



Mine

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Description: After enduring years of darkness, Lexi now has the happy life she has always dreamed of. Settling into the blissful routine of normalcy, she believes that all of her troubles are finally behind her. Until one fateful morning when a handsome stranger rips her away from everything she holds so dear.

Finding herself inexplicably drawn to her seductive captor, Lexi struggles with the wanton feelings he stirs within her. With the line between right and wrong blurring, can she escape his obsessive grasp and return to the safety of her new life? Or will she cave into his wicked desires, knowing full well that he is the only one who will ever understand who she truly is?

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Prologue

Tossing his empty coffee cup into the garbage bin, he dug his right hand into the front pocket of his black Under Armour hoodie. Wrestling his phone from its confines, he anxiously scanned his dark gaze across the cracked glass screen. Noting the time, he curled his lips into a cocky smirk.

6:42 am. Right on schedule.

Standing from the wooden bench, he quickly secured his phone and began to casually run-in place; his shallow breaths causing a white fog to cloud the cold December air around him. It wouldn't be long before his beautiful prey rounded the corner of the winding trail. He could already hear her sneakers padding rhythmically against the gravel trail. She was running faster than normal, no doubt trying to work off her frustration from the night before. His plan must've worked. Good, he thought.

She was finally his to claim.

Knowing his obsession was only paces away, he began to lightly jog down the pathway. Not wanting to spook her as she ran past, he kept his excited eyes dead ahead. The last thing he wanted was for her to panic. He had seen her fight before and knew what a hellion she could be when her adrenaline began to flow.

No, he reminded himself. He didn't want to cause any undue physical or emotional pain on the woman that consumed his every waking thought. This needed to go as smoothly as possible. She deserved for things to be easy on her for once in her life.

Feeling the breeze shift as her svelte body sprinted to his right, he slowed his steps and gave his love the opportunity to take the lead. Allowing himself a moment to admire the way her chestnut ponytail bounced with each quick paced stride, he reached his hand back into the worn pocket of his hoodie. Years of planning had culminated into this very moment; it was almost surreal. From now on, she would forever be his.

Counting to ten in his mind, he rapidly closed the gap between their moving bodies. Before she had a chance to realize what was going on, he pulled a thin medical syringe from his pocket and pounced on her petite form.

He knew it would be hard for her to accept her new life but eventually, she would learn to trust him. To want him. To need him.

To love him.

Chapter ONE

Lexi whimpered aloud, the sound mimicking a wounded animal caught in a jagged trap. At first the drugged brunette felt nothing, her limp and useless body refused to budge no matter how hard she tried. As the hollow minutes passed by her cloudy mind began to clear, allowing her to make sense of what had happened.

Keeping her eyes tightly shut, she recalled her last few moments of consciousness. She remembered the way the frigid air bit her flushed cheeks as she ran down the dark trail, the way her sneakers slid over the icy gravel path. How she had quickened her pace to keep from falling flat on her ass. It had felt good to run off her frustrations from the night before.

Halfway through her mile however, she had noticed another runner. A tall man with dark, shaggy hair moving much slower than he was clearly capable of. Although he

was physically larger, she wasn't nervous or scared as she ran past. No, there wasn't any fear. That didn't come until she felt his hulking body tackle her to the ground. It was the same moment that she felt something sharp pierce the exposed skin of her neck. She had just enough time to let out a shocked yelp before an inky blackness swallowed her whole.

She had been attacked, drugged, and abducted. Her body was in no condition to fight. If she wanted to be in control of the situation, she needed to keep her wits about her. It was important that she be the one with the power, not the stranger who had taken her against her will.

Taking stock of the situation, she slowed her breathing and blindly focused on her surroundings. She was lying on an uncomfortably firm surface with a soft pillow cradling her head. A warm blanket covered her body, its plush faux fur lovingly tucked in around her. The soft hum of white noise played in the background, while the comforting smell of lavender wafted through the cool air.

If she didn't know any better, she would've sworn she was back home in her tiny apartment. Only she knew in the pit of her stomach that she wasn't, and she also knew that she wasn't alone.

"Comfortable?" a deep male voice asked, snapping her from her racing thoughts.

Licking her cracked lips, she slowly opened her green eyes, wincing ever so slightly as the room's overhead light heightened the throbbing sensation squeezing around her skull.

"Mmm. Where am I?" she breathed, trying unsuccessfully to move her numb arms.

"Somewhere safe. That's all you need to know," the voice answered. "The paralysis you're experiencing is a minor side effect of the drug I injected into you this morning.

Now, don't panic. Shhh...don't panic, it won't last long."

Clenching her jaw in frustration, Lexi focused her semi-blurry vision on the attractive stranger leaning over her. He looked so incredibly proud of himself. It made her sick to her stomach.

"What fucking drug?" she hissed angrily.

"It's not important," he replied, warming his masculine features. "Please know that I didn't want to hurt you, Sweetheart. I did it for your own good."

Glowing at her captor, she fought back the urge to spit in his handsome face. He had pumped her full of something that had knocked her out and paralyzed her for her own good? Sure. Right.

"Bullshit," she spat.

Clicking his tongue against the roof of his mouth, the man moved to sit his large frame on the edge of the cot beside her. There was a sudden fire flashing behind her emerald eyes, causing the hair on the back of his neck to stand up on end with excitement. She was a fighter, alright. Taming her would be the most delicious triumph he would ever taste. Of that he was certain.

"I'm not lying to you. I could have bound you to the bed in chains that would've left your wrists and ankles bruised and broken. Yet here you are, completely free of any restraints so that I can have this talk with you and make you see that you want to be here with me," he purred, softly swiping the pad of his thumb along her trembling lower lip. "Wasn't that nice of me?"

Turning her face away from her captor's gentle touch, Lexi took in a breath to calm herself. He was being too open with her and clearly wanted her trust. Killing her

didn't seem to be his motive, not yet at least. She supposed that there was a chance he wanted to rape her, but something in her gut told her that it was unlikely. With those two terrifying options out of the way, however, she wasn't sure what else was left.

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“How do you know my name?” she wondered, her voice shaking at the seams.

Unable to stop himself from touching her again, the man brushed an errant strand of hair from her cheek and gave a thoughtful shrug.

“I know almost everything there is to know about you. I've been studying you for some time now, Alexandria,” he said with a small smile.

“If that were true, then you would know that no one calls me that,” she countered.

“Well, they do when they're trying to get their point across to you. Sometimes, it's the only way you will listen, isn't it? That probably stems back from your first foster mother, huh? Lucy? The one with the blonde hair you wished you had? I'll bet that you still hear her screechy voice whenever someone calls you by your full name. Isn't that right, Alexandria Joy Curtis?”

Opening her mouth in shock, she began to stammer. He was right, she was hearing that bitch's voice in her head that very moment. It was one thing for him to know her name, anyone could know that with a quick Google search, but how did he know about her foster mom?

“How? I...I...I don't,” she mumbled, unable to form a coherent thought.

“See, I know everything about you,” he purred, leaning his head to the side. “You're such a fascinating, pretty thing. I love your little quirks. Like how you wake up every morning exactly at five fifteen without the need of an alarm clock and immediately jump into the shower. You keep the water at an almost scalding temperature and stand

under the spray for at least five minutes before washing your hair. You keep your shampoo bottle on the right-hand side of the tub, and the conditioner on the--”

“How the fuck do you know that?” she interrupted, finally turning her head to meet her abductor’s hungry stare. “You’ve been in my apartment?”

“Of course. Many times,” he grinned before nonchalantly returning to his thoughts, “But out of all your idiosyncrasies Lexi, and you really do have so many, I think my favorite is that you meticulously ration yourself twenty almonds a day as a snack. You eat the first ten after your second cup of coffee and the last ten when you get home from work. You think they're healthy and that you have a balanced diet, but you don't eat nearly enough, and that worries me terribly...but don’t worry, we will work on that.”

Widening her eyes, Lexi swallowed hard. Her abductor was a lunatic. A lunatic that had stalked her for God knows how long, infiltrating her life in a way she couldn’t fathom. Knowing that he, a complete stranger, knew so much about her terrified her to the core.

“We will work on that?” she asked.

Nodding his head, the man drifted his warm brown eyes over her prone form. He could see the gears turning, she was trying to make sense of it all. He wondered how long it would take her to realize that he only wanted to help her reach her full potential.

“Ohhh, my love. We will be working on many things,” he promised.

“Just who the hell are you, huh?” she asked.

Sighing softly, the strapping man measured his temper. This was all new for her, he

needed to keep that in mind. He had been in her position before and knew how it felt to buck against the inevitable. It might take some time, but she would eventually come around.

“I’m someone that loves you very much and only wants the best for you. You have so much potential, and I’m going to make you realize it. With my help, you’ll become who you were truly meant to be,” he offered truthfully.

With her blood running cold, Lexi lifted her throbbing head from the silk encased pillow. Things were popping into place. Killing or raping her weren’t his motives. Oh no, her captor wanted much more than that. He wanted to mold her into whatever perverted version of her he had in his twisted mind. That was his motive. Like hell she would play along with his twisted little game.

“What if I don't want to?” she asked defiantly.

Straightening his posture on the hard cot, the man gave himself a moment before answering her question. Her ungratefulness was leaving a sour taste in his mouth. After being tossed aside like garbage again and again, he expected her to be at least a tiny bit thankful for taking such a huge interest in her wellbeing. He was the only one who ever had.

“You will,” he stated confidently, choosing to forgive her transgression.

“If you believe that, then you don’t know me as well as you think you do,” she countered, pulling her bottom lip between her teeth. It was a risk to goad her captor, but she just couldn't help herself.

“Oh, now there's that spark that I love so much,” he said with a wink before standing from the cot. “Lexi, I know this must be very hard to take in right now, and that's why I'm being so forgiving, but there's nothing you can do to change this situation. It’s in

your best interest to just accept it and to accept the love that I will give you.”

Blinking up at her abductor, she attempted to calm her racing heartbeat. Deciding to remain silent, she gave a tiny nod in faux agreement. For her safety, she had to make him think that he had won. She would be the perfect, compliant little doll for him. At least until the paralysis wore off completely.

“Good girl,” he praised, stepping towards the black metal door of her room. “I know you’re hungry. I can practically hear your stomach growling from over here. I’m going to leave you for a few minutes to get you your lunch. I won’t be gone long, Sweetheart. Oh, and just so you don’t get any ideas while I’m gone, your room is completely soundproof and there are no windows for you to break. The only way out is through this door, and I promise you, it’s very secure.”

Nodding to appease her captor, she bristled inside. He sounded so sure of himself, he really thought she would willingly rot away in this tiny cell. Unfortunately for him, she wouldn’t be helpless for long. At her earliest opportunity, she would find a way to escape. There wasn’t a damn thing he could do to stop her.

Giving her one last longing look, the handsome man quietly unlocked the door. Pulling the heavy hunk of metal open, he pressed his lips together and took a small step. He wouldn’t be gone long, but he found himself already missing her. If only she knew the power she held over him.

“I’ll be right back,” he said.

“Wait!” Lexi exclaimed, trying to lift her head as high off the pillow as she could.

Stopping himself halfway through the open threshold, he turned back towards her. Arching a dark brown brow, he offered her a small grin.

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“Yes, Sweetheart?”

“Well, you know my name, I think it's only proper that I know yours as well,” she said, curving her lips into a deceptively sweet smile.

Quirking his head to the side, the man wanted to kick himself for his rudeness. It was easy to forget that she didn't know anything about him. It was something he looked forward to changing.

“My name's Kade,” he said before exiting the room and locking the door behind him.

CHAPTER TWO

Keeping her eyes glued to the popcorn ceiling of her cell, Lexi let out a sigh and methodically wiggled her tingling fingers and toes. She hated waiting more than anything in the world but was thankful that her captor had been gone longer than she expected. It gave her mind an opportunity to formulate a plan of action, and her body a chance to recover. Thankfully, she could now move her limbs without any extra effort and hoped it wouldn't be long before the rest of her body followed suit. The quicker she could fully move again, the faster she could escape.

Although Kade wasn't physically in the room with her, she knew she was being watched. The red blinking light in her peripheral vision told her so. It took every ounce of control to not look into the white bubbled camera and tell her captor exactly what she thought of him. How he was a pathetic, limp dick motherfucker whose ass she couldn't wait to kick.

Soon, she thought to herself.

Tapping her fingers against her blanket covered thighs, she replayed the interaction with her abductor repeatedly in her mind. It was obvious that he had done this before, but something told her that what he was doing with her was different. There was something other than murderous intent behind his chiseled features. He was too soft with her and looked at her too fondly. Without meaning to, he had told her exactly where his weakness lay.

A stupid mistake on his part.

“Sloppy,” she said aloud, turning her steely gaze directly at the camera.

Within the span of a second, she heard a loud buzz followed by Kade’s honeyed voice echoing against the walls of her sparse cell.

“What was that my love?”

Painting a sugary smile across her chapped lips, she blinked innocently at the white bubble and shrugged her heavy shoulders. Yes, he was watching her indeed.

“Oh, nothing! I was just wondering when you were coming back. I’m getting lonely in here,” she said, pouting her mouth slightly.

A dark laugh came across the speaker of the camera. She couldn’t tell if he was annoyed or amused by her comment, she hoped it was the latter.

“I’ll be right there,” he promised before quickly silencing the speaker.

Taking in a deep breath, she pulled her eyes away from the camera and focused on the metal handle of her door. Soon, she heard the heavy lock lift, and something press

against the hatch. My, wasn't her captor an eager beaver.

"I'm sorry it took me so long, Sweetheart," Kade said as he entered her cell, "I wanted to make sure that the sauce tasted just right."

Using his foot, he closed the heavy door behind him and made his way to the small cot, carrying with him a mahogany tray that held a plate of spaghetti and meatballs and a glass of red wine. Not bothering to lock the door, he instead sat down beside Lexi and gave her a warm smile. He was so proud of her for accepting her current situation and intended on rewarding her for being so calm and reasonable.

"I made you your favorite spaghetti, the one you only make on special occasions? I even added a touch of brown sugar to the sauce. That's your secret ingredient, right?" he asked, placing the fragrant tray of food and wine at the foot of the cot.

"You really do know all about me, don't you?" she murmured, giving him a small smirk.

Gently pulling her into a sitting position, he carefully moved her against the wall at the head of her bed. Making sure she was strong enough to sit on her own, he scooted his large form to the edge of the cot before reaching back down to grab the wooden tray.

"That I do, but don't worry, I won't tell anyone about the sugar," he said with a wink before picking up a fork and twirling a bit of pasta onto the utensil. "How are you feeling?"

Watching him intently, Lexi felt her mouth water as he lifted the filled fork and brought it towards her. While the spaghetti smelled delicious, she knew she shouldn't consume anything her abductor gave her. She would rather starve than have him drug her again.

“I’m feeling fine, but no, no thank you. I’m not hungry,” she lied.

Noticing her hesitation, Kade turned the utensil and shoveled the pasta into his own mouth. Swallowing the food, he put the fork down onto the plate and moved the tray onto her lap. He couldn’t blame her for being cautious, but this wasn’t going to work if she didn’t trust him.

“I promise you, I didn’t put anything in the spaghetti that shouldn’t be there.”

Pursing her lips together, she pulled her gaze from his intense stare towards the glass of red wine on the tray.

“Nor did I spike the wine,” he said with a small sigh before picking up the wine glass and taking a deliberately large sip. If he needed to show her that her food and drink were safe before every meal, then so be it.

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Licking her parched lips, she lifted her hand and carefully took the etched glass from him; gasping slightly as her fingers accidentally brushed against his. There was an immediate spark between them that caused a shiver to race down her spine. Fuck. Now was not the time for her to form an attraction to the man that was holding her captive.

“I’m fine re---”

“Please,” he interrupted, his voice shaking slightly. “Eat and drink, Sweetheart. I know you’re starving.”

Pausing a moment, Lexi carefully weighed her options. Her captor wouldn’t be stupid enough to ingest the meal if he had slipped something into it. Not only that, but it would be counterproductive on his part if he lied to her about it. He wanted her trust, and it was in her best interest if she let him believe he had it.

Deciding to play the game, she picked up the fork with her free hand and began to stuff the homemade spaghetti and meatballs into her mouth. Pausing every so often to wash the food down with a gulp of sweet red wine, she couldn’t care less that her attractive captor was watching her like a hawk.

Savoring the moment, Kade patiently waited as she ate her supper. Awe danced on his masculine features while he listened to her happy moans. It boosted his ego to know that she was enjoying what he had made. She was so beautiful when she allowed herself the pleasure of caving into her cravings.

“Good?” he asked, arching a dark brown brow.

Swallowing a bite of perfectly seasoned meatball, she nodded her head. She hated to admit it but had to hand it to him. It was truthfully the best spaghetti and meatballs she had ever had.

“Mmmhmm, it’s so good,” she murmured. “Who taught you how to cook? Your mom?”

Within a split second, his otherwise warm face took on a hardened facade. Clearing his throat, he shook his head once and met her widening gaze.

“No. She didn’t,” he said, his tone icy and curt. “And you’re to never ask about my mother ever again. Do you understand, Alexandria?”

Fuck, Lexi thought, she didn’t expect that reaction. He clearly had some unresolved, deep-seated issues towards his mother. Mentally tucking away the tidbit of information, she scooped up the last bit of sauce laden pasta and brought it to her lips.

“Yes, I understand. I won’t mention her again,” she said softly before taking the last bite of her meal.

Pleased with her response, he took the empty fork from her grasp and lifted the wooden tray from her lap. Now was not the time to lose his temper with his beautiful guest, especially now when her behavior was exactly what he had hoped it would be. She was a fast learner, of course she would understand that she would fare better if she followed his direction.

“Good girl,” he praised while placing the tray on the cement floor of the cell.

“Thank you for lunch, it was delicious,” she said, her cheeks speckling pink from a combination of wine and the wolffish gaze he was suddenly giving her.

Not paying attention to her words, Kade instead focused on a smearing of red spaghetti sauce at the corner of her mouth. Leaning in, he resisted the temptation to kiss the sauce from her lips, opting to use the pad of his thumb to wipe it away, instead.

“What a messy little thing you a—”

Before he had a chance to finish his sentence, he was silenced by the shock of her grabbing his wrist and holding his long arm still. With a furrowed brow, he watched in stunned awe as she took his thumb into her mouth and swirled her wet tongue suggestively over his digit. It was blatantly obvious that she felt the same, animalistic attraction he had felt since the first moment he laid eyes on her two years ago. Why else would she be doing this?

Smiling to herself as she watched his brown eyes darken with want, Lexi gently released his thumb from her mouth. He looked like he wanted to eat her alive. Maybe this plan she had hastily thrown together would work. It certainly couldn't hurt to try.

“Mmm, thank you. I'm not used to someone taking care of me. I'm feeling lucky right now...and really, really warm. Do you...do you think you could help untuck the blanket a little bit? I wouldkick it off, myself, but my legs aren't really working, yet,” she lied.

Snapping himself back to reality, Kade blinked his eyes and paused a moment to gather his thoughts. She wasn't the only one feeling hot after her little flirty display. He couldn't help but wonder how his now aching cock would feel inside that pouty little mouth of hers.

“Hmm? Oh, yeah...yeah of course, Sweetheart. Here, let me take care of that for you.”

Quickly standing from the cot, he grabbed onto the hem of the blanket resting on her hips. Pulling the faux fur from her slim body, he mentally stopped himself from staring at her toned thighs. She was wearing his favorite pair of leggings, the ones that hugged her ass so perfectly. How many times has he fantasized ripping them down just enough so that he could worship her with his tongue?

Needing to calm himself down, he folded the blanket neatly in his arms. Clearing his throat, he placed it at the foot of her cot and turned away.

“There, that’s better, hmm? I’ll be back in a second... there’s something I need to take care of,” he said.

“Wait!” Lexi exclaimed, not wanting to let this moment pass her by.

Pulling his attention back to the brunette, he quirked his head and took a step closer to her. Bending over her semi-prone body, he gave her a tiny grin.

“Yes, Lexi?”

“You felt that, right?” she asked.

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“Felt what?” he teased.

Taking in a tiny breath, she glanced down demurely. Now was the time to put her thoughts into action. She knew exactly how she needed to work this situation in order to escape. If she played her cards right, she would be out of her cell before her captor realized just what had happened.

“That spark. When I touched you. I think there’s something between us. Am I just imagining things, or did you feel it too?” she wondered, deliberately lifting her eyes and locking them on her abductor.

Biting into the smooth flesh of his cheek, Kade tried desperately to stop himself from smiling. Her comment had taken him off guard much in the same way her actions did only moments before. He thought it would take her some time to feel any sort of attraction but lucky for him, she was letting her emotions win over her head. This was better than anything he could’ve hoped for.

“You aren’t imagining anything, Sweetheart,” he said, once again taking a seat on the edge of the cot. “I feel it, too. I’ve felt it from the first moment I saw you. You’re all I’ve ever wa—”

“May I kiss you?” she asked suddenly, cutting him off.

Physically taken aback, he stammered. Had he heard her, right? He wasn’t dreaming, was he?

“You...you want to kiss me?” he asked, his deep voice cracking in amazement.

Nodding her head, Lexi lifted her face towards his. Trying her best to entice her handsome abductor, she ran the tip of her tongue across her lower lip. It was now or never. Freedom was just within her grasp.

“Yes, very much so,” she breathed.

Leaning in closer, Kade lifted his large hand to cup the side of her face. Brushing his thumb across her high cheekbone, he brought his face a scant few inches away from hers. He had been thinking of this moment for so long and now that it was finally happening, he couldn’t believe his luck.

“Then kiss me,” he whispered.

Praying that her little plan would work, she let out a shaky breath. Closing her eyes, she gently pressed her lips to his in an act of faux want. At first, she played the virgin, timidly kissing his soft lips. She wasn’t sure as to how he wanted her to behave, whether he wanted an angel or vamp. It was important that she keep him on the hook before it was too late.

Noticing her hesitation, he took the lead and deepened their first kiss; encouraging her perfect lips to move under his in a passionate game of give and take. Alternating his need from gentle to hungry, he nipped her bottom lip before soothing it with a swipe of his tongue. It wasn’t long before he felt her soften and return his kisses with fervor. Her enthusiasm was better than anything he had ever dreamed.

Lexi’s heart raced as she realized her captor wasn’t as repulsive as she thought he might be. On the contrary, she found herself thoroughly enjoying their torrid moment. It was apparent from the way her body was betraying her that he knew how to kiss, and kiss well. She almost didn’t want it to end.

Almost.

“Mmm, more,” she demanded against his moving mouth. “More!”

Spurred on by her heady command, he moved his large form over hers, trying his best not to crush her slim body as he settled himself between her thighs on the cramped cot. It seemed as if the drug he injected into her on the trail had fully worked out of her system by the way she wrapped her toned legs around his waist. Perfect timing, he smugly thought. There was no turning back now, she was his.

Moaning wantonly into the seemingly passionate kiss, she hooked her feet together and squeezed her legs to hold him tightly in place. Not wanting to tip him off to what was happening, she rolled her hips and moved her hands to either side of his chiseled face, creating the semblance of a woman giving into her lustful desire. It was now or never, this hastily thrown together plan had to work.

After counting to three in her mind, she suddenly pulled his lower lip between her teeth and her bit down on as hard as she could. Hearing her abductor yelp in acute pain, she gruffly yanked his torso to hers and rolled off the cot, taking him down hard onto the cement floor with her. Managing to free her legs from his waist, she pushed him flat on the unforgiving surface before wiggling up his torso. Pinning her bony knees onto his broad shoulders, she sat on his chest and let out a feral scream. It was time for her to unleash all the anger she had spent so long repressing.

He had chosen the wrong girl to take.

Looking up at her in utter disbelief, Kade tried to make sense of what had just happened. One minute he was kissing the love of his life, the next he was lying on his back with the wind knocked from his lungs and his lip torn and bloodied. Just what the fuck did she think she was doing?

Raising a closed fist, she pulled back her arm and angrily bared her teeth. Not wanting to give him an advantage, she viciously began her second assault. He would

pay for what he had done.

Time came to a grinding halt as confusion tore through Kade's mind. Before he had a chance to react and deflect, he felt the crushing blow of her balled fist contacting his nose. Once, twice, and then a third time. Leaving him dazed and too stunned to move.

Satisfied with her final punch, she stood to full height and jumped a foot away from his writhing body. Shaking her stinging hand, she gave her abductor a scathing look before kicking him in the ribs in rapid succession. Screaming a string of obscenities into the stale air of the room, she let herself rage. Even if she didn't escape, at least she had this moment. It was a thought that thrilled her to no end.

Hissing through gritted teeth, he felt his anger spike. Trying unsuccessfully to grab her leg, he rolled his protesting body away in a protective maneuver. Attempting to rise to his feet, he spat a mouthful of blood onto the cold floor. How dare she try something so stupid?How fucking dare she!?

Knowing that time was not on her side, she ended her vicious attack and sprinted towards the unlocked door. With her adrenaline pumping hotly through her veins, she grabbed onto the metal handle and wrenched the slab of metal open. Without giving her captor a second glance, she made her way out of the suffocating cell.

“ALEXANDRIA!” Kade screamed. “GET BACK HERE!”

Pressing his hand against his bruised ribs, he growled in acute pain. Using the cot to hoist himself to a standing position, he slowly stumbled forward after the brunette. Wiping the blood trickling from his nose with the back of his hand, he felt his frustration explode. He knew that Lexi could fight, but never thought she would attack him like this. Did she honestly think she could escape?

“ALEXANDRIA,”he bellowed.“YOU WON'T LEAVE ME!”

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Glancing around the darkened hallway, Lexi gulped in much needed air as she surveyed the narrow space. On either side of the short hall were a handful of closed doors resembling the one to her cell. A low metal ceiling loomed over and the same concrete flooring from her room ran throughout. It was dark and ice cold, with no discernible way to escape. Just where thefuckwas he keeping her?

Realizing how dire her situation was, she whimpered aloud. Hearing heavy footsteps behind her, she sprinted from door to door, trying desperately to open each one to no avail.

“FUCKING SHIT!”she screamed.

Stepping from the threshold of her cell into the hallway, Kade shook his head in disbelief. Watching her as she tried in vain to open the last door on the right, he slowly stalked towards her.

“Just give up, Lexi...give up now, and I won’t be angry with you,” he spat through the blood still falling from his injured nose.

“FUCK YOU!”she yelled.

Stopping himself midway to the sputtering hellcat, he lifted his hands in a motion to show her that he didn’t intend to harm her. Not yet at least.

“Lexi...you don’t want to try that last door,” he warned.

Turning her attention from her abductor to the door on the left side of the hallway,

her mind reeled. That must be the exit, she thought to herself. Why else wouldn't he want her to try it?

Running to the door with focused determination, she could almost taste her freedom. It was so close, she just needed to get through the damned door.

"LEXI! DON—"

Before he could finish his sentence, Kade watched in horror as she reached out and touched her hand to the black metal doorknob. A loud "ZAP" filled the claustrophobic space as a sharp, electric jolt entered her body, causing her thin form to seize and convulse uncontrollably before falling to the floor in a boneless heap.

Releasing a displeased sigh, he removed a pair of metal handcuffs from the back pocket of his jeans. Slowly making his way to his love lying on the frigid cement, he shook his head in annoyance. Lucky for him, she was still conscious. He could tell by the way her eyes tracked him down the hallway. He didn't know what he would do if the bolt had killed her.

"You should have listened to me, Alexandria," he tsked, bending down and securing her wrists with the unforgiving handcuffs. "Now we have to do things the hard way."

Wiping a sweaty curl from her forehead, he placed a bloody kiss on her temple and gathered her limp body into his arms. Cradling her lovingly against his chest, he carefully carried her down the hallway to a different room than the one she was originally kept in. One he had hoped he wouldn't have to use.

"Don't worry, Sweetheart," he said, his voice deep and foreboding. "We're not done yet."

CHAPTER THREE

“That looks painful,” Lexi said smugly, motioning with a flick of her chin towards Kade’s marred face.

Surveying his shackled love with a critical eye, Kade bent down and placed a bottle of water at her bare feet. It had been three long days since her escape attempt and her words to him were few and far between. He knew she meant her comment to be a jab, but he was still pleased to finally hear her voice again.

“What, this?” he began, pointing to his splinted nose and scabbed over lip. “It’s nothing.”

Grabbing the plastic water bottle, she scooted her sitting form away from him to create some distance. There was a dark glint in his warm brown eyes that she didn’t trust. It was apparent that the leash he kept himself on was on the verge of snapping again. Even with the threat of enduring another “punishment” looming overhead, she couldn’t help but use this opportunity to poke the injured wolf.

“Oh, is that so? Then I’ll try harder next time,” she promised, pressing her back against the white padded wall of her new cell.

Pushing out an exasperated sigh, he sat himself down on the rubber lined floor and gave her a shrug. He wasn’t going to argue with the spitfire this time. They had already wasted too much time being upset with each other.

“I’m sure you will, Sweetheart,” he said, cautious about the way he moved his sore, swollen lower lip. “So, Alexandria, now that you’ve had some time to think, is there anything you’d care to say to me?”

Narrowing her angry eyes, Lexi pulled her scraped knees to her barely covered chest, sucking in a sharp breath as the metal chains binding her ankles bit into her bruised skin. Oh, she could think of a million things to say to him. None of them kind. He

deserved every bit of the pain she had caused, especially with the humiliation he had put her through over the last seventy-two hours.

“People are looking for me,” she said, not giving him the apology he craved. “I know they are. If you let me go now, I promise you...I won’t tell anyone.”

Holding back a laugh, Kade folded his long arms over his chest and quirked his head to the side. Did she really think he would be worried about people looking for her? He had gone to great lengths to make sure she wouldn’t be missed for quite some time.

“People are looking for you? Really? Like whom, Leo?” he snickered.

Pulling her red rimmed eyes to meet his, she pursed her dry lips together and swallowed hard. Hearing him say Leo’s name made her stomach instantly churn. She knew Kade was capable of torture and murder, what if he had done something to him? God help her, she would rip him limb from limb if he had hurt Leo.

Sensing her unease and simmering anger, he slid his hulking body closer, “Do you really think he will care that you’re gone? After all, he thinks you’re a cheating littleslut...that’s what he called you, right?”

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Snarling at her abductor, she squeezed the bottle of water so hard that the thin plastic threatened to crack. Her last fight with Leo had been fraught with confusion and panic the night before her abduction. He had ended their long-term relationship abruptly with her, accusing her of lying and cheating. Her once adoring lover had switched on a dime, calling her a “whore” and “slut” among other vile things. Leo screamed that he had “proof” of her infidelity and that he never wanted to see her lying ass again. At the time she didn’t understand what the hell he was talking about, she had never cheated on him. Now, however, her confusion was starting to clear.

“You,” she hissed. “What the fuck did you do?”

Furrowing his brow, Kade moved in closer. He hated to see her get so worked up over the loser. Didn’t she see that he did her a favor?

“Leo was no good for you...you deserve so much more,” he offered matter-of-factly.

“WHAT...what did you DO,” she asked again through gritted teeth.

Clicking his tongue against the roof of his mouth, he shook his head in warning. “Calm down, Sweetheart. You don’t want me to get the crop out again, do you?”

Resting the back of her head against the padded wall, Lexi swallowed a scream as she tried to settle her racing heartbeat. She could still feel the sting of the leather riding crop along her inner thighs from her last “punishment.” It was something she never wanted to experience again.

Play his game. Play his fucking game, she reminded herself. Closing her eyes for a

moment, she centered her thoughts to suppress the rage bubbling to the surface.

“Please...please tell me?” she asked, slowly lifting her eyelids.

Happy with her change in behavior, Kade leaned his broad torso forward and placed his large hands on his knees. Feeling generous, he cleared his throat. He would tell her this story only once, she had better be listening.

“Good girl,” he began. “Well, I stopped by Leo’s office last Monday and caught him as he was leaving for lunch. He pretended like he knew me, even offered to buy me a coffee and catch up on old times. Can you fucking believe that? He’s such a bullshitting moron, you should be thanking me for freeing you of him, you really should! I mean, two years and no ring? He’s a fucking tool, he never loved you.”

Watching him in silent fury as he weaved his tale, her mind raced as she pieced together the ramblings spilling from his injured mouth. Her abductor was becoming more and more agitated with every word, which made her skin prickle in anticipation. They were two powder kegs on the verge of exploding, all it would take is one little spark.

“So, anyway, while we were having coffee, I told him that you and I had been fucking each other senseless for the past six months. He didn’t believe me at first, I guess you should know that,” he continued, using his animated hands to help him tell the story. “He said that you weren’t that type of girl, that you were loyal and that you loved him. I told him that was a lie, that you loved me and wanted to be with me. He threatened to kick my ass, which I would have loved to see him try, but I didn’t want to cause a scene, so I showed him the proof--”

“Proof? What proof?” Lexi interrupted, confusion passing over her face.

“The pictures, of course,” Kade answered nonchalantly. “The ones I took while you

were sleeping. I suppose it worked out in my favor that you don't like to wear anything to bed, huh? I still can't believe you didn't feel me crawl in beside you. But now that I've thought about it, I know why you didn't wake up. It's because you belong with me. Your body knows it to be true. We are destined. Why else would you curl up next to me and let me take those pictures? Huh?"

Dropping her mouth open in shock, her blood ran ice cold. Within a split second, a high-pitched sound filled her ears, and red spots blurred the edges of her vision. His split mouth continued to move, but she was unable to hear his deep voice. She could only hear the tight shrill of rage. Somehow, he had managed to break into her apartment, climb into her bed, and take pictures with her sleeping, naked body. Pictures that were shown to the love of her life under false pretenses. Pictures that had effectively sealed her fate.

He was right, Leo wouldn't care that she was missing. No one would.

"YOU SON OF A BITCH!" she screamed, awkwardly throwing the bottle of water at his head and lunging her tethered body at him.

Even with her ankles and wrists bound to metal chains anchored to the ceiling, she managed to land squarely on her abductor. Knocking his hard body down onto the black rubber pad covering the soundproofed cell, she released her pent-up fury. Spitting hateful phrases, she clawed at any bit of flesh her jagged fingernails could find. Her only goal in that moment was to tear his handsome face to shreds. If she had to be in pain, then so did he.

Thrashing his face from side to side, Kade let out a deep growl as her sharp nails raked across the flesh of his cheeks and neck. Letting his instincts take over, he grabbed her upper arms and flung her slim body from his towards the wall. Standing up quickly, he reached into the front pocket of his dark indigo jeans and removed a small key. Although the new wounds weren't deep, they stung just enough to piss

him off. Once again, she had made the wrong choice.

“DAMMIT, ALEXANDRIA” he spat, stomping his way towards her. “WHEN WILL YOU LEARN??”

Remaining still on her side, Lexi’s chest heaved as searing tears spilled from her eyes. She didn’t care what happened to her anymore. Leo was the only person who ever cared about her and now that lifeline had been severed. If he was going to kill her then so be it.

“I hate you! I FUCKING HATE YOU!” she screamed.

Kneeling beside his tempestuous love, Kade set to work freeing her limbs from the restraints. Pausing for a long moment after removing the last shackle, he looked over her beet red face. His anger was at a critical breaking point, she was lucky that he loved her so much. He would never have let the others talk to him like this.

Never.

“You need to calm down!” he ordered before yanking her into his arms and throwing her over his shoulder like a sack of potatoes.

Flailing her arms wildly, she repeatedly punched her closed fists against his back as hard as she could. She wasn’t sure where he was taking her this time but wasn’t about to be the meek creature she had been the day before. Bucking over his broad shoulder, she tried her best to slam her knee into his chest but failed when she was stopped by a sharp slap stinging her backside.

“STOP!” he bellowed, giving her pert ass another smack for good measure. “Just stop! I’m not trying to hurt you!”

Thoroughly annoyed, he cleared the space from her cell to the bathroom at the opposite end of the bunker. Hissing out a command for the screaming hellcat to be still, he entered the tiny room. Pulling her from his shoulder, he set her legs gruffly down onto the cement floor and pointed to the corner shower stall. Leaning down, he whispered hotly in her ear.

“Get in now, Lexi!”

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Standing rigidly with her fists clenched against her sides, Lexi shook her head. Like hell she would go in there willingly.

“I willnot,” she replied, her voice thick with defiance.

Wrapping his arm around her bare waist, he lifted her from the floor once again and held her tight against his torso. Stepping over to the plastic stall, he turned the silver faucet and set the temperature to cold. Squeezing her tighter as she attempted to wriggle out of his grasp, he pushed their fighting bodies into the small space of the shower stall, making sure that the frigid stream of water centered itself right on top of her head.

Lexi shrieked as the water hit her scalp and streamed down her body, completely soaking through her white sports bra and cotton panties. Within a few heartbeats, her squirming limbs stopped fighting her abductor; her muscles instinctively choosing to conserve their energy for warmth instead of attack. Smart man, she thought to herself as her thin form shivered. Smart man, indeed.

Feeling her spark extinguish, Kade released his right arm from her chest and reached towards the temperature dial. Turning the metal lever from cold to warm, he bent down and nuzzled his bruised lips near her temple. He had seen her use this technique on herself before and knew that it would reset her brain. Now, he only needed to keep his little hellion subdued.

“Shhhh, shhhh, you’re ok. You’re ok. Please don’t fight me anymore. I don’t want to hurt you,” he pleaded, drifting his fingertips along the expanse of her exposed stomach. “Please don’t make me hurt you, again.”

Closing her eyes, she allowed her exhausted muscles to relax in his strong arms. It was against her better judgement to let her guard down, but her body wanted to betray her. Just as it had during their illicit kiss. She should hate the man draping over her, moving his calloused hands so reverently over her wet skin. She should hate him for putting her through trial after emotional trial. She should hate him for essentially taking her life away.

Only she didn't.

Not fully, at least. And that thought alone was more terrifying to her than the possibility of never escaping.

Holding her close, Kade lightly swayed their bodies under the warm water, paying no mind to the fact that he was still fully clothed. For the first time in days, he could finally breathe again. His love was back in his arms, exactly where she belonged. As the seconds ticked by, she softened beneath him. Indicating to him that she knew what he had been telling her all along was true. Just a little coaxing and she would be his.

"I love you so much, can't you see?" he asked, his full lips tickling the delicate skin of her neck. His impatient touch moving to the waistband of her panties, skimming his long fingers between the drenched fabric and her pebbled skin. "Please...let me show you how much I need you."

CHAPTER FOUR

"Please, Lexi?" Kade asked again, his deep voice laced with desperation.

Stifling a frustrated moan, Lexi's body begged her to allow him to dip his fingers lower. It didn't take long before a familiar, pleasurable ache spread across her taut belly, sending a sharp wave of anticipation straight to her cunt. It had been weeks

since she had felt the bliss of release and her muscles were more than happy to accept her captor's willing hands. Her mind, however, wasn't so enthusiastic.

Stay in control, she reminded herself. Take the power back.

Silently cursing herself, she placed her hand over his, halting his excited touch just as the tip of his middle finger reached the cleft of her apex. It would be so easy just to give in, to allow him to make her forget about their twisted situation. Her mind was right though, she needed to take control once again.

"Wait," she said aloud, her voice echoing in the tiny shower stall.

Thoroughly annoyed that she stopped him when he was on the verge of breaking through her wall, he let out a low growl. He knew she wanted to fuck just as badly as he did, her lewd mewling and swaying hips told him so. How dare she stop him from taking what was rightfully his. How dare she.

"Why?" he bit, pressing his strained cock against her firm ass.

Closing her eyes, she instinctively arched back. A small grin lifted the corners of her lips as she heard her abductor push out a ragged groan. It gave her a small bit of satisfaction to know that his body was just as worked up as hers. At least she wouldn't be the only one left unsatisfied.

Turning her soaked form in his arms, she raised her eyelids and locked her hungry gaze with his. It was now her turn in their wicked little game.

"I just want our first time together to be special," she replied, leaning her tingling body upon his clothed torso. "Don't you want that, too?"

Surveying her beautiful face, Kade slowly nodded as his brain fully registered her

words. She was right, their first time together sexually needed to be beautiful and memorable. Not just a quick screw against the fiberglass wall of a dirty shower. The love of his life deserved much more than that. So much more.

“Yeah...yes, of course I do,” he agreed, raising his hands to cup her flushed cheeks. “I’m sorry I got carried away, my love. I just want you so badly.”

Smiling at her abductor, Lexi placed her open hands on his denim covered thighs. Moving her trembling right hand, she passed her touch over the noticeable bulge wanting so desperately to be freed. He was making things almost too easy. He would be the one caught in her web now.

“I want you, too,” she said, her fingers pressing eagerly against his thick cock in a calculated move. “But...but I know it will be worth the wait. Don’t you think so, too?”

Spitting out an expletive, he pulled his dark eyes away to stop himself from cumming in his soaked pants. It was taking all his strength not to bend her over and fuck her senseless. Needing to immediately calm himself down, he dropped his hands from her face and reluctantly pushed her hand away from his protesting dick. He couldn’t remember the last time he wanted another woman so badly. It was almost too much to bear.

“Yeah. You’re right, Sweetheart. And it will be.” he replied, wiggling his large body away from her. “I...I will...uh...I’ll go get you a towel and some dry clothes. I’ll be right back...don’t leave.”

Smiling innocently at her captor, Lexi watched as he broke free of the dingy shower stall and stumbled from the claustrophobic bathroom. Waiting until he had fully exited the room, she opened her mouth to expel a silent scream. Her body was abuzz with a million conflicting emotions, and she didn’t know exactly how to process them

all. What the fuck was wrong with her? She was sick in the head for even entertaining the thought of fucking the man who was holding her against her will.

Turning towards the shower head, she tried to ignore her nagging thoughts. Taking in a shaky breath, she allowed herself to bask in the warmth of the water as it hit her body. She hadn't had a shower since the morning of her abduction and wasn't sure when her next opportunity to bathe would be. She might as well enjoy it while she could.

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With a small sigh, she stripped the wet sports bra and panties from her body, plopping them unceremoniously onto the stall floor without a second thought. Glancing around, she found a green bar of soap hanging from a rope attached to the temperature dial. Lifting the bar from the metal handle, she brought the oddly familiar soap to her nose and gave it a whiff. Instantly, the smell of fresh pine took her back to her own shower in her modest apartment. Weeks ago, she had found the exact same soap hanging from her shower head. At the time she had just assumed it was Leo's. Now however, she knew who had really put it there.

Kade wasn't lying. He really had been in her apartment. It was a sickening realization that made her blood run to ice.

"Son of a bitch," she spat under her breath, quickly putting the soap back on the temperature dial. "You're fucked. Absolutelyfucked!"

Hearing his heavy footsteps, she turned her green eyes towards the door and plastered on a forced smile. Reminding herself that it was important that her captor believe she was completely enamored, she posed her body wantonly under the running water. She couldn't let him know how truly disgusted she was.

"I'm back, Sweetheart," Kade announced loudly, newly dried and wearing a pair of low-slung black flannel pants. Carrying a gray fluffy towel and red silk nighty in his arms. "I'm sorry but you need to turn the water off, now. We must conserve it, my lo—"

Stopping himself from completing his sentence, his brown eyes zeroed in on her naked body. Raking his intense gaze from head to toe, he unabashedly took his fill of

her perfect form. It wasn't the first time he had seen her naked, but there was something about the way she was standing beneath the shower stream that made his mouth water and his cock spring back to life.

God, how he wanted her.

Following his request, Lexi pressed her hand against the metal lever and turned off the water. "Oh, yeah, sure. Hey, Kade? Do you think I could have another shower tomorrow? Please?"

Walking towards her, he shrugged his broad shoulders. Urging her out of the stall with a flick of his hand, he fought the urge to drop everything and take her into his arms. He would gladly let her run his water reserve dry. But she needed to learn the important lesson that her actions had consequences before he agreed to any requests.

"That all depends on you, Sweetheart. Can you behave?"

Stepping from the shower, she took in a deep breath and reached for the terrycloth towel. Taking it in hand, she began the process of methodically drying her cooling skin, all while boring a hole in her abductor's handsome face with her eyes.

"I'll be a good girl," she promised, her voice taking on a tone of thinly veiled innocence.

Biting into the soft flesh of his cheek, Kade mulled over a reply. He wanted to believe her, but this wasn't the first time he had heard that phrase slipping from her pouty lips. Simply offering a nod, he took the towel away and handed her the skimpy nighty in its place.

"It's almost time for bed, Sweetheart. You'll be sleeping with me tonight," he said, his eyes taking on a lust filled glow. "Let's see how good you can be, huh?"

Lexi gasped, her mouth falling open in genuine surprise. Since her escape attempt, she had been forced to sleep on the hard floor of the padded room without the comfort of a pillow or blanket. For three long nights, she had tossed and turned, her body unable to relax on the cold rubber slab. Her captor had just dangled the most delicious carrot in front of her nose. If she had to sleep with a monster in order to enjoy the comfort of a real bed, then so be it. It was a small price to pay to keep her body in fighting condition.

“I promise,” she said softly before slipping the crimson silk negligee over her head.

With a wicked grin, he waited patiently as she finished putting on the nightgown. Taking her hand, he pulled her flush against his muscular body. He knew she would look delicious wearing the skimpy lingerie. None of the others could pull it off, they all looked wrong in the low-cut negligee. It was just another sign for him that she was perfect for him.

“This is your warning, don’t fight me tonight,” he purred, effortlessly picking her up off the floor like a groom cradling his new bride.

Swallowing hard, she wrapped her arms around her captor’s neck and gave a small smile in return. No, she wouldn’t fight him tonight. She would use this golden opportunity to regain her strength, boost her confidence, and play him like a fucking fiddle.

“I won’t,” she said, snuggling like a kitten in his embrace.

Holding her tightly against his torso, he walked from the bathroom out into the dark hallway. Keeping his greedy eyes on her sweet face, he couldn’t help but smirk. There was an excitement dancing over her features that he couldn’t resist staring at. It was clear that she was just as eager to crawl into bed with him as he was with her. Finally, things were falling into place.

Just as he knew they would.

Stepping to the second door on the left, Kade crossed over the opened threshold of his room. Quickly clearing the space to his queen-sized bed tucked into the far corner, he gently placed her down on the mattress. Bending over her, he pressed a loving kiss upon her damp forehead. She looked exactly how he imagined she would be lying on his bed. For a moment, he thought about pinching himself to make sure this wasn't a dream.

Humming softly as he crawled onto the plush bed beside her, Lexi scooted closer to the beige wall to give his large body some space. Trying not to look conspicuous, she glanced around the room to gain her bearings. Turning back at her captor every so often with faux adoration, to not trigger his suspicion.

On her second pass, she noticed a small TV flanking the wall. Plastered on the flat screen were surveillance images from what she gathered were all the other rooms within the complex. Three of which she recognized, the fourth she had never seen. It was filled with wicked looking contraptions, some of which she recognized from a few BDSM websites she had visited once or twice. She halfway hoped to never be taken there.

Dropping her eyeline beneath the TV, Lexi blinked in confusion. Catching her attention were six golden hooks nailed into the uneven plastered wall, a single necklace hanging from each. Above every hook clung a yellow sticky note with a different name scribbled in black ink. Sensing something sinister to the display, she allowed herself a scant moment to focus on each sloppily written name and necklace.

Nora. A long golden necklace with a shiny, rhinestone studded star.

Elena. A delicate rose gold necklace with an ornamental letter "E."

Mackenzie. A double tiered chain with a black onyx circle hanging from each.

Veronica. A white gold chain with a diamond heart pendant.

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Serena. A silver chain with the word “love” engraved on a rectangle of tarnished metal.

Blythe. A simple necklace with a solid silver cross.

Six names. Six necklaces. Six trophies from women that she could almost guarantee hadn’t made it out of Kade’s obsessive grasp.

“Fuck,” she whispered.

Hearing her mutter something under her breath, Kade moved his eyes from her perky breasts to the point that held her attention. Razor sharp panic licked up the length of his spine as he realized that she had noticed his small shrine. Lifting his right hand, he tenderly cupped her now colorless face. She needed to know how insignificant they were, that they were nothing more than poor imitations unable to satisfy his wicked appetite.

“They didn’t mean anything to me!” he urged. “Please don’t be jealous! I swear to you, they meant nothing!”

Blinking her eyes, she wondered if she had heard her abductor correctly. Jealous? He thought she could be actually jealous of these poor women? He had murdered them; jealousy was the last emotion she was feeling at that moment.

Trying to settle her churning stomach, she let her mind step in once again to smooth over the insane situation. Although the thought of her being jealous was twisted, it was something she could use to pull him deeper into her little web.

A web that would eventually set her free.

“You sure you aren’t lying to me?” she asked, her voice taking on an accusatory tone. “Because it sure looks like they meant anawfullot to you.”

Stammering like an idiot, Kade frantically shook his head. Fully holding her face between both hands, he made her meet his wild eyes. He couldn’t possibly lose her now, not when their happiness was within an arm’s reach. She was the only one that held his heart. He could never love another.

“I’mnotlying to you! You are theonlywoman for me! Can’t you see that I love you with all my heart? Look at everything I’ve done for you! Everything I’ve done so we can be together!” he exclaimed, his voice strained with anxiety.

Pulling her face from his grasp, Lexi narrowed her critical eyes. She almost couldn’t believe what she was about to do, but she would be damned if she allowed herself to be victim number seven. In that moment, self-preservation was the only thing that mattered.

Slinking onto his lap, she leaned her svelte body seductively against him. Trying her best to use whatever womanly charm she could, she brought her pouting lips to within an inch of his. Humming a response, she reached up to grab a handful of his raven-colored locks. This was it, she thought to herself. After tonight, she would hold all the cards.

“Then make love to me,” she breathed, pressing her lower half wantonly over his hips. “And prove to me thatyouaremine.”

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CHAPTER FIVE

Arching a brow, Kade placed his hands on Lexi's slim waist to still her moving hips. Only a handful of minutes before she had stopped him from taking her in the shower. Now, she was begging him to make love to her? It rubbed him the wrong way. He didn't appreciate the mixed signals she was giving him.

"You said you wanted to wait," he said, his deep voice taking on a dark tone.

Goosebumps pebbled Lexi's forearms as she realized her plan was just a hair's breadth away from falling apart. She had moved too quickly with her emotions, believing that he was like every other man she had met. Scrambling to think of a way to salvage the moment, she moved her hands to his sharp cheeks and leaned in closer.

"I know, and I did! But knowing that you've been with them makes me so angry! I need you to show me that I'm the only one you care about. I need you to prove to me that you truly love me," she replied, trying her best to sound desperate for his affection.

Taking in a sharp breath, he studied the different emotions passing over her beautiful face. He hadn't planned on bringing her back to his room and therefore, hadn't tucked the necklaces away. Ultimately, it was his fault that she was feeling insecure. He needed to rectify the situation and give her what she needed to feel better.

"Of course, I'll prove it to you, Sweetheart," he said confidently. "Go ahead and lie down with your arms above your head. Once I'm through, there will be no doubt left in your mind that I am yours."

Forcing a flirty grin, she dropped her hands from his face and slowly moved off his lap. Maintaining eye contact, she settled herself beside him on the bed. Raising her toned arms over her head, she grasped onto the cold metal bars of the headboard. An

uneasy feeling was taking root in the pit of her stomach while her mind screamed at her to reach into his pants and rip his balls off. Watching him crawl his chiseled body over hers caused that obnoxious scream to turn into a whisper. It wasn't long before her dread morphed into lustful desire.

You're playing with fire, she thought to herself as his lips nuzzled the soft skin of her throat.

Teasing heated kisses over her pulse point, Kade ghosted the fingers of his left hand down the length of her torso. Barely touching the silk nighty with his fingertips, he moved his touch to the unfinished hem resting on her upper thigh. Slowly inching the crimson fabric upwards to expose her bare cunt, he trailed his lips lower to her clavicle.

Nipping his sharp teeth against her delicate flesh and bone, he took pride in the pained gasp leaving her parted lips. He knew that this was what she desperately craved. Her minuteman Leo could never deliver on her dark fantasies, whereas he intended on making them all come true. She would soon learn that no other man could satisfy her the way he could.

Lexi's eyes widened in a mixture of shock and pain as she felt her captor bite into her skin, so hard that she was certain he had drawn blood. Squeezing her grip over the metal bars of the headboard, she fought her muscles to stay still while he soothed her wound with a loving kiss. She hadn't realized the full gravity of the situation until that very moment.

How did she honestly think this would go? That he would make love to her the way Leo had their first time together? No, the man hovering above her wasn't rose petals and wine; he was handcuffs and razor blades. Kade wasn't going to make love to her, he was going to fuck her.

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Something she had always wanted a man to do.

Pleased with her self-restraint, he drifted his hungry lips lower to her left tit. Blowing hot air over her fabric draped breast, he smirked as he watched her nipple pebble to attention. Keeping his brown eyes fixed to hers, he covered the hardened bud with his mouth. Sucking it between his jagged teeth, he used the tip of his wet tongue to elicit a verbal response.

“Ah!” she moaned, arching her torso from the bed. “Oh my God!”

Releasing her tit from his mouth, he lifted his face from her chest and narrowed his gaze. Something about her uttered phrase ignited an evil spark inside his soul. Unable to stop himself from going too fast with her too quickly, he reached for the deep neckline of the nighty and roughly pulled it down to expose both of her firm breasts. She was behaving exactly how he knew she would. Everything about this moment was perfect.

“God isn’t doing this to you, Lexi,” his deep voice boomed. “I am.”

Eagerly latching his mouth to her freed tit, Kade gripped her right breast in his rough hand. Working his fingers and teeth in tandem, he pinched and nibbled her rosebud nipples; again, and again until he felt her buck beneath him and spread her legs wide. The feminine scent of her arousal filled his nose, sending his debauched thoughts into overdrive. Dropping her tit from his mouth, he moved his legs to the space between her spread thighs and curled his lips into a sinful smile.

“You’re already wet for me...fuck...I can smell you,” he breathed, clamping her left

nipple between the nails of his index finger and thumb.

Lexi winced as the sharp prick of pain flowed from her nipple over her entire breast. There was no denying that what her abductor said was true. His rough touch was causing her body to hum with a burning want she hadn't felt in ages. Many of her fantasies were that of a strong man dominating her in bed, using her for his sick pleasure. Never in her wildest dreams did she think it would happen. It was twisted and grotesque, but she found herself buzzing with anticipation. She wanted this to happen.

"Please...please," she panted.

Placing a quick kiss in the valley between her breasts, he released his hold and shimmied his hulking body lower. Hearing her beg for more was music to his ears. He wanted to test her to see how far she would allow him to go.

Situating his face between her open thighs, Kade danced his gaze to her reddened apex. It was apparent from the liquid arousal seeping from her bare cunt lips that he was right. She was ready for him to finally claim her.

"Mmm, Sweetheart, you look good enough to eat," he said with a slow lick of his lips. "Should I give you a taste?"

Watching with wide-eyes, Lexi whimpered as he moved his mouth to the inside of her ticklish thigh. Unable to speak, she nodded her head in response while his lips brushed a sprinkling of delicate kisses across her skin. There was nothing in the world that she wanted more than to feel his mouth worship her.

Needing to hear her consent, he raised a thick brow and cleared his throat. "Tell me you want this...that you need me to eat your pussy," he encouraged, nibbling her smooth flesh. "Say it, Lexi."

“Yes! Yes, I want this...I...I need you to eat me,” she said unabashedly, not even thinking twice.

“Mmm, yes you do, Sweetheart,” he agreed before swirling his tongue from her inner thigh towards her perfect cunt. “Yes, you do.”

Pressing the back of her head against the mattress, Lexi whimpered a curse as she felt the heat of his tongue swirl across her sensitive flesh. Closing her eyelids, she pulled her trembling knees towards her chest, wantonly giving him complete access to her entire body. Oral sex was something that Leo was never too interested in giving and when he did attempt to pleasure her, he fumbled around like an inexperienced teenager. It was immediately apparent that there was a vast difference between the two men. She knew that Kade was well versed in how to worship a woman.

Placing his large hands on her malleable thighs, Kade held her tightly in place. Wiggling the flat of his tongue between her soft folds, he stopped just below her pink clit. Purposefully neglecting it, he instead concentrated on the other lips of her cunt. Kissing and sucking on her tender skin, he used all his tricks to drive her wild. Slurping up her arousal, he grunted an approval as he savored her unique taste. It was something he would no doubt begin to crave. This one escapade wouldn't be enough, he realized. It would never be enough.

Moaning loudly into the small room, she couldn't care less how desperate she sounded. The sensation of his plush lips and expert tongue on her throbbing cunt was almost too much to bear, she was on the verge of losing her mind. Her ignored clit was aching and needed to be touched. Unable to stop herself, she released her hold on the headboard and reached between her legs for his raven locks.

“My clit, please,” she begged, urging him by grazing her nails across his scalp. “Please!”

Smiling against her pussy, Kade decided to oblige his love. Finding her little pink pearl at the top of her wet slit, he teased it with the tip of his tongue; dancing around it in a random pattern of clockwise and counterclockwise circles. Reading her squirming body, he knew that her release was rapidly building by the gentle roll of her hips and sharp breaths. It had been too long since she had had a decent orgasm if this was all it took for her to fall apart. Not wanting her to lose control too quickly, he stopped his needy tongue and glanced up at the mewling woman.

“Should I let you cum, Sweetheart?” he asked, moving his right hand from her thigh to her dripping center.

Immediately opening her eyes, she vigorously nodded her head. She was so close to falling from the cliff, the way he had just stopped was absolute torture.

“Yes, yes!” she squealed. “Please...let me...cum!”

Shaking his head, he narrowed his brown eyes and clicked his tongue against the roof of his mouth.

“No,” he hissed. “Not until you admit that your body is mine. Tell me. Say that you belong to me, and I promise I’ll make you cum harder than you ever have.”

Lexi trembled, her swimming mind trying to make sense of what her abductor was saying. Maybe what he said was true, perhaps she did belong to him? Why else would she be reacting to his touch so eagerly?

“I... I belong...to...you...Kade!” she whimpered lewdly.

“Hmm,” he mused, dipping both his index and middle finger into her silken pussy. “There’s my good girl...mmm...alright. Cum for me!”

Curling his fingers upwards, he sunk his long digits inside her tight cunt and felt for her hidden crevice. Finding the spongy surface, he tickled his fingertips against it at the same time his eager mouth latched onto her clit. Pulling the sensitive bud between his teeth, he flicked the tip of his tongue over it again and again in a haphazard “x” pattern. Sensing she was on the verge, he pumped his fingers and barked out another order for her to cum. He needed her to find her release so he could indulge in his own.

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Twisting her fingers into his dark hair, Lexi blinked up at the popcorned ceiling. Taking in a trembling breath, her overstimulated mind went completely blank. Working on animal instinct alone, her heated body seized and immediately fell apart. A heady wave of pleasure ripped from her core and shook through her tensed muscles, causing her cunt to spray her arousal in a moment of debased wickedness.

Kade growled as he felt her pussy gush onto his rough hand and forearm. Her body's reaction was more than he could've hoped for, it caused a sense of dark pride to take hold of his heart. No other man could have made her cum like that. Only he had the power to make her fall apart at the seams.

"That's my girl," he praised, slowly removing his face and hand from her soaked cunt.

Unable to hear anything but her own deafening heartbeat, she looked at him in complete awe as he crawled over her like a triumphant God. She should be embarrassed over what just happened, only she wasn't. The man that was currently holding her against her will had just given her the strongest orgasm of her life. So powerful that she had let body completely go. So powerful that she was almost willing to forgive him for everything he had put her through.

What the fuck is wrong with you? she asked herself.

Smiling wickedly at his love, Kade leaned down and placed a kiss upon her flushed cheek. Giving her a moment to catch her breath, he carefully stripped off his black pajama pants and tossed them to the floor. Kneeling unabashedly naked next to her, his ego swelled as he watched desire once again dance over her features. He had her

exactly right where he wanted.

“Oh, don’t worry, Sweetheart,” he cooed, running his calloused hand up and down the length of his freed cock. “We’re not done yet.”

Swallowing hard, she watched him stroke his hardened dick. Every immoral fantasy came racing through her mind. He physically fit the mold of what she had always craved in a man. She knew it was against her better judgement, but God help her, she wanted to know how his cock would feel inside of her.

“You want this, don’t you?” he asked.

Freezing from his question, her face dropped in embarrassment. Fuck. Had he implanted a thought reader into her brain, too? At this point, nothing would surprise her.

“No. Don’t be ashamed, my love. Here,” he said, lifting her hand and bringing it to his aching cock. “Feel me...feel what you do to me.”

Meeting his consuming gaze, Lexi grazed her fingertips over his rigid cock. Wrapping her petite hand around his length, she slowly squeezed her grip up and down; giving him a cat-like grin as she heard him groan under her eager touch.

“Fuck...keep doing that, and I’ll cum right now all over your face,” he warned, his deep voice straining.

“Is that what you want to do?” she asked, quickening the movement of her hand.

Shaking his head, Kade lowered his mouth to her ear and let out a low growl. Playtime was over, he needed to be inside her. Now.

“No, Sweetheart, I’m going to cum in that little pretty pussy of yours. Now get on all fours for me,” he ordered.

With a nervous lick of her lips, she released her hold on his cock and moved onto her hands and knees. Her legs were still wobbly from her mind-blowing orgasm, making her wonder if she could withstand being fucked in this position for long. Glancing over her shoulder, she watched in anticipation as he moved behind her. It would be so easy to attack him right now, when he was vulnerable and not expecting her to rebel. If it were that easy though, why couldn’t she bring herself to act upon it?

It’s ok, she reasoned with herself. It’s ok for you to want this. It’s ok for you to want him.

Centering himself between her calves, Kade brushed his left hand over her firm ass. Pushing the red nighty to her waist, he left her backside and glistening pussy completely unobstructed from his view. He had waited years to finally know her in the most carnal way imaginable. Now that the moment was finally here, he wanted to savor every pleasurable second.

“Are you ready for me, Sweetheart?” he asked, wrapping his fingers around the base of his throbbing cock.

Turning her face towards the headboard, she swore under her breath. Wiggling her narrow hips, she tried to goad him on. Her conflicting thoughts could wait, she would deal with them later; when her body was satisfied and too exhausted to protest reason.

“Yes,” she moaned. “Please, I want you inside of me.”

Biting into the flesh of his cheek, he stopped himself from immediately ravaging her. Her lewd plea was everything he had wished for. Slowly dragging the head of his aching member down her slit, he gave her overworked clit a sharp slap with his flesh.

Hearing her spit out a needy hiss, he smiled to himself.

“Don’t worry, my love,” he said, lining the tip of his cock against her sopping entrance. “I’ll touch that perfect little clit of yours and make you cum again...once I’ve had my fill.”

Slowly inching his thick girth inside, Kade growled as he felt her inner walls squeeze over his length. She was much tighter than he had expected and the sensation of her pussy stretching around him made his head spin. If he didn’t know better, he would’ve sworn she was a virgin.

“Holyfuck, Lexi...you are so...damn tight,” he grunted while taking her hips in his hands and burying himself fully to the hilt.

Wincing slightly as he slammed his hips against her bare ass, she whimpered a reply. Her cunt had never felt so full before, and she was dancing a fine line between pleasure and pain. It was a wicked sensation that she wanted more of. Pushing back against him, she encouraged him to fuck her with a needy moan.

“God,” he groaned while clawing his fingers into her sharp hips. “Aren’t you a greedy girl.”

Giving her what her body craved, he moved his cock inside her using a series of short, forceful thrusts. Her walls gripped around him like a wicked vice, making it hard for him to withdraw. It was instantly addicting, causing an electric jolt to run through his body. He had only just begun and was already looking forward to the next time he could fuck her again.

Twisting his hips, he glanced down to watch his cock slide in and out of her slick center. He didn’t know it was possible for a woman to be so wet. She was perfect, he thought to himself while ramming into her again and again. So very perfect.

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Squealing like a dirty whore as his thrusts deepened, her body trembled in pleasure. Closing her glassy eyes for a moment, she listened to the sound of their intense coupling. She had never heard anything so raw and animalistic; it turned her on even more. Between the noises filling her ears and his cockthreatening to split her in two, she found herself on the razor's edge of her climax before she knew what was happening.

“Please! Please,” she begged, twisting her fingers into the comforter covering the mattress.

Not wanting her to lose herself this quickly, Kade stilled his sharp hips. Raising his large hand, he brought it down upon her ass with a firm slap. Once. Twice. Then a third time for good measure.

“Oh no, not yet,” he spat, gripping her waist and hips so tight he knew she would wake up with marks, “not...until...I’m...ready!”

Whining as her mind registered the painful sting growing across her backside, Lexi pulled her lower lip between her teeth. Blinking her watery eyes, she nodded her head as he continued. With every manic thrust, he became rougher, snapping his hips against her so hard it made her see stars. His aggression fueled her desperation, it took every ounce of her willpower to not cum right then and there.

Sliding his calloused hands along her spine to her slim shoulders, he let out a deep snarl. Wrapping his long fingers over her skin, he used his newfound leverage to push even deeper and faster into her warm cunt. Purposefully thrusting in time with the erotic moans spilling from her mouth, he narrowed his dark eyes. Leaning his

muscular torso over her shaking back, he pressed his lips against the shell of her ear.

“Who do you belong to, Lexi?” he demanded, arching his hips upwards with every thrust inside her.

Turning her head, she looked out of the corners of her eyes at her captor. He looked wild and insane, like a wolf about to devour his prey. It made her stomach tighten from a mixture of delicious fear and lust.

“You!” she cried. “I belong to you!”

Having the confirmation he needed, Kade kissed her sweaty cheek and pulled his right hand from her shoulder to her waist. Wrapping his arm around her, his fingers easily found her apex between her thighs. Using the tip of his middle finger, he teased her swollen clit peeking from between her pussy lips. He was feeling generous with his love for behaving so well. She deserved to cum before he did as a reward.

“Hurry, Sweetheart,” he hissed, feeling the familiar tickle of his orgasm growing with every slap of his balls. “I won’t last long.”

Nodding her head, she focused on his fingers working her sensitive clit. Pushing back against his eager thrusts, she clenched her jaw as she reached the edge of her release. It shocked her how he knew exactly what to do to make her break so quickly.

“I... I’m. I’m,” she whined, unable to vocalize a coherent thought.

Moving his mouth from her flushed cheek, Kade hovered his full lips over her throat. Roughly sinking his teeth into the salty flesh of her neck, he felt her shatter over his throbbing length. Growling in approval, he held his bite to ensure it would leave a mark. He wanted to give her a physical reminder of the exact moment she gave herself to him.

Succumbing to her second release, Lexi's vision filled with a cluster of blood red splotches. Paying no mind to his sharp teeth at her neck, she raised her arms towards the headboard. Gripping onto the cold metal, her body writhed as she rode out the ecstasy radiating from her core. If it weren't for her hold on the sturdy headboard, she would have collapsed to the bed in a boneless heap.

Feeling her cunt flutter over his aching length, he spit an expletive into the air. Moving his hands to her waist, he squeezed her tightly as he thrust into her fragile pussy. Slamming into her in rapid succession, his entire body stilled as his orgasm took over. Wracked with overwhelming bliss, his pulsating cock released spurts of hot, milky cum deep inside her. Claiming her in the most sinful, carnal way.

"FUCK! FUCK!" he screamed, the muscles in his abdomen flexing as he enjoyed the wicked pleasure.

Wrapping his arms around her, he pulled her free from the headboard. Falling with her onto the mattress, he curled around in her a fetal position. Cooing loving phrases against the nape of her neck, his hands ran across her skin in gentle reverence. She was his now, just as he was hers. Nothing would tear them apart.

Nothing.

Staring numbly at the far wall of the room, Lexi's eyes drifted towards the row of dangling metal necklaces. Little by little, the angry scream she had suppressed in her brain grew louder and louder. It's shrill sound forcing her to take stock in what had just happened. At least it seemed that her captor was pleased with her. She hoped that it would bide her time.

"Are you ok, Sweetheart?" he asked, his deep voice taking on a tender tone.

"Huh?" she replied, shaking her overwhelming thoughts from her head. "Oh...yeah.

Yeah. I'm more than ok. I'm just exhausted...that's all."

Smiling against her scalp, he nuzzled his face against her damp hair. Squeezing his strong arms tighter around her, he closed his brown eyes. He had to agree, he was just as spent. He needed his strength for the busy day that lay ahead. It was best if they both got some sleep.

"Mmm, me too. You wore me out, my love," he said with a contented sigh. "Let's get some sleep, huh?"

Pursing her lips together, she nodded her dizzy head. Swallowing a scream, she prayed that sleep would consume her sooner rather than later. She didn't want to feel the guilt pricking at the base of her skull. Not yet at least. Not while she was selfishly enjoying the afterglow.

Giving the necklaces one last glance, she turned herself in his warm embrace. "Yes, let's," she agreed, making herself pretend for the night that they were two soulmates madly in love.

CHAPTER SIX

Jerking violently against the restrictive comforter tucked in around her, Lexi opened her red rimmed eyes. Freeing her arms from the fabric, she groaned while she gained her bearings. No longer drowning in the murky depths of a salty sea, she found herself instead lying in a cozy bed. Surrounded by pillows and blankets she hadn't remembered being there the night before.

Trying to calm her erratic heartbeat, she searched the mattress with her outstretched arm. Unable to find Kade, she sat straight up and glanced around the darkened room. It unnerved her to know that she had slept so soundly that she hadn't felt or heard him leave.

“Kade?” she asked, her voice heavy with sleep. “Where are you?”

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Pausing a moment, she fully expected her captor to come running to her room as he had every morning since her arrival. Hearing only the eerie sound of silence, she flung the heavy blankets from her legs and climbed out of the warm bed to find him. Normally, she would relish the thought of being completely alone. After what had just happened however, she found that it was the last thing she wanted.

Smoothing her hands over her wrinkled nighty, she cautiously walked towards the entrance of the room. Flipping on the light switch, she winced as the fluorescent overhead light flickered to life. After giving her tired eyes a moment to adjust, she turned and gave stock of the sparse space. Honing her gaze to where the necklaces hung the night before, she took in a tight breath as she noticed that the hooks were now empty.

Realizing that he had removed the jewelry and sticky notes for her benefit, she couldn't help but grin. It seemed that her little plan had worked. He truly believed that she was jealous of those poor women. She had him hook, line, and sinker.

"Hmm, I wonder what else you'll do for me?" she whispered, folding her arms over her chest.

Letting out a long sigh, she pulled her attention away from the golden hooks and debated on what she should do. Knowing that the door was most likely locked, she shrugged her sore shoulders and resigned herself to crawl back into bed.

Slowly stepping towards the mattress, she noticed a random sheet of notebook paper lying on the nightstand. Placed next to the note was a plastic bottle of water and a singular white pill. With her curiosity piqued, she quickly clearing the space.

Snatching the note with shaky fingers, she scanned over the hastily scribbled words.

Sweetheart-

I had a quick job to take care of, but I will be home soon. Both the bedroom and bathroom doors are unlocked. Take a long shower, there is plenty of water. I'll bring back breakfast. I miss you, already.

Love-

K

PS-Take the pill

After reading the note twice, she tossed the paper on the bed. Rolling her eyes, she scoffed with a snort at her abductor's demand. Like hell she would take the fucking pill.

Reaching down, she picked up the tiny tablet with the tips of her index finger and thumb. Holding the pill up to the light, she tried to find any identifiable numbers or markings. While there wasn't a brand name present, she did see the letters "I.N.O.R." etched into the pill. There was something oddly familiar about it, but she couldn't quite place where she had seen it before. It didn't look like aspirin or ibuprofen, and it wasn't her old faithful Ambien. What the fuck was it?

Feeling the artificial eye of the security camera boring into the back of her skull, she grabbed the bottle of water and opened the lid. Knowing that she was being recorded, she decided to play along.

Turning back around towards the door, she pretended to put the pill into her mouth. Chasing the phantom tablet with a large gulp of water, she walked towards the exit.

She hoped her movements would blur the fact that the circular pill was now pinched between her index and middle fingers.

Clutching the water bottle in the hand that held her secret, Lexi lifted her free hand and tugged on the unlocked handle of the door to the room. Pulling the creaky door open, she peeked her head into the hallway to make sure that she was indeed alone. Satisfied that Kade wasn't there, she made her way to the small bathroom. It had been days since soap had touched her skin and she was beyond ecstatic to have the opportunity to be clean again; if only physically.

Keeping her weary gaze towards the floor, Lexi stepped to the white porcelain vanity near the shower stall. Arching a sculpted brow, she was surprised to see a gray fluffy towel and a change of clothes folded neatly on the side of the sink. She still didn't understand how she hadn't heard him getting everything ready for her. Had she really slept so hard that she didn't hear a single peep during the night? Or had he somehow been able to drug her, again?

Shaking the thoughts from her mind, she carefully placed the water bottle on the vanity and let her hands fall to the torn hem of her silk negligee. Lifting the stained garment up and over her head, she closed her eyes and held her breath. The moment of truth had arrived for her to take a good look in the mirror and hold herself accountable for her actions.

Counting to three in her head, she dropped the fabric on the cold floor and opened her green eyes. Gasping audibly, she shook her head in disbelief as her brain processed the woman staring back at her through the looking glass. She didn't recognize the broken shell standing before her. It made her suddenly sick to her stomach.

Chewed up and spit out, she thought to herself before surveying the damage done.

Her dirty, tangled hair fell around her sallow face in total disarray. Dark purple

circles stained the skin under her bloodshot eyes, her cheeks were sunken in and hollow. A large black and blue love bite marred the delicate skin of her throat. Only a few inches lower, another bite mark clung to her sharp collarbone, the skin surrounding that wound torn and bloodied.

“What the fuck happened to me?” she asked in shock.

Really? What happened? Gee let’s see...oh! That’s right! You were FUCKED. Fucked by an insane serial killer,her mind answered flippantly.Duh.

Unable to turn away from her garish image, her gaze drifted lower to her chest. Vibrant red and purple hickeys colored the skin of her pert breasts, so large that she was certain that Kade had tried his best to fit her entire tit into his mouth. Looking lower still, her eyes widened in horror as she noticed large claw marks grazing the fair skin covering her narrow hips. She knew her captor had fucked her hard, but she didn’t realize he had been that rough.

“Oh my God,” she breathed in twisted wonder. “And what’s crazy is that you loved it, Lexi! You loved every single second of it!”

Unable to see past her hips in the looking glass, she glanced down to the sore apex between her tender thighs. Her skin was a fiery shade of red and visibly swollen, like a badge of honor screaming to the world that she had just experienced the most debased sex of her entire life. She should feel like a disgusting slut for letting him use her body in such a way. Only she didn’t.

It wasn’t until she turned away and felt the remnants of his release seeping from her torn cunt did she feel any remorse.

“Why did you let him cum inside you? You stupid...stupid whore!” she growled viciously at herself.

Wait,her mind spat back.Wait...wait...wait. Now calm down. You have never, ever used protection with Leo, and you've never fallen pregnant, have you? It's ok, don't worry. You know Kade can't get you pregnant because your body doesn't work.

Nodding in agreement with the voice, she repeated the comforting words in her head to calm her frazzled nerves. Her periods had always been irregular, and she and Leo had been having unprotected sex for the better part of two years. Odds were if she could get pregnant, she would have by now. Right?

Right.

Needing to distract herself from her racing thoughts, she pushed out a frustrated groan and walked over to the dingy shower stall. Throwing back the clear plastic curtain, she reached down and pushed the temperature dial to almost scalding. Turning the water on, she dropped the white pill hidden between her fingers on the drain in the center of the stall. Waiting patiently until the tablet had fully disintegrated, she stepped into the steamy shower and turned her face towards the hot stream. Holding herself still under the water, she let the initial evidence of her lustful sins rinse off her skin.

If only it were that easy to clean your memory, she thought to herself before picking up the green bar of soap and scrubbing her skin raw.

CHAPTER SEVEN

“Kade?” Lexi called out, running the towel through her wet hair. “Are you back?”

Making her way down the hallway, she paused halfway to his room and waited for a reply. She had lost all track of time in the shower, cleaning her body and washing her hair again and again until the water ran cold. Secretly, she hoped that her abductor had returned without her knowledge and was disappointed when she didn’t hear his deep voice bellow from the bedroom. What if something had happened to him while he was gone? No one knew she was trapped, and she had no way of getting out. What if he got into a car accident, or was mugged, or was lying dead in a ditch somewhere? She would die in this prison. She would die alone in this hell.

“Stop it, Lexi,” she scolded herself. “Just stop it!”

Pursing her lips into a thin line, she pushed the manic thoughts from her mind and walked down the rest of the hallway. Crossing the threshold of her captor’s room, she tossed her gray towel on the bed and began to hum a comforting tune. It was a song that Leo often sang to her early in the morning, when the day was young, and nothing mattered but their bodies pressed languidly together. Oh, how she missed him.

Don’t worry. You’ll see him again, and you’ll live happily ever after. You’ll have everything with Leo that you’ve ever wanted in life, her mind offered.

“Yeah, right,” she argued aloud, pacing around the room. “Like he’s going to forgive you for fucking another man? Don’t be so delusional! Leo will never want you again...nope. Never! You’re tainted goods, now. You’re a cheating whore! But Kade...well, he does want you. Sure, he’s insane and has murdered some women...but you’re the one he has always wanted! So maybe you should just be a good girl and be quiet...do what he says and let him love you. Yeah?”

Halting her steps, she struggled with the conflicting thoughts raging through her mind. She hated Kade, only she truly didn’t. She loved Leo, only not enough. She wanted to escape, but was afraid of what her life would look like once she did. She wanted Kade. She wanted Leo. She needed Leo. She needed Kade. Leo. Leo. Leo. Kade. Kade. Kade. Freedom. Freedom.

Freedom.

“Stop, stop, STOP!” she screamed, cupping her hands over her ears and shutting her eyes.

Swallowing a sob, she stood ramrod straight and gave herself a long moment to calm down. She was under an extreme amount of stress and letting her emotions get the

better of her. If she could just tame her thoughts and collect her wits, she still stood a fighting chance of making it out from under Kade's thumb alive. She just needed to breathe, sleep, and eat.

Oh. Food.

Not realizing just how famished she was until the thought ran across her mind, she dropped her hands to her stomach. Almost on cue her stomach growled, letting her know that she desperately needed something to eat. Kade did say he was bringing home breakfast, but she didn't know how long he intended to remain gone. It could be hours, or even days until he returned. She couldn't wait that long. Her body needed food now.

Hurrying to the wooden dresser situated on the opposite side of the room, she began to systematically open each drawer and comb through their contents. She was certain that Kade had a stash of food somewhere and was hellbent on finding it.

Rifling through the contents, her frustration bubbled as she only found his clothes within the first three drawers. Yanking open the fourth drawer, she felt a phantom slap to the face when she noticed her clothes folded neatly inside. Intimate articles that had gone missing from her apartment over the past few months.

"You've got to be kidding me!" she said in bewilderment.

Searching through the drawer, she was shocked to find a collection of her unwashed bras, panties, and sleepwear. Items she had lost her mind over trying to figure out where they had gone. She wasn't crazy after all. Someone had taken her clothes. Only that someone was a murderous lunatic, not a friendly house elf as Leo had suggested.

Son of a bitch.

Digging through the piles of dirty cotton and lace, her fingers smacked against an old shoebox. Arching a curious brow, she pulled the box from the drawer and set it on the cold floor beside her. Taking in a deep breath, she opened the lid and exclaimed a wicked curse.

Reaching into the shoebox, Lexi picked up dozens of printed pictures. Quickly flipping through them, she realized how unscrupulous Kade was in his hunt. They were all of her, taken candidly in various locations. At work, out shopping, at the park, and in restaurants. There were even pictures of her inside her apartment. It didn't matter where she was or whom she was with, he was always near her. It sent a cold shiver down her spine.

Setting the photos on the floor, she dove back into the box and found a set of keys attached to a familiar beaded keychain. It only took her a split second to recognize that they were the spare keys to her apartment. Keys that she hadn't noticed were missing. It unnerved her to finally know how he had broken in. She wondered just how many times he had set foot into her home without her permission.

Moving past the keys, she focused her attention on the last two items in the shoebox: a red velvet jewelry box and a black linen bag with something rectangular inside. Grabbing the jewelry box first, she flipped open the stiff lid. Honing her eyes on the white gold infinity necklace inside, she felt her heart stop. It was the necklace that Leo had given her on their one-year anniversary. All her cocky confidence flew out the window when she realized the implication.

Kade had stolen her necklace in anticipation of doing to her what he had done to his other victims.

You think you're so special, huh? Yeah, right. He's probably chomping at the bit to add this necklace to his shrine, you idiot! You aren't playing him, he's playing you.

Closing the jewelry box, she dropped it onto the floor next to the pictures. Panic settled deep within her bones, ramping up her anxiety. She needed to get the hell out of his prison, only now she didn't know how.

"Don't worry. You'll think of something! Just stay calm," she encouraged herself before yanking the velvet bag from the shoebox. "Just stay calm."

Opening the rope drawstring, she pulled the fabric open and physically jumped from the floor. To her complete shock, her cell phone was tucked neatly inside. It made no sense to her why he would have kept her cell, but at that moment she didn't care. This was her chance at being rescued, and she intended on taking it.

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Reaching into the bag with trembling fingers, her heartbeat raced as she freed her phone from its confines and pushed the power button on the side. Although its screen was shattered, the rest of it seemed perfectly fine. She prayed to God that the battery still had some juice left.

“Come on...come on...come on,” she repeated as she waited for the white logo to appear on the screen.

After what seemed like an eternity, she squealed in excitement as her phone sprung to life with twenty-two percent left of its battery. Without thinking, she scrolled through her contacts and immediately tapped her finger against Leo’s name. Holding her cell to her ear, she choked back tears as her phone connected to her network. After the second ring however, her heart sank when she was sent directly to Leo’s voicemail.

No, No, NO!! ANSWER, DAMMIT!!her mind screamed.

Swallowing her heart back into her body, Lexi’s thin form shook as she listened to Leo’s voicemail message. She couldn’t believe her shitty luck. This could be her only opportunity to be saved and her former lover was sending her to voicemail. He must really hate her.

Finally hearing the cue to start her message, she took in a breath. With her stomach twisting into tight knots, she spat out a stream of words that she hoped made sense.

“LEO!! Help me! Please! I’ve been taken...I don’t know where I am... I’m scared! PLEASE,PLEASEI need your help! He’s going to kill me. I know he is! He’s going to—”

Before she had a chance to finish her sentence, a loud “thud” came from somewhere above her head. Knowing that her captor had returned home, she abruptly ended the call. Frantically hitting the power button, she slipped her cell back into its bag and gathered all the objects from the floor. Stuffing them back into the shoebox, she felt her adrenaline spike. Throwing the box into the drawer, she haphazardly covered the cardboard with her clothes.

Shit, shit, SHIT, she thought as she slammed the drawer shut.

Needing to be as far away from the dresser as possible, she ran over to the bed and jumped on the soft mattress. Situating her body into a relaxed position, she tried her best to calm her screaming nerves. Painting a happy look on her face, she prayed that her captor wouldn’t know what she had just done.

“I’m back, Sweetheart, and I come bearing gifts!” Kade’s loud voice boomed as he made his way into the secured bunker.

Walking through the opened door of his room with a black backpack swung over his shoulder, he lifted a white paper bag held in his right hand. Settling his dark eyes on his love, he stopped dead in his tracks. He couldn’t believe how beautiful she looked lounging on his bed. She was right where she belonged.

“I knew that would look amazing on you,” he said, referring to the floral silk teddy hugging her slim body. “You’re so gorgeous.”

Smiling innocently at her abductor, Lexi dropped her eye line to the bed in an act of faux modesty. She couldn’t believe he thought she was beautiful in her current state. She looked like a hideous beast that had just gone through hell and back.

“Thank you,” she replied softly, trying her best to still her shaking muscles.

Clearing the space to the bed, he reached down to cup her face with his free hand. Encouraging her to meet his gaze, he gently swiped the pad of his thumb across her lower lip. He couldn't wait to put her lips to good use, but knew she needed to eat before he ravished her again.

"I know you must be hungry, Sweetheart" he said, giving her a swift kiss on the forehead. "So, I went and got you that bagel sandwich from Clyde's deli I know you love so much."

Hearing her stomach growl, she eagerly took the white paper back from him and quickly opened it. Almost at once, her mouth began to water as the smell of toasted meat and cheese filled her nostrils. Reaching inside the bag, she pulled out the sandwich and unwrapped just enough of it to sink her teeth into. She couldn't remember the last time she had been this hungry. It was as if she hadn't eaten in days.

"Mmmmm," she moaned happily.

Humored by the way his love shoved her sandwich into her mouth, he unslung the backpack from his shoulder and dropped it to the mattress. Unzipping the satchel, he reached in and retrieved her hairbrush from the bag. Giving her a pleased smile, he moved to slink his large form behind hers on the bed.

"Good?" he asked, leaning down to kiss her bare shoulder.

Swallowing her bite of food, she glanced back and nodded. Confusion wracked her mind as she felt him begin to comb her hair through her wet hair. So that's where he went?

"Mhm, very good, thank you," she replied, psyching herself up to start a conversation with him. "So where did you go? It was weird not having you here. I missed you."

Running the bristles through her chestnut locks, he let out a sigh. Knowing that she had missed him was a dagger to the chest. He didn't want to leave her this morning but sadly, his obligation took precedence.

"I had a job I needed to take care of, my love. I tried to get out of it, but I was the only one that could handle the situation...but since I was out, I figured I would stop by your old place and get some of your things on my way home. I tried to be as fast as I could...anyways, hey. I feel like I owe you an apology. I'm sorry I was so rough with you last night, Sweetheart. I just couldn't help myself. How are you feeling?"

Closing her eyes, she shivered as the memory of their carnal coupling filled her mind. He was a complete animal the last time she saw him, it was in stark contrast to the tender man now brushing the tangles from her hair. Maybe there was still some good in him, after all? Perhaps he really did love her?

"Sore," she answered honestly.

Setting the brush down upon the square nightstand, Kade reached around his love and hugged her tightly against his chest. He hated the fact that he had hurt her, but it was so hard for him to keep the beast at bay. He needed to try harder, though. She deserved to be loved and loved well.

"I'm so sorry. I'll try to be more gentle next time," he said, nuzzling his full lips against the crown of her head. "It looks like you took your pill. Good girl."

Taking another bite of her delicious sandwich, she mumbled a reply and focused her eyes on the foot of the bed. She suddenly felt guilty for not taking the damn thing.

Yeah, sure. Such a good girl.

“Uh huh,” she replied.

Rocking her gently in his arms, he smiled to himself at just how perfectly things had fallen into place. He knew she would finally accept his love. Wanting to show her how grateful he felt, he moved his hungry lips to the skin of her neck. This time, he would play the sweet lover her body so desperately needed.

Leaning her head, she savored the feeling of his capable mouth pressing against her throat. Dropping her half-eaten sandwich into the bag, she reached back with her right hand and ran her fingers through her captor’s shaggy hair. Unable to stifle a moan, she encouraged him to continue his wicked game with a sharp tug. It wasn’t fair that he had the ability to make her this weak. Why did he have such a power over her to make her forget all his wrongdoings?

Smiling against her smooth skin, Kade drifted his left hand to her breast. Gently toying with her firm tit, he felt a bolt of pride run through him as she arched lewdly under his touch. He was so pleased with her behavior, she deserved to be rewarded. Selfishly, he couldn’t wait to taste her again.

Continuing to press heated kisses down her neck, he was rudely torn from his torrid thoughts by the obnoxious sound of an airplane engine roaring to life. Yanking his lips away, his body perked into an alert position behind her.

“What the fuck is that?” he asked, his dark eyes darting around the room.

Not knowing what was happening at first, Lexi turned to look toward the sound radiating from the chest of drawers. Her mind screamed as she finally recognized the sound of Leo's ringtone coming from her cellphone.

That's impossible, you turned off the phone. Right? Oh SHIT! You didn't turn off the damn phone! You're FUCKED, now!

Realizing that she had made a critical mistake, she scooted away from Kade and looked at him with wide eyes. Unsure of what to do, she pulled her legs to her chest and squeezed her body into a protective stance. Frozen with fear, she watched helplessly as her captor stood from the bed and stormed to the dresser. She didn't like the deadly look washing over his handsome face. It made her fear for her life.

Fuck. Fuck. FUCK.

Keeping his piercing gaze focused on the guilty looking woman, Kade opened the drawer of his dresser and grabbed the shoebox that he kept Lexi's treasures in. Knowing exactly where the sound was coming from, he tore the box open and grabbed the black linen pouch. Ripping the phone from its bag, he growled in anger as he saw Leo's picture flash across the shattered screen.

Unable to stop himself from raging, he threw the ringing phone with all his might over Lexi's head, effectively smashing the cell to bits as it slammed against the wall.

“What did you do, Alexandria!?” he demanded, barring his sharp teeth. “WHAT DID YOU FUCKING DO??”

CHAPTER EIGHT

Lexi stammered, unable to answer his heated question. Her captor reminded her of a caged animal as he paced back and forth in front of her, the look of pure rage gracing

the masculine features of his face. She was completely unprepared for the deadly fight unfolding before her eyes. If she wanted to survive the day, she needed to diffuse the situation as quickly as possible.

Deny. Deny. Deny, her mind encouraged. Deny everything!

“I...I... I didn’t do anything!” she cried out impulsively, listening to her brain instead of her gut. “I didn’t even know my phone was in there! I swear!”

No sooner than the words had left her mouth, she knew she had given the wrong answer by the way he stopped dead in his tracks. There was no reigning the beast in, now. It was over, she had just signed her own death warrant.

Kade growled, his face turning scarlet as his anger took hold of him. Alexandria had betrayed him and now she dared to lie to him? It took all his strength not to reach for her and toss her around like a rag doll.

“DON’T YOU LIE TO ME! ANSWER ME, LEXI!” he screamed, balling his hands into fists at his sides. “WHAT...DID...YOU...DO?”

Swallowing hard, she tried in vain to calm her racing heart. With a pained whimper, she released the hold on her legs and submissively turned her gaze towards the mattress. There had to be a way to turn the situation around in her favor. She had to try, at least. What did she have to lose?

“I found my necklace, you know,” she countered, completely changing the direction of the argument. “You took mine just like you took theirs. You lied to me! You don’t love me. I’m just a toy to you! Something to play with and then destroy once you’ve had your fill! You want to kill me, just like you killed them...don’t you?”

Spurred on by her sudden accusation, Kade gave her a critical once over and allowed

his dark fantasy to play in his mind's eye. He could imagine his rough hands wrapping around her thin neck, squeezing into her flesh as she twitched and fought to be freed. He could see her sweet face turn crimson and then indigo as the light behind her emerald eyes slowly dimmed. He could feel the euphoria that coursed through his body every single time he stole a soul from Death, claiming it as his for all of eternity. It made his cock ache and his blood run molten just imagining it.

“And what if I do, Alexandria?” he asked, his voice suddenly eerily calm. “What if I do want to kill you and let you join the others?”

Blinking in bewilderment, she absorbed his heavy words. Her worst fear was slowly coming into fruition. She wasn't expecting him to tell her the ugly truth. There was nothing special about her, she was just one of the many pathetic creatures ensnared in his deadly trap. There was one huge difference between her and the others, though. She wasn't about to go down without a fight.

“Good,” she spat, rising to her knees on the mattress to meet his eye level. “Because I want to kill you, too!”

Smiling wickedly at the defiant hellcat, Kade slowly nodded his head. He knew she would finally understand that she was his true match. Once she reclaimed her true self, they would be unstoppable together.

“Ahh, and that's exactly why I can't kill you, Sweetheart. Don't you see? That darkness that's inside you is like a Siren's call to me. The first time I saw you, I knew that we shared the same twisted impulses. That we are both driven by the same savage instinct. We need each other, my love. And now that I have you, I'm never letting you go. You are mine.”

Narrowing her eyes, she attempted to mask her shock with a deep scowl. Did he really know about her past? She had worked very hard at wiping that chapter of her

life from the world, there was no way he could know. Even if he did somehow, that Alexandria no longer existed. She was a changed woman, her impulse to kill no longer controlled her. He was wrong, they weren't anything alike.

Liar, liar, pants on fire, her mind taunted.

Sensing that his love was struggling with the weight of his words, he took in a large breath and stepped to the side of the bed. Reaching out, he cupped both sides of her flushed face and bent down to press his forehead against hers.

“Do anything to jeopardize our life together again,” he warned, his voice hovering just above a whisper. “And I will hurt you, mylove. I will hurt you so badly that you will wish that you were dead. Is that understood?”

Trembling as her adrenaline flowed, her eyes met his dark storm head on. She believed every word that had spilled from his full lips. There would be no escaping him. The only way she would ever be free is if she broke her own vow and took his life.

“Yes, I...I understand,” she acknowledged, her voice cracking with the realization of what she needed to do.

“Good girl,” he praised, reluctantly releasing her face. “Well. Now that we have that out of the way, it’s time to go, my love.”

Lifting a brow, Lexi watched in dismay as he stepped over to the wooden nightstand and opened its drawer. No, they couldn’t leave now. Not while there was a sliver of a chance that Leo could alert the authorities. They needed to stay right where they were.

“Go? Go where?” she asked, trying her best not to panic.

Reaching into the tiny drawer, he sighed in annoyance and removed a pair of silver handcuffs. Walking back to her, he roughly grabbed her thin wrists with his free hand. He knew exactly what she was thinking, and it irked him to no end. Her precious little airline pilot wouldn't be able to swoop in and save her, now. No one would.

"You'll know when we get there," he answered curtly, cuffing her wrists together.

CHAPTER NINE

Pressing her forehead against the cool glass of the passenger side window, Lexi listened to the sweet symphonic music filling Kade's Mercedes GLE SUV. They had been driving for hours and she was completely lost as to where they were. With every mile marker they passed, her hope faded. Even if the police determined which tower her cell phone had pinged off, it didn't matter now. She was long gone.

Wincing slightly as the metal cuffs threatened to cut into her skin, she was grateful to no longer be blindfolded and gagged. For whatever reason, he had foregone the added restraints after helping her relieve herself on the side of the deserted road. She was humiliated that she needed his help cleaning up afterwards, but he acted as if it was an everyday occurrence. He didn't even bat an eye when the tissue he used to wipe her soaked through, getting urine on his fingers.

Against her better judgement, she found herself feeling thankful for him and his nonchalant attitude. So much so that she had allowed herself to return his hungry kiss as he buckled her back into her seat. Her moment of weakness only made her internal struggle that much worse.

God, I'm so fucking sick. How can I possibly want that murderous lunatic to touch me? Leo is the only one I should be lusting over. I know that he still loves me. He wouldn't have tried to call me back if he didn't. That poor man is probably going

crazy right now trying to find me.

Well yeah, ok. That may be true, but even if you free yourself and go running back to him, you know he will never accept you for who you truly are. He wouldn't want to have anything to do with you if he knew the ugly truth. Leo just doesn't understand your needs. Not the way Kade does.

Sure. Maybe Kade does understand me, but I can't get attached. I know how this needs to end. He must die. That's the only way I will be able to get out of this!

Fighting to keep her bickering thoughts under control, she counted the snow-covered trees as they whizzed by her window. She could feel the beginnings of a sharp headache grow from the constant back and forth argument between her and her psyche. She didn't want to think anymore.

"Are we almost there?" she asked, purposefully breaking her erratic train of thought.

Tightening his grip on the leather encased steering wheel, Kade nodded his head. Despite the weather, they were making excellent time. In another ten minutes or so, they would finally arrive at his secluded safehouse. Away from anyone and anything that could tear them apart.

"We are, Sweetheart. Just up the mountain a little way. We'll be there before you know it," he replied, pausing for a beat before continuing. "You've been so quiet. What's going on in that pretty little head of yours?"

Turning in her seat to look at her handsome abductor, she laughed internally. There was no way in hell she was going to tell him what was truly on her mind. She would however, tell him what he wanted to hear.

"I'm just wondering if the place you're taking me to has a bed," she said

suggestively.

Lifting the corner of his lips into a smirk, he released his right hand from the steering wheel and reached over to caress her face. Perhaps the silence had been beneficial for her, it seemed as if she had done some soul searching. This was the Alexandria he knew would emerge once she got over the ridiculous notion that she could ever live without him.

“It does, my love,” he began, letting his fingertips trace along her jawline. “A big, sturdy one.”

Playing her role, she hummed an approval. She knew he would be easily distracted with the thought of sex. “That sounds nice. Maybe you can take me to it, and we can do what we did last night?” she asked.

Clicking his tongue against the roof of his mouth, he adjusted his posture in the driver’s seat. His cock grew hard as his memory reminded of the way her perfect little cunt wrapped around him, squeezing him to madness. She didn’t have to ask him twice; he couldn’t wait to fuck her again.

“Oh, my little minx. Of course, we can. I just need you to take another pill for me first, and then I’ll take you straight to bed,” he purred.

Raising a brow, she gently pulled away from her captor’s touch. “Another pill? But, why? I already took the one you gave me,” she said, trying to ignore the hairs standing up on the back of her neck.

Turning his attention back to the icy road, he eased off the gas pedal. Slowing down his Mercedes, he made a right hand turn onto a gravel road leading to their destination. He didn’t understand why she sounded so alarmed. She didn’t have a problem taking the first pill, why was this suddenly an issue?

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“Well, yes, you did. But it takes two doses for the medication to be effective, Sweetheart.”

Sitting ramrod straight, she held her breath as they wound up the side of the mountain. She didn't know what she should be more afraid of, the steep terrain or the current conversation.

“Effective? Just what the fuck did you give me?” she asked, her voice taking on a hint of annoyance.

Placing his foot on the brake, Kade slowed his SUV to a crawl and gently turned left onto the long driveway that led to his cabin. He hadn't planned on telling her the truth about the pill, but if things were to progress, he knew he needed to be forthright with her.

“I gave you Plan B, Sweetheart. I knew I wouldn't want to pull out or use protection the first time I was with you. But I'll use condoms from now on, I promise,” he said, pulling in front of his A-Frame cabin.

Not caring that they had arrived at the end of their journey, Lexi blinked at him in a daze. That's why the pill looked so familiar. She had taken the morning after pill the first time she and Leo had had unprotected sex.

You really fucked up this time! What if the reason you haven't fallen pregnant yet is because Leo's swimmers don't swim? Did you ever think of that?

“Oh,” she breathed, unable to say anything else to either her abductor or herself.

Putting the Mercedes in park, he turned off the engine and unbuckled his seatbelt. Opening his car door, he stepped onto the snow dusted gravel driveway and slammed the door behind him. Walking around to the passenger side, he opened her door and leaned over her slim body to remove her seatbelt. Daylight was quickly fading, and the temperature was dipping below freezing. It was best that they settle themselves in for the night as soon as possible.

“Ok, my love,” he muttered, reaching for the black backpack resting at her feet. “Time to see your new home!”

Helping Lexi from her leather seat, he reached back into his SUV and grabbed a gray metal flashlight from the glove box. Closing the passenger door, he took her by the arm and gently led her towards the modest two-story cabin. He hadn’t planned on taking her to his safehouse for at least a few more weeks and it annoyed him that things weren’t ready. He hoped she wouldn’t be turned off by the fact that they would be roughing it for a day or two.

“I’ll head into town tomorrow to get gas for the generator,” he said, pulling his keys from the pocket of his jeans and unlocking the door. “Until then, we have flashlights and I’ll make us a fire. How does that sound?”

Turning her gaze from the rustic cabin to her captor, she gave him a faux smile. Why the hell was he asking her? It wasn’t like she had a choice in the matter.

“Sounds nice,” she replied, her teeth chattering slightly from the frigid air.

Opening the red wooden door, Kade glanced at her with concern painting his face. Even though he had bundled her up in an oversized puffy coat, thick jeans, and Ugg boots, the freezing temperatures were still getting to her. He needed to build the fire quickly, before she became sick.

Turning on the flashlight, he ushered her inside the dark cabin. Taking her shackled hand in his, he led her towards the stone fireplace flanking the far wall.

“It’ll just take me a couple of minutes to get a fire going, Sweetheart. I promise I’ll have you warmed up in no time,” he said softly before pulling logs from the reserve pile next to the fireplace.

Nodding a reply, Lexi watched him as he set to work setting the wood inside the hearth and sparking a fire. Within a couple of minutes, the fireplace roared to life, filling the immediate area of the dusty cabin with much needed light and warmth. Moaning happily, she stretched her bound hands towards the heat and closed her tired eyes. She always did love being next to an open fire.

“Feels good, right?” he asked, shrugging the backpack from his shoulder and dropping it to the floor.

“Very good,” she replied honestly.

Turning to look at her, Kade studied her for a long moment. She looked so sweet and happy, he liked seeing her like this. It washed away all the anger he still harbored from her little stunt earlier in the day.

Unable to stop himself, he stepped in front of her and gave her a chaste kiss on her rosy cheek before digging into his dark denim pocket. Pulling out a pair of tiny silver keys, he reached for her restrained hands. Unlocking the handcuffs from her wrists, he gave her a loving smile.

“Stay right here and warm up. I’m going to unload the truck. While I’m doing that, be a good girl and take your last pill. It’s in the front pocket of the backpack. There’s a bottle of water in there with it so you have no excuse not to, ok?”

Opening her eyes, Lexi nodded as she watched him move towards the front door. Rubbing her raw wrists, she waited until he had crossed the threshold before following his command.

Bending over the backpack, she unzipped the bag and retrieved the pill and water. Popping the lone pill from its foil housing, she placed it on her tongue and cracked open the plastic bottle. Saying a silent prayer, she washed the tablet down with a large swing of water. She hoped that half of the dose would be sufficient in protecting her from an unwanted pregnancy.

Yeah, you'd better pray you don't get pregnant with the Spawn of Satan, her conscious hissed.

Mumbling a curse, she tipped the plastic bottle upwards and chugged down the rest of the tepid spring water. Turning her back to the stone hearth, she slowly danced her gaze around the darkened space to memorize her new surroundings. Although she shouldn't make out specific details in the firelight, she could see that the open concept cabin was sparse of furniture or personal effects. There didn't appear to be anything obvious she could use as a weapon. It left her feeling somewhat defeated.

Think Lexi, her mind nudged. There is a kitchen...and where there is a kitchen there are usually...

"Knives," she breathed aloud.

Swooping her eyes to the left, she narrowed her sights on the small kitchen. She prayed that she would find at least one knife inside the pine drawers. It didn't have to be a butcher's knife; any blade would do. Hell, if she had to, she could use a dull butter knife to slit her captor's throat. She only needed to find a way to rummage through the cabinets without Kade knowing.

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Sneak away while he's sleeping. You know how to be quiet. You can do this.

"Yeah, I can do this," she said quietly, pulling her attention back to the flickering fire.

Enjoying the heat radiating from the burning logs, she constructed a basic plan of action in her mind. First, she needed to exhaust him so completely that he would be dead to the world. Second, she would tiptoe into the kitchen and find a knife. Lastly, she would use the blade on her captor and earn her freedom back.

Simple enough. What could possibly go wrong?

Ignoring the doubt creeping into her mind, she unzipped her black puffy coat and shrugged it from her barely covered shoulders. Dropping the jacket to the wooden floor, she silently went over her plan again and again. For whatever reason, the thought of using a knife on him rubbed her the wrong way. It was the only way she could overpower him, though. She was strong but not nearly as physically capable as her captor. This was how it needed to play out.

You know, it really doesn't have to be this way, Alexandria. You don't have to kill him. You know that he completes your broken soul.

Yes, I do! I must, there isn't another way! I want this nightmare to end so I can go back to my life with Leo. My future is with him, not with Kade. I must kill the monster. I must!

Staring into the cracking fire, she became lost in her mind's vicious tug of war. After a handful of seconds, her vision blurred. Slowly, the yellow and orange flames

blended into one, offering her a forbidden glimpse of her future.

She could see herself cuddling next to Leo's naked body, laughing at something brilliant tumbling from his lips. He looked so sure of himself as he weaved a hilarious tale. Whatever it was had enthralled her, she seemed thoroughly entertained by her lover's story. It was clear that happiness and love surrounded them in their shared bed. Everything about the moment felt blissfully perfect.

Focusing on the fantasy, the tender moment in front of her evolved. She watched in silence as her phantom self-slinked over Leo's tanned body, pressing heated kisses from his bare stomach to his chest. Teasing him mercilessly with her tongue and teeth, she looked triumphant as he begged for more. Straddling his hips, she moved her lustful advances upward towards his pleading mouth. Just before her lips made contact however, his handsome face suddenly melted away, turning into Kade's at the very last second.

"What are you thinking about?" Kade asked, stepping behind her and wrapping his arms around her.

Yelping in shock, she jumped against her captor's embrace. She hadn't heard him come up behind her and it scared her senseless. If she was to go through with her plan, she needed to be more alert. Being distracted was a complete amateur move.

"Ahh! You scared me!" she cried out, forgetting about the prediction in the flames.

Holding her tightly against his torso, he kissed an apology against her temple. Roaming his calloused hands across the floral silk covering her abdomen, he moved his lips to the shell of her ear.

"I'm sorry, Sweetheart. I didn't mean to," he offered, pulling her soft lobe between his teeth.

Moaning a reply, she lifted her right arm and let her fingers sink into her captor's mop of dark hair. It unnerved her how quickly he could disarm her. She shouldn't be enjoying his lewd caresses or his hungry kisses. She should feel wrong for wanting more from the man she would ultimately have to kill.

"Warming up?" he purred, his tongue lazily toying with her earlobe.

Twisting her fingers into his locks, she wiggled her backside against him suggestively. He had just begun to touch her, and her body was already beginning to ache. How was it possible for him to have such an unnatural hold over her?

"Yes," she breathed.

Letting his hand slip from her abdomen, Kade danced his nimble fingers lower to the metal clasp of her jeans. Toying with the brass button, he trailed his full lips lower to her neck.

"Good. Should I take you upstairs to bed then, my love?" he asked, licking the bruised love bite gracing her throat.

Shaking her head, she turned her body in his strong arms. Pressing her entire weight against him, she plastered a calculated look of desperation and need on her face. She couldn't risk moving any further away from the kitchen than necessary. If she played her cards right, she could be free before daylight broke. All she needed to do was exhaust her abductor to the point of no return.

"No! I can't wait! I want you to fuck me right here, right now," she said seductively, leaning up to claim his mouth in an all-consuming kiss.

CHAPTER TEN

Drawing in a ragged breath, Lexi watched as Kade fell to his knees before her; his large hands yanking the fabric of her stonewashed jeans to her ankles in the process. For a moment he looked almost vulnerable, like an insecure peasant unworthy of being in the presence of a queen. It was a fleeting thought. As soon as she blinked, the wolf had returned, hellbent on consuming anything she was willing to give.

“Off,” he demanded, motioning with his sharp chin for her to step out of her pants.

Following his command, she lifted each leg and allowed her captor to remove her pants. Clad only in a pair of white cotton panties and ankle socks, she couldn’t help but feel embarrassed. He had yet to take off any of his clothes, and didn’t seem to be in any rush to either. Now she was the one who was vulnerable. Exactly as he intended.

“What about you?” she asked, squeaking a bit as he ran his rough fingertips over her calves.

“And what about me, Sweetheart?” he questioned, leaning forward to nip his jagged teeth into the skin of her upper thigh.

Closing her red rimmed eyes, she pressed herself closer. Swallowing her racing heartbeat, she reached down to grab the finely knitted sweater covering his shoulders. It was imperative that she took hold of the reins before he spun her too far. She couldn’t let him take control again. Not now, not ever.

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“This...take it off, take it all off.Now,” she hissed.

Pulling his lips away from her pebbled skin, Kade locked his dark eyes on her flushed face.Finally.All his time and efforts were paying off. His wicked little doll was ready and eager to play.

“Make me,” he husked, moving to run the tip of his tongue along the seam of the panty gracing her right thigh.

Releasing his ebony sweater, Lexi lifted her right hand to run her fingers through his tousled locks. Narrowing her eyes, she twisted her digits into his hair. Wrenching his head to the side, her dominant display caused him to wince and bare his white teeth.

“Get up and take off your clothes,”she growled, giving his tendrils another hard pull. “Iwon’tsay it again!”

Giving the semi-confident woman a slow once over, he stifled a laugh. She would have to do much better than that if she wanted to keep under her thumb, tonight.

“I... said...make...me,” he said, pausing deliberately after every word.

Pursing her cracked lips together, she nodded once and raised an open hand.Fine, fucker,she thought to herself.Let’s play.

Not giving him a second to brace himself, she released all her pent-up frustration. Letting her hand swing, she slapped his angular cheek as hard as she could muster.

“NOW!”she barked, moving her stinging hand in the opposite direction to backhand the other side of his shocked face.

Squaring his throbbing jaw, Kade quirked the corner of his mouth into a cocky smirk.It was a good start. Enough of one to fan the flames of his heady desire, at least. He couldn’t wait to see what else she would do.

“Yes, Sweetheart,” he purred before raising his hulking body from the wooden floor.

Lifting her chin in triumph, Lexi folded her arms over her bare breasts and watched as he stripped naked before her. It wasn’t long before she felt the euphoric rush of adrenaline spike through her veins, causing a tight knot in her core to twist and turn. The switch that she had spent so long suppressing was on the verge of flipping. She needed to be careful not to let it overtake her once again.

Or not,her mind poked.Who says you can’t enjoy this fuck just as much as you did last night? Who says you can’t enjoy this kill? Who says you need to stop? Be who you were always meant to be.

Pulling his charcoal gray briefs from his legs, Kade tossed them to the floor. Standing unabashedly before his love, he watched with focused interest as her gaze trailed lazily down his naked body. It was obvious that she was struggling, he could tell by the way she was nervously biting her lower lip. His poor little minx, still wanting so desperately to be a good girl.

“Well. Now, what?” he asked, paying no mind to his hardening cock yearning for her touch.

Blinking away her conflicting thoughts, she snapped herself back to reality. Reluctantly shifting her focus from his defined abdomen, she turned her head to the left. Noticing a worn microfiber couch, she motioned to it with a point of her index

finger. They had had enough foreplay in the time it took him to tear her clothes from her body, she could already feel her arousal seeping through her cotton panties. She needed to feel his cock stretch her open again. The sooner, the better.

“Sit on the couch,” she demanded. “I’m going to ride you until you whimper and beg me to let you cum.”

“Oh, yeah?” he asked, letting out a disbelieving huff as he headed towards the old sofa. “You think I’m actually going to beg you?”

Quickly stepping behind him, she reached forward and gave his firm ass cheek a sharp pinch with her fingers. “I don’t think...I know. Now sit down,” she ordered.

Turning to face the hot-tempered girl, Kade sliced his canine into the soft flesh of his cheek to keep himself grounded. He doubted that she would be successful in her efforts, but was dying to see her try. It was a win-win situation for him either way.

“Yes, Sweetheart,” he replied, taking a seat on the couch with his legs spread wide.

“I’m not your Sweetheart,” she said, hardening her fine features.

“No?” he asked, sudden amusement lifting his tone. “Then what are you, huh?”

Stepping between her captor’s strong legs, Lexi tried to project an icy cool exterior. If he truly knew her past, then he should know exactly what he was dealing with.

“I’m your worst nightmare,” she said simply. “Now don’t say another word unless I tell you to.”

Widening his brown eyes, he felt his cock twitch in response to her little act. Keeping his lips tightly pressed together, he offered a nod in acknowledgment. He would stay

silent for the time being.

“Good boy,” she praised.

Moving her hands to the flat of her stomach, Lexi slowly traveled her touch to the waistband of her panties. Trying her best to put on a show, she inched the fabric down her hips, pausing just before revealing her aching pussy to gauge his reaction.

“Do you want this?” she asked, her voice barely above a whisper.

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Remaining silent, he lifted his arm to attempt to tear the cloth from her grasp. Of course, he wanted her cunt. It belonged to him.

Clicking her tongue against the roof of her mouth, she raised her right leg. Expertly kicking her foot against his muscular chest, she held him firmly in place against the back of the couch. Leaning towards his surprised face, she hissed a warning.

“I’m the one in charge, tonight! You just sit there and let me fuck you, is that understood?”

Coughing lightly from the minor attack, Kade savored the moment. Wiggling his broad back against the couch, he brought his cold hands behind his head. He loved watching her blossom into the assertive temptress he knew was inside. He would gladly be her toy this time. It would give her a tiny taste of what was possible if she reclaimed her true self.

“Understood,” he said, threading his fingers together.

Pleased with his behavior, Lexi shoved her foot from his pec and quickly stripped her panties and ankle socks from her thrumming body. Standing naked before him, she trailed the fingers of her right hand from her breastbone to her swollen cunt. Holding his lustful haze, she worked the tip of her middle finger between her cleft and coated her digit with her slick arousal. Climbing onto him, she effortlessly straddled his hips and brought her finger to his lips.

“Taste me,” she demanded.

More than happy to oblige, Kade opened his lips and took her finger into his mouth. Working his uneven tongue around her digit, he eagerly licked all her essence from her skin. She was lucky he was letting her steer their fuck session. In the morning, however, he would drink her dry.

“That’s a good boy,” she praised, pulling her cleaned finger from his mouth with a loud “pop.”

Feeling emboldened, she dropped her hand between their wanting bodies and wrapped her fingers around the base of his thick cock. Holding him steady, she lifted herself onto her knees and nudged his head against her readied entrance. Her skin was buzzing with heightened excitement, causing the dull ache in her core to grow into a dying need. Finally, and truly, she had the power over her abductor. This was happening on her terms. It felt better than any aphrodisiac.

Studying her determined face as she slowly lowered herself onto his cock, he pushed out a low groan. Her pussy was the guiltiest pleasure he had ever known. He would never tire of the feeling of her perfect cunt squeezing around him like a vice. It caused his mind to blank of everything, except for one tiny detail.

“Alexandria,” he hissed, remembering something vital. “Wait.”

Halting her movement, Lexi narrowed her eyes and slapped her open palms against his chest. How dare he try to stop her. He wasn’t even fully inside of her, yet.

“What?” she asked in annoyance, trying to ignore her burning leg muscles.

“Condom,” he said through gritted teeth.

Shit, she thought.

Pressing her broken nails into his flesh, she closed her eyes and ran through her lurid options. The last thing she wanted to do was stop herself and find protection. Perhaps the dose of medication would protect her from both encounters. They were within twenty-four hours of each other, they were fine. Right?

Right.

“Fuck the condom,” she growled, sinking his rigid cock to the hilt. “Just tell me when you’re about to cum and I’ll get off.”

Spitting out a curse, Kade nodded in agreement. Removing his hands from behind his head, he stretched his arms along the back of the couch. Tightly gripping the sofa, he watched entranced as she slowly raised and lowered herself onto his cock. He would gladly pull out and cum all over that tight little body of hers. Hopefully it would live up to the shameless fantasies that invaded his mind multiple times a day.

Pulling her lower lip between her teeth, she wiggled her hips and languidly moved her cunt up and down his shaft. Her muscles were still sore from their previous fuck, and she had to remind herself to relax as she worked his thick girth. After a handful of passes, she found a comfortable rhythm that allowed her body to loosen around him. Pleasure danced around her core with each push as the wide tip of his cock tickled her hidden crevice. In this position, he was hitting her deeper than she could have ever imagined. He felt too good inside of her, she wanted more.

Now, now, now. Don’t lose yourself. I know this feels fucking amazing, but stay in control, her mind warned.

Moaning a reply to herself, she focused on keeping her shallow thrusts evenly measured. Again and again, maintaining a lazy pace; trying desperately to ignore the wicked ache of her desperation as it grew into something deliciously sharp.

Roaming his hungry gaze over her undulating body, he dragged his attention upwards to her twisting face. Even in the dull light of the room, he could tell that she was concentrating so hard on not going too wild, too quickly. Wanting her to give into her lust, he released his grip on the couch and placed his hands on her narrow waist. Squeezing his fingers into her flesh, he encouraged her to speed her movement.

“Fuck me faster, Lexi,” he said with a groan.

Bucking against her captor’s touch, she pulled her hands from his muscular chest to either side of his face. Holding him firmly in place, she leaned in close and brushed her lips over his.

“Beg me,” she replied, running the tip of her tongue along his upper lip.

Growling against her mouth, he narrowed his dark eyes. Lifting his hips from the couch, he fully sheathed his entire length inside her slick cunt. This was the second time in his life he had ever begged, first in the shower and now this. She better remember this moment; it would never happen again.

“Please fuck me faster, Sweetheart,” he said, his deep voice heavy with desire. “Please.”

Smirking triumphantly, Lexi leaned away from his handsome face and obliged his lurid request. Ramping up the speed of her thrusts, she held his stare with her own. Watching his lips pull back in an animalistic sneer, she bristled with pride. She almost had him right where she wanted. It wouldn’t be long now before he broke, and she could put her plan into motion.

“Mmm...like...that?” she panted.

Unable to speak, Kade crushed the tips of his fingers into the soft skin of her waist. He was amazed by how tightly she squeezed around him with each rise and fall over his throbbing length. Every scandalous swirl of her hips seemed calculated. He knew she was planning something by the nervous twitch in her left eye but couldn't care less. All that mattered was the way her svelte body moved, intent on draining him.

Reveling in the sound of their frantic fuck, she ran the pads of her thumbs against his sharp cheekbones. Cantering her hips in a circular pattern, she whimpered as her wet pussy eagerly worked her abductor's cock. As the seconds passed, the burning need within her body grew. It wasn't long before she felt her release curling tightly around her core, threatening to toss her over the edge. Perhaps she wasn't in complete control, after all.

Dammit! You know what you need to do. DO IT! NOW!

Heeding her mind's demand, she moved her hands from his face to his neck. Hissing a low snarl, she easily located his racing pulse point. Catching him off guard, she pressed her fingers into his throat with all her might, making him choke on his last breath of air. She knew she wouldn't be able to kill him this way but was hoping that the twisted action would make his body crumble. Leaning forward, she placed her chapped lips against the shell of his ear and whispered hotly.

“Is this how you did it?” she asked, continuing to fuck his cock as she strangled his neck. “Is this how you killed them?”

Pushing out a tight cough, he was surprised by her poorly made decision. Not in control of his emotions, the leash he held on to the Beast within snapped. Its sadistic nature forcing him to turn on the woman he so desperately loved.

Growling like an unhinged monster, he broke her grip on his neck. Grabbing her thin shoulders, he turned and slammed her lithe body down onto the couch. Thrusting his cock back inside in her pussy, he gripped her by the throat with his right hand. Enjoying the way she squirmed beneath him, he gave her an evil smile.

“No, Lexi,” he replied darkly. “This is.”

Struggling under her captor’s hulking form, Lexi couldn’t expand her lungs beneath his weight. He was too strong, there was no way she could overpower him without a weapon. Just what the fuck did she think was going to happen by prodding a psychopathic serial killer?

Beat yourself up later, you stupid bitch, her mind screamed. Get yourself out of this situation, NOW! Fight, dammit!

Using her weakening will, she grabbed onto his strong wrist with both hands. Whimpering in pain, she tried to snap his hold. Unable to budge his crushing grasp, she scratched her sharp nails down the length of his forearm and bucked her torso with the last of her strength. Ebony spots blurred her vision, she could feel her windpipe collapse from the force of his grip. Time was not on her side, she needed to do something.

“Please,” she managed to squeak out. “I... love...you.”

Snarling through a jagged smile, Kade watched mesmerized as her beautiful face slowly turned crimson in color. Acting on autopilot, he paid no mind to her feeble attempt to stop his attack. Cinching his hand tighter around her thin neck, he bent

over his love and watched her green eyes begin to gloss over. This was the exact moment his evil soul craved, when his victims hovered between life and death. The in-between. It would be so easy to snuff out her bright light and allow her to join the others in the afterlife.

Only, that wasn't her fate.

Registering her final plea, he snapped himself back to reality. Loosening his fingers from her throat, he spat out a loud curse. He hadn't meant to lose himself with her. Taking her to the brink was the last thing he ever wanted to do.

"Alexandria?" he asked in a panic, rapping his palm against her splotched cheek, "Lexi!"

Gulping in large mouthfuls of air, Lexi's buzzing body jerked as her mind came back from the edge of the abyss. Relief flooded her muscles, bringing with it a surge of euphoric adrenaline. Within the blink of an eye, she went from overwhelming despair to staggering pleasure. She had no idea what was going on with her body, but she knew she didn't want the feeling to end.

"Again," she breathed without thinking. "Do that again."

Leaning his head to the side, he eyed the moaning woman curiously. At first, he wasn't quite sure what she was asking of him and was worried that he had caused serious damage. Once he felt a gush of her warm arousal coat his cock however, he realized exactly what she wanted him to do. She had crossed over the threshold, he now had her for all of eternity.

"Oh, you enjoyed that, Sweetheart," he said, slowly grinding his dick into her tight cunt. "Didn't you?"

Nodding her head feverishly, she wrapped her legs around her captor's waist and clawed her nails along his broad shoulders. The switch she had guarded so protectively for years had finally flipped, there was no going back. She needed him to do his worst.

"Yes...do it, again," she demanded, her voice broken and hoarse.

"Mmmm," he began, nuzzling the tip of his nose along her jawline. "You need to tell me exactly what you want me to do, my love."

Excitement tickled the base of her skull as she felt her captor wiggle his left hand between their pressed bodies. He was toying with her, both emotionally and physically. Trying to make her mind and body admit things long suppressed. God help her, she was ready to confess everything to her abductor.

She would give him everything.

"I... I need you to put your hand around my neck and squeeze until I can't breathe. I need you to fuck me and make me cum," she said wantonly, gasping lightly as she felt him toy with her swollen clit.

Circling his hips, Kade eagerly sunk his thick cock into her pussy while she spilled her wicked desires. Taking her sensitive clit between the tips of his middle finger and thumb, he leaned down and swiped his lips against hers. Purring an agreement, he claimed her mouth in a feral kiss. Whether she realized it or not, she had just sealed herself to him. Now, they were one.

Encouraged by her seductive mewls, he returned his right hand to her marred throat. Opening his digits, he slipped her neck between the junction of his thumb and index finger. Reluctantly breaking the kiss, he pulled back and locked his dark eyes to hers.

“Ready?” he asked, his voice menacingly low.

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Licking her bruised lips, Lexi filled her lungs with one last breath and gave a nod. Her body was more than ready. Between his cock filling her cunt, fingers playing with her clit, and his hand around her throat, she was already on the verge of snapping. He needed to get on with it before her need killed her.

“Yes,” she replied.

Having her permission, Kade slowly squeezed his fingers against her throat and focused on her breathing. Feeling her pulse race beneath his hand, he groaned as her silken cunt squeezed around his cock. She was enjoying it as much as he was, the realization made him want to spill his seed right then and there. No, he reminded himself, she needed to cum first. It was necessary for her to take her fill before he took his. This was his present to her.

Drifting her blurring gaze to his full lips, Lexi relaxed her body as much as she could and allowed him to control the fuck. Before long, she felt herself slipping into the darkness, where all her icy fears were replaced by a warm burst of pleasure. It was unlike anything she had felt before, the lack of oxygen heightened every lurid sensation. So much so that she never wanted it to end.

Monitoring his love's slowing heartbeat, he grit his teeth as her eyes rolled back into her head. Watching her slip towards the final edge was the most beautiful thing he had ever witnessed. He would never forget this moment for as long as he lived.

Cinching his fingers even tighter, he felt a sudden twinge of pride as he felt her twitch violently beneath him. She was close to meeting the others. So very close.

Squirming uncontrollably under his wicked administration, Lexi found herself running headfirst towards the rocky cliff of her release. Before long, she lost all semblance of control. All that remained was a pulsating ball of pleasure hellbent on stealing what was left of her soul. Screaming silently into the darkened void, she eagerly let go and fell directly into the fire; letting it consume her mind and body in wave after wave of kentic bliss.

Feeling her seize around his aching cock, Kade reluctantly freed the grip on her neck. Hearing her breathe in much needed air, he curled his lips into a beastly snarl. He couldn't wait to ask her how it felt to dance with the Devil.

Good girl,he thought.So very good.

Waiting until her constricting form stilled, he allowed his body to finally take its own release. Balancing himself on the small sofa, he thrust into her still spasming cunt like a man possessed. Grunting into the warm air of the cabin, he waited until the very last second to pull his cock from her. Feeling his razor-sharp orgasm tear through his muscles, he held his throbbingdick steady and watched in awe as he released rope after rope of creamy hot cum onto her abdomen.

“Fuck!”he hissed as he slowly came down from his high.

With his heart on the verge of flatlining, he closed his eyes and swallowed hard. He hadn't cum that hard in years, not since his first time with Nora. He had spent so long chasing the steel dragon and only through Lexi had he been able to finally catch it. It was just another sign that they were truly meant to be.

Moaning happily, Lexi trailed her fuzzy gaze across his now serene face. In the flickering light of the fireplace, she couldn't help but think he was the most handsome man she had ever seen. If she didn't know what lurked deep within his soul, she would've sworn he was an angel sent straight from Heaven to save her from

all the evil in the world.

You stupid little girl,her mind spat.What the fuck have you done? How could you possibly have let yourself fall in love with the Monster? You still have to kill him! YOU MUST KILL HIM!

Slapping the critical voice to the back of her mind, she lifted her shaky torso from the microfiber couch and gave her abductor a chaste kiss. Her plan hadn't changed, she assured herself. She wasn't in love with him.No,that wasn't possible. Leo was the one that still held her heart, not the man hovering above. When the time came, she would be able to deliver the final blow and end this nightmare.

Uh huh, sure, Lexi. Sure.

Returning her tender kiss, Kade gathered her in his arms and moved to sit properly on the used sofa. Cradling her on his lap,he pressed a sprinkling of kisses against her crown and cooed phrases shared only between lovers. For the first time in his adult life, contentment filled his stone cold heart. He was finally at peace. Nothing could tear him from his love, now.

Nothing.

Listening to the sweet words filling her ears, she drifted her attention towards the kitchen. Not wanting to lose what was left of her wavering nerve, she forced herself to move the night along instead of basking in the tender afterglow. Her plan was still very much in effect. And as soon as he was asleep, she had to find some sort of weapon and finally free herself.

“Kade?” she asked, snuggling against his muscular chest.

“Yeah, Sweetheart?” he replied.

“I’m tired,” she said, making herself yawn for added effect.

Running his rough hands over her svelte body, Kade let out a knowing laugh. Tired didn’t even begin to describe how he was feeling. His little hellion had completely worn him out.

“Me too, my love,” he said before catching her contagious yawn. “Shall I take you to bed?”

Widening her eyes, her body froze. No, they couldn’t go upstairs. She needed to be as close to the kitchen as possible.

“Bed? No! I, uh...I mean...I’m just so comfortable right here like this. Can’t we...can’t we just sleep here?” she stammered.

Lifting a dark brow, he glanced down at his love. She seemed unusually nervous for some reason, and he didn’t understand why. Perhaps her brain was still trying to reset from the lack of oxygen.

“Well, as much as I love holding you like this, I won’t be able to sleep in this position. And I can tell you from experience that you don’t want to sleep on this couch. It’s total shit. Trust me, the bed upstairs is much more comfortable,” he said, nuzzling the top of her head. “I know you don’t like the dark, but I’ll be right next to you. Nothing will happen to you, I promise.”

Licking her lips, Lexi felt the skin of her forearms pebble. Of course her captor would know about that one little fear of hers. She hadn’t even thought about how dark the loft would be until just now.

“I... I just know that I would sleep better down here. In your arms, next to the fireplace,” she replied.

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Shaking his head, he swooped her into a bridal carry position and stood from the well-used sofa. He was growing too tired to argue about something so trivial.

“Stop it,” he grumbled, suddenly feeling agitated. “I’m taking you upstairs and then we’re going to sleep. Got it?”

Wrapping her arm around his neck, she swallowed hard. There was no changing his mind. Although it sucked, she would just have to make do and tiptoe downstairs when he fell asleep.

“Yep. Got it,” she said, a hint of annoyance peppering her tone.

“Trust me, you’ll thank me in the morning,” he said, stepping towards the wooden staircase leading to the tiny loft above. “Now come on, let’s go to bed. You need your rest for our busy day tomorrow.”

Glancing over his shoulder, Lexi gave the kitchen one last look. She hoped he would fall asleep quickly, before she had a chance to change her conflicted mind.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Listening to Kade’s rhythmic breathing, Lexi pulled her heavy-lidded eyes to the four paned window along the far wall. There was a raging snowstorm on the other side of the frozen glass, causing the cabin to creak and groan with the wind. It only added to her growing anxiety. If she was to go through with her plan, how the hell would she get down the mountain? Her winter driving skills were poor at best, she would probably end up killing herself in the process.

Maybe this is a sign? Maybe I should just wait it out until the weather clears up some? It's not like time is of the essence, here. And that way, maybe I can talk to him and really get to know him? Figure out what makes him tick? If I do that then I won't drive myself crazy for the rest of my life trying to figure out the answers to the questions I never asked.

HA! Yeah, right. Do that and you'll never be able to escape. He'll only worm his way into your heart if you do that. Look at you...you're already smitten. No! Fuck him! The less you know about him, the better. Now get out of bed and find the damn knife! Finish this!

Debating her racing thoughts, she listened to the aggressive voice in her head. Holding her breath, she slowly wiggled her body away from his slumbering form. Inch by inch she moved over the lumpy queen-sized mattress as quietly as she could. Halfway towards the edge of the bed, she felt her captor stir. Almost on instinct, his long arm jetted away from his torso to find her.

Freezing in place, she closed her eyes as she felt his heavy paw slap down across her hip. Holding her breath, she heard him mumble something gruff. She couldn't quite make out the words, but it sounded possessive and dark. Even in his sleep, it seemed as if he needed her to stay by his side.

Oh well. He can't have you! Now hurry! Before you chicken out. Dawn will be breaking soon. Don't lose this precious opportunity!

Opening her eyes, she carefully turned her head to look at him. Watching his face soften in the filtered moonlight, she felt her confidence falter. He looked so sweet and pure as he snuggled his pillow. How could she possibly kill him?

Don't be a dumb bitch! Just find a blade and slit his throat! Easy peasy! Stop pretending like you don't know what the fuck to do! Now stop looking at him and

MOVE YOUR ASS!

Knowing that the angry voice in her head was right, she psyched herself up. Silently counting to thirty-three, she gently eased herself from his hold. Scooting her naked body off the bed, she shivered as the cold air of the room hit her bare skin. She didn't know what was worse, staying in bed and overthinking herself to madness, or walking around the freezing cabin completely nude.

Using the chilly temperature as motivation, she tiptoed her way around the bed towards the old staircase. Reaching for the black railing, she slowly made her way down the stairs. Remembering the way Kade's weight had made the fourth step creak, she hopped over the broken plank and landed at the foot of the stairs with a loud thud.

Wincing from her stupid miscalculation, she hunched her shoulders and waited for him to jump out of bed. How could she be so stupid? The cabin was ancient, she needed to be careful if she wanted to be successful.

Waiting for a long minute, she sighed in relief when she realized her captor was still fast asleep. Hearing him snoring softly above her, she let out a thankful sigh. Padding her way to the back of the A-Frame, she felt a rush of confidence as she reached the kitchen.

"You've got this! You've totally got this," she whispered to herself.

Stepping into the tiny kitchen, she began her search. Starting with the vertical row of oak drawers next to the avocado green refrigerator, she opened them one by one. Carefully inspecting the sparse contents inside each shallow drawer, she felt her frustration bubble. Just where were the fucking utensils? She would freeze to death before she found anything resembling a weapon. A metal whisk and plastic measuring cups wouldn't do a damn thing.

Gritting her teeth, she worked her way down the line of cabinets. Still not finding anything of value, she was on the verge of giving up her search when she stumbled across a tiny drawer nestled in the corner of the kitchen. Carefully opening it, she nearly screamed with excitement when she realized what was inside.

Even in the overwhelming darkness of the room, she could make out the ragged blades of five steak knives. Feeling her heartbeat quicken, she reached into the drawer and grasped onto the wooden handle of the one closest to her. It wasn't a very large blade, maybe only five inches long at best, but it had a decent heft to it. She had dispatched men with smaller knives before. This one would certainly work.

"Fuck yes!" she whispered.

Ecstatic with her newfound treasure, she lifted the steak knife from the plastic utensil divider. She couldn't believe her luck, everything was finally going her way. Her confidence was short-lived, however. Just as she pulled the blade from the drawer, she heard a deep voice boom behind her.

"I know what you're looking for, Sweetheart," Kade bellowed, his large body draping over the side of the loft's open railing.

Jumping in fear, Lexi dropped the knife back into the drawer and quickly pushed it closed. Turning to face her handsome abductor, she raised her chin and gave him a full smile. Putting on a demeanor of innocence, she shrugged her shoulders and stepped away from the cabinets.

Fuck! Fuck! Fuck! Just act stupid! Play dumb!

"You do?" she asked sweetly, folding her arms over her pert tits.

"Mmhmm," he hummed, raking his eyes up and down her naked form. "But you

won't find what you're looking for in there.”

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Swallowing hard, she shivered nervously as she walked towards him. Trying her best to seem unassuming, she let out a small laugh. Oh, if only he knew how wrong he was.

“I won’t?” she asked.

“Nope,” he responded, standing to full height. “There’s nothing in the kitchen, all the food I brought is in the duffel bag by the front door. It’s not much, just some protein bars, nuts, and those applesauce squeezey things you love. But it’ll tide us over until we go into town tomorrow and get some groceries.”

“Ah! Yeah, I was wondering where the food was,” she said, rubbing her palms along her upper arms for warmth.

“Yeah so, why don’t you grab the bag and bring it upstairs. We’ll snuggle and have a little feast in bed. How does that sound?” he asked.

“Sounds perfect,” she replied.

“Good girl. Now be quick about it before the bed gets too cold,” he ordered.

Nodding her head, she quickly headed towards the front door. Thank God he didn’t suspect anything. Her plan was foiled, but her efforts hadn’t been entirely in vain. She knew exactly where she needed to go the next time an opportunity arose.

Picking up the heavy black bag, she slung it over her sore shoulder. Hurrying her way back towards the staircase, she grabbed onto the railing and climbed the wooden steps

two at a time. Stopping herself at the top of the stairs, she smiled anxiously as Kade stalked to where she stood. She couldn't tell what he seemed hungrier for, the food or her.

"You're so damn beautiful, you know that?" he asked, leaning down to kiss her cheek.

"So are you," she said without thinking, wincing as soon as the words left her mouth.

Lifting his lips into a devilish smirk, Kade took the backpack from her and tossed it onto the mattress. She seemed so awkward and innocent, almost like a blushing virgin. It was a complete departure from the wanton girl begging him to strangle her only hours before. He loved that she had the ability to be both. How did he get so lucky?

"I'm glad you think so, Sweetheart. Now get back in bed before you catch a cold," he demanded.

Obedying her captor's instruction, she eagerly climbed into the bed and yanked the plush comforter around her shivering body. It felt so good to be surrounded by cozy warmth once again. She might as well enjoy the calm before the storm.

Slipping under the covers, he sat his tired body next to hers and bent down to kiss the side of her head. It was his fault for not getting her anything to eat or drink after their little escapade, his poor little minx was no doubt starving from all her physical exertion. He would be more mindful of her aftercare next time.

Grabbing the stuffed bag, he dropped it onto his lap. Rummaging through its inner pockets, he quickly removed a handful of random snacks. Handing her the applesauce pouch, he smiled warmly as he watched her snap open the lid and greedily suck out its flavorful contents. It was always a pleasure watching her eat.

“Good girl,” he praised, handing her a second pouch before she was finished with the first. “Eat up and then we will go back to sleep.”

Swallowing a mouthful of applesauce blended with strawberries, Lexi gave him a quizzical look. There was too much adrenaline in her muscles, sleeping was the last thing she wanted to do. They might as well have a much-needed conversation. She wanted answers to all the questions that had been swirling around in her mind since she had woken up the first day in the bunker.

“I was hoping that maybe we could talk, instead?” she asked, trying her best to ignore the critical voice in her head screaming at her to stop.

Pulling a chocolate chip protein bar from the pile of goodies, he shrugged his weighty shoulders and cleared his throat. While it made him slightly uncomfortable, he knew that this talk needed to happen. She deserved some answers. He knew everything about her, it was only fair that she knew every sordid detail about him.

“Of course, my love,” he purred. “I would love to talk to you. Ask me anything.”

Drawing in a ragged breath, she cracked open the second pouch of sauce. There was a real chance that his answers would only terrify her more, but it was a risk she was willing to take. She needed a sense of closure before she could fully commit to taking his life.

“Why do you have those necklaces?” she asked.

Pausing a moment, Kade mulled over the question. For a moment he thought about lying, but what good would that do?

“Well...they remind me of them. Of the time we spent together. There’s a lot of sentimental value. Each of those necklaces meant something to them. They were gifts

from their loved ones. Mothers, sisters, best friends...boyfriends. They held a special moment for them, and now they hold a special moment for me”.

“So, they’re your trophies?” she asked.

Lifting a brow, he nodded his head, “Yeah, I guess so. As cliché as it sounds.”

“So, you must’ve killed them, then?” she asked, keeping her green eyes glued on his suddenly solemn face.

Pressing his lips into a fine line, Kade’s mind drifted to each of his girls. In a matter of seconds, he relieved each of their final breaths on earth. They all looked so beautiful, so serene as they slipped from this plane of existence. He honestly hadn’t given much thought to them once Lexi came into his life. Now, however, he found himself missing them. It annoyed him to no end.

“I did,” he stated darkly.

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Licking a drop of applesauce from her lips, she felt a cold shiver race down her spine. Her gut had been right all along. She knew he was a psychopathic serial killer.

“Are there others?” she continued, not sure if she wanted the answer.

Meeting her steady gaze, he let out a heavy sigh. Yes, he had killed others, but not for pleasure. She didn’t need to know that, though. Not yet at least. They would go over that another time, probably right before his Boss requested a meeting.

“No, just the six.”

Soaking in his words, Lexi sat silently as her mind reeled. Those poor women. They didn’t deserve what happened to them. It made her feel insanely guilty. How could she possibly have feelings for the animal that had stolen their lives? She should be the one that was dead, not them.

“Why me?” she asked, staring directly into his stormy eyes. “Why the hell are you letting me live?”

Chewing on the smooth tissue of his inner cheek, he weighed his love’s loaded question. There were a multitude of reasons why she captivated his attention, but only one that truly stood out. Leaning in close, he gave her a wild grin and offered the only explanation that mattered.

“Because my love, you’re a monster, too. You’re just like me.”

CHAPTER TWELVE

Pulling away from her captor, Lexi shook her head in defiance. Scoffing at his statement, she scrunched her face in disgust. She was a monster? Just like him? No. Absolutely not. He had it all wrong.

Are you sure about that? her critical voice taunted.

Straightening her posture, she wrapped the blanket tighter against her shivering body and narrowed her angry eyes. Whatever he thought he knew about her was a complete lie. They didn't share this evil bond. She was nothing like him.

"I'm not a monster," she stated, her voice heavy with disdain.

Sensing that his love was building an emotional barrier, Kade softened his features. Reaching out to brush an unruly lock from her face, he hummed softly. It was hard to watch her deny her true self so vehemently. Didn't she realize he was there to set her free?

"There's nothing to be ashamed of, Sweetheart. You are what you are, please just accept yourself. There's no difference between you and someone that kills lions for the thrill. You just happen to hunt different game," he offered.

"I don't enjoy killing!" she spat in defense.

Liar, liar, pants on fire.

Pausing a moment to give her time to reflect, he took a bite of his protein bar. Watching a sea of conflicting emotions wash over her face, his heart squeezed. It would be difficult for her to come to terms with her true nature, but it was good that they were finally having this conversation. She was incredibly lucky to have him help her through this process.

“Well, perhaps not the first time. Everyone knew that it was self-defense, Lexi. Scott...that disgusting motherfucker...he was going to rape and murder you, you had no choice. That first kill was all survival, there’s no denying that. But what about the second time? Or the third? Fourth...fifth? Those kills weren’t in self-defense. You tracked them...you hunted them...and once they took your bait, you slaughtered them because you wanted to,” he said before moving his fingers under her chin and forcing her to meet his simmering gaze. “Shhh, it’s ok, my love...I understand. I know what it’s like when you taste blood for the first time. It’s a craving that never goes away.”

Licking her lips nervously, she tried to deny his heavy words. She didn’t get any sick thrill out of killing, and she certainly never craved it. Every single life she had ever taken was out of necessity. They were horrible men that deserved to die. She was doing the world a favor by eliminating them. That was her only motivation.

“Now, I know what you’re thinking,” he continued, scooting himself closer. “Right now, you’re trying to justify your actions, trying to ignore that part of yourself that came alive once you sliced your knife into their flesh. I know you’re excusing what you’ve done because the men you killed were abusers and rapists. They were scourges that were going to victimize more women if you didn’t step in, right? I know that narrative helps you sleep at night...but I also know that there’s more to it, my love, I’ve seen your face during and after a kill. I know you enjoyed every single moment.”

Gasping lightly, she blinked her red rimmed eyes. She was dumbfounded and knocked off guard over his confession. It had been years since she had given into her temptation and carved another notch into her bedpost. Everything changed the moment she met Leo Estrada. He showed her that there were good men still left in the world. He taught her how to love and how to trust. Through him, her bloodlust had been contained. Even in the very small chance that what he was saying was true, none of it mattered now. She was a changed woman, that part of her no longer existed.

Then why are you looking forward to slitting Kade's throat, then? Huh? Miss "I'm a changed woman?" Admit it. You loved killing those pricks. Remember the fun we had? You can pretend that you haven't missed the rush, that you haven't wondered what it would feel like to give into temptation just one more time. A leopard doesn't change their spots, ya know. Why are you being so hardheaded? Kade is our match. He understands us. Look at him! He's everything we have always wanted. You know that Leo can't give us what we want. Kade can.

Silently growling at herself, Lexi closed her eyes and silenced the crazed voice in her head. No. Kade wasn't her savior. He was a psychopath that she needed to kill. She couldn't let herself be manipulated. Not by Kade and certainly not by the bitch in her head. As soon as he was dead, she would be back in Leo's arms, right where she belonged. Living her happy, normal existence once again. Finding pleasure in life, rather than death.

Uh huh. Right. You know that's not what you want, the voice in her head teased. Give in and let me out to play again. Please? It's been so long!

SHUT UP, SHUT UP, SHUT UP!! she screamed internally, fighting the urge to beat her fist against her skull.

Noticing an abrupt change in his love's body language, Kade moved to cup his open palm against the side of her face. Leaning in closer, he caught her darting gaze. He knew exactly what was going on in that pretty little head of hers. She didn't have to hide it from him.

"Hey," his deep voice said. "You should listen to her."

Taken aback by her abductor's odd comment, Lexi tried to wiggle away from his warm touch. She must not have heard him correctly. No one knew about the voice screaming inside her mind.

“What are you talking about?” she asked, giving him a quizzical look. “Listen to who?”

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Quirking his head to the side, he reluctantly dropped his hand and let out a sigh. Didn't she understand that she didn't need to pretend with him? He wasn't her enemy, he only wanted to help her realize her full potential.

"You know who, Lexi...that little voice in your head? The one screaming at you to let her out?" he urged. "You don't have to pretend with me. Just listen to her. Please."

"I... I don't know what you're talking about," she denied, her voice raising ever so slightly in anger.

Fucking hell! Would you just quit, already? You're such a damn drama queen! He knows you. He knows US. Give in to him...give into me. We could be so happy if you would ju—

Abruptly dismissing the voice of her alter-ego, Lexi shook her head. Now was not the time for her to have a breakdown. If she didn't stay in control, she would never escape. That was her goal, she reminded herself. Everything else was merely a distraction.

"You saw me?" she asked, pretending that the last few minutes of conversation had never happened. "But, how? I was always so careful."

Annoyed by the way she had changed the topic so nonchalantly; he angrily tossed his protein bar to the nightstand next to the bed. Settling his broad back against the row of wrinkled pillows, he took in a cleansing breath. Fine, he thought. She could have it her way this time, but the conversation was far from over. In order to truly move forward with his plans, he knew that her dark little friend would have to emerge at

some point.

“Yes, you were careful, my love. Very careful. You did everything right. Well, almost everything. But to be fair, you wouldn’t have seen me that night even if you had tried,” he said, giving her a reassuring grin.

“Oh, yeah? And which night was that, huh?” she asked, wondering how many incidents he had witnessed.

“It was the night of your last kill...a little over two years ago, now, right? Fuck, time flies, doesn’t it? Anyways, I went to the club that night to just look, really. Seeing if I could find another littlebrunette to scratch that nagging itch that never goes away. And I did, didn’t I? It didn’t take me long to find you. How could I not be drawn to you? You looked like such a perfectslutin that little black dress that barely covered your ass. With those bright red lips and your hair in those messy waves that drive me wild. The hair you get after you’ve just beenfucked.Hmm...like how your hair looks right now,” he purred, lifting his hand to tug the curl gracing her shoulder. “You wereexactlywhat I was looking for.”

Drifting her eyes to his fingers as he played with her tangled locks, Lexi recalled the night in question. She remembered that kill vividly. Partly because it was her last and partly because it had left her so unsatisfied. Eight long weeks’ worth of hard work to ensnare her mark into her deadly web, only to have the prick die far too quickly and painlessly. Knowing that he had witnessedthatkill made the bitter taste still left in her mouth all the worse.

“So,” he began again, clearing his throat, “I knew you were my girl as I watched you sip your fruity drink in the corner. Your little head bopping along to that God awful techno music. You know, I could tell there was something different about you right away, but I couldn’t quite put my finger on it. It intrigued me enough that I started to approach you...but then I saw Roman slink his way behind you...fuckingErik

Romanof all people!”

“Wait,” she interrupted. “You knew Roman? How?”

“We worked together,” he said simply.

In an instant, all the blood drained from Lexi’s face. The implication of his statement terrified her to the core. She knew it was a gamble going after Roman but thought she had gotten away with it. Guess she had lost that bet, after all.

“Wait...you...you work for Bloodbayne, too?” she asked nervously. “How come I never saw you two together? I would’ve remembered you.”

“Roman managed Thailand, I oversee Eastern Europe,” he said with a small shrug.

“We were...reluctant counterparts to say the least.”

Gasping loudly, her eyes widened as things began to fall into place. Not only was Kade a cold-blooded serial killer, but he was also an Underboss for one of the greatest organized crime families in America. Karma had finally come to kick her ass.

“Oh my God...you’re Volkov?” she squeaked.

“I am,” he replied with a wave of his hand. “But we will get to all of that later. So where was I? Oh yeah...I saw Roman worm his way behind you, and I was so fucking pissed when I saw him touch you, Lexi. You have no idea how badly I wanted to rip his head from his body. But I was bound by my Oath, so I just watched. I watched him kiss you. I watched him reach his hand up under your skirt to touch your bare little cunt. I could tell he was awful at that, by the way, you looked so bored. That made me feel a little better, I’ll admit...but...fuck...it took all my strength not to steal you away from him.”

Listening to him as he rambled on, Lexi reeled from all the information being thrown at her. Trying to stay in the moment, she closed her eyes and brushed her fears aside. Within seconds, her mind recalled that fateful night.

The popular club was at capacity, filled with drunk college kids celebrating their first night of Spring Break. Even standing in the corner of the dance floor, she found the air within the large room to be too stifling hot for her liking. The European technomusic that the cocaine fueled DJ played was tolerable, however the constant groping by random frat boys was not. After waiting for Roman in the overwhelming club for over an hour, she had almost given up.

When the asshole finally appeared, he came up behind her without any warning, grabbing her ass so hard that he had left a bruise. It had taken all her willpower to not elbow his hooked nose into his brain. She instead greeted him with a wink and a laugh, putting on an act of being the ditzy little coed he had paid for.

It didn't take long before he wanted his money's worth. Before she knew what was going on, she felt him fumble his clammy hand towards the apex between her thighs. She tried to seem excited as he roughly fingered her, grinding down on his hand and moving her hips in time with the steady beat, moaning and squealing like a porn star. If Roman had any idea how to pleasure a woman, he would've known that her orgasm was faked two ways to Sunday.

Wiping his dirty hand on her dress, he then screamed into her ear over the pounding base. He told her that he wanted to 'take her back into the alley and fuck her so hard she wouldn't be able to walk afterwards.' With a flirty smile, she asked him to take her back to his car instead. He was such a slimy son of a bitch that he yanked her from the nightclub right then and there.

She hadn't planned on killing him that night, but Roman made things too easy. She couldn't stop herself from seizing the opportunity. Within minutes, she found herself

straddling the blonde in the back of his Jaguar XJ, listening to him demand that she suck his cock, or he would throw her on the next ship to Thailand. According to Roman, she needed to 'learn how to be a proper little whore.' She might have been able to keep her rabid personality in check if he hadn't slapped her across the face after she refused.

Unfortunately for the smug prick, that was all it took for her to unleash her fury. Not allowing him time to react, she yanked her Stiletto switchblade from her bra and slashed him across the throat. A clean, crimson line ripped him open ear to ear, almost like a second smile. Regrettably, that first cut had nicked his artery, causing him to bleed out far too quickly.

As far as she was concerned, it was a botched kill. One that would forever haunt her in more ways than she would have imagined.

"God you were beautiful," Kade continued, not realizing she had zoned out for most of his monologue. "Watching your face as you stabbed him over and over again after you cut his throat. Fuck, it made me so hard, Lexi. The way his blood splattered all over you? I'll never forget it for as long as I live. You were so feral and uninhibited, my love. That was the moment that I knew why I was drawn to you. Don't you see? Fate brought us together that night for a reason, Sweetheart. We're destined. We're destined to take over the Organization. Together."

Shaking her head, she moved her fingertips to massage her throbbing temples. Between the memory of that defining night and the realization that he had insane, grandiose plans, she immediately felt overwhelmed. It was too much information for her to process all at once, there were too many suppressed emotions bubbling to the surface. She wasn't equipped to face her inner demons, especially not with a demon hovering over her.

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“Please...I can’t...I can’t do this right now,” she said with a whimper.

Furrowing his brow, Kade wrapped his arms around his love and gently pulled her onto his lap. He hadn’t meant to cause her distress. He was just so excited to finally tell her about that night and their connection. It was obvious that she wasn’t ready to accept what she was, he would have to ease her into things. It was alright, though. They still had time before Bloodbayne requested a meeting with her.

“Shhh, it’s ok. You’re alright,” he purred, nuzzling his lips against the crown of her head. “You don’t have to worry, I took care of the cleanup for you. I made it look like it was a hit by the Fratelli’s. Bloodbayne still has no fucking clue. See how much I love you? I’ll never let anything happen to you. Please don’t cry, I hate seeing you cry. Hey, let’s go back to sleep, hmm? In the morning we’ll go into town and just enjoy the day together. We’ll get some breakfast and do some grocery shopping. How does that sound?”

Burrowing her colorless face into the crook of his neck, she nodded her head and choked back a sob. Whatever he had planned for her wasn’t going to work. She wasn’t a murderer, anymore. She was a good girl with a stable life filled with loving people. He wasn’t going to twist her mind. She would find a way to escape once they were in town. He couldn’t have her.

Not now, not ever.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Settling herself into the passenger seat of Kade’s black SUV, Lexi followed him with

her tired eyes as he made his way towards the driver's side. She had found herself unable to sleep after his confessions and was now paying the price. She thought about asking him to leave her behind so she could rest and recharge. That thought was short-lived however, once she realized that he had given her the perfect opportunity to escape. All she needed was the tiniest window and she would be gone.

Opening the frozen door to his Mercedes, Kade slinked his large form onto the driver's seat and quickly pushed the SUV's ignition switch. Shutting the door with a curse, he turned to his love and offered smile as the vehicle's heater roared to life. Even with dark circles under her green eyes and her chestnut hair wrapped into a messy bun, she was the most radiant thing he had ever seen. They hadn't spoken much since their heavy conversation, but she seemed to be in good spirits. It pleased him to know that she was slowly coming around.

"We'll just let her warmup for a few minutes before we head down," he said, rubbing his bare hands together.

Turning her attention towards the defrosting windshield, she arched a brow and surveyed the winter wonderland surrounding them. There was at least six inches of fresh snow covering the gravel driveway. Perhaps heading into town wasn't the smartest decision, the last thing she needed was to freeze to death alongside a homicidal maniac if they became stuck.

"Are you sure it's safe for us to leave?" she asked, genuinely concerned.

With a nod, he let out a small laugh and reached over to cover her hand with his own. "You have nothing to worry about, Sweetheart. I'm an excellent driver," he replied, giving her cold fingers an assuring squeeze.

Pursing her cracked lips together, she hummed a reply. She wasn't comforted in the least by his words.

“No, really,” he said, moving his calloused hand to rest against her cheek. “I won’t let anything happen to you. Trust me, Lexi. Just trust me.”

Leaning slightly into his touch, she lifted her gaze to meet his dark stare. He had a look of absolute sincerity on his handsome face that she hadn’t seen before. Deep down she knew that what he was saying was true, she was safe in his presence. It was a sudden awareness that caused her heart to skip and a million butterflies to fill her core. It was the same feeling she remembered the first time she realized she was falling in love with Leo.

Fuck, she thought, terrified of the new hurdle placed directly in her path.

Fuck, indeed, her alter-ego taunted inside her mind. I must say, your plan is going rather smoothly. Bravo.

Doing her best to ignore the bitch in her head, she grinned at her captor and gave him a small nod. “Ok,” she said in an almost whisper. “I trust you.”

Grinning in triumph, Kade bent over the SUV’s center console and gave her a tender kiss. It thrilled him to hear her meaningful admission. Her stone wall was finally tumbling down, this moment had been worth the excruciating long wait. She was his. Finally.

“Good,” he breathed, brushing his mouth over hers once more before pulling away.

Licking the remnants of the kiss from her lips, Lexi kept her focus on him as he sat back in his leather seat and readied the vehicle to leave. She was skating on extremely thin ice. Why the fuck was she feeling this way now, when she was so close to her goal?

He’s the enemy, she repeated to herself again and again. You don’t love him. You

don't love him.

Oh, if only that were true, her alter teased from the corner of her mind.

Shut up, Nikki! Nothing has changed! Absolutely nothing! she spat back in defense.

Good God, you are so pathetic! But yeah. Ok, keep telling yourself that, Nikki said with a dark laugh.

Unaware of his lover's inner turmoil, Kade gave her one last glance before putting the SUV into drive and easing it down the snowy driveway. While the conditions were less than ideal, he knew he would be able to make it into town safely without any problems. After all, he had precious cargo he needed to take care of.

"You know," he began, clearing his throat. "It will probably take us about forty-five minutes to get into town. Why don't you close those beautiful eyes of yours and take a nap?"

"Huh?" she mumbled, blinking herself back into the present. "What? Sorry...I guess I kinda zoned out for a second."

Keeping his eye line glued to the slick driveway, he let out a worried sigh and tightly gripped the steering wheel. As much as he would love to hear her scream his name all night long, they would be turning in early. It was apparent that she was more sleep deprived than he originally thought.

"I know you're exhausted, Sweetheart. Please get some rest," he urged as they crossed the property line of his family's old ranch.

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Wiggling her stiff back against the comfortable passenger seat, she allowed her heavy eyes to drift to the side mirror gracing her door. Noticing a rusted, metal sign pass over the reflective glass, she took stock of the backwards letters. Reading them repeatedly, she tried her best to place them in the correct order until they finally made sense.

Ho li Wlof Rach. Howlng Wolf Ranch. Howling Wolf Ranch.

Howling Wolf Ranch.

“Mmm...yeah, you’re right. I should,” she agreed, not wanting her abductor to suspect that she had just learned where he was keeping her. “I didn’t sleep much last night.”

“I know and I’m sorry about that. Now, close your eyes and take a cat nap, my love. I’ll wake you when we get to the restaurant. I figured we would have breakfast before running the other errands,” he purred.

Mumbling something unintelligible, Lexi followed his instructions and allowed her eyelids to flutter down. Sleep was a precious commodity, and she couldn’t let this opportunity pass her by. For her to escape, she needed as much strength as she could muster.

Pushing out a long yawn, she eagerly surrendered to her body’s overwhelming exhaustion. Her last coherent thought was that of Kade and how beautiful his broken heart would look in her bloodied hands.

. . .

“Sweetheart, we’re here, time to wake up,” Kade said softly, trying to ease her from her sleep.

Moaning like a grumpy child, Lexi wiggled away from his gentle nudge. Reluctantly opening her eyes, she righted herself in her seat and looked around her new surroundings. She knew she had never been to the town before, if you could even call it one. It was merely a single dilapidated road with an ancient diner and gas station on one side, a tiny mercantile grocery and coffee shop on the other. No wonder her abductor wasn’t nervous about taking her out in public. They were still out in the middle of nowhere.

“Where are we?” she asked, her voice froggy with sleep.

“Town,” Kade replied without further explanation. “Now I know this place doesn’t look like much, but they make the most amazing blueberry pancakes. I know how much you love those, Lexi. I’ll make sure to order you a double stack.”

Undoing her tight seatbelt, she couldn’t stop her stomach from rumbling at the mere mention of warm food. Applesauce pouches and granola bars were great, but she needed more sustenance. A carb filled meal was exactly what she needed to fuel up her energy reserves.

“That sounds great, I’m starving,” she said honestly, moving to open her car door.

“Wait!” he exclaimed, reaching into the front pocket of his dark indigo jeans. “I almost forgot...here, give me your left hand.”

Obedying his command, she held out her hand. A look of confused curiosity fell over the features of her face as he placed a delicate gold band on her ring finger.

“What--” she began.

“If anyone asks,” he said, cutting her off. “We’re married. I’m Jon and you’re Emily. We’re here on our honeymoon. Try not to say much, though, that’s my job. Is that understood?”

Unable to verbalize a response, she nodded and watched Kade intently as he placed a similar band on his own ring finger. Married? Sure. Just two crazed murderers out a honeymoon holiday in the middle of the arctic wilderness. As if things couldn’t get any more bizarre.

“Good girl,” he praised before exiting the SUV and walking to the passenger side to help her out of the vehicle.

Taking his hand, she carefully stepped next to her captor as they wove through the icy parking lot. Casually glancing from side to side, she desperately searched for any clue as to where they were. Five cars were parked nearby, but each had license plates from different states. None of the businesses were chain stores, apart from the gas station which sold “Mobile” gas. It was as if the universe was intentionally trying to drive her insane.

Nothing can ever be easy, she thought bitterly as he opened the door to the diner and ushered her inside.

Giving her eyes time to adjust to the bright interior of the classic fifties’ diner, Lexi moved to the side of the waiting area and allowed Kade to step in front of her. Before long, they were greeted by a tall, slim woman with silver hair; the name “Peggy” etched onto the bear shaped name tag pinned to her white uniform. Although the older woman had a stern face, she felt that there was something trustworthy about her. It made her heartbeat quicken with hope.

“Just the two of you?” Peggy asked, giving the attractive couple a once over.

“Yep, just us,” Kade replied, taking Lexi’s hand once again.

Giving them a quick nod, Peggy grabbed two plastic menus from her podium. With a flick of her head, she urged them to follow her to a booth in the center of the diner. Setting the menus down on the rectangular table, she glanced back and forth between the pair as they took their seats. It wasn’t often that such a handsome couple came into the restaurant. Perhaps her day wasn’t going to be so dull after all?

“Can I get you two something to drink?” she asked with a bright smile.

“Two coffees,” Kade answered immediately. “One black, one with cream and sugar.”

“You’ve got it, I’ll come back with the coffees and take your order,” Peggy said before leaving the pair alone.

Tracking the waitress as she walked behind the metal bar, Lexi wiggled out of her puffy winter coat and tossed it on the bench seat beside her. Quickly taking stock of the sparse diner, she noticed only three other patrons gracing the space. Directly behind Kade sat an elderly couple, bickering with one another over the thickness of their overcooked bacon. Off to her right, was a young teen perched on a rickety barstool, hunched over his cell phone and shoveling scrambled eggs into his mouth. It was very apparent that no one in the restaurant was equipped to help her escape. She would need to rely on herself and herself alone. Something she wasn’t sure she could do once she caught how Kade was staring at her.

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“It smells good in here,” she said, distracting herself by picking up her menu and glancing over the various items. “Do you know what you’re going to order, Jon?”

Tilting his head to the side, Kade raised a brown brow and licked his lips before answering her question. He was hungry, but not for anything on the menu.

“Well, I want to eat you, but I think they would kick us out if I tried,” he said cheekily. “So that feast will have to wait until we get home.”

Dropping her menu to the table, she brought her green eyes to his. Ignoring the flush burning her cheeks, she felt her heart race. Shit, she thought. Did he really have to say that?

Oh, let him, her alter Nikki pleaded. C’mon just one last fuck before we slice his throat, please? You know you’re going to miss that cock once it’s gone!

Pushing the annoying voice to the back of her mind, she swallowed hard. Bringing her hand to her throat, she began to nervously play with the black turtleneck hugging her bruised skin. There was no way she could allow that to happen. No matter how badly she wanted it to.

Smirking at the blushing girl, he gave her a small wink before turning his attention to Peggy slinking her way towards their booth. It was good that the regular waitress wasn’t there. They wouldn’t be at the cabin long and he didn’t want to draw any unnecessary attention with this little outing. It seemed as if everything was working in his favor.

Grinning warmly, Peggy plunked down two steaming mugs of coffee and a ceramic creamer down upon the sticky table. Removing her notepad and pen from her black apron, she gave the couple her undivided attention.

“Alright, two coffees and some cream! Sugar is in the container by the salt and pepper shakers,” she said, motioning to the far end of the table. “Do you guys have any questions or are you ready to order?”

“I think we’re ready. Right, Sweetheart?” he asked.

“Yeah, I’m ready,” Lexi agreed. “I... ugh...I’d like a double stack of blueberry pancakes...extra syrup and butter...and a double order of bacon and eggs over easy.”

Making a surprised face, Peggy quickly scribbled her order onto her notepad. She never would’ve guessed such a skinny girl could have that big of an appetite.

“Trying to get some energy before hitting the slopes, huh?” the waitress asked.

“No, actually,” he cut in. “We’re just getting some things from the store and then we’re headed back home.”

“You’re not skiing?” Peggy asked. “But the weather is perfect right now!”

“Yeah...well, we have other things planned for our honeymoon,” he stated suggestively.

Gasping excitedly, the waitress beamed at the couple. Young love always made her so happy to see.

“Oh, wow! Congratulations, you love birds!” she said, her voice lifting two octaves higher than normal. “Oh, honey...no wonder you look exhausted. You’re a lucky

girl!”

Blinking at the waitress, Lexi resisted the urge to scoff at her presumptuous statement. Oh, yeah. She was such a lucky girl. Held captive by a lunatic. So lucky, indeed.

“Actually, I’m the lucky one,” Kade chirped, taking Lexi’s menu. “Pancakes aren’t the only thing she’s hungry for, if you know what I mean.”

Letting out an airy laugh, the waitress turned her clear blue eyes to Lexi and gave her a knowing look. The girl seemed completely mortified but she wanted her to know that she completely understood and didn’t judge her one bit. She was once young and in love, herself.

“Well, just as long as you two are enjoying your honeymoon, that’s all that matters,” she said with a nod. “So... back to the food. What would you like to order, Sir?”

“I’ll have the T-bone steak and eggs. Rare and over easy, please,” he stated, handing the waitress the menus.

“Perfect, I’ll get these in. Shouldn’t be too long. As you can tell, the cook isn’t swamped back there,” Peggy said with a roll of her eyes before turning on her high heels and heading towards the kitchen.

Waiting until the waitress was out of earshot, Lexi furrowed her brow and gave Kade’s shin a sharp kick under the table.

“Hey!” he yelped, narrowing his dark eyes. “What the hell was that for?”

“You know exactly what that was for,” she hissed, folding her arms over her chest.

Holding up his hands in mock surrender, he smirked cockily and leaned over the table. He loved it when she asserted herself, but didn't want her to be too upset with him over something so trivial.

“Alright, alright, I'm sorry! I truly am. Please forgive me, my love?”

Glaring at her abductor, she pursed her dry lips together and shook her head. Hell no, she would never forgive him. Not just for this little shenanigan, but for all of it. Even if she did harbor some twisted feelings towards him, there was no redemption for the Devil currently giving her puppy dog eyes.

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Kinda like how you won't even forgive yourself? Nikki wondered.

"Have you been here before?" she asked, abruptly changing both conversations.

Picking up his brown coffee mug, he nodded as he took a sip of the bitter hot liquid. The tiny little mountain town held all sorts of memories that he would rather forget. "Yeah. I've been coming here off and on since I was a kid."

"Oh?" she asked, doctoring her own coffee with a splash of cream and two sugar packets. "So, you know the waitress, then?"

"Nope. Haven't seen her before in my life. Which is perfect, actually. But the cook, on the other hand...I know him really well," he said, glancing to the opened window between the kitchen and the bar.

Following his gaze, she looked toward the window and locked her eyes on the man working in the kitchen. An older gentleman, perhaps in his mid-fifties. Surly and dirty looking, with a deep scowl on his face that made him look like every villain she had ever seen on tv. Clearly, the man wasn't happy working behind the greasy cooktop.

"Looks like he's having a hard day," she muttered, bringing her coffee to her lips.

"Hard day? Nah, I wouldn't worry about him. Tony's life isn't too rough. Now his wife's life, on the other hand...her life is the hard one," he stated, his voice low so only she could hear.

“What do you mean?” she asked, leaning in to listen.

Shrugging his broad shoulders, he placed his mug on the tabletop and eyed his love. There was a method to his madness. Hopefully, she would take his bait. He would love to see her play again.

“Well, you see. Tony has a little bit of a drug habit, but not a lot of money. So, when he can’t get his drugs, he likes to take it out on his sweet wife. He’s put her in the hospital six times already. Cops want to lock him up, but she’s dropped the charges every single time. Says she loves him too much and that he will never do it again. It’s a lie, though and everyone knows it. Tony’s nevergoing to stop beating her. She’s going to die soon, Sweetheart. He will kill her next time.”

Ohhhh, he beats his wife? Did you hear that? Something ought to be done about this lowlife. Dontcha think? Nikki quipped from the back of her mind.

Frowning at her captor, she gripped her ceramic mug and slammed a mental door in her alter-ego’s face. She knew exactly what they both wanted her to do. She would be damned if she was going to fall for the sob story. There was only one life she was going to allow herself to ever take, and it sure as hell wasn’t the cooks.

“Pity,” she muttered, taking another sip of her sweetened coffee.

Noticing her lack of enthusiasm, Kade pushed out a loud breath and leaned back in his seat. “Well, we’ll be here for a few days, maybe it’ll give us something to think about, huh?”

Replying with a shit eating grin, Lexi felt a surge of triumph as she watched utter annoyance dance across his face. He really thought one little mention of some random man beating his wife would make her revert to her old ways? Obviously, he didn’t know her as well as he thought he did.

“We’re only going to be here for a few days? So where will be headed next?” she asked, curious to know the agenda.

Chewing on the soft flesh of his inner cheek, Kade paused a moment and thought over his answer carefully. He knew he needed to be vague but didn’t necessarily want to lie to her. She did have a right to know what her future entailed.

“Back home. There are some loose ends that need to be taken care of. After that, we’ll head into the City. I have some business I need to attend to,” he stated evenly.

Freezing like a deer caught in the headlights, she felt her heart plummet to the floor. Remembering their conversation from the night before, she swallowed hard.

“Business? And does thisbusinesshappen to involve Bloodbayne?” she asked, her voice shaking ever so slightly.

“Yes,” he replied, deciding that he did need to be forthright with this information. “It does. But like I said, he won’t hurt you. I won’t let him ever hurt you.”

Blinking at him, she sat dumbfounded.Holy fuck. He was actually serious.

“You’re talking like I’m going with you to see him,” she said nervously. “Please tell me that I’m not.”

Staring blankly at her, he plastered a mask of false indifference over his handsome face. He didn’t want to take her to Bloodbayne, but the situation was completely out of his hands. This was the only way his Boss would spare her.

“Well, I’m not going!” she spat loudly. “You can just fuc—”

“You don’t have a choice!”he hissed angrily, his deep voice hovering above a

whisper. “WE don’t have a choice! Now, please! You said you trust me so just...just fucking trust me, will you?”

Narrowing her eyes, she folded her arms over her chest. She didn’t understand why his silly plan was rubbing her the wrong way. It wasn’t like he would live long enough to see it through.

Because Lexi, if Kade plans on taking you to see Bloodbayne, that means Bloodbayne already knows about you. Do you see the problem, now? Kill Kade and Bloodbayne will go after you. OR you can let him live and be protected from Bloodbayne. Huh, seems like a no brainer to me! But what do I know, right? Nikki said.

Letting out a sigh, she raised her right hand and pinched the bridge of her nose between her middle finger and thumb. Things were going to get messy, no matter what. She was damned if she did and damned if she didn’t. Why were things always so damn difficult?

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“Fine,” she said.

Giving her a curt nod, Kade picked up his mug and polished off the rest of the coffee. God how he hated fighting with her. Why did she have to be so stubborn? “Good girl. Now, can we just try to have a nice day? Please?”

“Yes,husband,” Lexi mumbled.

“I will admit, I do love having you call me that,” he said before letting his steely gaze move behind her. “Oh, heads up, Sweetheart. Breakfast is here.”

Balancing three full plates of fragrant food in her arms, Peggy carefully walked towards the newlywed couple with a small smile on her face.

“Ok, love birds! Let’s see. We’ve got steak and eggs for the mister...blueberry pancakes with extra syrup and butter and a double order of eggs and bacon for the misses,” the waitress stated, setting the various plates in front of the pair. “Would you guys like some more coffee?”

“Yes, please,” they both said at the same time.

Snickering to herself, Peggy looked back and forth between the two. It warmed her heart to see a couple so in sync.They probably finish each other’s sentences too, she thought to herself.

“Aww, you two really are made for each other, aren’t you? So adorable. Ok, I’ll be right back with that coffee!” she said before taking her leave.

Picking up his fork and knife, Kade began to cut his steak into bite sized chunks. He was extremely happy with the waitress' statement.

"See? Even a stranger can tell we're meant to be," he said, shoveling a forkful of meat and runny eggs into his mouth.

Not daring to make eye contact with her captor, Lexi doused her blueberry pancakes in warm syrup and muttered something sharp under her breath. She doubted the waitress would be so enthusiastic if she knew the true nature of their relationship.

"What was that?" he asked between bites of his breakfast.

Reluctantly lifting her eyes, she plastered a smile on her face and shrugged her slight shoulders. "I just said that you're right! Everyone can see how I feel about you," she replied flatly, slicing through her pancakes with the edge of her fork.

Swallowing a mouthful of food, he silently watched his love as she began to eat bits and pieces of her hearty meal. He didn't care for her tone but wasn't going to start another tiff over it. It was something he simply needed to take note of and monitor. If he needed to redirect her attitude before they went back home, then so be it.

Feeling the uncomfortable heat of his gaze, she took a bite of crispy bacon and pulled her attention to the waitress returning to their booth. The evil glint in her captor's eyes put her on edge. It gave her the much-needed reminder that he was a dangerous man. She needed to get the hell away from him, the sooner the better. There had to be a way for her to alert the waitress. There just had to be.

Stepping back to the table, Peggy began the process of filling up the newlywed's empty coffee mugs. There was a tension in the air between them that she hadn't felt only a minute prior. It made the hair on the back of her neck stand up on end. Understanding that it wasn't her place to say anything, she simply pursed her lips

together into a tight grin and walked over to attend the elderly couple sitting in the next booth.

Keeping her emerald eyes glued on Peggy, Lexi ignored Kade for a moment and focused her attention on the seemingly mundane conversation between the trio.

“Can you believe this snow?” Peggy asked, shaking her head in annoyance. “I mean, I know we are in the mountains but geeze!”

“Oh, I know,” bickered the elderly woman. “It has snowed so much up by our place that our cable and internet have been down for days. I’m so mad! I’ve missed four episodes of my General Hospital, already! I heard that Laura got shot and I need to know what the hell happened!”

“You and that damn soap opera,” chimed in the elderly husband.

“Oh, shut up Barney. You know I wouldn’t watch it if you would act like a husband and actually talk to me,” she huffed before turning her full attention to the waitress. “At least I still have the radio. Speaking of, did you hear that news conference this morning? The one about the missing woman? The one that was kidnapped?”

Instantly perking, Lexi kept her ears open but dropped her eyes to her plate. Picking at her breakfast, she acted as if she hadn’t heard a thing. Fuck, she thought. They had to be talking about her.

“It was so sad,” continued the elderly woman. “Her boyfriend talked after the police gave their spiel. I mean, I feel so bad for the guy. It even sounded like he was crying. Just pleading for whoever had his girlfriend, to just let her go. He was so heartbroken! Just listening to his voice I could tell that he loves her so much. I just can’t imagine. What is our world coming to? We’re all going to hell in a handbasket, I swear!”

Taking in a sharp breath, Lexi gripped her fork tighter between her fingers and stabbed a piece of pancake. Yes, theyweretalking about her. The police were looking for her.Leo was looking for her.He still loved her, and he wanted herhome.

Curious to know if Kade had overheard what she had, she slowly lifted her gaze towards her captor's face. Meeting his wild eyes, she instantly knew he had heard every single word. He had a look that chilled her to the bone. One that she knew was meant to threaten her with something hideous if she dared to open her mouth.

Seething in sudden anger, Kade leaned his large body over the table towards her. He wanted to make sure she paid attention to him and not the ridiculous conversation in the booth behind him. He should have killed Leo when he had the chance, it was a mistake he wasn't going to make twice.

"You know, on second thought," he hissed through gritted teeth. "I think we're going to go home tomorrow. Thoseloose endsneed to be tied up as soon as possible. Now hurry up and finish your breakfast, Sweetheart. We're heading back to the cabin as soon as you're done."

Dropping her fork on her plate, Lexi nodded once in acknowledgment. Grabbing her mug, she took another sip of coffee to look unbothered.Holy fuck,she screamed internally. He's going to kill Leo.

Actually,Nikki quipped.I think it's more likely that he's going to make you do it.

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Agreeing with the voice in her head, she nervously licked her chapped lips. Yes, that was exactly what he intended to happen. He was going to make her kill Leo to prove herself. She couldn't let that happen. There was no way she could murder the man that truly loved her. She needed to make a break for it. If she ran as fast as she could, she might make it to the grocery store before he knew what was happening. Freedom was within her grasp, she needed to take it.

"I think I'm full," she said, scooting herself to the edge of her seat. "I just need to go pee before we leave. I'll be right back and then we can go."

Seeing right through her paper-thin plan, Kade pulled himself from his seat, effectively blocking her from stepping away from their table. Did she honestly think she could get away so easily? Had she not learned anything about him in all this time?

"Here," he offered, taking her by the elbow. "I'll walk you."

"You really don't have to," she countered, wrenching her arm free. "I know where the bathroom is."

Glaring down at her, he slowly shook his head. Like hell he would let her slip away. "I'll walk you," he growled.

Not giving her a moment to protest, he turned down the main aisle of the diner. With slow and steady steps, he waited for her to catch up behind him. Anger was causing his vision to run blood red; he could feel the metallic taste of adrenaline filling his mouth. She was lucky he loved her so much. That love was the only thing stopping him at that very moment from strangling the life from her body. How dare she

eventhinkof running from him?

Quickly catching up to her captor, she frantically looked towards the patrons and waitress. She hoped that they would notice something odd about their less than loving interaction. To her dismay, no one seemed to pay them any mind. They were too wrapped up in their own little worlds.

Think, Lexi, think, she repeated to herself. There had to be something she could do.

Following him as he rounded the corner next to the entrance, she noticed a pen lying on the wooden podium in the waiting area. Making sure he wasn't looking, she swiped the writing utensil and crammed it into the back pocket of her jeans. Maybe if she somehow left a note of some kind, help would arrive before they left the cabin in the morning.

Pushing the door to the women's restroom open, he motioned for her to enter with an agitated flick of his head. "Go. I'll wait for you right here," he said, his face gravely serious.

"Sure...ok," she agreed, stepping into the restroom and giving him an overly sweet smile before he closed the door.

Swearing a line of obscenities, she ran to the very first stall. Quickly slamming the metal door, she secured the lock with shaking fingers. Reaching for the flimsy toilet paper roll, she tore off a piece and placed it down on the top of the porcelain toilet. Yanking the pen from her pocket, she took in a cleansing breath and began to scribble a note.

Help me.

My name is Alexandria Curtis.

That man is not my husband.

He has kidnapped me and is holding me against my will.

He is keeping me at Howling Wolf Ranch.

Please send help!

He's going to kill me!

Hearing a quick rap on the door to the restroom, she jumped to attention. Flushing the toilet, she picked up her flimsy note. Her brain was running a million miles a second. This plan was going to work. Surely someone had to wash the bathroom on a daily basis? They would find her note and send help. Everything was going to be ok.

Exiting the dingy stall, she frantically looked around the small space for somewhere to place her hastily written plea. Deciding that it would most likely be noticed on the sink, she walked over to the pedestal and draped the length of toilet paper over its metal faucet. Saying a silent prayer, she smoothed her hands along the black fabric covering her torso and made her way out of the restroom.

Intently watching Lexi as she left the ladies room, Kade held out his arm and handed her warm puffy coat.

“Here, put this on. I just paid. It's time to go, Sweetheart,” he said without further explanation.

Gulping audibly, she took her coat from her captor and followed his simple direction. Zipping the oversized jacket closed, she followed him as he headed towards the entrance of the diner. Giving the restaurant one last look, she found the waitress wiping down the booth she had been sitting at only minutes before. In one single,

fleeting moment, her watering eyes met Peggy's. Unable to speak, she let her nervous face do the talking. Trying to give the woman some sort of silent cue, she quirked her head towards the restroom just as Kade grabbed her arm and forced her from the restaurant.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

“Are you going to say anything?” Lexi asked, turning her head to look at Kade for the first time since he had viciously shoved her into the SUV.

Chewing on the tip of his tongue, he kept his gaze centered on the snowy road ahead. Tightening his grip on the steering wheel, he continued to seethe. What did she want him to say? He doubted she wanted to know that he had spent the last forty minutes fantasizing about killing her. He was sure she didn't want to know how he dreamt of using his contained rage to fuck her into oblivion. That he wanted to make her scream his name again and again until he felt her tight little cunt squeeze around his cock. She certainly didn't want to know that he imagined taking an ice pick and piercing her deceiving heart at the exact moment her body shattered.

He could see it so clearly in his mind's eye, effortlessly thrusting the sharp length of metal just below her perfect left tit. Finding that sweet spot between her ribs where her heart lay vulnerable to his expert hands. In his lurid dream, he could hear her moan in both pleasure and pain as she peaked and passed almost simultaneously; her flushed face freezing so beautifully in a mixture of confusion and bliss. She would stay perfectly his for all of eternity this way, staining his soul with her cum and blood. It would be a fitting death for his love.

No. He didn't think she wanted him to say what was truly on his mind.

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“You’re mine, Lexi,” he said, his voice low and menacing. “No matter what happens, you will always be mine.”

Sitting still in her seat, she fought to control her erratic heartbeat. Swallowing hard, she mentally kicked herself for opening her stupid mouth. His ominous response did absolutely nothing to calm her fears.

As if you really expected him to say something sweet and caring? God, you really fucked up this time, Nikki hissed. Ya know, if you just would’ve listened to me, you wouldn’t be in this predicament right now. But it’s not too late, I can still help you. Just let me take control once we get back to the cabin. You know I can clean up your mess.

Silencing the bitch in her head, she watched her abductor as he let go of the steering wheel and reached over the center console for her hand. Lacing her shaking fingers between his, she found herself suddenly feeling remorse for leaving the note in the bathroom. It didn’t matter how hard she fought, he was right. She was his.

“I know,” she said.

“Good,” he replied, lifting her hand to his lips and kissing her dry knuckles. “It’s up to you on how you would like to move forward, Sweetheart. I’m going to give you a choice. You can either trust me and let me guide you...or you can resist me and lose everything. Decide carefully, my love.”

Nodding her head, she dropped her gaze to her lap and took in a wavering breath. She had no idea which path to take. Just as she began to feel one way, he would find a

way to sway her to the other side. He was toying with her thoughts and emotions, and she was crumbling in the process. She was in a no-win situation.

Releasing her hand, he gave her a searing glance before turning his attention back to the mountain road. He hoped she would choose correctly. The thought of turning his most recent fantasy into reality left him with a bitter taste in his mouth.

“We’re almost at the cabin. When we get there, I will be putting you back in handcuffs. I hate to do it, but you’ve left me no other choice,” he muttered.

Recalling the feeling of the sharp metal shackles biting into her skin, an icy chill ran down her spine. If she let him tie her up, she would be in a world full of hurt once help arrived. There was no doubt that it would turn into a nasty hostage situation, and she would be powerless to protect herself. She couldn’t allow him to subdue her again.

Then quit changing your mind! Make a damn decision and stick to it! If you want to escape, then you know what you need to do. As soon as he heads upstairs to grab the cuffs, you get into that damn drawer and grab a knife. If this is truly what you want to do, and you’re fine with living with the consequences for the rest of your miserable life, then take the knife and let me step in.

“Fine,” she said aloud, answering both her abductor and alter ego with a single word.

Slowing down the Mercedes, he made a gentle turn onto the frozen gravel road leading to the cabin. Relieved by her answer, he felt a small sliver of hope worm its way into his black heart.

“Thank you for not fighting me on this, my love,” he said.

Lifting her eyes to the windshield, she swallowed an inappropriate laugh. Not fighting

him? Oh, if only he knew what she had in store.

. . .

Pulling up to the A-Frame cabin, Kade carefully eased the SUV to a stop before putting the vehicle in park. Turning off the engine, he gave her a warm smile and opened the driver's side door. Quickly exiting the Mercedes, he walked around to the passenger side and opened her door for her. He was eager to get her inside and start the process of securing her for the night.

"Come on, Sweetheart," he said, leaning into the vehicle to unbuckle her seatbelt.

Taking his hand, Lexi allowed him to help her from the SUV and walk her to the front entrance of the cabin. Waiting patiently for him to unlock the wooden door, she let her eyes take their last fill of her captor. Some sick and twisted part of her really had fallen in love with him. It pained her that things had to end this way. She had to save herself though, and she had to save Leo. Perhaps if they had met under different circumstances, they might have had a good life together.

It was a thought she knew would haunt her for the rest of her life.

Turning the brass knob, he used his shoulder to push the door open. Catching her conflicted stare, he hardened his features.

"After you," he said, motioning towards the opened threshold.

Taking his direction, she walked into the cabin. Stopping after a handful of steps, she turned to watch him as he entered the space. Unsure of what he wanted to do, she studied him as he took off his heavy winter coat and shoved his keys into the front pocket of his jeans. Trying to look as innocent as possible, she painted a sugary sweet smile on her face. It was important for him to believe she was as placid as a newborn

kitten.

“Now, what?” she asked.

Hanging his coat on the metal hook next to the front door, he moved his attention to her and arched an unruly brow. He could see the gears turning in that pretty little head of hers and it annoyed him to no end. Her betrayal was written so plainly on her face. After everything that had happened, she still wanted to run back to her limp-dicked boyfriend. It was a realization that made all the rage he had suppressed flare up once again. Evidently, she had made the wrong choice.

“Take off your clothes,” he replied.

Visibly scoffing, Lexi let out a little laugh. Take off her clothes? They weren't exactly having a flirty moment. She must have heard him wrong.

“What?”

Taking a single step closer, Kade narrowed his dark eyes. Straightening his posture in an overtly dominant stance, he balled his hands at his sides. He hated it when she played dumb. Didn't she realize that she was treading on very thin ice?

“I said. Take. Off. Your. Clothes,” he repeated, enunciating every word clearly.

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Staring up at him, she shivered as a rash of goosebumps pebbled her flesh. She didn't care for his command at all. He wasn't going to rape her, was he?

"But...but, why?" she asked.

Closing the space between them, he hunched menacingly over her svelte form. Forcing her to meet his stormy gaze, he bristled with pride as he saw terror flash behind her green eyes. Good. She needed to be afraid.

"So you don't try to escape," he bit, his voice hard and unforgiving. "You're smart enough to realize that if you tried to run outside completely naked, you'd die of hypothermia before you made it halfway down the mountain, right? Now take off your clothes before I take them off for you."

Blinking back the hot tears welling in her eyes, Lexi gave a single nod. He was growing more and more tempestuous with every passing second. She knew he was barely holding on to the leash restraining his inner beast. Until she held that knife in her hands, she was powerless against him. She needed to placate him.

With trembling fingers, she followed his command and began to remove her winter clothing. Piece by piece, they tumbled onto the darkly stained floor, fanning around her like wrapping paper on Christmas day. Pulling her frilly bra from her chest, she hesitated once she noticed the feral look on her captor's face.

Quirking his head, Kade stomped his booted foot to snap her back to the present. Why did she continue to test him?

“Take everything off,” he barked.

Jumping from the agitated tone of his voice, she immediately dropped her bra to the floor. Unable to keep her frazzled nerves in check, she felt herself sob as she quickly shimmied her cotton panties from her lower half. Her confidence was faltering with every passing second, she wasn't so sure she could go through with her plan.

Oh, would you just pull yourself together?! Now is NOT the time to get all emotional! Wipe those tears from your face and do whatever you need to get to that damn drawer! But if you really are too chicken shit, then let me step in and I'll take care of things, myself! Nikki growled.

Not wanting her to take control just yet, Lexi lifted her rounded chin defiantly. Meeting his wild gaze, she squared her shoulders to psyche herself up. Her alter was right, now was not the time to let weakness set in. She couldn't allow him to think he had any power over her.

“Now what?” she asked, trying to best to harden her voice.

Smirking at his hellcat, Kade lifted his hands and gently cradled her face between his hands. Bending down slightly, he licked a salty tear from her cheek before moving to claim her mouth in a possessive kiss. As livid as he was, he wanted her to know that he still desired her with every fiber of his being. He wouldn't have gone through all this trouble if he didn't desperately need her by his side.

Freezing beneath his lips, she tried to process what was happening. Her head was spinning from the mixed signals he continued to throw in her direction. Did he want to fuck her, or did he want to kill her?

Probably both, Nikki snickered. Why don't you just enjoy the ride while it lasts?

Taking her advice, Lexi gave into her temptation and returned the kiss with fervor; gliding her lips and tongue over his in a delicious game of give and take. This was the last few minutes they would ever have together, and she wanted to take advantage while it lasted. As demented as their relationship was, she knew deep down in her soul that she would miss him. She needed this passionate memory to last her the rest of her days.

Enjoying the moment longer than intended, he reluctantly ended the wanton kiss. Reminding himself that he still needed to grab the restraints, he pulled away with a sigh and released his hold of her flushed face. There was nothing he wanted more than to take things further, but they both needed time to forgive one another. They would have plenty of time to enjoy each other physically once they had cooled down.

“Stay here,” he ordered, stepping away from her and heading towards the staircase leading to the loft.

“Ok,” she whispered.

Taking in a cleansing breath, she pushed the consuming kiss from her mind. Eyeing him as he made his way up the wooden staircase, her stomach dropped in a mixture of excitement and dread. This was her chance to make her move. She wouldn't have much time, she needed to act quickly.

Certain that he was upstairs in the loft, she sprang into action. Racing towards the kitchen as fast as she could, she kept her thoughts intently focused on finding the weapon that would give her freedom. Running to the corner cabinet, she quickly located the hidden drawer. Pausing a moment to look over her shoulder, she yanked on the metal pull. Glancing back to the drawer, her eyes widened in shock as she realized that it was completely bare.

Not a single steak knife to be found.

“No!” she whispered, her heart plummeting to the floor. “No, no, no!”

Well, there goes that idea. He’s a smart son of a bitch, I gotta hand it to him.

Stammering as her adrenaline spiked through her veins, Lexi stood dumbfounded over the sudden turn of events. The drawer had been filled with knives only the night before, where the fuck had they gone? She hadn’t imagined them. No, they were right there.

Instantly panicking, she began to tear through the neighboring drawers. Opening them as fast as she could, she silently cursed herself as she took stock of the harmless kitchen utensils. Rusty whisks and plastic measuring spoons wouldn’t take him down.

She was absolutely fucked.

“No!” she squeaked. “This isn’t happening...this isn’t hap—”

“Looking for something, Alexandria?” Kade interrupted, silently stepping behind her.

Whipping around on her bare heels, Lexi held out her hands in a protective measure. He had completely caught her off guard. She knew she was in danger, but it wasn’t until she registered the feral look on his face that it really began to sink in.

He was going to kill her.

“Looking for the knives, huh? Yeah. About those,” he said, invading her personal space. “You see, I knew that you had found them last night. So, while you were in the bathroom getting dressed this morning, I got rid of them. I was hoping you wouldn't be stupid enough to go back for them, but once again, you've disappointed me, Sweetheart.”

Opening her mouth to respond, she was silenced as he slammed his hands down on the linoleum countertop. Jumping in fear, she whimpered as he used his arms to cage her against the old cabinets.

“You have failed every test I have given you, Lexi,” he seethed, leaning his face so close that his nose nearly touched hers. “Every single one. Our first kiss in the bunker...the cell phone...trying to escape at the diner...the knives. I gave you so many fucking chances and you failed them all. What am I to do with you, huh?”

A cold shiver ran down her spine as her body poised for fight or flight. She had severely underestimated her captor. Of course he would test her, why didn't she think he would? Because of her hubris, she was now staring at a snarling wolf on the verge of snapping. There was no way she could overpower him physically; she was completely outmatched.

“I'm...I'm sorry,” she whispered. “I didn't mean--”

“You're sorry?” he interrupted, lifting his hands to roughly grip around her upper arms and giving her a hard shake. “YOU'RE SORRY? WELL THAT FUCKING

DOESN'T CUT IT FOR ME!"

Let me out,Nikki growled.I promise to let you back in as soon as he's dead. I promise, just let me out!

Not trusting her to keep her promise, Lexi struggled against Kade's hold. Glancing around the space, she frantically tried to find something of use. She was just as capable of murder as the voice in her head. She could take her abductor down.

No. Shewouldtake him down.

"Please...I won't try to run away again...I'm yours...I'll...I'll do whatever you want me to!" she pleaded, trying to distract him from the object she noticed from the corner of her right eye. "Please...I love you!"

Raking his livid gaze over her terrified face, Kade softened from her heartfelt confession. She was a liability, and would always remain one, but he couldn't envision a life without her by his side. She truly seemed remorseful, perhaps he could let her live. Yes. He had to let her live.

"You do?" he asked, his voice strangled and gruff.

Nodding her head, she swallowed the bile rising in her throat. She was instantly disgusted with herself. The phrase may have slipped out in desperation, but it was the ugly truth.

"Yeah, I do," she replied breathlessly. "I do love you, Kade."

Closing his eyes, he smiled to himself. Relaxing his broad shoulders, he pushed out a long sigh. Relief flooded his muscles as he soaked in the knowledge that his plan had worked. He knew she would fall in love with him.

“God, I’ve waited so long to hear you say that,” he said.

“You have?” she asked.

Lifting his eyelids, he quirked his mouth into a cocky smirk. He could see disappointment forming over her face, he was sure she was expecting him to tell her that he loved her, too. She would have to wait just a bit longer for that.

“Yeah, but it was worth the wait,” he admitted. “I’m so excited for our future, Lexi. We are going to be so great together.”

Locking her eyes on his, Lexi wrestled with her racing thoughts. Straightening her posture, she forced herself to ignore the part of her that wanted to cave. At the end of the day, it didn’t matter how she felt for him. They weren’t meant to be, and she would be a fool if she let this opportunity pass her by.

“I’m excited too,” she lied.

“That makes me happy to know, Sweetheart,” he said, releasing his hold ever so slightly. “So very happy.”

Feeling his tight grip easing around her arms, she seized the moment. Gritting her teeth, she called upon all the anger she had harbored since her abduction. Pushing out an animalistic growl, she gave into her rage and lifted her knee as high and fast as she could. In a split second, the flat plane of her toned thigh landed squarely between his spread legs.

Freezing in place, the air was knocked from his lungs as his mind registered the acute pain radiating from his groin. Letting out a strangled groan, his large form buckled. Releasing her arms, he doubled over in a mixture of shock and panic. Time seemed to stop for the dangerous monster. Nothing felt real. It was as if he was experiencing

some sort of disordered nightmare. How fucking dare she.

Screaming out an obscenity, Lexi continued with her assault. Pulling back her balled fist, she released every single bit of her frustration.

With bewilderment dancing across his masculine features, Kade watched in stunned silence as she threw her fist into his jaw with enough power to make him see stars. Unable to react in time to defend himself, he felt her bony knuckles contact his face for a second time. This punch breaking the flesh covering his left cheekbone and effectively subduing him.

Screaming like an unhinged creature, she wiggled her naked body away from him as he dropped to his knees. Lunging to her right, she reached for the dense object sitting on the stove. Wrapping her hand around its metal handle, she lifted the iron tea kettle from the burner and swung it wildly. With a horrid “crack,” the teapot crashed against her captor’s temple, easily splitting his skin and fracturing his skull.

Blinking through her hazy vision, she watched in slow motion as his hulking body dropped like a pile of bricks onto the floor. Unsure of whether he was indeed dead, she threw the kettle on the counter and pulled back her foot to give her abductor a series of heavy kicks against his side for good measure. Not feeling him move or fight back, she fell beside him and dug her trembling fingers into the front pocket of his jeans.

Well color me surprised! Nikki praised. You actually did it, Lexi! I didn’t think you had it in you!

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“Shut up! Shut up!” she hissed aloud as a torrent of tears streamed down her face.

Why? Aren’t you proud of yourself? Bravo! Hey, you really ought to get a good look at your handiwork. Oh, he looks so beautiful right now. Go on...look.

“I SAID,SHUT UP!!”she screamed, yanking the fob to the Mercedes from his pocket.

Stuffing Nikki into the dark reaches of her mind, Lexi stood from Kade’s bleeding form and ran towards the front entrance. She couldn’t believe she had gone through with it. It was over.

She was free.

Grabbing her abductor’s coat from the metal hook next to the door, she shimmied the heavy fabric over her shoulders. Zipping the coat to her chin, she stopped herself from looking back. Adrenaline and endorphins were flooding her muscles, causing her mind to move in a thousand different directions. There was no rhyme or reason for her actions, now. All she knew was that she needed to get away from the cabin as quickly as possible.

Throwing the door open, she ran as fast as she could towards the SUV, paying no mind to the snow-covered gravel slicing into the soles of her feet. Holding onto the driver’s door handle, she pressed the unlocking device and pulled the vehicle’s door open. Jumping into the driver’s seat, she quickly slammed the door behind her and pushed the ignition button. Expecting the hum of the powerful engine, she was shocked when only the radio turned on. The song“Closer”by Nine Inch Nails blared through the premium speakers lining the cabin, drowning her in an overwhelming

base.

Confused as to why the power train wouldn't start, she angrily slapped the mute button on the steering wheel. Scrunching her flushed face, she pressed the ignition switch once again. To her dismay, the engine still wouldn't turn.

"GOD DAMMIT!" she cried, wiping another flood of hot tears from her eyes. "COME ON!"

Frantically looking around the dash, she searched in vain to find a solution to the problem. There had to be a reason why the SUV wasn't starting. Even with the frigid temperature outside, it was a brand-new SUV. There was no reason for it not to work.

Your foot, Nikki said with a sigh. Put it on the fucking brake and try again.

Pausing a moment to look down at her tingling feet, she growled at herself and slammed her right foot onto the black brake pedal. Punching the ignition switch for a third time, she laughed in crazed relief as the engine purred to life.

"There...see? You can do this! You can do this!" she told herself. "He's gone. He's gone!"

Putting the Mercedes into drive, she kept her focus strictly on the windshield ahead. Turning the steering wheel, she slowly circled the vehicle around to leave the cabin. Without warning, the gravity of the situation hit her. Just what the hell had she done?

Teetering on the edge of a panic attack, she stopped the SUV and closed her blurry eyes. Focusing on steadying her erratic breathing, she tried to imagine all the things she would be able to experience again now that she was free. In just a matter of hours, she would see the man she was meant to be with. She could almost feel Leo's loving arms wrapping around her, his lips nuzzling against her neck. She could even

hear his warm voice whispering sweetly into her ear, saying her name repeatedly.Lexi...Lexi...

“LEXI!”

Snapping her eyes open, she yelped in shock as Kade slammed his open palms against the icy glass of her driver’s side window. His hands leaving bloodied handprints in their wake.

“ALEXANDRIA!”

Not believing what she was seeing, she screamed in terror as he slowly dragged his beaten body to the front of the Mercedes. With his split face contorted, she could tell that he was filled with rage and pain.

“WHAT ARE YOU DOING, ALEXANDRIA?” he snarled, punching his closed fists down upon the hood of the vehicle.

Frozen in sheer panic, she stared at her captor like a deer caught in headlights.No.He wasn’t there. This was just a sick figment of her imagination.Kade was dead!There was no way he could have survived that head injury.

“GET OUT OF THE CAR, NOW!” he growled, once again pounding his sticky hands against the black fiberglass.

“You’re not real...you’re not real!” she sputtered.

Oh, but he is,Nikki replied.Just run him the fuck over! But make sure to really kill him this time, ok?

“GET OUT OF THE CAR NOW, ALEXANDRIA!” Kade repeated.

You'd better hurry, Lexi! Do it!

"Ok, ok!" she said.

Reaching for the gear shift, she put the SUV into reverse and backed the vehicle away from Kade's heaving form. Shifting into drive, she swallowed hard as she watched him shake his head in disapproval. Holding her left foot on the brake pedal, she tapped her right foot on the gas; just enough to rev the engine in warning. It was clear that even after everything that had happened, he still didn't believe she had the guts to leave him. Nor did he believe she had the power to kill him. She would prove him wrong.

Narrowing his dark eyes, Kade stood his ground as he called her bluff. "YOU'RE MINE, ALEXANDRIA!" he screamed, his mouth spitting scarlet red blood onto the white snow before him. "YOU WILL FOREVER BE MINE!"

Choking back a sob, she nodded once and tightened her grip on the steering wheel. Giving him a wistful grin, she felt her heart squeeze. No matter how hard she may fight the truth, she knew that he was right. He had left an indelible scar on her soul she would carry for the rest of her life. Until she took her last breath, she would belong to him.

“Forever,” she replied.

Using her adrenaline, she slammed her foot down upon the gas pedal as hard as she could. Before he had a chance to move, the Mercedes sprung dangerously forward through the snow. With the help of studded tires, the heavy vehicle lurched towards her captor. Gaining enough momentum, it brutally slammed into his broad body, causing him to haphazardly roll from the hood onto the windshield. Shattering the tempered glass, his form hurtled straight up into the air and over the entire length of the SUV as it sped ahead. Snapping bone, ripping muscle, and shredding skin in the process.

Pushing on the brake, she steered into a fishtail while the SUV came to a reluctant stop on the frozen driveway. Looking back in the rearview mirror, she caught Kade’s body as it landed on the hard, snow-covered gravel like a torn rag doll. It was a sight that both stunned and sickened her. How could she have done that?

“Oh my God! Oh my God,” she repeated to herself.

Stop it, Lexi. God had nothing to do with this, this was all you! Nikki said, sounding somewhat impressed. He’s not moving, I think you may have been successful this time! Good job! Now get down the fucking mountain before he pops back up like the damn Terminator!

Giving his mangled body one last, longing glance, she placed her bare foot on the gas pedal. Gently accelerating down the private driveway, the SUV drove away from Howling Wolf Ranch and towards the safety of the flashing blue lights making their way up the mountain.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Staring out of the back window of the ambulance, Lexi's red rimmed eyes glossed over as she processed the emotions flowing through her. Anger. Sadness. Elation. Relief. Regret. Mostly regret.

Just what the hell had she done?

Readying a clear oxygen mask, the female paramedic gave her a warm grin. She was trained to always remain neutral, but she couldn't help but feel pity for her new patient. She had been through a very traumatic experience. The poor woman looked like a beaten puppy.

"You know, we do have more warm blankets to wrap you up in if you want to take off that coat," she offered, hoping she would allow her to remove the tainted article of clothing.

"Hmm?" Lexi asked, blinking herself into the present. "Oh...no... the blanket on my legs is enough. I'd like to keep this on, if that's ok?"

Shrugging her shoulders, the blonde gave the coat another once over. Her patient was swimming in the damn thing, it had to belong to the suspect. She couldn't fathom why she wanted to wear it.

"Sure, I guess," replied the paramedic, slipping the mask over Lexi's tear-stained face. "You can keep it on until we get to the hospital. They will make you change, there. Now just take some deep breaths and try to relax as best as you can. We will be leaving in just a second."

Nodding her head, Lexi took a breath of the cool oxygen and closed her exhausted eyes. Off in the distance, she could still hear the sirens of six police vehicles

swarming on the ranch. She didn't understand why they didn't turn the bloody things off, it's not like they had to alert anyone of their presence. Kade was dead.

At least you hope he is,Nikki taunted.

Shaking off her alter's words, she snuggled herself into Kade's thick coat. Imagining that his capable arms were wrapping around her, she let her guilt consume her once again. She hoped he forgave her for what she did. Someone had to. God knows she wouldn't ever be able to forgive herself.

"You're so lucky you were able to get away from that monster," the paramedic said, typing notes onto the screen of her tablet.

Instantly bristling, Lexi snapped open her eyes. How dare the blonde say that? She knewnothingabout him.

"He's not a mon—," she said through the mask, catching herself before she could finish her sentence.

What was that? Are you actually...defending him?Nikki spat, her tone thick with annoyance.What the Hell? Didn't I tell you to be sure that killing him was what you wanted to do? Didn't I tell you to be FUCKING sure?

Slamming a mental door on the bitch in her head, she blinked at the paramedic. Moving her right hand to her left, she toyed with the band of gold circling her ring finger. She didn't need the voice in her head to make her feel worse than she already did. The damage was done, she needed to live with it.

"Yeah, you're right. I'm very lucky that I was able to get away from him," she lied, her voice cracking at the seams.

Winking at her patient, the paramedic lightly tapped her open hand against the metal wall separating the cabs of the ambulance to let her partner know that they were ready to roll. She had already made sure the authorities had alerted the woman's boyfriend of her status. She hoped he would arrive at the hospital soon. In situations like these, it was crucial for the victims to have their loved ones nearby as soon as possible.

"Well, you don't have to worry, anymore," the paramedic said as the ambulance made its way down the winding road. "You're free of him."

Suppressing a laugh, Lexi continued to play with her wedding band. She was free of him? If only that were the case. As long as her heart continued to beat, she would never be free from Kade. She was his.

Forever.

EPILOGUE

Frowning at her reflection in the bathroom mirror, Lexi fussed with the loose curls framing her face. She didn't like how round it had become over the last few months. Her cheeks were so full, she felt like a squirrel preparing for winter. It made her self-conscious every single time she caught an image of herself.

"If you would just stop eating cheesecake, you wouldn't look like such a bloated cow," she whispered bitterly to herself.

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Stepping through the threshold of the master bathroom, Leo couldn't help but smile as his warm brown eyes settled on Lexi. Slipping behind her, he wrapped his arms around her torso and gently pulled her flush against him. He knew exactly what she was thinking and was intent on changing the narrative rattling around in her head.

"Stop. You're stunning," he assured, locking his sincere gaze with hers in the mirror. "You're the most gorgeous woman I've ever seen."

Leaning into his comforting embrace, she smirked at the handsome man in the looking glass. He had always been incredibly sweet to her, but was even more so since her return. She was lucky to have him stand by her side through the past six months. His unwavering love and support had kept her from ending it all.

"You're my husband, you have to say that," she said, glancing to the familiar gold band gracing her left ring finger.

"Well, yes, that I am. But you know I would never lie to you, Sunshine," he purred, moving his hands to cradle the swell of her rounded belly. "You grow more beautiful with every passing day."

"No, I'm getting fatter with every passing day," she replied with a roll of her green eyes.

Pressing a quick kiss to her temple, Leo shook his head in disagreement. He wished she could see herself through his eyes. Then she would never doubt her beauty. She was his world, and he couldn't imagine a life without her in it.

“That’s not fat, Lexi. Your body is growing a baby,” he said, his voice filled with awe. “Our baby.”

Pulling her lips into a forced grin, she dropped her gaze to watch him lovingly smooth his hands over her pronounced stomach. She found out she was pregnant a few weeks after her abduction, and he had immediately claimed the child. Of course, there was a chance he could be the father, but she knew with every fiber of her being that the child wasn’t his. She just didn’t have the heart to tell him. Besides, Kade was entombed in a coma that his doctor’s didn’t think he would ever awake from. This way, her son would be raised in a loving home with a father in his life. A good father in his life.

It was best for everyone involved if Leo believed that she was carrying his child.

“Yeah, you’re right,” she replied softly.

Mumbling an agreement, he continued to caress her bump. Feeling a small foot kick against his opened palm, he let out a pleased laugh. His boy was going to be an amazing soccer player.

“He’s getting strong, huh?”

That he is Leo! Just like his real Daddy, Nikki teased.

Ignoring the ever-present voice in her head, Lexi turned her body in his arms. Raising her hands to hold his beaming face, she hummed lightly.

“He’s getting hungry,” she said, wincing slightly as she felt her son kick again. “Really hungry. Can we go eat, please?”

“Yeah, of course, Sunshine! Can’t let you two starve now, can I? What do you feel

like having tonight? Let me guess...Italian?" Leo asked with a full smile that crinkled the corners of his eyes.

With a hearty laugh, she leaned forward to brush her lips against his. She had been craving nothing but pasta for months, now. It was a running joke between them. Little did Leo know that what she really craved was the spaghetti and meatballs Kade had made for her the first day of her abduction. That was another little secret she was keeping to herself.

"How did I know? I must be psychic or something. I guess it's a good thing I made reservations at the Adriatic Grill, huh?" he said with a wink.

"Oh! You did? Yay! You're the best, you know that?" she said cheerfully.

"Nah, I'm not, I just want to make you happy, little Mama," he said. "I hope you know that I'll do anything to make you happy. I love you with all my heart, Mrs. Estrada."

Giving her new husband a smile, Lexi tried her best to hide the pain constricting around her heart. There was no doubt in her mind that his statement was the absolute truth. He loved her fiercely and completely. She only wished she felt the same.

"I love you, more," she replied, ignoring the dark laugh echoing in the back of her mind.

...

"Do you like living here, Sunshine?" Leo asked, cutting into his garlic encrusted sirloin.

Swallowing a mouthful of spaghetti, Lexi nodded her head before setting her empty

fork down on her plate. It had taken her some time to get used to the West Coast at first, she now found herself loving their new home. She was excited to raise her son somewhere safe. Far away from the clutches of the Bloodbayne Organization and the memory of Kade Volkov.

“I really do! I can’t believe how beautiful it is here. With all the mountains and trees...God, it’s amazing! You know, everyone was right. There’s nothing like Western Washington in the Summer. It totally makes all the rain worth it!” she said cheerfully.

Grinning at his wife, Leo soaked in her enthusiasm. He was thrilled to see her like this, happy and content like she used to be. Before that son-of-a-bitch had taken her. It seemed as if her therapy sessions were finally helping.

“Yeah, it does. I’m glad you’re getting used to Tacoma. I really love it here, and I think our son will, too. Hmm, speaking of our little man, don’t you think we should think of a name?” he asked, taking a bite of his steak.

Licking marinara sauce from her lips, Lexi paused for a moment. For whatever reason, they hadn’t really discussed names. It was the one thing she wasn’t sure about. Perhaps because it would make this child very real.

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“Do you have anything in particular you’re thinking of?” she asked.

“I do, Sunshine...are you ready for this? It’s a good one, I promise,” he said with a lift of his brow.

Laughing lightly, she tilted her head and gave a quick roll of her eyes. He could be the biggest ham, sometimes.

“Yeah of course! Don’t keep me waiting! What would you like to name him?” she asked, patting her belly for extra effect.

Raising his hands to help him sell the name, Leo leaned over the table and honed his eyes in on her amused face. He had been thinking about this name for a while, now. Hopefully, she would be open to it.

“Ok...ok...Atlas. Atlas Estrada. Now...now, before you give me that look just think about it for a moment. Just think...let it stew...let it roll over your tongue, Baby,” he encouraged.

Fighting a giggle, Lexi pursed her lips together and followed her husband’s request. Atlas. Of course, he would choose an unusual name. She didn’t immediately hate it, but she didn’t know if it was quite right for her son.

That’s because he should be named after his father, Lexi. You know you want to name him Kade. You had a dream about it just last night, for fucks sake! Little Kade Junior. A spitting image of his lunatic Daddy.

Mentally growling at her alter, she ignored the suggestion and gave Leo a slight shrug of her shoulders. She had to admit, the name Atlas was slightly better than Kade or Demon Spawn.

“Little Atlas Estrada,” she said aloud, absentmindedly rubbing her stomach. “Hmmm...maybe. I’ll think about it.”

Clapping his hands together, he smiled triumphantly. He was thoroughly pleased that she hadn’t immediately shot down the name.

“Take all the time you need, Baby,” he purred. “We have what...another three months to go?”

“Wow, yeah. It feels like it’s flying by,” Lexi said with a sigh. “We still have so much to do; I’m starting to freak out a little bit.”

“We will get everything ready, don’t you worry your pretty little head,” he encouraged. “I’ve got everything under control!”

Lifting her water glass to her lips, she took a large sip and quietly memorized the look of confidence on her husband’s face. It was moments like these that she was thankful she had made the split-second decision to marry him. She knew she could always rely on him.

“Thank you...for everything,” she said, setting her glass back on the table.

“You don’t have to thank me, Lexi. I love you. I’ll always love you...and little Atlas,” he said with a flirty wink.

Almost on cue, she felt an internal punch to her bladder. Sitting straight in her seat, she pushed out a hiss. Apparently, her son wasn’t too thrilled at being called by that name.

“Oh, dammit! I need to pee!” she exclaimed while ungracefully standing from her chair, her rounded belly bumping into the table in the process.

Steadying the square table, Leo gave his wife a knowing smile. Now that she was moving into her third trimester, it seemed as if she was peeing just as often as she did in the first. He felt horrible that she was constantly running to the bathroom.

“Hurry, Baby. I’ll order dessert while you’re gone. Cherry cheesecake?”

“Yes, please!” she said before walking as quickly as she could to the bathroom, giving him a loving glance over her shoulder.

You got it!” he called, watching his wife carefully waddle through the restaurant.

Concentrating on holding her bladder, Lexi turned the corner separating the dining room from the rest of the establishment. Swiftly making her way towards the ladies’ room, she was too distracted to notice a set of heavy footprints race up behind her. Opening the metal door to the loo, she let out a shocked yelp as she suddenly felt someone grab her from behind and push her into the empty restroom.

Not having time to react, her green eyes widened in terror as she felt a large pair of hands wrap around her. One hand lifting to cover her opened mouth, the other pressing possessively over her swollen stomach. Not understanding what was happening, she froze in place. It wasn’t until she heard a familiar, dark voice purr into her ear did she realize what was happening. It was both her wish, and her worst fear come true.

“Did you miss me, Sweetheart?”