



Home Stretch

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Category: Romance

Description: Home Stretch: The concluding straight part of a racecourse.

Kade Camp is about to graduate and start his dream business with his two best friends.

He's been racing for the last four years, trying to save up enough money for his share and now he finally has enough.

Then some rich prick puts up his date as collateral and Kade knows that he would do anything to rescue her.

So, he races... and he wins.

Too bad for him, Malia has no desire to be traded like she's property.

Now he's spinning his wheels, trying to figure out how to prove to her that he would never bet her because he's not willing to ever risk losing her.

When her parents cut her off because she insulted their friend's son, he has a choice to make.

When he's in the home stretch, will Kade stick to the plan or follow his heart?

Total Pages (Source): 26

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ONE

Malia

Well, this was a terrible mistake.

I knew it would be, but that doesn't do much to comfort me now.

I'm currently trapped in the backseat of my date's car as he laughs with his two pretentious friends and races down the backstreets toward the Stud Farm.

"And then I was like let's bet, and the dude tried to make it for fifty bucks," Thatcher says before cackling. His friends join in, and I roll my eyes.

Thatcher, Sterling, and Francis are all rich pricks born and raised in Los Angeles. They went to the best private schools and vacationed at only the swankiest hotels in Europe, Asia, and the Hamptons. They've never had to worry about money or well... anything.

And I grew up the exact same way. Cold, hard cash; cold, hard parents, and all the opulence in the world to fill the void we all carry around in our souls. I hated every minute of it, which is why I chose to go to college in the tiny town of Sequoia, California.

Maybe the last few months here have spoiled me, and that's why I'm extra-sensitive to how abrasive and horrible these assholes "from the city" are being. I hope and pray I was never like them, even at my worst. From what I've experienced so far, I'm

confident that none of them have ever thought about the condition of their souls.

“Ha! Did you tell him to come back when he had big boy money?” Sterling, my unfortunate date for the night, asks.

“No, I took that chump’s money,” Thatcher says. Francis and Sterling both laugh and start high-fiving each other.

I roll my eyes as the guys go back to bragging about something else, wondering why I’m even here. Sterling seems as interested in me as I am in him, which is to say, not at all.

Sighing, I stare out the window, wishing for the millionth time I didn’t agree to this stupid date just to appease my parents. I’ve replayed the conversation a dozen times in my head over the last few days, and I’ve come up with a few zingers I should have thrown their way.

It’s antiquated for them to set me up with their friends’ kids just to secure some sort of wealthy family connection. My mother and father don’t see it that way, and I doubt anything I tell them would convince them otherwise. I wish I had made up a lie, an excuse, anything to get out of going out with Sterling tonight.

My parents have been introducing me to their friends’ kids for as long as I can remember. They’ve been trying to set me up with someone respectable, someone with the right social status, since I was born. That’s all that they care about. It doesn’t matter what I want.

That’s part of why we’ve never been very close. They don’t care about me, not really. They only care about how I can make them look. Mom was always on me about my weight, how I’m pretty but too curvy to catch the right kind of man. She started doing my hair and makeup when I was ten, telling me how beauty is pain. How messed up

is that?

When she called to inform me that Sterling had agreed to take me out, she seemed pleasant and polite, but it was like she was talking to a stranger.

I guess part of me was hoping Sterling wouldn't actually come. I mean, why would he drive an hour to the middle of nowhere to meet some random girl?

Apparently, Sterling has a lot of time on his hands. Or maybe he just mindlessly does whatever his parents ask. I wouldn't be surprised if he couldn't get a date in Los Angeles either, even with all his money and connections.

The dude is seriously insufferable.

I wonder if my parents knew he was going to be bringing his friends on our date or that he's taking me to the racetrack near campus.

"This is where the racetrack is?" Francis scoffs from his seat next to me.

"Yeah, why the hell are we in this small town? No girl is worth coming to a place like this," Thatcher says with a laugh. Am I invisible? They're talking shit about me and my home, and I'm right here!

"Only if she has magic pussy," Sterling says, looking at me over his shoulder from the front seat. He winks, and my stomach turns. I try giving him my best glare, but I'm trying not to throw up in my mouth.

"I guess you'll find out tonight," Francis crows.

I want to knee every single one of them in the balls.

We follow the line of cars until we can park at the end of a row. My date and his friends are busy talking about how much more expensive and better their car is compared to everyone else's.

"My dick is so small, I have to make up for it with a shiny car," Sterling says as we climb out of the car. Thatcher and Francis both nod in agreement.

Okay, that didn't really happen, but it's all I'm hearing when any of them talk from now on.

I take a few steps away from them and try to put space between us as more people walk toward the fence bordering the racetrack.

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I bump into someone and turn to apologize.

“Sorry about – Oh, thank god!” I say, throwing my arms around him when I realize it’s Kade.

“Uh,” he starts, and I squeeze him tighter.

“It’s so good to see you,” I say against his shirt. I might be sniffing him a little, tiny bit, but it’s only because he always smells so good. Like wintergreen and musk and something uniquely Kade.

“It is?” he stutters out, still not hugging me. I should probably stop holding the man hostage, but my body doesn’t get the hint.

“Yes. I’m here with the worst people. Save me!”

Kade finally circles his arms around me, gently pulling me closer. My body heats up, and I’m aware of every single place we’re touching. It feels too dang good.

I’ve been into Kade Camp since the first time I saw him. Cliche, right? Weeks later, my feelings for him have only grown the more time I spend around him. And we spend a lot of time together. My two best friends and roommates are dating his two best friends and roommates. We also attend the same small college in this small town, so we’re constantly running into each other. I don’t mind.

“Are Hendrix and Thorne here too?” I ask.

I figure if they are, I can hang out with my friends instead of my date.

“No, they took Locklyn and Elodie out tonight, so it’s just me.”

I nod as we start to walk up to the fence. He wraps his arm around my waist, protecting me as we push past the crowd. I bite my lip, trying to ignore how much I love being around him and having his big strong hands on me.

I wish Kade was my date tonight.

I push that thought aside. My parents would be furious if I brought Kade home. Besides, it’s not like Kade has ever shown any interest in me. I would know. I obsess over every interaction with this man. If he gave me even one hint that he liked me a fraction of the amount I liked him, I’d be in his lap in an instant, begging him to make me his.

Desperate? Yes. True? Also yes.

“Uh, I think your date is looking for you,” Kade says. I frown as I look over my shoulder to where he’s staring.

Sure enough, Sterling has finally noticed that I’m not hanging on his every word and is glancing around for me. He’s about six inches shorter than Kade, lanky, and far too manicured for my tastes. I know I shouldn’t compare every man to Kade Camp, but it’s hard not to. Especially when I’m standing right next to him, willing him to tell my date to fuck off so he can have me for himself.

When that doesn’t happen, I sigh, dreading the rest of the evening ahead of me. Turning, I give in to the urge to hug Kade again, hoping it gives me the strength to deal with Sterling and his awful friends.

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TWO

Kade

I forcemyself to step back from my dream girl, even though everything in me wants to toss her over my shoulder and march her straight into my bed where I can worship her the way she deserves.

I've been obsessed with Malia since the moment I laid eyes on her bright red hair and dazzling smile. However, I've been very careful not to show my feelings around Malia or my friends. I want her to feel comfortable around me, so I've been keeping my crush on the bright, sweet Malia to myself.

It's getting harder the more time we spend together, though, and almost impossible when she wraps her arms around me. When she hugged me earlier tonight, I nearly collapsed with desire. As soon as her curvy little body pressed against me, I wanted to blurt out that I loved her or beg her to let me kiss her.

I know if my friends found out about my little crush on Malia, they would encourage me to ask her out, but I can't bring myself to do it. Malia is from a well-off family. The world is at her fingertips. There's nothing that I, a country boy from Texas, could offer her.

I saw her when she climbed out of that shiny Porsche 911 with those other guys. Obviously, they're not from Sequoia and come from money. I love this town, the slower pace of life, and the community here. I don't know how well I would do in a big city, and I never want to stifle Malia by making her slum it with the likes of me.

Shoving those thoughts way down deep, I lean back against the fence and try to make small talk while her asshole of a date glares at me and starts walking toward us.

“I’m surprised to see you here,” I say, giving her my most charming country-boy grin. Her cheeks flush red, but that’s probably just from being outside. It’s a little chilly out tonight.

“Yeah, my date wanted to come,” she says darkly. I glance back at the short, scrawny dude, narrowing my eyes as his two goons join him.

“Your date brought you to the racetrack?” I ask.

“Yeah, pretty romantic, huh?” she says sarcastically, rolling her bright blue eyes. “He won’t be getting a second date,” she scoffs.

I can’t believe any guy would be dumb enough to waste an opportunity to be alone with Malia.

“What an idiot,” I mumble as the guys finally push through the crowd and reach our side.

My race is coming up soon, but I’m not going to leave Malia alone with these tools. Especially when she doesn’t seem completely comfortable around them.

“Who the hell are you?” the guy, who I assume is Malia’s date asks.

“I’m Kade.”

“Well, hands off my girl,” he spits at me.

“I’m not your girl,” Malia informs him. He ignores her.

“She’s not your girl,” I repeat. The prick glowers at me.

“I brought her here, so yeah, she is.”

Malia opens her mouth to tell him off, I’m sure, but before she can, the announcer crackles over the speaker system.

“The next race is starting in five minutes! We have a new challenger who is ready to face off against Kade tonight! Place your bets now!”

“Looks like we’re racing,” the guy says with a cocky smirk.

This guy is my competition? Oh, hell, yes. I can’t wait to stomp kick his ass in his pretty little sports car.

“Looks like it,” I say calmly.

“Care to make things interesting?” he asks.

“Like he could,” one of his friends scoffs.

“Sure.”

“Since you obviously don’t have money,” he sneers, eyeing my clothes. “Let’s bet for the girl.”

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“Excuse me?” Malia growls, stepping into his space. I hurry to accept before she can punch him in his smug face. He deserves it, but I don’t want her hurting herself when I can easily win the bet. It’s a win-win, right? I get to beat him, and Malia gets away from him.

“Deal.”

Malia’s head whips around, and she glares at me, equal parts shock, rage, and hurt. Shit. Was that the wrong thing to say? I want to take it back. I want to apologize. I didn’t mean to upset her, but obviously, I just did.

“Malia,” I start, but the asshole cuts me off.

“Let’s go then!” he shouts, and his friends clap him on the back as he heads back to his car.

“Malia,” I try again, but she’s already walking off through the crowd.

I sigh and head to my car too. I’ll find Malia and apologize after. She probably just needs time to cool off. It all happened so fast, but she’ll understand when I explain it to her. I just want her to be free from those guys. And yeah, I don’t mind winning a bet, especially against a dick like that guy.

I slide behind the wheel of my Camaro and pull out of the long line of cars to head over to the starting line. Malia’s date, whose name I still didn’t get, is already there, and I stop next to him. He’s staring at his friends, who are cheering him on from the sidelines, but I’m scanning the crowd to try to find Malia.

I finally spot her over by the announcer's chair. She still looks angry, but there's something else there. She looks like she's... crying? Fuck. My heart sinks, and I hate myself for doing this to her.

"All bets are now closed!" the announcer says as a scantily clad girl walks into the center of the track with a black and white checkered flag.

She smirks at both of us and raises the flag above her head. I tighten my grip on my steering wheel, my eyes locked onto the flag.

I push all thoughts of my obsession with Malia and any thoughts of the bet out of my head. It's just me and the track.

Racing has always been like that for me. There wasn't much else to do in my small town. I was never into football, but cars were in my blood. My dad and grandad were both mechanics. They had their own garage in town, and I used to dream of taking it over.

Then my dad was hit by a drunk driver, and my whole world was turned upside down. There were too many memories in my house and town, so I jumped at going to college in California. Meeting Hendrix and Thorne was the cherry on top. They love cars as much as I do, so we decided our freshman year to open a garage together.

We all take mechanical engineering and double major in a business class. Mine is accounting, and I can't wait to graduate next year and finally start our dream.

"Ready?" the girl calls to us. I nod, hitting the gas as the flag drops.

I take off, my tires spitting gravel as I race across the starting line.

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THREE

Malia

I can't believe this is happening.

Who the hell puts a person up as collateral? Did I accidentally fall into a time machine that took me back to the 1850s? My blood is boiling, and I swear steam is about to shoot from my ears like an old cartoon. I knew Sterling was a jerk, but I underestimated how cruel he was.

As much as I want to claw my stupid date's eyes out, I'm equally as crushed that Kade took the bet. My anger toward him is different, though. It feels like a part of me broke off and is withering away. I thought he was different.

I rub the heel of my hand over my heart, trying to ease the tightness and tension there. Blinking back frustrated tears, I try to get my emotions under control. This is no time to fall apart. If my upbringing taught me anything, it's how to fake a smile and carry on until you can ugly cry alone in the bathroom.

I'm not all that shocked about Sterling doing something like this. I met plenty of guys like him when I lived with my parents. He doesn't know me, which means I'm expendable. It's obvious that he only cares about money, material things, and impressing his equally moronic friends. The only upside to this is that I have a surefire excuse for not going on a second date with him when my parents ask for an update.

Oh, who am I kidding? My parents honestly won't care that Sterling tried to trade me like a piece of collateral. I can just picture my dad's round face as he chuckles, telling me it's all in good fun. Boys will be boys and all that. It's disgusting and problematic but par for the course.

Kade was supposed to be different, though.

I can't believe he accepted the bet. Part of my brain is trying to rationalize it, and I can almost make myself believe he only said yes because he was trying to help me. I didn't exactly try to hide how disgusted I was with my date. There were other ways Sterling and his lackeys could have been handled, though. Like a kick to the balls or a broken nose. Just to name a few.

The race starts, and I hold my breath, my eyes glued to the track. It feels like my heart is lodged in my throat, and I swallow as I watch the cars zoom past me and into the first turn.

I briefly wonder if I should leave. I could try to find a friend in the crowd and get a ride back to my apartment. Hell, I could walk over to the Stud Farm, to Remy's house, and see my best friend, Gwen. The two of them are such homebodies, and I know they'll be home. She would give me a ride back to my place.

Before I can decide, though, the cars are in the home stretch. I won't have time to make it even a few feet through the crowd before the winner of the race can get to me.

I know Kade will be the winner. He's never lost a race, and even though Sterling's car might be worth more money, Kade is the superior driver. He's been ahead for the entire race, and I glance over at Thatcher and Francis. They both look pissed that their friend isn't in the lead, and I smirk as I look back to the cars.

Kade's car zips over the finish line, and I almost cheer for him like I always do. Then I remember I'm pissed and deserve an explanation. Did I really build Kade up in my head as a sweet and rugged cowboy when in reality, he's just as shallow as everyone else?

Deep down, I know that can't be true. I've seen Kade's heart and soul. So why did he agree to that stupid bet? I guess there's only one way to find out.

Straightening my shoulders, I take a deep breath and climb down from my spot on the wooden announcer stand. The crowd is still clapping for Kade's win as the next two cars get ready at the starting line.

I head over to Kade while Thatcher and Francis both glare at me, then stomp off to Sterling's car. The man himself is behind the wheel, scowling at everyone who walks past. What a sore loser, not that I expected anything less.

"Get a ride home," Sterling snarls at me as he pulls up next to me in his car. I'm not surprised that the three of them are leaving right away. They just got embarrassed by these small-town kids and can't wait to get back to Los Angeles so that they can remind themselves how much better they are with their parents' money.

He mutters something about magic pussy my ass before spinning his tires, and I flip him off, grinning as I head toward Kade's car. At least I had that little serotonin boost before dealing with Kade.

I take a deep breath as I turn and look at Kade. He's got the driver's side door open with one arm on the roof of his car as he stares at me. I'm still beyond annoyed, but god, just looking at him has some of my anger burning away and turning into lust.

Kade's hair is a bit of a mess, but in that effortlessly sexy way, I could never pull off. My eyes follow the lines of his broad shoulders, muscled biceps, and strong forearms,

the tendons flexing as he clenches his fists.

Deep brown eyes search mine, but I can't quite place his look.

I close the distance between us and stop on the other side of the car. Kade's dark eyes are heated, like melted chocolate as he watches my every move. What is he expecting from me? Does he think I'm going to sleep with him because he won the race?

My stupid heart flips, but my brain rebels. I want to be with Kade in every way, but not like this. Why did he have to go and ruin everything?

Neither of us says anything for a long moment. Everyone is trying to get his attention, guys clapping him on the back with words of congratulations while a few girls shimmy up to his massive frame, trying, unsuccessfully, to flirt. The entire time, his eyes never leave mine.

The world blurs and fades into the background, and I'm only vaguely aware of the engines revving up for the next race. Those damn eyes are filled with something meaningful, but I can't for the life of me figure this man out.

"Want a ride?" he finally asks me, that southern drawl lulling me into a sense of safety. I've always loved the timbre of Kade's voice.

I bite my lip as I slowly nod. I guess we're going to have this talk sooner rather than later.

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FOUR

Kade

It takes longer than usual to get away from the Stud Farm. There's still a pretty steady stream of cars headed to the racetrack since it's still early in the night. I don't mind, though. More time with my girl is never a bad thing. Even if she's madder than a wet hornet.

I hate that she's upset with me, but Malia is too damn adorable for her own good. My woman has a fight simmering just beneath the surface, but I can tell she's trying to rein it in. She's not doing a very good job. Her arms are crossed over her chest, her shoulders tense and nearly up around her ears, and she's pouting so hard.

Malia gives me a sideways glare, her cheeks nearly the same shade as her gorgeous, fiery red hair. It only makes her blue eyes pop all the more, even as she narrows them into slits. Damn, she's fit to be tied. I hope we can clear the air before I drop her off at her apartment, but something tells me I did a lot of damage by accepting that stupid bet.

"I'm sorry," I say, knowing the words are inadequate.

Malia doesn't say anything, just raises an eyebrow at me, her jaw set in a challenge. I smile slightly, loving how strong she is. She knows what she's worth and isn't going to accept anything else.

"For accepting the bet," I continue. "I wasn't thinking about how you might interpret

my actions,” I ramble on. “I got caught up wanting to show that idiot what a jackass he is.”

This gets her to smirk, letting down her defenses just enough. I’ve known Malia for a little while now, and I’ve observed that she can jump to conclusions, but she hardly ever stays mad for long. I’m hoping that’s true now, too.

“It worked,” she muses, her grin lighting up her blue eyes with mischief. “He ran out of here with his tail between his legs,” she says with a small laugh.

“It was easy. The guy can’t drive for shit.”

She laughs fully at that, and I smile, relaxing into my seat as I listen to the happy sound.

“I mean, don’t get me wrong,” Malia says sternly, remembering her earlier frustration, “I’m still pissed that I was treated like a piece of property to be traded, but I’m still glad you won. Sterling would have been insufferable if he had. Even more so than he already is.”

I nod, swallowing hard. It’s a personal ethic of mine to never do anything that would make my mama yell at me. I have a feeling that she wouldn’t be too happy with me for accepting that bet, though. Even if I told her it was to win the girl of my dreams.

My stomach churns as I turn onto Malia’s road, and I tighten my hold on the steering wheel as her apartment building comes into view. Fuck, is that what she thinks? That I view her as property? I won’t lie, it hurts to hear her compare me to that dickhead, but I understand. My actions were the same as his tonight, and that thought makes me sick.

I pull into the parking lot, stopping in front of her door. Turning to the only woman

who has ever captured my heart, I make sure her blue eyes are focused on mine so she can hear what I'm about to say.

"I'm truly sorry, Malia," I tell her earnestly. "You're right. I should have let you handle it. I know you could have handled yourself, but something just... snapped. I couldn't stand the way he was treating you. What the hell was he thinking? I swear I was just trying to help."

She nods but doesn't say anything. I'm scrambling to find the right words and put them together in a way that she understands. Malia reaches for the door handle, and I panic, knowing my window of opportunity is quickly closing. I clear my throat, pushing through the tension wrapped around me like a vice.

"Malia, I don't think you're a piece of property. I would never treat any woman with anything less than respect, especially you."

Her eyes widen, and I realize I just let a little sliver of my obsession peek through. Especially you.

"I know, Kade," she finally says with a sigh. "You've always been good to me. I'm just..." Malia sighs again, her shoulders slumping forward. God, I can feel the weight of the world she carries with her. I wish she'd let me help, but I've just broken her trust. "I'm just frustrated with this whole night," she finishes, breaking eye contact. I hate it. I want all of her attention. I'm greedy for it.

"I'd never bet you," I say softly, reaching for her hand. She lets me slide my palm against hers and wrap my fingers around her delicate hand. Ocean blue eyes blink up at me, and I swear she's holding her breath like she's hanging on my every word. "I'd never bet you because I would never be willing to risk losing you."

I didn't mean to say that last part. It just slipped out. Her warmth, closeness, sweet

scent... everything about her is drawing me in, melting my defenses, and urging me to claim her once and for all.

Normally, I can bite my tongue. I can hide my attraction to her, but all of that's changed. I don't know if it was seeing her out with some other guy, the bet, or just being alone in the car with her, but I can't hold back my feelings any longer.

I want Malia, and now she knows.

I stare at my girl because that's what she is, whether she acknowledges it or not. I'll always be obsessed with her, even if she shuts me down right here and now.

She stares back at me, her blue eyes wide with surprise. Silence stretches between us, and I swallow hard as she finally opens her mouth to speak.

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FIVE

Malia

I stopped being furious with him the second he took my hand and locked eyes with me. The genuineness of his heartache was written all over his face, and his sweet words soothed my soul.

And then there was his confession. I feel like I'm dreaming. I mean, I have to be, right? The man I haven't been able to stop thinking about just told me that he likes me.

I blink a few times, trying to absorb this information. It still doesn't make sense. Kade is freaking gorgeous, with his warm brown eyes, dark hair, and six and a half feet of toned muscle. Not to mention his easy smile and charming grin, which always put me at ease.

I, on the other hand... try as I might not to let my mom get to me, but her words are on a loop inside my brain. You're pretty, dear. But not beautiful. Not with those hips and thighs.

"Malia?" Kade whispers, his brow furrowed in concern.

I don't think he's moved a muscle since he admitted that he liked me. I don't think I have, either. There are a million different questions racing through my mind as I stare at Kade, but only one thing comes out.

“Do you mean that?” I ask him.

My voice comes out so low that it doesn’t even sound like me. I clear my throat, trying not to get my hopes up. Maybe he just meant—

“Yes,” he answers right away, his hand tightening around mine. Electricity snaps between us, every nerve ending humming with anticipation.

I don’t know how to respond or possibly tell Kade that I’m already halfway in love with him. Luckily, he keeps talking.

“You’re so far out of my league, Malia,” he continues. “I know that. I can’t offer you the kind of money those city boys can, but that doesn’t change the fact that I’ve wanted you since the moment that I saw you.”

My heart melts at his words, and I wonder once again if this is really a dream. He thinks I’m out of his league? He has no idea I’ve had the same thoughts about him.

Kade always knows just what to say to put me at ease, even if it means being vulnerable. Maybe that’s because he’s not usually much of a talker.

That isn’t what attracted me to him in the first place, though. It’s the way he carries himself. He’s always so calm and relaxed. Kade seems comfortable in his skin and at peace with who he is. That’s not something I’ve come in contact with much in my twenty years.

There’s something more than that to him, though. It’s his energy, his aura. I can tell he has a strict code of honor and follows it. Deep in my soul, I know he’s a good man who would never hurt me.

“Say something, angel,” he rasps.

Oh god, I like that. Angel. I love the way it sounds in his slow southern drawl. Shivers run up and down my spine, landing between my thighs and making me feel all sorts of things I've never felt before.

Kade is still staring at me, looking a little nervous about what he just said and the fact that I haven't responded yet.

I have no words, but my body seems to know what to do to show him I want him as much as he wants me.

When I start to lean over toward him, his brown eyes widen in shock. When my breath blows across his lips, he finally snaps out of whatever trance he is in and closes the distance between us.

Kade's lips meet mine, softly at first, as if he can't believe this is happening. He nips my bottom lip, pulling a breathy whimper from me. Kade lets out a low growl, sparking everything in me to life.

My arms wind around his neck as he deepens the kiss, his hands roaming up and down my sides and back like he can't get enough of me.

"God, I've wanted you for so long," he murmurs, trailing his lips down my throat. I tilt my head to the side, moaning softly as he scrapes his teeth across my sensitive skin. "I thought I messed up my only chance with you," he whispers into the crook of my neck before sucking lightly there.

"I want you... too," I manage to breathe out before our mouths are drawn together once again.

We fall into a perfect rhythm, giving and taking, each stroke of our tongues building the anticipation for more.

I'm about to crawl into Kade's lap when headlights flash over us. I pull away from him, completely forgetting that we are parked right in front of the entrance.

Kade clears his throat, a pale pink flush covering his cheeks as he shifts into drive and pulls into the nearest parking spot. He's freaking adorable, and he's all mine.

"I'll walk you up," he says. I nod, barely containing my grin. He's such a gentleman, but I hope I can get him all flustered like this again soon.

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We both climb out of the car, and I take Kade's hand in mine as we head inside the apartment building and up the stairs to my apartment.

I doubt Locklyn or Elodie will be back from their dates yet, so we should have the place to ourselves for a bit. My heart starts to race in anticipation as I dig the keys out of my purse, my heart starts to race in anticipation. If I'm honest, I think I would jump Kade's bones right now if he'd let me. As it is, I'm good with making out on my bed.

As soon as I have the door unlocked, I turn and smile over my shoulder at him as I push the door open. "Do you want to come in?" I ask, my cheeks heating. I never thought I'd offer that to a man, but Kade is special.

"No, not tonight," he says, surprising me. I blink, trying not to be disappointed.

"Oh," I squeak out, wishing I could transform into an ant and crawl away from this situation unnoticed.

"Hey," Kade says softly, his hand coming up to cup my cheek. "Look at me, angel." My entire body heats at his pet name for me, and I have no choice but to meet his gaze. "I very much want to follow you inside, strip you naked, and show you how much I want you."

I know my face is probably tomato-red, but I nod, letting him know I'm okay with that. Kade gives me his signature grin, leaning forward to kiss my forehead. He dips his head down, his lips brushing against the shell of my ear.

“I’m going to treat you right, Malia. You deserve more than hanging out at a racetrack before I take you home and have my way with you.”

“Oh,” I say again, though I have a cheesy smile spread across my face this time.

“So have dinner with me. Tomorrow. Let me woo my girl. Wine her and dine her. Show her I’m interested in everything about her, not just her gorgeous body and sweet kisses.”

He’s so dang sweet, and all his kindness and attention are directed right at me. I feel like a princess for the first time in my life, which is saying something. I’ve worn several tiaras in my day, but this moment tops all of that.

“Tomorrow,” I agree.

He leans in, capturing his lips with mine once again, and I want to wrap myself around him. Before I can, he’s pulling back and waving at me once before he heads down the hallway toward the stairs.

I watch him go until he disappears, then I turn and head into the empty apartment. I go straight to my room and into the closet. I only have eighteen hours to figure out what I’m going to wear tomorrow on our date. I want to knock his socks off. I want him to be unable to resist me.

I want to make him mine. Wholly.

SIX

Kade

I pull into the parking lot of Malia's apartment and hop out of my car, wiping my sweaty palms on my pants before I can think better of it. Taking a few deep breaths, I remind myself to walk up the stairs like a normal person and not leap up them three at a time just to get to Malia that much faster.

Figuring out where to take her on our date was hard at first. Sequoia isn't a big town, and only two restaurants would be appropriate for a first date. Neither of them are quite right, though. Not when the first date is with the girl of my dreams.

I want to take her somewhere she's never been before. I want her to have fun with me and feel comfortable around me. I may not be able to take her to a Michelin star restaurant in Los Angeles, but I can show her how much love and peace a life with me would give her. I hope that's enough for her to fall for me completely.

I know Malia likes the outdoors. She's always sitting under the same tree on campus in between classes, smiling as the sun warms her skin. I wonder if she knows I purposefully walk between the Armstrong and Briar buildings every day just to catch a glimpse of her there. That route is way out of the way for me, but it's worth it. Seeing her so happy makes me happy.

Hendrix and Thorne both gave me knowing looks when I said I was going out tonight. I'm sure the news of my date with Malia has already spread through our friend group like wildfire. I left before they could try to offer me advice.

Now that I'm standing outside Malia's door, though, I'm wondering if I should have run my plan for tonight past my friends.

Too late now.

I raise my hand and knock on the door, trying to calm my heart rate as I wait for Malia to answer it. I've just about managed to steady my heartbeat when the door swings open, and Malia smiles up at me, sending my heartbeat erratic once more.

"Wow," I whisper under my breath, taking in her dark skinny jeans and form-fitting blouse. I told her to dress casually, and of course, she nailed it while still looking absolutely gorgeous.

A blush creeps up her neck and spreads into her cheeks. It's adorable and makes her freckles pop out.

"This old thing?" she says as she steps out into the hallway next to me. Malia spins in a circle, giving me a brief glimpse of her round, juicy ass. Everything about her is absolute perfection.

"You look gorgeous, angel." Her blue eyes sparkle at my name for her, and I love that she loves it.

"Thanks. You don't look so bad yourself."

She takes my hand as we start walking back down the hall toward the stairs.

"Mind if we take the elevator this time?" She asks, and I glance down at her shoes, which are cute but look a little tight.

"Of course."

I hit the button, and I can feel the sexual tension between us grow as we realize that we're alone. That feeling only grows as we step into the empty elevator. The doors slowly close, and I try to take a deep breath. All I can smell is Malia's sweet scent, and it has my body reacting.

I want to take her in my arms, press her against the wall and ravage her mouth with mine. I want to feel all of her sweet curves molded against the hard planes of my body. I want to hear her moaning and begging me to give her more.

I blink, and the elevator doors open. Malia reacts first, tugging on my hand, leading me out of the elevator and toward the front doors. I take over once we get outside and lead her to my Camaro.

"I'm surprised," Malia says as I open the door for her.

"By what?"

"The fact that you haven't talked about your car for as long as I've known you," she says as I watch her slide in.

"Well, it's a 1969 Chevrolet Yenko Camaro in Le Mans Blue."

"Ohh," she says, pretending to look impressed.

I laugh as I close the door and head to the driver's side. I climb behind the wheel, and she grins at me.

"Do you like older cars then?" she asks as I pull out of the parking lot.

"Sure. This one used to be my grandfather's. He bought it new and took good care of it. He willed it to me when he passed away a few years ago. I used to help him fix it

up.”

“That must have been nice. You’re lucky that you were so close to him.”

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“Yeah, my whole family is close. We all lived in the same small town. My dad and grandpa ran a mechanic shop in town.”

“Are you going to take over after you graduate?”

“No. We sold the garage a few years ago.”

“Ah, retirement?”

“No...” I trail off, not sure I want to bring the mood down this early in our date. However, I’m never going to keep anything from Malia. I almost lost her before I really had her, all due to a miscommunication. I won’t risk that ever again. Clearing my throat, I continue. “My dad was hit by a drunk driver, and he passed away. We, ah... we needed the money for bills.”

I can feel the sadness creeping into the car. It’s always the same whenever anyone learns about my dad, and I hate it.

“I’m so sorry, Kade. I had no idea.”

“I don’t talk about it much,” I say with a shrug. “But I want you to know me,” I finish, looking over at her.

“Thank you for trusting me,” she whispers, slipping her hand into mine. I lace our fingers together, drawing from her steady strength. This woman is somehow more incredible than I realized. I can’t wait to find out how much more of her there is to love.

I clear my throat as we head out of Sequoia and toward the National Park.

“I’m not close with my parents at all,” Malia says. “I wish I had parents or grandparents that I was close to. I know losing your father must have been incredibly difficult, but I’m glad you have good memories to hang on to.”

“What are your parents like?” I ask, needing to know everything about her.

“They’re snobs,” she says with a roll of her eyes. I can tell it’s so much more than that, but she doesn’t want to burden me with the details. Soon she’ll know I want every little thing from her, even the painful parts of her story. “Picture those guys from last night but like forty years older,” she adds.

“At least you never had to worry about money?”

Malia lets out a long-suffering sigh. “Money like that comes with strings. It always has,” she says bitterly. I squeeze her hand, encouraging her to continue. “They want me to fit into these boxes they’ve picked for me before I was even born. I’m just... I don’t know. I’m not what they want.”

“How is that possible?” What the fuck? How could anyone spend any amount of time with Malia and not love her instantly?

“You know, just...” she cuts herself off, bouncing a shoulder up and down like it’s no big deal. I see right through her tender heart, though. This means something to her, and she trusts me with it. I won’t let her down. “Like they want me to be skinny,” she whispers, as if afraid to draw attention to it. “Size zero skinny. My mom had me on all kinds of diets growing up, and when that didn’t work, the fat shaming began. Just in time for high school, so that set me back a bit.”

I’m about to call her mother some very un-gentlemanly words, but Malia is on a roll

now, and I don't want to stop her.

"They hate how bright my hair is, too. My dad wanted me to dye it blonde, saying blonde hair and blue eyes would be more of a draw. It took me a while to realize he meant a draw for other men. I mean, how sick is that? My own dad grooming me for marriage?" I grip the steering wheel, hating these people more with each word she says. "My parents hate how much I love baking and reading. They want me to care about fashion labels and shiny things, but I never have."

"You're perfect the way you are, Malia," I finally say, unable to keep silent any longer. "Stunning. Magnificent. Your hair, your body... fuck me, angel, I'm so sorry you grew up doubting your worth. They're idiots if they can't see how incredible you are."

She doesn't say anything for a beat, and I wonder if I came on too strong. Before I get a chance to doubt myself any further, Malia whispers, "Thank you."

"Of course, sweetheart," I say softly, matching her tone. She smiles at another pet name, and I tuck that information away. My girl didn't get a lot of love and attention growing up, and I plan to make up for that as soon as possible.

We drive in silence for a few minutes, enjoying the way that the sunlight filters through the trees overhead. We have another half hour of sunlight left, and I hit the gas, driving a little faster toward my favorite spot.

"Do you come out here often?" she asks. I nod.

"Yeah, usually about once a week. It's a good place to think, and I like hiking."

"I've never been, but I've been meaning to."

“I’m glad I get to show it to you then,” I say with a grin as I pull onto the halfway hidden road and shift into park.

“I’ll get your door,” I say as I turn off the car and climb out.

There’s a large rock just a few feet away, and I brought a few flashlights and lanterns for us to use to see. I open her door first before I go to the trunk and grab the lights and cooler of food before going back to her side.

“Ready?”

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“Are we hiking today?” she asks as she takes my arm. I chuckle.

“No, just going right over there.”

Malia takes off her too-tight shoes a few steps later when we reach the edge of the rock. She turns to me, gifting me with another brilliant smile.

“I brought some blankets for us,” I say as I place them on the flat rock where we’ll have our picnic.

“How did you find this place?” Malia asks as I start to unpack the cooler.

“I had to do a project for a science class my freshman year, and I came out here to do some research. I made friends with some park rangers, and they showed me some hidden spots.”

“That’s so cool!”

“Yeah, this is my favorite spot. I come here quite a bit.”

“Well, thanks for sharing it with me.”

“Of course, angel.”

I pass her a bottle of water and then start spreading the food. I went to Sequoia Market this afternoon and got food from the deli. Potato salad, fried chicken, imported olives, some chips, and brownies for dessert. I lay all of it around us, and

Malia smiles as she pops an olive into her mouth.

“I love these things.”

“I know,” I blurt out.

“You do?”

“Yeah, you eat them like every day. Every time I see you on campus, it seems like you’re eating olives.”

She blushes, but her eyes stay locked on me.

“Do you watch me a lot?” she asks quietly. I swallow thickly, knowing I won’t be able to lie.

“Yeah,” I admit. She full-on grins at me, her blue eyes sparkling in the fading light.

“Good.”

I thought she would be freaked out or maybe uncomfortable with my confession. This girl is always surprising me, and I love it.

I hold out my hand to help her climb onto the rock where our food is, but instead of taking it, Malia pulls me closer, letting me know she’s hungry for something else.

SEVEN

Malia

I don't know what comes over me. Maybe it's his confession of watching me, my own jumbled feelings, or the need to be closer to him. Either way, I boldly pull Kade into my arms, tilting my head up and pressing my lips to his. Kade doesn't hesitate. He moves his lips with mine, taking over the kiss and prying my lips open with his tongue.

I moan softly and let him in, gasping at the need behind each stroke of his tongue. I taste his longing, his promises, his desire for me. For us. Gripping his hips, I tug him closer to me, desperate for more of him. Kade groans and tangles his hands in my hair, angling me right where he wants me so he can delve deeper into my mouth. He's all-consuming, his citrus and leather scent, the warmth of his mouth, his hard length rubbing against my stomach.

"God, Malia, I've wanted this for so long," he murmurs into my lips before taking them again, claiming them as his own. I roll my hips against him and slide my hands up his chest, fisting the collar of his shirt and clinging to him with everything I am.

Kade tears his mouth away from mine, only to nip and kiss down my neck. I whimper when I feel his hands slide down my back so slowly, taking his time to feel every inch of me before gripping my ass in his large, capable hands.

We're lost in each other, completely taken over by the lust and longing that has been building up between us for weeks. Eventually, Kade pries himself away from me,

giving me one last chaste kiss on the lips before resting his forehead on mine. We're both panting, sharing the same air, and basking in the intimacy we've both craved for so long.

“There’s no going back now,” he says softly. “You’re mine.”

I chew on my bottom lip nervously, wanting his words to be true but having a hard time believing this isn’t all a dream.

Kade takes my silence for uncertainty and cups my face so sweetly. “We’ll go as slow as you want. I’ll never take anything you don’t willingly give me.”

"I know," I whisper, tilting my head, so our lips are inches apart. "I trust you. With all of me." With that, I kiss him again, letting him know I want this; I want him more than words can say. Each swipe of his tongue and nip of his teeth open up a need deep inside me. There's a tugging low in my belly, an almost painful throbbing.

“Gotta stop, angel,” he grunts into the side of my neck before licking me there and catching the tender skin between his teeth. “I can’t hold back much longer, and I don’t want to scare you away.”

“I’m not scared,” I breathe out. “I can’t hold back either. I just...I don’t know what I’m doing. Can you show me?”

"Fuck," he growls, attacking my lips and pressing me back against the side of the large rock. "Are you wet for me, Malia? Is my dirty little angel wet for me?"

I let out a throaty moan and nod. “Will you... Can you... T-touch me there?”

“Fuck yes,” he grits out, cupping my pussy and rubbing my aching center over my jeans. “You need to come, beautiful girl?”

His words are so filthy, but they trigger something inside me. This man has reduced me to base urges I didn't think I had until I met him. I nod and roll my hips, trying to get him to somehow touch me deeper, more, more, more...

Kade nips at my chin, pulse point, and shoulder, then slips his hand into my jeans. I know he feels how soaked I am, and it only turns him on more.

"Jesus," he grunts, stroking my pussy and parting my folds over my panties. The fabric scrapes against my sensitive clit, making me shiver and moan.

"More," I beg, gripping his meaty biceps and digging my nails in.

Kade plays with the waistband of my panties, teasing me and driving me absolutely wild. Finally, finally, he touches me where I'm throbbing for him, swiping two fingers up my slit and circling my clit.

"Malia... you're soaking wet for me," he grunts. My pussy contracts at his dirty words, trying to suck him inside. He groans and continues to stroke me up and down, gathering my arousal and massaging my little ball of nerves.

I squeeze my eyes shut and moan, throwing my head back and exposing my neck to his greedy mouth. Kade sucks on the side of my neck and dips one finger into my tight hole, making me grind down on his hand. "Oh," I gasp, pulsing around him and releasing even more wetness.

Suddenly, Kade removes his hand, leaving me empty and confused. I open my eyes and see Kade kneeling in front of me, gliding his hands up and down my thighs. "I need to taste you. Just one taste. Is that okay? Can I make you come on my tongue?"

"God, yes," I whimper. Kade practically rips my jeans open, tugging them down my legs along with my soaking panties.

“How do you smell so good?” he says more to himself than to me.

Kade helps me step out of my jeans, staring at my pussy the whole time. I should probably be embarrassed or have at least a few reservations, right? But I can't think of anything when the man of my dreams is touching me like this.

I tremble as he ghosts his fingers up my legs, guiding one over his shoulder, exposing me completely to him.

“Perfect, just like the rest of you,” he whispers right before parting my lips with his tongue and sucking on my clit. Hard.

I buck my hips and grab his hair, overwhelmed by the sensation of his warm tongue against my sensitive, swollen clit. He growls into my pussy, the vibrations rattling my bones as he devours me.

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Kade spears his tongue into my entrance and swirls his nose around my clit. My breaths come out as short little gasps as my muscles tense and pulse. It's unlike anything I've ever experienced. I feel myself teetering on the edge, close, so close to falling over the edge into the unknown.

I open my mouth to tell him I've never had an orgasm, but a strangled scream comes out instead as I explode on his tongue. I jerk in his arms, but Kade grips me tighter, steadying my movements even as he laps at me and bats my clit around, prolonging my pleasure.

He looks up at me right as I tip my head down to look at him. His eyes are stormy, dark, and feral. I see my juices covering his lips and nose, making me moan. Kade doesn't give me any time to recover before flattening his tongue and licking me from bottom to top.

"Oh, ohmygod, Kade, I... I can't..."

He grunts and continues to nibble and suck on my folds. The world crashes down around me until all I can focus on are the relentless strokes of his tongue as he pushes me higher and higher, winds me tighter and tighter, increasing the pressure in my core almost unbearably.

I gasp and writhe as he plunges two fingers inside me and curls them up, hitting some spot inside me that makes my nerves light up and burn deliciously beneath my skin. He swirls his tongue around my clit again and again. I can't breathe. My heart thrashes. There's a rushing sensation flooding my body. I feel like I have to twist away, back down from the onslaught of pleasure, but I can't. I'm rooted in place,

completely at his mercy.

My whole body gets tight. The pressure builds inside me, through my pelvis, over my skin, in my muscles, and along nerves. Pleasure swells and explodes as I convulse in his arms. He pins me to the rock, mercilessly eating me out with a growl.

I'm floating through space, through bliss, and through lust and release. A rhythmic, sharp throbbing between my legs brings me down from my high. I open my eyes and see Kade slowly licking me up and down, swallowing down all of me, every last drop.

My bones turn to liquid as I slump against the rock, completely wrung out. Kade helps me get my jeans and shoes on and then stands up, pulling me into his chest. He holds me up and kisses me, letting me taste myself. He groans, and I bury my face in his chest, not sure what happens next.

"Are you okay, sweetheart? You're shaking," he whispers. "Was that too much?"

I manage to lift my head, blinking through the haze of the most intense experience I've ever had. "Not nearly enough," I breathe out, licking my bottom lip.

"God, Malia," he groans. "I'll give you so much more. I'll give you everything."

I nod, and Kade lifts me up in his arms, carrying me back to his car.

"Wait!" I exclaim as he sets me down in front of the passenger side. "What about our picnic?"

Kade furrows his brow, looking from me to the spread of food all laid out for us. He grunts, then stomps over to the rock, swiping everything off and into the open basket in one swift move of his arm.

I can't hold back my giggle as he sprints back to the car, tossing the basket in the back before fastening my seatbelt for me. He jogs to the driver's side, hopping in and grinning at me.

"Those olives better have survived," I say with a pout.

"I'll buy you ten more jars, angel. I promise."

With that, he takes off toward town. We're pulling up to his apartment in record time, and I note that neither Hendrix nor Thorne's cars are there. They're probably out with their women, which is a good thing. I don't know if I can be quiet while Kade is ravishing me.

My body heats at the memory of him eating me out. I'm still incredibly turned on, almost painfully so. Kade must be feeling the same way because he rips my door open and scoops me up, making me laugh and kick my legs out.

"Love that sound, angel. I want to see what other sounds I can get you to make."

"Yes, please," I say with a nod. Kade jogs up the stairs with me still in his arms, which makes me feel dainty and precious, two words I've never used to describe myself.

We barely make it inside before Kade sets me down and presses me against the closed door, flattening his body over mine. I feel his hard muscles and thick cock digging into my soft flesh, which only makes me want him more.

"Are you sure, Malia?" Kade whispers into the shell of my ear. "I swear tonight wasn't about this. I just wanted to give you a romantic dinner and get to know you more."

“Are you disappointed with the way things turned out?” I ask, lifting an eyebrow at him.

“Fuck no,” he growls, finally crashing his lips down on mine.

Kade somehow kisses me senseless while stripping me of my shirt and unhooking my bra. His hands are everywhere, squeezing, caressing, loving all of my curves.

I’m vaguely aware of being lifted up in Kade’s arms and carried into his room. When he sets me down, Kade kisses my forehead, nose, and lips so sweetly. He cups my cheeks and rests his forehead on mine.

“I’ve wanted you for so long,” he murmurs. “I’ll take such good care of you. I don’t have much experience, but I want to explore every inch of you. I want to learn every single way I can make you come.”

I shudder at his words, nodding as I nibble my bottom lip. Placing my hands on the outsides of his, I look into his kind, brown eyes that have so quickly become my home. “I trust you, Kade. I want you. I... I’ve never done this before. Not with anyone. Back at the rock... that was my first, um... well, it was my first everything.”

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Kade's eyes turn impossibly darker, his tendons and muscles flexing. "Love that I'm your first. You'll be mine, too, angel."

His confession fills my heart and soul. I knew he was perfect for me. "I can't wait any longer."

"I know, Malia," he says, kissing me deeply, brutally, and yet reverently. "I'm gonna make you feel so good, I promise," he whispers into the side of my neck before kissing me there. Kade skims his hands down my body, carefully pulling off my pants and panties, so I'm completely bare before him. He walks us toward the bed, where he gently pushes me down so I'm spread out before him.

Seeing how his body reacts to mine, how his gaze darkens, and how his cock hardens even more in the confines of his pants makes me feel sexy and confident. I spread my legs wide and offer myself to him.

"Jesus," he grunts, ridding himself of his clothing. "So goddamn gorgeous. My beautiful, sexy girl, giving me her delicious body... Let me enjoy you, Malia. Let me make this incredible for us."

I nod, lean back on the bed, and open myself up again for him. Kade takes another moment to look me up and down. I feel the heat of his gaze over my skin, my nipples, and my lips, and then he locks his eyes on mine.

Never breaking eye contact, Kade crawls on top of me and settles between my legs, rubbing his cock up and down my slit while resting his weight on his forearm beside my head.

“Ready?” he asks.

I nod and squeeze my eyes shut, preparing for the pain of losing my virginity.

“Hey, look at me, Malia,” Kade says so softly.

I open my eyes and see Kade looking at me with such longing, such desire, but beyond that, I see the kindness and patience of the man I love. “I’m ready,” I whisper.

He kisses me sweetly and lines himself up with my entrance. I feel the head of his cock stretching me wide open, and he’s hardly even inside me yet. I tense up and hold my breath. Kade stops and nuzzles the side of my neck.

“Breathe, beautiful,” he whispers in my ear. “I promise I’ll take good care of you.”

I take a deep breath and turn my head to kiss him while he surges forward, stretching me with his massive cock. Kade works his length inside me, one shallow thrust at a time until he bumps up against my barrier.

“Look at me. I want to see you the second I make you mine forever.” His voice is shaking and his muscles tense with the effort of holding back.

“Do it, Kade. Make me yours.”

He pulls back slightly and then thrusts inside me all the way. I cry out and cling to him as he splits my body open.

“I’m sorry, sweetheart. You’re doing so good. Are you okay?” His tone is equal parts concerned on my behalf and pained that he can’t move. I’m struck again at this man's self-control over his own body so I can be comfortable.

“I’m okay, Kade. I’m so...full. It doesn’t hurt much anymore.”

“Yeah?” he croaks out, resting his forehead on mine.

I wiggle my hips, trying to get used to the feeling of him inside me. I like it. Not only how he makes my skin light on fire and my pussy throb in ways I couldn’t even imagine a few minutes ago, but I like knowing we’re as connected, as close as two people can possibly be. I’m already losing track of where I end and he begins.

“Move, Kade. I need you to move.”

“Fuck,” he groans. “I don’t want to hurt you, Malia.”

I buck my hips and wrap my legs around him, taking him impossibly deeper. We both cry out with the rush of sensations, and a wave of wetness flows out of me.

“Please,” I beg, wiggling my hips again.

He crushes my lips with his and pulls out of me, only to push back inside, hitting me deeper. Kade growls and fists my hair, tugging my neck up so he can kiss and bite me there.

“You feel so damn good, beautiful. This pussy was made for me,” he grunts while picking up the pace.

I moan when I feel his mouth against my breast, his tongue flicking at one pebbled nipple and then the other. My fingers weave in his hair to hold him to my chest while I arch my back, wanting to feel more of him, all of him.

Kade slides one hand to the curve of my ass and then squeezes roughly, lifting my lower half to meet him thrust for thrust. Each time he hits home, my muscles tense

and I let out a little whimper. The pleasure feels unreal. My pussy walls flutter, my muscles shake, and my eyes burn with the effort of keeping all of these sensations inside of me.

“That’s it, Malia, come for me,” Kade demands.

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I feel my orgasm rising to the surface. It starts deep inside me, a pinpoint of bright light trickling throughout my body. Each ragged breath and rough stroke adds to that bright light until my whole being is engulfed in pure energy. Kade slams into me, shocking my body into an intense orgasm. It feels like my chest is being ripped open as I scream and convulse in his arms.

When I come back down, Kade kisses my forehead so gently, then nuzzles my neck.

“Can your gorgeous body take any more?” he asks before pulling my earlobe through his teeth.

“Fuck...” I exhale. “Fuck yes.”

Kade growls and pulls out of me, flipping me onto my stomach and pulling my hips back. He squeezes and massages my ass cheeks before pulling them apart and stroking his cock up and down my slit, from my clit all the way to my puckered asshole. I shudder at the thought of him taking me there. I should be scandalized, right? But instead, I’m absolutely dripping at the thought. As if reading my mind, Kade leans over me, his muscled chest covering my back and kisses between my shoulder blades.

“Not today, Malia. But soon, I’m going to have every inch of you.”

I whimper and nod, suddenly feeling empty without him filling me up in some way. “I need you, Kade,” I beg, not even caring if that makes me wanton, weak, or slutty. I’ll be slutty for him any time.

“Need you too, angel,” he grunts, slapping my ass once and thrusting all the way inside me.

“Kade!” I yell, gasping for air and digging my fingers into the mattress. “Oh god, you’re so deep, so deep...”

I trail off, unable to complete the thought as Kade pistons in and out of me, hitting that special spot with each powerful stroke of his fat cock. I press my body back into him, increasing the friction and causing us both to moan.

Kade slides one arm under my hips to keep me in place while he fucks me savagely. His other hand skims up my back, the soft feeling of his fingertips tickling up my spine intensified by the hard pounding he’s giving me.

His fingers twist in my hair, pulling my head to the side so he can lean down and kiss me. His abs flex and tense against my lower back as Kade stuffs me full of his dick and tongue at the same time.

I bite his lip, and he snarls into my mouth, making me even wetter for him.

“I want to feel you come like this,” he says in a gravelly whisper before kissing the spot between my neck and shoulder.

Before I can respond, Kade pinches my clit and bites my shoulder, making my pussy snap almost painfully tight around him.

“God fucking damn, I love feeling you climax on my cock. You’re incredible, too fucking incredible.”

I think he’s going to come too, but instead, he pulls out and flips me back over, entering me again in one swift motion.

“Kade!” I scream, coming again, or maybe still. I claw at his back as my body jerks, every movement sparking a deep, insatiable need.

“Malia,” he grunts, holding himself up with one hand beside my head. His other hand grips my hip and steadies my trembling body as he buries his massive dick inside me again and again, ruthlessly tearing me apart in the best way possible.

Each stroke winds me up, up, up, my pleasure mounting into an almost unbearable orgasm. Everything goes white as my climax ravishes me from the inside out. My back bows, pressing my tits up against Kade’s hard muscles, and then I curl up in his arms, burying my head in his chest right as he roars his own release.

His arms give out, and Kade collapses on top of me, his large, warm body blanketing mine and keeping me sheltered from the storm of emotions and sensations rushing through my body. He tries to roll away, but I cling to him, needing his skin on my skin just a little bit longer.

“I don’t want to crush you, kitten,” he chuckles into the side of my neck before kissing me there.

Kade rolls to the side but keeps me in his arms, pressing me close to his body. My eyes are closed, and I’m still shaking from my multiple orgasms, but Kade slowly calms me down with the gentle touch of his fingertips swirling over my skin.

When I open my eyes, I’m floored by the look of awe in his deep brown eyes.

“That was...Jesus, Malia, that was amazing.”

I nod and grin at him, giggling when he kisses me all over my face. He tucks my hair behind my ear and presses his lips to mine, just savoring our closeness.

I don't know how much time passes, but nothing else matters when I'm with Kade.
We both melt into each other and drift off to sleep.

EIGHT

Kade

I'm not sure what Malia likes for breakfast, but I figured pancakes were a safe bet. I haven't made them in a while. I never really have time, but I woke up early this morning and wanted to do something nice for Malia.

Hendrix stopped by the apartment late last night to crash for a few hours, and Thorne strolled in about twenty minutes ago to rinse off. Both of them have already left for campus again, so it's just the two of us in the apartment. I know Malia needs to get to her classes soon, so I head down the hall to wake her up, but she's already awake.

"Morning," I say as she wraps her arms around my waist.

"Morning. I was just coming to find you."

"I made breakfast."

"You're the best."

I laugh as I hug her and then lead her down the hallway to the kitchen.

"I have to be on campus soon," she warns, and I nod.

"I'm ready to take you home and then to campus whenever you want."

She smiles as she adds a few pancakes to her plate and digs in. I do the same, and we eat in companionable silence.

“Do you like to cook?” she asks as we clean up the dishes.

“Every now and then. Thorne and Hendrix aren’t the best in the kitchen, so I tend to do it more than them.”

“Do they at least clean up since you cook?”

“Yeah, they’re good at cleaning up and keeping their space clean.”

“It’s good that you guys can stay friends. My first year in college, I heard so many horror stories of best friends rooming together and winding up hating each other by the end of the year.”

“Yeah, we had some people like that in our dorms the first year too. Maybe it helps that I didn’t really know Hendrix or Thorne when I first got here. Besides, Thorne tends to stick to himself. Or he did anyway.”

Malia giggles, the sound light and joyful in the small kitchen.

“We should get you home and to campus,” I say as I finish loading the dishwasher.

“I’m ready when you are.”

I grab my keys and cell phone before I take her hand and lead her out of the apartment. Malia’s place is only a few blocks over from mine so it doesn’t take us long to get there. It doesn’t take long to get anywhere in Sequoia, and I love it.

“Do you ever miss Los Angeles?” I ask as her parking lot comes into view.

“Not really. It never quite felt like home to me. I don’t want to be a celebrity or a socialite. I didn’t exactly fit in with my classmates or friends. Plus the traffic,” she groans, and I chuckle.

“Yeah, I never knew how people did that. Just sit in your car for hours to get somewhere that should take twenty minutes tops.”

“Some people love it. Maybe if I wanted to be famous or if I liked surfing.”

“You don’t like surfing?”

“I could never even stand up on the board without falling off,” she says with a laugh as I pull into the parking lot. “Have you ever surfed?”

“No, I’ve only seen the ocean once in my life, when we went to Corpus Christi for a vacation when I was younger. I remember playing in the waves, but I don’t think anyone was surfing there.”

“Do you want to?”

“See the ocean again or surf?” I ask.

“Both? Either?”

“Not really. I’m happy with cars, forests, and you.”

She blushes, leaning over the center console of the car to kiss my cheek.

“Do you want to come up? You’ve never actually seen my bedroom.”

“Sure,” I say, even though I know that if I go into her bedroom, I will not be able to keep my hands off her. One look at the blush creeping up her cheeks, and I know she’s thinking the same thing. I’m more than okay with skipping classes if it means getting more time with my girl.

We head up to the front door and then into the elevator. The same sexual tension from last night is there between us as soon as those elevator doors slide closed, and this time, I can’t resist the temptation to kiss her.

Just like I imagined last night, I grab Malia’s waist, pushing her back against the wall as I crowd her into the corner and claim her lips with mine. She moans against my mouth, her hands fisting into my t-shirt as her body presses against mine.

She opens under me, and I waste no time slipping my tongue into her mouth to tangle with hers. She tastes like maple syrup and sugar, and I’m instantly addicted. I’ll never be able to eat pancakes again without thinking of this and getting as hard as a diamond.

She lets out a throaty moan, and my cock starts to leak in my jeans.

Fuck, I love this woman.

The elevator dings, and the doors slide open. We're still alone, but I know I need to get her into her apartment before someone interrupts us.

I take her hand and lead her down the hall to her apartment. She passes me the keys, and I unlock the door and usher her inside.

"I just need to get changed really quick," she says.

She sounds slightly out of breath and still turned on from that kiss in the elevator. I follow her down the hall and stick my head inside her bedroom.

Her walls are the same cream color as the rest of the apartment. There's not much to her room either. There's just a bed, dresser, and desk, with a closet on the far wall. Some books and papers sit on her desk, and some knick-knacks are strewn across her dresser. I laugh when I see a picture of Malia, Locklyn, and Elodie. They're all making funny faces, and I smile when I see how cheerful they all look.

Malia clears her throat, and my gaze is immediately pulled to her, my mouth watering when I see her naked body.

"Does my girl need something from me?" I ask, my voice deep and gravelly.

She nods, trailing a hand down the center of her body. I follow the motion, my dick growing painfully hard as I take in every dip and curve along the way.

Mesmerized by her seductive touches, I start peeling my shirt and pants off, nearly ripping my boxer briefs in an attempt to get to her faster.

Malia giggles at my struggle, but I growl and lunge for her, pinning her down to the mattress and devouring her sweet, sexy lips. “Jesus, woman,” I grunt before kissing her again. Malia wiggles beneath me and spreads her legs wide, letting me settle between them. My heavy cock glides through her folds, making us both groan.

She clutches my biceps, digging her nails into my flesh as I suck on her pulse point. “K-Kade...” she whimpers. “P-please. It hurts. I hurt without you. Need it. Need you...”

“You have me, angel. You’ll always have me.” Malia nods and thrusts her hips, grinding against my cock as I gather up her juices. She’s soaked for me. I line myself up with her pulsing entrance, closing my eyes and savoring this moment.

“Ready for me, beautiful?”

She nods and licks her lips. “I need you,” she begs.

I cup the side of her face and kiss her as I surge forward, filling her up in one long stroke. Groaning, I swallow down her cries of pleasure before slowly pulling out.

“More,” Malia whispers, wrapping her legs around my hips. “Deeper. I want it all.”

“Fuck,” I growl, pulling out and slamming my dick back inside her greedy little cunt. She feels so damn good, so tight and wet for me. Malia inhales sharply and then exhales a breathy moan.

Her pussy ripples around me, sucking me in deeper, deeper, so fucking deep I see stars behind my eyes. I grit my teeth, hanging on to my orgasm by a thread. Malia clings to me as I rock in and out of her. My thrusts become more forceful, and my needy girl loves it. She plants her feet on the bed and lifts her hips, meeting me brutal thrust for brutal thrust.

I scrape my cock along her front wall, searching for that spot...

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“Yes!” Malia cries out as she spasms around me, her muscles flexing and releasing, squeezing me so damn tight as she comes around me like a goddess.

I fucking snap.

I hammer into her, hitting her G-spot over and over, grunting as I fuck her right through her first orgasm and into another one. Malia screams my name and claws at my back, tearing up my skin. It hurts so damn good.

“Again,” I growl, burying my head into the side of her neck. I know I should slow down, but the way my woman is moaning and writhing beneath me, I don’t think she minds.

My spine tingles with the first signs of my orgasm. My muscles flex and tense as I try to shove it back down. I’m not ready for this to end yet. White hot bliss courses through me, but I need her to come again before I give up the fight.

I sit back on my heels and pull her legs up to rest them against my chest, changing the angle. Her already tight pussy squeezes my cock like a vise, pulling a growl from somewhere deep in my chest as I thrust harder, faster, deeper inside her. Malia’s glazed-over eyes roll to the back of her head, and her mouth hangs open, rewarding my rough strokes with greedy little whimpers as I bring us closer and closer to our climax.

“Oh God, I think I’m...”

“Yes, beautiful, that’s right. Let go.”

Her body responds to me immediately, that sweet pussy massaging me as I lean in for another kiss. She arches her back, and I know she's close. Just a little more. Fuck, I'm going to come, but I need her to get there first.

"Yes," she whispers. "Yes, yes, yes..."

"Who does this pussy belong to?" I snarl, unable to hold back the beast inside me.

"You," she cries out.

"Say my fucking name, Malia. Say my name when you come for me."

"Kade! Fuck, Kade, Kade, K—"

I feel her climax as it rushes through her, overwhelming her curvy little body as she clamps down on my thick dick over and over. I pound into her, losing a little more of myself with each rough stroke until I'm nothing more than a wild animal rutting inside my mate.

Malia tenses for a heartbeat, then claws my chest as a raw scream is ripped from her throat. I roar her name as we shatter together, our old selves breaking apart, making way for the new life we're going to build together.

I reluctantly pull out of my woman and collapse beside her, draping her limp, sweaty body over mine. I can feel her heart slamming against her chest as she gasps for air. I rub Malia's back in calming circles, letting her know she's safe with me, even in this vulnerable state.

My beautiful girl finally looks up at me, her blue eyes filled with satisfaction and awe. Yeah, I'm definitely going to need to put that look on her face every chance I get.

NINE

Malia

Things have been going so well between Kade and me the last week that I completely forgot about Sterling and my parents. Big mistake.

Part of me was hoping that Sterling and his friends would forget all about me and their night in Sequoia. I was counting on them not saying anything to their parents or mine, but I guess I shouldn't have counted on that.

I've only taken two steps out of my accounting class when my phone rings. I glance at the screen, hoping that it's Kade calling to set up another date, but instead, it's my mom's name on the screen.

Dread fills my stomach, but I know I need to answer. She'll just keep calling me until I do. I hurry outside and around the building, where it's a little more private, before I accept the call.

"Hey, mom. I'm actually still on campus," I say, hoping to put an end to this conversation before it can really start.

I'm not that lucky, though.

"I can't believe that you treated Sterling that way!" comes her screeching voice. Hello to you too, I think to myself. "He came all of the way out to that little hick town you insist on living in, all to take you out on a nice date, and what did you do?"

You left him for some loser!”

“Um, I’m not sure what Sterling has been telling you, but that’s not what happened.”

“So, you didn’t leave with another man?”

“Well, yes, but that’s only—”

“So you admit it!” she shrieks. I can just picture her clutching her pearls, and the thought has me rolling my eyes.

“Yeah, mom, but can you let me explain my side, please?”

“Fine,” she half snarls down the phone. “You embarrassed me in front of all of my friends, but sure. Let’s hear your excuses.”

I take a deep breath, rolling out the tension from my shoulders. I swear this woman takes five years off my life every time she calls.

“Did Sterling tell you that he brought two of his friends with him for our date?” I start. “Or that the ‘romantic evening he had planned’ was really just him taking me to the racetrack at this farm near campus?”

“Well, I’m not surprised! He probably couldn’t find anything else to do in that town.”

“We have restaurants and a movie theater and all of that, mom. There were other options.”

She doesn’t have anything to say to that, and I just know she’s tapping her high-heeled foot in annoyance.

“Did Sterling tell you that he bet me? He bet that he could win the race, and the winner got me. I was literally put up for collateral. Is that a good enough reason to ditch him?” I try controlling my voice, not wanting to get flustered around my mom. She has a way of sniffing out weaknesses and pouncing on them.

“Well, the other man had to accept the bet, so what does that tell you?”

My stomach tightens in pain at the memory of that night, but I know why Kade accepted it. He already explained and apologized to me for it, and I forgave him. My mom won’t care about any of that, though. Typical. She can forgive one man for initiating the bet, but not the man who took up the offer to save me.

“You need to call Sterling and apologize to him,” my mother snaps. I jerk my head back, lifting the phone away from my ear so I can stare at it incredulously. Me? Apologize? “Maybe he’ll be interested in taking you out again, preferably in Los Angeles this time, and you two can clear the air.”

Is she serious right now? But, of course, she is. “Mom. He bet me,” I stress. “He used me as collateral. Traded me like a piece of property. I have nothing to apologize for.”

“I don’t care what you think he did. That doesn’t sound like the nice young man our friends raised. Sterling is a shining example of the kind of man you should be with. He’s wealthy, connected, handsome, and he’ll give you a comfortable life.”

“A shining example? He’s a misogynistic piece of—”

“I will not let you embarrass this family,” she says, cutting me off. Her tone is flat and dark, which does nothing to hide the threat behind her words. “You will apologize to Sterling for what happened that night and for leaving with someone else. It’s incredibly rude, and your father and I raised you better than that.”

“No,” I state firmly.

“Wh— what...?” She stumbles over the word, baffled that I won’t accept her ridiculous demand.

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“No,” I repeat. “I will not apologize to that asshole. It’s hard to believe you’re even asking me to, but then again, I shouldn’t be surprised.”

Silence stretches out between us, and I count every beat of my racing heart. I’ve never been this bold when talking back to my parents. I’ve never really stood up to them, but I must admit... it feels good. I can’t help but think Kade has something to do with my newfound confidence.

“Then your father and I have no choice but to cut you off.”

“What?”

The line goes dead, and my mouth drops open.

What?I... I wasn’t expecting that. Blinking a few times, I try to ground myself back in reality, but my head is spinning.

I should have seen this coming, but god... it happened so quickly. A snap of my mother’s fingers and now... I have nothing.

Taking a few breaths, I close my eyes and stem the flow of tears building up behind my eyes. Truthfully, I think my parents have been looking for a reason to cut me off for years. They want me to fail and come running back to them. They want me to beg them for help. They want me to promise to be the perfect daughter, the kid that they always wanted.

I can’t do that, though. And if their love is conditional... then I don’t want it. I have

everything I need with Kade.

I tuck my phone back into my pocket and look up. As if on cue, Kade is headed my way, a wide smile on his face.

“Hey, there you are! I was looking for you over at your tree,” he calls to me as he closes the distance between us.

I can see the moment that he realizes I’m upset. His whole face drops, and he looks so concerned. He hurries to my side and pulls me into his arms.

“Malia, what’s wrong? What happened?”

I snuffle into his shirt, the tears finally winning the battle, and he holds me tighter. Being wrapped in his arms feels so perfect, and I know that I can’t give this up. Even if it means my parents cutting me off financially.

I can get a job or take a semester off. I can make this work. I can do anything as long as I have Kade by my side.

“My mom just called,” I tell him as I pull back slightly.

“Is everyone alright?” he asks in concern, and I nod.

“Everyone’s fine. They heard about what happened on my date with Sterling.”

“And she was pissed at that douchebag?” he asks, sounding pissed himself.

“She was pissed, alright. With me.”

“What?” he half shouts before he can compose himself. “She was mad at... you? For

what?"

"For leaving my date for another guy."

"Did you tell her what he did?" he asks, looking outraged. I nod.

"Yeah. I told her everything. She didn't care," I murmur, leaning against Kade as the last of my strength leaves me. He holds me close, running his hands down my back in a calming motion. "She said that she and my dad have no choice but to cut me off. That I've just embarrassed them and the family too much for them to have anything to do with me."

"You've embarrassed them? After what that jerk did?" he growls. "I don't understand them."

More tears spill down my cheeks, and Kade pulls back just enough to wipe them away.

"Don't cry, sweetheart. Things will be okay. We can fix this. I have some savings. It's yours. I'll do anything I can to help; just please don't cry."

"How can we fix this?" I sniffle. "Tuition is so much money. I'll never be able to afford it in time."

Kade squeezes me, and then his hold on me loosens as he smiles down at me.

"I have a way," he says with that signature peace and confidence I love so much about him.

"What do you mean?"

TEN

Kade

I manage to calm down enough to lead Malia over to my car and help her inside. We make it back to my apartment in under five minutes, but now I'm wondering if I should have taken her to her own apartment since Thorne and Hendrix are here.

"We'll get out of your way, but we wanted to talk to you about something," Hendrix says as he shoves notebooks into his backpack.

"What's that?" I ask as I grab a glass and fill it with water for Malia.

"Thorne and I were talking, and... we're going to be moving out soon. We want to live with Locklyn and Elodie and not worry about anyone being home."

I smile. I had a feeling this was coming. I mean, they're both head over heels in love with their girls. I know that feeling, and I'm happy for my friends. Plus, this might end up working out for all of us if my plan goes right.

"I'm happy for you," I tell both of them. They look relieved as they smile back.

"We're happy for you, too," Thorne says, nodding toward my bedroom, where Malia is waiting for me.

"Is everything alright? She seemed a little stressed when you guys came in," Hendrix says.

“Yeah, she’ll be alright.”

I want to fill them in on what’s been happening, but I’ve left Malia alone for a few minutes already, and I’m dying to get back to her.

“I’ll see you guys later.”

“Later,” they call, and as I head down the hallway to my room, they head out the front door.

“Thanks,” Malia says as I pass her the water.

She’s sitting on my bed, and I grab my desk chair, pulling it closer to her so we can be face-to-face when we talk.

“What am I going to do now?” she whispers as she stares at the glass of water.

“You could move in with me. I can cover rent.”

“I’m not sure that Hendrix and Thorne would like that.”

“They actually just gave me some interesting news. Your parents may not be on your side, but the universe is. Hendrix and Thorne are moving out. They want to be alone with their girls.”

Malia nods. She doesn’t seem surprised by the news either.

“I figured that would be coming soon. I mean, Locklyn spends more nights over here than at our place already. I was going to offer to look for a new place, somewhere smaller. I probably can’t afford that now, though,” she says with a sigh. “But what does that have to do with the universe?”

“Well, you can move in here. Thorne’s parents paid rent for this place for the whole year. We just cover utilities and groceries.”

“Won’t Thorne and his parents be mad that they have to pay rent somewhere else, too?”

“I doubt it. They’re super generous, and right now, they’re all on cloud nine because Thorne and Elodie are finally back together.”

Malia blinks as if the thought of a wealthy family being generous is a foreign concept. Hell, from what she’s told me, I’m not surprised. Her own goddamn parents disowned her.

“I would still want to ask him,” she hedges. “I don’t want him to think that he’s getting screwed or that I’m taking advantage of him.”

I nod, and she takes a deep breath, though I can tell she’s still on the brink of a breakdown.

“I guess I should start looking for a job. It’s going to be hard to find one now that school has already started. I have some savings, so I should be good for a little bit, but if I’m paying for rent and for everything else... plus be saving for tuition... that money is going to be gone soon,” she rambles, getting caught up in her racing thoughts and worries.

I lean forward, taking her hand in mine.

“I have a solution for that too.”

“What’s that?” she asks, her blue eyes swimming with so many emotions.

“You could bet on me.”

As soon as I say the words, it hits me that I mean bet on me for more than just the races. I know that Malia could go back to her parents, and they would pay for everything again. She could let them pick some fancy husband for her, and I’m sure that he would be equally rich, and she would want for nothing. No one will ever love her as much as I do, though. No one will ever work harder to make her happy.

Malia is studying me, and I know she’s thinking the same thing as me. The air seems to stall in my lungs as I wait for her to give me a sign, something that lets me know that she wants this with me.

When she smiles, her eyes softening, I feel like I can breathe again.

“People bet on my races all of the time. Hell, people love betting against us all the time. You could bet Thursday, Friday, and Saturday nights and make enough for the whole month. Bet on Hendrix and Thorne too. They’re sure bets. You’d have enough to cover tuition in a few months. I can cover expenses here for us.”

“I’ve never bet or gambled before,” she says, and I can see her doing the math in her head.

“I can help you pick other racers too. I know enough about them and their cars to

usually be right about who will win.”

“It seems so strange to do that for a living,” she says, but I can see her considering it.

I know that the only thing holding her back has to be what her parents will think if they ever find out, and I try to think of a way to convince her.

“Your date from the other night thought that he could make a bet for a girl and no one in your family thinks that was weird. Why can’t you make a bet to pay for your future?” I ask her.

“You’re right. My parents cut me off because of what some rich dick did. They wanted me to apologize for it. They don’t get to judge me for what I do after that,” she says with a determined nod. The familiar fire that I’ve always loved seeing in her is back.

I grin, taking in her flushed cheeks and sparkling blue eyes. Malia has always been so strong. She has this drive in her that is similar to mine. Maybe that’s why we clicked so fast.

“So, we’re doing this?” I ask. She looks at me, her ocean eyes locking with my brown ones.

“Absolutely we’re doing this.”

She stands like she’s going to throw herself into my arms, and I’m more than ready to catch her when she freezes.

“Wait. What about the garage you guys want to open? And your future?”

ELEVEN

Malia

Tearswell in my eyes once more.

I can't believe that I was about to be so selfish. I know that Kade has been working and racing these last few years so he could graduate and open a garage with Hendrix and Thorne. I can't let him waste all that savings and hard work on me.

"I will figure something else out," I start, but he's already shaking his head.

"I want to help you. I want us to be together. My future? It's you, angel."

"I can't let you spend all of your money on me. I can find a job and still bet. I have some savings too, and I can pay for stuff around here. I don't want to be a burden."

"Malia. You could never be a burden," he says, standing and taking my hands in his. "Everything is fine," he tries soothing me.

"No, it's not!" I blurt out, so many thoughts and emotions clanging around in my head. "Why are you doing this? Why are you willing to throw all your hard work and money away on me?"

"Because I love you."

He says it like it's just that simple. Part of me falls even more in love with him.

Everything is so easy with Kade. Well, everything that isn't financial.

"I know it's fast," he says, mistaking my silence for shock. "But I love you. I've never felt this way about anyone before. I know your life would be easier with a guy your parents picked out for you, but—"

"But it would be boring and cold," I finish for him.

He nods, watching me with wide, hopeful eyes.

"I think I fell in love with you the first night we met," he murmurs. "And I've only been falling more and more with each passing day."

I swallow hard, and he reaches for me. I let him pull me into his arms, and just before his mouth claims mine, I say the words I've wanted to say for weeks.

"I love you, Kade."

I breathe my promise onto his lips, then seal it with a kiss. Kade opens up for me, sliding his tongue against mine as he maneuvers his way out of the chair and pulls me up from my position on the bed.

His hands slide up and down my sides, squeezing my flesh and setting my skin on fire.

"This okay, angel?" he rasps into the side of my neck.

"Yes, please," I say, nodding my head.

I think he's going to toss me down on his bed and have his way with me, but instead, he swings me up in his arms before I even realize what's happening. He sets me

down in the bathroom, leaning over to turn on the hot water.

I giggle as he rips at his shirt, but it turns into a moan as he lifts my blouse over my head, revealing more of my skin. In record time, Kade strips us out of our clothes and hauls me into the steaming hot shower.

I feel the weight of his gaze all over my body as he takes in every naked inch. “Fucking gorgeous,” he murmurs. Kade runs the back of his knuckles over my breasts, my pebbled nipples, and down my ribcage until they land on my hips.

I gasp as he grips me tightly and presses me into his chiseled body so I can feel his hard cock against my stomach. He takes my lips then, in a slow, drugging kiss. My hands wind around the back of his head, and I pull him even closer.

“I need inside of you, beautiful,” he groans.

I giggle at his seemingly desperate need and then moan when he pushes me up against the wall and grips my ass, rolling my hips into his erection. I feel Kade's fingers tease my entrance and then glide up my slit, checking my readiness. Of course, I'm ready for him. I'm always ready for him.

“You need me too, don't you?”

“So bad,” I admit, gasping as he circles my sensitive bundle of nerves.

With that, he lifts me up in his arms and pins me to the wall, his thick dick hitting home inside my throbbing cunt. He fucks me hard and fast, grunting with each thrust of his hips. I lean forward and bite his lips before kissing him wildly. I didn't realize how much I needed him like this, needed to feel him deep inside me again.

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“Yes, Kade, God, don’t stop,” I moan.

He’s relentless as he pounds into me, nailing me to the wall with each rough stroke, breaking me apart so perfectly. I feel every ridge of his cock as it splits me open and glides along my tight channel. My fingernails bite into the flesh on his shoulders, making him roar and fuck me harder.

My orgasm slams into me by surprise, knocking the air right out of my lungs as I convulse in his arms and open my mouth in a silent scream. Fire rips through my veins, leaving every nerve raw and exposed.

Before I even have the chance to come down, Kade pulls out of me and sets me down on the ground, spinning me around so I have to brace myself on the wall with my ass sticking out toward him.

“Yes, god, so perfect for me, Malia. So goddamn thick and juicy and mine,” he growls before sliding into me from behind.

He’s almost gentle, teasing me, rubbing my clit, building me up touch by touch. His hot breath rolls against my neck as his hands tighten around my hips, keeping a slow, steady rhythm.

I moan and buck against him when his hands slide up my hips, following the curve of my waist until they cup my breasts. I gasp when he pinches my nipples.

Reaching one hand up, I grab his hair as he kisses me over my shoulder. I run my hand down his cheek and cup it there, feeling his coarse stubble against the palm of

my hand as he works his cock in and out, deeper, deeper, so fucking deep, grinding into me, sparking a desperate need to come again. My body burns for release, my skin scorching, my lungs breathing fire.

“Don’t stop,” I plead, rocking back into him and meeting him thrust for thrust.

“Never,” he growls, picking up speed.

Our skin slaps together as he builds us up with every stroke of his fat cock. Kade curls his body over mine and places his hands on either side of mine against the shower wall. I feel his muscles bunch and tense against my back and ass. Something about that makes my pussy clench and gush.

“Oh God, Kade, I’m... I’m...”

“Let go, love, let go of every-fucking-thing and come for me.”

I hold my breath as every muscle in my body stretches tight against my skin. All at once, every ounce of tension is released from my body as my pussy spasms around him again and again. Kade pistons in and out of me, keeping me at my peak longer than I’ve ever experienced. I cry and sob and beg for mercy as a sharp pleasure bordering on pain stabs at my nerves and prickles over my skin.

Kade unleashes a torrent of cum deep inside of me. It splashes down my legs, mixing with my own juices from multiple orgasms.

“I’m coming so fucking hard,” he grunts as his cock jerks inside me and empties another round of his release.

Kade pulls out of me and spins me around, guiding me to lean against the wall as he kneels before me.

“Oh my God, Kade, I can’t...”

He just growls and lifts my right leg over his shoulder before licking up our combined juices. God, it’s so hot how he’s drinking down both of our releases like a feral animal. When his tongue swipes against my clit, my body twitches so hard he has to grip my hips to keep me steady. He never lets up, though.

Kade sucks my clit with such a singular intensity that I start to feel lightheaded and tingly all over. He growls into my throbbing, raw pussy and nibbles at my clit, causing a great pull deep in my belly. Again and again, he lavishes attention on my swollen ball of nerves until I come violently against his mouth.

Kade shakes and grips my hips so hard I know I’ll bruise, but I don’t care. It’s the only thing keeping me anchored here on Earth.

“Fuck, you’re squirting all over me...” He drops one hand to his cock and pumps it twice before shooting his own release down the drain.

When we’re finally wrung completely dry, I slide down the wall into Kade’s waiting arms. He tucks me into his chest and rocks me back and forth.

“So beautiful,” he whispers. “So perfect for me. God, I love you so much, Malia. I can’t wait to spend the rest of my life with you.”

I nod, pressing a kiss to his chest.

“Yeah, I think we’re off to a pretty good start,” I sigh, waggling my eyebrows.

He groans and kisses me again, and we get lost in each other. Yeah, this man is meant to be mine. The other details will work themselves out. All that matters is my Kade.

TWELVE

Kade

Five Years Later...

“It’s going to be okay,” I tell Malia as I squeeze her hand.

“That’s easy for you to say. You don’t have to go through labor,” she says, and I nod.

“You’re right, but I’ll be by your side for the whole thing,” I promise.

She nods, relaxing back onto the table as the ultrasound tech comes back into the room and sits down in her chair.

“Are you two ready to see your little one?”

“Yes,” Malia and I both say at the same time, and the tech just smiles.

We’re at our third ultrasound, and we’re supposed to be learning the sex of our baby today. Malia says that she doesn’t care as long as they’re healthy. I agree though I can’t deny that I would love to have a little girl who looks just like her mama.

The technician puts on her gloves, and I turn back to my wife. Malia and I got married a little over three years ago. We were celebrating our three-year anniversary when we found out she was pregnant.

We're both so excited to be starting our own family. I know it might have been a little sooner than we were planning, but that hasn't lessened our excitement.

Our friends are happy for us too. Hendrix and Locklyn are expecting, too, and Elodie and Thorne are going to be adopting a baby soon. We've been supporting each other through everything these last five years, and they've truly become my family in that time.

That helps because we don't have much contact with Malia's parents. They reached out a few years ago after she had graduated. Apparently, some of their friends had noticed that they never talked about her anymore, and they wanted to catch up for appearances.

They weren't thrilled to learn that she was getting married to me, so we spent another year having nothing to do with them. Then they sent some money and invited her to visit. That trip didn't exactly go smoothly, but it was still nice to finally meet them and see where she grew up.

Since then, there's been a few sporadic phone calls here and there. They sent more money when they found out that we were expecting. They're already asking her to come to Los Angeles for a baby shower with all of their friends. Malia hasn't decided if she wants to yet, but I'll support her in whatever she decides.

My mom is thrilled that I'm settled down and am about to be a father. She's been talking about moving out here but hasn't found a place close enough to us yet. My mom loves Malia, though, and I know that Malia loves her too. She's the parent that Malia always wanted, and now she finally has it. They talk more than my mom and I do, and I love seeing them both so happy.

"This might be a little cold," the technician says as she squirts some of the gel onto Malia's stomach.

Malia's hand tightens around mine as the wand starts to move over her stomach. The screen turns from black to a hazy gray, and we both lean closer as our little bean comes into view.

"Measuring at twenty weeks, two days."

"That's right," I say, and she nods.

The tech takes a few pictures and measurements before she turns to smile at us.

"Did you two want to know the sex, or are we keeping it a secret?"

"We want to know," Malia says in a rush, and I smile over at my wife.

"Well, it looks like it's a girl."

She shows us a few things on the monitor, and I beam as I turn to look at Malia.

"A little girl," I whisper, and she nods, the tears in her eyes making her blue eyes look like the ocean.

"I love you."

"I love you too," she says.

I lean over to kiss her as the technician prints off our pictures and wipes off Malia's stomach.

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“We’ll see you back here in a few weeks,” she says as she leaves us at the front counter.

I help Malia out to the car and open her door for her. We’ve upgraded to something safer since we learned that she was pregnant. Luckily, when we bought our house, we made sure that it had plenty of bedrooms.

“Locklyn said that she’s closing up tonight, but maybe we could get together later and tell them the news,” she says, and I nod.

Locklyn, Elodie, and Malia own a boutique in downtown Sequoia. They opened it right after graduating and have made it a success in a short time. I opened a garage with Hendrix and Thorne, and we’ve been working on building up our clientele over the years. We do the usual repairs, oil changes, and all that, but we also do custom work.

We have one big-shot client in Los Angeles, and we’ve been doing work for him for over a year. He’s been bringing in his friend’s cars, too, so we’ve been making bank the last year or so.

I head toward our house, but I know my wife, so I pull into the drive of the local Mexican restaurant and hit the drive-thru.

“Oh, those crispy tacos sound so good right now,” she half moans, and I grin.

“How many do you want?”

“Four.”

I nod, taking her hand as we wait in line. She’s been craving hot sauce and salsa for the last two weeks. I’ve been trying to keep up with her cravings and anything else that she might need or want. It’s the least I can do since she’s carrying our baby.

I place our order, and we drive around to pay and get the food. I pass her the bag, and she sighs happily as we hit the road toward home.

“Happy?” I ask her as she crunches into a taco.

“I always am with you,” she says, and I grin.

“I love you, Malia.”

“I love you more.”

I don’t tell her that that’s not possible as I take her free hand and drive us home.