



Sold to the Investor

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Category: Erotic, Romance, Billionaire Romance, Adult

Description: Sophia

I'd give anything to take care of my brother, at the expense of my own happiness, but this time he's gone too far, right? When I'm sold to pay off my brother's gambling debt, I end up somewhere I never thought I'd be—on a stage while an audience of the city's richest men decide how much my virginity is worth.

But then he's there—my protector. My savior.

My new owner.

Grayson makes me feel like I'm priceless. And wanted. Like I'm worth more than I've always been told. He shows me pleasure and happiness like I've never imagined, and I want more.

And after a lifetime of giving and giving, I'm finally ready to go after what I want.

Grayson

I'm supposed to be focused on finding a way to bring down this auction house and the corrupt men who do business here—I'm definitely not supposed to be purchasing any of the women for sale. But those gorgeous eyes don't give me any choice. Before I know it, I'm claiming her as mine in front of the whole room, and I never want to give her up.

I want her to stay—not because I've paid for her, but because she wants me. Trusts me. Whatever she decides, I'll never let anyone hurt her again.

Sold to the Investor involves a bold hero that will do anything for the one he loves.

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Chapter One

Sophia

Tick, tick, tick.

I glance at the clock above the kitchen table for the hundredth time. It's past midnight, and Daryl isn't home.

He does this all the time, coming home at odd hours or even disappearing for days. I shouldn't be worried—heck, I shouldn't wait up for him anymore, but he's all the family I have left. No matter how terrible Daryl is, he's my brother.

The door rattles, jolting me out of my thoughts. The sound is accompanied by a loud, rapid knock.

“Sophia, it's me,” Daryl shouts, turning the doorknob impatiently.

I rush to the entrance and unlock the door. Daryl wrenches it from my hands, barging in and making me stumble back.

“Daryl, where have—” I let out a soft gasp. “What happened to your face?”

He urges me deeper into the small living room of our apartment and closes the door.

My brother's face is covered in bruises. His right eye is swollen shut, and dried blood trails down his temple, stopping just above his chin.

He's in trouble again.

He doesn't answer, but drags me to the worn-out couch and sits beside me. "I need your help, buttercup," he says, his eyes full of panic and darting all over the room.

My heart sinks at the endearment. The nickname he used so affectionately when we were kids has turned to a weapon meant to make me comply. But the truth is that he never really gives me a way out when he "needs help," especially since he started hanging with a bad crowd and developed a gambling and drug addiction.

"What do you need help with?" I ask hesitantly as I take in his ruffled look.

"I owe some people, Soph, and they want their money back. I know I promised not to borrow from loan sharks anymore, but I had to pay some debt and now they're threatening to kill me." He gives me a beseeching look. "If you could just go with them as collateral, I promise to get you back as soon as I get their money."

I stare at my brother in shock. "Collateral? What are you talking about, Daryl? You can't possibly ask me to do that," I say in disbelief.

He grabs my hands, gripping so tightly it hurts. "Please, buttercup. Do this for me. They're going to kill me if I don't give them something," he says, his tone ringing with desperation.

I shake my head gently, overwhelmed and scared. I've never seen him quite this desperate. "I'm sure we can find something else...another way to pay them. Maybe—"

Daryl's brown eyes turn crazed, as if he's possessed. I jerk in place and my heart rate spikes as he shouts, "I just need you to do one fucking thing for me! Be useful for once!"

There it is, the demon in him. His words hit me in the chest, bringing on a familiar flare of guilt. Many times, I've considered walking away from him and not looking back. But then I remember all the times he's taken care of me, before the drugs took hold, and I can't bring myself to just leave him to his destructive nature.

Of course, there's also the question of whether I can even survive without him.

You'll come running back to me... You can't survive without me...

Those are the words he throws carelessly at me when he's in a nasty mood. I've heard them so much that they've taken root in my mind. I withdraw my hands from his, feeling hollow.

He sighs softly and rubs his face. "Look, I'm sorry, Soph. I shouldn't have snapped at you, but I'm scared. These people are dangerous. Please, do this for me," he pleads.

"They won't hurt me, will they?" I ask, wringing my hands.

Daryl puts his hands over mine again, giving me what's meant to be a reassuring squeeze, but it only adds to my anxiety. "No, they won't. They just need something or someone valuable to hold me accountable. It's just for a day, buttercup. I promise to get you back tomorrow, as soon as I get paid."

"Are you sure?" I ask softly, trying to reason it out in my head. Maybe if I do this for him, he'll listen if I ask him to get some help...

"Of course," he replies, then springs off the couch. "Come on. We have to go now. They have a car waiting to pick you up outside."

I let myself be dragged out, ignoring the heaviness settling in my heart. It might be a stupid idea to go with him, but I refuse to believe Daryl is leading me out like a lamb

for slaughter.

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As we exit our run-down apartment building, I see a black vehicle with tinted windows idling at the curb. “There it is,” Daryl says with a relieved smile. The passenger door flies open as we reach the car, and he pushes me into the seat. “I’ll see you later, buttercup.”

His dismissive tone puts my hackles back up, but before I can assess the meaning behind it, he turns to the driver, drawing my attention to the cold-faced man beside me.

“Just like we discussed, man,” Daryl says.

The driver nods and starts the car. I glance from him back to Daryl. “You’ll come for me tomorrow, right?” I ask hopefully.

Daryl nods in response. “I promise, Soph,” he says, then closes the door.

The car speeds off the curb the minute I fix the seat belt, sending my heart into overdrive. I clutch my hands, gripping them tightly as the car moves roughly down the narrow road where our tiny apartment complex is located.

All I can do now is hope and pray that Daryl keeps his word.

“Where are you taking me?” I ask the driver after a while.

No response.

I sigh softly, settling into the seat. I might as well gear up for what’s coming.

Whoever it is that Daryl owes money, I hope he's right that they don't mean to hurt me, just hold me somewhere. I can handle this. It's just a day.

The drive is longer than I anticipated, and I soon drift off to sleep. By the time I open my eyes, the car is pulling up in front of a huge stone building in the middle of nowhere.

How the heck did I fall asleep in such a situation?

Well, it's no surprise after I worked all day cleaning houses only to get back home and wait up for Daryl. I'm tired to the bones.

The driver stops the car in what seems to be a parking lot full of all sorts of luxurious-looking vehicles. He gestures for me to get out. I comply, and he comes around to my side and fetches a phone from his front pocket. He makes a quick call, and soon a figure materializes from the shadows beyond the parking lot. He's incredibly tall, with a thin scar that runs down to his chin from beneath his left eye.

"Did you confirm she's a virgin?" the new man asks without glancing my way.

"Yeah," the driver replies. "Her brother confirmed it."

I blink from one man to the other in shock. What's going on here? What does my virginity have to do with anything? And when did Daryl discuss my virginity with this man?

Just when I'm about to demand answers to the questions swirling in my head, the new man roughly grabs my arm, pulling me to his side. "I'll take it from here," he says, and the driver nods, returning to his car.

"W-who are you?" I ask, my heart thumping loudly in my chest. "What is this

place?”

He doesn't answer. Instead, he starts to pull me forward. I dig my heels into the ground, struggling against his hold. "Let me go!" I squeal, blinking back tears of frustration. "Can you tell me what's going on? Who are you? Do you know my brother? Did he borrow money from you?"

"Shut the fuck up and come with me, girl!" he snaps, his grip on my wrist tightening.

A soft, menacing growl reaches my ears, and I snap my head in the direction of the sound. My gaze collides with a pair of dark eyes. Another man is stepping out of the darkness like an avenging angel, and the quiet intensity in his gaze pulls at me until he's all I see. His shoulders are broad, and his chin is strong. Everything about him is strong, really. There's an air of savagery around him that feels almost...protective. This man might be my only chance, and a bubble of hope rises within me.

"Help..." The word slips out of my mouth, and just when I'm about to scream it again at the top of my lungs, Scarface slams his hand over my mouth. Paying no attention to the man who I'd hoped might be my savior, he picks me up like a sack of potatoes and begins to carry me toward the door of what I now realize is a chapel. That tiny bubble of hope bursts.

He doesn't put me down until we enter a dimly lit room. He dumps me unceremoniously on the ground, pointing toward a sheer curtain. "Go in there and change into something appropriate," he orders gruffly.

"And what if I don't?" I counter, glaring at him despite the growing fear in my guts.

His expression hardens and in a flash he pulls a gun from his pants and aims it at me. I freeze, staring at the gun in wide-eyed disbelief.

“Disobey me one more time and I’ll kill you, do you understand?” I nod in response, too terrified to utter a word. “Now, get the fuck in there and put on something appropriate,” he repeats, his tone deathly quiet this time. “And be fucking fast about it.”

I nod hurriedly, scampering over to the curtain. I quickly take my clothes off and grab the first piece of clothing on the rack of options, a short black dress with a plunging neckline. I put it on and select red heels from the pile of shoes in the corner.

“Now, come on,” Scarface says impatiently as I walk out from behind the curtain. He moves ahead of me out of the room and I hurry after him, my heart pounding hard with every step.

What exactly has Daryl gotten me into?

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The man leads me down a long flight of stairs, stopping in front of a huge wrought iron door. Then he turns around and gives me a number tag with the number 4 written on it. “Clip this on you. When your number is called, go through that door.”

I nod in response, not daring to voice any of the questions echoing in my head.

“Better behave,” he growls, caressing his gun in one last warning before stalking off in the opposite direction.

I know not to take his warning lightly, so I wait, wondering what lies ahead of me behind the imposing door.

Chapter Two

Grayson

What the fuck was that?

I’m still reeling from the scene in the parking lot as I walk toward the main entrance of the chapel.

The young woman had been strikingly gorgeous, even as her face twisted in fear. I noticed her with the guard the moment I stepped out of my car. She clearly didn’t want to be here, and when he grabbed her, my protective instincts had flared to life. When her bright hazel eyes met mine, it was as if she was begging me for help, and I longed to give it.

It took my many years of discipline and Damien's firm hold on my bicep to keep me from striding through the parking lot and slamming my fist into the guard's face.

I have heard of the things that go on in this chapel. A club where lowlife businessmen can make dark deals, and a high-end brothel. Beautiful women available as entertainment for the evening.

Due to my wealth and business contacts, I've received invitations, of course. But I've avoided the place until now—I have no interest in such things, no need to pay a woman to spend time with me.

But then I overheard Connor Grant—my biggest competitor in the real estate business, and an arrogant asshole—whispering into his phone the other day after a meeting. “He's offering his sister as payment? Get confirmation...virgin. The chapel...”

While I didn't hear everything, and didn't know exactly who he was talking to, I'd heard enough. Enough to give me a sick suspicion that the women at the chapel aren't the well-paid escorts I assumed them to be.

I knew it was time for me to look into this chapel, and find out whether the women who work here are even here of their own free will. So I enlisted the help of my private investigator friend, Damien Hart.

Damien has also heard the vile rumors about the chapel and the business that takes place here. He convinced me that if we were to attend tonight's event, we'd need to commit to the act—as potential buyers.

Apparently that includes not standing up for the woman in the parking lot, and allowing her to be mistreated. My fists are still clenched, and I can't erase the image of her face from my mind. I swear to myself that I will get to the bottom of whatever

is going on here.

I have no business here otherwise.

“Fucking bastards,” I mutter under my breath as we follow a group of well-dressed sleazebags into the building.

Damien lets out a dry chuckle beside me. “If you don’t want to be here, then maybe you shouldn’t do business with the people who come here,” he says as we draw closer to the entrance.

“Those two things have nothing to do with each other,” I reply, my tone hard as the memory of the frightened woman fills my mind.

Why the hell do I care so much about someone I’ve never met before? Why are her terror-filled eyes haunting my soul?

“Look, I’m going to look around a bit, and I have a contact to meet with. I’ll join you later if I finish on time,” Damien says. I nod, watching him slink away to the side of the building and blending into the darkness.

I enter a large room with a stage along one end, velvet red curtains draped above it, and I soon spot Connor Grant at the other end of the room.

Smug bastard.

He seems to be enjoying himself, already several drinks in, and I have to tamp down on the urge to walk over and wipe the smirk off his face.

I locate a place to sit near the back. Each chair has a small table that holds a buzzer and a small mic. I lean back in my seat, suspicion growing. This is like no brothel

I've ever been in.

The first woman soon walks onto the stage, and I have to clench my jaw to keep from betraying my emotions as the bidding begins. It's an auction. These monsters are not just bidding on the chance to spend an evening with a beautiful escort—they're bidding for the chance to bring these women home. To own them. Perhaps I shouldn't be surprised, knowing the type of men I do business with, but this is so much worse than I feared.

I try to find Damien in the crowd, but I don't know where he's disappeared to. In the process, I note the company I'm keeping. In the crowd with me I recognize public officials, police officers, and other powerful and wealthy men. And they are bidding, laughing and enjoying themselves. This organization has more ties and is more well supported than I would have dreamed possible.

My anger rises as my attention returns to the stage. The woman being trafficked has held up surprisingly well, her face betraying no emotion as prices are thrown around. But when she is made to perform for the man who purchased her, she starts to shake with fear. I remember Damien's words. "You can't help them all—and tonight is just about gaining information." I turn away from the woman as her head begins to bob up and down in the lap of her new owner.

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I swear I will find a way to end this.

The two girls that follow after her don't do so well. They look terrified through the whole ordeal. I'm very well aware that I can't save every damsel in distress. But I can't help the anger that rises within me as I watch this sick spectacle. I grew up in foster care, so I know what it means to feel hopeless.

I never knew my parents. All I remember is passing through the foster care system for most of my childhood and adolescence. I was an angry kid, mad at everyone and at the world. I had nothing, and got into fights often. Then I realized how futile it was to stay angry, so I channeled that anger into something better—making it out of the slums. I was determined to make it at all costs. And over the years, I have managed to claw my way to the top, the most successful property tycoon in the city.

I wonder what Connor's up to. So far he hasn't made any bid. His silence might mean that he isn't interested in the bidding at all. Could he be at the auction only to ensure the sale of the woman he mentioned?

After the third girl, I'm seriously considering leaving the auction when number four is called in. I feel an instant shift as she walks through the curtain onto the stage.

"Gentlemen! Here's another delight for you," the auctioneer announces in a loud voice.

I stare in disbelief at the stage. It's the girl from the parking lot. She's dressed differently, in a short black dress and heels that seem to make her legs go on forever. She's so damn gorgeous, and If I'd thought what I felt earlier was just my protective

instincts, then I was wrong. It's definitely something more. Something that I don't have time to explore right here and now.

Unlike the other girls who looked resigned or downright terrified, she seems utterly confused. Ruffled, like a fish caught on dry land.

How is she here? She obviously doesn't belong in a place like this. None of these women do, but something is different about this one. I'm suddenly overwhelmed by a strong urge to protect her from the perverts in this room. The feeling is strange and shocking. What is it about her that shakes my very core?

"Isn't she sublime?" the auctioneer says, his voice cutting sharply through my thoughts. "This one is the highlight of the night, an untouched gem. Number four is a virgin, and so the bidding starts at ten thousand dollars!"

My whole body goes cold at the announcement and the excited murmurs that follow. None of these bastards are getting their paws on my girl. I will make sure of that.

"Fifty thousand dollars!" someone calls out from the audience.

"One hundred," another counters almost immediately.

"Two hundred!" another voice calls from another corner of the room.

A blind rage fills me as I listen to the bids flying around, but I keep my cool. I've been in business long enough to know that emotions don't play a part in making deals. So I wait, watching the shit show with an air of indifference because I know I'm going to win anyway.

By the time the bid rises up to five hundred thousand dollars, many of the patrons have backed out.

“Five hundred thousand dollars going once, going twice...” the auctioneer drawls, definitely biding his time.

I press my buzzer. “One million,” I say, pleased by the shocked murmur that ripples through the crowd.

Then the most surprising thing happens.

Connor presses his buzzer. “One and a half million dollars,” he calls out, his voice cocky and assured. I can almost feel an arrogant stare from him, as if he’s daring me to go higher.

What the fuck? Is he just bidding because he doesn’t want me to win? I shouldn’t be fighting this so hard, but I’m way beyond reasoning now. It’s as if a switch has suddenly been turned on in my brain and my thought process has been altered. I can only think about how I must protect her.

The thought of her leaving here with Connor is inconceivable. I’ve heard the stories of how he treats the women he dates—how much worse will he treat a woman he’s purchased at an auction?

If it means losing billions of dollars just to save her from these monsters, so be it.

“Two million dollars,” I call out, pressing my buzzer again.

“Three million,” Connor says forcefully, his tone belligerent.

“Ten million,” I counter.

The hall is dead silent now, yet there’s an undertone of excitement layered beneath the silence.

“Twelve million,” Connor says forcefully. I can hear the hesitation in his voice now. He’s a wealthy man, but he’s also a shrewd businessman. He’s reaching his limit. I can feel it.

“Twenty million,” I say firmly, reveling in the heavy silence that settles in the room.

None of them dares to challenge me now, and even if anyone dares, I’m ready to increase my stake. She’s mine.

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“Going once, going twice, sold!” the auctioneer announces, his voice ringing with excitement. “And now, onto what I’m sure we’re all looking forward to, the sampling. Why don’t you sample your new acquisition, Mr. Blackwood, and show us how satisfied you are?”

I freeze, remembering the tears of the other girls as their buyers had their way with them in front of the whole room. Fuck. There’s no way I can hurt my girl like that.

Suddenly, the light above me comes on. I smooth my shocked expression, putting on a cloak of indifference, the same one that I use to put my imposing board of directors in their place in the boardroom.

“I’m quite pleased just by looking at her,” I say, keeping my voice impassive.

Someone in the audience snickers. The auctioneer gives me a plastic smile. “I’m sorry, sir, but that won’t cut it. All of our products must be sampled right here in front of everyone. It’s an important part of what we do here—it must be done. Right?”

The audience cries out in agreement, the air thick with their sick anticipation. It grates on my nerves, and everything I feel intensifies when my gaze fixates on the scared young woman. The shock of the bidding has worn off and now she’s trembling in fear, her bright eyes glistening with unshed tears that threaten to undo me.

I clench my jaw hard as white-hot anger spears me. Who are they to tell me what to do?

My anger can be vicious, and it’s unwise to let it lose. So I grit my teeth harder until

my ear throbs. I now have her to think about, so I have to remain completely calm.

The auctioneer smiles bigger as he addresses the audience. “Looks like we have a shy one. Did you forget to check the rules before...”

He clams up at the sinister look I shoot at him, and he trails off, chuckling nervously. I look around to assess the situation. Damien has disappeared somewhere. Where the hell did he go when I needed him? Though I suppose I’m glad my friend won’t have a front-row seat for this show.

I know better than to blow my cover, or Damien’s. I know that I can’t reveal myself to be anything less than one-hundred-percent on board with the activities taking place here. The true goings on in this chapel are a closely guarded secret. I eye the men at the doors, their weapons visible even from where I’m sitting.

I can’t leave without her, and I can’t leave without sampling her, so that only leaves one option...

“Alright, doll, go and meet your new master,” the auctioneer says, taking my silence for acceptance.

She walks toward me tentatively, heightening my tension. What’s going through her mind?

I study her features more closely when she stops in front of me, taking in every breath and shiver. This close, she looks even more beautiful. Her dazzling hazel eyes beckon me like a siren calls to its prey. Except that her call makes me want to do damage to anyone who tries to hurt her.

She looks ready to burst into tears, pressing her nails tightly into her palm. I ball my fists to keep from taking her hands and kissing away her pain. I watch her flinch from

my reaction, and I swear internally at myself.

“I’m Grayson, what’s your name?” I ask in my most gentle voice. It comes out hoarse.

“Sophia,” she replies in a small voice, nervously biting down on her lips.

A staggering lust hits me at the gesture. What the fuck? I shouldn’t be this turned on right now.

“Trust me, Sophia, I won’t harm you,” I say slowly, holding her gaze so she can see the sincerity behind my words. I can’t promise her that I’m not like every other bastard in this room, but I would never hurt a hair on her head. I’d kill anyone who does.

She nods, her stance relaxing a little. I beckon for her to come closer and she complies, her steps tentative.

I’m aware of the piercing stares around us, but she ensnares me. It doesn’t matter that I literally learned her name justseconds ago; I want to give her everything she’s ever wanted. I want to see her heart-shaped lips curl up in a smile and her gorgeous eyes twinkling with laughter. I want to get her out of this godforsaken place and protect her from every evil in the world. I’ve never wanted anyone this much, not to mention a girl I barely know. What is it about her that draws me like a magnet to steel, an unstoppable force that renders me helpless and yearning for more?

I have no answer to any of the questions in my head, but the least I can do is make this barbaric show a pleasurable one for her.

“Straddle me,” I command in the gentlest tone I can muster.

Once she settles awkwardly on the edge of my lap, I pull her closer. “I know you’ve never done this before, but we need to give these greedy vultures a show,” I state calmly. She nods in response, her eyes never leaving mine. She shouldn’t trust a bastard like me.

I raise my hand to her face, gently caressing the smooth, soft skin. She gasps softly when I trail my thumb over her lower lip, her gorgeous hazel eyes gleaming with an unconscious lust that sends blood rushing to my cock. She probably has no idea what she’s doing to me.

I lean forward to kiss the thrumming vein on her neck, then slowly make my way up until my lips are resting against her ear. “Relax, baby. I won’t make you do anything you don’t like. Forget these bastards are even here, alright? It’s just you and me.”

“O-okay,” she stutters softly, her face turning an adorable shade of red.

I pull her closer until our breaths mingle and my arousal is nestling against her warm sex. Her eyes widen at the contact, and I watch as awareness slowly seeps into those gorgeous hazel depths.

“You ever kissed someone?” I ask, bracing myself for the answer. My muscles bunch at the thought of another man’s lips on hers; the possessiveness I feel robs me of my breath.

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“N-no,” she replies, her face growing even redder.

I let out a breath that I didn’t even know I was holding, and chuckle mirthlessly to myself. What the hell is wrong with me?

I lean forward until our lips are inches apart, all the while watching her expression. “Kiss me, Sophia,” I murmur against her lips, giving her free rein to help her relax and get used to me.

She bites down nervously on her lip, and it takes everything in me not to throw caution to the wind and claim her mouth. I wait patiently, watching the play of emotions in her eyes as she tries to adjust to the whole situation.

I like that she has such expressive eyes. I can see everything she’s feeling through those gorgeous hazel orbs. In my world, where people hide behind a facade of indifference to do the most despicable things, finding someone as guileless and pure as Sophia is almost impossible. I’m a lucky bastard, because I sure as hell don’t deserve her.

She leans forward, pressing her lips tentatively against mine. I instantly deepen the kiss, sliding my tongue between her soft, full lips, and into the warmth of her mouth. I run my hands over her back, pressing her closer against my body, losing myself in her heady scent and her unconscious little throaty moans. God, she makes me want to let go of control so badly. I want to sweep her up into my arms, take her someplace safe, and then return and tear apart each of these men limb from limb. Anyone who dared to touch what’s mine.

But now's not the time. Losing control would mean giving these bastards exactly what they want.

I slide my hands to her nape, sinking my fingers into her silky hair and kissing her harder, deeper. I can't seem to get enough, but I finally tear my mouth from hers, taking in her dazed eyes and swollen lips. She's breathing hard, her chest heaving in a way that draws my attention to the swell of her breasts. Unable to resist, I glide my hand over the luscious flesh, squeezing gently, loving the shiver of response that racks her body.

I allow my fingers to dance around the tips of her hardening nipples, tracing along the soft material of her dress. A soft moan escapes her throat, igniting my desire. I lower my mouth to her neck again, and she tilts her head to give me access, her hands tightening on my shoulders. I drop soft bites and licks down her neck until I close my lips over the tight nub of one of her breasts through the dress, my hand strumming over the other.

Her soft moan of pleasure fills the air as she starts to grind against my cock, unconsciously setting a rhythm that threatens to undo me. I claim her mouth again, drowning out her sexy moans. I can only give these leering bastards so much—they have no right to hear those throaty little moans of hers. I need to put an end to this shit show.

I widen her legs, sliding my palm up her thighs until my fingers are nestling against her entrance. "I'm going to touch you now, Sophia," I say, kissing her nose. "Just close your eyes and enjoy it. Remember, it's just me and you here." She nods obediently and closes her eyes.

"That's my good girl," I murmur as I lean forward to claim her mouth again. Gently, I tug at her panties, pushing them aside. Then I start to rub my thumb over her clit, teasing and flicking the little bud until she's soaking wet. I slide a finger slowly

inside her tight and slippery sex, my thumb still stroking her engorged clit, and she trembles slightly, her nails digging painfully into my shoulders.

I pull back a little to look at her as I slip my finger out and gently push it in again. Her breath hitches, her deep hazel eyes hooded with pleasure as her walls clamp tightly around my finger. I create a rhythm, sliding my finger in and out of her. There's something incredibly stimulating about watching her while I pleasure her. My chest swells with an indecipherable emotion at the total surrender in her face.

My God, she's gorgeous.

I increase my pace, fighting hard against the overwhelming desire thrumming in my veins.

"Look at me," I rasp in a thick voice, sucking in a breath at the drunken pool of want that has darkened her hazel eyes. It reels me in and I get lost in them. She lets out a guttural moan as I add another finger. It's a tight fit. I can feel the walls of her warm sheath constricting around me.

I'm the hardest I've been in years. It feels as if my dick is made of granite. My left hand is now wrapped tightly around her waist, her loud moans and whimpers spurring me on, heightening the tension inside me. Our gazes remain locked and at the slight widening of her eyes, I know she's at her peak. I press my thumb hard on her clit and welcome the spasm of her inner muscles as she lets go. Warm liquid trickles down my fingers and I pet her slowly until her orgasm subsides.

Both of us are breathing quickly at the end of it. Me, from my lack of release. Her cheeks burn with embarrassment at the thundering applause that follows.

I rise to my feet with her in my arms. "You don't need to care about them. Once you leave here," I whisper against her hair, "you'll never have to see them again after

tonight.”

That’s a promise I plan to keep with my life.

Chapter Three

Sophia

The ride to Grayson’s home fills me with a tension I can’t describe. His large hands hold mine protectively in his, even in the confines of the car. It’s like he’s conveying a message without saying a word.

I peer at him from the corner of my eye. He’s ruggedly handsome, with harsh features that make him look like a tamed wild animal. His slightly crooked nose fits perfectly with his arched brows and full lips. The intensity in his eyes as he stares at his phone makes me shiver slightly, remembering his dark, hooded stare as he brought me to orgasm.

I don’t know how I moved from crippling fear to desire in such a short time. The minute the reality of my situation dawned on me, I braced myself for the worst. But the moment I saw him in the audience, the man from the parking lot, I immediately felt safe, and hope returned. Maybe I’m foolish to trust a stranger so completely when my own brother just betrayed me, but I’m helpless against the emotions he evokes in me. It’s exciting and alarming at the same time.

He puts down the phone and stares ahead, barely concealing his irritation like he has since the car left the chapel parking lot. He hasn’t looked at me since we left the place.

Maybe he doesn’t really want you, a voice whispers in my head.

My mind travels back to the sorry excuse of a kiss that I gave him in the auction hall, and I wince. I am no doubt inexperienced. Between studying to get good grades and working my ass off, I had no time to indulge boys. I know nothing about intimacy or how to please a man.

So I can understand the reason for his irritation. Nobody wants to be with an inexperienced woman, especially not a man like Grayson who seems to have the world at his feet.

But then...why bid twenty million dollars on me? That's more money than most people ever see throughout their lifetime...

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I want to say something, anything to fill the tense silence between us, but I can't seem to think of anything appropriate. It seems like forever before the car pulls up in front of a massive mansion with a huge, rushing fountain at the center of the drive. It looks like a waterfall, and I feel the urge to grab my camera and capture the rawness of it. The mansion itself commands attention just like its owner. I wonder how many people live here, before it occurs to me that he probably lives alone. He is a billionaire after all.

He's already waiting for me as I step out of the car.

He takes my hand in his and I shiver slightly at the warm feeling of his large, calloused hand over mine. His thumb grazes the back of my palm in a soft, intimate caress. The action startles me and I look up to find dark eyes on me, watching me with an intensity that sends an aching thrill to my core. I press my thighs together to relieve the blooming ache, but it's useless.

His gaze roams my face, lingering pensively on my lips, and for a second I think he might kiss me, but then he doesn't.

"Come on," he says instead, turning toward the door.

I clear my throat awkwardly, my cheeks flaming with embarrassment. I follow behind him, barely able to take in the luxurious decor of the house as I hurry to keep up with his long strides. He leads me up the stairs to a large bedroom with a huge king-sized bed. The bedding looks fluffy and inviting in its creamy glory. I've never seen a pillow arrangement so enticing.

“You must be very tired. You can sleep here tonight,” he says gruffly.

I snap my head up in time to see the slight hesitation in his dark gaze. He tries to let go of my hand, but I hold on to him like a lifeline. I don’t want to be alone.

I see the confusion in his eyes and quickly lower my gaze, my bravado slowly waning. I want to ask him to stay with me, but the possibility of being rejected cripples me with fear.

“Sophia?” he queries softly.

Tears of frustration pool in my eyes as I suddenly feel an overwhelming sense of abandonment. My emotions come crashing down on me all at once. It’s been a long night, with my brother abandoning me and being auctioned off in front of strangers. I just want Grayson to hold me and tell me it’s going to be alright like he did back at the auction house.

What’s wrong with me? Why do I want to be comforted by the man who bought me?

“Look at me,” he commands softly.

I almost look up automatically, but I don’t want him to see how affected I am. His hand gently grips my jaw and I’m suddenly looking into his penetrating dark eyes.

“What’s wrong, baby? Talk to me,” he says quietly, his gaze softening.

“I-I just...I’m sorry,” I stutter, unable to find the words to express the myriad of emotions crashing through me.

His brows bunch in surprise. “Why are you sorry, baby? You haven’t done anything wrong.” My chest tightens at the concern in his voice.

I look away from his searching gaze. I can't look in his eyes as I say what weighs on my mind. But his hand remains firm on my jaw. "I know I'm inexperienced, and I didn't please you like you—"

"What makes you think you didn't please me?" he asks, his tone softening.

I raise my gaze to find his smoldering gaze on mine. The question throws me off. "I—I just thought...since you were quiet on the ride back and you wouldn't look at me..." I trail off, becoming shy.

A low growl rumbles in Grayson's chest as he clasps my face with both hands. He moves closer, towering over me, and lifts my face. This close, I can see the wariness in his dark eyes.

"Sophia, you pleased me more than you can imagine," he assures gruffly. "I don't care that you're inexperienced—in fact, I love that you're untouched. I know what we did at the auction house overwhelmed you, and I just wanted to give you space. I was only angry at myself because I find it hard to stay away from you."

"I—I just thought you might be regretting paying that much for me," I whisper hesitantly. I know I shouldn't let him see how insecure I am, but I can't help myself.

"Oh, baby," Grayson says, his lips tilting slightly in a self-deprecating smile. "If I regret anything, it's not killing those motherfuckers for what they put you through."

"So, you still want me?" I ask in a small, shaky voice.

"More than you can imagine," he replies gruffly, his eyes darkening with a hunger that instantly robs me of my breath. "Baby, I'm fucking hard for you. Even now, I can't stop staring at your lips. They're begging for my touch..."

He growls and drags me closer, taking over my lips. It's heady and addicting, the way he ravishes my mouth. There's a sense of urgency in the flicks of his tongue as it tangles with mine. As if he can't get enough of me.

The desire that had been waning within me roars back to life. And with every nip and suck, tiny currents bloom at the pit of my stomach, stoking the flame of need. I melt into him, moaning softly as I curl my arms around his neck, sinking my fingers into his lush, dark mane. I grind my core against him, trying to ease the insistent ache. My mind is in shambles, searching for release.

He detaches his lips from mine with a low groan and rests his forehead on mine. I whimper in disappointment.

"Do you really want to do this, Sophia?" he asks tightly, his voice husky with desire. "I need you to know what you're getting into. I'm not going to hold back."

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I search his eyes, my heart skipping a beat at the raw desire in his eyes. “I don’t want you to hold back,” I reply, letting go of all inhibitions.

At my words, a different side of Grayson emerges. Harder. Harsher. Possessive. His midnight eyes burn with deep-seated need.

He slams his lips against mine. This time the kiss is demanding. Unyielding. As if he can’t get enough.

My breath stutters in my chest. His passion and hunger explode across my senses, and I whimper, my hands tangling in his shirt. His answering groan vibrates through me, tightening my nipples and sending goose bumps racing across my skin. I fall into the kiss, swept away by the lush carnality of it. A sob of pleasure escapes me.

He breaks the kiss and trails his lips to my neck. My pussy floods as his tongue swipes over my wildly beating pulse.

“You ready for me, baby?” he rasps against my ear, his hot breath sending shivers through my body. I whimper aloud. “Are you soaking wet for me? You want me to ease the ache in your cunt and drive my cock into your wet pussy over and over?” Every word sends shivers of awareness through my body as he sucks my lobe between his teeth, giving it a tiny nip.

My knees buckle under the assault. “Y-yes,” I stutter shyly in a voice husky with desire.

He guides me back until my calves hit the bed frame, and then I’m gently pushed

onto the bed. My chest heaves as I watch him yank off his shirt, his gaze hungrily devouring mine in the process. His chest is sculpted, hard ridges of defined muscles under golden skin. His massive body should scare me, but I feel safer than ever. Protected.

He climbs onto the bed, his knees between my thighs, and slowly pulls off my dress and underwear, stealing a touch with every movement of his hands.

By the time I'm naked, I'm panting and unexpectedly aroused. He's no different—it's evident in the tent of his trousers. His lustful gaze roves over my body and everything stands at attention as if listening to a silent command.

"My God, Sophia. You're exquisite," he breathes softly. "I can't believe you thought I didn't want you. I could look at you for eternity, baby."

He slowly closes the space between us and then hitches me up with an arm banded around my back, centering me on the bed before he settles atop me. His hands slide down my throat to my shoulders, blazing a hot trail across my skin. His mouth latches on a puckered nipple, his lips soft and warm, the suction slow and savoring. He closes his fingers on the other and rolls it between them, teasing and tugging. I can't help the way my body reacts. Small cries escape my lips as he savors my sensitive buds, alternating between the two.

"My baby loves what I do to her," he rasps softly, his hot breath brushing over my tight, hard nipple.

"Grayson," I whisper brokenly. I arch my back as my sex clenches, growing wetter at the sensory overload. If this is what it means to have his attention, then I'll gladly accept. This wanton person, undulating her hips trying to ease an ache, is a new version of me that I didn't know existed. My mind is in a sexual haze and my insecurities seem nonexistent.

Grayson lets go of my hard nipples with a final kiss, then trails his lips down to my belly button. Tiny bites follow his movements, and he swipes his tongue slowly to soothe the sting. My stomach vibrates with pleasure as he swirls his tongue around my belly button, then slowly licks and sucks his way down to my core. He parts my swollen flesh, feasting his eyes on my budding clit. My breath trembles in anticipation. He arranges my calves over his shoulders, exposing my sopping wet flesh, and my sex tightens sharply at his bold stare. He blows gently on it, all heat and breeze, dragging a reaction out of me as my hips buck and my pussy floods at the assault.

He lets out a soft groan. “Ah, I fucking love how responsive you are, baby,” he rasps over my clenching, wet pussy.

My fingers grip his hair, and just when I think he’ll never end this torture, he closes his mouth over my engorged clit, sucking hard. “Argh!” I buck, wild. My orgasm is hard and sharp as I slam to the peak. Grayson continues his assault as if he didn’t notice my release. He nips and sucks at my clit, his movements voracious and savage. Tension slowly gathers in the pit of my stomach and loud whimpers slip from my lips. I try to hold them in, but it’s impossible.

My body goes taut as the tension ramps higher. I’m gyrating my hips in wild abandon, desperate for the final push to ease the staggering ache. But he slows down, giving attention everywhere but my clit. Then he starts again, ravishing my sex with gusto until I’m achy. My grip on his head tightens and my quiet whimpers transform into loud moans as he continues his torture.

“P-please, Grayson,” I sob.

“Not yet, baby. Can’t get enough of your sweet pussy. It’s addicting.” His voice is guttural, and he smirks up at me before he continues his sexual torture.

My pleas turn into chants and I turn my head from side to side, begging for release. My loud moans have become even louder. And just when I think that I can't take it anymore, he sucks me deep and hard, sliding two fingers inside my core and curving them. My mind goes blank and I go over the edge, screaming my release as I coat his fingers.

I watch him take off his remaining clothes, still in the high of my orgasm, my core tightening at the aftershocks. He is all man with his big thighs and jutting cock. As he settles his weight against my core, he slowly takes my lips. His movements are soft and possessive as he takes and gives. He slowly glides his stiff length along my wet core, stimulating the sensitive flesh.

He kisses a path to the sensitive arch in my neck and I arch into his mouth, moaning softly. The movements of his body on mine are slow and languid, stoking a deeper flame of need. It festers as my sex floods with hot, wet liquid. Everything feels different now, meaningful.

I can't take my eyes off him as he slowly eases the head of his cock into me. He thrusts gently, shallow and slow, not fully entering me. The movement is maddening and torturous and my sheath clamps tightly at every intrusion. He groans and rests his forehead on mine, his nose stroking mine in affection.

"It's going to hurt, baby," he confesses thickly. His midnight eyes show his barely restrained desire.

I nod, blushing softly. "It's okay," I assure him.

His need for me is blatant and empowering. Knowing that a man as powerful as Grayson wants me and is caring enough to show me how much he needs me is enough for all my insecurities to dissipate.

His eyes go darker at my assurance. “Put your hands over your head. Don’t move,” he orders in a guttural tone.

Oh God.

My core clenches hard at the steely order. He rolls my nipples with the pads of his fingers, strumming and flicking. The coarse flesh creates a friction and I arch up to meet him. My hands ache to touch his inviting flesh, but I’m helpless and under his control. I welcome it.

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His hips thrust shallowly into me again, and the sensory overload turns me mindless.

A deep keening sound leaves my throat at the incessant stab of desire, my sex clamping hard at his thrusts. "Please..." I beg.

He pushes deeper at once, piercing a barrier. The pain is quick and sharp, more a discomfort. Still, a tear rolls down my face and I'm amazed at his tortured expression.

"I'm sorry," he apologizes, reaching up to lick away the tear and then slowly kiss me.

"It's fine. I'm fine," I assure.

Then he starts to move again. It's shallow at first, then gradually increases tempo. Our gazes meet as he breaks the kiss and thrusts more deeply.

"Oh God," I whimper.

My desire is like a burning flame razing everything in its path. Goose bumps mark my skin with every movement of his hips. The light dust of his hair grazes over my sensitive skin, increasing the sizzling current that consumes me. I need to touch him. My hands slide over warm skin until I'm grabbing his back.

I'm so far gone, unconsciously arching my hips to meet his. The desperate need in me builds higher and I moan aloud. His thrusts build in speed and intensity, going deeper and deeper until I reach the crest. I moan long and hard, clamping my walls hard around him as I orgasm. My gaze remains on him as he grunts and closes his eyes in bliss, finally letting go. It's a glorious sight.

He slumps to the side, pulling me with him until we're lying side by side, staring at each other, our breaths and bodies shuddering with the force of release.

"You're so beautiful, Sophia," he growls out softly, kissing the side of my head.

I smile shyly in response, burrowing deeper into his warmth.

Chapter Four

Grayson

I wake to find my hand resting over Sophia's soft, creamy breast. Our positions changed during the night and now her back is melded to my front, my stiff cock in the crease of her curvy ass. I can't believe I'm waking up next to an angel like her.

Last night felt like a dream. It's as if I'm experiencing what it's like to be with a woman for the first time. I should have known I was too far gone when I took her to my personal suite last night instead of the guest wing.

Memories of the night rush through my mind. I frown, remembering how beaten down she looked when she thought I didn't want her.

Once she wakes, I'll try to find out more about her past. There has to be something or someone that caused that deep insecurity, and I hope my actions can help her overcome it. I'll spend every day showing her just how gorgeous she is and how much I want her. My cock hardens as images from last night fill my head. For a petite woman, she has curves that would drive any man crazy.

I flick the pad of my thumb casually over her tight nipple as I try to understand the feelings she evokes in me. I've had relationships with many women in the past, but they've always been emotionless, never filling that void. Growing up, I

thought getting out of my impoverished state would fill that emptiness, but it did nothing.

With Sophia, that empty feeling is nonexistent.

Before now, it's been impossible for me to truly trust people, or to care deeply for them. I assumed it just wasn't in my nature. Although a few people have proven their loyalty—Damien being one of them—none have possessed my heart the way my doe-eyed angel has done.

Ever since I brought her home, my whole worldview has been changing. She has made me realize that despite all the money I've made and the status I've attained, I've lived an empty life.

She has become a part of me, the other half that completes me. I feel it deep in my soul. Her imprint. Her presence. I can't go back to my cold, lonely life. I'll do everything to make her choose me, stay with me.

My brain ruminates on what I can do to keep her with me forever.

Forever?

I look at the woman nestled against my body—her long, dark hair fanning over her shoulders and my hand plucking at her hard nubs. I realize that I don't mind the thought of keeping her with me forever.

I lean down and take her earlobe between my lips, sucking softly. My hand continues to brush over her breasts, kneading and rolling. I let go of the lobe after a slight nip and trail kisses down to her neck, kissing the sensitive arch. Tension springs in her body, indicating she's awake.

“Morning, baby.” My voice is thick and gruff.

She moans softly in response, shifting sensually in my arms. I continue my assault on her neck and trail my hand down her stomach to the flesh between her legs. My cock seeps, bobbing against the curve of her ass, and I groan when my fingers find her pussy soaking wet and slippery.

“Fuck. So wet,” I murmur against her flesh.

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She trembles in my arms, and whimpers as my thumb moves rhythmically over her clit. I keep circling and stroking until her stomach heaves and her hips buck against my hand, asking for release.

I stop abruptly, pressing a kiss on her neck. “I need to be inside you,” I say urgently, flipping her onto her stomach.

I place a pillow beneath her, arching her ass in the air, leaving her pink, swollen flesh wet and exposed, ready for my cock. I line my erect length against her pussy and bend to gather her hair in my hands. Stealing a kiss over her shoulder, I slowly rotate my hips against her sex. She shudders, mewling softly as I trail my lips down her left shoulder. And that’s when I see it. It’s a raised line of scar tissue right under her shoulder blade.

I freeze and pull back. The scar is the length of a pinky finger and the flesh is a bit darker than the rest of her skin. The injury must have been deep, because it looks like it healed without proper care.

My blood roars at the thought of Sophia in pain. A dark possessiveness consumes me, and the cold predator in me rises to the surface. Arousal is far from my mind as I push to my knees.

She senses the change and turns. “What? What is it?” she asks, scrambling to look at me.

Her eyes widen at the darkness in my eyes. She slowly sits up and arranges the sheet around her without fear, and I almost growl in approval. Good. She needs to know

that I'll never hurt her. I would sooner hurt myself than cause her pain in any way.

Which is why the thought of her in pain makes me clench my teeth in anger.

I inhale slowly. I don't want to scare her. "Where did you get the scar?" I ask.

She ducks her head and sighs. "It happened a long time ago," she finally answers. She looks back up and there's resignation in her hazel eyes.

"How?" I ask, trying my best to soften my voice.

"Promise you won't be mad," she says, and my chest tightens at her shaky voice.

My jaw clenches and unclenches. "I can't promise that, baby," I reply gently.

She nods, understanding my torment. "I got it from my brother, but it was an accident."

"Sure. An accident." I go with her statement. Maybe if I agree with her, she'll keep talking. "What happened?"

"You have to understand that life hasn't been easy for him—he had to take on so much responsibility when he was just a kid. He's the reason we survived in a harsh environment, and it made him harsh too. It's not his fault."

I settle opposite her and cover my now-flaccid cock with a pillow. I stay silent, watching her hazel eyes darken. The hurt and pain that she tries to hide while she defends her fuck of a brother pulls at my soul.

"When I got my first job, Daryl thought I'd use all the money for us, for our bills. But I wanted...I'd fallen in love with photography and it was my dream to own a camera

of my own. So I gave Daryl some of the money, but saved the rest for over a year until I had enough money to buy a cheap camera from a secondhand store.”

She sighs, lost in the memory. “The first picture I took was of Daryl while he was sleeping. I thought he would be happy when I showed him, but he wasn’t. He...accused me of being selfish.”

I can’t help it. I growl slightly at the words selfish, and she jumps. I reach out to reassure her. “Baby, I’m not sure you could be selfish if you tried.”

She blushes, leaning into my touch, but shakes her head. “The next day I wanted to use my camera and couldn’t find it, so I asked him. I shouldn’t have even asked, because he had just lost some money while gambling, and I know how he gets when he loses,” she says softly as if it was her fault.

My anger is a dark force, but I force myself to stay calm as she continues, “But I was so mad that I didn’t care. I didn’t think. He told me he’d sold the camera. I yelled at him. I’ve never yelled at Daryl. I’ve never wanted anything else for myself and he sold my camera like it didn’t mean anything. Just to spite me.”

She wipes a tear from her face. “He got angry and pushed me hard. I hit the edge of the table. His beer bottle broke and I fell back on it as I tried to get away from him. It was deep and needed stitches but we didn’t have money for the hospital and besides, we were running from social services. Daryl didn’t stitch it well, so that’s why it’s such a messy scar.”

I growl. “Your brother is a fucking pussy,” I say darkly.

Sophia shakes her head. “He just has his own demons, and his addictions, but on his good days, he’s the same brother who took care of me when our mother overdosed.”

The fury in me is barely leashed but I nod, knowing I can't change her mind. "So, how did you get to be at the chapel?" I ask.

With every word that leaves her lips, my anger grows. So I sit with my fists bunched as I listen to Sophia tell me how her fucking brother tricked her into going to the chapel. In her voice, I can hear the love and affection she has for him even though he did fuck all to deserve it. Not many could forgive something so cruel as what he did to her. My Sophia is so pure and good that it takes my breath away.

One thing I know for sure is that she's never going back to that asshole of a brother. He thinks he's sold her, but his actions have only given me the greatest treasure of my life and I'm going to keep her. She's mine.

"I understand that you think your brother truly didn't mean to harm you, and I won't fight you, but you should know that he's my least favorite person in the world and I'll be damned if I let you go back to him," I growl softly.

"I know. Still, I'm thankful to have met you," she answers with a shy and beautiful smile.

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My eyes darken as I watch her swipe her tongue nervously over her top lip. My dick jerks in response and my arousal roars back to life. I discard the pillow and watch her hazel eyes dilate with desire as she stares at my growing cock. A drop of pre-cum beads at the slit of my length and she licks her lips.

I swallow a groan as I imagine her full, pink lips wrapped around my cock. But I want it to be her choice. I want her to go for what she wants.

“Can I kiss it?” she asks hesitantly, and I almost growl in satisfaction.

A soft groan escapes my lips and I answer, “Of course, baby.”

She goes to her knees and moves closer, her eyes swirling with curiosity and excitement. She rubs her thumb over the head of my cock, smearing pre-cum over it, and I almost buck into her hand. But I try to hold still, allowing her to satiate her curiosity.

She slowly bends over me, her breath blowing over my length.

“Fuck, Sophia,” I groan out.

Her tongue swirls over the cap of my cock and then she closes her mouth over it, sucking deep and hard. I buck my hips as sensations wash over me in droves. I jerk slightly as she closes her hand around my girth and her mouth swallows down my length. The soft and warm flesh of her palm sends a blaze of want through my veins. My breath seizes in my lungs and my heart thunders with every tentative stroke. I need her to go faster, but I want her to enjoy herself at the same time.

She looks up at me, trapping my gaze in hers. Her hazel eyes are dark with festering need. Her movements are awkward and innocent but still evoke desire. The wantonness in her eyes feeds mine, inflaming my insides.

My chest heaves as I move my hips gently into the hot vacuum of her mouth. I release more pre-cum and Sophia swipes her tongue around to taste it, moaning in delight. The sound vibrates to my balls and currents of need race up my spine.

“You’re doing great, baby. Relax your throat and take me deeper,” I urge. My voice is a guttural command, the reins of my hard-won control gradually loosening. Pleasure races up my veins, starting at the pit of my stomach, burning everything in its path. Tension builds and the intensity increases, rushing down to my balls.

The feeling winds up, tightening at the base of my shaft, needing a push. She swallows me down until I’m hitting the back of her throat. My breath hitches as she moans deeply, and the overwhelming sensation tips me over the edge. My control snaps and I let out a loud groan as I spill cum down her throat.

I hold her gaze as she swallows every drop.

I’m not letting her go.

Chapter Five

Sophia

It’s my second morning in Grayson’s house and it feels like I’ve known him for a lifetime. I roll out of bed, smiling giddily to myself as I remember the parting kiss that he gave me before going to his home office. It was sweet and ravishing, like he couldn’t get enough of me.

There's a heady feeling that comes with knowing someone wants me in their space. It's addicting. I'm not used to taking so much from someone without giving back.

It's why I always fall for Daryl's tricks. He has done so much for me as a brother that I can't help but give in to his whims.

I stand in place, wondering what I can do for Grayson. What does one do for a man who has it all?

What am I good at?

My stomach rumbles loudly and I remember I haven't had breakfast. Grayson must be hungry too. I walk into his closet, picking up the first shirt I see and yanking it over my head. It reaches my thighs, the soft material a sensual touch against my skin. I take a whiff of the shirt, breathing in the faint scent of him—it's a woodsy, manly scent mixed with his sandalwood cologne.

My sex spasms as the scent brings up the memory of him driving his length inside me with vigor. Ever since I lost my virginity to him, it seems that my body has a mind of its own.

My stomach rumbles again, reminding me of my decision to make breakfast. I walk out of the closet, then out of the suite and down to the kitchen. I know my way since he gave me a tour of the house yesterday.

The kitchen is huge and spotless, fitted with every modern appliance. The floor is covered with gray marble and the walls are painted a soft beige, like most of the house. I find the necessary items in the pantry and start to prepare a huge breakfast of pancakes and eggs. It's my specialty. I pour some freshly made coffee from the pot, add some milk and sugar, and take a sip. Grayson must have made it before he went into his office.

As I mix the pancake batter, his deep, gravelly voice reaches my ears; he must be on a call in the office. I smile, remembering how he always tries to sound softer, afraid to spook me with his voice. But I find it soothing. It makes me feel safe.

My mind travels back to when he spoke to me about the auction, about the payment he made for me. After we made love last night, as I was about to sleep, he told me he wanted me to know that it was my decision to stay or leave—that I owe him nothing. He also made it explicitly clear that he wants me to stay, to be his. In his words, he would try his “damnedest” to make me stay.

I heat the pan and start making the pancakes. As the first one turns a nice golden brown, I flip it and prepare the eggs on the side. My mind goes back to Grayson as I beat the eggs, considering his offer.

I know I could decide to walk out of his house and he wouldn't force me to stay, but that's the same reason I want to stay.

The enormity of what I feel confuses me. It's only been a couple days, but my feelings for him are indescribable. Everything he's done since he brought me to his home has made me feel wanted and loved. I'm beginning to feel confident in my own skin, and it's all thanks to how he has treated me. My insecurities are a thing of the past. I remember how he fed me yesterday afternoon and made love to me right after in the living room, telling me over and over how beautiful I am.

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I've seen how rough he can be, and it's clear that emotions are a new feeling for him. But, knowing that he's warm and soft only for me makes me fall even harder. I don't want to be away from him. I want to listen to his gruff voice all day and watch his eyes go dark with want when he looks at me.

Sometimes, I wish I still had my camera so I could save every stare, every smile.

I wipe down the kitchen island as I finish breakfast, the delicious scent of it making my mouth water, and I start to put the ingredients back in their places. I could get used to this.

What about Daryl? Am I ready to leave my destructive brother by himself? I think about it for a moment, and I realize that I am ready. I still love him, but I can't go back to someone who sold me off like a cow for slaughter.

What if he comes looking for me? What will I do?

The questions haunt me as I reach up to place the pan back in its place. I hear a familiar shutter click behind me. When I turn around, Grayson is standing by the door with a camera on his face. I'm distracted for a moment by his rugged features and his muscular frame in sweatpants and a tight T-shirt, until I hear another click.

I blink slowly, taking in the scene. "That's a camera," I say as if in a trance. I'm in shock.

"You look sexy as fuck in my shirt," he says in his gravelly tone, and I blush.

I still get shy around him sometimes. Especially when I'm caught off guard by his compliments. "I didn't have any clothes to wear," I explain.

"It's alright, baby. I love seeing you in my clothes. Might even want you to wear them every day," he says, then takes another shot of me. "I want to take you on the kitchen island and fuck you till you scream my name," he growls softly.

My breath hitches and my core tightens, flooding my insides instantly. Another click.

"Fuck, baby. You look ready to come." Another click.

"Or do you want me to bend you over the stool and fuck you? Do you want that, baby?" he asks, drawing nearer.

"Y-yes," I breathe out as he takes another picture.

My pussy is soaking wet and my hard nipples are poking the soft material of his shirt as he reaches me. He leans in to take my lips in a slow, deep kiss. I'm panting by the time he stops.

He reaches under the shirt, and his fingers part my swollen slit, making him groan softly. "You aren't wearing panties."

I whimper in response, holding on to his shoulder as he flicks his thumb over my clit. I get wetter and grip him tighter as the next finger joins in. My body trembles as he moves his fingers deftly and rapidly over my sensitive flesh. Shivers rack my body as he gradually leads me to the peak. My orgasm is hard and sharp.

"Grayson!" I shout.

He presses a soft kiss on my forehead and the corner of my lips, holding on to me

until my rubbery knees gain strength. “Pose for me, baby. I want to take a picture of you looking so goddamn delectable,” he says and moves back.

I lean back against the cabinets, my hip popping to the side, and smile shyly. He takes a shot, then another. Feeling bolder, I change my poses, each one more erotic than the next. My smile is teasing and sensual, until finally he stops and covers the space between us. His midnight eyes are warm and languid with need and something else.

“You’re a lovely sight,” he says gruffly, and closes his lips over mine.

The kiss is softer and warmer, as if he’s savoring me. His tongue sweeps into my mouth. It’s warm and sensual and I’m moaning into his lips, giving as much as he takes. I’m not afraid to show how much he affects me. He slowly lets go of my mouth and presses his forehead to mine.

How did I get so lucky to be here with Grayson? This amazing man who I know I’m falling in love with.

Love.

But surely it’s way to soon, I scold myself. It hasn’t even been two days!

Still, I know the feelings growing within me are real, and soon enough I’ll have to face them, and I’ll have to hope he feels the same way.

He opens his mouth as if he’s about to say something, but then catches himself in time and gives me a lopsided smile. It’s boyish and makes my heart tremble.

“The camera is yours,” he says gruffly. “I was thinking about what you told me. How you love photography, and I wanted the first picture on it to be of you. Now I understand why you love it so much. I enjoyed taking those pictures and knowing

that I'll always have memories of this moment."

My smile comes easily at his words. I miss having a camera and doing what I love best. "Thank you," I breathe out softly as I take it from him.

"And I talked to a friend at the university. Admissions open again in the fall. If you want, you can apply and resume studying photography," he says.

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I grin, beaming up at him. I don't think I could ever be happier.

Chapter Six

Grayson

I love you. That's what I almost said.

But I know it's way too soon. Especially knowing that she's been through so much. I plan to show her how I feel in words and actions, and hope that she sees the truth of them and reciprocates my feelings in time.

For the first time that I can remember, I'm truly happy. I look into her gorgeous eyes and I see my future there. I know that I'll give her anything in the world. I'll do anything to make her happy.

Every foster house I lived in was hellish for me. Sometimes I was tolerated, but most times, I was alienated. I hurt a lot in those days until I learned to defend myself and eventually fight my way to the top.

I learned to cloak my anger with an indifference and coldness that allows me to navigate any space I want to be in. I have few loyal friends and fewer allies. Just the way I wanted it. I thought my life was seamless and perfect the way it was, until I met Sophia.

She's a fucking goddess. A ray of sunshine in my cold world, and I'll burn it all if it means I can have her. I'll give the world to her on a diamond platter.

And somehow it turns out that she actually likes the cold, hard man I am. I can tell she adores the soft, gruff man that I am with her, while she also delights in the savage and brutal nature I hide beneath it all. It makes me love her more. She is fast becoming an obsession.

I wrap my hand possessively around her neck, humming at the spark of desire in her eyes, and draw her in to give her another passionate kiss. She loves it when I get possessive, and her responsiveness to my dominant nature makes me hard. I slowly release her lips, ready to lift her and eat her up on the kitchen island, when I notice a platter of honey-colored pancakes.

“You made breakfast,” I say gruffly, pressing a lingering kiss in the sensitive arch of her neck.

Her slight shiver fills me with satisfaction. I soften as her cheeks brighten to a shade of pink. Her shyness undoes me. “Yes. I wanted to make something simple to eat while you work. I didn’t know you’d finish work early.”

“That’s so sweet. No one has ever made me breakfast,” I admit. It’s hard to talk about my past, but I find that I want her to know everything about me. Nothing is off the table when it comes to her.

“Really?” she asks with a small frown.

I grimace slightly, and reply with a shrug. “I mean, no one ever made me breakfast and meant it. I grew up in foster care, and many families didn’t like the older kid. I guess it was just an obligation to feed me so I wouldn’t look like I’m starving when child services come calling,”

“That must have been traumatizing,” Sophia says, her tone sympathetic.

“Not really. I got over it, and it made me who I am today.”

“Still. I’m sorry you went through all that,” she says stubbornly, and I grin.

“Thank you, baby.”

I watch her reach for the platter of breakfast, and an idea occurs to me. I’ve already canceled all my plans for the day so I could spend time with Sophia, so I ask her if she’d like to watch some movies with me in the home theater after breakfast.

“That’s a great idea. I want to see what a home theater looks like,” she says happily as she plates our breakfast.

But after breakfast, we never get around to watching movies. Instead I find myself reclining lazily on the bed as I watch Sophia try on my clothes. She looks so cute in rolled-up sweatpants and a soft T-shirt knotted around her waist. It’s one of her greatest charms that she can look cute and sexy at the same time. I grab her new camera and take a picture.

She playfully strikes a pose, lifting both her hands in the air and bringing her legs forward on tiptoe as if dancing ballet. Her smile is playful and open. I take another picture. It’s amazing to see her being herself around me.

What begins as playful teasing soon turns into a full sequence of displays as Sophia tries on different outfits and puts on a show for me. At the sight of Sophia in my clothes, I grow stiffer until my cock pushes against my casual slacks, spurred on by the sight of her quickening pulse and the tight nipples that poke out of the flannel shirt she now wears.

“Come here,” I order, and I watch her hazel eyes flare with arousal.

I sit upright until both feet are planted on the marble tiles and wait for her to stand between my legs. My arousal is a painful ache that sends stabs of need to my groin.

“You’ve literally taken my breath away,” I say to her before stretching to kiss her.

My hand circles her neck and I gently pull until she’s kneeling on the bed between my thighs. She sinks her hands in my hair, gripping it tight. I bite softly on her lower lip and suck gently on it to ease the sting. She moans into my mouth, and desire shoots straight to my dick at the sound.

I slide my hands up her soft body under her shirt and gently knead her breasts. Then, I slowly play with her tight nubs, and her moans get louder with every tease and tug. My cock weeps in my pants and our melding of lips turns desperate and delirious. I slowly ease my mouth off hers and close my lips on her erect nipples, over the shirt. Sophia moans low in her throat, then throws her head back and arches her back.

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I'm just about to suck on her other nipple when my phone rings. I curse loudly as she groans in disappointment.

"Sorry, baby," I mutter and take the phone out of my pocket, my left hand gripping her waist.

I check my phone. It's Damien.

"This had better be good," I snap harshly when I answer the call.

I've put Damien on the case of finding Sophia's idiot brother for me. The thought that I might be able to punish Daryl for the pain he's inflicted on Sophia is the only thing that could tear me away from her in this moment.

"I haven't quite found him yet, but I have a lead—I know somewhere he might be," Damien says. "You want to be there when I check it out?"

I grip the phone tighter. "Yes. Don't go without me. Text me the details." I end the call and look up at Sophia. "I have to go. Damien needs me," I explain, leaving out the part about her brother.

Sophia nods, taking in the seriousness of the situation, though she doesn't ask any questions. "It's alright," she assures me.

She pushes off the bed to stand and I get up too, straightening my clothes. Damien's voice was enough to banish my arousal. I gently kiss her lips. "I'll be back soon, baby," I say to her.

“Be careful,” she answers, and my heart trips.

I’m not used to having someone waiting for me to come home. And now I’m reluctant to leave.

Damn you, Damien!

I sigh and head out.

Chapter Seven

Sophia

After Grayson leaves, I change into his sweatshirt and pants, and move to wait for him in the huge living area. I start to go through the camera roll, admiring the pictures he took of me. He has a knack for capturing my curves in the best way. From these pictures, I can tell how he really feels about me.

Some of the pictures are outright comedic. Like when I tried to strike a sexy cougar pose and failed horribly. The ones he took in the kitchen make me pant just by looking at them. I can see the blatant desire in my eyes and the post-orgasm flush to my cheeks. They are truly sexy and beautiful pictures.

All of a sudden I miss Grayson. It’s only been ten minutes since he left, and already I miss his touch, his hesitant smile, his gruffness and possessiveness. His ability to make me feel safe is unrivaled. I make a mental note to take more photos of him next time so I can have something to look at when he’s not beside me.

There’s a soft, insistent knock on the door. I frown. Who could it be?

I know Grayson wouldn’t be knocking at his own house. My movements are tentative

as I walk toward the door. It could be the maid. I open the door and my heart slams hard in my chest.

It's Daryl.

"Hey, buttercup," he says in a too-sweet voice that I always used to fall for.

Not now.

Now I know better.

Before I can react, he pushes his way in, looking around the large space with wide, greedy eyes.

What is Daryl doing here? How did he know where to find me? What does he want?

So many questions and I have no answers for them.

"Why are you here?" I ask, breaking the oppressive silence. "I didn't think I'd ever see you again."

His smile stays put as he finally looks at me. "I'm sorry it took me so long, Soph. When I finally got the money to get you back, they told me you'd been auctioned, even though I never agreed to that. I found out about your buyer, seems like quite a guy. Anyway, I came to get you back. I promised I'd never abandon you, didn't I?"

I stare him down, feeling braver than before. "You mean the money you received after Grayson paid for me? You've spent it all, haven't you?" The slight flare in his eyes is the only answer I need. "And now you want me back so you can sell me again. Is that right?"

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He ducks his head in shame, but I know it's all for show. A ploy to get me back.

But I'm not the Sophia he knows. "Well, I can't go back with you. Grayson paid for me, and I belong to him now. Besides, I love it here. Grayson treats me better than anyone else ever has."

He raises his head and a sneer twists his mouth. This is the Daryl I know. "Just listen to yourself. Are you really that stupid?" His disgust thickens his voice. "Or do you only think with your body? You think you've found your prince charming?" He let out an evillaugh. "Look at you, you're dressed like a common whore. Or is that what you are now? His little whore?"

I stay silent and he continues, "What do you know about love? You're nothing to him. Just another plaything he'll get bored with when he's done. No man will ever want you. The same way Mom didn't want you. You're the reason Dad left and the reason she's dead," he rants.

Normally when he goes on a rampage like this, I would try to act small and soothe him, trying to make it seem like his words don't affect me. This time, his words are harsher. Meaner. And they only show his desperation, so I just watch him with pity.

I'm stronger now. Grayson has made me realize my strength.

"I'm not going back with you, Daryl, no matter what you say," I declare softly. "I don't believe a word that comes out of you. You can't make me feel worthless. Not anymore. Grayson has shown me what it really means to be loved. I'll never go back to that old version of myself." My resolve is unyielding.

“I don’t care,” he says. “Now, go and get your things, if you have anything. I’ll ransack this dude’s house for cash and anything valuable.” Daryl’s tone has turned threatening.

I freeze. I don’t answer him and I don’t move. I haven’t forgotten about the dark side that he has. It’s so bad that when he comes to he doesn’t always remember his actions.

A cold sweat breaks out on the back of my neck and rolls down my back. “Daryl. Please, stop this,” I try to reason with him. I’m almost shaking now. I have the feeling that something bad is about to happen. My mind is blank, and it’s difficult getting my thoughts together into anything coherent.

He takes a threatening step toward me, and I quickly put a sofa between us. Though I doubt it will keep him away for long.

“You stupid little girl!” He raises his voice now and smashes his fist into the wall.

I jump, feeling helpless. “Daryl, you’re scaring me.” I feel tears clouding at the back of my eyes and I hate it. I feel like the helpless little girl that he thinks I am.

I know I’m a different person now, yet I can’t summon the courage to stand up to him outright.

He sighs again. “I’m sorry. You’ve always been too stupid. But haven’t I always known better? Haven’t I always looked after you? I’m telling you—this guy is bad news. I heard he paid millions for you. You think people pay that much for love? What kind of people do you think attend those auctions? How many girls do you think he’s bought and used before you? And you’re not going to be the last.”

“You don’t know him. He’s a better person than you’ve ever been.” I feel bits of

courage welling up inside me.

I need to keep him occupied.

“What?”

“You sold me to the chapel to pay for your stupid debt, even though you’re my big brother and you’re supposed to protect me from the kind of men you’re talking about. I was lucky Grayson was there to save me.”

“I promised you I would come back for you once I paid my debt. It was never my intention for you to be sold.”

“Have you paid it back?”

“What?”

“Your debt,” I say calmly. “Have you paid it back?”

He goes quiet, but I can hear the wheels turning in his head.

“You’ve known this Grayson for how long? A few days? Well, I’ve known you your entire life. I’m your brother, and I’ve always looked after you and I’m going to keep doing it. Now get— You know what? There’s no need, we’re leaving now.”

“No! I won’t go with you.” I dart my eyes around, looking for a way to escape.

“I’m not asking.” His voice is like steel. “I’m not leaving here without you. One way or another, you’re going to come with me.” He takes a step toward me.

“No, I think you should leave now.”

Before I know what's happening, Daryl lunges forward to grab me. I gasp and try to duck back, but my movements are too slow. He catches my hand and begins to drag me toward the door. I stiffen my body and struggle to free my hand from his grip.

He turns around and throws a heavy slap across my face. The force of the slap snaps my head to the side. It almost feels as if my neck has snapped too.

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I freeze in shock. Never in his episodes has he resorted to hitting me. Maybe because I was so quick to soothe him in the past.

Before I can recover from the hit, he delivers a punch to my side. I curl into a ball as he starts to kick my side and back. The image of Grayson flashes in my mind, as if he's giving me support. I summon my inner strength and slam my leg into Daryl's thigh with all my energy.

It works, and I watch him crumble to his knees. There's surprise on his face at my strength, and before he realizes, I stand and dash for the kitchen. I need to find a weapon to protect myself and ward Daryl off. If it comes to it, I'll stab him.

The thought surprises me. Since when have I been capable of such violence? I'm not proud of it, but I'd rather protect myself than allow my brother beat me up.

I hear him stampeding behind me, and as I turn around to see how close he is I crash into a kitchen stool. "Argh!"

Daryl catches me and drags me back to the living room by my hair. I scream. The pain is excruciating, and I kick frantically into empty air. He quickly maneuvers his body and sits on top of me, pinning my hands with his knees.

I'm helpless now. He delivers two hard slaps to my face and there's a loud ringing in my ears. Everything starts to turn hazy. I can't give up now.

Suddenly I hear a loud bang.

Grayson's home.

Chapter Eight

Grayson

I drive my car up the driveway almost absentmindedly. Damien and I checked out the house where we thought Daryl might be staying, and we interrogated his drug dealer—forcefully. But Daryl wasn't there, and hasn't been seen in a few days. So the whole trip feels like a waste of time.

Time that could have been better spent with my Sophia.

I can tell that Sophia's still very worried about Daryl. I've had Damien investigating him, the people he owes money, and any other trouble he might be involved in—and I also just want to keep tabs on him. From Sophia's story, it's clear that Daryl depends on her, no matter what she thinks. I believe he will start looking for her sooner or later.

I'll give Damien a few days, and if Daryl's still missing, I'll start getting more involved in the search myself. I don't like the thought of not knowing where the bastard is at all times.

I park my car and climb out, happy to breathe the same air as my woman. As I reach the entrance, I hear Sophia's scream. My senses come alive and I go rigid. The cold predator takes over. My thoughts and actions are in precision as I kick down the door and rush in.

Sophia is sprawled on the floor and there's a strange man astride her, hitting her. For a second, my heart stops. She isn't moving!

My mind blanks and I fly into a murderous rage. My fury is a burning lava. Who dares to touch my woman? My reason for breathing. I lunge at the man before he can bring his filthy hands down on her again.

He crashes to the floor, away from Sophia. I'm barely thinking now.

I'll kill him, I'll kill him...The words are on a loop in my head. There's shock on his face. Before he can recover, I swing a powerful punch across his face and then follow that up with another. My mind is in a haze. I keep punching until he's powerless and feeble, and even then I don't stop.

Sophia is weeping in the background. "Grayson, please stop, you'll kill him, please!" she says through her tears.

And though I hear her, I can't process the words. I just keep swinging my fist.

How dare he? I'll kill him for hurting Sophia.

Then Sophia grabs my hand as I try to throw another punch. "Please stop, he's my brother. Don't kill him," she sobs.

That takes all the fight out of me. I look down at my bloody fist and then at the man on the floor. His face is all messed up, and I doubt he's conscious. So this is the scum that sold Sophia to the auction house to settle his own debts? The same man who made her life miserable in the name of looking after her? I feel my anger rising afresh, but I manage to keep it in check.

"He's my brother," Sophia repeats, still sobbing.

I stop and catch my breath for a second. "Did he hurt you?" I ask her.

She stares numbly, but I don't need her response. It's evident on her face. There are imprints of hands on her cheeks. I wonder if I'll find marks all over her body too, and it's enough for another surge of anger to rush through me.

"Please," she pleads softly, tears flowing down her cheeks.

Her brother groans on the floor and tries to get up, but he doesn't seem to be able to move yet.

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I keep one arm around Sophia and pull out my phone with the other, dialing the number of a trusted friend who works in personal security.

“Jackson—I have a job for you, are you available right away?”

He’s at my house within the hour, and I explain the situation. “Take him away and get him off my property. And then when you return I’ll need protection for Sophia. I hadn’t realized she’d need a bodyguard when on my own property. I won’t make that mistake again.”

Sophia gasps, looking up from where she’s curled up on the couch with a cup of tea. “A bodyguard—Grayson, is that really necessary?”

I walk over to her and brush her hair away from her face. “I won’t allow him to come anywhere near you again. You’ll be safe—I swear it.”

She looks like she wants to defend her brother again, but then she shivers under my touch and nods her head. “Alright.” She smiles softly. “Thank you.”

“Good girl,” I whisper, kissing her temple.

Jackson goes over and picks Sophia’s brother up from the floor. Before he leaves, I tell him, “Take him to the hospital first and send me the bill.” I’m only doing this out of consideration for Sophia.

After they leave, I turn my attention to Sophia, lifting her up and carrying her upstairs. “Let’s get you cleaned up.”

The first thing I do after I carry her upstairs is take care of her bruised knees. They're red and swollen. "Did he also do this to you?" I ask her.

"No, I crashed into the kitchen stool as I was getting away from him."

I look up at her. Is she telling the truth? Or is she trying to protect her brother?

"It's true," she insists.

I work quietly. I get out the first aid box and clean and bandage the wounds on her knees. Then I proceed to clean the cut at the corner of her lips. I know it's from Daryl hitting her face. My hand trembles with the force of my anger.

Then my gaze shifts up, meeting hers. She looks scared and vulnerable, and that melts my fury like it never existed. I was never really angry at her, only at her brother and how she chose to defend him. Looking at her now, her hazel eyes bright with pain, the overwhelming urge to protect her is stronger than ever.

I draw her a hot bath and watch her gingerly undress, drawing in a sharp breath at the sight of her body. Bruises mar her creamy flesh. Some are red and swollen while some have turned a shade of purple. I stiffen as rage festers inside me, growing from a deep well of protectiveness.

"Grayson," Sophia calls to me. Her voice is thin and far away as I continue to stare at her bruised flesh.

I am her protector. I failed her.

"Grayson," she snaps, and I look down at her. "It's not your fault," she beseeches me.

I shake my head. "I shouldn't have left you alone," I state.

“You couldn’t have known.”

“You defended him. He did this to you and yet you protected him,” I whisper, unable to understand.

I know she was only thinking of him as her brother. Still, I can’t help the anger warring inside me. It makes me want to punch someone, or lash out.

I close my eyes. I can’t be around her in this state. “I’m sorry, baby. Enjoy your bath. I’ll be in my office,” I say gruffly.

“I don’t want to be by myself, can you join me?” she asks just as I’m about to leave the bathroom.

Her tone is soft and hesitant. I can’t refuse her. “Okay.”

I help her get into the tub. I wet the sponge with shampoo and gently scrub it all over her body, tracing her curves. It’s a soothing activity that gradually eases my anger.

As I towel her dry, she draws me close and kisses me deeply. The soft smell of fruit-scented soap still hangs heavy on her.

“I’m really sorry about today,” she says.

“Don’t worry about it, Sophia. None of it is your fault.”

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My cock is stiff from the kiss and the heady scent of her, but despite my arousal, I know she's too sore for any rigorous activity. I rub a soothing oil on her skin and stiffen at her every wince and flinch. By the time I'm done, I'm angry all over again.

"Let's get you to bed," I say gruffly, helping her climb into bed and pulling the blankets over her.

I take a shower and think back on the situation as water drums on my head. I can't let go of my hurt, and at the same time I'm irritated at myself for being so sensitive about the issue when Sophia is no doubt in pain.

I leave the shower and dry myself, slipping on a pair of boxers. Then, I go back to the bedroom to find her asleep. I watch her for a long moment, and then press a soft kiss onto her lips.

"I love you," I say quietly in the dark.

I can't sleep yet, though. I'm still restless. A thought occurs to me and I walk out of the room, heading to my office.

Chapter Nine

Sophia

Grayson has to be mad at me.

He tells me he loves me, then leaves the room. I feigned sleep when I heard him

coming out of his closet. His whispered words had sent a thrill through me, but then his abrupt departure left a sting.

I wonder what he's doing now. What are his thoughts?

Did he mean it? Does he really love me, as I love him?

Or is he reconsidering his feelings for me? Maybe he's thinking that I come with too much baggage.

My thoughts wander to Daryl. I sincerely hope he's okay wherever he is now. Did I do too much in protecting Daryl from Grayson?

He's the only family I have left in this world. I hope Grayson understands that.

I conjure up the image of Grayson hitting Daryl. He looked so fierce, so brutal. I've always known about that side of him, but seeing him in that light today made me understand the reason he hides his savage nature. It's brutal and unforgiving.

I wasn't scared for myself, but more scared for Daryl. I sincerely thought Grayson was going to kill him. What if I hadn't intervened? How far would Grayson have gone?

I don't know the answer, but I know that I don't want him to have blood on his hands.

I wonder what will happen to Daryl now. Even though he doesn't deserve it, I still worry about him. How will he get along by himself? Who will look after him?

All these worries make it impossible for me to sleep. I check the time—it's just past ten p.m. I sneak out of my room and head to the guest suite. I push the door lightly and poke my head in, but he's not there. So I go to the other place where I'm sure

he'll be. His home office.

My whole body aches as I gingerly go down the stairs to the ground floor, then turn left to go down the corridor that leads to his sanctuary.

I see lights under the door, so I knock softly and open the door. He looks up from his computer and my heart races at the savage beauty of him. I enter and we stare at one another in silence.

"I thought you were asleep," he says.

There's a brief pause before I whisper, "I wasn't asleep. I just didn't know what to say to you."

Another pause. "Do you want to join me?" he asks, moving back and patting his thighs.

I walk slowly around his desk and settle sideways in his lap, pressing my body against him until I feel his warmth seep into me. He sinks his hand into my hair and starts to massage my scalp the way I enjoy.

"Why couldn't you sleep? What were you thinking about?" I ask him.

"Everything."

"Good thoughts?"

"Not all of them."

“I was thinking about today too. I’m sorry about Daryl.”

Grayson sighs. “I shouldn’t have hit him so hard. It’s just that when I saw him on top of you I totally lost it. I wasn’t in control of myself anymore. I don’t know what I would have done if you hadn’t stopped me. And afterward...I was angry. I hate to see anyone hurt you, and I never had a family of my own so I don’t know what all the rules are. I’m sure you’re justified for still feeling protective of him. I’m sorry for how I acted.”

It’s almost as if he read my mind. He’s saying all the things I’ve been dying to hear.

“Anyone would have acted like that,” I admit. “If I came in and saw any man beating you up, I don’t know what I’d do.”

This makes him laugh, and that helps to lighten the mood. “What could you do against someone who can beat me up?”

“I dunno. Maybe use a knife or something,” I say, remembering how I ran to the kitchen for a knife when Daryl pursued me. I can’t believe that I’m the same person who thought of stabbing him.

“Let’s hope we never get to that place.” He tilts his head and kisses my forehead.

“I’m worried about Daryl,” I say softly.

“Worried? Don’t worry, he won’t ever hurt you again. I’ll make sure of it.”

“No, that’s not what I’m talking about. I’m worried about what will happen to him when he’s by himself. There’s no one to look after him. I’m the only one he has.”

Grayson grunts, unconvinced. “Isn’t the older sibling supposed to look after the younger one?”

“It’s not a rule. But I’m serious. I know that Daryl has been a terrible person. It’s not always his fault, though.” I look up at him.

“Yes. You explained this to me before—he had a difficult childhood, so now he’s allowed to be an asshole to his sister,” Grayson says sarcastically.

I roll my eyes but can’t help giving him a small smile. “It’s not that. I know there’s no excuse for his behavior, and I’m glad I don’t have to worry about him hurting me anymore. But...Daryl used to be so kind to me when we were children. After our mom left us, he would go hungry to make sure I had enough to eat.”

Grayson’s arms tighten around me, and I lay my head on his shoulder. “It all changed as he grew older. He started doing drugs and getting involved with a bad crowd. But no one cared enough to investigate further or offer him any help. His friends introduced him to gambling, and he’s only gotten worse since. He just...he needs help and I’m the only one who can help him.”

“Well, if he’s truly addicted to drugs and gambling, then he needs professional help,” Grayson says. “And you’re wrong. You’re not the only one who can help him. I can help him too. Do you know if he would agree to go to rehab? I’ll pay the bills—I’ve found a good program that comes highly recommended.” He shows me the website that he already has up on his computer.

This is what he came in here to do? Try to find ways to help my brother? I’m touched by Grayson’s generosity and thoughtfulness. I can’t find the words to express how

grateful I am.

“I’ll talk to him, I’ll convince him. Thank you so much,” I say, my voice thick with emotion as I kiss him squarely on the lips.

“Someone has to be there when you talk to him, though,” Grayson warns. “I won’t let you face him alone.”

Tears of gratitude roll down my cheeks in torrents. Why did I ever doubt his feelings for me?

“What is it? Did I do something wrong?” he asks in panic.

“Nothing’s wrong—they’re happy tears,” I assure him, smiling at his visible show of relief.

“I only want to see happy tears from now on. No more sadness,” he insists sternly.

I smile up at him, my heart feeling so much lighter now. “Thank you for taking such good care of me.”

His eyes meet mine. “Sophia, if you’ll let me, I want to take care of you forever. Say you’ll be mine.”

In his arms, I stare deeply into his midnight eyes, reveling in the intensity of my emotions for him. “I’m all yours, forever,” I insist. I press my lips to his and he returns my passionate kiss, our bodies pressing closer together.

“I love you,” I declare softly.

“I love you too, baby,” he murmurs against my lips before giving me a deep, searing

kiss and tasting me in a slow, unhurried movement.

His passion and hunger explodes across my senses, and I whimper, my hands trailing over his sculpted body. His answering groan vibrates through me, tightening my nipples and sending goose bumps racing across my skin.

He slides his hand between my thighs, his fingers going straight to my wet and swollen clit. My core spasms at the soft strokes of his fingers. I tremble in his arms, moaning deeply and clutching his huge biceps.

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He lets go of my lips and arches his brows. “Hmm, we’ll have to do something about that.”

I blush under his hooded stare and sensual smirk. He pushes his computer to the side, clearing a space. Then he gently lifts me off his lap and places me on the desk. Anticipation grows in my gut as he closes the space between us.

I rest on my elbows as he grips my thighs and parts them as wide as possible, exposing my drenched sex. My breath quickens at his show of dominance, and my mind is hazy with desire.

Without warning, he ducks down and gives the sensitive bud an eager flick of his tongue, then closes his mouth over it and sucks. I cry out, moaning and angling my hips, offering myself to him.

“Grayson,” I whimper.

I dig my nails into his scalp, my hips rising to his torturous ministrations and twisting in sexual frustration when he takes his mouth away, just as I get to the edge. I’m gasping for breath, my head tilted back and my eyes closed. I hear the sound of his belt unbuckling and let out a moan when he suddenly eases himself inside me.

I breathe out slowly, my slick walls gripping him tightly. He leans down to meet me, invading my mouth with his tongue as my hips arch to allow him deeper inside me. He begins to thrust, hitting places inside me where no one has been before, stretching me and filling me to the fullest.

His hand slides down between our bodies to move against my clit, and I buck hard at the dual sensation—his cock sliding in and out, and his skilled fingers wreaking havoc on my clit. My breath comes in ragged pants as he keeps up the rhythm, and I scream as the tension inside me shatters. I come with a shaky sigh, my inner muscles clenching around his pumping length. He keeps his rhythm steady, trying to make the pleasure last, growling as he gives into his own pleasure and comes inside me, raining kisses on my lips, my neck, and my trembling breasts.

As the quaking inside me slowly fades, he whispers words of praise and love into my ear, and I know that I'm exactly where I belong.

Epilogue

Grayson

Six Years Later...

I smile as I watch the nanny chase my sons around the house. Sophia gave birth to Keith and his twin brother Kevin five years ago. That was the proudest moment of my life—standing beside her with our newborn boys in my arms. It's hard to match the image of those sweet, innocent babies to the young boys giving the nanny so much trouble now.

At this rate, we're going to be late for the event if I don't intervene. Sophia is doing an exhibition of her latest photography collection, showcasing Seattle and its people. After she finished college, she interned under the most prestigious studio in the city. Since then, she has evolved into one of the most sought-after photographers in the city. Her work, especially a photography collection of schoolchildren in the city, has been featured in magazines all over the country. She's also won many awards.

I'm so proud of her and her achievements. It makes me happy to watch Sophia pursue

something she has so much passion for. And surprisingly, her passion has infected me. I've also begun showing some interest in photography. I've been spending more time in her studio, and last week I bought a camera for myself. Of course Sophia has been teasing me about copying her, but I know she loves sharing this interest with me.

By the time I arrive at the exhibition, the event is already well underway. Most of the important guests have arrived—the mayor, expert critics, and the chief editor of the leading art magazine in the region.

Sophia dazzles the crowd, as usual. Her exhibition is a display of people going about their normal lives. The police officer helping an elderly woman cross the street, young lovers walking hand in hand, children playing under the supervision of their conversing parents at the city park, a homeless man feeding a street cat. Each picture is captured from a unique angle and tells a story at a glance. They're wonderful showpieces, and I don't fail to notice that the final picture is a portrait of Daryl smiling as a kid.

Last we heard, Daryl had done well in rehab and seemed on the way to recovery. I met with him and made it clear that he would stay away from Sophia in the future, and he agreed.

And Sophia has grown, the longer she's been away from her brother. I know she still cares for him, but now that she's been away from him and tasted what a life without his cruelty can be like, she doesn't want to go back. She agrees that staying away from him is what's best—for her and for our family.

At the end of her presentation, she receives a standing ovation and my heart swells with pride. She has worked so hard to get to where she is, and she deserves all the recognition she's getting.

Later that night, the exhibition seems like a lifetime ago. The kids are tucked in bed and asleep for the night, and the nanny has gone home. I'm sitting beside my wife in our suite, my gaze intense and smoldering.

The house is finally silent, and I can ravish her the way I've wanted to all day.

"I have a gift for you," I say darkly, the tone of my voice already suggesting what kind of gift this will be.

She raises her eyebrows, letting out a little giggle. "Oh? What did I do to deserve such a thing?"

I shake my head, smiling down at her. "For the woman you are, you deserve so much more than this." I hand her a small box, which she opens eagerly.

"Ooohhh," she gasps, lifting up the lingerie inside, a delicate scrap of lace. "Can I put it on right now?"

I grin. "I thought we could have a little photo shoot."

It isn't long before Sophia is spread out before me on the soft rug in front of the fireplace, her creamy skin glowing in the light as I begin to snap photos. She moves into a pose that highlights her full breasts, which somehow seem bigger than I've ever seen them, even though I'm well acquainted with those breasts by now.

Lace trails over her curves, and she spreads her legs teasingly. My mouth dries at the sight of the tiny piece of fabric that hides her pussy from my view. I can almost see her lips peeking out on either side of it.

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“Pull it to the side,” I command, my voice low. “Let me see that pretty pussy.”

She obliges, grinning and arching her back as I snap another photo.

“We’ll have to do more photo shoots as my body changes over the next few months,” she says casually.

I nod, barely taking in the words as I catch sight of the arousal glistening at her entrance.

Wait, what? I snap my eyes up to meet hers.

Her hazel eyes are sparkling with unrestrained excitement. “I’m pregnant, we’re going to have another baby,” she says with a wide grin.

Happiness wells up inside me, so much I want to burst from it. My decision to retire could not have come at a better time. I quickly set down the camera and rush toward her, picking her up out of excitement and twirling around with her in my arms.

“We’re going to have another baby,” I say out loud.

“Shhh, you’ll wake the boys,” Sophia says, laughing.

I give her a deep, passionate kiss. Sliding her fingers into my hair and drawing my head closer, she parts her lips for me, meeting the thrusts of my tongue with her own. I groan deep, kissing her harder, plundering her mouth, stealing the breath from her lungs and giving it back again. She whimpers, the sound going straight to my cock.

I break the kiss, then I stand and bend to scoop her into my arms. She laughs and gasps, wrapping her arms around my neck. Her gaze meets mine, and I growl in satisfaction.

Her lips look well and thoroughly kissed, swollen and pink.

Once inside the room, I put her on her feet by the bed. We silently undress each other, stealing kisses and caresses. By the time we're naked, Sophia can barely stand and my cock bobs against my taut stomach, slowly releasing pre-cum.

I slowly take in her body. Since she gave birth to the twins, her body has turned curvier. And I wonder if it will be even moreso after the new baby. I take in her flat stomach where our baby nestles. Very soon, she'll be so sensitive and responsive that she'll scream out her orgasm from being stimulated on her nipples alone.

Desire ravages my senses at the image, shooting currents to my jutting cock. I wonder if any part of her body is sensitive yet. I reach for my wife again, taking her lips in a slow, sensual kiss. I back her up until she falls back onto the huge bed and I'm sliding atop her.

"Clasp your hands on the bed frame. No touching," I command gruffly, watching her eyes liquefy at the order. My woman loves when I tell her what to do.

I kiss my way down to her breasts. I blow softly over a nipple and watch the pink areola darken and tighten. I shift to the second one and the response is the same. Sophia cries out, her breath trembling. I continue to alternate between the hard, pink nubs, blowing hot, breathy air that causes goose bumps on her skin. She arches her back, begging for my lips or touch, her hips gyrating as her need multiplies.

"Grayson, please," she pleads.

“I want you to come without my touch. Can you do that, baby?” I growl softly, blowing on her tight nubs.

“No, Grayson. Please, please...” she whimpers.

“Please what, baby?”

“Suck me. Suck on my b-breasts,” she says on a trembling breath.

“Is my woman hurting?” I ask hoarsely. Her responsiveness and wantonness makes my cock weep.

“Y-yes. Please make it stop.”

Gladly.

I close my lips over her hard nub, sucking hard.

“Argh!” she shouts hoarsely, bucking her hips. I shift attention to the other, nipping and sucking. I growl against her flesh and she mewls low. I can’t take it anymore; my cock is begging for release. In a swift glide, I slam into her pussy.

“Grayson!” she screams. Her hot sheath squeezes my cock as she floods it. Her hips buck wildly as she comes hard. I move intensely inside her, my movements hard and fast, in sync with her undulating hips. I drive deeper into her, my thrusts becoming erratic, the fire in my veins now a roaring inferno waiting to be released.

I jerk suddenly, slamming deeper than ever. “Argh!” Sophia’s back bows as she reaches another crescendo and I groan at the intensity of my orgasm, jerking wildly as I shoot streams of cum inside of her.

“Fuck, Sophia. I fucking love you,” I declare.

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She smiles at me, encircling my neck with her arms. “I love you too, baby,” she murmurs against my lips.

I deepen the kiss, drinking her in and enjoying the feeling of being connected to her. My cock begins to harden inside of her again and I slowly move within her, kissing her slowly.

“Grayson. Again?” Sophia asks in delighted surprise, her eyes already clouding with want.

“I’m excited,” I reply, smiling down at her.

I take her lips in mine as I thrust in slow, languid strokes. I drop a final kiss on her lips, then press a kiss on her forehead, her temples, her chin, and the corner of her lips.

“Thank you for our baby,” I murmur.

“Oh, Grayson,” she utters breathily, her eyes going teary. “I love you so much.” She moans as I pick up the pace.

“I’ll give you the world if you ask me to,” I growl, rising to my knees and pulling her up with me. Her legs wrap around me automatically and I thrust harder. Deeper.

“I-I know,” she says brokenly, lost in pleasure.

Our gazes stay locked together and I keep driving into her. Slow and deep. Hard and

fast. My mind is in a sexual haze, gearing up for another release. Sophia wraps her arms around my neck and buries her face into it; my shoulder muffles her moans and whimpers.

My thrusts become urgent and erratic. I'm slamming deep and hard at the same spot until her walls tighten on my cock and her nails dig into my back as she begins to shake.

"Fuck!" Her release triggers mine and I jerk hard, letting go completely as I fill up my wife for the second time tonight.

Breathing hard, I curl up around Sophia on the bed as we come down from our high. My hand trails over her stomach, and she sighs peacefully.

I never thought I could be so happy, so content. For the orphan who once had nothing, now everything I could ever ask for is here in my arms.

~The End