawke, you better fix it." guys to Knox handed William off and pulled me in for a big hug. "Proud to Dr. You're a long way from Trailer Park Princess now, huh?" need to Remy snorted. "She ran after a baby skunk a few days ago because h twinsthought it was so cute. Barefoot, chasing a skunk, and doing what beforedescribes as 'hollerin'', I don't know if I'd say a *long way*..." . I was I smacked his arm and then kept my hand there as he flexed his muscle soon. must've been smiling pretty goofily because both of them laughed at my directioncomposure around my men was something I'd lost a long while ago and the airnever gotten back so I wasn't all that worried about looking silly. It was a daily thing.

ine and "You look stunning, Memphis! Let me look at you!" Monica e

side us. Knox out of the way and grabbed my arms. “You could’ve left your gown with a few more genes in the looks department, you know. Brains, that way that matter.”

a lucky Knox tugged his wife into his chest and grunted at her. “You’re complaining about my looks or my brains this morning.”

wiggled I pretended to gag. “Not in front of the big sister who changed his di the few Jackson poked his head into the conversation and grinned when I sc happy.in joy. He pushed his way to me and wrapped me in a giant hug, sq ace. Maggie in the process. “Little Fish, I’m so glad I could make it.”

ords?” I Maggie let out a growl of her own and pushed at her Uncle J e close. “Squishing me, Uncle Jack.”

really He pretended he hadn’t noticed her and gasped. “Oh, my go l. “This Magatha Christie, you were there all along? Why didn’t you say somet

“That’s not my name, Uncle Jack!” She giggled and reached for him Mommy isn’t a fish. She’s a mommy!”

He held her close and kissed the top of her head. “Your mommy had of you.name for me to say when I was little. I talked a little funny and-”

“You still talk funny.” She laughed with her head thrown back as s use sheit, beyond happy to have burned her uncle.

hat she “Anyway! I couldn’t say Memphis. It always came out like Me Then I shortened it to Fish and it just stuck. Just like Magpie is g

iscles. I stick.” Jackson ruffled her hair and winked at me. “I brought you sor me. My special, Magpie. When we get to the house, I’ll give it to you.”

and had “You could give it to me now!” Maggie cupped her hands around l t was a and stared deep into his eyes. “Please?”

Jackson groaned. “Stop trying to use your magical powers on m lbowed girl! You can’t have it until we get to the house. Where’d you learn

brotherlike that, anyway?”

too, for

weren't

diapers.”

reamed

uishing

ackson.

odness!

hing?”

1. “And

l a hard

he said

m-fish.

oing to

nething

his face

e, little

to pout

like that, anyway?”

* **Memphis** *

Wells leaned close and kissed the shell of my ear. “How about shove the kids off on your brothers and have a little fun of our own?”

A shiver worked its way down my spine. “I love that plan. The babysitting. And I love your thing.”

“I thought it was my turn to babysit.” Jake leaned down and kissed my cheek, while holding a drooling Elizabeth in his arms. He wiped her drool away with his shirt and never even batted an eye. “I guess I could join them. They’re not getting this one from me, though.”

“Want to bet?” Jackson grinned at Jake. “I don’t get to see them do it, so I think it’s my turn.”

“Move back here. I won’t be punished because you want to save George.” Jake lifted his eyebrows at my little brother. “I will join you, but one day to leave me childless will be met with force.”

Monica chose that moment to rejoin us. “Sounds kinky.”

I watched in shock and surprise as both Jackson and Jake blush and looked away. I looked at Knox, who seemed to be pretending to be ob-

and then at Wells, who was suddenly very interested in his shirt. Tilting my head, I studied my little brother and my best friend. They moved farther apart and looked ready to book it at any second.

Boone bounced William into my line of sight and narrowed his eyes. "Should he go, right? We have the dinner still."

Remy grunted his agreement. "Yep. Dinner. Bea and her family meeting us there. She's still furious that she didn't get to come to everyone, watch out."

"Not our fault that she and her husband got permanently banned from campus after starting a campfire on the front lawn. Not to mention the indecency." Boone shook his head. "I'm still surprised that campus security let us out when we chose to taste first and ask questions later."

I giggled and looked around at my family. It was so much larger and happier than I'd ever allowed myself to dream and it was all because my brothers were happy and healthy. Around the time Jackson was celebrating my five years of sobriety, Knox was celebrating his fourth full year of sobriety in Remy's company and his second anniversary with Monica. I wondered if there was something going on between Jake and Jackson, but I trusted Remy with my life, so trusting him with my brother would be a no-brainer.

My husbands were still crazy in love with me and couldn't keep their hands off me. Every day was even sweeter than the last and I never forgot to stop and be grateful for the life I'd conned my way into. The guys sometimes made fun of me for the lies I'd chosen to tell on my application that time ago. Their favorite was the fact that I'd claimed to be an Olympic winning swimmer. When they had a pool put in, they hadn't realized I'd been lying about that part, too. They found out I didn't know how to swim the day they finally told me about the pool, but it was too late. Since then,

sleeve.taken lessons as often as possible because the idea of not being able
'd both the kids if something happened was nightmarish.

We were still living in the guest house, waiting for the main house
s. "We finished. It was cramped and most days someone tripped over something
had to catch themselves to avoid complaining too much, but it was horrible
ily remain house was only six months away from being finished. The good
day, so found several more of their mother's diaries in the attic and one of them
included her vision of the main house if Don hadn't taken over and it
d from look dark and unwelcoming. The guys ran with the ideas immediately
public turning Don's dark abode into something bright and airy, something
security as wholesome as the guest house.

Pete and I were already planning magical gardens for the front
ger and house, gardens that would be full of color and life almost year round
al. My taken a two-month long, way overdue honeymoon and I received picture
brating texts from him almost daily of the plants he was finding on his adventures
work at He'd already sent back several boxes of bulbs that I was in charge of planting
lered if until he got back and took over again.

ed Jake Everything and everyone in my life had come so far in the almost six
since I'd lied my way into the Hawke brothers' lives. I still sometimes
up their like I had to be conning them for them to be as obsessed with me
orgot to were, but they loved when I had those thoughts because they got to
ys still their time showing me how wrong I was to question my worth. They
ition all did it with their mouths, hands, and other impressive appendages.

award Later that night, when our group had moved to the restaurant and eat
that I'd way through the menu, everyone seemed a bit calmer. Maggie was
o swim awake, holding out for her gift from Jackson, but William and Elizabeth
nen, I'd out. William's blonde hair was sticking out in every direction and I'd

to save because he looked just like all three of his dads when they woke up
morning. He had Remy's bright blue eyes, but I thought his smile v
e to be hundred percent Wells. Elizabeth, like Maggie, looked just like me
ing and glad that at least William looked like them.

ne. The Putting my hand over my stomach, I hoped the twins looked like
ys had knew the guys didn't care one way or another, but I loved the idea of c
em had the kids up for pictures and making the guys dress just like their mini-t
made it We'd just been given our dessert when I stood up and looked ar
diately, everyone. My heart was in my throat, but I knew I was safe and could r
almost been in more supportive company.

"I just want to thank each and every one of you for helping me g
of the All of you mean so much to me. Six years ago, I thought I'd nev
d. He'd anything better than what I had right then. It wasn't about money or
res and but family. Being raised with just Knox and Jackson, I got used to
entures. pretty alone. Today, though, I'm surrounded by loving people who I'r
lanting enough to call family. My dreams have come true.

"I'm going to be working for a charity that the guys introduced me t
x years we first met. The kids in this program will finally have access to a lib
nes felt location, and I can barely wait to start. I want to help someone the wa
as they helped when I was a kid. It's going to be hard, though. Balancing th
o spend the husbands, the friends, the pregnancy. I know I can do it, though, be
usually have a support sy-"

"What pregnancy?" Remy looked at my stomach and then back up
iten our face. "What pregnancy, sweetheart?"

as still I grinned and held my belly. "Turns out, birth control is no match fo
th were swimmers."

loved it Knox groaned. "Memphis Mae! Come on. We're eating!"

Boone stood up so fast his chair tipped over. “You’re pregnant?”
“Yeah. A little over three months.” I winced. “And you know how
fun twins would be?”

Bea screamed and jumped in place. “I spread the twin curse! I spread
the twin curse!”

Wells wiped his face with his napkin. “Twins? We’re having twins?”

Remy patted his pockets. “I need to call Dr. Braddock. It’s riskier
with twins, right? There have to be things you shouldn’t be doing.”

I put my hands on my hips as the rest of the table laughed at how
my domineering husband could turn into a scared little rabbit. “Ren
et here, fine, you goof. Now, are y’all going to come celebrate me or do I need
er have three new husbands who know when to freak out and when to hug
things, wife?”

Boone swept me into his arms first, hugging me and kissing
me everywhere he could reach. “You’re not getting rid of me that easily, I

Wells pulled me to his chest and kissed me deep. “We have
so much celebrating to do. I promise. We’re going to celebrate you so many
ways, or you’re going to beg us to stop.”

Jackson gagged. “For the love of all things holy, not in front
of the kids, brothers!”

Remy picked me up by my ass and pressed his forehead to mine. “
leave, right? We can just go? They can take the kids?”

Jake grunted. “We’ve got the kids.”

“You heard the man, Sir. Let’s get out of here.” I sucked at his earlobe
for y’all then bit it. “I found out I was pregnant two weeks ago. I was just too
stupid to spill the beans.”

Remy growled. “You haven’t been a good girl, sweetheart. I think

could use a treatment after being in that auditorium.”

I said Before we could get out the door, Maggie’s sweet voice called out from the table. “Mommy is too a good girl! I heard Daddy tell her this morning.” Laughter followed us outside the restaurant and when Nico opened the door for us to climb into the backseat of our car, I was bright red with embarrassment. “I told you the walls aren’t thick enough!”

Remy dragged me into his lap and started working my dress off. “It’s not the walls that are the problem, sweetheart.”

Wells lifted my hips so I was kneeling in the seat and his first slap on my ass made me release a loud moan. His second made me scream out. When he buried his face into me from behind, I was sure people were passing the street thought someone was shooting a porn inside our car.

“Let’s talk about how to punish you for not telling us the moment we found out you were pregnant, M.” Remy cupped my jaw and fed my thumb to suck. “Any ideas, Boone?”

“It’s been a little while since we recreated our night at Desire.” Boone moved closer. “Especially the part where we keep our sexy little wife on her knees for hours and hours before letting her come.”

I grunted my disagreement, but Remy’s dark chuckle told me he knew Boone’s plan. I moaned and rocked back against Wells’ mouth, trying to reach my breaking point before they could stop me. They knew me too well though. They knew everything about me and took care of every need I didn’t even know I had.

“Sweetheart, I love you. Remember that when you’re screaming your name in a few hours because I won’t let you come yet. Remember it when I spank your perfect ass red and mark you all over. Remember it when

Wells

sure you can't take anymore. I love you." Remy stroked my hair out from face and smiled down at me. "You know how to make it stop."

ing!" I bared my teeth at him, already wild with desire. I nipped his thumb and watched as his hips jerked reflexively. "I love you, too."

and with Boone tilted my head up to face him. "I love you, Memphis."

Wells lifted his face and growled. "I fucking love you, Memphis. It's Hawke."

By the time the night ended, the sun was only a few minutes from dawn across the sky and we were all exhausted and used up. I wore their marks all over my body. Handprints and suck marks that they couldn't help leaving when lost in the moment. On top of Remy, with Boone and Wells at my sides, I was fading when I thought of something.

"Did I ever tell y'all that your charity buddy's wife invited me to a threesome? She was great besides thinking I'd ever want to go home to my husband." I kept my eyes closed as I spoke, close to being asleep. "I told Boone yesterday. They have a three-year-old now. She asked me over on edge play date and I might've made a terrible joke about hoping this party would be less naked than the last one she'd invited me to."

Boone laughed and gripped my ass. "I'm just ignoring the part about propositioning you."

Remy grunted in agreement. "How'd she take your joke?"

"I think you'll be hearing from her husband. She was very displeased." I sighed sleepily. "I didn't know the rules of threesome club, I guess. In our house, there's no talking about threesome club."

"And you're never going to know threesome club rules, baby." Remy gripped my other ass cheek. "You only ever need to know the rules of marriage and you made most of them, so I think you're good."

t of my “I hope he does call. I’ll have a few choice words for him.” Remy
the top of my head. “Now go to sleep. We’re going to see Braddock
mb and morning.”

I groaned. “But it is the morning.”

“Better sleep while you can, then.”

s King- “Fine.” I snuggled even closer. “I won’t be happy about it, though.”

“Bullshit.” Wells knew better.

coming “Fine. I’ll be happy, but I won’t tell you about it.”

ver me, Boone sighed. “Stubborn till the end, this one.”

in their Remy kissed me again. “Just the way I like her.”

quickly

e for a

with her

ran into

r for a

laydate

ut them

ased.” I

s. Rule

’ Wells

. of our

Hope this spicy book filled you with laughter and tears!

If you want to continue the Rebel Bloom reverse harem ride chec

Nanny for the Bossholes for \$2.99 or FREE with Kindle Unlimite

“I hope he does call. I’ll have a few choice words for him.” Remy kissed the top of my head. “Now go to sleep. We’re going to see Braddock in the morning.”

I groaned. “But it is the morning.”

“Better sleep while you can, then.”

“Fine.” I snuggled even closer. “I won’t be happy about it, though.”

“Bullshit.” Wells knew better.

“Fine. I’ll be happy, but I won’t tell you about it.”

Boone sighed. “Stubborn till the end, this one.”

Remy kissed me again. “Just the way I like her.”

Hope this spicy book filled you with laughter and tears!

If you want to continue the Rebel Bloom reverse harem ride check out Nanny for the Bossholes for \$2.99 or FREE with Kindle Unlimited!