



# His Summer Intern

**Author:** *Jessa Kane*

**Category:** Erotic, Romance

**Description:** Juno has been locked away for two years, but has finally escaped and is now on the run.

While dashing through the forest, she comes upon a cabin. The owner, Caleb, is a young, former military man with tortured grey eyes—and he believes Juno is the summer intern he was expecting to help him with research on his novel. With no choice but to go along with his misconception, the two tumble headlong into a wild obsession with one another that can't be tamed.

But the truth about Juno's real identity lurks, waiting to jump out and bite them. When it does, will their passion be put to the test? Or does an obsession like theirs overcome all?

**Total Pages (Source):** 19

# Page 1

*Source Creation Date: June 25, 2025, 5:50 am*

1

Juno

Oh God.

Oh God.

Don't stop running.

Whatever I do, I can't stop.

My lungs are burning and the tree branches are leaving scrapes on my face, my arms. Blisters have long since formed on the backs of my heels and fatigue plagues every one of my limbs. But I won't let them catch me. I can't go back there.

The howls of misery haunt my ears even now. The grimy bars on the windows. The utter loneliness and monotony and sadness. I can't. I can't do it anymore.

The forest ends and I stumble to a stop, my breath wheezing in and out of my lungs.

A house?

The place where I've been living for two years seemed like it could only exist at the ends of the earth, so I expected to be running for another couple of hours until I got anywhere. Perhaps I should keep going. Get farther away. When they come looking for me, they'll probably check the closest houses, won't they? Or have I traveled far

enough?

Time is hazy.

The back door of the house flies open. A shotgun muzzle eases out through the opening and points square between my eyes. And I almost laugh. I really do.

Out of frying pan, into the fire.

A floorboard creaks and the door edges wider, revealing the man holding the weapon.

Even in my exhausted, panicky state, I recognize that he's a force of nature. He'd have to duck to exit the house without knocking his head into the doorframe. In a sweat-stained white T-shirt, he looks like he's been working out, well-maintained muscles stretching the sleeves. Are those dog tags beneath the cotton? Yeah. He's military for sure. I spent some time on a base growing up and there's no mistaking his poise. He's killed before. His hands are steady, black hair shorn tight to his scalp.

His slate-gray eyes are meaner and fiercer than any I've seen. Worse than the head nurse's, even. They look down the barrel of the gun, taking my measure. When he's determined I'm not a threat, he straightens slowly, lowering the weapon. "Are you my intern?" he rasps.

My immediate impulse is to say yes.

This is a man people don't like to disappoint.

He's also a man to whom lying is useless. I can see that already.

One sweep of those sniper's eyes and he's picked me apart. Sorted me like laundry.

“Did you run here or something?”

I open my mouth to respond, though I have no idea what I’m going to say...and I find I can’t speak. There’s no saliva in my mouth. My throat is coated in dust, and Jesus...dizziness is setting in. Oh lord, I’m so tired. The adrenaline is beginning to drain out of me and now my limbs are shaking, preparing to give out. And they do.

Am I safe?

I turn and look at the woods, hiccupping a sob.

Please. Please don’t find me.

When I turn back around, he’s less than a foot away and I suck in a shocked breath, stumbling backwards. And I go down. I go down, but he catches me and slowly lowers me to the grass, frowning something fierce at my pitiful condition.

There’s something about his hands. The capability in them. The experience.

Right before the blackness claims me, the word safe whispers through my mind.

\* \* \*

I wake up in a foreign bed and immediately know I’m not alone.

He’s there in the corner. Heel propped on the opposite knee.

Cloaked in shadows. Methodically drinking a cup of coffee.

Now that the sun isn’t glaring in my eyes, I can see that he’s younger than I originally thought. Maybe twenty-eight. Thirty.

Remembering how he greeted me, I sit up and gather the army-green comforter around me, my gaze scanning the room for his shotgun.

“I put it away,” he says, that voice so low. Deep as a well.

Swallowing, I take stock of my clothing. Still dressed. Minus my socks, though.

He sets his coffee aside, standing long enough to bring me a canteen of water. “You always show up for a new job on the verge of death?”

My response is to suck down the water greedily, finishing the entire canteen before ten seconds has passed. My body is so relieved to have its dehydration cured, tears crowd my eyes and I take a deep, gulping breath, the metal container rolling out of my slack grip.

“If we’re going to work together, you’re going to have to knock off the crying.”

I want to tell him I hardly ever shed tears. There’s no point. Crying just makes me think of more reasons to be sad. But I stare up at the ceiling until my eyes are dry, then I focus on him. To tell him the truth. That whoever he was waiting for? His intern? I’m not her. After that’s out of the way, maybe I can convince him to lend me cash for a bus ticket. “I’m not your in—”

## Page 2

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“She speaks. I was beginning to wonder,” he cuts in. “You remember the job description, right? I don’t mind going over it again. You look like you’ve been through some shit since we traded emails.”

Been through some shit?

You have no idea.

He seems to read that thought on my face and his eyes flicker with grave understanding.

“Like I said in my email, I’m writing a book,” he says, clearing his throat. “It wasn’t my idea, but if I’m going to do something, I’m going to do it right. But there’s one small issue.”

It’s been so long since I had a good conversation. A real one. I find I’m interested to hear the rest of his problem. “What is it?”

My voice seems to throw him off, but only momentarily. “It’s fiction. That was part of the requirement. See, I could write about Afghanistan, but that would defeat the purpose. And because it’s fiction...there are female characters. Women. Not soldiers. Civilian women. And I don’t know how to write one convincingly.” His gaze traces the slope of my shoulder, a muscle bunching in his cheek. “I’ve been in the army since I was eighteen, tour after tour, until recently. Haven’t been around many of your kind. Not in the real world. Not in normal surroundings. Not...soft.”

“I’m not soft,” I correct him, pressure shifting in my chest.

He nods once, twice, watching me carefully. “I expect that’s the kind of thing I’ll find out observing you for two weeks. Researching how women behave.”

That’s it? That’s the job?

Color me skeptical.

I want to ask more questions, but they’ll make it clear I’m not the one he emailed with. “Two weeks,” I echo, hoping he’ll take the bait and keep talking.

“That’s right. Two weeks as my guest. I pay you at the end.”

Pay me. Enough to buy a bus ticket? Maybe some new clothes. Food. I could get far away from this place, get a job, have a normal life. It seems too good to be true, but maybe I’m due one tiny, little break.

Although...why hasn’t he asked me about the scratches on my face and arms?

Doesn’t he wonder why I have no luggage if I was planning on staying for two weeks?

And most concerning, what if the real intern shows up?

Then I’ll make a break for it. Hope he doesn’t shoot me.

Please let me get the chance to eat first.

The man stands, saunters to the door. “I’m sorry about the treacherous commute. These woods can be unforgiving. No roads to speak of. I’m guessing your suitcase got too heavy to carry? I’ll head out in the morning, see if I can find it.” He turns with a hand on the doorjamb. “In the meantime, you’re welcome to my shirts in the

drawer. Toothbrush under the sink. Shower is down the hall.” His voice trails off as his footsteps creak down the hallway. “I’ll see you at dinner, Sarah.”

Sarah.

At the mention of dinner, my stomach growls loudly. Embarrassingly.

His footfalls pause before continuing.

2

Caleb

That’s not the girl I hired.

I would never have hired someone I’d want to fuck.

And Christ, I’m tempted.

The intern who was supposed to arrive this morning was in her late thirties. An empty nester from the closest town looking to make extra money. The plan was to study the way a woman behaves, speaks, cooks. Take notes, so I could write a female with authenticity. Watching this girl will do nothing but make my dick hard. So why did I facilitate this lie?

Because she was getting ready to tell me the truth. Then what reason would I have had to keep her here? This girl with the brave, green eyes. This girl who is running from something that I instinctively want to protect. This girl whose voice sounds like I already dreamed about it.

Who is she?



My hands curl into fists as I pace the length of my study. When I removed her socks, her feet were bruised from running. No one runs through that pain unless they're running from a nightmare. And I know what that's like. When she challenged me, told me she wasn't soft, I felt that, too. That denial of weakness to everyone, even myself.

How ironic that I required a woman here so I could catalogue her differences.

And one so similar to me shows up.

There are quite a few physical differences to her, though. Even caked in sweat and dirt, nicked up from tree branches, I couldn't help but marvel over a body so supple. Her bones are so fragile, her muscles lithe and feminine. She's younger than me, probably by a good decade, even though her eyes are those of an old soul. Her hair is an indescribable color. Brown and sandy and blonde, an earthy combination that reaches her waist.

She's unkempt. Wild. Beautiful.

What the hell am I thinking keeping her here?

Building a foundation of lies, when my policy has always been the truth at all costs.

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And if I couldn't let her go after one hour, what makes me think I'll happily let her leave in two weeks?

Is there something wrong with me? Who lusts after a girl who is so clearly troubled? Scared? Running away from something?

Because it's not just sex I'm craving from her.

It's something else, too. That quiet strength in her eyes grabbed me around the throat, roused my protective hackles. Made me feel possessive. I don't simply want her to be the first woman I've had in years. I want to be the shield between her and whatever she's scared of.

The sound of the shower running brings my head up.

Is she already naked?

Just thinking of the suds coursing down over her nipples, my simple, white bar of soap lathering up her pussy, makes my dick pulse hot. It thickens in my jeans, damn near making me dizzy. But the girl is starved and exhausted, so I need to rein it the hell in.

Ordering myself to focus, I throw some steaks on the stove and roast some root vegetables from the garden. I'm buttering some bread and setting it on a plate in the middle of the table when she enters the kitchen, her long hair wet, a plain white T-shirt of mine down to her knees. The fact that she looks so goddamn young doesn't abate my lust, but it sure as hell makes me feel like a bastard.

I pretend not to notice when she turns a surreptitious eye to the stack of mail on my sideboard. Looking for a name to call me, no doubt. A name she's already supposed to know.

Either way, I'm anxious to hear her say it.

"Sit." My voice is nothing but a scrape of sound. "Get started if you want."

"Thank you."

I turn my back, so she doesn't have to be embarrassed about inhaling the bread and butter. And sure enough, when I turn around a minute later, half of the plate is empty.

Right then and there, it's decided.

If a man is responsible for hurting this girl, I'm going to carve out his entrails.

No one hurts her again. Ever.

God, I wish I knew her real name. I'd know everything about her by morning. I've got the intelligence connections to make that happen easily. But I can't ask for her government name without ruining the ruse—and something tells me she needs this deception. She needs to hide inside this game we're playing and for some reason, I'm compelled by something deep and resolute to give this girl what she requires. To feel safe. To stay.

When the light hits her cheek and I realize the dirt was a bruise, I set the steak and vegetables down in front of her harder than intended. She flinches, but keeps her head down.

"How was your shower?"

She picks up her utensils, visibly trying to pace herself. Not dive in right away. “Amazing,” she says. “I didn’t want to get out.”

“Why did you?”

A corner of her mouth twitches. “I smelled dinner.”

My laugh is more of a grunt. “Do you want a beer?”

“Oh, I’m not—” Old enough. Damn. Not even twenty-one. “Sure.”

I take two cold ones out of the fridge, twist off the caps and set them down. Take my seat across from her at the table. She picks up her bottle, reads the label and takes a long sip while I try not to obsess over the way her throat looks swallowing.

“So...” she says, looking at me through her lashes. “What is your book about?”

Shit, I didn’t expect her to ask. I haven’t told anyone the plot. But I find myself wanting her to know. Find myself wanting to tell her anything, just so she’ll look at me. “A retired army ranger. Home after a decade, living with a wife who doesn’t know him anymore. There’s a murder in his hometown and his PTSD makes him wonder if he committed it during a blackout. His wife and him...they...”

“What?”

“I don’t want it to sound like a romance. It’s not.”

She arches an eyebrow. “Just say the rest.”

I hesitate. “They reconnect, I guess, while solving the mystery together.”

“Oh,” she says casually, the beer bottle poised at her lips. “Is there kissing?”

“No,” I say firmly. Then, “Might be. Haven’t decided. It’ll be minimal, if so.”

“Good idea.” She smiles into a bite of a carrot. “No one likes kissing.”

I make a mental note that women allow men to have their small victories.

Or at least this one does.

“Um.” She shifts in her chair and I realize I’ve been staring at her beautiful mouth.

“You said writing the book wasn’t your idea. Whose was it?”

Now it’s my turn to shift uncomfortably. “My doctor.” I pick up my fork, but it remains suspended over my plate. I’m no longer seeing the food, but a rush of color. A riot of sound that includes gunfire, chopper blades, screaming. “I brought a little too much war back with me. He thought putting my focus into something else, a fictional world, would be helpful.”

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She's stopped chewing, her green eyes softening, searching.

I won't be able to stand her sympathy—or anyone else's—so I change the subject. “I hope you don't mind that I'll be following you and taking notes.”

“No,” she murmurs after a few seconds. “That's...why I'm here.”

“Yes. It is.” A heavy beat passes between us. She looks so young and vulnerable, swallowed up in my shirt, that my question escapes in an urgent rasp. “Where did the bruise on your face come from?”

Let me kill whoever did it.

Her fork clatters down onto the plate, slipping through pale fingers. “Is that...I-I can't recall if you asking me personal questions is part of the deal we made.” She looks like she's seconds from bolting and I brace to give chase, if necessary. “Is it?”

I consider lying, but I've already done too much of that with her. “No, it wasn't part of the deal.”

“Then please don't.” Her eyes implore me. “Okay?”

My back teeth grind together. “And if I do? If I demand to know every thought in your beautiful head?”

Her breath catches, color stealing up her neck.

I watch her become aware of me. As a man. I watch her realize I'm attracted to her.

Dangerously attracted.

She's innocent, though. That much is obvious. She doesn't know enough to wonder if my cock is hard beneath the table, but goddamn, is it ever. Stiff and burdensome. Ever since she arrived. And the way she's evading my curiosity is getting my juices flowing even more. Making me want to pin her down in my bed and fuck the secrets out of her.

"If you demand to know every thought in my head, I'll leave." Her chin is raised, but her voice is shaky. "You can find someone else to observe for your book."

"No. I don't want someone else," I growl.

"Then no personal questions," she whispers. "Please. Or I'll leave."

I'm surprised when her threat finds its mark, scaring me. She's only been here for a few hours and I'm already attached. Irreversibly so. I don't know her name or where she came from. If she runs, I could track her, but I wouldn't know where to look if the trail went cold. If I want to keep her here, keep her safe, my only option is to agree to her terms.

"Fine." I tuck a piece of steak between my teeth and put all my frustration into chewing it. "But just for now."

3

Juno

It's not unusual for me to hear people shouting in the darkness.

Where I came from, it's the norm.

Tortured shrieks that rattle my bones have long been my lullabies.

The shout that comes in the middle of the night isn't one I recognize, though. It's deep. A man's misery in full stereo. Commanding one moment. Guttural, desperate the next.

It takes me a minute to remember where I am.

Not in my unremarkable locked room.

I'm in Caleb's guest room. Wrapped in his shirt and the soft, forest-green comforter. Which means my host is the one who is yelling down the short hallway.

My heart screws up tight, the corners of my mouth turning down.

At dinner, he confided in me about his PTSD. His honesty made me feel extra guilty for keeping the truth about my identity from him. He should know he was telling something deeply personal to a stranger. A liar. Because of my deception and refusal to return his honesty, I owe it to Caleb to wake him up from this nightmare. Don't I?

But do I really want to go into his bedroom after the way he looked at me?

Like I was naked.

Like he was curious how I taste.

Men have looked at me with interest before, long before it was legal for them to do so, but this? This was different. There was a hint of madness in his lust.



And I got the feeling he was tempering it for my sake.

How much more lay beneath?

Another shout blasts down the hallway and I swing my legs over the side of the bed.

Swallowing my trepidation, I walk toward his door. Finding it closed, I open it...and my breath catches. I was right. Caleb is locked in the throes of a nightmare.

A fine sheen of sweat coats his ruthlessly honed muscles.

He's also naked. Lit only by the moonlight coming in the window.

A sheet is twisted over most of his lap, but the thick patch of black hair and the broad base of his shaft is visible. It takes me a moment to drag my attention upward, over the heaving slab of his abdomen. His tense pectorals. The veins standing out on the generous curves of his biceps, his straining forearms. His body language reminds me of a cornered animal.

Or a patient who isn't in the mood to take her pills.

I know the feeling well and my sympathy moves me forward.

"Caleb," I whisper, once I've reached the bed.

Maybe it's not a good idea to wake him up, but I'm always grateful when something rouses me from mine, whether it's an alarm going off or a slamming door. The guards talking too loudly in the hallway. If given a choice, I never want to remain in the nightmare. To let it play out. Who would?

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I settle a knee on the edge of the bed, dodging a flailing arm. “Caleb.”

“Get the fuck down,” he growls, baring his teeth.

My heart is racing as I settle a hand in the center of his chest. “Caleb—”

I’m ripped down onto the bed. Violently.

Two hundred and fifty pounds of muscle rolls on top of me, a lethal hand circling my throat. His eyes are open now, but they’re fogged. Still trapped in some unknown location. Reliving something unspeakably awful. His tortured expression tells me that. And even in the midst of my terror, I grieve for him. Want to help. To soothe.

“Caleb,” I gasp with some of my precious breath. “Wake up.”

A muscle jerks in his cheek, his head cocking to the right. “Who’s there?”

What name do I use? Juno? Sarah? I struggle to fill my lungs with his huge body crushing me and speak on an exhale, “It’s me.”

His lids clamp shut and he shakes his head hard, as if trying to break free of the fog.

And then slowly, Caleb focuses all that torture on me.

Awake now, but still suffering.

Needing somewhere to put it.

Against my inner thigh, his sex stiffens and his chest begins to heave with renewed vigor. His hips move slightly to the right, cinching into the cradle of my thighs, settling there like a king to his throne. “What are you doing?” I breathe.

He drags my wrists up over my head, locking them there. “Don’t say no to me, girl,” he says raggedly. “Don’t ask me to stop.”

“But Caleb—”

His mouth stamps down over mine, stopping the flow of words. What was I going to say? Stop. I think I was going to tell him to let me go, but the desperation in his kiss confuses me. It pits my compassion against my fear of the unknown. The former parts my lips for him like a drawbridge, allowing him to thunder in and take. This man devours me, his head angling right, then left, his tongue so deep in my mouth I could confuse it for my own.

My wrists are held in a bruising grip, my protests lost in the kiss, and slowly he starts to rock against the juncture of my thighs. Slowly, slowly, then fast, hoarse sounds erupting in his throat, though he never breaks the kiss. No, he continues to consume, his mouth racing over mine, our foreheads flush, hot breath puffing from his nostrils.

“My little lost princess,” he croaks, finally letting me breathe, his hard lips raking down to the hollow of my throat, launching a sensual attack. “This is your home now.”

I open my mouth to respond, but he grips both of my wrists in one hand, using his free one to rip my borrowed shirt down the middle and all I can do is gape. At my complete nakedness. At the man who is already snarling at my nipples, lapping at them hungrily.

“Fuck,” he rasps. “These are delicious. Like ripe little cherries.”

A moan sneaks past my lips.

Does it feel good?

I-I don't know.

There's moisture gathering between my thighs, but the tightening sensations in my tummy are so foreign, so confusing. Where do they lead? "C-Caleb—"

He flips me over onto my stomach, expelling the air from my lungs.

I try to suck in oxygen, but he's already lying down on top of me again, shoving my legs apart. "Haven't had pussy in a decade," he growls in my ear. "Sweetest one in all creation falls right into my lap. Did you think I wouldn't end up drilling it?"

My body is excited, tingling, but my heart is rebelling.

I'm not sure I want to stop, but everything is moving so fast.

Is this how my first time is supposed to happen?

I'm not even sure how sex works exactly. Is he going to tell me?

His fingers lodge between the mattress and my belly, traveling down, down. I squirm when they dip below my belly button. Oh my god. He's going to touch me there. "Wait," I breathe, my bottom wiggling, frantic in his lap. "But...but..."

He doesn't wait.

The pad of his middle finger parts my sex like he owns it and fireworks go off in my vision, their silhouette staining the pillow my face is pressed into. He tickles me on

that nub, that button I sometimes play with in the shower, though it gets me nowhere but frustrated. The way Caleb touches the stiff bud is different. Demanding. Crude.

Arousing.

“I dare you to pretend you don’t love that, girl,” he grates in my ear. “Matter of fact, say whatever you want. Your pussy is telling me the truth, isn’t it? You’re a wet little princess in a man’s bed and there’s only one way out.”

My moan is muffled by the pillow.

The way he’s talking to me is shameful.

Does that mean I’m shameful for holding my breath, not wanting to miss a word? And he’s right about one thing, the flesh of my inner thighs is soaked, growing more so with every stroke of that nub between my thighs. There’s tension gathering inside of me and I don’t know what it means, but I start to rub myself against his finger, a whining sound growing louder and louder in my throat. “Caleb.”

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“There it is. That’s how you say my name, girl.” His hips drop down hard on mine, thrusting his erection against my buttocks. “That’s how you tell me you’re ready for cock.”

Am I ready for it?

I don’t know. I don’t know.

But then he’s pushing my knees wider and yanking my hips up at an angle.

Something smooth and hot prods my opening—and then it sinks all the way into my body, slowly, inch by inch, a rigid, unstoppable force. A juggernaut pushing through that virginal barrier on the way to filling me completely. And I scream. I scream at the intensity of the invasion, how it stretches me, how he doesn’t allow me a second to get used to him before he’s drawing my hips up higher and pounding at me, the squeaking of the bed springs mingling with his guttural grunts.

“Goddamn, that’s tight,” he groans, dragging a palm up my spine and tangling it in my hair, pulling my head back. “You legal, girl?”

I am, I’m eighteen, but I’m too overcome to respond...and the desperate way he thrusts into me suggests he wouldn’t stop, no matter what I answered with. It hurts. I’m being rutted. But there’s a tingling in my hips that begins to arrow inward, making my belly constrict. How something so forceful can make me feel...ticklish is beyond my comprehension, but the sensation climbs until I’m mewling into the pillow.

His rock-hard stomach smacks off my butt over and over again, his palm cracking off the cheek of my ass every so often, as if he's chastising me for making him feel so good. I don't understand it, but those spanks make me sensitive all over and suddenly I'm pushing back into the pumps of his hips, a dark, undiscovered part of me enjoying the mixture of pain and pleasure. Enjoying the fact that I've made him come off his hinges.

Because he's nothing more than an animal now.

He flattens me to the bed, buries his teeth in my shoulder and takes me so roughly, I see stars. Some instinct tells me he's going to be finished soon and I don't want to be left behind. So I wedge my fingers down between my legs and ride the heel of my hand, his frantic pumps grinding that slick bud up and back, up and back, until I start to panic at the magnitude of what I'm beginning to feel. I've never gotten this far. Never felt the weight of pleasure bearing down on me, bundling up all of my nerves and making them quake.

"Not taking my dick out. Can't." His pace turns wild, his sweat dripping down my back, mixing with my own. "Might have to put a brat in you, girl."

Am I a bad seed?

That's what my mother always told me.

But I never believed it until Caleb threatening to make me pregnant only makes me lust harder. Makes me whip my hips back into the rhythm of his thrusts, my upper lip curled with mischief. I'm given no warning before I'm swallowed up in a black hole of pleasure, my screams delivered into the pillow as long, unbearably hot ripples grip my core, bringing relief so complete, my eyes roll into the back of my head.

Caleb stiffens behind me, choking out curses, his hand flexing and releasing where it

grips my hair. That huge, wicked part of him spasms inside of me, sticky hot moisture flooding my sex and sluicing down my inner thighs. He continues to pump, growling, spanking my buttocks with a hard palm until finally, he collapses on top of me, his harsh breathing leaving condensation in the curve of my neck.

I don't know what to think or feel.

No, I do.

I'm...angry. At him for taking what I didn't technically offer.

At myself for finding pleasure in the act, regardless of his crude treatment, his filthy words and filthier intentions. I am a bad seed and I'm mad at him for proving it.

Tears crowd my throat and I wrestle my way out from beneath his heavy body.

He doesn't let me get far, however, his hand shooting out and wrapping around my elbow. When I look back at the man over my shoulder, he looks anguished, tortured shadows brimming in his eyes. "Jesus. Sarah..."

I would have stayed if he didn't call me by the wrong name.

It's not really his fault since he doesn't know I'm Juno. But having my virginity taken so forcefully, followed by him using Sarah to address me...it's too much.

Refusing to cry in front of Caleb, I jerk out of his grip and run down the hallway, locking myself in the guest room, curling into a ball on the bed and letting the silent tears fall.



Caleb

I clean the virgin blood of my cock and force myself to stare at the red-stained towel.

At what I've done.

Christ, am I really this man? A man who...

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Was it assault? Did I assault that sweet, beautiful, troubled girl?

The sleeping pills are supposed to stop me from having nightmares, but they've only made them worse. On top of the medicine making the images more vivid, more visceral, it takes time after I wake up to return to myself completely. I wake up wild, teeming with adrenaline as if I'm in the midst of battle and...there she was.

Shelter in a storm.

Softness in a world of splintering pain.

She put that innocent hand on my chest and I lost it. My cock wouldn't be denied. All the black memories and shouts from the past went away as soon as we were skin to skin...and I couldn't give that serenity up. Couldn't stop. Didn't stop to make her comfortable.

Or prepare her.

She was a virgin.

And I'm a goddamn monster.

I can't sit there until the sun comes up, wondering if she'll ever speak to me again. Wondering if there's any way to repair the damage I've caused. I'm a man of movement, action, so I pull on jeans and a T-shirt, prowling the hallway outside of her door. It's locked. It would be easy as breathing to kick it open, but I restrain myself. I've already used too much force tonight where this girl is concerned.

Barreling my way in there would only make things worse.

Dammit, I don't know anything about women.

What is going to fix this? Can anything fix this?

I just fucked her facedown without a hint of finesse. Or gentleness.

Or encouragement.

The dirty shit I said to her...Jesus, I deserve to be shot.

An apology isn't going to be enough. I have to bring her something. But what? Flowers? That doesn't seem like her style.

Food.

Candy.

Clothes.

She can't live in borrowed shirts, right? I can go out and bring her back clothing to wear. There is a hidden road that leads down to the highway. I disguised it when I bought this place, wanting total seclusion. It's only supposed to be for emergencies, but what the hell is this if not an emergency? She's crying in there.

I rub at my chest and pace some more, once again considering the merits of kicking down the door. Somehow I refrain. I focus on the task at hand, instead. It's dark out, the middle of the night, but there's a twenty-four-hour Walmart less than ten miles away. She's not going to try and run away in the pitch black, is she? So help me God, if she's gone when I come back, I'll tear down every tree in this fucking forest until I

find her.

I go to the kitchen and pick up my car keys, grinding the metal teeth into my forehead, my chest on the verge of caving in, and I pace the floor like a lion.

I can't chance it. I can't chance her leaving.

Fuck. I'm only going to make things worse between us, but what other option do I have?

My pulse clamors in my ears as I retrieve a length of rope from the shed, dragging it behind me on the way to her room. "Open the door."

A long pause. "No. I'm sleeping."

My brows draw together. We both know she's awake. "It doesn't sound like it."

Several beats pass. And then she pretends to snore.

Something heavy turns over in my chest. I think...I think I find her pretense amusing. And adorable. Now I'm even more determined to make sure she doesn't run from me. "One last chance to open the door, girl."

She snores louder.

A laugh threatens, but I shake it off. Step back and kick the door in.

She screams, scrambling on the rumpled bed and shielding her nakedness with a pillow. Her mouth opens to question me, but then she spies the rope and it snaps shut. "What...what are you doing?"

“I can’t have you leaving while I’m out buying an apology.”

That calm explanation doesn’t appear to reassure her. “Don’t tie me up, Caleb. I won’t leave. I-I have nowhere to go!” she sputters.

“Can’t risk it.” I move closer, running the length of the rope through my hands. “I won’t make it tight. It’ll only be for an hour or so.”

Her eyes dart toward the window, but I’m already shaking my head. “Don’t make me tie your ankles, too.”

“Please, please, don’t. I hate being tied up.” She sucks in a breath and goes still, visibly shocked at what she’s revealed to me.

I’m shocked, too. And flooded with rage. Like someone flipped a switch.

“Who the fuck tied you up?” I ask carefully, the rope creaking in my shaking hands.

She looks up at me with incredulous green eyes. “You are about to tie me up! How can you be upset at someone else for doing it?”

“Answer me now! Who was it?”

Victory lights up her expression. “No personal questions.”

I turn and punch a hole through the wall, mash my aching knuckles against my temple. “Is this what women do? Create a series of traps for men to step in? If I don’t tie you up, you’ll run away from me. If I do, I could make you cry again. There’s no right answer.”

## Page 8

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“Yes, there is. You can trust me.”

“Absolutely not. I don’t trust anyone.”

“Me either. But...” She trails off, licking her lips. “I don’t know. Maybe we have to start somewhere, you know? We’re going to be here together for two weeks.” If she thinks I’m letting her leave in two weeks, she’s dead wrong, but I wisely don’t correct her. “If you don’t tie me up, Caleb, I’ll answer one personal question.”

Damn.

There’s no way to resist the temptation.

I want to ask her name, but if I do, our jig will be up. She’ll know I’ve been aware all along that she isn’t Sarah. And I’ve already determined she needs to hide a while longer before she reveals where she really came from. What she’s been through.

“Who tied you up?” I rasp.

Her fingers twitch against the pillow. “A doctor. Doctor Taylor.”

“Why?”

Slowly, she shakes her head. “That’s more than one question.”

Frustration burrows beneath my skin. “I will kill him for you one day.”

“Good,” she breathes, seeming shaken by her own response.

Something passes between. An understanding that we both have some darkness. It breeds more trust than the deal we made, the narrowing of my eyes and the answering flicker in hers. I get hard, impossibly so, in my jeans, aching to explore that darkness we share, but I need to make amends first. If she lets me back between her thighs, I’ll be lucky. There might be a little danger lurking in her, but not enough to keep her from crying. To keep her from running from my bedroom like she’d been attacked. She had, in a lot of ways.

Swallowing hard, I drop the rope. “If you run, I’ll find you.”

“I know.”

\* \* \*

Juno

When Caleb returns an hour later, he’s white as a sheet. Sweat beads his upper lip, more perspiration soaking a patch of his shirt beneath his throat.

He’s holding two large bags in his hands, his knuckles leached of color around the handles. I couldn’t sleep with him gone, so I found a new shirt and waited for him in the kitchen. When he sees me at the table, a shudder goes through him and he heaves a breath.

He closes the door behind him and carries the bags over to where I’m sitting, setting them down at my feet. One by one, he pulls items from the bags and places them on the table. Three pairs of jeans, a mixture of thongs and bikini panties, a pair of sneakers, white tank tops, a pink hoodie, two casual dresses, some flowery shampoo and conditioner. Deodorant. The last thing he pulls out is a short, gray silk nightgown

with thin straps, white lace at the hem.

When he's done emptying the bags, he drags a chair over beside me and sits in it. We're just two people sitting in the silent kitchen at one thirty in the morning, not talking. Slowly, he turns his legs toward me, leans forward and rests his elbows on his knees. He turns his head toward me and I can barely breathe at the regret there.

I can't have you leaving while I'm out buying an apology.

This is his way of saying sorry for what happened in his bedroom.

Emotion punches into my chest. Even though I ultimately got pleasure in his bed, I know I shouldn't let him off the hook. He was aggressive. Domineering. And he took my virginity like a savage. Maybe it's because no one has ever said sorry to me before—not for anything—that I find my hand creeping closer to his, stopping just short of holding it.

He stares at my hand, not breathing.

A clock ticks somewhere in the house.

Caleb swallows and scoots his chair an inch closer, turning more in my direction. His big chest lifts and falls, lifts and falls...

And then he does something I could never expect.

He lays his head down in my lap.

I despair over the way my heart seems to expand, fluttering wildly. He greeted me with a shotgun, physically overpowered me and threatened to tie me up—and it hasn't even been a full day yet. Despite all of that, I think I could have serious



feelings for this man, despite his obvious madness.

Does that make me mad, too?

I've always denied it, but now I'm not so sure. Because I find myself reaching down and stroking his hair. One stroke and his arms wrap around my entire chair plus my body, dragging me as close I can get, his face burying in my stomach. Pressing there. We remain like this for God knows how long. An hour, maybe more, my fingers trailing up and down his neck, over his shorn black hair, his arms like steel bands around me.

Just as I'm starting to nod off, he picks me up and brings me to his room.

His eyes search mine, desperate, and I nod.

I drift off in his arms, ignoring the fear that I've traded one prison for another.

## Page 9

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This one, though...I'm not so eager to escape.

And that worries me more than anything.

5

Caleb

I wait until she's in the shower to roll over, bury my face in her pillow and beat off.

My erection didn't subside all night, pressed up tight to her bare, smooth ass, but I know fucking her again is going to take work. She might have had mercy and forgiven me, but there's a line in the sand between us now. If I cross it again before she's ready, a brick wall will replace the line and that will be unacceptable to me. I want nothing between us. Nothing.

Facedown, I buck into my fist, imagining it's her tight little pussy.

Imagining she's not only forgiven me, but shyly asked me if we can fuck again.

She blushes and spreads her thighs for my cock, her middle finger busily stroking her clit, whimpers tripping over her lips. Her red nipples jiggle up and down as I drive into her wet fuck hole, the glazing of her green eyes telling me she's going to come fast. Good girl. So am I. I can't last longer than a minute in her ripe little body, my spine already beginning to tighten. Slick, she's so fucking slick, starting to orgasm around me, her breathy moans of my name driving me over the edge.

“Christ. Shit. Yes, yes, yes,” I groan into the pillow, jerking my load into the sheets. “Take it, princess. Please no more crying. Please. No more.”

I’m still panting when the shower shuts off. My dick remains half-hard because my fist doesn’t even come close to comparing to her pussy. And though it hurts, I zip it into a pair of jeans and go to make coffee. My mug pauses halfway to my mouth when she walks out in one of the dresses I bought her. A pink one with white dots all over it that buttons up the front. It’s short as hell and molds to her tits. Not going to lie, both of those things were a real selling point for me.

“You look pretty,” I say, my voice sounding gruff to my own ears.

“Thanks.” She smooths her hands down the skirt. “You, um...didn’t buy me any bras.”

“Oops.” I sip my coffee.

Humor twitches her lips.

And I love that she can smile at me, even though we both know I need to get back into her good graces. I hired Sarah so I could learn about women, but I only care about this woman now. I’ll be taking notes on her. Careful, detailed ones.

So far, I’ve learned that she’s tougher than she looks. Her feet are bruised and still she walks without a limp, as if refusing to betray weakness.

She’s merciful. Forgiving. I can still feel her fingers stroking my neck last night, granting me absolution I didn’t deserve.

She’s cunning. Trading me information about her so I wouldn’t tie her up.

I can't wait to find out more about her today.

I will know everything soon.

It's almost unbearable to exist in a state where things about her remain a mystery.

"What are we going to do today?" she asks, biting her lip and looking around.

One word of encouragement and I'd spend the day licking her pussy. That thought must be pretty apparent on my face, because she turns pink. "You decide," I almost groan. "I'm going to observe you."

"Right." Her eyes light up. "I'm going to bake a cake."

A laugh catches me off guard. "A cake? What's the occasion?"

"The occasion is wanting to eat cake." She starts opening cabinets, going up on her tiptoes to search for ingredients, her sweet ass peeking out beneath the hem of the dress. "I haven't had anything sugary in so long."

My heart drops into my stomach, dislodging the surge of lust. Where has this girl been?

What has she gone through?

When I find out who has hurt this girl, my vengeance is going to be swift and deadly.

Never mind that I hurt her, too.

Swallowing the fist-sized lump in my throat, I open my notebook on the table and click my pen, ready to take notes as she bakes. I'm a little surprised I have all the

necessary ingredients. Eggs, milk, sugar, butter, vanilla extract. There is no frosting and I curse myself for not buying the whole damn store last night.

She moves like something out of a dream, her face alight with simple pleasure as she cracks eggs, mixes everything in a bowl. My pen scratches over the blank paper, writing down everything I observe. She's neat, cleaning the counter after adding each ingredient. She's left-handed. When she pulls her hair back, the ponytail lands mid-back and the sunlight picks out different colors. Reddish brown and buttermilk blonde. There's a dimple in her cheek, but it only appears when she's concentrating, pursing her lips. Her lips move when she's reading the backs of packages. She makes me so hard, I have to ease my zipper down quietly to give my cock some breathing room. And that steel staff stands straight up, brushing the underside of the table as I continue to take notes. Notes that grow more obsessive by the moment.

## Page 10

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There's a freckle on the back of her left knee. Medium brown.

She cocks a hip when she stirs.

Breathes approximately twenty-seven times per minute.

And when she bends forward to slide the pan into the oven, her sassy bottom flashes at me and I grit my teeth, on the verge of climax.

"It will be ready in half an hour," she says, setting the timer.

I wince, zipping myself back up. "We should take a walk. Eat outside."

"Like a picnic?" she breathes, excited.

I nod.

She eyes my notebook curiously. "What did you write down?"

"I'll tell you one thing I wrote if you answer another personal question."

Her smile wavers. "Ask the question first and I'll decide."

"No. That's not how it works."

"You're not in a position to make the rules."

After last night, she means. I incline my head to acknowledge that.

I'm accustomed to giving orders, not taking them, but I'm starting to understand that there's strength in conceding sometimes when it comes to this girl. For instance, if I'd followed through and tied her up last night, I seriously doubt she would be smiling now and baking us a cake.

"How old are you?"

She relaxes a little. "I turned eighteen two months ago."

I release a breath I wasn't aware of holding. "I wasn't sure. You were..."

Red stains her cheeks. "Inexperienced?"

"Oh yeah." I run my eyes down to her hem. "Tight as a fucking bolt, too."

"Oh," she whispers shakily. "That's a...good thing?"

"Ah, princess. It's a very good thing." Need twists inside me, dark and hungry. Demanding to be satisfied. "We need to stop talking about your perfect pussy or I'll get worked up over it again."

Her throat works. "Tell me one thing you wrote down."

I don't have to consult the page. "You're forgiving."

She arches an eyebrow. "Only the first time."

My nod is slow, measured. "That's why I'm waiting for a green light, girl. No matter how painful it gets." Acute discomfort prods my gut, biting and twisting. "The worst

part is knowing you didn't have an orgasm. It's fucking killing me."

We're both breathing hard, facing off across the table.

Her nipples are hard, pushing at the bodice of her dress.

"You won't take me again until I say? No matter how painful it gets?"

"That's right," I say through clenched teeth.

That dark mischief I witnessed in her last night drifts to the fore, turning her eyes a vivid green. She saunters slowly around the table, trailing her index finger along the surface, hips swaying seductively. When the girl reaches me, she leans down and whispers right against my ear. "Who says I didn't have an orgasm?"

My spine snaps straight, my hand closing around her elbow. "Did you?"

Her sexy mouth is almost on mine. "That sounds like a personal question."

I lunge to my feet, my hip sending the table skidding across the floor. "There's an end to my patience, girl. You're very close to reaching it."

"Yes." She's trembling, winded, backing away. "I had one."

Unbelievable. Relief, triumph and scorching heat surge in my veins. I was so lost in the adrenaline, in her, in the remnants of the dream, I couldn't be sure.

I yank her up against me. "You like it rough."

Her eyelids fall, her nod subtle. "I think so. But..."



“But you need time?”

“Yes.”

I press my open mouth to her neck, licking her pulse, unable to stop my hands from cupping her braless tits, sliding my touch up down her ribcage and kneading her hips, before I tear myself away and step back, my cock hard as a crowbar behind my zipper. God. God, she’s everything. My obsession. MINE. That’s why I have to do this right. I swipe an agitated hand over my hair and curse. “Let’s go have a fucking picnic then.”

6

Juno

We let the cake—and Caleb—cool off before we leave the house.

Although I’m not sure if this man is ever calm and collected. Or if he just lets me think he is. The copious muscles of his shoulders are bunched, his jaw in a permanent flex as I pass him on my way out the back door. And I have to stop myself from rubbing up against him, purring like a kitten. My skin is fevered under his rapt attention. It feels like I’m caught in a web.

A physical one.

An emotional one, too.

There’s a connection between us and it vibrates like a tuning fork, making me aware of every twitch of his fingers. If he exhales a touch too roughly, every hair follicle on my neck stands at attention. What has Caleb woken up inside of me?

Last night, I swung wildly between outraged and cosseted.

He manhandled me and cradled me like a baby.

I should be confused or terrified of all the extremes, but I'm not. Instead they excite me. How will he be incited next? What is he thinking? What would it take to soothe the pacing beast inside of him? Surrender? Making me surrender?

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A shiver races up my arms and Caleb glances at me sharply.

I don't realize until we've taken a few steps into the trees that I'm exposed outside. In the house, I'm safe from the people who tried to chase me down. At the very least, there is a wall separating us. Out here, I'm a sitting duck.

My steps falter and Caleb's chest meets my back, his breath stirring the hair at my temple. "What is it?"

"Nothing," I say quickly.

A beat passes. "You're worried about animals." Before I can correct him, he circles around front of me and lifts his shirt, letting me see the gun tucked into his waistband. "Nothing and no one touches you, princess. Or else."

He'd kill for me.

That ever-present madness in his eyes is making that clear. Just like last night when he vowed to kill Doctor Taylor, a thrill snakes through me, rattling its tail. Between my legs, the strip of my thong grows damp, my pulse thickening like warm syrup. Muscles sore from the previous night clamp down, seeking him inside me, and I have to swallow a gasp.

"Understand?" he prompts me.

"Yes," I breathe.

What if he knew the truth about me, though?

What if he knew where I came from and where I've been living for the last two years?

Would he believe my story or punish me for betraying him?

I worry silently as we continue walking, but my fears scatter when we reach the stream. Crystal-clear water babbles over mossy rocks, birds chirp happily in the towering trees. The tree cover prevents much sunshine from breaking through, so the light is muted and cozy, even in the middle of the day. Caleb spreads out a blanket and I have to giggle over this jacked military dude with sniper's eyes setting up a picnic by a stream.

"What?"

"Nothing." I set down the basket holding the cake. "You look a little out of your element. That's all."

"I am." He gives me a lopsided smile and my breath catches. "I've never been on a picnic before. You might have to coach me through it."

"I've never been on one, either," I admit.

"Really?" That seems to please him. He runs his gaze down the front of my pink dress, tucking a tongue into the corner of his mouth. "You definitely don't look out of your element. Just a young girl all dressed up for her first date." His eyes take on a glint. "Didn't your daddy ever tell you not to go into the woods with men?"

My breasts turn achy, my nipples in stiff, little points.

He watches them harden knowingly. With dirty satisfaction.

You like it rough?

Until he asked me that back at the house, I wondered if there was something wrong with me. That while last night moved too fast, I found completion. I liked how hard he rode me. The rude manner in which he spoke to me. I want to do it again. But I need to find my footing the next time. Need time to discover this unexpected part of myself.

“Let’s eat some cake,” he says when I fail to answer him, gesturing for me to sit down.

Caleb slips the gun out of his waistband and sets it within reaching distance. Then we sit across from each other on the blanket and take out the container holding a chunk of the cake, digging into it with forks. I moan around my first bite, a rush of chocolate-induced endorphins rushing to my brain. “Oh my god, that’s so good.”

He’s stopping chewing to watch me. “I’ll get frosting next time,” he says gruffly. “Okay?”

“Okay.” I look around. “How long have you lived out here?”

“Less than a year. My final tour ended and...” He clears his throat. “The damn doctors wouldn’t approve me for another one. I tried living in an apartment down in Detroit for a while, but there was too much noise, too many people.”

I try not to show too much sympathy. I remember from one of our first conversations that he doesn’t like it. “What about your parents?”

“They live with my sister in Minnesota.” He opens his mouth, closes it. “I went for a

visit once and left early. I was making everyone tense and nervous. And I couldn't figure out why or how to change it. Maybe it's just how I'm built." He blows out a breath. "So here I am."

It doesn't feel right keeping every part about myself from Caleb anymore.

He's told me the plot of his book.

About his PTSD.

Now about his insecurities regarding his family.

What have I given him? Cake?

Swallowing, I put my fork back in the basket and set aside the cake container. I walk toward him on my knees and feel awareness flow through his rugged body. His nostrils flare the closer I come, his eyes watching me from beneath heavy lids. He's a powder keg, but I climb on anyway, using his broad shoulders for balance and straddling his lap, snuggling down on his erection, savoring his hiss of breath.

## Page 12

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His mouth finds mine, but he doesn't kiss me. Just bares his teeth against it. Says, "What are you doing, girl?"

"Getting personal," I whisper.

Cautious hope transforms his harshly masculine face. "Yeah?"

"Just a little. For now."

"I'll take it."

I order my stomach to stop jumping. "I make everyone tense and nervous, too."

"No." He frowns, shaking his head. "No, I don't believe that."

"My mother used to..." I stop for a breath, the truth exerting me. I've told so few people my secrets and none of them have ever believed me. It's a blind leap across a canyon. "Have you heard of a medical condition where a mother makes her child sick on purpose? For sympathy?"

His shoulder muscles tense under my hands. "Yes."

"M-my mother had that condition, though she was never officially diagnosed. She used to tell people I was, um...severely mentally ill. Teachers, friends. My father." I squeeze my eyes closed and wait. Wait for him to get weird, like everyone else does when presented with someone who might just need a little medication to feel okay. To deal with the world. During my life, my mother has put me in a lot of situations

where I've met people with mental illness and the judgment they face is almost as much of an obstacle as the actual illness. "I'm not ill in that way," I say, for clarity's sake. "There have been times I thought I needed help, but that was because she's very good at making people, even me, believe her. She's a manipulator."

"I'm sorry," he rasps, stroking the sides of my face. "God, princess, I'm so sorry she lied like that about you."

I roll our foreheads together. "You're not the only one who has nightmares."

He makes an anguished sound, kisses my mouth hard. "No. I won't let you have them."

That makes me giggle. "Are you going to climb inside my head and stop them?"

"Yeah." He lowers me down onto my back, settling his weight on top of me. "I'm going to put so many good thoughts in your head, the bad ones have to find a new home. And if that doesn't work..." Sitting back on his heels, he reaches up beneath my dress and drags the thong down my thighs, over my knees and past my ankles. "If that doesn't work, I'll just exhaust the hell out of you. Make you too tired to dream." He kisses each of my knees. "Give me the green light, girl, and I'll start tiring you out right now."

7

Caleb

"Green light," she whimpers, parting her thighs slightly for me. "It's yours."

I watch in slow motion as the dress slithers to her waist and a ray of sunlight bathes her beautiful, glistening pussy. With a reverent hand, I reach out and run a knuckle



through her slit, bringing her wetness to my mouth and sucking it off. “Christ, it’s such a delicate little thing,” I manage, ferocious hunger hitting me like a ton of bricks. “Fuck me. I’m going to hell for taking your virginity doggy style. Pounding it so damn hard.”

“But...” She flushes. “I-I liked it, remember?”

“Yeah.” Lust grips me by the balls. “Doubt I’ll ever be able to go easy on that pussy. But this time you’re going to be ready for me.”

She nods eagerly, like a good princess, and lets me part her thighs. “Okay.”

I’m panting for a lick by the time her legs are fully pried open. Her aroma reaches me and I drag her closer by the thighs, the move involuntary, but Jesus...that scent. I’m no poet but she smells like sugar dusted rose petals—with thorns. Like a miracle of innocence and forgiveness with that intoxicating hint of darkness woven in. And my mouth gravitates toward her hungrily, bathing the whole of her sex with my tongue. One thorough lick encompasses the entire tiny thing and she gasps, grows more damp right before my very eyes.

My thumbs massage circles into her inner thighs, the tip of my tongue riding up and back through her folds, teasing her entrance, stopping just short of licking her clit. And fuck, it’s so adorable, watching her squirm, trying to move her hips and guide me toward that pulsing nub. As if I don’t know right where it is. As if my eyes aren’t fixated on it like a slaving wolf. I wait until her honey is dripping off my chin and then I rake my stiff tongue over that bud and she sucks in a tremulous breath, her hips bucking wildly. “Caleb, Caleb, please. Again.”

When she says my name and writhes her cunt against my mouth, I’m done teasing both of us. I worry her clit with my lips, I kiss it gently, then harder and harder until I’m bearing down on it, moving my lips in the semblance of Frenching. Her legs are

restless, heels digging into the blanket, her fingers searching for purchase on my head—and I decide in that moment that I'll grow my hair. I'll grow it down to my goddamn shoulders, just so she'll have something to hold on to when I'm eating her out.

## Page 13

*Source Creation Date: June 25, 2025, 5:51 am*

“Oh, I think...” Her legs start to tremble. “I think it’s happening.”

Never ceasing my worship of her horny bundle of nerves, I rub the pads of my index and middle finger against her sweet, wet hole, then push them inside, twisting gently and pulling out. Back in, twist slowly, then out, and she quickens almost violently around my fingers, her clit swelling against my tongue.

“Caleb!” she wails, her thighs clamping around my head, her back arching off the ground, body locked in a continuous spasm, her pleasure coating my tongue.

I watch her in awe as she twists her way through it, her breath coming in short, little bursts, her inner thighs growing more saturated by the moment.

The better for me to fuck you with, my dear.

And that moment is definitely upon us. My cock is a turgid monster in my jeans, gasping for breath, pushing its way free of my zipper before I’ve fully got it down. I stalk my way up her body with my cock out, an animal assessing its prey, and new awareness kindles in her eyes. The thorns of her rose are already showing, coming out to play with mine.

“Time to fuck, princess,” I say thickly, using my left hand to tear her dress’s buttons free of their holes. “Time to pay.”

Her tits heave up and down. “Pay for what?”

Abruptly, I drop my weight down on top of her, pulling a whimper from her throat.

“Time to pay for having a pretty face and a tight pussy. Those things men love and hate you for. Love because they can’t help themselves. Hate because they can’t have it.” I grip her throat and squeeze. “I’m the only one who collects on his misery.”

We’re like a perfect storm, our breathing harsh, our eyes locked in understanding.

Excitement.

“Red light,” she whispers.

And God help me, my dick sputters precome all over her belly.

Her words tell me one thing, but her open thighs and lust-drunk expression tell me another. This is our language. One we stumbled on by mistake, but one that has snared us and will never let go. I will never let her go.

“Red light?” I echo, tightening my grip on her throat. “Who’s going to stop me?”

“I could try,” she pants, bucking her body beneath mine, pushing at my shoulders with frustrated little sobs. And all the while I easily keep her pinned, letting her see my amusement over her efforts. I’m not, in actuality, amused, however. Because every time she twists beneath me, her pussy mashes against my hard cock. On purpose? Does she know I’m constantly on the edge where she’s concerned? Is she trying to push me off?

This is a game we’re playing.

A way to give her back some of the control I took last night. I’m the aggressor, but she is involved this time. She’s complicit. She’s voluntarily being assaulted.

But I will snap eventually. I will succumb to my obsession with her and take.

“You’re going to tire yourself out, princess,” I rasp, lowering my head to lap at her tits, snap at them with my teeth. Maintaining eye contact with her, I close my mouth around her nipple and suck. “Even if you managed to get free, you’d have no energy to run. Time. To. Pay.”

She makes one more attempt to free herself and I lunge, imprisoning her wrists above her head, and my cock grinds into the drenched juncture of her thighs. And she can’t hide the anticipation in her eyes, the tongue that wets her lips, eager for what’s to come. She whispers my name and her thighs fall open, her body flexing beneath mine. Preparing.

This is it. I’m toppling over the edge. I’m gone.

With a ragged moan, I fuck my dick into her body, spearing her with every depraved inch. Nailing her to the ground. My balls jack up tight, eager to spill already, thanks to her perfect snug warmth, the ecstasy on her face. “Yeah, you love my misery, don’t you? You eat it right up.” I say through my teeth, thrusting into her roughly. “Feel that? Feel the pain of needing your pussy so bad? I have no choice but to take it. You’ve given me no choice. And you have no choice but to get what’s coming to you.”

Her swollen lips part on a breathy moan, tits bouncing up and down in the open bodice of her dress, her hips rolling up to meet my drives.

Oh. She’s a dirty, little girl. Turned on by things that might be wrong, but feel right to us. We’re a little twisted, me and this girl, but we’re twisted together.

And that’s how it’s going to stay.

My balls are in a tightening vise and her pussy is clenching. I’m getting it from both sides. All sides. And my breath is echoing in my ears, her cries and the smack of flesh

spurring me on. Making me ride her harder. I'm desperate to come, but I want to leave my seed inside her as deep as possible, so I let go of her wrists, reach back to catch her knees in my hands and sling them over my shoulders. I bend her in half and power into her, groaning over the increased tightness of her pussy, rearing my hips as far back as they'll go without pulling out, then pumping back in greedily, knees digging into the ground, humping her wildly like a fucking animal because the pussy is just that good. Hot. Addictive.

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“Caleb,” she moans, those green eyes rolling back in her head. “Oh. Oh. Right there. Faster. Please.”

“Jesus Christ,” I growl, pumping into her at a breakneck pace now. “You going to come with your knees up near your fucking ears, girl? You get off on fighting me and getting drilled?”

“Yes,” she whispers.

“Louder. No one can hear you out here.”

“Yes!”

“Good. I don’t wait for an invitation when it comes to this pussy,” I push deep and hold, feel her begin to shudder. “It’s mine. You want to walk around my house looking like a tasty little cupcake, flashing that young ass at me, I’ll drag you out to the woods and fuck you sloppy. Spreading your legs is the price you pay for making my cock hurt. You hear me, girl?”

“Y-yes!” Her orgasm turns her green eyes blind.

That puffy mouth forms an O and she huffs, huffs, screams, her heels digging into the breadth of my back. I feel every ripple of pleasure that goes through her, her cunt sucking me off, milking the seed right out of my balls.

I bear down on her, groaning loudly, hips slapping roughly against hers, my come funneling into her in hot waves. Jesus, I’m shaking, sweat trickling down my spine,

ass flexing to keep me deep in her heaven. I'm boxed in by pleasure, my lower abdomen clenching, my dick jerking like an unattended fire hose, spraying down the walls of her channel. Her womb. God yes, let her get pregnant. Let her grow round with my child and let me care for them forever.

I collapse on her, panting, her limp legs dropping down on either side of my hips. She's the most beautiful thing I've ever seen, a sheen of dew on her tits, her neck. Teeth marks on her lower lip, eyelids weighed down like sandbags.

"Is there something wrong with us, Caleb?"

"No." I kiss her fiercely, wanting to obliterate every single worry in her head. "The whole world is wrong, princess. We're just finding our patch of light in the dark. Our light just happens to be a dimmer shade than some. But as long as it makes you happy, it's right for us. Does it?" I swallow hard and brace. "Do...I make you happy?"

She explores my eyes, a smile curving her lips. "Yes."

I let out a shaky exhale. "Thank God."

With my heart doing donuts in my chest, I tuck her head into my neck and let her sleep, the sound of the stream burbling happily beside us. And I mouth the words I love you up at the tree tops until blessed unconsciousness claims me, too.

8

Juno

When we wake up at the stream, a storm is moving in and we run for the cabin, closing ourselves inside just before it pours. And for two days after that, I'm the



happiest I've ever been in my life. Caleb works on his book, typing sounds coming from his office. When he's not in his office, he follows me around. Observing, taking notes in his notebook.

I put on music and dance for him. I cook. I pick a biography from his shelf and read it in the window, combing through the words while water patters softly on the pane. And he sits there, watching me in that intense way, his pen scratching on the paper. Sometimes he whispers the notes as he takes them, but I pretend not to hear. They seem private.

Scratches her knee.

Mutters at the author.

Can't get comfortable in her seat.

Thirty-one breaths in a minute.

An hour since I've been in her pussy.

Two hours.

I'm starting to think Caleb is obsessed with me and it teaches me about the newly discovered darkness inside of me...because I love it. I love his obsession. When he stares at me with madness lurking in his eyes, my body blooms like a rose. I can barely breathe. We have sex like starved animals every single time. He throws me facedown over the kitchen table or barges into my shower, impaling me against the tile and grunting brokenly into my neck, taking me in maelstrom of biting and scratching and dirty words.

Our lovemaking is such an emotional upheaval that we fall asleep afterward every

time, our limbs tangled together, his strong arms wrapped around me possessively. We lose track of time. It has no meaning. There is no day or night, there is only the last time he was inside me. The next time he'll be inside me. What he'll say. How rough he'll be. If we'll leave marks.

He's typing in his office now with his back to the doorway. He's shirtless.

Nail marks decorate his back in dramatic red slashes.

The considerable muscles in his shoulders stiffen with awareness. His head turns ever so slightly to one side and I sense him holding his breath. I'm obsessed with him, too. I know it in that moment. The reason I know he's always following me, always staring at me, is because I'm doing the same to him. Memorizing him from the shadows. Waiting for him to come out and play. To throw me down like a plaything and vaporize my will.

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The rain is coming down hard on the roof now, so I almost don't hear what he says.

"I love you." His voice is gruff, the line of his jaw flexing. "Like a goddamn fanatic. It claws deeper with every breath out of your mouth." I'm grateful when he pauses so I can attempt to calm my racing heart. But then, "This book has become about you. You are the wife. I'm the man. And he's slowly going crazy with need for her. He's obsessed, the way I am with you. So obsessed he might drop dead of misery if she leaves."

Tears burn in my eyes. My pulse riots.

I can't barely speak through the emotion packed into my throat.

He loves me. I love him, too. And that means...I have to tell him everything. He doesn't even know my real name or where I came from. He thinks my name is Sarah, for god sakes. Suddenly, I can't stand the lies. They lie between us like a trench of fire.

"Caleb—"

There's a loud knock at the door. "Hello?" calls a man's voice.

Followed by another knock.

I brace to run. It's an immediate reaction. I have to flee. They've found me. I hear the authority in the man's voice and I know. I know the truth has arrived before I could say it out loud. No, this can't be happening. Not when he's just told me he loves me.

Now he's going to know I've been lying all along. That he's in love with a lie.

My heart climbs into my throat and I choke it down, trying desperately to keep my features schooled. It's dim in the room, the storm painting the house in gloom, and I use it to my advantage, sinking back into a shadow.

Caleb turns in his chair with a frown. Neither one of us moves for a long, tense moment.

Then he rises, muscles shifting, chasing each other across his shoulders, his ruthlessly tight abdomen. "I'll go see who it is." He stops in front of me, tips my chin up. "Go wait in the bedroom. I don't want another man looking at you."

Even in my state of panic and despair, desire trickles through me.

He sees it. Recognizes his own creation.

"When he leaves, it's going to be extra rough." He grips me between the legs. "You drew him here with this pussy. I know you did."

Wetness rushes toward his palm, my core clenching eagerly. "No."

He squeezes tighter, his teeth flashing. "Yes. Go to the bedroom and lock the fucking door. I might have to kill him if he tries to get past me. He wants what's mine."

I moan, melting back against the wall. Every time I think we've hit a new level of this obsession, it sinks deeper and so do I. God help me, so do I. "Don't go. He'll leave. Come to the bedroom with me. Caleb, please."

"You think I'm going to turn my back when there's another man sniffing around you?" He yanks down my panties and shoves two fingers into my sex, capturing my

cries with his mouth. “Do as you’re told, girl, and be ready to fuck when I get back.”

Oh God, oh God, I have to tell him everything, but his eyes are black with jealousy, possessiveness. Madness. He won’t hear a word I say. He’s a mate preparing to rip the throat out of a challenger. So I simply nod. “I will.”

“Lock the door and hide in the closet.”

“Yes. I will.”

He slides his fingers out of me, sucking them with a groan as he turns from the office doorway. And I go in the opposite direction, hurrying down the hallway and closing the bedroom door, locking it. But I don’t go to the closet. I wait, listening, my ear to the crack.

It’s so much worse than I could have imagined.

The front door of the house creaks open.

“Afternoon. Are you Caleb Daniels?”

Caleb doesn’t respond, but I picture him nodding.

Picture him holding his rifle just out of sight.

“I’m Officer Torres,” the man says, sounding slightly wary of my man. As he should be. “And this is Sarah Horner. Found her out in the woods while we were looking for someone else. Says she’s supposed to start an internship for you but had some trouble finding the place.”

“Hi, Mr. Daniels,” Sarah sniffs, sounding sick. “I guess I got turned around...a-and

there was no cell service. I'm a little worse for the wear after camping for three days, but—"

"Who were you looking for in the woods?" Caleb asks.

Officer Torres laughs. "Escaped mental patient. Young girl named Juno took off, jumped the fence of the facility about eight miles north. I've got a picture here..."

I cram my knuckles to my mouth, a sob wrenching up my throat as I back toward the window. Have to run. I have to run or the police officer is going to take me back. And I can't be locked up again. I won't scream until I'm hoarse that I don't need medication only to be held down and have it administered. I refuse to feel my thoughts lose their edge and my limbs turn lethargic. To be propped in a corner so I can stare into space.

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I've discovered life again, here with Caleb. Far richer than the one I lived even before the facility. I'm teeming with energy and life and feeling. I can't let them take it away. And Caleb loves me, but...I knew the moment I met him he wasn't a man people lie to. What if he's so betrayed, he lets them take me? I can't chance it. I can't.

Shaking, I shove my feet into my sneakers and move quietly as possible to the window, sliding it up and climbing out into the rain. I'm wearing nothing but the gray and white silk nightie Caleb bought me, so I reach back in and grab a blanket. I wrap it around me and run full speed into the woods, out of view of the front of the house. I escaped once and I can do it again, right? The farther I get, the more my heart starts to rebel. Screeching at me to go back.

Sobbing brokenly, I ignore it and keep sprinting.

Caleb, I'm sorry.

\* \* \*

Caleb

Juno.

My obsession has a name now.

I want these people to leave so I can get back to her. NOW.

No more waiting to have to truth out. She has to know by now there's no reason to

hide from me. That even if she did belong in an institution, she would be mine. Mind, heart, body, soul. Every part of her is cherished by me.

The cop holds up a picture of my princess and I almost lunge for his throat. Simply for having her likeness in his pocket. Having any part of her. But the picture freezes me in place, turns my blood to ice. It's Juno in the picture, but the life is missing from her eyes. They're rimmed in black and she can barely keep them open. Her shoulders are slumped, her hair in disarray. What did they do to you there, princess?

I suddenly want to hold her so badly, I could roar this house down.

They will pay. Whoever hurt her will pay.

"I no longer require your services," I say to the woman, but my eyes are still on the photograph. "And I haven't seen the girl."

He eyes me closely but flinches and averts his eyes when I stare back coldly.

This man was out looking for Juno.

If he found her, I know what would have happened.

He'd covet what's mine. Take her. Steal her from me.

And yes, I could kill him for something he hasn't done yet. Does he smell her in the back bedroom? Does he know I've got a treasure and want it for himself?

Madness boils in my head, my back teeth grinding.

If he makes a move to get past me, he won't make it two steps in her direction.



“Don’t need my services?” the woman is screeching. “I just spent three nights—”

“Is that all?” I cut her off, my voice quiet. Lethal.

“Yes,” the officer says wisely, guiding the woman away. “My car is parked down on the main road. Quite a hike, but...I’ll make sure she gets home.”

“Good.”

I close the door and force myself to wait. Wait for them to move out of sight before I go tearing through the house, already unzipping my pants. I want to be inside of her when she tells me everything. Want her to feel my ownership, my love, the way I burn for her, so there isn’t a doubt in her beautiful head that she is safe, in the right place, home.

“Open the door,” I bark, trying the handle. “They’re gone.”

When there’s no answer, no sound of the closet opening, a prickle of terror runs up my arms. I don’t wait. I step back and kick the door in.

Not here. She’s not here.

The closet is empty.

Open window.

She’s...gone out the fucking window?

“Juno,” I bellow, sprinting to the opening and throwing myself through it, landing on the ground in a crouch, my eyes scanning every direction for some sign of her. Anguish stabs me through the eyes, rips holes in my chest and I stumble in the rain,

my breath sawing in and out of my lungs. “Juno, where are you?”

Footprints.

In her size.

Hope seizes my chest and I follow them, picking up speed once I’ve found her trail. The rain is turning the dirt to mud, though, so I have to hurry. I race through the trees, trying to find her roses and sugar scent in the air, croaking her name when I can’t. No, this isn’t happening. I haven’t lost her. I can’t lose her. I need her. I need her. Was I too much? Did I scare her when I explained how deep my obsession ran?

The possibility chokes me, but I carry on, jumping over downed trees and splashing through the stream, calling her name until I’m hoarse—

A flash of gray up ahead.

She’s there.

“Juno!” I shout, crazed, relieved, miserable. “Please. Stop.”

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Is it my imagination or does she run faster?

My heart cracks at the possibility. I cry out hoarsely.

Too bad, though. Too bad. Even if she doesn't want me anymore, I'm still keeping her. Does she think I'm optional? I'm fucking not. I'm permanent, I'm her life now and I'm bringing her home.

It doesn't take me long to catch up and wrap my arms around her from behind. Our speed causes us to go down, but I turn my body to bear the brunt of the fall. She's sprawled on top of me, soaked from the rain, tears rolling down her cheeks.

"I'm sorry," she sobs, trying to scramble her way out of my hold. "I'm sorry I lied. But please, please don't let them take me back!"

"Listen to yourself!" I grab to fistfuls of her hair, drag her face to mine and press our foreheads together. "Do you think I'd let anyone take you away from me? Do you think I wouldn't kill anyone who tried?"

"I...I..."

"I've known you weren't Sarah since the beginning," I growl. "I pretended to believe it so I could keep you with me. I couldn't stand the idea of you leaving, even after you'd only been in my home for one goddamn minute. We both lied. But that's over. It's over. No more lies between us. You're going to come home and let me fucking love you, Juno. Forever. Longer than forever. Is that clear?"

Face crumpling, she throws herself into my arms, crying into the crook of my neck. “She lied so they would keep me. She told them I attacked her with scissors, that I’d done it before, but she did it to herself. I wouldn’t. I wouldn’t.”

“I know you wouldn’t, princess.” I rock her side to side, my heart squeezing in my chest. “You don’t have to convince me. I know you.”

“And I thought when I turned eighteen, they’d have to let me go. But they didn’t. I fought and fought, but they tuned me out.” She’s trembling in my arms, so I hold her tighter, as tight as I can. “You’re just part of a chorus of shouting and nothing gets through. Oh God, it was awful. Please don’t let them find me, Caleb.”

“Never. We’ll move farther away. We’ll go as far as possible. I won’t have you scared, princess. I wouldn’t be able to stand it.”

She lifts her head, swipes the tears out of her eyes. “I love you, too,” she whispers. “I was so worried I wouldn’t get t-to tell you.”

A sense of completion rocks me to the core. She loves me.

She’s mine. Mine to protect and pleasure and worship.

I’m never ever letting her go. Never letting her out of my sight again.

Desperation snares me in its trap, a ferocious need to possess turns my blood to fire, and I turn, throwing my girl down onto the forest floor, my fingers dragging down my zipper to spring my cock from its prison. “Did I or did I not tell you to be ready to fuck when I came back, girl?”

With a whimper, she opens her thighs.

## Epilogue

Juno

Five Years Later

I smile lazily at my husband from the hammock.

From where he kneels in the sand building a castle with our daughter, he bares his teeth back at me, letting me know he's hungry—and not for food.

Five years ago, we left the cabin in the forest. After the cop came to our doorstep and Caleb witnessed my fear, we only spent two more nights in the house. The first night, he left and came back several hours later, not having to explain where he'd gone. The headline in the paper the following morning was explanation enough.

Missing: Asylum Doctor and Nurse.

After that, we packed up and drove until we reached a remote part of Washington State and took refuge there while he finished his book.

He named it Mine.

The New York Times called it, “A terrifying glimpse inside the mind of a deranged lunatic with an unhealthy obsession with his wife.”

It remained on their hardcover bestseller list for forty-nine weeks.

In the fiction section—but we know the truth.

There's nothing fictional about Caleb's enduring fixation on me.

Nor mine on him.

With the craze surrounding Mine, Caleb was offered a major movie deal and took it, but we moved to the private island before it ever came out in theatres and neither one of us has seen it. He told me he couldn't even bear to watch someone touch an actress portraying me. I agreed. "I'd want to kill her," I leaned down and whispered in his ear as I rode him one morning, my belly swollen with child.

Now we live on the island, just our small family. Our daughter is four years old and our son—who is currently napping beside me in the hammock—is two. We spend our days swimming in the ocean, tending our garden, reading on the beach.

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It's the peace Caleb and I have always needed, but not in a million years could I have imagined the perfection we've found.

A shadow blocks the sun and I glance up to find my husband holding my sleeping daughter in his arms, his body outlined by the cloudless blue sky. "Going to bring her inside and put her in bed," Caleb says, his eyes lingering on my bare breasts. "Meet me in five minutes."

My pulse is already hammering. "Okay."

I move on unsteady legs up the stone pathway to our enormous house. Normally I would stop to admire the turrets stretching up to the sky, the ivy climbing the brick walls or the balcony where Caleb and I drink our coffee every morning. But I hurry now, focused on being alone with my husband. We can only keep the hunger at bay for so long each day before we collide. And a collision is imminent now.

I leave my son sleeping in his room, beneath the mobile Caleb made him by hand, and race for our bedroom down the long hallway. He's waiting for me outside the door, impatient, shirtless. A lion licking his chops.

He grabs me by the back of the neck as soon as I reach him, dragging me into the room like a recalcitrant teenager and positioning me in front of a full-length mirror. "Look at you," he says thickly, breathing hard against the curve of my neck. "Do you think it's easy for me to wait this long? My head aches, my chest aches, my cock aches until I have you. I'm not human until I've been between your legs. Have I given you any reasons to doubt my constant starvation for you, girl?"

My folds grow slick and ready, my knees dipping under the onslaught of arousal. The hunger for him never abates. Never. It only grows. “No.”

“And yet you parade around, taunting me with these tits, playing in the water in nothing but the bottom half of your bikini. Your beautiful laugh ringing in my head.” He strips the garment in question down to my knees, palms my right butt cheek roughly. Smacking it hard. “Are you trying to drive me madder than I already am?”

I lick my dry lips. “No. I just wanted to be comfortable.”

“Comfortable.” His teeth rake my neck, his thick shaft pressing to my backside. “What is comfort? What is relief? Show me.”

I turn and go down on my knees eagerly, sobbing, sucking him through the front of his pants until my shaking fingers finally manage to get his zipper down. I moan around the thickness that tunnels into my mouth, leaving the taste of the ocean on my tongue. I know he won’t let me enjoy him for long, so I take advantage of the short time I have, running reverent palms up his rocky abdomen, bobbing my head enthusiastically.

He can’t handle my mouth.

Never can for longer than a minute.

It’s why I love it so much.

He bucks his hips forward and makes a choked sound, salt bathing the back of my throat, his sex swelling, lengthening, arrowing down the back of my throat while he chants my name, his fingers twisting in my hair. I look up at him with adulation in my eyes and loosen my throat, allowing him to push deep until a shudder passes through his incredible body. “Enough. Oh, God. Enough. You will break me.”



Caleb pulls free of my mouth with a grunt and I'm hauled to my feet.

Thrown up into his arms.

He carries me out onto the balcony overlooking the ocean, laying me down on a wide, sun-drenched chaise. He stares down at my naked body and strokes his hand up and down his rampant erection, his breathing labored, chest heaving. "Turn over."

Wild, starved for his weight on top of me, I roll onto my stomach and present my backside, going up on my knees and tempting him to take. Take me like he did the first time.

His grips my hips and yanks me back toward him. Breathlessly, I wait to see what he'll do and a keening sound leaves my throat when he presses his middle finger into my sex...and his thumb teases my back entrance, pushing inside slowly. He draws both fingers in and out in a sensual rhythm, my arousal creating a wet soundtrack to his ministrations. "You want to make me wait, princess? I'll have that ass."

My legs almost liquefy beneath me. "Yes, Caleb." I slide my knees wider, tilt my hips and roll them back, back, back to meet his fingers. "Conquer me."

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*Source Creation Date: June 25, 2025, 5:51 am*

“It’s only fair, Juno,” he rasps. “You conquered me on day one.”

And when he sinks into me, it’s decadent.

The hot, slick pressure.

His hoarse groans of my name.

The way we start slow but enter a frenzied state singular to us.

A man obsessed with his wife.

A wife obsessed with her husband.

And a lifetime of seeing how high the burning pyre will build.

THE END