



# Targ

NOLA Rebels MC - New Orleans - Book 5

MACKENZY FOX

**TAG**

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**NOLA REBELS MC**

NEW ORLEANS

BOOK 5

**MACKENZY FOX**

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*For those who have been waiting patiently for Tag (yes he was first mentioned in my Bracken Ridge Rebels MC in Gunner's book) I hope you enjoy this beast of a man.... Buckle up!*

# AUTHOR'S NOTE

CONTENT WARNING: Tag is a steamy romance for readers 18+. It contains mature themes that may make some readers uncomfortable.

It includes: violence, trauma, foul language, torture, step-sibling romance (please note they did not grow up together and did not pursue a relationship until in college) forced marriage (not by MMC), she has a cheating ex. This also has very graphic, steamy, sex scenes that may melt your device!

It brought me so much joy to bring you Tag. He's been a big, grumpy thorn in my side since I wrote Gunner's book (Bracken Ridge Rebels MC) and I didn't know back then he'd have a book or there would be a NOLA Rebels MC... but 3 years later, here are Tag and Luna!

They have melted my heart so many times over, and I especially loved the back and forth griping... and of course Tag falling hard... what could be better than seeing our big, gruff teddy bear fall in love with the one woman who's always had his heart?

If you loved my best-selling Bracken Ridge Rebels MC series, you're sure to love this new spin-off too.

You also don't have to have read Bracken Ridge to enjoy this new series as it is written to be read stand-alone.



# BLURB

## Tag

I shouldn't want her  
It's wrong in so many ways  
Forbidden  
If the truth ever came out...  
Which is why I sent her away  
I said things I didn't mean  
I got her to leave  
But it was only for her protection  
Now she's back  
And she's everywhere  
Avoiding her feels like a full time job  
Temptation threatens to overwhelm me  
It's too much  
I can't have her around

She's a distraction I don't want  
Because if she can't be mine  
I'll make sure that she can't be anyone's

### **Luna**

I feel his presence before I see him  
That's how it's always been with us  
We're connected  
Whether we admit it or not  
But there is no *us*  
He's made that clear  
He's pushed me away  
He said terrible things  
But I know the heart of him  
I've seen what nobody else has  
And when I break down his walls  
I don't know who will be left standing  
Because Tag has my heart  
He always has  
That's his greatest weapon  
And my biggest downfall

# SYNOPSIS

NOLA Rebels MC - (New Orleans Series Book 5)

Tag is a grumpy hero, step-siblings, protector (he's the Sergeant at Arms), romance with a curvy, mouthy heroine, and includes blackmail, forced marriage (not to MMC) with an enemies to lovers vibe. Like all my books, it has lots of steam.

The men of the NOLA Rebels MC will do anything for their club. They're a brotherhood, a club who stands mighty, and above all else, they take care of business, New Orleans style.

The bikers may rule this city, but the women of the club have their hearts, and the men will do anything to protect what's theirs.

It is part of a series but can be read stand-alone with a HEA. This book is recommended for mature readers 18+

NOLA Rebels rule...enter at own risk!

# NOLA MC COMMITTEE MEMBERS



**Cash** – Founder & President

**Ryder** – Vice President

**Harlem** – Enforcer

**Tag** – Sergeant at Arms

**Jett** – Treasurer

**Hawk** – Road Captain

**Riot** – Secretary

**Nevada** – Tail Gunner

**Bronco – Tail Gunner**

**Priest – Club Chaplain**

**Other regular club members:**

**J.J.**

**Bullet**

**Chains**

**Brew**

**Haze**

**Current prospects:**

**Pipes**

**Giggs**

**Rodeo**

# PROLOGUE

LUNA

*Two and a half years ago*

I stare up at the Shield's Insurance building and try not to shudder. It's taken a lot of courage and, dare I say it, biting my tongue, to get to this point. I've always hated coming here. I'm almost unable to set foot inside the intimidating building, as it's always freaked me out. All it needs are gargoyles on the top and pit of hell in the lobby and welcome to my nightmare.

My father is a wealthy man, and when my mom finally left him after his cheating ways, he made sure we had to struggle for every penny. I suppose we should have been grateful for the fact Mom got child support without having to take him to court, but trust me, his lawyers let him get away with the bare minimum. I still have student loans he refuses to help me with, all because he believes I need to learn a valuable lesson about how to manage my finances.

I've never expected a free ride. Nothing in my life has ever just been given to me, but to watch your own child struggle and work three jobs? All because I don't want to come and work for him and his stupid company? It sickens me.

But today has to be done.

I need to beg, borrow, or steal to get this money.

I bite my lip as I finally make it through the doors and toward the expansive lobby.

Walking right up to the receptionist at the desk, I say, “Mr. Shields’s office, please.”

She looks up at me with a curt smile. “Do you have an appointment?”

I sigh. Not that I’d expect her to recognize me, as I’ve only been up to his office a handful of times in the past, but that was ages ago. “No, but...”

She gives me another one of her tight smiles. Clearly, customer service isn’t her strong point, and neither is my patience. I’ve always been told I’m feisty, and while that may be true, there is no reason for bad manners. “Everyone has to have an appointment, Miss...”

“Shields.”

“Oh.”

“Luna Shields. I’m his daughter.”

She blinks in rapid succession, and I think she’s wondering how much pull I have with my father and if she’ll get fired for this. Lucky for her, I’m only a bitch when I really need to be. Today isn’t that day. I’m tired. Cranky. And I need to get cash, quickly.

When I think about my credit card bill that I can’t pay and how irresponsible I’ve been at certain times of my life, I start to think that maybe my father was right. I know how to manage my funds; hell, I majored in business management and have that unfinished degree in accounting. But I didn’t plan for this. The reason why I’m here and why I need this money...

I’ll pay my dad back. I don’t expect money for free, but I know with my father there will be conditions with strings attached, and consequences if I don’t deliver. There always is. But I have to surge on. I’ve made it this far...right?

What's a few more steps?

She looks down the length of my body as if there's something wrong with me. I even wore my best pair of dress pants with a blouse and a short bolero-style jacket. It's the nicest outfit I own. I'm a curvy girl, and I think I look great.

I can't afford designer clothes, but it's not like I'm dressed like a homeless person.

Her nose twitches and she plasters that smile back on her face. "Certainly, Miss Shields. Let me get you a day pass."

I'm about to tell her I only need a fifteen-minute pass, but I keep my mouth closed.

I give her the same fake smile back, and she taps away on her keyboard and then hands me the fob.

"Thank you," I say, taking it from her.

"You're welcome."

I scan myself through security and then make my way to the elevators.

It takes forever to get to his floor. When the elevator finally stops, I introduce myself to another receptionist who also doesn't know who I am. I did text my father to see if it was okay if I came by, yet nobody seems to know I'm coming.

My father has his day tightly mapped out, it's how he's so successful.

The receptionist named Carly, who seems much nicer than the wench downstairs, politely phones through to his office, and when she hangs up, she says, "Please take a seat, Miss Shields. He won't be too long."

*Take a seat?*

*Is she for fucking real?*

I swallow my pride and do as she says. *Remember why you're here...*

The asshole keeps me waiting for fifteen minutes. Just as I'm about to approach to ask her how long this is going to



take, my heart drops to my stomach.

Oh, hell no.

My ex, Brian, steps out of one of the offices farther down the hall. He comes to halt when our eyes meet. *What the fuck is he doing here?*

I knew this was a bad omen. I stand and then scurry to the elevators. I can't do this today.

"He won't be too much longer..." Carly begins, but I frantically hit the elevator button like it's done me some injustice. *Just damn well open, asshole!*

"Luna?" I hear him call.

*Fuck. Fuck. Fuckity fuck.*

He's approaching... Is the fucking elevator jammed?

I mean, I've been wanting to have it out with him since I left him. But I never thought it would be like this. I had it all planned out in my head, but none of it included running into him at my most vulnerable...

"Fuck," I mutter.

"Luna?" he says again as he stands a few feet away. "I thought that was you."

I glance at him and instantly regret it.

He's still as handsome as ever. Brown eyes. A perfect nose. Clean shaven. His suit is immaculate. Quite the ladies' man...as I found out much later on, after my heart was already his.

"What the fuck are you doing here?" I blurt out.

I see Carly's head snap up from her desk in shock.

I don't give a shit. I swear like a sailor and I'm proud of it. This asshole is a cheater and a liar and he deserves the worst of my wrath.

"I work here," he says, like it's obvious.

"My father gave you a job?"

He blinks like there must be some confusion. “Yes.”

Oh. My. God.

Do not tell me that Brian is my father’s new fucking protégé or something. That would be just my luck. But he knows me and Brian broke up a year ago... He knows he cheated...

“I... I’ve tried reaching out to you...” he goes on when I’m frozen in place.

All the things I used to love about him now just look distorted. He’s too good looking. He has an arrogance to him that I never noticed before, but it’s plain as day now. I guess I really did have rose-tinted glasses.

I stare at him with a scowl. “Why?”

He glances over to Carly, who is pretending not to listen, and clears his throat. “Can we not do this here?”

“Why not?” I throw back, waving my arm at the reception desk. “You don’t want your colleagues to hear what a liar and a cheat you are? Or is it that you don’t want them to know that I caught you fucking one of my best friends when you were supposed to be at work...on my birthday, no less... Or the fact you moved her in, and when she outgrew her welcome, you kicked her out too...” A shudder goes through me at the memory of him cheating. Oh, what I’d pay to erase that from my mind.

Amy and I had become friends when I moved to New Orleans with my mom and step-dad, shortly after I commenced college. We worked together in a bar, and she was fun, filling the void of my best friend, Payden, who went on to study law and stayed back in Pittsburgh.

He reaches for my arm, and I step back like he’s a snake. “I swear to God, if you fucking touch me!” I’m no match for him, of course, but I’m tall and I do pack a mean punch. I’ll put all my weight behind me if it means I get to punch the asshole.

“Calm down, Luna, you never gave me a chance to explain.” His voice is now a highly-strung whisper, and I love

that I'm getting him unglued like this. It's the only sense of satisfaction I've gotten.

"Explain what, exactly? That you're both dead to me?"

"It wasn't like that..."

My eyes go wide. "Please explain to me how your dick entering her vagina repeatedly wasn't like that, Brian."

His eyes go wide. "Luna, that's enough! You're causing a scene."

I look over to Carly. "Carly, honey, am I causing a scene?"

She swallows hard and then stands. "I think I might just go and refill my coffee."

I smile pleasantly as she scuttles past. I hope she's the office gossip and Brian's credibility slips just a little. Really, it's the least I could do.

"Luna, I never meant to hurt you..." *Here we go.* "But you know we were having difficulties..." *Three, two, one.* "And you were coming on strong... I mean, we were just fooling around and things felt... pressured."

I open my mouth, but no words come out.

*Pressured?*

He is the biggest asshole and gas lighter. My fury rages, so much so that I feel the pounding of blood in my ears.

"You fucking pig," I snarl. "You told me you loved me. That we were going to look for an apartment together. How was *I* the one coming on strong? You felt pressured? More like you wanted your cake and eat it too. What I really want to know is, why her? Why Amy?"

He at least looks like he's a little sorry, or maybe he's just worried Carly has gone to the lunchroom to spread the word. Good. I hope he rots in hell.

He shrugs. "We'd grown close. She was there when I needed her."

Oh, this just gets better. The final nail in the coffin.

Blame it all on me.

I shake my head. “Are you serious right now? I worshiped the ground you walked on. When you did what you did... and with Amy, of all people, I was devastated. Everyone said that I should have punched you in the face or burned your apartment down. But all I could do was wallow away in my own pain and self-pity while you two got to play happy couple.”

“We were sorry for that.”

*We?*

“You’re not even with Amy anymore. The second things get too hard, you split. Right, Brian?”

“Just know that I’m really, truly sorry. I never meant to hurt you.”

“No, you just enjoy fucking women who are supposed to be loyal to me. You know what, though? It’s the best thing that’s happened to me. You were both as toxic as each other.”

His nostrils flare and I love how he may finally get the fact he can’t control me anymore. It’s like he’s bewildered that I would even dare leave. At the time, I yelled and screamed and threw Amy’s goddamn shoes at him while he was pumping her from behind...then I ran away. I couldn’t face them. I just couldn’t. It made me sick.

I don’t even know to this day if Amy tried to reach out because I blocked her and moved out of my apartment the following week. I wanted no trace of my existence in her life.

The old me isn’t exactly anything like the new me. But it’s taken me a while to get here.

At least, that is, until Thomas, or as we know him now, Tag...the MC Sergeant at Arms for the NOLA Rebels destroyed me. Just thinking about his rejection makes me squirm. Then there’s Gary, the guy I hooked up with after Brian, who’s now making my life hell. My biggest mistake and the main reason I’m here.

However, I’ve grown accustomed to hiding my true feelings.

I know I can get through all of it. I just need to breathe...

“It’s been a year, babe. Isn’t it time we buried the hatchet?”

“I’ll fucking bury the hatchet up your asshole!” I hurl at him, just as another man suddenly clears his throat.

I glance over and see my father standing there, a disapproving look on his face. “Luna?”

I try to compose myself, but I’m raging mad. “Dad. I didn’t realize you employed liars and cheaters.” I wave my arm at Brian.

My father sighs like I’m a petulant child and points down the hallway. “Go wait in my office.”

I roll my eyes as I pass Brian, tempted to kick him in the nuts, but I remind myself that I’m here for a reason. Yelling and ridiculing Brian was just an added bonus.

He says something and Brian nods.

So they’re in cahoots.

To think my dad, the man who is supposed to be on my side and fucking stick up for me, hired this asshole. He knows what he did to me. How much that hurt me. How my life plans were thrown into disarray. What’s more, he even gives Brian a double pat on the arm, like he’s the star of the show or something.

*What in the ever-living fuck?*

I pace my father’s office until he steps inside. Shutting the door firmly behind him.

“Luna?”

“You hired *Brian fuckface Miller*?” I all but screech at him.

He shakes his head, moving behind his large, opulent desk as he ignores me.

Oh, he’s used to my outbursts by now, but I don’t think I’ve been this feral in a while.

“He’s very good at what he does,” he says simply.

My mouth hangs open. “You can’t be serious? You know he was screwing one of my best friends? That I caught them in the act?”

Of course, why would my father care about that? He’s a cheating liar from way back, so I guess that saying really is true; the pack sticks together.

I am so done with men.

“Luna, just calm down. Brian’s past has nothing to do with him working for Shields Insurance. You can’t just come in here and cause a scene like this.” I’m literally foaming at the mouth, but he continues. “Now take a seat and tell me why you’re here. I’m a busy man...”

I should never have come here.

I should never have fucking come here.

They’re like vultures.

The fact that he can just belittle my feelings like this and take Brian’s side... and then give him a job? And his own office. It’s like my dad is rewarding him for hurting me. Maybe he gets off on it because he’s never been able to control me.

I’ll never understand this man. And I know I’ll never be good enough in his eyes. I’ll always be the fuckup daughter who should’ve been born a male so I could take over the family business. He’s always thought less of me just for the simple fact that I’m a woman.

“I need to borrow some money.” I may as well cut to the chase. And the words feel like poison as I speak them. I hate myself for it. I hate Gary...

He gives me a look that says he isn’t surprised. “How much?”

I swallow the words. *You can do this*, I tell myself. *It’ll just be a short loan.*

“Fifty thousand.”

He grunts, displeased. “Luna Louise Shields, that’s a lot of money.”

I’m surprised he even knows my middle name. Should I be thankful?

“I know, but I’ll pay it back.”

“What’s it for?”

I swallow hard. I can’t tell him the whole truth. “Credit card debt and some bills,” I say, my voice small.

He points at me. “This is exactly the reason you never should have dropped out of college.”

I wince at his words. “I finished business school. With honors. I went back to finish my degree when we moved.”

“Not exactly an MBA, though, is it?”

I meet his gaze. It pains me to plead, but I have no choice. It’s this or face the consequences. “Please, Dad. I’ve never asked for anything before. I’ll pay you back.”

He sighs again. “Fine. Is there anything else?”

Wait... *That’s it?* No argument. No big lecture? Although, his disappointment in me is apparent. He probably just wants me gone quicker so I don’t cause another scene. Looks are everything with my dear old dad. People on this floor can’t go around thinking my dad has a wild daughter who’s out of control. That doesn’t fit his image.

“Uh, okay.”

“There’s one condition,” he states as I take a breath that I wasn’t even aware I was holding.

I pique an eyebrow. “Okay.” I wait for it.

“You come and work for me.”

I try not to gape at him, but the dread washing through me is palpable.

I knew this was coming.

“I can’t,” I stammer. “Not with *him* here.”

“Brian will get promoted at some point, then he won’t be in the same office,” he tells me. “And it’s about time that you got yourself a decent paying job. I heard that you’ve been waitressing and doing odd jobs around town instead of using your education.” His face screws up like he smelled something bad, but all I hear is Brian’s going to be promoted.

*Promoted?*

*Is my dad on crack?*

I take a deep breath to steel myself.

“I can’t promise anything,” I say, ignoring the waitressing and odd jobs comment. At least he can’t accuse me of being a gold-digging daughter. I’ve never borrowed a cent or asked him for shit. He’s never paid for anything except basic child support when I was younger. Even college was something that he barely chipped in for. I haven’t received any inheritance when I turned twenty-five, since the age he’s set is apparently now thirty-five. Not that I expect to receive a damn cent from him.

“That isn’t good enough, Luna. Promise me you’ll come work for me someday. It doesn’t have to be next week or even next year, but one day I will come calling, and you *will* do as I say.”

*Do as I say?*

He’s just rotten to the very core. I wish I didn’t need this money, but if I don’t get it...everyone’s lives will be ruined, not just mine.

I shake my head. I don’t care what he says. Not with Brian here.

How he treated my mom after what he did... It’s the reason this pains me so much to be here.

I feel like I’m betraying her.

“Then the deal is off.”

*Holy crap.*

“Dad, I can’t...”



He opens his check book, then closes it again. This is what he does. Slowly but surely dangling the carrot.

I swallow hard.

The pounding of blood in my ears only fuels the fire.

He's caught me in his trap, and he knows it. He fucking knows it.

"Then I can't help you, Luna. I'm sorry."

He's not sorry. Not one little bit. He's reveling in my shame at having to come here and beg.

"Why do you want me to come work for you so much?" I demand. "It's not like we're even close."

He looks at me sharply. "You need a career, and I know I can give you that. You can finally do something worthwhile with your life instead of bouncing from job to job. You have to work smarter, not harder, Luna. I've been telling you this since you were a child. And we're not close because you shut me out. I've tried reaching out, but you've never wanted to know."

He's a liar. He's never reached out. Even when he did what he did to my mom, she never stopped me from seeing him. She'd never do that. He *chose* to shut me out of his life. I didn't fit his new narrative.

"You cheated on my mom," I say, tears marring my tone. "You hurt her, Dad. So badly. You've no idea what that did to her, what it did to both of us."

He holds up a hand, which is what he always does when he wants to shut me up and not hear any of it. He takes no responsibility in what he's done or that he tore our family apart.

He's such a selfish asshole.

"That's enough. We're not here to discuss that," he sneers. "You've no idea what it's like to be married. One day, pray tell, when you have a husband and children of your own, you'll realize that nothing is as rosy as it seems on the outside. Marriage is hard work and sometimes things just don't work out. You can't hold my mistakes against me forever."

*I fucking hate you.*

If he thinks I can't hold this against him, he clearly doesn't know me at all.

"Tell that to Mom's broken heart."

"She moved on," he says, aggravated. "She remarried, for Christ's sake. Stop being so dramatic, I'm getting a migraine."

*Yes, and Terrance is a much better father than you've ever been, and he loves my mom.*

Of course, none of these words form on my lips.

I try not to look at him with utter contempt as I rise from the chair to leave.

I can't go to my mom for money; she doesn't have that kind of cash just lying around. And Terrance will want to know what it's for. To think that I've come here to beg him...it makes me sick.

He can stick his fucking money.

"Luna?" he says, when my hand finds the doorknob.

I turn.

He opens his check book and scribbles out a check as I stand there watching him.

"Cash it or don't cash it, the choice is yours. But that's the deal." He rips the check from his leather book and then holds it out to me. "One day, I'll come calling."

*Move your feet. Get out of here. Don't take the money!* I know my inner voice is right. That if I do this now, I'm forever in his debt. He'll have me where he wants me. But the alternative? The alternative is too horrible...

Tears form in my eyes. But I do need it. And not for the selfish reasons he thinks, like going shopping. If there was any other way...

I walk toward him, and he pulls the check back slightly as my eyes meet his.

“You’re a Shields,” he tells me. “It’s time you started acting like one.” He holds the check back out, and I take it with shaking fingers. Even now, it feels like dirty money. It feels like it’s tainted. My stomach churns as I hold it between my fingers.

“Oh, but I am,” I say, knowing that I’ve just done a deal with the devil. And this devil will not let me forget that, I’m sure. I can’t even utter my thanks because the words feel like poison in my throat.

I make my escape, breathing a sigh of relief when I’m out his door. Leaning against it, I take a moment.

I know he’ll hold me to it. Maybe not someday soon, but one day.

I shove the check in my purse, my emotions going haywire as I think about what I’ve just done.

*It’ll only be for a year,* I tell myself. Or however long it takes to pay off fifty grand working for that damn asshole I call a father.

But right now, I need to split.

As I pass by Brian’s office, I hear him laughing with a couple of clients, and I just can’t resist having the last word. He deserves to suffer, just like I have. The nights I spent crying to Payden. The way I had him on such a high pedestal because he had a good job. He had to be a good guy, right? No way Brian would ever do anything bad...

Before I know what I’m doing, I barge into his office as he turns to stare at me with wide eyes. The man and woman sitting opposite him turn to look at me in surprise.

“Brian Miller,” I stammer. “You fucking asshole! That rash you gave me that you told me was thrush, turned out to be gonorrhoea, what do you have to say about that?”

His eyes go even wider as I try to hold back my smile. “Luna!” he yells, too stunned to even jump out of his chair. “What the hell?”

“The clap!” I clarify. “You don’t get that from playing poker, *Brian*. What were you really doing on Saturday nights ‘with the boys?’ You were fucking our maid again, weren’t you? Is she even legal?”

The woman gasps as Brian blinks at me. I’ve never seen him so horrified.

“He’s a liar and a cheat,” I tell them, fake tears forming that I dab with a tissue I pull from my purse. “On top of that, he knocked up my best friend and then told me they were moving in together. Then he bought her a house and left me and my baby alone with debts I couldn’t even pay. We were homeless. I couldn’t afford food. He even kept my cat. I had to... I had to do unspeakable things in order to survive... He wouldn’t pay child support. My baby had nothing to wear to keep him warm,” I rail off, not before adding, “And then he took away our insurance.”

They both gasp in horror.

At least some of it is true, just not the clap and a fake baby or homelessness, or the cat, but still. I shudder at the thought of a STD. I guess I dodged a bullet there.

He opens his mouth, then closes it again.

So I do the only thing that’s left to do. I grab his coffee cup—pity it isn’t hot—and I throw it over him.

“That’s for fucking with me, you asshole! Rot in hell!”

I turn to leave as cold coffee drips from his head and soaks his desk as he jumps up—not to chase me, but to grab some tissues. The man and woman are on their feet, and it looks like they’re ready to head for the hills. Good. I hope it was a big deal that he just lost, and he’ll hopefully have to explain to the board, and my dad, why.

My work here is done.

I shut the door behind me and head to the elevators, straightening my back more with every step.

At least I feel slightly better about things now. A good old dose of cold coffee revenge over an expensive suit always

does the trick. I hope the stains don't come out. I'd also love to hear what the couple have to say, but I'm not sticking around to find out. Security is probably on its way up to throw me out.

Let them try.

"Did you get everything you needed?" Carly asks as I tap the elevator button.

I turn to her. "Oh, I did, thank you, Carly," I say, then add, "Just stay away from Brian, he has the clap."

Her eyes go wide as I disappear into the elevator and give her a five-finger wave as I grin widely. The elevator doors close on her shocked face.

I really hope she wasn't sleeping with him. I guess she won't be now.

I smile at my own reflection against the doors. At least that part of my life is taken care of, even if I am still torn about cashing my father's check. Then there's Gary's threats and Tag's rejection. All men are assholes.

Knowing Brian is probably blithering around, trying to dry himself, keeps my head held high, though.

Don't fuck with me, assholes.

Brian. My Father. Gary. Fucking Tag.

Oh, I was wrong. Today is bitch boss day, and I'm the fucking queen.

## TAG

### *PRESENT DAY*

Fuck me, I'm getting old.

I rolled out of bed this morning and felt like an old man. I'm thirty-one, not a hundred.

Picking up my phone, I glance at the time. Fuckin' early.

With a grunt, I stand as I run a hand through my hair and go take a piss. Least there're no sweet butts in my bed this morning. Not that I've been indulging lately. It's harder to get rid of them when they're clinging on for dear life, but nobody in the club has turned my eye as of late.

What don't chicks get about a quick fuck? Even if I were interested, that's all it would be. I'm not capable of anything else.

I shake my head, aware that I've not been doing my exercise this week and it's showing.

I'm a gym junkie, to say the least, but after my compound leg fracture that I suffered on the football field some years back, from time to time, it acts up. I'm sure it's just to remind me of what I lost.

The damn injury forced me into retirement. I played for the Steelers for five years.

*Five fuckin' years.* That's all I got.

I had fifteen surgeries to stem an infection and it nearly cost me my leg. I was in a wheelchair for months. That alone

almost did me in. Not knowing if I'd lose my leg, and if I kept it, if I'd ever walk again. It was a slow recovery.

I shake it off. No need to go down memory lane.

I also fell asleep at the clubhouse. I still have a room here, which is for one purpose and one purpose only, and that's for fuckin'. Unfortunately, with all shit that's been going on around the club recently, it's left little time for the simple things in life like getting my dick wet.

I hit the shower because I need to iron out this damn leg and go to the gym. My training buddy and the club's Enforcer, Harlem, hits the machines with me and spots me when we lift.

He's a good friend, probably my best friend. Most of the guys in the club, aside from Harlem and our Prez, Cash, are about my age or younger, but I don't really relate to any of them. Maybe Priest, the club's Chaplain, and Hawk, the Road Captain, but now he's got his balls in a vise with our accountant, Jas, he's a goner too.

First Cash, then Jett, the club's Secretary, Hawk, and then Harlem. Of all fuckin' people.

I mean, I know he's almost fifty, but still. I thought we were on the same page that women are for bustin' a nut and not much else.

They're dropping like flies.

I've had my fair share of women over the years, and I know how goddamn clingy they can be.

Then there's Luna.

*Goddamn Luna.*

The thorn in my side that just won't go away.

She left a few years back after we got closer than we should have. In fact, it was all so fuckin' right, even when we knew it was wrong.

I close my eyes as I step into the warm water.

Goddamn it.

As soon as I think about Luna and her curves, I'm as hard as a rock.

Doesn't matter where I am or what I'm doing, just hearing her name does it to me.

That voice. The soft sway of her hips when she walks. The fullness of her lips and that ass and tits... She does it for me. She's my kinda woman.

But I don't wanna think about her as I grip my dick in one hand and tug it. I really don't want to imagine her like I do every time I jerk off.

*What the fuck is wrong with me?*

I'm too old for this shit. I shouldn't be getting off thinking about the one woman I can't fuckin' have.

Still, I grip my cock and stroke myself. *Fuck...*

It's like this every single time. Imagining Luna on her knees for me, taking my dick in that pretty little mouth of hers. The mouth that always gets her into trouble. The mouth I'd like to shut up with my fat cock so she can't spit and hiss at me.

She's so fuckin' cute when she's mad. My lips curl up as I fight a smile. Fuck that. Not going there.

Women make you soft. And Luna...she's my kryptonite.

Still, my hand keeps choking my cock as I brace one hand against the tile.

I spread my legs a little farther as I imagine her tongue snaking along the underside as she looks up at me with those big, pretty hazel eyes.

Pleading eyes.

Because we both know she wants to please me.

I'm not into kinky fuckery, but I do like a woman who obeys. Not that Luna could do any such thing. She'd fight me at every turn these days, even giving a blow job. Hell, she'd probably bite my dick off.



Wincing, I shut that thought down.

“*Fuck,*” I mutter, stroking faster.

We put our issues to bed years ago. We stayed apart. Then, a couple of years back, we got close again, and I shut it down before anything else happened. Crossing that line again...it wouldn't be right. Our past is too complicated and too many people would get hurt.

*She* would be hurt. And I know she hates me now because I rejected her, but I did her a favor. I'm no good for her. She knows it deep down.

It's left me wondering if we could really go there and I'm positive the answer is no.

Not if everyone knew the real reason why we can't.

They'd be disgusted, just as I am doing this to myself while imagining ramming into her sweet pussy. Or her ass. I groan again.

Her ass. What a fuckin' beautiful thought.

Luna has curves up to her eyeballs and I love every single one of them. She's tall, five-ten, and has a sassy, chin length haircut to match her sassy attitude. I usually only like women with long hair, makes it easy to grab on to when I'm fuckin' 'em from behind. But with Luna, anything goes. Hell, even if she cut her hair short, I'd probably still wanna fuck her.

No question there.

That goddamn spitfire attitude and smart mouth...

My balls tighten.

I stroke faster, remembering her tits and how perfect they were. Big. Bouncy. Her nipples large and pink... My mouth around her tight bud as I milked those fuckin' tits and fucked her senseless all those years ago. When we were too young to stop ourselves from realizing it was a mistake.

I grunt. I'm close.

She's been around the clubhouse more and more since she's been working for Rock, Jett's twin brother, at his

business Rock's Truck 'N' Haulage, which the club now part owns.

I hate other men looking at her. I want to gouge their fuckin' eyes out of their heads.

Then again, I've always been protective, ever since we were kids...

I take a sharp breath as I start to come, gripping myself faster as I jerk and then still, spilling my seed all over the tile and it never fuckin' ends.

*Jesus.*

This is what I fuckin' get for not having pussy in a few weeks. It ain't right.

I make a mental note to fuck one of the sweet butts tonight before my balls fuckin' hang down to my knees.

I clean myself with shower gel and shut the taps off. That does feel better, though.

The tension I had earlier has gone, but my leg still hurts like a motherfucker.

Once I dress quickly in my gym gear, I head downstairs to see if Manny is here yet. He's our resident cook and the biggest gossip in the entire MC, including the women.

I don't smell anything coming from the kitchen, so it looks like I'm gonna have to dig around for leftovers in the fridge. No fuckin' bitches around either to make me a coffee.

Where the fuck is everyone?

I know it's early, but still.

I run a hand over my stubble. I only have a short goatee at the moment, with the sides shaved, and my hair is longer than I've had it in years. I tie it in a short ponytail as I hunt at the back of the fridge.

Finally, I find something that resembles spaghetti bolognese and heat it up in the microwave. I eat a lot and I don't fuckin' cook, and I ain't learning how. No point in having a fuckin' cook and doing shit yourself.

I eat here a lot, even though I have an apartment downtown. Manny makes sure that I get the things that I like, but that means I have to be nice to him. I don't really enjoy being Mr. Nice Guy, but a simple grunt is all it takes to keep him on my side. He knows that if he's too goddamn cocky, he'll get a punch in that pretty boy face of his.

I swear he's too fuckin' pretty for his own good. All the women fawn over him like he's got a six-foot dick or something. When I asked Summer, Jett's ol' lady, and the only chick I actually have any time for, she told me it was because he was nice.

Nice.

*Fuckin' nice.*

What the fuck does that even mean?

Summer and I are unlikely friends, and I've no idea why that is. I've nothing romantic with her—she's Jett's ol' lady anyway, and that's a no-go—but it ain't like that. I even put up with her hassling me about Luna and when I'm gonna make it up to her.

Even she doesn't know about us. And she can't know.

It'll just show the depths of my depravity. Not that I give a fuck, but with my club brothers, I still want their respect. I don't want their judgment.

I make instant coffee because I don't know how to work the goddamn coffee machine, and by the time I get to the gym, I'm wide awake.

Harlem trudges in behind me.

I glance over my shoulder as I swipe my fob on the door. It's so early that there's no staff here yet.

“Look like a wet bag of cement,” I mumble.

He gives me a chin lift. “Mornin' to you too.”

I grunt. “You gotta be so fuckin' happy first thing?”

He chuckles.

Rarely do I see Harlem in a bad mood. When he is, it's catastrophic.

I know it's because he wakes up next to a beautiful woman every morning.

Indigo and her daughter, Cami, just moved in with Harlem. While we're still on the lookout for Indigo's ex, a man named Forger, who kidnapped her kid and locked her in a fuckin' crypt that almost burned down with her inside, everyone is on tenterhooks.

Forger was trying to put back together an old club and our biggest rivals, the Devils Ink MC, and when they got wind we'd found their hideout, they split and left Cami inside.

Word is they've gone underground, but it won't take long for us to find out where they are.

Forger won't be able to sit tight for long. If he's gonna kidnap his own kid and almost kill her, then he won't stay down forever. And when he does, we'll be waiting for him.

"Had a nice early mornin' wakeup call." He grins.

Indigo isn't just a nice piece of ass, she's also the co-owner of the bakery NOLA Sweet Treats, and she's also eighteen years his junior. I'd be smiling too at his age.

"Don't make me puke before my second breakfast."

"You made your first breakfast?"

I look at him like he has two heads. "Manny had leftovers."

We head to the machines, and I sling my bag down and pull out a towel. Nothing frustrates me more than bad hygiene.

"So. Why are you all pissy?" he asks.

I roll my eyes.

Harlem has a bullshit radar sharper than mine. Being my best friend, he also knows when I'm lying so there's no point.

"Usual shit."

"You talk to Luna?"

I give him a look. “Can we go one training session without talkin’ about Luna?”

He shrugs. “Whenever you have a face like you’ve sucked on a bag of lemons, that means it’s usually to do with her.”

The trouble with that statement is that it *is* about Luna, but not in the way he thinks. She won’t let me within a ten-foot radius without shooting her mouth off. If she were mine, I’d fuckin’ shut that smart little mouth up...

“Sorry to disappoint.”

He shakes his head. “Well, if you wanna talk. I’m here.”

I grunt. When do I ever wanna talk? I sort shit out the way the good Lord intended, in my own head. No need to go around burdening others. It’s selfish.

Plus, I don’t like other people knowing my business. Not that I’d mind Harlem knowing, or Cash, but this is different. Yet somehow, I feel like I have this fuckin’ secret that’s burning a hole in my goddamn chest.

Maybe Harlem is right?

“You sure you’re not goin’ all Dr. Phil on me?”

He chuckles as I adjust the leg curl. “Nope.”

“Goddamn fuckin’ women,” I mutter.

“I knew it. I thought things had cooled off with Luna?”

I exhale. “That’s because she’s always over at Rock’s.”

She won’t last there long. Luna never sticks to anything for more than five minutes.

“They got somethin’ goin’ on?”

I snort. “Not likely.”

He gives me a look. “You told him to keep his hands off?”

I did, in fact, do just that. But it was more of a snarl and a threat. If he knows what’s good for him, he’ll keep it in his pants. I’ve gotta stamp out any ideas he may have before they take hold.

I don't answer. Harlem knows the truth anyway.

"Come on, man, when you gonna make up? What did she do anyway?"

"Don't wanna talk about it."

He wags a finger at me. "You say that, but I don't think you mean it. You guys hooked up, then you didn't."

"It's not as cut and dry as you think," I cut him off.

"Why? You clearly have some kinda chemistry going on."

I sit in the seat and get into place. "Chemistry. Fuck's sake, H, you're the one goin' limp dick on me."

"Don't knock monogamy till you've tried it," he says. "Nothin' like knowin' a woman is yours and only yours. Should give it a go sometime."

"Sounds fuckin' awful," I say. "I like variety."

"Like the Luna variety?"

I start to curl the bar weight. Though I've got a fuckin' leg injury that never quite healed itself, I pride myself on keeping fit and being strong. If I lose that, then I've got nothing.

"Can we just work out in peace?"

"Fine."

He takes the machine next to me and five minutes go by.

But knowing Harlem like I do, I know he won't keep his flap trap shut for long.

"It's just, you kinda look cute together."

"Cute?" I glance around. Even though nobody else is here, I'd never want anyone to overhear that. "Jesus, H, it's worse than I thought. You're all fuckin' pussy boy on me."

He doesn't give a shit, though. He just chuckles. "Settlin' down is the best thing I've ever done. You've got no idea."

"No I don't, and I don't wanna know."

"So you won't care that Luna's bringing a date to Casey's birthday party?"

Casey is the sister of Crystal, our VP Ryder's ol' lady. She's an EMT and helps the club out from time to time. Like the time Nevada, one of our Tail Gunners, got shot. She patched him

up and put him back together without alerting the authorities.

I frown. "What?"

He shrugs. "Some guy she met online or so I heard."

Hmm. Doesn't sound like Luna.

I snort. "Fuckin' stupid. Could be a serial killer."

"Or he could be a great guy who she falls in love with."

Wrong again. Luna isn't capable of that.

Her last piece of shit boyfriend cheated on her before she took off a few years ago. She skipped town and I know for a fact she went to see her father that day. I don't know exactly what went on, but I can read between the lines. He's rich. And he's a goddamn asshole.

"Doubtful. Luna cares about number one and that's it. She's always been like that." Also, not true. Her ex changed her. She used to be sweet, too naïve. She trusted the wrong people.

She's different now. Sassy. She has an attitude I'd like to spank out of her. Then again, I'd like to spank her just for fuckin' existing and torturing me this way.

"I don't know why you give her such a hard time."

"Clearly, you haven't heard how she speaks to me. She has the wrath of the devil on her tongue."

"Maybe she's reactin' to you. Don't know if you know this, brother, but you do have a reputation for bein' hard to communicate with."

"You're just sayin' that 'cause you're pussy whipped."

He shakes his head. "Give me one good reason why you won't go chasin' after her?"

I open my mouth. *Can I really tell him?*

I mean, once the words are out, they're out. I can't take them back.

Then I'd have Harlem's judgment as well as my own, and that would be even worse.

"You wouldn't understand."

"Try me."

I stop to adjust the weights and run a hand over my face. "Gotta promise that this shit is between us," I say. I feel like I need to get this shit off my chest once and for all.

"Scout's honor."

I give him a glare. "Fuckin' mean it, H. No flappin' your gums to Indi, got me? If anyone finds out..."

"What the fuck happened?" He stops and stares at me. "Now you've really gotta fuckin' spill the tea."

It feels wrong, but I think if I tell him, I'll feel better. Then again, Harlem might look at me like I'm a sick fuck and then decide we're no longer friends.

I like him.

And I don't like many people. I doubt I'd be able to convince Summer to be my training buddy and almost chuckle at the thought.

"Fine." I take a deep breath. "I..."

He keeps staring. "Gettin' old here, T."

"We're, uh, just in the smallest sense..." *Fuck.*

He drops the lat pulldown bar and sits down facing me. "You knock her up?"

My eyes go wide at such a thought. "For fuck's sake."

"She been in jail?"

"You gonna let me tell the fuckin' story?"

"So tell it already."



I take another deep breath.

I've never told a living soul what I'm about to tell Harlem. Now my secret, *our* secret, will be out in the open.

"I... we... She's my..."

He frowns.

"Sister," I manage.

His eyes go wide. "What the fuck?"

"I mean... *Stepsister*," I add quickly. "We're not blood related."

"Thank fuck, my heart rate just went over a hundred." He's still staring at me, eyes wide.

I take a long breath. "So you can see why..."

"So you grew up together?"

I shake my head. "It's not like that. She was fifteen, I'd just turned sixteen... our parents met. Her mom and my dad, and they got married. I left for college less than two years later."

He blinks a couple of times and says, "Out of all the things I thought you were goin' to say, that wasn't it."

I shake my head. "So you can see now, how weird this all is," I go on. "Havin'...*thoughts* and shit about her."

"Did she reciprocate?"

I close my eyes momentarily. "Not until we were both over eighteen. We were friends for the first few years. I didn't think about her like that at first."

"Shit, man."

I scowl at the memory. "We both denied it, the attraction, but then shit happened."

"And then?"

"And then we noticed each other. I was about to be drafted by the NFL. My dad was on my case every second. Luna and I

kept out of each other's way. Then we saw each other again at a frat party..."

"Then what?"

"Nothin'. I mean, it's a long story. But I was lookin' out for her and shit but...things felt...*different*. She'd grown up, so had I. And I didn't like it when other dudes talked to her, stuff like that."

"She felt the same?"

"Obviously. But nothin' happened straight away. Just lookin' and shit. One night, before I left for college, she got scared because of a thunderstorm. Our parents were at one end of the house and us the other." I shake my head at the memory. "I heard her crying and when I went to investigate, she also said she hated the dark. It scared her. I felt bad so I let her sleep in my bed." I run a hand through my hair. "That's when I first started to really notice her differently. And I hated myself for it."

"Oh."

"We fuckin' cuddled," I admit in disgust.

Harlem chuckles. "Yeah, I can't exactly imagine that."

I shrug. "I was a kid. Didn't know shit back then. I'd fucked a couple of girls, but it felt different with her." Fuck. I can't believe I'm even admitting this.

Then, over the years, I discovered even more about myself through her eyes.

It's like I'd only discovered what jealousy was when I saw her talking to any other guy, no matter where she was.

Even now I can't stand it. It's worse than ever.

I swear to fuckin' God, if I see her with a date at Casey's party, which is apparently being held at the Grill, the restaurant we own downtown, I'll lose my mind. I'll have to make myself available now in case I have to smack some heads together. Namely, her date's head into the wall.

"I get it. Your parents would be mad."

“My dad, yes. Lisa, Luna’s mom, is more understanding. Her and Lu are close. And she loves me, always has, so there’s that.”

Seeing Lisa’s disappointment is what keeps me on the straight and narrow. She’s been a real mom to me over the years, completely accepting me the way my own mother couldn’t.

Mom skipped out on both of us. Only wanting to get back in my life when I made it in the NFL. The idea sickened me as much then as it does now.

And my dad. That’s a whole bucket of worms I don’t wish to bring up.

I know I let him down when I retired early. He thought I could just be magically fixed.

All I’d ever wanted in life was his approval, and I’d never felt good enough in his eyes.

Even when I was drafted, he told me I made the wrong team choice.

Of course, I looked up to him. He played ball for the Cowboys. He’s loved and respected by the entire nation, and I wanted to follow in his footsteps. Even winning a Super Bowl didn’t matter, not in the end. It’s all about winning. And in my dad’s eyes, my career was cut short and he blamed me.

In hindsight, I know I’d never live up to him, period. I’d never really have his seal of approval, and over the years, I’ve come to terms with it.

But me and Luna?

Oh, he’d never be able to hide from the shame of it all. The great Terrance “Bear” Madden and his wayward children. He’d never forgive us.

“Maybe it’s time you stopped worryin’ about what everyone else thinks, T. Ever think of that?”

I look up at him. “It’s weird, though. Admit it.”

“It’s...*different*. But you’re not blood related, and you didn’t exactly grow up together.”

I didn’t realize I even cared what he thought until this minute. But I’m surprised. Harlem is a moral man. He’s a straight shooter. He’d tell me if I was a fuckin’ weirdo.

Somehow, it feels better to hear him say that I’m not.

“Wait,” he goes on, staring at me. “Did you pop her cherry?”

I grunt as I lift the weights. “Mind your own fuckin’ business,” I growl.

“Jesus, T. No wonder she wants to claw your eyes out every time you see her.”

“It wasn’t like that,” I say, trying hard to forget that night.

“Uh huh.”

“Forget I said anything,” I mutter, realizing I’ve divulged enough. “Not gonna happen anyway. We’re through.”

He just shrugs and goes back to working out. “Famous last words.”

Nope.

This time, Harlem has it all wrong.

There is nothing between us. It was young lust and nothing more.

I won’t be indulging Luna and her escapades anymore. From now on, she can go it alone.

I’m done being the fall guy.

## LUNA

“GODDAMNIT!” I KICK THE WHEEL OF MY CAR.

I only just had new tires put on and now the stupid thing just damn well stopped, almost causing an accident. It’s smoking, so I’m assuming it’s overheating.

I feel like tearing my hair out.

Recently, things have only gone from bad to worse where my luck is concerned. I shouldn’t be surprised, since usually when one thing in my life starts to go right, the next thing you know, I’m sliding down a mountain, about to hurtle off a cliff.

I guess I’m one of those people who just happens to have bad luck.

The first person I call is Rock, my boss, as we have tow trucks at the office where I work, as well as heavy diesel trucks and haulage. Of course, being late at night, he doesn’t answer.

Probably out chasing pussy, since he’s now part of the MC. He’s been exempt from prospecting, so he can lay claim on any available woman in the club. All the chicks want him because he’s hot as fuck. The funny thing is, I don’t want him in that way. He’s my boss, for one, and that would be more than a little awkward. Plus, he has more baggage than I do, and I certainly don’t need to be dealing with that. Sad but true.

I really don’t want to call a 24/7 tow truck, when I can keep trying Rock. He’ll answer eventually. We also need to offer that service, but the latest we run is eight.

I try to call Jas, but the call rings out. Then I try Manny; his phone goes straight to message.

Then Summer. Deanna. *Goddamnit*. Does nobody answer their fucking phones anymore?

While I have insurance, I don't have roadside assistance. And that means I need to rely on friends. Friends who never seem to pick up.

My mom and stepdad can't help since they live a few hours away.

I know there is one person who will answer, guaranteed. But he'll only lecture me, then we'll end up in an argument and things will be awkward at our next family gathering.

Yes. I still have to put up with Tag at family events because he still shows up. My stepbrother.

Infuriatingly, my mom adores him. It's like he can do no wrong. His dad, on the other hand, is another story. I've always liked Terrance, as he's good for my mom, but he's always been harsh on Tag. Ever since he got a football scholarship and followed in his old man's footsteps, he's always sought his approval. Something tells me that he only had it when he was playing, and even then, his pops was a big part of every decision he made. And he never did seem quite happy with any of Tag's decisions. Their relationship is strained now. Ultimately, I think it was to do with Tag being forced into early retirement.

Nobody at the club talks about it. It's kind of a no-go area.

I've never seen a player like Tag. He ruled the Steelers.

He's large, for one. Bigger than a bear. His frame would dwarf a normal-sized person.

Hawk and Harlem are two of the biggest dudes in the club, and Tag is still wider set than they are. I wouldn't be surprised if he could bench press his own body weight, which would be over 250 lbs. of raw muscle.

He's only gotten bigger over the years since he did bodybuilding and boxing for a while. Then he started the

mechanic shop with Hawk and now spends his time tinkering with engines. Just my luck, I guess.

Calling him is the last fucking thing I want to do, but I know he'll answer.

Dammit. This is the problem with only having a small circle of friends. My other, non-MC best friend, Payden, isn't back in town until tomorrow, so she's no use. I try Jas one more time. She must be busy. Out of all of my friends, she's the most reliable.

I'm kinda in a jam here.

With a heavy sigh, I scroll through my phone.

I hover my thumb over his name and then realize it's ridiculous, feeling inferior to calling for help, and I hit dial.

It rings. And rings. And rings.

Then suddenly, it clicks off, and I hear in a deep monotone, "Luna?"

*Who else?*

"Hey. Uh, T..." I refrain from calling him Thomas, because I only call him that when I'm really annoyed with him. Or want to be a smartass, and right now I need his help. "Look, no one else is picking up. I'm kinda in a jam."

An awkward moment of silence passes. "What's wrong?"

"My car broke down."

"That's because you drive a piece of shit. It's a death trap."

"Spoken like a true mechanic."

"Where are you?"

I reel off the address. It's not far from the workshop.

"Why didn't Rock come get you?" he presses.

"Didn't answer."

"Fuckin' need that tow truck business 24/7."

It sucks how great minds think alike, but I refrain from saying anything.

“To do that we need to be on board with an insurance company for after-hours callouts.” Something I’m working on, but that takes time.

He grunts. “I’ll be there soon.”

“What about my car?”

“That tin wagon is a piece of shit. Keep tellin’ you that.”

“Ugh.”

He hangs up on me.

*Asshole.*

Great. Now I’m going to be stuck with a grumpy-ass biker and the man I least of all want to see, much less share a ride with. I just hope to God he brings his truck and not his damn motorcycle. The last thing I want to be doing is pressing my body up against his.

The number of times I’ve thought about it over the years, however, doesn’t delude me to the fact that I never really got over Tag, I think back to the night of the frat party when I was a freshman and my heart leaps in my chest...

*Ten years ago*

*“You know if this party gets raided, we’ll be implicated,” I tell Payden.*

*She rolls her eyes at me and chugs down more warm beer. “You worry too much.”*

*“No, I don’t. I’m serious.” I’ve always been the good girl.*

*The one who tried to be the sounding board for my mom when my dad cheated and left us. Then she found love again, remarried and got her happily ever after. I never wanted to give my mom one ounce of grief because she’d already lost so much. When she found Terrance, I was genuinely happy for her. My mom was too gorgeous and too nice a person to be left on the shelf, but after what my asshole dad did, I have zero respect for him.*

*I stayed in line. Got good grades and tried to not be a pain in her ass. She had enough going on.*



*“Just live a little,” she reassures me. “Anyway, we’re drinking beer, we’re not smoking joints or doing any heavy shit.”*

*I give her a worried look. Drugs have never interested me. In fact, they scare me. I know everyone does it, but I like being able to stay in control. As we pass drunk guys and girls through the enormous house, I’m vilified in my decision making.*

*I’m definitely not losing my virginity to some loser in someone else’s bed or couch who won’t even remember my name in the morning.*

*I also haven’t seen my stepbrother all night. Thomas is supposed to be here, not that I even want to see him. Things at home were weird when we shared our last family dinner during spring break.*

*I hadn’t seen him in a year since he was a year ahead of me, and he’d changed a lot.*

*Thomas had always been popular, as much as he was a quiet achiever.*

*But all of a sudden, he’d developed this attitude problem.*

*That and the fact I had a secret crush on him, which is gross when you think about it.*

*We’d lived under the same roof for about two years before he took off for college. And I don’t like having to hear his name around campus because he’s the star quarterback, I’d had enough of that in high school.*

*He’s never been awful to me. But I can tell that I annoy him. He doesn’t want me around, especially when his friends are there.*

*I shake my head. Like I care.*

*We’ve only been here five minutes and I’m ready to grab some Chinese takeout and watch some crappy reality TV.*

*“That’s just the point,” I go on. “We don’t fit in.”*

*Payden may act like she's one of the crowd, but we both know that isn't true. Neither of us were overly popular in high school. For one, she's the complete opposite of me. Which is probably why we get along so well.*

*I'm the level-headed one and Payden is the risk taker. I don't like recklessness. I also don't enjoy drunkenness because it reminds me of my real dad and how he'd come home late smelling like beer and cheap perfume.*

*"We have to blend," she says, smoothing one hand through the air like she's grooving to the beat.*

*I feel like face palming myself. "I need the bathroom," I say.*

*She nods. "I'll hang here."*

*"Sure you don't need to go?"*

*"Luna, I'll be right here waiting when you come back. I'll get us another drink."*

*I give her an eye roll and pour the rest of my beer into her paper cup, as I'm never gonna drink it.*

*Hesitantly, I make my way upstairs to where I assume there is a bathroom somewhere.*

*The music is loud, and it's dark, and I find the main bathroom occupied... It also sounds like people are screwing in there.*

*Shit! I need to pee.*

*I wonder briefly if anyone would notice if I slipped into one of the bedrooms to check if they have an ensuite... That's my only option, aside from going outside to find a patch of grass away from the fray. No thank you.*

*Tentatively, I listen at the door farthest from the stairs, deciding it is, in fact, vacant. I hesitantly knock and then push the door open.*

*Phew. Nobody in here.*

*The room clearly belongs to a boy. It's messy and smells like a teenager. Gross.*

*I tiptoe across the room and find the bathroom. I don't dare turn the light on in case the bathroom is as bad. I'd rather not know.*

*Even though I cover the seat with three layers of toilet paper, I still hover over it without touching it.*

*I do my business, using the faucet with my elbow to avoid any further contamination and go to leave. Halfway across the bedroom, I hear voices. Holy shit.*

*Then the doorknob turns. I dart across the room and run toward the open closet, shutting myself inside.*

*I panic because I shouldn't be in here. Someone might think I was looting or something.*

*It's one of those closets with slats so you can see out. Why the fuck do people have these?*

*I really hope it's not two people coming in here to go at it...*

*The door slams shut, and I hear a girl giggle, then, "Oh, God."*

*Kissing sounds ensue, and I cringe.*

*I have a decision here to make. Do I just come clean and run now, or sit through the duration and hope it ends quickly. Surely sex doesn't take that long...*

*The dude grunts and I hear movement.*

*Then, the chick bounces on the bed and pats the space next to her and says, "I did promise you a blow job after all."*

*My eyes go wide. I watch as he slowly moves toward the bed, his back to me, blocking all of her out.*

*"That's right, Candy, you have been a bad little bitch, cock teasin' me..." he says, his voice familiar.*

*"Thomas... you know every girl on campus wants you to pop their cherry," she croons.*

*Thomas?*

*Oh, no...*

*He moves, and she giggles again and yanks her tube top down, her perfect breasts spilling out as I blink. I can see it's him. Thomas Madden. My fucking perfect stepbrother who can do no wrong in anybody's eyes.*

*Oh. My. God. Please, do not let me be about to witness my stepbrother's sexual encounter with this random chick. I feel like I'm in a fucking peep show.*

*He fondles her tits as she goes straight for his dick. When she touches it through his pants, he groans.*

*I look away.*

*Shit.*

*Shit. Double shit.*

*I need to go... to run...but yet...I can't look away, either.*

*The damn blinds don't move, but I could close my eyes if I really wanted to.*

*"Fuck," he mutters.*

*I've never heard Thomas speak this way. Never.*

*I wet my lips and ignore the pulse between my legs as I try my hardest not to watch them.*

*He tweaks her nipple with his knuckle, and she tries to mount him. To my surprise, he pushes her off. "Blow job," he mutters.*

*Oh great, he's an asshole too.*

*"Oh baby, I want your dick inside me."*

*No.*

*No.*

*No.*

*He ignores her, pushing her down onto the carpet as he spreads his legs. And I watch as he shoves his pants down and his giant dick springs free. My cheeks redden, and I close my eyes, reminding myself this is wrong. Totally wrong. His dick... it's a damn monster not that I've seen enough to compare.*

*She makes appreciative sounds as she fondles him and his eyes close when she takes him in her mouth.*

*I bite my lip, but it's like a trainwreck that I can't look away from.*

*One hand in her hair, he guides her down on him as she bobs her head up and down.*

*He doesn't say a word. Not one fucking word. But she's groaning and writhing and I can't help but feel wet between my legs.*

*My stepbrother is gorgeous. Clean-cut and wholesome. The whole package. Any girl would be lucky to be on his arm, but not this Candy chick. She's trash. I'm sure Thomas can do so much better.*

*It occurs to me that I'm jealous. It soars through me like a fast-spreading poison as I watch.*

*And I have no right to be. He's my fucking stepbrother, for heaven's sake. One I've always had a crush on.*

*Groaning, he fists her hair. As his eyes open, and he looks over to the closet, I freeze.*

*He's staring right at me.*

*Shit, can he see me?*

*No.*

*"You have such a big dick, T," she groans as she gobbles his dick like a greedy bitch.*

*But he continues to stare.*

*I don't know what to do. My heart thuds in my chest. He can't see me...can he? He can't know that somebody is in here. And what are the fucking chances it would be his dumb stepsister who shouldn't be in here in the first place.*

*He makes a sound that makes my heart rate spike. It's so goddamn sexy. I can't help but feel turned on, knowing that the shame would ruin me if he knew I was here.*

*Look away... Look away!*

*But I can't.*

*I'm fixated on him.*

*He's beautiful.*

*His lips part.*

*Thrusting, he grips her hair and gives it to her.*

*He doesn't even warn her he's going to ejaculate... and I'm pretty sure he is...*

*A groan leaves him as he grunts his release, pulling out at the last second to paint her mouth as he grips his monster dick.*

*I stare in absolute shock.*

*I've never had sex before, call me a late bloomer, but I've made out with guys and done some stuff. Though, I've never seen a penis like his before.*

*When he's done, Candy giggles, wiping her lips with a finger as she tastes him provocatively. Then she stands and skips off to the bathroom.*

*I watch in horror as Thomas gets up and tucks himself back into his underwear and zips his pants up. Clearly, Candy is getting no sex tonight. He just wanted to get off.*

*Typical.*

*Good. This might mean they're leaving and I can go hide someplace else.*

*But then the unthinkable happens.*

*My phone rings.*

*I fumble around for my back pocket as I try not to yelp. The damn thing frightened the life out of me.*

*Of course, my ringtone is very distinct. Fergie's "Good Girls Don't Cry." And it's loud.*

*I quickly shut the thing off, but it's not like Thomas didn't hear it, even with all the music playing downstairs.*

*He turns and looks over his shoulder as I put my hand over my mouth.*

*As he walks toward the closet, it's one of those moments when everything is about to change if he opens those doors and sees me.*

*He stands there, staring through the slats as our eyes meet, though I know he doesn't see me. It's dark...he couldn't know. I could be anyone. That ringtone is popular...*

*Instead of opening the door to reveal my identity, he hears Candy behind him and moves away, not before smirking in that cocky way of his over his shoulder.*

*Candy complains that she's not done, but Thomas shuffles her out of the room as the noise grows louder then quiets again as the door closes.*

*Holy fucking crap.*

*What the hell did I just witness?*

*And more to the point, why am I so wet?*

*I take a deep breath. My heart is hammering so fast in my chest that I'm sure he can hear it.*

*Is there something wrong with me?*

*I shouldn't be having these feelings for him, though I know it's not the first time.*

*I shake my head and glance at my phone. It was Payden calling, obviously panicking to see where I was. I shoot her a quick text, telling her that there was a line and hope to God Thomas has disappeared for good.*

*I don't know how the heck I'm going to get out of this party without being seen.*

*How can I ever look him in the eyes again?*

*I saw his... Oh God, no.*

*I need to eradicate those thoughts once and for all... Then I remember his smirk as he walked away. Damn asshole.*

*If I never see Thomas Madden again, it'll be too soon.*

**TAG**

*TEN YEARS AGO*

*Lisa beams as I find her in the kitchen after dumping my bag in the hall.*

*“Thomas!” she says, in surprise. “I didn’t know you were coming.”*

*Of course she didn’t. It isn’t like my dad would’ve told her anything important like that. All he cares about are my grades and my training schedule, his wife coming in as a close second.*

*I often wonder how my dad scored a woman like Lisa. She’s everything my real mom never was, not that I knew her because she split when I was around ten. She wanted to have a relationship more recently, but I’ve shied away from that. I don’t deal with liars.*

*I wasn’t good enough then, but as soon as I got drafted and was doing well for myself, she shows up. Fuck her.*

*“I told Dad I was headed back for the weekend.” It is Thanksgiving and all, and we always celebrate as a family. It’s the only holiday I tolerate.*

*She turns and folds herself into my arms.*

*I’m not a hugger.*

*I never have been, but I tolerate it for Lisa because I like her.*

*“Are you hungry?”*



*I grin. Lisa is also the only woman I'll grin for, and she can read me like a book.*

*I don't think about that too closely.*

*She rolls her eyes. "Of course you are."*

*"I'm still growing," I tell her.*

*She shakes her head as she sets about to make me a sandwich. "Turkey on wholewheat?"*

*"Thanks, Lisa," I say. "I might just go wash up before Dad's home from work."*

*She smiles. "Okay. I'll make us some coffee. You still drink coffee, right?"*

*"Sure," I say. "Anything's gotta be better than the instant crap we have back on campus."*

*I take off upstairs, grabbing my bag as I go.*

*I don't think about Luna or if she's coming tonight, even though I know she will be. She and her mom are close, and she's never missed Thanksgiving. It's her next favorite holiday, aside from Christmas.*

*I know I probably shouldn't have come, but that little voice in my head told me that I had to. Not to see my dad or Lisa, oh no, it was to see her.*

*It's the only reason I'm here.*

*And I don't know what the fuck to do with that.*



*We sit across the table from one another as my dad asks me about training and Lisa passes food around. She's gone all out this year, and I know I'm going to put weight on by the time I go back to school on Sunday.*

*I wish I could focus, but all I can think about is that night at the frat party.*

*In fact, it's all I can think about.*

*What I want to know is if that was her, what the fuck was she doing hiding in the closet?*

*I saw Payden downstairs. It had to be her.*

*Then, something hits me.*

*Holy fuck, was she with a guy? That would make perfect sense.*

*My temper flares, stunning me into even further silence.*

*Why the fuck am I acting this way? Why do I give a shit who she's fooling around with?*

*She's nineteen, almost twenty, she can do whatever she wants. Yet the thought of another man's paws on her makes me see red. I shift in my seat as I try to avoid looking at her.*

*When she came in late, rushing into the den wearing jeans, a soft, beige colored sweater with a pumpkin knitted into the front, and white Converse, I had to bite my tongue.*

*Why does she wear those stupid sweaters? It's no different at Christmas time. In fact, it's even worse. And it's kind of adorable.*

*One year, Lisa got us all matching pajamas, but I refused to put mine on. Now she gets Christmas blankets instead, in the hope that I'll join them in their stupid traditions. I get she's trying to make Christmas enjoyable, but we're not little kids anymore.*

*I tore my gaze away from her curves and how her ass looked in those jeans when she hugged her mom. She didn't hug me. All I got was a lame "hello." Her cheeks flushing, which told me pretty much what I had already suspected.*

*It's not like I haven't noticed her. She's hot. She doesn't know it, but she is.*

*But she's my goddamn... No. I can't even say it.*

*Even if we're not blood related and I've only known her for five years and lived under the same roof for two, it's still weird. Despite any sugar-coating on my part. It's implied that we're related.*

*I crack my neck.*

*Why am I so annoyed at the idea that she was making out with a guy?*

*I try to tell myself it's because I'm being an overbearing, overprotective brother, but deep down, I know the truth.*

*I know it was her. I know that fucking ringtone anywhere. And not just that; she hasn't been able to look at me these last few weeks when our paths crossed on campus, not that we've ever been super close, but still, a simple hello isn't beyond either of us.*

*She pokes at her food as Lisa passes the potatoes.*

*My dad is still jabbering about the game he watched on replay between the Dolphins and the Raiders, and I pretend to listen, nodding in all the right places.*

*My dad lives and breathes football. It's what he does.*

*"So, Thomas, how is everything going with the team?" Lisa asks.*

*"Great," I say.*

*"What about you, honey?" she asks Luna. "How are classes?"*

*Luna finally looks up, avoiding my gaze as I stare at her. "Uh, fine, Mom."*

*She seems jittery tonight, now that I'm in close proximity.*

*She's such a little liar.*

*I feel my dick hardening as I swallow hard.*

*Holy fuck.*

*This won't do.*

*Lisa rattles on good-naturedly, and Luna's eyes finally meet mine. I stare at her, and she doesn't look away.*

*I want her to know that I know.*

*That it was her...*

*Her cheeks flush as she looks away first.*

*“So, Lu,” I say, delighted when her breath hitches at my saying her nickname. “Haven’t seen you around campus much.”*

*She forks some turkey but doesn’t bring it to her mouth, instead she looks at anything but me. “I’ve been busy,” she says, her voice faint.*

*“I hope you’re looking out for her,” Dad says, as I flick my eyes to his. “College can be hard when you’re young.”*

*I smirk. “I’m pretty sure Luna can handle herself, right, sis?”*

*Her eyes go wide as she blinks in rapid succession for a second, and I love the fact that I’m getting under her skin.*

*“I have Payden,” she goes on. “So I’m lucky that we’re close by.”*

*“Stay away from those frat parties,” my dad goes on, still looking at Luna. “Nothing but trouble lies there. Your brother should be looking out for you, anyhow.”*

*Brother.*

*For pity’s sake, I wish he’d stop using that term.*

*I only called her sis to get under her skin, not because we’ve ever been like a real brother or sister. I just like to see her squirm. Don’t get me wrong, she’s given me enough lip over the years to warrant my teasing. But this is just too good to pass up.*

*“Yeah, definitely avoid those frat parties,” I sing-song.*

*Her eyes flick up again and there it is. The guilt on her face, as well as her cheeks turning beet red.*

*I fucking knew it. Why else would she be acting like this? She’s usually throwing insults back at me behind closed doors and acting like the perfect daughter in front of her mom and my dad. So I know something’s up.*

*She opens her mouth to say something, but then swiftly closes it again.*

*My eyebrow quirks as I smirk.*

*Didn't think so.*

*We help clear the table, and while Luna's loading the dishwasher, I confront her.*

*"Why were you there?"*

*She freezes, her back to me. "What?"*

*"Don't play coy with me, Lu. I know it was you."*

*She straightens her back and continues to load the dishes. "You're talking gibberish, T. Time to lay off the dope and booze. It's messing with your head."*

*And there she is. I was wondering when her fiery side was going to finally show itself.*

*I move closer. "I don't think so."*

*"Or maybe it's those idiots you hang out with and all the video games you play. Haven't you heard it numbs the brain?"*

*"You watched me, Lu, didn't you?"*

*She fumbles with a plate and nearly drops it.*

*"My question is, why were you in there?"*

*She turns and finally looks at me. "I wasn't."*

*"Liar."*

*"Stop harassing me, I'll tell them..."*

*"Go ahead. And I'll tell them my dirty little liar of a sister was in the closet with some fuckin' guy, watching me get off. I'm sure it'd go down a treat."*

*"You're an asshole. And I wasn't with a guy."*

*I narrow my eyes. "No?"*

*She shakes her head. "I was leaving the bathroom... I heard voices..."*

*I stare at her, my heart thumping in my chest. "So you... just stayed there?"*

*"I... I didn't want to get sprung," she whisper-shouts, closing the door to the kitchen so our parents can't hear. "I*

*wasn't supposed to be up there."*

*A question lingers on the tip of my tongue. "Did you like it?"*

*Her eyes go wide. "W-what?"*

*"You heard me. Did. You. Like. It. Watchin' me come?"*

*"You're disgusting."*

*She glares up at me, her face twisted in annoyance and revulsion. "Seriously. You're deluded, T. Just because you want to get off with one of the biggest sluts on campus who probably has cooties and God knows what else, isn't my issue. I would be checking for STDs though, can't be too careful, even with oral."*

*I blink. "Candy's not a slut."*

*"No? Sorry to be the one to break the news, but she's been with most of the guys on your team. Sloppy seconds is kinda revolting."*

*I point at her. "If I find out you really were with a guy in there."*

*"You'll what?" she challenges.*

*"I'll fuckin' kill him."*

*Her mouth parts, and for the first time I realize how fuckin' pretty those lips are.*

*Shut. This. Down.*

*But I can't.*

*My fury rages when she says, "I'll fool around with whoever I want to. Whenever I want to. You're not my keeper."*

*"No, but Dad said I was to look out for you. After all, what are big brothers for?"*

*"You're not my brother, T, you never will be."*

*I move closer. "Is that because you liked what you saw, little liar? Did you see my dick and get all wet in your panties?"*

*She turns and goes to slap me, but I catch her wrist as I pull her closer.*

*“You’re disgusting,” she breathes, her eyes dipping to my lips.*

*“Really? Or are you just trying to fight those urges you have deep down.”*

*“The only urge I have, Thomas, is to knee you in the balls.”*

*“Do that and I’ll tell your Mom you were in the closet with a guy.”*

*“I’m nineteen.”*

*“Still, it doesn’t look good, does it? Mommy’s little princess, getting fucked in a closet by some complete loser. What did it take, half a beer?”*

*“You are the most disgusting person I’ve ever laid eyes on.”*

*I let go of her. “You don’t mean that.”*

*“Yes, I do. What’s more? I think you’re jealous.”*

*I snort. “Jealous?”*

*“Yes. Because you keep flapping your gums about it. I saw your reaction at the table, T. So turn that finger around and take a long hard look at yourself. You like the idea that I saw you, and that makes you the sick one, not me.”*

*I forgot she’s smarter than me.*

*We’re both breathing heavily as I step back and Lisa comes into the room as we spring apart.*

*“Kids?” she says, coming to a halt when she sees us. “Is everything okay?”*

*“Yeah, Mom,” Luna says quickly. “Thomas was trying to help, but his big fat fingers almost cost you a plate.”*

*Lisa laughs. “That’s okay, honey. It’s nice to see you two finally getting along.”*

*I try not to snort. My God. How clueless parents can be.*

*“Who’s up for some pumpkin pie?”*

*“That’d be great, Mom,” Luna says.*

*I give Lisa a tight smile as she goes to check if dad would like pie, too.*

*“Fat fingers?” I roll my eyes.*

*“It’s better than saying you have a thick skull and have been hit too many times in the head with a flying football.”*

*“Very funny.”*

*“How about you leave me alone to finish this and go pretend to be the perfect son to your dad.”*

*“Like I’d need to pretend,” I grunt.*

*She rolls her eyes back at me. “Try hard wannabe.”*

*“Bitch.”*

*She throws the nearest thing, a plastic spatula, and I duck as it flies past me and hits the wall.*

*“Didn’t know you were violent as well as a liar,” I snark.*

*“Wouldn’t want to ruin that pretty boy face now, would we?”*

*Just as I’m about to insult her back, her damn phone rings.*

*Fergie. “Big Girls Don’t Cry.”*

*A grin spreads across my face as she fumbles around in her back pocket to shut it off.*

*I can’t help but laugh.*

*There is no escaping it now. No freaking way.*

*“Time to change that ringtone, Lu,” I say, swaggering as I leave. “Big girls may not cry, but they sure as hell pack a mean punch. Though if you wanna hit me next time, aim a little to the left. Your throw’s off.”*

*I leave her standing there furious as I head to the den, chuckling as I go.*





*I haven't seen Luna for at least two weeks. I don't know if she's just hiding from me, or purposely avoiding all of the places we'd usually run into one another. But even I begin to worry when I don't see her at her favorite coffee shop.*

*I debate texting her but, in the end, I know that if I text Lisa about it, she'll just worry.*

*Sighing, I pull my phone out before practice and shoot her a message.*

You alive?

*To my annoyance, she doesn't answer. She doesn't even read the text.*

*I send her another.*

Better answer me soon, or I'll come looking for you

*A few moments later, I see she's read the messages, and the gray bubble appears. Thank fuck.*

*At least she's alive.*

Why do you care?

*I roll my eyes. Why do girls have to be so fuckin' complicated?*

*Okay, so things weren't great the last time we saw each other, but get over it.*

*She won't admit that she has some weird crush on me, and I'm not gonna admit that I jerked off that night thinking about her watching me get blown.*

*Fuck.*

*There's something wrong with me.*

*I need to stay away from her. She only evokes all this annoyance in me that I really need to reserve for the game.*

I don't. But your mom will ask me how you're doing sooner or later, and I don't like lying... unlike some people

Fuck you

Do you kiss your mom with that mouth?

At least my mouth is clean, unlike yours. God knows where you've had it

*I chuckle to myself.*

*It doesn't take long for her temper to flair. I find that quite adorable. As well as that flush to her cheeks that I know only so well.*

Wouldn't you like to know?

I wouldn't actually. Now did you want something? I'm busy

Busy doing what?

Mind your own business

*I grin and click my phone so it locks. I'm done with her shit already.*

*I try not to worry about her, but lately that's all I've been doing.*

*I mean, Luna is an attractive girl. She's tall, curvy, and doesn't know how cute she is. Plus, when she's not being a complete bitch, she can be funny. Not that I'd ever admit that out loud.*

*She may not be that sweet teenager I once remember, but I know she's a good girl.*

*She'd still be a virgin. At least, I think so. She's one of those good girls who never gets into trouble for anything. Which is a surprise with a smart mouth like hers.*

*Again, my blood boils and my heart rate accelerates when I think about her and another dude.*

*What the fuck is the matter with me?*

*Why do I keep telling myself it's because I really am concerned about her, and not because I keep imagining it's her down on her knees, taking my cock between those pretty lips.*

*Hell no.*

*I need to shut this down permanently, and that might mean not going home when she's gonna be there, which is a little hard since our parents only live an hour away. It's easy to just take off for the weekend.*

*I steel myself as I go change for practice.*

*I'm the fucking quarterback. A man who can get anything he wants right now.*

*Any friend. Any play. Any chick. Any fucking party I want, and I'm the star attraction.*

*It irks me that Luna doesn't see me in the same light that others do. She calls me out. She doesn't put me on a fuckin' pedestal like everyone else. And I'd kinda dig that if she wasn't being such a bitch to me, we might even get along.*

*Luna needs to accept that it wasn't my fault at the frat party. I didn't see her until I walked right over to the closet. And when I did...my cock was hard all over again at how dirty it was.*

*She should never have hidden in the goddamn closet, and watched me get sucked off. That was her choice, so that's on her.*

*As disgusted as I should be about that, the thought thrills me.*

*It's forbidden. She's a girl I can never have.*

*The only girl I can never have.*

*Any other chick would be jumping on my dick without a second thought. But not Luna.*

*She's not like that.*

*Nobody is good enough for her, especially me.*

*I decide I'll look out for her, but only because deep down, I do care. I don't want to see anyone take advantage of her or fuck her around. In fact, I'll snap someone's neck before that happens.*

*It's not a thing.*

*Just me looking out for my stepsister.*

*And that's what I need to keep telling myself. I do have a thick skull, after all, according to some.*

**TAG***PRESENT DAY*

The last fuckin' thing I need is Luna on the back of my sled, but I have no other choice.

I'm half tempted to call Rock to come deal with it, but at the end of the day, Luna is my problem to sort out. Just like always.

I shake my head as I tug my boots on and run a hand over my scruff. Fuckin' Lu.

She's always been a pain in my ass ever since that night at the frat party. And then there was that other time...much later, when we got closer than we ever should have.

I swallow hard at the memory.

I just can't win with her. I know this already, yet I still keep getting her out of messes.

She's always found fuckin' trouble.

It's like she just attracts it.

When she left for a few years, I worried about her. Especially when she wouldn't reply to my texts and told me to fuck off.

We got close again. We didn't fuck that time, but close to it, and then I just couldn't. I think about the first time we got closer... Jesus H. Christ. Panic washes over me.

She gets under my skin like no woman ever has, and I know it's because she's forbidden.

We shouldn't have done half of what we did, yet it didn't stop us.

I find her hunk of junk easily. Hopefully, a semi will come by and clear the damn thing off the road and I won't have to deal with it. Tonight, it can stay here. It's safely off the highway and half in the goddamn bushes.

Rolling up, I kick the stand down and kill the engine.

Luna opens her car door. Least she had the good sense to sit inside.

I give her a chin lift. "What happened?"

She rolls her eyes. "How the hell do I know? You're the mechanic. It overheated, I guess, then it just stopped and I only just got it off the road."

I don't understand how she drives this piece of shit. It's not road worthy. I've offered countless times to buy her a car, but she won't have it. Now I'm insisting on it. I don't fuckin' care anymore.

I don't know what she's done with money over the years, and I sure as shit know her deadbeat dad, who's a millionaire, doesn't help. She doesn't see him much, and whenever she does, she comes back mad as an alley cat.

He could help out if he wanted, but he never does. And I know Luna is too proud to ask her mom and my dad for cash.

I've got a lot of money. I guess you could say I saved hardcore when I was playing football and I invested well. Though I don't like to think about that time, I still think about what could've been.

"Go pop the hood."

She does as I say, and I use my phone flashlight to have a look. "Doesn't look like you're goin' anywhere tonight," I tell her, noticing the engine's overheating.

"No shit."

I look up at her. “Do you want my fuckin’ help or not?”

“What choice do I have?”

Good point. She doesn’t have one. Not like I’m gonna leave her here on the side of the goddamn road.

“You could walk home.”

“Fine.”

She goes to the driver’s door, leans in, rummages around, and a few moments later, she pulls out her overstuffed purse and slams the door. “Goodnight.”

My nostrils flare at her lip.

“Get back here, Lu. Don’t make me come get you.”

She stops in her tracks, and I know that she knows I will haul her ass back to my sled. Hell, I’ll throw her over my shoulder if I have to.

Thinking better of it, she turns and faces me. “Fine.”

I frown, looking down at her attire. “How the fuck do you expect to get on my sled wearin’ that?”

My dick hardens at the sight of her in a tight skirt. She has a blouse on and a jacket, clearly work attire, but still. “I’ll roll my skirt up.”

“Not carin’ who sees?”

She rolls her eyes. “It’s only you. Not like you haven’t seen it before, right?”

My head starts to throb as well as my cock.

That was a long time ago, but fuck do the memories come flooding back.

Of course, once was never enough, it never could be.

I’m still a fuckin’ smug son of a bitch knowing I took her virginity. Oh yeah, she gave it to me.

I was the first. And I don’t know what kind of asshole that makes me, considering our family predicament, but I’ve

ceased caring about any of that. I've stopped blaming myself and I've moved on. Or so I thought...

"Don't test me, Lu. Get on the goddamn bike."

"You first."

She turns and locks her car with the key.

"Don't lock it," I scold. "If you're lucky, someone might steal it."

"Hilarious."

Stepping over to my sled, I pull out the spare helmet from my saddlebag and hand it to her.

She takes it without any words, her eyes meeting mine, and I realize what a big deal this was for her to call me. She really must have been out of options.

I don't say a word as I mount my sled, kick up the stand, and start the engine.

I've never had Luna on the back of my motorcycle, shit, I've never had any bitch on the back of my sled. You start doing that and they get too clingy.

Luna, however, there's no chance of that.

There is no denying the fact that she hates me now. I get that, but I don't give a fuck.

Everything I did, I did to protect her. She can like it, or she can find someone else to cry a river to.

I turn my head as she considers how she's going to do this and I'm here for the show. This ought to be good...

She hitches her skirt up to her thighs, and I almost lose my mind.

Fuckin' stockings with goddamn garters.

A low growl leaves my throat, and she looks up. She can't have heard that over the rumble of my straight pipes, but I'm sure by now she knows that look in my eyes.

"Are you getting a good look, Thomas?"



It drives me mad when she calls me that.

“You wear that to Rock’s office?”

“Obviously.”

“He tappin’ it?”

She looks at me in horror. “Aside from that being none of your business, he’s my boss.”

Good. She’s not. But still, if she’s wearing a getup like that, she’s got sex on her mind.

Don’t tell me women wear that shit just to feel good about themselves. What a load of crap.

“So that’s a no then?” I clarify, just to be sure.

“Why don’t you just stop gawking at me and ride.”

I take a deep inhale. “Shut the fuck up and get on and I will.”

“Stop staring!”

“You think I give a shit who you flash your pussy to?”

She ignores me, puts her hands on my body, and I instantly freeze. She hasn’t touched me like this in so long. I could almost forgive myself back then for being young and dumb, and we were both horny as fuck, but as a grown man? I still have some pride left.

“Do you always have to be so crude?” I hear her mutter, and I take great pride in the fact that I hear her skirt tear as she straddles across my sled.

I let out a laugh. Yeah, nobody in this life—aside from her—can get me unglued and laughing all in a matter of minutes.

“You okay back there, Lu?”

“I’m fine.” She sounds anything but fine.

“Need my cut to cover your ass?”

“Like you’d care who I show my ass to since you don’t care who sees my pussy.”

I rev the engine to relieve my annoyance at her tone.

Goddamnit.

Two minutes with her, and I'm a raging bull. I swear if getting under someone's skin was an Olympic sport, she'd win a fuckin' gold medal.

I'm the club's Sergeant at Arms, so it's my job to protect all the club's property. Including her. And her getting home safe is a priority.

Despite our differences, I never want to see anything bad happen to her. And New Orleans can be a scary place.

I'd never forgive myself if anything happened and I could've been there to prevent it.

Luna falls under the club's protection umbrella not just because she's my stepsister, but because she works for the club. Anyone who works for us is our property, so to speak.

Anyway, Cash would have a heart attack if he found out I ignored her calls out of pettiness.

Recently, the Devils Ink MC, who we'd already put in early graves, had a couple of members who got away, and then they began to rebuild the club underground.

We don't want to risk anything with Forger on the loose.

If I do find him, or any of them, I'll be calling Harlem. He's still frothing at the mouth to have his revenge for his ol' lady.

Nobody is allowed anywhere without protection, and that means the women and children of the club.

Lockdown can't work forever, but the idea that Luna would be stuck on the side of the road unsettles me.

For fuck's sake. *Hurry the fuck up.* I need to get out of here and get her delivered back to her apartment.

She doesn't know it, but the one thing that I insisted on, was making sure she had a nice place to live. She doesn't know this, but I helped her get her townhouse when she was short on cash to prevent her from living in a sketchy

neighborhood. She thinks my dad put down the deposit. I own the house, and she has no idea.

I got the realtor to make out that the other place was already taken. It was in a questionable part of town, and I couldn't have that. I told my dad and Lisa not to say anything when the new townhouse came up. She could go on thinking that my dad was the hero, and he was happy to fill that role. It didn't bother me. What is the point of having wealth and not being able to share it?

Now she lives in a gated community, in a nice neighborhood one street over from St Charles Avenue that she adores. And now I can sleep at night knowing she's safe so I don't give a fuck. She can go on thinking she's renting, and in time she'll learn that I'm not a total asshole.

Despite popular opinion, I'm not a total dick.

I don't just think on impulse either, in fact, I rarely do. Everything I do is carefully planned out.

And tomorrow, fuck it, I'm gonna get her a new ride. She won't want my charity, but I'm past giving a shit. The last thing I need is her wrapping herself around a tree or some shit and having Lisa and Dad worry themselves to death.

Luna knows I'm loaded, yet she's never once thrown it in my face. She'd never ask for money, so I try to help where I can. She'd die before becoming a charity case.

She doesn't look at money the way I do. With her, it's like a hot fuckin' potato. In one day, then out the next.

I'm still pissed about when she split a couple of years ago. I know I had something to do with it, but I thought I was doing the right thing.

She doesn't just get to blow me off and then show up again like nothing ever happened. I had to find out everything from her mom, who was also worried she'd gone AWOL.

When I questioned her after she started working back at the clubhouse, she just shrugged and said she went traveling. She's such a bad liar.

The thing about Luna Shields is she can't lie for shit.

I can see straight through her; I've always been able to.

She holds onto my hips, and I turn my head so she can hear.

“Stop bein' a bitch and wrap your fuckin' arms around me. If you fall off, it'll be my fault.”

“Stop calling me names.”

I rev my engine. She knows we're not going anywhere until she does as I say.

When she sighs loudly and then wraps her arms around my body, I feel a hum and calmness in my chest that makes my throat dry and my body tense.

If I admit to myself that it feels fuckin' good, that's hardly blasphemy. Not that I'm religious, but I'm pretty sure I'm not going to heaven after what we've done.

Checking the highway, I pull off the shoulder and take off.

I know Luna loves riding, but this isn't for her enjoyment. I'm just doing my job.

I'm not the same person she once knew. I've changed. I'm not *Thomas* anymore. He died when my career did. I joined the MC and I became tough. I have to be as the club's Enforcer.

I know she wants something that I'll never be able to be. She wants some fuckin' fairytale that doesn't exist.

I sometimes wonder if I've always been this hard, but I know after my career ended so abruptly, I changed. Everything changed. I was bitter. Maybe I'll never get over it.

Maybe this was the best thing to happen, because without it, I never would've met Harlem and ultimately joined the club that I love so much. My brothers are everything.

But now, as I get the waft of her scent...I can't even describe how it feels to have Luna pressed up against me on my sled.

This bike is my baby. My pride and joy. There is nothing I love more than riding, except fuckin'. But having Luna close to me like this feels different.

I keep thinking about Harlem lecturing me. Of course, I know he's right.

At some point soon, Luna will find someone to settle down with. Then I'll have to witness an even bigger atrocity: her settling down and making a life. Us at family Christmases, flaunting him in my face. I shift in my seat when I imagine her knocked up with another man's baby.

My hands grip the handlebars tightly. Fuck no.

But why do I give a fuck about these things?

Probably the same reasons I've always given a fuck, deep down.

Because I can't have her, but I don't want anyone else to either.

*Jesus fuckin' Christ.* This is so fucked up. I should've phoned Riot or Bronco to come get her.

I run a hand over my chin and try to shake it off. But like all things Luna related, that's easier said than done.

I take a breath and tear down the highway, and across the city.

After all of the backchat she's given me these last few months since returning, it's a wonder I'm even here rescuing her ass. You'd think she'd be a little more grateful.

As usual, all I get is a mouthful of lip.

It's like she knows I'll just drop everything to come get her, regardless of what I'm doing.

She knows that I have an obligation and, boy, doesn't she milk it.

But with her thighs wrapped around my hips and her arms around me, I feel... *different*.

My jaw's tight as I fight the feelings. I can't let this one situation change who I am.

She doesn't have that power over me, not anymore.

I feel her shift behind me, and I turn my head.

"You good?"

She nods. "Yeah."

I look back at the road.

It takes about twenty minutes to get across to her side of the city.

As soon as we drive down Paramount Lane, everything changes.

I feel an ache in my chest when I know that she's not living in some slum somewhere.

And renting with strangers like she was talking about, not gonna happen.

You don't know what kind of psychopaths are out there these days, chicks included.

Sometimes they're the worst. And really, it's the least I could do to keep her safe.

When I pull up to her place, I'm glad she's at least left some security lights on.

The place is magnificent. It has an elegant entry with a grand staircase and private balconies on both floors.

I know it's over the top and she probably wonders how the fuck she can afford it, but again, I don't doubt she thinks her dad probably helped out, too. Motherfucker.

Pulling up in her drive, I plant my feet. I've no intention of staying so I'm not gonna kill the engine.

My sled will surely stir up the neighbor. Not like they can't hear the sound of loud straight pipes. I'm sure it'll give the snobs around here something to talk about over Bridge and high tea, or whatever it is they do down in this neck of the woods.

My place is the opposite of this. A modern penthouse in a nice part of downtown.

It's home to me and more unassuming, being it's not surrounded by white picket fences and perfect gardens.

This suits her, though.

She slides off my bike, her hands grazing over me as I scrub my chin and stay seated.

I try not to notice her skirt bunched up as I get a glimpse of her panties as she pulls it down, covering her legs. I swallow hard. Pink panties. *Fuck me.*

She lifts the brain bucket off and hands it to me. "Thanks."

I give her a chin lift.

"Get Rock to get your damn car in the mornin', but no more drivin' it. I'll check out the engine." A lie. It's going to the scrap heap. RIP piece of shit. "And don't be wearing shit like that to the office."

She gapes at me. "I beg your pardon?"

I wave a hand at her waistline. "*That...*the lacy shit under your skirt."

Her eyes narrow. "Thought you didn't care, and suddenly you think you can tell me what to do and what underwear to put on?"

"Don't think it, know it. I am your big brother after all."

Her eyes narrow. "Fine, *Thomas*. But if you're my brother, then I'm pretty sure what we did was illegal."

"You wanna make it weird, go for it. But don't be callin' me to get you out of trouble again."

"Trust me, I tried everyone else's number."

I snort. "And I'm the only asshole to pick up?"

"Pretty much."

I shake my head.

Will this ever end with us? It's exhausting but I also concede it's necessary.

She doesn't have to be such a snarky bitch though. I meant what I said, she shouldn't be wearing that underwear if she's not looking for strange. I don't want to picture her with another man or him seeing that.

"You lookin' for it?"

She puffs out a loud breath. "What, Tag?"

"Strange."

She knows what I mean. Out looking for dick.

"Fuck you." She starts toward her front door. "For your information, I was at Faux Paws."

Now I feel like a dick. The dog rescue. I forgot in her spare time she likes to clean out dog cages and shit.

I'm a cat man myself, but dogs can be cool.

"Already tried that, Lu," I yell after her. "Didn't really work, did it?"

She flips me the bird as I watch her disappear into her house, my eyes on her ass the whole way.

Fuck me. She's only gotten better with age. Those curves... When I think about the first time I sunk my dick into that sweet pussy... Hell no. Thinking about that is complete torture.

I crab walk my sled backward as I turn around.

Staring up at her bedroom window, I wonder how the fuck we got to this. I guess we'll never know, but if memory serves correct, it's because we crossed a line. A line we can't ever come back from.

I can't be sure, but as I drive away, I'm sure her curtains move.

Goddamn dick tease.



## LUNA

ONLY WHEN THE STRAIGHT PIPES FINALLY ROAR AND THEN slowly fade away, as Tag tears off down the street, do I let out a breath.

He gets me so unglued.

I know it means nothing, it's just a ride, one I didn't even thank him for, but with him it always means so much more. Tag will always come for me. That much I know. But the question is why?

He was the first boy I fooled around with... He took my virginity. I slap my forehead as I dump my purse in the foyer and kick my shoes off. *He took my virginity.*

Okay, he's the club's Sergeant at Arms, so it's his job to make sure that anything or anyone who is deemed club property is protected, that part I get. But when I look at him, it's like he's battling some inner demon that I just can't figure out.

The night we got close again, over two years ago, he stopped it. He rejected me. He told me that what we're doing was wrong, that what we did *that night* and many other nights, was wrong.

I'd dropped out of college for a while, and our parents were moving to New Orleans and I was going with them. It was a few months after the frat party, after months of avoiding each other and him being overbearing because I knew he was watching me from a distance. Just like he does now.

He doesn't want me, but he doesn't want anyone else to have me either.

Typical asshole biker. Or just typical asshole Tag.

When did he get this grouchy?

When did he go from being my annoying older stepbrother to this man?

He doesn't even speak. He grunts. Like opening his mouth is some kind of hardship for him.

He has always been hard to talk to, but never like this.

It's like something snapped in him after he was forced into retirement. He retreated. His fun-loving nature disappeared, along with his smile that I never see anymore.

My beautiful beast.

His eyes, though. My god. His eyes are the windows to his soul.

They're bright blue and so vivid. Even when he won't say shit to me, I can tell exactly what his emotions are through his eyes. As much as he likes to try to pretend he's just 'doing his job' I know differently. I know the real Thomas.

The one who hides away behind his muscles and foul mouth. The man who I know would drop everything to make sure that I'm safe. But why does he continue to push me away?

Aside from the elephant in the room, of course. Us and our history don't help.

More to the point, why does my heart still ache for him all these years later?

I don't want to remember the man he used to be because he was different then.

Has he always had an attitude? Hell, yeah. But it was different then. Now he's just plain mean.

And what's worse? He's good at it.

As I run myself a bath, I wonder what the hell I'm gonna do about getting a new car. I've got a little bit saved but not a lot. I'd have to get a loan, but my credit isn't that great due to being late on my student loans all those years ago that magically vanished, and my credit card bills that lagged for months. I sincerely doubt my dad had a change of heart and paid them, or maybe he added it to his bill. The only other person with a lot of money is Tag, but it isn't like he would've come to my rescue. At least, I don't think so.

Then there was...*him*. Gary. The man I hooked up with. To say he'd come back to haunt me was an understatement, but after I borrowed that money from my dad, he went away.

And for a while, that's where he stayed. Buried in the past. But the funny thing about the past is that it always comes back to haunt you.

No, I don't want to think about Gary any more than I want to think about Tag, but at least with Tag, it was real. He'd never purposely hurt me, not like Gary did. He'd never try to blackmail me in the worst possible way.

He recorded us having sex and threatened me with it when I didn't want to continue seeing him. He said he'd put it on a sex website and send it to all my friends and family as well as my work colleagues. Stupidly, I went along with his demands because I was dumb and naïve and didn't know what to do. Going to the police would only result in further embarrassment.

After Brian, I was lonely, and Gary had seemed nice. He wasn't exactly my type, and I knew it wasn't going to go anywhere, but we hooked up a couple of times and the sex was great. But that's all it was. Months later, he sent me a text saying he had something important to discuss. Little did I know that it would be my dignity on the chopping block.

When Gary's threats became real, I shut myself off from men. I couldn't deal with any more heartbreak, especially after Brian's betrayal. I still dread it every time I get an unknown call. I have to live with looking over my shoulder to make sure he's not following me, not that he's done that in years. He just

kinda drifted away once he got his money, which is what I prayed he'd do.

Out of sight, out of mind.

If Tag knew. He'd go psycho. But it's my shame and I've put it behind me, never once understanding how people can be so cruel.

My father has called a couple of times for me to come and repay my debt, and he won't take money as payback. He still wants me to work at his office. I figure the longer I avoid him, the better.

Plus, if he really was so concerned about me paying him back, he would've hunted me down. He's a man of means and power. And he knows that he has me on the hook. Sooner or later, I'll have to repay him.

How he and my mom ever got together I'll never know.

I sink into the bath and sigh. This is my one indulgence and I love it.

Sometimes I read on my Kindle, sometimes I'll just play some soft music and close my eyes and relax. It's the only place I can truly do that and feel like myself.

But when I am relaxed, that's when I start thinking about the past. About the night Tag took my virginity...

*Nine years ago*

*Almost a year has passed, and Thomas and I have barely spoken. He's been noticeably absent from a lot of home visits this year, but then again, he is a big hotshot now, so he doesn't need pesky things in his life, like family.*

*The only thing that could be worse than seeing him again would be being under the same roof as him again, but that's exactly what happened over Christmas.*

*Of course he came home. And, of course, I ignored him, keeping it civil when mom and Terrance were around so they didn't grow suspicious of our bickering.*

*“You really think that snowman sweater is gonna turn on that asshole you hang around with at school?” he says, when we’re alone together in the kitchen.*

*He’s referring to Rich, I think. He hangs with me and Payden, and he’s gay. Not that I’ll let Thomas know that because Rich is good looking and this could work to my advantage.*

*“Unlike some people, I don’t care about turning people on. And I like this sweater,” I say back, glaring at him over my shoulder. “Anyway, it got your attention.”*

*He leans against the kitchen island, too close to me. I can smell his musky scent from here and it’s enough to make me weak at the knees. A year can do a lot. He’s bigger now. He’s always in the gym and it’s paid off. His shoulders are wide, and his frame is muscular and... fuck, I’m staring.*

*“Because it’s so fuckin’ ugly,” he says, trying to get a reaction.*

*Oh, dear brother of mine. You’re such an ass.*

*“Profound. I don’t know how I’ll sleep tonight, knowing you don’t approve.”*

*“Maybe I should take you to the mall. You know that place with stores that sell fashion.”*

*“Why are you such a jock?”*

*“Uh, because I am one?”*

*“Oh sorry, did I say jock? I meant asshole...”*

*He rolls his eyes.*

*The annoying thing is, I need to go to the mall, and since I don’t have a car, I’ll have to rely on my mom to take me, or get the bus.*

*“Fine. Stay here with your mom and my dad and watch them makeout over Debbie Does Dallas Christmas edition. It’s your funeral.”*

*“You are so disgusting.”*

*He grins. "You like it."*

*I open my mouth and then close it. "Do you ever get sick of being such an ass?"*

*He pretends to think about it. "Uh, no, actually. When you're as adored as I am, you really don't think about these things too much."*

*"Ah, I forgot, thinking isn't your strong suit, is it, T?"*

*He pushes off the bench. "I'm rollin' out in five minutes. Suit yourself what you do."*

*I stick my tongue out behind his back as he leaves.*

*Though he's not my favorite person right now, I do have a few things to get at the mall and I need to find a dress for a party we're going to on New Year's Eve.*

*He smirks when I grab my purse and tell Mom and Terrance I'm going with him to the mall. We ride in silence, and I'm peeved about how he has a nice truck and I get to take the bus. I guess that's what happens when you're the star quarterback.*

*Strangely, he doesn't just dump me at the mall to go find his friends.*

*We kind of shop together. He goes into a store, and I follow, looking around, then he does the same. I don't realize until an hour into our trip that that's what's happening.*

*Even a clothing boutique that sells party dresses. I'm sure he's only coming in here to check out the salesclerk, but it's not like I care anyway. I hold a handful of pretty dresses and go find the dressing room.*

*There's one black dress I love. It has a slightly revealing neckline embodied with crystals on the A-line bodice.*

*I slide that one on first, then to my horror, the zipper gets stuck.*

*I turn and frown. Shit. I try to zip it back down, but it's then I hear a tear.*

*Oh no!*

*“Thomas!” I yell.*

*A few moments later, I hear, “What’s wrong?”*

*“The dress, holy fuck,” I curse as the curtain slides to one side and Thomas is standing there. I try to cover myself, but half my ass is hanging out.*

*He stares at me in the mirror as I stare back at him.*

*“The zipper!” I say. “It’s stuck, and I just ripped it because I’m too fucking fat!”*

*His eyes trail down my body, and his lips part. Instead of ridiculing me and telling me I am indeed fat and should go on a diet, he steps in and abruptly shuts the curtain behind us.*

*His nostrils flare as he faces me.*

*I don’t even have it in me to turn and shove him back out. I’m too embarrassed.*

*He stares at me as I clutch the dress over my breasts to cover them. I didn’t even get the damn thing all the way up my body. How embarrassing!*

*“One thing, Lu, and I’m only gonna say this once.” His tone is like ice and deadly serious as his eyes cut into mine. I’ve no idea how much this is going to hurt... “Don’t you ever let me hear you say those words again about being fat, you hear me?”*

*I frown, my heart racing in my chest. What? “But I am...”*

*He holds a finger up to stop me and steps right up to my back so his chest is touching me.*

*His expression fierce, he says, “You are not fat.”*

*“I just need you to unzip me. Please...”*

*“Say it.”*

*My eyes go wide. “Thomas, get out!” I turn to shove him this time, and he catches my wrists. In the process, the dress falls, and his eyes dip to my white lacy bra. I’m big breasted and I’ve always tried to cover myself up so boys don’t stare, but Thomas looks at me differently.*

*His eyes look hungry as he takes me in.*

*“Fuck,” he mutters.*

*I should smack him, tell him to stop gawking at me and get the hell out. But my feet are stuck in place. They won't move. And...he's staring at my breasts like they're some kind of wonder of the world. Then I see the huge bulge in his jeans and my eyes go wide. Is his dick hard for me?*

*When his eyes meet mine again, he grabs my shoulders roughly and spins me so I'm facing the mirror again.*

*“Say it.”*

*“Say what?” I whisper, defeated.*

*“I'm not fat.”*

*I open my mouth, but the words won't form.*

*In a voice I've never heard him use before, he says, “Luna.”*

*“I'm not fat,” I whisper.*

*He nods once, then says, “My body is beautiful.”*

*“I can't say that.”*

*“You will say it, or we're camping here tonight.” His menacing stare tells me he's not kidding, so I do.*

*“My body is beautiful.”*

*“I'll never let anyone tell me any different.”*

*I swallow hard. “I'll never let anyone tell me any different.”*

*“I'm perfect.”*

*I frown. Why is he making me do this?*

*“I'm...”*

*“Say it, Lu.”*

*The way he says my name is a growl. And it's turning me on.*

*“I'm perfect.”*



*He nods again. His eyes sweep down my body once more, and he makes a feral noise in the back of his throat. Holy shit. He's totally checking me out.*

*"Fuck, Lu," he whispers. Then he adjusts himself as my throat feels like sandpaper.*

*I don't know what makes the next words fall out of my mouth, "Touch me," I whisper.*

*His eyes go wide. "Lu. I... I can't."*

*"But you want to?"*

*His eyes...they're like the perfect storm as he battles with himself and his emotions.*

*"Yes – yes, I want to."*

*Holy fucking shit, what is going on here?*

*"Is everything okay in there?" the clerk asks from behind the curtain.*

*My eyes go wide, and Thomas puts a finger against his lips.*

*"Y –yes," I stammer. "I just had trouble with the zipper, but I'm okay now."*

*I don't know if she buys it, but I hear her step away.*

*Then, I feel Thomas's hands at my back and his fingers feel like hot cinders on my skin. He finds the stuck zipper and tugs down on it, releasing it as I sigh with relief. I know I'm going to have to pay for it, but still.*

*I'm so wet between the legs and my nipples are hardened peaks.*

*I need him to touch me, but he won't.*

*The dress falls, and his eyes dip as he checks out my ass. I want to die.*

*I can't keep my eyes off that bulge. I've seen his cock and I know it's big.*

*Noticing, he swears and adjusts himself for the second time as my cheeks flush red.*

*Then, I feel one hand at my hip and the other tilts my chin to look at him in the mirror. He leans to my ear, his masculine scent clouding my senses as he says, "Don't ever hide your body, Lu. It's beautiful. If anyone tells you you're fat, you let me know, and then I'll have the pleasure of fuckin' killin' them."*

*I swallow hard, his fingers pressing into my hip as I nod slowly.*

*He lets me see how serious he is, then turns to leave before adding, "I take it back. Don't wear this dress in public, because if you do, I'll have to hunt down every fucker who looks at you and gauge their eyes out while I'm at it."*

*He leaves the dressing room, and I stand there in my underwear, my ripped dress at my feet as I try to calm the fuck down.*

*What the hell was that?*

*I dress quickly without trying anything else on and Thomas insists on paying for the damaged dress on his credit card as I try to hide my embarrassment from the clerk. He has something else in the bag along with it, but I don't dare speak.*

*I'm flushed with embarrassment as we leave. I just want to go home.*

*The whole car ride, we're silent.*

*When we park in the garage, he says, "This is between us."*

*I nod. Relief floods through me that he won't tell all of his buddies on the team what a loser I am.*

*The loss of his touch, even the slightest bit, makes me want to sob.*

*I need his hands on me. I want him to play with my body.*

*He hands me the bag. "This is for you. Merry Christmas."*

*He gets out of the car and takes off inside.*

*I sit there and peer into the bag.*

*It's my dress. Except, not the ripped one. It's in a slightly bigger size, the size I should've selected in the first place.*

*He bought it for me?*

*Then I remember his words: "Don't wear this dress in public, because if you do, I'll have to hunt down every fucker who looks at you and gauge their eyes out while I'm at it."*

*I clutch the bag to my chest and take a few moments to compose myself.*

*We had a moment.*

*We had a fucking moment.*

*What in the hell happens now?*



*The days pass and we avoid each other once again. I'm confused. Upset. And most of all, turned on.*

*I touched myself while imagining his hands and mouth on me. Who am I kidding? Thomas has played the starring role in my late-night fantasies when I make myself come many times before.*

*I keep myself awake at night, imagining his cock and what it looked like that night I hid in the closet.*

*Everything about Thomas is big, and when the girls at school talk about monster dick, I now know what they mean. His is perfect. But I can't imagine that thing fitting inside me.*

*I've never gone that far with anyone. You could say I'm a late bloomer, but it's just how I'm made. I don't apologize for it. I also don't think most guys are into girls my size, but I refuse to go there. Thomas thinks I'm perfect... Shit, I have to stop thinking things like that.*

*I don't know what his endgame is, and I hope this isn't just an elaborate prank.*

*Christmas comes and goes and the night of the New Year's Eve party at my mom's friends' is in full swing.*

*They have an opulent house, and the grounds are sprawling. All of my friends from school are here, as well as Thomas's. He came to the same fucking party.*

*Again, we've avoided each other all week. When we collided in the bathroom, I ran out saying he could have it, and I shut my bedroom door before he could argue.*

*It feels forbidden. He's right across the damn hall and our parents have no idea what happened at the mall.*

*I can't stop thinking about how he touched me. How his eyes roamed my body like he really did think I was beautiful. Nobody has ever looked at me like he did that day. Or said those words. And I want more of it.*

*It's wrong. So very wrong, but I want him.*

*I wear the dress Thomas bought me, and rode with my mom and Terrance, having no idea where Thomas even is tonight.*

*I don't want to keep thinking about him. It's been hard enough at home with him right there, without having to deal with him seeing me in the dress he bought me. The one he forbade me to wear.*

*It fits like a glove and is tight in all the right places.*

*I find myself hoping Thomas likes it on me, now that my ass isn't hanging half out of it.*

*The masquerade-style party is in full swing, not that I'm wearing a stupid mask.*

*But there's formal dancing and fancy food that has caviar on it and tastes like dirt.*

*I agree to dance with Chris, an old high school buddy, and we laugh as he tells me about his new roommate who has stinky socks and bad hygiene. After the second dance, I see Thomas staring at me from across the ballroom. I freeze in place as he stalks toward me and, before I know it, he pulls me into his arms and away from Chris, telling him, "I'm cuttin' in."*

*"Thomas," I say, as he whisks me away. "That was rude!"*

*“What did I tell you about wearing this in public?”*

*I stare at him, unable to form words as he waits for my answer.*

---

## LUNA

*HIS HANDS ON MY BODY FEEL FORBIDDEN. WRONG. BUT OH-SO right.*

*“Well?” he demands, when I don’t answer.*

*“I – I don’t understand. You bought it for me.”*

*His eyes graze down my body. “Yes, but not to wear for everyone else to see.”*

*I gape at him. “Did you want me to wear it just for you?”*

*He spins me around, and my hands reach up around his neck as he holds me. He’s not a great dancer, but at least he’s trying, even if he is being demanding.*

*“Yes.”*

*“Thomas, we can’t do this.”*

*“Exactly what are we doing?” He quirks an eyebrow.*

*“Things we shouldn’t be.”*

*He thumbs over his shoulder. “Who was that?”*

*“I – uh, that’s Chris.”*

*“Yeah, and he had his hands all over you.”*

*“So what? Are you my keeper now?”*

*He smirks. “No, but I am gonna look out for you. Just like I should’ve been doing all along.”*

*“I don’t need you to do that,” I tell him. “I can look after myself.”*

*He lets go of me.*

*“What are you doing?”*

*His lips twitch. “I don’t dance.”*

*I laugh. “No, you really don’t.”*

*He laughs too and as it’s such a rarity, I stare at him in surprise.*

*“You should smile more,” I tell him. “It brings out the sparkle in your eyes.”*

*“My eyes sparkle?”*

*“When you smile, they do.”*

*He swallows hard as he watches me. “You know this is a bad idea. Everyone is watching.”*

*“So, pretend like you don’t want to fuck me and act like my brother.”*

*His nostrils flair.*

*“Keep that damn smart mouth shut for five seconds, and I will.”*

*I can’t help but smile. He wants this too, even though we know we’re both playing with fire.*

*“I want your mouth on me, Thomas.”*

*He swallows hard. “You don’t know what you’re saying.” His eyes watch me intently, and I could swim in them forever.*

*“Yes. I do. For the first time in my life, I do.”*

*“It would change things, forever.”*

*“I don’t care.”*

*When he spins me around, I catch sight of our parents, smiling at us with approval. My stomach drops, but I smile back.*

*“You sure, or are they just tough words?”*

*“Thomas, don’t.”*

*“One dance,” he says. “That’s all I can offer.”*

*“Why do you have to spoil everything by opening your mouth?”*

*“Because if I take you away from our parents’ watchful eye, I might just end up doing something I shouldn’t.”*

*I stare at him in shock.*

*He nods once. “Understand?”*

*“But I thought... I thought you hated me?”*

*He snorts. “I’ve never hated you, Luna. But to be fair, you’ve never made life easy for me.”*

*I can’t fight him on that, but still, he acted like such a douche. Until that night at the mall.*

*His face changed when I berated myself and the thought of how he came into my changing room still thrills me to this day. He made me stand there and say nice things about myself before he left. Who does that? Has Thomas always been like this underneath, and I’ve never seen it?*

*He has no reason to be fake-nice. None at all. We could just go on like this forever.*

*“I want you to admit something,” he says, his voice low.*

*I nod because I can’t speak right now. He’s holding me too close... too tight... I can feel.... everything.*

*“That night, in the closet...”*

*My mouth parts, and I see him snicker.*

*“Y- yes?”*

*“Did you like it?”*

*I frown, and when a flush comes over my cheeks, he tilts my chin up to face him.*

*“Answer me.”*

*I swallow hard. “Yes,” I admit. “I liked watching you.”*

*His nostrils flair. “Have you ever been with a guy?”*

*I roll my eyes. “With a body like min-” I stop.*



*His eyes turn furious. "Don't make me angry," he warns. "And the fastest way to do that is to put yourself down."*

*I can't believe he's saying these things.*

*"No," I clarify. "I've never...done stuff like that."*

*He gives me a chin lift. "Good. Keep it that way. College kids, they're only in it to get to the next pussy, Luna. It doesn't mean anything to these guys. They have a different girl in their beds every night."*

*"Like you?"*

*He doesn't answer.*

*"Like you, Thomas?" I prompt.*

*"Just listen to what I'm saying. I'm trying to help."*

*Help? This feels like I'm in an alternate universe.*

*My eyes go wide, and I can't help but ask, "Would it mean something to you?"*

*He frowns. "What?"*

*"Taking me," I whisper, my face beet red. "Doing things to me."*

*His lips part, and for the first time ever, Thomas is lost for words.*

*"You're a virgin?"*

*I nod. "Obviously."*

*"Fuck."*

*I watch him carefully, then he shakes his head. "I don't deserve that. But don't give it up until you're ready, Luna. It should be... It should be special. Not just some grope and a feel in the back of a car, or with some drunk guy who won't remember your name. You're too good for that."*

*How I wish I could tell him I want it to be him.*

*All of it.*

*I only want him.*

*But that is a far-off dream.*

*The song ends, and I slide out of his arms.*

*We look at one another, but don't linger.*

*The magic and the moment are gone when reality hits again.*

*He's my stepbrother.*

*We can't go any further.*



*I've tossed and turned all night since we got back.*

*Thomas didn't stay out. He came home later than me and our parents, but at least he came back.*

*I can't stop remembering how he held me. How he said those words. He was so sincere.*

*I can't take it anymore. I get out of bed and tiptoe to his room, crossing through the shared bathroom to his door. I knock.*

*Nothing.*

*I knock again.*

*It's late. Maybe after three, so I don't expect him to be awake.*

*Taking a chance, I turn the doorknob and peek inside.*

*The TV's on and now I know why he can't hear me because he's wearing his Bose headphones.*

*I slide the door closed and the movement has his gaze shifting to mine.*

*He sits up, the snack he had in his lap falling onto the comforter.*

*"Lu?"*

*I can't breathe. I've only been in his room a handful of times. The last being when I was seventeen and I was scared that night because of the storm. He'd slept with his arms*

*around me. A memory I think of fondly and one that's kept me safe in times when I needed it.*

*Now I'm here. I don't know if to run toward him or run away. This is unfamiliar territory for me.*

*"Yes," I stammer.*

*He's shirtless and I can't stop myself from staring at his beautiful chest. He's so big.*

*"What are you doing?"*

*"I – I don't know," I admit.*

*He shakes his head, then says, "Come here."*

*My eyes go wide. He's not turning me away or laughing at me?*

*I can feel how slick I am as my legs betray me and I move toward the bed. If I'm honest, I've been hot for him all night. There's only one reason I'm here...*

*I'm wearing my silk pajamas. I threw them on instead of the Santa Paws ones I had on earlier. These are sexier and I know he hates Christmas shit... Oh my God. Have I even heard myself?*

*"Lu," he breathes when I'm right next to his bed.*

*"I shouldn't be here," I whisper.*

*"Then why are you?"*

*He pats the space next to him. I hesitate, but then sit as his eyes search my face.*

*"Because..." I trail off.*

*"Lu. Don't shut me out," he says, surprising me. "What is it?"*

*"I – I wanted to see you."*

*"In the middle of the night?"*

*"Don't you feel it?" I whisper.*

*He swallows hard, his eyes dipping to my chest and back as he gives me a chin lift. "We can't act on it."*

*“I want to.” His eyes go wide, but I plow on. “I’m a virgin, T. I want you to be my first. I’ve thought about it and what we said and this... I want...you.”*

*I visibly hear him gulp as he sits up farther. “Luna...”*

*“You don’t want me?”*

*He shakes his head. “That’s not what I... You, you’re gorgeous...every damn inch of you. And you wore that dress I told you to never wear in public.”*

*“Then why did you buy it for me?”*

*“Because I wanted to make you smile.”*

*I’m so fucked.*

*I look down. “Don’t tease.”*

*He leans toward me and tilts my chin with his fingers, a move that makes me weaker every time.*

*“I’m not teasing you, Lu. I meant what I said. You’re gorgeous, but you don’t know what you’re saying. It shouldn’t be with someone like me. I’m an asshole.”*

*My heart hammers in my chest. “Why not with you? Aside from the obvious.”*

*“Because. It should be... I don’t know, special.”*

*“It is special. It’s you.” Does it sound like I’m begging?*

*His face changes, and then distorts. “No.” He shakes his head. “Luna, no.”*

*I feel myself flush.*

*I’m a fool. A fucking fool.*

*He just did this to make an idiot out of me? To prove that I will never fit in or be the kind of girl that he would find attractive? Was this all a game?*

*Why would he do this to me?*

*Because he’s Thomas Madden and he can.*

*He’s the star quarterback who everyone wants to be, who everyone loves. And he can treat people this way because he*

*gets away with it. Yet...he was so sincere tonight. Even now.*

*I feel the tears spring to my eyes as I shoot off the bed and run back to my room through the connecting bathroom. Leaving him calling after me in a whispered shout as I slam the door.*

*I launch myself at my bed and fall into the pillows and cry.*

*I should know better than this. I should never have put myself in this position to be ridiculed.*

*I'm not a dumb girl, but I sure as hell seem to be acting like one.*

*What if he tells his friends? Or worse... My mom? Oh, shit.*

*Shame fills me as I bang my fists and curse his name.*

*Then I hear the door open, and before I know it, he pulls me into his arms and he's lifting me off the bed. I fight him, cussing quietly to put me down and let go of me, but he ignores it.*

*Carrying me back to his room, he closes the door with his foot and walks me over to the bed, still struggling. I can't help but feel how strong he is. How I seem to weigh nothing in his arms.*

*I curse myself too, for the feelings he's evoking in me. This just isn't fair. I don't want to feel this way about my stepbrother...*

*"Don't ever hide from me," he growls, then throws me on the bed.*

*I scramble to sit up, but he's pinning me down before I get a chance to move.*

*"Do you hear me, Lu?"*

*I nod as he cages me in.*

*His chest is huge, his shoulders and biceps bulging as he rests on his hands. It's then I notice all he is wearing is a pair of black boxer briefs.*

*He's a vision. That's all I can say. He's fucking gorgeous.*

*His body ripples as I feast my eyes as he watches me taking him in.*

*His crotch is...well, there's a massive bulge front and center, and I curl my toes to save from the pull I have between my legs.*

*"Your body," I whisper.*

*"What about it?"*

*"It's so..." I trail off.*

*"It's so?"*

*"Hot."*

*He chuckles. "You know we shouldn't be doing this, that's what I meant earlier. I didn't mean no I didn't want to. I just... fuck, Lu, you drive me fuckin' crazy."*

*My eyes go wide. "I do?" I stammer.*

*He reaches down to cup his dick as I stare in fascination. "Not like I can hide it."*

*I lick my lips as he adjusts his bulge and a small mewl leaves my lips. Oh, holy shit.*

*"You should go," he breathes, still pinning me down.*

*"I don't want to, T."*

*"No? What do you want?"*

*"For you to touch me."*

*"You know if we do that, there's no going back."*

*"Good."*

*He chuckles again. "Feisty little thing, aren't you?"*

*I run my hands up his arms and along his biceps and he freezes. It's like my touch tortures him or something. The look in his eyes is pleading, yet also like he's fighting that inner voice that says no. I wonder who will win out...*

*"Lu, you having your hands on me..."*

*"Do you like it?"*

*He takes a second, but finally he nods.*

*What if I do this?" I squeeze the muscle, and then palm his chest, cupping him there.*

*"Fuck."*

*I skate my hands down his chest, along his abs, enjoying the feel of pure muscle there as he stares at me. I forget how beautiful he is. He shouldn't be this pretty, not for a quarterback.*

*I stop at his lower abs as he challenges me with his eyes.*

*I really want to feel his dick. I'm not afraid. I want this. I want it to be him.*

*Lowering one hand, I feel the tuft of hair at his navel, and he hisses when I flatten my palm against his bulge. Oh. My. God.*

*A squeak leaves my lips, and he smirks. His dick pulses against my palm as he groans, and I squeeze a little harder.*

*"Lu," he grunts.*

*I fondle him, enjoying how hard I'm making him.*

*His face is inches from mine, and I really want his lips on me. I want to kiss him. I want to get lost in him. In his bed.*

*He moves his face lower, his lips brushing mine. "We're crossing a line," he whispers.*

*"I don't care," I whisper back. "I want this."*

*Suddenly, his lips crash to mine, and I groan in relief. His lips are surprisingly soft, but also brutal. He kisses me hard, his tongue seeking entry as I grip his cock harder. Cupping my face with his hands, we kiss long and hard, and when he pulls away, we're both panting.*

*"I need to see your tits," he says.*

*My eyes go wide.*

*Holy crap.*

*But I don't hesitate, I rip my pj top off and my breasts spill out.*

*I love this about him. He makes me feel like I really am beautiful. All my inhibitions go away, and I can just be myself.*

*“Fuck,” he mutters when he sees them.*

*I try to cover them with my hands, but he knocks them away.*

*He growls as he kisses my neck, making his way down toward them as I cling onto him for dear life. I’m so wet. I need friction. I need his name on my lips.*

*“Oh,” I cry out when he leans down and sucks one nipple into his mouth, groping the other with his big hand. “Oh, yes.”*

*He sucks hard, then moves his attention to the other one as I squirm underneath him.*

*“T,” I moan.*

*“Shh,” he tells me.*

*Once again, I’m reminded of what we’re doing, but we’re past the point of no return now.*

*His hands and his mouth are on me. There is no going back, not for me.*

*I watch as he plays with me, strumming my nipple with his knuckle as he sucks on the other. Groaning like I’ve never heard a man groan before, he lowers his body, pressing into me. I’m delirious when I feel his hard cock against my hip.*

*“Need this pussy,” he whispers.*

*His dirty words send me to heaven as he works one hand down my torso and into my pj pants.*

*I’m not wearing any underwear, and he finds my bare pussy with a hiss on his lips as he grunts his approval.*

*I moan as he runs two fingers through my crease, and he mutters under his breath. It’s so erotic. So forbidden. And so fucking hot.*

*I start to move my hips, needing my release.*

*“You want to come, Lu?”*

*Oh, God. Just hearing him say that... my God.*



*“Y—yes,” I stammer.*

*He finds my clit, and I arch my back as he rubs over it, coming in all of two seconds.*

*Reaching up, he places a hand over my mouth to quieten me, but I don't care. This house is huge, both our parents sleep like the dead. I cry out his name like it's a prayer and a curse all at once. He just made me come.*

*My stepbrother just made me come.*

*He lifts off, then reaches for my hips and yanks my pj pants down my legs and discards them.*

*“Fuck,” he mutters when he sees me, then, “Spread your legs, I need to see you.”*

*I'm naked under his body, and I've never felt this way. I'm not ashamed of my body when his eyes are on me. That's a new experience all in itself.*

*I do as he says as this seems to please him, and he grunts his approval once more. He starts to play with me again, his eyes on my pussy as he slowly inserts a finger, then with a hiss, “So fuckin' tight, Lu.”*

*Trembling, I bite down on my lip. I'm so wet, my release slippery, and I don't know what to do with myself when he leans down there and blows on my clit.*

*I cry out when I feel his tongue on me, swiping through my folds as he sucks on my pussy.*

*Holy shit. Holy goddamn shitting balls...*

*I sit up on my elbows and watch his head between my legs as he eats me out. He fingers me, and I start to feel a tight knot in my lower belly that tells me my next orgasm is gonna be big.*

*When he sucks my clit into his mouth, I fall over the edge, coming long and hard. His finger inside me, pumping in and out as he adds another. When I'm done, he pulls away, glancing down at my wet center. Biting his lip, he whispers about how sweet I am.*

*I've never had an experience like this before.*

*Reaching down, he yanks off his boxers, and my eyes go wide when I see his cock spring out.*

*Goddamn.*

*It's even bigger than I remember.*

*He pulls on it with his hand and just watching him is enough to send me into a frenzy.*

*"You sure you want this?"*

*I nod as he watches me. "Thomas...that was so good. Your mouth..."*

*"You taste sweet, baby."*

*Baby?*

*Fucking hell!*

*"Oh."*

*He grins. "I want your mouth on me, too. It's all I've been able to think about since that night in the closet. I wanted it to be you."*

*Eagerly, I sit up, reaching for his cock. I take over fondling him, and he watches my hand with a look on his face I'll never forget. He wants me. He finds me attractive. He wants to fuck me.*

*He cups my face. "You are so beautiful, Lu. Don't let anyone ever tell you differently."*

*I squeeze him harder, and he groans.*

*He comes up to his knees, and I scoot down onto my elbows, taking his heavy cock in my hand.*

*"So big," I mutter. "So thick."*

*He cups the back of my head but doesn't shove his cock down my throat. Instead, he lightly plays with my hair, a gleam of satisfaction on his face when I take his tip into my mouth.*

*When he hisses, I think I'm beginning to like that sound.*

*"Fuck, Lu."*

*He tastes...salty. Weird. His head is thick, and I lick the bead of cum off the top.*

*I groan as I take more of him, the throbbing between my legs getting worse. I need him so much. I need him inside me. I can't take much more of this.*

*"Like this," he says, holding his cock in his palm as he gently moves my head up and down and I take over.*

*He's so damn big that my jaw is stretched. I fondle his balls and he jerks as I lick up his thick cock and he mutters again. He does that a lot.*

*"Feels so good," he whispers. "You should see how you look, Lu. My dick in your mouth."*

*His dirty words. His dirty, goddamn words make me so wet.*

*I glance up at him with his dick in my mouth and he's staring at me in awe.*

*His eyes blaze, and I never, ever want another man to look at me like this except him.*

*I'm in love with him.*

*And I know that's bad. Very, very bad.*

*This is just another notch on his bedpost. But if I say that now, I know he'll retreat.*

*And I don't want that.*

*I don't care what this is to him; for me, it's liberation.*

*I want it to be him. I want to feel him inside me and remember it always.*

*What happens tomorrow doesn't matter. All that matters is now.*

*I keep sucking him, up and down, and when he jerks his hips, I gag, and he pulls out.*

*"I'm sorry."*

*I shake my head. "It's okay."*

*He pulls me up so we're both on our knees and he kisses me hard. We're all tongues as I wrap my arms around his neck, and he slowly lowers me back to the bed.*

*We kiss for a minute before he pulls away and fumbles around in his side table drawer, cussing when he can't quite reach. I giggle as he leans farther and then finally, he has a condom packet in his hand.*

*I let out a silent breath as he rips the foil packet with his teeth and then looks up at me.*

*"Roll it on."*

*"Oh God, Thomas."*

*I sit up slightly as he rolls it onto his tip, then places my hand there and I take over.*

*His dick is so damn big, I've no idea how it's going to fit inside me.*

*Reaching down, he fingers my pussy again and I'm embarrassed with how slick I am.*

*I lie back down, and he holds his dick and swipes the head through my folds, swirling it over my clit as I moan. Everything he does is good, and I know that it's because he's had a lot of practice. But none of that matters right now.*

*None of it.*

*All that matters is it's me and Thomas and it's special.*

*I'm special. He said so.*

*I'm so desperate for him that I grip his ass, and he chuckles as he leans down to kiss me chastely. "Greedy girl."*

*I watch with fascination as his dick slides through my crease and nudges my clit. He's moving so slowly that my orgasm just won't come... he's making it last, oh, Thomas... He's teasing me.*

*"Show me," he whispers. "Show me how you come for me."*

*His words undo me, and I come again, but before I finish, I feel his head at my entrance.*

*“Gonna hurt a bit,” he mutters.*

*“I don’t care,” I gasp. “Take me, Thomas. I want this.”*

*“Me too, baby.”*

*Baby...*

*Oh, his words.*

*I no longer care if I’m just a fool. Let me be one. But I’ll die if I don’t have him inside me, giving this to me, making me a woman. His woman.*

*Once his tip is in, he slowly slides in farther, and I gasp. He’s so big and it’s so tight.*

*“Let me in,” he whispers. “Relax, Lu.”*

*I do as he says, spreading my legs as he cages me in. It hurts.*

*His mouth hovers over my lips as he kisses me slowly. Then he moves his lips to my nose. Each eye. My forehead. My chin. My cheek bones.*

*I groan beneath him as on every kiss, he slides in a little more.*

*“Fuck,” he mutters.*

*“Do it,” I gasp. “Please, Thomas.”*

*Like he’s out of control, he thrusts in, and my breath hitches as he breaks through, and I cry out. Fucking ow. Jesus. He’s in me...*

*He stills. “You good?”*

*I bite my lip, my eyes stinging. I nod. “I’m good. It’s... it’s big, T.”*

*“Does it hurt?”*

*“Yes.”*

*He grins, his fat cock seated deep inside me. “Good. Tomorrow you’re gonna remember that I’m the one who*

*fucked you. I'm the only one, you hear me? I took your virginity. Say it."*

*Oh, God...*

*"You..." I stammer. "You took it."*

*"Good girl."*

*He slides out and then slides slowly back in as my walls squeeze him and I feel my chest constrict.*

*The feeling, it's like nothing else. I'm lost. Lost in him.*

*And I've no idea how I'm ever going to let him go.*

**TAG**

*9 YEARS AGO, MY BEDROOM*

*The way she feels. The way her walls squeeze me. Her pussy is a vise that makes me want to come so fuckin' fast. But I grit my teeth and hold on. I can't come in two minutes; she'll think I'm a fuckin' pussy. Plus, it's her first time. It isn't about me.*

*Instead, I slow things down. Sliding my dick in and out of her at a pace that's making us both tremble. I lift up so I can watch her taking me and that turns me on so fuckin' much, when I slide back in and she swallows me.*

*"Feel that, Lu?" I groan, my hands on either side of her head.*

*"Yes," she moans.*

*"Wrap your legs around me."*

*She does as I say, and I squeeze my eyes shut as I pump her a little faster. The first time's gonna be fast. I can't help that, but after, she can ride me, and I'll be able to hold on for longer.*

*"Fuck, Lu. Your pussy's so tight."*

*All she does is moan beneath me, and I chuckle.*

*I tilt my hips so I brush her clit and I really start to move. Thrusting my hips, I fuck her harder, banging her into the mattress as she grips the sheets underneath her.*

*I can't hold on.*

*Watching her.*

*Her moans.*

*Her cries.*

*Her body.*

*Her pussy holding me tight.*

*I start to spurt. I throw my head back and call her name in a whisper as I come hard inside her and she shudders underneath me as I mold our bodies together.*

*I still and then collapse on top of her, panting.*

*She thumps my chest. "Thomas!"*

*"Fuck, sorry." I roll off, and reluctantly, out of her, and she sighs when I do.*

*Rolling onto my back, I lie there for a second.*

*"That was..."*

*I turn my head to look at her.*

*"Amazing," she says, a big grin plastered across her face.*

*I lean up onto one elbow and grin, kissing her. "Good. Because tonight isn't over."*

*Her eyes go round. "It isn't?"*

*I shake my head and pull the condom off, tying it in a knot as she stares at what I'm doing. Getting up, I walk to the bathroom, toss the condom in the trash, then grab some tissues to cover over just in case Lisa gets nosy when she empties it, and I return to bed with a damp washcloth.*

*She's fumbling around for her pjs.*

*"What are you doing?" I ask.*

*"Uh, finding my shit."*

*I shake my head, flopping down on the bed. "Oh no, you don't." I hand her the cloth. "Are you okay?"*

*She takes the cloth from me, but doesn't use it. "I'm... good, really."*



*“Then why do you look worried?”*

*“Are you serious? About...doing that again?”*

*“Yes. I want you on top.”*

*She stares at me as I glance down at her pussy. She covers it with her hands.*

*“Don’t hide,” I warn.*

*“But...this is so... Us being... naked and stuff.”*

*I reach down and kiss her, letting her know I want her again.*

*“You sore?” I ask again.*

*She nods. “A little.”*

*“But it was good?”*

*“Better than good.”*

*Smiling against her lips, I reach between her legs. She’s still so wet. I gently massage her pussy lips, and she groans into my mouth. We kiss for a long time. Our tongues entwine together as we get worked up all over again.*

*She grips my cock, and I swear to God, I’ll never get sick of her hot little hand fondling me.*

*“That’s it,” I encourage. “Show me what you want, Lu.”*

*She rolls me over so I’m on my back and she’s on top.*

*Jesus H. Christ. She’s so beautiful.*

*I cup her tits, watching her as she straddles over me and palms my cock and balls.*

*It’s hard again. She has no idea; I can go all fuckin’ night, especially for her.*

*“How many girls have you been with?” she asks, staring down at me.*

*I tug on her nipples, pulling them as she groans. I wish the lights were on so I could see her pinkening skin.*

*“Enough.”*

*“You’re good at this.”*

*I sit up and cup her face, my tongue in her mouth as we makeout. I’m leaking again. So fuckin’ bad. I’d love for her to take my cum down her throat, but I’m too excited about having her pussy.*

*I’ll keep the memory of her sucking me off in my spank bank for a long time to come.*

*I grunt. “Sit on my dick, Lu. Take it, baby.”*

*“Oh, T.” She lifts up as I lie back down, holding her hips as I lean over and grab another condom.*

*“You do it this time. Show me how you get my cock ready.”*

*She pants hard as she rips the foil with vigor, and I chuckle when she rolls it on my dick.*

*“Quick learner.”*

*She smiles down at me. “I guess I am an academic after all.”*

*I smirk.*

*She lines up my cock, and I stare at her in wonder as she sinks down on me.*

*Holy fuckin’ mother of God.*

*Watching her take my dick has me ready to spurt again, so much so, I close my eyes and think of something else so I don’t.*

*She bobs up and down, slowly, and when I open my eyes again, she’s caressing her tits and muttering how good it feels. Holy crap.*

*I tighten my grip on her hips as I guide her up and down, my dick throbbing at her tight walls.*

*Has she always been this sexy?*

*Everything about her turns me on, and not just because I took her virginity.*

*The fact we have to be quiet so our parents don’t hear turns me on even more.*

*We both know this is wrong, but neither of us care.*

*As long as I hear my name on her lips, I don't give a shit. Just being inside her like this is enough. I don't know how I'm going to let her go. I've barely gotten a taste.*

*"Oh," she moans. "Just there, oh."*

*I love how vocal she is. I'm not really verbose when it comes to sex. I grunt a lot. But I think Luna likes dirty talk.*

*"Look down at my dick takin' you," I mutter. "Makin' your pussy mine."*

*She bites down on her lip as she throws her head back and our hands join as I link our fingers. I want this to last longer than the first time, but I think I can be forgiven. The situation and the fact I'm the first were too much for me.*

*"Thomas," she moans. I love how she uses my name. I like how she tells me she likes it.*

*I reach around and grip her ass with one hand and give it a squeeze. I love her curves.*

*I love everything about her sexy body. How she could call herself fat or anything like that makes me want to flip her over and fuck her from behind, pulling her hair back as I make her tell me how beautiful she is.*

*And maybe I will.*

*I like how inexperienced she is, how I can teach her stuff, like how to suck me off properly.*

*Fuck. I've even started to thinking maybe we could do this, after tonight. Even though I know that probably can't happen.*

*Don't go there. If I go there, I'll stop right now and then tonight will be lost.*

*Just give me tonight.*

*The sound of her soft moans and the look on her face encourages me to drive up into her. Meeting her thrusts as her eyes open and I cup her face and bring her down to my lips. I need her lips on me.*

*We kiss and I love how she feels against me. I need all of her. I start to bounce her hard as she grips the bedhead and meets me thrust for thrust.*

*“Gonna come,” I growl.*

*My words set her off and she spirals as we fuck like rabbits, and I still, spilling once more as I grunt my release.*

*Holy shit.*

*She collapses on me, mewling into my shoulder as I stroke her hair.*

*“You did good, Lu,” I whisper in her ear as she buries her face. “So fuckin’ good.”*

*She holds on to me and I revel in this feeling.*

*Normally, when I fuck a girl, I don’t like to cuddle. I detest it, in fact, but with her, it’s different.*

*I want her to know that this meant something to me. That I’m glad I got to be the one. I won’t take it for granted.*

*I don’t know how long we lie there for, but when she eventually rolls off and I slide out of her, she sprawls out on my bed and sighs.*

*I chuckle. “I take it that I get a pass?”*

*She turns her head. “Uh, that’s a yes.”*

*I rest my hand on her thigh. “You good?”*

*“I’ve just been fucked, T. Twice. Gotta give me a minute.”*

*I laugh as I roll off the bed and discard the rubber just like I did the last one.*

*When I come back to bed, she’s still lying there.*

*“Do you need anything?” I ask. “Another washcloth.”*

*She sits up on her elbows. “That was kinda sweet of you.”*

*I give her a look. “Hey, I’m not a total asshole.”*

*She shakes her head. “I’m okay. I’ll shower before I go back to bed.”*

*I stare at her as she looks at me, wide-eyed. Guilt starts to slowly creep through my veins.*

*“I hope I didn’t hurt you.”*

*“You didn’t.”*

*“Are you sure you’re okay?”*

*She rolls her eyes. “I’m better than okay, T. That was amazing.”*

*I clear my throat, but before I can say what’s on my mind, she beats me to it.*

*“And don’t worry. I know that Mom and Terrance can’t know about this. I’m not a total idiot,” she says. “I’m not going to fall in love with you or anything.”*

*I quirk an eyebrow. I’m not sure if I like her saying that. Something hits me in the chest, and I wonder if it’s me catching feelings and not her.*

*I clear my throat. “Probably a good idea. But how can you resist?” I give her a wide smile and she laughs.*

*“In all seriousness, you really should smile more.”*

*I pull the comforter over her. “And you need to sleep.”*

*She falters. “I should... I should go back to my room.”*

*I shake my head. “Stay for a little bit.”*

*What the fuck am I saying?*

*A smile plays on her lips. “Are you worried I’ll think you’re a douchebag if you kick me out?”*

*I shake my head. “No.” Yes.*

*“Because you’re only a douchebag when you think you’re funny.”*

*I bump her with my hips as she yawns. “I’m funny all the time.”*

*“Not lately.”*

*“No?”*

*She shakes her head.*

*Pulling her into my arms, we spoon.*

*Fucking spoon.*

*I'm losing it, I swear to God.*

*This protective urge washes over me as I hold her.*

*She's so warm. So full of life.*

*She doesn't want anything from me, not like everyone else in my life. Everyone, even my teammates, all want a piece of me. Then there's my dad, who's always on my case 24/7.*

*Not Luna, though, she's different.*

*She likes me for me and, for some reason, that resonates deep inside me. Not that I'd ever admit it out loud, but it's there.*

*Within a few minutes, I'm listening to the sound of her soft breathing, and I know she's fallen asleep.*

*I lie there. Guilt washes over me with every breath I take.*

*Do I regret it? Hell no.*

*Should I have done it? Hell no.*

*But I'd be lying if I said I wouldn't do it again.*

*I just hope she meant what she said. I can't have her catching feelings, hell, I'm fighting my own right now.*

*It's not just the wash of protection that I've always had over her, but the fact that we shared this.*

*That at some point, she'll be in another man's bed. In another man's arms. And I'm going to have to sit back and take it.*

*I swallow hard.*

*Tonight, I tell myself. I'll give myself tonight, and that will be that.*



*Present day*

I growl down the phone.

“Two weeks? What the fuck?”

Jerry, the car rep I always go through for my own clients, sounds remorseful. “T, it’s a hundred and thirty grand. Since Covid, cars are in high demand. I’ll shop around, but I can’t guarantee I can get it in silver any quicker.”

I roll my eyes. “Find a way.”

“I’ll see what I can d—”

I don’t even wait for him to finish. He’s annoyed me enough.

It’s Luna’s birthday soon, and while she would never expect an extravagant gift like that, the Mercedes G-Wagon is sturdy and it’s kind of a girl car. I think.

I don’t want to buy her affections. I snort at the idea. Hell would freeze over before she ever let that happen. But she can’t continue to drive around in a piece of shit.

I had it towed back to Rock’s, but it’s not gonna be salvageable. For now, she can borrow my truck, or get a ride, not that anyone lives in her neighborhood.

Money is no object when it comes to her safety; she should know that by now. But she’ll continue to fight me at every turn because she never lets me explain.

A lot of shit went down with us, but I never lied to her. She took one little thing I said and twisted it, resulting in her leaving for two years without so much as a goodbye.

I still have some pretty hard fuckin’ feelings about that, even though she thinks I don’t have any.

But fuck her.

I shouldn’t do shit.

She should find her own vehicle... Even as I think it, I know that I’m not going to see her safety put at risk. Nothing has changed over the years where that’s concerned. In fact, I’m even more protective of her since she got back.

Working for the club is a bonus. It means I know where she is at all times.

As I sit at my desk, looking at the amount of paperwork stacking up that I need to get to Jas, I hear a rap at the door.

“Hey, Tag,” Summer says as I give her a chin lift.

“Hey, Tink.”

We named her Tink because she looks like Tinkerbell with her short haircut and gamine features.

“What’s happening?”

I grunt. “Same shit, different day.”

She takes a seat opposite and then waves a bag of donuts at me.

My eyes light up.

She’s the only one who gives a shit about my wellbeing, I swear to God.

“Are those the frosted ones?”

“Yes.”

“Good.” I take the bag and shove one into my mouth. “They don’t make these in a box?”

She rolls her eyes. “A simple thank you would be nice, too.”

“Appreciate it,” I garble as I shove another one in.

“I now know why you’re single,” she says, wrinkling her nose.

“You don’t have to sit there watchin’ me eat.”

“I came to chat.”

I sigh. “I don’t chat.”

“You do to me.” She smiles sweetly.

I’m reminded once again that I’ve no fuckin’ idea why I befriended her. It’s not like we talk. She lectures me and I grunt and walk away.



“The fuck is in this?” I say, devouring my third one.

“Sugar, mainly.”

I grunt again. “What do you want?”

“Can’t a girl come in to see her friend and not be accused of wanting something?”

I roll my eyes. Then a thought hits me. “Do you like G-Wagons?”

She frowns. “I don’t know cars very well, T.”

“It’s a Mercedes.” I pull up a picture on my phone and hand it to her.

“Sweet. You buying one?”

“Thinkin’ about it.”

“I don’t know, I always kinda saw you as a Hummer guy.”

I shake my head. “Happy with my truck.”

“So, it’s not for you?”

Great. Now she’s gonna pester me about this all morning.

“Said I was thinkin’ about it.”

“Wait.” She holds up a finger. “Didn’t Luna’s car break down last night?”

“Did it?”

She gives me a staredown. “You know it did. You’re the SAA, you know everything.”

“Clearly, I don’t know everything. If I’d known you’d be stoppin’ by to bust my chops, I would’ve stayed in bed.”

She sighs like I’m annoying. “Don’t start grumbling, or I won’t bring you food anymore.”

“You say that, but we both know you will. You can’t help it.” I’m right and she knows it.

“Your ol’ man know you bring me food?”

Another eye roll. “Yes. He says it makes you less grumpy.”

“If you wanna make me less grumpy, stop by Sweet Treats and grab some of those Red Velvet cupcakes that were at Caprice’s baby shower.”

She shakes her head. “That’s what you remember from your Prez’s baby’s christening?”

I shrug. “They were good cupcakes.”

“Anyway, getting back to the G-Wagon...”

“Let’s not talk about it.”

“I think it’s sweet of you and all, but it’s an expensive car... You know how Luna gets... with her pride and all.”

That’s true. She doesn’t like thinking that she’s a charity case. I’d never see her in that light, but that doesn’t mean she doesn’t.

“So, she can send it back to the fuckin’ car dealership if she wants to be an ungrateful bitch.”

Summer sighs loudly. “Tag. We talked about this.”

“Did we, Dr. Phil?”

“Yes. And the use of the term ‘bitches’ is not only derogatory to women of the club, but completely belittling.”

“Look like I care?”

“You should care, you might be a father one day. How would you like your daughter to be called a bitch just because she speaks her mind or is strong willed?”

I almost choke on my fourth donut. “Lucky for me I don’t have any kids then, isn’t it?”

“I said *one day*.”

“Not happenin’, Tink. Babies...kids...too much fuckin’ hard work.”

She blinks and then starts laughing. “You were so cute with Caprice at the christening. I know Luna had tears in her eyes watching you hold her.”

Wait...she did?

Harlem thrust the kid at me, claiming it was a chick magnet, and since all the chicks were across the room watching, I didn't think it could hurt. But then Stella took a photo and the baby started wriggling around and spitting and making noises. I don't do kids. Chick magnet or not. We just don't gel and that's fine with me.

"Well, I hope she got a good look because it won't be happenin' again. Could've dropped the kid on her head or some shit."

"You wouldn't."

"Not on purpose," I say. "Babies just drool and smell gross."

"So why did you agree to hold her?" she muses, knowing the truth.

"Not like I had a choice when Harlem dropped her on me."

"He was only trying to help."

"I don't need any help. Especially lookin' good in front of women. Don't need gimmicks to get me chicks."

"A baby isn't a gimmick, T." She sighs. "And anyway, I haven't seen you with anyone for a while now. Could that be because of a certain someone?"

I give her a pointed look. "Are you done yet?"

"Nope, not nearly."

"You know you're more annoyin' than Jas and Luna put together."

She grins. "I'll take that as a compliment."

"Did you actually come here for anythin' except to harass me?"

She gives me an innocent look, like I don't know she's meddling. "Yes, I came to bring you donuts. Next time, I'll think twice if you're going to be grumpy."

"Next time, bring those and the cupcakes I like."

“Is there a ‘please’ and ‘thank you’ to go with that?” She shakes her head as she stands.

“And here I thought Hawk was the only one who got down on his knees to beg like a pussy.”

It’s a well known fact around the clubhouse that the big guy got down on his knees to grovel before Jas would forgive him for being a dick.

“You’re a jerk,” she says over her shoulder.

“You keep comin’ back, though, so I can’t be that bad.”

“Who else would you talk to if not me?” she calls back. “Oh, and Casey’s party is at Solo. Just thought you’d like to know.”

Solo is the male strip joint the girls sometimes like to go to when they want to piss off their men. It’s not like we can talk. The club owns a strip joint called The Vault, and Cash has recently expressed expanding and giving women a similar style club since it’s so popular at Solo with Inked Men XL who were recently in town for three sold-out shows.

I’m thoroughly against the idea.

I frown. “Why would I give a shit?”

“Luna’s going.”

A snarl leaves my chest as she waves behind her.

“You’re welcome,” she sing-songs.

## LUNA

I STARE AT MY PHONE AND SHAKE MY HEAD.

What the fuck does he want?

Call me. Need to talk.

I haven't heard from my dad in months. And frankly, that's exactly how I like it.

Whenever my dad comes calling, I just want to shrivel up into a ball and stay there until it's all over. Ever since he lent me the money, I've felt like I'm indebted to him.

I gave Gary almost all the money.

Over the years, I've thought about why I didn't go to the police. Aside from the initial embarrassment, it's a felony to film people without their consent.

If he'd have pulled that stunt now, I wouldn't give a shit. But at the time, threatening to involve my friends and family... I can imagine my dad opening the email and being thoroughly disgusted with me. Even though none of it is my fault, he'd accuse me of being promiscuous. Never once has he even remotely acted like he cared. Throwing money at me was easy, probably because it was less of a headache for him to say yes than it was to say no. I've never been to his building again since that day. I've no idea if Brian still works there.

He's probably my father's right-hand man by now.

I sigh and send a text back. If I don't, he'll only try to call me if I don't respond.

Hi Dad. I'm at work but can call you later.

He doesn't reply.

I shoot Payden a message.

Dad called again.

She's the only one who knows about what happened with Gary, and while she was supportive, she encouraged me to be brave and speak up. I didn't. I was too messed up from Brian and Amy's affair to be in the right headspace to deal with it.

I didn't want the ridicule and judgment from my family, and ultimately my dad's rejection. Not that I haven't had that my whole life, but he still tolerates me because I'm his blood.

A few minutes later, I get a text back.

Oh no, what does he want?

IDK. But I can give you one clue. I wonder if Brian took the old man's job yet.

Worse. He's the COO, so one more leap and he'll be running the place.

I groan.

Why did you have to tell me that?

I'm sorry. I don't want you to get a shock if you run into him at your dad's office.

I won't be going to my dad's office.

He's such an asshole.

Payden has always been my biggest supporter where the douchebags in my life are concerned. She even knows about me and Tag. I had to have someone to vent to all those years ago. It was confusing as much as it was exciting.

Tell me about it.

I glance at my phone as another text from my dad pings back.

With a sigh, I read it and send Payden another one.

He just texted again and said to meet him tomorrow

Did he even ask, or did he summon you? Tell him you're busy washing your hair

I can't believe Brian is COO

I can. He's a snake in the grass

Ooh, I forgot. We're all going out to Solo this weekend. Casey's birthday and mine being the weekend after, we thought we'd do like a joint celebration

Solo? Count me in

I grin. I can always count on my best friend to have a good time.

Inked Men XL is back in town for one night only

Fantastic!!

Tell me about it. Manny will probably come

He's so fine

Eww

That's because he's like a brother to you...  
speaking of which, how is Tag?

Same as usual

When he quit football, he really did become a  
grumpy asshole

Oh, grumpy isn't even the word for it. I seriously  
think something inside him broke. He was never like  
this. I could talk to him, now he just grunts and  
snarls at me

He used to care about me.

Even after that night...that one magical night. He was attentive and gentle. The next day, we acted as if nothing happened. We had Cheerios at the fucking kitchen table while my mom blabbed on about the New Year's Eve party and how amazing the food was.

We had to sit there across from one another while I pretended that I hadn't sucked on my stepbrother's dick and rode him all night. It was probably the hardest thing I've had to do.

Lying to our parents wasn't right, but what else could we do? They could never find out.

After that, we went back to college and things cooled off.

I knew I was growing feelings for him, and now it was almost impossible for us to hang out. The one night we did, we made out and he ended up eating my pussy for dinner...

*"Oh, fuck, Lu, you taste so fuckin' sweet."*

*"Oh, God." The sensation was like nothing else.*



*“Say my name, Lu. Say it, baby.”*

*“Thomas.”*

*“Fuck, I’ve missed you and this sweet pussy.”*

Hearing that was like music to my ears. I craved him. All I seemed to do was think about him and that night he took my virginity.

He speared me with his tongue, and I came all over his face like a hot mess.

Then we fucked against his dorm door while he put his hand over my mouth because I was loud.

We both knew we were playing with fire. It’s why it had to stop...

I sigh as another text snaps me out of my reverie. It’s not from Payden or my dad.

Wow. I’m on fire today.

It’s Tag.

I shake my head as I read his message. What in the ever-living fuck?

Solo burned down

I stare at his text.

What?

You heard me

I frown, then I roll my eyes. Oh, so he’s heard about the weekend.

What a fucking asshole.

Do you ever get bored of being such a dick?

Do you ever come up for air?

What the hell is that supposed to mean?

The next time I want your advice, I'll ask for it

Fine. You won't get your birthday present

I blink.

There must be a full moon or something. Tag has never, ever bought me a birthday present.

The only gift he ever bought me was that black dress I wore to the New Year's Eve party that night.

Are you day drinking again?

Out of all the brothers, Tag is the most responsible when it comes to alcohol. Surprisingly, he's never been a big drinker. Maybe it's because he's always got to be on his game if some bad shit goes down. Can't exactly fault him for that.

Like last night when he picked me up.

Completely sober.

Working security that night

Oh no, he is fucking not.

I take a few deep breaths. I've been doing these breathing exercises lately where I try not to fly off the handle. I know I have a temper and men like Tag know how to push my buttons. I'm trying to learn techniques to refrain from biting someone's head off and spewing verbal diarrhea at them even if they deserve it.

You are not

Yup

But I know how to get right under Thomas's skin. I smile as I type.

Fine. I'll make sure I have my garter and stockings on. Oh and you owe me a new skirt

He doesn't reply for a long time, and I switch back to text Payden to tell her Tag's messaging me.

**Payden**



**Me to Payden**

He's fucked in the head

**Tag**

Don't owe you shit, woman

Woman? I can just see you pounding your chest when you say that

You saw how well Hawk took the news about Jas at Solo, don't fuckin' test me

I stare at his words and backspace over the smart-assed reply I was about to send.

I read it over and over.

Test him?

Test him?

What in the monkey fuck is he talking about?

Does he think because I'm back now that I'm under his rule or something? I may be part of the MC because of work and the friends I've made there, but he has no right to think he has some ownership over me.

*He didn't want you, I remind myself. So let's not get ahead of ourselves.*

I didn't realize you cared about what I'm doing or who I'm with

I throw that last part out of sheer frustration.

Who are you with?

My friends

That all?

Are you asking me if I'm screwing anyone?

Oh, I just love playing with him. He's so easy to wind up; I just have no idea why he's being this way when all we ever do is fight. That is largely because I won't speak to him after he left me hanging and the obvious fact that he's an asshole.

Don't care what you do

Liar

Who's the liar?

So I'll see you Saturday night?

I'd better not

I don't know what the fuck his problem is or where he gets off trying to tell me what to do. I'm fucking over him, to be honest.

If he cares so much, why doesn't he just do something about it?

I shake my head, annoyed as Rock walks in and I drop my phone.

He's a cool boss, but I still don't want it to seem like I'm not working hard.

"Hey, Rock," I say.

He gives me a chin lift. "You good?"

I nod. "Hey, I've been thinking...you know how much busier we're getting and we're now offering haul trailers for hire? Cash mentioned that we may look at putting another person on to help."

"Probably a good idea," he replies, looking around the messy office.

I swallow hard. I don't want to sound ungrateful, but I know that I'm quickly outgrowing parts of this job. I need something more mind stimulating.

"If someone can help with the day-to-day office duties, it means I can get the financial stuff better organized, take over all the invoices, and work more closely with Jas at the club."

He gives me a look. "You're not happy here?"

I frown. "I'm very happy here, but I'm swamped, Rock." I wave my arm around the desk.

"I've no issue with hiring someone. You and Jas work it out between yourselves. I can put out a job posting. Long as you're not leavin' for good."

I give him a genuine smile. I like Rock. He's kind, even though he is dark and mysterious. He's not a total asshole like some of the brothers, namely one, nor does he treat me like I'm stupid. Which is refreshing.

"I'm not leaving for good, Rock. I promise. You've been good to me, and I appreciate that you let me get on with things without being overbearing or undermining."

He gives me a chin lift. "Glad to hear it. Amazin' what you can learn in the joint."

“Right?” I don’t really know what to say. I don’t know a lot about why Rock was locked up for a year, but it was a minor charge, nothing bad like killing someone. He may look exactly like Jett, but he’s harder somehow.

“Gave me a reason to get on the straight and narrow. Don’t need to feel like a bird in a cage, so if you wanna fly, you can. Just come back, got me?”

I give him a grateful smile. “Thanks, Rock.”

He leans on the doorframe. “You got any cute friends?”

I laugh. “What’s wrong with me?”

I’m kidding, of course. Rock is gorgeous, just like Jett, but I’m not attracted to him in that way.

“You’re Tag’s girl.”

I open my mouth in shock, but no words come out. I shake my head and take a breath.

Before I can say anything, he butts in. “Or...not.”

“Not,” I say. “I’m not Tag’s anything. He’s an asshole, if you must know.”

“What did he do now?”

“Trying to rule my life, for one. It’s mine and Casey’s birthday combined, and we’re going to Solo to watch Inked Men XL, and that giant pain in my ass thinks he can tell me I can’t go.”

“He’s got some nerve, huh?”

I give him a glare. “Not you too.”

He waves his hands in the air. “I’m just sayin’. If a chick I was hung up on was gonna have other naked dudes rub themselves all over her, I’d have somethin’ to say too.”

I roll my eyes. “He’s not hung up on me. The trouble is, you all stick up for one another, no matter what, and here I was thinking you were on my side.”

“I am on your side, sugar. You don’t wanna waken the beast.”

“Funny, that’s what we used to call Jett before he settled down.”

“Pussy....” He coughs. “I mean...women, they make men weak. Which is why I’m not gettin’ tied down.”

I pout. “And I had such high hopes for us.”

“Sorry. Only so much of me to go around.”

“And to answer your question, I do have a cute friend, but she’s off limits.”

He smirks. “You know that only makes her more attractive to me?”

“Of course. We all want what we can’t have, right?” The second the words are out, I regret being too frank with Rock. He doesn’t need to know shit like that. And I didn’t mean it how it sounded.

He gives me a wink. “Got that right.”

I shake my head as he sidles off to his office.

I’m excited about the prospect of working with Jas and getting out of the office and more involved in the finance side of the businesses. I feel like that’s my true calling.

And taking note of what Manny and Jas told me recently about doing what makes me happy, and not what makes other people happy, I know I’m making the right decision.

I haven’t been working here that long, so I do feel bad, as if I’m jumping ship on Rock, but I know I’ll be so much more productive if my mind is stimulated.

It’s important to me.

I didn’t move back here so I could slip back into my old ways.

I came back to start fresh and to put the past behind me.

Somehow, I found my way back to the clubhouse, but it was like a second home to me.

That doesn’t mean history has to repeat itself.

I’m through with Tag. He can suck it, for all I care.

If he thinks he can try to boss me around like he has some biker ownership over me because of our history, he can think again.

It isn't just my pride talking. Taking off was the best thing I could've done for myself.

I came back with a new sense of vigor, a confidence I haven't had in years, and I'm not going to let Thomas take that away from me.

He had no fucking right to say shit. If it's not how short my skirt is, it's where I'm going with my friends, or am I fucking Rock because we get along. Tag has changed.

He's always been possessive over me, but he also threw me away at the same time. He can't have it both ways. He can't have his cake and eat it too. That isn't fair, and I'd only be cheating myself if I let him control my life.

I'd like to think his protective instincts, which surpass being controlling, are because he's looking out for me, as all stepbrothers should. But I know that's not the case.

I'm not going to comply or do what he says because he's the club's Sergeant at Arms and most people fear him. I'm not like most people. I'm also not scared of him. Even if he is twice my size, Tag would never hurt me. But he's got a nerve if he thinks this shit is gonna fly.

I'm not playing these games with him.

Ever since I got back, he's been not-so subtly poking his nose in my business.

Thinking that it's okay to be telling everyone that I belong to him... Even if he didn't say that directly, it's implied. Well, fuck him. I handed myself to him on a platter and he refused it.

He threw me away like I meant nothing to him. He said it was for my own good, but he just wanted an out.

Like most men.

Like all men.

That's all I've ever been to any of them.



Somebody to use. Somebody to fuck and then discard when they're done. Pussy and a warm bed to come home to.

I couldn't even keep my ex away from my best friend! Well, fuck that.

Maybe I'm just not cut out for relationships? Maybe that's it.

Would make a lot of sense since I don't give a flying fuck anymore about pleasing a man.

Before that's all I wanted.

To be loved. To be accepted. To be someone's first choice. But I've never had that.

Every man I've ever been with, and you can count them on one hand, has been a fucking mistake.

They all wanted something from me. They never even gave us a chance.

Even my own father is dick of the year.

I'm done with complying and bending to any man's rules. Best of all, Tag's.

I can have a life outside the MC. I can see whoever I want. I can date whoever I want, not that I want to do that because I'm having some time out from all that shit.

I hope Tag's happy because he contributed to this.

I'm responsible for my own actions and I own that. I didn't do everything right, but I'd never cheat on someone like Brian did to me. Or threaten me with blackmail like Gary. And Tag?

Tag took a piece of my heart and stomped all over it, mercilessly. I will never be free of him because of our parents. I'll never fully escape him.

And for the first time in a few months, I question if I did the right thing moving back here.

**TAG**

THE CLUB IS RAGING, AND SO IS MY TEMPER.

I've stayed away. All fuckin' week. Hell, for two long fuckin' years she had me on a goddamn short leash worrying about her. Now she thinks she can just come back into town as if nothing happened and flaunt shit in my face. Not today. Not any day.

My obsession with my stepsister hasn't wavered over the years. In fact, seeing her again every fuckin' other day only reminds me of every single part of her that I'll never have.

We've both changed from a decade ago. Hell, I don't even recognize the jock I used to be. Funny how things change. Not always for the better, but most of that was out of my hands.

I loved football. I loved being the quarterback. A Steeler. I had it all.

Then lost it all in one play.

Regret and remorse flood through me, like always.

I've done well, I don't deny that, but the fuckin' thing is, I don't give a shit about money.

It's the memory that I can't shake.

The disappointment of my dad.

How much we both wanted it.

How little I achieved in 5 years. One Super Bowl wasn't enough. I wanted more, so much more.

I had a fuckin' 5-year plan, and then I had to go and change those plans.

I nod to Zeke on the door. We're buddies and he's at the gym sometimes.

The club is thinking of acquiring Solo, since it's along the strip of clubs where The Vault is. So I came on the pretense of checking it out.

It fuckin' pains me in the chest to have to even be here.

I should've brought Hawk along with me since he's the one used to dragging his ol' lady out of places.

Tonight I want to observe. I want to watch her. If another man puts his hands on her, then I'll deal with that if and when I have to.

She has to know that, as much as I deny it, she's all I can think about day and night. And when Harlem reminded me that she's free to do whatever the fuck she pleases, and it wouldn't be long before she got snagged, it hit home.

I need to wipe the visions of her from my memory, but instead, here I fuckin' am, checking her out at a ladies only club like some stalker. Like I give a fuck.

She isn't mine and she never will be.

What we had is gone, so why do I have to keep fuckin' reminding myself of that?

Maybe Luna was right all those years ago about my thick skull.

I don't want to be tied down, least of all to Luna. I've told myself for years that having an ol' lady is just a drag and nothing good can come of it. Hell, I've been the club's biggest advocate for staying single and fuckin' anything that moved. But all of that gets old.

There are chicks everywhere, and since I'd left my cut off and wore a plain vest instead, I was kinda incognito. *Kinda*. It's not like chicks didn't notice me; I'm big and hard to miss.

I'd purposely dressed in black, including the damn pants, so I'd blend in like one of the security. Zeke told me to look around, see how business was so I could report back to Prez.

If only my fuckin' Prez knew what I was up to.

A moment later, I hear, "So, didn't think you'd be at a place like this," Manny says, leaning on the bar next to me.

I turn to look at him. "Of course you'd be here," I mutter.

He laughed. "Why wouldn't I be? Someone has to keep the girls under control. May as well be me."

That was true, but I still didn't know if Manny was quite the person to do it. Not like he was a brother who would knock someone the fuck out, then again, he is quite solidly built.

"Here on business," I say.

"Uh huh."

"Don't give me that fuckin' attitude, it's true."

"Like Luna being here tonight has nothing to do with it?"

"Fuck off."

A few moments later, I hear, "Not you too, bro?"

Goddamn Harlem.

I turn to my left and see him, Nevada, Jett, and fuckin' Rock standing there.

"What the fuck?" I bark, annoyed.

"Came to check out the action," Nevada says with a grin. "Oh, and Harlem wanted to check on his woman because he's pussy-whipped."

"Fuck you," Harlem says, putting him into a headlock he can't get out of.

"Speakin' of which, what are *you* doin' here?" Jett asks accusingly.

"Nothin'. Just checkin' shit out for the merger."

"Didn't realize we could get intel at a *chicks only* strip club at this time of night," Nevada goes on. He seriously never

knows when to quit, which is why he's the one who's always getting threatened. "Must be in the wrong job."

Nobody says Luna's name, because they know if they do, I'll fuckin' kill them. I don't joke around where she's concerned.

"While we're all here," Harlem goes on, giving the bartender a nod. "Bout time we had a catchup about what the fuck is goin' on with the Devils Ink and where the fuck they're hidin'. Sick of sittin' around waitin' for them to make their next move."

"Save that shit for church," I mutter, though technically I agree with him.

"Shit can't be good," Manny says, ignoring me. He takes a seat on the stool next to me. "Girls are still pretty shaken up about it."

There is no point telling him it's club business, because he knows more about the club's dealings before we do. That's what comes with being our cook and the eyes and ears of the clubhouse. The trouble with him hearing too much is that he's tight with all the girls. Luna included. They all love him.

"Kid got kidnapped," I growl. "Course they're gonna be shaken up. It's not safe until every last one of 'em is buried and in the ground."

"How's Indigo doin'?" Rock gives Harlem a chin lift.

He shrugs. "She's okay. I mean, things have changed. She doesn't do shit without triple checkin'. Always lookin' over her shoulder and shit like that. Never had to do that before, and it kills me that she feels unsafe. On the rare occasion I'm not there, got prospects on the lookout. Now that Brew and Haze are back, they can help out."

Brew and Haze are two scary motherfuckers who come and go from the club from time to time, but they always come back. Kinda like nomads. They have a family business in the busy hub of downtown and run a bar and grill, but they've also been doing shifts at The Vault.

Usually, their older brother, Hustle, is running the bar, but they have a shitload of cousins and family. Hustle got his name because he's a card shark and a fuckin' good poker player. He's never been part of the MC, but he'd make a good brother.

"Can't be easy bein' Maddog's daughter," Nevada says, sobering. "Shit's gotta stick."

Maddog was Indigo's pop who used to run a notorious club before our time called the Blazing Fury MC. Lot of shit went down with that club, including Maddog getting murdered when she was only fifteen.

"Some shit never does leave," I say. "Should be thankful you got decent parents, pretty boy. We could all learn somethin' from the cards that were dealt to Indigo and Jonah. Lookin' over your shoulder your whole life is no way to live."

I don't stick up for people much, but their story is fucked up and I don't like when kids are involved in fucked-up shit, like Indigo's kid Cami being kidnapped. I still have goddamn nightmares about finding that backpack and not knowing if she was dead or alive.

You mess with kids, I've got a problem with it.

We as a club set up BADVA a few years back. It stands for Bikers Against Domestic Violence for women and children. It's a project very close to Jett's and Cash's hearts. I don't know much about Jett and Rock's upbringing, but from the rumors I've heard, it ain't good.

Summer is the same. She hasn't come outright and told me, but I know from her club back in Arizona that she and her older brother, Gunner, had an abusive upbringing, and that just boils my blood.

I've never wanted my own children. Not now, anyway. Maybe when I was younger. But when I see all the fucked-up shit on the news, I don't know why you'd want to bring a child into this world. All I would do is worry about their safety.

Women and children are a target. Within an MC, even a legit one like our club, they are a weakness and can be used

against you. I would never put someone in that position.

I'm no fuckin' saint, but I've got principals.

Sensing my inner thoughts, Harlem gives me a squeeze on the shoulder. "It's under control."

"Is it?" I give him a look.

"Well, it's been fun, y'all," Manny says, giving us a salute. "But I'd better get back with the drinks, or the girls will come looking for me."

"Don't tell anyone we're here." I shove a finger at him.

He rolls his eyes. "Okay, big guy, but it's not like y'all don't stick out like a sore thumb."

I glare after him as he takes off. He does have a point.

"Time for everyone to fuck off," I say in no uncertain terms as I turn to the others. "Got shit to do and you're holdin' me up."

"Gonna head out to The Vault anyway," Jett says. "Busy night and only got Brew and Riot on the door."

Rock gives me a chin lift. "Need me to keep you company?"

I give him a look. "Think I've got it."

"I dunno, Luna can be a handful."

I narrow my eyes. "In what way?"

"In every way, bro. But that's not really for me to say."

"Don't worry about him," Nevada pipes up. "He's just pissed that he doesn't get to watch the show."

"Fuck you," Rock throws back. "Gonna watch the show over at The Vault."

I keep staring at Rock, trying to work out if something is going on with him and Luna.

I know I can't keep doing this to myself.

Harlem's words whisper to me every time I fuckin' think about her and someone else. It's inevitable, but I'll be damned

if it's gonna be with another brother. Not on my watch.

I can't sit back and watch that shit fly. I'd kill a man.

Plus, now I've ordered and paid for Luna's new car, I'm realizing that it was probably a mistake. I'm gonna have to broach it from a different angle so she'll take the damn thing.

It annoys the fuck out of me that her own father doesn't help her more. He's a multi-millionaire. She's heiress to a fuckin' fortune at Shields Insurance, but I'll guess that he doesn't give her shit.

If he did, I wouldn't be buying houses for her and pretending she can afford it on her meager wages. Goddamn fuckin' asshole.

The difference between me and her old man is that I actually care. I may have a funny way of showing it, but at least I'm here. Unlike him.

I know how much it pains Luna that her dad isn't in her life and how much she wants to try to have a relationship with him, but what he did to her mom weighs heavily on her mind. Not that Lisa has ever kept Luna away from her pops. On the contrary. She's the most selfless woman I know. She'd never want that.

"Knock yourself out," I say to Rock.

He gives me a smirk, realizing that he's getting under my skin.

I've a goddamn mind to take him the fuck outside and have it out if he thinks he knows something about Luna that I don't. He doesn't know shit.

When I glance at Harlem, he has a pointed look on his face. He's fully aware. He's the one true best friend I have, and I can't hide much from him.

He's probably gonna tell me that I need to pull my finger out of my ass. Either walk away fully from Luna and let her live her life, or do something about it.

I'm still undecided which, but staying away from her fully is impossible when we're technically family.



They all turn to leave, and I breathe a sigh of relief. I don't need any of them hanging around, whether they really were on a mission or not. I also know there are two prospects outside; Rodeo and Pipes, two of the more responsible of the crew who will make sure the girls and Manny don't run into issues when they leave.

It's a telling factor that I've not been interested in or fucked any sweet butts for a little while. Tonight, I might change all that. Fuck Luna out of my system once and for all. Even if my brain reminds me that I've been trying to do that for the better part of a decade and it hasn't worked.

The music's getting louder and the show in the next room, which was portioned off from the main bar, is about to start.

It makes my blood boil even more thinking about another man near Luna. Not that I care to think about it. She's been with other men besides me. Hell, she's a walking disaster area where men are concerned. That part I get.

Even if I had been fucking my palm for the last few weeks, so the fuck what. A man needs a break from pussy once in a while.

Maybe I'll stop by the Vault later myself and see if any of the strippers catch my fancy. Not that Cash likes us doing that, but it doesn't stop the brothers from time to time.

The one thing I rely on is my fuckin' memories. And I have a lot of Luna.

I just haven't been able to shake her from my goddamn brain.

Maybe some new pussy is all I need? Since Luna's clearly doing her thing, I should be able to do mine without acting like my dicks in a damn sling.

There were always plenty of women at church who wanted it. Didn't really matter if we stopped at The Vault or not. Fresh pussy came and went; that was the nature of the MC.

We also didn't fuck any of the bar staff, Luna included when she used to work there. Amber came and went too, and

Brandy, who was always trying to sleep with Cash but had to be told by Deanna to back the fuck off.

Goddamn bitches.

Claiming their men is something an ol' lady will do to make a bitch back off. But sometimes that didn't always work and then fights broke out. Usually, it was between two chicks fighting over Nevada or his pretty boy counterpart Riot. Shit like that happened all the time.

I didn't want to get to know any chick real well. I've always been the type of man to just have casual sex with no strings. If a chick got too close, I'd cut 'em loose. That's how I'm made, it's how I roll. I just can't help but think that the shit does get old. Especially when I think about how it used to be with Luna and how when she left school and moved here with our parents, everything changed for us.

Nothing would ever be the same, not that it could go on the way it did.

Having quick fucks in our dorm rooms wasn't what she deserved. I knew that then and I know it now.

I shake my head.

This shit has to stop.

I glance around the bar and notice a couple of chicks eyeing me up at the end of the bar.

*Fuck.*

One of them is my type.

Curvy. Thick. Long, dark hair, brown eyes. Huge tits.

She would do.

I give her a chin lift, not knowing what the fuck I'm doing. Do I really want this?

It'd be so fuckin' easy to just go bang another chick while thinking about the one I really want, but at least my palm and I could finally be rid of one another for a night.

I take a breath and down the rest of my drink as she approaches.

She eyes me up and I stare at her. “Hi, big guy,” she purrs.

Up close, she’s not as pretty, but it’s not as if it’s her head I’ll be looking at.

Her tits though... fuck yeah.

“I saw you staring at me from across the bar,” she goes on.

*I was thinking about ways to get the fact that I wanna screw my stepsister off my brain...*

“... You wanna buy me a drink?” She runs a hand up my bicep, and I refrain from grimacing.

I didn’t give her fuckin’ permission to touch me.

“Just wanna fuck,” I say, steeling my jaw.

There is nothing romantic in what I’m about to do and she needs to know that. If she’s not up for it, then I’ll find someone who is.

Her lips part and she’s either gonna slap me—which any good woman should—or she’s gonna take me up on the offer.

Her gaze slides down my body and lands on my crotch. “Subtle. You’re not even gonna buy me a drink first?”

I grunt. “Nope. I can give you dick, that’s it.”

I think she wants to be outraged, but her interest in me is outweighing her disgust.

Good. I don’t need no bitch catching any feelings about what this really is.

“Here?”

“Yup.”

Her eyes go wide. “I’m not usually that kinda girl...”

I glance down at her tits and her top leaves little to the imagination. I don’t know if they’re real or not and I don’t care. But I have a wood in my jeans and I need that taken care of.

“Fine with me. Like I said, we can fuck, and I’ll make it good for you, or you can go back on over to your friend and keep sippin’ on pink cocktails.”

Her eyes narrow. “I don’t even know you.”

“I fuck hard. That’s all you need to know.”

She glances down at my dick again.

She’s here to pick up or she wouldn’t still be standing here. I’d be wearing that goddamn drink, that’s for sure. “Jesus, you’re feisty. I like that.”

I tug on her wrist, and she yelps as I drag her toward the restroom.

I don’t give a shit that other people may be around. That doesn’t interest me.

I just need to get off and get Luna out of my mind.

If I tell myself that’s all this is, a mindless fuck and that Luna means nothing to me, then maybe I’ll start to believe it as well.

## LUNA

I HAVEN'T SEEN TAG SINCE THE NIGHT HE DROPPED ME AT home, but he's all I've been thinking about. Even tonight, when I should be having a good time with my friends, I'm here thinking about him and what I should've said to make him stay. Not that he would.

Tag won't be forced into doing anything he doesn't want to; that's how he is and will always be. I need to accept that. I guess never having found what we had all those years ago tends to stick with me, making me powerless to not compare other people to him. To Thomas.

The man I used to know.

This man? I don't know him.

He's rough. He's mean. And he can be brash and impatient.

I'm not saying Thomas was a saint, but he always listened to me. He cared about what I thought. Tag couldn't give a shit. All he wants from a woman is one thing, and he doesn't even want that from me. I'm nothing to him. Not even a casual thing, not that I'd want to be that. I don't share and I don't do sloppy seconds. The idea makes me nauseous.

Still, I have to put on a brave face for my friends because it is supposed to be a birthday party after all.

Casey can't stop jabbering about how she works nonstop and can't find a nice guy.

So I volunteer to play matchmaker. “What about Rock?” I suggest we sit on the lounge before the show starts. “He’s a good guy and he’s smoking hot.”

She gives me a look. “You two have never...”

“Nope, not even close. It’s not like that. I mean, I know he’s now part of the Rebels, but he’s not knee deep in pussy like most of the single guys are,” I add.

She screws up her nose. I laugh. She’s a lot like Crystal, who sits on the other side of me.

Both are small little things, but Casey has a big personality, and she likes to tell it like it is, which I dig.

“Is that supposed to be a plus?”

I laugh. “In this club? Yes. And I can’t hook you up with anyone else because, clearly, I have no life and I don’t know anyone else outside the clubhouse. That’s how sad my life is.”

She pouts. “I totally get it. I work all the fucking time and I never catch a break. There are no cute EMTs where I work. They’re all old or middle-aged women. Where are all the cute guys that you see on all the TV shows? I’m so done with dating apps. All the guys want to do is hook up.”

“Ugh, tell me about it,” I say. “I gave up on those a while back.”

I think about Gary and want to shudder. Mistake number one was using a dating app.

I should’ve known better.

You hear about all these so-called people who went on a random dating app and found the love of their life, but I’ve never met anyone in real life that had a good experience.

“Why are good men so hard to find?” she goes on.

I shrug. “Take Rock, for example. He’s a good guy. Trust me, all the girls at the clubhouse want to ride his dick, not that I’m sure he minds that part, but in the real world nobody gave him a chance. He set up the trucking business because Jett helped him. Couldn’t even get a job as a bartender because of

his record.” I feel for my boss. He really has had a shitty time. His jail time was only for a few months because of some petty shit, but I guess you either sort your shit out or you don’t.

“Awesome, so you’re trying to set me up with an ex-con?”

I point at her. “See! That’s exactly my point! The guy can’t get a break because he fucked up once, and now he has to live with it.”

“Don’t forget that he’s successfully expanded the business he started from the ground up,” Crystal singsongs next to me.

Casey rolls her eyes. “Bragging just because you’re happily married?” she groans. “Some of us are just unlucky in love.”

I hold my cocktail out to clink her glass with mine. “Put it here, sister.”

“Even if I did want to settle down,” Casey goes on after a sip, “the men in this town are jerks. I once had a guy take me out for coffee and told me to go easy on the chocolate croissants as they’re loaded with calories.”

My eyes go wide. “No way.”

“Yes way! He was a fitness instructor,” she tells us. “Could work his dick, but that was about all. We couldn’t have one meaningful conversation or talk about anything other than lifting. It drove me nuts.”

“Good dick only lasts so long,” Crystal says. “If you want to settle down one day, then you need to take nothing less than you deserve.”

“You keep telling me that,” she sighs. “But I keep kissing toads.”

She nods. “I get it, but finding Ryder wasn’t easy. It was long and hard. Even now, we have to fight for it. If you let it, other things get in the way and life passes you by. Then all of a sudden, you’re not doing date night anymore and your kid takes up all your time, not that I’m complaining,” Crystal says. “We love our little man, but it’s hard work.”

“Which is why it’s so much better to stay single,” I say with a grin. “No complications. No mess. He goes home and you don’t have to worry about cooking for him or picking up his shit.”

“But then you don’t have a man in the house,” Crystal says. “To feel safe. To take charge. To be the protector.”

I swallow hard at her words.

*The protector.*

Yes. I do miss that.

I miss having a man in the house. Tag annoys me, and his dad, who isn’t the cuddliest of creatures, they’re both alpha males, and me and my mom always felt safe having them in the house. There is something about a man’s presence in the home that I will always crave. Maybe it stems from my own childhood after my father left, I’m not sure. But there was always something missing until my mom married Terrance.

“You’ve got me there,” I say.

“Or to see the look on his face when you give him a child,” she goes on.

I give her a look. “We don’t need your happily ever after ruining it for the rest of us,” I say, half-joking.

“I’ll drink to that,” Casey says as we clink our glasses again.

Manny went to get more drinks and Deanna, Summer, Jas and Payden are somewhere between ordering our food and on the dance floor.

I idly wonder what Tag really thinks about me being here or if he even gives a shit. Summer told me she let him know about tonight, and his nostrils flared when she did.

She’s not dumb; she knows there is something between us and a reason why we can’t.

It’s not just the idea that the two of us enjoy bickering or playing hard to get.



I've no idea how our parents would react if they found out. I think for the most part they'd be horrified, as well as most of the clubhouse. I wouldn't want to be ridiculed or have Tag be a laughingstock. As much as he is respected in the clubhouse, there is still that element of respect within the ranks, and I know that Tag wants to keep his reputation intact.

Something that just makes me want to eye roll even more.

I still don't know who he thinks he is trying to tell me what to do. Goddamn beast of an asshole.

Yet, as much as I continue to deny it, what I can't deny is how I felt on the back of his bike.

Man, it felt good.

Not just the rush of adrenaline and feeling the straight pipes rumble beneath me, but everything. Him. Being wrapped around his body. His strength. His scent. Everything about him sings to me even when I know it shouldn't.

"Don't look now," Manny says in my ear when he comes back with the drinks. "But lover boy is here."

My eyes go round. "What?" I mouth, annoyed and surprised at the same time as I look around, trying to spot him.

"Tag's in the bar area. Don't worry, he can't see you from here. He also told me not to say anything, but come on, like I'm gonna keep my trap shut."

"Why is he here?"

He gives me a pointed look, and I shake my head.

"No," I say. "He's not here for me."

"He had some bullshit story about checking shit out for the merger. If the Rebels decide to buy in, then they'll own this joint."

I roll my eyes. "There goes all our fun."

"Didn't seem too thrilled you were here, baby cakes. Safe to say the big guy has a thing for you in a major way."

Hearing Manny say it thrills me, even if I know that Tag would never have given off those signals. I mean, he came to collect me off the side of the road because he's obligated. Not because he wanted to.

Now he's here snooping on me? Jerk.

"Guess what? I don't give a shit what he's thrilled about. He can go to hell, for all I care."

Manny chuckles as I glare at him and add, "What's so funny?"

"You two."

"There is no *you two*."

"No, but there could be if the two of you weren't so pigheaded."

"You don't understand," I whisper. "It's complicated with us."

"I get that, but sometimes we overcomplicate things when we really don't need to."

I take a sip of my drink. "Trust me. It's not worth the headache."

"You could actually say that with some conviction," he muses. "And make it sound at least half believable."

I sigh. Manny can read me well, just like Payden can.

As I think it, the girls arrive back and Payden slides into the booth next to me.

"Why do you look like you just sucked on a lemon?" she queries.

I roll my eyes and then whisper, "Tag is here."

Her eyes go round. "Holy shit."

"I know."

"Wait, he's here to try to find you and drag your ass out of here? Naww, that's so sweet."

I shake my head. "Not when you hate the guy."

She almost chokes on her drink. “You don’t hate him, Lu.”

“Fine. I *intensely* dislike him. Is that better?”

She gives Manny a look and they laugh together. Of course, Payden loved Manny the second they met. Payden is easy to get along with. Her short, bob-style caramel hair and hazel eyes make her look much younger than she is. She’s also tall, slender, and turns heads wherever she goes. She joked that she could make more money doing Only Fans than being an actual lawyer and I’m pretty sure she’s not far off.

“You need to hit it one more time, get him out of your system,” she says. “Speaking of which... Just ran into your boss. You didn’t tell me he was smoking fucking hot!”

My eyes bug out. “Rock’s here too?”

She wiggles her eyebrows. “I might make an excuse to come and visit you at the office a little more.”

“Get in line. I was just trying to sell him to Casey,” I say with a smirk.

“He was just leaving,” Manny says. “They all were, except Tag.”

“You mean he’s still here?”

“Hey, can we get back to talking about your stinkin’ hot boss, please?” Payden whines. “I’ve clearly not taken enough time to make sure your workplace is safe and secure.”

“Are you gonna use your hot lawyer voice?” I tease with a smirk. “You know that will reel him in faster than any pencil skirt.”

“Nope.” She shakes her head. “But I might throw him a fuck if he’s up for it.”

Manny slaps a hand over his mouth. “You two are staying away from any more mojitos,” he says, trying to swipe Payden’s glass from her hand.

She swiftly knocks the rest of it down and gives him a taunting smile.

“Payden, I don’t want to think about you and my boss going at it.” I screw my nose up. “Even though you’d make a cute couple.”

“I don’t know if you’d penetrate that forcefield he puts up,” Manny chimes in. “But you’d have a fun time trying.”

“I’d let him penetrate my force field any day of the week,” Payden says with a sly grin as I try not to chuckle. She always makes me laugh.

“You’re a bad influence,” I tell her.

She grins. “And I’m just getting warmed up where cocktails are concerned.”

“Don’t tell me I’ll have to haul you out of here too?” he groans. “I already promised Tag I’d look out for all of you. Even though there are two prospects outside to make sure we all get home safe.”

“Aww,” Payden says with a cute pout. “The MC aren’t just assholes after all.”

“Don’t be fooled,” I retort. “There’s one exemplary specimen.”

“Now, now, if Tag didn’t care, he wouldn’t be staking the place out. I don’t think Hawk is the only one who is willing to carry his woman out of here over his shoulder,” Manny snickers.

“I’ve told you a million times, I’m *not* his woman. He can fuck whoever he wants,” I counter. “I don’t know why he’s here, except to annoy me and try to control my life.”

Damn asshole.

“Think of it like this, it could be a good thing...” Payden whispers.

I give her a look. “How do you figure?”

She bats her eyelashes. “Well, if he’s getting jealous of strippers being around you, it means he doesn’t want anyone touching you, which means he’s still interested...”

“I don’t care!” I all but yell.

“Keep your panties on,” Manny says. “I don’t think they heard you in Arizona.”

“I’m just saying,” I say, lowering my voice. “He rejected me more than once; I think I’m done with the humiliation.”

They both give me a look and I shake it off.

“Babe...” Payden begins.

I take a long swig of my drink. “Need to powder my nose.”

She pouts. “Want me to come?”

I shake my head. “I’m fine.” I know I’m touchy, but I can’t help it.

Just knowing he’s here somewhere, spying on me, kinda boils my blood but also heats my insides at the same time.

I don’t know who he thinks he is.

I slide out of the booth and grab my purse.

I just need to enjoy tonight, get Tag out of my brain for one evening. And if he wants to spy on me from a distance and pretend otherwise, well, that’s on him.

He needs to get a life and stop following me everywhere.

Just as I turn to step into the partition to the ladies’, I bump into a woman, adjusting her top as she strides past me in a hurry. She nearly bowls me over and I turn to say something when what I see next delivers the final blow. Tag. And he’s zipping up his jeans.

I stare at him, then his crotch in utter disbelief.

It’s pretty obvious what they were doing, and even if he thinks I don’t have a right to be mad, I see red.

My mouth opens, but no sound comes out.

He stops in his tracks and stares down at me. “Luna.”

“Really, *Thomas*?” I manage. “In a public bathroom? You couldn’t even take her back to that shithole you call a room?”

He actually has the good grace to look guilty. “It isn’t what it looks like.”

“You’re an asshole.”

Pointing a finger at me, he narrows his eyes. “I thought *you* didn’t care.”

“I don’t.”

“Right, and you bein’ pissed at me right now shows you don’t care.”

“Fuck whoever you want,” I say, jabbing him in the chest. Two can play that game. “I don’t give a shit. Your disgusting habits are of no interest to me. I just thought you might have a bit more class.”

He glances down at my finger prodding him, then looks back up at me. “Says you, who’s at a strip club about to have naked men rubbing all over you.”

“Oh, that’s rich, I thought you didn’t care.” I snark his words back at him.

“I don’t.”

“Then why are you here?”

He rubs his chin as he studies me, his eyes gazing down my body. I look hot, sue me.

“Don’t have to answer to you.”

“No?”

“No.”

“Let me fill you in, shall I? You’re here to spy, *Thomas*. Let’s call it like it is. You were worried because there’s half-naked men here tonight and you didn’t want any of them near me, isn’t that right?”

“You’re delusional.”

“No, you are. You’re the one humping anything that moves in a public bathroom!” I screech.

My anger boils. I can’t with him. I am so done.

“Like I said, it’s not what it looks like!” he bellows.

“Fuck you, Tag. Seriously.”

I go to push past him, and he grabs my wrist.

“I’m not done with you yet,” he growls.

“Yes, you are!” I say, and when I go to knee him in the balls, he blocks quickly and holds me against his chest, my back to his front. I try to squirm out of his hold, but it’s no use. Tag is ten times stronger than I am.

“Listen to me,” he growls in my ear. “I don’t wanna do this here.”

“No? Seems like you love sloppy seconds in a bathroom stall, just your type of woman, right?”

“Stop bein’ a bitch and hear me out.”

“No! Get off me or I’ll call security.”

He laughs without humor. “I’m all the security you got tonight, princess. So scream all you want.”

“I don’t want any part of your body touching me since you’re up to your eyeballs in pussy,” I whisper-shout.

“You really just don’t fuckin’ listen, do you?”

“Nope. Never have, never will. Now let me go!” I kick him in the shin as he curses and loosens his grip and I manage to slip out from his hold. I turn on him. “I hate you!”

He shakes his head. “No, you don’t. You wouldn’t be this angry.”

“I hope your dick falls off,” I curse as I push my way into the ladies’ room, and lock myself inside the first stall I see, my heart racing.

I won’t give him the satisfaction of tears. It’s not like I didn’t know that he fucks other women, but here? Tonight? What, did he take a quick break to get some snatch before the show began? He’s sick. And I’m not doing this anymore. I refuse.

Tag...fucking *Thomas* can go to fucking hell.

**TAG**

I STARE UP AT HER HOUSE.

All her lights are out, but I know she's home because I followed her.

I know I don't owe her a fuckin' explanation, but seeing her so upset ripped me in half.

I hate seeing her like that.

Not just the fact she was throwing daggers at me, and kicking me in the shins, but the hurt in her eyes when she thought I did fuck what's-her-face in the bathroom. I didn't.

I couldn't. I thought I could, but it wouldn't even scratch the itch that I have going on for the one woman I can't have. And I shouldn't even be here.

I don't owe her shit, yet I can't leave it like this.

I shut off the engine and pull my helmet off and goggles. Fuck her if she thinks she can have the last word.

I'm here

I hit send on her number as I make my way to her front door. I mean, I have a fuckin' key, so if she doesn't let me in willingly, I'll help myself.

Surprise, surprise, she doesn't answer.

I type her a message, but it takes forever because I have fat fuckin' fingers and I hate mobile phones.



Get your ass down here

No reply.

I sent her another text.

Now!

A few seconds later, I see she's read my message, and hope blooms in my chest for a second as the gray bubble appears. Then...

Fuck you

My nostrils flare.

I dial her number, and this time she answers.

"What do you want?"

"To talk," I grunt.

"Go away, Tag. I don't want to see or talk to you."

"Let me in, or so help me God..."

"You'll what?" she challenges. "You're just mad I caught you. That says a lot more about you than it does about me."

"Don't wanna fuckin' argue out on the street, now let me up now!" I bellow.

"And I said *fuck you, Thomas.*"

She hangs up, and I see red. Anger flashes through me as I dig out my keys.

Fuck her if she thinks I can't fuckin' come in here whenever the hell I please. All I fuckin' want is to explain and make sure she's okay. Why does she have to be so difficult?

I use the key, then as expected, the alarm is set, so I punch my overriding code in the panel before it has a chance to go off.

Staring up at the ceiling, I turn to shut and lock the door behind me.

I stomp up the stairs. Destination: her bedroom.

It's as neat and fuckin' tidy as I'd expect. Nothing is out of place. At least she's not living like a slob, I guess.

The carpet on the stairs is probably plush, but since I stomp my boots on them, I'll never get to find out.

I make my way up the hallway, and without even knocking, I barge into the room with the light shining from under the door and our eyes meet.

She yelps and jumps up from her pillows, ready to swing, then she realizes it's me. "Tag? What the fuck! You almost gave me a heart attack!"

I can only stand in the doorway and stare at her.

She has on fuzzy pajamas, a bowl of ice cream in her hands, and the TV is blaring out some goddamn trashy reality show.

"Should've just let me in like I asked."

She wobbles the bowl onto the side table and points at me. "Get the fuck out!"

"No." I move closer, and she slinks back into the pillows.

"How the hell did you get in here?" she breathes.

Well, there's a good explanation, but I'm not sure that she wants to hear it right now.

"That isn't important right now. What's important is you shut the fuck up and let me speak."

"I don't want to hear anything you have to say," she says, her tone haughty. "This is breaking and entering, Tag. That's a felony."

"Not when I own the house."

Her eyes go round. "What?"

Shit.

"You... You do not own this house... my father..." she trails off. Then her hands raise to her mouth as she gasps. "You didn't..."

“That isn’t important right now. I need you to know I didn’t fuck that chick.”

She shakes her head. “This isn’t happening.”

“Yep, it is.” I take a step closer.

She’s got nowhere to go, and she knows it. “Did you also clear my college debts and credit cards?”

I take a sharp intake of breath.

“You did, didn’t you?” she breathes.

“Is that such a bad thing? I have the money.”

“That isn’t the point!”

“You seem mad. I was only trying to help.”

“By keeping tabs on me with your key?”

“Don’t be dramatic.” I roll my eyes.

“I don’t want you here,” she whispers, tears in her eyes.

“I thought I could do it, Lu. I thought I could just have a mindless fuck, like I’ve done every other time that it’s not you, but I couldn’t.” The words are hard for me to say. I’m not fuckin’ verbose, but she has to know. If it’s the last thing I ever do, I want her to know the truth.

“Why?” she garbles.

I run a hand through my hair. “I don’t know why.”

I can’t tell her everything. I’m not made that way. I show how I care by buying shit and keeping people safe. I don’t do feelings and sentimental crap. Even if I do feel like shit right now that I made her cry and upset her.

Her eyes are red from crying, and it’s telling that she’s home alone, eating ice cream, instead of out, doing whatever the fuck she wants with some random guy.

She’s not a piece of shit like I am.

She’s always been better than me, and I’ve always known it. But right now, it’s never been more apparent.

“Do you want me, Tag?” She frowns as she says it, like she can’t believe the words came out of her mouth.

I swallow hard. It feels like I’ve swallowed fuckin’ nails.

“I shouldn’t,” I say. “I should tell you that this is a bad idea and that I should never have let myself in.”

“But you did.”

“I know you think I’m an asshole, but I want what’s best for you, Lu. I always have.”

Her eyes blaze. “Well, you know what, Tag? You have a funny way of showing it!”

“Tag?” I snort. “I thought I was *Thomas*.”

“Shut up.”

I chuckle.

“This isn’t funny,” she goes on. “None of this is fucking funny.”

I stare at her. She’s never been more beautiful. I shouldn’t be thinking that, but tonight we’re laying it all out on the table.

“You didn’t come home with anyone,” I observe.

She rolls her eyes. “No shit.”

I glance over my shoulder at the TV. “Vanderpump Rules?”

“You’re a fan?”

I give her a look. “How do you watch this shit?”

She ignores me. “Tag, you can’t break into my house and then act as if we’re all okay.”

“I can and I did.”

“What the hell?”

I sit on the edge of her bed. “I will always make sure that you’re safe. Always. So don’t fuckin’ tell me that I can’t do shit.”

“How do you own this house?” Her voice is small as she asks.

“That isn’t important right now.”

“Yes, it is. No lies. I thought my father...”

“Your father didn’t do shit, Lu. We both know he’s a fuckin’ greedy ass piece of shit. What I want to know is why you give him the time of day.”

“I don’t,” she stammers. “I don’t see him much these days... Why did you...”

“To keep you safe. To make sure you had a nice place to live. I couldn’t stand that shithole you were going to rent.”

“So my rent money... goes to... you?”

I swallow hard. “I’ve been puttin’ it into a high-earning savings account... to give to you when...”

“When?” she finishes, brow furrowed.

I look at my boots. “When you decide to buy a place... *This* place.”

She shakes her head. “What the hell is wrong with you?”

I frown. “What do you mean? Do you wanna live in a shitty neighborhood?”

She gasps. “My mom knows about this, doesn’t she?”

A small pang of guilt crawls its way up my spine. I clear my throat. “Don’t bring her into this.”

“Oh my God, who else has been lying to me all this time?”

I shake my head. “Stop bein’ such a pain in the ass and hear me out. None of us wanted you to live in a shitty place, or share with strangers. It was a good investment...and it was best that you thought your dad helped out with the deposit and the insurance...”

“I don’t need your charity!” she spits. “Or anyone else’s... I can’t believe all the people in my life just lie to me like it’s nothing.”

“It ain’t nothin’, Lu. We care about you.” I look back at her beautiful eyes, and my heart lurches in my chest. “I care about you.”

“No, you don’t,” she whispers.

I stare at her, feeling at a loss, trying to convey what I’m feeling without words. Her chest rises and falls rapidly, and I know I should leave. I should fuckin’ leave.

*Put one foot in front of the other, asshole.*

*She ain’t yours, she never will be.*

“Provin’ that by bein’ here, ain’t I?”

“No. You’re just proving you’re a brute with no manners.”

“There you go again, shootin’ that damn mouth off.”

She narrows her eyes. “What you gonna do about it? Shut my mouth up?”

I grit my teeth.

She just has to keep pushing me. Poke. Poke. Fuckin’ poke.

“Tryin’ to do the right thing here, Lu.”

“By breaking into my home...the home that I’ve just found out *you* own, after following me home tonight? Knowing I was alone. Not before putting your hands on me at the club.”

“Like you minded.”

She shakes her head. “So I’m asking you, Tag, are you going to shut me up?”

My eyes drop to her mouth.

Only I know there’s a whole world waiting there.

Her lips are plump and fuckin’ beautiful, just like the rest of her. An image of her lips around my cock almost has me shooting my load in my pants.

“Don’t push me.”

“You want to be pushed, T, or you wouldn’t be here.”

She's right, of course. I've only led myself into this temptation.

The temptation I can't walk away from.

We both know why I'm here, and this time I'm gonna burn in fuckin' hell.

"Tried to stay away," I mutter, leaning down to undo my laces. "I fuckin' tried."

"Tag? W –what are you doing?"

I pull my boots and socks off, and then shrug out of my cut.

"You sayin' you don't want it?"

Her eyes go wide and her lips part. "But you said..."

"Forget what I fuckin' said." I cup my dick. "Been fuckin' hard all fuckin' night because of your teasin', Lu. You're right. I don't like the idea of some chump with his hands all over you."

"So do something about it," she challenges.

I tug my shirt off and she stares open mouth at my chest.

"What's the matter, princess? Cat got your tongue?"

She shakes her head.

It's been a while since she's seen me naked. A lot has changed.

Aside from the large NOLA Rebels 'Ride or Die' tattoo that adorns my entire back, my legs and one full arm are covered in various ink.

I take a little satisfaction in her reaction to my body. I do work out hard to keep myself looking like this, and her appreciation goes right to my dick.

"I –I just didn't think that...that you'd agree."

"You won't let up about it. Tried to walk away. Tried to fuck another woman. But since you've been back, you're all I can fuckin' think about, Lu. Twenty-four-fuckin'-seven. It seems like all I do is worry about you and what you're doin'."

She gapes at me in shock as I loosen the buckle on my belt and unbutton my jeans. “And you just strut around the goddamn club like a fuckin’ cock tease. Knowin’ you’re drivin’ me insane and just keepin’ me so far out of reach, ain’t that right?”

She can’t argue. She knows it’s the truth.

I unzip myself and shrug my jeans down. If she wants my cock, she can do the honors and pull it out.

Her eyes stay glued to my crotch as I stand before her in my boxer briefs.

She wets her lips and then moves off the pillows. “Come over here.”

I grunt. Not wanting her thinking she’s in charge, I say, “You come here.”

She sits up on her knees and scoots across toward me.

“Top off,” I tell her. “Now.”

“But –”

I stare at her. “You want it or not?”

She drags her eyes down my body, and then she swallows hard, and fuck me if she doesn’t lift the hem of her top and pull it over her head. Her big, beautiful tits bounce free, and I drop my gaze.

Holy fuckin’ shit.

I forgot how fuckin’ hot she is naked.

I love her curves. I always have.

“Fuck,” I mutter.

I don’t even have to say anything more. She moves her hands to her bottoms and yanks them down.

“Expectin’ dick tonight?” I say, my voice low as I kneel on the bed.

She shakes her head.

“No panties?”



“I don’t wear panties to bed, T.”

“Spread your legs,” I say when she keeps her pussy hidden. “Let me see.”

She moves her hands from her crotch, and then does as I say. She’s pink and glistening from here. Holy fuck.

I grunt my approval and give her a chin lift. “Touch yourself.”

Her lips part, and without arguing, she moves her fingers to her pussy and starts to play with herself. I’ve never seen anything so beautiful.

She’s so wet for me already.

“You touch yourself thinkin’ about me?”

She nods.

“Did you make yourself come?”

She nods.

I watch as she swirls her arousal over her clit, and I want to fuckin’ bury my face between her legs and get lost. I don’t go down on women. Not ever. Don’t wanna do that shit when I don’t know where they’ve been. But that’s not the case with Luna. I don’t fuckin’ care.

She’s mine.

*Fuck.*

*She. Is. Not. Mine.*

“Show me,” I growl.

She scissors her fingers and rubs herself, then inserts a finger inside her pussy as I watch, my cock growing harder every second. This might just be the hottest thing I’ve ever seen.

“Oh,” she cries out when she inserts another finger, her other hand still working her clit. “That feels so good.”

She’s such a dirty little bitch. Her mouth parts as she pleases herself, and I adjust my cock in my boxers, then fuck

it, I shove my hand inside and cup my dick. I need her hands on me.

I fuckin' need it like I need air.

"Lu," I mutter.

"Pull it out," she cries. "Let me see it."

I wish it were her strangling my cock with that tight pussy... I pull my boxers down, and my cock springs free. I fist it and she stares at it with the widest eyes.

"Bigger than you remember?" I snark.

She wets her lips once more, and I jerk when I think about that mouth and tongue all over my dick. When she nods, I grunt my approval.

*All in good time.*

I keep jerking myself as she fingers her pussy, her cheeks reddening as I say, "Make yourself come."

She moves her circling fingers faster and pumps her pussy in and out as I stroke my cock. So eager for her, but also so fuckin' ready to take my time and fuck her pretty little mouth shut.

That might teach her some manners about behaving.

"Fuck, Lu," I groan when she jerks and bites down on her lip.

"Oh, T," she moans. "Oh, yes, I'm coming... I'm coming..." She throws her head back, and I watch as she comes completely undone.

She's a sight for sore eyes, and I almost jerk myself to climax just watching her. I let go of my dick and kick my boxers to the floor and crawl toward her.

She sits up on her elbows and looks at me with hooded eyes.

"Don't look at me like you're fuckin' innocent," I growl. "Because we both know you're nothin' like that."

"Fuck me, Tag. Please, I need your dick."

I shake my head. “Such a dirty little mouth.” I yank her upright and she obeys as I rise to my knees. “Suck my cock while I think about how much I’m gonna spank your ass when you’re done kickin’ me tonight.”

She rolls her lips to save from laughing, and I pull her to me, my mouth at her ear. “I’m gonna fuck you so hard, Luna, that you won’t even remember your own name, got me?”

She gasps, her chest rising and falling rapidly as I take pride in her shock. The greedy little bitch reaches for my cock and I let her. I need her touch like I need oxygen.

A rumble leaves my throat as her hot little hand starts to tug on my dick and I run my nose down her neck to her clavicle. She shudders under my touch. I know she wants me to touch her, but she’s going to have to beg me for it.

I bite down on the top of her breast, and she cries out, her free hand squeezing my bicep like she’s encouraging me.

“Make me so fuckin’ wild,” I tell her. “You know that?”

She nods slowly and I cup one tit at the same time I reach around and grab a handful of ass.

“This body is mine, Lu. Understand?” Just for tonight. *Just tonight.*

She nods. “Yours.”

“You’re gonna get down on your knees and take my cock like a good little bitch,” I growl, my lips brushing over her nipple as I cup her tits. I wanna play with her so bad, but I want her needy. So fuckin’ needy she can’t stand it.

I move one hand lower, down her ribcage and belly as I cup her mound and she gasps.

“This pussy.”

“Y –yes.”

“Is mine.”

She groans when I suck one nipple into my mouth, just to tease her. I pull hard and she moans as my hand squeezes her

ass. Gonna fuck her in every goddamn hole. Then I've marked her everywhere and we'll be done.

I swipe my fingers through her pussy, and then move them to her lips. "Suck," I tell her.

She does as she's told, those doe eyes on mine as I try to hold on to my sanity.

A sick smile crosses my lips. "See, you do know how to take orders when you want to."

She bites the pad of my finger, and I spank her ass. As she starts to suck on my fingers, groaning, her hand still pumps my cock.

She's the most beautiful thing I've ever seen.

Too good to be mine.

But she can be mine for tonight.

Then we're done.

Done for good this time.

Just one little taste is all I need, and then she'll be out of my system.

## LUNA

I CAN'T BELIEVE THIS IS HAPPENING.

His mouth is on me and I'm touching his cock.

It's so big. Hard. Everything I remember but so much better.

He growls his orders at me, and I hate to say it but I'm putty in his hands.

I want this.

As much as I deny it, I know I want it. So badly.

I drop to my knees, and he grabs his cock and guides it to my mouth.

I'm so fucking hot for him.

When I swipe his tip with my tongue, he hisses, admonishing me in that way he does.

I open my mouth, and as he slides himself in, I groan at how thick he is.

His groan tells me that he likes it and I start to bob my head as he holds it in place. I hollow my cheeks and go to town on him. Every single bob of my head causes my heart to race like it might burst out of my chest.

I feel him reach his hand into my hair and he guides me down farther. I look up at him and his eyes are closed. He doesn't ram down my throat, but I know his hips are gonna

start moving soon. And I'm here for it. I want to give him anything he needs.

He fucks my mouth as I practically wet myself from being so aroused. He teases me in ways I can only ever picture in my dreams, leaving me wanting more.

I cup his sac and he grunts, his breathing labored, and I know he's fighting his orgasm. He doesn't want to come too quickly. In his eyes, it would be a sign of weakness. In my eyes, it's a sign of hotness, and that I'm doing it how he likes it.

He starts to thrust, and I gag. He doesn't let up, though, oh no, he mutters something about me being a dirty little cocksucker and my nipples and core tingle. I need him inside me.

I want to move my hand between my legs and play with myself, but I'm still tugging his balls and holding myself upright with my other hand.

Then, I'm being yanked off his dick, and he pulls me upright, holding my body flush against his as I feel his hard cock against my stomach.

“Think it's funny to play games, Lu?”

I shake my head.

He grabs my ass with one hand and gives it a squeeze.

“Do it,” I encourage.

He frowns. “What?”

“Spank me. I know you want to.”

I turn before he can say no and lean my hands against my headboard and stick my ass out.

I know he likes my ass. Hell, he likes all of me. He's the only man who's ever looked at my body with desire, and I can't get enough of it.

He growls as he moves toward me, his mouth at my ear.

“My princess wanna be fucked in this tight ass?” He grabs a handful and I moan.

“Yes,” I whisper.

He tuts. “Dirty little girl.”

He cups my tits, and I’m so horny I feel delirious. I need to come again. My slick center drips down my thighs. I’m ready to beg him to give me his cock if he doesn’t hurry up.

I don’t even get a warning and I feel his hand smack my ass. “Count.”

“One,” I whisper, the sharp smack knocking the wind out of my sails.

I love pleasure and pain, but I’ve only ever felt it with Tag.

He smacks my other cheek.

“Two.”

He smooths the area with his palm, and then smacks it again.

“Three.”

I’m almost combusting as he continues his slow, arousing torture.

*Four.*

*Five.*

*Six.*

*Seven.*

*Eight.*

Reaching one hand between my legs, I feel how soaked I am.

Tag kisses my neck and shoulders as he knocks my hand out of the way.

“Fuck,” he mutters when he feels my wetness. “Need to fuck you now.”

I stick my ass out farther as he rustles around behind me.

“No condom,” I breathe.

Our eyes meet as he frowns, running a hand over his hair.  
“Lu?”

“Nothing between us,” I whisper. “I’m on the pill. I need to feel you, T, just like old times.”

He comes back to me and spreads my legs wider as he parts my ass cheeks, and fuck me if he doesn’t lower his head and eat me out from behind.

My eyes roll into the back of my head as he rolls his tongue over my clit, my pussy lips, my opening, and my ass. This man has no fucking idea how good that feels.

I writhe beneath him, desperate for my release.

“Tag,” I cry. “*Please.*”

“Please what?” he mutters, sucking on one pussy lip, then the other.

“I need to come, T.”

“You’ll come when I say you’ll come.” He flicks my clit with his tongue. “You got lube?”

My eyes go wide. “Y –yes, in the top drawer on the left.”

His mouth is in my ear again. “Why you got lube if you’re not fuckin’ anyone?”

I stick my ass out again, needing him so badly. “Just in case you came by.”

He slaps my ass and moves to the drawer to find the lube...along with my dildo.

He stares at it and our eyes meet once more. “You use this on yourself?” he asks.

I bite my lip. Well, duh.

“Of course, it’s not just in there for decoration.”

He studies the pink rabbit like he’s never seen such a contraption, then he turns the damn thing on, including the bunny ears and the gentle hum has me purring for him.



He holds the vibrator in his hand as he goes back down to my ass and pussy. Using his tongue again, he swirls over my clit, and I moan long and low. He keeps going, eating me like a man possessed until I'm a gasping, heaving mess, and I come on his tongue as he moves the vibrator to my ass and circles it against my puckered hole. *Oh, God.* He pops the lid and applies lube. He keeps moving the head downward, until the ears brush over my clit and he holds them there. I combust in a few seconds. The orgasm he just gave me didn't even have time to recover.

"Tag," I moan. "Oh, that's so good."

The head of the vibrator nudges my hole, and I try to sit down on it, just as he slides it inside me. I feel his tongue on my ass and I know he's going to make me pay for all the lip I've been giving him. I want his cock, and he knows it, but he's going to continue to tease me until I'm ready to combust.

Then I feel his finger at my back entrance, lubed and probing as I moan like a two-dollar whore. He inserts a finger to one knuckle, then two, then he's all the way in. Slowly, he slides his finger in and out of my ass as the vibrator inside me, and the ears frantically rubbing my sensitive nub, have me falling apart.

He grunts, and I swirl my hips as I imagine how I look back there.

"Gonna come, T," I warn him, panting heavily. "Oh my God. Oh my God."

I spiral until I'm pushing back onto him, the dildo working inside me, as well as my clit and his finger in my ass. *Holy mother of God.*

He makes a guttural sound in his throat as I scream my release across my bedroom. Every fucking sensation hitting me like a freight train.

Removing his finger, he pulls the vibrator out of me, swiping his fingers through my folds as the aftershocks ripple through my body.

"Tag," I say, my voice trembling.

His mouth brushes my earlobe before he tugs on it with his teeth. “Yeah?”

“I need your cock.”

“That’s because you’re a greedy little bitch.”

Spreading my knees even farther apart, he lines up his cock as he caresses my neck and drives into me without any warning. I cry out, his thick cock filling me so full.

“Dear God,” I whisper.

“You wanted this,” he mutters, still nipping at my neck. “You can take it.”

He pulls out and then slams back in again.

His cock is so fucking big. The biggest dick I’ve ever had, and I love every damn inch of it.

I grip the headboard as he starts to fuck me hard, my body tingling all over as he drives into me in every punishing way possible. All of it feels electric.

Like my body is alive because of him. Like he switched on a goddamn light and I hate myself for it. I hate how good he makes me feel and that I crave more of it. I never want him to let me go.

The more he gives me, the more I want.

He grunts as he fucks me, one hand coming around the back of my neck as he slides his dick in and out of my wet pussy. I can’t believe he just did that with my vibrator, and then there’s the ass play...

I try to take it all in, but he’s moving roughly as he speeds up, the bed protesting. I come again, his cock riding me through it as I pant like a wild bull, and he slaps my ass as he lets go of me and pulls out. The minute he’s gone, I mourn the loss of him, needing so much more.

Suddenly, he throws me over and onto my back. “Wrap your legs around me.”

I do as he says as he holds my hips and lines his cock up, sliding into me again as he hisses.

“Pussy’s so tight,” he mutters.

“That’s because your cock is so big,” I groan.

He stares down at me as he rocks his hips, his hands planted on either side of my head.

I roam my hands up his torso. To say he’s ripped is an understatement. His body is so fucking hot, his abs and pecs like steel, as I appreciate all the work he’s put in to looking so fucking good.

“You have a hot body, T,” I tell him.

He grunts.

“What do you lift now?”

“Shut up and let me fuck you, woman.”

I bite my bottom lip as he plows on, and as he tilts my hips slightly, his girth hits that place deep inside me that makes me see stars. I squeeze his biceps as I try, and fail, to hold on to it before I detonate.

He rides me through it and then I watch with fascination as his whole body tenses, his muscles looking like they’re going to burst. Coming in the most glorious way, he groans and his eyes squeeze closed. Just witnessing that will live rent free in my brain forever.

Flopping down on top of me, I take his weight for a few moments before slapping him on the ass. “Can’t breathe.”

He grunts again, pulls out, and rolls off of me, splaying on his back beside me. Both our breaths are ragged as we struggle for air.

“Fuck,” he mutters.

“Yeah.”

We both know we’ve crossed the line again, but I don’t regret it.

I hug myself as I fail yet again, grinning like a Cheshire Cat.

Noticing my stupid face, he says, “What are you so smug about?”

“Oh, nothing.”

He turns on his side and props his head in his hand. “Out with it.”

I giggle. “Couldn’t stay away, could you, T?”

“Only because you drive me fuckin’ wild.” I feel him watching me, but I don’t meet his gaze.

He’s too intense. He’s so fucking hot...and he hasn’t even kissed me on the mouth yet.

His mouth at my neck...and on my body, however...

“Not my fault.”

“How do you figure that? Waltzin’ around the clubhouse in next to nothin’ so everyone will notice. That dress you had on tonight I’m gonna burn.”

“Not everyone,” I retort. “Just you.”

I turn as his eyes, so blue with ice but yet fiery at the same time, meet mine, and it’s like an electric current runs between us both.

He is the most beautiful man I’ve ever laid eyes on. That much I know.

“Got a smart fuckin’ mouth,” he grumbles.

“And you shut it up with that big cock.”

He doesn’t take his eyes from mine. “Nobody can know about this.”

“As if I don’t already know that,” I snark back. “Least of all, your biker buddies.”

“Does anyone know about us? Bein...step—”

“Only Payden,” I cut him off. I can’t bear to hear him say those words. “She’s always known.”

He nods, which prompts me to add, “Are you ashamed of me? Of people finding out?”

Frowning, instant irritation flashes through his big blues. “Ashamed of you?”

“Yes.”

He clears his throat. “That’s ridiculous.”

“It isn’t, T, and you know it.”

He holds my gaze. “I’m not ashamed of you, but our parents wouldn’t understand, Lu. This has been my argument all along.”

The pain of him rejecting me hits me all over again.

*We can’t do this.*

*This is wrong.*

*Our parents won’t understand.*

*We need to stop.*

All the old pain comes rushing back, as well as my defenses.

“Well,” I say, pulling the duvet up to cover myself. “You may as well go.”

His eyebrows quirk in surprise. “Go?”

I hold my head high. No point in delaying the inevitable. “Yes. Thanks for the orgasms, and can you set the alarm on the way out. It’ll save me getting up.” I give him a smile.

He stares at me with absolutely no expression. Typical Tag.

“You’re bootin’ me out?”

I nod. “Unless you want to go again?”

He grunts, rising from the bed as his nostrils flair.

I try not to laugh. I mean, he was never going to spend the night. He’d only end up leaving in a huff anyway.

“Always gotta dig the knife in, don’t you, Lu?”

“I’m not doing that,” I state calmly. “We fucked. It was great, and now I’m tired.”

In reality, I'm far from tired. I'd like nothing more than for Tag to take me in his arms and spoon me to sleep, waking me up in the morning with his big fat boner as he fucks me from behind.

But I know that isn't going to happen.

Tag isn't the cuddly type.

I remind myself that I'm not being a bitch. He broke into my house—correction *his* house—to set the record straight and then fuck me.

We both know that he made the first move, he can deny it all he wants. But my heart is guarded. This is just an itch for him. It's nothing. He'll go back to fucking sweet butts at the club, something that fills me with dread, but I don't let it show on my face.

“Should keep you awake for the rest of the night,” he grumbles, finding his clothes as he tugs them on and my heart thuds in my chest because he'll be gone soon. “Teach you a lesson about bein' a dick tease.”

I don't want him to go. But I can't tell him that.

“I'll be sure to wear the shortest skirt I can find for work on Monday,” I tell him.

He turns to look at me and points. “You do that and I'll fuckin' remove it and take it home as a trophy to mount on my wall.”

I make an *ooh, I'm scared* face with wavy fingers and that only pisses him off even more.

“If you need any more booty calls, just text me,” I say sweetly as he sits and tugs his socks and boots back on.

“Booty calls,” he mutters, shaking his head. “Should never have come here...”

Here we go.

I choose to ignore him and watch as every single part of his body is now covered and I miss his touch already.

“But you did,” I sing-song.

He shoves off the bed, and just as he's about to leave, he turns and says, "Nobody else here but me. Got me?"

I open my mouth, the shock rendering me speechless. "W – what?"

The side of his mouth tugs up. "You didn't think this was gonna be it, did you, Lu?"

My eyes go wide. "Uh..."

"Shouldn't have started somethin' you can't finish, princess. Wear pants on Monday, or so help me, I'll spank that ass in front of Rock, his men, and anyone else who wants to watch. You got me?"

He turns on his heel and stomps out, not even waiting for me to answer.

"Asshole!" I yell after him.

Who the hell does he think he is? He can't talk to me like that.

I'm not his, and he's not mine. Even if my heart is telling my head it's got other ideas.

I'm smarter than this. None of this is real. That he just wanted to see what it was like one more time. *You're not special to him. You'll always be his helpless little stepsister, nothing more...*

The race of my beating heart can't be mistaken. Every single cell in my body is on fire.

We have a connection, no matter how I try to fight it. He knows it too. Even if he is the hardest person in the world to read, I can still tell when he's affected.

And I ruffled his feathers.

There's a chink in his armor and he won't like that.

My beautiful beast Thomas likes things just how he likes them. So nobody can rock the boat. So he's in charge of everything. Unlike his football career, which he still hangs onto and hasn't dealt with.

Maybe he never will.

I take a breath and then groan. I feel like I just got thoroughly fucked. I glance down at my poor vagina and apologize as I wince. That man is big.

Hurricane Tag leaves quite a wake.



## TAG

I DRIVE HOME WITH A FUCKIN' WOOD THAT WON'T STOP.

*What the fuck just happened?*

This woman has a hold over me like no woman ever has, and tonight she pushed me over the edge.

I had to have her. I had to sink my dick into that sweet mouth and even sweeter pussy, and it wasn't at all like I remember... It was even better.

She's under my goddamn skin like nothing I've ever experienced, and now that I've had her, I'm not sure I can shake her.

I ride with vengeance, like someone has done me wrong, even if I am solely the one to blame.

I was the one who drove over here all by myself.

I was the one who broke into her house.

I was the one who stripped naked and fucked her like an animal.

Did she like it? Sure, she did. But does that make it right? No fuckin' way.

I can't feel one bit guilty about it. As much as I know it's wrong, my need for her is too strong.

I'm fucked. I know that much.

I didn't think that she'd keep burying herself deeper and deeper under my skin. I thought that I'd be able to shake her

after fucking her stupid. My dick doesn't seem to think so, and neither does any other part of me, other than my head. I'm not thinking with the right one, clearly.

The look on her smug little face when she got what she wanted.

Is that all she wanted from me?

Just a quick fuck?

How many other men has she just had a quick fuck with?

Is that her thing?

So many goddamn questions and it's driving me completely insane.

Her body.

Her goddamn body.

Her curves that go for days. I fuckin' love how her thighs are thick, her stomach round, her tits big, and she has an ass I could park my bike in. I like a woman I can hold on to. Remembering my finger in her ass has me squirming on my sled.

*Why the fuck did I leave?*

I don't take goddamn orders from her, or any woman in this club or otherwise. Yet with Luna, I seem to let a lot of things slide.

As much as I try to wipe her from my thoughts, that's a little hard when her pussy juices are still coating my cock.

I'm a fuckin' fool.

For believing that I could just have a quick fuck and that would be that. For ever trusting my own instincts because, clearly, they're wrong. And for daring to believe that this could actually work out. For a split second there, I saw our future.

Usually, when a bitch starts getting too naggy, I run a fuckin' mile. But when I'm with my girl, all I can think about is us. Together. Maybe even a couple of kids... *What the fuck?*

I don't even like kids. They're weird little things and smell bad. They don't like me, and I don't like them. But imagining Luna pregnant with my kid...that just makes me want to turn around and do very bad things to her all over again. Fuck the consequences.

Fuck the fact that, morally, it's wrong. Or that our parents would die a thousand deaths if they ever found out. Plus, the ridicule I'd receive from my club, and then there's Luna and the backlash she'd get. Sure, her friends would support her, but not everyone would. She'd be a joke. A laughingstock. Someone to judge and talk about behind her back. I can't allow that.

I won't put her through that. She deserves better.

Yet when I think about another man being in my place, my anger boils once more.

No fuckin' way am I gonna allow that, either.

Another man sliding into that sweet pussy and calling her name? Not happening on my watch.

*She's not mine.*

*Fuck.*

*She's not fuckin' mine, fuckhead.*

I let out a groan.

I have to accept it. I have to let this fuckin' shit go, yet even as I think the words, I know it's not gonna happen.

Luna is ingrained into my soul. She etched her way in and left a stamp there that is more permanent than any tattoo. I can't fuckin' shake her. And maybe I don't want to.



I stare at Rock and Jett as they run by their findings on the former Devils whereabouts.

I feel a migraine coming on when I think about what's at stake.

When this fuckface Forger almost took away Indigo's kid, *his own kid*, and did so without a single care in the world, it boiled my blood. She almost died.

Harlem and I have a pact that when we find that goddamn piece of shit, he's ours. And we won't hold back.

"Did a trace on the plates from the warehouse that night," Rock says. "Plates were stolen, but interestingly, I was able to follow the car across the city to an underground parkin' lot. Could be a lead. Can't promise anythin'. Taken me weeks to even get this far."

Tracing multiple cameras across town is no easy feat, but Rock is the best in the business.

"Good," I say. "H and I can check it out."

Rock nods. "I'll keep you posted. Footage is hazy, but I'm only a bead away from gettin' an approximate location. Might be nothin'. Car could've been dumped, but even so, there would be footage of the parking lot in the security video, and I can hack into that. See what we can find."

"Good work," Harlem says. "Damn shame they put you into jail for this in the first place."

Rock pops a shoulder. "Don't think I haven't been asked to work for the government before. Trouble with doing top secret shit is that you eventually become dispensable. Don't wanna be the next victim on Crime Busters sayin' I jumped off a bridge. I'm not suicidal, by the way."

Jett rolls his eyes. "So dramatic."

Rock gives me a chin lift. "Just need a couple more days and then we'll have a location. Aside from that, nothin' good came out of the prospect. He didn't know shit, which is exactly why Forger didn't care if he got captured."

We caught one of their prospects and beat him into giving us all the information he had, which wasn't much. Prospects are generally the last to know important shit, but he did give us a location that led to finding the crypt.

Then there's the intel that Forger and the club had a financial backer. Someone to fund the drug mule business that the club was trying to reignite.

Cleaning up this city ain't for the faint-hearted, just when you think you're done, another asshole pops out of the woodwork to finish what another fucker started.

"Sounds like a whole lot of creepy fuckin' shit," Harlem grumbles. "Who the fuck would invest in Forger and the goddamn Devils? I get times are tough and all, but nobody in this town would take the risk after what we did to them the first time. They know to stay away from our neighborhood. Startin' to believe Forger has a goddamn death wish."

"Desperate men," I reply, running a hand over my face. "There are many wealthy men in this town with money to embezzle. A one-percent club is the perfect alibi. Good way to hide money, and the club takes all the fall. Sounds like a match made in heaven. At this point Forger would be desperate for cash and will do just about anythin' for it."

Unfortunately, money—or lack thereof—tends to bring out the worst in people and their traits.

When Cash formed this club years ago, we were legit from the get-go. We're a brotherhood and we love riding motorcycles. That's about as simple as it gets. When Cash and Harlem were in a one-percenter club years ago, a lot of shit went down. Men died. Some are still in jail. Some lived on the run. That's no life. I'd never want to live like that.

I like having my freedom. Being locked in a concrete box ain't in my future. Even though we may do things now and again that involve making men disappear in the Bayou, we are really doing this city a favor of eradicating the vermin from the streets. That's how I look at it.

Selling drugs and guns is a dangerous game, and our club makes plenty of money with our legit businesses. Hell, I made a bunch of cash when I was playing football.

I didn't just piss it all away like a lot of athletes do. I don't need a fancy car or high-priced mansion. My digs are sweet,

but I didn't spend millions of dollars.

I never want to be struggling like we were growing up when my father gambled a lot of our money away after my mom left. Times were tough. His temper didn't help matters. Unfortunately, that's one of the traits I inherited from him.

"Got that right," Harlem agrees. "Makes him a loose cannon. And loose cannons are dangerous."

Rock twirls a small knife around his fingers like a goddamn expert, and it makes me wonder if he likes knife play. "Trouble is, companies and organizations can hide behind another company or business entity, and so on. Meaning that tracing the person, or persons, can take time, and even then, they can go under an assumed name. Sometimes there are dozens of layers to get through, and there is the possibility it leads to a dead end."

"Great. So we're back to square one," I mutter.

"There is often a lot of work involved uncoverin' criminals who hide as businessmen, but it's not impossible," Jett says. "It seems unlikely that Forger is dealing with anybody that goddamn smart or anyone that rich. It's probably some dirty hustler sellin' drugs on the street corner. We could be barkin' up the wrong tree, but either way, we'll get to the bottom of it."

"Or it could be worse than we thought," Harlem goes on. "Indigo said he had a lot of connections. Dealin' is what he knows, and that means he has connections with every goddamn scumbag in this city."

Yep, we're fucked, and that annoys me the most. Nobody has seen or heard from any of the Devils since the night of the fire. It's like they literally disappeared. The old club had a habit of doing the exact same thing, then they randomly pop back up again in another part of the city.

"They can't have just vanished," I say. "Someone knows somethin'. The trouble in this town is you never know who's with you one minute and turnin' against you the next. It's cutthroat."

“Don’t trust the Irish,” Jett agrees in a low voice. “For now, they’re not implicated, and I doubt they have anythin’ to do with it, but no stone will go unturned. We’re checkin’ out every single lead.”

Harlem gives him a chin lift. “Appreciate it.”

The Irish mafia helped us out with the Devils originally, providing back up when the club was under siege. We walked away with all our men intact, and we formed an alliance.

We would look the other way as long as they stayed on their side of the city and dealt drugs away from our side. We wouldn’t ask any questions and they’d keep it out of schools and the streets. It seems to be working well. Crime rates in the city are at an all-time low, and I’m not saying that’s why, but sometimes you gotta just do what you can do and turn a blind eye to the rest.

Without Rock, Jett, and a mutual associate; Linc, a friend of our brothers in Bracken Ridge Arizona, things would be even slower. I keep reminding myself of that every time I want to yell at them for taking so long. Rock is just one man, and he still runs the trucking business. Right now, Cash has ordered Rock to work on this full time until we get something. At this point, anything would be better than a bunch of dead ends.

“Soon as we know anythin’, you’ll be the first to know,” Rock says, looking between us.

I nod. “Things are different when they go after women and children,” I mutter. “We all know that shit don’t fly, even with the Irish.”

“Know it,” Rock answers. “We’ll get them. But the slippery little fuckers know how to hide. The thing that concerns me the most is the fact they’re being protected, most likely in underworld circles. You say you don’t trust the Irish, but now may be an opportune time to test that loyalty. We may need them.”

“If the Devils are gainin’ traction in the underworld, then we need to be ready,” Harlem agrees. “Ryder and Cash have

called a meetin' tomorrow at church. Need to put all the cards on the table and pull all our resources."

"Agreed," Jett chimes. "All the women are livin' in fear. Can't have that. Can't live lookin' over your shoulder, wonderin' if you're gonna be next."

A painful thought hits me right in the chest at Luna ever being hurt. If that ever happened, there is no rock they could hide under where I wouldn't find them.

It feels almost as if the club and its members are like a ticking time bomb.

And I get what Harlem is saying. The women and children can't live looking over their shoulders wherever they go. It's bullshit.

If Forger took his own kid and almost killed her out of revenge, what would he have in store for anyone else? I shudder at the thought.

"Tomorrow at church," Harlem says, "we'll run some ideas by Cash and work out what the fuck is next. Might even mean sendin' prospects downtown and undercover. Plenty of lowdown bars and clubs. Pipes thinks on his feet. So does Rodeo when he's not goofin' off."

"Could be a plan," I agree. "Just need one fuckin' break. All this is goin' on, and in the meantime, Forger is out there with numbers on his side. The type of members he'd be recruitin' would be unhinged criminals, and there'd be a lot of them. Not exactly like they've got much to lose if he's offerin' them deals or to join the MC. We don't want him gettin' numbers."

Nope. We don't. Forming a club bigger than ours would be a threat. It would change the status quo. And we don't want Forger getting bigger than his boots before we can stamp this out. I don't like the uncertainty, and I sure as hell don't like the fact they're hidin' like goddamn little pussy boys.

"Fuckin' agree," Harlem says. "And remember what we said. Me and Tag get first dibs at them. Ain't fuckin' around here boys."



“Know it,” Rock says at the same time Jett gives us a chin lift.

“You know we want them fuckin’ dead as much as you do,” Jett says. “The more they suffer, the better.”

I go to stand. I’ve got some business to take care of and my cock is aching at the thought of it.

“You goin’ back to the depot?” I say to Rock. In reality, I just need to know if he’s gonna show up unexpectedly.

“Nope. Gonna work from here for a coupla hours,” he replies.

Jas helped clean out the storage room next to hers so Rock and Jett could have a space to work from when they needed to.

“Gotta go sort Luna’s fuckin’ car out,” I say.

“Piece of shit needs to be burned,” Rock replies.

“Oh, it’s never gonna be roadworthy again,” I tell him. “See you boys later. Got shit to do.”

“Say hi to Luna,” Rock calls after me.

I flip him the bird, head to my bike, and roar the engine to life.

I’m gonna do more than say fuckin’ hi to her.



She’s wearing a goddamn short skirt.

I shake my head as I stand behind a customer trying to pay.

Luna is distracted by me, and while my aching cock appreciates it, I certainly don’t like to be kept waiting.

“This gonna take much longer?” I bark.

The man in front turns to look at me, his lips parting to give me a mouthful, then takes in my appearance and quickly shuts it.

That happens a lot. Men don’t pick on me.

That would be a bad fuckin’ move.

“I, uh...” he starts as I sigh loudly.

“Luna? Your fingers fuckin’ broken?”

She narrows her eyes at me as I go to the door and turn the sign around. If she doesn’t hurry up, I’ll fuckin’ throw him out by his goddamn coattails.

“Shut up, Tag,” she says.

The man fidgets uncomfortably and says, “I can come back, if it’s an issue...”

“It’s not an issue,” Luna says, trying to remain calm. “Sometimes the machine takes a second to download.” She shoots me another glare. “Other people just have to learn to be patient.”

He lowers his voice. “Not sure you should be provoking him.”

She smirks. “He’s my stepbrother.”

I practically hear him shitting his pants as the card finally goes through and he swiftly leaves without even taking his receipt. I kindly slam the door behind him and turn the lock.

I then go to the other door that leads to the workshop and lock that too.

“Tag? What the hell are you doing here?” Luna says, her cheeks flushed.

The sight of her only stirs up memories from the last night and the way she sucked my cock in that smart mouth of hers before I fucked her like an animal.

I know I’m fucked, I admit that. But she was warned.

“We need to talk about your outfit.”

She glances down at herself. When her eyes meet mine, there’s a tightness to her expression. Like she wants to laugh, but she won’t let herself. This ain’t no laughing matter.

And in any case, she sent me a text showing me her skirt and bare thighs... I shake my head. The idea of another man touching her almost sends me into a spin.

“What did I tell you about wearin’ shit where other men will be able to see your pussy?”

She frowns. “They can’t see it!”

I give her a look. “Show me.”

Her eyes go wide. “Go away.”

I walk to the little window and twist the blinds closed. “Do you really mean that?”

“My boss could...”

“Rock?” I smirk. “Trust me. I just buried him in enough security work to ensure he’s gone for the rest of the day. You, on the other hand... Doesn’t seem like you listened to a word I said.”

“That’s because you don’t own me,” she snarks back. “So I don’t have to listen to you telling me what I can and can’t wear. We had sex once. You don’t have any claim over me.”

“Like hell I don’t,” I bark. “Show me.”

“Fuck you.”

“Gladly. Just like you did last night.”

Her eyes narrow, and I take delight in her angered expression. This should be good.

She rode my cock like a fuckin’ pro.

She stands and then turns and wiggles her ass at me.

Too short for work.

“You can’t just come here, kick my customers out, and lock me in here,” she fires back. “And then demand to see my panties.”

I point at her. “I warned you that if you wore that short skirt again, I’d make you remove it and take it home for a trophy.”

I see the fire in her eyes, and I’m like a moth to a goddamn flame.

I stand there and watch her indignant face as she tries to pretend I don't affect her.

We both know I shouldn't have come. But we also know that we have a raging fire between us. And the only way to deal with a fire is to put it out...

## LUNA

TAG'S GAZE ROAMS OVER ME AS HIS EYEBROWS KNIT together, and I flinch. He does not look happy. Tough shit for him. He doesn't scare me.

“A trophy? Really, T?”

He stalks toward me, but I hold my own, staring him down as I put my hands on my hips.

“You're holding me against my will. That's a felony.”

He smirks. “Scream it from the rooftops, Lu, nobody will hear you, and if they do, nobody will care.”

“Right, because you're the almighty club's Sergeant at Arms. Do I need to get down on my knees and bow to you?”

He holds my glare. “No, but you can get down on your knees and suck cock.”

I fold my arms over my chest. “Not happening, T. Don't you have anything better to do?”

“Then why did you send that picture?” He waves the phone at me, ignoring my attempts to get rid of him.

We both know that I'm playing with fire. Awakening the beast. But what a beautiful beast he is.

“To provoke you.”

“And now you're complainin'.”

I huff. “I didn't think you'd accost me at work.”

“Clearly, you don't know me at all.”

He glances down my body, and I involuntarily shudder. This man has always had a way to unravel me. He doesn't even have to try.

But I thought he'd be busy at work, and we'd be able to catch up later... not at my office in the middle of the day.

"I could get fired," I whisper.

He snorts. "Doubt it. Come 'ere."

I stand my ground. "No. You come here if you really must."

"You tellin' me that you're not wet in your panties, Lu?"

I swallow hard. He'd be right, of course. I haven't been able to stop thinking about him after he left me dripping with his cum last night. He may have pounded me into next week, but that doesn't mean I've had my fill of him.

"That would be none of your business."

He leans toward me menacingly. "That would be *all* my business. Skirt off."

I narrow my eyes. "Make me." I know I'm only encouraging him, but surely, he won't...

He steps toward me, and his hands reach out to snake around my waist just as I turn. I don't know where I'm trying to run to. I can't go anywhere.

He pulls my back to his chest, and I'm panting like a wild animal as his mouth presses against my neck. "You want me to leave my mark on you, Lu, let everyone know who did it to you?"

I shake my head.

He snorts. "Not good enough for you?"

"No. I'm having dinner with Mom and Terrance this weekend."

His hold on me softens. "You are?"

I can feel his hard cock against my butt, and I so badly want him to soothe the ache. I need it.

And I hate how fucking needy I am for him.

“Yes. Mom wants to go shopping after.”

He runs his nose up and down my neck. He smells so frigging good. A mix of oil, spice, and cologne. There is something so sexy about the way Tag has always smelled.

His fingers still touch me lightly, but I swear to God, they feel seared into my skin.

Then he says, “You sore?”

Why does he even care if I’m sore? He’s gonna take what he wants anyway. And I’ll let him because I’m just as needy for it.

“No.”

He sucks on the fleshy part of my neck as I squirm and wriggle my ass back against him. I feel his hands cup my ass as he squeezes, then roughly pulls my skirt up so it’s rucked up against my hips.

He’s rough with me, and I like it.

When he reaches a hand between my legs, I spread my legs for him.

“Spreadin’ your legs for me like a good little bitch,” he murmurs.

“Asshole,” I mutter.

He chuckles, his hand running up the crease of my panties. They’re soaked, my clit throbbing. This man is a fucking menace on my body.

It calls to him on another level.

“Your pussy doesn’t think so.” He pushes my panties aside and runs two fingers through my crease, and I buck wildly when he circles my clit. I bite down so hard on my lip I taste blood.

“Someone’s very wet. Thought you didn’t care, Lu, that I don’t affect you.”

“You don’t... I was thinking about someone else.” It’s a lie, and I know I probably shouldn’t anger him, but right now, I’m past the point of caring.

“Liar.”

I groan when he pushes two fingers into my hole and starts to pump in and out. I press my hands against the wall as he cages me in.

“Tag,” I groan as his fingers slide in and out and his thumb brushes against my clit.

He can’t be doing this at work... He... *oh*.

“Tag,” I groan.

“Pull those tits out,” he demands. “Wanna see how hard those nipples are.”

A spark goes through me as I willingly do what he says, knowing he’s a goddamn asshole for his control over my body like this.

I fumble with the buttons, eager to let him get his hands on me, and when I’m three buttons down, I yank my bra down. My tits hang out nicely as his hand reaches around, and he fondles me from behind. I groan as I brush my ass against him, his fingers working furiously as I groan like I can’t get enough. His fingers curl, and with his thumb brushing my clit, I start to fall. As he pinches one nipple, I gasp and moan. One of his hands reaches up to press against my mouth as I come long and hard.

Grunting against my shoulder, he kisses the skin there. The gesture surprises me. Tag is never gentle.

He pulls his fingers out, then spins me to face him. Eyes dropping to my tits, I place my hands on his chest as I pant hard. His eyes darken as I take him in, my chest heaving.

He’s such a brute.

A beast.

But he’s my beast.

He stares at me and says, “Suck.”



I open my mouth, and he slides his two fingers inside as I taste myself. I reach for his cock, and he groans as I squeeze him through his jeans.

“Couldn’t just leave it alone,” he mutters.

When he pulls his fingers out, I say, “Bet you were already on your way here, before I even sent that picture.”

His nostrils flair, and I bite my lip, knowing what that does to him.

I squeeze harder and he groans. Then he yanks at his belt, loosening the buckle. He frees his zipper and shoves his jeans down to his thighs as his thick cock springs free.

I gasp as I step back. He moves closer.

“Don’t tell me you’re backin’ away, Lu. I’ll be sorely disappointed.”

Last night’s pounding left me speechless and sated. And I want to take him into my mouth so badly, but I also need him inside me.

“Why would I do that?” I counter. “When you clearly can’t stay away from me. The sooner you fuck me, the sooner you can go, and I can get back to work.”

He snorts and fondles my tits as I gasp at the sudden move. Then he moves his mouth to suck on one nipple and my eyes roll into the back of my head. He moves to the other, sucking, pulling, and nipping. His groans have me wrapping my arms around his neck as I enjoy the pleasure and pain.

Unfortunately, he doesn’t stay there long.

Swirling me around, he says, “Hands on the desk, ass out. Gonna fuck you like the little dick tease you are. Then I’m gonna rid you of that skirt and take it home, just like I promised.”

He wouldn’t... *Shit, he fucking would.*

I hate myself for doing as he says, but I need him. I hold my skirt up to secure it farther around my waist, and then plant my hands on the desk.

He reaches down and tugs my panties aside, lines his cock up, and sinks into me as my breath hitches. He doesn't even give me a second to adjust. He slides out again and slides back in, and then starts to fuck me in slow, pounding thrusts as he holds one hand at the back of my neck, and the other at my hip.

Overbearing son of a bitch.

But I guess this is what you get when you play with fire.

Now Tag is fucking my pussy over my desk, and I can't get enough of it.

"You gonna play nice, Lu, or am I gonna have to keep punishin' you?" he growls, his thrusts getting faster.

I'm almost delirious with his movements. His cock stretches me as I enjoy every single thrust and touch he has to offer.

"Isn't it so much better when I'm a bad girl, T?" I throw back.

He grunts again, fucking me harder, his name on my lips as I try to keep my words to myself. He can't know how much I really want him. How much I think of him. It'll only lead to disaster. Just like the last time.

But last time we didn't get this far. He rejected me and told me no. He had guilt written all over him then, so what changed? Did he just stop fighting it?

"I'm gonna come, T," I cry.

He doesn't let up as my orgasm takes hold, and I moan his name while he keeps pounding me in and out.

"Gotta keep pushin' me," he growls. "Know I can't stay the fuck away from you, Lu. I fuckin' can't..."

"Oh," I cry when he pumps me so hard and fast I see stars. His balls slap my pussy, and the noise could be heard downtown. Papers and shit fly off my desk as I fail at holding on to them as much as I do my own sanity. He is just so damn good.

So. Fucking. Good.

His cock fills me. I squeeze his dick with every thrust, and he makes a guttural sound in the back of his throat that I know only too well.

He stills, roaring his release as he spills his cum inside me and I take it all.

Holy shit.

Sex with Tag isn't just fucking amazing, it's a goddamn rite of passage.

We're both a panting, heaving mess when I hunch over the desk, as he brushes my hair to one side and kisses my neck. Never my lips.

"Fuck, Lu."

"You said that last night, genius," I snark.

He pulls out, groaning as he does, and I feel his cum dripping all down my legs as I reach for the tissues on my desk.

He plucks two out of my hand before I get to use them and cleans himself up as I do the same.

"Happy now?" I ask, tucking my tits back into my bra as I tug my skirt down.

"Not until I get that skirt."

I huff. "You're not having my skirt, Tag. Go away."

"Got dick and now you're sendin' me on my way?" He arches a brow. "Next time, I'll go out to that workshop and fuck you on the hood of a truck, so everyone will know that—"

"What? I'm yours?"

He runs a hand through his hair. I know that he was about to say exactly that.

*That I'm his.*

But I'm not. So I don't know why we have to keep going around the houses like this. It's too damn hard.

“That we’re fuckin’ and to stay the fuck away from you,” he replies.

I roll my eyes, securing my panties back in place. “We’re not fucking, T. We had sex in my office because we both wanted to get off. That’s it. Period. The end.”

He does that eyebrow thing again. “You really think that’s true? That you won’t be wantin’ to bounce around on my cock again tonight?” He smirks. “Your pussy needs this, babe. You know it. I know it. My dick knows it. Send me any more texts like that and I’ll spank your ass and not care who sees me do it. Then you won’t be able to sit down for a week.”

“Promises, promises,” I sing-song. “Now if you’ll kindly let me get back to my desk.”

“Skirt.”

I stare up at him. “You can’t be serious.”

“Try me.”

“Fuck you, Tag. I’m not taking my skirt off. What will I wear?”

He reaches for the pair of overalls in the corner that one of the guys must have left there and I gape at him.

“These will do.”

“I’m not wearing those.”

“Babe, you don’t call the shots when you send me shit like that. Gotta know there’re consequences to your actions.”

I put my hands on my hips. “You want this skirt, tough guy? Then you can try to remove it from my body.”

I smile smugly, knowing he doesn’t have the time or patience for that. But instead of rolling his eyes and stepping away and pissing off, he just shakes his head.

“Gettin’ your clothes off you is half the fun. Not that I’ve ever had to wrestle them off your body. You drop them willingly.”

“Well, I hate to be a foregone conclusion,” I sigh. “But I need my skirt. If I take it off now, it’ll mean I’ll be prancing around in my lacy panties. I’m sure Rock and the boys won’t mind...”

“Fine,” he grunts, pointing at me. “But don’t think this means we’re even. We’re not.”

He unlocks the door and pulls it open.

Lucky for me, nobody is waiting outside. It wasn’t like we were quiet when we were banging against my desk.

“Like I said. I’ll text you if I need a booty call,” I sing out after him.

He leaves me without saying another word.

Goddamn asshole.

I pull myself together, fix my skirt, tuck my blouse back in and fix my hair.

That goddamn beast just barged in here and made a goddamn mess, and not just my desk and all the shit lying all over the floor.

I quickly move to pick it all up before anyone sees and wonders what the hell happened.

I can’t help but have a big grin on my face as I do.

He’s a big, bossy asshole who only cares about himself. I know that. He doesn’t act loving in any way, definitely not tender in the way he fucks me. Yet my body screams for him like I’m having a full-body wax. I can’t shake him.

And now he thinks we’re fuck buddies.

I have to make some things clear. I don’t want him thinking that he can just go around screwing whoever he wants. He made a point about making sure I wasn’t doing that with any other man. Like he’d stand for it. And second best isn’t my style. I wonder if he actually realizes I’m being serious.

If I saw him with a sweet butt now, I’d probably slice his goddamn throat.

I don't have any clue what it is this man really wants. My body, yes, that's a given.

But with Tag, it's never just about sex. It never was back then, and it isn't now.

He can deny it all he wants, but he doesn't treat me like the other women in his life. He's friends with Summer, and grumpy to most of the other girls but doesn't hate on women. I know his mom not being around for a long time had an affect on him, not that he'd ever admit it.

He comes back for more. He never does that at church.

The way he just came in here and did what he did... and I let him... Not to mention the fact that I fucking enjoyed it. It wasn't like I was pushing him away or telling him to stop.

Tag is exciting in bed and he's fucking good at it. No wonder I've had a smile plastered on my face for the last few days. Even now, I feel like humming a little tune while I put my desk back together.

He's always been a challenge, but he's worse now than he's ever been. The man doesn't wear his heart on his sleeve, and he never will, but back when we were younger, he was capable of being tender. Of allowing me in. Now he's a closed book and I don't know the real reason why.

His football career ending fucked with his head, and his dad was hard on him. But I really thought Tag was over all of that. He also has never spoken about his mom and what happened there. He must hold bitter resentment toward her, especially her wanting to come back into his life after he got drafted and was offered a multi-million-dollar contract.

That's fucking shitty. Maybe he just hates women in general? No. That's not true. He adores my mom. She's the only one he'll pretend to listen to.

Even though I know just about everything good and bad about Thomas, I can't seem to put him behind me and move on.

He's alpha to the extreme, and I dig that about him. He's protective, not just of me, but of everyone in the club. Yes,

that's part of his job as SAA, but also him as a person.

I know for a fact that he'd lay down his life for any of us in the club, not just the brothers.

In that regard, Tag is very selfless.

I just wish I could get him to smile more. To not take life so seriously. To let his hair down and have some fun.

Somewhere in the back of my mind, I know I have to snap out of it. I can't go daydreaming about a future with Tag. But maybe we can just do the friends with benefits thing?

If he's jealous about me being around other men and not wearing revealing clothes, then it proves he cares. He's not just a possessive asshole. He must care deep down.

Or at least that's what I tell myself to feel better.

**TAG**

THINGS WERE SIMPLER WHEN SHE WASN'T HERE.

I could do whatever the fuck I wanted and have no one nagging at me about shit, but now even my fucking conscience won't let up. But ever since Luna got back and Cash gave her a job, she's always around.

Not that I mind looking at her. I don't. She's every man's wet dream with her long legs, her wide hips, thighs and big tits. Those doe eyes, though, that's what gets me every fuckin' time. Added to that, her hair, which should be longer, hangs around her chin in a messy but sexy fuckin' style that makes my cock hard. If she grew her hair out again, it'd mean I'd have something to grab onto. I should suggest it, not that the woman will listen.

She doesn't see sense.

She knows what she did sending that photo, and I fell into her trap. Willingly.

The memory of seeing Luna bent over her desk will live in my mind forever.

I can't fuckin' concentrate. Which is why I'm out front of her place, her new car parked in the drive next to me. I had the dealership deliver it to my garage.

I'm in two minds about her driving it. For one, it's a powerful car. And another thing is she'll take issue with it. She won't wanna think I'm buying her off, which I'm not. She's



not a goddamn whore. I'd never fuckin' think that, nor treat her like one.

But her safety is number one on my priority list, and if I have to say it's on loan, then I will. Anything to get her to be fuckin' reasonable.

I let myself into her house and immediately I get a text.

That you?

I roll my eyes and punch back a quick text as I begin to mount the stairs.

Who else?

Then I realize the TV is on in the den and I halt in my tracks.

She's still up?

It's late and I wasn't going to come by tonight, not after what happened at lunch in her office. But I've already got a goddamn lead around my cock when it comes to her, and all she has to do is yank the chain and here I am.

"Where are you, woman?" I bark.

"In the kitchen," she sing-songs.

Someone sounds happy.

I'd like to think that's because of me and what I did to her earlier. I adjust my dick as I remember that sweet fuckin' ass of hers in the air and my cock disappearing in and out of that sweet pussy.

I try to tell myself that's why I'm here. That's all I fuckin' want. But I know I'm lying to myself.

"What the fuck?" I say, glancing around the kitchen.

She's baking and the kitchen is a total mess. There are bowls and dishes everywhere, as well as ingredients from here to high heaven.

I lean against the kitchen island and fold my arms over my chest.

“I’m baking,” she declares.

I can’t help but smirk at her goofy expression. Fuck’s sake. She’s so much hotter when she’s happy and not hurling abuse or insults at me.

“Really? Could’ve fooled me. Looks like you’re makin’ a goddamn mess.”

She shrugs. “As long as you don’t tell my landlord.”

Smartass.

“He dishes out punishment in other ways.”

Her brown eyes meet mine and I swallow hard.

I didn’t think I was fucked, but that voice in my head is telling me to shove everything off that counter and fuck her on top of it, almost has a hold over me.

I can’t fuckin’ wait to be inside her again.

She’s my addiction.

The only one I want.

*The only one I want?*

What the fuckin’ fuck is wrong with me?

“Well, you’ll be happy to note that it’s all for a good cause.”

I have to admit, it does smell good in here.

I give her a chin lift. “What’s on the menu?”

“Grandma’s pecan pie.”

“Get the fuck out of here.”

She knows that’s my favorite. Her mom makes it for Thanksgiving.

“And some chocolate chip cookies I thought I’d take to work for the boys.”

The idea irks me. I push off the island and go take a peek at one of the cooling trays.

I snag a cookie and stuff it in my mouth. It actually tastes pretty good.

“Didn’t know you baked,” I say, turning to face her.

She has a fuckin’ *NOLA Sweet Treats Bakery* apron on over her pjs, and I bite my bottom lip as I watch her ass move while she puts the pie together.

“I don’t,” she replies.

I come up behind her as she continues to work.

“These cookies are all mine. Got me?”

She shakes her head. “The boys never get treats.”

“What are they, fuckin’ dogs? They want treats, they can go over to Indi’s and fuckin’ buy their own.”

“Are you getting jealous over my cookies?”

I reach around and cup her breasts. She tries to slap my hands away, but it only makes me grasp harder.

“No need to be. Your cookies are mine.”

“Speaking of which. Just to clarify...since this clearly isn’t a one-night thing... Your dick’s mine, I’m assuming? No sweet butts for you while we’re fucking.”

I massage her tits, nuzzling my face into her neck. She smells like fuckin’ caramel cream pie.

“You really think I’ve got time for that shit, as well as you?” I snort.

“Good point.”

“Shouldn’t be here,” I mutter. “But you and your fuckin’ mouth.”

I tilt her head so she looks at me. I so badly want to take that mouth...but I know what it means if I do.

She parts her lips as I swallow hard, my throat suddenly feeling like sandpaper. We stare at one another.

“Why?” she whispers.

I frown. “Why what?”

“Why won’t you kiss me?”

She knows the reason why.

If I kiss her on the mouth, it all ends here. She’ll be mine for good. There ain’t no way on this earth that I’ll ever let a man kiss her after me. Which is why it can’t happen.

When I don’t answer, she sighs. “You used to kiss me.”

I clear my throat. “Yeah, and look how much trouble that got us both in.”

“We’re consenting adults, for Christ’s sake. And we’re fooling around, this isn’t serious, like you keep saying. So what does it matter?”

“You’ll want more.” It’s harsh, but it’s the truth. It’s also true that I’ll want more too. And I can’t give her more. Not like this.

“Don’t you mean *you* will?” she fires back.

I wish for once I knew what was going on in that pretty head of hers.

“No strings,” I reiterate. “It’s just fuckin’.”

I pinch her nipple, and she groans, pushing her ass into my cock. I’m hard, just like I always am with her, and I grunt at the feeling of her rubbing against me.

“Have I got you tongue tied, T?” she muses.

I move my mouth to her neck, and I’m delighted when I see the bite mark and the purple bruise I left there from sucking.

“Nice war paint.”

“I had to cover that with makeup,” she grumbles. “Next time you leave a hickey, could you do it somewhere where nobody can see it.”

“What’s the fun in that?”

I keep fondling her, the scent of the baking as well as her and the fact I know she'll be soaking wet have me ready and able to repeat what we did this morning.

“Tag,” she groans when I pluck her nipples repeatedly.

“Need to fuck you,” I growl.

“I’ll burn the pie.”

“Fuck the pie.”

She bucks into my cock, and I start to undo her apron.

I need her wearing this and only this while I eat her out on the bench.

She yelps when I shove her pj pants down her legs and reach between her legs.

Just as I guessed. Soaking.

“Tag,” she cries.

I brush my fingers over her clit brutally, and she gasps.

“So fuckin’ wet all the time,” I say, my voice gravelly.

“Only for you.”

I snort. “Better be.”

“Let me just check the cookies,” she pleads. “My first pie is almost done.”

I like that she made two pies. Luna knows I’m a man who can eat.

She steps out of her pj bottoms, and I watch her bare ass as she bends down to open the oven, my eyes glued to her body.

She should be fuckin’ illegal.

“Good job I checked,” she mutters as she pulls out a tray of just done cookies, and the first pie.

It’s all cooked to perfection.

“Smells good,” I say, giving her a chin lift.

She shoves the second pie in and then adjusts the temperature on the dial, turning back to face me.

“Sit on the counter,” I order.

I like her cheeks flushed like this. I can't wait for her to ride my face.

“So bossy, T.”

“Just do it. No lip.”

She has a smudge of cookie dough or something smeared on the side of her face, her hair is a mess, and those rosy cheeks... I'd be lying if I said I didn't come here just to fuck her, but she makes it so fuckin' impossible to concentrate on anything else.

“Tag!” she squeals when I lift her and flip the apron up so I can see her pussy.

“Fuck,” I mutter. I move my fingers between her legs and stroke her as she cries out.

Her hands reach into my hair as I spread her legs wider.

I've been dying to get my fill of her like this ever since I had a taste the other night, but it wasn't nearly enough.

I slide a finger, then two, into her pussy, and she moans my name in a long drawl.

“Lie back,” I tell her.

She does as I say. Shoving leftover ingredients out of the way, I hook one of her legs over my shoulder and lean down. I bury my face in her pussy and eat her out like I'm a starved man.

And maybe I am. Starved for her pussy, that is.

I latch onto her clit as she squirms and I hold on to her, pulling her even closer toward me.

I can't get enough. I can't get close enough.

“Oh, Tag,” she cries as I slide two fingers inside as my tongue laps at her clit. “I'm gonna come, T...”

And she does, her explosion echoes off the walls as she screams and I keep pumping her.

I pull my fingers out and run a hand over her torso and up to her chest. I'm delighted that she's rucked up her pj top so her breasts spill out behind the apron.

"Sit up," I command. "Need these tits."

With one hand still playing with her pussy, I latch onto one tit with my mouth and suck her nipple.

Our eyes meet and her mouth forms a perfect 'O' as I suck and suck and suck.

Fuck, she feels so good. *Too good.*

"Tag!" she cries when I pump her pussy with my fingers again. In and out. In and out. I brush

her clit with my thumb, and she starts to tremble.

I'm so hard in my jeans that I have to let my cock out any second before I come in my pants.

I'm wound so tightly around this woman that I'm like a fuckin' teenager who can't hold off from coming too soon.

I move my mouth to her other nipple, latching on and sucking hard as she squirms and curses and drags her nails up my back. She comes again, throwing her head back as I pull away and watch her tits bouncing in my face.

*So fuckin' perfect.*

I can feel myself leaking. Need to fuck her hard and fast, but when she reaches forward toward my cock, I've got a better idea.

"On your knees," I tell her.

I pull her off the bench, her apron haphazard and loose as her tits spill out the sides, and my cock grows that much harder.

"T," she groans when I swiftly unbuckle my belt, yank my zip down, and then my jeans.

My cock springs out. It's fat and throbbing, and I know it'll take one fuckin' blow and I'll be toast.

She grips it as I stand over her, the sight of her like this a goddamn dream. I fist her hair and lower her mouth onto my cock, and before she can stop, I'm pumping my hips and she's groaning as she takes all of me. When her eyes shift up to mine, I have to look away.

I start to come. In all of five fuckin' seconds of her hot lips on my dick, I blow like a little pissant.

She gasps as I loosen my hold and she laps me up as I come down her throat, then I paint her lips and finally those big juicy tits with my seed.

Fuck.

She looks so goddamn hot.

"Jesus," I mutter.

"I think I could get used to baking." She giggles as my lips twitch.

"So pretty on your knees for me," I blurt out before I can stop myself.

She licks her lips, and most of my cum that I sprayed on them, and starts to rise from the floor as I tuck my dick back into my pants.

I pull her to me, and before I can stop myself, my lips find hers.

I taste myself on her lips, but that shit doesn't bother me, what does is the noise of surprise she makes as I jolt her closer.

I hold her flush to my body, and I know I shouldn't be getting this close, but fuck me if my body reacts before my damn head can catch up.

Our tongues mingle, and she groans. It's such a sweet sound, it only encourages me to take her mouth rough, enjoying her succulent lips as I cup her face.

I just wanted a little taste...

"You like it?" I murmur.



She looks up at me with hooded eyes and nods. “Yes, T. I like it.”

“Want me to stay and fuck you in your bed?”

She nods. “Yes. I’d like that.”

“Finish bakin’ that other pie while I wash up?”

“Bossy bitch,” she muses.

I pinch her ass, and she yelps. “Don’t be puttin’ those pants back on. Want you cookin’ naked for me.”

“That’d be right up your alley, wouldn’t it?” She rolls her eyes.

I chuckle, swiping another cookie as I head upstairs to take a shower.

I’m fucked. But I’m tired and I need a hot shower and to enjoy myself some pussy when I get out.

I’ll leave the car keys downstairs. I don’t want to get into a thing with her tonight. And while most people would be grateful for a new car, with Luna, her independence is everything to her. If I make her feel like a charity case, I’ll never hear the end of it.

Luna’s bathroom is huge. I could almost put my whole room at church in here, not that I’m up in that room much these days. Only to sleep if I’ve had too much to drink. Haven’t fucked a sweet butt in... well, it’s been a while.

I meant it when I said Luna takes up all my fuckin’ time, not to mention energy and patience.

*And I fuckin’ kissed her on the mouth.*

Undressing, I turn the taps on and step into her massive shower, pulling out my hair tie.

The whole bathroom is white with marble and gold taps. It’s tasteful and I’m glad to see Luna taking care of the house like it’s her own. Chicks are so much neater than dudes.

Of course her shower is loaded with a hundred fuckin’ bottles of shit. I only need body wash and some shampoo.

Eventually, I find the shampoo and soap up my hair.

This rain shower shit is good. I should think about getting one of those for my place.

I'm just lathering up with her apple-scented shower gel when I hear the door open. A few moments later, Luna steps into the shower with me. Her apron's long gone as she presses her palms to my chest.

Leaning up, she brushes a small kiss to each of my pecs, and I groan at her slightest touch. I know we're not gonna leave this shower before I fuck her again.

I reach between her legs, my dick growing harder when I feel her arousal. She's always so responsive. Such a good fuckin' girl.

"Like my cum in your mouth?" I taunt, bending to brush my lips over hers.

"Yes," she whispers as I back her up against the tiles.

"Say it."

"I liked your cum in my mouth."

"What else did you like, princess?"

"Your dick down my throat."

"Yeah?"

"Uh huh."

"You gonna let anyone else fuck you like that?"

She shakes her head.

"You sure?" I prompt.

"I'm sure."

I cage her in. She's a tall woman, but I still tower over her.

I cup one side of her face, and my other hand rests on her hip.

"Gonna be between us?" I ask.

"Only if you want it to be."

Her words shock me.

I frown. “You wouldn’t care, if people knew...about us?”

“They wouldn’t care if we were fucking, T.”

I give her a look. “You know that’s not what I mean... about the... stepsibling thing.”

“Your brothers love you, T, they wouldn’t give you a hard time. Maybe Nevada and Riot, but you’d just fuck them up so they’d shut their mouths.”

I don’t know why the fuck I’m even bringing this up. “What about your mom and my Dad?”

“We’re getting ahead of ourselves, aren’t we? I thought it was just fucking?”

I purse my lips and press my forehead to hers. “Then why can’t I stop thinking’ about you?”

Her breath hitches in her chest at my words. “You can’t?”

“I’m a pussy boy for admittin’ it,” I say. “But ever since that night at Solo, I haven’t been able to stay away. You got some kinda woo woo shit goin’ on I don’t know about?”

She shakes her head. “Nope. Just pussy.”

I smirk. “Not just that.” I kiss her lips softly. “If this were just about pussy, I wouldn’t be back for seconds or thirds, you know how I work.”

She makes a face. “Yes, I know how you *used* to work. Now you don’t bone sweet butts anymore.”

“Lu,” I groan, pressing my body flush against hers.

“I know, T,” she sighs. “I know.”

She runs her hands over my body, and I realize with fascination at how my heart skips a beat at every touch. She loves my body. She loves touching me and squeezing my biceps, ass, and cock.

“So fuckin’ beautiful,” I whisper. She glances up at me, prompting me to ask, “What?”

“You’re.... You can be so sweet,” she murmurs.

I grunt. “Don’t go fuckin’ shoutin’ that shit around.”

My dick prods against her stomach as she looks down. I can’t tear my eyes from her face, though.

I need to feel and see her every reaction.

For the first time in my life, I need to be her everything.

And that is the scariest idea I think I’ve ever had.

## LUNA

### DAD

Tonight. My place. I'll send a car.

I stare at the message and wince.

I finally called my dad back yesterday and he said he needed to see me. That in itself is never a good thing.

I feel dread in my stomach when I think about how much he's going to ask of me, and how I can politely let him down. I owe him the money back and I've been saving as much as I can, but I've got nowhere near fifty grand. When Gary took basically all my cash, I had no choice but to live frugally.

Here I was thinking my dear old dad was being a nice guy, when in reality, it was Tag who I'm paying rent to? What a fucking joke. I make a mental note to have it out with my mom because she would've known. She and Tag are as thick as thieves.

I don't like the idea of him taking care of me like that. I've always prided myself in fending for myself, even if my dad probably thinks I'm a mooch because I took money from him. If only he knew the truth.

I wear a nice dress and do my hair and makeup. Dad prefers it if I don't look like something that just rolled out of bed, and for some reason I always try to look as best as I possibly can.

A part of me wants to rebel and wear my torn jeans, battered converse sneakers and my Guns N' Roses t-shirt, but for some reason, I still seek his approval.

I swallow hard as the car pulls up to his exclusive three-story townhouse. Kind of him to send a car, even though I know it's because he'll get to determine when I leave. I can't just make my escape whenever I've had enough. Being at his mercy isn't something that I enjoy, but I'll hear what he has to say.

I know that he's going to try to convince me to come work for him, and I'm dreading that part.

I'm helping Rock interview this week, and I can finally start moving things over to Jas's office to start my new job. Things are looking up.

Then there's Tag and the new car he left in my driveway.

I shake my head as I recall walking into my messy kitchen from the night before and seeing a set of keys with a large pink fluffy keyring on the tag and note, saying: *I took your skirt.*

I stared at the note and then the keys and ran outside.

He left a G-Wagon in my driveway.

I texted him immediately.

WTF?

You good?

You left a car in my drive

It's on loan... Figured you needed a ride

And that was it.

I blinked a couple of times before sliding into the driver's seat to poke around. The damn thing is brand new.

I shake my head at the way Tag goes about things.

I know that he bought that car for me. He'll just say that it's for me to use because he knows I'm stubborn. The car is amazing. Beautiful. But it also reminds me what a failure I am that I can't even afford my own car.

Here I am living in a beautiful part of the city in an amazing townhouse, and I was thinking all along that my dad was the one who helped out. More to the point, he didn't correct me when I thanked him for helping out.

What the hell is wrong with him?

My hands are clammy when I finally step out from the car, and I wrap my shawl around my shoulders.

I told Payden I was coming, and she was concerned. She knows how much my dad upsets me, and after what happened in his office all those years ago, nothing good can come from meeting with him. But I have to face the music.

When his housekeeper answers the door, she shows me into my father's study. I stupidly thought that maybe we'd be having dinner together. How lame.

I check out the selection of books on his shelf, many of which are first editions. The fire is lit, and his office is exactly what you'd expect from a man who has made millions of dollars, yet talk of my inheritance is a dirty word. After what he did to my mom, I don't need his charity anyway.

Of course, like in his usual fashion, he keeps me waiting for a long time.

I start to wonder if I'm even going to be graced with his presence when he finally arrives.

"Luna," he says, looking me over. "You look...lovely."

He doesn't embrace me, instead he walks behind his desk and takes a seat in the chair behind.

I stand there like a fool as he ushers me into the seat opposite him.

My heart rate spikes, and my palms start to sweat.

He certainly still knows how to make me feel nervous.

“Hey, Dad,” I say, forcing a smile. “How have you been?”

He glances across at me and I swallow hard. “I’ve been fine, Luna. How is my prodigal daughter? You’re finally back from whatever it was you were off doing for two years.”

I nod. “Yes, I was finding myself. Getting my shit together, so to speak. After what Brian did to me...”

“I see. And I’m glad that my money helped with that. I’m assuming now you’re back for good?”

“Yes. I’ve been working for—”

“The NOLA Rebels?” He frowns. “Luna, I do not approve of you working for thugs when you had a perfectly good opportunity to come and work for me. How do you think it will look if word gets out that my only child is involved in a motorcycle gang?”

“They’re not a gang,” I say, steeling my back. *They’re more of a family to me than you’ve ever been.* “They’re great to work for, actually. I’ve been running the office and I’ve not a promotion at...”

He waves a hand at me like he doesn’t care. “Luna, when is it you’re going to just stick to one thing and one thing only? How many jobs have you had in the last ten years?”

I feel my confidence wavering. “I don’t see why that’s relevant. I like to change things up. If something isn’t working then why should I stay in a job I hate?”

“You don’t give things a chance,” he goes on, disappointment laced in his tone. “Just think of where you could be now if you’d have taken the opportunity to work for me years ago.”

I shake my head. “Working for an asshole like Brian, do you mean? No thanks, count me out.”

“Brian has come a long way,” he goes on. “Which is why I wanted to talk to you tonight.”

I frown. “About Brian?” *What the hell is he up to now?*



“About your life, Luna. I’ve let you have your freedom, your fun, and now it’s time to repay me the favor of that freedom. We always knew this day was coming.”

I stare at him and try not to let the tears show in my eyes.

*I will do anything to not have to go work for him.*

“I’ve got a little money saved,” I chime. “I’ve always had the intention of paying you back.”

“Forget about the money,” he says, his voice level as he turns to stand and goes to pour himself a whiskey from the decanter on the sideboard. “Consider it an advance from your inheritance.”

“My...inheritance?” I stammer. “I didn’t think...”

“You never once asked me about it.”

“Because I never want to come off greedy.” *Especially since you gave Mom fuck all to help raise me while you squandered your fortune and we had to struggle.* “I was raised differently.”

He shoots me a look, but I play innocent. He barely had a hand in my upbringing and we both know it. My mom taught me about ethics and values. All my dad taught me was how to brace for disappointment.

“You’re not a shark, Luna, you never have been. To make it in this world you have to be ruthless. You have to stay one step ahead of everyone else.” *Is he going to get to the point?* “It’s how Shields Insurance grew from what it was back then to the multi-million-dollar business it is today. I persevered. I pushed through. I did things that nobody else was willing to do. That’s how you get ahead. That’s how you succeed in this world.”

*Does he think I’m a total idiot? And why does he act like I’m such a disappointment to him?*

*What did I do that was so wrong?*

I shake my head. “I can’t be like that, Dad. I’m just not made that way. I’m sorry.”

“I know,” he agrees. “Which is why I have another proposal.”

*Oh, this should be good. Maybe he’s planning on auctioning me off to the highest bidder...*

I stare at him, waiting to hear what god-awful plan he has for me next.

“It’s time you settled down,” he goes on. “Even though you’ve had certain...*indiscretions* in the past, we can overlook that. You’re still my daughter, and your name carries a lot of weight in this town.” *Oh, God, is he really going to sell me?* “You’d make a good housewife. With a little bit of styling and couture, you may even make a great one.”

The room spins.

*A housewife?*

*What the fuck is he on about?*

“Dad?” I stammer, lost for words. “I’m not following. I’m not going to be a housewife...”

He sighs like I’m dumb, taking his glass as he swirls the amber liquid around and slowly walks back toward the desk.

“I have a proposal, it’s a generous one at that. One I’m sure you’ll agree is more than adequate, given your current situation.”

My ears begin to ring. “My current situation?” My mouth feels full of cotton balls, and I start to sweat.

“Your unmarried state, Luna. You may not think it’s important, but to a Shields, prestige and status are all that matters. People will respect you if you marry well. You’ll have a good life, and you may even learn to accept your husband, if you give it a chance.”

*My unmarried state?* He says it like it’s some kind of disease that I need to be cured of.

*He can’t be saying what I think he’s saying. He can’t.*

“My husband?” I try not to spit the words out. “What are you talking about?”

He sits once more and slides his glass onto the bronze coaster as he lays his hands on the arms of his chair. Like he really is not just CEO of his company, but of me as well.

“I want you to marry, Luna. A man of my choosing.”

My eyes go round. I open my mouth to speak but no sound comes out.

“Marry?”

He nods once. “It’ll be arranged, of course. I’m sure the subject of your inheritance has come up with your mother plenty of times. I did, after all, attempt to help you with college before you moved, hence moving your funds into a trust account that can’t be accessed until—”

“Until you have me where you want me?” I fire back.

He purses his lips. “You can choose to look at it like that, or you can choose to embrace this like a Shields and realize you have duties and responsibilities if you carry this name.”

“Would you prefer it if I take Mom’s name?” I fire back. “She did, in fact, raise me after you left us. Maybe it isn’t me that needs to *embrace* my duties and responsibilities, Dad.”

“You know nothing about it or about adult relationships,” he fires back. “You don’t know what happened between your mother and me, you were just a child.”

“I know you cheated and left us, left her broken-hearted and alone. There is no excuse for cheating. None at all. Mom worked two, sometimes three jobs, to support us...”

His nostrils flair. “Of course she would have painted me as the devil in all of this,” he mutters. “She was the one who didn’t want to work things out, did she ever tell you that? I left when she gave me no other options. She wanted me out, never wanting to salvage our relationship.”

He’s a liar. He’s a fucking liar.

And why does he act as if I’m a child who can’t comprehend anything? I’m thirty years old. I know how relationships work. I know how cheating works and I know how a dead-beat dad works. It makes me sick.

“I can’t believe that you’re throwing this back on Mom,” I say, shaking my head. “She was devastated when you left. We had to struggle, Dad. There were times when she couldn’t make ends meet and you didn’t care. You let us struggle and Mom didn’t fight you for a dime.”

“I did care!” he roars. “She wouldn’t let me have custody of you. Could I have fought her? Taken her from you? I could have, but I didn’t. If that makes me an asshole of a father, then so be it. I’ll live with it. Can she say the same?”

He’s also a gaslighter. He didn’t fight my mom for custody because I didn’t fit into his plans. And he blames her for *his* cheating?

I shake my head as I fight back the tears. “You never wanted me,” I whisper. “I was just the thorn in your side. The daughter you hid away because I didn’t fit the mold for what you wanted. An heir. I’ve always been an embarrassment to you and I’ve no idea why you hate me so much, why I’ve always got to live up to this ideal of impressing you and making you notice me. All I ever wanted was your attention, Dad. To know that you cared about me. And I never got that. I never wanted your money or any of this, I just wanted your time.”

His face twists in disgust. “How can you impress me when you can’t even get your shit together?” he snarls. “Time is money, Luna. You, of all people, know that life isn’t a romance book. Life is hard, and if you want to push your life failures on me for being a bad father, then do it. It won’t make me change my mind on this. You have a choice to make, and I certainly hope that you reconsider. What else have you honestly got to offer a well-bred man if not for your name?”

My mouth opens as I gape at him. “You really are a first-class asshole,” I say. Words just won’t form even though I want to scream at him. But I have to know one thing. “I can only imagine what well-bred prodigy you had lined up for me.”

He glares at me and says, “Brian will be most disappointed.”

My eyes go wide. “Brian?”

“Don’t look so shocked. I am his mentor, after all, and he’s going to be my new CEO. He’s a good fit for you, Luna. You’d do well to give him another chance. On his arm, there isn’t a person in this town who won’t look up to you.”

I screw up my nose. “You’re sick,” I tell him. “He cheated on me...with my best friend!”

He waves it off, along with his annoyance. “We all make mistakes, but he’s always held a candle for you. Even after you tipped coffee all over him in his office in front of clients.” He gives me a look. “You certainly didn’t get your raging temper from me.”

“Really? I don’t get it from Mom,” I snark back. My temper is *always* from his side. There isn’t a mean bone in my mom’s body. “All this time, I thought somehow you were redeemable. That you were just cold in the middle and over time you’d thaw out, but now I understand that you’re not just cold, you’re rotten. To the very core. I wouldn’t marry Brian fucking Miller if he was the last man on earth or you offered me a million dollars!”

“How about two million?” he counters.

I step back as if he’s slapped me.

He’s willing to sell me to Brian—the man I hate most in the world aside from Gary—for a king’s ransom?

What a fucking piece of shit.

I’d rather eat dog’s balls than do that.

“Two million dollars?” I stammer.

He smirks, cracking his neck. “Hard to resist, isn’t it, daughter dear? You’d also have a beautiful home, cars, more money than you ever dreamed of, and you’d receive five hundred thousand dollars for each child you produce.”

I think I’m going to be sick.

He’s paying me to be the “perfect” daughter?

“I have to go,” I say, wafting my arm to the door.

“I’ll need your decision soon, Luna,” he yells after me.

“Go to hell!” I yell back at him, slamming the door as I sink down onto the front steps and sob.

I hate him.

I fucking hate him.

The things he said about my mom.

The things he said about me.

And now Brian is the son he never had? What in the actual fuck?

This can’t be happening.

I pull out my phone and text Payden that I’m coming over. Then I book an Uber.

There is no way I want anything of my damn asshole father’s. He’ll only hold it against me.

I’ve never been so disappointed and so confused in all of my life.

My father thinks he can just throw money at me, and I’ll sing and dance like his little puppet.

He doesn’t care about me. Two million dollars is a small price to pay to restore his reputation as a kind and caring father with the perfect family. Fuck knows he needs the publicity after the headlines in recent years.

I cringe as I think about being Brian’s... No, I can’t even say it. I don’t want to touch him with a ten-foot pole, much less have his children.

Is this the idea that they’ve been cooking up all this time?

My heart aches.

He’s broken me in ways I could never imagine.

Money and an arranged marriage don’t fix this. Nothing does.

Today will always be the day that I cut my father out of my life. This time, for good.

**TAG**

“IT’S TIME,” I AGREE AS HARLEM NODS. I LOOK AFTER THE prospects, and Pipes has paid his dues. He’s been a good prospect, and he’ll be an even better brother.

Not only did he single-handedly save Deanna from an attempted kidnapping, but he’s stepped up to the plate in times of trouble. Always being reliable and using his head.

Unlike Giggs and Rodeo, who are both loose cannons, he’s proved he can be trusted.

“This weekend,” Cash declares, banging down the gavel.

Patching Pipes in has been on the cards for a while, and he’ll be happy to be out of that prospect gear.

“I’ll get his cut organized, and have one of the women sew the patches on,” I say as Cash and Ryder give me the nod. “Least somethin’ good can come out of all of the shit that’s happened this past year. Fuck knows we all need some excuse for a party.”

They all stare at me.

I’m a man of few words. Even if I speak a sentence, they gape at me like I’m some freakshow.

“You okay?” Ryder prompts.

I roll my eyes. “I’m fine.”

“I dunno, bro, you have bags under your eyes,” Nevada pipes up. “Not been gettin’ a whole lotta sleep?”

Nobody knows about me and Luna, only Harlem, and he won't say shit.

It's not like Nevada is gonna be riding down Luna's neck of the woods anytime soon, hence one of the reasons we haven't been to my place.

I was thinking maybe I should take her there, but I'm undecided.

She's never seen my apartment. Nobody has. It's the one thing I have that's mine.

I glance at the message as it pops up on my phone and quickly flip the damn thing over before any nosy bastard sees what Luna just texted me.

I miss your cock. Come over tonight?

The woman is insatiable. I like to fuck, but Luna can keep up with me like I never expected. She never tires out.

Just thinking about her in that loose apron while she sucked my cock is enough to make me shift in my seat. Then we fucked like rabbits in the shower, and then again in the wee hours of morning, when I woke up to her mouth on my dick.

“Got a hot date?” Riot gives me a chin lift.

It's unusual for me to have my phone out. I hate the damn things.

“Always,” I sling back at him.

Cash clears his throat. “Jett, how is Rock comin' along with intel? We know Linc came to a dead end. I guess that's what happens when you have stolen plates and recruit fuckin' nomads and deadbeat prospects.”

“Not a lot about Forger, aka Drake,” Jett says. “Seems like he kept a pretty low profile when he got out of the joint. No records for him or his whereabouts. Hasn't touched his bank accounts, not that there's anything in them. When Rock did some diggin', he found a transaction from Razor that came from an offshore account.”



My eyes shift to Cash.

His stepbrother, Razor, was the head of the Devils, and just when you think you know everything about the asshole, something new pops up and leads you in another direction.

“That’s gonna take some doin’,” Priest mutters.

“No shit,” I agree. “Fuckers not only have nine lives. They also have people in the underworld protectin’ ’em.”

Everyone turns to look at me.

“Got somethin’ you wanna share?” Ryder quips.

I give him a chin lift. “Got some bad eggs I still keep in contact with in the boxing world who dabble in the usual illegal shit. Heard that the Devils were spotted in the French Quarter, plannin’ on takin’ over Irish territory. Shit’s gonna be a bloodbath.”

“Irish territory?” Cash shakes his head. “They don’t have the numbers for that.”

I stare at him. “Picture every asshole you can imagine who Forger was in jail with. And I’m talkin’ real fuckin’ pieces of shit. He recruits them, and every other drug-dealin’ criminal in the underworld and suddenly you’ve got a big club on your hands.”

“He’d have the connections,” Hawk agrees. “We know that he’s good at keepin’ a low profile.”

“Indigo thought he was dead,” Harlem says, rubbing his chin, deep in thought. “Fuck knows what he’s got planned or who he’s doin’ it with.”

“Nothin’ from the Irish,” Bronco pipes up. He and Riot were in charge of keeping their ear low to the ground on Irish territory. They’re not gonna be happy when they hear what we know, but we can use that to our advantage.

What is alarming is the fact they think they can waltz into Irish territory and take over their turf.

“Startin’ to think this asshole has more than a fuckin’ death wish,” I grumble. “Rowan won’t stand for any kinda

threat like this. Which makes me believe he has numbers, and he's been protected in the underworld."

Rowan is head of the Irish mafia, someone that the club has dealt with in the past when both of us needed help.

"Fuckin' underbelly bullshit," Ryder snarls. "If they recruited, just like you said, then they very well could be buildin' an army."

"Fuck," Cash mutters.

With a new baby now, everything changes. Women and children can be used and hurt, as we saw with Indigo and Cami.

That can't happen again.

I won't let it happen.

"Not gonna lie, it doesn't look good," I say, my eyes moving around the room. "But we each have to be extra vigilant. I don't think it's enough havin' just prospects on the case. Can talk to Brew and Haze, make sure they're on board for some extra security. They've got friends in low places. I know Hustle doesn't want shit to do with the club, but he'd be the best person to talk to."

"Get on it," Cash agrees. "More we know the better. Hustle may not wanna join forces, but he respects his brothers enough to be loyal. Pity. The man would've made an excellent brother."

"Glad to have Haze and Brew back," Harlem agrees. "Know they got tied up in the family business, but they're still part of the club, even if it is on and off. Happy to have the muscle."

Brew and Haze were patched in, but drifted for a while from different Rebels, and in doing so, they know a lot of people. They're good guys to have around in case we need them, and they know every dirty, low-down asshole from here to the French Quarter.

"Gonna talk to them, get them to stick their necks out downtown," I say. "Brothers are loyal to the club, wanna be

part of NOLA again means they gotta show they're committed. Anythin' we ask of them, they'll do."

"What about sniffin' around the fightin' rings and underground bettin'?" Priest gives me a chin lift. "Sendin' prospects in would be suicide. Since they've got a hand in security and both are built like brick shit houses, could pass off as bein' bouncers. Nobody would suspect shit as they haven't been seen with the Rebels in NOLA for years. They just got back to town and need work. Doubt that grumpy asshole of a brother, Hustle, will be lettin' them back in the fold until they've paid their dues."

"Could work." Cash shrugs.

"If they had a crew," I agree. "Which I know they could rummage together. Gotta understand somethin', Prez. These two assholes are hardcore. I'm talkin' me and Harlem hardcore on steroids."

"Hey, what are we, chopped liver?" Nevada whines.

I flip in the bird. "You know what I mean. They're reckless. Don't get me wrong, they're good, but they don't give a shit about goin' to jail. We don't want blood on our hands if this goes sour."

They're still our brothers, and as Sergeant at Arms, I'm still responsible for their safety, no matter how big or fuckin' tough they may seem.

"They're big boys." Bronco shrugs. "Pretty sure they can handle it."

"Who votes for sendin' Brew and Haze in with a crew?" Cash bellows.

Agreements ring around the table. He bangs the gavel down.

"You and H talk to them," Cash says, pointing at us. "Later today, Rock will have an update. If we can find anythin' with the bank account or the stolen plates dumped at the parking lot, then we can investigate further. Least for now, we have several brothers workin' on separate shit until we get a break."

“Gonna happen,” Priest says. “Gotta stop these assholes before someone else gets hurt.”

Out of all of us, Priest is the one who worries the most.

The dude may have been from bum-fuck-outta-nowhere, but he’s the spiritual advisor at the club for a reason.

“Agree with that,” Jett says. “Fact is the Devils are doin’ too much on the downlow. Last thing we want is a fuckin’ uprisin’ that starts another turf war. This one would potentially be bigger than the last, especially if they’re already plannin’ an attack on the Irish.”

“Nothin’ worse than a brother with a death wish,” I grit. “Makes him all the more dangerous.”

We’ve all been tired of this shit ever since we found out that Forger was resurrecting the Devils. That asshole Razor had taken him under his wing, and he stayed hidden since he got out of jail. Which means, Razor had all of this in place before he died. This was always going to happen and on a much bigger scale than we initially realized.

The thought doesn’t sit easy with me. These things never do when the Prez of a rival club is unhinged. And a man that could stoop so low as to kidnap his own kid and almost kill her is certainly more than a little fuckin’ crazy.

“And much easier to find,” Hawk says. “Surely, they can’t be fuckin’ masterminds at hidin’. Someone’s gotta talk at some point. They won’t stay down forever.”

“Exactly why we send in the brothers,” I say. “Because someone will talk. Just need the right kind of persuasion.”

“Got that right,” Harlem agrees. “The kind of persuasion I’ve been holdin’ out on when I get my hands on Forger. Not gonna remind everyone that he’s mine. When he gets caught, not *if*. Fuckin’ *when*.”

Cash nods. We all know what this means to Harlem. He has to defend his ol’ lady and her kid. I’d be doing the exact same thing and I’m happy to assist in his death.

“Nobody around this table will take what’s yours,” I say, knowing it’s true. “But Forger is slippery. Look at how well he’s managed to hide so far. We can’t underestimate him.”

“Agreed,” says Cash. “We all know that he’s gonna come back with a vengeance. And here I was thinkin’ we had loyal subjects in the underworld. Clearly, we need to shake the tree a little harder.”

Chuckles go around the group.

My phone buzzes again. This time, I turn it over like I’m playing a hand of poker and I don’t want anyone else to see my cards.

I could wear my apron...

A picture flashes up of her wearing said apron with her tits hanging out. She’s biting into a cookie with half her face cut off. I quickly drop the phone down and clear my throat.

Last thing I need is a hard dick when I’m sitting here with all my brothers. I’ll deal with her later.

This woman is wild.

She speaks to every single cell in my body, and every muscle. Especially the one between my legs.

“I’ll talk to the boys tonight,” I say, giving Cash a chin lift. “Soon, as they’re nestled in the thick of it, we may just get lucky. Or better, we find someone to torture the information out of.”

“I’ll second that,” Harlem agrees.

I don’t like doing anything with luck in the title, as it means we’re not in control. I hate relying on other people to do shit, but this is too vast. We need eyes and ears on the ground everywhere.

Forger and the Devils being so secretive and off the grid makes the whole club uneasy. The fact they’ve had this planned for fuck knows how long means they have underworld figures helping. We know it ain’t the goddamn Irish, if not

then the Bratva or another rival club. We don't have any beef with any other clubs around these parts.

"Long as we get what we need, it doesn't matter," Cash says. "Can bury them out in the bayou, along with Razor, for all I care."

I have no problem killing to keep the club safe. This club and everyone in it mean the world to me. They're my family. They're all I've got.

I give him a chin lift in appreciation. Prez knows what has to be done ain't always pretty.

"Let's get to work," Cash goes on.

When I go to stand, Cash gives me a nod to stay behind.

When the others are filed out, I stand and lean my hands on the table. "You good, Prez?"

"Rock said you're dealin' with Luna's piece of shit car."

"It's sorted out."

"That why she's ridin' around in a brand-new Mercedes?"

I roll my eyes. "Good news travels fast."

"You know what you're doin'?"

I swallow hard. "When it comes to women, do any of us ever know what we're doin'?"

He smirks. "Good point. She's gonna be movin' into Jas's space soon, you good with her bein' at the club more?"

"I got a choice?"

"Clearly not. Jas needs her. Just know when you two cross paths, sparks fly."

"I'm sure I can keep a lid on it. I manage to keep all the prospects in line, after all. The trouble with Luna is she's got a mouth on her. She doesn't know when to keep it closed."

Cash chuckles. "Sounds familiar. Keep your wits about you. They creep up on you and get under your skin faster than you can blink. If you don't wanna get caught, then don't fuck

her around. She's a good worker and a nice girl. Jas adores her and she keeps us all paid and the club coffers full."

I give him a look and he stares at me pointedly. "Hail Queen Jas," I mutter.

"You want a hug, big guy?" Cash taunts. "Look like you need it."

"No. But why do all the women get all the praise around here? And we get treated like schmucks."

"Sure you don't want that hug."

I wave him off. "Luna isn't as sweet as she seems," I tell him.

"Long as she's not gonna be an issue. If she is, she stays at Rock's and we get someone else," Cash goes on.

I can't do that to Luna. It's all she's been going on about for weeks.

She's looking forward to it.

I know it'll mean we see each other even more, but I'm the one who's been going out of my way lately to accost her. Not the other way around. I need to text Summer. Out of all the women in the club, she seems to have the best advice, and for some reason, I tolerate her annoying me.

I shake my head. "It's fine. We'll work around it."

He gives me a chin lift. "You tappin' it?"

I can't lie to him so I stay silent.

He nods. "Always thought I'd see you two settle down," he says out of nowhere. "Where there are flames, there's fire, brother."

"It's more complicated than you realize," I say, palming the back of my neck. "Everythin' is when it comes to Luna."

He gives me a look that says he understands. "Heard."

"Gonna head out." I thumb toward the door, and when I leave, I can't help but think that I just got reprimanded by the fuckin' school principal for looking in the girls' locker room.

I'm fucked.

I know I am.

I pull my phone out and text Summer.

So, you got any words of wisdom for what women want these days?

**Tink**

You said a mouthful there. Luna troubles?

When don't I have Luna troubles?

You have seemed happier lately, less grunting and nostril flaring

I said words of wisdom, not be a smart ass

Not that I'm a big expert, but women want to be wooed.

WTF

You know, wined and dined. Girls like pretty things, T. It isn't that hard.

*Pretty things? Is she kidding?*

I can see you're going to be no help

Be specific, what do you need help with? Figuring out a woman's brain will take more than a few text messages

All of you are so hot and cold



And y'all aren't?

I roll my eyes. I can just imagine her snickering.

Say one thing, mean another, a man can't keep up

I think with Luna, it's pretty straight forward. You have to be honest with her. Tell her how you feel

I scratch my chin. I know she's right, but I'm not good at this kind of thing.

She's a spitfire no matter what. Telling her how I feel isn't all that simple

Don't overcomplicate it

Didn't think I was

Try thinking before you speak, maybe? That could work

That's helpful ☐

Oh, wow, you can use emojis! ☐☐☐

Yeah, I like this one for all the advice you gave me... ☐

That's just mean. You know you love me really, or you wouldn't be texting me

Genius

I shake my head, clicking out of our thread and scratch my chin. *Be honest.* Trouble is, whenever I am honest, shit hits the

fan.

Still, I flick back and thumb a text back to Luna, I still didn't reply to her apron texts, even though I'm picturing it right now.

Busy

I know it's cold, but if she thinks I'm gonna be at her beck and call, she's got another thing coming.



I pull into my building's parking garage and see a shiny silver G-Wagon parked in my space.

Fuckin' get out of town.

I shake my head, parking in the spot next to her, kicking the stand down as I kill the engine.

I yank my helmet and goggles off as the driver's door opens.

Luna exits wearing a long cream-colored trench coat.

I give her a chin lift. "That's my parkin' spot."

She looks different. Her face. Somehow. I don't know... But her cheeks are flushed, and her eyes look...watery. Or some shit.

She doesn't say a word, instead she unbuckles the belt and flashes me, right there in the middle of the fuckin' parking lot.

My eyes go wide as I stare at her black lacy underwear. I lurch toward her and yank the coat closed.

"Are you fuckin' nuts?"

She smiles. It doesn't reach her eyes, and I know something is wrong.

"No, but I want your nuts, Tag."

"Shouldn't have come here," I warn.

"Why? Scared someone will see us?"

I shake my head. “No. Dressed like that, not even this neighborhood is safe.”

“I need your dick, T.”

I frown.

What the fuck is going on?

“You been cryin’?”

I stare at her as she looks away.

When she doesn’t answer, I say, “Luna Marie.”

“I saw my Dad today. That always sparks loathing and unhappiness,” she says, her voice terse. “Are you going to let me up, or shall I drive my sorry ass home in this brand-new car?”

I nod toward it. “You like it?”

Before I know what’s happening, she’s in my arms. Her lips press against mine as she wraps her arms around my neck. She kisses me with vigor, so much so, that I cup her face and my tongue finds hers.

When she pulls back, we’re both panting.

“I love it,” she whispers. “I love when you try to keep me safe.”

“No tryin’ about it,” I gruff. “No matter what you think of me, Lu, I’ll always look out for you.”

I see sadness in her eyes, and I realize suddenly that I never wanna be the asshole who put that look there.

“What happened? With your pops?”

She shakes her head. “Not here.”

She’s right. I yank her by the hand and tug her toward the elevator. Scanning the panel, I put in a code and we step inside.

“The penthouse?” she queries.

She’s never been to my new place. She wouldn’t know.

I don't let go of her hand. "Nothing but the best for the beast, right, Lu?"

She grins as the doors close. "Right."

## LUNA

HIS HAND FEELS WARM IN MINE.

I know coming here is probably the worst thing I could do. But Tag is the only person in this world who makes me feel safe.

I love Payden. I love my mom. I love Jas, Deanna, Summer, and Manny. But Tag is the one who makes me feel safe. He's like home.

Tears well in my eyes as he takes my hand in his meaty paw and doesn't let go.

It's like he knows.

He asked me if I'd been crying, and the fact he even noticed makes me want to die.

*I'm falling for him.*

And I know if I tell him what happened, he'll kill my father.

I'm still reeling from what happened. I haven't been able to eat or think in the last twenty-four hours.

I close my eyes when I recall my best friend pulling me into a hug as I sobbed my eyes out...

*"He's a goddamn fucking asshole," she scorns. "You want me to do something? I know a guy."*

*I laugh without humor, blowing my nose with a tissue noisily. "You know a guy? I know plenty of them, trust me."*

*She holds up a finger. "Ah, yeah. I forgot that."*

*We sit on her couch and binge on pizza and chocolate and watch Real Housewives of Beverly Hills.*

*"Why is your Dad such a fucking prick? I can't believe he wants you to marry that asshole Brian. Did you tell your Mom?"*

*I shake my head. "Not yet. She'll go postal on his ass. The things he said about her..." I shake my head.*

*"Babe. You know he's just using manipulation to get what he wants. That's what he does. Any man who could offer you a deal like that is clinically insane. It's all about prestige for him. None of this is about you or your happiness."*

*"I know." I sniff. "But two million dollars?"*

*She gives me a look of horror. "Don't tell me you're considering it?"*

*"No. of course not. I could never look at Brian again, much less have his children." I shudder at such a thought. "I just don't get how my Dad is so evil. How he can hold my inheritance over me like this. I don't need money that badly."*

*"It's a lot of money," she agrees. "But marrying that asshole would be like selling your soul to the devil. You can't just get it back once you sign on the dotted line."*

*I gulped on more of the red wine, knowing it would give me a headache later on. "I know that. But it isn't like Tag is offering me anything more than his dick."*

*She gives me a sympathetic look. "Have you talked to him about it?"*

*I laugh. "Talk? Tag doesn't talk, Pay, he barks."*

*"Well, bark back. I know you can, LuLu. I don't get why the two of you haven't just bitten the bullet and gone for it by now. It's obvious he has feelings for you if he's being all possessive and shit."*

*"That's just Tag."*

*"Really?"*

*“He’s the Sergeant at Arms, it’s his job.”*

*“I don’t think so, babe. I’ve seen the way he looks at you. And that night after Solo? He broke into your house to tell you that he was sorry...in a roundabout way.”*

*I narrow my eyes. “Sounds like you’re sticking up for him?”*

*“I’m not. I’m just saying. He doesn’t tell you how he feels, he shows you. That’s how you can tell he cares. He might not say it, but he stole your goddamn skirt, for pity’s sake.”*

*I almost choke on my wine with laughter. “It was a fair swap.” I shrug. “He did leave a very expensive car in my driveway.”*

*“Pre birthday present?”*

*“He would never drive a G-Wagon. He claims it’s his, but he’s a bad liar.”*

*“Hey, being a bad liar isn’t a bad thing.”*

*“There you go again.”*

*“Tag is never gonna let you see anybody else,” she goes on. “I think you need to ask him why. Seriously. Make him admit he has feelings, and when he does, you need to work through them.”*

*“He won’t.”*

*She squeezes me on the arm. “He will if he wants you. The question is, are you prepared for more heartbreak if he doesn’t?”*

*I shake my head. “To be honest, I’m not. Every man I’ve ever known in my life has let me down. If Tag hurt me again... even by just being honest or trying to protect me, I don’t know if I’d recover this time... I didn’t mean to...” I trail off.*

*Payden links her fingers through mine and holds my hand. “You’re in love with him.”*

*I stare across the room at nothing.*

*I am in love with him.*

*I've always been in love with him.*

*No man could ever compare.*

*Not to my Thomas.*

*Tears well in my eyes as she pulls me into a hug. "I'm so fucked, Pay."*

*I sob in her arms.*

*"Shhh. No, you're not, LuLu. But you have to find out where he's at. You can't do the friends-with-benefits thing forever. I know you. You want more. And you deserve more. You deserve the best, babe. I don't want to see you get even more hurt."*

*"It was just supposed to be sex," I muffle into her shoulder. "A bit of fun. Let off some steam. We both know it's wrong, but we can't stay away from one another... Then I think about what our parents would say, and I start to doubt myself all over again. They'd never accept it."*

*"Yes, they would," she tells me. "If it's what you really wanted. Your Mom would understand. I know she would. It would be a shock at first, but they'd have to deal. If not, then you'd have to be prepared for the consequences."*

*"That's just it!" I wail. "I'm not. I can't lose my Mom, too. I've already lost my Father in so many ways. I never had him to begin with, but there was always hope. Now he's just shattered me into a zillion pieces, and I can't go back. Not even for two million fucking dollars."*

*"You don't have to do that," she soothes. "Your Dad can go fuck himself. He can't just expect you to be the little wife to that piece of shit and be just like your Mom. Looking the other way while he does whatever the fuck he chooses. You could never live like that, LuLu."*

*"I know." I sniff. "I should know all of this. I just honestly thought that when Dad called me to his house that we'd have dinner and he'd ask me about my trip and...I don't know... for once be interested in me. Yet he tries to trade me like Nasdaq on the stock market, like I'm some commodity he can just play with and use whenever it suits him."*



*“He’s a dick.”*

*I pull back, wiping my eyes. “Yes, he is. And I never want to see him again.”*

*“Luna,” she says as I meet her gaze. “You know if you agree to this, your Father will have a hold over you forever.”*

*“I’m not doing it!” I fire back. “Do you think I’m insane?”*

*“No. But I know other men have disappointed you a lot, and I don’t want you thinking that all men are this way. That they can just throw absurd amounts of money at you to force you to do something. It’s a lot of money.”*

*“I don’t care about that. I never have.”*

*She nods. “I just want you to be happy.”*

*“So do I,” I whisper....*

I wipe a stray tear, and when I glance up, Tag is staring down at me.

“What happened?”

I shake my head. “Dad’s an asshole. Nothing new.”

He narrows his eyes.

I know I’m using sex to control my own narrative here. But I need to forget. I need Tag to fuck me stupid and make me believe I am worthy. That I matter. Even if it is just his fuck buddy. Someone he will never settle down with. Someone who will never be seen with me in public. Someone who won’t be the father of my children.

I turn away.

We ride the elevator in silence, and when we finally arrive, he pulls me along with him as we step straight into an expansive foyer.

This place is not the kind of digs you’d expect a biker to have. But it is a space that you’d expect an ex NFL star to have.

It's huge. And decorated minimally, with a masculine edge. Just like Tag.

"You eaten?"

I shake my head.

"Hungry?"

"Only for your dick."

He gives me a look, and I expect him to throw me down on the nearest flat surface, but he doesn't.

Instead, he sits my ass down on the kitchen counter and goes over to the fridge. I watch as he takes out a beer, turns and gives me a chin lift. I shake my head.

He pops the lid and takes the bottle to his lips, and then chugs half of it down. His eyes never leave mine.

I stare at him, wondering what the hell he's doing. I'm right here on a platter.

He takes his phone out of his back pocket, scrolls through and then dials.

"Who are you calling?" I mouth.

He shakes his head.

I listen as he proceeds to order Chinese food, my favorite dishes, and then hangs up.

"I said I wasn't hungry."

"No. You said you were hungry for my dick."

"And yet you ordered egg rolls and sweet and sour chicken instead."

He gives me a chin lift. "Talk to me."

I open my mouth and no sound comes out.

"What do you mean?"

He gives me a look. "You move your lips and words come out."

I go to undo my belt again and he grips my wrists. “No, Luna.”

I frown. “No?”

“Not until you answer me.”

“You don’t want me?” Tears spring to my eyes. I can’t help it.

Payden warned me about this, but did I listen? The fuck I did not.

Pain hits my chest.

“Didn’t say that.”

“But you’re not fucking me on the counter, so why am I here?”

“Exactly. Why are you here? To get fucked?”

I nod.

He shakes his head. “I don’t believe it.”

“Believe what you want.” I reach for his cut, and he steps back, angering me further.

“You’re using sex as a defense against what’s really wrong. Tryin’ to mask it.”

My eyes go round.

He. Did. Not.

“Are you analyzing me now?” I scoff. “Seriously, Tag. Let’s not do this.”

“I don’t wanna do it. Not until you tell me what happened.”

I bite my lip.

I can’t tell him.

I know him. I know what he’ll do, and it’ll only cause me more problems.

“It’s nothing. Like I said, my dad being a dick, as usual. He knows exactly how to make me feel like shit, okay? Is that

what you want to hear, T?”

“No. I just want the truth. You’re eager to jump me in the parking lot, but I can see you’re visibly upset. I can’t do you like that, Lu.”

I. Can’t. Breathe.

*Holy shit.*

“Are we really going to pretend we care now, Tag? Aren’t we both just here to get off?”

He stares at me. Those icy blue depths show a sorrow of his own I’ve only just realized lives there. What is it? What have I fucking missed all these years?

“You know that I’m not just here to get off,” he growls.

“Really? Could’ve fooled me. That’s why you’ve been in my bed every night this week.”

“Not just because of that.”

I snort. “Don’t tell me you like me for my personality because I really will barf.”

His eyebrows knit together. “Why you gotta do that?”

“Do what?”

“Be such a bitch.”

I smirk. “You’re trying to get under my skin, T. I know what you’re doing. You don’t really give a shit about what’s wrong. You just want to be a ‘nice guy’ so you don’t feel bad about fucking your sister.”

“Stepsister,” he grunts. He looks like I’ve just slapped him. “You think I feel bad about fuckin’ you?”

“Don’t you?”

*Those fucking eyes. They eat me alive.*

“No.”

I watch to see if anything else follows. Sarcasm. Pity. Humor. Nothing.

“I don’t understand,” I say, my temper flaring. “We fuck, T. You like it. I like it. We go our separate ways. No feelings. No expectations. Nobody gets hurt. That’s what we agreed.”

*When did I become such a good liar?*

“I’m changin’ the rules.”

“We have rules now?”

“Yes.”

Oh, this should be good.

“And?” I quirk an eyebrow. “Out with it.”

He comes toward me, pressing his forehead to mine. “No sex until you tell me exactly what he did to you.”

I swallow hard.

No.

He can’t do this to me.

He can’t get involved in family shit.

“And if you tell me any bullshit, Lu, or try to cover it with bitchy snarks, I swear to fuckin’ God, the spanks you get this time will not be for pleasure.”

My breath hitches in my chest.

He’s going to break me.

He’s going to break all of my walls, defenses, everything. And then I’ll have nothing left.

My heart? What a joke. He already has it. He’s always had it.

“I…” I stammer.

He leans back. He’s so fucking close.

“I can’t tell you,” I whisper, rolling my lips.

“Why?”

I look down at my hands folded in my lap. I can’t touch him. I can’t look at him. This is too much.

I've never had to speak to anyone like this, not even Payden. But he draws the truth out of me like a moth to a flame. The last thing I want is his pity, but I'm more worried about him going to jail when he finds out what my dad suggested.

"You'll be really mad."

He tilts my chin up.

"Please," I beg him, tears leak down my face. "Please, don't make me tell you."

"Listen to me, Luna Marie," he growls. "There is nothin' you can say that will change how this is gonna go down. You can either tell me, or I'll go to your Father's office and demand that he tell me. That option won't be pretty. So make a decision. If he's upset you, I need to know."

*Holy shit, no.*

"Why?" I counter, one last ditch attempt at throwing him off can't hurt. "I'm not your ol' lady."

His nostrils flair once more. "Maybe not. But I'm the one you can always come to. No matter what happens." He holds my chin harder, pinching it between his thumb and forefinger. "No. Matter. What. Happens."

My lips part. "Why have we never talked like this before?" I whisper. "You're so closed off all the time... I can never talk to you like this..."

The pain in his eyes shines through as he cups one side of my face. "Because I've been a fuckin' fool."

I stare at him, and he stares right back. Except this time, it's like he sees right into my soul.

"Promise me you won't kill my Dad?"

He shakes his head. "I can't promise that. But if someone makes you this sad, I want to know about it and hear me, Luna when I say. You. Are. Mine. If anyone fuckin' upsets you or tries to take what's mine, I won't just fuckin' kill them, princess. I will destroy everything they hold dear."

My heart beats like it never has.

I can't believe I'm hearing this.

Why the change all of a sudden? What is happening right now?

"I'm yours?"

He lets out a long sigh. Like he's in pain. His voice low when he says, "We both know it. And you're not leavin' until you fess up."

I've nowhere to look except at my hands, or at his face.

And he stands there and waits.

"It's a long story..."

"I think I can keep up."

I gulp. "You know my ex, Brian?"

The muscle in his jaw clicks as he gives me a chin lift.

"When I left two years ago, I went to my dad's office. I'm ashamed to admit I had to borrow money. We'd had that fight... I had to get out of town, and I ran into Brian. He works for my dad now."

"No shit?"

"I told him to fuck off and threw cold coffee on him. Made him look like a fool in front of clients. And I thought I had my revenge. But now my dad has come up with a new plan for me. My inheritance..." I trail off.

He strokes my cheek with his thumb.

This isn't Tag. And it definitely ain't Thomas.

He isn't kind or gentle. Yet he stands here before me doing the sweetest things.

*Hold it together, for fuck's sake.*

"He wants me to marry Brian and offered me two million dollars," I blurt out.

He blinks once. Then twice. Then his eyebrows knit together in that scary way of his.

“He what?”

“Uh, yeah. And it gets worse...” I go on, my voice small. “I get a big fancy mansion, a sports car, and five hundred grand for every heir I produce.”

His face turns a funny color. Not red. Not white. Purple. It’s fucking purple.

“What. The. Fuck.”

I grip his biceps as he shifts farther back, searching my face for any signs of humor.

“You said you wouldn’t get mad.”

“No. I didn’t. You asked me to not kill your dad and I didn’t agree. What the fuck is he playin’ at?”

“He wants me to be a trophy wife,” I explain. “All that concerns my father are appearances. He never had a son, so he’s taken Brian under his wing, not giving a shit about the fact he’s a liar and a cheat and I wouldn’t spit on him if he were on fire, much less marry the guy.”

He swallows hard. “Why now?”

My eyes go wide.

I can’t tell him about the Gary situation. That would ensure that there would be bodies spread across this city.

“I don’t know.”

“So he wants payback for you borrowin’ money, is that it?”

“I... I guess. He also wants to control my life, T. He blames my mom for everything when it was him that was a deadbeat dad and husband. He never sees anything wrong in how he hurts people, and he uses it as a weapon. All I ever wanted from him was his time. His love. And I didn’t get that opportunity. I certainly don’t want it now.”

He looks at me. “How much did you borrow?”

*Oh shit.*

“Uh, a bit.”



“How much, Lu?”

I don't want this. I can't tell him about Gary... What the hell would he do?

“Fifty thousand.”

His eyes go round. “Fifty grand? What the fuck?”

“I needed to get away,” I lie. “Everything had just gone down with us. Then I saw Brian and how much my Dad doted on him, like he was the son he always wanted. I needed to get out of here. Try somewhere else for a while.”

“You should've come to me.”

I stare at him unseeing. “Are you serious? I couldn't come to you. You rejected me, remember? You said we couldn't do it. That you regretted everything... That...that I was a mistake.”

“I lied.”

I hear the words, but they don't compute in my brain.

*He lied?*

*He fucking lied?*

The world I thought I knew spins on its axis.

I put a hand over my mouth. “Holy shit, T. This changes things.”

He cups my face once more. “I know it does. And I want to know fuckin' everythin'.”

## TAG

SHE STARES AT ME WITH THOSE PRETTY EYES, AND I'M LOST.

I'm lost in a sea of confusion because of her pain.

As much as they call me the beast and the brute of the MC, for her, I'll always have a side that wants to take care of her. Nurture her. Even if it is in my own way.

When I see her like this, it kills everything inside of me and makes me want to harm anyone that did her wrong.

Her fuckin' dad is a piece of shit.

*Marry her cheating ex?* What kind of monster does something like that.

I'm also pissed she went to him for money. But something's missing here. Luna doesn't spend a lot of cash. She's hopeless at saving, and for her to go to him to ask for that much money is just too illogical for me to comprehend. You also don't need fifty grand to travel.

I'll get the truth out of her if it's the last thing I do.

Bit by bit, I'll break her walls. I know if I push her too far, she'll retreat. But it seems like she wants to at least get this shit with her dad and Brian off her chest.

"You lied?" she says, repeating my words from earlier. "What does that even mean?"

I grunt. "It means what you think it means. I pushed you away because I was thinkin' about everyone else and not us. I didn't want our parents to be unhappy or for us to feel shame,

so I walked away. It was the hardest thing I ever had to do. When you left, Lu..." I trail off.

I can't even.

She fuckin' broke something inside of me and I know it has a lot to do with my mom leaving.

Only wanting to know me again when I was a big superstar.

"You hurt me," she whispers. "I couldn't get hurt over and over, T. I knew that you wouldn't go through with it, and I was at the point where I wanted to tell everyone. I was ready, but you weren't. So I had to leave. It was the best thing I ever did. We're better people because of it, aren't we? Who knows what would have happened if we had shackled up together. I was still hurting from Brian... and *stuff*, but now I see that I had to grow. I had to be by myself for a while. Even if it meant not seeing you."

I shake my head. "I never meant to hurt you," I say, looking down at her lap. "It cut me deep when you left. But I thought I was doing the right thing."

She cups my face, and I look back up at her. "I forgive you, T. I know that this situation isn't ideal. But I also know that I can't go through that again. You're either in or you're out. And if you're out, it's for real this time. We both know we can't keep doing this. Before long, one of us will want more or one of us will want out."

"I'll never want out," I blurt out. "I know that now. Don't make me beg, woman."

Her lips part. "I didn't know... I didn't know you cared this much."

"Just because I don't tell it to the world, that doesn't mean I don't feel it." I take her hand and place it on my chest. "I made a promise to always protect you, Lu. I thought that's what I was doin' by keepin' you away. I thought I was lettin' you live your life like you're supposed to."

She shakes her head, tears welling in her eyes.

That son of a bitch caused her this pain, and fuckin' Brian, but so did I. I played a part in putting those tears in her eyes. A lump forms in my throat.

"It wasn't the same without you," she whispers. "I tried to forget. I tried to just live my life somewhere else thinking I'd forget about you eventually. But I couldn't. That's why I came back."

"Every fuckin' day I cursed myself," I mutter. "I can't... I can't always say what I want to, Lu. You know me, you know about..."

"Your mom?" she whispers, like it's a secret and someone might overhear us.

I nod.

The pain hits me like a hurricane.

I missed my mom when she left. I cried for days, according to my father. It's a memory I've since wiped from my brain. I tend to do that with painful areas of my life. I carefully dissect them into non-existence and it's like it never happened.

When my mom came crawling back once I got drafted and was the star quarterback for the Steelers, everything changed. She wanted to know me. She wanted to be a part of my life again. *All of a sudden.*

I was bitter and resentful and couldn't see straight at that time of my life. No matter what, there is no excuse for leaving us. She didn't go to rehab. She didn't have an accident and was in a coma. She started a new family elsewhere and left me and my dad alone.

I wrapped myself in a cocoon so tight that I never really broke free of it. My mom frosted my heart over and, yeah, I do blame her. Her rejection was confusing to me. I didn't understand it or where my mom had gone.

When I learned the truth when I was older, the bitterness just ate me alive.

“You know my mom left to start a new life in Florida,” I say. “She left me and my Dad and I never got why. Then she tried to weasel her way back in when I made it big. She even had the audacity to ask for money.” I shake my head at the memory.

“I’m so sorry, T,” Luna says. “We’ve both had a shitty parent each. We didn’t deserve that from either one of them.”

I close my eyes momentarily and let my anger subside. I’ve done well over the years at being able to push it back down, never really letting any of it come to the surface unless I’m provoked.

And I certainly never took it out on other women. If anything, it made me skeptical and afraid to commit. I never wanted to be rejected like that again, so I pushed anyone away who got too close. Including Luna.

“I admit that I pushed you away,” I say. “It’s who I am, Lu. I can’t help it. Some things in me are buried so deep that now they’re just a part of me.”

She stares at me with such love in her eyes, love I’ve never seen before. “Oh, but they aren’t, T. When you smile...” She shakes her head. “It lights up a room. When you laugh—not that you do it very often—the whole world is brighter. It’s brighter because you’re in it, don’t you get it?”

I wrap my arms around her waist. “I do now.”

She sighs. “Why has it taken us this long to get all of this shit out?”

I shrug. “It’s just how we are.”

“Do you forgive your mother?” she asks softly.

I shake my head. “If I’m honest, the answer is no. But I’ve come to terms with it. I’ve made peace with it. Maybe I haven’t dealt with it fully, but I channeled my anger into doing things I love doing, rather than shit that could get me in trouble.”

“You were a bit of a spoiled brat after the NFL,” she quips.

I roll my eyes. “I had a lot of money and a lot of time on my hands. I was bitter about everything. The loss of my career. My injury would render me useless. I didn’t know who I was without it for a long time. Which is why I joined the Rebels. I needed to be around people who...” I take a breath.

She smiles encouragingly. “Who...”

“Cared about me,” I grit out, looking away.

“I care about you,” she whispers. “You don’t know how much, T. I just didn’t want to admit it either. I wanted to just hate you for rejecting me and reminding me of what we are and what we would never be. I carried that around for so long, unsure what to do with it or where to direct my anger and hurt. I bottled it up. And I took it out on you.”

Guilt rises in my chest. “I never wanted to hurt you.”

She nods. “I know that now. But I’ve also come to a new realization.”

“Oh yeah? What’s that?”

She smiles warmly. “That I can’t live without you, T. What do you think about that?”

I move my hands up her arms as she continues to beguile me with her gaze. She’s so beautiful, it takes my breath away. Her eyes are still bloodshot, and they look tired from her crying, but she’s a vision. Like she always is and always will be.

“I think we’re gonna have to come clean because I don’t wanna live without you either.”

Her lips part again. “I never thought I’d hear you say those words.”

“Want me to say them again?” I bump her with my hips.

“Just once, but this time I want to record it for future reference.”

I bump her again. “Funny.”

“What changed?” she asks. “Why now?”

“Why not now?” I throw back at her. “I’m sick of pretendin’, Lu. I told Harlem about us. He hasn’t told anyone, I trust him. And he reminded me that you’re fair game. That at some point soon, you’re gonna find someone else, and would be around the club with him. He’s gonna be in *my* place. In *my* bed. Doing *my* ol’ lady, and I couldn’t live with that. I couldn’t bear to imagine you with another man, Lu. I’d kill them. I couldn’t ever let that happen.”

Her lips part, and before I know it, she presses them to mine and pulls me in closer by the lapels of my cut. She swings her arms around my neck as our tongues meet and a feral noise leaves the back of my throat as we kiss with vigor.

Fuck. She makes my dick so painfully hard. Every little damn touch has my cock weeping, but I also want her to know it ain’t just about the physical stuff.

When we pull apart, I mutter, “Not just about sex, want you to know that.”

“But you do like the sex, right?” she blurts out.

I grin against her mouth. “Yes. But I never want you to use sex as a weapon to hide behind. Don’t ever do that with me. We don’t have to... You never have to do anythin’ you don’t wanna do.”

She stares at me. “I want to do it, Tag. With you. Just you.”

I press my forehead against hers. “Only me. Say it.”

“Only you.”

“We’ll find a way to tell everyone. I don’t care about that anymore. And we’ll find a way to deal with your Father.”

“Leave it alone,” she whispers. “I don’t care about him.”

“But he hurt you. He tried to buy you off, Lu. That’s disturbin’ on so many levels.”

“Shhh,” she whispers against my lips. “Don’t talk about him tonight. We’ve done enough talking.”

“I know what you’re doin’,” I say. “But you’re gonna eat first.”

“I’m not hungry for food.”

I give her a look. “I know you. I know that when you’re upset you don’t eat, and we can’t have that.”

“Are you going to just boss me around now?” she quips.

I grip her chin just as my phone buzzes to tell me the food is here.

I kiss her chastely. “You better believe it.”



I slide in and out of her slowly as she groans beneath me.

While I admit, it was a big fuckin’ turn on seeing her in that trench coat in just her underwear. There was no way I could just fuck her without getting to the truth of what upset her first.

I meant what I said. She hides behind sex and intimacy, so she doesn’t have to be real with me, but that all ended tonight.

I made sure she ate her food, then spread her coat wide on the couch and made her come with my mouth three times while she rode my face, and then I took her over my knee and spanked her for not telling me the truth about her dead-beat dad sooner. The way she moaned when I did it and begged for more had my cock so fuckin’ hard that we didn’t even make it to the bedroom.

I didn’t wanna fuck her hard and rough like before. I wanted to take my sweet time and tease her body just like she deserves.

Now, in my huge bed, I have the space to move around and give her what she needs. And I get to take my time.

With her legs wrapped around me and me on my knees, resting on my haunches, holding on to the headboard as I ease in and out of her at a maddeningly slow pace, she groans and makes noises that should be illegal.

She’s so fuckin’ perfect.

“I know what you’re doing,” she breathes when we get into a rhythm that keeps her right on the edge, and every time I



think she's gonna come, I shift so she's left hanging.

“What's that?”

“Depriving me.”

I chuckle. “Open your eyes.”

She does as she's told.

“Just want you to look at me when I make you come,” I tell her, shifting my hips so I hit her clit when I thrust at just the right angle.

She cries out, digging her heels into my ass, trying to encourage me to go faster.

“Tag!”

I don't let up until she comes gloriously, arching her back as her tits bounce and I move my hips at the same pace so I drag out her orgasm.

When she's done, I lean down and take her mouth roughly. “Makin' love to you is so fuckin' hot,” I murmur.

She can't help but laugh. “Better than fucking me hard, when we were at each other's throats?”

“We can always role play,” I suggest. “Gonna buy you an apron for every day of the week.”

I raise to my knees and unwrap her legs, lifting them over my shoulders and pulling her closer so her ass hits my thighs. Just where I want her, and I can see everything.

“Thank God for Pilates,” she groans.

I hold her ankles as I thrust in and out, watching my dick sink in and out of her sweet pussy.

“Fuck,” I mutter. “So fuckin' good, princess.”

We covered a lot of baggage tonight, and we're still not done, but at least it's a start. I don't know how I'll deal with her dad, but I will be making sure he gets the message. I'm also gonna settle her debt so she owes him nothing. Luna isn't indebted to anyone, even me.

And I'm gonna make sure she knows it.

I might have done what I did with her townhouse, and the car, but material things mean nothing to me. All that matters is she's safe and happy.

The fact that her own flesh and blood is offering her money to marry her cheating ex just makes me want to ride up the elevator to his office and slit his goddamn throat.

I thrust a little harder and she cries out.

"Tag," she cries. "I'm coming..."

I ride her through it as I revel in her perfect face and flushed cheeks.

Letting go of her legs, I roll us over so I'm on my back.

"Ride me, baby," I grunt as I hold her hips, and she bends down to kiss me. "Nice and slow."

We both know this isn't fuckin' anymore.

"Love this," she whispers as she slides off my cock and then sinks back down.

I hiss as I watch her. "Yeah?"

"Oh, yeah."

"Tell me, when you come next."

"Tell you?"

"What you said before," I grunt, gripping her hips tighter.

I did say *I love this*... But, I've never said the L-word to anyone. In fact, I never thought I was capable of it.

But tonight, everything has changed.

She is mine, in every sense of the word.

I need to embrace that and fuck anyone who thinks less of us because of our history.

I don't give two shits, and I'll fuck anyone up who upsets my girl.

I let her take control as her pussy squeezes my cock and I'm so fuckin' close to the edge.

She looks so perfect bouncing up and down on me. My name on her lips as she cups her huge tits and plays with them.

I sit up, needing to suck those puppies.

She gasps when I take a nipple into my mouth, and I pull harder.

As she bounces faster, her hands grip my biceps.

“Take it,” I tell her. “Take what you need, princess.”

“Oh, Tag,” she cries.

I suck her other nipple as she slams down on me. I know I can't hold on much longer. The slower pace meant I've been able to hold it in, but she's hitting it just fuckin' right.

“Fuck,” I mutter.

She swings her head back and cries out, “Tag...I love it... I... Oh God, I love you.”

I groan as I still, my cum spurting violently inside her. *Fuck.*

I love what she does to me. I love everything about her, and if that makes me a pussy, then so be it. I don't give a fuck.

Tonight isn't just ours, the rest of our lives is. And I'm gonna make up for lost time any which way I can.

She needs to know that I care about her. That I was wrong. That I'll never let her down ever again like the other men in her life have. Especially her father. I know what that shit's like.

I wish I could mend my own relationship with my dad, but one bridge at a time.

I'm ready to cross over.

“I love you too, Lu,” I mumble, bringing her lips against mine as I bury myself in all things Luna.

## LUNA

I WAKE UP IN A DAZE. SATIATED AND HAPPY AS I FEEL TAG SHIFT next to me.

I spent the night. The entire night in his bed.

To say I'm ecstatic is an understatement, and even as I lie here with a big, sappy smile on my face, I know that it's early days. We both said a lot last night, and afterward, we wore each other out having sex until neither of us could move.

It wasn't just sex. Or fucking. It was making love.

Tag made love to me, and while I'll always want every single piece of him that he's willing to give, I also will take tender, sweet, slow-roast Tag any day of the week. He kept me right on the edge, drawing my pleasure out of me over and over until I was screaming his name across his penthouse. The man certainly knows how to please a woman in bed.

But it wasn't just that.

It was his words.

He opened up to me last night.

He told me things he's never told me before and confessed details that have been buried for a long time. I never thought he'd be capable of it, but there he goes again, proving me wrong.

And I love being wrong about him if this is the outcome.

Wrapped around him feels safe. It feels warm and cozy and like we can conquer the world, even if we don't have all

the answers yet.

I close my eyes and enjoy the precious moments of quiet.

It was quite a revelation last night and I have no words for Tag and his confessions, nor mine.

Everything feels like a whirlwind and I've no idea what's going to happen next.

The man spooning behind me—*spooning*—isn't the man I thought I knew. He has many complex layers and I'm here for all of them.

I don't know how we're going to broach our parents, but it's something that has to be done if we want to move forward and be a couple.

*A couple?* I can't even believe that's a possibility.

Tag's words have hit me all at once, and to be honest, I'm still processing. It's not like him to wear his heart on his sleeve, but something about my face last night got him in the feels. I never expected to go there and end up confessing to him about what my dad did. In truth, I didn't want him to know in fear of what he'd do. Seeing his face, and the jealousy that flashed in his eyes last night, told me all that I needed to know.

There is nothing this man won't do for me, and it's taken me a long time to realize that and for him to admit it.

Maybe my dad being an absolute asshat was the push he needed. I don't know. All I do know is that the possessiveness I saw is what I needed to realize that what I was feeling wasn't one sided. Tag does feel the same way.

As much as he is a grumpy asshole for the majority of the time. He can also be gentle when he wants to be. And only with me. I love that about him.

*I love you too, Lu.*

What in the ever-living fuck?

I groan as he moves in my arms, and I feel his mouth press against my neck.

“Make me fuckin’ hot when you wrap around me,” he grumbles, pulling me closer to his body.

“Then get your paws off me,” I fire back.

“Coffee.”

“Is that you politely asking for coffee, or?”

“Need it.”

“Get up and make it then.”

He bumps me with his hips. “One sugar. Extra cream.”

“Now I know you don’t think I’m the type of woman who jumps to your command just because you said you loved me.”

“Was wonderin’ how long it’d take for you to bring that up. All of five seconds,” he grumbles.

I chuckle, happiness flooding through me.

Is this what it feels like to be happy?

How could I have gone from being down and out yesterday, thinking all was lost and just needing to be close to Tag... to this. The two of us snuggling together. He was right. I was using sex as a weapon, not intentionally. But it numbed the pain. It made me feel good, but it didn’t fix anything. It wouldn’t have made me happy. All it would’ve done in the long run is make us both miserable.

I still haven’t told Tag about Gary, and it scares me that I will have to. I just think that digesting the information about my father and that asshole Brian was enough for one night. However, Tag isn’t stupid.

I will tell him. I think a part of me is just embarrassed, obviously. I just wanted to forget about the whole thing and move on from it. Aside from the fact he scammed me, I don’t want this coming back to haunt me. Not that I’ve heard from Gary in years.

He lived up to his promise and dropped off the grid. I could never understand how anyone could do something like that to another person and live with themselves. I can only hope karma gets him in the end.

“Well, excuse me if I don’t just gloat in my own merriment for half a second,” I sing-song. Turning in his arms, I press a kiss to his nose, and he gives me a look. “I will make your coffee, but not because you’re ordering me around, you big, grumpy asshole.”

“You sound so sexy when you talk like that.”

I throw the duvet back and pull Tag’s t-shirt over my head, which is the closest thing I can find. It fits me like a dress as I flash him my ass on the way by and go find the kitchen. His apartment is huge.

From what I can see, it has three bedrooms and three bathrooms, plus a huge den that has a beautiful fireplace. The view from up here is also amazing. I can imagine no expense was spared. Not where you’d expect to see a biker, but that’s Tag for you.

He’s not like anyone else.

Of course he has a fancy coffee machine, which I slide a pod into and line up the cups.

His kitchen is all marble and dark wood, with charcoal cabinets and a white bench top. It’s stunning. And surprisingly neat. I guess he eats out a lot because there’s hardly anything in his fridge.

I’ll bet anything he has a cleaner come in. Imagining Tag doing housework makes me giggle.

He’s still in the same position when I bring his coffee back to him in bed. I forgot that he is not a morning person.

“Missed my workout because of you,” he tells me, his eyes still closed. I place his coffee down on the side table and scoot back under the covers.

It’s so quiet here.

“Don’t worry, I’m sure you burned off a few calories last night,” I say, giving him a smirk when he opens one eye.

“Not the same as leg day.”

“You know you whine like a little bitch,” I say, sipping my coffee. It tastes amazing.

Of course Tag has only the good shit.

“Gotta head out soon,” he says, yawning.

“To work?”

“Nope. Me and Harlem got word on a lead.”

My eyes go wide.

He’s telling me about club business?

“With the Devils?”

“Never mind.”

“Tag. I’m not an idiot. I know you guys are still hunting them down. I would’ve worked it out for myself.”

“Less you know, the better. Keepin’ you safe by keepin’ you outta shit.” He rolls onto his back and stretches out.

My, my. He is a sight for sore eyes.

The duvet is low on his hips, and I admire the muscled specimen next to me as he sits up and reaches for his coffee.

My God, he’s delicious.

“That’s what all the ol’ ladies say, but they end up knowing half the shit that goes down anyway,” I mutter.

He gives me a look. “Takin’ that to mean Deanna, Summer, Jas, and Indigo all rehash pillow talk.”

I pretend to zip my lips. “That is classified information.”

“Or Manny,” he grunts.

“Best spy ever. You want someone to know the ins and outs of anything, send Manny in,” I muse.

He looks at me sternly. “Don’t need you worryin’ about your pops.”

I almost forget to breathe. “What do you mean?”

“Nothin’.”



“Tag.”

“He isn’t gonna get away with this.”

I rest a hand on his arm. “Tag. I don’t need you doing anything that takes you away from me.”

“Not gonna happen. Not stupid. But he has to learn. And I’m gonna hit him where it hurts.”

“How?”

“You’ll see.”

Panic rises in me. “He’s still my Dad,” I say. “No matter what he’s done.”

“Know it. But he hasn’t learned to respect you over the years, Lu. Plus, he throws your Mom under the bus any chance he gets. That shit ain’t right.”

“Please, don’t hurt him,” I whisper.

He takes a sip and says nothing.

“Tag?”

“I heard you. Piece of shit like him ain’t worth spendin’ my life in jail for, but you won’t have to hear from him again, if you don’t want.”

“I appreciate that. Just... I’d rather you stay away. I gave him a piece of my mind when I yelled at him.”

“What about that other fucker?”

“Brian?” I laugh without humor. “He wasn’t there. But obviously he knows, hell, it was probably his idea.”

“If he contacts you...”

“He won’t.”

“If he does, he’s a dead man.”

I swallow hard. Tag isn’t kidding. He is the most literal man I know.

I dread to think what he’d do to Gary when he finds out. Let’s hope he’s left the state, not that that would stop him.

I'd never want Tag to think any less of me, but it wasn't like I knew Gary was filming me.

I shudder at the thought.

He notices and looks at me. "What?"

I shake my head. "Can I use your shower?"

"No." He reaches down and cups my mound. "Think I like the idea of you walkin' around with my cum still between your legs."

"Ew."

He chuckles, nodding toward the bathroom. "Got no girly shit in there."

"Don't need girly shit, just soap." I take another sip. "Ever brought a woman here before?"

He gives me a look that says *hell no*. "What do you think?"

"Why is that?" I ponder.

"They're not you," he says, stealing the breath from my lungs.

"You're on fire with the compliments," I muse.

"Harlem told me I can't drag you around by the hair, so I gotta start tryin' to be nice."

I almost sputter my coffee everywhere. "Harlem is quite the ladies' man. Never once heard him call any of us bitches."

"You know that's a term of endearment, right?"

I snort. "Right."

"You're my bitch now."

"That does not sound cool. I'd prefer ol' lady to that."

"Know that means I gotta claim you at the table."

I run a finger down his chest as he watches it, his lips twitching. "Yes, I know how it works. I'm sure nobody else is gonna fight you over claiming me."

"If they do, they won't win."

“Do you ever take a day off from being Mr. Grouch?”

He grunts. “I suppose I could be called worse things.” He gives me a chin lift. “You bring any other clothes?”

I shake my head. “Nope just the trench coat. I didn’t really think it through.”

“Don’t be doin’ that shit again in public.”

“I thought you liked it?” I pout.

“I said in public, woman. In private...that’s a different story.”

“Hey, you stole my skirt, can’t I just wear that?”

“Not in public,” he states again. “And anyway, that’s my trophy. Along with the panties I kept.”

“You really are something.”

He turns and plants a chaste kiss on my lips. “Not the first time you’ve told me that.”

I try to deepen the kiss and a low grumble sounds in his throat. “Can’t...gotta get goin’.”

I nod, still kissing him, my hand wandering down his pecs to the tuft of hair south of the border.

“Are you sure about that?”

He grunts again when I slide my hand over his cock... Yes, the man sleeps naked.

“Fuck,” he mutters.

“I can be quick,” I purr.

He pulls me into his lap as I squeal. Slapping my ass, he says, “No wearin’ my shit in public either. Too fuckin’ hot in my stuff.”

“Maybe you need to write a list of all the things I can and can’t wear,” I tease. “Then I can set fire to it and wear whatever the fuck I want.”

He sighs. “Got my work cut out for me, don’t I?”

I giggle, grinding my pussy against his hard cock. I swear to God, that thing never comes down.

“You know it.” I grin.

And I spend the rest of the hour making Tag remember why he chose me.



“Holy shit,” Jas says when I flop onto the couch.

“That’s a lot to process.”

“I know,” I sigh. “I don’t want the others to know yet, but I’m worried about the whole claiming thing.”

“You are, why?” She gives me a look as I sit up.

“Because...I’m technically Tag’s...uh...stepsister.”

Her eyes go wide. “Holy shit.”

“See.”

“I didn’t mean it like that... I mean, you’re not blood related.”

“He moved in with his Dad when he was sixteen. I was fifteen,” I explain. “He went to college less than two years later...”

She stares at me, invested in the story. “And? Did you guys get up to no good?”

I laugh. “No. Not until we were both at college... He... Tag was my first.”

“Oh. My. God.”

“You can’t say anything,” I tell her again. “Payden knows, obviously, but our parents don’t, and we need to tell them first.”

“I’m behind you a hundred percent, Lu, you know that.”

I smile at her kind words. “Thanks, babe.”

“The boys will be fine. I’m sure Nevada and Riot will make a joke or ten about it, but nobody will care. It isn’t like

you're really related."

"That would be ick."

"Just a little."

"I'm just... God, Jas, dare I say it? I'm happy. For the first time in my life, things feel like they're going right, ya know? I have this new job. I have Tag. The club. But I feel like once we tell our parents and my Dad finds out, all our blissfulness will be gone."

"How will your Mom take it, do you think?"

I shrug. "She'll probably be shocked. Terrance is a stern man. He and Tag have a strained relationship at best. But he said it doesn't worry him. He's a grown man, and if we want to be together, we have to face them together."

"I'm so happy for you."

"I am too." I sit up on the couch. "Did you hear anything about what's going down today? Tag said he and Harlem are going to check some shit out with the Devils."

Of course, if anyone knows anything, it'll be Manny or Jas.

"Hawk said they're checkin' out some parking lot where one of the stolen cars was dumped. Not a lot to go on, but they're hopeful there will be security."

"I know they're big guys, but this whole Devils shit has gone on for too long. It makes me nervous that they're still at large."

"Me too," Jas admits. "I don't know how the fuck they're hiding but then again, there are a lot of lowdown scumbags in this city. They'd be only too happy to jump on board and get a quick pay dirt."

"I hope we can go back to normal soon."

"It'll happen," she assures me. "With Rock now on the case, they're covering more ground than they would normally. He's really good at breaking codes and hacking into security systems."

“Guess that’s why he’s never at work anymore,” I muse.

“How is all of that going?”

“I’ve got some interviews later this week,” I say. “Pity Amber, or one of the other bar girls, weren’t interested to keep it in house.”

Amber hasn’t been around much, but some of the girls come and go.

“I did hear some gossip,” Jas goes on, lowering her voice. “Just between us girls.”

My eyes go wide as I smile conspicuously. “Do tell.”

“I heard Aspyn Ashley is being stalked.”

“Holy, what? How do you know this?”

She taps her nose.

Aspyn Ashley is one of our favorite reality stars. Recently, she got booted off the show Tail Spin in a cloud of controversy involving her ex.

“Oh, it gets better. You know how Cash and her Dad are really good friends?”

My eyes widen. “Yeah?”

“She’s coming here,” Jas whispers, putting a finger over her lips.

“Here?” I whisper-shout. “To the MC?”

Jas nods. “Not even kidding when I say she’s had death threats. Here, she has no ties to the MC and her Dad and Cash go way back. They figure it’s the safest place for her.”

“Where the hell is she gonna live? In one of the rooms upstairs?” I wrinkle my nose at the thought.

Jas shrugs. “I guess. This stalker weirdo even got past her security. Her dad is furious.”

“Oh, brother.” Then I give her a look. “I hope they’re not putting Tag on the case.”

I'm a jealous person by nature, but I will knock the bitch out if I have to when it comes to my man.

Jas laughs. "Getting all jealous already? Aww, you're so cute. I knew there was a reason Tag has been less barky these past few weeks."

I roll my eyes. "Very funny. Aspyn is gorgeous."

"Yeah, and she's a brat, or so I've heard. Harlem doesn't want to take her on, even though, technically, as Enforcer, it's between him and Tag to work it out."

"I don't know who I pity more."

"I can't imagine someone like Aspyn being under lock and key, though," Jas goes on. "She seems pretty wild."

"That asshole boyfriend of hers, making everything out to be her fault. What a complete douchebag. And then they fired her from the show for being too risqué?"

"Right? Pass me a bucket."

"Tag never said anything," I mutter. "Of course."

Jas laughs. "You think he's going to just drop all this 'club business' shit because you two are a thing? This is Tag we're talking about. The man barely says three words all year."

"That's true," I say. "Though he knows I watch reality TV like I'm some kind of addict."

She shakes her head. "Seriously, I need to whip him into shape if you're finding stuff out from me."

"Oh, I'm sure Tag would love that." I give her a chin lift. "When is she arriving?"

"A few weeks, I think. Cash is hoping all of this Devils bullshit has blown over by then. It would be better if she and whoever is assigned to watch over her are at a hotel. Then it's completely away from the club."

"I guess she could go in disguise?" I say. "Or she could stay at my place. It's in the middle of nowhere and it's nice. Oh, by the way, Tag owns my house."

Jas gapes. “What?”

“Yeah. He bought it when I got back and pretended he knew nothing about it. I even thought my Dad helped out since the deposit and rent in advance was so much... Turns out, my Mom was keeping secrets as she knew about it, and all along I thought my stepdad was the one funding it.”

Jas rolls her lips. “And I don’t suppose that new G-Wagon out front just turned up all by itself?”

I shake my head. “This man knows absolutely no boundaries.”

“Hey, I wouldn’t say no to my old man buying me a new Mercedes.”

“He’s too much,” I agree. “And if I can get past the extreme possessiveness, I can see that he was just looking out for me.”

“It is kinda sweet, for Tag, anyway.” She smiles, taking me in. “I’m glad you’re happy, Luna. You deserve it.”

I smile back warmly. “It feels different.”

Her smile widens. “You’re in love with him.”

I swallow hard. “Yes,” I admit. “I am.”

And for the first time in my life, I’ve never been so sure of anything.



**TAG**

THE ADDRESS IS DOWNTOWN AND SURROUNDED BY HIGH-RISE buildings.

The idea that Rock even traced the van this far is a goddamn miracle. It's taken weeks, but it's the only lead we had.

Haze and Brew head into an underground fighting ring tonight, and they'll report back in the morning. Whoever is keeping a tight lid on what the Devils are up to is part of the problem and we'll deal with each and every one of them.

All fuckin' day, I can't stop thinking about what Luna told me about her father.

His building is not far from here. Goddamn Shields Insurance. What kind of maggot tries to pay their own daughter off like that? It's fucked. I think about what I need to do, and while I'd love to go up there and jam my fist down that asshole's fuckin' throat, I know I can hurt him much harder somewhere else.

He's going to pay for what he did to Luna, and he's gonna pay handsomely. I'll make sure of that.

"Rock get into the security cameras?" Harlem asks.

"Got a partial plate. Some exchange took place, but the footage was too fuzzy to make out," I reply as we head underground on foot. Not like we can do fuck all, but casing the joint at least makes us both feel like we're getting closer.

First thing I notice is you need a permit to get into this parking lot. *Interesting.*

“Fuckin’ dead end,” Harlem mutters. “This is bullshit.”

“Need to see that footage,” I agree. “Maybe break it down even more. Whoever got in here, had a permit. Notice this ain’t a public parking lot. It’s private.”

Harlem scratches his chin. “Good point. Could be somethin’.”

We’re missing something here, I feel it.

“So, the fucker who did the deal could’ve swiped them in,” I say. “But that seems risky, given the cameras.”

“Or they just thought they’d get away with it. Who’s gonna notice anythin’ fishy goin’ on? Rock only caught it because he followed the van on several cameras across town.”

I run a hand over my face. “Nothin’ is addin’ up, H.”

“Hear it.”

“We should go tonight, backup Brew and Haze. Feel like they need the help.” I get that feeling in my gut every so often, like now. Like something is right under our noses.

“Can send in J.J. and Bullet, maybe Jonah too. He’s happy to help out. Might be Maddog’s kid, but nobody knows him around here. Indigo said they never met. He was a kid when she ran off with fuckface.”

“We’ll be spotted a mile away,” I sigh, knowing it’s true.

I know he’s right, but sitting around like this, waiting for the Devils to make their move, feels like they’ve got the upper hand. And that doesn’t sit well with me.

“Someone’s gotta know somethin’,” I mutter. “They’re bein’ protected, but why? We know Razor was slippery as fuck. Had a habit of disappearin’ for months at a time. Where the fuck did they go?”

“Not out of town,” Harlem says. “Cali rejected the motherfuckers. Disbanded them from the Devils HQ.”

Shouldn't even be wearin' those colors. Fuckin' mess, if you ask me."

"Cali should have dealt with it," I agree. "Instead, they sat on their hands while we did all the dirty work."

"Got that right. Fuckin' bullshit. Now they're nomads, Cali Devils won't get involved."

"Course not, then they'd actually have to have some accountability. Doubt that'll ever happen," I mumble.

"So this fuckin' parking lot leads to several office buildings," Harlem goes on. "Could be nothin' in it, but I say we check 'em out."

I glance over at the map near the elevators. It's a long shot, but the private parking has my head reeling. Who would be stupid enough?

If the van was dumped after the exchange, then why come here? Why not a deserted park or a backstreet alley way in a rough part of town. This seems almost set up.

"Evans Investments, Mayfair Marketing solutions, Capital one," I say. "All big firms."

"Don't add up."

"Unless one of them is an investor."

Harlem frowns. "You think they'd be so stupid, to do that here?"

"That weasel prospect told us they had a big financial backer. Granted, that could still be scum of the earth, but this all screams coverup. Someone is coverin' their tracks either way."

I nod to the plaque. "One of these?"

"Maybe."

I take a screenshot and shoot it over to Rock. "Rock can check 'em out, see if anythin' comes up. Once he traces the funds to that offshore account, shit could get real."

I feel the frustration mounting. In fact, it's mounting within the club.

Our pockets need to go deeper in the underworld. Clearly, those who we do have in place ain't saying shit. We may not deal or carry guns, but people in this town respect the club. We have eyes and ears everywhere, yet nobody has seen anything? I don't believe it. I think Forger is paying everyone off. And with financial backing, he'd have the means to keep everything quiet.

We made a statement when we took the Devils down. The Irish mafia stayed away and paid their respects by leaving our turf untouched. The cartel fucked off back to their neck of the woods, and that was that for the time being.

To have an uprising ain't what any of us need.

We all know nomads are dangerous and they can pop up anywhere they choose.

"Plenty of crooked businessmen," Harlem goes on. "No shortage of men who know how to hide money in all the wrong places."

"Smart men, too," I grunt. "Let's get back, touch base with Rock, and make sure the other brothers are ready for tonight."

"Knowin' J.J., he'll end up in the ring," Harlem snorts.

"That wouldn't be a bad thing, might knock some sense into him."



I stare at Luna across the hall.

She's in with Jas, setting up her desk on the opposite side of the room.

I always thought Jas got the best office in the club, including Cash's, but now Luna's here, I'm not seeming to mind so much.

My phone buzzes in my pocket. I take it out and see it's Summer.

I smile.

**Tink**

How did you go, lover boy?

I roll my eyes.

Kinda busy right now

Give me an emoji for your current mood, here's mine... 😴

You're asleep?

No, I just got off nightshift.

Summer is a nurse so her hours are all over the place.

K

Made any progress?

☐

You're skiing?

No, that's me flying off a cliff

No more emojis for you. She likes Chinese food...

Good to know

I shut my phone and see Luna's looking at me. I give her a chin lift, and she rolls her lips in a smile.

We may not be making things public just yet, but that doesn't mean I can't look.

She looks hot in a pencil skirt—thankfully, longer than the last one I snagged and took home—and a frilly blouse. I don't know why these chicks don't just wear jeans, but her and Jas take fashion to a whole new level I don't understand.

“You okay, big guy?” Manny says, slinging an arm around my shoulders.

I side-eye him. “Fine.”

“Making my famous Gumbo this week,” he sing-songs. “Know it's your favorite.”

“When you gonna make one of those beef and bourbon pies we had at the baby's christening?” I grumble.

“All you gotta do is ask.” He follows my gaze, and then says, “Can see why the view from here is so appealing.”

I sigh. Manny is someone we all tolerate because he's a fuckin' good cook. Out of all the brothers, except maybe Nevada, he's the one always pushing at me and Luna getting together. I know they're friends and she likes him a lot. That used to make me jealous, especially knowing he's bi, but Manny knows not to cross me and what it'll mean if he does.

Still, a little warning never goes astray.

“Don't let me break all those pretty fingers of yours,” I mutter. “Be a shame to have a prospect take over the kitchen.”

I can almost feel Manny rolling his eyes. “You wouldn't.” He holds out his hands to flutter his painted nails at me.

One hand has black nail polish, the other has black and white with skulls on them.

“You pay for that manicure?”

“You betcha. You can tell a lot by a man and the state of his hands,” he says.

I hold mine out.

He tuts when he sees the calluses and scratches and burn marks. “What do mine say about me?”

“That you work hard...though calluses don't feel good when you're...you know, using your fingers for other things.”

“Luna doesn't seem to mind,” I say.

Yeah, maybe I want him to know so he'll back off.

He claps his hands together, and I roll my eyes.

“Don't tell me the big bad wolf has finally seen sense? You know how many dudes eye up your woman when we're out, how many numbers she's turned down?”

I glance at him, my nostrils flaring. “You got names? I'll break every bone in their body and gauge their goddamn eyes out.”

“Ooh.” He grins. “A man with ethos. I like that, T-boy.”

“I'm bein' serious.”

“Calm your farm. Lucky for them, I don't have names, but it wouldn't have been long before one of them caught her eye. Glad it's you, T. I think you make a cute couple.”

“Cute?” I snort.

“Imagine your kids, aww,” he gushes.

“Don't want no kids.”

He puts his hands on his hips. “Really? I think Luna does. She's good with kids, and hey, you didn't drop Caprice on her head when you held her. That's gotta count for something.”

Kids?

*Kids?*

I wait for panic to hit me, and when it doesn't, I frown.

I glance at my girl as she chatters away to Jas while they get shit set up.

I can imagine her pregnant with my kid. Her belly big and round while I take her in my arms and keep her and our baby safe.

*Fuck.*

Do I want this?

I never used to.

Not last week. But now? Now I'd give her a kid if it's what she wanted.

Is this what it means when a brother gets caught?

"I can see the cogs turning," Manny goes on, annoyingly reading my mind. "You just gotta remember that if you knock Luna up, then I insist you name the baby after me, since I'm one of the main people in this club singing your praises, brother."

I glance at him. "You were?"

He nods. "Always." Then he adds, "I may have reiterated you're a grumpy asshole who grunts and spits at everybody he doesn't like—which is everyone—but you have a kind heart deep down. You're loyal and care about the club. You protect Luna at every turn. I see it."

"Thank God, I have your approval," I snort. "But we ain't callin' any damn kid Manny."

"What's wrong with Manny? My real name is Manuel."

"For fuck's sake."

"You can laugh, but if you don't have your girl's besties on board, *she's* never gonna be on board." Manny taps his nose.

"Shit got real this time," I go on in a low voice. "With Cami. Should never have happened."

He nods. "That shit fucked us all up. Nobody wants to see kids getting in the firing line. That just isn't right."

"That shit ain't ever gonna be over," I say. "Not when they took a kid. Could've happened to any of the ol' ladies. Crystal's got a kid, now D and Cash, Hawk and Jas's kid, Jonah..."

"Goddamn assholes," Manny agrees. "But you know Luna can hold her own with the best of them."

He's right, she can. But only I know how much Luna puts out there and how much she holds inside. She never lets anyone see that she's troubled or something ain't right. She's



selfless like that. Not wearing her heart on her sleeve... She only does that with me.

Pride swells in my chest.

*Mine.*

“She can,” I agree. “I like that you look out for her...just don’t look too hard.”

Manny rolls his eyes. “Was that almost a joke, T-bird?”

“Do you have to call everyone ridiculous names?”

“Of course. What good am I if I’m not here to annoy you with nicknames. Though I think T-Bag suits you better.”

I go swipe him with my backhand, and he ducks just in time.

“Asshat,” I mutter.

Rock appears at the door where I’m standing and gives me a chin lift. “Got somethin’.”

I shove Manny in the shoulder as he barrels away laughing, shutting Rock’s door behind me.

Harlem went to check on Indigo and Stella at the bakery.

I tower over his desk. “Yeah?”

“Did some diggin’ into the money Razor received offshore. Took a little bit, but found a company name that runs a firm out of DC, Pittsburgh, and here in NOLA.”

“Political?” I frown.

“Thought that at first, fuck knows the governor’s office has been in hot water lately for corruption, but I just got a report back from all of the employees that work for Global Investments, includin’ their CEO and COO. It’s some offshoot insurance broker. I’m runnin’ through the list of disgruntled employees, just to be sure.”

“Sounds like a good plan.”

“They went to a lot of trouble to hide this, T.”

“Know it.”

He gives me a chin lift. “Speakin’ of trouble, you heard about Aspyn Ashley?”

I give him a look. “Cash mentioned it, but with all that’s been goin’ on, haven’t had much chance to dissect it.”

“He and Ryder want me to watch her.”

I nod. “Yep. You seem like the best candidate. Priest is the next best option, but he’s a little more out in the community than you are. Nevada ain’t responsible enough, and he’ll end up fuckin’ her.”

“And I won’t?”

“You take duty a little more seriously.”

He smiles. “Looked her up. She’s fuckin’ trouble.”

“With a capital T.”

“Cash has me lookin’ into this stalkin’ bullshit. Her security team have been fired. Looks like she’s gonna need all the protection she can get her hands on. Her Father is overprotective, but I can see why,” he says. “He’s in the real estate game, owns a shit ton of property.”

“Sounds like she’s doin’ it tough.”

Aspyn was born with a silver spoon in her mouth. Her dad is very successful, and she’s spoiled, so why she agreed to do a reality show is beyond me. It’s not like she needed the cash.

“One thing’s for sure, can’t be bringin’ her around here. Word will get around.”

“We’ll work somethin’ out. Her Pops will probably buy her a fuckin’ apartment,” I say. Or they could rent somewhere with better security.

“Yeah, seems I get all the fun jobs,” he grumbles.

“Sure you can handle it?” Secretly, I’m glad I’m not on the job. I need Luna close to me. All fuckin’ day and night.

“Pretty sure I can handle it.”

“Gonna need round-the-clock security. You sure you don’t wanna commit?”

He's honest when he says, "Me and Cash were on the outs for a long time. I don't wanna disappoint him. Truth is, I don't know the first thing about Aspyn Ashley or what she's gonna need, but I can keep her safe. For Cash and this club, I'll do it."

"You took a bullet for this club," I remind him. "For Cash to trust you with this, one of his closest friend's kids, means somethin'."

"Know it, that's why I can't fuck up. Or decline."

I give him a rue smile. "She as wild as I've heard?"

"Apparently, she has a degree in sarcasm and plays with knives for fun."

"Should be a hoot."

"Tell me about it."

Rock is a good brother, not just to Jett, but to all of us. He dove in front of a bullet to save Jett and in my book, that's fuckin' heroic.

I know him and Cash had shit they had to work through after he took Jett in as a teenage runaway, and Rock split. They'd been on the outs, until recently, when Rock agreed to join the MC and sold half of his trucking business. Now he gets to do what he really loves doing instead of sitting behind a desk talkin' trucks all day.

"As soon as I have anythin' else, I'll text you. I'm gettin' through security, but it's takin' a while," he goes on. "These people aren't invincible, if you know how to hack into the right systems."

"Got it."

He gives me a chin lift. "So, you and Luna?"

I roll my eyes and he smirks.

"Kinda figured somethin' was up when hell unfroze itself," he chuckles.

I shake my head. He ain't wrong there. "Yeah. Well, it took a while to get through the layers."

“You or her?”

I snort. “Touche.”

“Women are complicated,” he says.

“You got anyone on the sly?”

He shakes his head. “Hardly got time to sleep, much less fuck all night. Though some of those new sweet butts hangin’ around ain’t half bad.”

Thank fuck my sweet butt days are over. Must be getting old.

“Make sure you get in first,” I say. “Before those pretty boys get wind.”

“You sayin’ I ain’t pretty?” he laughs.

“Fuck off.” I move to the door. “You need any help with Aspyn, you call me first, got me?”

He nods. “Got it.”

He knows I’m in charge of security for the club, and we can work together. In truth, I’m glad I didn’t get lumbered with this task. I think Rock will be good for the job. He’s reliable and he wants to appease Cash and do right by the club. As any good brother should. Gotta respect that.

“Harlem’s got enough goin’ on with revenge on his mind, Cash has his baby, and from what I hear, Crystal and Ryder are tryin’ for baby number two. Last thing they need is a whiny little bitch makin’ life complicated,” I say.

“I’m only whiny when I don’t get enough pussy.”

“That’s pretty much all the time, then?”

“Funny fucker,” Rock quips.

“And I meant Aspyn, obviously. Broad like that comes with baggage. Always the same story.”

“Gonna clear my schedule for the next few months. Once Luna’s trained the new office girl, and I get a manager in to oversee, I’ll be able to let go of the reins a little bit.”

I give him a chin lift. “Sounds like a plan.”

“In the meantime, can keep watch on Luna, till whatever this shit is goin’ down is dealt with, when you’re not around.”

“Appreciate that.” I stare him down then add, “Claimin’ her.”

“I got it.”

“Know what that means?”

His lips twitch. “Yep. Like I said, I’m just tryin’ to help out.”

“Long as that’s all it is.”

“You really think I want my skull pounded in?”

I clear my throat. “Glad we got that straightened out.”

It’s always a good idea to make things very clear. That way, when fists start flying, a brother can’t say he wasn’t warned. While I don’t believe he’d try anything with Luna, I don’t know him *that* well. If Jett trusts him, and Cash, then that says a lot, but when it comes to my woman, there’s no taking any chances.

I leave as he gives me a salute, and I shut the door behind me.

Luna’s laugh from the room next door has me turning to sneak another peek at her.

The fact she’s happy makes my chest tighten, and I want it to always be like this; listening to her laughter and seeing her smile.

If anyone dares upset her happy space, I’m gonna fuck with them so bad they won’t know what hit them.

That’s my promise to her.

That’s how I can show I care when sometimes I don’t have the words.

There is nothing that I won’t do for her.

Nothing is ever gonna be off limits.

## LUNA

I STARE AT THE MENU WHILE I WAIT FOR PAYDEN, JAS, AND Manny to arrive.

We decided to have lunch to celebrate my promotion.

We could've gone to the grill, but Manny insisted we go upmarket and have it at Piccolo's. I've never eaten here, as it's very expensive and everyone looks like they should be in a board meeting.

I love going to the dessert section first, and my eyeballs almost bust out of their sockets when I see the prices.

"Hello, Luna," the voice says as I flinch. I'd know that damn voice anywhere.

*Fucking Brian.*

I glance up and, sure enough, Brian is standing at the seat in front of me, holding on to it as he smiles down at me. It's not even a smile, it's a smirk.

"What the fuck do you want?" I snarl back.

He has the audacity to look affronted. "That's a nice way to greet an old friend."

"Old friend?" I stammer. "We were never friends. You were a cheating, arrogant asshole!"

The people at the next table gasp, and Brian clears his throat. "Now isn't the time for a scene," he says, taking a seat as I glare at him. "Just hear me out."

I laugh without humor. “About what? You and my father’s outlandish proposal? Or are you trying to get my inheritance any which way you can?”

“You always have to be a stick in the mud, don’t you, Lulabelle?”

“Don’t call me that!” I snap, standing to leave.

“Sit down,” he commands. “I know all about why you left New Orleans two years ago.”

My eyes go wide as I swallow hard and do as he says.

“W –what?” I stammer.

“Good news. Your secrets are safe with me, babe. And it’d be a shame to let Daddy Dearest in on what you got up to on Tinder.”

“It wasn’t Tinder,” I whisper-shout. “H –how?”

A sick smile spreads across his face. “Truth is, we both want what we want, Lulabelle. I want to be CEO, and with your father already doting on me, I’m almost there. The son he never had. With you on my arm, it would seal the deal. We both get what we want.”

“I don’t see how I win in any of that scenario,” I snap. “So your pathetic little plan is futile.”

“No? Don’t you want Daddy’s approval? Come on now, Luna. We both know that you’ve always looked up to him, but he’s been out of reach. I can give you that. His approval. He’ll look at you in a whole new light if you marry me. You’ll be respected, finally. Taken seriously. And you’ll have wealth beyond your wildest dreams. You’ll never have to work the same dead-end job again, or wear anything except couture. Not that I relish the idea of my future wife being a fucking whore, but we can’t win them all.”

I literally can’t speak.

I clutch onto the cutlery, ready to stab him to death with my butter knife.

“I wouldn’t. Too many witnesses,” he says, giving me a wink.

“You’re such an asshole,” I whisper, venom in my tone. “The best part of my life was getting away from you. Hear me, and hear me good, fuckface. I wouldn’t be with you if you had a hundred million dollars. I wouldn’t be with you if you had all the tea in fucking China. Tell my Dad I have a sex tape that I didn’t consent to, we’ll see how that looks in court for you, and for Gary, if he’s in on this. It won’t affect me since I’m a nobody after all. What’s one more shame on my Father’s wall of regrets, right? His wayward daughter caught up in a scandal? Is this really all you’ve got?”

He purses his lips, momentarily caught off guard.

Of course, I’m shitting my pants, but he can’t know that.

Fucking Gary. When will this shit ever end? How did Brian know about that? Did he set this up?

“What about the money, Luna?” Brian finally speaks, his tone cold. “We both know that you’ll always be bouncing on bupkis, working one shitty job to the next to make ends meet. Though, you must be fucking someone high up to be driving a G-Wagon.”

Thank God, he doesn’t know about Tag. I can just imagine that scandal would be quite enough to make Brian squeal to the papers. Despite what I said, embarrassing my dad isn’t on the cards, no matter what I’ve led him to believe.

“Fuck you,” I spit. “You’ll have to try to find some other mail-order bride because I’m not for sale. I don’t give a shit about inheritance when it means I have to sell my soul to the devil in order to get it.”

“You’re looking at this all wrong, Lulabelle. We were good once, we could be good again.”

How can someone want money and prestige that much? Is it really that fucking important?

“I was a whore five seconds ago.”



He stares at me, his eyes cold. “I regret what I did,” he begins. “With...Amy.”

I laugh without humor. “Really? Is that because she realized what an asshole you were and left you five minutes after you left me?”

“I never meant to hurt you...”

“Oh, but you didn’t.” I lean over the table, my fist banging down. “I know how to handle bullies, Brian. I’ve been dealing with my dad my entire life, so I’m a fucking expert. At one point, I would’ve fallen over myself to get back with you. I never thought I deserved anyone who was actually good to me. Who would treat me like a queen and respect my choices. On paper, you had it all. But you never had the one thing I value more than anything—loyalty, Brian. You’re just a sad, pathetic excuse of a man who’s greedy and doesn’t want to work hard to get it.”

“You’re such a fucking bitch,” he seethes.

I laugh. “Is that the best you can come up with?”

“I’ll end you,” he warns. “I’ll fucking end you, Luna. With that stunt you pulled in my office that day, you’re lucky I didn’t come after you.”

“And do what?” I challenge. “Embarrass yourself even more?”

I love the way his eyes narrow, like he can’t figure out why I don’t want anything to do with it.

Why money means nothing to me because I’m not willing to sell my soul to get rich.

I’m doing okay. I don’t need Brian and I don’t need my father. They’re both as toxic as each other.

“Last chance,” he grits out. “There won’t be any more chances. Mark my words when I say I will bring you down. I’ll make your father see what an entitled little bitch you are and see to it that you’ll never see a penny from him, even after he dies. You’ll be in the headlines of the Times in disgrace.

The shit I can make up about you would make your head spin.”

I stare at him in utter revulsion. “You’re sick,” I whisper. “You’re truly, truly sick.”

He opens his mouth to speak, but I gasp in shock as Tag approaches and yanks him out the chair, fury on his face as he punches him once, twice, three times, until Brian is falling on the floor and there’s blood everywhere.

I hold my hands over my mouth as I stare at Tag in shock, heart beating out of my chest.

The people around us gasp and start to jump out of the chairs to help the man.

When he glares at them, they back away.

He turns to look down at me. “You okay, Lu?”

I nod. “You didn’t have to –”

“Yeah, I did.” He thumbs behind him as Harlem and Hawk peel Brian off the ground and start to drag him away. “He’s done more than you think, Lu.”

“What?”

He holds out his hand over the table. “Come’ere.”

I go willingly as he pulls me along and we leave, Brian’s lifeless body being dragged by the two large men in front of us.

Everyone stares as we pass by.

“Where are you taking him?” I whisper.

“The warehouse.”

Oh, shit.

“What did he do?”

“Aside from harassing you and calling you names?”

“Yes.”

“He funded the downfall of our club.”

I gape at him. “W –what?”

“Rock traced the money back to one of Brian’s accounts at an old firm he worked for in Pittsburgh. He wasn’t just embezzling money, Lu, he was funding crime and reaping the benefits. When we took the Devils down, he was behind it all. Since workin’ for your father, he’s also used company money to fund bogus charities to act as a front to dump money for drugs and guns instead of investing them.”

I shake my head. “And my father knew nothing about this?”

Tag looks down at me as we exit the restaurant. “Not that we know of, but it wouldn’t surprise me. His turn is comin’, princess. I told you it would.”

I watch as Harlem and Hawk haul Brian’s unconscious ass into a van and they slide it shut.

Nevada’s at the helm, with Bronco next to him, and they take off.

“Gonna drop you at the clubhouse. Lunch has been canceled for obvious reasons.”

He bundles me in the passenger seat of his truck, and then jogs around to his side, and we take off before the police even arrive.

“I don’t get any of this,” I say, my voice tight. It’s all too much to take in. “Brian was involved with the Devils?”

“He wanted world domination,” Tag grunts. “But he wanted your Dad’s company more. He’s obsessed with it. Which is why he was on board to be your potential husband when your old man first suggested it. He gets nothin’ if you don’t agree.”

“But he’d make CEO.”

“Still, you’d have a majority share, if anything were to happen to your pops.”

I shake my head, but he looks at me. “You’re in his will, Luna. You get it all. In some sick, fucked-up way, your dad

always wanted control. Down to the bitter end, but he still isn't willing to let Brian have his fortune."

I go to open my mouth and close it again. "But my dad hates me."

"I don't think that's true. You just didn't want to be what he wanted you to be, Lu. It doesn't comprehend in his brain how abhorrent it would be for you to marry Brian. He obviously thinks you would do anything to get your inheritance, and Brian's the son he always wanted. In his eyes, it's win-win."

I buckle up and turn to face him. "I can't believe Brian was behind all of this."

"That ain't the half of it. We think Brian is just a cover for something even bigger. We don't know what yet, but we do know he made that payment to Razor."

I shudder at the idea of how much trouble Brian is in. He has absolutely no idea who he's dealing with. After all the names he called me, and the way he sneered and said I was a whore, threatening me, I have no remorse for him. He's made his bed and now he has to lie in it.

"Tag. Everything I thought I knew is a lie."

"Not me," he says. "I'm here, and I'm never gonna tell you lies."

I bite my lip. "I have to tell you something."

He glances at me as he pulls into the lunchtime traffic.

"It's about what Brian said," I go on. Silence accompanies me as I stare straight ahead.

"When my dad gave me that money, and I left..." I feel his eyes on me once more.

"...I... After Brian, I was messed up. I went on a dating app and met someone. We hooked up, and when he wanted more, I broke things off. Then he..." I swallow hard.

I look down as I feel Tag's hand wrap around mine. "You can tell me," he says, his voice hard. "No lies."

“He... He filmed us...then he bribed me with it and said I had to pay him fifty thousand dollars or he'd send the tape to all my friends and family and my boss...” I turn and look the other way. Shame blazes across my face.

Tag's hand tightens in mine. “What the fuck?”

“I was scared, T. We had that big fight, and I had to get out of town, so I went to my dad and told him I was paying off my student loans and credit card debt. In return, he wanted me to work for him.”

“Fuckin' asshole,” he mutters.

“I was scared. I was at an all-time low...”

“Because of me?” He grits his teeth.

“Not all you,” I whisper. “But I was terrified that he'd make good on his promise, and if I went to the police, it would all get dragged out in court. I didn't want that. So I tucked my tail between my legs and went to my Dad. Now I'm paying handsomely for it.”

“You'll never have to pay,” he says, his tone firm. “You hear me, Lu?”

I nod, my cheeks still hot.

Suddenly, we're pulling over, and I turn to look at Tag, “What are you—”

He cups my face, and I gasp when his lips almost touch mine. “There is nothin' that you can't tell me that would change the way I feel about you,” he growls. “You not tellin' me shit is the same as lyin', Lu, you got me?”

I nod, tears springing to my eyes. “How could I?” I sob. “This is the most embarrassing thing that's ever happened to me, T. I could never tell anyone about it. Only Payden because she forced it out of me.”

His nostrils flair. “Don't even think that I would be mad at you for tellin' the truth,” he says. “This wasn't your fault. You didn't do anythin' wrong. He committed a felony, and if you'd have come to me, I could've fixed it. That's on me because I

was an asshole and I thought I was protectin' you, when all I really did was send you into the lion's den. That shit's on me."

I shake my head. "No, it's not. It's on me because I should have gone to the police."

He presses his head against mine. "Now I get to deal with him. I want his name. I want his number. I want any piece of detail you have on him without argument or question. Let me do this for you."

"Do what?" I wipe my tears. "Go after him? I don't even know where he lives..."

"Rock can find him. If he's done this to you, imagine how many other women he's done it to. That shit ain't right, princess. It's time he paid for what he did. MC style."

I can't even feel bad about what's coming for Gary, I can't. He's put me through hell for the last few years, and I've never had another relationship since. He violated me, and Tag is right, he does need to pay.

"I'm sorry I didn't say anything," I stammer. "But as far as I was concerned, it was water under the bridge. I hadn't heard from him since I gave him the money. When Brian said he knew...I started to wonder if he didn't set it up to trap me."

"I'll get to the bottom of it," he says.

The fear of God runs through me, because I know Tag will stop at nothing to get to the truth. I guess Brian and Gary should have thought about that before they started acting like total assholes.

"I don't like the idea of you with another man," he goes on. "But that doesn't mean this shit is okay. It's not okay, Lu. I'm not gonna stand for it. You're my woman now, and I'll fuck anyone up who disrespects you, got me?"

I nod. "Please, don't put yourself in danger, T. I couldn't bear losing you."

He kisses me chastely. "You're not gonna lose me. I know the bayou like I know the back of my hand. Lots of things out there that can meet with a tragic end."

I press my lips to his, not wanting to hear any more.

When Brian goes missing, the less I know, the better.

“Tag...”

“Repeat after me: I will not keep any more secrets from my man.”

His thumb swipes a stray tear, and I look at him with absolute devotion. “I will not keep any more secrets from my man.”

“I am so fuckin’ beautiful. Every single inch of me is perfect.”

My eyes go wide.

“Say it,” he barks.

“I am so fucking beautiful. Every single inch of me is perfect.”

“I love my old man’s cock.”

I giggle. “I love my old man’s cock.”

“It’s the only one I’m ever gonna ride.”

I let out another giggle. “It’s the only one I’m ever gonna ride.”

Cupping my face, we kiss, his tongue in my mouth as I wrap my arms around his neck.

By the time we pull apart, we’re both panting and needy.

“Can’t do this here,” he mutters. “Gonna have to wait. Got an ex-boyfriend to go fuck up.”

“I love it when you talk dirty,” I murmur.

His lips twitch, and he almost smiles. “I love you, Lu. You know that whatever I did in the past was because I thought I was doin’ the right thing. I was thinkin’ of you...not myself.”

I run my hands up his chest. “I know that, T. I understand why. We’ve got hurdles we’re going to have to climb, and we can do that together. Starting with our parents. But no matter

what happens, I love every damn inch of you, and I know that we're meant to be together. No matter what."

His eyes soften, and I melt at the way he looks at me. "Fuckin' perfect," he mutters, our lips meeting again.

"I love you."

"Say it again."

"I love you, *Thomas*."

"Fuck."

This moment is ours. It might not be the most romantic of circumstances, but it's the realest thing I've ever known.

"There is nobody but you. There never will be again."

"More."

"I'm yours, T. Say you're mine too."

"You're mine." He presses his forehead against mine. "If anythin' ever happened to you..."

"It won't, T. I can handle myself. And I have you now, too."

"You always had me. It just took a little while to get it into my thick skull."

I sniff, my heart to fucking full that it could burst. "No matter what, no more lies."

"Nothin' that you don't already know. No skeletons in my closet, princess. What you see is what you get."

"A big grumpy ass?"

He snorts. "Most of the time. I'm better after coffee."

"I've noticed."

We kiss once more. "Gonna take you to church until this all blows over. I don't trust that fucker... What he said to you..."

"You heard some of it?" I gasp, even though he doesn't know the half of it.



“An entitled little bitch? I’m sure that wasn’t the worst part, but that’s alright, he’ll talk.”

I wince. “Don’t get blood on my favorite cut.”

He smiles. “That’s my girl.”

**TAG**

I HAVEN'T HAD AN ADRENALINE RUSH LIKE THIS BEFORE. NOW all the pieces have come together, I feel the shift and the weight drain off my shoulders. This is the easy part.

Not so much for Brian, who's tied to a chair with a dirty rag gagging his mouth, blood splattered all over his face from where I broke his nose. He's crying like a little bitch.

Well, he's gonna be my little bitch when I'm done with him.

I twirl the knife around in my fingers, Harlem by my side. I don't know which one of us wants him more. He may not have been the one who kidnapped Cami, but he sure as fuck has dealings with the goddamn Devils. And the money Razor received came out of one of his—not so cleverly hidden—bank accounts.

I shake my head in disgust.

Hawk, Bronco, Nevada and Priest wait by the entry. Cash and Ryder should be here soon.

The brothers, Haze and Brew, are on their way with some intel on what they heard last night.

Rock just happened to call me mid-morning to let me know he'd traced the van.

“Where should we start first?” I ask Harlem.

“I think fingertips. Nobody needs those, right?”

He squirms, trying to fight against his restraints that he'll never get out of.

“I was thinkin’ his balls. You’re way behind me, brother.”

Harlem snorts as Brian wails and struggles again.

“The harder you fight, the worse it’ll be,” I remind him.

I don’t know how he got a job in investment banking, and then with Luna’s father in insurance. He seems like a dumb fuck to me.

The great part is, he’s shit scared, and that’s exactly what he should be. No matter what happens, he’s not getting out of here alive.

When I can’t take it anymore, I grab him by the hair and yank his head backward and get in his face. “Stop. Fuckin’. Movin’,” I growl. “One more fuckin’ peep, and I’m gonna cut your dick off and feed it to you, got me?”

He immediately stops.

“You pissed him off,” Harlem singsongs. “This is gonna be so much worse for you.”

“Yeah, you had a choice how you were gonna die, and now you don’t. Pity. I usually just go in for the kill, but now I’m gonna draw it out until you no longer recognize your own screams,” I say.

His eyes go wide as he blabbers something behind his gag.

“I’m gonna let you speak,” I growl. “But if one word comes out of your mouth that I don’t like, I’m gonna take the tip of each finger, then your thumbs, then your toes, and that’s just me warmin’ up. Understood?”

He nods frantically.

I yank the rag out of his mouth.

“Speak!” I bellow.

“W –what am I doing here?”

I stare at him, bored. “You disrespected my woman, for one. And then there’s that little incident with launderin’ money

through the Devils MC and usin' company funds to buy drugs and guns to sell on the black market." I eye Harlem as he glares at the motherfucker, both of us chomping at the bit to get a poke at him. "I don't know how Mr. Shields is gonna feel about any of this. I might just send your carcass up to him in his elevator as a pre-arrival gift before I go turn his world upside down."

We still don't know if Luna's father is implicated, and that's something I need to get to the bottom of.

"Please," he begs. "He can't know about this..."

"Ah yes, that's the third issue we need to get to, felony charges. What do you get now for fraud, embezzling money, and supplying drugs and guns these days, H?"

Harlem doesn't take his eyes off the bastard. "Life. May not even make parole with all the other shit we're gonna pin on you. Be nice for the family if Razor's murder was finally solved," Harlem says, without missing a beat. "Can't blame every single 'accident' on the bayou with assholes like you at large."

"I didn't!" he starts. "I didn't do shit!"

I sigh and grab his hand, which is already splayed out flat on the armrest. Without hesitations, I slice the top of his finger off, just narrowly missing the bone. "Remember how I told you to think about your words? Now isn't the time to test my patience."

He howls, spittle forming at his mouth as blood oozes out of his finger.

"Now. Let's try this another way. We'll ask questions, and you'll tell us the truth." I point to the tray of instruments on a silver platter, just begging to be used. "Or you'll be picking out which blunt object I remove your spleen with."

He cries like a pussy and bites down on his lip. Beads of sweat run down his angry face.

I crack my neck. "How long has this been goin' on?"

His lips part, and if he's thinking about hurling abuse at me, he quickly changes his mind.

“Razor approached me. I had control of finances at the bank I worked for some time back, so it was easy to skim off the top. It was enough to invest and get a piece of the action. Everyone downtown knew the coke was shit until Razor did a deal with the cartel. They needed connections and I was the middleman.”

“Investment bankin’ obviously didn’t pay enough back then,” Harlem says, shaking his head. “Always wantin’ more. Fuckin’ greedy, but where did it get you in the end?”

“I never meant to hurt anyone,” he babbles. “I just invested money, then Razor got the stuff, distributed it with some lowdown parolees who got the shit on the streets, and everyone took a piece of the pie. The money I skimmed didn’t even get missed.”

“So essentially, you didn’t put the money up, the bank did?” Harlem shakes his head, incredulous.

“It was a few cents here and there,” he breathes. “It was almost too easy. Then I started at Shields, and when Razor was gunned down, his men approached me again.”

“So you took company funds from Shields?” I ask, wondering how the fuck this idiot covered it up.

“Again, I made it look like investments,” he pants. “I’m good... I’m good at it. I always got a return, and with Shields, the money was back in the account before anyone noticed. Nobody was any the wiser.”

“How proud your mother must be,” I mutter. “You know guns and drugs kill people, right? That shit you’re puttin’ out on the street is fucked, and you just sit here and act like it’s nothin’ while you keep these streets littered with criminals and addicts. You’re a part of the fuckin’ problem. You’re just a goddamn lowlife scumbag.”

Just because he’s pissing me off, I slice another finger.

He howls like a bitch.

“Please,” he wails. “I’ll do anything... I never... I just wanted to get ahead. I planned on retiring in a few years, after I became CEO.”

“And took Luna as your wife?”

“That was her father’s idea.” He winces. “I was just going along with it to keep him happy.”

“Somethin’ wrong with Luna?” I bark.

He shakes his head. “No. of course not...”

“She told me that you called her a fuckin’ little whore and she’d suck cock for anyone.”

His eyes go wide.

Harlem shakes his head. He knows what’s coming next.

“You disrespected my ol’ lady,” I growl. “Can’t talk your way out of that.”

“Kiss of death,” Harlem agrees.

“You touch her?”

“No!” he spits.

“You want to?”

“No.”

“You think you’re better than her, don’t you, Brian?”

“I –I don’t,” he stammers. “I just did what Mr. Shields told me to do. I wanted that fuckin’ promotion. I deserve it. If peddlin’ a little pond scum is what I have to do, then so be it.”

My nostrils flair. “Bein’ with Luna is like peddlin’ pond scum?” I frown, then to Harlem, “I think he did just say that, right?”

“Definitely.”

“No!” he screams. “I didn’t mean that... I meant the company...not Luna.”

“You’re a piece of shit,” I snarl. “You made her cry. You know what I’m gonna do to you for every tear she ever cried for you? I’m gonna fuck you up.”

He shakes his head. Fuckin' suit.

“Not so tough now, is he?” Harlem snickers. “Remind me, dickwad. Didn't you cheat on Luna with her best friend and leave her broken-hearted?”

Brian's eyes go wide.

“Yeah, then he left that chick when she had a miscarriage,” I say, disgust on my face. “Seems like you enjoy runnin' out on women and leavin' them broken-hearted, Brian, is that what you like to do?”

“I said sorry to Luna,” he cries. “I did... I swear... It was a major lapse in judgment on my part, I admit that. We were both sorry... I never stopped loving her.”

Hearing him say those words makes me fuckin' furious. Without thinking, I uppercut him under the chin, and his head jolts back from the impact, a harsh 'oof' leaving his chest as he jerks in the chair.

“Don't ever fuckin' use those words!” I spit, grabbing onto his shirt as he flails around like a fish out of water. “Or I swear to God, I'll torture you for days, and every time you pass out, I'll bring you back and start all over again.”

He murmurs, my punch knocking him senseless. I'm almost disappointed that he's such a fuckin' wimp.

Harlem gives me a chin lift as I step back. He knows I'm gonna kill him if this continues, and we still haven't gotten shit out of him.

“Tell us what else you know,” Harlem says. “And let's not prize it out of you. Tag ain't kiddin' and I'm not sure you want what he's offerin'.”

“I... There wasn't just me,” he garbles. “Another couple of investors at the firm... The company accountant, Gerard, he was in on it. He hid the money...”

Good. This is good. I need more names. All the names.

“Who else?” I ask, turning away and folding my arms over my chest.

I glance over and see Ryder and Cash have arrived, but they're staying away. The less chaos in here, the better.

"That's it, just Gerard and another guy Richard... He was friends with Forger...got him out on parole."

"He's a lawyer?" Harlem looks at me.

Crooks all across the board. The whole fuckin' lot of them.

"Go figure," I mutter.

"You meet with Forger?" Harlem quips. He shakes his head, and when I turn to face him, he quickly adds, "He's got traction in the underground fightin' ring. It's a well-kept secret because only elites can get access," he says as I frown. "That's how they've been making big dough, fast. Anything goes. There are no rules. And the payout is huge. Some of his former inmates joined, and that's how he's been recruiting, not just for fighters, but for dealers, pimps, you name it."

"Club members, too," Harlem mutters.

I shake my head. "How was he hidin' it? We have eyes and ears everywhere. Nobody said shit to our Prez or to me. I know everythin' that goes on everywhere in the underworld fightin' rings..."

"He paid them off," Brian says. "Wasn't that hard, and he moved out of the city, to an abandoned underground building... That's where they hold all the big fights. I don't know where, like I said, I've never been there, but I know that's how he was gaining momentum and gettin' drugs moved from place to place."

"So he's been operatin' outside the city," Harlem mutters to me. "Probably has more than one operation, too. Scumbags usually know a lot of other deadbeats..."

"Which is why he's flown under the radar," I murmur. "It also seems like he hasn't learned any lessons from the past."

Still, it doesn't account for the fact that our allies are goddamn traitors. More mess for us to deal with, but we'll get to that. All in good time.



“Don’t believe you when you say you don’t know where,” Harlem grits. “That bastard took my ol’ lady’s kid, locked her in a crypt, and set it on fire!”

Brian’s eyes go wide. “I don’t know anything about that, I swear to God.”

“Your money gets spent on other worldly things like prostitution as well as trafficking, includin’ kids,” I bark at him. “Did you ever stop to think about that?”

“I told you. I just wanted to make some quick cash and then get out,” he wails. “I never meant to—”

Harlem swings the hammer down on his other hand and the crunch has me wincing.

Brian makes a sound I’ve not heard in quite some time and I saunter over and shove the gag back in his mouth to shut him the fuck up.

“Your fuckin’ money...” Harlem spits as I push on his chest to move him back an inch. “Pays for kids to be trafficked and raped... Do you get that, fuckface?”

Young women, little boys and girls shipped off to foreign countries to work like slaves and be sold into sex rings because you wanted another yacht to sail on the weekends.” He spits at his feet, and now I’m the one making sure that Harlem doesn’t end him.

He wails behind his broken hand, bleeding fingers and stuffed mouth.

I’m sick to the fuckin’ sight and sound of him.

“Need to end this,” I mutter. “Can’t listen to this bitch whinin’ for too much longer.”

He tries to protest, but it sounds like a blithering mess.

“You think you’re just supplyin’ drugs to fuckin’ users that want it? You put pimps up on a pedestal, give dealers God like status, and put guns into the hands of criminals and terrorists and you don’t bat an eyelid?” he barks, anger lacing his tone as points in Brian’s face. “What kind of sick fuck are you?”

“A delusional one,” I answer for him. “He thought he could get away with it and then move on to my ol’ lady. Didn’t you, Brian?”

He shakes his head, his face clammy and pale as a sheet. We haven’t even fuckin’ started torturing him properly yet. And here I was thinking this was gonna be so much fun.

It’s starting to get boring.

“Think he knows fine well, but he doesn’t care,” Harlem agrees.

“Here’s what’s gonna happen,” I say. “You’re gonna give us everything else you know, includin’ your work ID and passwords to all your computers. Who you met with, how you did it, what phone numbers you have... we’re gonna check it all out, then I’m gonna come back here and dissect you if anything you told us isn’t legit.”

He squirms and wriggles around like a goddamn idiot. Have some fuckin’ dignity before you die. And die he will. He doesn’t know it yet, but he won’t ever be seeing daylight again.

“Don’t know if he’s understandin’,” Harlem snickers. “He might need a little dose of ‘can I live without my balls attached?’”

He protests loudly as I roll my eyes. How could Luna ever fall for a dipshit like this?

It’s so tedious when the asshole just gives it all up without having even one ounce of resistance.

I turn to Harlem as we step away. “Need to find that buildin’.”

“Haze and Brew are on their way. Maybe they found somethin’?”

I turn and Cash gives me a chin lift as I saunter over, leaving Brian in a heaving mess to think about what’s left of his short time on earth.

“Least we got some shit, and we know he’s operatin’ out of town,” I say as Cash nods.

“This piece of shit used to date Luna?” Cash looks past my shoulder at the man hunched over in the chair. “No fuckin’ grit at all.”

“Disappointin’,” I agree.

“What’s next?”

“I think we need to wait for Haze and Brew. They just got off night shift. Might have some new intel, not that we can rely on any of the allies we had.”

“Gonna see to that,” Cash promises. “Nothin’ gonna get past our noses anymore. If Forger thinks he can get one step ahead of us, then we beat him at his own game.”

I give him a chin lift. “Won’t even miss this scumbag.”

“Not until he needs money again. We’ve probably got a day or two, if we’re lucky.”

“Not feelin’ it,” Ryder puts in. “We don’t even know if this asshole is tellin’ the truth. Could be sayin’ anythin’ to lead us into a trap.”

“Which is why we send Haze and Brew in to check it out.” I shrug. “Can’t be any different to what they did last night. They came out unscathed. Probably ended up goin’ a round or two.”

Both of them are big motherfuckers you wouldn’t wanna mess with. You’d never expect Haze to be a goddamn teddy bear when he’s not cracking skulls. I almost chuckle at the thought.

“Gotta keep him breathin’,” Harlem says, coming up behind me. “Least till we find the HQ. If that’s where Forger’s been hidin’ out, then they’ll have numbers. Like Cash said, we’ve got a day or two before word gets out. The scene at the restaurant wasn’t exactly pretty.”

I snort. “Notice how people just don’t offer to help someone in distress anymore.”

Cash shakes his head. “Funny that.”

“We’re gettin’ closer, that’s the main thing,” I go on. “If we can surprise the Devils with an attack, then we might just have the upper hand.”

“Find out how many numbers Forger has,” Cash says, giving me a chin lift. “Be disappointin’ to see those tools goin’ to waste.”

Like the rest of us, Cash can’t stand to see corruption like this in our city. It’s one thing looking the other way with the Irish, but it’s quite another having Forger and the redneck Devils creating a shitstorm in the criminal underworld. Money is power in this town.

And we can’t take any of that lightly.

I give Cash a grin. “I’d love to.” I turn back to Brian, who’s still panting like a dog in heat, his eyes glassy and the dried blood on his body making me wince. Someone should’ve told him not to wear his good suit today. Pity.

I point at him. “Any last words?” I’m kidding, of course. Unfortunately I need him alive.

He starts to flail around and I clip him on the jaw and whisper in his ear. “Just kiddin’, princess. We’re gonna do all of that again because I just can’t stand it when you go all quiet on me, means I’m not doin’ my job. Glad you’ve got nowhere to be. For every single ounce of pain you gave to Luna, I’m now gonna give it to you. Got me?”

He doesn’t get time to answer. Instead, I tighten the ropes around his wrists and walk around him several times as he shakes in fear. “Now. Where were we?”

## LUNA

I'M RELIEVED WHEN I HEAR THE DOOR TO TAG'S ROOM AT church click open. I sit up in bed.

It's late, and though I've not slept, tiredness washes over me as I adjust my eyes.

Tag slowly closes the door behind him and doesn't say anything as he starts to undress.

He toes his boots and socks off, then his cut, and lays it over the bedpost.

"Luna," he whispers.

"I'm here," I say.

He reaches for me, and I gasp when I see he has blood on him.

"T, you're bleeding?" I whisper.

"Don't worry, it's not mine," he says.

"Holy shit."

"It's okay, princess. Everything is okay."

"Did Brian spill the beans?"

He snorts. "And then some."

"Did you find Forger?"

"Not yet. Haze and Brew got word of an abandoned building underground at the same time Brian spilled. Gonna move in on them first thing tomorrow."

I shudder. “I’m scared, T.”

He pulls me into his side and plants a kiss on my head. “No need to be scared. I’m here now. Gonna take a shower, then I need to sink into your perfect pussy and wash away everythin’ that happened today.”

I nod. “Yes.”

He moves off the bed and proceeds to undress as he walks toward the tiny bathroom.

I cleaned everything from top to bottom because I had nothing else to do.

I’ve been so worried about him all day, panic rising in me at every turn at what Brian might say and what Tag would do to him.

I don’t give a shit about Brian. He can go to hell. But the fact that he’s been behind all of this, and now my father could be implicated too? I shudder as I hug myself and let Tag go clean up.

I want nothing more than for him to hold me in his arms and make it all okay. But I sit and wait because that’s what good ol’ ladies do. That, and the fact that two of us won’t fit in that tiny shower—Tag will barely fit just his body in there.

I hear the pipes groan as he turns the water on and my mind reels.

All this time, Brian has been behind all of this?

What in the actual fuck?

I know that I’m never going to see him again, but that doesn’t make any of this any easier. Knowing he’s been one of the main perps behind all of this for a long time makes my blood run cold. How callous and calculating people really are.

I thought I knew him. Clearly, I didn’t after he cheated, but I never thought he’d be so brazen as to take on not just one, but two MCs. And then think he can get away with playing both sides.

Everyone always gets caught.

I wonder what they're going to do to him and how they'll do it, not that I want to know. But I'm not dumb enough to think that the Rebels will let this slide or turn him into the cops.

Not happening.

After what feels like an eternity, the bathroom door opens, and a billow of steam pours out.

He walks toward me buck naked and I take in his fine form.

His body is incredible.

Strong.

Muscled.

Completely ripped.

He's perfect.

His striking blue eyes seem laced with anger and something else... sadness, maybe? I'm not sure. I've never seen this look before.

I pat the side of the bed, and he sits down, his back to me.

"Tag?" I whisper, settling on my knees behind him as I put my arms around his shoulders. "Is everything okay?"

He nods slowly. "Been a long day."

"I missed you."

His breathing is low and shallow, calm, but I know better. I know this man like I know the back of my hand. He's troubled.

"Say it again."

"I missed you," I whisper without hesitation.

"Love me?"

"Yes."

"Want me?"

"Yes."

“Tell me I’m the only one.”

*Where is this coming from?*

“You’re the only one.” I promise, laying small kisses on his skin. “I’ve been so worried about you.”

I feel his chest rumble. “Don’t be worried about me, Lu. I’m always gonna come back. Never gonna let you down.”

“I hate that he did this to the club.”

“What about what he did to you?”

I shrug. “So what? That’s over. It was years ago.”

“But him and your dad...”

“Shhh,” I tell him. “I don’t want to talk about them. This time is for us now.”

“I loved you from the first moment I saw you,” he says out of nowhere. “You were fifteen, I was sixteen. I knew I had to stay away from you back then. When I took your virginity years later, I knew that I could never shake you. Not ever. I don’t want you to think I didn’t want you...”

“It’s okay, T,” I whisper. I don’t know what happened tonight, but he’s troubled, and I need to help him through it. “I don’t think that. Everything happens for a reason. We came together in the end. That’s all that matters.”

“I hate the thought of losin’ you.”

“You’ll never lose me, T. Not ever. I love you. There’s only ever been you.” I squeeze him tight, and he moves one hand to pat my hand as I add, “What happened?”

He shakes his head. “Nostalgia. Nothin’ more.”

“Please, don’t shut me out.”

He takes a deep breath. “You’re the only one who’s ever accepted me for who I am, aside from my brothers. Respect that. You tell it like it is. You stand up to me, not that I enjoy the lip but at least I get the last word when I tan your ass.” He chuckles as I kiss his neck.



“Been thinkin’ about my mom and how shitty she was. Makes me realize that I did hate women for a long time. I took it out on the wrong people. Not that I’ve raised my hand to a woman in my life, but I wasn’t exactly boyfriend of the year.”

“You’re a good man, Tag. Your mom is an awful person. A gold digger. But one thing she taught you was to never accept less than you deserve. In life, in love, in everything. And I’m not going anywhere. We will weather the storm, T. I know we can get through it, no matter how hard it might seem with our parents...”

“Don’t care about that,” he mutters. “Just want you.”

He reaches around and pulls me into his arms.

“I want you too.” I sit in his lap, and my mouth finds his. We kiss gently, passionately, for a long time. When his cock stirs, I giggle, and we pull apart.

“Wanna ride me, Lu?”

“Yes,” I stammer. “So badly.” I rip my nightgown over my head, and his eyes lower to my breasts.

Lifting so my tits are in his face, he starts to play with them. I moan as he sucks one nipple into his mouth, and I reach for his cock. It’s hard and thick and delicious. I want him inside me. Right now. No foreplay or anything. Just him.

I tug on his cock, and he groans my name.

“Tell me,” he grunts.

“I’m yours, T,” I cry, my hands reaching into his wet hair as I straddle over him and push his tip through my wet center, circling my clit.

“Only mine?”

“Yes.”

He lifts his head, and the look in his eyes shocks me. He’s so beautiful. So haunted.

I realize there are many layers to this man. His pain goes deeper than I thought, and I must tread carefully and not push him. His mom leaving is a huge trigger for him, and I think he

uses that to fuel the violence he likely inflicted on Brian tonight.

His mom is a piece of shit who doesn't deserve him. She deserves someone like my dad, a man who cares about nothing but himself.

I groan as I continue to please myself with his tip and his mouth moves to my other nipple. He tugs on it as I groan, getting myself hotter and hotter as I move up and down, sliding along his cock as I unravel. My orgasm hits me hard, and I'm not even done when he lifts me by the hips and I sink down onto his fat cock.

We both groan. I'm tight and his cock fills every inch of me.

"Beautiful," he whispers.

"I love you," I whisper back. "Nobody but you."

I start to rock against him, riding him in slow motion as I adjust to his girth.

"Fuck, baby."

As I wrap my arms around his neck, he stares at me. I could get lost in his depths forever and never resurface. I want it to always be like this. Us loving each other, with nothing between us. Not ever.

I love him so damn much.

His hands grip my hips and when my rocking isn't enough, he starts to lift me up and then down.

He glances down to where we're joined, and I grip his biceps as my eyes trail to where he's staring.

"So big," I murmur.

"Fill you good, princess?"

"Yes," I cry.

He grunts.

We move together, as one. My orgasm builds as he lets me ride his cock, just how he likes it.

I love that he holds me in his arms like I weigh nothing. And how he looks at me like I'm his everything. I will never get enough of this.

I never thought I'd ever feel this kind of love with anyone. This kind of belonging. He makes me feel safe, always has. He's my happy place, even when he's being a grumpy asshole. Even when he can't say the words. I know he means them. I know he means it all.

When we're like this, we're invincible.

He hisses as I slam down on him, my pussy clenching his cock and squeezing for all he's worth.

He mutters obscenities under his breath as I whisper his name. *Thomas. Tag...*

The man I've always wanted.

The man who took my virginity all those years ago and who I never want to let go.

"We fit, T," I whisper. "We fit so fucking well."

He grunts. His hands grip my hips tighter as I grind against him. My tits bounce as he starts to move his hips, thrusting as I feel that pull in my lower belly.

I grip his arms harder, knowing I'm leaving a mark, but he just pumps me more powerfully as I bounce faster, needing my release. Craving it. Craving him.

I cry out as I come, my sensitive clit grinding against his pubic bone as he mutters, "One more, Lu, give me one more."

Cupping his face, I bring my lips to his as we kiss with vigor. Our tongues match our frantic fucking as we get lost in one another.

Suddenly, he rolls me over and pushes my knees to my chest. He holds them in place and comes to his knees, moving his hips hard and fast. His face is beautiful and furious as he uses my body, and boy is he a sight. I marvel at his control. In his ability to make me feel this good without hurting me. He's a big man, he could easily crush me, yet he gives me what I need with just the right amount of fury. It all pours out of him

as he moves in and out, grunting with every thrust until I'm begging him for it.

He quickens as I rush out a bunch of profanities, my breath hitching as I see stars. My orgasm has me crying out his name like a prayer as he stills, his cum spurting inside me as he breathes my name.

He rests down on me, his breathing heavy as I pant and come down from my high. He plants a kiss on my forehead before pulling out and rolling off me to the mattress.

"Feel better?" I muse.

"Hundred percent."

We both stare at the ceiling.

"This bed sucks," I say.

He chuckles. "Like me to replace it?"

"Yes. Not only is it unhygienic, but it's lumpy."

"Don't sleep here much."

"You won't be sleeping here at all unless it's with me."

He shifts to look at me. "My woman gettin' all possessive?"

I run a hand over his pecs as my eyes trail my movements. "What if I am?"

I squeal as he grabs me and hauls me onto his lap and gruffs, "Like you sayin' that. Like that my woman knows what she wants."

"Don't ever leave me again," I whisper.

"Never," he promises. "You're mine now."

I press my forehead against his. "What else happened with..."

"Shh," he tells me. "Not tonight. I just want to be with you, nobody else. Brian has done enough overtime for one night."

I kiss his lips softly. "Okay."

“Good girl.”

“Don’t think I’m always gonna be so agreeable,” I quip.

He grunts, his hands grabbing my ass cheeks. “I’d be sorely disappointed if you were.”



When I wake, Tag is gone, and I feel a sense of loss just not having him with me.

I know he’s a big boy and he can take care of himself, but knowing that he’s putting himself in danger makes me want to go and hide somewhere until it’s all over.

I also text my mom because we need to talk.

Tag and I plan on seeing them next weekend. When we get some time away from the MC and work.

Mom. Are you and Terrance home next weekend?

She takes ages to reply. I’ve had a shower and I’m combing my hair when a text comes through.

Yes, honey. Are you coming for a visit?

Thomas and I might come together.

Our parents don’t use Tag’s nickname. And there’s no *might* about it. It’s happening.

That sounds wonderful.

How is Terrance?

I hope he’s mellowed. I haven’t seen him much since I got back, but he’s always been good to me. I just hope he can fix his relationship with Tag. Though, after the bombshell we’re about to give them, I doubt that’s gonna happen.

He's good, honey. Playing golf. We're both excited to see you. I'll make your favorite.

I snort.

You mean Thomas's favorite?

I thought you liked lasagna too?

Not as much as him!

Glad to hear you two are finally getting along. How is he?

Guilt washes over me that I have to lie. That I have been lying all these years.

We're not going to tell them all the sordid details. They won't want to hear that Tag took my virginity under their roof while we were on spring break.

But they need to know the truth, and it's better they find out before anyone else does. It would still be nice to spend Christmas with them, but I'm not holding out on any of that. They may disown us, for all we know.

He's good, Mom. We both are.

Good to hear. See you both then. Let me know what time so I can have everything ready.

I close my eyes and take a long hard breath.

Will do. Love you.

Love you too x

I drop my phone and feel like the worst person in the world.

I hate lying to my mother. She's my best friend and she's always been there for me. I hate to think what this might do to her when we confess.

Hesitation hits me, but it doesn't last long. I know this has to be done. Mom won't disown me forever. She's not like that. We can't help that we fell in love.

We can't help but want to be together.

When I think about Tag and how he seemed last night, he was so defeated. Exhaustion taking over as he slept in my arms like a baby.

I've never felt so much love. We clung to each other like we were all we had. That's how I know that this is real. That Tag and I aren't just trying to prove something to ourselves, we don't have to.

All I know is how I feel. I can't go back now. There is nothing in the past for me to keep me shackled any longer. I'm free of it all. If Tag will have me, then I'm his. And I know that we can get through anything.

## TAG

I'VE GOT ENOUGH ON MY MIND AFTER YESTERDAY.

Six or so hours of torturing the man who made my woman's life hell seems like a small price to pay to redeem her.

The things he said. They can't be taken back.

I'm so sick of assholes like him going around ruining women for the rest of us. My sweet Luna. To think she cried tears over that asshole. He's not fuckin' worth it.

Now she won't ever have to hear from him again. Nobody will.

I shake my head as I catch up with Brew and Haze.

"Plenty of scratch bein' thrown around downtown," Brew says. "Motherfuckers makin' plenty and they're gettin' decent fighters. Bloody business, but that's the price you pay."

I grunt.

Underground fighting has always been a thing, just like drugs and guns and prostitution, but to do it so openly, while Forger is still at large, just makes me want to crack more skulls.

"Got in with one of the crew," Haze says, cracking his knuckles. "Said me and my brother were interested in fightin'. Didn't take too much. Guess the fact we're big motherfuckers kinda helps sell the story, though I doubt Brew would wanna ruin that pretty face of his."



“Fuck off, asshole,” Brew swipes back.

“The next fight is the following weekend. Nobody gets the address until the fight goes down. Afraid we won’t know shit until Saturday night. Forger, bein’ the nomad that he is, likes to move around the city with no permanent base. Makes him one hell of a slippery motherfucker to try to pin down,” Haze goes on.

“Meanwhile, we’re interrogatin’ at the warehouse,” I tell them. “All the eyes and ears we thought were on our side until recent events are bein’ lined up. If they’re on Forger’s payroll, then they’ll talk.”

“Any manhandling to be done, we want in,” Brew says. “Been a while since we let off some steam. Assholes who wanna work both sides deserve to be a punchin’ bag.”

“Got it,” I mutter, my mind far away because there’s so much shit to fix.

“Happy to help,” Haze agrees. “Motherfuckers got allegiances, though. Nobody talked much smack, except this one guy we couldn’t shut up. Be headin’ down to the regular bars tonight, see if we can find out any more before the weekend.”

I nod. “That’d make sense. But time is runnin’ out. If he’s forming alliances with every faction in the underworld, then that ain’t good. We’re already behind the eight ball.”

Still, it doesn’t solve things in the meantime. It only makes things even more tense.

“Agreed,” the brothers say in unison.

I swipe a hand over my face.

Goddamn fuckin’ nomads will do this shit from time to time and sometimes disappear for months or even years on end. Not knowing when they’re gonna show up again and now Forger is back in full force, it’s obvious with the financial backing he had, that he was planning something big.

It also leaves the club constantly living in limbo. I don’t do goddamn limbo. It’s not a place I’m familiar with nor do I

want to get to know.

Nomads are unstable and unpredictable, and this whole mess has gone on far too long.

We need to put it to bed.

I also need to go pay Luna's father a visit and find out how much he knows. From what I've discovered, he seems to be completely oblivious, but that doesn't mean that he gets off scot free. He still bribed his own daughter and was forcing her to marry this creep.

He's far from fuckin' innocent.

I decide to take Nevada, Rodeo and Rock with me, since the others are all busy and this guy isn't gonna be a problem for too much longer.

While I'd like to bury Luna's father out in the goddamn bayou, he's too high profile and will be missed. Not like Brian. A nice little suicide will tidy his death up and smoothly.

When the receptionist tries to blow us off and threatens to call security, I mention Luna's name and that she's in trouble and, all of a sudden, we're being let into the elevator.

Like security can do shit.

We leave Rodeo downstairs in the lobby with instructions to let us know if the cops arrive.

I'd hate to have to throw Jerry Shields out of the top story window, as I don't think two mysterious deaths from one company in the same week can be very believable.

We wait in the lobby of his office, the receptionist looking very nervous as Nevada starts asking her questions about where high-class chicks like her hang out.

I'm not in the fuckin' mood today, and if not for the fact that Jerry walks out to greet us, I'd probably punch Nevada in the throat.

"Thomas?" he questions, looking me up and down. "What are you doing here?"

“In your office.” I point behind him. “Gonna need privacy for this conversation.”

The two security follow us as I add, “And you can lose the two buffoons, or I’m not sayin’ shit.”

He nods as they hang back and we follow him to his office. He looks like a man who’s one step away from a heart attack. His face red, and he’s at least thirty pounds overweight. He dabs his forehead with a handkerchief.

“Did well for yourself,” I say, looking around the expansive office. “Pity.”

“What do you want, Thomas? Is this about Luna?”

I snort, my eyes landing on him as Rock and Nevada stand by the door.

“Suddenly you care about Luna?”

“I offered her a deal she couldn’t refuse, and this is how she repays me?”

I crack my neck from side to side. “See, that’s just the thing. People aren’t pawns, fuckface. Luna is her own woman, and she can’t be bought off. She’s better than that. What does it say when her own flesh and blood tries to make her do somethin’ she doesn’t wanna do?

That tells me that they’re pathetic scum.”

His hand trembles as he hovers his hand over the phone.

“Touch that and this will all end badly,” I warn.

“What the fuck do you want, asshole?” he growls. “I’m a busy man.”

“So busy that you couldn’t take time out to be a decent father to your own child? You let her suffer for years, when all she ever wanted was to be accepted by you. To hear that you loved her.”

He snorts. “What do you care? You two hated each other.”

Now isn’t the time to let him in on me and Luna. Her mom and my dad get that courtesy, not this motherfucker.

“She’s family. You don’t even know the meanin’ of the word.”

“I never forced her to do anything,” he goes on. “She took money from me and never paid it back. That’s the thing with Luna; she never quite could get her shit together. Frankly, she’s an embarrassment. The deal I offered was more than generous, given the number of times she’s made me look like a fool, or I’ve had to fork out to pull her out of a mess. It’s time she took some responsibility.”

“That’s rich, coming from a guy who hires money launderers who fund underworld illegal activity by embezzling company funds,” I tell him, waiting for the penny to drop.

“What the fuck has that got to do with me?”

“Brian,” I say. “All the information is being emailed to you as we speak. Brian had a horrible little habit of doin’ this kinda shit at the last place he worked. This time, he got greedy, and when you get greedy, you get sloppy, then you make mistakes.”

Jerry looks outraged. “I don’t know what the hell you’re playing at here!” he bellows, standing and waving his finger in my face.

I move slowly, rising from my chair as his eyes follow up my body and take in my form.

“I wouldn’t,” I tell him, cracking my knuckles. “This can all end badly if you want it to.”

“You need to leave,” he says, as Nevada and Rock move to cover the door.

“We’re not goin’ anywhere until you have a full grasp of what took place here, before we let the board know what happened with their money. I’m sure that you’ll be gettin’ a call soon, since Brian had control of the accounts. See, this time, Brian ain’t gonna be back to replace those funds.”

His face pales. “This can’t be true.”

“Like I said, everything is in your inbox. But we’ve more important things to discuss. Such as what I’m goin’ to do with

you.”

His eyes go wide as he sits back down, scrambling to his computer as he clicks around. When his eyes settle and make their way back to mine, I see the resolve there.

“I didn’t know anything about this,” he says. If I could snap a photo now and send it to Luna just to show her how pathetic her father is, I would.

He’s a fuckin’ coward.

“The sad part is, I actually believe you,” I say. “However, there is that other small issue of Luna’s inheritance, now that Brian will no longer be attending their fake wedding.”

“What did you do to Brian?”

I smile. “It’s not what I did. It’s what he did to himself. You’ll hear about it soon enough. What was the figure you offered her again, asshole? Two million?”

“That was if she married Bri...” he trails off.

“Yeah, funny thing about dead guys is they can’t show up. We keep goin’ around in circles here, so I’ve made it very simple for you. You’ll transfer the money into Luna’s checking account by four pm today and all of this mess goes away. Well, not the part about what Brian stole, but that’s your issue.”

“You’re out of your goddamn mind!” he spits.

“That may be so, but I still want that money transferred.”

“I don’t have that kind of—”

I hold up a hand. “Don’t make me hurt you,” I warn, staring him down.

He reaches for the phone, but I’m faster, ripping it out of the socket before he can even blink.

I lean over and grab him by the scruff of the neck and slam his head into the desk.

I hold it down as I get very close to his ear. “Listen to me once. Don’t make me repeat myself. You will transfer Luna two million dollars into her checking account by the time I let

you take another breath. My friend Nevada over here, he's a little bit crazy, so you don't wanna see what he can do with a switchblade."

I don't need to turn to see the grin on Nevada's face.

I let go and Jerry coughs and splutters, his face red and disorientated.

I straighten my cut. "Now, where were we?"

"You won't get away with this."

"Oh, I think we will," I say. "You still gotta explain where the funds Brian stole went, or will you cover that up with your board as well?"

He clears his throat. "How much are we talking?"

I laugh. "Funny thing about rich people, they don't even miss hundreds of thousands of dollars goin' missin'. It's nothin' to them, which just goes to show that you obviously have too much money and not enough brain power."

He straightens himself out, and I can't wait to break his fuckin' nose.

"Fine. I'll make the transfer, but if you ever come in here again, I'll have you arrested."

I laugh. "Don't you know, fuckface, we own the police. Not much they're gonna do about it, but I'm sure there's plenty of bad publicity we can bring on Shields security." We don't really own *all* of the PD in NOLA, but he doesn't need to know that.

He scowls, and I can tell he wants to hurl abuse at me. I almost wish he would so I can hurt him properly.

He tinkers around on the computer and then says, "I need to make some calls."

I fold my arms over my chest. "Can use my cell phone to make those calls. And we won't be goin' anywhere until I see receipts."

He mutters a string of profanities under his breath as I hand him my phone and he calls his accountant to discuss

Luna's trust fund.

I really don't give a fuck what his excuse is. He can cough up.

It takes less than five minutes, which makes my blood boil even more. He would have the money right there in his bank account. I'm not a total fuckin' idiot.

"I'm curious, though," I go on. "Why do that to Luna? Why make her suffer like that with a man that cheated on her and doesn't respect her?"

He snorts. "Sounds like you're really invested."

"Like I said. She's family. Answer the question, or my friend back here will show you how sharp his knife is."

He flicks his eyes over my shoulder and then swallows hard. "Reputation is everything in this town. I was giving Luna a way out of her mess. I was doing the right thing. I didn't think Brian was a fraud..."

Still, even after all of this, all he cares about is the fraud part. "By bribin' her?"

"She would've had a good life."

"You think money buys happiness?"

"It sure as shit doesn't buy unhappiness."

I stare at him. What a sad, pathetic little man.

No wonder Luna's mom got out when she did. I cannot even picture how the fuck she got entangled up with him in the first place.

I could also make him sign over shares to the company in Luna's name, but I have a contingency plan in place already for that. Luna wouldn't want anything that associates her with this asshole. I wouldn't put her through that, but he is going to pay.

If it's the last thing I do, I'll hit him where it hurts.

She needs to cut all toxic people out of her life, starting with him.

The less Luna has to suffer in all of this, the better. She's suffered enough.

"I want everything you have on Brian," he mutters to himself. "You hear me, Thomas? Everything."

I shrug. "I go by Tag now." I point to the name on my cut.

"Tag?" His brow furrows.

"You heard me. Now show me the transfer is complete. Hurry up. You think I've got all fuckin' day?"

He tilts his computer, and I feel a sharp stab of satisfaction that Luna has what she's owed.

"It'll be within the hour. My accountant has to move some things around."

"Don't make me come back here."

"You think I'm going anywhere?"

I stare at him menacingly. "Glad you finally saw some sense."

His nostrils flare. "Happy now?"

I stare at him like he's a scumbag. "I am, actually. But I'll be even happier when that money comes through. You try anythin' and I'm not gonna be so nice on my next visit."

Not that she'd want for anything with me, but it's the principal.

I go to stand, and fuck it, I punch him in the face because I can't stand to look at him anymore or listen to any more drivel that comes out of his mouth.

He balks, grabbing his face as blood spurts out of his nose. I've been dying to break that since the minute I laid eyes on him.

"Oh, and if you're gonna try to make a case against Brian to the board to explain the money, that'd be a good start, but are you also gonna also be able to explain to them how you lost multiple million-dollar contracts in the process?" I give him a sadistic smile.



Folks don't seem to like it when I smile, and I'm not sure why. Maybe because it's not exactly friendly. That and the fact I've made him bleed twice and I'm just warming up.

He looks confused. "What are you talking about?"

I straighten my cut once more. "You're forgettin' who you're dealin' with," I say. "I used to play ball, asshole. I'm tight with a dozen management councils who work for the NFL and deal with personal insurance policies. Pity that you just lost one of the biggest multi-million-dollar contracts for the Saints and the Steelers. Guess it sucks to be you."

Yeah, I made a few phone calls. It seems as if Luna might have to start thinking about a new line of business. I'm sure her and Jas can handle it, or they can call in a specialist to run things and it can be another form of income for the club. What's important is this asshole pays. And the only way to make him do that is to hit him in his designer pockets.

His jaw drops to the floor as I turn to face Rock and Nevada. I've never heard Nevada be quiet for so long—that's gotta be a first.

"You... You can't do this!"

I roll my eyes. "You keep sayin' that, asshole, but the fact is, I can and I did."

"But...I'll be ruined! The NFL is our biggest—"

"You think I give a fuck?" I roar, making him jump backward. Not even his bloody face gives me satisfaction anymore.

He sags back in his seat, defeat written all over his face. Good. I hope he suffers, just like Luna has had to endure all of his shit over the years.

"I... I..."

I wave my hand in his direction. He's so fuckin' pathetic he can't even string a sentence together.

"Fuck him up," I say, giving them a chin lift. "But don't take too long. Bein' around all these suits is givin' me hives."

My work here is done.

## LUNA

WE BOTH KNEW THIS DAY WAS COMING.

We have to face our parents.

Now as we sit here, feeling like we're teenagers again with our hands caught in the cookie jar, it seems a lot harder than I first imagined.

Telling your parents, who've been together for more than ten years, that both their kids are in love and will be together forever will undoubtedly be a shocking revelation.

I've no idea how they'll react, but the bets going around the clubhouse aren't good.

Tag filled everyone at the club in on the circulating rumors about us. I have to admit; he did a pretty good job of keeping the fact we're step-siblings a secret, mostly. But now that it's out, he hasn't stopped copping shit for it.

Nevada is sporting a nice black eye because, like always, he took it one step too far.

We sit on the couch as mom smiles across at us.

"Is Terrance coming?" I say, looking around. "This involves him too."

Tag sits next to me, looking larger than life on the loveseat.

"Honey, what's going on?" Mom has concern etched on her face. "Is everything okay?"

I nod, biting my lip as Tag's and my eyes meet.

A few moments later, Terrance walks in.

He glances at the two of us, his face lighting up with a smile when he sees me.

“Hello, Luna.” He glances at Tag as I stand up to give him a hug. “Thomas. To what do we owe this visit?”

Tag has always had a tough relationship with his dad. It started long ago and worsened when he stopped playing football. I know Tag has never quite felt adequate around his dad, and over time I hoped that would get better, but both of them are as stubborn as each other. From what I know, he’s always wanted Tag to strive to be better, and joining the MC wasn’t exactly on his list of life goals for his son.

“We have some exciting news,” I say, trying to keep my tone even, but I’m also bursting to get it out.

Adrenaline runs through my veins and when I feel Tag’s hand on mine, I turn to look at him. He nods and I smile softly. When I turn back, mom and Terrance are staring down at his hand.

This isn’t like us. Not that we fought like cats and dogs in front of them, but there’s always been hostility on our visits home. We haven’t visited home together, though, in years.

I open my mouth, then close it again, tears springing to my eyes as I’m overcome with emotion.

This could be the day I lose my mom.

I had many thoughts about what to say, but now words won’t come out.

“Me and Luna are together,” Tag says suddenly, knocking the wind from my sails.

Terrance’s frown deepens, if that’s at all possible.

Silence hangs in the air.

To add insult to injury, the big guy who would murder anyone who even looks at me sideways, but also likes to cuddle, adds, “We’re in love.”

Holy fucking shit.

I swallow hard, my mouth dry as my mom slaps her hands over her mouth.

This wasn't the plan.

"Oh my god," she says, behind her hands.

"Mom?" Tears fall down my face as I swipe them away.

"You've finally admitted it," she says, her words muffled. "I can't believe it."

My eyes go wide as Terrance looks between the three of us. "What the hell is going on here?"

Tag stares at his father. "Just what I said. We tried to fight it, for years, but we can't do it anymore. I have feelings for her that go beyond..."

"Her being your sister?"

"She's not my actual sister, Dad, she never has been. We both know that. We lived under the same roof for less than a year. I've never seen her like that."

"Did something happen then?" His dad balks, his face screwing up in disgust.

We knew that he'd be the one to take it the hardest.

My mom still has her hands slapped over her mouth in shock.

Now isn't the time to mention that we hooked up under their roof. It wouldn't be good to mention it to Terrance or my mom.

No good can come from that.

We rehearsed our words, not to lie, but confessing our feelings for a decade would only creep them out further.

"No," I say. "Honestly, it's been a recent discovery, though over the years we have grown closer."

"I thought you hated each other?" Terrance continues to shake his head.

"We definitely *don't* hate each other," I say softly. "I'm sorry that this is probably hard to take."

“Hard to take?” He looks angry now. “What will we tell people at the country club?”

I bite my tongue.

It’s because of Tag getting his father out of debt when his business was going under many years ago that they get to live this lavish lifestyle. I know for a fact firsthand how generous he is with his money.

*“Dad only cared about me when I was playing ball,”* Tag said to me one time. *“He lost all interest in me when I stopped being an international superstar.”*

I squeeze his hand and I feel him look at me in my periphery.

“Is that all you care about?” Tag shakes his head. “What the Jones’ say at the fuckin’ country club?”

“She’s your sister!” Terrance says again.

Tag shakes his head. “She’s not my sister, Dad. We love each other and this is happening, whether you like it or not.”

Hearing Tag say those words out loud, despite the dire situation, makes my heart flutter.

“I don’t know what to say,” mom speaks finally. “I always sensed something between you two, I just thought it was sibling rivalry. I had no idea...”

Terrance looks at her, aghast. “You did?”

She turns to him. “Yes, and I told you about it and you dismissed me.”

*Um, what?*

“When was this?” he demands

*Uh oh, now they’re going to get into a fight because of us...*

“Years ago. When they returned from college, Thomas purchased her a dress from the mall. The kindness and sweetness of that action, I still remember it.”

Oh god, she remembers that? A few nights later, he took my virginity after wearing that very dress to the ball...

“That was back in college,” Terrance stammers.

She waves a hand at him and turns back to us. “Terrance and I need a little time to digest all of this.” She wipes her eyes and my heart breaks. “But I want you to know that despite the situation and the fact you’ve been keeping it a secret from us, I support you, Luna. You too, Thomas. If you really love each other, then I will not stand in your way. I can only speak for myself, but I am going to try and wrap my head around it.”

My mouth falls open. So does Terrance’s.

“Lisa!”

She turns to him again. “You can’t help who you fall in love with. We haven’t even heard them out, and you’re jumping down their throats with accusations.”

“That’s because what they’re doing is morally wrong!” He goes to stand and mom tries to stop him. “I think I’m going to be sick.”

“Sit down,” she says, her voice firm.

I’ve *never* heard my mom speak this way. It’s not like her, but now I see where I may get some of my backbone from.

“Lisa?” He sputters.

“You heard me. Let’s come together as a family, talk and find a solution. Work through it. Acting like this is only going to push them away. I won’t lose my daughter, Terrance. And I won’t lose Thomas because you can’t see what’s right in front of you.”

He shakes his head. “I can’t believe you.” He sits back down reluctantly.

“Lisa, we understand this is a lot,” Tag says, choosing to ignore his father. “We get it’s a shock for the both of you. But I’m in love with Luna, and it’s taken me this long finally to admit it to myself. We don’t want to push either of you away or distance ourselves, but this is what we want.”

Terrance snorts. “So even if we’re against it, that won’t matter? You’ll do it, anyway?”

Tag turns his gaze to him. “Yes. Dad, we’re both grown adults. We can make our own decisions. We don’t need your permission. Those decisions may not be what you had planned for either of us, but we’ve spent this long denying our real feelings and I don’t want to live my life like that anymore. It was devastating when I had to quit football. The only thing that comes close to that was Luna leaving town. She left because I rejected her and I felt like an asshole doing it.”

He lets the words settle.

We’ve come so far since that day. Full circle.

“He was trying to do the right thing,” I add. “By letting me go and finding myself. I did all of that. I traveled. Met new people. I fulfilled my wishes. But the road always leads back here. This is home. To my family. And to Tag.”

“Don’t stick up for him,” Terrance growls. “I’m sure there are plenty of women in that godforsaken motorcycle club you could hook up with...”

“That’s just the thing,” Tag interrupts. “It isn’t a *hook up*. I don’t want that. I haven’t wanted that for a long time.” His fingers interlace with mine. “This is real. What we have is real, Dad.”

My stomach flips, and I want to kiss him right now. I refrain, though. They really don’t need to see that right now.

“We have a connection,” I go on. “We’ve always fought against it, thinking that we were too different. But the fact is, we’re too much alike. I know it’s a lot to ask for your blessing, but we hope that with time, you’ll understand that we’re just two people who were not meant to fall in love but did.”

Mom leaps out of the chair and folds me into her arms. She kisses me on both cheeks and pushes my hair back. “I’m so happy for you. Thomas has always been like a son to me...”

“That’s because he is!” Terrance roars. He jumps to his feet. “I can’t believe you’re just okay with this!”



Mom shifts to look up at him. “If you’re not going to talk about this civilly, then just leave,” she says. “Shouting will not change anything. They clearly have put a lot of thought into this and they love each other. It’s done. We have to accept it.”

He points at Tag’s face, while Tag stands.

My eyes go wide. Tag is bigger than his father, but Terrance is no lightweight.

My heart sinks.

“You can’t fight this, Dad,” he says, his voice eerily calm. “Nothing is going to change how I feel. I love Luna.”

*Hearing those words...* My gut clenches.

I bite my lip as mom moves in between the two of them.

“And I love him,” I say, wiping my tears. “We love each other. I’m sorry, but we fell in love and we want to be together.”

Terrance and Tag lock eyes, refusing to back down. In the end, Terrance storms out, muttering under his breath about how crazy we all are.

I let out a breath I didn’t know I was holding as mom sits next to me on the couch.

“I’m sorry, Mom,” I whisper. “We didn’t mean for this to happen.”

She smiles gently. I have always had the ability to talk to my mom about anything. The thought of losing her love and respect because of this has caused me distress for a little while now.

Tag sits back down so mom is in between us.

“My only desire is to see both of you happy, you know that. I admit, I’m a little taken aback, but if I’m being honest, I’m not all that surprised,” she says, shocking the hell out of me. “I’ve always known there was tension between you two, and when you went off to college in the early years, it seemed like pure hatred. However, as you got older, things appeared to

change. I didn't see it then, but I see it now. I know you love one another. I feel it."

"Mom," I cry, flinging myself into her arms. "It's been incredibly difficult for us, and the thought of telling you has been dreadful. We've walked away so many times because of the family dynamic and what you'd both think of us."

She kisses my hair as she reaches for Tag's arm, giving him a squeeze. "It doesn't matter what he thinks. He'll come around. I just want you to be happy. That's all I've ever wanted."

"He won't come around!" I sob.

"And if he doesn't, that's his problem."

"We don't want this to cause issues with you two," Tag speaks up. "Now you're on different pages. He will be insufferable."

"Don't you worry about him," mom says. "I know he rarely shows it, Thomas, but he loves you deeply. Showing affection has never been his strong suit. He wasn't raised that way. But he was so proud of you..."

"*Was,*" Thomas snorts. "That's the story of my life."

She turns to face him. "He *is* proud of you and all you've achieved. In some ways, you playing in the NFL was him reliving his glory days. That's *his* issue, T, not yours. You were not at fault for getting injured and having to retire early. That broke all of us. But he's a grown man. He needs to live his own life, not through your accomplishments. He has plenty of his own."

Tag smiles gently, taking in her words. "He's going to need a shit ton of time."

"Yes, he is. But we will be a family again, I promise you." Her words are so soft and gentle that it only makes me cry harder.

"You're honestly not mad?" I stammer.

"I'd be more mad if you were sneaking around behind our backs and we found out from someone else. Coming here

today required great courage. In Terrance's eyes, you're his daughter, Luna. He's been a big part of your life," she says sagely. "This will be hard for him to process, but I know in time he will see how much you really love one another."

"I hope so."

We sit there for a few minutes.

"I should go find him," mom says. "We've got a lot to talk about."

"Do you want us to stay?" Tag offers. "Or come back later when he's cooled off?"

Mom shakes her head. "I think it's best if we give him some time. Then we can talk about it later. You know what he's like when he's like this, and this is just the kind of thing will keep him stewing for a while."

"We understand it's a shock," I say. "But if he doesn't come around..."

She pats my leg. "Don't worry about any of that." Stressing about it won't solve anything. He's a grown man and when he's had time to grasp what it truly means, I know that he'll see sense. He's still Thomas' father, and this affects him. We just have to give him space and time."

"I respect that," Tag says, his voice gruff. "We both do."

I nod as mom wipes my tears with her thumbs. "I'm glad," she says, giving me a bright smile. "That's just the thing, Thomas. I always knew you two were perfect for each other."

Again, my mom's words shock me and I hug her once more.

The biggest obstacle has been conquered, though Terrance's potential rejection and silence is daunting, it is also liberating. Like a weight has been lifted.

This is our time now, and we have to live it for ourselves. Not for anybody else.

As we leave, Tag throws his arm around my shoulders as we walk toward his motorcycle.

“That went better than planned.”

I turn to look up at him. “You have to be joking!”

“What? Dad was to be expected. Your Mom, though? Talk about a dark horse.” He chuckles.

I sigh. I didn’t expect a rose garden, but I don’t like the idea of Tag’s dad being mad at us. The cat’s out of the bag now, so there isn’t much we can do about it. Nor would I want to.

“Yeah, moms reaction was a little unnerving. I just don’t want them to be fighting over us.”

“We’re grown adults,” Tag reminds me. “He’s allowed to be shocked, but I’ll be damned if he’s gonna hold this against us forever. You already have one shitty Dad, you don’t need another one.”

“That reminds me,” I say as we reach the truck. “My Dad texted me, informing me that he transferred my inheritance into my account. Ever since Brian went missing, he’s changed his tune...”

He pulls me into his body and kisses the top of my head. “Well, that’s good then.”

“I’m an instant millionaire. Did you have something to do with that?”

I’ve never seen that much money before. It’s very overwhelming.

“I told you about Brian.”

I swallow hard. He certainly did. That damn asshole. And he’s still on the lookout for Gary. I pity the man when he finally catches up with him.

“Yes, I meant my father. His email was... short, to say the least.”

“Let’s just say you won’t be getting any more arranged marriage propositions anytime soon.”

“What did you do?”

“What any man should do; protect what’s his. Even from those who are meant to love you.”

I swallow hard. “I think I gave up on my Dad years ago if I’m being truthful.”

He tilts my chin with one finger. “There’s no need to answer to him ever again.”

I shake my head. “Two million dollars? What will I do with that?”

He shrugs. “Buy some shit. Set yourself up for life. Give some to Faux Paws... whatever you want.”

I still can’t believe that amount of money. Stunned doesn’t even begin to describe it. I have some inclination of who persuaded my father to give me the money, but I definitely don’t want to ask too many questions.

“It’s a lot of money, T.”

“Money that’s yours. You’ve done enough for that bastard. He’s the one missing out by being a stubborn son of a bitch. Same with my pops. If he doesn’t wanna get on board with us, then it’s his loss. I’m not goin’ anywhere.”

I stare up at him. “Why didn’t we do this sooner?”

He smiles down at me. “Because we were puttin’ everyone else before ourselves. We won’t be doin’ that again.”

I reach up to my tiptoes and wrap my arms around his neck. “I love you so much, T. For sticking up for us in there. For saying those words in front of them.”

He stares at me. Those blue icy depths that I lost myself in so many years ago.

“I meant them. I love you more than anythin’ in this world, and nobody is gonna stop us bein’ together.”

When we kiss, it’s like the world has stopped just for us.

Being in his arms is where I want to be. Always.

# EPILOGUE

*LUNA*

*Two weeks later*

I hear the chime on the door at Faux Paws and I turn to tell whoever it is that we're closed.

I smile when I see Tag stalking toward me.

"Ooh, here comes a good-looking guy," I chortle as I wait for him to reach me.

He picks me up and lifts me into his arms as my legs wrap around him.

He's been away for nearly a week, the longest time we've been apart since we made it official.

"I don't wanna be away for that long again," he grumbles.

I know the club has problems with the Devils, and ignorance is bliss. I usually have my nose in everything, but this is one juncture that the club needs to sort out.

One thing I've learned with this club is that they will get to the bottom of it.

I won't be an ol' lady who needs to know every single thing. Tag tells me what I need to know and I'm okay with that.

"Me either."

We kiss, and he settles me onto the bench top as he stands between my legs.

"Heard from anyone?" he asks. *I.E. his dad.*

I shake my head. "No, but Mom has been texting. She basically wants to know when the grandkids are coming."

He rolls his eyes. "Me and babies don't mix."

I wrap my arms around his neck. "I don't know. I remember you holding Caprice at the christening and you did an okay job."

"She slobbered, and I almost dropped her."

I laugh. "You pulled it off, and babies do slobber, amongst other things."

We haven't talked about kids yet, but I've never been really maternal. Being knocked up with Tag's baby, though, it kinda does things to me.

"I hope you told your Mom to just hold off on buyin' the crib for the moment."

"No. I told her we were going at it with practice."

His eyes go slightly wide as I fall over laughing.

"Oh, my god! Your face." I laugh.

He squeezes my middle, and our lips meet. I groan when he deepens the kiss.

"Babe, not here," I say, in between kisses.

"Why not?"

"There're dogs and cats around us, watching."

He snorts. "I don't give a fuck. Been wrestling with my palm this entire week. Need your pussy."

“You have such a way with words,” I laugh.

“I locked the door.”

“And?”

“You should have it locked at all times, especially when you’re on your own.”

“I have a prospect outside.” Ever since the club has had this dispute with the Devils Ink, security has heightened. I don’t need a prospect watching me everywhere I go, but if it makes Tag feel better when he’s out of town, I can’t deny him that.

“You know the rules.”

I run my hands over his huge shoulders, enjoying the feel of him beneath my hands. I’ve missed him so much.

“What rules are those?” I keep snaking one hand down his chest, abs and torso. He hisses when I cup his dick. It’s thick and hard.

“Fuck.”

“I’m waiting.”

He growls against my mouth as I squeeze his dick. “Does my baby need some relief?”

“Tease me and I’ll spin you around and fuck you against this bench, and I don’t care about onlookers.”

I giggle, kissing him again as I fondle him. My nipples peak against his hot skin and I need relief for myself.

“Fuck it,” he growls, fumbling with his belt as he swiftly gets it undone and then drops his pants and underwear to his knees. Gripping my ass, he pulls me farther toward the end of the bench.

Shoving up my skirt, he pulls my panties aside. “Did you wear a skirt because you knew I was coming home today?”

I smile. “Not just a pretty face, T.”

He grunts, rubbing two fingers through my slick heat as I groan.



“Need these tits out.”

“What if someone looks through the window?”

“You talk too much.”

He gropes my breasts as I scoot even farther to him, lining his cock up as I rub his tip through my pussy. “Oh god, T.”

He shoves up my shirt and yanks my bra down, growling even deeper when my breasts spill out over the top. He leans down and takes one nipple into his mouth and sucks as his tip eases into me. Even though we’ve only been kissing for a few minutes, I’m wet.

He slides in farther and I groan. “You feel so good.”

I ease him in even more, groaning when his huge cock fills me. His hips jolt and he pushes in full tilt, making me yelp.

“That feel too big, babe?” He smirks.

I bite down on my bottom lip as our foreheads push together. “Never.”

“Gonna be quick. Can’t help it. Been away too long.”

His words are like music to my ears. He slides out and then back in, limbering me up as he moves his mouth to suckle my other nipple.

I run my hands through his hair, and when he can’t get enough of the slow pace he says, “Hands behind you, stick those tits out so I can see them bounce while I fuck you.”

*This man...*

I do as he says. His eyes dip and I feel warm all over when he looks at me like this. Like I’m his everything.

Nothing else matters when we’re in each other’s arms.

He rams in and out of me, grunting as he cups my tits, bringing them to his mouth as he sucks and licks between the two. My legs wrap around him as I lose control, crying out his name as he pumps me harder.

A few moments later, he’s spilling inside me as he grunts my name.

The man didn't even get his cut or t-shirt off. I enjoy admiring his body while he's above me, but we have the entire night and our future to make up for lost time.

"I love you, Tag," I whisper when his eyes meet mine. "Promise to never leave me for a week again."

"Don't plan on it," he says, pulling out as he dips his eyes to watch his cum spill out of me. "I fuckin' love you and seein' you drip like that for me."

"I think we need to get home."

"Sweetest words I ever heard." He grins, pulling up his briefs and jeans as I adjust myself. "But you knew that already, didn't you?"

I smile, relishing in his touch as he kisses me once more. "I know everything about you, and I love all of it."

We get lost in our kisses and our hands.

I mean every word.

Now and forever.



*Tag*

I wake to the sound of my phone ringing.

It's still early, the sun isn't even up.

When I glance at it, I see Lisa calling.

I scramble to answer. There's a problem if she's calling me at this hour.

"Thomas?" I know straight away it's bad, and she's been crying.

"What's up?"

"It's your father. He was lifting some wood in the back shed, then he started saying he felt funny... and the doctor's say he suffered a heart attack."

The only other time anxiety like this happened to me, was when I couldn't play ball anymore, and again when Luna left

town.

A deep shudder runs through me when I ask, “Is he okay?”

She snuffles. “I kept him breathing. I called 911. They restarted his heart.” *Oh, fuck.* “But he’s in recovery, oh god, T...”

Luna sits up, rubbing her eyes.

“We’ll be there in fifteen minutes.” I hang up.

“Tag? What’s going on?”

“It’s my Dad,” I say, throwing the comforter off as I haul myself out of bed. “Your Mom just rang. He was lifting wood and had a heart attack... he’s in the hospital.”

“Oh, shit!” She dives out of bed and scurries around, finding our strew clothes from earlier. “Is he gonna be okay?”

I tug my jeans on and rummage around in the dark, trying to find my shirt.

“He’s in recovery.”

“Oh, my god.” Luna pulls on her sweats and sneakers.

We’re out the door in a few minutes.

We take my truck and head to the hospital. “Stupid old fool,” I mutter.

Luna puts her hand over mine. “He’s as strong as an ox, just like you.”

“Stubborn as a mule, too.”

“Like someone else I know.”

Neither of us have heard from dad since the day we made our announcement. And Tag officially claimed me at the table.

I realize it’s a lot for him, but he’s not even being reasonable. He’s been ignoring Luna’s texts, and that’s not fair.

She already feels guilty enough as it is.

Once we arrive, we find his floor and quickly notice Lisa in the waiting room.

It's bad if she's out here.

She folds into Luna's arms as I wrap my arms around both of them.

She cries quietly as Luna comforts her.

"Tell us what happened," Luna says, pushing her mom's hair back from her face.

"He was doing too much as usual," she says. "I've been nagging him about lifting too much and putting too much pressure on himself, but he never asks for help. Today he overdid it."

"Was this us?" I say, my voice barely audible. "For what we did?"

Lisa turns her tear-stained face to mine. "No, Thomas. It had nothing to do with you. Your Dad's cholesterol has been high for a while now. We've been monitoring it, as it wasn't a problem. The doctor said the strain on his heart from lifting just triggered the onset. At first, he felt breathless, then he collapsed.

"Holy shit," I mutter.

When they say your life passes between your eyes in moments of despair, they're not fuckin' kidding.

Torment runs through me for unspoken words, yet I still love my father despite his years of hell.

Now I may never get the chance. He could die not knowing and being mad at me and Luna.

"It's okay, Mom," Luna says. She helps her mom into the seat but I remain standing. Ain't no way I'm gonna fit into a plastic chair. "We're here now. It's going to be okay."

I fuckin' hope she's right.

"Why didn't you tell us sooner about his diet?" I ask, trying not to make it sound gruff.

She wipes her nose with a soggy tissue. "We didn't want you to worry, and he's been doing better. He clearly struggles

to ask for help.” She gives me a look which I feel all the way down to my toes.

I vow right then that I’ll do better. I’ll try to fix this, even if I don’t know how.

“How soon did the EMTs arrive?” Luna asks.

“Pretty fast,” Lisa says. “He was fine until they got halfway there, then he had a cardiac arrest.”

My stomach sinks.

Just hearing those words.

My father could have died.

I ask myself if I’ve done everything possible to make amends. Despite his difficulties, I acknowledge I’m not easy to get along with.

“After they revived him, they kept him stable.” She tears up again. “I just want him to be okay.”

Luna cradles her in her arms and a lump forms in my throat. I’ve never seen Lisa cry like this before.

We wait for hours.

When the doctor comes out, he gives us an update. The EMTs got there early, and thanks to Lisa’s efforts for giving him CPR, it saved his life. The doc says the heart attack was a warning, and he’s lucky. He’ll need to take it easy over the coming weeks, even months. Which means complete rest.

He informs Lisa that we can go in, but only for a few minutes.

When I see my dad hooked up to machines, I try hard not to gape. Monitors beep, nurses come in and out. It’s unsettling.

Lisa sits in the chair by his side, clutching his hand. She went in before us while I summoned the courage to face him.

“Dad?”

He looks up at me as I move closer. “Son.”

My chest constricts. “Lisa says you were overdoin’ it again?”

He looks so tired. “She says I’m stubborn.”

“I guess it runs in the family.”

He goes to smile but grimaces instead.

I move closer as Luna sits on his other side, afraid to hug him.

“Where is my Luna?”

She folds into his arms and bursts into tears. “I’m so sorry, Terrance. When we heard, we were frantic.”

“I’m gonna be fine,” he assures us, though I’m not convinced.

“Gonna get you the best treatment available,” I tell him.

“You’ve already done enough, Thomas.”

I can’t discuss us too much because the doctor advised against stressing him. He doesn’t need any reminders about me and Luna.

“Anything you need, dad. We’ve got it covered.”

He stares at me for a long moment. Luna in his arms and Lisa by his side. A lump forms in my throat. Only when you truly contemplate the absence of a parent, realizing they may never return, does the impact truly resonate.

“Appreciate that.” He closes his eyes, and I think he may have fallen asleep, but then he says. “I’m sorry for everything.”

“It’s alright,” I start. “The doc said we’re not to put unnecessary stress on...”

“I’ve been an ass for a long time,” he says, surprising me. “I blamed you for your injury, Thomas. I was trying to live vicariously through you, because I had an idea in my head what I wanted for your life. Because after your Mom... it was the only thing I could control. Then it fell apart, and I was angry for you that your dream was gone.”

“Dad, I came to terms with it a long time ago. I’ve made peace with it. I’m happy where I am now.”

He nods.

I know he’s saying these things because he’s had a near death experience. I suppose when you believe you’re on death’s door, a lot of things can come to the forefront of your mind.

All I’ve ever wanted is my father’s approval. I don’t want him to be forced to feel it because he’s being nostalgic.

“It was a shock,” he says. “You and Luna.”

“Dad...”

“But Lisa has made me see it isn’t all bad. I just have to get my head around the two of you together.”

“Just know that we love you,” Luna whispers. “We can talk about this when you’re feeling up to it. Right now, the doctor said you need to rest.”

Our eyes meet, and he gives me a nod.

It’s early days, but maybe there is hope for our relationship yet.

I know he’s set in his ways, as am I. I also know a lot of the reasons we fought over the years were because we’re too pigheaded. Perhaps change is possible for both of us.

I need to speak to the doctor about transferring him to a better treatment center. If that’s what he needs.

He closes his eyes again, and Luna comes to stand by me. I reach out and squeeze my dad’s arm. His eyes open and his hand finds mine. “I love you, son. No matter what.”

My heart constricts. My dad never spoke those words, not even when I was small.

“I love you too, Dad. Don’t go doin’ anythin’ until we get you back home. Got me?”

He smiles softly. “Got you.”

Hope has finally returned after a long time. It just sucks that it had to come to this in order for us both to wake up to ourselves.

Better late than never.

I pull Luna into a hug as we leave the room. We stand there for a while, holding one another.

“He’s lucky,” she says eventually.

“Very.”

“He’ll be okay. He’s already talking and saying stuff he doesn’t normally say. That’s a good sign.”

“I’ll have to check and make sure he didn’t hit his head,” I say wistfully.

She smacks me on the arm. “Tag, that isn’t funny.”

“Do you see me laughin’? My Dad has never said those words to me in as long as I can remember.”

She smiles softly. “I never expected that.”

“All we can do is look to the future,” I say. “We can’t control it.”

“Which is why we have to live each day like it’s our last, or so they say.”

I cup her face. “You’re so right. Let’s go home to bed. I need you, Luna.”

“I need you too, Tag.”

She is the sweetest woman I’ve ever known.



*A few days later...*

“Sorry to hear about your pops,” Cash says around the meeting table while at church.

I give him a chin lift. “He’s gonna be okay. That’s the main thing.”

“Glad to hear it.”



“Any word on the Devils?” It’s been a couple of days and I’ve been at the hospital, arranging for my dad to have the care he needs when he goes home.

“We’re so close,” Harlem says. “Next weekend, there’s a fight goin’ down. Big Papa has arranged a meeting with the new gear Forger is pushin’ out. Figurin’ out the logistics of who can accompany him without bein’ recognized.”

This is progress. Big Papa is one of the biggest drug runners in this city. We don’t deal with him usually, but after he heard what Forger did to his little girl, he wasn’t having any of it.

He also owes Cash from way back, so having him in our corner, at least for a night so we can end things, is music to my ears.

“This better fuckin’ happen,” I mutter. “I’m so over this shit.”

“In the meantime,” Cash goes on. “Rock is in charge of Aspyn Ashley, Tommy Huntley’s kid. She’s comin’ to New Orleans and needs to keep a low profile.”

I heard about Tommy Huntley and the death threats against his daughter. I’m thankful it’s Rock and not myself or Harlem who have the babysitting job. I’ve got bigger fish to fry than watching over some spoiled princess.

“Hey, how’s your sister doin’?” Nevada pipes up out of nowhere.

“Fuck man,” Riot says nudging him in the ribs. “Thought you’d have learnt from the last beatin’ not to fuck with T.”

Nevada just laughs. I swear to god he’s fuckin’ crazy.

“Take more than a black eye to fuck this pretty face up,” he laughs. “Got me a coupla sweet butts at the ready, only too happy to nurse me back to health.”

“Keep callin’ Luna my sister, and I’ll fuck you up so your dick won’t work again, got me?” I give him a look.

“Careful, T, that sounded kinky.” He gives me a wink.

Priest shakes his head. “If you need a hand with Rock, let me know. Heard this chick is a handful.”

“Or two handfuls?” Nevada laughs. “Judgin’ by the size of her tits on the big screen.”

“Don’t fuckin’ tell me you watch reality tv?” I grunt. “I’ve heard it all now.”

“Not like I watch it for the storyline.” He shrugs. “Cash, you know I’m free to babysit Aspyn, just say the words and I’ll rearrange my week.”

“How about shut the fuck up,” Cash fires back at him. “Tommy entrusted me with the task of looking after his daughter, and I don’t want her to suffer from your extensive history of sexual encounters. Nor do the rest of us need to fuckin’ hear it.”

He puts a hand over his heart. “I’m shocked you’d think I’d do somethin’ like that.”

Chuckles erupt around the table as I shake my head. He’s a fuckin’ doofus.

I have to admit; I don’t regret giving him a black eye and bloody lip, not that it’s deterred him one iota.

Cash bangs the gavel down and we make our way out. I need to catch up with Harlem, but when I see the tail end of my girl, I follow her down to her office.

She doesn’t have to work anymore, not with her inheritance safely in her account, but that isn’t Luna. Nor is it me. I love this club more than anything, I couldn’t imagine doing anything else.

“Should you be wearin’ short skirts to work?” I say, startling her when she turns and I’m already pressing myself against her back.

“Jesus, T! You scared me.”

I smile, my hands landing on her hips as she heads to her shared office with Jas.

Luckily, Jas isn’t here. I close the door behind us.

“Skirt?” I quirk a brow.

She rolls her eyes. “It isn’t even short.”

I push her up against the door and she gasps. “T! We can’t do this here.”

“Why not?” My face is buried in her hair as I breathe her in.

“Jas is due back any second.”

I move my hand and lock the door. “So now she’ll have to wait.”

I nip her neck and the chastising words she was about to throw at me, die in her throat.

“You seem edgy.”

“I found Gary.”

She gasps. “What?”

“Let’s just say, he’s gonna learn how to fly.”

“*Tag...*” She hates me doing anything that might put myself in danger, but she needn’t worry. I’m a big boy. I can fend for myself.

“He terrorized you for a long time. That shit doesn’t fly around here, Lu. You know I live and breathe vengeance.”

“He’s an asshole.”

“Yes he is. What he did to you, it ain’t right. I’m gonna make it right.”

Oh, I’ve plans for good old Gary. In fact. Harlem and I might take him over to the warehouse.

It’s been a while since we’ve spilled blood. Even getting rid of Brian hasn’t satisfied my appetite for revenge, not just yet.

Assholes like Gary shouldn’t be allowed to exist. I can’t even begin to fathom Luna’s emotions throughout the years. It’s about time he paid.

“You turn me on when you talk like that.”

I smile. “You like the idea of me avengin’ you, don’t you?”

“I like the idea of you being mine, T.”

I push her hair back off her face, my dick pressing into her stomach as she sighs.

“You are mine,” I tell her. “And if anyone fucks with you, they’re gonna die.”

“You’re wasting time talking when we could be...”

*Knock. Knock. Knock.*

I groan. “Fuck off!”

“Oh, god,” Jas groans through the door. “Are you two.... Never mind... I don’t want to know... just make sure you use the anti-bacterial spray once you’re done.”

“It’s not like that!” Luna yells, trying to push me off.

I’m no match for her, kissing her clavicle as I take my sweet time. “Now. We need to hurry this up. I’ve got shit to do.”

“So romantic,” she sighs, giving up on pushing me away.

I cage her in. “There’s time tonight, when I tie you to the bed.”

She giggles. “You know how to keep a woman interested.”

“Sure do. I’ve got a lot of lost time to make up for.”

“So shut up and kiss me.”

I hover my lips against hers. “I thought you’d never ask.”

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you for reading Tag and Luna!

Thank you firstly to all my readers, and if you're new to my books, thank you for taking a chance on me! NOLA Rebels is a spin-off from my best selling series Bracken Ridge Rebels MC set in Arizona. That series is complete with 12 books 😊

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If you can spare the time to leave a review on GR and/or Amazon if you loved Harlem or any of my books that would be greatly appreciated and helps me so much as an indie author. Links are on the following pages.

The next book in the series will be Rock and Aspyn. Release date is 14<sup>th</sup> April 2024. I'm so glad you guys keep asking for Rock, and trust me when I say, this is one possessive man who is a little unhinged when it comes to protecting our heroine. See a sneaky peek below...

Be sure to check out my private Facebook group (links below) as I update this page regularly before anything gets released on other social media channels.

Love from Australia, MF xx

# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mackenzzy Fox is an author of contemporary, enemies to lovers, motorcycle and dark themed romance novels. When she's not writing she loves vegan cooking, walking her beloved pooch's, reading books and is an expert on online shopping.

She's slightly obsessed with drinking tea, testing bubbly Moscato, watching home decorating shows and has a black belt in origami. She strives to live a quiet and introverted life in Western Australia's South-West with her hubby, twin sister and her dogs.

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# SNEAK PEEK - ROCK

**Excerpt (subject to change) before editing:**

*Prologue*

*The Past*

*Rock - 17 years old*

I stare at my twin brother Jett.

We've always been close, even when we share a difference of opinions. But people say my brother is sweeter than me, that I'm the harder nut to crack.

"What you think?" I give him a chin lift as I hold the punk up against the wall. "We leave him breathin', or we fuck him up?"

Jett gives me a look. He's always been the calmer between the two of us. If I had completed high school and had a picture in the yearbook, it'd say something like: Most likely to fuck up.

Jett, on the other hand, he'd be most likely to be able to talk himself out of any situation. Calmly.

I scoff at the idea. Talking is overrated. I hit first, talk after.

“Fucked him up enough,” Jett replies, rolling his eyes.

“You think?”

“Since he’s barely conscious, I’d say yeah.”

I check his pockets and relieve him of all the cash in his wallet, plus a nice-looking pocketknife.

“Had it comin’,” I mutter.

“Who is he, anyway?”

“Punk owed me money.”

“You dealin’ again?”

I ignore him. Sometimes my brother’s ‘holier than thou’ attitude drives me crazy.

“Rock?” he presses.

Since when did he become a saint?

Our eyes meet. “Dealin’ ain’t takin’, brother. Don’t tell me you don’t know the difference.”

“Don’t want you endin’ up like Lazy Pete.”

I snort. “Lazy Pete did needles. I don’t do that shit.” I shudder at the thought.

“You know what I mean. In the end, he crossed everyone in this city until there was nobody left. Now he’s six feet under.”

I frown. “Who I crossin’?”

My brother has always had this moral dilemma. Even when he knows justice has to be served for those who cross us. It’s the only way they’ll learn.

“Just sayin’.”

I grip the back of his neck and press my forehead to his. “Thought we were in this together?”

“We are.”

“Doesn’t sound like it. You goin’ soft on me?”

He doesn’t answer.

“What is it?” I prompt, pulling back. He’s been acting off for weeks.

“Cash.”

I try not to roll my eyes. “What about him?”

Cash is the MC President for the NOLA Rebels MC, and I know that he wants Jett and me to join.

“He wants us to prospect for the MC.” He says it like I don’t already know.

I try to suppress a groan. I know Cash seems like a decent enough man, but I don’t trust him. I don’t trust anyone.

“So what?”

“So, we won’t have to live like this anymore.”

I frown. “Live like what? I thought we were makin’ our own rules?”

Jett shakes his head. “Aren’t you sick of runnin’?”

I stare at him.

Why does this already feel like a loss... Like I’m losing my brother for good?

Jealousy courses through me.

Jett and I have had plenty to argue about over the years, but we’re street smart. We know these dirty holes better than anyone, and I don’t like the idea that Jett could need anyone else but me. We’ve always been there for each other.

I don’t like this one bit. It makes me anxious.

“You know what my answer is,” I say. “That hasn’t changed.”

“Why are you bein’ so stubborn about this? It’s a chance for us to get back on our feet. To get off the streets, start a new life.”

I step back like he’s slapped me.

He knows how I feel about men in positions of power. We don’t mix.

Not after our childhood

Everyone is a goddamn liar until proven otherwise but, unfortunately, my little brother has a penance over his head and tends to believe outside influences. I'm not interested in that, and I'm not interested in Cash Hudson or his club.

"What's wrong with how we live?" I question, knowing that how we live is no picnic.

"Rock, come on. This is no way to get ahead; we're always hungry. We steal to get by. We have no real home. This is a chance for the both of us... Cash can help us."

"I don't need anybody's help, brother. I told you that a long time ago."

He runs a hand through his hair. "I'm tired of runnin'."

"Tired of me?"

"Didn't say that."

"You think Cash and a bunch of bikers are gonna take your side when shit hits the fan? As a prospect you're nothin', Jett. Lower than dog shit. You're more than that to me."

"I'm lower than dog shit now, though. The difference is we could be part of somethin', a true brotherhood."

I almost snarl at him. What the fuck has gotten into his head?

"A *true* brotherhood?" My anger flairs.

"That isn't what I meant."

"I'm not a good enough brother for you? You need more?"

Nobody can hurt me. Nobody. Except my twin brother. He holds all the power to destroy me because he's the only thing I care about in this godforsaken world.

And I thought I was the same to him.

We needed each other once. When both of us had nobody else, we had each other. That's all that mattered. My, how the mighty have fallen.

Hearing about the NOLA Rebels MC over and over is driving me insane.

I don't want to hear about anything that is going to take my place and leave me out in the cold. I won't conform for him or for anybody.

"I don't need more, but Cash is a good man. He'll look after us, make sure we never have to return to the streets." He kicks the guy who we've both left slumped on the pavement. "Shit like this gets old, Rock. You know it as well as I do."

I shake my head. "Look after us? We're grown now, Jett. Talkin' like we're kids again."

He stares at me for a moment, trying to gauge if I'm being serious.

Oh, but I am.

Deadly.

Then he says, "Maybe we need to grow up."

I have plans for my life and those plans don't include being stuck in a one-horse town, being an asswipe for these guys. Not happening.

My brother trusts the wrong people, always has.

"You walk away now, we're through."

"Can't keep doin' this. Gonna end up in a concrete box with no windows, or a goddamn early grave."

Betrayal runs through me.

He's choosing Cash Hudson over his own flesh and blood.

"I thought our pact meant somethin'?"

"It does. You're bein' dramatic, brother. We can do this together..."

"*Dramatic?* You wanna join an MC, even though you know that'll mean we'll be split up? And they'll treat you like shit. You won't be doin' anythin' you're not doin' now and yet you'll have to give all the money you make to them. And don't pretend you don't care about me."

“I’m doin’ it because I *do* care about you! I won’t live like this...” He points in my face, and I push him back. “I can’t, Rock.”

“I’ll fuck you up. I swear to fuckin’ God!”

He stands his ground, knowing my temper well. “I’d like to see you try.”

I pull my fist back, ready to punch him in the face, but then I stop. I’m being childish.

A part of me has always been the protector out of the two of us, I don’t know why. Maybe it’s the fact I’m slightly bigger than my brother, or that I just have a goddamn death wish. I was always the one to take the brunt of the beatings, not because Jett was any less of a target, but because I didn’t want him hurt too. He was smaller, so I acted as if I were the big brother, when really there’s half an hour between us in age.

Who fuckin’ knows, but the jealousy coursing through me is gonna make me do somethin’ I might regret.

“Don’t do this,” he says, determination in his eyes.

I don’t like that, either.

“You’re just dyin’ to be rid of me, so may as well not delay the inevitable,” I snarl back at him. “Since your own flesh and blood isn’t good enough anymore.”

“I never said that. Stop bein’ a dick.”

I back off, not willing to hit my brother, but I also don’t want to be around him anymore. I know he’ll pick the MC over me. It’s been coming for a while.

The life I promised the two of us when we ran away from foster care never happened.

Life on the streets is as hard as it sounds.

“Give me a call when Cash chews you up and spits you out,” I say, walking backward.

“Where are you goin’?” He frowns. “We can talk about this.”



Except we can't. I don't want to join the MC and Jett does. I don't like authority, and I won't be shit kicking as a prospect. If my brother wishes to go down that path, then I can't stop him. But I'll be damned if I'm gonna sit here and take it.

“Sayonara.”

I turn and walk away, leaving him and the unconscious asshole on the sidewalk.

“Rock?” he calls after me.

I give him a two-finger salute.

Fuck him.

Fuck everyone.

I can go wherever I want. Do what I want. I'm never gonna have anyone telling me what to do. Ever.

“Rock!”

Pain hits my chest when I walk away. I've never done life without my brother, but I know that I have to sever the cord at some point. He's better than this. Better than me. Maybe I knew that all along and that's why I kept pushing him away.

Jett is destined for better things. He doesn't harbor the past like I do.

He doesn't hate like I do.

He's the good twin. And though I wouldn't consider myself the evil twin, I'm no boy scout.

I ignore the ache inside me that he is no longer by my side, and when I get far away enough, I turn to look back and he's gone.

Empty space.

He left me for dust.

I guess that's what happens when time charms the fuck out of you and you think you have nine lives. But in the end, there's nothing left inside you except an empty shell.

Chapter 1

*Six years later*

*Aged 23*

I bounce the ball against the wall, just like they do in the movies.

Waiting to get out of jail isn't fun, especially when you're not sure if anyone's coming to bail you out.

Of course, I wasted the only phone call on my brother, namely because his is the only phone number I know.

To say things have been strained between us these last six years is an understatement. We've seen each other, but things have never been the same after he joined the MC.

I walked away without a second glance and Jett accepted his fate.

My brother has thrived, something I'm pleased about, because despite what he thinks, I still want what's best for him. My jealousy stems from him not needing me and instead turning to the MC like they're his family.

Childish? Maybe.

Do I hold grudges? Freakin' A.

At least I'm consistent. I don't play games. I have no agenda.

What you see is what you get, and because I came from nothing, I have nothing to lose. Except Jett.

He harbors resentment toward me for walking away all those years ago. I didn't hide my anger, and he didn't change his mind, so I figure we're even.

Now I'm waiting in the hope that he'll remember his blood and not leave me here to rot.

I've been in the joint plenty of times for petty theft and dumb shit, but if they knew half the stuff I've done, they'd lock me up for good and throw away the key.

I don't know how long I bounce that damn ball for, but when I hear the warden come to the front of the cell and call

my name, I feel relieved that I don't have to spend another night in this hell hole. It's dirty and smells like piss.

He unlocks the door and rolls it back as I step out.

Though I didn't touch anything in here, I want to go bathe in disinfectant.

I follow him down the hall, ignoring remarks from the other lowlifes in custody, and before I know it, I'm collecting my contraband and making my way past reception.

My brother stands on the other side of the door looking very unhappy.

I grin.

He looks about the same. I haven't seen him for years but nothing much changes with the two of us. I'm a little more unkempt than him, but that's because I don't have pussy at the ready like he does. Cleaning his room and cooking his meals for him.

Maybe I'm a dumbass for not following him into the Rebels all those years ago.

He rolls his eyes as the door is unlocked and we're face to face.

I try not to balk at the fact he's wearing a cut that reads: Jett, Treasurer - NOLA Rebels MC. So he's had a promotion?

His hair is long, like mine, but I wear mine up most of the time.

The chicks dig it, along with the multitude of tattoos I have all over my body. The things I've had to do in order to afford ink...

I've always had a big build as well as being tall, and since we're identical, Jett's the same. If we want to split hairs, I'd say I'm a little more defined, but he'd argue the point.

"Brother," I say, giving him a rueful smile. "It's been a while."

"Yeah, it has."

“Told you I’d write...”

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