



Inked Soul

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Category: Erotic, Romance

Description: Luke has built the life he's always dreamed of. His tattoo parlor is thriving, his co-owners are his closest friends, and everything feels perfect—until it all comes crashing down.

Abigail is a newly divorced single mom, struggling to adjust to her new reality. She never expected to cross paths with someone like Luke. But when he enters her life, it's exactly when she needs him most.

Their connection is instant, intense, and undeniable, but love isn't always simple. Abigail's ex-husband isn't ready to let go, and he'll do anything to win her back.

Will Luke stand his ground and fight for their blossoming love, or will he let her slip away?

Total Pages (Source): 26

Page 1

Source Creation Date: May 19, 2025, 10:33 am

Prologue

New Neighbors

Luke

I make my way upstairs to find a man dressed in an expensive suit glaring at a crib. What the hell is he doing? The thing is taking up most of the hallway.

“There you are,” he says, sneering at me. “You need to move the rest of this shit into the apartment.”

A chuckle escapes me. He clearly thinks I’m one of the movers.

“I don’t work for you, pal,” I reply, trying to make my way around him and into my own apartment.

“Listen here, punk,” he huffs. He stands up straighter, trying to meet my size. “I don’t care if I paid for your services or if she did, do your fucking job.”

I assess the man in front of me. Light hair, styled perfectly, expensive suit and ugly-ass shoes. I know men like him. They think because they earn a lot of money and flash it for everyone to see they are better than the rest of us. Usually, I would brush it off, but I am having a shitty day and this guy needs to be taken down a peg.

“I. Don’t. Work. For. You.” I annunciate each word, leaning into his personal space. I know I can be an intimidating motherfucker when I want to be, and I see the man

balk. “As in, I’m not a fucking mover. Your shit is in my way, and I can’t get to my damn apartment.”

He has the decency to blush before he splutters out a half-assed apology and hightails it to the apartment next door. Fucking perfect. Now I’ve already made enemies with the new neighbors.

Turning, I see Laine coming up the stairs.

“Who is that?” he asks tipping his chin in the direction the man went.

“No one important,” I grumble. “Why are you here?”

“Chasing me away?”

“Scared Hailey wised up and kicked you out. I do not want to live with you again.” I snicker at his reaction of mock outrage.

“Whatever, dickhead.” He punches my shoulder as he passes, making his way to what used to be his bedroom. “I have to grab the last of my boxes and get Hailey a pizza for dinner.”

I chuckle but the sound is off. I haven’t been getting any sleep the past few nights. The new neighbor’s baby cries constantly. And it hasn’t helped with my disposition. I watch as Laine walks through the apartment with three stacked boxes in his arms.

“Tell Hailey if she ever gets tired of you, she can move in with me, but you are never moving back in,” I tell him jokingly.

He laughs freely, knowing I am only joking. We have been best friends since before I can remember, and he is the closest thing I have to a brother except for Alistair.

“Hailey would drive you nuts, Mr. OCD.” I swat at his head, and he ducks. “See you on Sunday.”

Yes, lunch with Laine and his family. I hope I can get some sleep before then.

Page 2

Source Creation Date: May 19, 2025, 10:33 am

Chapter One

I Don't Know What To Do

Abigail

I wish I could say I was the perfect mother, but we all know that isn't true of any woman. Each of us has our own way of doing things. Parenting isn't some laid-out plan you follow to raise the perfect child. You don't get a guide when you give birth. All of this is just doing your best and hoping it is enough.

I want more than anything else to help my child. I want to be able to soothe my son, to stop the crying that has been going on for hours. His wails ring out around the small apartment, tearing at my heart. But nothing I do seems to have any effect. I changed his diaper, fed him, swaddled him, sang to him ... hell, I have tried everything and nothing works.

Someone bangs on my front door and my heart falls to the ground. I honestly don't want to deal with Darren, my ex-husband, right now. Holding tightly to my son, Tyler, I make my way down the hall when I hear the second loud knock. He came over a few days ago to check that we were moved in and hasn't been back since. Not that I care. I told him to leave, now I just wish he would stay away.

Opening the door, I am ready to lay into my ex-husband but instead I find a muscle-bound man glaring at me. I stare at the giant on the other side. This man is exactly the opposite of who I was expecting to find standing in front of me tonight. I am more grateful than words can express not to find Darren on the other side of my door, even

though I shouldn't be. I don't know this man and he is clearly not happy.

He towers over me with his bulky frame. Dark hair and green eyes, with colorful tattoos covering his arms. He is dressed in heather gray sweatpants and nothing else. His ridiculously tan and ripped chest is bare of any artwork, but his muscles are impressive. Pecs, six pack, and that stupid V that draws every woman's eye right down to said man's junk. I do my best not to stare but it's a losing battle. My sleep-deprived brain isn't doing what I want.

"Look, lady," he says in a voice that is low and gravelly, finally shaking me out of my stupor. "I know your kid is just a baby, but it has been a damn week of constant crying. I'm not getting an hour of sleep every night and it's making me cranky. Can you just do something about it already?"

I don't know what it is that pushes me over the line, his frown or the fact that I am just so fucking tired, but the dam breaks and I can't hold back the tears any longer. A sob breaks free as I clutch my crying child to my chest.

"Shit." The giant man curses, pushing the door open wider.

He gently takes Tyler from me, cradling him to his naked chest as he wraps an arm around my shoulders. He gives me a side hug like we are old friends.

I should be freaked out. I should be fighting to get my son back from this stranger who is now inside my home, but all I want to do is lean into him and take some of the strength he carries around.

"I didn't mean to make you cry," he says softly, rubbing my shoulder.

"It's not your fault," I sob. "I'm just tired."

“I’m sure you are.” He chuckles, leading me deeper into the apartment. “Just like me, you’re not getting any sleep.”

Taking a seat on the dark brown couch, I stare up at this strange, half-naked man who is holding my son to his chest when it hits me. The silence.

“He stopped.”

“What?” The man frowns at me like I’m speaking gibberish.

“Tyler isn’t crying anymore,” I say in shock.

Green eyes slide to my son’s sleeping face, a small smile tugging at the side of his lips. “Well, I’ll be damned.”

“What the hell?” I whisper, staring at them, my tears forgotten. “Are you like ... a baby whisperer or something?”

He full-on smiles and if I was standing my knees would have given out from how handsome he is. “Kids don’t usually like me. I can’t even remember ever holding a baby before.”

“You’ll have to live here now,” I joke—mostly. “If you can get him to sleep that fast, I am never letting you out of here again.”

The words are out of my mouth before I have a chance to think about it.

He chuckles while shaking his head. “How about I lay him down and we can both grab a couple hours of sleep before he wakes up?”

Nodding, I lead him toward the nursery. It’s like watching Mom porn. He is

gorgeous. Tall, muscular, and tattooed. And a man that looks like him, holding a baby? It's obscene.

Page 3

Source Creation Date: May 19, 2025, 10:33 am

Embarrassment slams into me. Aside from the crib, all his stuff is still packed up in boxes. I just haven't had it in me to fully unpack in the month we have been living here. This man, this stranger, is witnessing my greatest weakness right this moment.

"Sorry about the mess," I mumble, my cheeks flaming hot.

"No worries. Moving sucks," he says, laying Tyler down and covering his tiny body with a light blue blanket.

We both watch him sleep for a moment before we head out of the room. The man walks toward the front door, shaking his head the entire way.

"My name is Luke," he says once he is standing on the threshold, holding his hand out for me to shake. "I live next door."

Nodding, I take his large hand in mine. "Abigail."

"Nice meeting you." He smiles again before striding to his apartment and disappearing inside.

Closing and locking the door, I slide down the wooden surface. Sitting on the ugly, brown, industrial carpet I stare into my apartment, and sadness hits me in the chest. I finally understand why Luke was shaking his head as he walked through. Unpacked boxes line the walls, stacks upon stacks of items I fully intended to pack away but never got to.

My life and my apartment are a stunning mess—something I definitely need to get

under control. And I will definitely start working on that in the morning. But first, I need to sleep.

Chapter Two

Just A Little DIY

Luke

I got the first night of good sleep this month after leaving Abigail and her boy next door. Sipping at my coffee at the kitchen counter, I think of her and the way she broke last night. She truly is overwhelmed. I don't know why her son fell asleep the moment I cradled him against my chest, but I am grateful he did. Both of us were in serious need of sleep.

I want to head next door and help her with everything that has been piling up in her life. I think of my own mother and can only imagine how hard it must have been raising me and my sister on her own, and we were both in school when our dad died.

I don't know where Tyler's dad is, but I do know he hasn't been helping her, that much is clear. I wonder if the asshole from the other day is his father. But if that's the case, he would be here helping Abigail. I don't know what to do with my feelings but I do know I can't just go stomping into her life and rearranging shit any way it pleases me, even if my OCD is driving me up the walls. We don't know each other for shit. Besides, I need to get down to House of Ink, the tattoo parlor I own with my two best friends. I have an early appointment.

Instead of going next door, like I want to, I hop through the shower before jumping in my truck and heading off to work.

The hours pass in a blur. The tattoo gun in my hand buzzes, stripping my thoughts

away and just letting me be in the moment. My art flows from somewhere deep in my soul and the piece is finished sooner than I thought it would be.

“When is my next appointment?” I ask my sister, Skye, after my client has paid up and left.

“You are wide open,” she says with a smile. “Actually, with how picky you are, you are set to have a long weekend.”

Page 4

Source Creation Date: May 19, 2025, 10:33 am

“It’s only Wednesday.” I frown.

I know I don’t work on just anyone, but I thought I had more appointments this week. I may need to rethink the policy I have on clients. I can’t only work once a damn week. I’ll go nuts staring at the fucking walls in my apartment.

“I know. I have you booked up for the next two weeks, if that makes you feel better, but nothing for the rest of this week.”

“That seems like just my luck.” I smile, rapping my knuckles on the glass counter. “I’m going to clean up and head out.”

At least I have some prospects in the next couple of weeks.

“Have fun.”

“Fuck!”

I hear her curse before I even hit the landing to my floor.

“Why the hell is this so damn difficult?” Abigail says, sighing loudly.

“Because you need to use a screwdriver,” I reply from the doorway, watching her struggle to assemble what looks like a bookshelf.

She screams, holding tightly to her chest with one hand while wielding a butter knife in the other.

“What the hell, dude?” she yells. “You’ll give me a heart attack.”

“Sorry,” I say, chuckling, holding both my hands in the air.

“Whatever,” Abigail mumbles, returning to her futile task.

“Do you need some help with that?” I ask, trying but failing to hide the amusement in my tone.

She glares at me. “No,” she says sarcastically. “Can’t you see how easy this is?”

Shaking my head, I leave her to her own devices and head over to my apartment where I grab my toolbox and a beer.

“Move over, woman,” I say as I walk back into her apartment. “Let me do this before you break something. Or hurt yourself.”

Just then, Tyler makes a cooing sound over the monitor she has set up on the arm of the gray two-seater couch. She glares at me as she moves out of the way and toward her son.

“You should thank him for saving your ass. I hate men telling me what to do.”

A chuckle escapes me as her ass sashays away from me. Now that she isn’t a sobbing mess with a screaming child, I can actually appreciate her. She is a beautiful woman. Short and curvy, her black hair piled on top of her head in that messy nest women often make. I’ve seen a hint of pink peeking out through the black and wonder how much color she actually has in there.

Assembling the shelf is faster than I thought it would be.

“Wow,” she says behind me.

“I know, right,” I reply. “If you have the right tools the job goes so much faster.”

“Kiss my ass,” she sasses. “I’m not a handyman.”

Looking up from my spot beside the shelf, my gaze travels up her tanned, toned legs, over her tiny jean shorts. Her flat stomach peeks out beneath a baby pink halter top, her substantial chest, and finally stops on her makeup-free face. She is holding the little boy in her arms.

“Is there anything else that needs assembly?” I ask, my voice gravelly. I need to stop thinking with my dick, and manual labor should do the trick.

We haven’t even had a decent conversation and already I want to know what she looks like naked. I haven’t gotten laid in month, as picky about my sexual partners as I am about my clients at House of Ink, and that is clearly playing a role in my dirty thoughts right now.

She throws her head back and laughs. Fuck, that’s sexy. How the hell am I this attracted to a woman holding a baby?

Page 5

Source Creation Date: May 19, 2025, 10:33 am

“Only about a hundred more things,” she says.

“I’ll make you a deal then,” I say. “You get the beer and pizzas, and I’ll assemble whatever you want.” Standing up I wipe my hands on my jeans.

She looks at me skeptically. “Why would you help me?”

“My dad died when I was a junior,” I say honestly. “My mom raised me and my sister by herself. But once a month, Mr. Murdoch from down the street came over and did all the little DIY stuff she needed help with. She always paid him with beer and pizza.”

“You assume there isn’t a man in my life,” she says with another glare.

I consider asking her about the asshole I met in the hallway, but he isn’t important. If he was her man, he would be assembling her furniture instead of me.

“I assume,” I say instead, taking a step closer to her, “that no man worth his salt would let his woman struggle on her own for a month. That a real man wouldn’t leave his son to cry through the night but would be there to help the mother through this. And I know if you have a man in your life, he sure as shit would not let the neighbor assemble your furniture with you wearing those shorts.”

“What’s wrong with my shorts?” She stares down at her body.

“Not a damn thing,” I mumble, looking at her legs once more. “So, do we have a deal?”

“Fine. But I like pineapple on my pizza.”

Chapter Three

Helping A Sort-of Friend Out

Abigail

Watching my huge and insanely attractive neighbor put together furniture for the entire day before taking a seat at my kitchen counter and enjoying a beer has me smiling the entire time. He is funny and sarcastic, giving me shit the whole time about nothing in particular.

I have caught him staring at my legs several times throughout the day and I have to say I am not hating it. It makes me feel desirable, which I haven't felt in ages. I usually just feel like I'm a breath away from falling apart.

“The pizza should be here in a minute,” I say as he finishes half his beer in a couple of gulps. When did watching a man drink beer become a sexy thing? It must be the sexual deprivation. I haven't been with anyone except my vibrator since before the divorce. “I'm just going to put Tyler down, but there is money on the bookshelf for the food. You know, the one you assembled with your fancy tools.”

“Damn right, I built that shelf.” He puffs out his chest in what I assume is fake self-importance and I laugh. Luke doesn't strike me as the type of man to toot his own horn. He seems much humbler.

After putting my son in his crib, I join Luke in the kitchen where he already has one of the pizzas open and is putting two pieces on a plate he hands to me.

“Thank you.”

Page 6

Source Creation Date: May 19, 2025, 10:33 am

It's strange, sitting here eating dinner with a virtual stranger and feeling more content than I have in the past year. Actually, it is probably far longer than that. My marriage was strained and uncomfortable long before I caught my husband cheating.

I don't know this man, but I do know he is easy to be around. And I am insanely attracted to him, not that I will be acting on any of the dirty thoughts running through my mind. I am a mother now and I can't just throw caution to the wind.

"Tell me," he says after finishing his first slice of pizza. "Where is Tyler's father?"

"Why?" The word comes out more defensively than I intended.

He chuckles. "Relax, Abbi. I just want to make sure some dude isn't going to take a tire iron to my truck when he finds out I spent half the day assembling his woman's furniture."

I watch him carefully, looking for any indication that he is being dishonest. Not that I would be able to tell. I'm shit at picking up on people who are actively screwing me over if my history is anything to go by. Everyone knew Darren was a cheating dickhead and kept it from me, even people I thought were my friends.

"He isn't in the picture," I say, trying to decide what exactly I want to say. "Darren and I have been divorced a little over nine months."

"Nine months?" he asks in shock. "How old is Tyler?"

"Three months tomorrow," I say with a shrug, stuffing more pizza into my mouth,

hoping he'll let it go.

“What a prick.”

He looks angry. What a strange reaction. I think of all the friends I shared with my husband, people I loved like family, who simply pushed me aside when we got divorced. Everyone blamed me for the demise of my marriage. All those that lied to me and helped him hide his affairs. And yet, this man who has only seen me twice automatically takes my side.

“Why would you assume he was at fault?” I ask, curious about his thought process.

“I can't think of a single thing that would make a married woman want to be a single pregnant woman, or a single mother for that matter.”

“What if I cheated?” I didn't do a damn thing wrong but I want to know what he is thinking.

“Did you?” He raises a brow as he continues to watch me.

“No!” I'm immediately defensive.

He shrugs. “I already knew that,” he says. “I'm pretty good at reading people.”

“Tell me then. What do you see?” I want to know. For some reason, which I don't understand, his opinion of me feels like something important.

He studies me for a moment before answering. “I see a woman who is overwhelmed by the circumstances she has found herself in. I see someone who wants to laugh and live but doesn't, out of fear of being hurt again. I see a mother who loves her child. I see a fighter, a survivor, a damn strong woman.”

I feel tears gather in my eyes. It's been a long time since someone said anything nice to me.

"That's a lot to see in only two encounters," I joke, trying to break the tension.

"I'm observant like that."

Laughter bubbles out of me at his serious expression.

"So, what do you do for a living?" Luke asks, steering the conversation to something lighter.

"I'm a veterinarian. I used to have a practice in the city." I love animals. And I really have missed working with them. I can't wait to get back to work.

"And now?" He leans forward, completely focused on me.

"Now ... I need to start over. Find a premises and build a new client base."

He chuckles. "My best friend is going to be stoked about this. He always has to take Tyson to the city if anything happens."

"Tyson?" I ask, leaning forward as well.

"My friend, Alistair, has a rescue pit bull he loves like a child, and he has been slowly but surely adding to his ever-growing brood. He can't leave a stray or a rescue alone to save his life. My sister doesn't help matters. She keeps adopting animals and taking them to his house because she can't have them in the apartment."

Page 7

Source Creation Date: May 19, 2025, 10:33 am

More laughter shakes my frame as I listen to this man describe his friend. They sound more like brothers than friends.

“I’m an only child,” I say sadly. “I wish I had that kind of closeness to anyone.”

“I love my sister, but you can have her if you want. But I do have a ‘no refunds, no returns’ policy.”

“Oh my God,” I say, slapping his shoulder as I move around him to drop the plates in the dishwasher. “You can’t just give your sibling away.”

“I know.” He sighs. “It hasn’t ever worked, no matter how hard I’ve tried.”

Bending over to load the dishwasher, I hear a muttered curse behind me. Glancing at Luke, I find his gaze fixed firmly on my ass while he adjusts his hard-on. Well, shit. I didn’t even know I could still have this effect on a man. Since giving birth, I haven’t loved my body as much as I once did. His reaction is a massive ego boost.

I finish my task with a smile, feeling good about myself for the first time in over a year. Lust flows through my veins. Luke is everything I avoided in men my entire life. He’s too wild, too different from me and the life I want for myself. He is dangerous and free where I am cautious and staid. We would never work, but I honestly can’t think of a single damn reason not to climb the man like a tree.

“What do you do for a living?” I ask, leaning against the counter.

“I own the tattoo parlor in town with my two best friends.”

“I’ve always wanted to get something done,” I say with a shrug. “But it’s so permanent. What if I don’t like it?”

He smiles with a shake of his head. “Tattoos are very personal. You need the right artist to bring your vision to life. I’d be happy to work with you if you ever decide to get some ink.”

A shiver runs down my spine at the thought of his big hands on my skin while he marks me permanently. Why the hell is that thought so hot?

Chapter Four

At the End of My Frayed Self-Control

Luke

Today has been fun but now I need to leave. I’ve had four beers and my self-control is slipping. Since I first laid eyes on Abigail in those frayed cutoff shorts, I have been sporting a semi and it’s only gotten worse with time. Thinking of getting her in my chair and being the first to put my mark on her skin is doing crazy things to me.

I can see she isn’t overly self-confident, and I assume that has something to do with her divorce. Her husband cheated, that much is clear. I know because she got so defensive when I asked. I stare at her, taking in her natural beauty, and I can’t imagine any man lucky enough to catch her attention would ever be that stupid. I know I wouldn’t be.

I also know if I stay here any longer, I am going to do something one or both of us will regret in the morning. I find myself wanting to know her better, so I don’t want to screw this up. She is the type of woman I could see myself falling for easily.

I'm not sure where that thought came from. I've never considered myself the type of guy to settle down but suddenly my mind is filled with thoughts of building a life with this beautiful but broken woman.

Page 8

Source Creation Date: May 19, 2025, 10:33 am

“Thanks for the beer and pizza, Abigail,” I say, standing from my spot by the counter. “Let me know if you need any more help. I’ll be around.”

She smiles softly but it doesn’t reach her eyes before she follows me to the door. Even when she is laughing there is a tinge of sadness that hangs around her and I hope I get the chance to kick her ex-husband’s ass. His actions have left her feeling vulnerable and unwanted.

“I’m sure you have better things to do than assemble my furniture, Luke.”

I shake my head. Fuck, I like how this little bird says my name. Actually, there are quite a few things I like about her. We stare at one another for long, tense moments and I almost lean in to kiss her. Almost. But now isn’t the right time.

“I’m here if you need me. For anything,” I say with one last smile.

Turning away from her, I head to my own apartment. The silence envelops me and I instantly miss her laughter. I rip my shirt over my head throwing it over the back of the couch, standing in my living room, filled with frustration and longing. All this for a woman I barely know.

What the fuck is going on with me? Am I really that lonely? Horny? It’s not that she isn’t a great woman, but I’ve never been this enraptured by a female in my entire life.

I look around my apartment, and I notice how bare it looks. Abigail has art and photos against her wall, I have a flat-screen TV. There are no magazines or plants. This isn’t a home like hers, no, this is just where I shower and sleep. There are no

personal touches in my entire apartment and I feel I have somehow failed at being an adult.

Maybe I should grab a shower and rub one out before bed. My mind drifts from the state of my apartment to fill with dirty thoughts of my spunky little neighbor so I definitely won't need any extra stimulation. Seems like a solid idea.

A knock sounds on the front door before I can decide what to do with myself. Who the hell would be here after nine at night?

Swinging the door open, I find the object of my obsession.

"Abigail," I say in shock. "Is something wrong?"

I look down the hallway, but we are the only people on the floor, and I don't hear Tyler even though I see the monitor hooked onto a loop in her jean shorts.

"No," she says and shakes her head. "You said if I needed anything else, I could come to you."

I watch her blush a deep shade of red. That's interesting. Leaning against the doorjamb I smile at her.

"Sure. What do you need?"

Her gaze is stuck to my chest as she runs her tongue over her bottom lip. "It's a big thing to ask a virtual stranger and I want you to know you can say no. I won't be angry or offended."

"I can't answer if you don't ask," I cut in with a chuckle.

She finally looks at my face, tilting her chin up and straightening her back.

“I need a fuck buddy.” The words fall from her pouty lips without hesitation.

“Jesus wept, woman!” I grab her hand and pull her into my apartment, slamming the door shut. “You can’t just say shit like that where anyone can hear you.”

“Why not?” she asks, glancing at me from beneath her lashes.

“Because I don’t need anyone knowing our business.”

I push her against the wall, caging her in with my arms. Then I do what I’ve wanted to do all day, and I kiss her.

Her taste explodes across my senses, and I can’t help but take more from her. Soft, full lips pressed against mine, a breathy moan shaking me to my foundation. With a single kiss, she rocks my world and my soul to the core. And she doesn’t even know it. My cock is hardened lead in my jeans and I want to bend her over the nearest available surface and make her scream my name. Lust courses through and I fight to keep any semblance of control.

I may not understand it, or even be able to explain it, but I do know that my world and my life are changing rapidly. Instead of wanting to hold back or run from the unknown feelings she awakens in me, I allow myself to free-fall into whatever the hell this is.

Page 9

Source Creation Date: May 19, 2025, 10:33 am

Chapter Five

This Could Be A Very Bad Idea

Abigail

Gathering all my courage, I knock on my hot neighbor's door. I have no idea what the fuck I'm doing. What I do know is I am starved for human connection, and he clearly finds me as attractive as I do him. Also, I haven't had sex for over a year and I'm tired of the subpar orgasms I keep giving myself.

The moment he pushes me up against the wall I know I'm in over my head. I'm used to guys that are soft and calm. You know, the missionary position guys. This man is a wildfire, ripping through all my boundaries. Strangely, I don't care. I want wild, reckless, passionate.

Luke kisses the way he does everything else, with confidence. He pushes his tongue between my lips and takes what he wants from me without giving me a chance to pull away or object. He consumes me and sets my hormones on a rampage with a single, earth-shattering kiss.

For long moments he savors me before pulling away. Leaning his forehead against mine he breathes deeply.

"Fuck."

He turns and walks away from me, running his hands through his hair. My body

tingles from the aftereffects of his onslaught but my mind is screaming at me that I need to focus. For some reason, I think the kiss may not have been as explosive for him as for me.

“Never mind,” I say softly, gathering what little self-respect I have left, and open the door to leave.

A hand shoves the door closed. My body is spun around and pressed against the wooden surface once more.

“Where are you going?” Luke asks with a frown.

I fight to hold back the tears of embarrassment as I face him. “You don’t want anyone to know about me asking you to do this, and obviously the kiss was horrible. I’m leaving before you feel the need to let me down gently.”

“You’re insane.” He chuckles, placing a gentle kiss on my lips. “I don’t care who knows, I just don’t need the competition.”

Luke rubs his erection against my stomach, his hand caressing my neck, tilting my head all the way back. A soft mewling sound falls from my lips as a shiver works its way through my body. His leg works its way between my legs, and I shamelessly rub my crotch against his muscular thigh.

“And that kiss was everything,” he mumbles, kissing my chin before moving to my neck, one hand caressing my ass. “I needed a moment to regain some semblance of control.”

“What?” I whisper. I’m not sure I’m understanding the words he is saying, my hormones already wreaking havoc on my senses.

“I’ve been thinking of bending you over the back of your couch the whole day,” he says with a smile. His other hand fondles my breast through my tank top. “I want to fuck you until you scream.”

“Oh. Good,” I squeak. I seem to have lost all ability to say anything beyond single words.

“Yeah, good.”

He pulls down the pink fabric of my halter-neck top with the cup of my bra, exposing my breast to his gaze. He rubs a thumb in circles around the already-hardened nub, drawing another moan from within me.

“You’re so fucking sensitive,” he says lowly. “Are you still breastfeeding? I’ve never had breast milk before.”

“Shit,” I mumble as he draws the tip into his mouth. I had no idea that him suckling my milk would be sexy, but I feel the walls of my pussy flutter. The question catches me off guard, so it takes me a moment to gather my wits and nod. He groans against my breast, and I assume he is enjoying the experience.

Page 10

Source Creation Date: May 19, 2025, 10:33 am

If he didn't have a hand on my ass, I would have fallen to the ground at the sensation. It's been a long time since a man touched me, even before I caught my asshole ex-husband cheating. I forgot how much I enjoyed physical attention.

Releasing my breast, he lifts me into the air. My legs lock around his hips like I've been doing it forever. He marches deeper into the living room, laying me down on the burgundy suede couch he has there, staring at me.

"Are you sure this is what you want?"

"Yes."

I know I should take a moment and think this through. Maybe even make a pro-and-con list before jumping in with both feet but I am so tired of holding back, always worrying, never doing what I want, and just this once, I am going to throw caution to the wind and just live.

"Good." He smirks down at me, his eyes dark with lust.

He doesn't waste any more time. Unclipping the baby monitor from my jeans, he fiddles with the volume before placing it on the coffee table beside us. Luke unfastens my jean shorts and slips them down my legs. He licks his lips as he stares at the apex of my thighs.

"No panties," he murmurs, adjusting his erection. "If I knew that this morning..."

His words drift off. "What? What would you have done?" I ask, feeling a little more

brazen as I spread my thighs wider.

“I wouldn’t have built a damn shelf. That’s for sure.”

He falls between my thighs, licking at my center like it’s his favorite treat. My hips shoot up off the couch but Luke bands an arm across my stomach to hold me in place while he feasts.

The first flick of his tongue sets off my orgasm and a scream tears out of me. He presses two fingers into my spasming sex, and I moan like a wanton whore. I’ve never been this vocal with a man but then again, no man has ever touched me the way Luke does. His confidence is sexy as fuck and I can’t stop it from affecting me. He wrings every drop of pleasure from my body before drawing away. My body is lax with postorgasmic bliss.

A cocky smile stretches across Luke’s face, the muscles in his arms bulging as he holds himself above my body. He leans down and kisses me, letting me taste myself on his lips. I want to beg him to fuck me, to take away the aches inside me but I don’t get the opportunity.

On the coffee table, the baby monitor crackles before Tyler’s cries ring out.

Chapter Six

An Almost Happy Ending

Luke

The moment Tyler’s cries ring through the room, I know this interlude is over. Abigail is a mother and that will always come first. Pushing off her body, I quickly help her get her shorts back on and her top back in place.

I swear to everything holy, I am trying to be a gentleman here but the sight of a dark wet spot on her top where her breast milk is leaking through the layers has me feeling like a fiend. That was a first for me and I know I'll be doing it again the moment she gives me a chance.

Page 11

Source Creation Date: May 19, 2025, 10:33 am

“I’m so sorry,” Abigail says as I clip her baby monitor back in place.

“No need to apologize.” I smile up at her.

She is standing between my thighs, while I re-dress her. I place a kiss on her stomach with a smile. I want to lick every inch of her perfectly smooth skin but now is not the time.

“I knew what I was getting into. Your boy comes first, as he should.”

“What about you?” she asks, staring at my erection. She licks her lips and my cock twitches in my jeans at the thought of her lips wrapped around my length.

“Next time,” I reply with a smile.

She shakes her head just as Tyler’s cries grow louder. Standing, I take her hand and lead her to the door. Opening it, I give her a smack on the ass.

“I’ll see you around, Mama.”

Abigail kisses me hard and fast before making her way back to her apartment. I don’t take my eyes off her swaying ass until she is safely inside.

My cock throbs in my pants and I know I won’t get any sleep if I don’t grab a shower and get myself in hand. Locking the door behind me, I make my way to the bathroom and start the shower.

Stripping out of my jeans, I stare at myself in the mirror. I have no idea why I would agree to be Abigail's fuck buddy, but now that we have crossed that line, I know there is no turning back. I want her and she has given me the perfect opportunity to get my way.

In my bones I know I want more than just sex from her. But I also know she has already been hurt and getting her to give me a chance may take some time. But she has opened the door for me to slip in and I won't let this opportunity pass me by. With every moment I spend in her presence, I know I am willing to put in the time with her, get to know her, and win her trust and her heart.

Stepping beneath the spray I bow my head, allowing the water to cascade over my tense muscles. Wrapping my hand around the throbbing length of my erection, I allow myself to relive the past twenty minutes. How she tasted on my lips and felt beneath my calloused fingertips. The sounds she made and how beautifully she came undone beneath my tongue. My tattooed hand on her perfect, unmarked skin looked stunning and I want to see it again and again.

A vision forms in my mind.

Abigail, naked in my bed.

Abigail, moaning as I spear her with my cock.

Abigail, coming with my cock buried deep inside her.

It only takes a few more strokes before I find my own bliss. My orgasm barrels through me, long ropes of white cum splashing against the dark blue tiles. My knees feel weak, and my breathing is ragged as I wait for everything to return to normal.

The water goes cold as I scrub my body, but nothing can wipe the smile from my

face.

“Why are you smiling?” Hailey, my business partner’s fiancée asks. “You hate mornings.”

“Can’t I just be happy?” I know it’s out of the norm for me but I haven’t been able to help myself since last night.

She gives me a look of disbelief before starting the coffee maker we have set up at the shop. “I need coffee before I can deal with your lying.”

I chuckle, heading to my station. Hailey is the type of woman who can’t help but stick her nose in everyone’s business. She will be in here to grill me eventually. Not that I know what I will tell her.

I don’t have any appointments but I’m hoping if I hang around the shop for a few hours we might get a walk in. If I stay in the apartment, I know it won’t be long before I head next door to Abbi’s place and fuck her on every available surface. But I don’t want her thinking all I want is sex, so I need to let her be the one making the first moves for the foreseeable future.

Whatever is happening between Abigail and me is so undefinable. I know I want her more than I have ever wanted anyone else in my life, but she has been through so much, I don’t know if or when she will be ready to let another man into her life. I also find myself not wanting to just be a fuck buddy, the term already irritating me. I want to know her, what makes her tick. I want more than just sex.

I barely know her, but I already feel protective. It’s completely irrational but I already want to keep her. Pulling my cell from my back pocket, I scroll through the contacts

before dialing.

“Don’t you have a life?” the voice on the other end complains.

“You need to get used to being up early. Babies don’t wait for you to catch your beauty rest,” I reply. “Besides, you’re one of my best friends and I need advice.”

Adam grunts before I hear him moving around. “Hold on.” For long moments all I hear is shuffling before he returns to the call. “Lily is sleeping. Her morning sickness is more like midnight to five a.m. sickness.”

Page 12

Source Creation Date: May 19, 2025, 10:33 am

Just last week they had all their friends and family over to tell us they were expecting their first child. I couldn't be happier for them and there isn't a more deserving couple. They will make great parents, and I know both of them are excited for this next phase in their lives.

"I'm sorry she is having a hard time," I say, and I mean it. Lily is one of the best people I know, and Adam is lucky to have her in his life. Sometimes, I find myself jealous of my friend even though I know it's stupid.

"I hear you. What do you need?"

"I met someone..." I need to get to the point before he loses interest.

"And?" he already sounds irritated.

"What is the difference between love and lust?"

Adam chuckles. "The fact that you have to ask me means you're already fucked, my friend."

"I only met her this week," I protest.

"It takes a minute to like someone, an hour to love someone, but a lifetime to forget someone. Nothing works on a set timeline."

And then he hangs up. Fuck load of help he is.

Chapter Seven

With Some Pep In My Step

Abigail

I never understood what other women meant when they said an orgasm could do wonders for one's disposition. But I get it now. I haven't been able to stop smiling since I walked out of Luke's apartment. I slept like the dead and my mood is the best it has been in years. Yes, I said years. Before last night, I had only been with Darren, Tyler's dad, my ex-husband. Sex was just another thing we ticked off on our list of chores. It was mechanical. Darren also hated going down on me and he made it very clear, so I never enjoyed it.

But what Luke did last night was out of this world. I can't wait to do more with him. I mean, if a single oral orgasm has blown my only other sexual experience out of the water, I can't imagine what actual sex would be like.

Pushing the stroller down Main Street in Franklinton, I smile at my babbling son. The sun is shining, and I just found a vacant premises that would be perfect for my veterinary practice. The estate agent is already drawing up the rental contract for me to sign. This day is already one of the best since moving here and it's not even noon yet.

A woman with bright red hair smiles at me where she stands on the sidewalk poking at the screen of her cell phone, and I can't help but return the smile.

"Hi," she says as I approach.

"Hello," I reply with a wave that makes me feel silly.

Page 13

Source Creation Date: May 19, 2025, 10:33 am

“Are you new in town?” she asks. “Sorry, I’m a little forward. But it’s a small town so I know most people.”

I laugh at her explanation. “Yes. I moved here about a month ago.”

She claps her hands before opening the glass store door behind her and yelling inside. “Fresh meat!”

It only takes a moment for a short and curvy dark-haired woman to make her way outside. “A baby!” she almost yells, bouncing in her excitement. “Can I hold him?”

I’m shocked and it must show on my face. Coming from the big city, people are rarely friendly and even when they are it is never like this.

“Don’t be rude,” the redhead admonishes. “Introduce yourself before you try to steal the woman’s kid.”

“This is Hailey,” a male voice I know too well says from behind me. “And the crazy one is Skye.”

I look over my shoulder to see Luke smiling down at my son. He is much too handsome to be walking around unsupervised. He could cause a car crash. The silly thought makes me smile wider.

“This is Abigail and her son Tyler,” he explains to the other women.

“Whatever,” Skye says impatiently. “We all know each other and it’s great. Now give

me the baby.”

Luke arches a brow in question, and I nod. He leans around me to unbuckle Tyler before handing him over to what I would have thought was a crazy woman. A moment later she is gone, disappearing into the store.

Luke places a hand on my lower back, leading me inside with Hailey trailing behind us. Inside is a cacophony of colorful pictures. Some were drawn on paper, others painted on the wall, and even some photographs. I’ve never been inside a tattoo parlor, but I am instantly curious about everything. Rock music plays softly in the background, and I can’t help but stare.

“Isn’t he beautiful?” I hear Skye say to someone, but I don’t hear a reply.

A scowling man walks out of one of the back rooms and glares at all of us. He’s a mountain of a man, covered in ink. He is intimidating but handsome in a dangerous way.

“Who thought it was a good idea to let her hold a baby?” he asks, his deep voice filling the space.

“Sorry, she asked,” I say softly, feeling a blush cover my face.

He studies me before his features soften. “You’re new, so you didn’t know.”

“Didn’t know?” I ask. I’m confused as fuck. These people are a little much...

“Skye isn’t allowed around babies because she gets all maternal and shit,” Hailey says making her way behind the counter. “And then she makes Alistair adopt another dog.”

“I live in an apartment,” Skye says with a shrug. “They don’t allow dogs and I’m allergic to cats. Besides, Ali has a massive yard.”

“You did this!” He accuses and points at Hailey, who only chuckles.

“How many do you have?” I cut in, asking the big man. But he doesn’t get a chance to answer.

Skye answers for him, smiling and cooing at my son. Tyler is happy with all the attention because he laughs loudly.

“Ali only has one dog. The other four are mine,” she says.

“My name is Alistair,” he grumbles, smiling at my son over her shoulder before returning his sharp gaze to me. “Who are you?”

“Abigail. And if you have that many animals, I’m sure we’ll be seeing more of each other.”

“How so?” he asks with a frown.

“I’m opening a veterinarian practice a couple of doors down.”

Chapter Eight

She Fits In

Luke

Abigail is a virtual stranger and already she has seamlessly fallen into easy camaraderie with everyone she's met. Alistair is probably the hardest one of us to win over and he's already smiling at her.

I can't tear my gaze from her as she banters with the people in my life. She is dressed in dark blue jeans and a flowy deep purple top. Her hair is down, and I can see she has quite a bit of pink running through her black hair. She is breathtaking and my heart feels full for the first time in ages. If I can only convince her to let me into her life and her heart, and not just her body. For now, I will accept our arrangement, but it won't be long before she realizes she is mine.

Skye's voice pulls me from my inner musings.

"A vet?" she asks with excitement. "Tyson has a lump on the inside of his left leg. When are you opening?" Like everything else the woman does, she speaks a mile a minute.

"Give her a minute," I cut in. "She just got the shop."

"It's fine." Abigail smiles at me, squeezing my arm before facing Skye. "It'll take a couple of weeks to get all the gear I need and have the practice up and running. But

I'm happy to do house calls in the meantime."

"Really? That would be so cool." Skye hands Tyler over to Alistair, who has a terrified look on his face. "Can we go now?"

Abigail looks torn between laughing and ripping her son out of my friend's big hands. I don't have the same problem. Hailey and I both burst out laughing before a flash goes off.

"What the hell, Hailey?" Alistair grumbles.

"Everyone gonna get a kick out of your face when I put this online," she chuckles. "Have you never held a baby?"

Alistair frowns, thinking. "The last time was when Damien was this small."

"Damien?" Abigail asks.

"His cousin, Laine's youngest brother," I explain with a snicker. "He just turned twenty-one, so it's been a long time."

"Wow. It has been a while," she teases my best friend, and I swear the tips of his ears turn red.

"Can we go already?" Skye cuts in, hopping from one foot to the other.

"She'll never let you have a moment of peace," I chuckle. "Go on, I've got Tyler."

Abigail raises a brow questioningly. "Are you sure?"

"Yeah, how hard can it be?"

Page 15

Source Creation Date: May 19, 2025, 10:33 am

This is something I have to learn to do on my own if I want them both to be part of my life. Why not start now?

Famous last words.

Me and my big fucking mouth. Abigail isn't gone all of five minutes before all hell breaks loose. Tyler goes from a smiling, laughing little boy to a little screaming demon dressed in baby blue. It doesn't help that between the three of us, not a single one knows anything about babies. I remember the first weeks after Abbi moved into the apartment next door and I suddenly feel soul-deep empathy for what she went through. Now I understand why she burst into tears that first night I went over.

Hailey searches the bag Abigail left for a bottle, but Tyler just spits it out. His diaper isn't wet or dirty and no amount of swaying and cooing seems to do anything. Suddenly, I feel like a complete and utter failure. I don't know what's wrong and he's too small to tell me. I feel impotent and incapable.

"This worked the last time," I mumble as I hold him against my chest.

Hailey looks disbelieving and Alistair keeps looking at his phone.

"Should I call them?" he asks.

"No!" Hailey and I shout in unison.

“We can’t admit defeat so easily,” Hailey says with a frown. Tyler is still crying, his fists are clenched, and his little face is red. “Is that exactly what you did the last time?”

“I wasn’t wearing a shirt.”

“I’ll table that for later.” She takes Tyler from me, lightly patting his back. “Time to strip, bitch.”

I don’t think this will work but I’m running low on options. So, I whip my t-shirt off and hand it to my best friend, smiling at his terrified expression. Taking Tyler back, I cradle the screaming infant against my chest and sway a bit. It’s almost instant, the change in him. He stops screaming, staring up at me. Every couple of seconds he hiccups but I hope that, too, will calm down soon.

“What the hell?” Alistair whispers, leaning over to look at the baby I’m cradling.

“I saw it on TV once,” Hailey says softly, smiling down at the now silent little boy. “Skin-on-skin contact lets them feel connected.”

“Wow.” Alistair and I say in unison.

The word is a reverent whisper that falls from my lips. This kid already has me wrapped around his little finger. I thought I was falling for his mother, but it seems I have been falling for them both.

Chapter Nine

Fur Babies

Source Creation Date: May 19, 2025, 10:33 am

Abigail

I'm a little afraid of riding shotgun with Skye. The woman is all energy and that translates to her driving as well. Luckily, Franklinton's roads are relatively empty, and we make it to Alistair's house safely.

"You're a vet, so you probably already know this," she says once she kills the engine and we both step out of the car. "But pit bulls are one of the most misunderstood dog breeds ever. The kids are going to come at you fast and furious but the worst thing that will happen is getting pushed over and slobbered on."

I'm well aware of all these things but I love that she is taking the time to explain it to me. People are terrified of the breed because of what they see in the news. But not all kids are the same and neither are all dogs. You wouldn't punish all little boys for one boy's actions, so why do it to a breed of dogs?

"Thanks for the heads-up," I say with a smile. "Now let's see if I can help your baby."

Skye smiles, opening a side gate and leading the way. It happens just like she says. One moment we are alone, and the next, there are four pit bulls vying for our attention. There are various colors and sizes, some have visible signs of abuse, but all of them are giving us those goofy pittie grins and I can't help but bend down and give them all a little love.

"Tyson!" Skye calls out with a frown.

At the side of the house, beneath the shade of a large oak tree, I see a nose sticking out. I point in that direction and Skye takes off like a shot.

“Oh, baby,” she coos, falling to her knees.

The moment I lay eyes on him, I know what the problem is. “How long has that bump been there?”

“I saw it last night when I took him for his walk,” she says, tear-filled eyes imploring me to do something. “I’m sure it wasn’t there the day before.”

I nod. “Hand me your phone,” I say, holding out my hand. “What do you have Alistair saved under?”

“Ali-bear,” she replies, already crying.

I’m trying to remain calm and efficient so as not to scare her, but she knows this is serious. She knew the moment he didn’t come to the gate.

“Hey, girlie,” Alistair answers after the second ring.

“It’s Abigail. You need to come home. Now.”

“What’s wrong?” I can hear him moving in the background. “Is everyone okay?”

“We’re fine. But Tyson has a spider bite that I can’t treat,” I explain. “He’s lethargic and not moving on his own. You need to take him to the city.”

“Shit!” he curses. “I’ll be there in a few minutes.” And then he ends the call.

“Skye,” I say, sitting on the grass beside her. “I need you to get me a glass of water.

If you have one, a syringe or a straw, too.”

“Why?” she sobs.

“He’s dehydrated, sweetie. I want to try and get some water in him.”

She nods several times before jumping up and running into the house. The other dogs are standing around watching us except for a tan bitch. She rests her head on my leg and stares at me questioningly.

“We’ll get him better. Don’t worry,” I say, scratching her ears.

Skye returns with a jug of water and a handful of bendy straws. If I wasn’t so worried I’d be laughing my ass off. In the short time I’ve known her, I’ve come to realize the woman really doesn’t know how to do a damn thing in half measures.

Taking a straw, I push it into the jug. Then I place my finger over the opening above the water line and lift it out. Once I have the straw placed in his mouth, I release my finger and the water rushes out. The first two times, all the water dribbles out and my heart sinks. But the third time, he swallows. I repeat the action over and over until Alistair arrives.

“Take him to Doctor Novak. I’ll call ahead and let them know you’re coming,” I say as I move out of the way so he can pick Tyson up. “I’ll take Skye’s car back to the shop.”

“Thanks, Doc.” He nods before walking to his pickup.

“We’re going to be good friends,” Skye says, hugging me tightly. “Sandy doesn’t like people and won’t let anyone besides me touch her. She chose you.”

And then she's gone. Leaving me to stare at the tan girl sitting beside me.

Page 17

Source Creation Date: May 19, 2025, 10:33 am

“I assume you’re Sandy.”

I sit down on the grass and give the other fur babies some attention. A situation like this is just as stressful for them as it is for their humans. I allow myself five minutes to breathe and just release the stress of the situation before heading to Skye’s little yellow car. I don’t know Franklinton as well as I wish I did and I was mostly focused on staying alive while Skye was driving, so I take a few wrong turns as I navigate my way back to the tattoo parlor. But I make it back eventually.

Chapter Ten

How To Raise Someone Else’s Child

Luke

Alistair tears out of here so quickly I can’t help but allow dread to settle in my stomach. Hailey walks into my section with a glass of water for my customer and a frown.

“I don’t know,” I answer the unasked question. “Give it ten minutes and then start calling them.”

She hands the glass to Steven, the walk-in customer I was hoping for, before leaving us alone. I’ve worked on him before but he rarely plans on getting new ink. He is more a spur-of-the-moment type of guy.

“This is new,” he says and gestures to me.

I chuckle. Hailey strapped Tyler to my naked chest using one of her scarves. It's a little weird but it works. I can still help customers, and the kid is fast asleep.

"He's the son of a girl I'm dating," I reply. A frown pulls at my features.

Wait. What? When did we start dating? Is this what Laine meant when he said I'd know the right woman for me? Can a few days really be enough to make these kinds of decisions?

My mind has been swirling with thoughts of her for hours. It's been appreciation and lust, thoughts of claiming and keeping her, or just having some fun. I know I want her, but do I want to keep her? Do I want to raise another man's child? I do know I don't want to give her or Tyler up so maybe she is my girl after all...

"Not sure you're dating?" Steven asks with a chuckle.

"We've only known each other a few days and there's lots of outside issues."

"But you want to be her man, right?"

"Absolutely," I reply with a smile.

"That's cool," he says, lying back down. "Not many guys are confident enough to raise another man's child." I raise a brow. "My old lady had four under the age of eight when I met her. She thought I would run for the hills the moment I found out. Now our oldest just finished high school with honors."

"And the father?" I don't want to pry but this guy can give me an insight I didn't know I needed.

Page 18

Source Creation Date: May 19, 2025, 10:33 am

“He came around in the beginning. He was more this weird uncle that always brought presents,” he replies as the sound of my tattoo gun fills the room. “But I was never worried. I wouldn’t do anything to keep a man from spending time with his kids, you know?”

“How’s your wife feel about all that?”

He chuckles and I almost fuck up a line. “Sorry,” he says. “I told her if she wanted to go back to him all she had to do was say so and I would step aside. Family is a big deal to me and all. She told me to fuck off. Said if she was done with me, she’d find herself a pretty little wifey, something nice to look at.”

I shut down the gun as my entire body wracks with laughter.

“Sounds like quite a woman.”

“I’ll bring her around next time.”

Twenty minutes after Alistair left, Hailey still can’t reach either of them. Steven has left with the little script tattoo he wanted, and I am stressed as fuck. Of course, I don’t have Abigail’s cell number so I can’t call her.

When the door swings open and she walks in, a sigh of relief falls from my lips. She stares at me in confusion before heading to the diaper bag and digging inside. She pulls out her cell phone, quickly scrolls, and dials.

“Dr. Novak, please. This is Dr. Robins.” She waits impatiently, tapping her foot. “Hi, Emma. Sorry to call out of the blue. I’ve sent some friends your way with their pit bull. He has a spider bite.” She listens to the other woman speak. “The owner says she saw the lump last night. I don’t have a practice set up yet, so I gave him some water for dehydration. He’s around eighty pounds.”

She listens once more before turning to me. “How old is Tyson?”

“Three,” Hailey chimes in when I take too long.

“He’s around three years old. I don’t have any other medical history, but I do know he’s a rescue. They should be there in the next ten minutes. Thank you so much.”

She ends the call and pockets her phone before facing me. “Why are you half naked?” Her brow arches with the question.

“He wouldn’t stop crying.” Her gaze swings from mine to Hailey’s before she bursts out laughing.

“I’m sorry I took so long,” she replies after her laughter dies out. “I’m not fully acquainted with Franklinton yet and I wasn’t paying attention when we drove there.”

“I should’ve warned you.” I nod, placing her son in her waiting arms. “Letting Skye drive is a little...”

“Scary,” Hailey adds.

Abigail shakes her head with a smile as she helps me undo the scarf before putting a sleeping Tyler in his stroller. I watch her closely, looking for her previous sadness but I don’t see it. Is she happier around me and my crazy extended family or is she just hiding it better today?

Chapter Eleven

I Want More Than Proper

Abigail

I leave the tattoo parlor after Luke swears to let me know the moment they hear anything about Tyson. I don't have Alistair or Skye's numbers, but I do have his programmed into my phone now. He wasn't happy when he couldn't reach me earlier.

Heading home, I feel the adrenaline crash. My entire body is tired. It's been a long time since I've worked in a life-or-death situation, and I've forgotten how much that can take out of a person. Tyler is still sleeping when we get home, so I put him in his crib before changing into some yoga pants and a tank top and falling down on the couch to get some rest as well.

I don't know how long I sleep, but I do know what wakes me. A featherlight touch against my cheek and the same voice I heard in my dreams.

"Abigail," Luke murmurs, pushing the hair out of my face.

Slowly, I open my eyes to see his face right in front of mine. I stare into his deep green eyes, losing myself in the depths. Dear God, this man could wreck me if he ever got the chance. I know that thought should terrify me but just like with everything else I've done since I first met Luke, I want to jump in with both feet and not worry about the consequences. I want to know what it feels like when a man like

Luke claims a woman. And somehow, I know I can trust him not to hurt me even if I can't explain it.

"You need to lock your door," he says with a frown, drawing me from my thoughts. "Anyone could walk in here while you're sleeping like the dead."

"Shit," I say sitting upright. "I forgot. I had a massive adrenaline crash and just dozed off. How is Tyson?"

Luke shakes his head with a smile. "He's doing fine. Doc was able to fix him right up and he'll be able to come home in a day or two."

"That's good," I mumble but I'm not really focused on the conversation anymore. I'm more interested in the fact that he hasn't looked at my face since I sat up. "My eyes are up here, you know," I say, tilting his chin up.

He has the decency to look a little chagrined.

"I'm not going to say sorry because I won't lie to you. But I've been thinking about your tits since last night. Hell, I saw these beauties in my dreams last night." His finger runs along the neckline of my top, grazing the skin of my breasts. "I've always been an ass man but your breasts have converted me."

A laugh falls from my lips. I love his honesty and the fact that he has his gaze glued to my chest once more. I feel sexy and desired, and I don't want it to stop. I will put this all down to still being half asleep if anyone asks later but I quickly lift my shirt over my head.

"These?" I ask, cupping the blue lace-covered mounds.

"Fuck, yes," he mumbles, leaning closer to run his nose between the globes. "Take

off your bra, Abbi. Show me.”

Desire courses through me as I do as he asks. The heat in his gaze does things to me. Since having Tyler, I haven’t looked at my body the same way. My breasts are still larger than before and they have silvery stretch marks that I hate, as do my stomach and hips. But the way Luke licks his lips makes me feel sexy and desirable.

I’ve never been overly sexual, but he draws it out of me. Using my hands, I lift my breasts before pushing them together. The lust flowing through my veins has my nipples leaking milk and I can feel the wetness against my fingers.

“Fuck, that’s pretty,” Luke says before taking a nipple into his mouth, lapping at the milk before moving to the other side.

“Oh, my,” I moan as Luke pushes his way between my thighs. “Why is that so hot?”

“No idea,” he says, standing. “But I can tell you I want more.”

I can see he has a plan in mind but so do I. Before he can move me, my hands are working at the belt holding his dark jeans up. I think I catch him off-guard because he doesn’t stop me immediately. The moment I have his jeans undone and pushed down his hips, his cock springs free.

A shiver of anticipation and trepidation works through me as I wrap my hand around his girth. His dick may be around the same length as my ex’s, but his girth is impressive. My fingers don’t touch when I stroke his hardness, and I know he is going to feel so good inside me. I stare at the silver ball at the tip in amazement and trepidation. This will be an entirely new experience for me.

I lean forward and a hand on my cheek stops me. I stare up at him, waiting to hear what he has to say.

“You don’t have to do that,” he says softly, rubbing his thumb over my lips. His eyes have darkened, the corded muscles in his neck visible as he strains to keep control. “I didn’t come over here for sexual favors. I just wanted to see you.”

My heart skips a beat at his words. He says exactly the right thing to make me feel like this is more than just sex.

“I’m doing this because I want to,” I say with a smile before I give the angry red crown a lick. “I was dreaming of sucking your cock when you woke me up.”

If he can be honest, so can I. I watch him swallow before he nods. Sliding from the couch, I fall to my knees before trying to take as much of his length inside my mouth as I can. Luke wraps his hands in my hair with a hiss. He holds me in place.

“Slowly,” he says, staring down into my eyes. “I want this to last and your lips around my dick feel too good.”

Page 20

Source Creation Date: May 19, 2025, 10:33 am

I may not be able to move my mouth, but I can move my tongue. Tracing the slit at the tip, I am rewarded with a low pump into my mouth as his hips shoot forward.

“Fuck!” he curses loudly before pulling me off his length. “I’m trying to behave but you’re not making it easy.”

“We’re going to always be honest with each other, right?” I ask after releasing his cock with a pop.

“I hope so,” he says with a frown.

“I’ve had proper. I’ve had plain. What I’ve never had is passion, recklessness. I don’t want you to hold back with me,” I say softly, hoping he understands what I mean.

He stares at me for long seconds, cataloging all my reactions before he speaks. “If I do anything you don’t like or it becomes too much, you need to stop me.”

I nod enthusiastically and he chuckles. “I promise.”

“Then open those pretty lips so I can fuck your face.”

Chapter Twelve

Dirty Her Up

Luke

The vision before me has my balls already drawing up tight to my body. Abigail, on her knees with my cock between her swollen pink lips, will forever be my favorite memory. I can't think of a single sexier thing.

Holding onto her hair, I push my erection into her wet mouth. I know she said she didn't want me to hold back but I don't know a damn thing about her limits or even what she likes. From the sound of it, I don't think she does, either.

Pushing deeper into her throat, I feel her gag and retreat. She grabs my bare ass and pulls me closer. She gags a second time but doesn't stop until her nose is pressed against my pubic hair.

Fuck, that's hot.

"Damn, Mama, you're hungry for my fat cock."

The words fall from my lips before I can even consider how they might affect her. Her teary gaze collides with mine as her moans travel up the length of my erection. Fuck, fuck, fuck. She is a damn goddess. Sucking my cock like a champ and enjoying my filthy mouth? I couldn't ask for more.

Drawing out of her wetness until only the tip lies on her lips, I decide to take a chance. I pump my hips into her mouth, fucking her face shallowly at first. Her moans float up to my ears and I know she is enjoying this just as much as I am. Slowly, I start fucking deeper, spittle falling from her lips to land on her chest and mix with the milk dripping from her lush tits.

"I want a fucking photo of you like this, all dirty and horny."

Page 21

Source Creation Date: May 19, 2025, 10:33 am

I swear I don't know where that came from, but I can't get the thought out of my head. A moment later, a cell phone is pressed into my palm. I unlock it using my fingerprint, grateful it's mine before struggling to find the fucking camera app. Abigail stares up at me expectantly, lifting her tits higher while she suctions my aching cock.

I snap three pictures hoping to God that one captures the way she looks right now because I'll fucking cry if it doesn't. Tossing the device on the couch I reward her with a few more pumps before stepping away. A mewling sound leaves her, and I almost return to give her what she wants. But I want to be buried inside her for the first time.

Lifting her from the floor, I carry her to her bedroom. Which is more effort than you would think with my jeans around my knees. Let me tell you, it's not sexy at all.

Depositing her in the center of her bed, I kick off my jeans before fishing out my wallet. For a moment I consider not wearing a condom, but I can't do that to her. We need to talk about shit like that first. But the thought of knocking her up and binding her to me forever doesn't put me off at all, if anything it makes my cock jerk in her direction.

Tearing into the wrapper, I make sure to sheath my length before crawling onto the bed and quickly divesting her of the yoga pants she is wearing. I can see the arousal clinging to the puffy lips of her cunt and I almost nut right then and there.

"If you want me to stop you need to tell me right now, Abigail," I say, staring at her face. "This will change everything between us."

“Luke?” she questions with a frown.

I may fuck this up, but I need to make sure she knows what she is getting into. “I don’t want to be your fuck buddy. We’ve only known each other a couple of days but I want to see where this will go.”

She lifts herself up on her elbows, staring at me. “I thought we were just having fun.”

“Oh, this will be plenty fun,” I say, running two of my fingers along her sopping slit. “But I don’t want to be a booty call. I want a chance.”

She watches me closely, taking in every inch of my expression. “I don’t know if I’ll be any good at being with someone, and I have tons of issues from before, but I’m willing to try.”

A blush suffuses her cheeks as I release a breath I didn’t know I was holding. My friends told me when I fell it would be hard and fast, and I laughed them off. Now I get it. Already this woman has burrowed beneath my skin, and I can’t imagine life without her. I’ll hold off on any declarations until she is a little more confident in what we have, but I already know I am in love with her.

And Tyler.

Leaning forward, I push her thighs wide open, positioning myself at her entrance. Her hips tilt up, seeking me out, and I can’t help but smirk. I’m going to wreck this pussy until she can’t remember another man before me. Pushing into her channel, my eyes roll back in my head. Scorching heat surrounds me in a vicelike grip, drawing me deeper into her until I bottom out.

Her hands grip the bedding beneath her, her head thrashing against the pillows. She is stunning and I can’t hold back any longer. Pulling back, I thrust into her harshly,

shaking her breasts before my eyes. A sound I haven't heard before falls from her lips as her cunt grips me tighter and I repeat the move. It only takes four thrusts to push her over the edge and into her orgasm. The fluttering of her walls sets me off and I follow her into bliss.

Chapter Thirteen

That Was Intense

Abigail

I don't know how long I lay there but when I do come back to myself, I am wrapped in Luke's thick arms. He cuddles me from behind, his muscular chest to my back.

Source Creation Date: May 19, 2025, 10:33 am

“Are you okay?” he asks pressing soft kissing to the bare skin of my back.

“I can’t feel my legs,” I mumble.

His entire body jostles mine as he laughs. “Not what I meant but thanks for the ego boost.”

I take a moment to work through my thoughts and emotions before I answer the question. “Things happen in the heat of the moment.”

Moving away, he shifts me to my back so he can see my face. I want to hide from him because his words meant everything to me, but I won’t hold him to them. Just thinking he may not have meant what he said cracks my heart wide open. I want to be enough for a man like him but taking on a divorced woman with a baby and a ton of baggage is a big ask.

“Listen to me, Abigail,” he says, gripping my chin and forcing me to focus on him. “I didn’t say a damn thing I didn’t mean. I want you ...us. I want a chance to see where this can go.”

“Luke...” I start but he cuts me off with a toe-curling kiss.

“I’m not asking you to marry me, yet,” he says with a grin once he has kissed me senseless. “All I’m asking is that you keep an open mind.”

“I can do that,” I say breathlessly.

His smile steals my breath right before he kisses me again. He situates himself between my thighs again and I welcome him, ready for round two.

But we are cut short as Tyler's cry rings through the apartment. Luke kisses me quickly before jumping from the bed and grabbing his jeans from the floor.

"I'll grab him while you get dressed. I think all of us could use some food."

He doesn't give me a chance to argue, he simply takes charge. Lying on my bed for another minute, I smile to myself. I love that he isn't afraid to handle Tyler and is willing to let me put my son first. I don't know many men that want to raise someone else's child, but I can honestly say I don't see that being a problem here.

Sliding from the bed, I grab a bright yellow sundress from my closet and slip it over my head. It will give me easy access to breastfeed Tyler and it isn't too constricting. I also want to know what Luke thinks of me in a dress. Stepping into the kitchen, I catch him talking to my son as he cradles him to his bare chest, and my heart melts.

"I probably should have talked to you sooner, but the decision is already made. I'm dating your mom now," he explains while Tyler watches him sucking his thumb. "I'm going to be around a lot, and I hope you and I can build our own relationship because I really like her. I like you both and I want to keep you. What do you think, buddy?"

Tyler babbles, reaching out to touch Luke's face, and I have to turn away before he sees me. I didn't think he could get any better but the private moment I just witnessed has me melting for this man. It takes me a moment to get my emotions under control before I walk into the kitchen.

"What are you two guys up to?" I ask with a smile, taking Tyler from Luke.

“Just chatting.” Luke smiles. “I’m ordering takeout for the non-milk drinkers. Do you want Thai or burgers?”

“I would love some Mexican,” I counter.

“A woman after my own heart. I’ll make the call.”

Taking a seat on the couch, I lower the strap of my dress and push the material away to expose my breast. Tyler latches on immediately and starts drinking. He has always been a healthy eater.

“I feel like an asshole,” Luke says, standing beside the couch watching us.

“Why?” I ask with a frown.

“I’m jealous of our boy.”

I don’t know if it was a slip of the tongue or if he meant to say it but my heart trips over itself at his words. Our boy.

I smile to hide my reaction. “Don’t worry. There’s more where that came from.”

Luke gives me a heated look and I can’t hold back my blush. He takes a seat on the couch across from us and grabs his phone. I didn’t know I could blush any harder, but I do. Watching him, I know he is looking at the photo he took. His gaze darkens as he bites his bottom lip.

“Is it what you had in mind?” I ask softly.

His gaze collides with mine. “Better.” He winks at me as someone knocks on the door.

Walking past me, he leans down to kiss my lips before making his way to see who it is. I hear a man's voice. A sudden unsettling feeling wraps around me and I hold my son just a little bit tighter.

Source Creation Date: May 19, 2025, 10:33 am

“There’s a man here,” Luke says as he walks back toward me. “Says his name is Darren.”

He is frowning and I can feel the dark emotions rolling off him. I want to comfort him, reassure him of everything that has happened between us in the last hour, but my heart is already racing.

That’s where the feeling came from. I haven’t even seen him and already my soul knew he was here. I want Luke to tell him to fuck off, but I know he won’t leave. Luckily, Tyler has already fallen asleep, with my nipple still in his mouth, might I add.

“I’ll put Tyler in his crib. Will you let him in?”

Luke nods but I can see he isn’t happy. In front of my eyes, I have seen him go from happy and carefree to shut down. My chest aches as he turns away from me. He grabs his shirt from the floor before heading back down the hallway toward the door and my waiting ex. How does he always know when to show up? The moment I start to move on or find any kind of joy, he’s there to ruin it for me.

Taking my time, I lay my son in his crib and watch him sleep. I don’t know what my ex wants but I know I want him out of my home as soon as possible. He is ruining this perfect day.

Walking out of Tyler’s room, I see Darren in the middle of the lounge looking around with a frown, assessing everything. He sees me watching him and smiles.

“Abigail.” The sound of his voice grates on my nerves, and I want to plug my ears.

“Where’s Luke?” I ask.

“He left,” Darren says with a frown. “I told him we need to spend some time together as a family.”

My eyebrows shoot into my hairline. “Family?” My voice is incredulous.

“Yes, family.” He seems confused by my reaction. “You are my wife and that child in there is part of my DNA.”

A harsh laugh falls from my lips. “You don’t even know his name.” My voice is rising with every word I speak. But Darren has always pushed my buttons and now that I see him for the user asshole he really is, I can’t hold back my reactions. “And according to the state of Louisiana, I am no longer your wife. Or did you somehow forget what the judge said?”

“A boy?” A small smile tugs at his lips. He ignores everything else I said. He’s always been good at only focusing on what serves him.

“Don’t act like you care,” I snap, anger already firing through my veins. “You wanted me to get a fucking abortion. That boy is mine, not yours.”

“Can we just talk about this?” he asks, trying to placate me.

“There is nothing to talk about, Darren. You were fucking another woman behind my back!” I’m yelling now but I can’t just remain calm anymore. He fucked up my life and deserves to know it. “You treated me like shit, bad-mouthed me to our friends, and asked me to kill my fucking son! You pushed me out of my home to replace me with a younger model.”

I'm shaking with rage. What I'm not expecting is the hand on my shoulder.

"Tyler is crying," Luke says in my ear. I have no idea where he came from, but I want to cry I'm so happy. "Go to him. I'll sort this out."

Chapter Fourteen

Time To Leave

Luke

I glare at the man—no, the waste of space—in front of me. The moment I opened the door to find him standing there I remembered him. He is the dickhead from the day in the hallway, the day Abbi had furniture delivered. The guy who thought I was part of the moving company. I finally understood who he was and all I wanted to do was smash his face in.

I didn't want to leave her alone with him. I didn't think he would physically hurt her, but I don't know him. I do already know he has wreaked havoc on her emotionally. Another part was the fear. I couldn't help but worry that the woman I had fallen head over heels for would return to her cheating husband. But that fear was unfounded.

It only took me three minutes to decide to return to Abigail's apartment. I could hear every word she was yelling from my apartment. The moment she said this piece of shit wanted her to abort Tyler, I knew I wasn't leaving her alone with him for a second longer. Seeing her shaking with rage the moment I walked in cemented the fact that I was doing the right thing.

"You need to leave," I say calmly.

"Who the fuck do you think you are?" he seethes. "I am here to talk to my wife and see my son and someone like you won't stand in my way."

“Someone like me?”

“I know men like you,” he says and chuckles. “Preying on the single new mother to get your dick wet. You’re probably living off her right now. You’re a loser and probably a criminal.”

“You don’t remember me, do you?”

“Why would I ever remember someone like you?” he questions with a sneer.

“You self-important motherfucker,” I say with a shake of my head, fighting to stay in my spot and not wring his skinny fucking neck. “Not that you deserve to know a damn thing about me,” I say, stepping closer, losing the battle. A smile spreads across my face as he steps back, fear in his gaze. “But I am a business owner, one of the top ten most sought after and highest paid tattoo artists in the entire United States, and someone who puts family above everything else.”

He opens his mouth to say something, but I silence him with a look.

“I’m not here to get my dick wet. Let me make myself perfectly clear so there’s no misunderstanding between us. I am going to marry that woman one day and if ... if...” I say the word twice to make sure he hears me. “Abbi ever lets you nearher son, our boy, I will respect her wishes. But know this, if you ever speak to my woman with anything less than the highest respect, I will beat your ass. Got me?”

He stares at me before sliding his eyes to the side. I know Abigail is standing there. I don’t know how much she heard but I meant every single word. Darren has a look of confusion on his face.

“Abigail?” he asks.

“There is nothing here for you. Leave, Darren. Forget you ever knew me.”

He straightens his spine with a smirk I would describe as malicious. “I want to see my son.”

I want to kick his teeth in. The only thing holding me back is the small hand that takes mine. “Talk to your lawyer, Darren. You gave up all your rights to him during the divorce,” she says calmly.

My heart hurts at her words. She is calmer now and I know that what Darren did still hurts her. I can hear it in her voice. I can’t believe this pompous prick hurt Abigail the way he has, throwing away a good woman, a marriage, and a son, for nothing. He isn’t man, he’s a piece of shit.

A look of shock blankets his features. I’m assuming he didn’t know or chose not to remember this fact. He probably thought he would just walk back into her life and she would be happy to take him back. That’s not the Abigail I’ve come to know these few short days.

“You can’t be serious!” Darren shouts indignantly. “We can fix our marriage. You don’t have to settle for this asshole.”

“I’ll tell you a secret, it’s not settling, it’s upgrading.” She squeezes my hand, smiling up at me. “Luke is nothing like you and that’s exactly what I need in my life. It’s what my son will need as he grows up. A strong man to lead him in the right direction and teach him how to be a decent human being. Something you know nothing about.”

“Darren, it’s time for you to leave before I throw you out,” I say, sounding much more rational than I feel at the moment. “Our dinner will be here soon, and I don’t want you ruining the rest of our evening.”

With a glare, he stomps around me toward the door. “I will be speaking to my lawyer about my son.”

“You do that,” I say with a wink. “You’re not getting anywhere near our boy until he is old enough to make the decision for himself.”

A moment later the door slams loudly. Abigail sags against my side and I hold her tightly for long moments. “Are you okay?” I ask, for the second time today.

“Better than okay,” she replies, smiling up at me. “I’ve wanted to say a lot of that to him for a long time. I feel like a weight has been lifted.”

I place a kiss on her forehead. “That’s good, babe.”

Page 25

Source Creation Date: May 19, 2025, 10:33 am

“Did you mean what you said?” she asks softly. She doesn’t need to explain, I know what she is talking about.

“Every damn word.”

She pulls away to stare at me. “What if I never want to get married again?” she asks. “What if Tyler wants to get to know his dad one day? What if...”

I don’t let her finish, silencing her with a kiss. She is working herself up over things that may never even happen. I kiss her until her body melts into mine.

“First, if you don’t want to get married, we won’t. As long as I can have you in my life and be part of yours, I’ll be happy. Second,” I say, making sure she focuses on me. “If Tyler wants to know his dad, we will cross that bridge when we get to it. As for the rest, we can figure it out together.”

“I hope you know what you’re doing, Luke,” she says, tears brimming in her eyes. “If I let myself love you and you leave, it will break me.”

“I already love you. I’m not going anywhere.”

Epilogue

This Is My Life

Abigail - Six Months Later

“Are you sure you’ll be okay?” I ask Skye for the tenth time but she just smiles.

“We will be fine,” she replies. “Alistair will be here soon and he’ll help me.”

“Ali?” I ask my brows shooting into my hairline. “He’s terrified of Tyler.”

She laughs freely. “He’s getting better at it. Now stop making excuses and get out of here. Before my brother comes looking for you.”

I nod and make my way out of her apartment and to my car. For the past two weeks Luke has been planning our date night. We haven’t been out on a single real date, ever, and he is adamant on correcting that.

I love the idea of having some alone time with him, but I’ve never been away from Tyler more than the few hours he spends at daycare and my nerves are shot. I know Skye would never do anything to hurt my child or allow him to come to harm, but a mother still worries. Taking a deep breath, I push my fear aside and drive back to my apartment.

I still have to grab a shower, do my hair and makeup, and get dressed. I want to look my best for our first date. Pulling into my spot, I see that Luke’s truck is not there and let out a sigh of relief. I quickly make my way upstairs and into the shower, shaving my legs and making sure to moisturize every inch I can reach after.

Standing in front of my closet in nothing but a deep red thong and my garter belt, I stare at the clothing options available to me. I reach for a little black dress with a high hem and a low neckline that I haven’t worn in ages when hands cup my breasts from behind. I don’t hesitate to fall back against his muscular chest.

“You’re not supposed to be here yet,” I say with a smile.

Source Creation Date: May 19, 2025, 10:33 am

“And you’re supposed to be dressed,” he counters.

“I would be if I wasn’t getting mauled.”

Luke runs his fingers along the lace of my garter belt before cupping my sex. “I needed to see you. I just wasn’t expecting this version of you.”

He grinds his erection against my ass, and I can feel my panties dampening. Even after six months the man never fails to turn me on.

“We have a date planned,” I say huskily. “I got a babysitter.”

“We won’t miss our date. But I need to take the edge off,” he says pushing my thong aside and pushing first two, then three fingers into my pussy. “You’re already wet for me, Abbi.”

“I’m always wet for you.” The first stirrings of my orgasm are already barreling down on me.

“I’m going to bend you over in front of the mirror. Then I’m going to fuck you quick and dirty, and then I’ll take you out to dinner. I have a surprise for you.”

He moves me around my bedroom as he speaks until I am where he wants me. I listen to his zipper lower before his erection springs free. He retrieves his wallet from his pocket, fishing out a condom.

“I want you to fuck me bare,” I say, watching his shocked reaction in our reflections.

“Abbi...”

“I went on birth control when I stopped breastfeeding,” I say with a smile.

Luke thrust into me harshly, lifting my feet from the carpet. He holds my hips in a bruising grip and I can’t hold back my moans.

“Fuck!” he shouts, head thrown back as his hips piston, fucking me harshly. “You’re so wet, so hot.” His eyes are glued to my reflection, watching my breasts sway with every punishing thrust. “I am going to flood you with my cum, mark you from the inside out.”

“Yes,” I mewl. “I want to feel you.”

“You will.”

A moment later, his cock kicks inside me, filling me with his seed. His fingers find my clit and rub harsh little circles on the nub sending me crashing into my own orgasm. My legs buckle beneath my weight and Luke lifts me carrying me to the bed.

“Spread your legs,” he demands after depositing me in the center.

I feel myself blush deeply. “Why?”

“I want to see my cum dripping out of you.”

A dark look has come over his face and he looks slightly unhinged. I don’t know if I should be scared or turned on right now, but I allow my thighs to fall open, giving him the view he wants. He removes his cell phone from his pocket and leans in close to snap a picture of my sex. It has become a thing with us since the first time. He has a folder full of unspeakably dirty pictures and often sends me one in the middle of the day. It’s a major turn on for both of us.

A moment later, he moves my underwear back into place and helps me stand. “If you want your date, we need to leave before I tie you to the bed and pump you full of my cum. I find I like the look of my seed dripping from your pretty pink pussy.”

“Don’t threaten me with a good time,” I sass.

He looks me over, licking his lips. “Woman, get dressed. I want to give you your surprise and then I’ll fuck you any way you want.”

I quickly grab the black dress from my closet, but he puts it back. “We’ll do dinner next time,” he says kissing my neck. “Just wear a sundress. I want to show you something.”

I stare at him for a moment, but I don’t argue. I slip a pretty purple-and-blue dress over my head with a pair of sandals on my feet and meet him in the kitchen. Taking my arm, he leads me to his truck and helps me in before driving through town. On the outskirts of town, he pulls over beside a pretty white house with a wraparound porch.

“What are we doing here?” I ask but he doesn’t answer, instead getting out of the truck and helping me down.

He leads me down the path and inside where I find the house completely empty. I look around, not understanding. When I face Luke, he looks nervous, something I’ve never seen before.

He speaks before I can. “I bought this house for us. For you and Tyler and me. I want to live with you, have babies with you, grow old with you. And if you want, I want to marry you and give you and Tyler my last name.”

Tears spill from my eyes as happiness overwhelms me. I never thought I could be this happy, but Luke keeps proving me wrong. He hugs me to his chest, and I cling to him.

“I love you, Luke. And I can’t wait to start building a life with you.”

The End