



Bratva Past

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Description: For a long time, Isaac Flynn has had his eye on Lucy Rue. She was a beautiful woman, and he knew it was only a matter of time before someone else saw the gem that she was. But, he had a past, one that meant he needed to stay well clear of her.

From the moment Isaac arrived in town, Lucy had the biggest crush on him, but at the time she was just a teenager. Now, she was a full-grown woman, and having dealt with loss, she knew how short life was. She finally worked up the courage to ask him on a date, and he was the perfect gentleman.

Isaac does not talk about his past. There is no past life. He has no pictures. There is nothing. Nothing will come from his past because it is all dead. He was part of the Rostova Bratva, but when they killed his family, he turned on them. He was one of the most feared men in the whole of the Bratva, and now they're all gone.

He wants to live a simple life. Find a wife, a woman he loves, and finally have the family his father always wanted for him. But first, he has to tell Lucy the truth. Once she knows, will she accept him, or will she walk away?

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Chapter One

Every morning without fail, Isaac Flynn stood within the compound of his mechanic shop and watched as Lucy Rue approached. The young woman was only twenty-four years old, but slowly and surely, she'd been driving him crazy for weeks, if not months.

He couldn't remember the exact moment he started to pay attention to her. It might be the dresses she wore, or the way she wore her hair, or maybe it was even the makeup, which was strange. He'd never been a guy who cared if a woman wore makeup.

Lucy always looked amazing. She rarely wore too much makeup. She was stunning.

From what he knew, she worked at the local care home and was loved by pretty much everyone within the small town of Saint Falls.

Being the local mechanic, he was the guy everyone knew, the good guy they could count on, and he loved his place within the town. It had taken him a long time to get accepted.

Many years ago, he'd bought this old place in the hope of setting it up for retirement. He'd been into some bad shit, but that time was long gone. He took care of all loose ends, walked away from the life, came here, and settled down. Nothing bad had happened in over ten years. Not that anything bad would happen.

A long time ago, when his father was still alive, he'd been a mechanic. All it had taken were a few classes to remind him, and since then, he'd been working on cars,

trucks, and bikes.

None of the townsfolk knew who he was. They didn't need to know.

He saw Lucy approaching, and like every other day throughout the week, she stopped at the gate.

"Hey, Flynn," she said.

Never did she call him Isaac.

"You all right, Lucy?" he asked.

"Yeah, I'm doing okay. You know how it is."

Now, this was new, as she stepped up toward him. She rarely came into his shop. Lucy didn't own a car, and because it was a small town, she tended to walk everywhere, or catch the bus. Like him, she didn't have anyone. Her parents had died because of a drunk driver when she was eighteen, and that was six years ago, leaving Lucy all alone in the town.

"Yeah, I know how it is."

Since then, he had become aware of a few people attempting to take advantage. Lucy was not wealthy by any means, but the house her parents had spent their lives in was now hers, and it was fully paid for. After buying the house, they had a small fund saved up, and from what he knew, it all went to Lucy. The funeral didn't put a dent in the funds. For all intents and purposes, Lucy was fairly well-off, although she never showed it.

"What are you working on today?" Lucy asked.

She wore another dress today. This one seemed to be crossed over the breasts, and her tits looked absolutely glorious in it. It then molded to her waist, before flaring out at the hip, and falling down her body, toward her ankles. She wore a pair of heels, but again, they were not too large or too small. The dress had large flowers printed all over it, and it just seemed to match her smile.

“Just a few cars. You know how it is. They don’t take care of the car, and it breaks down. You’ve got to learn to give your car a little TLC.”

The smile on her face seemed to widen. “You really do love your cars, don’t you?”

“I’m a mechanic, it kind of comes with the title.”

“So very true.”

“Are you not working today?” he asked.

She glanced down at her dress and shrugged. “Yeah, I am, but seeing as I change every time I go into work, I don’t see a reason why I shouldn’t wear what I want.”

“You have a uniform.”

“Yep.”

“Tell me, Lucy, do you love working at the care home?”

“It’s ... I love it. What I don’t love is that I make so many amazing friends, and I lose them.”

He hated the cloud that landed over her face. Isaac also saw her eyes glaze over. She looked down at the ground, and he watched her hand clench seconds before she

finally looked up.

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“Anyway, I better go,” she said. “Don’t work too hard.”

“Nor you.”

She made her way toward the gate, and she had already broken the protocol they seemed to have.

Lucy stopped and turned toward him. “What about a drink after work?” she asked.

“You’re asking me out?” he asked.

She nodded her head and then shook it. “Not if you don’t want to go.”

“It’s a date, Lucy,” he said.

Her smile seemed to widen, if not brighten just a little.

“Thank you,” Lucy said.

“You do know that I am older than you, don’t you?”

“Does that bother you?” she asked.

“No.”

“Good, because it doesn’t bother me either. Bye, Flynn.”

And with that, she walked out of the gate and he saw the little spring in her step. Every part of his sensible brain was telling him he shouldn't turn up. Lucy was off limits. She was too young, and she deserved someone her own age, at least that was what he kept trying to tell himself.

Another part of his brain didn't like the idea of her being with anyone but him. He couldn't stand the thought of another man even looking in her direction. There was no way he was going to be able to cope with anyone else dating her.

They'd been doing this little dance for well over a year now. There was no one else good enough for Lucy. He was the only one capable of taking care of her.

"And what did he say?"

"Marge, will you stop?" Lucy asked.

"What? I'm the one who encouraged you to stop waiting outside of the gate. What does a lady have to do to get an update?"

Marge was one of her favorite people in the world. For the last six years that she had been working in the local care home, taking care of patients, or clients, during the end of their lives. There were a lot of different people who lived in the care home. Most of them wanted to go about their own lives. Lucy cleaned for them, kept them company, and in all honesty, was just a friend to all. She had applied for the job a week after losing her parents. It had been a trying time for her.

Many of the patients had unfortunately passed since she arrived. Marge and Harry were two that were still alive. Harry was currently sleeping, though. He had a thick book pressed against his chest, and he looked completely out of it. As for Marge,

Lucy had thrown a blanket over her lap, as the cold was starting to get to her, although it was the height of summer.

“We’re going out for drinks tonight,” Lucy said. “There, is that what you wanted to know?”

“Drinks? This is amazing news. Will you have time to go home and change? Update your makeup? Curl your hair?”

Lucy laughed. “Will you stop?”

“Nope, I am not stopping until I know you’re happily married with a baby on the way.”

“A baby?” Harry asked, yawning.

“Don’t be nosy, you,” Marge said.

“Me, nosy. You’re the one who’s butting into the kid’s life. If I was twenty years younger, Lucy, I’d take care of you.”

She couldn’t help but blush. Harry had always been a sweet man. He had told her on many occasions that if a man can’t treat her right, then it was no good keeping him around. There might have also been a couple of choice words along the way about what a real man is all about.

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She loved both of these people. They made her feel like she was part of their family. Although Marge and Harry's kids barely visited. They didn't even make time for a phone call. Lucy made sure to take care of them.

"I know you would, Harry."

"But, you're not twenty years younger, Harry, and besides, you'd need to be closer to forty years younger to have a chance. Now, come on, we all know that mechanic fella is a pretty good guy. He fixed our bus up really good and didn't charge us a fortune for it."

Harry grumbled, then went back to reading his book. Marge did not look entertained.

But what Lucy also saw was that her friend looked tired. "I think it is time for you to rest."

Marge didn't argue with her. She unclicked the lock from the wheelchair and started to take her toward her bedroom. Once she had Marge settled, she did a quick spot of cleaning, then began to do additional work. She moved from room to room, picking up the laundry, stopping to chat with each resident, and then carrying on.

Her job was to work, but to also be friendly, to keep everyone happy. When she arrived here at eighteen, she didn't have the first clue what to do, and Marge had taken her under her wing and helped her out.

The woman that had the job before her and been there over ten years, but left after someone had passed, and it became too much to bear. Lucy got it. She had lost a lot

of people, but she kept coming back, because it was important.

“You know Marge is getting tired quickly,” Harry said when she arrived at the main living area and started to clean it up.

“I know.”

“She just wants to see you happy, kid. We all do.” He groaned as he got to his feet. “We all see that you have a good heart, and none of us want to leave without knowing you’re going to be okay.”

He moved toward her, placed a hand on her cheek, gave her a smile, and then he left. They were her family, in their own way. She knew they wanted her to settle down, and she got it.

Lucy thought about Isaac Flynn. She started calling him by his last name because he had called her Rue once, and it kind of stuck. She’d been in a bad mood, and he’d shouted “Rue,” making her stop. At which point, she called him Flynn, and that was that.

Now, she made sure she walked past the mechanic shop every chance she got. He was often working on cars, or bikes, or the occasional truck. She was the one who asked him if he’d take a look at the bus for their rare trips.

Everyone here loved him. He fixed their bus, and all the trips that had been put on hold came back in full force. He only took minimal payment as well, which was a shock. When they first got the quote for the bus, it had been more than they could have afforded.

She knew he was a good guy, and the way he took care of them all melted her heart. He was a true gentleman, and the truth was, for nearly six years and maybe even a bit

longer, she'd had a crush on him. He arrived in town when she was fourteen, and she knew a lot of women were curious about him. Sure, people had their doubts, but slowly and surely he earned his place. Lucy would walk home from school, keeping a careful distance away so he never saw her, but she'd look at him, and yes, her crush had been cemented in her young heart. Now, it was at a fever pitch, and Marge had been encouraging her to ask him out for years.

She just couldn't believe she had finally done it.

Chapter Two

Isaac never got nervous. Not when it came to women. He had enjoyed his share of willing women in the past. Since becoming the town mechanic, although there were offers, he never succumbed to anyone.

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It had taken him most of the day to realize he and Lucy didn't make arrangements for their date. He didn't know if he should go to the bar or pick her up. So, he opted for the latter.

Knocking on her door, he stood and waited. Lucy opened it seconds later, and his breath nearly got locked in his throat. Her brown hair was curled, cascading around her face, and she looked positively beautiful. She wore a deep red dress that matched the shade of red she had on her lips.

She offered him a smile. Her eyes were smokey, but again, she wasn't wearing a lot of makeup, just enough to enhance what was already beautiful about her.

"I ... wasn't sure where you wanted to meet," he said.

"This is good. I realized as I was getting ready that we didn't ... you know, figure that out. Are you ready to go?"

"Yeah, I am."

She grabbed her keys, a denim jacket, and they were already out the door, Lucy locking it behind her. They walked down her short driveway, heading out onto the main street.

"I brought my truck," he said.

Lucy nodded, and then he realized something. He'd never seen Lucy get inside a motor vehicle. She never took a cab, always walked.

“Do you want to walk or drive?”

She looked at the truck and he saw her indecision. He hadn't even thought of the reason why she might not want to drive. Her parents were killed in a drunk-driving accident. Lucy hadn't been there, only her parents, and if she had any trauma from the experience, she was still carrying it.

“How about we walk?” Isaac asked.

He held his hand out, hoping to cut the tension he'd created. Lucy looked down at his hand, and he wondered if he had pushed too far, when she slid her hand in his. She had small hands, and he noticed that even in the height of summer, they were cold.

They started walking toward the local bar. He loved this quaint little town of Saint Falls.

“It's a nice evening,” Lucy said.

The sun hadn't quite set. Summer was still in full swing, and he glanced toward her.

“Yeah, it is. Are you feeling hungry?” he asked.

“Starving.”

“I know Richard makes the best chicken wings. You want to share a couple of baskets?”

Lucy laughed. “Yeah, it better be a couple of baskets.”

He laughed.

Richard owned the bar, and he'd named it, aptly, Falls Saints. Richard had thought it was funny, but the truth was, the guy didn't have the first clue what to name his bar. Taking the town name and swapping the two words seemed to make him laugh quite a bit.

His own shop was simply named, Saint Falls Mechanics. There were a few customers that had come in and asked why he didn't add "and sons" or "and daughters." He would tell them he didn't have either.

They arrived at the bar, and sure enough, country music was playing in the background, and there were already a lot of people, as he expected on a Friday night. Friday was always party night. He miraculously found themselves a table and ordered several rounds of hot chicken wings.

"It's busy," Lucy said.

"I'm sure Richard is loving it."

Being busy was good for business.

He glanced around, seeing several couples he knew, and a few single people. Most of them were having a lot of fun.

Returning his attention to Lucy, he watched as she glanced around, and he saw how nervous she was.

"You want to tell me about your day?" Lucy asked, getting there first. She offered him a smile.

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“I fixed cars. You?”

“I helped people.”

He laughed.

“Do you love working on cars, Flynn?”

He smiled at her. She was flirting, and doing a bad job of it, and he couldn't help but be completely captivated by her. She was so beautiful.

“Yeah, I do, but do you really want to talk about cars?”

Lucy pressed her lips together and shook her head. “I'm sorry. No, I don't. I mean, cars are great and they get people to where they need to go and all, but I have no interest in them.”

“I don't expect you to.” He chuckled.

“But I also don't have a clue what to talk about.” She nibbled on her bottom lip, and he saw this wasn't her attempting to be coy. She was nervous. “Can I tell you something?”

“You can tell me anything.”

“I've never been on a date. I don't know how any of this works.” She looked a little in pain, and it was so cute to see.

“No dates?”

“None. I mean, men have asked, and they’ve been kind of cruel about it, but no, I’ve never been on dates. I’m kind of flying blind here.”

He looked at her and then reached across the tabletop. “You’re not the only one.”

“You’ve never been on a date?”

“Never needed to be.”

“I find that hard to believe.”

“Why?”

“You’re ... well, you know, you’re you, and I know a lot of women would be very attracted to what you do.”

He laughed. “Are you trying to tell me, Lucy, that you find me attractive?”

She pressed her lips together but didn’t voice her opinion. She simply nodded her head.

“Good, because I find you attractive as well.”

This was going well, wasn’t it?

Lucy found him attractive, and he found her attractive. This was a good sign, but she didn’t know what else to discuss. What did people talk about on dates? She watched

movies, read books, but they were always a little far-fetched, and she didn't want to appear boring. This was so ... scary. She didn't know what to do. She'd never had time to talk to her mother about dating, or even her father. This was hopeless, and she hated it.

“So, uh—” She was saved by the timely arrival of the hot wings. Never in all her life had she been so glad to see some hot wings. They looked delicious.

“They smell great,” Isaac said.

She looked over at him and saw that he'd already grabbed one and taken a bite out of it. Seeing no reason to dillydally, she grabbed a chicken wing and did exactly the same. The spice was insane, but that was the way she liked them.

Lucy couldn't help but moan. “These remind me so much of the ones my mom used to make.”

“Your mom enjoyed cooking?”

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“Yeah and no. She was a damn good cook, but could not bake to save her life. That was Dad’s area of expertise.” She couldn’t believe she was talking about her parents on a date.

“You must miss them,” Issac said.

“Yeah, I do. A lot.” She took another bite of chicken. “It was hard in the beginning. You know? It was strange. I’d wake up, and I’d always expect Mom to be at the kitchen counter, making coffee. I don’t know if it gets easier, or you just have to move on. I mean, the world doesn’t stop for you.”

“You got to keep moving forward.”

“You have experienced loss?”

“A long time ago, I lost my parents. It was a hit-and-run. The kind of situation where they were in the wrong place at the wrong time.”

She couldn’t help but look at the ink that circled his wrist and traveled up his arm. From what she saw of his ink, she couldn’t get enough. He looked so sexy, so dangerous.

“That must have been hard.”

“It was, but it was all dealt with in the end.”

There was something about his tone, she couldn’t quite put her finger on it, but it was

there.

“So, what brought you to Saint Falls?”

“The quiet life. I liked that it was a small town. Plus, there was a mechanic shop, some people might see that as divine intervention.”

“You’re a religious guy?”

“No, but I’m a believer.”

“I like that,” she said. “And you still like the town? It’s not too ... boring for you?”

“I like boring, Lucy. Life can be a little too complicated, and I like it being less so.”

“You’re not looking for complications?”

“I’m looking to make a connection.”

This intrigued her. “You are?”

“Yeah.”

“There are a lot of women who would love for you to pay attention to them,” she said. She had no choice but to listen to them in line at the bakery, at the diner, or in the library. For the last ten years, Isaac had been and still was “fresh meat” to them.

“Funny, because last time I checked, I was here on a date with you, and you’re the only one I’m interested in making a connection with.”

Okay, it was like the world seemed to slow down and fade out as she looked over at

Isaac. She didn't know if he was referring to sex. That was how connections were made, wasn't it? Being a twenty-four-year-old virgin wasn't fun, and she didn't want to lose it to just anyone.

She looked at him and felt a little panic, but at the same time she couldn't help acknowledging the spark that took place within her. For ten years, she had developed a crush on this man, and in the last few years, it had grown and flourished.

Marge told her she should throw caution to the wind, but there was a sane part of her brain telling her to be cautious. She didn't want to keep being cautious. Cautious was boring. She wanted to be daring. To live her own life however she wanted.

Would it be stupid and naive to ask what kind of connection he was referring to? She hadn't realized how out of her depth she was. Instead, she ate more chicken.

The music was a good distraction, and before they had even finished, Isaac wiped his hands on a paper napkin and grabbed her hand.

"Come on, you're thinking way too much."

Before she knew what was happening, he'd pulled her onto the dance floor. She looked at him, smiling and laughing, and it felt good to get lost in that feeling. The dance floor was chaotic, but they found a place, and Isaac gave her a twirl. The heavy beat song came to an end, making way to a slow dance.

She didn't know if he was going to stop the dance, but instead he pulled her close, and Lucy got lost in his arms.

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“Stop thinking,” Isaac said. “It’s a date, we don’t have to learn each other’s secrets right away. We can take our time. Enjoy ourselves. There’s no rush.”

She couldn’t help but glance down at his lips, because in that very moment she wanted more than anything for him to kiss her. It felt so consuming and scary at the same time. Lucy wanted him to kiss her. But wouldn’t that spoil everything?

In the back of her mind, she heard herself saying, “just kiss him,” but instead she looked into his blue eyes and lost herself in the moment.

Chapter Three

Issac was not a gentleman. He had fucked many women. He’d killed a lot of men and women during his time. He was not a man to be messed with. In his past life, being nice got you killed.

At no point during their date had he lied to Lucy. His parents had died in a hit-and-run. It was the hit-and-run that would change his world forever. Ever since he was a kid, he had known his father was a reluctant small-time crook working for the Russian Rostova Bratva. Through his laundry business, he ran the money that the Rostova Bratva needed. It was good business, at least at the time.

As for him, he had a history of violence—one his father knew showed great promise, so he sent him to an exclusive training ground where all Bratva soldiers were trained. He excelled more than anyone else. His name, from a young age, had been feared among their enemies. His father had been proud of him, as he worked his way up through the Rostova Bratva, being the man known for getting jobs done. No one

dared to fuck with him.

Only, the Rostova Bratva ended up fucking with him.

He arrived at the scene of his parents' shooting. It had all been planned, to take out his father, as the man had become too strong, as the Bratva saw it. He wasn't true Bratva, and there was no place for a cocky civilian. That day, the Rostova made an enemy of him, and Isaac had made the streets run red with blood. He removed every trace of the Rostova Bratva, turning all the violence they had reveled in against them. No one was safe. They were all killed, and he turned his back on that life.

His father had told him one day he would find a woman, settle down, and want a simple life. It was strange how he thought about that now.

Nearly eleven years ago, he had gone to his parents' home for Sunday dinner, as he did every week. Regardless of who in the Rostova invited him for dinner, Isaac never forgot his family. He loved his family.

After eating, he offered to do the dishes, as his mother cooked the delicious meal for hours. It was then, in the kitchen, his father surprised him by apologizing.

"I didn't have a choice with the position I was in. You did, and I should have left you to live your own life, Isaac. You should have a future."

"I don't know what you're talking about, Dad."

"You're more than a cold, heartless killer, son. You're my son, and one day, you are going to meet a young woman, you're going to want to settle down, and you're going to want a life far away from the Rostova. You shouldn't have to deal with this life."

Pulling out of the memory, he looked into the engine of the car. At the time, he had

laughed with his father, telling him all the good women were gone. He was happy with his life, but the truth was, he wasn't happy.

From the very beginning, he hated working for the Rostova. He had done so to make his father proud, and also because when he went to the school where he was trained, he was warned. If he didn't excel, if he didn't make this worthwhile, his parents would pay. Everything he did, he did for his parents. He loved his family.

Their deaths were the last straw. He made his decision. They thought he would fear death, but the truth was, he welcomed it.

After his father died in his arms, and he begged for his son's forgiveness, Isaac had gone to church. It was strange that he had gone there. He'd never been baptized. His parents wanted him to make the choice, and the truth was, he always believed in a higher power. Whenever life got hard, he prayed, and each day he woke up and lived to survive another day.

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This was when he made the decision to rid the world of Rostova for good. He didn't care if he died. In fact, he felt like it was a guarantee. One man against the whole Rostova Bratva. Only, he was one of the scariest motherfuckers out there. No one could best him. Not even the teachers in that training school. He was that fucking determined, that fierce, no one was ever going to stop him.

It took the Rostova Bratva three decades to get where they were. Blackmailing politicians, having crooked cops on their payroll, and having the authorities look the other way. He dismantled the entire organization within two weeks. They had bred him to be an unstoppable force, but they never expected that force to turn against them.

“Hey.”

That soft, feminine voice pulled him out of his past, and he shoved himself out from under the car. His dad had never owned a mechanic shop, but he had wanted to. Instead, he went into laundry, because apparently that had been what the Rostova had wanted. His father always dreamed of being a local mechanic, which was why Isaac owned this place. It was why he took his father's name.

Isaac Flynn had died ten years ago, but he was going to keep him alive. As it happened, he shared his father's name, only he scrubbed “Junior” from the title. Now, he was going to do something with his life to make his father proud.

There was no one looking for him. No one would dare to. That monster was at rest, and no one better wake him up.

“Hello, beautiful,” he said, looking into Lucy’s smiling face. Was this what his father described all those years ago? If so, then he was more than happy to settle down.

“And are you going totell me what happened?” Marge asked.

Lucy didn’t need to look over at Harry to know he was paying attention to Marge’s question. She offered her friend a smile as she handed out the cups of tea she’d just made. This was part of her job as well, serving everyone, which she didn’t mind. She loved it.

“What do you mean?”

“Don’t play coy. I may have been tired yesterday, girlie, and it was your day off, but news travels fast around here.” Marge looked behind her. “Tell her, Betty, that people were talking.”

“Don’t get me involved. You’re the one that told the poor girl to stop coming in on her day off, and I don’t think that is right.”

It was true. Lucy usually came to visit her friends, because working here and getting paid for it, well, she considered everyone a friend. She loved and adored them all, and it wasn’t because it was her job. They were her family.

She offered a smile to Betty as a thank you.

“The only reason I didn’t come yesterday is because you threatened to beat me with your walking stick, don’t you remember?”

“Oh, I remember, but I also recall telling you to get a life, and you’re being a pain in

the ass about that too.” Marge gave her a forced glare, and she couldn’t help but laugh.

“I’m doing what I can,” Lucy said. “It’s all I can do.”

“Besides, I heard she was at the mechanic shop anyway,” Betty said. “So, there you go, Marge is doing exactly as you ask. She’s not coming to see us, and she is finding a life for herself.”

She looked from Betty to Marge, and hoped neither woman was upset with her.

“You went to him?” Marge asked.

“Yes, just to hang out.” She held the tray out for Marge to take her cup, and then it was all empty.

“Well, tell us how it went,” Marge asked. “That’s what I want to know anyway. Come on. Give me the juicy details of the hot mechanic.”

Lucy chuckled. “There’s not a lot to tell. We had a lot of fun Friday night. Shared some chicken wings, danced for a long time to some country music. Ate some burgers, danced a little more, and then he took me home. He ... walked me home.” She felt that was the sweetest thing of all, for him to walk her home. It showed that he cared.

She hadn’t sat inside a car or automobile since her parents’ accident. It wasn’t on purpose, it just kind of happened. She loved walking, and she could order online anything she needed that wasn’t available in town. Most places in town were also within walking distance. To her, it was a win-win, and she didn’t mind that.

“Is that all?” Marge asked.

“And he kissed my cheek and told me he had a good night,” Lucy said. It was sweet. Yes, it hadn’t been what she was expecting, but still, her cheek had tingled for a few hours afterward.

“What is wrong with men nowadays? I thought they were supposed to be like the men on those television shows. You know, horndogs and such,” Marge said.

Lucy heard Harry coughing, and she glanced behind her to make sure he was okay, before turning back to Marge.

“I loved that he was the perfect gentleman.”

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Marge huffed.

“And what about yesterday, young lady?”

“We enjoyed some lunch, he showed me how he worked. I hung out with him. We went to the diner for dinner. He walked me home, another kiss to the cheek, and that was it.”

Lucy didn't even know why she went to the mechanic shop. There was a chance she might have been able to help, though. For many years, she hung out with her dad and learned how to do odd tune-ups on a car, stuff that didn't require a mechanic. There was a time when she thought about studying to be a mechanic. After her parents' passing, she didn't see the point. She learned about cars to have something in common with her dad, and now that he was gone, it was just a horrible reminder that he was no longer around.

“I'm going to want to see grandkids, Lucy.”

Marge always thought of her as her child, one she needed to take care of.

“I'd like to see you settled down and happy.”

“Marge, I am happy, and please stop worrying. I don't want to speed this along. I'm happy with it going slowly.” She reached out and patted the other woman's hand. “You've got to stop worrying.”

“I can't help but worry about you. You're twenty-four years old. You don't have

many friends, you're alone, and hanging out with the likes of us, that is sad."

"Stop that."

"We've seen the people come and go, and I know none of us want to leave you, Lucy. We all need to know you're being taken care of."

Lucy looked at Marge, and then toward Harry. There were somber expressions on their faces, and Lucy couldn't stand it.

"I think it is time I go and grab some cookies. Everyone should have a cookie to dunk, don't you think?" She got to her feet without expecting an answer.

There was no way she was ever going to quit her job. She loved coming to work. They were her family, and she was going to be here until the end, no matter how hard it was.

"And we all want you to have a piece of that horndog, before another sinks her claws into him," Marge said. "Twenty years ago, I would have shown that man a thing or two."

Trust Marge to break the tension.

Chapter Four

"Your favorite movie?" Lucy asked.

"I don't have one. What about you?"

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“Nah, I’m more into a good book than I am a long, drawn-out movie.”

Isaac laughed. They had found a lovely, shady spot near the pond, with the sound of ducks bathing themselves, and the occasional quack-quack.

It was hot, and Isaac had closed up shop for the day, to just enjoy some time with Lucy. She had arrived around ten, as most of the people at the care home had gone on a trip to the beach and wouldn’t be back for four days. So, for four days, she had time off.

Now, when she told him about this trip, he thought she was going away with them for the four days. He was going to miss her, but he knew how much she loved the people she worked for. He was shocked when she was told there was no room for her on the bus, and all the hotel rooms had been taken. She had to stay behind. That was when he realized Lucy couldn’t go. She couldn’t handle getting in a car, and she wondered if her friends made excuses for her, so they didn’t force her to go.

She lay on her stomach, her feet kicked into the air, swinging back and forth, as she looked at him. Randomly, she’d take a bite out of a strawberry. Her long, brown hair was pulled back into a clip, and the length was curled, as it fell around her face in ringlets.

“Okay, so your favorite author?”

“I love too many to name one,” Lucy said. “You?”

“I don’t read all that much.”

“You don’t?”

“Nah, never had the time to read.”

“What about before you came to Saint Falls?” Lucy asked. “What life did you have before?”

Isaac couldn’t help but have a flash of his past life. The kills he made. The pain he caused. The violence.

“It was kind of boring,” he said.

“It was?”

“Yeah.”

“What did you do?” Lucy asked.

He knew it was only natural to be curious. There was no reason to be suspicious, and leaving that life, coming to a small town would make a lot of people curious about his past.

“I was a ... bodyguard for some people.”

That wasn’t far from the truth. She was not ready to know that in his life before Saint Falls, he was a soldier with the Rostova Bratva. One of the most feared of all that served the Bratva with loyalty. Until they squashed that loyalty and killed his family. She didn’t need to know his past.

“That sounds scary. Is that why you have all the ink?” she asked, pointing to his arms.

He got the ink as a way to hide the scars of the tortures he went through. The school he was forced to attend had their own methods of making men strong, so they wouldn't crack beneath the torture. Isaac refused to be tortured. He refused to submit. He fought everything.

"I like getting ink," he said.

"I thought once about getting a tattoo of a dolphin, because I love dolphins. Or of a rose, or of something, you know. Something I like. I even went to the tattoo parlor in town, and I sat in the waiting room, looking through their booklets. Then I chickened out, and I just couldn't do it."

Isaac laughed. "Getting ink is not for everyone. It can be painful to some people, for others, not so much."

"Was it painful for you?" she asked.

"No."

"You see, I don't know how that is possible." She wrinkled her nose.

"Trust me, I can handle a lot of pain."

He had been repeatedly punched in the face, had his balls and stomach kicked, all to make a man out of him. She didn't need to know any of that. Getting ink was easy compared to some of the things he experienced.

"Do you think I should get a tattoo?" she asked.

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She lifted her head, and the way she did it showed off the valley of her cleavage. Isaac was not known for being a gentleman. At least, not in his former life. Kissing Lucy on the cheek, and not taking those lips that looked like they were designed to be kissed, was testing his patience.

He wanted to kiss her. To make love to her. No, scrap that, he wanted to fuck her, hard, raw, and show her how to ride his cock. He wanted to get down and dirty with her.

But he also wanted to show her she could trust him. He would treat her like his queen.

Also, he had a feeling her friend Marge would come for him, and someone called Harry, as well as Betty, and pretty much everyone who knew Lucy and cared for her. Did she have any idea how much the town loved her? Including Richard, the guy that owned the bar in town. Isaac got a nice little phone call Saturday morning, with a warning that he better not be using Lucy for fun.

Lucy was not the kind of girl men discarded without consequences. He knew what that meant. If he treated her badly or hurt her, there might be a few broken bones in it for him. Not that he had any intention of hurting Lucy. He loved being around her. She was sunshine. He was darkness. He came from horror and pain. Lucy came from love and happiness.

They were two completely different people, but he knew in some odd way that he was capable of making her happy. That was exactly what he wanted to do.

“I think you should do whatever you want to do, and if you want to get a tattoo ... I’ll be right there with you.” To make sure no other man could attempt to take her from him.

“You know, you didn’t have to do this,” Lucy said, carrying out the tall glasses of lemonade.

Her friends were due back from their trip tomorrow. In the last three days, she had enjoyed hanging out with Isaac. She helped out around his mechanic shop, as there had been a couple of emergencies. They spent a lot of time in the park, near their spot by the pond. She loved to watch the ducks and swans taking baths and swimming in the pond. It was so cute.

They took picnics and enjoyed some good food. Isaac could cook. He made these little pastries with bacon and eggs, and they were so delicious, just thinking about them was making her mouth water.

They’d been enjoying dinner at the diner, but today she mentioned that she needed to mow her lawn and do some of the gardening jobs. The forecast changed dramatically, and all the glorious sunshine they were due to get turned into rain. It was supposed to start tomorrow and last for a week. She didn’t know if the weatherman was accurate, but she wasn’t willing to risk it.

Her mother had always taken pride in having a beautiful front yard and garden. Lucy had spent the last six years keeping up the tradition, which included mowing, weeding, taking care of her mother’s flowers, and generally just maintaining it. She loved doing it as well. She liked to think her mother’s spirit would come and visit her in the birds that stopped by.

Her mother used to love watching the birds. Only when it was necessary did she put out birdseed, if it had been a harsh winter, or something like that. Most of the time, she kept several displays that gathered water, and allowed them to drink and take a bath. She kept up with the maintenance.

She remembered one summer, so hot, with no rain, and she didn't have a choice but to add to the bowls for the wildlife. Her mother had loved wildlife, not just birds, but rabbits, dogs, and cats. Although, they had never gotten a pet. It was strange. She knew they always had every intention of getting a dog and a cat, but something always seemed to stop them.

"I know I didn't have to do anything, but here's the thing, Lucy. I wanted to, and if I don't do it, then you're going to have to, and I don't want to see you doing any more than necessary."

Lucy couldn't help but fall a little more for him each time. The way he talked, the things he said, it was like he wanted to take care of her. She knew she should be screaming independence, that she could do all these things and didn't need a man to tell her what to do, blah, blah, blah. But she loved that he wanted to take care of her. Call her a sucker, but she liked it when he opened her door for her, or helped her and held her hand. She didn't want chivalry to die.

"I'll get us some lemonade."

"And we can fire up that grill. Get ourselves some steaks on the go."

"Steaks?"

"I got some in the cooler in the back of my truck," he said.

"Why didn't you say anything? I could have put them in the fridge."

He finished mowing her lawn, and she made her way toward the driveway and to the back of his truck. She opened the back door and saw that the cooler was not close to the door. She would have no choice but to climb inside to grab the cooler.

It's okay, Lucy. You got this.

It should have been easy. Only, as she tried to take that first step, it was next to impossible to do so. She felt frozen in place.

All that replayed in her mind was opening the door, feeling so tired, and seeing Dave, the deputy sheriff of their small town. He looked so grim. She wasn't sure why he was knocking on her door. Then she had seen a few other police officers, and they were not wearing the same uniform.

"Hey, hey," Isaac said.

She hadn't even heard him arrive, and before she knew what was happening, he had pulled her into his arms and was hugging her tightly.

"I've got you," he said.

She wrapped her arms around him and pressed her face against his chest.

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“It’s stupid,” Lucy said.

“No, it’s not. You go on inside. I’ll grab the steaks and fire up the grill.”

She wanted to argue with him, but the truth was, there was nothing she could say. She wasn’t even in the car that night, but since then, after seeing the damage and losing her parents, getting into a car was the most impossible thing for her. Without question, she turned back toward her home and went straight through the main front door, slamming it behind her.

She didn’t want to cry, because she wasn’t wearing waterproof mascara, and that little devil was going to run and ruin the small amount of makeup she had worn. Clenching her hands into fists, she took several deep breaths, and then opened her eyes.

She missed her parents. It was moments like this that made it so much harder to deal with.

Once she had composed herself, she stepped into the downstairs bathroom and chanced a glance at her reflection in the mirror. She looked normal. Just a little sad. Which was exactly how she felt, and there was no changing that.

Her parents were gone, and she knew if they were here right now, they would be annoyed with her. She refused to face her fear, and had been doing so for six long years. If they were alive, they would make her face it.

They were not cruel parents, but they didn’t believe in allowing fear to control you.

There were exceptions to the rule, like spiders, frogs, and whatever fear couldn't be controlled. They didn't force her to pick up spiders or anything like that. But they made sure she got over the fear of speaking in public. They wanted their daughter to be strong and capable, and she knew they would be so disappointed that after all this time, she still hadn't stepped foot inside a car.

Chapter Five

The rain had come downthick and fast. Lucy had already called him that morning to ask how he was doing. There was no way he was opening the mechanic shop. There were already reports of flooding. From what he knew, her friends were not returning for a few more days, so Lucy was home alone, which he didn't like.

After yesterday, when he realized she was taking a long time to get the steaks, he went looking for her. She had looked into his truck as if she had seen a ghost, or at least something that had terrified her. That was when it registered with him that she was staring into the nightmare of losing her parents. He felt like such a fucking idiot, as he hadn't realized what she had been fighting.

Isaac had given her time to compose herself, and when she came out to the garden, she'd been back to her old sprightly self, but he'd known something was bothering her.

Pulling back his curtain, he looked out toward his own backyard, to see the puddles formed by the constant rain. It had started as he arrived home last night, and had been raining all throughout the night and this morning. Several places within town had already closed, including the diner. There had also been warnings of power outages.

He didn't like this. The thought of Lucy alone with no power rankled him. She hadn't asked for his company, but he let go of the curtain, made his way to his front door, grabbed his keys, and headed out to his truck. He knew it was dangerous, but as he

climbed into his truck, already soaking wet, he turned over the ignition and listened to his truck purr to life. His father would have been proud of this truck.

When he arrived in Saint Falls, he didn't have a car or a truck, and he found this heap of junk in the back of a trash yard. The guy had wanted fifty bucks for it, and it was Isaac's problem to get it off the lot. It was a long shot that it would actually work, but this beauty had wanted a second chance. He turned over that ignition and against all the odds, he drove right out of there and back to this place.

He had already purchased this house many years ago. It was one of those purchases he made in secret. Again, this place had been a dump, and the plan had been to start fixing it up, get his dad involved. Then he had every intention of giving the place to his parents, along with the mechanic shop he purchased at the same time. That never came to pass.

Instead, he took the house, finished fixing it up, and owned and worked the mechanic shop. Living out the dream he had with his dad. Although, he always missed his father's touch.

Pulling out of his driveway, he traveled slow, not wanting to create any chance that he might suddenly veer the car off the road.

It didn't take him long to get to Lucy's home, and he parked in the driveway. Climbing out of his truck, he got to the front door, and as he did, it opened up.

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“Isaac? What is going on?” Lucy asked.

“I wanted to make sure you’re okay,” he said.

He stepped into the hallway, and Lucy closed the door.

“You’re soaking wet.”

“It’s fine. I just wanted to make sure you were fine.”

Lucy had stepped away from him, and then turned to look at him. “You did?”

“Yeah, there are possible power outages, and I didn’t want you to be alone.”

There was a slight smile to her lips and he watched her press them together, nod, and then start to make her way down the hall. He couldn’t help but follow. Also, he couldn’t seem to stop himself from admiring the full curves of her juicy ass. It was odd to see her in a pair of jeans, and he was having a hard time concentrating.

She went into the downstairs bathroom, and he watched as she opened a door, then stretched up to grab a towel. He was so distracted by her curvy ass, he didn’t even offer to help. Seconds later, she turned to him, and he quickly looked back up at her face, and she smiled.

“What were you doing?” Lucy asked.

“Nothing.”

“Were you checking out my ass?”

“I might have been.”

There was a giggle that came from her, but it wasn't irritating or forced. It was a genuine laughter, like she couldn't quite contain herself.

She wrapped a towel around him and rubbed at his shoulders. “We've got to get you dry.”

“Have you heard from your friends?”

“Yeah, Marge called me. Everyone is fine, but they're going to stay a few extra days, until the rain subsides.” Lucy stepped back as he took the towel from her and quickly dried his hair. “I figured I'd go to the home tomorrow, when the rain subsides, and do a bit of cleaning or something like that, so the place is in tip-top shape when they all return.”

“I can come with you if you would like,” he said.

“Come with me?”

“Yeah, I can help.”

“You want to help me clean up?”

He nodded. The truth was, he just liked spending time with Lucy. When he was around her, she made all the bad shit disappear. It stopped him thinking about the shit that happened with his father. It helped him to just focus on the now, rather than the crap that happened.

“I’d like that,” Lucy said.

She then gasped and he pulled her into his arms, as the lights went out.

“I guess we’re getting those power outages after all.”

Lucy handed Isaac the plate of sandwiches she made for him, and then took a seat beside him. She didn’t feel like cooking, and the stove was workable, but the electric oven was not.

She also didn’t have any of the machines to help light the gas, to use the stove. Isaac didn’t have a lighter either, nor matches, so they couldn’t eat cooked food. At least, she had enough bread and fillings to make sandwiches.

Opening the bag of cheese-and-sour-cream chips, she grabbed one, then picked up the bag to shake it toward Isaac. She loved the flavor of them. “Care for a chip?”

He looked at the bag, and then shrugged, delving in, and grabbing a chip. He put one in his mouth and started to chew.

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Lucy loved his company.

They had checked the whole house, then sat and talked about everything and nothing. He asked her questions about Marge, Harry, Betty, and the people she worked for. She tried to talk about his past, but she had come to see that his past was very much off limits. They were not talking about it.

She took a bite of her cheese and pickle sandwich, and it wasn't too bad. She wasn't big on sandwiches for dinner, but it was better than a bowl of cereal. Not that there was anything wrong with having cereal for dinner. She had done that quite regularly when she didn't want to cook.

"When do you think the power will come on?" she asked.

"Hopefully as soon as possible," he said.

"I'm sorry you had to come here."

"Lucy, there's nowhere else I would rather be."

She looked toward him, and it was like she couldn't look away. His blue eyes looked so intense, as he stared right back at her. It was strange as she glanced down at his lips. He hadn't kissed her yet, and she wanted to feel those lips on hers. But, if he didn't want to kiss her, then she didn't want to make a fool of herself.

"I'll be right back," she said, getting to her feet and making her escape to the kitchen.

Come on, Lucy, get your head together.

She put her plate on the counter. She had a half-eaten sandwich still left on it. Gripping the edge of the counter, she tried not to think.

Lucy jumped as a plate clicked on the side. She opened her eyes, and she hadn't even realized she had closed them.

Isaac's hands moved to the kitchen counter, and she was suddenly trapped between his body and the counter. She felt him at her back, he was so close, yet he didn't touch her at all.

"What's going on?" Isaac asked.

"Nothing."

"Freaking out and leaving me back in the sitting room is not nothing, Lucy. I don't like being lied to. Don't lie to me, when I know you don't want to."

She couldn't believe what was happening. Spinning around in his arms, she had every intention of pushing him away. She even had her hands flat on his chest, and was going to do exactly that, only she stopped herself. She didn't shove him out of the way. He didn't budge and she rested her hands on his chest.

The words she was going to throw at him got trapped in her throat. Lucy had no idea what was happening, only it felt like a constant buzzing in her ears. She couldn't make sense of it. She looked at him, without knowing, without thinking. What was she to say?

No words were spoken, and Lucy didn't know how much time passed. Was it seconds or minutes?

And then, Isaac's large palm opened, touching her face. It wasn't hard, yet it was firm and gentle at the same time. He stroked some of her hair back behind her ear. Today, she hadn't put any makeup on, nor had she curled her hair. With the rain, it had felt pointless.

Isaac moved his fingers to the back of her neck, and she looked into his eyes, then for the first time in her life, she was kissed. This was not a peck on the lips between friends. The kisses he'd been giving her to the cheek did not prepare her for this kiss.

From zero to like a million, the intensity went through the roof, as his lips touched hers. He wasn't gentle but demanding, and as he kissed her, his body touched hers. She felt the hard ridge of his cock pressing against her stomach, even through the thick denim he wore. There was no mistaking how hard he was.

His other hand sunk to her waist, gripping her tightly, and she moaned into his mouth. She didn't know how it happened, but her lips opened, and Isaac slid his tongue into her mouth, kissing her, and she melted against him.

It was intense. She felt on fire. Her body wanted so much. She wanted his hands all over her, and they were both wearing too many clothes.

"Damn it, Lucy," he said, seconds later. "Tell me to stop."

"Why?"

"Because you deserve so much better."

That was strange. "I don't want you to stop," she said.

"Lucy!"

Her name was like a warning.

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She didn't even know why she said the next thing. "I don't know what I'm doing. I've never been with a man before, but ... I want to be with you."

Chapter Six

Isaac was not a goodman. He was not a gentle man. The life he lived had led him to this point. He had killed many people. Lucy did not know the truth, and he had a feeling if she did, she would not want to be with him so freely. But, those lips, and feeling her body ... a better man would have walked away. He was not a better man.

There was only so much strength he had. Without waiting for an invite, Isaac pressed Lucy over his shoulder, then proceeded to carry her upstairs to her bedroom. He didn't know how he knew which one was her bedroom, he just did.

Stepping inside, part of him had expected her room to remain girly, but instead, she had cream walls, a grey carpet, black covers. Her bedroom was very modern, but there were pictures on the walls, some pieces of art. The room screamed of Lucy, and the scent of her drove him crazy.

He let her go, dropped her on the bed, and he cupped her face. He kept telling himself a good man would walk away, but he was not a good man. He didn't want to walk away.

Cupping her cheeks, he tilted her head back and took possession of her lips another time. He could become quite addicted to her lips. Actually, there was noquiteabout it. He was addicted to her lips, and he couldn't get enough of her kisses. Isaac slid his tongue against her lips, and she opened up and kissed him right back. Another moan

escaped her lips, and he swallowed it down.

At the same time he kissed her, he reached for the edge of her shirt and slowly began to pull it up, breaking their lips apart long enough to remove her shirt and toss it onto the floor. She wore a pure white bra.

Everything was screaming at him to run in the opposite direction. She was a virgin, pure, had never been with a man, and he was ... compared to her, the Devil. Only, she didn't know who he was. He had kept that from her. He hadn't lied, just not told her the whole truth. The truth she deserved to know.

Sliding his hands down to the front of her jeans, he slid his fingers beneath the band and opened the button. Within seconds, he was already working her jeans off her thighs, and she had on a pair of matching panties. She looked so sexy.

Lucy got to her feet and placed her hands on his chest. He felt her shake beneath him.

"If you don't want to, tell me."

"I do. I'm just a little nervous."

Damn it. He should walk away.

Only, he cupped her face, sinking his fingers into her hair and tilting her head back. He ravished her mouth, and he just couldn't help himself. When it came to Lucy, he was fucking useless.

He needed to back away, only he didn't. He kept kissing her.

"No need to be nervous. I will take it slow."

He did not want to cause her pain, and to lessen it, he was going to take his sweet time with her. He continued to kiss her lips, sliding his tongue between, tasting her, loving her, and then he broke the kiss to start trailing down her neck. At her pulse, he nibbled down, hearing her soft moan.

Running the tips of his fingers down her back, he heard the catch in her breath, and he grabbed her ass within his grip. He tightened his hold, and then dug his fingers into her ass, hearing her moan deepen. The sounds she made were fucking heady. He didn't want her to stop, but he wasn't done.

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Isaac let go of her ass long enough to run his hands back up to her bra, and he flicked the catch open, and her tits spilled into his waiting palms. There was no time to waste, as he held her tits up to his mouth and lathered each nipple before taking each one into his mouth, sucking down hard. She let out a little cry along with a whimper. He was careful not to hurt her. He loved how big and ripe her tits were. Pressing them together, he danced his tongue between the valley, and then sucked on her tight buds.

His cock was getting harder in his pants, and he kissed down her stomach. She was still standing, and it wouldn't be long before he had her on the bed.

Tucking his fingers into her panties, he pulled them down, allowing her to step out of them, and finally, the woman he'd been fantasizing about for what felt like a lifetime, was naked.

Isaac helped her to the bed, eased her down onto the edge, and then pushed her back, spreading her legs in the process. He gripped her full thighs and stared at her virgin cunt. No other man had been inside her. No one else had ever tasted her. This was such a rare gift. He leaned forward and kissed the inside of her thigh—lightly at first, just a small kiss—then he started to trail his lips up, going toward her pussy. He spread the lips of her sex and tongued her swollen clit. Circling the tight bud, he danced back and forth before taking it into his mouth and using his teeth to draw out every ounce of pleasure. She cried his name, and it echoed along the walls of her bedroom.

He was so desperate to feel how tight she was, but he was not going to take her virginity like that. He was going to take her with his cock, sliding it in hard and deep.

Another moan escaped her.

He felt the pressure across his cock, as he had no choice but to keep it in his pants. All he wanted to do was fuck her and do so hard and fast, but he kept his control. He brought her to the peak of release, held her balanced right at that edge, and then he pushed her right over.

Lucy did not hold back. She gave him everything, and it was a wondrous sight, sound, and taste. One he couldn't get enough of.

Several hours later, Lucy stared at her reflection in her en-suite bathroom. It was strange, because when she was twelve, her parents had gifted her with this very en-suite as a birthday present. She had been complaining about wanting to have her own bathroom, and they gave it to her. She was shocked, but she loved it.

Some of the girls at school had complained that her parents were pathetic for only giving her a bathroom, but Lucy was happy with what she had gotten. She was not greedy. She had felt guilty afterward, and hoped her complaining hadn't forced their hand. Her parents had told her they had every intention of getting her an en-suite when she was ready.

Her parents were not wealthy, but they were frugal, and knowing she owned this house outright was a relief after her parents' passing. She embraced the frugal life, never living outside her means.

And now, she was no longer a virgin.

Isaac had made love to her and had taken his time. That first moment he entered her, it had been painful. It had taken her by surprise, but she hadn't wanted him to stop.

She didn't regret what they had done.

At the sound of his voice, she turned to find the man that had turned her world upside down, standing naked in the doorway of her en-suite.

He stepped inside, moved up behind her, and wrapped his arms around her waist. Throughout it all, he kept asking her to tell him to stop. As if she could. She had loved every second of it. The pain, not quite so much, but being in his arms, his kisses, his touch. She was addicted.

"Are you okay?" he asked.

She sunk against him. "Yes, I'm fine."

They had already taken a shower together, and Isaac had insisted on cleaning her sheets. Although, the electricity was still out, so she didn't know what he had done with them.

Her virginity was gone.

Her stomach chose that moment to growl.

"Well, that answers what we're doing next." Isaac gripped her arm, spun her in a circle, and then made her follow him.

"What are you doing?" she asked, as they made their way downstairs.

"Finishing our sandwiches."

He walked them into the kitchen, and she knew she shouldn't be charmed by him, but she was. She loved how he took charge and forced her to sit down at the small table

in the kitchen. He placed her plate in front of her, along with the bag of cheese-and-sour-cream chips she was eating. She watched as he opened the bag and poured a generous amount onto her plate. Next, he did the same with his own plate.

She looked at his endless tattoos. None of them made any sense to her. There were a couple of crosses on his back, his arms, a few skulls, what appeared to be a gravestone, along with flowers. All of his ink was in black. There was no color.

She wanted to ask him so many questions. He sat down, and they were both naked, and she couldn't help but steal glances his way. Who was this man?

“How old are you?” Lucy asked.

He laughed. “Shouldn't you have asked me before seducing me?”

She gasped. “I did not seduce you.”

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He raised a brow, to which she rolled her eyes.

“I’m forty-five. Are you having regrets?”

“No, not at all.” She took a bite of her sandwich and added a chip into her mouth.

“Have you ever been married?”

“No.”

“There’s no ex-wife or ex-girlfriend from your past?”

“None.”

“I find that hard to believe.”

She looked at him and noticed his intense stare as he looked at her. What was going through his mind? She had no idea what he was thinking.

“There is no one from my past, Lucy. I did not have a wife or a girlfriend. There was no one.”

She then remembered he had mentioned on their first date that it was also his first.

“You didn’t date?”

“No.”

“Why not?”

“There was no reason to date.”

This made her curious.

Isaac reached out and took her hand. “I was not a virgin with you, Lucy. I lived my life and in the past, I didn’t need to date, because women were happy to throw themselves at me without invitation.”

“Oh,” Lucy said.

“Yes, oh. There was no dating involved.”

Okay, that just made her even more curious about him.

“Lucy, my past is exactly that and is where it should be. You do not need to worry about anything, because it is all dead.”

She had a feeling he was trying to tell her something without saying the words. She couldn’t look away, so she nodded.

It was time to stop questioning him about his past. That was where it was going to stay.

Chapter Seven

Waking up to Lucy in his arms was a dream come true. For a few seconds, Isaac held her in his arms and just looked down into her sweet face. He hated and loved taking her virginity yesterday. Her sharp scream of pain would ring in his ear for the rest of his life, and he had been patient. There was no way he wanted to cause her any kind of pain.

When she started to wriggle on his cock, it had taken him every ounce of restraint not to respond, but he had done it. He never wanted to hurt her. Isaac waited for her to be ready, for her to ride his cock, and it had been perfect. She'd gone from pain to pleasure within seconds, and he was going to make sure she always felt pleasure.

Lucy opened her eyes, then turned toward him with a smile on her lips. He was fast growing addicted to that smile, and only ever wanted to be the one she smiled at.

“Good morning.”

“Good morning.”

“How long have you been staring at me?” she asked.

“Not long.”

She chuckled. “You know that sounds kind of creepy?”

He smiled down at her. “You think the guy sharing your bed is kind of creepy.”

“Well, now that you put it like that, maybe the guy sharing my bed should kiss me.”

“Should he?” he asked.

“Yes, I think he should.”

He took possession of her lips and she moaned, arching up against him. He put his hand on her hip, drawing her closer to him, and he didn’t want to let her go. She was so beautiful.

“Is that good enough for my woman?” he asked.

“Your woman?”

“Yeah, because that is exactly who you are now, Lucy. My woman. All mine.” And he kissed her.

He had never staked his claim over a woman. No one in his world had ever been worth fighting for. He’d fight for Lucy. He would die for her. She was that special, and he knew how rare it was to find a woman that made him feel this way.

“Does that make you my man?”

“Always.” Breaking the kiss, he trailed his lips down her neck and heard her soft, subtle moan. That was all he wanted to hear. Giving his woman pleasure and hearing her respond.

Nibbling at her neck, he saw how erect her nipples got, so he continued down, unable to resist taking each one into his mouth, sucking each nipple, then biting down on the hard buds.

Her hands clenched at her sides, and he knew the sensations were intense. Trailing his lips down her body, he kissed her stomach, and down he went, pushing the blanket out of the way so he could lick her sweet cunt.

He lifted her thighs over his shoulders, sinking his hands beneath her ass, and then he pressed his face against her pussy. She had the nicest, sweetest, tastiest cunt. He slid a tongue between her slit and stroked across her clit, moving back and forth. Then, he took that sweet little bud between his teeth and nibbled.

Her breathless sounds deepened, and she cried out, moaning his name. That was all he wanted to hear—his name spilling from her lips as she couldn't contain the pleasure he evoked within her body. She didn't hold back. The women in his past had used sex as an act, a way to manipulate. He accepted it, because that was the world he lived in, and there was nothing he could do. Sex had been a tool, a bargaining chip.

This, with Lucy, was real, it was raw, it was passionate, and he was there every single step of the way. He didn't want to let her go.

Sliding his tongue down to her entrance, he couldn't help feeling her tightness. He pulled back and then pushed deep inside, hearing her moan, feeling her wriggle on his length. She drove him crazy, and that was what he wanted.

He pulled out of her, and went to her clit, dancing across her bud, drawing her closer to her orgasm. There would be time to tease her, to make her wait, to have her begging for him. The truth was, he didn't want to wait. He needed to be inside her. Felt desperate, and his patience was wearing out.

He sent her over the hill, hearing her cry out his name as she orgasmed. Isaac did have every intention of allowing her to enjoy her release. Only, his desperation stopped him, and he slid up her body, taking hold of his cock, and then eased inside her.

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Again, he was being selfish. Last night, he didn't wear a condom, and neither did he now. Feeling her naked pussy wrapped around his cock was a fucking dream come true. He knew the risk of the consequences, and the truth was, he didn't care. All he could focus on were his own needs.

If he got Lucy pregnant, he would deal with the consequences. He didn't know if he had what it took to raise a child, but he would do anything for Lucy. Having her pregnant, married to him, he wouldn't lose her.

He knew this was not what his father meant, about finding a woman. Lucy should have the choice, but he just wanted to be selfish a little longer.

Staring into her eyes, he liked to think she knew, and if she didn't want a future with him, she would tell him to stop, to put a condom on.

That is what he told himself, and he was going to stick with that as an answer.

The rain finally let up and as it did, Lucy went to the care home to check on everything, do some cleaning, ready for everyone to arrive home tomorrow. It was strange taking Isaac with her to work. He helped to open the windows, freshen the air. She checked on the fridges and freezers. The care home had a back-up generator, so nothing was spoiled. It took them several hours to get the home back to working order.

Next, they stopped at the supermarket, as her fridge and freezer were empty.

Most of the stores were open, and after grabbing the groceries, Lucy walked with Isaac to his garage to check and make sure everything was fine. There were no leaks, and no break-ins, not that they were expecting any. Lucy didn't know of any major crime in Saint Falls since she had been there, and she had been there her whole life. After checking on the garage, it was time to check on his home.

Lucy knew she was being unreasonable. They could have done the trip in less time, if they didn't have to walk there. She knew that, and yet they walked. Isaac didn't complain once. He held her hand as they made their way up the small driveway to his home. Unlike her place, his was secluded, set back from the main road. She imagined he had no choice but to maintain the driveway as it wouldn't take long for the trees and bushes to overgrow, encroaching on the main drive.

They walked up to his home, and Isaac released her hand, pulled out a key, and let them into his home. This felt strange. It was like he was showing her trust by allowing her to come to his home.

The scent of lavender hit her first, and she looked around, only to be a little ... disappointed. There were no pictures on the walls. In fact, his walls were bare. There was not even any artwork. No sign of a man with a past.

He did have furniture. The house could have been a rental, as the furniture was black, the walls white, and the carpets pristine. There was a small table near the main door, and she watched as he put his keys in the brown bowl there. He didn't have anything else there. No personal belongings. A single jacket hung by the door, one she had seen him wear many times, yet there was nothing else.

"How long have you lived here?" she asked.

"Ten years."

Of course it had been ten years. That was how long he had been in town. She knew the place was a dump when he purchased it. There had been a lot of gossip about the person who had purchased this place. Some had thought it was a developer who intended to build apartments. Instead, it was Isaac, who built his home. Not only did he transform this dump into an amazing home, he also took on the mechanic garage.

When old man Phill had retired, the man's sons had moved to the city, and that was where Phill had moved as well. The garage had closed down, much to the town's dismay. Within months, it was purchased, and everyone was hopeful it would be open soon. No one liked to take their business out of town. She imagined it was one of the many ways it helped the locals fall in love with Isaac. He brought back the garage, didn't make waves, and seemed like a good guy.

"You have a nice home," Lucy said, trying to fill the silence.

"Did you ever see it before I arrived?" he asked.

"Uh, not really. I know people said there were rats here. Oh, and ghosts. It was why I steered far away from here. I'm not a ghost girl." There were always horror stories about this place—elaborate and untrue—but it made for some entertainment around Halloween, and that was about the extent of it.

The truth was, the owner of the house had passed away, and with no family, it had pretty much been left abandoned. It had gone up for sale, but it never seemed to appeal to anyone. For years, she would pass this place with her mom or dad, wondering who would buy it. She never told anyone, but for a short time, she had thought about buying it herself. This was when she was a kid, before the Halloween horror stories. She wanted to have a place to call her own, to raise a family.

Isaac had done an amazing job with the place. He moved toward her and surprised her by pulling out a cell phone and bringing up some pictures.

“This was the kitchen.”

It looked dirty, and there were no kitchen counters, nothing to show it was a kitchen.

“Is that a rat?”

“Yep, I had to call the exterminator so many times, he started to give me a discount for all the work I was sending his way. Rats, mice, roaches, you name it, this place had it.”

“Wow.” He flicked through the pictures and took her on a tour of the place. The work appeared at a professional level. “This is incredible. You really did all of this with no help from anyone?”

“I got the deliveries. I also got an electrician and plumber for the jobs I needed to make sure were done right. Other than that, everything is my own.”

“You have done an amazing job.”

They ended up in his bedroom, and she couldn't help but smile at him. He'd made a great home for himself, and she couldn't imagine any of the horror stories ever coming true that used to come with this place.

“You know, I’ve not had a woman here,” Isaac said.

“You haven’t?”

“No, and I think this bed really needs to know what it is like to be made love onto?”

She couldn’t help loving this side of him. “Then I wouldn’t want to disappoint your bed.”

Chapter Eight

Isaac kissed down Lucy’s back. He took his time, as there was no rush. He had her all to himself, inside his home, and he intended to take every advantage of that. For many months, he’d been imagining Lucy naked beneath him, and now he finally had her.

He got to the curves of her ass, knelt on the bed, and ran his hands across her ass, then gripped tightly, hearing her soft breath as she gasped. She was so responsive to his touch, and he gripped her hips, lifting her up, and drew her on her knees.

Moving into position behind her, he spread those delightful curves and cupped her sweet pussy. He pressed a finger knuckle-deep inside her, and she cried out as he added a second one. Spreading his fingers open, he began to work her pussy, getting her prepared to take his cock. When she was slick enough, he pulled out, gripped his stiff cock, and began to slide inside her, going inch by inch, watching himself disappear into her tight cunt.

They both cried out as he sank to the hilt, and for a second, he stayed perfectly still, not wanting to move. Basking in the feel of her pussy as she squeezed him tightly. She was so fucking tight, and there was nowhere else he wanted to be.

He waited as long as he was able, then slowly began to pull out, until he saw how slick his cock was. Without waiting, he slammed back inside her, but he didn't make love to her. No, he began to fuck her, hard and fast, making her take his whole length. Only, it wasn't enough. Keeping himself balls-deep inside her, he wrapped his arms around her waist and lifted her up so he could kiss her.

Lucy tilted her head at just the right angle, and he took possession of her lips, kissing her. Sliding his tongue into her mouth, and at the same time, he ran one hand down her body and slid his palm between her thighs. He stroked her clit, feeling her pussy pulse around his dick, and he didn't want to stop, although the pleasure drove him crazy with need. He wanted to be inside her, to fuck her, to fill her with his cum so he could make her pregnant.

There were so many things he wanted to do to her.

And he continued to stroke her clit, feeling her orgasm start to build, and today he wasn't patient. He was so close to orgasm himself that he didn't let up until she came, which she did, screaming his name. He knew he could get used to her saying his name in her pleased sounds.

Kissing the side of her neck, he let her go back to her kneeling position, and this time he didn't stop until he filled her one final time and flooded her pussy with his cum. Wave upon wave of it.

Afterward, they both collapsed to the bed, and he had no choice but to pull out. He moved Lucy so she was laid across his chest.

She looked up at him with a satisfied smile. “I think we have done your bedroom and your home proud, don’t you?”

“Nah, I think every single room could use another reminder,” he said.

Lucy chuckled, and damn it, he loved that sound.

He knew it was crazy and insane, but he reached up and tucked some of her hair behind her ear. “I know we’ve not been together long, but I was thinking, how would you feel about moving in with me?”

He watched her freeze in place.

“You can say no,” he said.

“You want me to move in with you?”

“Yeah.”

“But, what about my parents’ place?”

He knew that was going to be hard for her to give up. It was her parents’ home, the place she grew up. “You don’t have to do anything with it. That’s your home, but one day you could perhaps rent it out, when you’re ready. You know?”

He watched as Lucy nibbled her lip.

“You hate the idea?” he asked.

“No, no, not at all. I love the idea, I do, and yes, moving in together is a pretty big step. I thought people took a lot longer to decide, and I also thought men loved their own space.”

“You’ve watched a lot of movies.”

“More like read a lot of books, and trust me, those guys don’t always like giving up their homes.” She pressed her lips together.

“Lucy, I’m not like the guys in the books you read. I know you’re an amazing woman, and I also know that if I don’t act fast, some guy will steal you away, and I can’t have that.” He cupped her chin and knew he didn’t want to give her up.

He had already seen the destruction some men could make, and he didn’t want to make those mistakes. He trusted his father’s word, and that was why he wanted her to move in with him.

Isaac had already lost count of the number of times he’d released inside her. Each time he did, the risk of her getting pregnant went up, and up, and up. Hewantedher to get pregnant.

Lucy was an amazing, rare, beautiful, smart, generous, and, at times, damaged woman. He wanted to show her she had nothing to fear. He wanted her to learn she could trust in him, and nothing bad was going to happen.

“Well, what did yousay?” Marge asked the following day.

Lucy handed out the last of the tea and wished she hadn’t disclosed to Marge and Harry that Isaac asked her to move in with him.

“What?”

“Don’t give me that crap, girlie. You heard me just fine.”

She was stalling. “I ... told him I’d think about it.”

“You’d think about it?” Marge asked.

Lucy moved to sit on the spare seat opposite Marge. “Yes, I said I would think about it.” She tried to smile as her friend looked exasperated. “What’s the matter?”

“What’s the matter? What’s the matter? You cannot be real right now.” Marge threw her hands in the air. “Tell me, ladies, if Isaac Flynn asked you to move in with him, would you tell him you’d think about it, or would you just get down and dirty with that man?”

Several of the ladies started to fan themselves.

“That man can ask me for anything and I would give it to him.”

“Seriously, how you didn’t leave a hole in the wall, because that is what I would have done.”

Lucy laughed.

“I think Lucy is doing the right thing,” Harry said.

She turned toward Harry and offered him a smile.

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“You don’t get a say in it. You’re a man.”

“We don’t know anything about this man,” Harry said. “Lucy is being cautious.”

It wasn’t even about being cautious. She just didn’t know if she should move out of the home her parents had worked so hard to get. They had bought their home, and she remembered how happy they were when they finally got the papers. The truth was, she didn’t know anything about Isaac. He was a very private man, and she respected him for it.

“Stop worrying. We know he is a good man. He helped us when no one else would. He didn’t even allow us to pay for fixing our bus, and let’s face it, we all know that was expensive.” Marge waved a hand in the air. “He’s a good man.”

“Good man or not, we don’t know anything about him.”

“Don’t you listen to him. That man is a pessimist. He has been for as long as I have known him.” Marge shook her head at him. “You do not want to live alone, my darling. You like Isaac. You have liked him for a long time, and I don’t see a reason to stop you from enjoying your life. Take it from us, we all have regrets about what we have or haven’t done.”

Lucy smiled at her friends, but she couldn’t help wondering if Harry was on to something. She didn’t know a lot about Isaac, and he did keep quiet about his past.

For the rest of the day, she tried not to think about it, and instead got to work. She helped Marge go to bed for her nap, and played cards with Harry. By the end of the

day, she was exhausted. Leaving the care home, she made her way toward Isaac's garage. She couldn't help but think about Harry's warning. Was it really a warning, or just encouraging her to be cautious?

She couldn't help but wonder what her parents would think of Isaac, if they were alive. Would they hate the age gap? Lucy thought about it. She knew her dad would have an issue with the age gap; her mother, however, wouldn't care. She would only want to know if he made her happy.

Isaac did make her happy. She loved being with him, and he had been the perfect gentleman. He never pushed. He didn't try to force her to get into a car. He helped her with chores. Once the power came back on, he was right there in the kitchen with her, cleaning, cooking, like they had never been apart.

She arrived at his garage to see him handing a pair of keys to Bill, one of the many locals who complained when the garage had closed down. Bill also owned a car sales shop. She knew Phill closing had really hindered his business, and at one point he was close to closing down himself.

She watched them shake hands, then Bill got in his car, with a smile at her, and she watched him drive away.

"He looks happy," she said.

"He is. Bill and I finally made a deal. It has taken me ten years, but he now trusts me to work on the cars he sells. Once he gets them, he wants me to be available to do a quick check over them all, to make sure he is not being conned."

"Ten years?" She found that hard to believe.

"Yeah, he grew loyal with whoever he used to replace this one, and now they're

selling, and he wants to make a deal.” Isaac shrugged.

“Doesn’t that annoy you?”

“Nah, you got to do business where you can trust, and I get why he didn’t trust me, but now he has no reason not to trust me. I’ve proven myself, and that is all it takes.”

Lucy looked at him, really looked at him. Did she need to know about his past to love him? No. She only needed to know that she loved the man in front of her. She had loved him ten years ago, and she still loved him.

“My answer is yes,” Lucy said.

“You’re going to move in with me?”

She nodded.

He went to her, picking her up in his arms and spinning her around. “You won’t regret it.”

Chapter Nine

It didn't take long to move Lucy into his home. There were a lot of her parents' things she wanted to keep with her, and Isaac was more than happy to keep anything she wanted. All it took was a full weekend.

He knew it was hard for Lucy, but she did surprise him when by the following Monday, she had put her house up for rent. She already had a realtor in mind, who had a reputation for finding good homes with the right clients. Isaac intended to keep an eye on the situation, as he didn't want his woman taken advantage of.

By Tuesday, he felt good. Having Lucy in his home, close, was a dream come true. That very morning, he had stepped out of their home and found her staring at his truck. He had to wonder if she was trying to figure out a way to take that first step, and he had no intention of rushing her.

He walked her to work, kissing her on the lips, and then made his way back to his garage. He didn't need his car, and as he arrived, Bill had already left him a car to work on. Driving it into his lot, he parked it on the ramp, got out, and made his way to his office, where he changed into overalls. Once done, he was back on the lot, and spent the next hour checking over the car, which was in relatively good condition.

He was just about to head in to contact Bill, when he saw an older man he knew as Harry, heading into his garage. They had talked as he fixed up the bus for them. He liked Harry.

"Hey, Harry, long time, no see," he said, putting his clipboard beneath his arm and

stepping up close to shake the man's hand.

"Good to see you, Isaac," Harry said.

Lucy had told him over the weekend that all the ladies at the care home adored him. Harry was a little hesitant. He couldn't blame the man.

"I'm doing good," Isaac said. "Keeping myself busy. Bill finally gave in and I'm working on the car for him."

"That's good. Bill is loyal, trust me, he hated that you came along just as he found someone else. He has a hard time letting go, even though it did cost him."

He agreed.

"Have you come looking for a job?" Isaac asked.

Harry had once confided in him that he had always wanted to be a mechanic, but his father didn't want him to be, and instead he worked in accounting, a job he hated. However, according to his dad, cars would come and go, but taxes were for life. The job paid the bills, put his kids through college, and allowed him to enjoy early retirement. At least, that is what Harry said.

Isaac didn't need to work. He had plenty of money stashed away, but he didn't want to live that way. He wanted to work hard, which is exactly what his father would have wanted for him, and that was what he would do. His father's final wish for him: work hard. This was how he repaid his father. It was how he made amends for everything that happened.

"I'm pretty sure you don't need a man like me working for you."

“Why are you really here, Harry?” Isaac asked.

“Lucy.”

Isaac nodded.

“She’s a good woman. She’s a kind woman, Isaac. I also know she is a woman who has spent a lot of time falling for you.”

He looked toward Harry, a little taken aback.

“Oh, yes, when you first arrived, Lucy had a crush on you. I heard her tell Marge all about it. You were the strange man, the new guy, and she would take detours coming past this place, just to see you. I know she is falling in love with you, but I also know you’re a man with a past, Isaac. You keep your private life private, and there are reasons for that.”

“My past is never coming back to haunt me, sir,” Isaac said. “And as for Lucy, I love her. I’ve loved her for a long time, but I waited. I know she has dealt with a lot of loss, and I’m not here to cause her any trouble. I’m here to stake my claim on her. I want her as my woman, as my wife and the mother of my children. I want forever with her.”

Harry looked at him, and continued to stare. Isaac had no doubt he was being assessed. Harry was measuring him up, and this had happened to him many times. He never looked away. Nothing frightened him.

“Good,” Harry said. “You’re a good man, Isaac, hopefully we can keep it that way. Now, do you want to tell me all about this car?”

Isaac laughed. “Is that it?”

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“You don’t need me to tell you the usual crap, that if you hurt her, I’m going to kick your ass.”

“Don’t worry, you wouldn’t be the first,” Isaac said.

“That’s true, I reckon Marge and Betty would go a few rounds with you.”

“They would have to get to me first,” Isaac said. “I have no intention of hurting Lucy. I want to take care of her.”

“That’s good.”

He nodded to Harry, and then decided to let him see beneath the hood of Bill’s latest car that he wanted to get ready and up for sale.

“Oh, wow, I cannot believe Harry would do that,” Lucy said. “I am so sorry.”

“Don’t worry about it. I’m not worried,” Isaac said, taking her hand as they made their way into the Falls Saints bar.

It was Friday night, and it had been a hectic week. She knew Harry had gone to see Isaac, but he hadn’t said anything, and rather than push him to tell her what was going on, she just left it. There was no reason to go chasing problems. Harry finally seemed happy with him, and seeing as she was more than happy with Isaac, there was no reason to cause trouble.

Arriving at the bar, Richard had reserved Isaac's usual table. Now that she spent more time with Isaac, she was starting to see how close he had gotten to many of the locals in town. Of course, it made a lot of sense, seeing as he'd been in town over ten years now.

"It's busy," Lucy said.

Richard arrived at their table with chicken wings, and he looked rather frazzled.

"Everything all right?" Isaac asked.

"Yeah, but a bunch of guys landed about twenty minutes ago. Some kind of bachelor party, and they're ... interesting," Richard said.

At that moment, there were whistles, and Lucy glanced over to see Tanya spin around and give them the finger. Tanya was a married woman, and she quickly rushed to her husband's side.

She didn't like the look on Eric's face. The man was quite volatile with everyone, but he was good to Tanya. The two had met in high school, and a football accident had cost him a career. From what Lucy knew, it hadn't upset him too much, as his father owned a couple of the local ranches, and Eric now owned and ran one of them. They had six kids, and were one of the happiest couples in town. She knew Eric came to Isaac from time to time.

"This isn't good," Lucy said, as Eric approached the man that had attempted to make a pass at his woman.

She didn't look at Isaac. Eric was never one to step down from a fight, and Tanya quickly rushed to her husband's side, attempting to calm him down.

“How much do you want for me to take the whore for a night?” one of the guys said.

Lucy gasped as he pulled out his wallet, but it ended up on the floor, as Eric slammed his fist into the guy’s face. This wasn’t good. Tanya cried out. Eric pulled back and hit the man again, but now three men jumped on Eric’s back and started to hit him.

A couple of the locals tried to join in, but they ended up hit and thrown across the room.

At Eric’s cry, Lucy reached for Isaac, but he was already on his feet. She tried to stop him, but he turned to her.

“Don’t move,” he said.

There was something in his eyes, and in his voice that froze her in place. She had never seen him like this, and as one of the guys rushed at him, she pressed her hands to her mouth, as one punch sent the man to the floor. All it took was one punch, and he was out, unconscious.

Another came at Isaac, and she hadn’t seen that he’d grabbed a chair, and as he did, he slammed it into the man’s stomach. The chair smashed, and the guy went down. Now, he had two pieces of wood that had come off the chair, and she watched as Isaac took out eighteen other men.

He didn’t kill them, but he got them off Eric. The way he used the chair legs, Lucy knew there was no way this man hadn’t fought before. Isaac was calm, even facing men who outnumbered him, and she was shocked. None of them got a single punch in.

At the end, Eric was sporting a broken nose, with an already blackening eye. Tanya rushed to her husband, and Lucy stayed perfectly still.

Everyone in the bar, was looking to Isaac, and then he faced a round of applause, as he helped Richard toss the guys out on the street.

She stayed perfectly still. Eric and Tanya came to her table.

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“Tell your man, thanks,” Eric said. “Fuckers ganged up on me and took me down. Fucking cowards. No one scares my wife or insults her and gets away with it. You tell Isaac, he needs anything, just tell him to come to me.”

She nodded her head, as she was in a little bit of shock. Isaac had never raised his fist to anyone. The man she just saw was not a man who wasn't prone to violence. He had known exactly what to do.

Isaac returned, shook Richard's hand, then made his way toward the table. She stared at him, but she wasn't afraid of him. She knew there was a whole lot more to Isaac than met the eye. He had a history. A history he had told her had no place in his present or his future.

She didn't know what to say to him.

The chicken wings were still on the table, and she reached out to take one. “I don't know about you, but I am starving,” Lucy said.

What did she say? How did she ask him? Isaac didn't want to talk about his past, and she didn't want to be that nagging girlfriend that forced him to talk about it.

He sat down, reached for a wing, and bit into it.

Neither of them spoke about what had happened, but it wasn't forgotten. Lucy knew it hung between them, and she hated that more than anything.

Isaac knew he couldn't stand back and watch Eric get attacked. He knew what he had to do, and he did it. The consequences of his actions were that Lucy saw him. She had questions in her eyes, and he knew it was only a matter of time before he told her.

So, a week later, they were walking home, and the nights were getting shorter. The sun set earlier, and as they arrived home, he closed and locked the door, and waited as she removed her bag.

It was still warm, so she didn't have a jacket. She turned toward him with a smile on her lips.

"What do you want for dinner?" she asked.

He looked at her and knew he couldn't just leave it anymore. "There's something I want to show you."

"There is?"

"Yes, and ... there's a chance you're not going to like it."

He had to make the leap. He had to trust Lucy with this part of his past. Walking toward her, he held his hand out for her to take, and he loved that she didn't even hesitate. He took her through to the kitchen that led down to the basement. He flicked on the light, then made his way across the room, going to the small panel he kept hidden. Typing in the code, the door opened, and inside were the few belongings of his parents that he allowed himself to keep. Everything else had been lost or gone up in flames. Pulling out the large photograph album, he stepped back.

Lucy looked at him a little confused.

Moving to the small sofa, he sat down, and she came to sit beside him.

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Opening the book, he pointed and talked. “That is my mom, my dad, and that there is me. You will see it is outside of a launderette. That is what my family owned.”

“A launderette, but I thought your family had a garage? You mentioned your father was a mechanic, right?”

“My dad always wanted to be a mechanic, but you see, mechanics couldn’t always launder money.”

He saw the frown on her face. This was a past he wanted to keep buried, but there was no chance of that.

“My family found themselves struggling, and to try and make things work, they took a small loan from a man that was connected to the ... Rostova Bratva. There was no way my father would ever be able to make this payment, so he had no choice but to continue working for them. He cleaned their money. His shop was one of the places they used to clean money. I was his only son, but I was a troublemaker, and the Rostova Bratva saw my potential, as did my father. In the beginning, I was to be recruited as one of their soldiers.” He turned a page over and showed her images of himself as a boy. “I was sent to the Rostova Bratva to learn to become one of their soldiers, and I wanted to make my father proud. I did absolutely everything I could to earn their respect, and I was the best soldier. I was unlike anything they had ever seen.” He stopped because the truth was this was a bad memory. At the time, it had been amazing, and he’d been ready and prepared for anything.

“I worked my way from the ground up, and my parents were rewarded. Not monetarily, but they were kept working, and they were invited to parties. It was much

later that I realized they were being mocked. While I was given money and rewards, my parents were brought as a reminder of what they were. I didn't see that at the time. They were being disrespected, and when they had been used for all they were worth, the Rostova Bratva killed them."

Lucy gasped. "What?"

"Yes, they killed my parents in cold blood, and my mother was already dead when I arrived at the scene. I held my father as he died in my arms, and he told me the biggest mistake he ever made was selling me to the Rostova Bratva. He didn't sell me. He thought he was doing what was best for me, but ... we both knew it wasn't. I had become a killer, Lucy. I killed for the Rostova Bratva. That, in the bar, was nothing. They all walked away. Sure, some of them had broken bones, lost teeth. I bruised their egos, but I've done all of that before and worse. I listened to orders to kill whoever they wanted me to kill. I didn't ask questions. I just did. They thought by taking out my parents, they would have me at their side as their loyal dog. That I would do whatever they wanted."

He turned the album pages, seeing pictures of his parents throughout his childhood, as he was growing, as he became part of the Rostova Bratva.

"Instead, they made me their worst enemy." He laughed, but it wasn't a heartfelt laugh. It was one filled with pain and anguish. He had lost his parents because of who he was. He had been trouble, and the Rostova Bratva saw the potential. His father had wanted to guide him as best he could.

"It took the Rostova Bratva decades to get to the place of power. They fought and people died, and they hurt a lot of people. Two weeks—that was all it took for every single person to be killed, and I did that, Lucy. That is my past. The reason I say my past is dead and will never come and haunt me is because I'm not wrong. I killed. I am a killer. That is what I do, it is what I am capable of. This is my past. I'm not

proud of it, and once it was over, I left. I had already purchased this place, and then I got the mechanic shop. My dad's wish was to always have a garage. He loved working on cars, and it was with a sense of irony that he opened a launderette. But it was a means to an end. One to fund the other. He never got that chance. This is me giving him what he wanted."

He turned toward Lucy. "I know this is a lot to take in, and I'm giving you the chance to back away now before it's too late. I love you, Lucy, and I do want to spend the rest of my life with you."

Lucy stared out the window, not really seeing the view outside as her mind was filled with everything Isaac had told her. Her home was already occupied with a brand-new couple, and she had nowhere else to go. Not that she wanted any space away from him.

Isaac insisted on giving her time to think, to breathe. She had a feeling he was staying at his garage.

Running fingers through her hair, she stared out the window and wondered what he wanted her to think about.

So, his past life was dead. He'd killed everyone. His ink was a symbol of a life he was now ashamed of. He was part of a freaking Bratva, and they killed his family, so he killed them. The man she had seen at the bar—that was part of who he was.

"You look troubled."

She turned to see Harry stepping into the kitchen. Most of the staff were out with the residents for their weekly shop.

“Nah, I’m good.”

Once again, her fear of cars held her back, but she wasn’t about to admit that. She offered him a smile. “You didn’t go shopping?”

“Not today, I just wasn’t in the mood. Also, it looks like you wanted to talk.”

Lucy offered him a smile. “It’s fine. I’m fine.” There was no one she could talk to about this.

Isaac had trusted her with this.

“Are you sure?”

She was about to tell Harry there was no need to worry, but as she turned to look at him, something just swept over her. “What if you learned something about someone, someone you cared about, and it ... changed everything?”

“Like what?”

“Like, who you thought they were, they weren’t, and they have a whole different past than the one you thought possible?”

“Does it affect who they are now?”

“Yes and no.”

“Good or bad?”

“I don’t know,” she said.

Harry looked at her. “I’m an old man, Lucy. I know people change. People make decisions in the heat of the moment, and then live to regret them. But I also know that people evolve, they become better. Some become worse. I’m guessing we’re talking about Isaac. Now, there is no mistaking that man has a past, but look at him now. I’m figuring he has told you about his past, to be honest with you. I’ve seen the way he looks at you, and that man is in love with you. He is being open and honest, and that is a lot.”

“What about his past?”

“Do you really care, and does it really matter?”

She looked toward Harry and frowned.

“Okay, let me put it to you another way. Does it stop you loving Isaac? Do you want to walk away, have nothing to do with him, and find another man, someone else to spend the rest of your life with?”

“No,” she said, not even hesitating.

“Isaac hasn’t changed. He is showing you his past, the ugly parts and the good parts, and if you still love him, then why are you still here?”

Lucy glanced down, and then looked at Harry. "I've got to go."

"Go."

"Thank you," she said.

Harry nodded his head, and he pretty much urged her out the door, and she went without comment. Rushing out, she went as fast as she could go.

She didn't own a car, and all she could do was run. It had been raining, and the paths were a little slippery on her way to Isaac's. There were several points where she nearly slipped, but she caught herself just in time.

The moment she got to Isaac's garage, he was standing near the hood of a car, a clipboard in his hand, and it looked like he hadn't shaved his face in several days.

She took a deep breath, and everything she had been planning to say to him fell right out of her mind. What could she say to him? What was the point of saying anything?

Instead, she walked right up to him, and as he lowered the clipboard, she slid down onto one knee, staring into his blue eyes, and smiled.

"Marry me," she said.

She wanted to marry him, to spend the rest of her life with him. To have children with him. She didn't care about his past. That was behind them. He had told her that, and now all that mattered was the life they could share with each other.

"Lucy?"

"I don't care," she said. "I get it. You made some bad decisions, and they cost you

everything. They're not going to cost you me, I'm here, and I'm telling you, Isaac Flynn, I love you. I want to marry you and spend the rest of my life with you. It was a lot to process, but you didn't need to leave your house." She refused to get up off the floor until he had given her an answer. "Now, would you do me the honor of becoming my husband, and in the future, fathering my children?"

"You really want this?"

"Yes, I want you, and I will have you any way I can get you."

Isaac sank to his knees, cupping her face and staring into her eyes. "I love you, Lucy Rue, and I promise you will never regret marrying me."

And with that, he kissed her hard, passionately, and there was no way she was ever going to regret this.

Epilogue

Ten Years Later

"Seriously, Daddy, you expect me to believe that?" Rachel asked.

Isaac looked at his six-year-old daughter, and Michael, his son, laughed. "Yeah, they told me the same thing, that Mom couldn't even stand to get in a car."

He looked toward Shane who was also laughing.

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Of course, their mommy had gotten over her fear of cars many years ago, before Michael was even born, who was also nine and a half years old. He had to keep being reminded of that extra half, because it matters, according to his son.

As if talking about her brought her around.

He had picked up the kids from school and kindergarten, as Lucy had been driving Marge to her latest doctor's appointment. Marge, Betty, and Harry had become the grandparents to their three kids and were very much part of their lives.

Lucy had never given up her job at the care center, and he didn't want her to. People had unfortunately passed away, but they were also family. The kids loved hanging out there.

She pulled into the garage, and he watched as she pulled the hand brake on and climbed out. She was seven months pregnant with their fourth child, and like her other three pregnancies, she glowed. He loved her so damn much.

It had been a whirlwind of a life—one his father had once told him he would have, and Isaac hadn't believed was possible. After revealing the truth of his past to Lucy, he truly believed he lost her.

Never did he think she would be the one to propose to him. Their kids loved the story of their parents having a disagreement and then her proposing. It certainly made for a good story.

The truth was, it was just the beginning of their story. Lucy had helped him create

memories. Their house was no longer barren of photographs. On the walls were pictures of him, Lucy, their three kids, along with their dogs and cats. His wife had also insisted on rabbits and chickens.

The many vacations they took as a family, the life they made with one another, the drawings the kids made, their artwork—Isaac's home was no longer a place he survived in. It was a place he cherished, because it was finally the family home he had always wanted.

The End