



Blacklisted

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Description: I thought I had everything under control. Turns out everyone was controlling me. I did everything right. I had the right clothes, the perfect hair, stellar social connections, and most of all, I had him, Royer Atkinson, president of the Zeta Zig fraternity. All of this was part of my plan to get into the best sorority at Wittmore University. Except my life imploded and the unthinkable happened, I wasn't just rejected. I'm blacklisted. And the person that set it up? My not-so-perfect-boyfriend. I have two options: run away or I can get my revenge by posing as a male and infiltrating Royer's fraternity rush to get enough evidence of hazing to burn them to the ground. Even though it means teaming up with my biggest enemy and changing everything about myself, I choose revenge.

Total Pages (Source): 68

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Reagan

From the outside, the house looks regal. White columns and a broad staircase leading to wide double doors. Bold Greek letters hang from the front gable. That impression holds in the front foyer where large, framed composite photographs of each pledge class spanning the last hundred years hang in tidy rows.

Like an onion, the deeper one goes into the house, the more layers pull back, the more truth is revealed about the people inside. Royer Atkinson, my boyfriend of the last nine months, is one of those people.

“Fraternity Rush begins next week,” Chancellor Billups says, “and I don’t think I need to inform you that Zeta Sigma will not survive another hazing incident like last year’s.”

They’re in the parlor, an outer layer of the frat. One with uncomfortable chairs and finely woven rugs. Royer sits across from the Chancellor, legs casually crossed, looking like the college student the University would want on the cover of their recruitment brochure. Wavy blond hair, blue eyes, chiseled features. Every time I look at him, I wonder why he chose me? How did I get so lucky?

“I can assure you, Chancellor, the rush advisory board has already been warned.” He leans forward slightly. “We take what happened last year seriously, don’t we, Andrea.”

Andrea sits in another chair, the yin to Royer's yang. As the sorority chairperson, she's all about appearance. More than the guys. Her platinum white hair rolls over her shoulder in perfect waves, her makeup and outfit are on point, as well as her shoes, expensive and appropriate. "Don't drag me into this," she says with no bite. "We're announcing bids tonight. There have been no issues and I don't expect any."

My stomach flips at the mention of bid night and I press my back against the wall. I'm just outside the parlor, tucked in the small butler pantry that connects the room to the kitchen. This house is historic and filled with a dozen secret nooks. Or at least that's what Royer has told me. He pushed me in here when the Chancellor arrived with Andrea for their meeting.

Sorority rush has been going on for a week. A thousand girls have had a dozen rounds with each sorority, each including interviews and parties, outfits, and hairstyles. Before we even got on campus, we had to scrub our social media, gather recommendations, pick out the perfect clothes, jewelry, and manicure. Over the last five days, I've watched girls have breakdowns, cry, scream, panic. I've kept it together despite the anxiety and nerves. I've made it through all the cuts—I just need to get through the final night. Contact with members of the sorority is forbidden during the week—no one can be seen playing favorites, but Royer has assured me Andrea will make sure I'm a top recruit. I should be. I've done everything right.

That's why he pushed me into the closet. If Billups sees me anywhere near Andrea all my—no, our—hard work will be for nothing.

"We're watching everything," Billups says. "Alcohol, drugs, bullying..." Her eyes dart between the two leaders. "The national office is prepared to revoke your charters if necessary."

"We want to build relationships," Andrea says, toying with the pearl hanging from a thin, gold chain. I touch my neck. Royer gave me a similar one over the summer to

celebrate six months together after I'd admired hers. "Sisterhood is our priority. Building long-lasting relationships."

Royer chimes in. "What happened to that pledge last year... that was a tragic accident. No one, fraternity or sorority, wants to see something like that happen again."

Billups is quiet for a long moment, like she's trying to decide if she can trust them or not. It's valid. I've heard the stories that Royer and his friends retell. Fraternity rush sounds like a nightmare, but they claim it's part of the process. It's what builds their bonds. I'm just glad the sororities aren't like this. Sure, they're judgmental and can be petty, but that's how the game is played. If you can't take it, don't rush.

Finally, the Chancellor stands. "I'm glad we're on the same page. The last thing Wittmore needs is bad press."

"No one wants that," Royer says, having stood with her. "I expect this year's rush to go smoothly." He smiles, flashing her the flirty one that makes my knees weak. "I promise. Why don't I show you around the house and you can see for yourself?"

As they move, I peer through the crack in the door, trying to get a better look. My eyes land on Royer's hand resting against Andrea's lower back as they escort the Chancellor out of the parlor. Nausea builds in the back of my throat—dark jealousy. We started dating last Christmas. My friend's older brother had a party, filled with college guys, and he let us come. Royer was there and not only was he interested in me that night, but we also started dating for real.

I can't blame Royer for wanting a woman like Andrea. She's perfection. Everything I aspire to be. Once I get my bid, I can rise to a power of position in the sorority. Then Royer will look at me with the same level of respect and admiration. I'm too distracted by his hand and my own insecurity to hear that someone has entered the

closet behind me, from the kitchen, until I feel a hand on my hip.

“Sneaking around?”

The voice sends a tremor down my spine. Miller Hansen. Royer’s best friend.

“No.” I shift away, tucking my hair behind my ear. “Royer didn’t want the Chancellor to see me here. It’s bid day.” I glare at him.

“Ah, one last day to get through and then you’ll get those letters you can slap across your tits to prove to everyone you belong.”

I roll my eyes and finally look at him. He’s painfully attractive. With dangerous cobalt eyes and dark hair that ever so casually flops over his forehead. His skin is warm and perpetually tanned from being outside, playing ball or lazing around. He’s better looking than Royer, but less motivated. It doesn’t matter. His good looks and charming smile get him everything he wants. Royer wants to be president. Miller is happy to just be second in command, VP. Power without the pesky work. That’s why he’s in the pantry with me and not in the meeting.

“You’re in a frat too,” I say. “Don’t pretend like being Greek isn’t important to you.”

“I’m here for the parties.” His eyes rake down my body. “And the pussy.”

A chill of revulsion trembles down my spine. “You’re disgusting.”

The bright blue in his eyes flickers out and turns a shade darker. His hand snaps out, fingers gripping my chin tight. “You should be nice to me, Reagan. There’s still time for me to fuck things up for you.”

We stand like that for a beat—Miller holding my face in place, forcing me to look at

him.

“I’m sorry,” I say, blinking under the pain of his fingers. “I didn’t mean it.”

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“You did.” He licks his lips, the dark pink of his tongue darting out. “You’re not wrong about me. I have disgusting ideas, but you forget I hold the upper hand.”

Oh, I haven’t forgotten.

The dirt Miller has on me is the kind that can destroy me and everything I’ve worked for. One stupid, drunken night could ruin my life, and Miller Hansen is the one who can set that in motion.

He releases my chin and trails his fingertips down my neck and collarbone. “There’s still time to send that video to Andrea.”

God. The video.

I did everything right in high school; the clubs I joined, how I dressed, who I hung out with, the boy I dated. I had good grades, was captain of the volleyball team and was accepted early action at Wittmore. I held it together for so long, but I fucked up. I let go on graduation night and risked everything.

My parents threw me a party, and I got stupid drunk. After everyone left, only Royer and Miller remained. That’s when I went on a rant about how I really feel about Miss Perfect Andrea. I mocked, laughed, and ridiculed her for what a phony bitch she is. How her nose is crooked, and her boobs are obviously fake. I barely remember doing it, but that doesn’t matter. Miller recorded the whole diatribe, and he’s been blackmailing me ever since.

“What do you want?” I ask him, recoiling from the feel of his touch. “Daddy can get

you front row tickets to the playoffs.”

The demands started small, with me getting him weed and some pills, then escalated to tickets at the arena in my father’s box seats. Then on the Fourth of July, he got a DUI, and needed Daddy’s law firm to help him get out of it. I had to do a lot of navigating to keep my parents and Royer from asking why I was doing so many favors for Miller, but the risk was worth it. If I don’t get into Gamma Epsilon, then the entire trajectory of my life changes. Once I’m in, it doesn’t matter. Until then, until tonight, it’s worth doing whatever Miller wants.

“I’m not interested in tickets,” he says, pushing my hair over my shoulder. “Nice hair color, by the way.”

It’s three shades brighter than my natural color. I’d had my hairdresser strip away the dirty blonde and lightened it to the exact color of Andrea’s at the start of rush. I shrug and slap his hand away.

“Then what do you want?”

“Since we’re in the final hours, I’m raising my demands.”

His hand rests on my shoulder. Miller is touchy. It’s one of the ways he manipulates. Most females turn to mush around him, but I know better. He’s trouble. Dark and dangerous. I’ve seen him use and abuse too many girls. The glint in his eye makes me nervous. It’s predatory.

And from the way he’s looking at me, it’s clear he’s got his prey right where he wants it.

“I’ve been thinking about that pretty little mouth of yours,” he says, words spread out like honey. The warm pad of his thumb brushes across my bottom lip. “And how

good it would look wrapped around my cock.”

I jolt back, but his hand keeps me in my spot. “What the fuck? No.”

He shrugs but keeps his grip on me. “It’s up to you, but that’s my price.” With his other hand, he reaches into his pocket and pulls out his phone. A few swipes later, he’s got the video queued up and ready to post on ChattySnap. “Get on your knees, Reagan, or this goes out to the entire Wittmore Greek system.”

His demand hits me like a punch in the gut. Miller has always been an ass. Entitled and douchey, but this is beyond what I thought he was capable of.

“Royer is your best friend,” I say, hoping to snap him out of it.

“So? This is about business, not friendship.”

My stomach churns. That’s all he thinks this is? A transaction. But I know better. With Miller, it’s always about power and even more? Humiliation.

“I can’t. If he finds out...”

“If Andrea finds out you’re done, and you and I both know Royer isn’t likely to stick around for a girl that doesn’t get a bid.”

He says it so easily, like it’s not my biggest fear. Not getting a bid, missing my shot at being in a sorority; the friendships, the connections, the exclusivity, but most of all, disappointing and maybe losing Royer.

“Fine,” I say, barely hearing the word come out of my mouth. “Whatever it takes.”

His grin slowly spreads across his handsome face, but all I taste is bitterness. All I see

is the face of a devil.

“Get on your knees, Reagan.” His thumb pushes at the button on his jeans.

“Here?” I look toward the door. “They’ll be back any second!Withthe Chancellor.”

“Then you better get busy.”

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Bile rises in the back of my throat, but I force it down as Miller lowers his jeans and reveals himself. His cock is already hard, probably aroused just from the idea of forcing me to do this. He leans his elbows back against the counter and it bobs freely in the air.

It lookshuge.

“The longer you take, the more likely you’ll get caught,” he reminds me, guiding a hand down his shaft. “There’s still time to keep the video private, but if they walk in on this, you’re done for good.”

The urge to flee overwhelms me, but I have no doubt Miller will make good on his promise. I bend my shaky knees and drop before him, eyeing his cock like it’s a venomous snake poised to attack. Grabbing the shaft, I run my fingers down to the tip, eliciting a hum and his toned belly caves inward. “That’s right,” he says, reaching down. He grabs my chin and pulls my face forward, thumb pushing between my lips. “Suck it.”

Our eyes meet as the soft velvet tip of his finger brushes against my lips, leaving a sticky trail. I can’t help but search the darkness of his eyes for some sense of humanity. Why is he doing this? Why is he risking his friendship with Royer when he can have any girl he wants?

There’s no answer, just the tight clench of his fingers as they thread into my hair.

My tongue darts out, and I taste him, salty and slick. “Like that, Reagan? Like the taste of my cum?”

His hips buck forward, pushing the length of his cock past the threshold of my lips, down my throat. Tears burn the corner of my eyes and I gag, pushing him away. Miller watches me as I wipe my mouth and cough.

“You’ve done this before, right?” he asks. “With Royer?”

I shake my head and my cheeks heat with embarrassment. “No.”

“Seriously?” The corner of his lip quirks. “Guess that tracks, sort of.” His fingers run under my chin again, a little gentler, and he says, “Well, quick lesson: I’ll set the pace, be prepared to take me deep, and no teeth.”

I open my mouth to respond, beg really, and he uses the opportunity to push his cock back in. He’s slower this time, not going quite as deep at first. His blue eyes shine bright and his hand slides from my chin to the back of my neck. Once it’s clear I can take it, he increases his pace, thrusting into my mouth until I brace my hands against his hips and take over.

It’s the only way to keep him from choking me on his cock.

“That’s it, that’s it,” he mumbles, easing back against the cabinet again. I glance up and see his eyes half open, gazing down at me lazily. “Fuck, you’re good. I knew you’d be good. Sexy little kitten.”

The compliment sparks a conflicted physical manifestation. My cheeks burn. My chest swells. A damp heat builds between my legs. It’s not just humiliation but shame... worse? Pride. Knowing I’m making Miller Hansen feel good? Make his jaw slack and eyes glaze? That I’m overwhelmed by disgust that my body is reacting to his touch.

I focus on the rise and fall of his lower belly, the smattering of hair that travels down

the lean muscle to the thicker thatch of hair surrounding his cock. I hear his breath change, a signal, I think, that this nightmare is almost over. His cock thickens and swells in my mouth and I'm distracted, unaware of his hands moving until I feel the graze of his hand over my breast. I flinch and he laughs. "You've got amazing tits and fuck," he tweaks the tip. "Your nipples are hard. How wet are you? Just a little? Drenched?"

Fear claws at my chest. What if he touches me down there and feels the shameful, warm heat? The simple idea seems to spur him on, and he keeps his focus on fucking my mouth until his breath turns ragged and raw. Miller propels himself off the cabinet, punching forward, both hands grabbing the back of my head. "Hold on," he groans, cock twitching in my mouth. I feel the heat of him, warm and thick, hit the back of my tongue. My throat seizes, but he holds me still, forcing me in place until he's finished.

"Swallow it down," he says, removing his cock, but not the grip on the back of my neck. His thumb runs along my throat. "Can't leave a trace."

I do as I'm told, the fear of getting caught as intense as the desire to get away. I push past the reflex to gag on the salty, thick cum, eyes burning with unshed tears. I'm still on my knees, aware of him wiping off his cock with a towel from the pantry drawer, when voices come from the parlor. Royer and Andrea. The sound jolts me to my feet, and I stumble forward, crashing into Miller's chest. He laughs quietly and I look up at Miller. "Be careful."

It's a warning—but it barely processes as I try to reconcile what just happened. What he did to me. What I allowed him to do. How it made me feel. Gently, he wipes the cloth over my lips, removing any visible sign of what happened.

I run my fingers through my hair and straighten my shirt, thankful that I'm wearing pants so that there's no imprint on my knees.

“You need to go before they—” I turn to face him, but he’s already gone. I blink at the aloneness, a wave of grief and regret washing over me, but then I hear my name and a tap on the door that leads to the parlor.

“Hey,” Royer says, sliding the pocket door into its case. “Sorry that took so long.” His eyes sweep over me, and he frowns. “Are you okay?”

“Oh, um,” I wipe under my eyes. “It’s just the stress of it all. I’m exhausted from rush, paranoid from hiding, and just excited about Bid Night.”

I stare at him carefully, hoping the excuses make sense. They aren’t lies. In fact, all three clarify why I let what just happened happen. I’m vulnerable and on edge. I just need to get through the night.

He slips his arm around me and presses his nose to mine. “Rush week sucks. I know you’re worn out. After tonight, everything will chill out and we can celebrate.”

His lips brush against mine, and I fight to recoil. Can he taste Miller on my mouth? On my tongue. His sweeps against mine, pulling me into a deep kiss. When we break apart, I glance over his shoulder, making eye contact with Andrea. Her lips curve into a small, twisted smile. I’m too numb from the last hour to even try to figure out what that means.

“Everything go okay with the Chancellor?” I ask Royer.

“Yeah, they’re just on edge after last year and the lawsuit, but we have someone in the main office running interference.” He runs his hand down my back. “She can’t stop tradition. Zeta Sigma has a reputation to uphold. Some bitch in administration isn’t going to stop us.” He looks over his shoulder at Andrea. “Isn’t that right?”

She crosses her long legs and leans back against the seat. “Everything is going as

planned. I guarantee it.” Her eyes flick to mine. “Shouldn’t you be getting ready for Bid Night?”

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I look at the time. “Uh, yes. I do need to go. I have a ton to do.” Royer squeezes my ass and kisses me once again before walking me to the front door.

“Good luck tonight,” he says. “Send me a video.”

I pause at the word and search his handsome face. His expression is clear—innocent. God, I really am paranoid. Fucking Miller.

“I will. See you later.”

One more day, I tell myself once I’m on the sidewalk, walking back toward the dorms. One more day and this will all be over with, and everything I’ve worked and sacrificed for will fall into place.

Bid Night at Wittmore isn’t just the day we find out what sorority we’ve been accepted into, it’s an event. It happens on The Green, a wide swath of manicured grass, under the watchful eye of the clock tower and nestled between the historic oaks on the old campus. The recruits arrive and are given an envelope with their bid. Then, as they say, the recruits “run home” making the trek across campus in dresses and heels with the entire pledge class to their new sorority house.

The whole thing is magical.

I should be humming with excitement. Instead, I can’t stop staring at my mouth in the mirror over my dresser, wondering if people can tell Miller’s cock had been in there a few hours before. If I look different. If I tasted different when Royer kissed me.

Steam wafts into my line of vision, along with the tinge of burning hair.

“Shit,” I mutter, untangling the curling iron from my hair. The ends sizzle and I drop the iron on my desk. “Fuck.”

“What’s wrong?”

I glance at my roommate’s reflection in the mirror. She’s been stretched out on her bed for hours, scrolling through ChattySnap. Janelle and I were matched up randomly. My mother begged me not to room with someone I already knew. She said it would be better for me to make new friends, push outside my boundaries. I agreed, but only because I knew I’d spend most of my time at the GE house once I was accepted. Unfortunately, that was before I met Janelle and saw her black hair, dyed with purple streaks. Living with my biggest enemy would be better than a weirdo-freak.

So far, I’ve learned that Janelle is mostly interested in flannel, ripped jeans (and not in a sexy way) and has an extensive collection of pop culture figurines lining the shelf over her bed. I’m not sure, but at least half look like they’re from anime shows.

Shudder.

“Just this curling iron,” I say dismissively, tucking and re-tucking my hair behind my ear. It’s a nervous habit, one I’ve tried to stop. “It runs too hot.”

“Oh no, you mean your hair may not look like every other girl at the party?”

Janelle is not rushing. She’s not justnotrushing. She’s anti-sorority, a GDI (God Damn Independent) and uses every opportunity she can find to make snide comments about the system.

“It’s not a party.” I coax my curl into something acceptable and start putting on my jewelry. “It’s Bid Night. And my hair doesn’t look like every other girl’s.”

I spent the summer perfecting my hair. Along with dying it to match Andrea’s, I studied the way she coaxed the curls to hang in perfect spirals over my shoulders. Not only did I achieve her look; I surpassed it. Now people want my hair.

Janelle glances up from her phone. “Why are you so nervous? It’s not like you don’t already know what’s going to happen. Aren’t you a legacy or something?”

“Third generation.” I slip the earrings my grandmother gave me through my lobes. “It’s still exciting. I want to look my best.”

Janelle rolls her eyes and focuses back on her phone. “I’m glad you’re confident. I ran into some girl in the bathroom earlier bawling her eyes out. She got cut or something. You’d think her life was over.”

“Oh really? That sucks.” I grab my heels out of the closet. “Apparently it happens. Like the preferences don’t match up right, or the recruit suicided or something.”

Suicide.

That’s what I did.

I chose one sorority, GE, and that’s it. It’s not recommended because it looks ‘snobbish’ or something, but I know what I want, and I know they want me. I’m legacy. I’m a perfect fit. I didn’t want to lead on any other group. The issue comes when the sorority you picked doesn’t pick you back—that’s probably what happened to the girl in the bathroom.

“If you ask me, the whole thing sounds like a mass suicide of group-think.”

Laying my hands flat on my skirt, I smooth it out, removing any and all imaginary wrinkles. “Well, no one asked you.”

She sticks out her pierced tongue and goes back to her phone while I wedge my feet into my shoes. Janelle has made her views on sorority culture clear. “It’s nothing more than a group of women with no real identity of their own living up to patriarchal standards. They indoctrinate you into paying for friends and connections...”

At least I have friends, I think, adjusting the strap of my shoe. She hasn’t done anything since we moved in but sit on her bed and watch movies on her laptop. A knock taps on our door. Janelle and I share a look, but she shrugs. “It’s probably someone wanting to walk over to The Green together,” I say, walking over to the door.

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On the other side is a girl holding an envelope. I don't recognize her, but she's wearing one of the T-shirts that identifies her as a recruitment mentor. "Reagan Lake?"

"Yes."

She gives me a tight, flat, smile. "This is for you."

"Oh, thanks." I take the envelope and stare at my name printed across the front. The mentor pauses for a moment before taking a step back. I shut the door and turn.

Janelle's eyebrows raise. "What's that?"

"I don't know." I slide my manicured nail under the flap and then pull out the card. It's printed, already typed. "Dear Recruit," I read aloud, "We regret to inform you that you have not received a bid during this recruitment season."

My phone buzzes across the room, but I ignore it, trying to process the words. Have not. Did not. No bid.

The air in my lungs vanishes, knocked out like a vise tightening around my ribcage. Hot tears build in my eyes and blink, grabbing the edge of my elevated bed to steady myself. I read it again and again. Each time, the words confuse me more.

"I did everything right," I whisper to myself.

My phone chimes. Over and over.

“Uh, Reagan—”

“Not now, Janelle,” I bark, rushing over to my phone. Maybe it’s a mistake. It has to be a mistake. “I need to call Royer.”

“Reagan...”

I ignore her and reach for the phone. The screen is lit up with notifications. My hands are shaking, and the pink plastic case slips through my fingertips. It bounces under the bed, and I drop to my knees. A flash from earlier that day, from the last time I was on my knees, rolls over me.

No. No. No. No. No.

“Reagan!” Janelle shouts down at me. “There’s something you should see.”

She thrusts her phone in my face, and my eyes snap into focus. It’s a video. My stomach plunges, and I wrap an arm around my waist. Janelle presses play and the old video, the one from graduation, starts to run.

“Hey guys! Check this out!” drunk Reagan shouts. My hair is limp and stringy, my original dirty blonde. Still wet from swimming in the pool. “Who am I?” I swish my hips and stick out my tits. “I’m just so perfect. And beautiful. I look down my crooked nose at everyone—especially the girls that I know are really better, prettier and more popular.” I grope my boobs. “My tits are huge, right? Can you tell my Daddy bought them for me over winter break when I said I was in Cancun?” I grab a red party cup and take a sloppy swig. “Oh, and I love to flirt with other girl’s boyfriends, isn’t that right?”

A guy laughs behind the camera and the screen pans over to a shirtless Royer. “Babe, you’re trashed.”

Screen Reagan strolls over to the camera and shoves her face right up close. “Mark my words. When I get to Wittmore, I’m bringing that bitch, Andrea, down. I’m getting into GE, working my way to the top and showing the world exactly how fake and phony she is.”

The video stops and Janelle draws her arm back, but not before I see that it has thousands of shares. My mind spins and my stomach lurches. How? How did this happen? I did everything—

“Fucking asshole,” I mutter.

“Holy shit, girl,” Janelle says. I finally look over at her and her expression is one of concern and pity.

I grab the edge of the bed and lift myself off the floor.

“That motherfucking asshole. He promised me.”

“Promised you what? Who? Royer?”

I shake my head, rage and fear and humiliation washing over me. “I’ll be back,” I say, heading toward the door.

“Where are you going?” she slides off the bed. It may be the first time she’s moved all day.

I wrench open the door. “Bid Day.”

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By the time I get to The Green an eerie calm has washed over me. I'm possibly having an out-of-body experience.

I'm used to people watching me. It's one of the side-effects of being popular. There are eyes following me all the time. They're looking at my clothes, my jewelry, my shoes, my boyfriend, my everything.

Today their eyes aren't on me as much as their phones. The video has gone viral, spreading across social media like wildfire, jumping from one device to the other, like a chain reaction. No matter what the result is the same: I'm done.

The field is decked out in balloons and lights. Each sorority is represented, with members holding large cut out Greek letters. In just a few minutes, the recruits will be brought in, lined up and given a ticket to their future.

Not me. I'm no longer one of those girls.

I know there's no coming back from this, which is why I kick my shoes off halfway to The Green and continue on barefoot. It's also why, when I see him sitting on a brick wall on the edge of the grass, I don't hesitate to slap Miller Hansen's pretty face the instant I see him.

"Jesus Christ!" he shouts, hand moving to where his lip split from the force. The only reason the hit landed is that I took him off guard. I rear back to do it again and he stops me mid-air, hand wrapping around my forearm. "Do it again and things will get much worse."

His voice is low. Scary, but also tinged with the slightest amusement.

“How could you?” I whisper, completely ignoring the crowd of recruits lining up to get their bids. I can’t even process the balloons and music and excitement. Miller and the other frat boys are away from the field, poised to watch the ceremony. “You promised.”

“It’s not my fault you’re a naïve little girl.” His tongue darts out, licking the blood off his bottom lip. Good. I broke the skin. “This is how the game is played.”

Rage breaks through the remains of my self-control and I lunge at him, grabbing at his shirt. He laughs and pushes me off, but my nails sink into his skin. Irritation flickers in his eyes and, for a minute, I think he may hit me. I want him to. I want to feel something other than this terrible rejection.

Two hands cinch around my waist and drag me off Miller, still kicking and clawing. “Jesus Christ, Reagan, what the fuck are you doing?”

Royer.

My muscles relax and I sink into him, seeking his warmth, comfort. His body stiffens, and he spins me around. His expression is hard, his eyes dark. “Royer. I’m—”

“Blacklisted.”

“What?” A giggle comes from my left and for the first time I glance around. A crowd of people surround us, phones lifted and recording. “I’m sorry. I never wanted—Miller promised—”

“Don’t bring Miller into this,” he says, pushing his hair out of his eyes. “No more than you already have.”

My heart pounds and I look over his shoulder at Miller, who's wiping his mouth with the hem of his shirt. "Yeah, I know." He smirks over at his friend. "I mean, I'm the one that told him to do it."

"You what?" Confusion swirls in my mind. The bribes. The blowjob. The graduation party. I hold out my hands to steady myself. "What are you saying?"

He grabs my arm and drags me away from the guys watching us like a tennis match. He shoots them all a look of warning and pulls me behind a row of square hedges. "It's nothing personal, Reagan. Every year we pick an overconfident freshman and fuck with them."

"Then we blacklist them." I turn to see Andrea come around the corner, dressed in her Greek letters, all ready for Bid Night. She eases up to Royer, who slides his arm around her tiny waist and kisses her on the cheek. She smiles at me. "You were the perfect choice. So willing to do anything to get in. God, I've never seen someone so desperate in my whole life."

I stare between them, trying to understand. "W-w-why?"

Royer shrugs. "Because we can."

Andrea steps away from my boyfriend and stands in front of me. "You thought you could challenge me? Take me down? You're a stupid, naïve little girl who thinks she can play with the big kids." She reaches out and snatches off the pearl necklace. "Who do you think told him to buy this for you?" She laughs. "You needed to believe he cared."

My eyes dart to his and he shrugs.

I look back at Andrea, and she's pulled up her shirt, revealing her tits. She grabs them

with both hands. “Oh yeah, these tits are real, and your boyfriend loves them.”

She smiles back at Royer, whose eyes dart down to her bare breasts and grins. “She’s right. I like to lick and suck and fuck them.”

My hand covers my mouth. I may puke, but I have to ask. “So you’re together? And we’re...”

“Nothing,” he replies. “A prank. Which maybe I’d feel bad about, except you sucked my best friend’s cock today in the pantry.”

“He made me—”

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He cuts me off with a smirk. “Don’t embarrass yourself any more than you already have, Reagan. Go back to the dorm, pack your bags, and get the fuck out of Wittmore.”

Andrea grins at me and links her fingers with Royer’s before they turn away and walk back to The Green. I’m still standing there, in shock, when the squeals and screeches of Bid Night begin, hammering in the fact that I’m a fool.

I’m alone.

But worst of all?

I’ve been blacklisted.

3

Miller

The Zeta Sig house is already thrumming with life when I get back from Bid Night. We’d stayed to watch the girls open their envelopes. The drama is thick—tears everywhere. Some happy, some sad. Not everyone gets their first choice, but even those girls aren’t like Reagan. They’re accepted somewhere. She’s a blacked-out name. A warning to mouthy girls who were popular in high school and haven’t realized the rules changed the second they stepped onto Wittmore’s campus.

It’s petty and dumb, but it’s just part of this whole system. A system where I hold a place at the top.

“Miller,” I pause and see Shannon... or is it Shayla? The ends of her long platinum hair curl against the swell of her cleavage. She frowns at my lip and strokes my cheek. “What happened to you?”

I touch the swollen skin, sore from Reagan splitting it. “Eh, it’s nothing. Bid Day can get a little crazy. Emotions get high.”

She laughs. “Right? That girl... so fucking dumb to let a video exist like that.”

“Stupid as fuck,” I agree, wincing when I talk. God, Reagan nailed me. She’s stronger than she looks. If I’d known, I would’ve pushed her a little harder earlier today in the pantry.

“Want me to get some ice for that?” the girl in front of me asks. Her tits are pressed against my arm and her lips turned down in a pout. “Make it feel better?”

“I would, but duty calls. We’ve got a meeting.”

“Now?” She looks skeptical. I don’t care. This girl, Sharon, or whatever her name is, is one of dozens. After today, my energy is running high. It’s not a surprise. I prefer a girl that needs a little breaking down, but once I’ve had a taste, Sorority Susie just isn’t going to cut it.

“Frat rush starts tomorrow. You know how it is for officers.” She nods in understanding. That’s the world these girls get. Parties and pledges. I squeeze her hip. “I’ll catch up with you later, okay?”

Her expression brightens. “Okay.”

I cut through the room, past the underclassmen that don’t have the obligations that I do and step into the private room in the back of the house. Knox, our secretary, is

already there bent over, rummaging through the mini fridge. It's a comical sight. Knox is six-four, with shoulders as wide as a brick wall. He glances up when I enter, eyes assessing my swollen lip.

"Looks like you need something cold on that mouth."

I catch the beer with one hand and press the cool metal against the swollen skin. "Thanks."

"I saw the video. That girl had no idea, did she?"

"Not a fucking clue. She fell for it all, hook, line, and sinker." The door opens, letting the roar of music to bounce into the room. Royer steps into the room.

"Your girl packs a punch," I tell him. "Stings like a motherfucker."

"She's not my girl," he says, closing the door behind him. "And you can't say you didn't have it coming."

"Hey, you're the one that gave me free rein to fuck with her."

"And you're the one that always goes a step too far."

I shrug and press the can against my bottom lip. "No regrets. It was my last chance to feel that pretty mouth wrapped around my cock. Now that she's blacklisted, well, it doesn't matter how good she gives head. She's through."

It's too bad. I'd suspected Reagan would be good on her knees. Her lips are thick, puffy, and that hint of desperation... it never left her eyes. Just thinking about how scared she looked, how pathetic, makes me shift on the couch. Royer passes me and grabs the beer out of my hand.

“Hey! I was using that.”

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He pops the top and takes a long drink. “Yeah, that’s to get the taste of your jizz out of my mouth.” I bark out a laugh. He scowls. “Jesus, you could have given me a warning.”

“What’s the fun in that?” I laugh. “I can’t believe you never had her suck you off.”

He runs his hand through his hair. “Andrea made the ground rules. No blow jobs, no anal, no eating pussy.”

“But sex was okay?” Knox asks.

“Missionary only—she felt like it wouldn’t be believable if we didn’t fuck.”

Knox grins and looks over at me. “You two are diabolical.”

Royer drops into the seat across from mine and opens his phone. “Shit, this thing went crazy. Not just local, but viral.”

“Wittmore rush is a big deal,” Knox says, opening a can of seltzer. He’s not drinking, which isn’t unusual. He’s on the varsity rowing team and treats his body like a temple. “My little sister has been talking about it for weeks, and she’s still in high school. There are entire accounts and pages set up on social media to monitor it.”

“Good,” Royer says, resting his head on the back of the couch. “God, she was a naïve little bitch.”

“Didn’t keep you from popping her cherry.”

“I told you, Andrea wanted her hooked in entirely. Totally blindsided.”

I gently touch my split lip. “Mission accomplished.”

“You guys are playing with fire,” Knox says, mostly looking at Royer. “You and Andrea are going to push this too far and it’ll blow back on you—”

“Oh, it’s going to blow back on all of us,” I chime in, crossing the room to get another beer out of the mini-fridge. “The Chancellor is riding our asses and you and your little bitch just keep playing games.”

“It’s tradition,” Royer says, as though that wipes away all sins. In his mind, it probably does. “The Chancellor is under control. Rush is going to be epic. The shit we have lined up for initiation... people will talk about this for years.”

Knox and I share a look. The shit Royer has lined up; that’s what got us under investigation last year. Do I care? No. Not really. I’ve got a job at my father’s company regardless, but I’m here to party and bury myself in sorority pussy. I’m not here for lawsuits and jail time. Knox has the Olympic trials to worry about.

But we knew what we were getting into when we signed up. Hell, we went through it, and it was hell, but Royer’s right. It’s tradition. The strong survive. The weak fail.

In the end, we find our brothers, our true family, and what happened today was just the first warning shot.

4

Reagan

“No, Mom, I can’t stay.” I scan the room, looking for anything that can go in the

suitcase. I spot a tank top on the back of the bathroom door and toss it in with the rest.

“Reagan, I know it’s a stressful week, but you can’t just leave school.”

My mother is trying her best to sound rational and calm about the blacklisting, but I know better. She’s crushed. Probably as much, if not more, than I am. She’s a GE legacy, just like her sister, mother, and grandmother.

“I can leave, and I will.” I leave no room for discussion. “I’ll just take the semester off. Get a job or something.”

“I just don’t understand what happened. Everything was going so well.”

My mother isn’t on social media. She hasn’t seen the video—thank God. She’d never forgive me for doing something so foolish. I just told her that things went wrong. That the girls are tougher this year. They’re looking for something different.

“Jealous,” she says, going back to her old standby. “They’re just jealous. It happened in my year, too. Some girls are just too intimidating. They probably saw your relationship with Royer and your blossoming friendship with Andrea and thought it was too powerful.”

She launches into a story about some girl who did something her year and blahblah. It doesn’t matter, there are a few firm rules and trashing the president of the sorority while obviously drunk is breaking them. I continue to pack my things, ignoring the side glances from Janelle across the room. “Look mom,” I say, interrupting her, “I need to go get my laundry and there’s no service in the dorm basement.”

“Okay, honey. I’ll support your decision. Maybe a fresh start is best. You could enroll at the University in the spring and—”

“Gotta go, byeee.” I hang up and toss my phone on the bed. “God, my mother has no clue what a clusterfuck this is. There is no going to another school. Blacklisted is blacklisted. It doesn’t just apply here.”

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“Well, if you ask me, you dodged a bullet.”

I narrow my eyes at her. “I didn’t ask you.” She shrugs and I grab an empty laundry basket. At the door, I pause. “For what it’s worth, I’m sorry that all of this screws up your life, too. I know you’ll have to get used to another roommate and deal with all that.” I reach for the pearl necklace, to worry it between my fingers, but there’s nothing there. Andrea snatched it off last night. “I just can’t stay here.”

I don’t wait for her reply. Janelle doesn’t care that I got blacklisted. She doesn’t even really get the severity of it, but I’m not spending the next four years walking around this campus with everyone thinking I’m a reject.

I’m half willing to forget my clothes down in the laundry room and leave without them, but my favorite blanket is in there. After the last twenty-four shitty hours, I’m not leaving without it.

There’s little risk anyone will notice me as I take the stairs down to the basement. Anyone that matters is out partying and celebrating their bids. Everyone else can go fuck themselves. The machines hum as I enter the room, dozens of washers and dryers working at once. I find the one with my belongings and rest the basket under the door, opening it as someone walks into the room. Hopefully, if I don’t make eye-contact, they won’t know it’s me. I won’t have to see the judgement and amusement in their eyes. I can get out of here and leave Wittmore behind me for good.

I fill the basket and lift it off the ground. From the door, I hear, “I think you dropped this.”

Fuck. I consider walking out completely but pause and turn. There's a guy standing in the middle of the room holding a sock. The first thing I notice is his glasses, dark square frames highlighting the angularness of his face. Then his height—he's tall, with wavy, disheveled, dark hair. Lanky, although his T-shirt stretches across broad shoulders. The main thing that catches my attention is the fact he's too old to be down in the freshman dorm laundry room.

He lifts the sock. "Yours?"

"Yeah. Must have been bundled in my blanket." He balls it up and tosses it in the basket. "Thanks."

"No problem." He rocks back on his heels, and I take a step toward the door. "Wait."

I sigh. "What?"

"Can we talk?"

"Sorry, I'm not into laundry room creepers."

His lip quirks. "I'm not a creeper."

"No? You just make it a habit to troll around basements?" I settle the basket on my hip. "I'm not sure how old you are, but it's too old for the freshman dorm."

"I'm just..." he starts, eyes darting over my shoulder toward the door, "look, I'm here to talk to you, Reagan."

He knows my name. Well, who doesn't? The whole goddamn world knows who Reagan Lake is now that the video has gone viral.

I let my eyes skim over him. Even under the best of circumstances, this guy is not my type. “There can’t be anything you and I have to talk about.”

“Still a bitch, even after being taken down a notch.” He laughs darkly and shakes his head. “I knew this was a bad idea.”

I drop the basket and cross over to him. He towers over me, but I pretend he’s not intimidating. He’s a nerd. Some lame guy that lurks around freshman laundry rooms hitting on girls. “Since you know my name, you also know this has been a shitty week. I don’t know who you are or what you want, but you need to leave me the fuck alone.”

His eyebrow quirks. “Feisty. Maybe I wasn’t wrong.”

I throw up my hands. “Wrong about what?”

His eyes, dark like his hair, bore into mine. The flash of seriousness makes me pause, but it’s nothing like what he says next. “Getting you to take down the Zeta Sigmas.”

“You’re crazy.”

I believe it. He is. This guy, Grayson Hart, with his glasses and nerdy T-shirt, is completely deranged.

“I know they think they are just following tradition, but the Zeta Sig’s have gone somewhere dangerous with their hazing,” he says, taking a sip of his black coffee. After dropping the bomb on me in the laundry room, Grayson asked me to meet him at the Waffle Hut across town. I don’t know if it’s my exhaustion or bitterness or what that made me agree, but here we are. “Someone died last year, and they still won’t stop.”

“That was an accident,” I say, repeating what I’ve heard from Royer. “That kid had undisclosed asthma. Zeta Sig couldn’t have known that.”

The look he gives me is filled with pity—like he thinks it’s sad that I’m so dumb. “They forced Brandon Wheeler on a fifteen-mile hike with no water, no food, and zero supplies. He died on the trail, and no one found him for another twenty-four hours—after his roommate reported he didn’t come home.”

I repeat what I’ve heard Royer say. “Three other pledges passed out but still made it. There’s always a risk.”

“That’s only the one infraction people heard about. There are dozens of other violations to the hazing rules at Wittmore.” His nose wrinkles. “Things too disturbing to speak of.”

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I tear the piece of paper securing the napkin around the silverware. “Well, whatever you want from me, it doesn’t matter. I’m withdrawing from school. I was in the middle of packing when you came creeping into the laundry room.”

He ignores the jab, leaning back against the shiny red booth. “You don’t want to see these people go down—even after what they did to you?”

“They didn’t do anything. I did it to myself. I opened my big mouth.” In more ways than one. “I knew the rules and broke them.”

“You were set up.” I focus on his fingers tapping the sides of his coffee mug, trying to blink back tears. “These people are no longer about brother and sisterhood. They’re about power and fucking with lives.”

I unspool my silverware, placing each one on top of the napkin. “Why do you know so much about it?”

“I work for the Greek council, and,” he sighs, running his hand through his hair. “I was one of them.”

My eyes dart up. “You were a Zeta Sig?”

“Yep.”

“Then why are you trying to destroy them?” Even after the hurt and betrayal, I still have feelings for Royer. He must have done this for a reason. Maybe Andrea has dirt on him, too? Even though it sounds crazy, I don’t know if I can hurt him. But

Andrea... that bitch can die in a fire.

“People like Royer and Miller are trying to destroy it themselves. The history and traditions mean nothing if the charter is revoked, and they lock the doors. Girls like Andrea are nothing but bullies, and trust me, people notice. All those connections they want mean nothing from a banned member or worse, from a jail cell. They won’t come out of this unscathed.”

“I’m blacklisted,” I tell him, picking up the knife and spinning it on the dull tip. “I can’t get near these people. No parties, no second chances. I have less than zero power.”

“What if I told you there was a way in—a way to change everything—to get these groups back on track.”

“You don’t want to shut them down?” I ask.

He shakes his head, which makes his glasses slip down his nose. He pushes them back. “This is about saving the system, not breaking it. I want to get rid of the bad elements and start fresh.”

I stare at the knife, spinning it around and around. Twenty-four hours ago, I would have laughed in his face. I wanted so badly to be a part of this world, but that girl is gone. Shamed and humiliated. If I close my eyes, I can still taste Miller on my tongue and feel his sticky warmth on the back of my throat.

So yeah, I want to take down this system, but I also can’t help but wonder if I helped this guy then maybe I can help Royer too. If I can’t get him back, at least I can save him from snakes like Miller and Andrea.

Maybe, if I do this thing, Grayson can help me get the blacklist removed from my

record and I can have my life back.

I look up from the knife and say, “Tell me what I have to do.”

5

Reagan

Resignation is the excuse I give to Janelle and my mother when I change my mind and don't leave as planned. My roommate seems unbothered, barely looking up from her laptop. My mother just sounds like she's had too many glasses of wine.

The truth is that Grayson told me to stay put and that he'd contact me in the morning. I didn't sleep, tossing and turning, replaying every bad mistake and decision I've made in my lifetime. Meeting Royer that night at the party. Was all of it fake? Everything? The hardest one to reconcile is the first time we had sex. It was my first time, and Royer... he did everything to make it perfect.

Can someone fake that?

Buzz

I grab the phone, making sure it didn't wake Janelle, and read the message: Meet me in room 807, Corey Hall

There's no name with the text, but I can't imagine who else would be up at 8 AM on a Saturday. I know Grayson said he was in Zeta Sig, but I'm not getting that vibe. He's too skinny and well, nerdy, and he's trying to take down the frat.

His full name is Grayson Pierce. He graduated from Wittmore three years ago and started working for the Greek Council. His job, he told me, is to help ensure the

fraternities are adhering to University policy as well as the national policies set up by the Greek system.

Do I trust him? I don't know.

Do I have a choice? I told him I did, but now I'm not so sure. I guess I need to hear him out.

At least getting to the location isn't a challenge. I live in Corey Hall but on the third floor. I quietly slide out of bed, pulling a big Wittmore sweatshirt over my head and sliding my shoes on. Knowing I look like a wreck, I avoid looking at myself in the mirror and carefully open and shut the door as gently as possible.

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Not wanting to run into anyone, I take the stairs, climbing the five flights to the top floor. It's immediately obvious that the section of dorm I'm in is for male residents. There's the ever-present stench of sweat and body spray. The dorms are co-ed, but still separated by a hallway. I'm still breathing hard when I knock on the dorm door. It opens a moment later and Grayson stands just inside.

"That was fast."

"I was up." I step into the room and take a deep breath. "Jesus, couldn't find a room a few floors down?"

"No, actually." He shuts the door, frowning in concern. "Are you okay?"

"I took the stairs, and my asthma kicked in. I'll be fine." I look around and realize the dorm room is vacant. Other than a suitcase on the bed, there's nothing but the basic furniture every room comes with. "This your place?"

"No, actually," he says, "this is your place."

"What are you talking about?"

He picks up a folder off the desk and opens it. "Starting today, Reagan Lake is no longer a student at the university."

"But I told my mom I was staying."

"You are staying... just with a different identity."

Nothing this guy is saying makes sense. Maybe the glasses just make him look smart.
“What are you talking about?”

He gestures for me to sit in the desk chair. Reluctantly, I do. He holds up the folder and says, “I need you to have an open mind.”

“The fact I’m in this room with you right now proves I’m willing to be pretty open-minded, Grayson.”

“Right.” He gives me a tight smile. “To bring down the Zeta Sig’s we need someone on the inside.”

“Right. That’s you.”

“No,” he replies, “that’s you.”

“We’ve been over this. I can’t get within a hundred yards of fraternity row.”

“Reagan Lake can’t but, maybe this person can.” He hands me the folder. I open it up and look at the photo of a man—a young man, close to my age with familiar ash blonde hair and blue eyes.

“Why are you giving me this?” I ask, holding up the photograph.

“Because I did some research, and you have a stepbrother that is only a year older than you.”

I wave the photo in his face. “Yeah, Theodore. This is who you want to infiltrate the system?” I laugh. “Good luck with that. He’s an idiot. A college drop out that doesn’t know the difference between a bong and a chemistry beaker—hence the failing out. He’s not even in the country. He went to Spain six months ago to ‘find himself.’”

I roll my eyes and use finger quotes. Jesus.

“I don’t want your stepbrother to be our inside man. I want you to become Theodore and be our inside man.”

I gape. “Me? We don’t even look that much alike. We’re step-siblings. Not half.”

He snags the photo and holds it up to my face. “There’s more similarity there than you’d think.”

“This is ridiculous.”

“Actually, it’s not. It’s perfect.” He sits on the plastic covered mattress. “Theo is the perfect candidate for Zeta Sig. Good-looking, high-test scores, loves to party. He’s not in school right now, making it easy to use his identity for the next few weeks.”

“You’re right. He probably would make the perfect Zeta Sig, but there’s still a huge issue. I’m not a boy.” I tug at my hair and point to my boobs. “100% female.”

He shifts and the plastic crinkles underneath his weight. “We need you to infiltrate the Zeta Sig’s, Reagan, by going undercover.” His eyes hold mine. Dark and intent. “I’ve already secured you a spot through the first round, but we need someone to go through the initiation process. To document everything leading up to the final night.”

“All of that is top secret,” I argue. Sharing fraternity or sorority initiation secrets is unforgivable.

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“I’m already a Zeta Sig, Reagan. I know all of the secrets. What I really need is to know what else they are doing. What hazing have they implemented? How much drinking and what kind of drugs?” He pauses. “That means you’ve got to assume the role of Theodore Hart, by changing your hair and clothes,” his eyes drop, “your tits. They have to go. Or at least, be hidden.”

My arms cross over my chest defensively.

“Thankfully,” he continues, “you’re tall and athletic and not super small, like a lot of girls. That will make it easier.”

“Did you just call me fat?”

He stares at me but doesn’t respond. “You’ll move into this room and until this is over, you’ll present yourself as male at all times.”

“No way.” I cross my arms over my chest and shake my head. “I didn’t think this through. I was too distraught yesterday, and you failed to mention a sex change.”

I mean, how does this fix my problems? Save my reputation? Do anything other than make me look like more of a fool?

“Fine.” He shrugs like it doesn’t matter, but I see the disappointment in his eye. “I guess I approached the wrong person.”

He takes the folder from me, and I stand there, feeling a strange, overwhelming sense of loss and confusion. Yesterday my world imploded, but this morning I had a reason

to get up—somewhere to go—and something to do, even if that thing was plotting revenge.

Grayson looks up. “What’s wrong?”

“I just...” I stare at the Theo’s photo. We aren’t close. Our parents got married when we he was a junior in high school and I was a sophomore. He lived with his mom and barely came around. Royer never met him, but I’ve mentioned him.

Stupid Royer. My heart aches when I think about him and that urge to save him is still bubbling around the pain and humiliation. I can make sure he doesn’t get in more trouble and maybe he’ll thank me. And, more than anything, I’ll bring Andrea and Miller down. “I’ll do it.”

His eyebrow raises. “You sure?”

“No.” I chuckle darkly. “God no, I’m not, but I’ll try.”

“Awesome.” He approaches the suitcase and unzips the sides. “I brought you a starter set of everything you’ll need. The council will pay for your expenses—stuff to outfit the room. Inside is a stack of men’s clothing and a few scented toiletries.

I flip through the clothes. “Did you pick these out?”

“Yeah, why?”

“They’re not going to work.” I frown down at a T-shirt with a cartoon character on the front. “I need the type of clothes that a Zeta Sigma would wear.”

“I’m a Zeta Sigma,” he says defensively, crossing his arms over his chest. “I don’t see anything wrong.”

I can't help but notice the surprisingly hard curve of his biceps. I drag my eyes away. "Yeah, well, Royer's in charge now and I know what he's looking for—and this won't cut it. He's an entitled snob. Kind of like Theo, honestly. He'd never be caught in anything like this, either. If you want me to make it to the initiation, you're going to have to give me control over all of this." I catch a glimpse of myself in the mirror over the dresser. Even messy and unwashed, it hurts to think about losing my hair. God, my beautiful, perfect, amazing hair. "If that video hadn't come out, if Andrea wasn't fucking my boyfriend and I wasn't some kind of pawn for them to toy with, I would have been the queen of the GE's for the next four years. I know what I'm doing, Grayson, even when it's something stupid."

Which is why this hurts so much. I knew that video was a mistake, but I trusted the wrong people.

Which may be why this arrangement makes me feel uneasy. I don't know this guy. I just have to trust that he's legit.

But seriously, what the hell do I have to lose?

He pulls his wallet out of his back pocket. A moment later, a shiny gold credit card is in my hands. "Use it wisely," he says. "You have two weeks to bring me everything I need to bring these bastards down."

"Got it," I say, ignoring the dull feeling of dread in the pit of my stomach. I've never been one to take a risk, but everyone said college would be a challenge. I just had no idea it would be this.

Grayson gives me three days.

To move out.

To buy a frat-boy appropriate wardrobe.

To cut and dye my hair.

I won't pretend it didn't physically hurt to cut my hair. Watching the layers of platinum blonde pile up on the floor of the salon's floor was like taking the point of the scissors in my soul. I'd worked so hard to perfect it. It was part of my identity. Now it's garbage in a landfill.

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The style is short, cut above my ears, and trimmed to the nape. The front is longer—surprisingly curlier than I expected. All that weight had been holding it down. Now it's a top-notch frat swoop that suits my feminine features.

Grayson gawked at me for a full minute when I let him into my dorm that morning. The good thing about living on a hall with all guys is that they notice nothing and most barely get moving before noon.

“Stop staring at me.” I grab his arm and pull him in the room. “And don't lurk out there like some freak creeper.”

He rolls his eyes. “I'm not staring. I just... you look so different.”

“Don't remind me.” I'm not wearing makeup and my boobs are smashed down with a compression tank top, the kind runners wear for races. My outfit is decidedly frat bro; a pink button down and baggy khaki pants. Footwear is a depressing pair of low top Chuck Taylor's.

“The meeting is at four. It's a formality, really. All your paperwork is lined up. You're a last-minute transfer, which is why you missed phase one of rush. The letter Royer received from the Council is enough to get you an invitation.”

I don't know exactly who on the council sent the letter, but apparently, they're some God-like figure in Zeta Sigma. One word and protocol is completely forgotten. Theodore Hart is approved for initiation.

Well, after I meet with the officers.

“There’s no way I’m getting past them. They’re totally going to catch me.”

Grayson’s eyes sweep over me, landing on my legs. “Not if you sit like that, you won’t.”

I look down. “What’s the problem?” I ask, forcing myself not to ask what’s his problem.

“You’re crossing your legs like a woman.” He pushes my top leg off the other. “Spread them out a little.”

“You mean I need to manspread.”

He laughs. “Yep. Own that chair and all the space around it.”

I let my legs droop apart, taking up more room. “Okay, what else?”

The list is extensive. Apparently, even dressed as a dude, I have too many tells—I’m too feminine from the way I carry myself, the way I keep trying to touch my phantom hair is “girly” and I need to exude more confidence. We practice the way I walk and stand and how to force a lower octave to my voice. By the time I’m standing inside the front room at the Zeta Sigma house hours later, I’m exhausted, confused, and just hope I don’t sweat through my shirt.

There is no way I’m fooling these guys; two of whom I’ve been intimate with. This is a bad, stupid, insane idea. I’m staring at a portrait of some old guy—the founder of the fraternity or something, trying to figure out how to bail, when I hear, “You must be Theo.”

Royer’s voice sends a multitude of emotions through me. Anger, sadness, fear. The flickering memories of the times we’d all hung out together, me, him, Andrea, and

Miller, and realizing how they'd been playing a game all along. I take a deep breath and focus on the one thing I want the most: revenge.

I turn and raise my hand to tuck my nonexistent hair behind my ear, but I stop, dropping my arm to my side. Words lodge in my throat and I just nod, trying not to notice the irony of us wearing nearly matching clothes.

"I'm Royer." He offers his hand. I stare at it and blink for a moment before thrusting out my own. "President of Zeta Sigma."

"Theo Hart," I push out, keeping my voice under control. Or trying to. If he notices the size of my hand or the fact that it's petite, I can't tell. But if I've learned one thing about Royer in the past few days, it's that he's a very capable liar. "Thanks for meeting with me."

"I'll admit it's unconventional to allow someone to roll in after open recruiting, but your references are top-notch."

He ushers me to the small sitting room I'd been spying on him in just days before. My eyes flick to the butler's pantry, but the door is open, assuring that no one is hiding inside. I force myself to look at the other two men in the room, Miller and Knox, although I skirt over Miller as quickly as possible. I'm afraid that if I look him in the eye, I'll break and fling myself across the room to strangle him. He possibly fooled me more than anyone. Holding the video over my head for months, knowing it made no difference. He's the one that had me on my knees, lying and playing me for the fool. I swallow back the bitter taste of bile on my tongue.

"Theo," Royer says, "This is Miller Hansen our VP and Knox Bradbury our secretary."

I don't know Knox well, but I'm aware that he's on the varsity rowing team and a

contender for the Olympics. I know Royer respects him, but that he has to split his duties with training and the frat. He doesn't stand, thankfully, or it would be even more obvious how small I am. He's over six feet with broad shoulders and an unnatural wingspan. I do know that I've never seen him with the same girl twice.

"Nice to meet you," he says, giving me a friendly smile.

"Hey man," Miller says, lifting his chin in a bro-hello. At least I don't have to shake his hand. My palms are drenched.

"Theo enrolled late and normally would have to wait until the spring to go through rush, but I received a letter from the Council suggesting we allow him in for the initiation phase." Royer gestures for me to take the seat across from him. Days ago, in that same chair, I was perched in his lap kissing him. I sit on the edge, then mentally scold myself, sliding back and letting my knees fall awkwardly to the side. "What makes you think you want to be part of this chapter of Zeta Sig?"

"I've uh..." I swallow and run my hands down my thighs. I glance at Miller and see a small smirk toying at his lips as I fumble over my words. Asshole. "Sorry, it's been a long week. I've heard a lot about your chapter. The dedication to tradition and legacy is something I'm interested in. Too many of these frats aren't interested in having an elite membership." I smile. "Oh, and I hear the parties are epic."

"I see your father and grandfather were both Zeta Sigma's," Knox says, looking over the file Grayson carefully cultivated for me. He gave me some of the buzzwords and phrases to use, but I know Royer. I know what's important to him.

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“They were. At Hawthorne College. Which is where I was planning on going until I changed my mind at the last minute.” I force myself to look into each of their eyes. “I’d heard they’d watered down their recruitment system—pretty much letting anyone in. I knew the Wittmore chapter had higher standards.”

Miller leans forward and presses his palms together. His blue eyes sweep over my face, pressing beneath my skin, triggering every nerve to stand on end. I force myself not to shift or move when his gaze drops to my mouth for a long, uncomfortable beat. Has he recognized me? Figured it out? My heart bangs against my ribcage. “We were accused of a hazing incident last year—almost got kicked off campus. This year we are under tight scrutiny. One false move and we’re done.”

The announcement is a challenge—a test. These guys don’t want to change anything about their initiation process. They want members that will keep their mouths shut. People who respect tradition as much as they do.

“Then I guess Zeta Sig will have to make sure everything is locked tight, right?”

Knox laughs first, a deep rumble in his chest, and Miller relaxes enough to settle back in his chair.

“I’m willing to give you a shot,” Knox says, resting his biceps on the arms of the chair. “But once you walk through these metaphorical doors, you know there’s no going back, right?”

“It doesn’t matter how many letters you have or who you know. If you go through initiation, you’re like every other pledge.” Royer watches me closely. “We don’t play

favorites.”

It’s all I’ve ever wanted, just flipped to the male side of things. I want that connection, that created family, the bonds, and secrets that we carry to our grave. I just wanted it with women who shared eyeshadow and shoes. If I can’t have it, then they don’t deserve it either.

“Right,” I reply. “I’m ready for whatever you have to throw at me.”

The three guys share a look and Royer says, “How about this? There’s a party tonight at ten. It’s basically the kick-off to celebrate initiation week. If you get through the night, you can continue on.”

The offer sends a chill down my spine, but he’s right. If I can’t make it through this without being discovered or just not being able to handle it, I should be cut.

“Deal.”

Royer reaches out and again, we shake hands. I can’t help but feel the spark of energy that zaps up my arm—I won’t pretend I don’t still have feelings for him. Mingled with the hurt and anger in my aching heart.

“See you tonight,” Miller says, standing and slapping his hand on my shoulder. The emotions I feel are the opposite of my ex; disgust and revulsion. He’s nothing but a predator hunting the weak. I’m going to enjoy bringing this bastard down.

6

Reagan

I could get used to being a man. Getting ready for the party is a breeze. Jeans, shirt,

shoes, a little product in my hair. It's the fastest I've ever been ready for any event—the most comfortable, too.

I practice holding my posture on the elevator ride down from my room. Loose hips, pushed back shoulders (but not too much because I can only keep my boobs so flat.) The car stops at the third floor. I hook my thumbs in the belt loops of my jeans as the door slides open in an attempt to look cool.

I'm not expecting my former roommate Janelle on the other side. Predictably, she's focused on her phone—clueless that anyone else is in the elevator with her. That doesn't stop the sheen of sweat from rising on the back of my neck. At the bottom floor, the doors slide open, and I let her exit first. Even though it's the longer route, I go the opposite direction.

Zeta Sig isn't the only house on the Row having a party. Every house is lit up as I walk past, the crowds big enough that I get lost among the other students. Most are females, walking around on shaky legs and six-inch heels. I stare as one girl helps her drunk friend up the steps. Her sparkly skirt barely covers her crotch.

“Bet she's not wearing underwear.” I spin and see Knox, or rather his chest, since he's ridiculously tall. He's wearing a Wittmore track suit jacket zipped halfway up his torso, rowing logo stitched over his heart. His chest is bare underneath. It takes me a moment to drag my eyes away from the smooth, rippled muscles to see him gesture to the girl with his party cup. “You could bend her over the couch and fuck her quick without even getting undressed.” His eyebrow quirks. “Don't tell me you weren't thinking about it.”

“I uh...” I was actually thinking that I have a similar skirt and I wish I was wearing it instead of these baggy jeans. “Yeah, she's hot.”

“That's Brianna. She's a junior and Zeta Sig frat rat.”

“Frat rat?”

“You know, they hang around all the time, act like we’re all besties, but really, she’s just the frat bike.” I raise an eyebrow and he quirks his lips in the kind of grin that makes girls crazy. “You know, anyone can take a ride.”

“Ah, okay, right. That girl.”

“Oh yeah. The best way to get in her pants is neg her a little. She can’t resist it.”

I stare at the girl. Someone pushed a cup in her hands and she’s leaning on a guy. His hand curls possessively around her waist, rubbing little circles into her skin.

“Back handed compliments are like catnip to a girl like Brianna. Little shit that makes her feel bad and forces her into wanting your approval. Those girls will do pretty much anything you ask.”

Jesus.

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“Oh here.” He reaches into a box by the front door and tosses me a button. It’s white with word PLEDGE written in black ink. Underneath are the Greek Zeta Sig letters. “From now on, you have to wear that all the time.”

I push the pin through the fabric of my shirt. “All the time?”

“Morning, noon, and night. In the shower, pin it to your dick. Although that may make it a little hard to jerk off.” He winces, then grins again, but I get no implication that he’s joking. “Just don’t get caught without it, or the consequences will be fierce.”

“Thanks.” I step into the foyer, looking for some distance from Knox - or any of the officers. Getting past Knox isn’t my biggest concern. I only met him a few times since he’s so busy with rowing but now that I’m past the front door, my job is to blend in. It’s not hard with so many people. No, with so many drunk people. It’s like a completely different place than when I was here earlier, but it’s not my first party at the house. Royer brought me to a few in the spring. It’s where I first met Andrea. I felt so important and honored to be the high school girl invited to a college party. Now I realize all of that was a just part of the long-con.

I pass through the hall and a member hands me a drink. “Drink up,” he says with a grin. “Initiation starts tomorrow. Enjoy yourself.”

The first sip tastes like medicine, but I drink anyway. Not to enjoy myself, but to calm my nerves. What Royer would do to me if he found out... I wouldn’t just have to leave the school; I’d have to leave the country. The whole scenario freaks me out and I grab two Jell-O shots off a passing tray.

I suck down one and pretend like I fit in, causally leaning against the wall alone. My eyes sweep the room, searching, I know, for Royer. Instead, they lock with a pair of watchful eyes by the fireplace.

Miller.

My stomach rolls, and he lifts his chin in greeting. I return it with a tight smile and grab two more shots from a passing tray. I wonder which one of these girls he plans on assaulting tonight?

“Can I have one of those?”

I turn and see the girl from before, Brianna. Her cheeks are flushed, and she holds herself by propping her bare shoulder against the wall. Her skirt hikes up her thigh. “Sure.” Although don’t think she needs it.

Brianna holds the tiny cup to her mouth and flicks out her tongue, scooping out the yellow gelatin. She swallows it down and grins. “The Zeta Sigs have the best shots.” She narrows her eyes and pokes the button on my chest with her pointed, manicured nail. A small diamond is embedded in the tip. “I didn’t see you around during recruitment.”

“I skipped that part.” I swallow my shot. “Got here late. They’re letting me initiate, anyway.”

She snorts. “Good luck. I hear they’ve got an epic list of challenges this year.”

“Yeah?” Maybe if this girl spills tonight, I can be done with this charade. “Like what?”

“Well, I was in Royer’s room last night and—”

“You were in Royer’s room?” I blurt, voice an octave too high.

Her eyebrows rise. “Yeah? So?”

“Nothing. I just...” I swallow back pain, humiliation, and another shot. “I heard he was dating that GE. Andrea something.”

A guy walks by with another full tray of shots. She grabs four and hands me two.

“Royer is the president of Zeta Sigma. He doesn’t just fuck one girl. He fucks whoever he wants, and it’s a goddam privilege to be in his bed.” Her eyes are unfocused, and I’m pretty sure she won’t remember any of this tomorrow. Honestly, with the way my head is spinning. I may not either. How much did I have to drink? Or is this what it feels like to have truth bombs thrown your way? “Since he can get whoever he wants, he’s sloppy about it. Leaves his shit around because I suspect he thinks we can’t even read. That’s not what we’re here for.”

“We’re?” I ask, fingers moving anxiously to the side of my head, looking for my hair to fuss with.

“Females. Sloots. Pussy.” She rolls her eyes at my startled expression. “Yeah, we know what we’re called. It’s better to know than to be blindsided.”

“I guess?”

“You heard about how they pulled one over on that freshman, right?” I nod, hoping the wave of nausea in my belly stays down. “God, that poor girl. Like Royer’s settling down with a high school girl. So fucking naïve.”

Ouch. Another bomb. Another wound. “If he’s such a dick, why do you sleep with him?”

She slaps her hand clumsily down on my shoulder and leans toward me. “Because if I’m giving him what he wants, he won’t humiliate me in front of the whole school like he does the other bitches around here.” She gives me a look. “It’s smart to stay in the inner circle.”

Through blurry vision I stare at this girl, wondering if she’s really this clueless. Does she not know he’s already humiliating her? Or even more so, that she’s humiliating herself? What I know is that it’s not my problem.

“Look, I like you. You’re cute.” She tussles the swoop of hair hanging in my eyes. “Let me suck you off—give you a good night before hell week starts.”

Oh God. I knew I may get discovered. That Royer or even Miller would recognize me, but it didn’t cross my mind that someone may want to see my non-existent dick. “Uh...”

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“Oh shit.” She lurches back, stumbling on her heels and then bends. I reach out to steady her and her hand flies to her mouth. “Oh God.”

“Are you okay?”

“Bathroom. Now.”

Oh fuck. She’s going to puke.

I slip my arm around her waist and help her down the hall. “Bathroom?” I ask every person we pass. A few people look at us, but no one does much other than nod down the hall. “Hey! Anyone know where the bathroom is?”

As we get to the end of the hall, a door swings open and a couple stumbles out. She straightens her skirt while he buttons his jeans. I spot the toilet behind them. “Move!” I shout, pushing Brianna inside.

“Watch it, bitch,” the girl says, but I slam the door in her face. Brianna falls on her knees, forcing her short skirt over her ass. A thin strip of black lace is visible. I know it’s not the right time to think about it, but Knox is wrong. Brianna is wearing panties.

“Hooooarrrk.” She heaves into the toilet. A rainbow of colors comes up—all juice, Jell-O, and clear liquor.

Standing behind her, I pull back her hair as she rests her arms on the toilet seat and lurches forward, vomiting everything up. “Oh god,” she moans. “I feel like death.”

Wrinkling my nose at the combined scent of fruit and bile, I reach over her to grab a roll of paper towels off the counter. She straightens and my crotch presses into her backside. I rest a hand on her backside to steady myself right as the door swings open.

Knox stands in the doorway with a redhead. A smirk tugs at his lips. “Yeah, that’s my boy.” He makes a thrusting motion. “Oh.” He shoves his hand in his pocket and throws something at me. It bounces off my chest and onto the counter. It’s a square foil package. A condom. “Don’t forget to wrap up, otherwise it’s like fucking the whole frat house.”

He winks and slams the door.

“What a fucking dick,” I mutter, staring down at the condom. Then I realize... at least my cover isn’t blown?

God, one party and I’ve already turned into one of these monsters.

“It’s coming,” Brianna announces from between my legs, before gagging and spitting into the toilet again.

I let her get out a few more heaves, but people in the hall start banging on the door, shouting for us to hurry. “We need to go,” I say, helping her to her feet. “Where do you want to me to take you?”

“Sleep,” she mutters. “Put me to sleep.”

“Okay. Where do you live?” Getting out of here isn’t the worst idea. My head feels heavy. Woozy. The alcohol pumping through my system.

“Here. Wherever. I don’t care.”

I think on it while every cell in my body fights against the urge to run. To call Grayson and tell him I'm out. To pack up and leave, but Brianna moans and leans her full body weight against me. I don't like the idea of leaving this girl in one of the rooms, which means I'm going to have to stay with her. This night just keeps getting better and better.

"I have an idea," I tell her.

It takes a few minutes, but I manage to get her up the stairs to the second floor. Thankfully, Brianna isn't built like the captain of the volleyball team. She's one of those tiny cheerleaders they put on top of the pyramid.

I mostly carry her down the hall, past what I know is a common area for the residents. I also know there are bedrooms on this floor. I know because Royer brought me through here on the way to his room. There's a smaller kitchen, a game and entertainment room. I pass the open doors of the entertainment room where a video game is playing on one screen and a porno is on the other. The tables are littered with beer bottles and a couple of bongs. Weed smoke wafts into the hall. I hear a female giggle but keep going, refusing to look and see who is in there—if Royer is watching that movie or if he's with the girl. I can't decide what's worse... that he's a dick to me or that, apparently, he's fucking every female he meets.

A plaque is mounted to the door I'm looking for. I squint, trying to read the words: Study Room.

With one hand I prop Brianna up against the wall, with the other I open the door. It's dark inside other than the bluish-glow of resting computers. Across the room is a couch.

"Come on," I say, dragging her inside. "You can sleep in here."

Brianna rolls onto the couch, and I try to pull down her skirt. It's pointless—it's too short and I'm pretty sure she doesn't care. Exhausted, drunk, and worn out, I slump next to her, letting my eyelids droop closed. Darkness engulfs me like I'm being pulled under. Brianna shifts next to me and a moment later her breath is on my cheek. "Thank you." Her voice slurs. "For being so sweet."

Her soft lips press into my cheek, then pepper along my jaw. "Your skin is so soft."

"Brianna." I try to move, to tell her that she doesn't want to kiss me, that I'm not sweet, I'm just not who she thinks I am, but the words are heavy on my tongue. I face her and our noses bump into one another. Her mouth is on mine, tongue slipping through my lips.

It's not until her hand, warm and gentle, rests on my thigh, fingers inching toward the fly of my jeans, that I drag myself out of the abyss. "No!" My hand covers her. "No. No, I can't."

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“Oh.” She sighs, puffing her bangs out of her eyes, then sinks back into the couch. “You’re one of those.”

“What?”

“A nice guy.”

That’s not the reputation I want to convey during this experiment, but there’s no other choice. “I guess I am.”

A moment later, she’s slumped into the corner, curled into a tight ball, asleep. Again, I let my eyes flutter shut. I don’t know how long I’m out, if it’s a few minutes or hours, but I awaken to the feel of a thumb running over my bottom lip. “Brianna,” I mumble. “I told you, I can’t.”

Blindly, I reach out for her hand. I come in contact with flesh, but it’s warm. And big. And a little hairy. My eyes pop open.

Miller stands over me, a bottle of beer loose in his fingers.

“Wake up, Prince Theo.” His eyebrow lifts and his upper lip curls. “Or, should I say, Princess Reagan?”

Fuck.

Miller

I'd been watching him since he walked in the door. It wasn't anything in particular that gave him away. Knox didn't notice. Royer was too busy getting his cock sucked in another room. To the rest of the party, Theo Hart looked like any other skinny freshman pledge. There was just something familiar about him that kept nagging at me all through our meeting.

That mouth.

My fraternity brothers think I'm just a player. A joke. They think I got into Wittmore on my family name and the fact the gym is named after my grandfather. It's fair. I'm lazy. I didn't do much work during high school, but my test scores are off the charts. Colleges care about numbers. Tests, GPAs, bank accounts. Two of the three is enough.

And if I've learned anything in my twenty-one years, it's that sometimes it's better if people don't realize you're the smartest person in the room.

If Royer hadn't been so focused on initiation (and his cock) he would have been more suspicious of the letter we got, suggesting we give a pass to this kid, Theo Hart. I suppose he figured that if we agreed to take him, maybe the council would stop nosing around so much. It didn't hurt that this guy, Theodore, is all about tradition. Just like Royer. I love my best friend, but he's obsessed with the new members of Zeta Sig being forged by fire and committed by pain. We all went through it, the gauntlet, when we rushed, and I'm not ready to give it up either. I'm just not fixated on it like he is.

When Theo walked through the door, Royer was still high from that stunt he pulled with Andrea. They destroyed little Reagan Lake. If I'd known that blow job would be the last time I saw her, I'd have raised the stakes.

Knox walks up. “You look like you need another drink. Hey, Parker—” he shouts to a sophomore, chatting up a freshman on the couch, “get your VP a drink.”

“Yes, sir,” the kid says, untangling from the girl. She pouts as he runs toward the kitchen, but Knox gives her a wink and her face lights up.

“Why are you lurking over here alone?”

“I’m not lurking,” I reply. “I’m observing. Getting a feel for the vibe of this new group.”

“They seem solid enough.” A kid across the room bumps into a girl, spilling her drink down her white lace top. Knox snorts. “Well, most of them, at least.”

I spot Theo Hart clinging to the wall across from us. “What about him?”

“The late entry?” Knox shrugs. “I dunno. He was checking out Brianna earlier. I told him to go for it.”

“How generous of you.”

We both know Brianna is as easy as it gets. No chase. No work, but she’s always down to suck cock or if she’s drunk enough, anal. Parker returns with not one, but two, beers and hands us each one.

“Good work, brother,” Knox says, taking an exaggerated drag. It’s mostly for show for the new recruits. Knox puts too much time into his sport to fuck it up with shitty beer.

“My pleasure.” Parker looks between us. “Anything else?”

“Not now.” Knox grins over at the girl waiting on the couch. “Go lock that one down. She’s cute.”

Parker takes off, grabbing the girl’s hand and pulling her toward the stairs. Knox looks at me. “That new kid. Theo Hart. You worried about him?”

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Worried isn't the right word. It's more like a feeling deep in my gut. A twinge that I get every time I look at him.

"Nah," I say, swallowing half the beer. "I just don't like surprises."

"Dude." Knox laughs and jabs me with his elbow. "You love surprises."

"Only when it involves pussy."

Last year, for my birthday, Royer and Knox surprised me with the trifecta. A Tri-delta threesome. He's right. I love surprises.

Across the room cheers erupt from the beer pong table and Knox darts off, leaving me alone again. My gaze goes back to Theo, who is now taking shots with a very drunk Brianna. When I look again, they've vanished down the hall.

I lose them in the crowd—possibly behind one of the closed doors. Maybe they're fucking somewhere?

For some inexplicable reason, I have to know where Theo Hart is. Maybe Knox is right. Maybe I am worried.

After checking all the rooms downstairs, I head to the second floor. They're not in the game or entertainment room. At Royer's room, I carefully and quietly open the door. He's in there, naked and sprawled on his back while Andrea, still in her heels, hoovers his cock. He sees me, winks, and props his elbows behind his neck to get a better view.

I shut the door behind me.

The room across the hall is the study room and the only room I haven't checked. I prepare myself to see Theo's pimply ass as he bends Brianna over the computer desk. I open the door and the desks are clear—everything in order. Then I see them. Curled up on the couch. What the hell? They're both asleep. I shouldn't be surprised. They both had those shots. The guys know better than to drink the shots.

Brianna is curled on one side of the couch, skirt bunched over her hips. Her black thong is still in place. I dip my fingers between her legs. She shifts, sighing softly, but I'm not interested in her pussy. She's dry. Her inner thighs, too.

I slide my gaze over to Theo.

His body is leaning away from Brianna, elbow propped on the arm of the couch. His hair falls into his eyes, but not so much that I can't see his long eyelashes. I take in his sharp cheekbones and chin, cupped in his palm. The position makes his lips form a pout.

Again, that same strange unease twists in my lower belly. It's buried deep and burns like a coal. I take another look at his mouth, those lips, and a jolt runs through me.

Fuck.

My cock swells and Jesus Christ, there's no mistaking the feeling, the urge. I'm horny as fuck, and I know it's not about Brianna. And I sure as hell know it's not about Theo. I've lived with forty guys for three years. Not once have I ever had an inkling of desire for any of them.

I bend over his sleeping frame and swipe my thumb over his bottom lip. I know it. I've felt it.

Theo sighs softly, then blinks, grabbing out for my hand. I allow myself to be caught.

Aquamarine eyes meet mine and everything slots into place. Why I've been so suspicious. Why my cock and the hair on the back of my neck rises every time I look at this kid.

"Wake up, Prince Theo," I say, watching the fear creep into her eyes. "Or, should I say, Princess Reagan?"

Before she can react, I grab Reagan by the arm and down the hall and kick open the door to my room, tossing her inside. She stumbles, woozy, I assume, from the shots, but I snag her before she completely falls. Swinging her around so that she faces me, I grip the collar of her button down and yank, ripping the front apart. The room echoes with the sound of the buttons clattering across the floor. Underneath is a tight tank, but I can see the restrained swell of her tits. Fucking bitch.

"Miller—"

"I knew it was you." I laugh darkly, unamused. "I knew something was off when you came in today. That letter smelled like bullshit and you, honestly, smelled too good."

"I can—"

"Shut the fuck up." I grab her by the upper arms. "Do you want to know how I really knew?"

She nods slowly. Reagan may have lost her mind, but she's not dumb. Giving me what I want is the only way out of this room, and she knows it.

"Those fucking lips." God, I've fantasized about those lips for months and then I finally had them wrapped around my cock. I could pick Reagan Lake's lips out of a

goddam line-up. I run my finger over the puffy bottom one. “One of a kind.”

She tries to squirm away, but I’m too strong and she’s too wasted. Beaker, a senior and chemistry major, learned exactly how much Rohypnol to dump in the shot mix to make the girls loose but not blackout.

“Tell me what you’re doing here?” I search her eyes. She’s scared. She should be. Desperate. Also not a surprise. “What’s with the bro clothes? The games?” I tighten my grip on her arm. “And don’t tell me this is to get back at Royer. He’ll shove his dick into almost anything but not another guy’s ass. This is the wrong move.”

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“You’re hurting me,” she says, eyes darting down to my hand. I loosen my grip a little, and she relaxes. “I just wanted to come to the party, see what I was missing.” She swallows. “I wanted to see him.”

Him. Royer. This little cunt has been chasing him around for months, all while he was using the hell out of her and setting her up for an enormous, humiliating fall. “You’re not that pathetic, Reagan.” Although, at that moment she looks it. Tits smashed down, God awful haircut, dressed like my younger brother in his boy band phase. “Who the fuck gave you that letter?”

“I can’t tell.”

I laugh. “Tell me or I drag you down the front steps, naked, and I’ll make up my own story about what Reagan Lake is doing, sneaking around a Zeta Sig party after being blacklisted.”

She reacts to the word ‘blacklisted,’ wincing like she’s been slapped. After blackmailing her for the past four months, she knows how far I’m willing to go. That awareness flickers in her eyes and she sighs in resignation. “The Greek Council got me that letter. They want evidence to take you down.”

“Because of the hazing?”

“Yes.” She rubs her arm where I held her. “They’re determined to stop Zeta Sig and want hard proof. After they saw my video and what Royer and Andrea did to me, they figured I’d be ready for some revenge.”

“Looks like you jumped on it.”

Tears fill her eyes, and it makes me think about her being on her knees, her eyes watering as she gagged on my cock. I shift, feeling the swell in my pants, getting hard thinking about it.

“I just...”

“You just what?” I snap.

“Want my life back.” She wipes her cheeks. “I want all of those stupid mistakes to go away. For Royer to love me. For Andrea to be who I thought she was.” She looks down at the floor, but I tilt her chin upward.

“And me?”

Her voice sounds far away when she answers. “I want you to go to hell.”

“I bet you do.”

Loud voices bounce off the walls in the hall, followed by drunken footsteps. Her shoulders tense, afraid she’s going to get busted by more than just me. I stare at her for a moment, trying to figure out what to do with her. I could expose her right now and she’d be gone from this campus for good. Or...

“What?” she says warily.

I nod at the couch. “You’re in no shape to walk home. That roofie is going to kick in soon.”

“Roofie?”

“Yeah, never take a drink from a frat boy, Reagan. Especially a Zeta Sig.”

She sits on top of the pile of clothes on the couch and pulls her knees to her chest.

“Are you going to tell Royer?” she asks.

“Not yet. You’ll sleep here tonight, and in the morning, we’ll figure out how we’re going to handle this.”

She seems too exhausted to argue and the drugs kick in just like I expect, her eyelids fluttering shut despite her efforts to stay awake. I leave the room, locking the door behind me with a key. I’m still not sure what I’m going to do with her.

Or for how long.

But if anyone is going to benefit from her betrayal, it’s me.

8

Reagan

Get up.

Get up.

Get upppp!!!

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Source Creation Date: July 9, 2025, 3:05 am

The voice in my head screams at me. Makes commands. Demands. But none of it processes to my limbs. My brain feels like soup. Swimming in soup. Is that why I can't move? Can't think? Can't breathe?

Something heavy presses on my chest. I fight for air. To see. I force my eyelids open. Nope. They crash shut.

Weight clamps against my sides. I'm in a coffin. Dead? Again, I try. Blinking. Forcing. An image flashes in front of my eyes. Skin. Slippery. Sweat.

I fall back under. Or I try.

"There she is," a voice cuts through the haze. "Thought you were going to sleep right through it."

I blink, this time managing to get my eyes to stay open for longer than a second. The room is dark, but there's someone on top of me—male. A man.

"Miller?"

That's when I realize his hands are on me, pushing and pulling at my skin. My shirt is gone, and my breasts exposed. His thumbs roll over my nipples. I feel his weight on my lower body—my arms and legs trapped by his knees. He bends, tongue licking a hot path between my breasts.

He smirks down at me. "I knew your mouth was fuckable, but your tits... I have a feeling they'll be just as good. Maybe better."

I fight against the pounding in my head, the confusion, and the loss of control, and get a good look at him. He massages my breast with one hand and holds onto his cock with the other, sliding his hand up and down the shaft. The memory of him forcing it down my throat hits hard, and a wave of nausea rolls over me. Oh god. “Miller, stop.”

“Not until I’m done, kitten.” The nickname rolls easily off his tongue. He’d called me that in the pantry. “And not until you’re covered in my cum.” I struggle against him, but he’s too strong and I’m hungover or still drunk from the night before. He slots his cock between my breasts and lurches forward. “You owe me for not throwing you to the wolves last night.” He pulls back, humming in the back of his throat. “Instead, you’re just indebted to one wolf—me.”

My eyelids droop and he snaps. “Look at me, Reagan.” I force them open, and he laughs. “Good girl. Look at me while I fuck your tits.” He picks up the pace. “Don’t give me that broken, sad face. You’re the one that snuck into my house in disguise, looking to bring me and my brothers down.”

He’s right. I did do all of that. This is one punishment, by one man, not dozens of Zeta Sigs or the whole Greek community. All I have to do is survive this and leave. Tell Grayson I’m out. Go home like I planned and reevaluate my life. Or just crawl into a hole and stay there for the rest of my life.

While Miller violates me, my future flashes in front of my eyes. Every dream shattered. Now I’m a loser. A victim. The stupid girl who thought she was better than everyone else. I stare at Miller’s chest, at the hard muscles tensing with every push and pull. The carved V that points down to the weapon he wields like a knife. He’s perfection, cut from marble, forged by wickedness, emboldened by power and privilege. No wonder he thinks he can take what he wants—he can. He does.

“Your mouth, those lips, these tits,” his blue eyes, dark with revenge, roam down my body. He grimaces and squeezes my breasts tighter, pinching my nipples and pushing

his cock against my skin. "I bet your pussy is just as sweet."

My lower body clamps up and fear runs through me. Would he? Of course he would. Why wouldn't he?

Miller laughs, showing those white teeth and his boyish grin. "Don't worry, kitten. Not today." His neck muscles strain and his jaw tenses. He pounds into me, pinching and squeezing my skin. The valley between my breasts is slick with his fluid and his breath comes out in short, tight bursts. He grinds out. "This summer should have taught you that I'm patient. I can bide my time until I get what I want. I'm not fucking you... yet."

His back tenses, spine going rigid. One hand shoots out and grabs my throat. The other, the base of his cock. I fight for air as he lifts the swollen appendage, shooting cum all over my chest, breasts, and nipples. Warm, slippery, heat slides down my skin and I ignore the feeling deep in my belly. The shameful, dark one that spreads down between my legs.

He releases me and smiles down, eyes hard and cold. "I knew you'd look good marked with my cum."

I gulp for air, feeling the rush run down my throat. He climbs off me, freeing my arms and legs for the first time since I woke up, but I'm too frozen to move. I watch as he walks across the room, naked, smooth ass glowing in the faint light. He tosses a towel in my direction, stark and white against the fabric of the couch.

"Clean up," he says, tugging up a pair of joggers. "Then we need to talk."

His eyes are hard as he watches me wipe his cum off my skin.

I dig in the crevice of the couch, the sunken area between the cushions to find my

tank. I'm too numb to feel the right emotions. Humiliation and shame are buried somewhere under the surface. I pull the shirt over my head and pretend I'm not dirty—covered in his filth.

"I had all night to think about your betrayal," he says, rubbing his tired, red eyes. "And the only thing I think will benefit me the most is for you to continue to go through initiation."

I pause. "What?"

He sits on a chair across from me, still shirtless, joggers slung low on his hips. A twist in my stomach thinks about him over me. I shudder and look for my shirt. It's crumbled on the floor, near his feet.

"I know you think he's the golden boy, but Royer is a fucking tool. He's risky and obsessed and it's time for him to step down as president."

"He's your best friend." It's a statement.

Miller shrugs. "So? He's too worried about his dick and becoming a Zeta Sig legend to see how he's about to fuck everyone over." He licks his lips. "He and Andrea have too much control. I don't like it."

"So what, you want to stop the initiation? The gauntlet?"

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“Fuck no,” he laughs. “I love all of it, as much as he does, maybe more. But believe it or not, kitten, I’m not all about the glory. I’m about the process.” He locks eyes with me. It’s impossible to look away. “And you’re going to help me.”

“Me? How? I’m here to stop all of this.”

“We’re going to make sure your boyfriend and his whore take the fall. Then I’ll claim the position of president and restructure things.”

“Won’t you get in trouble too?”

“Not if we play this right.” He picks up my shirt and walks over, holding it out. “I know everyone thinks I’m a slacker, but that’s just because that’s what I let them see. There’s more to Miller Hansen than people realize.”

I stare at the shirt, the feeling in my skin, my brain, finally coming back. The nausea is still there. I’m not sure if it’s from the alcohol or from the assault. Probably both. “Why do you think I’m going to help you? I can walk out of here and go straight to my contact. I can leave this school. I’m already blacklisted. There’s no reason for me to do anything for you. Especially, not after...” I look down at the couch and swallow the lump in my throat, “after what you just did.”

Miller’s hand shoots out, quick and forceful. He grabs my arm and lifts me to my feet. His lips curl into that scary, dangerous, smile. “I know you, kitten. I know what you really want. You help me, you do every single thing I ask of you over the next seven days, and I’ll make sure your social standing is reinstated. Sorority of your choice. I’ll get that video obliterated from internet history, and I’ll help you get

revenge on the person you hate the most.”

“Andrea?” My heart leaps at the idea. It’s foolish, but I’m desperate.

He nods. “We’ll destroy her, and if you still want Royer after I’ve knocked him off his pedestal, then you can have him.” His hand cups my face and swipes his thumb over my cheek, eliciting a tremor that runs down my spine. “But the real reason you’re going to help me is that the alternative is worse than you can imagine.”

“Worse than what you just did to me?”

“The Zeta Sig’s have a tradition for everything, Reagan, including bitches that betray us.” His tongue darts out, wetting his bottom lip. “It wouldn’t have been just my cum all over your body. It would have been every single one of the men in this frat. In your hair, your face, your mouth...” His eyes sweep down. There’s no mistaking the hunger there. He must really want to displace Royer, because I get the feeling he would love to see me in that position. “You wouldn’t just be blacklisted. You’d be marked.” He pushes the swoop of hair out of my eyes. “But for now, you’re just mine. Which means I’ll protect you and make sure you get through the week, as long as you do everything I tell you.”

So, there’s no choice. Every move I make, things get worse. I either get exposed to the whole group, or see this through, under Miller’s thumb. I’d already been busted on the first night. There’s no way I would have made it on my own, even with Grayson’s help. I need someone on the inside just to survive.

“You promise to take down Andrea?”

He makes an X on his chest. “Cross my heart.”

“And you’ll help me get my social status back.”

“Yep.”

His hand thrusts out.

“Fine,” I say, as though I have a choice. I slide my palm against his, prepared to shake, but he pauses.

“Remember, you do everything that I tell you and you’ll survive. I own you this week. No arguments.”

Working with Miller doesn’t exactly seem like the lesser of two evils, but at least he’s the devil I know verses a string of frat boys downstairs that I don’t. Getting my social standing back is a long shot. Taking on Royer without help seems even more unlikely. Destroying Andrea is my goal. Grayson... well, he’ll have to take what he can get.

Our palms meet, and a wave of uncertainty rolls over me. I’m damned no matter what I do, and the glint in Miller’s eye tells me that he knows it.

9

Reagan

The path I take from the Zeta Sig house to my dorm is beyond a walk of shame. It’s a fucked-up, twisted maze of insanity and desperation. The only solace I have is that no one on campus, other than Miller, recognizes me. For a girl, this is the walk of shame. A guy? A stride of pride.

I stop and vomit in the bushes. Bent over and heaving, I wipe my mouth with the back of my hand and continue home.

In my dorm room, while the water heats in the shower, I rinse my mouth with mouthwash, letting the antiseptic burn. My tits ache. I think it's from being in that compression tank all night, but when I pull it off, I see the bruises forming in the shape of fingertips. Bastard. Pushing open the curtain, I dunk under the stream of water. I have it up as high as it will go, trying to burn off Miller's cum. I scrub and lather, but even after I'm dried off, and in my pajamas, I still feel dirty. Marked. Will that ever go away?

I don't even think about the rest of it. The way it felt to have Miller over me, forced to confront his ripped body and perfect face. The way his fingers closed around my throat and the way my body reacted. That's the real shame. The true betrayal. The one I did to myself.

Is that who I am? The girl that gets off on men treating her like shit? If the last week has proven anything, it may be that.

Turning off the light, I crawl into bed, sinking into the clean sheets. I've never been so tired. So confused. Is any of this worth it? Royer? Andrea? Getting my place back in the social hierarchy?

My phone buzzes.

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Grayson: How did it go?

Reagan: Everything's fine.

Grayson: Are you sure? I came by last night to check on you. You didn't answer.

Reagan: I'm doing what you asked me to.

There's a pause, the blinking gray dots of him typing and maybe deleting. Determining what to say...

Grayson: Stay safe.

I stare at the words. If he wanted me to stay safe, he wouldn't have asked me to do this. The risk was too high. He knew it more than anyone.

Reagan: I'll try.

I could—should—tell him about Miller busting me, but I have no doubt Miller would expose me. I can't risk it. I shove the phone under my pillow and crash. I dream of crowded hallways and shiny skirts. Black lace thongs and toilet bowls. Wicked grins and devil horns. The blast of a vibration under my pillow jolts me awake. I read the text bleary eyed.

Pledge Educator: Come to the house. Dress in semi-formal attire. Pack minimally, but for the week. Bring a sleeping bag and a backpack with your laptop, textbooks, and any other required schoolwork. Wait outside your residence. You have thirty minutes.

Turning on the bedside light, I look over at the supplies Grayson sent to my room. It's all of those things, including the sleeping bag and an extra backpack. He knew this was coming and didn't warn me.

All I want is to turn off the lights and pull the blanket over my head, but if I do, the world will know about Theodore Hart and the embarrassing way I got busted. Royer and Andrea will know, and neither of them will ever suffer a consequence for their shitty behavior.

Resigned, I hop out of bed and do the only thing I can: pack.

They jump me the second I walk out of the dorm, coming out of the dark. Hood thrown over my head, arms and legs hoisted off the ground. My high-pitched yelp is smothered by the fabric. I should be afraid, and I am, but it's not about being kidnapped. I've heard the horror stories about hell week and kind of expected it. No, I'm terrified and praying no one notices my boobs or the fact there's no junk between my legs as they carry me off.

"Keep your mouth shut and hood on," is all that is said after they toss me in the back of a vehicle. I land on another body; warm and bony. He grunts when my elbow slams into his gut.

"Fuck," he mutters.

"Sorry," I whisper.

"Shut the fuck up or we'll make a detour!"

I clamp my mouth closed and try not to notice how little air is coming through the hood.

The vehicle drives erratically, on purpose, flinging our bodies across the back of what I assume is a van. Loud music spills from the front and if the drivers are speaking, I can't hear them. It's not just the music. My heart pounds, heavy and loud, pulsing in my ears. This is really happening. There's no going back.

There's another stop. Another pledge is tossed in the back. This one lands on my leg, forcing it into an awkward position. Tears burn at my eyes and my nose stuffs up, making my efforts to breathe worse. Get your shit together, Reagan, I tell myself. The consequences are too big for me to fuck up anything, including suffocating.

I close my eyes and think about something else—anything. Last summer at the lake. Royer waving from the water as he expertly skied around the cove. Miller's sitting in the back of the boat, sprawled out in the sun. The V dipping below his shorts. The taste of salt on my tongue.

No!

My heart hammers harder than before. The vehicle screeches to a stop, tossing all of us forward, and freeing my leg from under the other pledge.

The music stops. The doors open. Hands grab me and drag me out, dropping me on the ground.

“Get the fuck up, asswipe.”

I scramble to my feet, hearing the sounds of the others next to me. There are more vehicles pulling up. More orders are barked until I hear the shuffling footsteps of dozens of pledges.

Just when I think I may pass out from the heat and nausea and lack of air, the hood is yanked off my head. A rush of cool air hits my face and I gulp, taking in as much as I

can. All around me are other pledges with sweaty hair matted to their foreheads, eyes wide and panicked. Lights shine from a building in front of us. Although it's clearly a large house, it's not the Zeta Sig house. Theirs is a mansion—this... it looks like a farmhouse. Grayson told me one work around Royer would employ is to have initiation off campus, at an undisclosed location.

Before I can worry about it more, my belongings are tossed at me, slamming hard into my chest.

“Welcome to Education Week!” A voice blasts through a bullhorn. He walks into the glare of the light shining from the building. I don't need to see his face to know who it is. Knox's six foot plus frame gives him away. “That's the name the Council wants you to call it, but that's bullshit and we all know it. Fraternities have initiation week, or what most of them call Hell Week. Not at Zeta Sig. We don't just drag you through hell. We put you through the gauntlet.”

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It's not the first time I've heard the word. Miller said it in his room—that I'd never survive without him.

“Tonight, you cease being individuals. You're just a bunch of goats. A piece of shit. Dried cum on the athletic sock in my drawer. If you make it through the week, you'll have the honor of being a brother. For life.” Knox says it all with passion and intensity. Like it's the most important speech of his life. “If you don't? That's a mark of shame you'll bear until you die.”

A fraternity brother, dressed in all black, walks through the crowd, handing out Zip-lock bags. Knox speaks again. “Put your phones, ID, wallet, and go in the bag. Don't plan on seeing any of those again for seven days.”

A sense of intense dread pools in the pit of my stomach, but I grab the items he listed and put them in the Zip-lock. In the crowd of pledges surrounding me, I hear, “Fuck this shit,” and then, “I'm out of here.”

There's a collective shift in the group, a moment where everyone sees an escape. If they go, we can go. Knox must sense it, too.

“You leave,” Knox says, “don't come back and don't even think of rushing again. Zeta Sig isn't interested in cowards.”

The threat is obvious. They'll be blacklisted, like me. Unlike me, there's no vibe of the humiliation that brought them down. Also, unlike me, they don't want it enough.

Two people end up leaving, grabbing their things, and walking down the dark road

alone. Knox mocks them until they're out of sight, calling them babies and pussies and cum-soaked-vaginas. When he's satisfied no one else is leaving, he turns his focus back on us. "The building behind me is where the current members of Zeta Sig will be staying. We've rented it out for the week. You shitheads, who we will be referring to as goats from here on out, will be living over there." A bright light swings across the yard to reveal another building. It's immediately obvious what that building is. Or was. A barn. "Other than going to classes, your days and nights will be spent in the barn. You'll eat, sleep, shit, and jerk off in there." He jabs his thumb at the faded red building. "You'll also have every opportunity to become a man. A brother. A family." He scans the crowd. "If anyone else wants to quit, now is your chance, because once you enter the doors, there's no leaving with your integrity or reputation intact."

No one else moves, although I can almost taste the apprehension in the air. Independence has never been my thing, but when they line us up, take our belongings and herd us into the barn, I'm pretty sure the cowards that left are the smartest ones of the bunch.

10

Miller

The barn smells exactly like you'd expect: thick dusty hay, oily gasoline, and the unmistakable scent of manure. The expression on the goats' faces as they enter are priceless. Welcome to the gauntlet, bitches.

"I can't believe you found this place," Royer says.

"My dad's company buys up a lot of foreclosed property," I reply. "This one went for a steal. As soon as I saw it in his portfolio, I knew it was perfect for the gauntlet."

As the goats pack into the center of the barn, clutching their belongings to their chests, I scan for Reagan. I know she got picked up. Was she one of the ones that left? If she was smart, she would've taken the public humiliation and walked away, but there's something about this girl. She's not a quitter—continuing long after it's prudent for her to cut her losses. Of course, that's one of the things that makes her so much fun. There's nothing I like more than a feisty, determined girl.

It's way more fun to break them down.

Knox takes a position on a stack of pallets. “This will be your living quarters for the rest of the week. You'll sleep here. Food will be delivered here. There's an outhouse around back and a stall for showering. You will do those things when given permission. You may go to your classes, but otherwise, your ass is ours. Understood?”

There's a murmur of yeses among the group, and I finally locate Reagan. It's weird how much a haircut and a change of clothes altered her appearance. If I hadn't been obsessing over her mouth for the last six months, I don't think I would've made the connection. Royer should have, but he's a self-absorbed asshole. He probably never really looked at Reagan's face. Her tits, sure. Her eyes? Doubtful.

Like everyone else, she has a number taped to her shirt, #47. Her eyes are red from lack of sleep and her hair is a mess from the bag. The dark curls hang over her forehead, and she tries to hide behind it, using the swoop of bangs to cover her eyes.

I jab Royer and ask, “Any idea who you're going to pick?”

Officers traditionally choose one pledge to champion, harass, and bet on during the gauntlet. It's a good excuse to keep Reagan close.

“I'm torn between eighteen and six.” Hawthorne and Thompson. Both solid picks.

Legacies, athletes, rich and smart. He looks over at me. “What about you?”

I pretend to search the crowd, like I’m still thinking about it. I’m not one to tip my hand, but I need to know if he suspects anything. “I kind of want to see what forty-seven is all about.”

“The one with the letter? Theo?” Knox asks, walking over and resting the bullhorn on the floor. “Seems kind of weak, although he was quick to hook up with Brianna last night. Dude doesn’t waste time.” He laughs. “Do you really think he’ll make it through the gauntlet?”

I shrug. “I’m willing to take the risk.”

Royer’s eyes go to Reagan, assessing her carefully. “I don’t know. That letter still rubs me the wrong way. Who is the council to tell us who to let in?”

It’s clear he doesn’t realize who Theo really is. Probably because he’s still bitter about the council getting involved. Royer isn’t used to people telling him what to do or setting limits on his actions. None of us are really, but he dislikes it more than anyone. I just choose to find my own way around the rules. I watch Reagan unroll her sleeping bag on the dusty floor. “If this kid is so important to the Council, then I feel like I should give him special treatment. Make sure he’s really up to the standards of being a Zeta Sig.”

Royer laughs. “Good point.”

I rub my hands together, thinking about the potential. When I locked Reagan into this agreement, I wasn’t sure how it would work out. If she’d even show back up, but now that we’re here, I’m excited. The possibilities for the week are endless. To the rest of the frat, it will just look like I’m molding a pledge into a brother, but in reality, I’ll be breaking down this little bitch who thinks she can get one over on the Zeta Sigs, and,

taking out our current president.

For the next week, Reagan Lake, or as she'll be known for the rest of the week, number forty-seven, is mine.

And I'm about to make her life hell.

It's late when the goats finally get settled. Most are probably still hung over from the party the night before. I know I'm running on fumes, but that doesn't mean it's time for a break.

Most of the pledges have just settled into their sleeping bags when bright lights click on and one of the gauntlet runners shouts over the bullhorn, "Baaaaaaa baaaaa," he bleats, "Get up! One more task before the night is over."

The room groans, but everyone complies, even if it's grudgingly.

"There's an old horse pen that circles the field out back. Complete four laps and then you can go to bed."

Across the room, Reagan's shoulders droop. She's exhausted. Worn out from the party, the drugs in her drink and what transpired between us.

I grab the arm of one of my brother's passing by. "Hey, Rat, tell forty-seven to come to my room."

Rat pauses. "And miss the run?"

Rat got his nickname during his week in the gauntlet for cutting his long hair but leaving a sliver of a rattail hanging down the back of his neck. The hair is long gone, but the nickname stuck. Now he's covered in tattoos, including a massive one on his chest of a rat chewing his way out of his ribcage. He's worked his way up to

Warden—the person who doles out the majority of the initiation activities.

“He’ll make it up,” I assure him. “I’ve got some work that needs to be handled. Worse than the run.”

He laughs. “Gotcha.”

I exit the barn and cross the yard toward the main house. It took me months to find this place, scouring through my father’s properties. Our family has lived in this area for a century and snapping up real estate is a tradition. This place is perfect. The house is in good condition, only recently sold off after the owners died. The furnishings inside are nice—better than the frat house. There’s a large kitchen, a living room complete with TV and gaming consoles, and nice bedrooms upstairs. There’s a bunkhouse adjacent to the barn where the non-officer members will sleep for the next week. By not having the frat pay for a separate facility for Hell Week, there’s no discernable paper trail. All things Zeta Sig needs to keep our chapter legal while we carry out our traditions.

I stop by the kitchen to grab a beer out of the refrigerator and head up to my room. Knox and Royer can oversee the drama outside. I need to check in with my goat.

Swallowing half the beer, I enter my bedroom and take in the queen-sized bed and comfortable furniture. Since he’s president, Royer got the biggest room, but this one will work. Knox is next door, on the other side of a shared bathroom. I stop at my suitcase, unzipping it and rummaging under the clothes.

I barely hear the tapping on my door, but call out, “Come in.”

The door opens with a soft creak. “You wanted to see me?”

My fingers graze the wooden box at the bottom of the suitcase, and I grab it. “Yeah, I

need you to do some work in here.”

Reagan swallows anxiously, the Adam’s apple noticeably missing from her throat, along with the telltale stubble that should shadow her chin at this stage of the day. She’s wearing baggy sweatpants that manage to make her look even skinnier and an oversized Wittmore hoodie.

“Close the door.”

She shuts it, and I note her stiff shoulders and trembling hands. She thinks I’m going to hurt her. The realization sends a warm spark down my belly. Control is a very powerful, intoxicating thing.

“It’s not just work,” I say, sitting on the edge of my bed. I open the box and remove rolling papers and a small baggie of weed. “I also didn’t want you getting busted.”

“Did I do something wrong?” Her eyes follow my hands. Watch me place the items on the mattress.

“Nothing that’s not nature’s fault. I’m not willing to risk you getting caught the first night because you’ve got a girly-run or something.” I nod at the suitcase. “Hang that shit in the closet. I can’t find anything.”

She frowns. Relieved? Disappointed? “That’s all?”

“For now.”

I roll the joint while Reagan hangs up my clothes one piece at a time. It’s not much—just enough to get me through the week. I lick the edge of the paper, securing the weed inside and wrap it tight, watching her as she methodically works.

“I should go back.” Reagan says once the suitcase is empty. The clothes hang in an orderly line behind her, including my pants. She arranged my shoes in rows underneath. “Someone will notice I’m missing.”

“Nah.” I pull my lighter out of my pocket and flick the lever. It sparks twice and then ignites. I light the end and take a deep drag. “Part of the gauntlet is people vanishing here and there. Everyone has a different journey. Officers pick different goats to monitor.” I take another drag and feel the burn deep in my lungs. “Right now, I’m monitoring you.”

“I wish you’d let me run,” she says quietly.

“Why’s that?”

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“I don’t want to owe you anything.”

Lifting myself off the bed, I stand and cross the room. I hold the joint out to her, but she shakes her head. I touch her cheek, but she turns away. “You became indebted to me the minute I caught you at the party last night.”

“What do you want from me?”

I grip her chin and force her to look at me, rubbing my thumb over her bottom lip. “You know what I want, Kitten.”

Her expression remains blank, but a wet glimmer fills her eyes. She sighs, and starts to drop to her knees, but I grab her arm, stopping her. Her eyes dart up.

“Remember? We’re in this together. I’m helping you and you’re helping me.” I lick my bottom lip. “I may be an asshole, Kitten, but I’m not selfish.”

She frowns. “What are you talking about?”

Stubbing the joint out on the wall, I grab the zipper of her hoodie and yank it down. The heavy sleeves drop off her shoulders and fall to the floor. She’s wearing a T-shirt underneath and I push that over her head. She’s in another compression tank, this one the color of her flesh. I go to remove it, but it’s tight, like it’s glued to her skin.

“Take it off.”

“Miller, you don’t have to do this. Let me just suck your—”

I snort. “You can suck my cock later, Kitten, but right now, I’m getting a look at you.” I rake my eyes down her tanned, flat stomach. “All of you.”

“I hate you.”

“Good.” I push my fingers under the elastic of the tank. “That rage just makes you hotter.”

She pulls away from me and bites down on her bottom lip, working her way out of the tank. It’s sexy. There’s no way for her to hide herself from me. With her tits on full display, that’s when I notice the bruises.

They’re all over.

Some, I realize, reaching out to touch the soft skin on the side of her breast, I definitely made.

“Do these hurt?” I match my fingertips to a bruise on the side.

“No.” It’s a lie. I see it in the way her chin lifts. The defiance in her eyes. She covers her chest with her arms, making her tits rise in a ridiculously appealing way. Every move this girl makes is the wrong one. Everything she does makes her sexier. More appealing. “You can’t hurt me.”

Oh, little Kitten, how I wish that were true. How Royer could pick that bitch, Andrea, over this spitfire, is beyond me.

“Get on the bed,” I command, kicking off my shoes.

The façade drops, and a flicker of fear rushes over her face. I use the momentary distraction to my advantage, pushing her toward the bed. She stumbles, the back of

her knees hitting the edge of the mattress. I close the space between us, towering over her, forcing her onto her back. “You tasted me. Now I’m going to taste you.”

Confusion and horror spread across her features, but I grab her waist and pin her to the bed. Control requires a semblance of balance. Giving as much as you get. Luring in your prey just before you pounce. But right now, I just want to taste her. Feel her heat on my tongue. Watch her squirm, even if she hates every second of it.

I inch down her pants and take exactly what I want.

11

Reagan

His fingers push under the waistband of my sweats, pulling them down over the hidden curves of my hips.

“Miller, don’t,” I plead. Pretending like every time I speak, the bulge in his pants doesn’t grow bigger. “I’ll do whatever you want. Just... please don’t.” He ignores me, going for the black boxer briefs, the front packed with a pair of socks. He yanks them down to my knees, the socks falling to the floor.

He laughs, that wicked smile cutting to the bone. “Guess you can’t beat a classic.”

I curl inward, futilely trying to block my exposed body.

“Don’t worry,” he places a hand on each thigh, “I’m not going to fuck you.”

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The way the word ‘fuck’ rolls off his tongue is less than reassuring. My inner thighs clamp close. “Please...”

His hands clamp down on each thigh, and his thumbs dip down between the gap, sweeping upward. “It’ll be a lot more fun if you don’t fight it.”

His grip loosens just a little. His touch is softer. The burn in my lower belly flickers and flares. I’m not ready when he drags my hips to the edge of the bed and drops to his knees. “What are you doing?”

“I told you, Kitten, I just want to taste you.”

His lips burn into the flesh of my inner thigh, licking and sucking. He makes his way to the crux of my legs, and I jolt when he touches me, thumb swiping against my heat. I hear a laugh. “I think you protested a little too much.”

Every muscle in my body tenses, and the heat that spreads across my skin is one of humiliation. It’s one thing for Miller to toy with me. It’s something else for him to know...

That I’m wet.

That he turns me on.

That I’m afraid that I’m just as sick and depraved as he is.

The self-flagellation ends when his warm breath blows over me, and his tongue, flat

and slow, swipes along my pussy. My body shudders. Instinctive and pure. Belly twisting with want.

“Royer ever eat you out, Kitten?” I feel his eyes on me, but I keep mine clamped shut. “He ever make you feel good like this?”

He flicks his tongue over my nub, catching a rhythm, then abruptly stops.

“Did he?” he asks again.

I open my eyes and see him staring at me with his own liquid blue ones boring back. He’s handsome as sin. Mouth wet and slick. His eyebrow is cocked in question. It’s obvious he’s not going to continue until I answer, and I should use the opportunity to run, to get the hell out of here, but desire burns in my skin. Tickles in my belly. Beats in my chest.

“No,” I tell him. “He said it’s gross.”

He licks his bottom lip, tasting me. “He’s missing out. God, you taste good.” His tongue flicks again, drawing me back into a trance. I didn’t know a man could want you like that. I thought it was something they did out of obligation—or to get what they want. Miller’s hungry sounds make my thighs fall wider apart, and my hips rise to meet him.

He sucks me in, laughing against my clit. “No wonder you’re so pent up. So bitchy. You’re horny as fuck.”

Caught somewhere between his mouth, my body, and my brain, I realize that’s what this is all about. Messing with Royer. Getting me off because Royer didn’t. It rubs me the wrong way, but it doesn’t matter because Miller’s tongue is rubbing me all kinds of the right way. As much as I try not to, I hum from the feel of his mouth, reaching

out and grabbing the back of his neck to pull him closer. My legs clamp around his ears and Iride his mouth, rutting against him, seeking the friction and wetness and heat until I'm on the pinpoint, shattering around him.

“Oh my god,” I breathe, writhing against his mouth, bucking into him with pulsing energy surging through every nerve and inch of my skin. We stay this way until the feeling dissipates, leaving me spent and limp.

Fucking hell, I think, staring up at the cracked ceiling. Miller Hansen just rocked my world.

Blissed out, I don't move as he steps back, taking his heat with him. I should cover myself. I should be ashamed, but all I feel is warm all over. I'm trying to get my arms and legs to cooperate when I hear the metal tines on his zipper. I look up and see him standing over me, cock hard in his hand. He strokes up and down the length, the muscles in his forearm tense.

It's the third time I've seen Miller come, and I'm starting to recognize the signs of when he's close. His forehead creases, and his eyelids get heavy. His breath grows ragged, mingled with a deep rumble in his chest. His cock is thick, swelling fat and long in his hand, and the way he moves—it's obvious he's done this many times before. He's an expert, pushing and pulling at the skin, the muscle underneath. I should be disgusted.

I'm enthralled.

I sit up to get a better view, but his hand shoots out and pushes me back.

“Lie back, Kitten,” he bites out, the cords of his neck strain as he gets closer. The muscles in his lower abdomen cave and tense. Miller straddles my legs and gives his cock one last tug, then bucks forward, groaning.

Cum shoots forward, hot and sticky, landing on my belly and chest, in thick ropey spurts. He milks it until there's nothing left, just the shiny, red tip. There's no noise in the room other than his breathing. The numbness has left my limbs, and all I feel his semen pooling on my belly.

"Goddamn," he mutters, "every time is better." He grins up at me. "Don't you think?"

"I think you're crazy," I blurt. It's the truth.

He grabs his shirt off the floor and wipes his cock. Then bends over me and cleans off my skin with a disturbing gentleness.

"You like it, Kitten. Your pussy was sloppy wet, and I felt you quiver on my tongue."

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I cover myself and sit up, suddenly self-conscious. “You forced me.”

“Sometimes we have to be encouraged to try new things.” He shrugs. “It’s not my fault Royer didn’t pleasure you.”

“Don’t talk about Royer.” I’m standing now, grabbing my clothes. Looking for an exit. Being around Miller is dangerous. “You’ll obviously do anything to bring him down.”

“The weird thing,” he says, pulling up his jeans. “Is that you’re still protecting him. Why? What did that man give you?” His lips curve upward. “Definitely not an orgasm like that.”

“I don’t owe you an explanation.” But he does have control. Once I’m dressed, I stand by the door. “Can I leave now?”

He stares at me for a long moment, working the tight muscle in the back of his jaw. He walks over and opens the door. A member walks by and he says, “Number forty-seven is finished helping me unpack. Take him to the field so he can do his laps.”

“Yes, sir.”

“Wait... what?” I stare at him. “You want me to—”

“Talk back to me, forty-seven and I’ll double it.” The soft, post-orgasmic glint in his eye is gone, and it’s been replaced with the mean cold gaze of entitlement. He took what he wanted and is done with me.

I step into the hall, following the member toward the stairs, hearing the firm click of the bedroom door as it shuts. If I thought Miller was going to be an ally in here, I was wrong. He's the same thing he's always been: a fucking asshole.

12

Reagan

The next morning we're given a pager, blindfolded, and herded onto a shuttle. We're dropped on the outskirts of campus, near the campus bus stop.

"Remember, goats, what happens during the gauntlet stays in the gauntlet," Rat says from the front of the shuttle. "Squealers get eliminated."

He doesn't say more, but the implication is there. No second chances.

A yawn rips through me, and I cover my mouth. After leaving Miller's room and doing my run, I only got three hours of sleep. I'm barely functioning as we're told we can remove the blindfolds. I follow the line of pledges out down the middle of the shuttle, tripping on one of the steps. A hand reaches out and grabs my hip.

I turn back and see Miller sitting in the front row. I didn't even realize he was here. "Be careful, goat."

I blink and continue off the shuttle and onto the sidewalk. Everything in my life has been turned upside down in the last week. New school, blacklisted, dumped, humiliated, and given an entirely new look and gender. But the worst part is Miller Hansen entering my life.

At least I know he can't hurt me out here—or force himself on me. Not in public. Not on campus. I look up at the window and see him staring down at me, winking when

he catches my eye.

At least I think he can't do any of those things.

"Mr. Hart, I'm sorry you're finding the material this morning so boring. Mr. Hart... Mr. Hart!"

A foot slams against the back of my chair and I jolt awake, gripping my pencil in my fingers. My professor, with his graying hair and Coke-bottle glasses, is two feet away, staring at me intently. A quick glance around tells me everyone else is too.

"Thank you for joining us. I know molecular biology isn't the most enthralling subject, but generally my students at least pretend to pay attention."

"Sorry," I mumble. I catch the eye of the girl next to me. She's pretty. Long hair. Stylish clothes. Shoes to die for. Two weeks ago, she would have been me. She wrinkles her nose points at my chin. I touch it, realizing it's wet with drool, and quickly wipe it away with the sleeve of my hoodie. God, what's happened to me?

"Thank you," Professor Dawes replies, his smile tight and condescending. "Maybe you can tell us what you see on the next slide."

I manage to fumble through the answer and stay awake through the rest of the class. When we're dismissed, I stand up and look to see who kicked my chair. I'm shocked to see it's Janelle.

"Thanks for that," I say, avoiding her eye.

"Yeah, I did it as much for myself as anything." She slings her black messenger bag across her chest. "The professor had been staring you down for most of the class, which meant he was basically only focused on this section of the room. It was

stressing me out.”

“Oh, well, thanks anyway.”

She eases out of the row of seats. “It’s just so fucking dumb.”

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I look around and see that she's still talking to me. "What is?"

Her eyes flick to the numbered pin on my shirt. "This Greek thing. Going through all this bullshit to pay for friends. It doesn't make sense."

I barely know Janelle, but I do know the look in her eye. She doesn't just think it doesn't make sense. She thinks it's pathetic.

"People have a lot of reasons for joining a fraternity." Like getting back at the bitch who blacklisted me. "No one gives a shit if you don't join. Why do you care what anyone else does?"

She rolls her eyes and walks off.

Hitching my backpack over my shoulder, I walk out of the room and into the hallway. Unfortunately, the first person I see is Andrea surrounded by a group of GE's. I stare at them for a long, wistful moment. None of them have rings under their eyes, giving the implication they're getting a full night's sleep, and not having to deal with dried cum on their stomach, because even if they did have a guy jerk off over them, they at least took a shower afterward.

That could have been me. Should have.

"Theo."

It takes a second for that name to process, but it finally does, and I turn. Grayson is a few feet away, casually lurking behind a column. He jerks his head for me to follow

him. Ignoring the peel of laughter coming from the group of sorority girls, I walk down the hall, aware of Grayson vanishing behind a closing door.

Resting my hand on the doorknob, I take a deep breath and open the door.

“You look like shit.”

That’s the first thing he says.

“And you look like a dork in those glasses,” I retort, not in the mood for any of this.

“Ouch,” he says, pushing them up the bridge of his nose. “Okay. I guess I deserved that. I wasn’t trying to be a jerk. I was just... noting how hard the past few days must have been.”

I look around the room. It’s not a room, really. It’s a closet. The walls are lined with shelves. Supplies are neatly arranged on each one. The unexpected thing is Grayson. He’s not in his nerdy T-shirt or worn-out jeans. He’s in a jacket and nice pants—dressed for work at the Greek council. The glasses... well, they don’t look dorky at all. They look—dammit—a little sexy.

Exhaustion wells in my chest and, embarrassingly, tears prick at my eyes. I rub them with the base of my palms. I’m losing my mind. I know I am, because Grayson is not sexy. Are my standards collapsing already?

“You okay?”

I refuse to look at him, but answer, “It definitely hasn’t been a cake-walk.”

His hand rests on my shoulder. Gentle and supportive, or at least that’s the impression. I tense in response and shrug him away. I’m not in the position to trust

men at the moment.

If Grayson notices, he doesn't say anything. "How's it going? Besides the sleep deprivation. Any intel on where they're keeping you? I know the frat house is empty other than a skeleton crew of members."

"We're off campus at some farm, complete with a barn." I raise an eyebrow. "That the recruits sleep in."

"Ah," a smile twitches at his lips, "because you're goats. Royer's clever."

"It's degrading."

"Of course. The whole point is to break each of you down into a shell of your former selves and then rebuild you into the perfect Zeta Sig." He straightens, raking his fingers through his hair. "Any idea where it's located?"

"No. We're blindfolded to and from campus and they took our phones." I unclip the pager from my waistband. "They gave us these."

Again, he looks impressed. For the first time, I think I can accept he's one of them.

"They've definitely covered their bases. Unfortunately, we need to catch these guys in the act." He rubs the thin layer of stubble on his chin. "No other specifics?"

"There's a big farmhouse the officers and upper classmen are staying in. The guys have nice rooms. The pledges are out in the barn."

He frowns. "You've seen the rooms?"

I force my voice to stay level. "Miller made me put his clothes away."

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“Hansen?” he asks, and I nod. “Well, that sounds right. He’s never been one to allow an opportunity go by that he can’t exploit.”

I snort. “Seriously.”

He frowns down at me. “You sure none of them have figured out who you are? I know it’s risky. You’ve been around all three of the officers.”

“I’ve kept my distance from Royer. He’s not interested in me.” The room feels warm all the sudden. The sweatshirt I’m wearing is too heavy. “Knox thinks I’m just another goat. Entertaining to boss around. And Miller...”

His eyebrow raises and lips purse. “What about him?”

This could be the moment I get out of this—break free from the chains of my own doing. I could tell Grayson about the abuse, about how he’s using me as his plaything—continuing to blackmail me like he had from day one. But there’s no proof. Just my word against his and if it gets out the lengths I’ve gone to in order to get revenge? Well, I can’t handle another blow like that.

Still, I tell him a semblance of the truth. “He’s chosen me as like... his little bitch for the rest of the week. Made me clean up his room. That kind of thing.”

“It’s common for the officers to pick a pledge to kind of monitor. I guess you got on his radar when you skipped the recruitment process.”

“Great,” I say with a tight smile, “just what I need, another target on my back.”

And Miller pointing his locked and loaded weapon at me.

“Reagan,” Grayson says, taking a step closer. It’s not like the room isn’t tight enough as it is. The space between us cramped. I get a waft of his cologne. It doesn’t smell terrible. “Are you sure everything is okay? If things get dangerous, or too intense, you can let me know. We can call this off.”

I don’t want to call it off. Not now. “I want to see this through,” I tell him. “It’s exhausting and smelly and completely deranged, but I just want to get back at them, and move on with my life.”

He nods, but I see the worry on his face. I may look like a guy, but Grayson thinks I’m weak. I can sense it. And that’s what I’m tired of; these guys thinking I can’t handle anything, that I’m stupid and not strong enough to take what they can dish out.

“I’m ready,” I tell him, giving him a defiant grin. “Bring it on, right?”

Before he can answer, the pager vibrates, and I lift it up to read the screen.

816 Elm Street

2 PM

“Any idea what this is about?” I ask Grayson.

He shakes his head but memorizes the address and time before looking back at me. “Hopefully, it’s something we can use.”

Staring at the storefront, I check and recheck the address.

Dale’s Barber Shop

Complete with red and white spiral pole.

“Move, goat.” The words are followed by a firm hand landing between my shoulder blades, and I stumble forward. “Time to get shorn.”

I look over my shoulder and see the tattooed, punk-rock looking Zeta Sig, named Rat. “Don’t worry. It’s just hair. It’ll grow back.” He grins. “Hopefully.”

I touch the swoop, the only thing that made this new haircut acceptable. It made me feel less exposed. Even cut and dyed, it was something left of who I used to be.

Another Zeta opens the door and impatiently gestures for me to come into the shop. I can hear the hum of clippers before I cross the threshold. Standing behind three barber chairs, dressed in white barber coats, are the officers. Royer, Miller and Knox.

My lungs get caught somewhere in my chest, wringing out every last bit of air. I glance over my shoulder, searching for what? Who? Grayson? Do I think he’s going to come in and stop this?

“Ah, number forty-seven,” Knox calls, giving me a welcoming grin. “You’re up next.”

No. If the last week has taught me anything, it’s that I’m not that lucky. And no one is coming to save me.

Three other pledges squirm in their chairs. One rubs his hand over his scalp. Another looks stunned, staring at himself in the mirror. The third just looks pissed. Oh, and they’re all sporting shaved heads.

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“That’s it, boys,” Royer says, whipping the cloth smock off the pledge. All three leave, and it’s just me and two other goats behind me. Another member scurries around with a broom, sweeping up the hair. The whole thing is ludicrous.

“Are you serious with this?” The question comes out in a croak.

“All animals need a haircut. Keeps the barn healthy and hygienic.” Miller spins his chair and pays me little attention. For a second, I wonder if this will make me less attractive to him, but then I remember he’s not attracted to me, anyway. He’s addicted to power and abuse. He stops the chair and waves his hand in front of it. “Ready?”

“You take twenty-two,” Royer says, eyeing me. “I really want to be the one that gets rid of that stupid-fucking boy band swoop.”

Miller pauses and looks between me and Royer. “Uh, sure.” He shrugs. “Twenty-two, get your ass in the chair and prepare to have a head as smooth as a baby’s ass.”

Royer slaps the back of the chair and gives me a smug grin. My spine tingles. Does he know it’s me? Is this where he lets me know that I’ve fooled no one? Has Miller been playing with me this whole time? The paranoia rolls in thick, like a dense fog, and I barely remember getting in the chair.

Suddenly, I’m less worried about the haircut than being caught and exposed.

I ease into the seat, trying to avoid looking at myself, Miller or Royer in the mirror. Try, but fail. I can’t help but check out Royer. I know I shouldn’t, but I’ve

missed him. I liked him—loved, really. We had fun together, or I thought we did. I know that person is still inside there. I also know he's a liar, but can someone fake it that much?

“How many ‘ho’s do you pull with this pussy hair?” he asks, laughing. “Not many, I suspect.”

“He hooked up with Brianna the other night,” Knox comes to my defense. The kid in his chair next to me watches the exchange. “Fucked her in the bathroom.” He raises his fist—which is filled with a pair of clippers. “Ballsy freshman move.”

“Please,” Royer says, draping the smock over my upper body. His fingers graze my neck and the barest flicker of a spark shoots through me. I freeze, hoping he didn’t notice. Also, hoping he did. “Hooking up with Brianna is like riding the campus bus—free, readily available, and lots of room inside.”

He grins down at me, and I wait for it. The moment he recognizes me. I almost want it. I want him to know. I want him to see me. I don’t see a trace of recognition. Just the obnoxious expression of a guy used to getting everything he wants—when he wants—no matter whose life he destroys in the process.

“Like Andrea’s any better,” Miller says, covering his own victim with the apron. “The only pristine pussy you’ve experienced lately was your little blacklister.”

My cheeks, neck and ears burn red. Fucking Miller.

“Hey,” he says, shooting Miller a glare. “I took one for the team. You know that.”

Knox snorts. “Let’s not pretend you dumping your cum in that tight pussy was a hardship, bro.”

I want to vanish. To die. To get swallowed up by the earth. Deep inside, every female knows that guys talk like this. That they're the worst, but to actually hear it?

"It wasn't the fucking that was the problem. It was all the emotional hand holding. The assurances." He grabs the clippers off the workstation counter. "'Don't worry baby. Only if you want. We'll take it slow. Tell me if it hurts. I love you.'"

It's not the mocking way he says it, it's the way he knows the lines by heart. He'd said all of that to me. Word for word.

Bile rises in the back of my throat and I'm one second from bolting when Miller catches my eye. He shakes his head slightly—in warning.

"I know we're pretending to be barbers, but let's not actually gossip like them." He flips on the clippers and a loud, vibrating buzz fills the room. The kid in the chair eyes them warily.

"Say goodbye to that bush on the front of your head, forty-seven." Royer says. I hear the snap, then vibrating buzz of the clippers in my ear. My hands grip the arms of the chair as the first swipe runs over the back of my head. It was short back there already, but not that short. Every pass of the clippers feels like another violation. Royer moves to the front of the chair, and I close my eyes. He grabs the longer hair and collects it together before sheering it off. Hair sprinkles across the bridge of my nose and long after vibrating stops, I still haven't opened my eyes.

I can't look.

The smock is ripped away and Royer barks, "Forty-seven! You're done and you look fucking magnificent." I blink and see his smug, smiling face. He palms my head with his hand and roughly rubs the top. "You can head back to the barn with the other goats."

Lifting myself from the chair, it spins, giving me a glimpse of myself in the mirror. My hand instinctively goes to my head, running over the short bristles covering my scalp. Staring at the reflection, I realize that I don't recognize myself. Not just the hair, everything. Who I am, and who I've become.

That girl is lost for good.

13

Miller

"Now that everyone has spiffy new haircuts, it's time to clean up!" The announcement echoes on the high barn ceilings. Rat claps his hands to get everyone's attention. "You get thirty minutes."

The goats perk up, suddenly aware of what's happening. A shower.

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“That means thirty minutes for all forty-seven of you!” He grins in a way that’s both wicked and fun. “You can go one at a time, lather one another together, clean each other balls, or whatever equation you can come up with, but everyone gets wet.”

The barn reeks. Not from the former occupants—from the pledges. Two days of nervous sweat and anxiety has turned the room noxious. It’s common for the goats not to bathe during the gauntlet, but it’s also fun just to fuck with them a little. It was Royer’s idea. Go figure.

The cocky guys hop up first, peeling off their clothes before they even get to the bathroom, cocks and pale asses disappearing into the next room. It’s not actually a shower. It’s a stall for hosing off horses and cattle. A couple of long arms that swivel around a concrete floor area with a drain.

The next phase of guys moves quickly, just less enthusiastic, leaving the remaining goats behind. Rat runs behind them, corralling them like livestock. The other brothers, here mostly for the show, form a funnel for them to channel through. Rat runs around waving his tattooed arms.

“Come on little goats,” Rat calls. “Baaaa, we’re family here. No one cares if you have a tiny cock.”

“Jesus,” Royer laughs. “This is hilarious. Picking Rat for Warden was an excellent choice, Hansen.”

They all herd together, but there’s one dragging. Shuffling slowly behind the others in oversized sweats, while anxiously rubbing his hand over his shorn hair. That one

little runt that maybe isn't going to make it with the rest of his brothers.

"Who's that lagging behind?" Royer asks, narrowing his eyes. "Fuck. It's forty-seven.

He jabs me with his elbow. "Not sure your precious Theo is going to make it."

"I'm sure he's fine," I reply nonchalantly.

Unfortunately, Rat is the next one to notice Theo falling behind. A dark expression crosses his face, shifting from fun to mean. My spine straightens and I watch closely.

"You afraid of water, number forty-seven? Worried about showing your tiny, limp dick to the other goats?" His hand shoots out, grabbing Reagan's arm. To her credit, she keeps a straight face, but there's fear lurking in her eyes and a guy like Rat can smell it. "Or maybe you like dick so much you're scared to go in the room with forty-six of them. Afraid you're going to get hard?" He looks her up and down. "What've you got hiding under all those clothes, boy?"

He lunges for her hem, and I push off the wall.

"What are you doing?" Royer asks.

I don't answer. I don't have a good one, but I know that if Rat gets that shirt off, my plan goes to hell. I stride across the empty barn and step between them just as Rat's hand goes for Theo's crotch. I stop him midair.

"What the fu—" Rat's expression transforms in a heartbeat when he sees me. "VP." He straightens. "What's up?"

"Just came down to see what's the problem."

“It seems like forty-seven is afraid of the shower. I was just encouraging him to get in with the rest of the goats.” He looks over my shoulder to where I know Royer is watching. “Pres said, everyone gets wet.”

I nod and spare a quick glance at Reagan. She looks exhausted and harsher without the hair. It also highlights her features, the sharp cheekbones, and long eyelashes. Those goddam lips. She’s kept it together better than I expected, even though I thought she may break when Royer was talking about all the lies he told her. That’s the only time I saw a crack in her façade.

“You get in there and deal with the others.” I let my lips curl. “I deal with him on my own.”

“But everyone—”

“Gets wet. I know.” I let my eyes sweep over Reagan one more time. “Don’t worry, brother. I’ll make sure he gets a thorough soaking.”

Rat’s eyes flick between me and Reagan. His urge to fuck with the runt is overwhelming. I get it. Before Rat, the goats had to deal with me. I was the Warden last year. That’s also why he knows better than to question me. I have seniority here.

“You got it, VP. I trust that whatever you have in store for him will be equitable.” A shout comes from the shower room, and it draws his attention away. “Sounds like my supervision as warden is needed elsewhere, anyway.”

Once he’s gone, I jerk my chin toward the wide double doors. “Go.”

“What do you want me to do?”

“Go to my room. Shower. Wait for me.”

Those big eyes hold mine for a minute, like she's trying to decide which punishment is worse. The shower full of degenerate recruits? Rat? Or me?

I won't lie and pretend like there's a good choice here, but there is one that keeps us both from going down in flames.

"Fine." She exhales. "Thank you."

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I don't know if it's the softness in her voice or the words themselves, but something dark kicks to life in my chest. "There's no need to thank me. I'm not saving you, kitten. If you haven't noticed, when I adjust your hazement, I'm not giving you a break. Everything the other goats do, you do too—with an added twist." I look down at her. "You reek. Clean up and wait for me."

She nods and takes a step back, grabbing her backpack and scurrying out of the room.

I'm not the only one that watches her go—Royer's gaze follows her from his spot by the door, forehead creased in curiosity. He knows well enough not to question me, but I sense the suspicion. It's a lot of interest in one goat—one he should have recognized if he wasn't so focused on his own getting his cock wet and making this the most insane gauntlet Zeta Sig has ever seen.

I cross the barn, preparing my excuse along the way, but one of the members, Bushwacker, rushes up to Royer with a sheet of paper.

"I updated the schedule with the added hazement," he says, pushing his wild, curly hair back.

Royer skims over the details and a slow grin spreads across his mouth. "Yeah, looks good. Tomorrow night. Midnight."

No one told me about a change in the schedule.

"What is it?"

Bushwacker shoves the paper at me, and I see the next item on the schedule.

Fucking hell.

“Seriously?” I ask, because this is one of those things that will get us tossed for sure if word gets out. “You really want to go there? I mean, the pledge cocktail is basically an urban legend. No one knows if it’s even actually been done.”

“Maybe it is, but not anymore. I told you, bro,” Royer says, “no holding back. This year is going to be epic.”

He’s right, of course. It is epic, hilarious, and downright nasty all at once. But it’s also going to be a problem for me and Reagan. There’s no way she gets through this without revealing her true identity.

“You better be sure this isn’t going to backfire,” I tell him, but I know it doesn’t matter. As deep as I’m in it with Reagan, Royer is just as obsessed with the gauntlet.

All of this is on my mind when I get upstairs. Warm, soapy, moisture lingers in the air—the scent of my shampoo and bodywash. Masculine and spicy. The lights are off, other than the glow from the bathroom. I peer in, but she’s not in there. What the—?

Then I find her. There. In my bed. Curled up in a tight ball. She looks like a kid; her features softened in her sleep, the dark circles under her eyes more pronounced. Her legs are bare, the hem of her—fuck!my ratty, worn sweatshirt grazing her upper thighs. Kitten thought she could borrow my clothing to snuggle into. Does she like my scent? My dick swells and I take a step forward. It’s going to be a pleasure to take that right back off.

She sighs, stirring slightly, grabbing the pillow next to her. She yanks it close to her

chest and clutches it protectively—a shield against the bad things—badmenlike me.

I'd planned on coming up here and making her pay for getting her out of that jam downstairs. Forcing her to do her share of the hazement but looking at her like this... it feels wrong to fuck with her right now.

I grab a pillow off the bed and a blanket, then stretch out on the couch. My legs are too long, forcing me to the side, positioning me and Reagan nearly face to face. I drift off, staring at her, taking in her features; those eyelashes, those lips, that fucking delicious mouth, pushing aside the worries about tomorrow's challenge.

I'll figure something out. I always do.

14

Reagan

The soft padding of the bed is the first thing I notice when I wake. It's comfortable, warm, and my muscles don't ache. It's wrong. I jolt up, blinking at the room, paranoia creeping up my spine, and try to put the pieces together. Last night had been a close call with Rat trying to force me into the shower with the other guys. Miller stepped in and sent me to his room to clean-up and wait for him. I did what he said. I knew better than to test him, but he never came. I got in the bed just to rest for a minute—to wait for him and whatever punishment he planned for me. After that is blank.

I look down and see that I'm in the same clothing as the night before. Miller's sweatshirt and the boxer briefs I stole from his drawer. Reaching under the shirt, I touch my chest and it's also clean. Whatever happened, Miller didn't mess with me. I wish that made me less apprehensive, but I don't like owing him any debts. I know he'll extract payment when he's ready, and it will be worse than before.

I glance over at the couch and see a bunched up pillow and rumpled blanket. Is that where he slept? Doesn't seem right. What time is it? I search for clock on the nightstand and stop. A plate sits on the table with a glazed donut and a note propped against it. In scrawled handwriting I read, Eat up, kitten. Tonight's going to be a doozy.

Ignoring the donut, I get out of bed. I take a second to straighten it up, giving the impression I wasn't there, although clearly, that's more for my benefit than anyone else. I pull on the jeans from the day before but keep on Miller's sweatshirt. My other one has bits of hair in the collar from the barbershop, and... I pull the shirt up to my nose. It smells good. Clean.

A flash of Miller's face between my legs brings a flush of heat across my body.

Okay, maybe wearing the shirt isn't a good idea.

I strip it off, putting back on my dirty shirt. Footsteps sound up and down the hall. An alarm in the next room keeps going off every ten minutes. Snooze button, I guess. I'm not sure how to get out of here—when it's okay to leave. I have two hours before my next class and a pile of homework to do. I haven't even been thinking about all the schoolwork I'm falling behind on. My eyes fall on the desk in front of the window. Miller's laptop and a few binders are stacked on the edge. I make a little space and pull out my assignments. There's a speech in my marketing class, a paper in language arts, and three videos to watch for Spanish.

We turned our devices in at the beginning of the week, so I snag Miller's laptop. At least I can get the videos watched. A few quick keystrokes later I'm in my class website, learning how to conjugate verbs. Or trying.

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Source Creation Date: July 9, 2025, 3:05 am

My stomach rumbles and I glance at the donut. Fuck it. I deserve it after that the last few days. I've just taken a bite of the sweet, sticky donut when I get an alert from my school messaging system.

Grayson:I don't know if you'll get this but it's worth a shot.

Reagan:I'm here.

The message sits for a moment, the icon blinking waiting for a response. Tiny bubbles appear.

Grayson:I didn't hear from you yesterday. Where are you?

I look down at the bed and then over to the couch to the pillow and balled up blanket. How do I answer this?

I'm in Miller's bedroom.

In was in his bed.

Wearing his clothes.

Now, I'm eating the donut he left me.

Reagan:I'm fine. Yesterday was just busy. You know, getting all my hair shaved off.

That's right. I'm still pissed he didn't save me from that.

Grayson:I'm sorry about that. It wasn't big enough to get the council to notice. Minor infraction at best. Are you okay?

Reagan:Define okay.

There's a pause, then the little gray circles flicker at the bottom of the screen.

Grayson:I really am sorry. You're strong R. It's worth it. We'll bring them down.

I look over at the note Miller left, the warning at the bottom. I'm not so sure Grayson is right. I'm not even sure if I'll survive another day in this place. What would have happened if they'd forced me into that shower and seen that I'm not who I say I am? Every minute, it feels harder to breathe in here. Harder to survive without them knowing the truth. Every day that passes will make it more of a betrayal. Not just to Royer. To Knox, Rat, and all the other goats. I'm scared of what will happen when they find out.

I type out a response.

Reagan:I hope so.

I finish the donut and get back to work. I'm halfway through the second one when a notification pops up in the corner of the screen. An assignment for Cal 103. I click on it, and pop into the website. Somehow, in the span of three days, Miller has gotten behind on his math. Curiosity, and the love of numbers (and a deep dislike for foreign language) draws me in. I scribble down the work, answering each question in succession, too lost in the science of it all to notice that the door swings open behind me.

"What the fuck are you doing?"

I freeze, pencil paused, then slowly turn around. Knox stands in the doorway, Wittmore Rowing T-shirt straining across his chest. His eyebrow is raised in question.

“D-d-doing homework,” I stammer.

His long legs make his walk across the room short and a moment later, he’s towering over me. My heart pounds. It happens any time any of them get too close. Can they sense it? Or am I really just another goat in the herd? Knox shifts the screen so he can see it better, then snorts. “He’s got you doing his calculus?”

I shrug and make a neat pile with the papers.

“Fucking bastard.”

“Is that wrong?” I ask, pushing the words over the lump in my throat.

“No, it’s freaking genius.” He shakes his head. “I knew he had something going on—some kind of scam. He had way too much interest in you.” He taps the computer. “This makes sense.”

I try not to shift, to show any anxiety, but it’s hard. Knox is imposing, oozing confidence and security. Everything I’m not—at least not in this body.

His big hand comes down on my head, and he rubs my shaved scalp. “The shuttle for campus leaves in ten minutes. You probably need to be on it.”

Source Creation Date: July 9, 2025, 3:06 am

I nod, grabbing my backpack, not looking back. My heart beats wildly. Frantically. What if Knox had come in a few minutes earlier? When I was asleep in Miller's bed? Or God forbid, changing.

Adrenaline pumps through my veins the entire way to campus, continuing after I drop into my chair in class.

I slink down, mimicking the way I've seen the other guys sit; legs sprawled, knees wide apart. A girl enters the room with her hair in two knots at the top of her head and her thick bangs are cut blunt across her forehead. Dark lipstick paints her mouth as she talks to another classmate. It takes me a second to realize it's Janelle. She looks cute, in her own gothy-emo way, but it's more than just the effort she put into her style today. It's who she's talking to.

Rat.

A sick feeling swirls in my stomach. There's something about him I don't like, something different than the other guys. Miller is dark and wicked, but all he wants is sex and control. Royer a chameleon, and Knox is just all about the fun, but Rat? He's too into his role as warden.

The uneasiness continues when he tucks a piece of her hair over her ear and bends, whispering something.

Gag.

When she climbs up the stairs, he goes in the opposite direction, sitting with a few

other Zeta Sig's across the room. We're not to associate with the brothers during the day, not unless we're summoned. I'm surprised when she stops at my row and sits one desk over.

"What's that all about?" I ask.

"All what?"

"I thought you said all frat boys were losers."

She pauses. "He's in a frat?"

I laugh. "Big time."

She mulls this over for a second and opens her laptop. "Every rule has the exception."

I laugh. "You really think that guy is the exception?"

"Hot is hot." Her eyes flick across the room to where he's sitting. "He's shot." She cuts her gaze back at me. "What do you care, anyway?"

She's right. Theo shouldn't care that Rat's a douche with a streak of hardcore asshole. Janelle is closed-minded and apparently a hypocrite. If she wants to go after a dick like Rat, then who am I to stop her? She'll learn the lesson on her own that her instincts were right all along; frat boys are the worst.

"Is that all you're getting?"

I glance over at the guy next to me, number seventeen. He's tall and lanky, having not quite grown into his arms and legs yet. He's studying my plate as we go through the food line in the main dining hall. So far, I have salad and a piece of grilled

chicken. Comparatively, his is loaded with pasta, fries, and something coated in a thick batter that may or may not be meat.

“Um... I don’t eat gluten...” He gives me a blank stare. “It gives me the runs.”

“Ah, right,” he nods in understanding. “That sucks.”

I grab a bag of chips at the checkout counter in an attempt to allay suspicion. Number seventeen doesn’t seem to pay much attention anyway; he’s already stuffed a roll in his mouth by the time we reach the table.

I sit between him and twenty-two, a boy with warm brown skin and a shiny silver watch on his wrist. The table is filled with recruits, all seemingly starving from the way they eat. I pick up my fork, hyper-aware of my choice in food, my mannerisms, and the fact that Andrea and a pack of GE’s just walked in the door.

“Anyone have an idea of what’s going down at midnight?” a guy at the end of the table asks.

“Nope,” seventeen says from beside me. “No clue.”

“I did hear a rumor about last year,” says another kid with a fine layer of white-blond fuzz covering his scalp. “They made everyone drink two bottles of scotch to see who was the last man standing.”

Another guy chimes in. “I heard they made everyone do push-ups and then paddled you according to how many you did.”

Twenty-two winces. “As long as they don’t make us circle jerk like the Alpha Ro’s do.”

Seventeen chokes on his second roll.

“Eh,” the blond-fuzz guy says, stabbing his fork into his mystery meat, “it can’t be that bad, right? They all survived it. I think they’re just trying to freak us out.”

Source Creation Date: July 9, 2025, 3:06 am

The table of guys nods their heads, feeling comforted by the words. I don't know if it's my own apprehension, or the fact I've had to keep on the downlow for so many days, but I look up from my uneaten salad and blurt, "Whatever you think it it's going to be, it'll be worse. Trust me."

All eyes swing to me. Heat rushes to my cheeks. I've made an effort to be invisible the last few days, and it's been easy to do with so many other recruits around.

"Oh yeah? Do you have some kind inside intel?"

Maybe? No, not really. "It's just a feeling," I say, picking up my fork. "Hopefully, I'm wrong."

But that's the thing, I realize later that night when Rat stands on top of a stack of hay, shirtless and revealing his disturbing tattoos, and presses the siren on the bullhorn, gathering everyone in a circle.

I'm not.

"Tonight, goats," he says, grinning darkly, "the gauntlet has no boundaries—no level too high. It goes to the place of urban legends. It's a place of bonding. Revelation. Brotherhood." The group of recruits shifts anxiously. No one in this room would admit they're afraid, but there's the scent of apprehension in the air. A drop of sweat slides down my back. He continues, "Tonight, we take part in a communion of sorts; The Pledge Cocktail."

The barn doors swing open and Royer strides in, holding something over his head.

Miller and Knox follow, but every pledge looks to the president, trying to see what he's holding. It's a trophy? No. A cup? A mug? He moves to the middle of the circle. A few shoulders relax visibly—it's just a drinking test. Barring alcohol poisoning, half the room has been priming for this challenge.

Until Royer spins the mug around and reveals the writing on the side.

"I Love Cumming."

The love is in the shape of a heart. On the other side it says, Cumming, Georgia. It's tacky, hilarious and... confusing.

"What the hell is that for?" the goat next to me asks.

The smug look on Royer's face makes me nervous. I look for Miller—for a clue—but his face is passive, bored even. This isn't good.

"Tonight, some of you will contribute to the Cumming Cup."

"Contribute?" someone says across the circle. "You mean..."

"Jerk off into the cup, yeah," Rat laughs.

"Shit."

"Ugh."

Everyone has an opinion. Not me. I'm just trying to control the wave of panic building in my chest.

"Fuck. This is gross," the guy next to me says. He's right. It is gross. Again, I look

for Miller, but he's avoiding me entirely. It's a smart move. My stomach drops and sweat accumulates under my armpits, but then I pause and thrust my hand into the air.

"Yes?" Royer asks, shifting that dark gaze to me.

"You said some of you..."

He responds with a slow grin. "Very good." He turns from me and faces the other side of the circle. "Some of you have been outstanding goats this week, others... not so much. We've taken note." On cue, Knox holds up a sheet of paper. Even from a distance, it's obvious it's a list. "Those of you that have fallen short of your duties will be the ones to participate in this challenge."

The drop of sweat turns into a river.

"There are twelve of you ranking at the lower end of our charts. Yes, we keep track." People shift and squirm, giving away exactly who knows they're being called out. "We know a few of you are going to feel inadequate. We've prepared for that. We're deviants, not pervs. The mug will be in the back horse stall. You'll go in, think of your mothers and leave your contribution in the cup." Rat explains the rules like we're about to play Monopoly. But this could work. If I'm in there alone, no one will know. "To keep you honest," he continues, "there will be a monitor in the room, making sure every last drop goes in."

"And then what?" a voice asks. "Who's going to drink this shit?"

"No one," Royer says, making eye contact around the circle, "if you finish in time."

I barely hear what he's saying, instead trying to think around my thundering heart. This is it. Not only will I be exposed, but it'll be in front of eighty other men. Eighty, exhausted, angry, horny men who haven't had a chance to hook up, or masturbate, all

week.

Shit.

“Forty-seven!” My eyes jerk up. Royer holds the mug out. “Since you specifically skipped out on the shower last night, you get the honor of being the cup monitor.”

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I blink down at the ceramic cup, then back at him. “Monitor?”

“You’re in charge of making sure every goat dumps his cum in the cocktail.” He shoves the mug in my hands and slaps me on the shoulder. “Got it?”

There’s a dark glint in his eye, one I’m not familiar with but suddenly it seems uniquely him. TheotherRoyer. The one that had quietly lurked beneath the surface all that time we dated, and I never even noticed. For the first time, I realize that my ex is dangerous. Not just to unsuspecting sorority girls, but to everyone. He may know not who I am, but he’d noticed that I didn’t take a shower with the other guys, and now, twenty-four hours later, he’s making me pay.

“Oh, and if you need a little inspiration,” Royer adds, shoving me in the direction of the horse stall, “we brought a prime selection of the Zeta Sig spank wall.”

I have no choice but to go into the room, repulsed and anxious. There’s a small table and a hard metal chair in the center of the room. I don’t fully understand the magnitude of the ‘spank wall’ until I see it. Dozens of photos are attached to the wooden boards, all of the girls in sexy or compromising positions. It takes me a minute to realize that most are of ‘real’ girls—not models or celebrities. There are blown up social media bikini shots, but a few are more candid, maybe even screen captures. Grainy and unprofessional. Those are the most revealing. Women having sex—all kinds—all angles. Open mouths, spread legs, tits, pussies, asses... it’s a lot. It all feels genuine, unposed, like someone took these photos in the middle of the act. I stand in the middle of the stall, gazing at all the photos when one catches my eye. The face is marked out with an ‘x’ and dark lettering covers the features. “Blacklisted.”

My stomach sinks when I see the small birthmark on the right rib. My right rib.

God.

Touching the spot on my side, I stare at the photo, wondering how and when it was taken. I'm on my back, naked, nose wrinkled in what could only be called an 'O face.' I force myself to look past that, to the background. I'm on a bed. The pillowcase is trimmed in blue. A small anchor in the corner.

The boat. Royer and I'd had sex on my parent's boat when we went out with Andrea and Miller. I drag my eyes away, looking past the manicured or waxed pubic hair and seamless tans, until I see another familiar face, the one I know I'm instinctively looking for: Andrea. That one startles me. Royer cares so little about her that he allows her to be on display for everyone to see? Does he feel this way about all women?

Andrea's not on her back—the photo is taken from below—as she straddles a man's body. Her tits are round and full, nipples darker than my own. There's a hand on her hip, masculine. A ring on the finger. I recognize the hand immediately. Royer's. Not a surprise. But what catches me off guard is something next to her thigh. The white sheet of the bed, also trimmed in blue. Those assholes had sex on my father's boat—while I was there.

I'd cry, but I'm all out of tears. There's no time anyway. The door opens, and Rat shoves a pledge through the door, slamming it shut behind him. I turn and face him. He looks as uncomfortable as I feel. Or at least on the surface. Everything would escalate if they knew I was a female, but as it is, I'm just some poor other goat forced into the situation.

He looks around, and his eyes brighten as they scan over the photos. "Nice."

I'm not prepared for how quickly he pulls out his cock, stroking it into a hard rod. I force myself to think of how a guy would handle this. Would he be grossed out? Maybe a little. Indifferent? Probably. Curious? Not visibly.

I decide to go with indifferent, even though it's almost impossible. I'm not turned on, that's for sure. Watching this kid, number six, yank and tug at his cock, takes the charm out of the action. He looks around the wall, avoiding eye contact with me, thank God, and zeros in on one of the photos a blonde with massive breasts. He stops in front of it, presses his palm flat against the wall and gets busy.

I stand there, awkwardly holding the mug in both hands, trying to figure out exactly how my life turned into this. How I let Royer and Andrea and Miller drag me down. Why I agreed to go undercover and subject myself with this insanity.

"Cup," he grunts.

I blink, coming back to the moment.

Number six hums again and jerks his chin at me. "I need the cup."

My eyes widen, and I shove it toward him. He doesn't take it. Just shifts around until he's positioned over the wide rim. His eyes flutter shut and his jaw slacks. I watch all of it in stunned horror as he grunts one final time and thick semen spurts into the cup.

Jesus.

I'm still processing what happened when number eleven rolls in. And eighteen. My mind shuts off as they come through, jerking off one by one. I see all kinds of dicks. Big, small, wide, narrow, curved, stubby. Some guys need the spank wall. Others have their own system—efficient, like any other consistently used muscle. Others seem to have to work at it, telling me to turn around and not be a pervert. They sit in

the chair, on the floor, lean against the wall, hunch openly. There's no comfortable way to get through this. It's just jerk, squirt, repeat.

By the time forty-four comes in, I'm numb to the smell of sweaty, nervous boys and the sight of cocks and jizz. I think I prefer the numbness to the ever-present ember of anxiety in the pit of my stomach. The end of this little game is coming. And when it does, I have no idea what I'm going to do.

Forty-four dumps his cum into the cup and zips up his pants. He peers into the mug and says, "That shit is so nasty."

He exits, and it's not long before the door opens again and Miller walks in.

For the first time since I walked in, I breathe a sigh of relief. "Oh thank God, I didn't know what to do—"

"I told him I would monitor you."

"Okay, good." I take in a few more breaths, settling my racing heart. "So what do we do? Just... wait? Pretend?"

He chuckles. "I told you I'd make sure neither of us gets caught, but I'm not giving you a break." He takes the cup from me and places it on the table, then sits in the chair. "You're doing exactly what they did, getting off."

"You're kidding."

He slouches in the chair, leaning back lazily, legs sprawled. He smirks up at me and adds, "You have ten minutes until that timer goes off out there. I suggest you get busy."

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The timer. I'd been so focused on what I was going to do that I'd forgotten about it. With the way things have been going, the way Royer zeroed in on me, I have no doubt I'm the one that will have to drink the cocktail. The thought propels me, and I lean against the wall and push my pants over my hips. I fumble with the boxer briefs, removing the rolled-up sock.

"You need me to hold your cock?"

"Fuck you."

His eyebrow jolts up. "Happily."

I throw the socks at him and ignore it when he holds them up to his nose and sniffs. The warm rush of humiliation burns against my cheeks as I push my hand down my lower belly and beneath the waistband. I reach between my legs, feeling the warm heat. I'm not wet though. Not after the last hour of being surrounded by the spank wall and a dozen unappealing cocks. I close my eyes and push aside everything else, the photos, the cum cup and Miller's watchful gray eyes.

Well, maybe not the eyes. I think about them, how intent they are, how they spark to life when he's fucking around. How they're right above his sharp, slanted cheekbones and soft lips. The lips that worked me into a frenzy. The heat of his tongue.

The rush of heat surprises me, and my fingers slide easier, spreading moisture across my clit.

Come on, I think. You can do this. It's not my first solo mission, after all.

I try to focus but I'm too aware of him, and I sense his movement from the chair. I open my eyes and he's standing in front me.

"Let me tell you what, kitten," he says, running his fingers down the column of my neck. "Royer is going to make you drink that cocktail, if you don't beat the clock." A sharp flash of pain, followed by the rush of warmth, runs through me as he tweaks my nipple. "But I'm not going to let that happen," he continues, making a circle around the hard peak of my breast.

The slick heat builds between my legs, his touch adding fuel to my smoldering fire. I catch a rhythm, the rhythm of his touch, and thighs spread. "Why do you care?" I ask, forcing out the words. I'm close to the edge, teetering really. Inching closer with every flick of my click, every circle of my nipple. "I'd think you'd want me humiliated."

He drops his mouth next to my ear. "The only cum going in your mouth is mine." He nips my earlobe. "Do you understand that?"

My hips buck forward just as dark fear twists in my belly, spreading out across my nerves. It mingles with the buildup in my core, the bundle of energy in my clit. This is more than a game for Miller. It's an obsession. A possession. If I thought he was being nice or working with me, I was foolish and wrong.

He grabs my chin and forces me to look at him. "Do you understand?"

I stare into the molten steel of his eyes and do the only thing I can. I whisper, "I understand."

"Repeat it."

I swallow, hating myself, but hating the idea of the alternative worse. "The only cum

going in my mouth is yours.”

“Good girl.” He runs his nose along the side of my face. “Let go, kitten, I’ve got you.”

I open my eyes and his are right there, boring into mine. He moves his hands to my hips, holding me up. The rush trickles over me, starting low and burning, rising as it spreads. Miller’s lips part, mimicking my shallow breaths, as though he’s going through this with me. I ball my fist between my legs and moan, allowing him to hold me up as I shatter into a million pieces.

“Beautiful.” He strokes my side, providing a strange soothing motion as I come back to my senses. “I knew you could do it—just needed a little help.”

He pinches my nipple again and straightens, walking over to grab the cup. I watch him, trying to regain my senses, level my breathing, as he walks out the door, leaving me with my pants and dignity on the floor.

15

Reagan

I know everyone thinks I’m a spoiled, entitled brat, but I can be grateful.

Today I am thankful simply for the fact I didn’t have to drink a cup of fratboy cum.

If that doesn’t say everything about my life right now, I don’t know what does.

I see him as I walk across campus, his tall, lanky body and mussed up hair. He catches my eye and jerks his chin toward the academic building.

I triple check the hallway before I enter the same closet we met in last time. Grayson is there, dressed in those work clothes that don't make him look completely stupid, holding a cup of coffee. His eyes dart to my hair and his jaw drops.

“Holy shit.”

“Yeah.” I rub my hand over the bristles. He hadn't seen it yet. “Cutting edge, right?”

“It’s—”

“Awful. I know.”

“No. It’s—”

“Stop.” I gesture to the coffee. “Got extra?”

It takes him a second to drag his eyes away from the abomination that is my head, to thrust the cup toward me. “Oh, it’s for you.”

I take the cup, feeling the heat burn through the paper. “Really.”

“I figured you probably had a hard night.”

I narrow my eyes at the word ‘hard,’ wondering if that’s a double entendre. He stares back blankly, and I sigh. “Why would you think that?”

“I went through Zeta Sig initiation, Reagan. It’s mid-gauntlet. I know what happens.”

Does he though? Does he know what I went through? A girl forced to watch twelve guys wank into a cup. A novelty cup from a discount store? My cheeks heat just thinking about it and tears prick in my eyes. At the time, it was about survival, but now...

“Hey,” he says, expression softening, “what is it?”

“Nothing.” I wipe at my eyes and stare at the floor.

His hands cup my face, and he tilts my chin upward. “Tell me what happened.”

“What’s the point? I didn’t get any proof, so why does it matter?”

“The more information we have, the better, Reagan. I need everything.”

I look past the glasses into the dark brown of his eyes. There’s not a trace of meanness there and, right or wrong, it makes me feel safe. This whole week is about bonding and brotherhood. I’ve never felt so disconnected and unstable.

Grayson brushes a tear off my cheek with his thumb and I tell him everything that has happened the last few days—well, the official things. I still haven’t told him about Miller knowing my identity. As I describe the cocktail, the muscle in the back of his jaw tightens. He seems repulsed, maybe a little angry. The more I talk, the more horrified I feel. God, how could I sit through that? Why didn’t I leave?

“It was disgusting,” I finish, leaving out the part about Miller making me masturbate.

“But Royer didn’t make you drink it?”

I shake my head. “No. They beat the time.” I laugh darkly. “Literally.”

He doesn’t laugh with me. “I’m sorry this happened to you. I’ve heard about this ritual, but I always thought it was just an urban legend. It never happened in my four years at Zeta Sig.”

“You know Royer,” I say, “he wants to be the best at being terrible.”

“So far, it seems like he’s succeeding.”

“Well, it’s over. I survived one more day. Four more to go.” I take a sip of coffee. The liquid warms my stomach. I look up and see him watching me. “What?”

“You’re pretty brave, you know that?”

I’ve been called a lot of things, but brave isn’t one of them. “It doesn’t feel brave. Every time I don’t walk away, I feel like I’m the world’s biggest idiot.”

“You’re not an idiot. You’re strong, Reagan.” The wide curve of his hand cups the back of my head and rubs over the shorn hair. “And believe it or not, I like the hair.”

I squirm away from the sensation and roll my eyes. “Yeah, right.”

“No, really.” His eyes skim down my face. “You look badass and beautiful.”

The sincerity in his voice forces me to look at him, and his expression matches his tone. My skin prickles and the air in the room grows thin. I should step back. The space between us is a little too narrow, but my feet are glued in place.

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“I should go,” I force out, because I know I’m exhausted and deprived of genuine affection and vulnerable.

“Right.” Although he doesn’t move right away. “Oh, I have something for you.” He reaches into his pocket. “You’re right about proof. We need evidence—hard evidence.” He holds up a circular button identical to the one I’m wearing. My pledge pin, complete with the number forty-seven. “There’s a camera embedded in here.”

A squicky feeling churns in my stomach. Grayson wants to see everything going on during the gauntlet. Including the stuff I’ve been hiding from him. “Seems risky,” I say, not entirely convincing. “If they found out...”

“They won’t.” He reaches for the button on my shirt and unhooks it. Then replaces it with the new one. He must sense my skepticism because he rests his hand on my shoulder and squeezes. “We need this, Reagan. We have to get them to stop.”

I nod. I know he’s right; we need hard evidence on the Zeta Sig’s, but even after I leave the closet and make my way across campus, I know that the frat’s won’t be the only reputation ruined.

16

Miller

“Congratulations!” Knox yells from the front of the room. “You’ve made it halfway through the gauntlet! Only four of you have pussied out and quit and we consider that reason to celebrate.” He grins out at the bald, exhausted goats. “It’s time for the

Liquor Run.”

Knox is an enigma. A balance between hard partying frat boy and dedicated athlete. The pressure he gets from being a varsity level athlete with Olympic aspirations is intense. I think that’s why he needs to blow off so much steam.

The Liquor Run is Knox’s favorite part of the gauntlet, probably because it combines both of those things. Competition and a party.

“Each one of you goats will team up with a brother who will drive you around to five liquor stores. You’re tasked with purchasing five bottles of liquor in two hours and bringing them to the rendezvous point. Everyone who succeeds will throw down at the most epic party of the year. The rest of you?” He laughs darkly. “Trust me, just fucking succeed.”

“What if we don’t have ID?” someone shouts from the pen. All of the goats are underage—that’s why this is challenging and hilarious.

“Tough shit,” Rat says, stepping next to him. “You better get good at sucking liquor store clerk cock.”

Rat lifts a bullhorn to his mouth and begins shouting out partners for the night. I’ve already arranged it for Reagan to be my partner. Once Knox discovered her working on my homework, he stopped wondering why I had ‘Theo’ in my room so much. It surprised me when I found out what she’d done. I mean, why was she doing my homework? I’m not sure I care that much because I have an ‘A’ in math now.

Rat calls out my name and then forty-seven, and Reagan and I make eye contact across the barn. We haven’t spoken since last night, but I’ve thought about her a lot. I just about rubbed my dick raw after going to bed last night, thinking about her getting herself off in the horse stall. Every time I think she’ll break, or that I’ll push

her past her limit, she rises to the occasion. Reagan Lake is tougher than anyone thinks.

She crosses the room, wearing loose Army green pants and a Wittmore sweatshirt, fussing with the pledge pin near her collar. We walk out to the parking lot and get into my Jeep. I've just slid the key into the ignition when she says, "Are you sure you want to do this?"

"The Liquor Run?" I ask. "It's a tradition."

"No, with me," she says. "Look at me, Miller. I definitely have no ID and with this haircut I look, at best, like a fourteen-year-old boy."

I shrug. "You'll figure something out. Everyone does."

"Everyone?"

I crank the engine. "Almost everyone, but I haven't lost yet, and I don't plan on it tonight."

Her eyebrow lifts. "You have something special up your sleeve? A fake? You know the clerk?"

"No," I say, backing out of the parking spot. "This is all on you, kitten, but I have no doubt you'll pull this off."

Okay, maybe I overestimated Reagan on this one. She does look younger with her hair shaved. Royer always bought her booze, so she doesn't have a convincing fake ID. And whatever spitfire attitude that normally gets her through these rituals seems to have faded under the neon beer signs hanging on the liquor store walls.

“I give up,” she says after the third store. “You need to go back and find a new partner.”

Eight other teams have come and gone while we’ve been in this parking lot. I should leave, heading out to the next option, but I haven’t been able to make myself go. Gripping the steering wheel, I stare over her in the passenger seat, shoulder slumped, teeth worrying her bottom lip. She’s right. This is pointless. Except I think about what I would do if she was a normal guy—just a stupid freshman boy learning the ropes of Zeta Sig.

I’d beat his ass raw if he pussied out like this.

I’d drag him in there again. Humiliate him. Emasculate. I’d ride that kid until he was on the edge of a breakdown and then teach him how to be a man.

I sigh heavily and then say, “Get out of the car.”

She looks up, eyes shiny. God. She’s crying. “You’re leaving me here?” Her hands wring together.

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“Fuck no.” I open my door and step out, slamming it behind me. I circle around and jerk open her door. “Get out of the goddamn car. We’re not done here.”

She stares at me but doesn’t move. I grab her by the arm and yank her out. She stumbles, but I hold on tight, keeping her from falling. “But he said no.”

He is the greasy-haired guy behind the counter who took one look at Theodore Hart and denied his purchase.

“It’s time to man the fuck up, Theodore.” She flinches when I use the male version of her name. “It’s time to get in there and prove you can do this.”

“I’m not a—”

“You are tonight. And I’m not going to embarrass myself by not winning. Straighten your spine. Grow a pair of balls.” I grab her between the legs, squeezing the lump of socks. “Get in there and buy me a fucking bottle of whisky.”

She stares at me for a long moment, eyes wide and caught in some kind of battle. There are times I know Reagan is about to quit, where she’s about to get pushed too far. I’ve learned that her stubborn streak is higher than her need for self-preservation. Defiance flickers in her eye and she says, “Fine,” and turns stalking back toward the store.

I follow her in, and this time she doesn’t roam around, taking a minute to gather up her courage like she’s done all the other times. She goes straight for the bottle, snatching it off the shelf and slides it across the counter.

The clerk lifts his eyes from the magazine splayed on the counter before him. He looks like he's in his forties, with gray streaks at his temple. A faded tattoo of a dragon peeks out from under his shirt sleeve.

"I'd like to buy this," Reagan says, voice modulated lower.

"I already told you. No ID, no booze, kid."

"I'm not a kid and I told you I left it at home."

"Sure, you did. With your algebra homework. You look like you're twelve." He picks up a magazine on the counter and starts flipping through it. "Stop bugging me."

I'm standing where she can see me, slightly behind the clerk, by a booze display. It has a sexy girl in a tight bikini holding a margarita. Reagan looks up at me and I give her a hard stare.

Her eyes flick to the margarita display, then back to the clerk. She straightens her shoulders and says, "I know I may look twelve, but looks can be deceiving."

He lowers the magazine and smirks. "Oh yeah?"

"Yeah." She takes a deep breath and reaches for the hem of her shirt. "How many twelve-year-olds have tits like this?"

She lifts her shirt and the guy's jaw drops, eyes unblinking. I stare at her chest, at the brown of her nipples and the faint, remaining tan lines from a summer on the lake. My fingers twitch, wanting to feel their weight in my hands, but she drops the shirt and pushes the bottle toward the clerk along with a twenty-dollar bill.

The clerk doesn't speak, but he does take the cash and slides the bottle into a paper

bag.

“Have a good night,” Reagan says with a cheeky grin. The overhead bell rings as she heads out of the store.

The clerk looks at me, the glaze slowly lifting from his eyes. “Did you see the tits on that one?”

“Yeah. And you know what?” I ask. “They taste as good as they look.”

Exiting the store, I walk up to the Jeep where Reagan stands outside the passenger side, bouncing on her toes, grinning wide. Without warning, she rushes me and gives me a hug.

“Oh my god, that was crazy,” she says, pressing those glorious tits against my chest.

I rest a hand on her lower back. “Unexpected for sure.”

“You never said I couldn’t show my tits.” She pulls back and smiles. “You said I should man up, but I’m not a man. I saw that display of the woman in the store, and I just knew my tits are as good as hers. I figured at the very least I’d stun him and steal the bottle.”

“I know for a fact your tits are better than that model’s, just saying.”

“Yeah?” She looks up at me with those bright eyes, soft and genuinely touched by the compliment.

I nod, unable to figure out what to say next. My heart thuds in my chest, energized by the scene in the store, the closeness of this sexy, wild girl. I want to push up her shirt and suck on those nipples right here in the parking lot. I want her tongue in my

mouth. My cock swells at the thought of her—all of her. I'm not supposed to want Reagan like this. Not for real.

The rush of blood pounds in my ears, and I think that maybe I'll tell her. I'll just tell her that I want her, but then I realized the pounding wasn't just my pulse. It's the thud of bass from a truck barreling down the road. A truck I recognize as one of my frat brothers. I step away from Reagan and nod at the Jeep. "We've got an hour and four more to go."

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“I’m ready,” she says, the adrenaline still running through her. I sense it when she sits next to me in the Jeep and as we drive down the road toward the next stop. But what I really notice about the girl next to me is that she’s full of surprises and for the first time in a long while, I’m eager to find out what comes next.

We’re not the first to arrive at the rendezvous point, but the important part is that we’re not the last.

“You know those clerks are going to talk about this for years,” I tell her, pulling into the sandy lot. Reagan repeated her tactic at four other liquor stores and came away successful at each one, the last a woman who winked and gave it to her for free. “This night is going to go down as the one where ‘the girl flashed her tits for a fifth of whiskey.’”

“Hey, I’ve been famous for worse things.”

Ah, the blacklist.

Her smile drops, replaced with the same sadness and regret that has marred her expression for days. I feel the slightest regret over what we did to Reagan. She’s not as much of a prissy bitch as Andrea and Royer claimed. Or maybe this whole experience has just toughened her up.

“At least this one is a little more anonymous.” She runs her hand over her head, fingers lingering just above her ears. I snatch it from the air, twisting our fingers together. “I thought that one guy was going to try to reach across the counter to make sure they’re real.”

My blood heats at the thought of it. Fucking pervert. Most of the guys were shocked and amused. That old asshole thought he'd take advantage. If he'd tried...

"I would've cut his fingers off. One by one."

She stares at me for a moment, then down at our twined fingers, like she's trying to ascertain if I'm serious. Trust me. I am. The thought of some jackoff touching Reagan... well. Just no.

She pulls her hand away and quickly looks out the window. "So what's next?"

It's hard to see from here, but there's a dune just ahead that slopes down toward the beach. The property is owned by an alumnus, and we have permission to party here all we want.

"You get to celebrate your success with a beach blowout, booze and all the pussy—" I wrinkle my nose and she does the same. "Guess you're out of luck on the pussy part."

"Guess so."

I pull out one of the bottles of whisky and unscrew the cap. I hold it out to her and to my surprise, she takes it, swallowing a gulp. "Oh god," she says, wheezing from the burn.

I grab the bottle from her and take two gulps. "Tastes pretty fucking good."

She shakes her head; the shadows highlighting her cheekbones. When it's just the two of us together, she drops the male bravado and it's easy to tell she's a girl. "You're..." she starts but stops.

“What?” I take another, smaller swallow.

“Wild. Fearless.” She looks at me from under those long eyelashes. “Fun when you’re not being scary.”

My heart thuds from the adrenaline of the night—from the booze. I lean toward her and run my fingers through the stubble just over her ear. Her nervous spot. “You think I’m scary?”

She doesn’t respond, and I continue rubbing my fingers over the soft fuzz. I can smell the whisky on her breath. See the plump swell of her bottom lip from where she’s been worrying it with her teeth. The urge to kiss her, lick my way into her mouth is all-consuming. It’s stupid. She tenses, reaching up to toy with the pledge button on her shirt. I drop my hand and pull back.

“Seeing you flash your tits all over Wittmore was unexpected. Good, but unexpected.” I take one more sip and screw back on the top. “But you’re more fun than I thought you’d be.”

I pop open the door and when I get to the front of the car she meets me, backpack over her shoulder. I take the liquor loaded pack from her and sling it over my shoulder.

The party unfolds in front of us, the goats that successfully returned and all the brothers. Oh, and girls, a busload of them, all in string bikini tops and short shorts, have been brought from campus. Otherwise, what’s the point?

“Forty-seven,” Knox says, voice a roar over the music and surf. “How’d you do?”

“She—he—killed it.” Fuck! Reagan stiffens next to me, and I shove the bag at Knox, hoping he didn’t catch my slip.

He gives me a weird look, but opens the bag and pulls out a bottle, nodding when he sees the brand. “Good job.” He peers in again. “Wait. There are only four bottles in here.”

“Oh, right,” I say, pulling the fifth out of my back pocket. It’s half full. “I may have started early.”

I needed something to calm my dick down with this hot, unexpected girl next to me all night.

Knox nods. “Add it to the pile and celebrate.” He then grins widely at Reagan. “You’re one day closer, dude.”

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Another goat shows up with his booty, and Knox returns the bag before heading over to check. When he's far enough away, Reagan punches me in the arm and hisses, "What the fuck, Hansen, you almost blew my cover."

I shrug. "I guess the sight of your tits multiple times tonight threw me off."

Even in the dim light, I can see her cheeks turn pink and I wonder how far that color travels down her body. The thought of seeing her naked, feeling her, sets my own body on fire. I pull out my half-drunk bottle of whiskey and unscrew the cap. I swallow a huge gulp and relish the burn spreads through my body. If we were back at the farm, I could command her to go back to my room and work off this boner. But we're out in the open—dozens of brothers and recruits around. Everyone here thinks she's a guy.

I'm stuck with a hard-on and a belly full of liquor.

I scan the area and see a group of freshly minted sorority girls on the other side of the bonfire. Those are the girls I'm looking for.

The bottles clink together when I shove the bag at Reagan. "Go put those with the others and have a good time. You earned it." She clutches the bag but doesn't move. I stare at those red lips and swallow down another gulp. "Go."

"Thanks," she says, "for helping me through that." She spreads her arms. "All of it, really."

My jaw clenches and I remind myself she's just a goat, a fake one at that, one that's a

means to an end. “Don’t thank me,” I tell her. “Get the fuck out of here.”

If I’ve hurt her feelings, she’s gotten better at hiding it. I cut my eyes away as she heads over to the bar.

When her back is turned, I look at her again, knowing a tight ass is hiding under those baggy jeans. It’s harder this time to drag my eyes away, but I shift my focus on the sweet things across the sand, prepared to do whatever it takes to get Reagan Lake out of my mind.

17

Reagan

After handing over the bottles to Rat behind the bar, I pick up one of the already poured cups and take a small sip. Gah. Awful.

“That’s quite the haul, forty-seven.”

I brace myself before I turn to face Royer. He’s leaning against the makeshift bar, reading the label on one of the bottles. The clerk was so stunned at me flashing him that he’d handed over a bottle of top shelf without realizing it.

I’ve never seen so many tit-matized men, and one woman, in my life. Thank God Grayson would be on the other side of that video—and it doesn’t record sound.

“Guess I got lucky.”

He opens a bottle and fills his red cup halfway to the top. “Seems like a trend with you.”

I can't help but gape. "You think watching twelve guys jerk off was lucky?"

He swirls the liquid and takes a sip. "You didn't have to drink it, which is what I had planned."

Behind me, Rat barks out a laugh. It's not surprising that Royer admits this. He's never been one to hide his motivations. I was just too dumbstruck to realize it applied to me as well.

"But I guess it makes sense you'd be pretty good at rubbing one out." A dark flicker crosses his eyes. "I talked to Brianna. She said you were quite the gentleman, even when she offered up her pussy to you."

"Just didn't seem like the right thing to do," I say. "Anyway, I like my women coherent when I fuck them."

A slow smirk tugs at his mouth. "I think you're still a virgin. Don't you, Rat?"

"Oh, definitely." Rat mixes drinks and pours them into orange cups. These he hands to a few girls that walked up behind me. "How about it, ladies?" he grins at them and nods in my direction. "Either of you willing to help this goat finally become a man?"

I'm obviously not a virgin. The man smiling like a douche next to me is the one that had the honor of popping my cherry, but I still feel humiliated and belittled from Rat's obnoxious tone and the girl's critical gaze. It's like... they're considering it. They've been put on the spot too by this powerful Zeta Sig, and moments like this can make or break a sorority girl. Are you game? Fun? Discerning?

"Eh," Rat says, cutting the tension, "don't worry about him. I've got someone special picked out just for him."

Relief crosses their features, while confusion must mar mine. I clutch my cup and notice Rat staring across the beach. There's a girl standing alone. She looks out of place, from her clothing to her makeup. She's holding an orange cup and when the firelight flickers in the bonfire it catches the purple highlights in her hair. My stomach flips anxiously, but it's not until she turns her head to the side and I see her profile, that I know for sure.

Janelle.

"I've been working on this one all week," he declares, more to Royer than me. "Hates frats and sororities. Thinks she's better than us. I've spent hours wearing her down and convincing her that not all of us are the same. What do you think?"

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“Feisty.” Royer shrugs. “But I’m not into that emo shit. She looks mean as hell.”

“She is, but one more cup of that spiked punch and she’ll be tame as a kitten.” The name kitten catches my attention, but Rat’s still looking at Janelle and I realize that no, he doesn’t know Miller’s nickname for me.

Where the hell is Miller, anyway?

I look around the beach and see him over with a group of girls. Three, as a matter of fact, each with long wavy hair and barely there bikini tops. I try not to dwell on the fact that I would have rocked that look. They’re all in various states of flirting, touching his biceps, leaning close, pressing their tits against his side, and he’s just basking in it. Of course he is. Why wouldn’t he be? He can have any girl he wants in this place.

Why do I care?

There had been a moment in the car where I thought he was going to kiss me, and it didn’t bother me like it should. But I was wearing the camera and Grayson could be watching. What would he say if he saw me kissing Miller?

“Your mission tonight, forty-seven,” Rat says, drawing me back to their conversation, “is to take that independent, anti-Greek bitch down the beach, bury your two-inch dick inside her, and come back a man.”

I laugh, trying to be in on the joke, but when I look at his face, and then Royer’s, he’s obviously not kidding. The pit of my stomach twists into a hard stone. “Is this an

order?”

“Either you do it, or I find someone else to.” His beady eyes hold mine. “I just thought you deserved a little reward for bringing in the best quality booze tonight.”

My heart pounds because there’s no way I can have sex with Janelle. I’m lacking all the right equipment and it’s possible she’ll recognize me. I also can’t let her go off with another guy, drugged and vulnerable. I’m risking everything by getting close to her. Jesus. The whole situation is messed up.

“Yeah, okay.” I swallow the rest of the alcohol in my cup.

Royer digs into his pocket and tosses something at me. I catch it midair. “Make sure you wrap it up.”

I stare at the condom for a moment, realizing it has the frats letters branded on the label. These guys are pigs.

“With the sorority girls you can raw-dog,” he explains, “we pass out Plan B like it’s candy. But the Chits? You gotta protect yourself.”

The hard feeling in my stomach loosens, and a wave of nausea rolls over me. These guys are monsters. Grayson is right. They have to be taken down. I finger the button on my shirt, realizing that all of this is being recorded. Every last minute.

“Good luck, forty-seven.” Royer claps me on the back while also pushing me forward.

Rat hands me another cup. “Don’t let her drink all of it. Maybe a few sips.” He winks. “Unless you’d rather her be unconscious.”

Bile rises in the back of my throat, but I manage to reply, “Gotcha.”

I take the drink and walk away from the two of them as quickly as I can. I just want to get away from them, but more than anything, I need to get Janelle out of here. She’s standing by the fire, trying to stay warm. I feel a hot gaze on me and look over to see Miller with a girl tucked into his side, watching me. Did he drug her too? I turn away, not caring what he thinks or knows. This has nothing to do with him.

I do one last thing before I approach my old roommate. I take off the button and slide it into my back pocket. What’s about to happen between us can’t be seen by anyone else. For her protection, as well as mine.

“Hey. Didn’t expect to see you here.” She snorts, but I see her glassy, dilated pupils. She’s already super wasted, but not enough that she doesn’t recognize me from class. “Thought you hated frats and frat boys and everything to do with this world.”

“Yeah, I thought I did too,” she replies, arm wrapped around her stomach. She looks around, but her gaze is completely unfocused. “Have you seen Rat?” She sighs. “He’s so fucking sexy.”

I fight a gag. This girl has terrible taste in men. Maybe worse than me. “He, uh, told me to take you somewhere to meet him.”

“Oh, okay,” she says, stumbling over the sand. I grab her by the waist before she falls, prompting her to lean against me. Leading her away from the party, I find a quiet area where I can try to figure out what to do next. Janelle grabs for the cup. “Oh, more drink!”

“Yeah, no more for you.” I snatch it back, forcing the liquid to slosh out the side. Then I dump the rest on the sand.

“Why did you do that? It was so yummy and makes me warm.” She looks me up and down. “Aren’t you cold? You’re so skinny. I know! I’ll make you warm.”

Her hand lands on my chest and I freeze, hoping she doesn’t feel my tits underneath, but she runs them up instead of down and wraps them around my neck. She sighs. “You seem like a good guy, Theo.” She presses her forehead into my shoulder. “Too bad I’m not into good guys. Where’s Rat? Is he coming?”

She’s lucky he’s not, because he’d have no problem taking advantage of this wasted girl. I wrap my arm around her waist and say, “Come on, let’s get you out of the cold.”

“Mmhmm,” she mutters, burrowing into my side. “You smell good.”

“Thanks.” I sniff her head. It smells sweet, a little like candy, and nothing like a barn. “You do, too.”

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It takes a while, because she gets heavier with every step, but we finally make it to the parking lot. I dig into her pocket and find her phone. I need to call someone and get her out of here.

There's only one person I can trust, and I don't have his number.

I remember the button in my back pocket. I type a message in the phone and hold it up to the camera. If you're watching, I need your help, it says. Miller says it's some alumni's property. Right on the beach. Secluded. Maybe you've been here?

Janelle watches me as I shove the button and phone back in my pocket. I think she'll ask me who I'm talking to or what the hell I'm doing, but she touches my lips and says, "I like your mouth."

"No, you don't. You've been drugged. You like anything right now."

I move her between two cars, out of the line of sight if someone walks up—someone I don't need seeing me. I lean her against a truck and brush her hair out of her eyes. "Just stay with me, okay?"

"Sure," she mumbles. "I told you. I like you."

"No, you didn't." She starts to fall over, and I lean against her to push her up right, leveraged against the car. "And no, you don't."

"But I do." She touches my face. "You have nice eyes, and you know, the mouth." She falls forward, sloppily pressing her lips to mine. Her lips are cold and taste sweet

like berry lip gloss, but her tongue is warm and shit. It's not the worst feeling in the world. It's also fucking wrong. "Janelle," I say, trying to talk around her tongue. "You don't want to—" Her hand shoots between us and before I can react, it's wedged between my legs. She fiddles around for a second and then jolts back, eyes wide. "Oh my god."

"I can explain," I blurt.

"Oh my god," she says again, looking me up and down like she's trying to figure it out.

"It's not what you think," I start, but thankfully, I don't have to finish. Not right then. Bright lights flash over us and a car comes to a stop a few feet away.

"Theo?" I shield my eyes, recognizing Grayson's voice.

"Yeah, help me get her in the car."

A moment later, he's next to me—his hair damp and smelling like soap. He shrugs her on his shoulder and gestures for me to open the door. Together, we stretch her out in the backseat. She passes out the instant her head hits the cushion.

"Does she need medical help?"

"I don't think so. I dumped out the second cup and no one touched her." She doesn't look as harsh like this, face slack and sleeping. Young and confused, like every other freshman. "Thanks for coming. I didn't know if you'd get the message, but I didn't know what else to do."

"Yeah, well, I'd been watching the whole thing and then the recording went blank. I was trying to figure out if it was a technical problem or something else. Then it came

back on.”

I feel a strange conflict about him watching me the whole time. Safer but... also intrusive? I force myself to remember that I’d agreed to this. Willingly.

“I was trying to protect her privacy,” I tell him, glancing over my shoulder at a door slamming on the other side of the parking lot. “We need to get her back to the dorm before someone sees us.”

“I’ve got her.” He jerks his chin toward the beach. “You can head back.”

“Yeah, no.” I wrench open the door. “I’m not leaving her alone—with any of you.”

I slam the door, and he walks around the car, getting in the driver’s seat. With both hands on the wheel turns to me and asks, “You think I’d hurt her?”

I look to the backseat where Janelle has turned on her side and is curled into a ball. “You’ve told me yourself over and over. You’re a Zeta Sig too.” I snap the seat belt in place. “I don’t trust any of you.”

18

Miller

After a week of being exclusively around dicks, it’s nice to be surrounded by soft, sweet smelling female skin. Oh, and their tits. God. How I’ve missed them. Big, little, round, perky, heavy. I don’t give a fuck. I want to bury my face and cock in the soft flesh.

It’s the downside of initiation week—the sheer intensity of the gauntlet. There’s no time for play, well, other than the hazing kind, which is what has made having

Reagan secretly among the goats so enticing. I have had the chance to have a little fun. Watching her squirm with both discomfort and pleasure is worth the risk. And tonight? Her killing it with the challenge? I didn't know she had it in her and fuck; it was hot.

“So, what's your major?” one of the girls asks—they're all freshman and essentially look the same. One of the brothers is specifically in charge of invites—female, freshman, and from chosen, top-tier sororities. This one has stars pattern on her bikini, two strategically placed over her nipples.

“Finance,” I reply, resting my hand on her lower back. “What about you?”

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“Undecided,” she admits, “but I’m leaning toward education. I just love kids, you know?”

I don’t, but whatever. I grab three orange cups from a passing tray and hand them to each girl. I hold up my own red cup in a toast. “To freshman year.”

They giggle and clink their cups, guzzling down the alcohol. If I know Rat, and God help me, I do, he’s made these strong and with an added kick. They’ll be loose and compliant soon and I can take all three of them to a quiet corner—or even a public one—and get them to do whatever I want. All I have to do is pretend to listen to their incessant chatter for just a little longer.

“Eight AM classes suck,” another girl says. Her bikini is made of a check fabric, like a picnic blanket. I let my eyes linger over the supple flesh between her tits and consider that I’d like to spread her out and eat off her soft skin. “Going to class hung over... I’m probably going to drop it.”

They continue talking about classes and professors and how challenging it is to figure out the bus system. I skim the crowd, eyes landing on Reagan standing by the bar. She’s blending in better, having adapted her posture and mannerisms. My eyes narrow as she talks to Royer and a weird feeling builds in my chest. Not quite apprehension, but something darker. Territorial.

“Your hair is so soft. Touch it,” Picnic commands the others. Slim fingers with sharp pointed nails comb through my hair, while another hand pushes under my shirt and strokes the hair on my lower belly.

Star tits grins up at me, eyes glassy. “She’s right. All of it is soft.”

I look back over at the bar and see Rat push an orange cup over to Reagan, which seems weird until she walks toward a girl standing alone. Fuck. That’s the girl Rat zeroed in on and brought as his chit. Shit’s about to get dirty.

“Listen,” I say to the girls, pulling their hands off of me, “you three stay together. I need to go do something real quick.”

“Promise?” the one with dark, warm skin and a gold top asks. “You promise you’ll come back.”

“You bet.”

Chits are girls brought to the party just to fuck with—or just to fuck. They’re outliers. Challenges. Not the standard sorority pussy that wants to be here. He had to cajole and flirt with her. Convince her he’s not just a dumb frat-boy. She’ll be humiliated, violated, and ruined by the end of the night.

The problem is that he sent Reagan in to do the dirty work and that’ll get her exposed.

I dart through the partiers, making it around the bonfire just in time to see her shaved head disappear into the dark by the dunes.

“Dude.” Knox steps in front of me, his tall frame blocking my view. “Your goat killed it. The only one to come in with all five bottles. Premium shit, too.”

“He’s good. Why do you think I backed him?”

His eyebrow arches. “You sure you didn’t help him out?”

I look up at him. “What? Why would you ask that?”

“I know he’s doing your homework. You’ve got a reason to keep him around.”

I pause, wondering how or when Knox figured that out. He answers before I have to ask.

“I saw him in your room doing it the other morning. I get you going easy on him for the extra perk.” His eyes flick over to the bar. “But you know it’s putting a target on him with Royer.”

“Trust me. I had nothing to do with him getting those bottles of whisky. That was all him and sheer ingenuity,” I reply. Showing weakness with any of these guys... well, it’s like showing your weakness to me. “He’s tough. He can take whatever’s tossed at him.”

Unless it exposes who or what Theo really is.

“See those girls over there?” I point to them and star tits waves back.

He grins over at them and offers his own small wave back. “They look fun.”

“They’re primed and ready for you.”

“Seriously?”

“Yep.” I clap him on the back. “You’ve been busy all night tallying the score. Go for it.”

“Thanks, dude.” Knox gives me two thumbs up and heads over to the girls. They squeal when they see him—they love how big he is and the fact he’s a varsity athlete.

Never fails.

Once he's distracted, I go in the direction I last saw Reagan and wind back around to the parking lot. It's dark, but there's a car idling, lights on. I spot Reagan getting in the passenger seat and the outline of a guy getting in the front.

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It's one thing for her to talk to other goats or the freshman slags at the party.

But leaving with another guy?

That's not happening.

19

Reagan

"Thanks for helping me get her up here," I say, pulling the quilt up to Janelle's shoulders.

"You know I'm here to help. I'm just glad that you got to her in time."

"Yeah, well, I hope she doesn't remember the fact that I don't have a penis." It's not my biggest concern about the night, but now that she's safe in her bed, I can't help but think about it.

Grayson crosses his arms over his chest, making his sweater taut across his shoulders. He looks down at Janelle. "I doubt she's going to remember much. Make sure she drinks a lot of water when she gets up. She'll have a killer headache."

"You know a lot about this." My tone is hard and sarcastic. "Is there some Zeta Sig starter pack on drugging and assaulting girls?"

"I won't deny it's part of the culture—one you and I are working hard to stop," he

says pointedly, but I notice the way he rubs the back of his neck. He's uncomfortable. Good. He should be. "Are you sure you don't want me to call the cops? We can blow this up now, even if you did turn the camera off."

It's another pointed statement. He asked me a dozen times why I turned the camera off. He wasn't just frustrated; he seemed angry about it, even after I explained that it wasn't fair to Janelle to show her incapacitated like that. He's right. I know we should call the police and end this once and for all. There would be enough at the beach party to get them shut down. If we reported it now, the police would find drugs, alcohol, under-aged drinking, and a slew of other crimes, but something holds me back.

"I don't want all the goa—the pledges to go down." Again, I look at Janelle, dead to the world in her bed. "And I don't want her to be involved unless she wants that."

It's a semi-valid excuse, but it's not all that's nagging at me. For some reason, I want to see this through. I want to witness Royer's shock when he realizes I'm stronger than he thought.

Grayson looks down at Janelle and back to me, worry etched on his face. "Are you sure no one did anything to you?"

"Other than drive me around while I convinced clerks to sell me bottles of liquor? I'm currently not their primary target." I grab my crotch. "I'm sorely lacking a vagina."

"Right," he says, dark eyes sweeping over me. "If anything happens to you—"

"It'll blow up the whole thing. I know."

"That's not what I was going to say." I raise an eyebrow and he thrust both hands into

his hair. “If anything happens to you, if they hurt you or... figure it out to the point that you could be in harm’s way, I wouldn’t forgive myself.” Janelle shifts in the bed behind him, and he places his hands on my shoulders, pushing me away from her bed. In a low voice, he continues. “You’re a special girl, Reagan. Beautiful and strong. The day I met you? I never want to see that much sadness on your face again.”

The words spill out in a rush and his hands move from my shoulders, cupping the back of my neck. I look into his eyes and feel a surging warmth. Of goodness and something safe. He releases a long shudder and tilts his head before brushing his lips over mine. His jaw is strong, powerful, but he isn’t forcing me. No, I’m stunned for a moment, brain ceasing to function, until the rush of want cuts through the fog. Pushing up on my toes, I kiss him back, fingers coiled in his shirt. Under my fingertips, I feel his heart race, my own pounding in my ears.

Thud thud thud

“Reag,” Grayson says, against my mouth. I bite down with my bottom lip, but he gently pushes me back, eyebrow arched. “Someone’s at the door.”

Thud thud thud

I wipe off my mouth and clear my throat. Leaning against the door, I ask, “Who is it?”

“It’s Miller. Open up.”

Fuck.

I mouth Miller’s name like Grayson didn’t hear it. He moves quickly but shows no sign of the panic surging through my veins. Miller knows I’m working to bring down Royer, but he doesn’t know who I’m working with. I point to the space under my

empty lofted bed—there’s room behind Janelle’s luggage. He frowns but crawls under, cramming his too big body in the cramped space. I arrange the suitcase to block him just as Miller says, “I know you’re in there, Theo. Open the door.”

Taking a deep breath, I open the door. Miller stands in the hallway, jaw tight and gray eyes blazing. I’ve seen a lot of expressions on Miller’s face—but right now, he looks downright dangerous. My stomach flips as he pushes past me and scans the room.

“Where is he?”

He peers into the closet, pushing aside Janelle’s clothes, then ducks in the bathroom, checking the shower and behind the door.

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I step between him, and Grayson's hiding place. "Who are you looking for?"

He looks down at me, eyes narrowed. "The guy you left with."

"There's no one here but one very unconscious girl that got drugged at your frat party."

"What's wrong with your face?" he asks, eyes narrowed.

I force myself not to react, not to touch my lips or do anything. "I had to get her up here," I reply. "Alone."

He finally looks over at Janelle. "You brought her home."

"Instead of violating her like Rat wanted or leaving her to get violated by someone else. Yeah, I brought her home. Do you have a problem with that?"

He snaps his attention back to me. "I have a problem with you leaving the party with someone—" I press my fingers to his lips and shoot him a glare. He bats my hand away and adds, "without permission."

Grayson still doesn't know that Miller is aware I'm a girl, but if he doesn't shut his mouth, he's going to blow everything up. I have no idea what his problem is or why he even cares, but Janelle shifts in the bed, and everything will go to hell if she wakes up.

"Come on," I say softly, grabbing him by the arm and pushing him toward the door. I

take one last look at Grayson, who I can make out under the bed, forehead creased, and go into the hall.

“Who—” he starts, but I keep going, walking down to the elevator. It opens automatically and I step on, pressing the button for my floor. Right before the doors close, I see Grayson slip out of my room and head toward the stairs. I exhale. Miller asks, “Where are we going?”

“To my room. Where you can berate me in private and not wake up Janelle.”

He snorts. “Kitten, she’s not waking up any time soon, not if Rat had anything to do with it.”

It takes everything in me not to slap him across his pretty, smug face.

He follows me down the hall and I pull out my ID and swipe it on the door lock. It clicks open. Once we’re inside, he looks around at my bare, gender-neutral room. I’ve only slept in it a few times before being sent to the barn. Before he can start again, I say, “The guy was just someone in Janelle’s phone. I called the last person she texted.”

He mulls that over. “He just picked you up and left?”

“God, yes, Miller. What’s your problem?”

“I didn’t want you to fuck this up somehow,” he sneers, “and blow your cover and fuck both of us.”

“What I did was cover Zeta Sig’s sorry ass by not letting them get a rape accusation.” Anger wells in me. I reach into my pocket and pull out the condom Royer gave me and throw it at him. “And what the fuck is that?”

He catches it mid-air but doesn't even look at it before he tucks it in his pocket. "Insurance."

"Royer said you only use condoms with 'chits.' What does that mean?"

"It's the girls lured in just to fuck with. They're not the frat-rats who come to the party knowing they're going to get laid. You wear a condom to make sure there's no DNA left in her pussy if she tries to report it."

"God, you guys are sick." The sound that comes out is caught somewhere between a laugh and cry. "No wonder you picked a farm. You're fucking pigs."

The urge to lash out is strong, and I take both hands and shove them against his chest. He circles my wrists and holds me against him. "You're the one that wanted to do this, kitten, to get your petty little revenge. Don't act like anyone's forcing you to do anything."

I look up at him, for once not afraid to meet his gaze. "You mean like sucking you off? Or letting you come all over me?"

"It's not my fault you're shitty at undercover. You agreed to that, too."

"If you believe that, you're delusional." I try to escape his grip, but he holds on tight. "I fucking hate you. I hate you. I hate Royer. I hate Knox and Rat. I hate how this whole fucking thing has overtaken my life!"

He drops his head and speaks right into my ear. "Why? So you can go back to being one of those vapid bitches at the party tonight? Another girl flaunting your tits in a string bikini? Is that what you really want?"

Yes, I want to tell him, but also... no. I don't know, anymore. "I can't ever be that

girl again. Not after knowing who you really are.”

“And exactly who is that, Reagan?” His lips curve in a dark grin.

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“You’re a soul sucking, manipulative, entitled, spoiled monster.”

The grin vanishes. “What’s the point of being civil then?” he says, forcing my hands behind my back. His pelvis bumps against mine, and there’s no mistaking the hard bulge of his aroused cock. I struggle against him, but he only tightens his grip. “You want to see the monster inside?” He flings me on the bed and climbs on top of me, knees pinning me in. “I’m happy to let him loose.”

“Miller no—”

His mouth crashes against mine, lips rough and punishing. It’s a different sort of kiss than the one I just shared with Grayson—although equally thrilling. His hands push at the hem of my shirt, and he only backs off long enough to yank it over my head. “You call me manipulative,” he says, palms covering my tits, squeezing them together. “You used these to get exactly what you wanted tonight. Those clerks would have done anything to get a taste of them.”

“That wasn’t—” he kisses me again, pinching my nipple between his fingers. I cry out, but he swallows it, sweeping his tongue against mine. After a moment of push and pull, of forcefully coaxing mine into compliancy, he eases back.

His nose is inches from mine, and his finger gently runs between my breasts down to my navel. His tone is oh so innocent when he asks, “That wasn’t what? What bitches do to get what they want? Show off their bodies? Tease and taunt?”

I clamp my knees shut, but he uses his knees to keep them open, grinding his pelvis against mine. Traitorous heat burns between my legs and my hips buck back on

impulse, seeking friction. “Stop—” I cry, working my hands between us and trying to push him back. He’s too big—too strong.

To my shock, he jumps off, but it’s immediately obvious that he’s not done. He reaches over his head and pulls off his shirt, revealing smooth tan skin and the ladder of muscles running down his abdomen. I watch him, aware of the hot burn in my lower belly. Hating myself for it.

“Tell me, kitten. Is that what you really want? For me to stop?”

What do I want? When has that ever been anyone’s concern? But the dark glint in his eye, and the way his Adam’s apple bobs in his throat, brings about a wave of desire.

I just want to make this night something other than a tragic shit-show.

To feel something other than lost. I want to feel like a girl who is wanted, not just used.

A hot tear builds in the corner of my eye, and no matter how hard I try, I can’t keep it from falling.

He steps forward and wipes the tear off my cheek. Again, he asks, “What do you want, Reagan?”

“Don’t pretend like you care.” I look up at him, absorbing the warm skin and dangerous glint in his eye. “I know you’re going to punish me for leaving with Janelle. For protecting her and risking this whole mission. You should just do it. Punish me. I deserve it.”

He opens his mouth to speak but swallows the words back, reaching out and hooking his fingers in beltloops of my jeans. They’re loose, and he yanks them down, taking

the boxer briefs with them, then tossing both on the floor.

I should run, fight, scream, but I just watch as his thumb pushes at the button of his low-slung jeans and they drop, piling next to mine. He's bare underneath, and he reaches for his cock. It's blistering red, hard, and glistening at the tip. He strokes it up and down, pushing and pulling at the taut skin.

It's the last thing I should do, the absolute insane, wrong, what the fuck am I doing, thing to do, but I reach for him and run my fingers down his shaft. He hums, the sound coming from deep in his throat and bends, kissing me along my stomach, up my breasts to my neck. He's so warm. Hard. Powerful. He's exactly who he is and nothing else. He's not hiding behind a mask, a position, or a calling.

He's Miller Hansen.

A monster.

And when he touches me between my legs, I'm ready for him. Wet and hot. Knees falling to the side. I don't fight him. I'm ready to be done with this—done with him.

“This isn't a punishment for saving your friend. It's for going off with another man—a man that doesn't understand that you. Are. Mine.”

The pads of his fingers brushing against my clit, sliding in the slick heat. There's no hiding my desire. My body has betrayed me. I buck against his hand, and he rises to crash his mouth against mine.

This time there's no resistance, just two bodies in synch. I fall into the taste of him, bitter liquor matched with something sweet. His touch is firm, but not the harsh punishment from before. He stokes the fire building inside of me, the one dying to let loose, the inferno waiting to explode, thrusting two fingers inside. They curve,

applying pressure in places I didn't know existed.

"Jesus," I breathe, "God."

He chuckles against my skin. "You said it, not me." He withdraws his fingers, forcing me to cry out, but I feel the hard press of his tip against my entrance. I wait for the invasion—the final barrier to be broken between us.

He hovers over me, forehead resting against mine, blue eyes blazing with an intensity I've never seen before. I freeze, terrified he's changed his mind, that he's just taunting and toying with me. Another twisted move in his fucked-up game.

His fingers glide down my cheek. "What do you want, Reagan?"

"I don't know." For a second, his determination falters, eyes shuttering. My belly drops, and that's when I realize I don't want him to stop. I arch my back and I grab him by the hips. "Fuck me, Miller." I bite down on his bottom lip. "I just want to feel you inside."

"See? That wasn't so hard, kitten." He grins wolfishly, teeth bared, and his hips rear back before he plunges into me, stretching me from the inside, filling me to the point I can't breathe.

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He stills as I adjust to him, watching me closely. If I didn't know better, I'd think he was waiting to see if I'm okay, but I bite down on my bottom lip and rise my hips to meet his, wrapping my legs around his back. It's all the signal he needs, and he punches forward, once, twice, three times, each time going deeper. I lock my ankles together and hold on to this disturbingly delicious man as he drills into me.

“So fucking tight,” he groans, dropping his face into the crook of my neck. I sink my teeth into his shoulder and that only seems to spur him on. “So goddamn, fucking, good.”

The rhythm he sets is mesmerizing, different from Royer. He was in constant motion, shifting and turning, performing chaotic acrobatics. My body could never catch up—was never satisfied. Miller dominates, his focus laser sharp. Every muscle in his body a part of the action. His biceps tense, the line in his forearm creasing as he holds his weight as he pulls almost all the way out before he fucks back inside. Each time is a little more tantalizing, more intense, sending a sharp jolt along my fraying nerves.

He lifts and watches where our bodies meet, the cut muscles of his lower abdomen tensing with each thrust. I close my eyes and hold on to the buildup, the way my body reacts to his. The feeling inches up my spine, flickers across my skin, and burns in the pit of my stomach. His tongue licks into my mouth and he grunts against my tongue, “Come for me, kitten. Let go for once in your goddamn life.”

It's like I needed permission, because once he says it, my nerves pulse and unfurl, clenching around his cock, spreading throughout my body. It feels good; he feels so good, kissing me through my orgasm. It's surprisingly gentle, although he never stops moving, and when my body stills, the warm rush fading, he picks up his pace and

pounds into me like he can't get deep enough.

I tighten my grip on his body, digging my nails into his back to hold him close. I watch him. His face, the scrunch of his nose, the tension in his jaw, the way his tongue darts out to lick his bottom lip. He's sexy and possessed. Abandoned and raw. When he pounds in his final thrust, his entire body shudders, starting with a groan erupting from low in his chest.

He pulses inside of me, warm and slick. Filling me in a way I didn't know existed. After he's finished, he hovers over me for a long moment, keeping the connection, his eyes holding mine. I reach up and push a lock of hair off his forehead and they shutter, the icy blue returning. He pulls out and rolls off, taking his heat and weight with him.

Absurdly, I cover my breasts and sit up, looking for something to clean off with, but his hand grabs my wrist, and he says, "Don't."

I blink and watch as he runs his fingers in the sticky mess between my thighs. He scoops the cum with his fingers and pushes it back inside. It's the moment I realize he didn't use a condom and that he'd done it on purpose. The action is foreign, confusing, and a still numbness washes over me. I'm surprised when he drags me close to his body, tucking me under the crook of his arm and engulfing me in his warm, musky scent.

What have I done? What have we done?

His fingers graze the heated skin of my belly, drawing tiny circles. "Sometimes," he says suddenly, his voice quiet, "I wish things were different."

"I always wish things were different."

He shifts, looking down at me, his normally hard eyes soft. “What if you’d never met Royer? Never fell under his radar and just gone through rush like normal.”

I peer up at him. I’ve replayed this scenario more times than I want to admit, but what is he talking about? “What do you mean?”

“You would’ve been a shoo-in for GE. You would’ve been invited to our parties, come dressed in your tight bikini tops and I would’ve noticed.” He splays his fingers over my breast and sighs. “Things could’ve been different, that’s all.”

His nose nudges mine to give him access to my mouth. My stomach churns, like a million beating butterfly wings. His kiss is gentle, warm, and despite every single reservation, I sink into it—into him.

We stay like this for a while, kissing, touching, dozing off into sleep. I’m not sure how much time passes before he gets out of the bed and redresses. He’s terrifyingly quiet, and the only thing he says after kissing me softly on the forehead is, “Be back at the farm before dawn,” before walking out the door.

Minutes pass and I finally get up. That’s when I see it. The Zeta Sig condom sitting on my bedside table. I stare at the shiny foil for a long moment, trying to process what it means. What I mean.

I don’t know if there’s an answer.

20

Reagan

I don’t need to see my reflection in the shiny metal elevator doors to know I look like shit. I barely slept, tossing and turning in the unfamiliar bed, thinking about what

happened between me and Miller.

What he did to me.

What I let him do.

How good it made me feel.

My entire body aches, inside and out, a reminder of how rough he'd been. How big he felt buried inside of me, the burn from the stretch. All things that should have been a violation but feel like something else entirely every time I think about it—of how Miller felt over me, inside me.

I move to push my hair aside, that habit impossible to stop. Although, for the first time, I'm glad to not have to worry about my hair or clothes. There's no way I could have put in the effort. It's just another way guys are lucky.

I didn't go back to the farm like Miller told me to. I barely made it out of bed. As far as punishments go, I think I've taken the worst of it, and I'm willing to risk not going back. For all they know, I slept with Janelle. That should count for something, right?

The elevator doors slide open, and every nerve in my body tenses when I see my former roommate on the other side. She looks worse than I do. Pale. Red, dark-ringed eyes. I'm even surprised she made it out of bed today.

She hesitates before crossing the threshold but ultimately clutches her backpack over her shoulder and her coffee cup in one hand. I want to say something—to check on her—but the words are stuck in my throat.

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The elevator doors shut, and the car moves. The bell chimes when we reach the ground floor and her finger shoots out and slams on the ‘close door’ button, trapping us inside. She turns toward me.

“I know what you did,” she says quietly. The first thing I think of is Miller and what happened last night. There’s no way she can— “The memories are vague but there... at least until we got in the car.”

Oh.

My mouth grows dry. “I didn’t—”

“I know. You helped me. You warned me and got me out of there.” She exhales. “I don’t know what the fuck you are up to Reagan, but thank you.”

My eyes widen in surprise. “How did you—”

“I knew you looked familiar in class. I just couldn’t put my finger on it. But it clicked after I kissed you.” She rolls her eyes. “You kiss like a girl.” Then her eyes drop to my crotch. “And your dick feels like a rolled-up tube sock.”

I gape for a minute, caught completely off guard, but finally say, “I saw what they were going to do with you, and I couldn’t let it happen.”

“Thank you,” she says again, the glint of a tear forming in the corner of her eye. “God, I knew frat boys were the worst. I fell for the fucking tattoos and that smug smile. I’m an idiot.”

“You’re not an idiot. They’re assholes.” I touch her shoulder. “And I’m doing everything I can to take them down.”

I’m headed to class when I see him, no,them. Miller and Grayson are together in the hallway, talking. I skid to a stop and duck behind a pillar.

A bubble of mixed emotions builds in my chest. What is Miller doing on this part of campus? Why is Grayson talking to him? I analyze their expressions and bodies for any signal, but they just both burst into laughter and Grayson claps him on the back.

What the fuck?

They go in opposite directions, but I follow Grayson. Miller is the last person I want to see right now. And Grayson? Well, I need to know what he’s doing. At least that’s what I tell myself as I push through the crowded hallway and grab a handful of his shirt. He looks down.

“I need to talk to you,” I say quietly. “Now.”

I walk past him and go straight to the storage closet we’ve met in before. This time it smells like floor cleaner—the odor wafting up from a bucket in the corner. The door behind me opens, and he slips in.

“Hey,” he says, eyes skimming from my head to my toes. “How are you? I never heard back from you last night. I was freaking out—”

“What the hell are you doing?” I snap. “Why are you talking to Miller?”

“I was looking for you, you know, since I hadn’t heard from you last since last night, and he was there. I couldn’t just ignore him.”

“Why not?”

“We’re fraternity brothers, Reagan. Just because I’ve graduated, and on the council, doesn’t mean I don’t know current members. Especially the ones that pledged when I was still active.”

Shit. I never thought about it. How close are they? God, what if Miller bragged about what happened last night? Or gloated or mocked me in some way. What if he told him—

“Hey,” he touches my chin. “You don’t have to worry about me talking to Miller. These guys know I work for the Council. They don’t trust me at all.”

“Right.” I give him a tight smile. “Of course.”

His hand is still on my face, fingers splayed under my chin. His warm brown eyes hold mine, like he wants me to read the truth in them. I can’t do the same.

I look away, and his fingers drop. He asks again, “So what happened last night?”

“Nothing.” Everything. “I needed to get him away from Janelle—and you. We just went upstairs to my room. Hung out for a while.”

He nods. “He wasn’t suspicious?”

My pulse races as the lies mount. “Nah, at first he thought I bailed from the party and came to drag me back. Then he thought I was hooking up with Janelle, but I told him she was too drunk. He wasn’t happy I didn’t go for it, but he let it go.” Lies upon lies. I move away from him and reach for the doorknob.

“Wait,” he says, hand flattening on the door, keeping it shut. “Are we okay? After

what happened last night?”

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So much happened last night, but I know what he means. The kiss.

“We’re good. I know things were just heightened emotionally and I don’t hold you to it.”

“Hold me to it?” He dips his head so we’re eye to eye. “You know I’ve wanted to do that since we met, right?”

“Grayson,” I say, resting my hand on his chest. “You’re a great guy, but I’m a fucking mess right now.”

His hand snakes around my waist. “A sexy mess.” He bends, kissing the column of my neck. His stubble rubs against my skin, and it shouldn’t feel good, but it does. Deliciously so. As much as I hate it, I pull away and push him back.

He slumps against the door. “Did you mean what you said?”

I pause. “Mean what?”

“That you can’t trust any of us?”

I look at this man in his glasses and slightly too large sweater. His chin is covered in half-day-old stubble and his hair unintentionally messy. He’s cute in his own way, but it’s hard to think he’s a devilish-mastermind like Royer or a sadistic asshole like Miller. But do I trust him?

“I want to.” It’s the most I can manage.

“I understand.” His hand lands on my shoulder. “You’re a special girl, Reagan. Stronger than anyone thought—definitely stronger than I thought. I know there are pledges that have dropped out this week. You made it to the end of the gauntlet and, honestly, it’s something to be proud of. The next few days will be intense as you go into the final tests. Be careful, okay?” His fingers stroke the back of my neck. “Wear the camera. I can’t help you if you take it off.”

I nod, hyperaware of his touch and trying desperately not to sink into it. I lied when I said I didn’t trust Grayson. I do trust him, more than I should, but what we’re doing is bigger than the both of us. We’re going after an institution. I not only promised myself that I’d take them down, now I promised Janelle too, and I plan on keeping it.

21

Miller

I waited until dawn for Reagan to come back to the farm. I’d left her in her dorm room, fucked out and dripping with my cum. She’d wanted it—asked for it. I would’ve slept in her bed that night, spooned against her soft curves, but that’s not how Miller Hansen operates. Women come to me, not the other way around.

Except she never came back and while I pour cereal and milk into a paper bowl, an unfamiliar niggle of worry worms into the back of my brain.

Did last night go too far? Following her home, questioning her motives... sleeping with her?

No. I heard her ask me to fuck her. Begged me. Her pussy was wet and slippery, lubed up and ready. Shewantedme.

God knows I wanted her.

I fill the dark hole in my belly with another spoonful of cereal.

“There’s my boy,” Knox shouts, strolling into the room. He grabs a plate and loads it with eggs and bacon, then carries it over to the table and drops in the chair next to mine. “Dude, thank you for handing over those three last night. They were very willing to let me break them in Zeta Sig style.”

Anal. That’s our style.

I fish around for cereal in the pool of milk. “Yeah?”

“They were game for just about anything. The blonde did this thing with her tongue.” He shivers and grins down at his food. “You should join in next time.”

“Good to know,” I say, not sharing my own sexploits from the night before.

Knox has a thing for group sex. He likes to watch, participate, encourage. The first time I agreed, it was a little weird. I wasn’t used to having another guy watch me get sucked off, but it’s his kink, and I’m not here to judge. Seeing him enjoy me get enjoyment? It was kind of hot. “Come find me next time.”

Royer walks in looking rough, eyes rimmed in red from the late night.

“Find you for what?” he asks, going for the coffee. He pours himself a cup and grabs five slices of toast.

“A foursome,” Knox says through a mouthful of eggs. Royer frowns at his lack of manners. “My boy did me a solid by handing over a trio primed and ready.”

“How generous of him,” Royer says, taking a sip of coffee. “By the way, number forty-seven didn’t come back last night.” He cuts his eyes over at me. “He’s your

pet—where is he?”

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I shrug. “He took off with the chit Rat set him up with. I guess probably sleeping it off in the backseat of a car or something.”

Royer responds by taking another long drink of his black coffee, never taking his eyes off me.

I swallow the last bite of cereal and carry the bowl over to the trash and toss it. “Is there a problem?”

He lifts a shoulder. “Seems convenient that your boy keeps getting out of complicated jams. Beating the Cum Cup time, winning the liquor store challenge, all while doing your homework and following you around like a puppy.”

“I don’t back losers,” I say casually, leaning against the counter. “You know that.”

“You just seem a little overly invested in this kid.”

“You play your games, I play mine. I didn’t get involved when you pulled that prank on your little Reagan. I’m not sure why you’re so worried about me.”

“He’s right,” Knox says, chiming in. “Neither of us interfered with you and Andrea’s game. That was all you.”

“Seriously?” he asks. “Don’t pretend like you weren’t involved with taking down Reagan. You fucked with her as much as me and Andrea.”

“But it was your plan,” I point out. I’m not sure where this is going, or what’s got

Royer in a snit, but I'm not in the mood. "I just did what you asked me to do."

"Right, and right now I'm asking you to tell me how you plan on dealing with forty-seven not coming back after the party last night. It's a violation."

"I don't see why this is such a big deal?" I ask. "And since when do you stay up all night waiting, taking roll?" I glance at Knox. "Sounds like I'm not the one obsessed with forty-seven."

Knox snorts and nods in agreement. "He's got you there, dude."

"Not that I need to explain myself," Royer says, "but Andrea made me come over last night. I got in late and did a bed check. Forty-seven is the only one that didn't make it back before dawn."

"I'll deal with it."

"No," he says, swallowing the rest of his coffee. "Let Rat deal with it. He's the Warden. The three of us need to get ready for the final initiation."

I open my mouth to argue—I don't want Rat anywhere near Reagan, especially alone, but if I push this too hard, Royer will just keep asking questions.

"Sure. Whatever. Rat can deal with it," I reply, grabbing my backpack and heading out the door.

Reagan has proven she can handle herself around the Zeta Sigs. I have to trust she can get through the final two days without my help. And then, I'll use her to overthrow Royer and claim my position as president.

I don't find Reagan on campus, but I do run into Grayson Pierce. I know the guy from

the year I pledged. He was a senior—the president—the biggest partier of them all.

Now he's a council narc.

I keep appearances when I talk to him, brushing off any details about the current rush. It's crazy he's turned into 'The Man.' He's the real reason Royer is so obsessed. He wants to surpass the legacy of Grayson Pierce. We bump fists and talk in "bro-speak" and off he goes.

I park myself outside her class, but she never shows. Her old roommate does—the Chit from last night. She walks into the hallway looking like hell. Honestly, I'm shocked she's out of bed. Rat doses the drinks liberally.

"Hey," I say, stepping in front of her. Her dark lined eyes narrow. "Have you seen Theo?"

"Theo." Her voice is like daggers.

"Buzzed head. Skinny. Zeta Sig goat, er, recruit."

"He wasn't here today."

I frown. Shit.

"You should leave him alone," she says, clutching her laptop to her chest. "He's a good kid."

"Yeah, okay." I roll my eyes at this freshman chit, telling me what to do. "Not that you have any idea what you're talking about."

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“God, you’re a fucking idiot,” she mutters, walking away just as Rat comes out the door.

“What did she say?” he asks, me. “Did she say something to you?”

“No. Nothing. Just forget it.”

“No,” he pushes past me. “What the fuck did you just call my friend?”

She spins on her heel. “I called him a fucking idiot!” she shouts, stalking toward us. “He’s lucky I’m not calling the police on you assholes for what you did last night.”

She’s pointing at Rat, and he grabs her by the wrist. “Shut your filthy loser mouth. You realize it was a joke, right? Chicks like you don’t get real invitations to parties like ours.”

“Hey now!” I jump in, forcing him to release her. People are watching. Grayson could still be around here somewhere. I rest my hand on Rat’s shoulder. “She’s not worth it.”

“You think I’m not worth it? Why? Because my asshole isn’t bleached, and my tits aren’t bought from the store? You guys are pathetic and you’re going down. Hard.” She smirks. “I’ll be there filming it when it happens.”

There’s a certainty to her tone and Rat must hear it because he lunges at her. I lunge at him and push him down the hall. When we’re far enough away, I shove him into the wall. “What the fuck, dude?! If you hit a female, one that is accusing you of

drugging her, don't you see how much shit we will be in? Back the fuck off for once in your life."

He breathes heavily, eyes flashing with anger. I have no doubt that if I hadn't been there, things would have escalated. I've known for a while now that Rat is a liability. When I take over, he's the second to go—right after Royer.

He shakes me off and smooths down his shirt. "What do you think she meant by us going down hard?"

"I think she's pissed and mouthing off." But I have the same question. Did Reagan tell her something? If anyone finds out what she's doing—what I'm doing—being blacklisted is the least of both of our concerns.

22

Reagan

I'm apprehensive about going back to the farm, but I know I can't avoid it forever. I'm walking toward the shuttle pick up spot when a familiar black Jeep pulls up beside me. The window is open and Miller stares at me from the other side. He leans over, pops open the door and says, "Get in."

Looking around, I make sure no one is watching as I climb into the Jeep. He presses the gas before the door has fully latched.

His hands grip the black leather steering wheel, and he faces forward when he says, "Look, about last night—"

"There's no reason to talk about it." I lay my palms flat on my thighs. "Obviously, it was a mistake."

The Jeep lurches forward, tires screeching to a stop. I fling forward, but his arm flies out protectively against my chest. I open my mouth to scream at him, cuss him out for being so careless, but when I look at his face, he's staring at me, eyes blazing.

"That wasn't a mistake," he says, his voice low. "That was..."

A horn blares from behind us.

"I'm doing something here!" he shouts at the car, flipping him off. The car swerves around us, and Miller moves to the curb. He shifts the car into park and faces me. "The only regret I have from last night is walking out on you."

My jaw drops. Actually drops. "What—what are you saying?"

"I don't know." He takes a deep breath. "I like fucking you. I like driving around conning liquor off people with you. I worry about you, and when you didn't show up, I was afraid..." He swallows and looks away.

"Afraid of what?"

"That I'd screwed this up for good."

I look around, searching for a camera or Royer or maybe Andrea. I'm waiting for the shoe to drop—the humiliation and pain that comes from me letting down my guard. Miller frowns, noticing my hesitation. "I just had to put that out there," he says, hand gripping the gear shift. "I won't retaliate if you don't feel the same."

He restarts the car, jumping back into traffic. The ride is silent all the way back to the farm. My heart skitters in my chest. Did he mean all of that? Does he really care for me? It seems crazy and unexpected, but at the same time... not.

Miller doesn't usually pay this much attention to one female, and he's been following me around for months. Sure, some of that was for the prank, but... how much? I think of all the times on my father's boat or the opportunities he took to corner me. The small touches and the hungry eyes. I know this man is awful. A monster. But sometimes monsters still have a heart beneath all the scales and claws.

He pulls the Jeep to a stop before we get to the parking area, gravel kicking up from the tires. He parks and I sit there, heart stuck in my throat. I'm not sure why he's stopped, but it gives me a moment to muster up the courage to say, "I don't regret last night either."

He shifts to face me.

“But?”

“But I don’t know how to trust you, not after all of this.”

“That’s fair.” He flips the beads hanging from his rearview mirror. “I don’t like it, but I understand.”

The air in the car grows thin, the space between us almost non-existent. But the farmhouse is right in front of us. Anyone could see us sitting like this. It’s dangerous. I start to open the door, but he reaches across me and pulls it shut.

“Royer knows you didn’t come back last night,” he says, eyes darting toward the house, the red rooftop visible through the trees. “And Rat and the chit, your old roommate, got into it after class. He’s on the warpath. You need to hunker down for a while.”

The hair on the back of my neck stands on end. Having a run in with either of them is not on my list of things I want to do today. Not with so little time left. “What? How the hell am I supposed to hunker down?”

His mouth forms a thin line, and he shifts impatiently. Finally, his expression clears, and he asks, “Do you trust me?”

Do I?

No.

Do I have a choice?

No, again.

I sigh and brace myself. “What do you want me to do?”

“You do see the absurdity in this, don’t you?”

It’s not just absurd, it’s surreal. Feeling the wispy locks of hair graze my chin. Having my knees exposed and, most of all, having cleavage again.

Miller’s eyes are zeroed in on my chest. “It’s not absurd. It’s practical.”

Yep, Miller’s big idea to get me in past the guys is to dress me up like a woman. Why does he have a red wig and minidress at his disposal? “It was on the list of hazement ideas. Forcing the goats to dress up like women and hit on guys from other frats. See how far it would go, but it got axed for the cum cup.”

God.

I look down at my shoes—five-inch platforms coated in a layer of glitter. “I fail to see how these shoes would be considered practical.”

He stops me just before we go in the back door. “I can’t take Theo Hart, number forty-seven, up to my room,” he looks me up and down, gaze once again lingering over my chest, “but no one will care that much if I sneak up a woman.”

He opens the door, and we step inside. I haven’t been in the farmhouse kitchen. The goats eat on campus or out in the barn. He gestures to a back staircase, and I feel the

brush of his fingertips against mine. A shiver runs up my spine that only spreads when he slides our hands together, fingers entwined. It's a common, intimate gesture, one that implies our relationship has shifted from the day before. When we reach the landing, he keeps me close, going straight to his room.

"Oh shit," I cry, tripping over the heels and slamming into him.

He laughs and holds me upright, placing a finger over his lips. "Shh." When no one emerges from any of the rooms, he adds, "You okay?"

Those blue eyes are cool for once. Soft.

"Just clumsy."

"Come on," he says, twisting the knob of his bedroom door. "Let's get you inside before you break an ankle."

I exhale when the door is shut behind us, looking around his bare room. Now that I'm here, I don't know what I'm supposed to do. Did he really bring me up here to hide? Or is this a ploy to get me to have sex with him again?

I catch my reflection in the mirror hanging on the back of the closet door and freeze. I'd changed out in the Jeep, only seeing a sliver of my hair and face in the rearview mirror. Seeing my reflection—the girl—with long legs and hips and tits and long hair.

"What?" he asks, grabbing a pile of clothes off the bed and tossing them in the corner.

"I just look..." I toy with the ends of the wig. "I don't know. Like me again."

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He walks over and stands beside me, looking at my reflection. “All I see is the same hot girl that’s been driving me crazy for months.”

I roll my eyes and catch his in the mirror. “Seriously? You want to pretend that I look the same with my shaved head and baggy clothes? I know you’re trying to convince me you’ve changed, Miller, but that’s a bit much.”

He grabs my hand and pulls me to him, tilting my chin upward. “I’m not trying to convince you of anything, kitten. You’re sexy as fuck, no matter what you wear or how many hours you spend on your hair.” He runs his thumb along my bottom lip. “I love your mouth—the smile you get when you’re proud of yourself. I love your eyelashes and how thick they are when your eyes are half-closed and you’re about to orgasm.” His hands drop to my waist and slowly slide up my chest, cupping my breasts. “I like that I’m the only one that gets to see your tits.” He pulls down the top of the dress and bends, kissing each nipple. “It makes me feel like you’re mine.”

If someone had asked me if Miller Hansen was capable of such romantic thoughts, I would have laughed in their face, but my body doesn’t care. My skin turns electric from his touch, my belly caves with every lick and suck of my nipple. I push my fingers into his hair, pulling his face to mine. We kiss, mouths hungry, breath raw, and he cups my ass and lifts me off the ground, carrying me over to the bed. He falls back, taking me with him, and I straddle his body.

I rest my hands on his stomach and ask, “Are you fucking with me?”

He pushes up, kissing neck, and whispering in my ear. “The only fucking I want to do is in your pussy, kitten. The rest of this is completely, totally, real.”

Suddenly, I don't care what his motives are, I just want him. I push up his shirt, revealing his tan abdomen, running my fingers over the defined ladder of muscle. I bend and kiss his nipples, sucking and licking just like he'd done to mine moments before. His skin is warm, almost hot, and smells both clean and musky.

"Jesus," he mutters, as I kiss down his body, focusing on the soft hair trailing down his lower belly. While his stomach caves, sensitive to my touch, his cock presses against the crux of my body, eager and hard.

I rise up and he lifts my dress, pushing it up and over my head. The wig falls off with it, and his hand rubs over the stubble, the desire in his eyes never wavering. He thumbs the button on his jeans, wincing from the strain and I hook my fingers in his belt loops, lowering them inch by inch. His cock springs forward, blistering red, and I bend licking the salty tip.

I'm so caught up in this, in him, that I don't notice the knock on the door until it's too late, until it's open and the shadow of a figure crosses the bed.

"Fuck, sorry, dude," a voice says—Knox. I freeze, face buried in Miller's pelvis, his hand tensing over my skull. "Didn't realize you were in here getting—" there's a beat of silence. "Is that—"

"Shut the door, Knox," Miller says, lifting up on his elbows. I hear the door shut with a click and my shoulders infinitesimally relax. "Dude!" Miller shouts. "What the fuck are you doing? Get the hell out!"

"You're fucking forty-seven," he says. I still haven't moved. Miller's cock is still resting on my tongue. "I knew something was up with you two, but I didn't know you were into guys. I mean, no judgement, just... Royer is going to lose his mind when he finds out you're fucking a goat during the gauntlet."

Miller groans and lifts my mouth off his cock, eyes meeting mine. I sense the apology before I can react, and he twists my face toward Knox. “Forty-seven is a chick. Not a guy.” He turns the rest of me around. “She’s got tits.”

Knox’s eyes narrow, darting from my face to my tits, which I’ve attempted to cover with my arms. “Wait,” he says, the wheels turning in his head, “I know you.” I shake my head and Miller shifts beneath me, his cock still hard and erect between us. “You’re Royer’s girl... the ex. The one that got blacklisted.” He snorts. “What the fuck, dude?”

“It’s complicated,” Miller says, “And I’d love to go into it, but we were in the middle of something.”

I gasp and face him. “Seriously? You’re more worried about having sex than the two of us getting caught?”

“That cat’s out of the bag,” he says, sliding his hand around my waist. “Knox isn’t going to go running to Royer. Not until we have a chance to talk.” He looks over my shoulder. “Right?”

Knox stares at me for a long moment, well, at my tits mostly, and then nods at Miller. “Right. But...”

“What?” Miller asks, his tone as if he expects something else.

“I want to watch.”

My jaw drops and I clench my arm around my body. “Excuse me? Absolutely—”

“Sure, just stay over there.” Miller points to the couch and then adds. “Absolutely no commentary.”

Knox gives him two thumbs up. “Gotcha.”

“Are you serious right now?” I ask, turning to face Miller again. My nose crashes into his and he captures my mouth. I press my hands on his chest. “You’re really going to let him watch?”

He sighs. “Kitten, you wanted to be part of this life. This is what frat life is all about; having fun, amazing, occasionally exhibitionist sex.” His fingers graze my neck, then trail down my chest to gently push aside my arms to free my breasts. “Knox just wants to watch. It’s kind of his thing.”

I glance over my shoulder and see that Knox has settled on the couch. He gives me a friendly smile and a gesture that would be interpreted as ‘carry on.’

Jesus.

Miller tips my chin back toward him again and says, “Where were we?”

I was about to suck his cock and the smirk on his mouth tells me he remembers it perfectly. My hands shake this time, anxious about being watched, although Miller is right. This is the life I’d wanted so badly. Sexy and a little wild. I shift back down, stroking his cock back to life. It hadn’t gone down much and I lift my ass in the air getting in a better position to take his cock in my mouth.

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“Fuck me,” Knox mutters from his seat.

“Dude,” Miller warns, his voice a little strained. “I told you.”

“Sorry. It’s just her ass.”

“It’s perfect.” Miller says, rubbing my head. “I know.”

After a week of dressing like a boy and living in a barn like a farm animal, the compliments hit home. I lick and suck Miller’s cock, gliding my hand up and down the length for friction. He hums beneath me, fingers playing with my nipples. He grows bigger, tastes saltier, and I think he’s going to come in my mouth, but he taps my chin and lifts me, flipping us both over. His knees spread my thighs apart, and he hovers over me, one long body of corded muscle. His fingers dip between my legs, spreading the sticky warmth around. I shudder, the tingles I’d been feeling now full-on shocks. My cheeks burn at the obviousness of my want. He notices and says, “It’s sexy that you want me. Forcing it has its own pleasures, but having a girl spread out for you, wet and breathing heavy?” He kisses me, dragging his teeth over my bottom lip, and palms my breast. “It’s a different kind of high. You ready for me?” he asks, eyes meeting mine. He pushes in a finger, then a second. I mewl at the sensation. Pant for more.

I stroke his cock and reply, “Yes.”

He lines up our bodies and pushes in with a swift punch.

“Oh,” I cry, loving the feel of him so deep. My knees drop to the side, wanting to feel

the stretch. “God, yes.”

Miller sets his rhythm slower than the night before. His mouth latches to my breast and over his head I see Knox slouched on the couch, hand pushed down the front of his joggers. Our eyes meet, and there’s this part of me that wants to recoil, to keep this moment private between me and Miller, but then he pulls out his cock and my breath catches.

He’s huge—proportional to his height and size.

I watch as he strokes down it leisurely, allowing it to bob in a slow, circular motion. The heat between my legs turns into an inferno. The sensation Miller is giving me amplified at the sight of Knox pleasuring himself. With his free hand, he pushes his shirt up and toys with his round, brown nipple. Our eyes hold and something deep passes through us, something that burns in my core.

“You like watching him too,” Miller says, and I turn my gaze back to him. His jaw is tense—he’s close—but he looks between me and his brother. “Don’t you?”

Knox’s motions grow less casual—more erratic. The skin around his nipple turns red, and he lets out a deep groan as he strokes his cock. I shift my gaze back to Miller. His eyes glazed with want. “I do like it,” I admit. Miller pulls out and punches in again, this time deeper. I exhale from the impact and close my eyes. I feel the both of them watching me. I hear their bodies and their grunts. The coil twisting in my core winds and winds, threatening to snap. Miller shoves his thumb in my mouth, and I suck on it. Drawing it back, he returns between my legs and presses it down on my clit. His teeth graze my earlobes, his breath hot and short.

“Come for me, kitten,” he says, and I can tell he’s waiting for me. They both are.

He rubs his thumb in a furious circle and the coil breaks, unfurling in waves of hot,

delicious heat. “Oh fuck,” I say, clamping my hands down on Miller’s shoulders. I dig my nails into his flesh. “Holy fu—”

He swallows my curse, tongue sweeping against mine. His orgasm rips through him, cock buried deep inside. I wrap my legs around him, holding him close, riding it out together. I turn my head to the side, watchful and aware that Knox is still fisting his cock, still chasing the wave. His groan starts deep in his chest before exploding in a feral roar. Cum shoots over his fist, thick and wet, dripping over his knuckles.

He falls back, chest heaving. “Jesus Christ,” he mutters, wrinkling his nose. “Jesus fucking Christ.”

The three of us catch our breath, each sweaty, sticky, covered in fluids. Miller rolls off my body, catching me in his arms and pulling me against his side. He kisses my temple. It’s soft. Sweet. Curious.

What the fuck just happened?

I want to ask, but I don’t want to break the spell. Outside these doors, Royer is still looking for me. Rat is on the warpath, waiting to dole out punishments. Knox knows our secret, and I still have two days left before the gauntlet is over. Oh, and these two men? They aren’t the only ones I had an intimate moment with today. I haven’t forgotten about my kiss with Grayson.

All I can think as I curl up against Miller’s side is that I am truly and thoroughly fucked.

We're in the process of cleaning up when Miller's phone buzzes on the desk. He swipes the screen, frowns, and shoves it in his pocket. I pull the Wittmore sweatshirt over my head and notice the two guys share a look.

"What?" I ask, rolling up the sleeves. It's Miller's shirt. It's too big, but soft, and smells like him. Something that has become more and more appealing.

"Royer is looking for me." He tugs up the zipper on his hoodie. "We have some set up to do before the final gauntlet." He looks me over. "Finish getting dressed. Knox is going to run interference."

He grabs his shoes and stops in front of me to repin my number over my heart. "Be careful, okay?" he says, then to my shock, he kisses me on the cheek before walking out the door.

"What does he mean by interference?" I ask, ignoring the storm of butterflies in my stomach. The patch of skin Miller kissed is still tingling. I fuss with the pin, a reminder of how meticulous these men are all the time.

"Just play along," he says, "and everything will be cool."

I shove my feet in the shoes Miller brought up from the barn. My brain is mush—still reeling from the orgasm, the inclusion of Knox in this game, Miller confessing his feelings to me. I don't trust anything, or anyone, and my body and mind know it.

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“Are you really not going to tell anyone about this?” I grimace. “I mean, about me?”

“If being friends with Royer for the past three years has taught me anything, it’s that one, he’ll stab you in the back in a heartbeat.” He gives me a tight, knowing grin. “And two, leverage is everything.”

He has a point, and it proves to me that Knox is on the exec board for a reason. He may look like a dumb jock, but he’s playing this game as hard as anyone else. I may be safe right now, but does that mean I will be forever?

I just have to survive through the end of the gauntlet, then none of it will matter anymore.

“So what are you going to do to keep me out of trouble?”

“Oh, sweet thing, I’m not keeping you out of trouble. In fact, you’re in huge trouble for not showing up like you were supposed to. Lucky for you, I’m a little less sadistic in my methods than other members of this frat.”

So I’m still being punished. I figured there was no getting out of that one. I sigh and say, “I’m ready when you are.”

Knox was right. He’s not as sadistic as the others, I think, scrubbing the brush in little round circles, trying to get off the caked grime. But like Miller, his sense of charity only goes so far. He pointed me in the direction of the downstairs bathroom, handed me a bucket, cleaning supplies and a scrub brush, and told me to get to work.

Dozens of frat boys had come in and out of this bathroom for a week. The mud caked in their shoes from the yard is now ground in the white grout. The toilet reeks of urine, their aim woefully off target. It looks like someone may have actually bathed a pig in the sink.

With the scent of bleach already stinging my nose, I'm wondering if I can just douse the room with the rest of the bottle, shut the door and walk away.

"Ah, forty-seven. I've been looking for you."

It's the tone that makes the hair on the back of my neck stand on end. Royer has that way about him, easy but smug. Casual but condescending. I get to my feet.

He leans against the bathroom doorjamb, holding an apple in one hand and a pocketknife in the other. Slowly, he starts peeling off the skin. "You didn't come back last night after the party."

"I was with the, uh," I search for the word I heard Rat use the night before, "chit, and passed out after."

"Sloppy. Zeta Sigs aren't sloppy. What if she'd woken up before you and called the police?" The blade pauses over the stem of the apple, and he looks up at me. "We're collected and controlled all the time, even when someone is sucking our balls. It's how we've managed to slip past the council despite our many traditions."

I hold back a laugh. Royer thinks he's slipped past the Council, but he has no idea Grayson can see every moment of this exchange. He doesn't realize that he's being recorded right now. God, seeing him go down will be the highlight of my eighteen years.

"I know Miller lets you get away with doing whatever you want, but not this time."

“You think scrubbing down this bathroom is what I want to do? Do you know how much pee and cum was stuck to the toilet?”

“It’s women’s work,” he says, scoffing. “Appropriate for someone who spends their life on their knees. But I shouldn’t be surprised Miller gave you pussy work.”

“Knox is the one that told me to do it.” I grit my teeth. “I don’t even know where Miller is.”

“Well, lucky for you, I’m here now and I’m going to teach you how to be a man, a brother, and not a soft vagina.” He drops the peel on the floor, right on the clean tile.

There’s a moment that ebbs between us, and I wonder if he knows the truth. If we’re both playing a game of cat and mouse, because his fixation on me is excessive. But then I remember how petty he is, how impulsive and childish. This is about the council pushing ‘Theo Hart’ through the Zeta Sig gate, and Miller daring to go against him by backing me.

This is about him being evil and looking for someone smaller, weaker, and less connected to fuck with.

None of that makes any difference when I see the dark flicker in his eye. It sends a chill down my spine. “I think you need a little bit of brotherly love.” He jerks his head down the hall. “Go wait in the parlor.”

“Brotherly love?” I clutch the scrub brush in my hand, my fingers raw and burning from the bleach. “What does that mean?”

“It means that you should follow an order without talking back for once in your goddamn life,” every muscle in his face tightens, “or things are about to get worse than they already are.”

He pops the rest of the apple in his mouth, then closes the blade shut with a loud snap. I drop the brush in the bucket and wash my hands, caught with a ball of dread building in my stomach. I'm so close to being done with this. So close to catching them. But maybe this is the opportunity I've been looking for. The camera is attached to my chest and Royer is pissed enough that whatever 'brotherly love' is, may be worth it.

I go straight to the parlor. Miller and Knox are both sitting on the couch. Miller's legs are sprawled out as he checks his phone. Knox raises an eyebrow. "You finished already, forty-seven?"

"No." I step over the threshold into the room. It's an old-fashioned room with painted glass lamps and a stone fireplace against the back wall. An uncomfortable-looking couch and chairs covered in a pale, floral print fill the space, along with a slant-topped writing desk tucked into the corner. "Royer told me to come here and wait."

Miller's body tenses, the casual stance vanishing. The two men share an uneasy look.

“Wait for what?” Miller asks.

“For my punishment? Cleaning that disgusting bathroom wasn’t enough. He said something about brotherly love? I don’t know.”

“Brotherly love?” Knox repeats. “He said that?”

I nod.

“Fuck,” Miller mutters, fingers shoving into his thick hair. “Fucking fuck.”

Knox just swallows thickly.

“What?” His reaction makes me nervous. “What does that mean—”

Rat stands in the doorway, a dark grin on his mouth. “Forty-seven. I’ve been looking for you all day.” He looks at Miller and scowls. “You’re not saving him this time, Hansen.”

His wide hand pushes me deeper into the room and I barely catch myself before crashing into the coffee table. When I turn, Rat is holding a fraternity paddle in his hands. The Zeta Sigma letters are burned into the smooth yellow wood, along with dozens of etched names. He spins it around by the handle. For the first time in all of this, I’m truly afraid. Rat grins, baring his teeth. He can smell my fear.

“This is the frat paddle,” he says, holding the long shaft at the end. “It’s only on rare occasions we have to bring it out and assert brotherly love. Usually it’s when a

brother, or a pledge, is showing disrespect to the process. Or needs a little reminder of their place in this community.” He points the end at me. “This is one of those times.”

“Because I was late?” I ask, my voice a squeak. “You’re going to spank me?”

I glance at Miller for help. His expression is passive, but I see the tense set of his jaw and shoulders. This could blow everything for both of us. If I have to pull down my pants, I’ll be exposed and he will be, too.

“Son, you’re about to get intimately familiar with the Zeta Sig paddle.” He looks at my waist. “Drop your pants, forty-seven, or I’ll have these two assholes do it for you.”

Terror cascades down my spine, paralyzing me. I force out, “No,” but I know the sound is weak. “Come on, we can talk this out. I’ll do whatever else you want.”

“It doesn’t work like that.” Rat slaps the paddle against his palm. The crack a warning of wood against skin. “I’m about to show you what happens when you think you’re above the rest of the goats in the barn.” He tosses it in the air again, but this time Miller’s arm shoots out, grabbing it mid-spin. Rat reacts instantly, lunging for the paddle. Miller shoves a hand into Rat’s chest, holding the paddle out of reach until things escalate to the point that Knox jumps between them, pushing them apart with his long, muscular arms.

“What the fuck, Hansen.” Rat attempts to grab the paddle from around Knox’s enormous frame. “I told you to stay out of this!”

“And I know you’re pissed off and itching to get back at someone after what happened with that chit on campus!”

“That bitch has nothing to do with what’s happening right now! Forty-seven thinks

he's special and I'm here to beat that specialness right out of him."

Miller holds up the paddle. "If you go after forty-seven like this, you'll fuck up Zeta Sigma for everyone! This kind of shit always gets out. You're too pissed." He looks up at Knox, a dark pleading in his eyes. "We can't afford any kind of incident."

It becomes obvious that, in this moment, Knox has become my lifeline. We're connected, but only through a moment of delicious perversion. Now he's the person between me and that paddle. Complete exposure. He could take me, or both of us down, in an instant.

He holds out his hand, gesturing for the wooden slab. Miller hesitates but hands it over. Rat makes another grab for it and Knox pushes him back with a hard blow that sends him into the wall. A framed picture crashes to the ground, cracking the glass.

"Dude," Knox says to him, "you need to back the fuck off."

"Thank you," Miller says, sneering over at Rat.

Knox turns and points the end of the paddle at him. "And you need to chill out. He's right, you're too wound up in forty-seven for some reason. I know we pick favorites, but this... it's gone too far."

Bile rushes to the back of my throat while Miller argues. "It's not about a fucking goat. It's about the preserving our charter and not going to jail."

"Maybe." For a moment Knox looks thoughtful, like maybe he'll side with Miller on reason and self-preservation, but when he speaks, he adds, "but Royer is still our president and if he wants forty-seven punished, you have no right to interfere. He isn't the first goat to receive brotherly love, and he probably won't be the last."

Miller allows more worry to slip through his façade than I've seen before. I know this isn't about protecting me—it's about protecting himself. If I drop my pants, everyone will know I'm not who I claim to be. Dominos will fall and I'll be lucky to get out of this farmhouse alive. That paddle is the least of my concerns.

"Whatever," Miller says, moving toward the door. Good call. Run. I can't even blame him. "This is going to backfire, and I'm not going to be here when it happens."

"Pussy," Rat mutters.

"Wait," Knox says, voice urgent. Miller pauses as Knox turns to Rat. "He's right about you. You're too upset and too fucking power hungry. The Warden has to be cool-headed. There's no way I'm letting you dole out punishment—especially not this one."

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“That’s not your call! Royer said—” Rat argues.

Knox shuts him up with a glare. “I’m on the executive board.” He nods at Miller. “And so is he. We’ve got a quorum.”

I feel like I’m teetering on the tip of a knife. I’m getting hurt one way or the other—how badly is in Knox’s hands.

“I’ll do it,” he says, holding his hand up to Miller before he protests. “I’ll maintain the integrity of the punishment and if I go over the line, I’ll take the consequences.”

“You’re fucking with me!” Rat shouts. “I’m the warden. It’s my job!”

“I’d watch how you speak to an upperclassman and officer,” Knox says, tone shifting dramatically. It’s the first real move of authority I’ve seen from him. “Get the fuck out of here before I turn this back on you.”

Rat’s eyes narrow and for a minute I think he may lunge for the paddle again but grabs the doorknob and jerks the door open. “You’re going to regret this,” he says, looking between us. His eyes linger on me the longest, and I can’t suppress the chill that runs through my veins. Right before he steps out and slams the door he adds, “Fuck you both.”

Knox walks over to the door and holds it open. He jerks his chin at Miller. “You, too. Out.”

“What? No. If you’re going to—

“Out, Hansen,” he says, giving him a pointed look. “This is the only way, and you know it.”

Miller’s jaw is so tight I think it may snap. He moves until he’s chest to chest with Knox, chin lifted. “I’m trusting you.”

“I know.” He tilts his head. “Go and make sure they don’t come in here before I’m finished.”

Miller exhales, hesitantly relenting. He gives me one last look before walking out of the room. Knox locks the door behind him. It’s just the two of us, the room quiet other than the pounding of my heart.

“Please, don’t do this.” It comes out shaky and hot tears burn at the corner of my eyes. I can’t help but stare at the paddle in his hand. The thick handle. God. “You don’t want to do this. What about last—”

He closes the space between us, fingers brushing under my chin as he tilts it upward. “This is happening, Reagan. You’re just lucky it’s me, not Rat. He would have torn up that sweet little ass and there’s no way in hell I was going to let that happen.” His hand creeps around to my lower back and he pushes his fingertips under my shirt, warm against my skin. “Miller knows what I have to do.”

“If you care so much about Miller, then why can’t we just pretend? How can you do this to him?”

“We’re brothers, sweetheart.” His thumb makes soft circles just above my crack. “We share everything. He trusted me to stay in that room with the information about you. He’s also trusting me with your ass.”

“You guys are crazy.”

He shrugs but grins. “We’re Zeta Sigs, which means what I’m about to do to you shouldn’t be a surprise.” He uses the paddle to point across the room. I follow its direction and see the slanted wooden desk top. “Drop your pants and bend over. It’s time for some brotherly love.”

24

Knox

Like the rest of the day, the scene unfolds both fast and in slow-motion. Forty-seven is a girl. Not just a girl, but Royer’s ex, Reagan. Miller knew it and kept it from me and Royer. Kept it from everyone.

Damn, he’s good.

I knew there was some rivalry between the two—especially over how initiation and the gauntlet were being handled. I thought it was just petty dick measuring. I see enough of that on the rowing team and figured it’d pass once we got through recruitment. I’d been content to let them piss it out, but watching this unfold? God, it’s a new level of deliciousness.

“Drop your pants and bend over,” I tell her. “It’s time for some brotherly love.”

Reagan trembles in fear and a twist of desire flickers in my belly. Sure, she still looks like a boy, except when I walked in Miller’s room earlier and caught her sucking his cock, I knew something was off. The slight curve of her body. Her narrow, tapered neck. Her tits when I finally saw them, round and perfect. But right now, physical looks isn’t what stokes the fire licking at my balls. It’s the waves of apprehension rolling off her, the sheer terror. She’s afraid of the paddle—of me. And I’m here for it.

Her eyes dart to mine as she reaches for the button on her jeans. I give her an

encouraging nod. “Part of having a successful plan is knowing when to pivot. Miller and I both know that. We’re brothers. Sharing this—you—with him is just an extension of that relationship.”

It’s in that moment that the fear vanishes from her eyes and is replaced with something else—hard determination. I shouldn’t be surprised. Anyone that gets this far through the gauntlet is made of steel. Despite what Royer and Andrea thought about her, she must be tough as nails. It just makes me want to see how she handles being on the receiving end of brotherly love even more.

Her jeans drop to her ankles, and I see her in a way that I couldn’t up in Miller’s room. The light in the parlor is bright, revealing the supple thighs and curvy hips she’s kept hidden underneath the fabric. The shorts go next, displaying the round swell of an ass only possessed by a woman. It’s instantly recognizable and my dick gets hard at the sight of the faint lines of her bikini tan.

She takes one last, long look at me, and I expect her to beg me not to do it, but her jaw clenches tight and she positions herself back against the wooden desktop, naked and sexy.

Damn.

“You’re such a pretty little thing, aren’t you? How did I miss it?”

I move behind her, my movements stiff from my boner. I run a hand down her back, gently pushing her forward, and tuck the paddle between my knees. Using both hands, I spread the flesh of her cheeks. She flinches at the intrusion, and I notice how her fingers grip the sides of the desk.

“That’s it, sweetheart,” I say, fingering her puckered hole. “Rat would have torn this tight little hole right up. I’ll get you good and ready first, okay?”

I spread her cheeks wider and bend, taking a long lick. She lurches forward, slamming her hips into the desk, a soft sigh floating back to me. Her reaction makes me harder than before, like I’d been when I’d jerked off earlier watching Miller fuck her. When she’s good and slippery, I lick my fingers and push one in slowly, easing my way inside.

“Don’t fight,” I tell her when I feel her tense. “It’ll hurt less.” She takes a deep, steadying breath. “That’s right. Fuck you’re tight,” I say, pulling my finger out and then pushing it back in again. “God, Miller said your pussy was good, but this? Jesus. Seems a stupid to waste it on the paddle.”

A shudder runs through her, and a bead of sweat slides down her backside. I bend and lick it off her skin, and slowly add a second finger in, stretching her out. With my other hand, I reach between her legs. She’s warm, slippery and wet.

My balls constrict. Damn. Despite the indignation and tears, this girl is hot for this.

“You like it, don’t you?” I ask, bending to speak right in her ear. “It feels good and exciting and new.”

She nods her head. “Yes.”

“If you want, I can fuck you instead of using the paddle.” I flick her clit. “You can feel me deep inside, filling you up. Is that what you want?”

Her forehead drops to the tabletop, and she turns her face to the side so she can see me. “You’re too big.”

“Rat and Royer are going to expect you to barely be able to walk when you get out of here.” I catch her eye. “It’s me or the paddle. I know it’s scary the first time, but I can promise you one thing. I’ll make it good for you.”

Her teeth bare down on her bottom lip, but she nods her approval—her want. I push down my joggers and pull out my cock, pushing it between her legs to get her juices over the head and shaft.

I wiggle my fingers one last time, spreading her out, then press the tip of my cock right up to the hole. Fighting the urge to just fuck right in, pounding my way into her ass, I take it easy, as she clutches the edges of the desk.

“That’s it,” I tell her. She has two dimples dotting the flesh. I press my thumbs into them. “Don’t fight me.”

Once I’m all the way in, I pull out slowly, letting her get used to it. I’m not here to tear her up—not like Rat would have. I’m here to do my job, show some brotherly love and get my nut off in the process. But I don’t have to be nice like this. I could

use and abuse her any way I want.

“How’s that feel?” I move quicker now, building a controlled rhythm.

“Wrong,” she admits, crying out when I push in harder. “It hurts, but... it also feels good.”

“It’s okay to like dirty, painful things.”

There’s a part of me that wishes Miller was in here now. She’s not the first girl we’ve shared, but this feels different. It doesn’t just feel good; it feels right. This secret girl hiding in our midst. The knowledge is deep in my bones, in the tight cinch of my balls, the hollow of my chest. I bite down on my bottom lip and hold in a groan, wanting it to last, but the tight muscles surrounding my dick are too much to bear and Reagan’s back arches, spurring me on.

“Oh god, oh god, oh god...” she chants, slamming her ass back against my lower abdomen. I wrap my arm around her waist, dragging my fingers back over her clit, pounding into her with deep strokes.

“Come for me,” I tell her. “Come on, I know you’re ready.”

“I don’t—”

“You do,” I tell her. “Stop fighting so hard and fucking come.”

The command unleashes something from within. Her pussy quakes against my fingers. Her body slouches and she’s sweaty and loose. I angle her back over the desk, holding her up. The aftershocks of her orgasm ricochet through her body and I pick up the pace, punching into her until my balls feel like they’re being squeezed by a vise, and I come hard and relentless, filling her up.

Even as I empty myself, my belly continues to twist at the scene in front of me. It's a mix of emotion; desire at seeing her so sexy and spent, satisfaction at knowing I made her feel this way, but there's the nagging concern that Miller and I are playing with fire.

"You okay?" I ask her, pulling out and tucking myself in my pants.

"Yeah that was..." her eyes are glazed, and she's at a loss for words.

"For us? Epic." I help her to stand, keeping a steady hand on her waist. "For everyone else, humiliating, horrifying, degrading."

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Her knees are wobbly, and I help her back into her pants. “No one will know this happened except Miller,” I assure her, straightening her shirt. “The good news is that you don’t have to lie about what happened in here. I gave you a pounding. You survived. Now you’re one step closer to being a Zeta Sig.”

A small, strange smile tugs at her lips and I can tell she’s proud of herself. She should be, but all I can think of as I unlock the parlor door is how fucking ruined we’ll be if Royer finds out the truth.

25

Reagan

As I exit the room, I catch sight of myself in the mirror hanging on the parlor wall. It’s not my red cheeks or glassy, well-fucked eyes that catch my attention. It’s the round circle of the pledge button. The camera. How much of that did Grayson see?

On one hand, I’d be enough to bring down the whole house, but it’ll also ruin me more than I already am. It would ruin what he and I have tentatively started.

Did that matter now? God, I’m so confused. My complicated life just got a million times worse. Three complicated men. None of whom I really trust. I sniff, wiping my nose with the edge of my shirt, wincing with every step. I’m spiraling, I can feel it; the pain and humiliation—now and coming—too much to bear.

None of that matters, though. Just outside the hall, I see the three of them waiting. Royer and Rat look skeptical. Miller, like he may want to snap Knox’s neck.

Knox stretches out the paddle by the flat end and points the handle at Rat. “You may want to wear gloves before you touch that.”

Rat wrinkles his nose and turns his gaze to me. “How’d he take it?” he asks.

“Like a Zeta Sig,” Knox answers. “Like a brother.”

“Good,” Royer says, “I want someone with him until the final phase. We can’t have him running off and squealing on us until it’s over.”

“I’m not going to squeal,” I say, hating him even more. “I signed up for this, just like everyone else. I told you I wanted in on the traditions and yeah, that was a fucking awful one, but I survived it. How many other members can say the same?”

There’s a beat of silence, the whole room engulfed in Royer’s paranoia. I force myself to breathe normally, and both Miller and Knox seem completely calm. The last person I expect to break it is Rat, but he slaps Royer on the ass with the paddle and says, “Dude, chill out. You don’t trust anyone, which is not the point of this exercise. He’s come this far; I think he’s pretty solid.”

Rat thrusts his hand out and I shake it, using the skills Grayson taught me. Firm grip, eye contact. “I know your ass and your pride hurt right now, forty-seven, but trust me, one day you’ll see this for what it is: being a legend.”

Miller grins, and Knox rubs the top of my head. A strange feeling fills my chest, one that horrifies me when I finally recognize it for what it really is: pride.

Although Royer backs down a little, he held firm on someone being with me all the time. Knox is the one that says, “Forty-seven, you’re coming with me.”

I turn to Miller for confirmation. He nods his approval. “I’ve got a few things to do to

get ready for tonight. Stick with Knox.” He gives his friend a pointed look. “Take care of him.”

“Got it, bro.” They bump fists and I fight the apprehension of going off with Knox alone. I barely know him and have no idea what to expect. With Miller, it’s definitely a case of the devil I know. My body grows hot and anxious as we climb the stairs to the second floor. My heart pounds against my ribcage as we pass Miller’s room and Knox opens the door to his own. His space is clean—tidy—impersonal since it’s just a temporary lodging, but his bed is made and his belongings put in place.

He unzips his hoodie and hangs it on a hook behind the door. “Get undressed,” he tells me, walking into the bathroom. A moment later, I hear the rush of gurgling water.

I’m frozen in the middle of the room, consumed by panic. I have no choice but to do whatever this man wants me to do, but also... I can’t help but wonder if Grayson is trying to find me. Does the whole council know what happened to me today?

“Th—Reagan,” Knox says, sticking his head back in the room. “Strip and come in here. Now.”

His tone is forceful enough that I snap into action, dropping my pants and pulling off my shirt and tank. Naked, humiliated, and feeling like my ass is on fire, I shuffle into the bathroom where Knox is bent over the full tub, pouring in a white powder from a box.

“Epsom salt,” he says, placing the box on the counter. His eyes stutter over my tits and pussy before making it back to my face. “It’s good for sore muscles.” He nods at my lower body. “It’ll help with the pain.”

“Oh,” I say, completely shocked. “That’s... that’s very nice of you.”

“I have some experience with muscle soreness. That’s why I insisted on the room with the tub.” He offers me his hand to assist me in getting into the tub. I take it, hissing when my toe hits the hot water. I try not to wince at how the high step tugs at my asshole and rely on him more than I want to keep steady. With his guidance, I slowly ease into the water, letting it come all the way to my neck. It both burns and feels good. Knox sits on the toilet, resting his elbows on his thighs, watching me.

I cross my arms over my chest. His eyes narrow and he motions for me to keep them uncovered. Releasing them, my tits float just at the surface. He doesn’t stop staring at my face.

“What?” I ask, feeling beyond self-conscious.

“I’m just trying to reconcile you being a female.”

“What we did in there wasn’t enough?” I lift my tits, pushing them above the waterline. “These aren’t enough?”

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“Those,” he says, with an amused grin, “are outstanding. No, just... I totally bought that you were a guy. Never crossed my mind.”

“It’s not like we were around each other much,” I say. “Not like Royer. He seems clueless.”

God, I hope he is or this whole thing is for nothing.

“He’s got a one-track mind right now. Well, maybe two. The gauntlet and shoving his cock into warm pussy. That’s it.” I make a face and he shrugs. “I know he hurt you and obviously it was enough for you to come up with this crazy scheme. But if you thought you ever saw a good guy in Royer, you were fooling yourself. That guy is a supreme prick. One of my best friends, but when he gets focused on something destructive, there’s no stopping him.”

“And that’s why you’ve agreed to work with Miller to take him down?”

He stands and moves to the edge of the tub. My heartrate had finally slowed with the warm bath, but it kicks back into gear with him so close. He reaches over my head and grabs a bottle of shampoo.

“I love Royer, but Miller’s right. He’s out of control and he’s going to bring down this frat.” I hear the sound of him squeezing shampoo from the bottle and then the press of his fingertips as he starts massaging my scalp. “That stunt today with the paddle? He’s lucky it was you. Anyone else would have gone running to the council and burned us to the ground. We’re already on thin ice, but he doesn’t give a shit. He’s more focused on his vendettas than anything else.”

His hands are big and feel so good. The tension in my shoulders and neck slowly unwinds.

“So what happens next?” I ask. “Royer gets kicked out and you and Miller take over?”

I haven’t asked for a lot of details. It would only make me look suspicious. Also, it doesn’t matter to me. My plan isn’t to save Miller or anyone else. It’s to bring down the whole house.

“I’m not sure, but Miller is the smartest son of a bitch I’ve ever met.” His hands move down my neck, rubbing circles with his thumbs. “Whatever you think you have on him? He’s got double.”

A chill runs up my spine. It could be from Knox’s firm touch or the cooling of the water, but I know better. No one knows about Miller’s involvement but me, and now Knox. I never told Grayson. For some insane reason, I protected him, which means that he possibly has the upper hand. Why? Why did I do that?

Knox’s hands travel down to my shoulders, fingers pushing into the upper part of my chest. The movement causes my breasts to bob in the water, nipples cresting the surface of the water before dipping back under again. The peaks are pebbled, hard and erect from the cool air and Knox’s strong touch. His wet fingers trail under my chin, tilting my face upward. I open my eyes, looking into his bold green ones. He thumbs my bottom lip, parting my mouth before bending and brushing his lips across mine.

“Jesus,” he says, “you’re sexy as fuck, you know that?”

There’s no response to that, and he doesn’t seem to expect one, kissing me again and dipping his hand under the water to cup my breast. His fingers discover my nipples,

tugging and twisting the firm flesh. My back arches, heat building in my belly. I shouldn't want this—or him—but my body never does what my mind wants.

Knox pulls away with a sigh, dragging his hand out of the water. "As much as I want to, I need to stop."

I try to calm my breathing. "Why?"

"I didn't clear it with Miller."

I blink. "That was for real?"

"I promised him. He told me to take care of you. He didn't tell me to kiss you." His eyes dart to my tits. "Or touch you like that."

"Oh." I slide back to a sitting position. "Okay."

He leans over, dropping his hand into the water at the end of the tub. The drain gurgles and bubbles under the surface. "Once this is empty, take a rinse off shower. I'll send a goat to get your things from the barn."

"Right." My skin burns and not just from the water. I feel it inside and out. "Thank you."

He stands. "This will be over soon. Tonight's the last night. From there, we'll figure out what we're going to do with you."

He exits the bathroom, leaving me in the draining water. I pull my knees to my chest, feeling lost and confused. I thought I was in control of this, that I was the one with the power, but what Knox said about Miller is terrifying.

What if he has one up on me and Grayson? What if all of this has been for nothing?

One thing is for sure, after tonight we'll know. I just don't know who will come out on top.

26

Reagan

Clean and in fresh clothes, I curl up on Knox's bed while he works on his laptop. I feel better since my bath, my muscles loose and the sensation in my backside less raw. I shouldn't feel comfortable with this man—not after what transpired earlier in the day, but I'm too worn out to fight anymore. After tonight everything will be over, and I can move on with my life. I pull the blanket over my shoulders and drift off to the steady tapping of Knox's fingers on the keyboard.

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It's a creaking sound that wakes me, and I blink into the dark room. Knox's room, I remind myself. I rise up but a gloved hand wraps around my mouth. "Don't fight," someone whispers in my ear, before wrapping a blindfold over my eyes and cinching my wrists with a tie. The words remind me of what Knox said to me in the parlor, telling me not to fight as he pushed inside. I bite down on a cry as the plastic cuts into my skin, but don't struggle as I'm hauled out of bed and dragged into the hall.

Footsteps echo in the hallway, but other than that, there's no sound. I'm lifted off the ground by two strong arms and carried down the stairs. It's gentler than I'd expect, and I wonder if it's Miller or Knox. I say a silent thanks that whoever it is didn't just kick me down the stairs.

A moment later we're outside, the crickets loud in the rural night. I hear the unmistakable sound of a van door sliding open, and I'm tossed in against the hard floor. Other than the sound of my body slamming into the floor, the men kidnapping me are completely silent. I wait, catching my breath, for other goats to get thrown in the back with me. After a beat, there's nothing but the sound of the closing van door, followed by the two front doors slamming shut.

I wait for anything—something to clue me in on what to expect, but the driver cranks up the car and the radio and blasts the music so loud that the walls of the vehicle shake. I can't see anything or hear anything. I'm alone, but maybe this is part of the initiation. We go at it solo? We meet our new brothers at the end?

Gravel crunches under the tires and the van lurches to a stop, music cutting off at the same time. Outside I hear muffled voices—the first since I was told not to fight. I can only make out the scattered word...stupid. Bullshit. I told you...

The door is thrown open, slamming into the jamb and, to my surprise, I feel my feet stuffed into my shoes, then I'm yanked out. The air smells clean. Fresh. Like nature.

"Your mission tonight," someone says, voice disguised so I can't make it out, "forty-seven is to climb the mountain of brotherhood. The path, like life, is filled with obstacles. Overcome those, climb to the top and you'll be rewarded for all your hard work and efforts this week."

Someone touches my chin, and the scent of bitter alcohol assaults my nostrils. "Drink up," I'm told, the rim of a glass—a shot glass—pressed against my lips. I open my mouth and accept the liquor, swallowing it down. It burns and I cough. For the first time, I speak. "Can I take off the blindfold?"

"Once you get on the trail."

A hand grips my forearm, and I take uneasy steps over the rugged terrain. Other than our footsteps, it's hauntingly quiet. If there are other goats out here, they're either silent or we're doing this in shifts. That or this whole thing is some stupid prank. Whatever it is, I know this journey is the way out of here. It's a means to an end.

"Count to twenty and you can take off your blindfold. Follow the trail. Go off it, and it'll be a long fucking night. There's a pitstop halfway." I'm not sure, but I swear I feel the ghost of fingertips graze the inside of wrist as they cut the binding. "Good luck, forty-seven."

The voice and the person vanish, and while I rub my raw wrists, I count to twenty.

"Fourteen, fifteen..." I say it loud enough that there is no way they think I'm cheating. "Eighteen, nineteen, twenty." I push off the blindfold and, although it's pitch black, it's clear that I'm in the woods. I look up and around, trying to acclimate my eyes to the natural light. Overhead, in the spots where the trees have thinned out a

little, the moon is bright. Otherwise, I have no light, no flashlight, no lighter, no torch of any kind.

Fucking assholes.

Taking a deep breath, I start up the trail, navigating the uneven ground step-by-step. The incline is steep, rocky, and filled with roots and other obstructions. I trip over a thick root, landing on my knees and palms. "Son of a bitch," I mumble, wiping my scraped and muddy hands on my thighs when I get back on my feet.

Throat parched and with sweat running down my back, I'm almost convinced that I'm lost when I see a flickering yellow light up ahead. It's the first pit stop. I cry out in relief, picking up my pace until I reach the table. There's a water bottle and I lift it to my lips taking a huge swallow.

"Oh my god," I say, gagging on the liquid. I spit half of it out. It smells and tastes like rubbing alcohol. 100% proof, I imagine. Royer obviously doesn't care that the reason they're in all this trouble is for this very thing. I spot a note on the table. True brotherhood is full of sacrifice, followed by reward. Drink the entire container and you can take the lantern with you.

Catching my breath, I consider it. Drunk in the woods or blind. Which is worse? Both seem suicidal, but my hands and knees are throbbing from the fall, and it's taking twice as long for me to go without a light. I lift the bottle and wrinkle my nose, my stomach already rebelling from the idea. Slowly, I drink the rest of the grain alcohol. My stomach aches and my head feels woozy, but I take the final swallow.

"Halfway there," I remind myself, grabbing the lantern off the tree branch. My first steps are wobbly, no better than if I'd been in the dark. I steady myself and try to clear my mind, taking the path one step at a time. I make it several yards before my stomach gurgles.

“Oh no.” I bend over and wrap an arm around my middle, desperately trying to hold it together. I fail miserably, falling to my knees retching up half the bottle, not making an attempt to move off the trail.

I become vaguely aware, as my skin turns clammy and my vision impairs and my body rejects the poison I’ve ingested, that I may become one of them. One of the recruits that dies during the gauntlet.

I’ll die out here of alcohol poisoning, dehydration and from the elements and it won’t be Theo Hart, but Reagan Lake. I’ll die as I lived; as a fool.

I yank off my pledge button and hold it to my face. “I don’t know if you can see me. I’m pretty sure you can’t hear me. But chances are I’m going to die out here, Grayson. Please don’t let them get away with it.”

Saying the words out loud is the motivation I need to continue forward. I drop the button and crawl the rest of the way to the top of the trail, dragging my body up on my hands and knees. I don’t know exactly how I know that I’ve made it, other than the trees are no longer overhead. The moon is visible and I’m in a clearing, the surface is made of hard, smooth rock.

“Forty-seven!” a voice booms and I look around, searching for the source. A figure cloaked head to toe in black emerges from the darkness. His voice is muffled behind the mask. “Congratulations. You made it through the gauntlet.”

Other figures shift behind him, dressed the same. I rub my eyes, trying to get an exact count. One seems smaller than the others, and it’s still eerily quiet. Where are the other goats? Am I the first one up here? The last?

Someone strikes a match, and it glows nearby, building until it forms a roaring fire. The yellow-orange flame provides brighter light, and carefully, I lift myself off the

ground. “Am I done?” I sway and grab my head. “Is it over?”

“Almost.”

The figures move toward me, each taking off their masks. The first is Royer, then Knox and Miller’s cut cheekbones, defined by the light. Rat shakes his head out, hair spiking in a dozen directions, grinning with amusement. I squint at the final person, and a wave of uneasiness rolls through my stomach when they finally reveal themselves. Andrea.

“Love what you’ve done with your hair,” she says, smug expression in place. “How much did it hurt to shave it all off, Reagan?”

Source Creation Date: July 9, 2025, 3:06 am

The name, my name, hits as intended, like a punch to the gut. Royer reaches out for his girlfriend and kisses her on the top of her perfect blonde head. “You didn’t really think you’d get away with this, did you?” he asks. “That you could come into my house, a filthy loser, and make a run at taking me down?”

He laughs and Rat laughs with him. Miller and Knox... it hurts to look at them—especially Miller. I thought we had a deal. That we had something... bigger. The cold glint in his eyes tells me that once again, I’ve been manipulated by the best.

“They know I’m here,” I blurt. “The council is the one that put me up to this. That wanted me to bring you down. They know where I am.”

“You mean Grayson Pierce?” Miller asks. His voice is so calm. Scary. Knowing. “Have you learned nothing this week, kitten? Once a Zeta Sig, always a Zeta Sig. Grayson is a brother. You really think he’d turn traitor?”

That I didn’t expect and my stomach drops, like I’ve just been pushed off a cliff. I didn’t just get manipulated by these people once. It’s happened over and over. And like a fool, I keep walking back into it. My desperation and need to fit in, to reach this rung on the social ladder, has turned me into something unidentifiable. Something pathetic and gullible.

“I won’t say anything. If Grayson isn’t working with me,” ouch, that hurts to say more than I expected, “then what’s the point? No one will believe me. You’re right. I’m a loser. Petty and stupid. I’ll leave Wittmore. You’ll never see or hear from me again. I’ll become a ghost.”

Royer pulls himself away from Andrea and walks toward me. “That’s a little too late, Reagan. Unfortunately, since you didn’t slink home like you were supposed to after being blacklisted, there’s only one way this is going to end.” A soft breeze blows, and I get a waft of his scent. His expensive, vile, cologne. I swallow back the rising bile in my throat as he approaches. “You’re not coming back down this mountain.”

“W-w-what does that mean?”

“It means that when I’m through with you, you’re going to kill yourself. You’re going to write a note, slit your wrists and put yourself and everyone you know out of the misery of having known you.”

My eyes dart to Miller’s, pleading. Hopeful. His stare back is like looking into a void. Whatever we’d shared, no matter how many times he saved me, that man is gone. He’s replaced with the Miller that hurts and takes for his own pleasure. With a sinking, desperate feeling, I turn to Knox, but he only watches Royer, too indifferent to spare me a glance.

Cold reality washes over me, turning my limbs numb. I have no one. Nothing. Not Grayson. Not the backing of the council. Not even the thin cords that bound me to Miller, and later, Knox. I did all of this, went through the pain and assault and humiliation just to end up back in this terrible place again.

“Fine,” I say, “you’re right. I’m pathetic. Give me the blade.”

Royer smirks and jerks his head at the others. “I need a minute with Reagan alone,” he says. “Head out and I’ll catch up in a minute.”

Andrea’s eyes narrow at her boyfriend’s request, but Rat nudges her along. Miller gives me one last look, his face shrouded in the shadows. I turn my head away. When they’re gone, Royer stands before me and pulls a knife out of his pocket.

He reaches for me, running his fingers down my cheek. “It didn’t have to be this way, you know that, right? You should have stayed in your place.” His touch moves to my neck. “I would’ve let it go if you hadn’t sucked off my best friend while I was in the next room.”

“That’s what made you do this?”

“Until that moment, I was undecided,” he admits. “I liked you more than I wanted to admit. I liked fucking your tight little pussy and playing on your father’s fancy yacht.” The thumbs my bottom lip. “But you let him in, you let him do something you’d never offered me, and that was unacceptable.” His hand lowers to my shoulder. “Before we’re finished, you’re going to give me exactly what you gave him.”

He shoves me to the ground, hard, my knees crashing into the rock. Through the numbness, the strangest thing is that I’m not even surprised. Of course, Royer would turn all of this into being about himself, into being about his cock. He’s the most predictable, petty, entitled asshole I’ve ever had the misfortune to be involved with—and that includes Miller Hansen.

The worst realization is that I’ve done this to myself.

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Miller

“What’s he doing back there?” Andrea asks, trying to peer behind Knox’s large frame as Rat leads us down the gravel road to the van. There’s a service road up to the top of the mountain. After we dropped Reagan off at the bottom we drove up and waited for her to arrive.

“Getting his final payback,” Rat says, chuckling darkly. “Shouldn’t take too long.”

If Andrea thinks Royer is loyal to her, faithful, she's more of a dumb sorority girl than I realized, and if I wasn't focused on the same thing, I'd mock the hell out of her for it. But I am focused on it—on whatever it is that Royer wants to remain private between him and Reagan.

That and the overall feeling I have about seeing her like that, setting her up and leaving her... knowing what she's going to do.

Fuck. When did this get so complicated?

I check my phone, looking at the time, the blue light casting a glow over the dark trail.

"It's crazy, you know," Knox says, voice low behind me.

"What's crazy?"

"That she made it all the way up there, drunk in the dark, bleeding." I step over a log crossing the trail and he does the same. "Like, she survived the gauntlet."

“Yeah, well...”

He grabs the back of my jacket and pulls me to a stop. “Well, what?”

I shrug. “She’s pretty fucking badass.”

He nods. Andrea and Rat’s footsteps getting farther away. “She is badass. And hot.”

“Very hot,” I agree. All of this started out as a game, another classic prank, but somewhere along the way I came to like Reagan. Really like her. As Knox said, she’s hot, but she’s also brave and funny and fucking determined. Even looking like a skinny, ratty boy, she made my dick hard. And now...

I check my phone again. Wincing when I see no notifications.

“What?” Knox asks, noticing me shifting on my feet.

“Fuck it.” I push past him, picking up my pace to a jog. I have nothing but my phone flashlight to see the way, but the gravel road is wider and less bumpy than the trail. I hear footsteps behind me, but don’t look back. Knox’s long legs and physical condition mean he can catch up to me easily. I push myself as hard as possible, not stopping until I reach the clearing. In the flickering firelight, I see Reagan on her knees, dirty and tired. Royer stands over her, hand shoved down his pants. There’s no doubt where this is going, and fuck no, is anyone putting their cock near my girl without my permission.

She’s mine.

Using every ounce of jealousy, rage and adrenaline, I charge at Royer. He sees me one second before I pounce on him, but it's not enough time for him to recover—to get his fucking hand out of his pants. We land hard, rolling around the hard rock.

“What the fuck are you doing?” he shouts, grappling with me. He grazes my chin with his knuckles, slicing the skin with the edge of his frat ring. I manage to pin him down. Using every ounce of my weight to hold him down. He grunts and fights against me. “What the hell, Miller?”

“You had your chance, asshole,” I say, punching him in the face. It's enough to get the upper hand, grabbing his shoulders and slamming them down on the granite. “And you fucked it up. You're going to get the charter revoked, the frat shut down, the police knocking on our doors. Why? Just so you can prove you're a better sadistic monster than the rest of us?” I stare down into his bruised, entitled face. “I'm not letting you take me down, Royer, and I'm sure as fuck not letting you put your dick anywhere near my girl's mouth.”

“Your what?” His jaw drops, and he barks out a laugh, spraying blood in the air. “Oh, this is classic Miller Hansen. Falling for my sloppy seconds. God, you're fucking—”

A foot slams into his side, knocking the breath out of him. I look up and see Reagan rearing back to kick him, or maybe this time, me. I hop out of her way and this one lands on his stomach. He rolls over to his side, groaning in pain.

She stumbles and I reach out to catch her, gripping her by the waist.

“Are you okay?” I ask, wiping the dirt off her forehead.

“What did you say to him?” she asks. “What did you call me?”

Footsteps echo off the rock and lights flash, glaring blindingly.

“Get your hands off of her!” a voice shouts—a man. I release Reagan and shield my eyes from the light, trying to see the man behind the glare. Grayson. I’d sent him my location an hour ago, but out here service is spotty. I had no idea if it went through.

“I’m not going to hurt her,” I say, holding my hands up in surrender. “Never again.”

A cop comes from behind, jerking me back, snapping cuffs on my wrists. Royer is dragged off the ground and I spot Knox, already cuffed, waiting at the edge of the clearing.

Grayson rushes to Reagan, eyes scanning from head to toe. “Are you okay? Did he hurt you?”

“Don’t touch me,” she says, backing away warily.

“He didn’t know,” I tell her, realizing she’s afraid that he’s still one of us. “I just told that to Royer to try to get him to stop.”

“I didn’t,” he promises. She holds out for one moment longer, then bursts into tears, lunging for him. My heart aches as I see her curl into him, jealousy stabbing like a knife. I’d told Royer she was mine, but I know it isn’t true. I don’t deserve her.

“We got Rat and Andrea,” Grayson says to me. “Blocked them on the way down the road. It’s why it took us so long to get up here. We had to hike the rest of the way.”

“Good.” I get out before the cop behind me wrenches my arms and drags me back. I catch Reagan’s eye, knowing whatever apologies, excuses, or bullshit I want to give her is never going to happen. I meant what I said: I’m never going to hurt Reagan Lake again.

Reagan

“I brought you some clean clothes.” I look up and see Grayson in the hospital room doorway, holding a paper bag.

“Thanks.”

I’d been subjected to an exam. Not just for injuries, but for evidence, to confirm my side of the story. They checked for bruises, tested my blood alcohol level. They asked if I was sexually assaulted. I said no. What I did with Miller and Knox may have straddled the line of consent, but I accept my part. I wanted it. I wanted them and I couldn’t pretend differently.

After a long week of raw exposure, lying under the harsh blue light and having nurses and detectives examine my body felt intimately worse.

I peer into the bag, seeing a few items from my—Theo’s—dorm room. Grayson is quiet, but I sense the questions he wants to ask. Too bad for him. I’m asking first.

“How long did you know?” I blurt. “About Miller?”

He sits in the mint green chair in the corner. “I’d suspected for a while that something was going on. Miller isn’t especially altruistic. When it became obvious through the video feed that he was helping you through the tasks, I knew he had to be getting something in return. I confronted him that day you saw us together on campus, but he didn’t admit anything.” He picks at the frayed cuff of his shirt. “I didn’t know for sure until he sent me the message tonight.”

“Did you see what happened in the parlor?”

The tips of his ears turn red. “I think I have a pretty good idea. I saw them get out the paddle and then you were alone with Knox—at least until the video went black.”

Only because the shirt fell over the pin's camera. "I know the history of using that paddle on pledges and we tripled our efforts to find you. It gave me the evidence I needed to get the police involved, and they were able to track down the farm through property records. Miller's father is good, but his fingerprints were all over the purchase of that property. Unfortunately, we just got there too late." His expression is one of disappointment and frustration. "By the time we raided the farm, you were gone. The other goa—recruits—were clueless. When I got the video of you alone in the dark, I was terrified for you." He tents his fingers together and stares at them. "I knew they were bad, Reagan. I just had no idea they would go to that level. Thank god Miller was able to send me the geo-tag with your location."

I think about it all, how angry Royer had been and how if they hadn't shown up—honestly, if Miller hadn't come back for me, what could have happened. Royer didn't just want to hurt me, he wanted me dead. I shiver and wrap my arms around my waist.

"Can I ask you a few questions?" Grayson asks. I nod, knowing I owe him a few truths. "Why did you go along with Miller?"

I shrug. "He caught me my first night out. He didn't give me much choice, and..."

His eyebrow raises. "And?"

The blush starts at the back of my neck, spreading across the rest of my skin. "It's possible that I may have liked it—being with him." And Knox, I think, but don't add. "By the end, we were both getting something out of it."

He nods, his expression carefully arranged into something I can't read. I'm just glad that if it's judgement, I can't see it.

"That last time we met..." He looks at me, a bit shier than before. "We kissed. Was

that just part of this? Just more pretend?”

I shake my head. “It was a nice kiss. I needed it.”

“But not the way you need someone like Miller.”

“I don’t know what I want, Grayson, other than a shower and a cheeseburger.”

“Fair enough,” he admits.

“What’s going to happen to them?” I ask.

“The charter has been revoked, and the fraternity has twenty-four hours to vacate the property. Royer has been charged with kidnapping, hazing, attempted sexual assault and a slew of other charges involving the fraternity.” His jaw tics. “You aren’t the only one he tortured this week.”

I shift, tugging at my hospital gown. “And Miller? Knox? The others?”

“We have video and other evidence of Rat’s participation. Andrea and Gamma Epsilon are being investigated now for their involvement. Since they were already on probation, it’s likely they will lose their charter, too.” He leans back. “As far as Knox and Miller, we’re going to need your report to determine that. You’ve admitted some of this was consensual. You walked into that building on your own, negotiated with Miller and,” he swallows, eyes shifting away, “participated in a sexual relationship with him. I understand there was a power difference here and the police are willing to listen, but you’ll have to testify and try to prove the difference.”

My skin grows sticky and warm thinking about it—about them. It’s a decision I’m not ready to make now—if I ever will. I slide off the bed and dump the clothing out of the bag. Grayson takes the hint and stands. “I can stick around and give you a ride

if you want.”

“Thanks,” I say, “but I already called someone.”

Janelle had been the first person I reached out to and as far as I know, she’s down the hall giving her own report about what happened at the party to the police. Another nail in the Zeta Sig coffin.

“Sure.” He doesn’t move. “I really am sorry this went so far, Reagan.”

“Me too, Gray, but it’s not your fault.” I give him a tight smile. “We did what we set out to do. We brought Royer and Andrea down, although unfortunately, the houses weren’t salvageable.”

“Which means you won’t ever get to be a GE, like you’d hoped.”

“I’m not that girl anymore,” I confess. “That whole world has lost its appeal.”

Source Creation Date: July 9, 2025, 3:06 am

He spreads his arms and I respond by tucking in against his chest, feeling comfort from his warmth. He squeezes me tight, and later, when I'm alone, I strip off the gown and pull on the clothes, feeling strangely comfortable in the men's jeans and sweatshirt. Whoever Reagan Lake was before she got to Wittmore is long gone, a new person emerged in her place. This one is strong, determined, and resilient.

The woman I've become can bring down an entire system. She knows what it's like to feel the pleasure of two men at once, and no longer needs a mirror to prove her worth.

"You ready?" Janelle asks as we walk down the hall.

My body aches. My heart hurts. My brain is a confusing bowl of mush, but I feel more complete than I have since I arrived at this school.

"Yeah," I reply, thinking of how far I've come and where in life I want to go. "I'm ready."

Epilogue

Eight weeks have passed since the gauntlet, but that doesn't stop people from looking at me as I cross campus. My hair is two inches longer and still my natural dark blonde. I no longer dress like a boy all the time, but I do have an affinity for hoodies with zippers and pockets. I'm grateful for pretty bras and panties. I never want to shove a tube sock down my pants again.

It's not my looks giving me stares, or even the blacklist. It's the article.

Decades of Hazing and Abuse Revealed in Undercover Greek Sting

That was the big story around campus for weeks, well, until a new scandal came out about the football team violating recruitment rules. It wasn't a good fall for Wittmore. My photo was in the article, along with images of Zeta Sig and Gamma Epsilon on moving day. They both lost their charters and houses.

And Royer? Well, it's no surprise his father bailed him out and hired a prestigious lawyer to defend him from the charges. They've appealed his Wittmore suspension, and a hearing will be held before the end of the semester. I want to say he'll never win, but guys like Royer Atkinson rarely lose. I'm just thankful he's spending his time getting out of this mess and not making my life miserable.

I arrive at the building and climb the front steps. The house looks the same, brick with white columns. The letters are gone, although the faded imprint is still visible. There's a chain and padlock looped through the brass doorknobs. A lone figure waits on the front porch—tall and lanky, glasses perched on his nose.

My heart flip-flips in my chest.

"Hey," Grayson says. His eyes scan up and down my body. "It's still weird seeing you like... you know."

"A girl?"

"Yeah." We meet halfway up the steps, and he hugs me, pulling me close. He smells great. "How are you?"

"Nervous."

"Any chance you want to tell me what this is about?"

“Not yet.” I look back over the yard. No one else is here yet. There’s no guarantee they will show. All of this is a long shot.

“Our job is to monitor and encourage Greek life on campus,” the Chancellor said. “Obviously, we’re down two at the moment, and that doesn’t look good to the national Council in terms of philanthropy and funding.”

“It looks better than being in the news for abusing recruits,” I shot back. “But I guess what you’re saying is you don’t like empty houses. You want to add them back.”

“Well,” she said, giving me a small smile, “we want to add something back. Something a little different.”

I tilted my head. “Different how?”

She rests her elbows on her desk. “A co-ed group, focused on networking and service. No formal rush, just applications. Zero tolerance on hazing.” She must see the skepticism on my face. “The goal would be to recruit students that have no desire for typical Greek life.”

“Why are you telling me about this?” I ask. The dust may have settled, but my nerves are still raw. “I have nothing to do with Greek life or building occupancy.”

“Because the Council wants you involved—they’d like you to be on the executive board.” She gives me a confident grin. “They think you’d be the perfect face and stamp of approval for this new venture.”

At first, I said no. Who wants the hassle? And it felt like a slippery slope back into trouble. But later, after I’d thought about for a while, a plan started to formulate. If the Chancellor really wants this to happen, she’ll go to someone else—someone who isn’t as invested in making a change. Why not take the opportunity for leadership to

do this the right way—my way? So, ultimately, I agreed.

But with some stipulations.

I glance at the time. Two minutes until this meeting is supposed to formally start. I think for a minute none of them are going to show and I'm going to have to go back to the Chancellor and tell her it's off.

“It may be easier if I knew who and what was about to happen,” Grayson prompts, resting his hands on my shoulders. His thumbs make tiny circles to relieve the tension. I almost cave, but I know if I do, the whole thing will blow up, more than I already expect it to.

Source Creation Date: July 9, 2025, 3:06 am

I take a deep breath and look up at him. “I need you to be patient, just for a few more minutes.”

He nods, but his eyes flick over my head and he mutters, “What the fuck?”

I spin, heart already pounding in my chest before I even see them. Miller and Knox are at the end of the sidewalk. Miller’s face is expressionless as he pretends he didn’t just miss a step when he sees the two of us on the former Zeta Sig front steps. Knox is the opposite. With his hands tucked in his pockets, a small, curious smile tugs at his mouth.

Grayson, on the other hand, has pushed past me and rushes down the steps. “Leave now or I call campus security.”

Miller nods at me. “She invited us, isn’t that right, kitten?”

The nickname lights my spine on fire, but I do everything I can to maintain composure. What happens in the next five minutes could change my—our—lives.

“Is that true?” Grayson asks, but he already knows that it is.

“Yes, I asked you all to meet me here.” I stay on the step, liking the way it keeps me elevated. “The Chancellor has asked me to start a new organization, non-Greek, one that brings out the best in Wittmore. There would be a focus on service and philanthropy. She’s given me this house to run it out of.”

“So what?” Knox asks. “You brought us here to rub it in our faces that you’re

creating a little club in our old house?”

“No, actually.” I take a deep breath and then exhale. “I’m inviting you to join.” I look at Grayson. “And for you to be our on-site liaison to the Council.”

“You’re serious,” Grayson says.

“A hundred percent.”

Knox lifts his chin. “Would there be parties?”

“Sure,” I reply. “But no drugging girls. Or forcing people to consume half their body weight in alcohol. Or any of your other hazing bullshit.”

He wrinkles his nose. “I don’t know. I kind of liked that stuff.”

Miller touches Knox’s arm and asks, “What’s in it for us?”

“A chance to repair your reputation for being members of a disgraced frat.” His blue eyes hold mine and I see the question in there. The one he isn’t asking, the one I feel in the pit of my stomach every time I think about him. “The Chancellor will expunge any connection to the hazing charges from your records.”

“And?” he prompts.

Grayson shifts next to him, looking up at me in curiosity. Knox—he’s still amused—clearly along for the ride. “And, uh, I’d like the four of us to work out an arrangement.”

“An arrangement,” Grayson repeats. “What the hell does that mean?”

Finally, Miller’s expression softens. “She wants to fuck us,” he says. “All of us.”

My cheeks burn, but he's right. That's exactly what I want.

"Move in with me," I say. "We can run the organization and turn it into something awesome, while also, I don't know, having something else awesome, too."

"I'm in," Knox says.

"No other girls," I stipulate quickly. "No chits or bicycles or whores or sorority girls."

"Done." Knox walks over, kisses me on the cheek, and whispers, "I've been thinking about being with you again for weeks."

I look up at him. "Me too."

Miller watches the two of us and says, "Fine, but you sleep in my room."

"Okay." It's a big ask, especially with the other guys, but we all know Miller has to at least pretend like he's setting the rules. "I can do that."

He grins with achievement and approaches me, giving me a deliciously hot kiss. I feel it everywhere, in my toes, between my legs, in the rapid pounding of my heart.

With the two of them by my side, I look down at Grayson. He was the first to have my back, but this is a big ask. Risky for him in a million ways. Knox and Miller are used to sharing and depravity, but I bank on the fact Gray used to be a Zeta Sig too.

"What about you?" I ask. "You want in?"

He looks up at me with that sweet face, his hair messy and glasses a little askew. He takes the first step and says, "I want to keep you safe and see you succeed." He climbs another step, our faces level. "And I know that I want you, I just..."

“I want you too.” I look at the others. “And them. I can’t be that stupid girl that walked onto this campus looking to be a robot like every other girl. I’m not her anymore. This is who I am. I’m a woman who doesn’t want to choose.”

His hand rests on my waist, thumb pressing into my hip. “You shouldn’t have to.” He tilts his head in that way that tells me he’s going to kiss me. That he’s saying yes. When our lips meet, it feels like an explosion. So good. So sweet. The best of all worlds.

I’m no longer limiting myself to one ideal, one dream. I’m ready to take it all.