



This is War (Checkmate Duet 1)

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Category: Erotic, Romance, Young Adult

Description: She hates him.
He loves getting under her skin.

Travis King is the worst kind of a**hole.
He taunts me for being a good girl and mocks my high standards.
He's cruel, crass, and has enough confidence to last two lifetimes.
And I hate him.

It wouldn't matter so much if he were avoidable.
But considering he's my older brother's best friend and roommate, I see him more than I'd ever want to. His sculpted abs and gorgeous eyes are wasted on such an arrogant man, which makes me hate him even more.

Even though I've had a crush on him since I was ten, the feelings weren't mutual and he's made that very clear. He's always loved getting under my skin and one night against my better judgment, I let him in my bed. I've succumbed to his manw**re ways, but that doesn't change a thing.

Because the King is about to get played at his own game—and lose.

Checkmate, King.

This is book 1 in the Travis & Viola duet and must be read first.
Suggested for mature readers only.

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PROLOGUE

VIOLA

Once upon a time, in a faraway land, lived a young princess who awaited a prince who would give her everything she ever dreamed of... love, passion, loyalty. He'd be the sweetest, kindest, most heartwarming gentleman a girl could ever ask for. And he'd be perfect.

...Excuse me while I vomit.

There is absolutely, positively, no way that a man like that exists on this earth. I used to think he was, but of course, I was proven wrong. I was young and naive, and didn't know any better.

And he was Travis King.

I remember how clear the sky was as I sat on my rooftop outside of my bedroom window. Summer was fading away and the start of my seventh grade year was right around the corner. The stars were super bright and as I counted them, I heard Travis' father screaming from the house across from mine. He did that a lot and occasionally, I'd see Travis through the window of his bedroom. He'd put on his headphones to tune out the yelling, as if it was something he was accustomed. But that night he didn't go to his bedroom. He ran out of his front door, slamming it behind him, and began pacing his front yard. I swallowed, watching him intently as his hands balled into fists at his sides.

When the Kings moved across the street from us, Travis and my older brother, Drew, instantly became best friends. They were both going into their first year of high school and I was sad I wouldn't be at the same school as them anymore. Well, mostly about Travis. Drew had made it very clear he didn't like his little sister tagging along, but Travis never made me feel like I was a nuisance.

As I watched him kick the dirt on the sidewalk, he looked up at me. His lips were turned down and I could see the anger in his eyes. My breath stilled as he watched me watch him, and I was certain he'd tell my brother I'd been spying on him.

Instead, he walked across the street, climbed up the trellis and sat down next to me. He stayed silent for a long while, but then he finally turned and spoke.

"I hate my dad sometimes."

"Why does he get so mad?" I asked.

He looked away and rested his arms over his bent knees. "He drinks. Sometimes too much."

"Does he hurt you?" He didn't look at me. "Or your mother?"

He winced. "No. Just yells."

We sat in silence, both lying on our backs as we looked up at the stars. The sky above us, the stars so bright and big.

"You can sit up here anytime, you know? My parents won't mind."

"Drew would," he said matter-of-factly. "He'd call me a pansy." He chuckled.

“Drew calls everyone that.”

He laughed again.

I turned my head and looked at him. “I don’t think you’re a pansy.”

Travis tilted his head and looked into my eyes and everything went serious. I watched his throat move, swallowing hard. He licked his lips and moved in close. Feeling his breath against my skin made me so nervous, I instinctively turned my head.

“Are you excited about going into high school?” I spit out, trying to change the subject, looking back up at the stars. I could’ve sworn Travis was about to kiss me. It would’ve been my first kiss.

Moments passed and he finally responded. “Yeah, I guess. It’ll be nice getting back into basketball season and staying late for practices and games.”

I knew what he was implying without saying the words. Less time at home.

“Why do you think she puts up with it?” Curiosity got the best of me, and I could no longer keep it in. “Can’t she leave him?” I asked.

He shrugged. I supposed it wasn’t that simple for adults, but to me it just sounded like common sense. Why would anyone want to be with someone that treated them like crap?

That wasn’t the last time Travis snuck up the rooftop and sat with me under the stars. We shared details with each other that we hadn’t shared with anyone else before. It was our secret little spot where we could talk or just sit and stare up at the sky.

It was easy.

He wasn't my brother's best friend.

I wasn't his best friend's little sister.

And the lines between us weren't blurred.

I was only twelve years old, so I truly believed prince charming existed. As I grew older, I came to realize he never really did. Because if he did, he most certainly wouldn't be available. And he most definitely wouldn't be interested in a girl like me. I'm not saying that because I want anyone to tell me otherwise, but if such a man existed, he'd have no chance with me anyway. Because for some only-God-knows-why reason, my heart only beats for one man. My pulse only increases when he walks into the room. My cheeks flush and my body hums when he looks at me. I feel the blood in my veins as my skin heats from his very existence. He's the epitome of perfection.

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...Too bad a decade later, he's a complete asshole.

Travis King.

He's no knight in shining armor; more like a royal jackass. He may look like a prince on the outside, but on the inside he's a cocky, arrogant womanizer that I want to shove over a cliff.

All right, that might sound dramatic and all, considering I just confessed my feelings about him, but those are feelings of hate...not love.

From being head over heels for him as a young girl to loathing him as a woman, Travis King needs to remember the golden rule—never admit defeat.

It was game on.

CHAPTER ONE

TRAVIS

I love a girl who can suck dick like a champ. Watching her tongue lick up my thick vein, pumping blood to my best and biggest asset, sets my body ablaze. She wraps her hand around my shaft, sucks on the tip, and pumps hard until I release inside her delicious mouth.

“Mm...salty.” She licks her lips and pushes a finger inside her mouth, sucking it clean.

“Sorry for the mess.” I pull myself back inside my pants and re-buckle my belt.

“I caught most of it.” She’s grinning, as if swallowing is some kind of special achievement.

I grab her hand and lift her up, leaning in to give her a chaste kiss. “Thanks, babe.”

“No, thank you.” Her eyes light up as a soft giggle releases from her throat.

I lick my lips. “Mm...you’re right.”

She furrows her brows in question.

“Salty.” Her eyes widen as she realizes to what I’m referring.

“So...same time next week?” She bats her long, fake lashes up at me, and I fight the urge to laugh in her face.

“I’ll check my schedule.” I open the door and casually look out in the hallway to make sure no one else is around. “All clear, babe.”

She follows me out, but we walk in different directions.

I head toward the elevator and press the call button. Once I’m in, I turn around and smile as I watch Alyssa Crawford’s hips sway from side to side as she walks toward the emergency exit staircase.

Yup. I’m hooking up with Sloan Crawford’s—CEO of Crawford Marketing—daughter.

And a nice hook-up it’s become.

“Wipe that smug look off your face, King.” I hear as soon as I step off the elevator. It’s Blake James, my lead supervisor.

“Don’t be a jealous dick,” I retort, walking toward my office.

“Not jealous, dude.”

“You would be if you knew what I was smiling about.” I turn around and grin, walking backward through my door. He rolls his eyes with a sigh, and I laugh as I slam the door shut.

Since my lunch break was spent in the bathroom on the ninth floor, I’m still starving. However, I can’t leave my office again, so I text my roommate, Drew. Dude, bring me a sandwich! I’m starving!

Didn’t you eat on your lunch? he immediately responds.

Not exactly... I send back, knowing he’ll understand what I mean.

Do I even wanna know?

I smirk. Let’s just say... I was the meal and she loved every last swallow.

How you don’t get your ass laid out and canned from your job, I’ll never know. I imagine him shaking his disapproving head at me.

It’s the charm, bro.

Unlikely.

So come on... bring me something to eat before I die.

Can't...stuck doing bitch work till five.

I groan. He's been working at the Sacramento PD for the past two years now, ever since we graduated from college. Between his long-distance girlfriend and working overtime, we barely cross paths anymore.

Fuck. All right. Never mind.

Why not just order delivery?

Because every chick that comes to deliver it ends up with an extra tip... That isn't a complete lie. I also forgot my wallet, but I spare him the details.

I can't even deal with you.

So you see my dilemma? I laugh to myself.

Sorry, man. I'll see if I can get someone that has some self-control and willpower to send something.

I roll my eyes. Thanks, I text back.

I get back to work, making calls and returning emails before my afternoon conference call. Less than an hour later, the receptionist buzzes and tells me my lunch is here.

Yes! I knew Drew wouldn't let me down.

"Send it in," I say back.

I adjust my tie and sit back as the door whips open. I look up as five and a half feet of pure hatred walks in. Good call, Drew. The self-control and willpower is strong with

this one.

Viola Fisher.

“Well, well, well...” I drawl out, crossing my arms over my chest in delight. “If this isn’t the surprise of the century.” Little Goody Two-Shoes, delivering my lunch as if I’m the biggest inconvenience of her life. She must have owed Drew a favor.

She throws a brown bag on top of my desk and glares. “Cut the shit, Travis.”

“Always a delight, V.” I continue smiling as her lips straighten into an angry line.

“It’s Viola,” she corrects like she does every time.

“But V the Virgin sounds so much better. Don’t you agree?”

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“I’m not a virgin,” she hisses. She throws her hands up and spins around. “I don’t need to explain anything to you. Enjoy your lunch, asshole. I poisoned it.” She opens the door and stalks out, letting the door slam shut behind her.

I grab the bag and pull out a turkey club and a bag of chips. I analyze the food, knowing damn well she probably would poison me if she had the chance. Just to be safe, I stuff the sandwich back in the bag and grab the chips instead. At least I know she hasn’t tampered with that.

I can’t help the pleased grin that spreads across my face when I see she’s picked out barbecue-flavored baked chips for me. She knows barbecue chips are my favorite, even though she’ll deny it until the day she dies.

Yeah, that’s what happens when you’ve known a girl for most of your life. She shares DNA with Drew, who’s been my best friend since we were twelve. We grew up together, played on the same sport teams, and even lived across from each other. After our sophomore year of college, we moved out of the dorms. We now rent a house off campus together, where Viola is always lurking around. She’s hellbent on commenting on every aspect of my life, even though she’s the one that needs to get one.

Needless to say, Viola and I haven’t had a great relationship. Or a relationship period.

She hates my guts.

I don’t blame her entirely. But I don’t exactly adore her either. She’s the perfect little prude who thinks she knows everything just because she’s the class brainiac. She

judges everything I do while being a complete cock tease. At least, I know how to walk the walk. I'd be surprised if she knew where her own g-spot is.

“King...” Blake steps into my office, his eyes lit up wide. “Who was that chick?” The corners of his lips are turned up in an excited grin. “She was hot!”

I roll my eyes. Viola is not hot.

Jessica Biel—hot.

Megan Fox—bangin’.

Eva Mendes—smokin’.

Scarlett Johansson—porn star hot.

But Viola Fisher—gorgeous, stunning, absolutely breathtaking. Much more than hot. Even though she could afford to loosen her panties a little. Both figuratively and literally.

Even if she did bat an eyelash my way, Drew would kill me before he allowed me to touch his little sister.

“That’s my roommate’s little sister, Viola. She was just dropping off my lunch.”

His lips turn down. “Oh...you’re already hitting that, aren’t you?”

The top corner of my lip twists up and a small chuckle rolls off my tongue. “Uh, no. Not even close.”

His brows furrow. “Then why was she here bringing you food?”

“Because Drew’s my best friend and I’ve known them both since we were kids. He probably asked her to and when she told him to fuck off, he probably threatened to change the locks.”

“Ahh...blackmail.”

I laugh. “Maybe. She secretly loves doing things for me.”

“You’re an arrogant dick, King.” He shakes his head as he aims for the door, but a small smile pulls at his lips.

“Arrogance is the key to success, James!” I holler back, but he’s already walking away and shaking his head at me.

Oh well...you can’t win everyone over.

VIOLA

You have got to be freaking kidding me!

I want to yell and flail my arms at the jaw-clenching task my brother has asked me to do.

Can you bring Travis a sandwich at work? He didn’t have time to eat during his break.

I roll my eyes at the message he sends me. A lame attempt to cover Travis’ ass. ‘Didn’t have time’...really? I wasn’t born yesterday.

However, Drew does so much for me that I have a hard time refusing him. As kids we weren’t super close, but as we grew older, he became much more than just my

brother. He's my best friend. As much as I want to tell him to tell Travis to fuck off, I don't. Instead I reply back, Fine. But I'm putting rat poison in his mayo.

Whatever gives it flavor. I smile as I read his message. Drew knows I hate Travis. Not like, har-har-I-hate-you kind of hate, but like loathing, I'd-rather-eat-my-arm-off-than-be-near-you kind of hate.

But Travis is his best friend, so when he needs a favor, I usually get roped into helping somehow.

After throwing his lunch on his desk, I storm out of his office with a humph. I was three seconds away from slapping his stupid, I'm-so-hot grin right off his face.

He's not hot, for the record.

He's a fucking devil and gorgeous god all in one, and he knows it, too. With his sculpted six-pack, sleeve tattoos and stunning brown eyes, he's the type that never has to work for anything.

He works out religiously and reminds me every time when he walks around the house shirtless. Aside from working out, his extracurricular activities include being naked and in between some bimbo's legs. If only he cared about the girls he brings home the way he cared about his body, we'd be having a much different conversation.

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For the record, I only know this because he lives with my older brother.

I drive out of the parking lot and head back to school. Although this is my last year, I still live on campus. I received a full scholarship based off my grades and SAT scores, so spending the extra money to be off campus didn't make sense. Luckily, last year I was able to choose courtyard housing, which means I get my own bedroom and bathroom and only have to share the a living room and kitchen with my three other roommates. For extra money, I tutor jocks. Never a short supply of academically questionable athletes on campus.

"Hey, Viola!" Ashley calls out as soon as I walk through the door.

"Hey! You're back early." I set my stuff down on the table and rummage through it.

"Class got dismissed as soon as we finished the quiz," she says in between bites of chewing her lunch.

"What a waste of a class." I love school. Yes, I'm one of those students that absolutely loves studying, doing homework, and participating in class lectures. I even devote an entire weekend for school supplies shopping and organizing it all by color and subject.

I'm smart, so sue me.

Actually, don't. I can't afford a lawyer.

"Doesn't bother me!" She stands up from the couch and stalks over. "Jesus, Viola.

What is all this shit?”

I furrow my brows at her. “This shit is called textbooks, notebooks, and reading material. You might’ve heard of it?” I tease.

“I swear to God, Viola. You are way too focused on school. I don’t think I’ve ever seen you without a book in your hands.”

“Plenty of times, actually. But you see this building we live in?” I dramatically twirl a finger around in the air. “And all the larger buildings that surround us? That’s called a campus...it’s where people come to learn.”

“It’s also where people come to party and get laid, but I never see you do any of those things,” she says with a grin.

I scoff. “I get laid plenty of times.” No, I don’t.

She snorts, laughs, and nearly chokes at my words. “That’s the biggest line of bullshit I’ve ever heard.”

I sigh. “I’m leaving now. BYE.” I pile my stuff back in my bag and head back out toward the door.

“Love you!” she calls out, but I just flip her my middle finger over my shoulder and slam the door behind me.

I’m really not the buzzkill she’s portraying I am, but it’s safe to say I’m school-focused. More importantly, I’m future-focused. I’m two hours away from home, and to stay away from that little town after graduation, I’ll have to continue my education or find a job that pays well. I am trying to keep my options open because there really isn’t a home for me to go back to. After our parents’ nasty divorce was finalized, the

house I grew up in was put on the market and sold. Mom moved on, fell in love with a nice guy named Larry. They'd let me move in without a doubt, but I could never do that. It would just be too weird to live with a man who's virtually a stranger to me. Dad is still happily married to his job at the law firm, which isn't surprising. Most days it feels as if Drew and I only have each other.

Majoring in International Business makes me happy. It keeps my mind busy and I've always loved how other cultures conduct business. I geek out over micro and macroeconomics and just the mention of foreign trade policies gets me hot and bothered.

Earlier in the semester, Dr. Johnson pulled me aside after class and asked if I'd consider an apprenticeship after graduation. I had already started applying for graduate schools, but I wasn't against the suggestion. If she thought it would benefit my future, I'd definitely consider it.

She handed me a stack of papers with a smile and gave me several handwritten recommendations for each corporation. After looking them over, I decided to send my application in to a few of them. I've been on edge waiting for their replies, but so far nothing yet. After doing further research into these corporations and weighing the benefits of what these experiences could mean for a future career, I've become obsessed with planning out every possible path I could take. Those offers will single-handedly decide my future after graduation.

It's something I've kept from Drew, which I feel bad about, but I know if I tell him, he'll either try to talk me out of moving away, or he'll ask me on a daily basis if I've heard anything yet. The pressure and disappointment is something I want to avoid, so until I know for sure, I'm not telling him anything. As far as he knows, I've only applied to graduate schools within the state.

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However, I know I'm going to have to tell him eventually. I'm just waiting until I have to. Once our parents started fighting regularly and their focus shifted from being a family to sabotaging one another, Drew made sure to take care of me. Even when he was annoyed with my books and my distaste for sports, he made sure to keep an eye on me. I was a sophomore in high school and he was in his last year of high school when our parents' fighting really got bad. I could no longer remember a time when we all sat down to eat a meal together or even to one of Drew's basketball games. Somewhere between middle and high school, something shifted, and I really never knew what or why, but it pushed Drew and me together. If anything good came out of my parent's divorce, it was that.

After my final class, I head back to my room, pile my clothes in a basket, and drive over to Drew's house. Since he and Travis rent a house just ten minutes from campus, I visit after Drew's shifts and do my laundry every Wednesday night. But since Drew works patrol all day, I stop in after he's home from work so we can hang out while I wait for my clothes to wash.

"Hey, Vi," he greets as soon as I walk in. His dark locks are a wild mess as usual, his eyes glued to the TV as his fingers furiously move across the game controller. You wouldn't know by looking at his muscular frame that he's a total videogame junkie. If he's not in uniform or killing zombies through the screen, he's working out with the guys in his unit.

"Hey. Washer free?"

"I think Travis just put his in a few minutes ago."

I curse under my breath. “He knows I come over on Wednesday nights to do laundry. Why is this a hard concept to understand?”

He doesn’t answer, but we both know why.

Because Travis is a fucking arrogant douche who thinks he runs the world.

“Fine, whatever. I’ll wait then.” I drop my basket on the floor with a hard smack and stalk toward Drew. I plop on the couch next to him and ask if I can play too.

“You don’t know how to play,” he retorts.

“Well, then teach me. It can’t be that hard.”

He chuckles. “All right. If you think you can play with the big boys.”

“Stop being sexist and give me a damn controller.”

We battle it out for a half hour before Travis struts in the living room in a low-riding pair of jeans. I bite the inside of my cheek to keep myself from commenting, but it’s a hard task. I hate it when he walks around shirtless, showing off the outlines of his taut muscles and the V that runs below his waistline.

As if he could be anymore of a walking, talking cliché, he has a sleeve of tattoos on one arm and half a sleeve on the other. I catch myself admiring it more than I should, so I quickly look away before he notices.

“What’s up, V?”

“Why don’t you tell me, asshole? Your clothes almost done?”

“Not washing clothes,” he says flatly, but I see the corner of his lips turn up slightly.

“Then what are you washing? You know I do my laundry on Wednesdays.”

“My sheets.” He grins, and I have to swallow back a gagging noise. “I have a guest coming over soon.”

“Well if you’d slow down the parade of visitors, we wouldn’t have this conflict.”

“Or you could do your laundry somewhere else and we wouldn’t have a conflict at all.”

I set the controller down on the coffee table and walk toward the kitchen as he walks toward the couch. “You’re such a disgusting manwhore.”

He sits in my spot and calls out, “Aw, is someone jealous?”

I roll my eyes so hard, I swear they might fall out. “Suck a dick, Travis.” I grab my basket and walk to the basement door.

“I was hoping that was your specialty!” I hear him yell out, but as soon as he does, I hear Drew’s fist collide with his shoulder.

“Dude, quit hitting on my sister.”

“In his dreams!” I yell out, opening the door and stepping down the stairs.

God, I can’t wait until I have my own place and can limit these not-so-lovely visits.

CHAPTER TWO

TRAVIS

Watching Viola's cheeks turn bright red gives me a thrill every time. She's easy to rile up, even easier to embarrass. She pretends to hate me, but let's be honest, there's hardly anything about me worth hating. Even when she was just ten years old and we'd just met, I could make her blush without even speaking.

I work out every chance I get, eat right, and work my ass off both in and out of the gym. When I'm not working out or at my job, I enjoy other types of recreation.

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Currently her name is Rachel and she's basically salivating at the mouth as she waits for me to give her what she's begging for.

I give in, of course.

I'm a guy after all.

When we're both sated and panting next to each other, I clean up and pull my boxer shorts back up. She curls her body around mine and places a quick kiss on my shoulder. "Are you kicking me out now?"

I look over my shoulder and give her a sympathetic grin. "Sorry, babe. No sleepovers."

That's not entirely a rule set in stone, but I prefer to sleep alone. Especially if there's no chance of morning sex the next day. I get up at five a.m. and head to the gym before I have to be to work at eight.

"All right." She gets up and searches for her clothes. Once she's dressed, she grabs her purse and walks over for a goodbye kiss. "Call me later."

"Sure." I escort her out of the house and kiss her once more before shutting the door. I spin around and nearly run over Viola as she passes in the hall.

"Aw...another victim released. How sweet of you."

"They aren't victims if they're willing," I retort matter-of-factly.

“Well, they’re airheads if they are.” She continues walking to the kitchen and reluctantly I follow.

“You sure sound pretty envious.”

“It’s not. It’s pity. There’s a difference.” She opens the fridge and reaches for a bottle of water.

“Trust me...she’s not feeling any amount of pity right about now.” I lean up against the doorframe and watch her take a long drink.

“If not pity, then definitely regret. Or perhaps she’s wondering where the nearest clinic is so she can get tested.” She takes another pull of her water and ignores my glare.

“Just because a woman likes sex, doesn’t make her an airhead. But you wouldn’t know that would you? Not when you keep your V-card hostage like it’s a million-dollar diamond.”

“For the hundredth time, I’m not a virgin!” she retorts sharply. “Just because I don’t spread my legs as much as a gymnast, doesn’t mean I’m a prude.”

“Well it sure as hell doesn’t make you a delight.”

She tosses the bottle out and steps toward me, shoving her shoulder against me as she walks past. “Knowing how to use your dick doesn’t make you a god, Travis.”

I spin around and face her as she walks away. “You speak as if you know from experience.”

“Trust me. The walls are thin. The entire neighborhood knows from experience,” she

calls over her shoulder.

“So are you saying I should be sorry for knowing how to use my dick?”

She freezes and turns toward me. “No, you should be sorry for anyone that falls for your shit that gets them into your bed in the first place.” She presses her lips together in a fake smile and walks down the hall and back to where Drew is still playing his game.

I don’t know what her problem is, but I’m determined to find out.

It’s already ten o’clock, and I have a long day at the office tomorrow, but I can’t get Viola off my mind long enough to fall asleep.

This never happens by the way.

Okay, well, maybe it does. Only when she gets under my skin, which happens to be all the damn time.

But you can’t blame me. She’s always perfect and proper, never wrong and always knows the answer to everything. She’s that annoying smart kid in class that always fucks up the grading curve for everyone else. The one that wears modest clothes but somehow always ends up looking sexy as fuck.

On the outside, Viola Fisher is the poster child of innocence and purity. But I know better.

Viola Fisher has tattoos and a right hook that could make any grown man cry.

VIOLA

Ugh, I hate him! I hate him so much I want to scream until his ears bleed.

Every time he's near me, my body temperature rises. He knows how to get me fired up to the point where I want to lose my shit all over him. One day during my freshman year, when he and Drew were juniors, I overheard a rumor about some of the crude jokes he was saying about me. I immediately saw red, already pissed about him asking one of my friends out during homeroom, so I walked toward him and tripped over my own feet, making my entire lunch tray land in his lap. It might not have been a complete accident, but nevertheless, he deserved it. Considering it was spaghetti and meatball day for lunch, he was pretty pissed at that little display of hatred.

But being the loyal sister that I am, I try to control myself, like always. Try being the key word.

"What are you two bickering about now?" Drew asks as I walk back to the couch, his eyes still glued to the TV screen as he works the game controller.

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“About how his sexcapades better not disturb my sleep.” My last day of class is Friday and then I had planned on staying at Drew’s during spring break instead of going home, since campus will be shutting down this year. Something about budget cuts and not wanting to pay for the added security.

The corners of his lips perk up a little, but his eyes stay focused on whatever creature he’s aiming for. “Eh, you get used to it. Soon enough, it’s like calming music that puts you right to sleep.”

“Ew, that’s disgusting, Drew. Seriously. Have some standards.”

“I do! What do you want me to do? Tell him he can’t have girls over?”

“Uh, yeah. It’s your house too.”

“We each pay half the rent. I can’t do anything about what he does in his room or with who.”

I groan. “This is going to be the worst two weeks of my life.” Why does spring break have to be a whole week longer this year?

He pauses his game and finally turns toward me. “You could always go home and stay with mom and Larry. Or go to Dad’s.”

I scowl. “I’d rather eat a rat.”

“Well, then suck it up, buttercup. Two weeks of manly bliss.” He winks and returns

to his game.

I groan at the truth of his words and drop the subject.

My clothes finally finish up just after eleven p.m. The crack of thunder and sound of the sudden downpour turn my attention to the window, making me sigh at the horrible luck.

“Great.”

“You can crash on the couch if you’d like,” Drew calls over to me from the kitchen.
“I’m about to head in.”

“Already?”

“Yeah...I’ve yet to start packing.”

“For what?”

“For Mia’s.”

“Wait, what?” I whirl around to face him at the mention of his girlfriend, who attends college a couple hours away. “You’re leaving?” It was the first I’d heard about it.

“Yeah, didn’t I tell you?” I shake my head furiously. “Using up a couple weeks of my vacation while she’s on her spring break.”

My eyes widen in anger. “What? I’m going to be alone with Travis the entire time?”

“Yeah. I swore I told you.”

“Does my face look like you told me?” I ask, loud and annoyed.

He shrugs. “Sorry. Thought I did.”

This isn’t happening. This cannot be happening.

“So I’m going to be stuck here alone with Travis?” I clarify.

“I guess. Maybe his dates can help keep you company,” he taunts. I grab a pillow from the couch and throw it at him from across the room.

“Not funny!”

He easily dodges it, pushing it away before it hits him. “I find myself pretty amusing.”

I groan and collapse on the couch with an exaggerated thud.

“If it helps, you can sleep in my bed. I’ll even put on clean sheets for you.” I hear the sarcasm in his voice.

“Gee, thanks. How accommodating,” I retort dryly.

“Anything for my baby sis!” he calls out before walking to his room. “Night!”

I grab the blanket off the floor and cover up, burning with rage knowing the next two weeks, I’m stuck in the same house as Travis King—#1 asshole and heartbreaker.

The rain slams against the roof and windows of the house and I toss and turn for what feels like eternity. Finally, I fall asleep, although it’s restless.

The alarm on my phone goes off and though it's been hours, it feels like only minutes have passed. For a moment, I have to remember where I am. I blindly reach for my phone and open my eyes, only to see Travis standing close to the T.V., shirtless with pajama pants sitting haphazardly on his hips. He's not what I want to see first thing this morning. He quietly watches the news, turning his head to glare at me until I click the button to turn off one of the most annoying buzzing sounds in the world. I groan and roll over on my side, hoping he'll go away, but when has he ever done anything I've wanted? Never. Last night I hoped I'd be able to grab my laundry and sneak home before class, not having to see him again until this weekend, but lady luck is obviously not on my side and neither is Mother Nature. Stupid rain.

“Did you have sweet dreams about me, princess?” he asks, confidence dripping in his tone.

His words anger me, maybe a little more than they should, but he shouldn't say shit like that to me especially in the morning before I've had any coffee. “That'd be a nightmare.”

He laughs, showing his perfectly straight teeth, and I linger on his plump bottom lip a little too long, which makes me even madder. Thankfully he doesn't notice. My nostrils flare, and I throw the blankets from my body and stand. My hands find my hips and before I'm able to give him a mouthful, Drew walks into the living room and interrupts me.

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“Please don’t kill each other while I’m gone.”

Travis looks over at him and he loses his grip on reality for just a second. “Where are you going?” Travis glances at me and his smile fades as he looks back at Drew.

“Mia’s, remember?”

“That’s this weekend?” I hear the same shocked tone in his voice that I had last night.

The smile that fills my face is devious and to know this may have ruined whatever sexcapades he had planned makes me happy. Just me and Travis alone for two weeks—this can’t be good.

“I guess you won’t be able to fuck on the couch like you planned,” I say, walking to my basket of clothes and picking them up.

He shoots me a daring look, and then scoffs. “I’ll make sure to look you in the eye when I do,” he says, leering.

“Oh, God. So that’s what throwing up in your own mouth tastes like. Wouldn’t have known until just now.” I give my brother a smile and my face goes serious when I look back at Travis. He crosses his arms over his chest, and I know this means war.

I have a feeling the next two weeks will be pure hell, with a devil named Travis supervising.

CHAPTER THREE

TRAVIS

I'm a man of routine. I like structure and schedules. Every morning as I blend my protein shake, I watch the news and catch up on current events before heading to the gym before work.

I watch Viola sleeping peacefully on the couch and it stops me in my tracks. Once her phone alarm goes off, all peace is gone. But it's not hard to notice that when her lips aren't pulled tight in her normal pout and her eyes aren't shooting daggers at me, she actually looks sweet. Almost like when we first met as kids.

I was so ticked when my parents told me we were moving from Arizona to California, even if it was because my dad found a better-paying job. I didn't talk to them for a week, but at twelve years old, I didn't have much power over the situation. Leaving my friends and the only home I'd ever known didn't settle well with me. That first night we were officially moved into our new home, I saw a couple kids around my age playing across the street. Still avoiding my parents, I hid up in my bedroom and watched from the window. The boy looked around my age and the girl probably a couple years younger, but there was something about the two of them that made me walk out my bedroom door, down the stairs, out the front door, and walk across the street toward them. The girl immediately stopped giggling and they both stared at me.

Eventually, I told them my name, and they immediately accepted me into their lives. Viola was only ten, but she seemed mature for her age. Drew seemed to be bothered that she was always following us around, but I didn't have a little sister, so I thought it was cute. Drew not so much.

The next couple of years, Drew and I were teammates in basketball and football. His parents let me carpool with them, Viola always tagging along to our practices and games, and she was pretty cool most of the time. I grew to enjoy her company and a

part of me became protective of her. Anytime Drew told her to get lost, I'd stand up for her and tell her she could stay. I knew she didn't have many friends at school, and I had started thinking of her as one of my closest friends. Drew didn't want her hanging around us, but I didn't mind. In fact, the two of us often hung out and those were the moments I longed for most. But then one summer our relationship changed, and it's never been the same.

Once I'm at the gym, I push myself harder than usual. Lifting weights is an outlet I desperately need. Ever since college, I'd been working out religiously. I needed a way to blow some steam and once I figured out that working out was a good way to release it, I became an addict.

Today, I bench an extra twenty pounds and run three miles without stopping. Sweat drips from my body, so I take a quick shower at the gym then rush home. There's too much pent up aggression inside me.

On the way home, I can't help thinking about Viola and how we'll be living in the same house for two weeks without a referee. Though it'll be fun to watch her squirm as I cross her perfectly drawn line, she's right about getting in my way. Hopefully her disdain and hatred doesn't wear on my balls. However, I'm thinking I'll make it my mission to push her to the limit. Either she really hates me or she secretly wants to fuck me. I'm pretty certain it's the latter.

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Once I arrive back to the house, I grab my gym bag and head back inside. I quickly toss my bag filled with dirty clothes on the floor and then head straight for my bedroom. I grab one of my suits from the closet and toss it on top of my bed. As much as I hate wearing them every single day, I'm determined more than ever to climb the corporate ladder and prove to myself and everyone else that I can do it.

At the firm, I'm one of the youngest employees, and it's my mission to become one of the youngest executives in the history of Crawford Marketing. I'm on track, but it's been a lot of proving myself and learning as much about the industry as I can. But I love a challenge. The job itself can sometimes be a bore, but it doesn't hurt to have the CEO's daughter suck me off every week. That alone makes me feel like I'm on top of the world.

It's Thursday and if everything goes as planned, I may take a vacation day tomorrow and start my weekend early. No reason to let Viola ruin my plans.

Crisp white shirt, black tie and suit, and dress shoes make me look like I own the place; bonus when it makes women drop to their knees in point five seconds. As I'm pouring a cup of steaming hot coffee in my travel mug, I see Viola's iPhone out of the corner of my eye sitting on the table in the living room. With a devilish grin, I grab it and place it in my breast pocket before heading back out the door.

The moment I walk to my car, Viola pulls into the driveway like a bat out of hell. She looks annoyed, or maybe that's just her regular expression, but I flash a smile at her because I know it eats at her sanity.

"Have you seen my phone?" she asks.

I place a hand in my pocket and feel her phone as I lean against the door of the Challenger. She glares at me and I look down at my watch to catch the time. Viola whispers something under her breath, obscenities probably, as she turns on her heels and walks toward the house. I don't have to be at work for another twenty minutes, so I have time to play. I put my thermos of coffee in the car, and then follow her back inside.

She's frantically pulling cushions from the couch and storming around the house like a mad woman. It's cute when she's worked up, which seems to be all the time when she's around me. I stand and watch for a few more minutes then pull it from my pocket and hold it in the air. She stops immediately and I tilt my head and look at her. She releases a deep breath of relief and walks toward me, but I place it back in my pocket. It won't be that easy, sweetheart.

"If you want it, come get it."

"Fuck off," she hisses. "I really need my phone. Give it back."

"Well we both know it's not for a booty call." I grin, but she looks less than amused. "Do you even know what that is?" The condescending tone has her nostrils flaring.

She groans and tucks her chestnut colored hair behind her ears. "Travis, I'm going to count to five and then you're going to hand me my phone or so help me God, I'll rip your balls off and shove them down your throat."

"I dare you," I whisper and take a step forward. I'm messing with her, but she doesn't think it's funny at all, which pleases me even more.

She puts her hand out with her palm flat. "One."

"I'm not a child."

“Then don’t act like one,” she fires right back.

I take another step forward.

“Two.” She raises a brow. “I’m serious, Travis.”

Another step.

“Three.” She huffs. “I’m not kidding.”

Another step.

“Four.” She releases a groan. “Stop, you’re being annoying.”

I’m uncomfortably close and she shifts on her feet.

“Please,” she whispers. She’s so calm it’s almost scary.

“Tell me why I should,” I say. I’m inches away and can smell her hair and the soap on her skin. Being this close to her is dangerous, but I can’t stop myself.

“You’re an asshole. I can’t handle you today.”

“I don’t think you’ll ever be able to handle me, princess.” I hand her the phone and she rips it out of my hand then storms out of the house. The door slams behind her, and I wonder what I did all those years ago that made her hate me so much.

I walk out and she shakes her head at me before backing out of the driveway and then stomping on the gas. I blow her a kiss and wave.

At the office, it feels like Monday morning on crack. Blake enters with a stack of file

folders and by the look on his face, I know what he's about to tell me isn't good. He sits the folders on my desk next to the work I have to get done today before I leave if I want to take the day off tomorrow.

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“Can you look over these contracts today?”

I stop typing, study the stack, and then look up at him. I’m not a fucking miracle worker. “Today?”

“There’s a last minute director’s meeting in the morning and Mr. Crawford wants a full rundown of where we are with expiration dates. They are reviewing forecasts and market predictions and want to know how many more potential clients we can sign before the next quarter. Stacy is busy and Julie called in sick.”

“What about Alyssa?” I ask.

Blake rolls his eyes and we both know she doesn’t do anything other than be the office eye candy in her super short skirts and low cut shirts. Must be nice to be the CEO’s useless daughter.

I exhale knowing I have no choice. “Fine.”

“Before the end of the day,” Blake reminds me before shutting my door behind him.

I lean back in my chair and pinch the bridge of my nose. I’ve only been here for twenty minutes and the entire day is already fucked.

My door clicks open and Alyssa struts in. She hasn’t been in my office since our arrangement began and we had agreed to meet on a different floor than our own. Her bravery is nothing more than an annoyance especially considering the extra work I’m doing is because of her. I’ll make sure to give her what she deserves the next time I’m

pumping my dick in and out of her mouth.

She leans against the door and smiles. Alyssa is sexy as hell with big blue eyes and a tight little body. She can blow me but she can't blow our cover. I lick my lips and look at her like she's lost her fucking mind.

"I've been thinking about you," she says, her tongue slowly running over her bottom lip, obviously up to no good.

I stop what I'm doing and interlock my fingers together. "Alyssa, what are you doing?"

"I want you, Travis." Her voice is sweet and sultry. "I can't wait any longer."

I swallow. I feel my dick slightly harden by her words and stand. I stalk to her and run my fingers through her hair grabbing a hold of her head and pulling her face close to mine. I hear her moan with pleasure. Alyssa is a sex kitten who loves getting off just as much as I do. She's undeniably fucking hot and the fact that she's my boss's daughter, makes my cock salute a little higher. I get high on just the rush of sneaking around as it is and there can't be anything more to us than that. And it needs to stay that way.

"If you get out of my office and don't pull shit like this again, I'll meet you in the supply room on the second floor at lunch and will make it worth every little second."

She leans forward and takes my bottom lip between her teeth and growls. "Deal."

When she leaves, I suck in a deep breath and adjust myself. Almost instantaneously, I start on the shitty busy work that Blake left for me hoping it takes me less time than he gave me. One day I'll get a project worth something, one that'll allow me to prove my worth to Crawford Marketing, but today is obviously not that day.

VIOLA

I'm pissed, and Travis King is to blame. It isn't the first time, and I'm certain it won't be the last. Flaunting himself in that perfectly tailored suit that hugs him in all the right places makes me hate him even more. My mother always told me that life wasn't fair, and seeing him dressed like that is proof. I want to gouge out his beautiful dark brown eyes. Because of him and his stupid games, I'm rushing around to make it to the other side of campus. Travis set the foundation for my entire day. Asshole!

I like to pre-read chapters before class to make sure I'm fully aware of what will be discussed. I double-check my syllabus on my phone that I fought for this morning and read while I power walk. Call me nerdy, but I don't have perfect grades by sliding by. Honestly, I could probably teach the classes I'm enrolled in because I've studied and researched the subjects so much. By some miracle, I finish the chapter and arrive to class with five minutes to spare. My shoulder is practically numb from the huge bag of books I carried across campus.

I sit down and tuck my hair behind my ears and try to calm down. My heart is racing a million miles per hour and when I close my eyes, what do I see? Travis's stupid face, smiling and I can almost hear the rough in his voice. I close my eyes tighter, take in a deep breath, and then exhale slowly. My economics professor begins to sound like the teacher from Charlie Brown and I know I need to get a grip. Finally he asks a question about supply and demand and I raise my hand to answer.

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“Correct, Ms. Fisher,” he says with a knowing smile. I smile in return, pleased with myself. I don’t mind being the Hermione Granger of the Econ department. Five points to Gryffindor.

The day flies by, and I can hardly believe I only have one more day until spring break begins. One more day until I’m stuck in the same house as Travis fucking King. I wish I could fast forward through the next two weeks and get it over with as soon as possible.

I walk across campus toward the dorms, switching shoulders when my bag becomes too heavy. As I pass the library, I hear a familiar voice call my name.

“Lola! Wait up,” Courtney yells, jogging up behind me, her blonde hair pulled into a ponytail. With every step she takes, her bracelets jingle. She’s been calling me Lola for years. Courtney complained that Viola reminded her too much of Violet, the first and only girl she’s ever dated. So she started calling me Lola instead, and it just kind of stuck.

I smile as soon as I see her. She’s breathless, and I can’t help but laugh.

“Jesus, woman. How fast do you walk? I’ve been trying to catch up with you since we left the lecture hall.”

“Oh, I’m sorry.” My brows furrow, wondering how I could’ve been so lost in my own thoughts to drown the rest of the world out. “I’ve been a little out of it today. What’s up?” We continue walking.

“I fly to Dallas on Sunday for our family reunion and won’t be back until Thursday, so we need to hang out this weekend. Will you be around?” She bumps my shoulder, knowing exactly what my plans are.

“Yeah. I’ll be staying at my brother’s house.” With a guy I absolutely loathe, I think to myself.

“With Drew and Travis?” Her inflection goes up when she says Drew’s name but she knows exactly how I feel about Travis—almost the exact opposite of how she feels about Drew—but that story’s for another time.

“Drew’s going out of town. So yeah. I’ll be living in hell for two weeks with Travis.” I pause and grit my teeth. “Just Travis.”

“You say it like it’s a bad thing.” She pinches her lips together in a knowing smirk.

“It’s the worst thing that could possibly happen to me.”

Courtney met Travis a few times in passing and instantly thought he was sex on legs, but she knows how I feel. She’s the only one that’ll listen to me bitch about his antics. My mood shifts, and it’s not a good one, and she notices.

“Come with me to Texas then. I can promise cowboys and delicious carbs.” The corners of her lips turn up.

All I can do is laugh. “I’d love to take you up on that offer but I have tons of reading to do and stupid jocks to tutor.”

“Fine,” she says, exaggerating the word. “Choose books over your best friend, again.”

Courtney is the best friend every girl wishes she had, and I'm lucky to have her as one of mine even if we don't have much in common. She's loyal, kind and is good at purposely making me laugh when I'm trying to study.

Her phone goes off and she squeals. I'm sure it's Toby, the love of her life. "I gotta go. I'll text you what time this weekend." She gives me a quick hug, then turns around and heads the other direction.

"Perfect," I say with a laugh.

The wind feels nice against my cheeks and the sun kisses my skin as I walk across the grass toward the dorms. I want to remember how this feels. Thinking about my future, the opportunities and possibilities, everything looks so bright. In less than two months, undergraduate life will be nothing more than a fond memory. Life will change and my friends and I will start new chapters.

I walk into my dorm room and find Ashley sitting on the couch, listening to music so loud that I can almost make out the words. I drop my bag by the door, giving my shoulder a much needed rest, then walk toward her waving my arms to get her attention.

"What?" she says, pulling out an ear bud.

"You're going to be deaf by the time you're thirty if you keep listening to your music that loud."

She rolls her eyes at me. "I didn't realize I was rooming with my mother."

"Shut it." I glare. "So, I have a huge favor to ask," I say sweetly, batting my eyes at her.

She puts her ear bud back in then bursts out laughing at my scowl. I place my hand on my hips and she removes the ear buds once again. “What is it? I fly home first thing tomorrow so whatever it is has to be done tonight.”

“I really, really, really need help carrying my boxes and bags over to Drew’s house. I’ll even buy Starbucks on the way. Venti. Extra shots. The whole menu if you want.”

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Her eyes widen. “You’re taking that much with you?”

“Just the essentials. Clothes, my Harry Potter collection, textbooks, and a dozen other books I want to read over break.”

She chuckles, knowing I’m taking way more than just my necessary essentials.

“I don’t want to have to do more than one trip, so that’s why I need your help.” I smile sweetly.

She sighs. “Fine, but I have to run across campus and pick up some paperwork from the lab first, but it won’t take more than ten minutes. Plus, you know I’m a sucker for free coffee,” Ashley says, her lips pulling together in a smirk. “I’ve decided you’re getting me a Trenta instead, by the way.”

“I wouldn’t expect anything less.”

“That’s because you play to my weaknesses.”

“Only because you’re the best roommate ever. But please don’t tell the other ones I said that.”

She gives me a thumbs up before putting the ear buds back in and rocking out to some song I can’t make out because the beat is too fast and the lyrics are jumbling together. I plop down on the couch next to her and she moves her feet so I have more room. I lay my head back and stare at the ceiling until my vision blurs then I close my eyes. I hardly slept a wink last night and it’s beginning to catch up with me.

My five-minute cat nap is interrupted when my phone goes off. It's a message from Drew. You know you're the best little sister in the entire world right?

Clearly, Drew needs a favor, and after hearing he's leaving this weekend, I'm not sure I feel like being much help. Actually when I think back on it, that was the restart of all of this drama with Travis. I had been able to avoid him otherwise.

What do you want? I text back, suspicious.

It beeps seconds later. I want you to know how much I love you and tell you how you're the greatest and my most favorite sister ever.

I sit up on the couch and groan. I'm your only sister. So spill it.

Well, see Travis texted me and asked if I could bring him lunch again today because he's super busy, but I'm stuck at work and can't leave. He swears he won't ask again for the rest of the year.

I immediately see red and my fingers can't fly across the screen fast enough.

NOT FUCKING HAPPENING! HE CAN STARVE FOR ALL I CARE!

For someone who has his shit together, he needs to plan better. Bring a sandwich, make a protein shake, for fuck's sake, take-out is always an option.

C'mon sis. It's totally not like you to be like that when people are hungry. I sigh and close my eyes. Why must he do this to me?

It's not happening, Drew. The sob story won't work today. He can do delivery. And don't ask me again. I know it's harsh, but I don't care.

Would Travis bring me lunch if I were starving and couldn't leave? After I sit for a second, I feel a little guilty because even though I hate his guts and he doesn't really care for mine, he would do it for me. I wait a few minutes then send a text back to Drew. Fine. He's getting the most fattening meal I can buy or worse.

Thanks sis. I knew I could count on you. Love you! I'm tempted to text some colorful things back to him, but instead I get up, walk to the kitchen and throw something together, and then grab my car keys.

While I walk toward my car, I ask myself what the hell is wrong with me. Something inside tells me I should've stuck with my original response.

CHAPTER FOUR

TRAVIS

File folders are messily stacked on my desk, which is driving me fucking insane. But I'm more annoyed I have to work through lunch. Or rather, my 'lunch' with Alyssa.

Blake dumping his workload on me is a dick move. He's threatened by the progress I've made since I started. He's supposed to want me to do well, but I think if he thinks I do too well, I'll end up taking his job. So he pretends to set me up for success when he's waiting for me to fail. He might be right about me taking his job if he continues pulling this shit on me.

I'm lost in reading the reports when I hear my office door creak open. I pop my head up to see Alyssa.

I'm so not in the mood for her neediness right now.

"Yes?" I ask without looking directly at her. "I'm busy."

“You stood me up,” she states, her tone sharp.

“Yeah, well...” I look up and see she’s standing directly in front of my desk, her tits on display. I swallow. “I’m on a tight deadline.”

“Too bad...” Her voice laced with seduction. “I could help you unwind.”

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I'm tempted, fuck, I really am. But Blake will murder me if I don't get this shit done.

"Not today, Alyssa," I say, groaning at my own words. "I'll make it up to you," I promise, flashing a wink at her.

"Well..." She rounds the desk, toward me. I spin in my chair and catch her between my legs. "That doesn't mean I can't give you a little motivation..." She kneels down in her tight skirt and runs a finger along my thigh. "You won't even know I'm here." She winks, and I know she's so full of shit, but I'm at a loss for words the moment she wraps her hand around me through my dress pants. She slides her knees along the floor, gliding my chair back toward my desk. She kneels lower, hiding herself under the desk and begins pulling at my belt and zipper.

"Alyssa..." I warn, grabbing her elbow. "We can't..."

"Shh," she hisses. "Get to work, Mr. King." I hear the amusement in her tone, and I can no longer deny that mouth of hers.

I try to straighten in my chair and finish reading the reports, but it's useless. There's absolutely no way I can concentrate on anything other than the wetness of her mouth and how it feels wrapped around my dick. The moment she puts a hand around me and begins stroking, the room begins to blur.

"Jesus, Alyssa..." I try to even my breathing. "I can't focus."

She removes her mouth, but continues moving her hand up and down. "What do you need help with, baby? Maybe I can talk you through it." Talk me through it? Is she

fucking kidding?

“I don’t think so...” I groan, her tongue gliding along the tip and teasing every single nerve in my body. “Fuck.”

I ball my hands into fists, trying to resist the urge to curl my fingers in her hair and pull her head back so she looks up at me when I come in her hot little mouth. Right as I’m on the edge of filling her throat, my phone beeps with Betty on the intercom.

“You have a visitor, Travis.”

Are you fucking kidding me?

“Uh...” I exhale, trying to catch my breath. “Not now. I’m busy.”

“It’s your lunch, asshole.” I hear Viola’s voice on the other end. Fuck, this can’t be good.

“I’ll be right there,” I say, pulling away from Alyssa.

“What are you doing?” she whines, licking her lips.

“You need to leave.”

“Seriously?” She stands, adjusting her skirt and top. “I cut out early on a budget meeting to come see you and you kick me out before I’m even done?” She cocks a brow, and I know she’s pissed.

I begin pushing her out the door. “Never come in here again. We meet somewhere else,” I remind her of the rules. “You’ll get me fired.”

She tilts her head, rubbing a hand on my cheek. “Maybe this’ll teach you to stand me up.” She winks, grabbing the door handle and letting herself out.

I sigh in relief, buttoning my suit jacket. I’m about to go meet Viola at the receptionist’s desk, when I see her coming this way.

Oh, fucking hell.

“What part of ‘I’ll be right there’ got lost in translation?” I ask, knowing it’ll piss her off even more.

“Don’t start with me. I brought you your damn lunch.” She throws a brown bag at me.

“Would it kill you to be polite?” I tease, knowing asking Drew would lead to Viola at my office again.

Her eyes graze down my body and land on my groin. “Would it kill you to stop screwing every bimbo you come across?”

I glance down and see the tent I’m sporting.

“It would actually.”

She rolls her eyes and turns back toward reception. “I may or may not have added a little special ingredient in your sandwich. Enjoy the extra saliva,” she calls back over her shoulder.

I smirk. “I always do!”

She flips me the bird and turns for the elevators.

I laugh and shake my head. Fighting with Viola is the best foreplay I've had in a long time.

Once I'm seated back at my desk, I open up the brown bag and grab the sandwich out of the Ziploc bag. It's lumpy, and I'm even more hesitant to eat it.

What the hell?

I peel back one side of the sandwich and see she's crushed up hot Cheetos on top of peanut butter, pickles, and sunflower seeds. It looks just as gross as it sounds.

But fuck it, I'm starving so I take a bite anyway.

Blake storms in promptly at four p.m. and asks if I have everything finished. Somehow I just managed to complete the review minutes before he came in, so I proudly hand it over to him.

"All done, sir," I say, giving him a cocky salute.

"Really?" He looks impressed, but I can tell by the way his jaw ticks that he was banking on me failing.

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“Yup. It’s not easy having beauty and brains, but someone’s got to do it.”

“You’re full of shit.”

I laugh and shake my head. “Nah, man. It’s all there. Nearly killed myself to do it, but I didn’t want to let you down.”

“Or you wanted to kiss Mr. Crawford’s ass,” I hear him mumble, and I’m starting to sense some regret in his tone. “Okay, well, I’ll let the boss look it over and let you know how it goes.”

“Great.” I interlock my fingers and crack my knuckles. “Does that mean I can take a vacation day tomorrow?”

“Uh, sure.” I hear the hesitation in his voice, but I don’t question it. “I’ll let Mr. Crawford know.”

I begin packing up my stuff, eager to get the hell out of there. “Thanks, man. See you Monday.”

I have five-and-a-half feet of fury waiting to curse me out back home. And this time, I might actually enjoy it.

Once I’m home, I start unbuttoning my shirt and ripping my belt off. I can’t stand being in these clothes any longer than necessary. I don’t see or hear Viola anywhere, although her car is parked in the driveway, so I pull my shirt off and pull my pants down before tossing them on the arm of the couch.

I walk to the kitchen and pull open the fridge to look for a beer. Once I find one, I twist off the cap and slam the door shut again. Just as I take a swig, a girl walks in, who is not Viola and stops frozen in her tracks.

“Who are you?” I ask, fully aware I’m down to my boxers. Her eyes glass over before finally blinking and looking back up to my eyes. “Did you hear me?”

She swallows. “Yes, sorry. You just scared the shit out of me. Viola said her brother wasn’t home.”

“I’m not her brother.” I take another swig, roaming my eyes down her petite little body. “I’m the roommate, Travis.” I say, taking a step toward her. “You must be a friend of Viola’s?”

Before she can answer, I hear Viola stomping toward us. “Don’t touch him, Ash. You’ll catch an STD.”

Her eyes widen, and I’m pretty sure I see her friend take a tiny step back.

“I’m surprised you even know what an STD is, considering you’re a virgin and all.” I flash a wink at her when her friend isn’t looking.

She huffs. “I’m not a vir—gah, never mind. Fuck off, Travis. And put some damn clothes on.”

“I don’t think your friend minds.” I turn and smile at her. “Do you?”

“Uh...I...” she stammers, and a part of me feels bad I’ve put her in the middle.

“Didn’t think so.” I grin, walking past her toward Viola. “Looks like you’re in the minority, princess.”

I sit on the couch and click on the TV. I hear Viola speaking to her friend as they finish bringing in all of her shit. I glance back and see bags lining the floor.

“You realize you’re only staying here for a couple weeks, right?” I shout. “No need to nerd up the place with all your Harry Potter books and capes. Wouldn’t impress my guests.”

“You’re an idiot,” she snaps. “And since when did you consider your one-night stands ‘guests’?”

I turn fully, facing her. Her cheeks are flushed, and I know it’s killing her that she has to be here alone with me. “You want to see how well I treat my guests?” I flash a crooked smile, knowing it’ll rile her right up.

“I wouldn’t let my worst enemy near you,” she fires back, narrowing her eyes at me. Fuck, she’s hot when she gets super pissed. All the more to push her buttons.

I tsk. “If you could keep them away that is...”

I turn back around just as she tells her friend it’s time to go. She whispers a few curse words, and I know this is going to be a lot more fun than I expected.

VIOLA

I can’t do this.

I can’t go back in there and be alone with him for the next two weeks.

But what other choice do you have? I ask myself. I don’t. I’m not going to stay with my Mom or my Dad. I wouldn’t go back even if there was a zombie apocalypse.

Guess I'm just going to have to suffer it out. But that doesn't mean I can't be drunk while doing so.

"Listen, Travis," I say immediately as I walk back inside the house. "There needs to be some house rules if you plan on torturing me while I'm here."

"Most girls don't mind the foreplay beforehand, but if you insist..."

"Ew, shut up. That's number one."

"What?"

"No more sexual innuendos. No talking about your victims, either."

He smiles.

"And clothes. Put some damn clothes on."

His smile gets wider. "Anything else, princess?"

I groan. "No bringing them over either. Not while I'm here."

"Yeah, right. This is my house, Viola."

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“Well, I don’t want to hear your nasty-charades while I’m trying to study.”

“Put some music on,” he suggests, being difficult.

“I don’t want to walk out to some half naked girl while I’m trying to eat breakfast either.”

“Okay, so no sleepovers. That works much better for me anyway.” He shrugs.

God, he’s relentless.

“Whatever. If you’re having dates over, then so am I.”

He snorts. And then he laughs. The motherfucker laughs.

“What’s funny?”

“Oh, I’m sorry. Were you not telling a joke?”

“Screw you, Travis.” I grab one of my bags and throw it over my shoulder. Two can play this game.

After unpacking and organizing my things in Drew’s room, I grab my shower kit and some extra clothes. I plan to hide out in bed and study for my last day of class before break. I have exams in two of my classes and although I’ve been studying for them all week, I’ll use any excuse to avoid Travis.

When I finish rinsing my hair and body, I turn off the shower and squeeze the excess water from the ends of my hair. I pull the curtain back, reaching for my towels, and gasp when I realize they're gone.

What in the hell?

I look around and don't see my towels or any of my clothes, not even the dirty ones. Argh! Fucking Travis.

I step on the floor mat and dry the bottoms of my feet before walking toward the door and slightly open it.

"Travis!" I scream, covering myself with the door from the neck down. "Travis King!" I shout again and he finally comes into sight.

"Yes, princess?" He asks in a smooth, calm voice. He takes another step toward me.

"Where the hell are my clothes?"

His lips turn down. "How should I know?"

My eyes narrow at him. "Quit playing, asshole. Bring me my towels and clothes now!"

"And uh...what if I don't?" he challenges, crossing his arms over his broad chest and showing off his ripped biceps.

"I swear to God, Travis," I threaten. "I'll make you wish you never met me."

He grins, pleased with how riled up he's making me. "What did you expect, V?" He crosses his arms. "You made me a delicious sandwich, and I just wanted to repay

you.” He presses his palm to his chest, faking his sincerity.

I groan, my cheeks burning with anger. I know I’m not going to win this one.

Either I wait in here until he goes to bed or leaves the house, or I walk out butt naked, giving Travis King exactly what he wants—humiliation at my expense.

I think on it a moment, anxiety of wasting time in here instead of looking over my notes for International Finance Management. I mean, it’s not like he hasn’t seen a woman naked before. I just hadn’t planned on him seeing me naked.

“Well, V...” He taunts. “What’s it going to be?”

He knows I hate it when he calls me that. My body is shivering cold but my insides are fired up, boiling.

“My name isn’t V,” I warn. “For the hundredth time.”

“I think it’s a very fitting nickname considering...”

“I’m not a virgin!” I snap out, seething, knowing he was about to say it. That’s it. I’m walking out. I’m not listening to him anymore!

“Well so you say but—” His words stop as soon as I whip the door open and expose myself. His eyes widen, although he tries to act unaffected.

“Fuck you, Travis.” I walk past him, flipping him my favorite finger, and head down the hallway to Drew’s room.

CHAPTER FIVE

TRAVIS

Viola Fisher, President of Prudeville and Queen Perfectionist, has several tattoos, one on her arm and another on her thigh that I couldn't make out because she was hustling down the hallway. My eyes widen, both shocked and impressed, and every comeback I had waiting for her vanished with a single look. I'm not usually at a loss for words, especially when it comes to rattling Viola, but all I can do is blink. As I stand paralyzed by the door, Viola prances down the hallway with water dripping down her perfect bare body as she flips me off.

She pauses in the doorway, not yet walking all the way through, and makes direct eye contact with me. "It's rude to stare," she bites out, her lips pinching together in a challenge; the slightest twitch depicts an evil grin forming.

I swallow, seemingly unaffected, but I won't give her the pleasure of knowing that.

"Trust me, princess. Nothing I haven't seen before." I hold my stance, both feet planted firmly on the floor.

"You'd be much more believable if you wiped the drool from your chin first," she remarks before taking another step and slamming the door behind her.

As the door clicks shut, I wipe my mouth and chin with the back of my hand. Dammit, Viola. She has my cock all kinds of confused, because if I didn't know any better, she enjoyed that just as much as I had. It responded to her more than I'd like to admit, but I can't fault it for knowing a sweet little thing like her. I've seen Viola in swim suits plenty when we were younger, but it's been years since we've all gone swimming together. Clothes don't do justice for that girl's curves. She has a small dimple in her lower back, right above her ass—which is perfectly round and asking to be spanked. Her tits nearly stopped me in my tracks, so perky and taut. Her pink buds were hard at attention.

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Fuck me. Now I'm completely hard. Standing in the hallway. Thinking about Viola Fisher's bare curves and how it would feel to palm those tits of hers.

Drew pops into my head, knowing he would fiercely disapprove. Not because I'm not a good guy—let's face it, I'm a catch—but because he knows my history and he knows his sister. Nothing good would come of it. But I can't help thinking about the possibility of shutting her smart mouth up once and for all.

Perhaps behind the textbooks and smart mouth, Viola Fisher has a secret wild side. A side I bring out in her, and I'm desperate to see it again. As I stand there, staring at her wet footprints down the hall, I think of my next move. If she wants to play, I'm all in.

I head to the kitchen and immediately reach for a shot glass in the cupboard. The images of her walking out of the bathroom, all gutsy and hot, are haunting me. She's absolutely breathtaking and now she's found a way to pay me back for all those crass remarks I've said to her—not that I can really blame her.

I take the bottle of tequila from the freezer and pour myself a shot. I tilt my head back, pour the liquid gold in, and choke the burning down my throat until it settles in my chest.

Knowing Viola and her hatred for me, I know this means war. But I wonder if I really know Viola at all anymore. When we were kids I knew everything about her, but now I clearly have a lot more to learn.

The Viola I grew up with loved daisies and putting peanut butter on everything. Her

favorite season was fall so she could jump into the huge piles of leaves. Before all of her adult teeth came in, whenever she smiled, her top teeth would rest on top of her lower lip, which I, of course, teased her about.

I also know that certain things about her will never change. Whenever she really, wholeheartedly laughs, it's so infectious that a whole room cracks up with her. I know she has freckles sprinkled across her shoulders and a mole on her left shoulder blade. Though she prides herself on being a know-it-all, sexual jokes tend to go right over her head. When we were younger, she used to throw punches like a boy and could run faster than Drew and me. But what about now? Who is Viola Fisher outside of her books and geeky Harry Potter references?

It drives me fucking insane that I genuinely want to know. I pour another shot because there's nothing better than self-sabotage. I hear footsteps behind me and turn to see Viola in a tank top and black leggings. Her wet hair is pulled up into a messy bun, her cheeks flushed. I lean up against the counter and raise an eyebrow at her.

"Hardly recognize you with clothes on," I quip.

"Shove it, asshole." She walks past me and opens the fridge and grabs a bottle of water. She opens the top and takes a huge drink then places it on the counter. She goes quiet, but then after a moment, she stands on her tiptoes and reaches for a shot glass from the cabinet. Her body is so close to mine that I can smell her fresh, clean scent. She smells like strawberries and fresh rain. I watch her every move as she slides the tequila bottle closer to her, unscrews the top, and pours herself a shot.

"Shit, that burns." She gasps for air, slamming the glass down on the counter.

"Have you ever been drunk before?" I find myself asking.

She shoots daggers at me, her fingers still wrapped around the glass. "Yes, I've had

alcohol before.” She rolls her eyes.

“That’s not what I asked.”

“Wait,” she says dramatically, her jaw dropping. “Is this stuff magically supposed to make my panties fly off while I trip and fall on your dick?” Her expression is completely serious, although I’m ninety percent sure she’s fucking with me.

“Well, I wouldn’t say fly off...” I tilt the corner of my lips up, enjoying this little battle we have going on. “But if you prefer being on top, I’m all about it,” I say, smugly, knowing it’s going to boil her blood.

She makes a gagging noise and steps away. “In your dreams, King. I don’t need to fake an orgasm to know you’re all talk.”

“Whoa, whoa, whoa...” I go on the defense, catching up to her when she walks to the living room. “There is no way in hell a girl has ever faked it with me. I have a one-hundred percent satisfaction guarantee.” I know I sound like a tool, but Viola is making me stumble on my own thoughts.

She bursts out laughing, shaking her head at me as she grabs the TV remote.

“I knew you were arrogant, but Christ.”

“What?” I ask.

“Do you have a full refund policy, too? Get an STD, all panties returned and burned.”

“I’ve never had any complaints,” I say, crossing my arms and leaning against the wall so I can study her features.

“I’m sure.” She rolls her eyes, flipping through the channels.

“Have you ever had one?”

“Had what?” she asks, avoiding eye contact with me.

I curl my lips up. “An orgasm.”

I watch as her fingers lose their grip on the remote and it falls to the floor. “I’m not answering that!” she shouts, reaching for the remote again.

“Why not?” I shrug. “It’s a valid question.”

“It’s none of your damn business.” She hisses.

I chuckle. “That’s a no.”

“No it isn’t.”

“Then just answer the damn question.” I groan.

She slams the remote down and stalks toward me, seething. “Fuck off.”

I smile as I watch her walk back down the hall. Now that’s the Viola I know.

Viola hides out in Drew’s room most of the night, which is just fine by me. It’s Day 1 alone with her, and I’m already desperate to go out and drink away all the memories of her walking wet and naked down my hallway.

She finally resurfaces, walking straight to the kitchen and ignoring me like the priss she is.

“I thought you’d be all tucked into bed by now.”

“Believe it or not, I need to eat,” she snaps, opening the fridge door.

“Work up an appetite in there?” I ask, pinching my lips together.

“Do you have an off button?”

“Actually...”

“Never mind,” she quickly spits out. “Forget I asked.” She groans, knowing exactly where I was about to take it.

Trying to get under her skin as best I can, I ask in my best conversational tone, “So can you give yourself an orgasm?”

She gasps as her eyes widen in shock. “Do you just say the first thing that comes to your teeny tiny brain?”

“Hasn’t let me down yet.” I shrug. She rolls her eyes at me, and I laugh. “Want me to make you something for dinner?”

“No,” she says on instinct. “I don’t want your hands anywhere near what goes into my mouth.”

She closes her eyes and immediately catches herself, but it’s too late.

“Well, I’ve never been told that before, but hey, there’s a first for everything,” I say nonchalantly. I have to say it. “However, whenever I offer to cook for a girl, we usually skip the dinner portion of the night and go right for dessert.”

“It doesn’t count if you have to drug them,” she retorts automatically. Christ, this girl has a lot of pent-up aggression. I could offer to help her with that, but I have a feeling it would end with her knee in my junk and me collapsing to the ground.

She continues busying herself in the kitchen, pretending I’m invisible. I guess I deserve that, but I’m not about to let her ruin my night.

As if on cue, my phone rings on the counter between us and before I can grab it, she glances down at it and frowns.

“Sarah From The Bar?” she asks, cocking one brow up in disdain. “Classy.”

“Don’t be jealous, princess. I have a nickname for you too.” I smile wide, knowing she’ll know exactly what I mean. V the Virgin.

“Is it under Never in a Million Fucking Years?”

I press a hand to my chest, as if her words actually hurt me. “Not even in a million years?”

“Grow up, asshole.” She takes her PB&J sandwich and twists around me, walking out of the kitchen.

I answer my phone before Viola’s out of hearing distance. “Hey, baby.”

“I’m in the area tonight. Was thinking about stopping over. Is that okay?” Her loud moans and perky ass immediately come to mind.

“Yeah, baby. Of course. Can’t wait to see you.”

“Think...short skirt, low cut top, no panties...” she drawls out in a smooth voice.

“Even better.” I grin, getting hard just thinking about how much fun we had last time.

“I’ll be there soon. I’m not too far away,” Sarah says before we hang up.

Viola peeks her head around the corner, obviously having listened to my whole conversation, and glares at me. If looks could kill, I’d be six feet under.

“What?” I say, smiling.

She rounds the corner and comes at me as if she’s going to knock me out.

“What? Really?” She seethes. “It’s only been a few hours and you’re already breaking the house rules! I have two tests tomorrow. I don’t need your sexcapades keeping me up all night.”

“I’m flattered you think I can go all night, but...”

“No. Guests. In. The. House.” Her stance is fierce, her body boiling. “Got it?”

I take a step closer, feeling the warmth of her skin radiate near mine.

I've put up with enough of her shit for one night. "We didn't agree on anything," I hiss, my voice dropping low. My eyes glance down and watch her breast rise and fall with each breath she takes, her pulse rapidly beating in her neck. She's seriously worked up.

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“Being here with you is fucking torture.” She groans.

“Yeah, well, you’re no picnic either, princess,” I tell her, not letting her win this round.

“God, I can’t believe I have to survive two weeks here. I’d rather sleep in my car than breathe the same air as you.”

“Don’t let the door hit you on your perky little ass on the way out, then.” I cross my arms over my chest and run my tongue along my bottom lip. She intently watches me. Her eyes dart from my eyes to my mouth, daring me to cross that line. I move in closer to her, testing her. She doesn’t budge; my lips are so close to hers that if I moved another inch, they’d touch.

The warmth of her breath brushes against my cheek and for a moment, I almost pull her to my chest and give in to what her body’s begging for. It’d be so easy to run my fingers through her hair and pull her lips close to mine. I’d be lying if I said I’d never thought about it. She’s my best friend’s little sister, of course I have. She’s always been the forbidden fruit, the girl I’m not supposed to want. Over the course of pissing her off and pushing her away, she’s grown to hate me more than I believed possible. I hear her breath catch as our bodies inch closer, almost as if she’s anticipating it. I have her under my spell, whether or not she’ll ever admit it, but I won’t give Viola anything until she begs for it.

I take a step back, flashing a wide, knowing grin. She releases a deep groan, narrows her eyes at me, and storms off back to Drew’s room. She doesn’t slam the door this time, and I’m relieved to finally have some space from her, even if I’ll be thinking

about her lips, her perky tits, and the way she shimmied her bare ass in front of me for a long, long time.

VIOLA

I must have a brain tumor or something because it felt like Travis was almost, maybe about to kiss me.

Ha! That's insane.

The last time I fell for his smooth ways, he broke my young, fragile heart. No way am I letting myself go down that path again. I might've only been twelve at the time, but it's not exactly something you just get over. I wasn't just a girl crushing on her older brother's best friend. He didn't treat me like a little kid. He actually made me feel special.

I'll never forget the time Drew called me stupid in front of his friends. It made me so mad I ran to the backyard and cried my eyes out. Travis left them and sat next to me as I ripped flowers from the ground. He made everything seem simple, easy even, as he wiped my tears away. He grabbed my hand, pulling me to the ground with him, and we looked up at the clouds. I was more important than his friends and video games. That's when Travis King wasn't full of himself and preoccupied with bagging every hot girl he meets. He was a boy with manners, who always seemed to say the right things to me.

I was a naive little girl. I know that now. But when you watch your Prince Charming tap every other girl around you— including your best friend since second grade— it's easy to believe something must be wrong with you when he never looks your way.

I thought, maybe if I was smarter. Or skinnier. Or had bigger boobs and longer legs. If I was just something more, he'd see me as more than just his friend's kid sister.

So basically, I hated myself all through middle school and hated him even more through high school. He toyed with my self-esteem and I grew to hate him for that, too.

I knew all of that stuff was petty. It was immature and lame, but now after all the years of feeling rejected, I can't stand being around him. He's a constant reminder that I'll never be good enough. He goes out of his way to get under my skin, and I refuse to tolerate it—even if he still affects me in ways I wished he didn't.

Having to spend the next two weeks alone in a house with Travis King is going to be pure torture. Even though I'd been able to avoid him once he and Drew moved off to college, I only had to tolerate him when I drove up to visit Drew. Then I got a full scholarship offer from the same college and everything changed again. Being close to Drew was important to me: My parents were divorced, neither of their houses felt like a home, my roommate threw weekend keggers, and I just needed somewhere to hide out and study. Aside from sleeping at the school library, Drew and Travis' house was my only option. On weekends Travis was gone, it became my sanctuary. But of course, he'd return and ruin it all.

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After heading back to Drew's room, I fold down the blankets on the bed and slide under the covers. I chuckle when I feel the smooth fabric because I know Drew really did change the sheets for me.

I can't concentrate at all. My book is flagged with important chapters for my test tomorrow and I've already been through the study guide three different times. I have it memorized verbatim. I try to read the words but they seem to bleed off the pages. I rest my book on my chest and replay every moment from the bathroom to the living room.

Heat rushes to my cheeks as I realize Travis saw my bare ass. Oh my God. I can't help but shake my head at my bravery because I'm not really sure where it came from. I hope the image of my best assets burns into his retinas. Take that, King Douche.

The doorbell rings and my heart drops. It's Travis' victim for the night, and as much as I hate to admit, a pang of jealousy rushes through me. She laughs at something and sounds like a dying hyena. I roll my eyes, thinking about how she must believe she has a chance at changing him. He's obviously into it just for the sex—just like every other girl he hooks up with—and she's probably stupid enough to think it'll lead to something more.

Travis doesn't do relationships, lady. Run for the hills. I roll my eyes, the sound of her high-pitched giggle grating on my nerves. The low rumble of his voice rings in my ear but I can't quite make out what he's saying. It's followed by the click of his bedroom door, which is next to Drew's.

I seriously cannot lay here as he fucks some skank next door. The walls are so thin, I can hear everything. After another minute, her muffled moans become more audible and it makes me physically ill.

Fuck this.

And fuck Travis King.

I throw the blankets off my body and immediately start pacing the room. I shake my head and try to think of something. Travis started this little game and I'm not backing down. He wants to play and it's on.

I step out of Drew's room and knock on Travis' door. I hear the bimbo still giggling and Travis speaking, so I bang my fist even harder.

"Go away!" he shouts and my blood boils even more. He doesn't want to follow the rules of the game, then fine. I'll bite.

"Goddammit, Travis! Are you sneaking around behind my back again?" I jiggle the doorknob, threatening to walk in.

"What the hell?" I hear the woman ask.

"It's my roommate's little sister," Travis responds, as if that'd be explanation enough for her. I hate how he insinuates the word 'little', as if I'm less of a woman. She'll figure it out since I'm about to go all crazy ex-girlfriend on his ass.

I twist the knob and let myself in. They're both naked, just a thin sheet covering them.

"I thought we would be alone tonight?" She looks to Travis confused but he's staring

at me, studying my body from head to toe, knowing how it aggravates me when he looks at me like that. He doesn't acknowledge she spoke and actually ignores the question completely. I almost feel bad for interrupting but Travis doesn't seem to mind as he smirks and places his hands behind his head, almost as if he's enjoying the scene. This is not going how I imagined, but he has no idea what evil plan I have in store. I suck in a deep breath with hopes to adlib an Oscar-worthy performance.

"Actually, I'm his girlfriend," I explain, my eyes watering right on schedule. "I can't believe you're doing this to me again, Travis! How could you?" I scream, my face heating up. Thank god for that semester of theater courses I took freshman year before I changed to business.

I know I'm not as good as I was back then, but I must be believable enough since Sarah From The Bar jumps up and grabs her clothes. I suck in a deep breath, not standing down, and the smirk that covered his face just a few moments before is replaced with a look of disbelief as Sarah puts on her skank suit. His jaw clenches and I know this can't be good, but I'm too caught up in reveling in victory—booty call has officially been cancelled.

"Tonight was obviously a mistake," Sarah rushes out in a panic. I barely have enough time to shift out of her way as she rushes past me. Travis doesn't try to explain the truth and he sure as hell doesn't chase after her, though I'm sure he'll be able to smooth it over without any issue. It's just an advantage of being Travis King.

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Travis sits up calmly and crosses his arms over his chest, staring me down as if he's asking if I'm finished. It's more frightening because he isn't saying a word. This is the calm before the storm but nothing can stop the evil smile creeping across my face. I've finally managed to push his buttons and it's about damn time. I was beginning to believe nothing I did bothered him.

He stands up, completely naked, and heat rushes to my cheeks. Travis gives no fucks because his body is perfect, and he has the most beautiful man-ass I've ever seen. Muscles cascade down his sun-kissed back, and I pull my lips into my mouth to hold back any audible sound that might try to escape. He slowly pulls the jogging pants to his waist and the band snaps to his body, bringing me back to reality. As much as I want to run away, I stand my ground. I'm so pumped up on adrenaline right now, I actually feel like I could take him and all of his muscles.

"Girlfriend? I don't think so, princess. I can't believe that's the best you have." The frustration and annoyance in his voice isn't lost on me.

When I realize he's still moving toward me, I begin backing up, until my back touches the wall across from his bedroom door. He rushes through the doorway and for a split second I think about running to Drew's room and locking the door, but I don't. My traitorous body freezes.

His eyes go dark, and I know he's just as pissed as I am. When I feel the hardness tucked in his pants graze along my stomach, I hold back a gasp. In a split second, Travis grabs both my wrists and pins them above my head against the wall. He arches his hips, pressing harder against me, making it very evident what he's so worked up about.

I tilt my head, his mouth so close to mine that I can hardly breathe. I'm being suffocated by Travis King, and I am so bespelled that I cannot move.

I look up into his golden brown eyes and he's studying my reaction, probably calculating my next move. I know he's angry, but there's something else in his gaze that I can't make out.

"Tell me something, V," he says in a husky tone. His lips don't touch mine, but he's dangerously close, being the asshole that he's always been, teasing and tempting me with every breath he takes. I want to struggle and demand that he never call me that again, but he's stolen my voice and my words, along with my mind. The control he has over me at this very moment is pathetic. My heart is racing, and I can smell him, an unmistakable fragrance that I wish I didn't know so well. It's sweet and manly and all Travis, but mixed with another woman's perfume nearly knocks me right off my feet.

I ball my fists because I don't know whether to love or hate what's happening. Too many emotions swirl together and time feels like it's frozen as he overpowers me. If he doesn't let go, I'll kick him in the balls and watch him fall to his knees. Back on the playground I was known for being a ballbuster and he, out of anyone, should know better. Instead of releasing me, Travis tightens his grip, and I let out an agitated grunt as I try to break free from him.

"What's the game plan, Travis? Are you going to keep me captive all night?" I roll my eyes and shake my head, trying not to meet his eyes.

"That's a good idea." He holds me hostage with one hand and brushes the other against the light stubble that graces his strong jaw. "Let me think about it for a while longer."

"You're such an asshole," I mumble, forcing my eyes closed because I don't want to

look at him anymore. My body is betraying me. I try to pretend I'm somewhere else, where I can't smell or feel the warmth of Travis's skin against mine.

"Now that my night's been ruined, what am I going to do?" He searches my face, waiting for me to flinch, because usually closeness like this activates my flight-or-fight instinct, especially when it comes to Travis King. But I refuse to let him know it's becoming uncomfortable and awkward. I try to relax as best I can, because this could go on all night. And if I know Travis, it will. The man doesn't half-ass anything.

"I'm just doing her a favor. I've heard crabs are a bitch. The rash and itch." My shoulders rise and fall, seemingly unaffected by the position he's put us in. "You should know."

He actually cracks a smile. "You'd think with how much you talk about my dick, you'd ridden it before."

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“You’re so vile,” I hiss, narrowing my eyes at him.

He tugs his bottom lip and runs his perfect teeth across the plumpness. It’s a pity those features are being wasted on such an asshole of a man. If I didn’t hate him as much as I do, those lips might actually be considered kissable. He leans in, his mouth too close for comfort and whispers in my ear. “You have no idea just how vile I can be.”

I grit my teeth and channel all the pent-up aggression I have toward him. As my body tightens, I twist my wrists, trying to loosen the grip he has on me. Strands of my hair start falling from my messy bun, and I can feel my chest and neck flushing.

I know I must look ridiculous. Adrenaline rushes through my veins as I try to gain control. After struggling for what feels like minutes, I drop my legs from under my body. If he wants to keep me here, he’ll have to hold me up with those big muscles he likes to flaunt around. But he doesn’t allow me to dangle for too long. Travis releases me, but on his terms— when he’s ready—and my ass hits the floor with a loud thump.

“Aww, little V is all worked up.” He stands over me with a confident smirk that I’m tempted to slap off.

I pull myself up on my feet and push a finger to his chest. “Touch me like that again and it’ll be the last.”

“Are you sure you’d want that, princess?” He’s not at all affected by my threat and it pisses me off even more.

“Fuck you,” I hiss.

“Now you’re talking about fucking,” he says with amusement in his tone. “All these mixed signals are getting confusing.” He glances down my body and pauses on my nipples that are so hard they could etch glass.

Quickly, I cross my arms but it’s way too late; they’ve already given me away.

He slowly lingers over my curves, and I realize every insecurity I have is on display for him to judge. As a sarcastic laugh escapes him, somehow I know it’s at my expense.

With nostrils flaring, I try to speak in the calmest voice I can as he moves toward the doorway of his bedroom. My hands find their way to my hips because I’m not standing down. Not this time. Not ever.

“This is war, King.”

“Game on, princess,” he says before slamming the door in my face.

CHAPTER SIX

TRAVIS

Viola has me so fired up, I hit the gym extra hard Friday morning. Since I’m off work, I don’t have to rush out and can do an extra three miles on the treadmill. Maybe that’ll get my mind off her.

I focus on the TV screen in front of me, but no matter how much I fight it, memories of her invade my mind.

It was the first summer I met Viola and Drew and they had immediately made me feel welcomed into their home. Their parents often invited me to stay for dinner, but I always felt too nervous to accept until I finally ran out of excuses. I knew my parents wouldn't mind—or even notice—so finally I agreed to stay one night.

Viola sat across the table from me, her brown hair pulled back in pigtails. She twirled one around her fingers and nervously chewed on her lip. Drew sat next to me, tapping his foot against the table leg until his father cleared his throat to stop him.

“Dinner’s just about ready,” their mom announced from the kitchen.

“Do you need help, sweetheart?” Mr. Fisher called from the table.

Moments later, Mrs. Fisher walked through the swing door, carrying a platter of ribs.

“No thanks, darling.”

I watched them together as Mr. Fisher took the platter from her hands and placed it in the middle of the table. He gripped her chin and placed a quick kiss on her lips, thanking her for preparing such a wonderful meal. The love they shared was evident, but I'd never witnessed it in my own home.

Was this what a family was supposed to look like?

“Stop sucking face,” Drew blurted out. Mrs. Fisher's cheeks turned red as Viola giggled.

“Drew,” Mr. Fisher warned. Drew slumped back in defeat.

“It's fine,” Mrs. Fisher reassured. “We're so glad you could stay, Travis.”

“Glad to be here.” I cleared my throat as I sat up straighter.

“You know, I’ve been meaning to invite your parents over for a cook-out—”

“Oh, I wouldn’t bother,” I cut her off without thinking. Everyone froze, staring at me.

“They aren’t really the grilling out kind.”

More like they aren’t really the sitting-at-the-table-eating-as-a-family kind, but I wasn’t about to admit that out loud.

With a nod and small smile, she dropped the subject.

I watched as Mr. Fisher sat on one end of the table and Mrs. Fisher on the other. They mirrored a picture-perfect 1950s sitcom family. They gazed at one another from across the room, completely in sync, as they served up our plates. I watched as he winked at her and she smiled wide.

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I'd never seen anything like it before.

There was no yelling. No tension in the air. No feeling like you were stepping on eggshells and had to watch what you said before you said it.

It was nice. Freeing.

Drew and Viola went on eating, unaffected by how their parents looked at each other, as if they were still newlyweds on their honeymoon. It was normal for them. Normal family behavior.

To them.

I couldn't remember the last time I'd ever seen my parents act like that. I couldn't remember because it'd never happened. Not in my family. I knew then my parents weren't in love. They were together for appearances, and it hurt. Watching the Fisher family interact showed me what I had been missing all those years. The adoration in the room was almost contagious.

Looking back, I could remember a time where my mother would at least pretend to be happy. She'd paint a smile on her face, cover up the hurt and pain she'd be feeling, and tell me everything was just fine.

Then she eventually stopped pretending. I was just a kid, but I knew. I heard my father yelling over inconsequential things, and I saw the way it affected my mother. I didn't realize just how dysfunctional my family truly was. Until I saw what it meant to be a family, how a man was supposed to treat his wife, and how loving the Fishers

were to one another.

Drew and I grew up together, but we didn't grow up the same. He was rugged on the outside, but wore his heart on his sleeve. After that dinner, I prayed for a family like the Fishers. But every day I woke up in a house that served as my own personal prison.

When you're told to get over it and be a man, you bury any feelings that threaten to surface. Showing emotion meant you were weak, and if my father saw weakness in me, he'd exploit it. I learned to be numb. Men don't cry, he'd tell me. Men definitely didn't show remorse.

I knew, even as a young teen, that my dad was a hardass. He never said he loved me or my mom. He didn't express love or show affection or give any indication at all that he wanted us. We were a burden, and yelling was his way of communication. It was his way or the highway. His iron fist ruling eventually what drove me away. Once I left, I swore I'd never move back home, regardless of how much I struggled. Struggling was better than being around the man I grew to hate.

The first time I ever liked a girl, I was eleven years old. She was in the Sunday school class that my mom made me go to every week. I knew she liked me, because every time I sat by her, she'd avoid eye contact with me and she'd blush anytime she caught me looking at her. A girl who sat on the other side of her giggled and stared at me. The more she laughed, the more I wanted to scream at her to shut up. Stop laughing. Stop looking at me. Why the hell is she laughing at me?

It was the first time I'd ever felt uncontrollable anger. I didn't understand it. I jumped up, mumbled an excuse about going to the bathroom and hid out until the class was over. My palms were sweaty and my body shook with anxiety.

My first reaction to a girl's attention was to yell at her. I knew yelling was rude and

would've been completely out of line, but it was my gut instinct. It wasn't until a couple years later that I understood exactly what had happened. Yelling and anger were the only emotions I'd been taught growing up. It was the only means I had of reacting to an uncomfortable situation. Then when I met Viola, the urge to protect her overwhelmed me and for a while I thought maybe I wasn't like my father. But then she started asking about boys, and how she could tell if a boy liked her, and I could only see red. My throat tightened, my hands balled into fists, and I nearly drew blood from my teeth sinking into my bottom lip. The urge to scream at her came out of nowhere and I barely managed to stop myself.

Her soft voice calmed me down, and I reeled my emotions back in check, but I knew from that day forward, a part of my father would always be inside me. He'd been treating my mother like that for years, and now I knew—I was built from the same blueprint.

I didn't have to protect Viola from boys at school.

I had to protect her from me.

“Hey, Travis.” Jeni's voice brings me out of the past and back into the present with a small wave and knowing smile as I wipe down the equipment. “Lookin' pretty good out there.”

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I clear my throat, shaking the thoughts from my mind. “Thanks. Not looking so bad yourself, babe.” I wink, knowing it’ll get her excited. I finish cleaning the treadmill and walk over to put the spray back. She follows.

“How’ve you been?” I ask, remembering the last time we hooked up in the co-ed shower.

“Not too bad. Heading to Florida for spring break in the morning, but I don’t have any plans tonight.” I know exactly what she’s implying and after Viola ran off my date last night, I don’t pause to take the bait.

“Well, we can’t have you leaving without a farewell party.” I grin and her eyes sparkle. I let her take my hand and follow her into one of the vacant shower stalls.

“How do you want it, babe?” I ask, ripping my clothes off before turning the water on.

She smiles, undressing as she lowers her eyes down my body. “No limits,” she responds, making my dick jump.

“Fine by me...” I turn the water on and pull her chest to mine. The water cascades down my back and before I can maneuver both of our bodies under the warmth, she has my dick in her hand.

I tilt her chin and bring her lips to mine. She hums into my mouth and strokes me harder. It feels fucking amazing. After dealing with Viola’s bullshit for the past twenty-four hours, I need a release.

I glide a hand up her side and palm her breast, rolling her nipple in between my fingers. The way her body responds to mine has my skin on fire. One moment, I'm kissing and touching Jeni, a girl who means nothing to me, and the next, images of Viola surface my mind: Wet and naked Viola, her gorgeous tits on display, her ripe ass as she walked away from me. Then there was the way her body felt against mine last night. I know she was turned on just as much as I was. My cock was so fucking hard, I had to jerk off before bed just to calm the hell down.

"Travis..." Jeni purrs in my ear. She's waiting for me to fuck her, but I can't.

I remember the way Viola's visibly taut nipples rubbed against the fabric of her tank and how I wanted to taste them. Goddammit, Viola Fisher! Even when she isn't around, she's cockblocking.

"Jeni..." I say, trying to gently push her away.

"Yeah, baby? Want to bend me over?"

Fucking hell.

"Jeni, no." I finally break away from her hold, forcing her to look me in the eyes. "I'm sorry. I can't right now." I can't believe I'm saying this.

"Are you fucking kidding?" Her face turns a dangerous shade of red, her temper hot.

I brush a hand through my wet hair, flustered just as much as she is. "I wish I was."

"You son of a bitch," she hisses, pressing both hands on my chest and pushing with every ounce of muscle she has. I stumble back, slipping as I try to regain my stance, but end up slamming my face against the shower faucet.

“Shit,” I curse, trying to find my balance. “The fuck was that for?” I press a hand to my cheek, already feeling the bruise form.

“You know exactly for what, asshole.” She grabs the shower curtain, pulls it open and immediately grabs the only towel on the hook. She turns and glares at me. I watch as she wraps the towel around her body and storms out. Great.

I close my eyes and brush both hands over my face under the water. What the hell is wrong with me? And why am I letting Viola Fisher get in my damn head?

When I return back to the house, there’s a car in the driveway I don’t recognize. I know Viola had her last day of classes today, but her car is there too, so she must’ve come back with someone.

Grabbing my gym bag from the car, I head in and am surprised to see Viola on the couch with another guy. The corner of my lips tilt as I see what a scrawny little shit he is.

“What’s up, V?” I ask in an overly friendly way, setting my bag on the table and grabbing the dude’s attention.

“We’re studying,” she says dryly, not even looking up at me. “Don’t get in the way.”

“You remember this is my house, right? I don’t have to go anywhere.”

“I-We can study another time...” scrawny boy interrupts.

“No, we’re in the middle of a session,” she tells him, ignoring the fact I’m standing right behind her. “Travis won’t be an issue.”

I raise my brow at that. “Not at all.” I grab the remote off the arm of the couch and

click the TV on.

She sighs immediately. “Do you have to do that right now?”

“I watch the news every day, princess.”

“So go watch it in your room.”

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“Go study in your borrowed room,” I retort. “I pay rent here.”

“Maybe I should go.” Scrawny boy starts shuffling his books, preparing to stand up until Viola grabs his wrist and yanks him back down. Even she is overpowering him with her small frame.

“No,” she demands, her lips pull in a tight line. “Just pretend he isn’t here.”

I scoff. Right. If she were capable of that, we wouldn’t be in this little war.

I busy myself in the kitchen, grabbing a bag of frozen peas, and just because I need a little extra pain reliever, the bottle of tequila.

I sit on the chair adjacent from the couch, where Viola and her little study buddy are sitting. She avoids looking at me as she scoots herself closer to him, pressing a hand to his arm.

“So Professor Gable’s study guide is only about half of what he actually puts on his finals,” she explains, leaning over to show him the packet. And by leaning over, she’s actually giving him a VIP look down her shirt. Intentionally, I’m sure, considering they were at least a foot apart when I first walked in. “So what we’ll need to focus on is everything else you took notes on during the semester.”

“I don’t have any notes,” he states, and I roll my eyes. Sure he doesn’t.

“I might have some notecards from his class in my binder. We can go look in my room if you want.” She accentuates dramatically, stacking up her notebooks on her

lap. “Plus, it’ll be less distracting.”

She finally turns and looks at me, glaring, until she sees my cheek and her face drop.

“What happened to you?” Her voice is sincere, worried even, but I don’t take the bait. She leans over, getting a better look and cringes. “Jesus.” Her hand reaches out to touch it, but she catches herself and drops it back in her lap.

Her little boy toy looks annoyed, and I use it to my advantage. I look between them and can see what he’s obviously doing here. He’s not here for his tutor session. He’s probably been eye-fucking her and undressing her in his head since before I arrived. I can’t blame him.

I tilt my lips up and stare into her blue eyes, filled with genuine sincerity and shrug casually. “Sex injury. No big deal.”

Her lips part as a soft gasp releases, her eyes narrowing as if she’s ready to pounce me and claw at my throat like a vicious animal. Just the reaction I was hoping for.

“Uh, I’m going to get going, Viola. I’ll see you next week.” Her little fun toy grabs his things and this time she doesn’t stop him.

She crosses her arms and keeps her eyes locked on mine long after the front door clicks. We’re alone again, which has already proven to not be a good thing.

“You aren’t blinking,” I say, furrowing my brows.

She finally moves, collecting her books and storming off.

“Okay, then!” I yell as she stomps down the hallway. “Good talk.”

I shake my head and decide to shut the TV off and jump in the shower instead. I need a release after dealing with her.

VIOLA

I hear the bathroom door shut, and the shower starts moments later. This is my chance to get the asshole back.

I wait a few minutes and plan my revenge. After grabbing a few large garbage bags, I head to his room and clean out the couple of drawers he has filled. Then I head to his closet and stuff all his expensive suits and shirts in another bag. I grab everything from his boxer shorts to his bed sheets.

If that motherfucker wants to take my towel and clothes to humiliate me, he's going to have to walk out of the damn house to get his back.

A devilish smile breaks across my face and soon the adrenaline takes over my body. I head to the linen closet and grab all the towels and put them in another bag. I know I'm running out of time, so I quickly collect all the bags and drag them to the door. Before I walk out, I run back in, lock Drew's bedroom door, and tiptoe into the bathroom. I collect his towel and clothes off the floor, leaving him with absolutely nothing. Then just for fun, I flush the toilet and dash out of the door as fast as I can, hearing him scream at me in the distance.

Take that, asshole.

I rush for the door, grab the three bags, and run out of the house. I open the trunk to my car and stuff them all inside.

If he wants them, he's going to have to come get them—naked.

“Viola!” I hear him yell from the bathroom shortly after I walk back inside the house.
“Goddammit, Viola.”

I bite my lip to keep the satisfied smile from forming. “What?” I yell from the other side of the bathroom door.

“You know what,” he hisses.

“I don’t know.”

“You don’t think I’ll walk out there naked?” He pulls open the door and peeks out.

“Because I will.”

“Do what you gotta do.” I shrug as if it’s no big deal to see Travis’ naked behind.

“But that’ll be another violation of the house rules,” I say matter-of-factly, knowing damn well they don’t mean a thing to him anyway.

He rolls his eyes and opens the door up all the way, exposing his wet muscled-and-tattooed self. Fuck. I didn’t think this all the way through. “Real mature, V.”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about.” I keep my eyes down, resisting the urge to look at him again.

He mutters a few curse words before walking around me and going down the hall to his bedroom.

Oh, Travis. The fun has just only begun.

No one said this was about maturity. This was about winning. Travis King needs his ego taken down a few notches.

I lean against the wall, waiting for the moment he realizes what I’ve done. If he doesn’t notice his sheets missing right away, he’ll notice once he goes to put his

shorts on.

I wait and wait and wonder what the hell he's doing in there. Finally, I hear the door opening and footsteps coming my way. I slowly look up, preparing for the death stare, but instead he looks completely indifferent. I blink, thinking I must be imagining things, but then I look down and gasp.

Oh my God.

I swallow, unable to take my eyes off him, his sleeve of tattoos that merge into his chest, water still dripping down his body all the way down to his cock, that's saluting to the ceiling. Why the hell is he hard?

My mind races as I try and blink away, but I can't. My feet are cemented in place and all the air is sucked out of me.

"I'm starting to think you have a thing for me." He smirks, obviously proud of himself. "If you wanted to get me naked, all you had to do was ask." He flashes me a wink, the corner of his lips tilted up in amusement, and continues walking past me into the living room.

It takes me a few moments to collect myself. How the hell did that not work? Why is this man so complicated? Fuck. I need to step up my game. But nothing phases that jackass. He has a perfect body and knows it, so of course he doesn't mind flaunting it. But sooner or later, he's going to need his sheets and clothes.

I walk to the kitchen, making sure to avoid him. I dig around in the fridge, letting the cool air hit my heated cheeks. My entire body is on fire and only an ice bath would cool it down at this point.

Images of his hard cock haunt my mind even when I try and push them out. I

assumed Travis was big, but seeing it in all its glory, thick and stretched, has my body tingling in areas I wish I could control.

After several minutes of trying to cool my body down, I decide to make some toast so I grab the container of butter and a bottle of orange juice. Maybe I just need some sugar to get my brain working again.

With the items in my hands, I use my elbow to shut the door. Before I realize what's happening, Travis traps me between his hard chest and the fridge door.

“What the hell?” I gasp, dropping both items to my feet. I feel his cock press into the low dip of my back, his firm arms caging me in.

“What’s the matter?”

I swallow.

“I think you need a lesson on boundaries,” I manage to say, my palms pressed against the fridge door.

He dips his head, brushing his stubble along my neck. I shiver, pissed that he’s getting a reaction out of me. His mouth is dangerously close to my ear as he whispers, “If it’s anything like your tutoring lessons, I won’t get my hopes up.” I feel a hand slide up my arm and brush along my collarbone before wrapping his palm around my neck, tilting my head up. It’s oddly soothing, and for a second, I forget Travis is the one holding me captive.

“I wouldn’t be opposed to teaching you a thing or two,” he growls against my ear again. His voice is low and deep as he taunts me, pushing every button he can.

“Get your naked body off me,” I say with gritted teeth.

“Never heard that one before.” He rocks his hips, pushing harder against me. My eyes flutter closed on their own accord as a moan releases without permission. His hand slides down my chest and palms my breast, making me release another throaty moan. His other hand squeezes my hip, melding our bodies against one another, and my head falls back as I feel his hot breath on my blazing skin.

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“So tell me again who’s in control around here? Because I’m pretty sure I just about made you come.”

My skin pricks at the words that come out of his mouth. “Screw you, Travis.”

“Sorry, princess. I don’t fuck virgins.” He clamps his teeth over my earlobe and nips it. “But if you ever want a lesson in sucking dick, I’d be glad to teach you. I’d even waive the tutoring fee.”

My body tenses at his condescending tone. My mind finally clears and I snap out of his spell. I turn my body just enough to dig my elbow hard into his ribs. He stumbles back with a curse, giving me the opportunity to walk away and out of the kitchen.

I’m pissed at the way he’s always pushing my boundaries and trying to get a reaction out of me, but I’m even more pissed at myself for falling into his stupid trap. My traitorous body took the bait and now I’m the one who got burned.

CHAPTER SEVEN

TRAVIS

Viola Fisher may look like your typical book nerd, but it’s all a deception. She’s smart as much as she is feisty, and hell if that isn’t hot as sin. My thoughts are plagued by her, and if I don’t get everything about her out of my mind, I’ll go fucking crazy. Drew would murder me in my sleep if he knew the ideas I was having about his sister. That’s if Viola doesn’t do it first.

After our encounter in the kitchen, I walk around the house naked, just to rile her up even more. When I catch her staring at me, she blushes and turns her head like she wasn't just admiring what she saw.

"Appreciate it, princess. All of it," I taunt as I strut to my room to grab my phone, knowing damn well she's looking at my ass.

When I walk back into the living room giving absolutely no fucks, she groans and starts shoving books into her bag. I'm wondering when she'll raise the white flag and return my clothes, but when she leaves to go nerd it up somewhere with her whole library packed, I realize she's not going to cave anytime soon.

Though I could walk around naked, showing her every inch of my body all day, it was getting a little annoying. But I'd never let her know that. It's too much fun to make her uneasy, which most of the time she brings on herself. I have nothing to hide, and I'm not fucking ashamed of what I've worked for.

I can't stop thinking about the rush that swarmed through my body as I pressed against her, knowing damn well she felt it too. The electricity isn't something that can be ignored. Her body responded to my touch and as much as she'll deny it until the day she dies, she wanted what I had to offer. The moan that released from her pouty lips was almost too much for me to handle. Maybe I shouldn't have done that, but goddammit, she pushed me too far. She asked for all of me or she never would've stolen every piece of clothing I own. She made sure to be extra cunty and took my sheets and pillowcases too, like bare mattress sex would scare me. For the record, I regret absolutely nothing. I'd press my naked body against her again and again. It's a memory that I'll file away for later use.

After I rummage through Drew's closet and find something that's somewhat my style and size, I search through Viola's clothes and take everything but the scandalous pieces. If she wants to go anywhere, she'll look like she works at a strip club.

Although she won't appreciate it, I know I will.

I throw on a pair of Drew's jeans and a polo, because I refuse to spend my Friday night fighting with her. I need to wash Viola from my thoughts as quick as possible, but each time I close my eyes, I think about that tight little ass, flat stomach, and perky pink nipples. For fuck's sake.

I text Drew, knowing he'll erase the dirty thoughts I'm having about his little sister who would willingly gouge out my eyes if I gave her the chance. Dude. How's it going so far?

The text bubble almost immediately pops up and I wait. Everything's great. Didn't realize how much I missed Mia.

Mia and Drew have been dating since last summer. She struck up a conversation while we were playing sand volleyball. He spoke to her first, which is good, because I would've made my move based on the way she was eyeing me. They've been together ever since and I'm happy for him, because she's pretty, with a tight little body, and knows how to have a good time. She's not afraid to say exactly what she wants, or so Drew tells me.

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That's great, man. Don't do anything I wouldn't do, actually, do everything I would do. I laugh as I hit send.

I can't believe Viola hasn't killed you yet.

I literally laugh. I'm sure she wants to. I linger on her name a little longer than I should and it makes me feel so damn guilty. We're getting along great. Ha. Sense the sarcasm? And it's only been a day.

It's been the best and worst twenty-four hours of my life.

So you live to see another day. Congrats. I'm sure she'll warm up to you where you can at least be cordial toward one another. Maybe she'll let you borrow her invisibility cloak? But if you go missing, I'll know who to ask first.

I shake my head and smile. Thanks bro. Now get back to your woman. Tell Mia I said hi. I'll check in later.

Will do. Later.

Viola and I being cordial to one another? Impossible. We're playing some fucked-up game of cat and mouse and in the end, we'll realize it's a trap for both of us. I'm not stupid and neither is she. We should call truce before it goes too far but we're both too damn stubborn to admit defeat. It's about who's going to come out on top, which will always be me.

I grab my keys and text Jason, a friend from college, so we can start the night early. I

have a lot of drinking to do and images of Viola to erase. The pre-party starts at his house and when I walk in he immediately senses something is off, as if he has the sixth sense or some shit. Four girls file out of the kitchen, giggling, and eyeing me like they want to eat me. If they're lucky, maybe I'll let them, all at the same time. I throw a smile to each of them, finding my mark for the night. The blonde one licks her ruby red lips, and I know that look from a mile away. She wants what I have to offer. Perfect.

"What's up?" Jason asks as he takes a long pull of his beer and walks to the living room.

"What do you mean?" I ask, confused by the tone of his question.

"You're wound up tighter than a stripper's g-string on a Friday night. You're all tense. Shit. Have a beer and chill out," he says, handing me a Heineken.

"This is bitch beer," I smile as I take a swig. Jason knows how I feel about the little green bottle. It tastes like piss with a pretty label. I have to admit, it's good marketing, but damn, give me a real beer, something dark like a Guinness or Krombacher.

"Beggars can't be choosers," he says, plopping on his couch checking his phone. "We'll leave soon. I have a few more friends meeting us at Good Times."

He glances over his shoulder and looks at the girls then lowers his voice. "So you gonna tell me what has you so tense or pretend like nothing's wrong?"

I finish the beer off in another big swig and answer. "Drew left to hang with Mia on her break and I'm stuck dealing with his little sister for two weeks. It's fucking torture." But not in the way he thinks.

He laughs and sits up. “Viola? She’s single again? How’s she been? Still hating your guts?”

He looks a little too happy to be asking about her. His question about a boyfriend catches me off guard, and I feel like such a dick for not knowing the answer. Is she dating someone? My jaw tightens and it’s not lost on him. He raises an eyebrow.

“Yes, she still hates me and I don’t know about the other stuff. We’re not friends. We don’t stay up every night talking about her fucking life,” I say truthfully between gritted teeth. Everyone knows she hates me, because she doesn’t keep quiet about it.

“She’s so fucking hot. If Drew wouldn’t go batshit crazy on me, I’d totally hit that,” he says, wiggling his eyebrows, as if he’s Viola’s type.

“She’s off-limits,” I growl, almost a little too protectively.

“Damn.” He laughs and finishes off his beer. “I know you’ve been best friends for decades but for a moment there I thought you actually channeled Drew. It was frightening. Don’t ever do that again.” He’s joking with me, but there was nothing funny about what I said. Viola is off-limits, the end.

I exhale through my nose as he walks off and try to calm myself. The girls come into the living room and sit on the couch around me. They chat about the night and the guys that will be there and I’m already bored. Blondie is a little too confident in her red miniskirt and low-cut shirt, but I play along. She seems like the perfect distraction for the night.

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“I’m Amber,” she says, grabbing my phone from my hand and programming her number into it. I knew I should’ve password-protected it.

I give her a smirk. “Thanks, babe. I’m Travis.” When the words leave my mouth, she beams. Pet names must be her thing. I grab her hand and drag my bottom lip across the top before I kiss it. Her friends walk away taking the hint and she moves in a little closer and places her hand on my inner thigh. For a second, I wonder if she likes to get her hair pulled. Once the thought crosses my mind, the image of Viola against the refrigerator, my naked body pressed against hers, flashes in my mind. Fucking fuck! She’s ruining my game.

Jason returns with two more beers. “So you’ve met Amber,” he says, handing me another Heineken. I drink it as fast as I can. The quicker I get wasted, the quicker Viola will leave my thoughts, or at least that’s what I hope, and maybe I’ll be able to screw her away.

Jason makes small talk to kill the time, but I can’t concentrate on his words. Amber’s a filthy little thing and she’s actually doing a good job at keeping me distracted. Her hand rubs across my thigh, and if no one was here, I have a feeling she’d be on her knees taking my dick in her mouth. I can tell by the way she’s been eye-fucking me for the past thirty minutes. Four beers down and I’m starting to feel the effects. My body is relaxed and I feel good, not worked up like I was when I arrived. Before I crack open another beer, Jason announces it’s time to head out. Our Uber driver is almost here, which is probably for the best, considering we’re already tipsy.

Good Times’ parking lot is full as usual. Most people my age come here on the weekends to let loose after a long week. The thick bass rumbles so loud it’s heard

outside. Girls enter in their scandalously short skirts and dresses and it makes it so much easier to forget about Viola, or so I think. I have my arm around Amber and hers is around me and we walk inside laughing. She's trying to hold a stupid semi-drunk conversation that means absolutely nothing to me over the loud music. Jason waves to a group of dudes over in the corner and I realize I've agreed to join a sausage fest. Great. Thank fuck for the girls Jason brought along to fill the table. They each find their dude for the night and the only man out is Jason. He'll find someone here, I'm sure of it.

Amber excuses herself to the bathroom and I walk to the bar for another drink, but this time I want something with a punch; whiskey will be my poison for the rest of the night. I need more alcohol so I can fall asleep on my sheetless bed and dream about nothing. I lean my back against the bar and scan the room. Lots of beautiful women are here tonight and I smile knowing I could bring anyone of them home . . . until my eyes land on Viola fucking Fisher walking through the door.

I exhale slowly when I see the scandalous outfit that shows just enough skin to make her desirable but not seem easy, compliments of me. She turns back and smiles at the bouncer whose gaze is lingering on her ass just a little too long and that's when I notice she's hanging on a dude's arm like an ornament.

What in the hell?

VIOLA

I'm happy that Travis isn't home after I return from tutoring. I thought it'd be better if I asked everyone to meet me at the library instead of being in a house with a crazy naked man. I could've given back his clothes but that's too easy. Me and easy won't ever go in the same sentence, so I drove to the library with a shit-eating grin knowing all his clothes, sheets, and pillowcases were in my trunk.

When I returned, Travis was gone and I felt like I could breathe again. Earlier he had taken my breath away and my body betrayed me once again. If I weren't a Fisher and he weren't asshole King maybe things could be different, but they can't and won't, especially with our past.

As I cozy up on the couch hoping for a quiet night full of romance books and alpha males, I receive a text. I reach over to see Courtney's name.

Can I cash in on those drinks tonight? Good Times is having Ladies Night!

As much as I don't want to go, I think it'll be good for me to get out of the house. She's also leaving in two days, so I want to spend as much time with her as I can.

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Sure. How's 9? I text her. The later we head out, the sooner we can head back home.

Perfect. I'll pick you up.

I laugh and poke fun at her. Oh, now we're going on a date?

LOL! No. You know I'm so over experimenting with girls. Not that you aren't hot, because you're a ten, baby. I can almost hear her voice as I read it over and burst out laughing.

I'm not sure how good my company will be, but it'll be fun to dance and lose myself in the music. Without another thought, I go to the bathroom and turn on the shower without worry. I step into the warmth until the water goes cold, and smile when I grab the towel from where I left it. I dry off, blow dry my hair, and walk to Drew's room with a towel wrapped around me replaying the moment when I took the trek butt naked.

I go to the extra drawers Drew left for my clothes and my mouth falls open.

"What the hell? TRAVIS!" I scream out in frustration.

My jeans and shirts are missing. The handful of things I brought for something unexpected or a girls' night out is all I have, and that's not much. I lock my jaw in anger. If he wants to continue with this little game, fine. Maybe I'll pick up a date tonight after all, because he left me with skirts, cropped tops, and a tight fitting dress. My brother would straight-up shit his pants if he saw me in any of this. I slip into a black dress that barely hits mid-thigh, with a revealing scoop neck. I huff in

annoyance. I don't have much to work with. I choose a pair of high heels that make me three inches taller and accentuate my ass. After I'm dressed, I halfway wished Travis would walk through the door and see me leaving like this. He'd probably give my t-shirt and jeans back and lock me in Drew's room. But I won't be held hostage by him tonight, or ever.

I check my phone and realize I don't have much time so I hurry and apply some smoky eyes and red lipstick. I'm pure sass and almost don't recognize myself when I catch a glimpse in the hallway mirror. Who is this woman who's taken my body and transformed it into a sex kitten? I'm almost unrecognizable, even to myself. I'm sure Travis thought this little joke would work, but I have a feeling wearing these clothes gives me the advantage, not him. Another minute passes and I hear the doorbell ring. Of course Courtney is punctual; it's actually one of her best qualities.

I grab my phone and stuff my credit card and ID into my clutch. I open the door and Courtney's mouth falls open. "Damn, woman. You took this date thing seriously!" She flashes a cheeky smile.

I give her one of my looks with narrowed eyes. She has no idea.

"Uh...where's the t-shirt and blue jeans?" She laughs. "What have you done with my best friend?"

"This isn't by choice," I mutter, not even wanting to explain myself or admit the little tiff Travis and I have going on between us.

"You're rocking it," she says as we walk towards the Jeep and head to Good Times.

"I invited Marcus to join us!" Courtney says over the music. Marcus is one of her gay guy friends and I actually like him a lot. He's super friendly and hilarious. Once we get closer to the venue, I finally relax because there's no turning around now.

Courtney wouldn't let me back out of a girls' night out anyway.

We circle around the parking lot several times before finding a spot and the crowd kind of surprises me.

"If you need me to scare off any weirdos, let me know," Courtney says, giving me a wink with a big smile. She's ready to drink and dance and I'm ready to lose myself in the music, too.

I start laughing. "I'm sure I can do that myself."

"Offer still stands." She nudges me.

We step out of the jeep and walk towards the entrance. Marcus pulls up in his BMW convertible and walks over to us with a big smile.

"Ladies, damn. If I weren't gay..."

Courtney squeals and gives him a hug then walks in first. Marcus and I get ID'd and the bouncer makes some comment about my sexy legs and I turn around to laugh at him and wrap my arm around Marcus's. The beat is hopping and the dance floor is full.

"Come on." Courtney grabs my hand.

"Drinks first," I say to her and walk across Good Times with a little pep in my step. I order a martini, because I'm dressed way too fancy for beer, and open a tab. Marcus follows me and we chat while he scopes the place for someone that's actually his type. It doesn't take long.

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I smile. “Go. He’s giving you the eyes,” I say, pushing him forward.

He turns and looks at me and I nod my head and shoo him off. “Dude. I’m fine and can totally handle myself. I’ve got bark and bite.”

“You’re the whole package, Lola,” Marcus says and shakes his little butt across the dance floor.

I finish off my martini and feel someone standing way too close to me. I turn and see Jason, a friend of Drew and Travis, leaning in. “Viola, babe! You look...hot,” he says.

I burst into a laugh. “Yeah? Thanks, I guess.”

“I mean, you always look great but this...” He freely roams his eyes up and down my body. “Wow.” He licks his lips, trailing his eyes down my face and stopping at my breasts. I want to interrupt his lustfest and tell him my eyes are up here, but I clamp my mouth shut for now.

I smile at him then turn my body and flag the bartender for another drink, this time a shot, because God I need one so bad right now. Jason pulls out his wallet and pays for it and orders one too. “Cheers.”

“Thanks,” I mumble and take the shot willingly. It burns and coats my throat and after two drinks I’m ready to dance. As if he read my thoughts, he asks with a smile. It’s a cute smile, but he’s not my type.

“Yeah, I’d love to,” I say, and he grabs my hand and leads me across the room. The song that’s playing is fast, but it soon changes to a slow, sexy song. Jason grabs my hips and pulls me close, and we both know if Drew was here, his nose would be broken, but the reality is Drew is far, far away.

I swear, dancing is like having sex with your clothes on. When I turn around and rub my ass against him, I can feel the hardness in his pants. Well, that’s unexpected, but the song is still going and I’m determined to let loose.

I turn back around, our eyes meet, and his hands run the length off my body until they rest on the top of my ass. The song ends and another one starts.

“Want to go out for a drink sometime?” Jason asks over the thumping bass.

“Maybe,” I say.

“What’s your number?”

I tell him and he programs my number into his phone while still moving to the beat of the music.

“All right. I sent you a text so you have my number now.” He tucks the phone back into his pocket. “What are you doing tomorrow?” Jason asks, pulling my body close to his again.

Before I can even open my mouth, a deep voice growls from behind me. “That’s enough.”

His rough tone and the closeness of his body to mine makes my skin prick with goose bumps. But I already know who it is before I even turn around. Travis fucking King.

And he's livid.

"Hey, man!" Jason's face lights up briefly before noticing Travis' tense expression. "We're just dancing."

"And now you're done."

Jason backs away from me and raises his hands up in defeat. "Okay, okay. Whatever. Chill, man."

I suck in a deep breath and narrow my eyes in at him. I should've anticipated he'd show up. He's inescapable.

"To what do I owe this pleasure?" I snarl, shaking my head at his audacity for scaring Jason away.

He doesn't say anything as he grabs my hand and leads me to the center of the dance floor while the slow mesmerizing beat plays on. He grips his fingers around my waist and pulls me in against his chest, claiming me for everyone to see. Our bodies mold together like puzzle pieces and as much as I want to remove that thought from my mind, it's front and center.

Dammit to hell.

He leans his head down and speaks over my ear, "I'm not going to watch another guy practically fuck you on the dance floor. You're off limits to every guy in this place. Got it, princess?"

He pulls back, his expression cold and firm. His jaw is set and there's no playing around in his tone. His eyes search my face before finally meeting mine.

Between the alcohol and the intense beat of the music, I'm ready to dish it right back to him.

"Even to you?"

His jaw ticks. "To everyone. Especially dressed like that." He trails his eyes down my body, emphasizing his point.

He's treating me like I'm a little kid again, acting over-protective, as if he has any say in what I do. But I know he has an ulterior motive.

I can't deny how being this close to him makes my mouth dry. I need a strong drink and to run away, because the emotions that course through me are dangerous. Our bodies slowly rock together and for a moment it's easy to forget it's Travis, because he doesn't speak, he just takes control and we dance together as one. It's seductive. I feel the pulse between my legs, and I promise myself after this next song, I'm walking away. But I don't, and neither does he, and we are lost in a trance of unspoken words and baby-making music.

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A busty blonde walks to his side and pouts out her bottom lip. “Travis, baby. Is it my turn yet?” Travis turns and looks at her, but not in a lustfilled way. He’s annoyed she’s interrupted. However, I take that as my cue and snatch my only chance toward freedom, stepping back and allowing her to take my spot.

As I walk toward the bar for another drink, I look over my shoulder and see Travis’ eyes glued to me. I look away, needing to clear my head, which means I order another drink; a bigger, stronger one that can help me make sense of what the hell just happened out there.

Courtney walks up with a huge smile on her face. “Uh, did you just practically fuck your brother’s roommate, or rather, your arch nemesis, on the dance floor or was I imagining that? Seriously Lola, every dude in this place wants to take you home right now.”

I scoff. “That would never happen.” I take one big gulp of a double vodka and cranberry as my skin tingles from the remnants of Travis’ touch. “You must’ve been imagining it.”

“Oh, right, okay,” she agrees, sarcasm thick in her voice. “Hey, I think I’m going to head out if that’s okay. I thought I was in the mood to dance, but without Toby, it kind of sucks.” She has those sad puppy dog eyes, and as much as I want her to stay, I can’t beg her when she gives me that look.

“Do you want me to go with you?” I ask.

“No, you stay! Marcus isn’t leaving so you guys can Uber together if you want.”

I take another sip. “Okay, well text me if you need anything.” I flash her a giddy smile, the alcohol running through my veins.

“I will.” She gives me a quick hug and walks toward the exit.

I glance across the bar area for Marcus and finally spot him cozying up to a dark-skinned hottie. I smile and turn back to my drink.

When I check my phone, I realize it’s been almost three hours since we arrived. The club will be open for another two hours, but I’m not sure I’m going to make it that much longer. Travis is still on the dance floor with blonde bimbo, and I don’t want to stick around to watch it unfold.

I finish my drink and just when I’m about to close my tab out, Patrick, a guy I tutored last semester, sits down next to me.

“Are you here alone?” he asks.

I shrug, sparing the details. “My friend left, so I guess I am.”

“Some friend.” He chuckles.

“Nah, it’s fine. I was just about to head out anyway.”

“Well, wait. Let me get you a shot or something first.”

I look at him, trying to read his motives. “Why? Because I don’t look drunk enough?” I chuckle and he laughs with me.

“No, you look like you need some cheering up. C’mon, I don’t bite.”

“All right, fine. I can’t deny free liquor.”

Patrick lets me pick and so I order us two Jelly Bean shots.

“This is such a pussy drink.” He groans and slams it down, pursing his lips together as the sour flavor fills his mouth.

“It’s dangerous, is what it is.” I lick my lips. “It taste like candy, which means you end up taking more shots than you can handle and end up puking in your roommate’s bed.”

His eyes widen and his lips turn up into an impressed grin. “Speaking from experience.”

“Yes.” I deadpan, remembering the night it happened. “It was my bed.”

His head falls back with laughter. “Sounds like the true college experience then.” He motions for the bartender and orders another round of shots. “Okay, my turn to pick. You ready?”

I cringe when I see the bartender reaching for the hard stuff.

This goes on and on until I’ve shared more embarrassing stories about myself. Apparently, alcohol frees the humiliation file. I don’t normally drink much or go out, really, but this is what Travis has done to me. He’s flustered me to the point that I need to numb all memories with booze.

“Now that you know my bra size and my first kiss’s name, I think it’s time for me to go.” He’s just a tipsy as I am, so I don’t worry too much about him remembering any of what I said. “I need to schedule an Uber.”

“Yeah, me too. Future Patrick is going to be kicking my ass in the morning.” I snort at the way he talks about himself. “We can do the carpool one if you want.”

We stand up from the barstools and my head begins to spin. “Whoa,” I say, grabbing the back of the chair.

“Are you all right?”

“Yes, just stood up too fast.” I blink my eyes a few times. “And drank way too much.”

“Yeah, I guess you were right about those Jelly Bean shots.”

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“I told you!” I giggle, reaching for my phone and looking for my Uber app.

Just as I schedule the pick up, I lose my footing and stumble back against the person sitting next to me. Patrick grabs my elbow and pulls me back before I can fall any further. “Maybe you should sit while we wait.” He pulls the stool back out, but before I can sit back down, an arm wraps around my waist and possessively pulls me away.

“Viola...” I hear my name on Travis’ lips and shiver. “I’ve been looking everywhere for you.”

“She was with me.” I look up at Patrick and see his hard expression. Shit. They’re both trying to intimidate each other.

“What the fuck are you doing here?”

“Travis,” I scold, shifting out of his grip, but he doesn’t release me. “Do you have to be an asshole all the damn time?”

“Do you even know who this is?” he asks me.

“Yes. His name is Patrick. I tutored him last semester, so put back your pitchfork.” I look up at Patrick and give him an apologetic look.

“Wrong.” His voice is jolting. “He was put on probation his freshman year for sexually assaulting a girl at a frat party. She pressed charges and since Daddy’s a lawyer, he got a slap on the wrist.”

Patrick's jaw ticks, and I can see the hardness in his eyes. I had no idea. Patrick is a year older than me, so Travis would've been the one in school with him back then.

"It's time to go." Travis links our fingers together and pulls me away. I can't even be mad at his caveman behavior after learning about Patrick's history.

"We were just going to share an Uber," I start explaining, although he hadn't asked. "I wasn't going to go home with him."

He doesn't say anything as he sets his mouth in a firm line.

We walk out into the parking lot of the club and the cool night breeze begins to sober me up, although those last set of shots were really a bad idea.

"You should've never been drinking that much with a guy you hardly know and especially never Uber home with him. He's dangerous."

"Well, I didn't know that at the time. He'd always been nice to me."

"They're always nice, Viola. That's how they get girls to go back home with them."

Clearly, I hadn't know that.

"Well, he wouldn't have had to try real hard. I'm practically naked already."

He walks me to the side of the club and as I lean up against the building, he paces in front of me, brushing his hands through his hair. "You shouldn't say shit like that, Viola. Guys see you and they see a good fuck. They don't see the real you."

"Well, you would know, right? You don't hook up with girls to get to know them. You go for the quick fuck and kick them out before the morning coffee is done

brewing.”

His head is bowed, but he looks up at me, his eyes locked on mine. “I’m only going to say this because I know you won’t remember it. Guys like him don’t want a one-night stand. They don’t find girls to hook up with just for the thrill. They want power and control. My bet is he was hoping to get you back to his place and give you his special cocktail that would make you pass out just enough so he could take full advantage. Guys like those are cowards and a pathetic excuse as a man, so don’t put me and him in the same category. I might get off on having a sexy little thing like you under me, but it’d be completely mutual. I get off on getting girls off, not on taking something they’re not willing to give.”

His breath is ragged, and I can see how tense his mouth is as he confesses that to me. I’m not sure where it came from, but it was a side of Travis that actually sounded genuine.

“So what you’re saying is the real me isn’t good enough to be someone’s one-night stand? I’d only be good if I were unconscious...?” I know I’m testing his limits, but liquid courage is making me bolder than usual.

He mutters curse words under his breath, and I know I’ve pushed too far. I hear a car driving up behind him and look to see it’s the Uber driver.

He wraps a hand around my elbow and leads us to the back door. “Get in the car.”

I blink. “What?”

He reaches behind me and grabs the door handle. “Get in the car, Viola. We’re going home.”

I do as he says and buckle myself in. His silence is deafening and I’m sure I’ll wake

up filled with regret.

I lay my head back against the seat and close my eyes. How the hell did the night make such a turn for the worse?

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“I can’t believe you drank that much,” I hear him mumble.

I turn my head and see he’s looking right at me. “Are you going to ground me now, father?” A loose laugh escapes my throat.

“I’d do a lot more than just ground you.”

“Ooh, I’m in big trouble, huh? I’m so scared.” I mock, digging the hole deeper and deeper. Apparently word vomit is a thing. The words come out before I can filter them through my brain.

“You should be, V. You really should be,” he says, and I’m certain I see the corner of his lips tilt up.

“Don’t call me that again, Travis,” I hiccup. “I might have to show you what kind of virgin I really am,” I say as my body slides down the seat and I rest my head in his lap because my world is shifting. I can’t be certain if it’s the alcohol or Travis King. Perhaps it’s the deadly combination of both.

CHAPTER EIGHT

TRAVIS

Goddammit.

The more she talks, the harder it becomes to hold my tongue. The moment I saw her with that piece-of-shit, Patrick, I immediately sobered up. Drew’s my best friend and

he'd punch me in a heartbeat if he knew what happened. I know if I had a little sister, I'd expect him to watch out for her, too. (Minus the sultry dancing, of course).

Viola is a lot of things—a royal pain in my ass, a filthy smart-mouth, and a damn Goody Two-Shoes—but she's not a girl who recklessly gets wasted and agrees to go home with a guy she hardly knows. Even after all these years of giving her shit and her giving it right back, I'd never let her leave with a guy like Patrick.

As she leans her limp body against mine, I try to find the willpower to behave myself. She might annoy the shit out of me and grate on my nerves every chance she has, but I'm still a man. She looks fucking incredible tonight, hotter than I've ever seen her, and while on the dance floor, she was practically undressing me with her eyes.

"I sometimes don't hate you, Travis King," she slurs, and then looks up to the sky.

"I guess I'll take that as a compliment."

"You were so nice when I was little, but then you grew up and became a royal asshole."

I roll my eyes, knowing she probably won't remember any of this in the morning.

"She okay?" The guy asks me, and I nod.

"Had too much to drink," I explain. "She's my roommate for the next couple of weeks, and I wanted to make sure she got back home safely."

"You're a good man," he praises with a nod. "I've seen far too many dangerous things happen to women this late at night."

I only purse my lips because if he knew the thoughts in my head right now he

wouldn't be saying that to me. Viola Fisher may be off-limits, but that doesn't stop the way my mind and body react to her. As much as I love to drive her insane, I can't deny the way she's always made me feel, even when we were kids who knew nothing about love at all.

When we arrive to the house, I'm able to wake her long enough to get her inside. A rush of exhaustion hits, but I can't leave her alone.

"Travis..." she mumbles as I direct her down on the bed.

"What, Viola?" I kneel down beside her, slipping off her heels.

"Viola?" she repeats. "Ooh, so formal," she says in a mocking tone, laughing to herself.

"Can you undress yourself?" I ask, hopeful.

"I'd rather you did..." She giggles.

I pinch the bridge of my nose, exhaling. "Viola...why did you drink so much?"

"To piss you off, and because I can."

I press my lips in a firm line. "Put your arms up," I demand. "You need to change out of this thing you call a dress."

"Well, you wanted me to wear it," she says matter-of-factly, her words slurring together. She finally raises her hands above her head and waits.

"I didn't even know you were going out tonight." The annoyance isn't hidden in my tone. I brush my fingers along the bottom of her dress and pull it slowly over her

hips, her waist, her chest, and then finally, over her arms and head.

“Why’d you take my clothes then?” She arches a brow as I toss her dress on the floor. She tilts her head, challenging a response.

I swallow. Removing her dress was a bad fucking idea.

She’s wearing a lacy bra and panties to match. I fight the urge to touch her and by the way she’s looking at me, I can see she’s fighting it, too.

“Not to mention, you only left me with thongs and my one lace bra.”

The corner of my lips tilt as I think about how pissed she probably was when she noticed. “Yeah, I’m only slightly regretting that right now.” Really regretting that decision.

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“Oh, Travis King,” she drawls out, biting her lower lip. “You’ve seen me naked already, remember?”

Oh, I remember. It’s fucking burned in my brain.

“I mean, if you preferred to see me in sexy lingerie, all you had to do was ask.” Her eyes sparkle up at me and now I’m positive she’s not going to remember any of this in the morning.

“Fucking hell,” I mutter under my breath, shaking my head. She’s seriously testing my self-control right now.

“I think you should get some sleep,” I say, directing her under the covers. “You’ll be feeling it in the morning.”

“Oh, Mr. Boss Man,” she mocks again, pouting her lips together.

“Viola...” I growl, pleading with her not to test me. “Get under the covers.”

“Are you going to make me? Because I wish you would.”

Fuck, I wish I had my phone with me, to record her saying that. This isn’t the Viola I’ve come to know. She’s spent the last decade hating me. I know her well, though, and she’ll hate me again once the alcohol wears off.

“What would you like, Viola? Tell me,” I challenge.

“Kiss me,” she says, her eyes looking up at me, pleading for me to do it.

I arch a brow, shocked she actually had the balls to say it. Part of me is tempted to kiss those lips and make her swallow her words, but the other part knows if I start, I may never be able to stop.

I grin down at her, tucking her in. She continues staring at me, as if she’s waiting. I lean down, letting my lips linger over hers. Her chest pumps up and down, her shallow breaths hits against my stubble.

“Princess...” I say just above a whisper, her back arching closer into me. “I don’t kiss virgins either.” My lips form into a cocky grin, knowing she’s about to scream at me.

Her blue eyes narrow and she pushes both hands against my chest. “Fuck you, Travis.”

There’s the Viola I know.

I lean off the bed and chuckle at her. “You wouldn’t know what to do with me.” I pull the covers up to her collarbone. “Get some sleep.”

“I bet you don’t have the balls to kiss me, Travis King. You’re all talk and no walk. Can’t say I’m really surprised. Disappointed, maybe, but—”

I cut her words off with my mouth, pressing my lips to hers and opening them with my tongue. I don’t wait for her permission; I take what I want, knowing it’s exactly what she wants.

She releases a deep, throaty moan and I catch it with my mouth, which only encourages me to continue. Her lips are warm and taste like the cranberry vodka she was drinking.

She wraps her arms around my neck, pulling me down on top of her. I feel the way she arches her hips up and meets me. The moment her lips touched mine, I was no longer in control, but I know I need to stop it.

Reluctantly, I release my lips from hers and push myself up. “Enough walk for you?” I ask, needing to reestablish the boundaries.

Her face goes pale and before I can ask her what’s wrong, she pulls the covers off and stumbles to the bathroom. A moment later, I hear her emptying her stomach.

“Viola!” I rush to her, finding her kneeling over the toilet, groaning. “Jesus.” I grab her hair in my fist and pull it back. I wait until she finishes and sits back, looking defeated.

“I’m going to try and not take that personally,” I say with a chuckle.

She narrows her eyes and glares up at me. “Hilarious, asshole.”

I stand up and grab the towel off the counter for her.

“I’m never drinking again.”

“That’s what they all say.”

She shoots me another look.

“C’mon.” I hold my hand out. “Back to bed.”

She stares at me a moment before giving in and taking my hand. My eyes roam down her body and she notices.

“Really? You’re going to ogle me after I just vomited in front of you?” Her stare is harsh; the Voila I know is coming back to surface.

I brush my free hand over my chin and flash a sly smirk. “Actually, I was contemplating on telling you that you had a little...something on your chest, but never mind, I’ll just let you sleep in vomit.”

She releases my hand and turns to look in the mirror above the sink. She grabs the towel and wipes it off, keeping her eyes locked on mine through the mirror.

“You should get some sleep,” I say. “And drink some water before you get dehydrated.”

She turns on the faucet and splashes some water on her face before glaring at me in the mirror. “Don’t worry about me. I’m fine.”

I want to say something about how she nearly left with some random guy at the bar and how she was barely conscious on the way home, but I bite my tongue and stare at her in rage before walking back out of the bathroom and heading back to my sheetless bed.

Source Creation Date: July 14, 2025, 9:07 am

After grabbing an extra blanket from the closet and passing out, I wake up sometime around four a.m. to more noise coming from the bathroom.

Shit, Viola.

She's hunched over the toilet again, her hair wild and sticking to her face and neck.

"Fucking hell, V." I rush behind her, controlling her hair and rubbing a hand over her back. "When did you come back in here?"

"I never left."

A deep growl escapes me at the thought of her damn stubbornness getting in the way of letting me help her back to bed. "You're going to get dehydrated. I'm getting you some water."

"No," she barely croaks out. "Don't leave me." She lays her head down on the seat, her face white as a ghost.

"I'll be right back. Promise." I grab her a couple bottles of water from the fridge and hand her one as soon as I return. "Drink this."

She shakes her head.

"Viola," I say, harsher. "I said drink it."

She takes it from me and begins drinking. "I feel like death."

“Yeah, well that’s what happens when you drink and take shots all night.” I wrap a hand around my shoulder, squeezing my neck. “What the hell were you thinking anyway?”

She closes her eyes. “You don’t want to know.”

After several silent moments, I pick her up off the floor and walk her back to her bed. My fingertips press against her bare skin, cool to the touch.

Once she’s covered up, I can’t bare to leave her alone again. I decide to grab an extra blanket from Drew’s closet and sleep next to her on the floor. Then just for good measure, I place a trash can next to the bed incase she gets sick again.

I smile and put my hands behind my head as I listen to her even breathing. I walk to my room, grab her clothes and put them back where I found them. I’m half-tempted to crawl in bed with her, but I lay back on the floor instead.

An hour later, I still haven’t been able to fall asleep. The memory of her lips on mine is still present in my mind, and I know when she wakes up, she’s going to have my head for kissing her.

VIOLA

I’m dead.

Oh God. No, I can’t be dead because I feel fucking awful.

I manage to crack open my eyes and notice Travis is nowhere to be found. I have no idea what time it is, but I remember him being in here last night. At least, I think he was.

Shuffling around for my phone, I finally find it in my clutch on the floor. 11:18 AM.

I haven't slept in this late since the last time I...oh shit. I grab the nearby trashcan and empty my stomach again.

Once I finally feel like I'm safe to sit up, memories of last night surface in my mind. I look down and realize I'm only in my bra and panties. And Travis King saw me in them.

Just great.

Then I remember the kiss and how his face hovered above mine.

Did that really happen? Maybe the alcohol and puking made me imagine the whole thing because there is no way I kissed him. If anything, I would've slapped him.

I mean, probably would've, anyway.

My fingers reach up and touch my lips. It all rushes back to me, and I definitely remember his mouth on mine. Soft, deep, intoxicating.

Fuck. I'm almost certain that kiss is going to ruin me more than him, but I can't let him know that. How the hell am I supposed to handle him now? He'll think he won.

And I'm not about to let him think that. Getting close to Travis is bad news. Nothing good could ever come out of it, especially letting him stomp on my heart again.

Needing a distraction, I decide to text Drew. Your roommate stripped me down to my bra and panties last night. Where's the coffee?"

I smile as I hit 'send'.

It flashes seconds later with his response. He's a dead man. It's in the cupboard above the sink.

I chuckle to myself, but soon realize it hurts my stomach to laugh. It's completely empty and growling. I'll need to face him sooner or later, I just wish it could be much, much later.

I finally manage to crawl out of bed and smile when I see my clothes, but I grab one of Drew's long t-shirts to wear until I can take a shower. First, I need to eat something.

Peeking out the bedroom door, it's completely silent in the house. Thank God. I step out into the hallway and make my way to the kitchen, searching for any sight of him. When it looks clear, I grab a granola bar and look for the coffee. Just as the coffee maker starts steaming, I hear him in the distance.

"VIOLA!" His voice makes me jump, but not enough to be scared. I conceal a smile as he storms into the kitchen.

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“Are you fucking kidding me? Please tell me you’ve experienced some kind of head trauma or something.”

“It’s possible.”

“Cut the shit.”

I still don’t face him. I’m not sure if I can, but then I remind myself we’re playing a game. I’m not going to make it that easy for him.

“Calm your tits, King.” I turn around and lock eyes with him. “I haven’t even had my morning coffee yet.”

“This shit ain’t worth it,” he mumbles before walking away. Good. Point for the away team.

After taking a shower and feeling slightly human again, I dress in my favorite pair of blue and green leggings and pair it with a red tank. I throw my wet hair up in a messy bun, grab my book, and curl up in bed for an official lazy Saturday.

Just when the Crown Prince meets Cinder, his Cinderella, I hear commotion in the hallway. I sit up, trying to listen for what the hell it is, and when I hear a woman moan, outside my door, my worst nightmare comes alive.

The click of his bedroom door is followed by a loud crash against the wall. More moaning. More banging against the wall. More noise.

Is he serious right now? He brought some chick back to the house in the middle of the afternoon?

Fucking bastard.

I shake my head, refusing to let it bother me. I put my nose back into my book, re-reading the last paragraph.

“Oh, Travis...yeah baby...” Yeah, baby? How original. She continues moaning and screaming his name while rocking the fucking walls.

I clench my jaw, knowing exactly what he’s trying to do. He’s spent the last decade getting under my skin. But no matter how much I hate him, there’s an undeniable chemical connection. Even if I acted on it, the way he shattered me and everything I believed in, will never be enough to fix all the years of torture and mutual hatred for one another.

Being the mature twenty-two year old that I am, I hook my iPhone up to Drew’s stereo system and blast the soundtrack to Mary Poppins through it. If that doesn’t make a hard on disappear, I’m not sure what will. However, he did say to turn music on to avoid hearing his sexcapades. So technically, I’m only following his directions.

I turn it up as loud as it’ll go, drowning out the noise of them next door.

The music works and soon I’m able to get back to my book where the Prince is surprised to find out Cinder is the best mechanic in the land. Figures. Laying back against my pillows, I nearly jump out of my skin when Travis blasts through my door, completely naked, and hard. He doesn’t look at me as he grabs my phone and begins messing with it.

“What the hell are you doing?” I yell over the bass of

Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious. “Get out!”

He ignores me, holding the phone above my head as he figures out how to shut the music off.

“I’ll just turn it back on,” I snip.

“Not if you don’t have it.” He turns and walks toward my door.

“Give it back,” I demand.

“No.” He walks out into the hallway and back into his room. I follow but am too late when he locks me out. Wait...is he fucking her up against the wall because his bed still has no sheets? Or to secretly taunt me?

Probably both.

But Travis has underestimated me once again. If he wants to break all the house rules and wall-bang a girl, fine.

Going into the kitchen, I grab a chair on my way and carry it with me. I grab a lighter from the junk drawer, a paper towel, and stand on top of the chair, directly under the smoke detector. They’re all connected and wired together throughout the whole house. If one goes off, they all go off.

I smile as I light the towel and wait for a small blaze, just enough to get it to smoke when I blow it out. I put it under the detector and wait for it to finally alarm.

As soon as it does, I jump off the chair and toss the towel in the sink. I hear footsteps coming down the hall and the girl is screaming at him to ‘turn that noise off’.

“Viola!” he yells, clearly pissed.

I sneak out of the kitchen and into the mudroom where he can’t see me.

“Goddammit, Viola.” I hear him mutter before the alarm stops. “Sorry babe. You should go.”

Yes, she fucking should.

A few minutes later, I hear the front door click shut, and I breathe out in relief. Except a new feeling overcomes me: fear. Travis is beyond pissed this time.

“Where the fuck are you?” he shouts.

I don’t answer.

“So, what? You can run off my date but can’t show your face?”

He’s right. I’m being a coward.

If I’m going to get even with him, I want to be able to see the look in his eyes.

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I intentionally make some noise to grab his attention. Before I can brace myself, he's in front of me in only the pair of jeans he was wearing yesterday, hunger in his eyes, his hands balled into fists.

We stand, facing one another, our eyes locked, neither of us moving. The only sound is our breathing, and before I can read him, he charges at me.

CHAPTER NINE

TRAVIS

This is the third time in three days Viola has cock-blocked me. I've never been so riled up in my life and I've had it with this stupid game she's playing. She wants a war, she's about to get one.

"I swear, Viola." I squeeze her hips and push her back up against the wall. "If I need to fuck you so it's out of our systems, then I will." I fist her hair, tilting her head back so she looks at me. "Is that what you need, princess? Feeling left out?"

"You're an arrogant asshole," she spits out, but doesn't deny it. "I wouldn't let you touch me with a ten foot pole." The lines in her face are tense, and I know she's just as riled up as I am.

"Oh, really?" I bring a hand up to her neck and slide it down in between her breasts. "Then tell me something. Why are your nipples hard as fucking pebbles right now?"

I watch her throat move as she swallows hard. "It's cold in here."

I laugh in her face. “Are you telling me if I pulled your panties down right now they wouldn’t be drenched?”

Her lips twitch.

“That’s what I thought.”

“Why do you care anyway? You can’t wait two weeks until I’m gone for you to bring home your stream of girls? Are you really that needy that you need a girl in your bed every night?” she challenges, my hand sliding down her waist and pressing our bodies together. The way she shivers gives her away. She wants it as bad as I need it.

“Liking to fuck doesn’t make me needy,” I say matter-of-factly. “But you wouldn’t know anything about that, would you V?” I taunt, knowing it’ll drive her absolutely insane.

“Fine,” she says, confident and eager. “You want to find out?” she challenges, bringing her hands to the top of her waistline, putting her thumbs inside and dragging her leggings down her legs. I still, watching, as she strips them off right in front of me, practically daring me to go through with it.

She kicks them off and moves to remove her panties next. I feel my cock twitch, knowing it’s well aware of Viola Fisher stripping right in front of me.

“What next, King? Do you prefer bra on or off?”

My jaw ticks, unable to respond.

“Off?” she answers for me, amusement in her tone. “Okay, then.” She pulls her tank up over her head and throws it down on the growing pile on the floor. She wraps her arms around her back, fidgeting to unhook her bra. Seconds later, she slides it down

her arms and I watch out of the corner of my eye as it drops to the floor.

“I’m ready,” she announces, as if she’s some kind of prize to collect. Viola Fisher is much more than a fucking trophy. “Do your King magic or whatever it is you do to make women fall to their knees.”

My blood is boiling, and I’m fucking irate. My entire body is tense; half of my brain is dying to bend her ass over the counter and give her what she’s begging for, while the other half is trying to rationalize how to walk away from her.

Finally, I make my choice.

I begin removing my jeans, my eyes watching every calculated move she makes, waiting to see if she breaks. She watches intently as I kick them off, now standing inches from her completely naked. Completely hard.

She blinks, her eyes roaming down to my impressive length. It’s been fucking hard since the night she arrived.

“Well?” She arches a brow. “I’m waiting for your smooth moves.”

I grit my teeth, stepping toward her, and close the gap between us until the crown of my cock presses against the softness of her skin. Placing a palm on the wall behind her, I lean in as I grip her waist with my other hand. “I’ve had just about enough of your smart mouth. You either show me what else it can do or I’ll shut it up myself.”

“No, thank you. I prefer to avoid herpes and considering you were just fucking another chick less than ten minutes ago...”

I cut her off before she can say anymore. “I wasn’t fucking her.”

“I was right next door. I heard.”

“You heard a lot of moaning,” I explain. “That’s what usually happens when a girl sucks me off. It’s enjoyable for both parties.”

“God, you’re so vile,” she hisses.

“You want to see just how vile I can get?” I press the tip of my finger in between her lips. “Suck, princess. I need to see what I’m working with.”

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She complies and opens her mouth for me. “Reach down and touch me.”

“No,” she says around my finger.

“Are you going to push me at every fucking opportunity, Viola?”

“I just might.” She nips at the pad of my finger, and I’m quick to remove it.

“Stop being a stubborn little cock tease and put your hands on me,” I demand, with assertion in my tone. “I know you’ve been dreaming about it, V.” I bring my mouth to hers, leaving mere centimeters between us.

“Fuck off, Travis,” she whispers, her mouth tense. “I don’t dream about egotistical manwhores. If I want to touch it, I will, but I’m afraid with all the action it gets, my hand would fall off.”

My jaw ticks, my patience running thin as my dick presses harder against her pussy.

“So goddamn difficult.” I wrap my hand around my cock, stroking it once. “Fine. Give me permission to touch you.” My lips are so close to hers that I don’t hesitate to lean in and run my tongue along her bottom lip. “I want to touch your pussy. Say it, princess,” I command roughly, my mouth against hers.

She presses her body slightly against mine, giving me all the permission I need. I smile against her lips in victory, preparing to crack her once and for all.

“That’s my good girl,” I praise as I lower my hand down her smooth flesh, slowly

brushing it over her peaked nipple. Her breath hitches, fighting the waves of pleasure she desperately craves. My other hand explores her soft curves until I land in between her legs. I rub the pad of my thumb over her sensitive bud, and I watch as her eyes flutter closed. Her head falls back with a moan, and I know she's going to combust before I even insert a finger inside her.

"Is this smooth pussy for me?" I ask, adding more pressure. I lower my mouth to her neck and press kisses down to her collarbone. "Answer me, Viola."

I hear her suck in a breath before she responds. "Believe it or not, not everything's about you."

I scrape my teeth along her neck, landing under her ear. I pull her lobe in between my lips and suck. "Is that so?" I plunge a finger inside her without warning.

She gasps, squeezing her fingers around my arm to steady herself.

"Fuck, you have a tight little cunt. It's so damn wet." I look down at her, watching as she rotates her hips, seeking relief. I kiss along her shoulder, wrapping my arm around her and keeping her pinned against the wall. I push in a second finger, her throat opening and releasing a deep, urgent moan.

"Mm...that's it, princess." I sink in deeper, rubbing the pad of my thumb along her clit. "Have you come on a guy's fingers before?" She ignores me, and I grin at the way I've completely taken over her. "What about a guy's mouth? Have you orgasmed that way before?"

"Mm..." is all she says, her hips going wild as she rides my fingers. "I'm tempted to sit on your face just to shut you up."

"Fuck, princess. That thought already crossed my mind, trust me, but I want to feel

the first orgasm I give you. I want to feel your pussy tighten around my fingers, your orgasm dripping down my hand as I finger fuck you harder. So c'mon, Viola. Let me hear you. I know you need it." Her body is writhing against me, and I know she's going to burst any minute.

Either she's holding back or she needs a little extra encouragement. I quickly whip her around so she faces the wall and my chest presses against her. My cock is rock hard as it rubs the soft part of her back. I wrap an arm around her waist, finding my way down her smooth path to her clit. My other hand slides up and wraps around her throat, adding just enough pressure to tilt her head until my lips brush over her ear.

"You have any idea what you've done, princess? I've spent the better half of my teen years talking myself out of putting a move on you. Then you grew up and despised everything about me, making me want you even more. And now? I want to fuck you so goddamn raw, you won't be able to walk for a week. But you know what?" I say, pushing two fingers back inside her, her juices covering them immediately. "Even through all the anger and judgment, I think you secretly wanted me, too."

Her jaw tenses, her eyes refusing to look up at me. "Sorry to pop your enormous ego bubble, but the anger's always been real. I'd push you in front of a bus if it meant I never had to see your arrogant face again."

I smile at that, seeing right through her lies. "Tsk, tsks." My fingers speed up, pushing in and out of her abruptly, her hand slamming against the wall for support. "Your body says otherwise. Your pussy is aching for it. You can't fight it anymore."

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“My fingers do the same thing,” she states matter-of-factly. “The only difference is I would’ve came twice by now.”

“You have a filthy little mouth, Viola Fisher, mostly filled with lies. I know for a fact it’d never be this good on your own.”

“Vibrators are a marvelous thing,” she says. “And it doesn’t talk.”

My lips twitch, my body getting hotter. “Fuck, Viola...I swear to God, if I didn’t want to taste your pussy so damn bad, I’d fuck you until you pulled your own hair out and your nails were scratched down to nothing.” I curl my fingers in deeper and push her body closer against mine, making her feel the tip of my cock against her. “You feel that?”

I hear her throat hum, eager to scream and plead for relief, but being the stubborn little priss she is, she fights it. If she’s not going to give it willingly, I’m just going to have to make her.

My hand finds her breast, and I pinch her pink, taut nipple, rolling it in between my thumb and finger. Her breath hitches once again, and I know she won’t be able to hold it in much longer. I palm her breast and squeeze with just enough force to make her release a moan.

“Ahh...” Her head falls back, and I know she’s no longer in control, no matter how much she wants to believe she is. Viola Fisher is putty in my hands.

“Mm hmm, that’s it. You’re going to come so fucking hard, princess. Let me hear it,”

I say against her temple. “You need it. You’re trembling,” I say, my voice softer this time. I know she needs it as badly as I do.

“Travis...” she nearly whispers. “God, yesyesyes...” Her hips move in motion with the rhythm of my fingers.

“That’s right, princess. Take what you need. Ride my fucking fingers and take it.”

She squeezes her eyes shut and releases the loudest, sexiest moan I’ve ever heard. She squeezes her tight cunt around my fingers and soaks them completely. Being the greedy bastard that I am, I don’t give her more than a second to catch her breath before I rub her clit again. I thrust my fingers in and out, pressing harder and faster on her sensitive bud, knowing she isn’t done yet.

“Fuck, ohmygod. I-I can’t...” she mutters, her hips rocking faster against my fingers, needing the relief more than she can speak.

“Who makes you feel this way, princess?” I ask, adding pressure. “Tell me.”

She releases another moan, but ignores the question.

“I’m not letting you come until you say it.” I begin retracting my fingers, reminding her who’s in charge.

“You’re such a fucking asshole,” she hisses, her breath releasing in short waves.

I tsk at her, pulling my fingers out more. My palm squeezes her breast again, reminding her that she’s completely surrendered to me, her pleasure is mine for the taking.

“You need it, Viola...I can feel how badly you do.” I push my fingers back in just

slightly, teasing her until she caves. “So tell me. Who does this to you, princess?”

“Fine, I’ll do it myself.” She reaches down, trying to remove my hand so she can give herself the relief she’s craving.

“Nice try. No amount of touching yourself would ever compare to how it’d feel when I’m touching you.” I grab her wrist and pull her hand up to her chest. “Who knew you’d be so needy?” I quip, resting my fingers back on her. “Now you want to come or not?”

“Yes,” she pleads, her jaw clenching.

“That’s my good girl.” I press a chaste kiss on her neck and work my fingers inside her, deep and fast until she’s unraveling in my arms. She clenches my fingers as my name falls from her lips.

I release her and spin her around, her face looking so damn gorgeous all flushed, hair sticking against her slick skin. She watches intently, her chest moving rapidly, as I suck on my fingers, tasting her. I lick my lips and she releases a soft moan.

“Your move, Fisher.” I grin, walking out and rendering her speechless. Point for the home team!

VIOLA

Travis is a dead man.

DEAD.

After coming at me like a starved animal, still smelling like another girl’s perfume, I should’ve pushed him away. He was with a girl seconds before finding me in the

mudroom, yet I couldn't find the strength to leave. The look in his eyes was mesmerizing, and when he took control, I couldn't even think straight.

Not only am I pissed at myself for giving in, but the fact that he left me standing alone and naked after the best orgasm of my life makes me livid. Of course, if this were a fairytale, he would've carried me back to his room and held me in his arms the rest of the night, but as we all know, Travis is no fucking prince. No, Travis is a prick, and I'll get him back if it's the last thing I do. But I have to make sure that I play my cards correctly, act as if I'm not hurt, act as if everything is perfectly fine, so he won't see me scheming in the background. I will be the Viola he wishes he had as I destroy him for breaking my heart so many times before. I'll serve him bites of the poisoned apple he's been feeding me for over a decade.

Source Creation Date: July 14, 2025, 9:07 am

I dodged him the rest of the day on Saturday and half of Sunday. I couldn't look him in the eyes after that. It was a moment of weakness and as much as I tried not to, I slipped and let him see how I really felt. And though I had buried those feelings away, as soon as he touched me, they all rushed back. It's a moment that almost brings me to my knees when I think about it. It's easy to sink into the fantasy of him wanting me, taking me, bringing me to the edge and watching me spill over as I whisper his name, but seriously? He left me standing there alone and naked for the sake of a game. What the fuck?

I slept uneasily and wake up with an evil plan to get him back. My emotions are not a violin for Travis to string and play. An eye for an eye, emotions for emotions, until we are even. I had a feeling he was avoiding me just as much as I was avoiding him. Once the door to his room opened and the front door closed, I make my move. I'm sick of him prancing around in practically nothing so I grab his shit out of my trunk and throw it in his room. Giving no fucks starts now.

I pick up my phone and scroll through the different numbers I have saved. I scroll past Drew, all the kids I tutor, until my phone lands on Jason's number. I know what I'm doing is wrong. Bringing other people into our war isn't something I'd usually do but after Friday night, I know Jason's interested and Travis needs to squirm.

Before I even text Jason, I cover my tracks and text Drew.

I'm going to have a drink or dinner with Jason. Wanted to let you know before you start busting balls.

He texts something back but I don't even read it. Drew isn't in control of me. We

aren't kids anymore and I can do whatever and whoever I want.

Instead I text Courtney remembering she flew home today. Did you make it to Dallas okay?

My plane just landed. I was going to text you and let you know! The delays were horrible. I wish you would've come with me.

I smile, half-wishing I would've went too. I wouldn't be in the predicament I'm in now. I know. You'll have fun though. I think I'm going to text Jason for that drink.

The text bubble immediately pops up. I can only imagine the look on her face right now. DO IT!!!! It's just a drink! Crap, my bag is going around the carousel. Give me all the deets ASAP!

Courtney gives me just the courage I need. A smirk hits my lips as I find the text he sent me on Friday while we were dancing.

It was great seeing you the other night. Want to have that drink?

No time passes before I get a response. Hey babe. What are you doing tonight?

An evil smirk crosses my face as I send a simple text back. I'm free tonight.

Let's have dinner at Romero's at 7. I'd love to catch up. I'll pick you up. Guilt creeps up inside, not wanting to lead him on, but I know it's the only way I can move on from the mixed feelings I have for Travis.

Perfect. I'm staying at Drew's. I'll see you then.

I have hours to get ready but the time passes so quickly. I take a shower and dress

into a tight little dress that makes my ass look great. Although it's fitted, it's still classy. I add a pair of pearls and light makeup to complete the ensemble. I'm a total class act and happy because I still look like myself, unlike the way I looked the other night.

I grab my phone and plop down on the couch to watch some TV as I wait for Jason to arrive. Travis enters and just stops. He has his keys in hand and wears a shocked expression. I know that look.

“What the hell, Travis? Take a picture and quit staring.”

“There's the V I've been missing.” He smirks, rattling his keys in his hand. “I was worried that girl had vanished.”

“You couldn't be so lucky. And call me V all you want, I'm not fucking you to prove you wrong,” I say.

A smirk crosses his face but I'm not joking. I'm supposed to be putting on a facade, pretending as everything is perfectly fine, but my heart races when I'm around him, and at this moment I'm feeling as if I'm losing control. He sits, smiles, and leans forward, still staring across the room at me.

“But you want to fuck me, don't you?” His voice is deep and raspy, knowing it'll drive me insane.

“I wouldn't fuck you with my worst enemy's pussy.”

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“Shit, V. I love it when you talk like that.” His lips curl up, flashing his perfect pearly whites.

I glare at him and when the doorbell rings, I get up, leaving him before he can say anything back. I feel his eyes burning a hole into the back of my head as I walk across the room and open the door.

A genuine smile crosses my face as Jason compliments the way I look. He wraps a hand around my waist, pushing me forward, and places a sweet kiss on my cheek. I wish I had eyes in the back of my head so I could watch Travis steam. I may have been drinking Friday night, but I remember the way Travis looked at Jason as we talked and danced. However, I bet it’s nothing compared to the expression on his face right now.

“Do you want to come in?” I ask, gesturing him inside. “I just need to grab my clutch real quick.”

“Sure.” He steps in, looking around.

I turn and see Travis standing hard like a statue. His jaw is clenched tight and agitation is written all over his face.

Good.

“Hey, Travis.” Jason nods at him and then looks back at me. Jason stiffens at Travis’s stance. I pinch my lips tight, hiding the delight I feel at Travis’ reaction.

“We should get going,” Jason says. “Our reservation is at seven.” He checks his watch.

“Oh, right. Sure, yeah. Let’s go,” I say, politely, but I’m obviously stalling. Jason isn’t stupid and takes the hint with a smile and a head nod before he walks out. “I’ll meet you in the car,” he says with a wink.

When the car door closes I shoot daggers at Travis.

“What are you doing, Viola?” he growls. Travis stands his ground and shoves his hands in his pockets. With lips drawn tight into a line, his mood darkens and his cold eyes watch me as he waits for an answer. A million unspoken words are exchanged during our little standoff, but I’m not backing down. And I have a feeling he’s not going to either.

“I said, what the fuck you are doing, Viola?” His volume goes higher and the tone is even harsher.

“I’m not sure what you’re talking about,” I say. I’m playing the game, but it isn’t an answer he’ll receive, because I leave without another word and walk to the car.

I can’t fully make out the emotions in his tone but it almost sounds bitter and angry and possibly jealous?

He’s not my brother.

We’re not even friends.

Travis said it was my move. Well, move made. I won’t be a pawn in this fucked up game anymore.

CHAPTER TEN

TRAVIS

The door snaps closed and I'm so livid that she's going out with Jason, I slam my fist into the wall. My knuckles crack as it breaks through the sheetrock. The deep indentation of a fist is undeniable. I shake out my hand and that's when I notice my broken skin. What the fuck is wrong with me? I've never had a woman make me lose control like that, and to know Viola Fisher is the reason pisses me off beyond belief.

The swelling and bruising starts to set in but I can barely feel the pain. I walk into the kitchen and take two shots, angry for allowing my emotions to get the best of me. After a few deep breaths, I take another one and wait as the tequila courses through my veins. I'm beginning to think more clearly, other than the building tension inside my body that feels like poison. I need to get rid of it pronto. I suck in a deep breath and pull my phone from my pocket. The first number I see is none other than the boss' daughter, Alyssa. This is a dangerous game, and I almost think twice about sending her a text but I do it anyway, thanks to the tequila.

I'm ready to take you up on that offer, babe. Tell me when and where.

She sends her address and the code to enter her building immediately. Viola only helped me see the light and tonight, I'll do what I've been meaning to do for the past few days: fuck away the very thought of her.

I lock the house and walk to the car. The cool breeze brushes against my skin and I wonder if Jason even gave Viola his jacket. I wonder where they are and what they are doing, and it's something that I shouldn't give two shits about. Before she left, Viola had looked at me like I was her worst enemy. Fuck this.

Knowing I shouldn't drive, but doing it anyway, I crank the car and listen to the deep

rumble of the Challenger. My head is in a fog as I back out of the driveway and slam on the gas as I enter the highway leading to downtown. Alyssa lives in one of those elite buildings with codes and security guards and people who push the elevator floor buttons for you. I've never visited her before—this is the first time for that—but she'll be the perfect distraction I need to pull me back to reality.

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I park in one of her reserved parking places and enter the code to the door. I give the older gentleman the floor number and we zip to the top of the building. When the elevator door opens, I realize that Alyssa has the entire floor to herself.

She's everything you'd imagine a CEO's daughter to be.

She greets me wearing nothing but a black lacy bra and thong. Her tits spill out of the sheer lace and she smiles at me like I'm the most delicious piece of candy she'll ever eat. No time passes before she removes her bra and drops it to the floor. Her dark nipples beg for me to suck them. I walk to her, place my arms around her waist and dip down to take one in my mouth. She throws her head back and moans my name with pleasure.

Alyssa slowly unbuttons my shirt, then drags her fingers down to my zipper and lowers it. Soon I'm standing in her living room in only my boxer shorts. The city lights and cars on the highway are a perfect setting and allows light to leak in around us.

"I've been waiting so long for this," she says, reaching for my cock and wrapping her delicate fingers around my length. I waste no more time and rip the little lace panties from her body and throw them to the floor. Her lips touch mine and as I kiss her, I'm furious to realize I don't feel anything like I did with Viola. I hate that she's consuming my thoughts and even more annoyed that as I'm kissing a hot blonde bombshell, Viola in her t-shirt and glasses is poisoning my thoughts. I grab Alyssa's tight ass in my hand and we walk backward until her ass touches the cool wood of the kitchen table. She sighs and moves my boxer shorts from my hips and begs me to fuck her. Before it goes too far, I bend down and pull the foil wrapper from my pants

pocket. Alyssa smiles and takes the condom from my hand. Her big blue eyes meet mine as she rips the package open with her teeth. Carefully, she guides the rubber over my length before laying back on the table.

I flick her other nipple with my tongue as I move deep inside her. She's so wet and when I fill her with my dick, she screams my name, not caring who hears. I pant against her neck as the clapping sound of ass against wood echoes through the room. She keeps trying to kiss me, but I don't feel like I can so I move her to the couch and bend her over the edge to fuck her from behind. I go fast and hard and before long she's coming on my dick. I'm moaning and remembering Viola melting under my touch. It brings my pending orgasm to an intense level and I know by just the thought of her I won't be able to hold it back much longer. Alyssa arches her back and circles her hips as I pick up my pace. As I come, I close my eyes and topple over her.

I pull out and look down at the condom, which is busted open, and I begin to panic. Her ass is still in the air as if she's waiting for a second helping. My heart beat pounds in my ears and I begin to have a mini-freakout. She turns around, glances down at the broken condom in my hand, and smiles.

"I'm on the pill, Travis." She smiles. "It happens."

I somewhat relax by the fact that she's double-protected. But all I can think about is how it doesn't happen and hasn't ever happened to me.

She walks into the bathroom to clean herself up but when she returns, her expression changes.

"Who's Viola?" she asks after a minute, her lips press into a firm line.

"What?" I ask, confused.

“You whispered her name...”

Alyssa’s arms are crossed and the look on her face is almost frightening. I give her a smile and walk to her.

“Who is she, Travis?” She’s pouting, making sure to add a little whine to her tone. I actually hate it when she does that.

I slip on my boxer shorts. “It’s my roommate’s little sister. She’s no one.” She doesn’t look like she believes me, so I sweeten my tone. “Trust me, baby.”

Her shoulders relax and she flashes a flirty grin. I place a palm against her cheek and guide her lips to mine, kissing her the way she wants to be kissed, passionately and needy. Although to me, it’s emotionless.

Alyssa breaks the kiss and licks her lips. The corner of her mouth tilts up as if she’s just come up with a filthy idea. I don’t question it as she grabs my hand and leads me to her bedroom.

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“I want to make you feel good. I want you to forget about Viola. I want you to scream my name, Travis.” The sound of V’s name on her tongue makes me uneasy, but I push it away as she moves my boxer shorts from my hips and guides me to the bed. She licks up and down my stomach before fully taking me into her mouth. After a few minutes, I’m ready to go again and I’m grateful she’s a sex kitten but confused that I would whisper Viola’s name and not even notice. I close my eyes and try to focus on one of the best BJ’s she’s ever given me. Alyssa even makes sure to give my balls extra attention by licking and sucking them. She perks up when I say her name, taking me deeper in her mouth. The room fills with her moans of pleasure and after she works for it, I give her what she wants.

“Mm. God, I love the way you taste,” she says, making sure to lick the tip dry. I open my arms and instead of her falling into them, she pulls a condom from her drawer, places it on my shaft, and then sits on me. Her tits bounce and she moans my name as she rides me. I thumb her clit, wanting to please her a second time, and as she roughly tugs her nipples, she comes again, then falls against my chest. She’s so greedy, but it’s exactly what I need right now, a woman who isn’t afraid to take exactly what she wants. I wrap my arms around her and we lay there, still connected together. At least she’s satisfied.

After we’re completely worn out, I decide it’s time to go. A few hours have passed and though I’ve gotten exactly what I wanted, I still feel incomplete. I dress and slip on my shoes.

“Travis,” she says as I pull my keys out of my pocket.

“Yeah, babe?” I ask, feeding her ego long enough to get out alive.

“Since the first time I’ve met you, I’ve always fantasized about you and how amazing it’d be if you bent me over your desk and had your way with me,” she says, licking her bottom lip.

“That’s a good fantasy,” I reply, shooting her a wink.

“Perhaps one day it’ll be a reality,” she says slyly, sucking in her lower lip. I don’t respond as I dip my head down and kiss her sweetly before leaving. She’s already getting way too far ahead of herself, which cannot be a good thing. As I ride the elevator to the bottom floor, I realize I’ve been playing with fire like a foolish fucker, and it’s only a matter of time before this blows up in my face.

VIOLA

Though Jason isn’t as slimy as I thought he would be, he’s still qualifies as a sleaze ball. He’s been staring at my tits for the past five minutes and has eye fucked me since we stepped out of the car. Right now, I want to scream ‘up here, buddy’, and it takes everything I have to keep my mouth shut.

I know by the way he’s undressing me with each glance, that if I suggested we go back to his place, he’d instantly be hard. The thought repulses me. I set my fork down on the side of my plate and take a large gulp of wine. I pull out my phone to see how much time has passed because it feels like I’m in limbo. I’ll be relieved when this is over, but that’s not something I would ever admit to anyone especially not Travis. I smile and nod my head as he mumbles with his mouth full. I’m trying to be polite.

As Jason continues to talk to my breasts about his job, all I can think about is Travis. Where was he going? What is he doing? Who is he with? I need to stop with the thoughts, but no matter how many times I remind myself, I can’t.

“You seem a little out of it tonight,” Jason says, actually looking into my eyes.

I give him a smile over my glass of merlot. “Sorry. I’ve got a lot on my plate with graduation and all of that.” I make up an excuse but it’s not school that I’m lost in right now, it’s the thought of a man that’s stolen my heart.

He nods his head but I don’t think he really believes me. I wouldn’t believe me either.

“Drew is going to kick my ass, isn’t he?” Jason finally says as the waiter takes our plates.

I burst out laughing, relieved this date is the beginning and end of us together. “Probably.”

The mood lightens and I don’t feel like my boobs are the center of attention.

“I thought Travis was going to break my face tonight.” He confirmed exactly what I thought.

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“Sorry, he feels like he has to be big brother while Drew’s away.” But I don’t mention the way he makes me feel or the dirty things he says to me when we’re alone.

“Truthfully,” Jason lowers his voice. “I think he just wants you for himself.”

Heat rises to my cheeks and I hope he doesn’t notice. If he does, I’ll blame the wine, but honestly I didn’t expect those words to come out of his mouth.

“I sincerely doubt that,” I choke out. “Not happening.”

He takes a drink and narrows his eyes. “Everyone knows you hate him though. Why is that? He never tells anyone why.”

I feel like I’m under Jason’s microscope and he’s peeling away every layer I have when it comes to Travis, which is okay because at least he’s stopped mentally peeling off my clothes. I force out a smile and think about my answer. The truth would sound immature and stupid, so I give him a basic version. “Because he’s an asshole.” ...that broke and continues to break my heart, but I don’t dare say that.

Jason laughs. “True. But he’s a good guy too, and he means well.”

“Good for him.” I finish off the glass of wine and he orders me another one.

We sit and chat a little longer before the waiter brings our check. Soon after we’ve finished our drinks Jason drives me home. The car ride is full of conversations about graduation, professors, and my future. I actually enjoyed talking to him about school.

When we pull up to the house, we sit in the driveway like two teenagers. The awkward silence pushes on until the Challenger roars into the driveway breaking the monotony. Travis gets out of the car looking like an unruly mess and just glares at us.

“Ugh,” is all I can say. The silent message is heard loud and clear.

“Tonight was fun,” he says. He holds out his hand and I shake it, grateful that he didn’t try to kiss me.

“Good luck with that.” Jason laughs, referring to Travis..

“Thanks for everything.” I give him a smile then get out of the car. Jason waits for me to turn around and wave at him before he drives off.

My heart is pounding in my chest and for a second I think about hopping in my car and driving around the block a few times, but it’s better to look the beast in the face without fear. I suck in a deep breath and walk inside. The living room is dark and the only light shines from the kitchen. I take a few steps forward and see Travis drinking tequila from the bottle. His messy hair is falling in his eyes the way it used to when we were younger. He looks at me like he wants to say something but I immediately start walking away. I can’t deal with him right now.

“What are you doing home so early?” he asks, his tone harsh. “You didn’t go back to Jason’s house and fuck him?”

I turn around and Travis is standing in the doorway of the kitchen, the warm glow of the light surrounds his body as his shadow splashes across the floor. His mouth is drawn into a tight line and he’s breathing hard.

“Oh, wait. I forgot you don’t do that. You prefer to be a little cock tease while judging everyone else’s lifestyle instead.”

I look him up and down and narrow my eyes at him. “Jealousy doesn’t suit you well,” I say, stating the obvious and choosing to ignore his last statement.

I’ve struck a nerve because all he does is take another swig of the bottle he’s tightly grasping in his hand. He doesn’t deny it, and in a sick way, it makes me happy.

“Were you thinking about me the whole time you were with him?”

He’s saying things to rile me up but I refuse to let him win. “You’re the last person I think about when I’m out with attractive, available men who know how to respect me.”

“Liar.” He half laughs and takes a drink of water.

I walk to him, getting ready to give him my best, and notice his knuckles are cut and bloody.

“What the hell?” My face drops and everything I was just about to say slips my mind. “What happened?” I’m generally concerned because if his hand looks that bad, I feel sorry for whatever took the brunt of it.

Travis shoves his hands in his pockets and doesn’t take his eyes from me. “It’s nothing.”

I notice the black t-shirt he’s wearing hugs his muscles and body in all the right places. The tattoos on his arms tell a colorful story, and I find myself gawking at a disheveled Travis King. All he needs is a leather jacket to nail the bad boy James Dean look especially with that hair. Shit.

He lets out a slight laugh when I swallow hard. “See, sweetheart. Told you. You’re fantasizing about me right now.”

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Being this close to him makes my skin burn with anticipation. The thought of his hands on me again is driving me mad and it takes everything I have to push the thoughts away, because I don't want them. He does dangerous things to me, and I can't continue on like this.

"There are times when I wish I could shut you up forever." I walk to the kitchen and shove the tequila back in the freezer.

"You mean there isn't a spell for that?" He leans against the frame of the door.

I turn my head and give him a dirty look. "If there was one that would work, I would've used it already."

As I walk past him he doesn't move, but turns and continues to look at me. That's when I smell the sweetness mixed with his cologne.

"When did you start wearing women's perfume?" My tone is accusing, but I already know the answer.

His eyes shift slightly, immediately giving him away. Realization sets in to what Travis was doing tonight and my mind creates a repulsive picture.

"God, you're disgusting. Have some damn self-control." The moment those words spill out, I eat my words. Self-control, Viola. Must stay away from Travis King and his royal cock.

He doesn't respond. Shrugging his shoulders, he walks the other way. As much as I

fight it, I can't stop the pang of jealousy that shoots through me, followed by anger. I remember why I've hated him for so long. He's the king of all douches, a manwhore and a one-upper. And I'm still the girl with a stupid crush.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

TRAVIS

Monday morning is proving to be more of a bitch than I anticipated. I work out and go straight from the gym to work, so there's no opportunity of running into Viola. I turn the radio off and drive in silence. My mind is running a million miles an hour, thinking of when we were kids and the first time Viola asked me about boys. We were sitting in our spot on her rooftop when she brought the subject up. It was sweet, the way she glanced up at me, acting shy and embarrassed as she asked me how to tell if a boy liked her. The wind blew her hair around her face, and I was surprised she had worn her hair down. I watched as she tucked strands behind her ears as she fidgeted.

"Guys are simple creatures," I explained, although I hadn't much experience myself. The only girl I cared about spending time with was her, but I could never tell her that. "They will find any opportunity to be near a girl they like, even if no one else approves. He'll just enjoy being around you."

"I kind of expected you to tell me they'll pull your hair and make fun of your clothes or something." She laughed, her body finally relaxing. I loved her laughter and tried to make her laugh any chance I could.

"Well that depends. Are you crushing on a five year old?"

She threw her head back, exposing her neck, and let out the purest, rawest laugh I've ever heard. I wanted to bottle that up and lock it away only for me to hear it.

“No,” she finally managed to answer, wiping away tears of laughter from her cheeks.

Without thinking, I leaned in and caught one with my finger. She swallowed hard as I brushed my hand against her cheek.

“If a guy likes you, he won’t be afraid to tell you.” The moment the words came out, I regretted them. I wanted to tell her. I wanted her to know that whatever she was feeling, I was feeling too, but I was a fucking coward.

I didn’t know how to explain what I was feeling.

“Oh,” she replied, her eyes lowering, and I could see the disappointment in her features.

I was an idiot.

“So are you excited for your birthday?” I needed to change the subject.

She shrugged. I knew she didn’t have a lot of friends, so I wanted to do something to make her feel special.

Viola Fisher was special. To me at least.

I didn’t have a lot of money, but I managed to scrape enough from mowing lawns to buy her something. I thought about it for weeks, wanting to get her the perfect gift.

I couldn’t let Drew know, though, because then I definitely wouldn’t hear the end of it, so when I did finally pick out the perfect necklace for her, I wrapped it with some old wrapping paper I found in our attic and hid it under her pillow. Inside, I wrote a short note: When a guy likes you, he’ll make sure you know.

I knew I was crossing every single line and boundary writing that note, but I didn't care. I wanted her to feel extra special on her birthday. When she wasn't burying her head in a book or reciting the value of Pi, she'd talk to me for hours about all the characters and different worlds she's read about. I never knew what she was talking about, but it didn't matter. I just enjoyed being around her even if Drew poked fun at me for it.

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But that was the last birthday I ever bought something for her. Over the next few days, she dismissed me, throwing me out like yesterday's trash. Anytime I tried talking to her, she'd ignore me or walk away. By the time school started back up, we were no longer friends at all. I was a freshman in high school and she was still in middle school. Between working on the weekends and practices, we barely even saw each other in passing.

I pull into the parking lot and sit in my car a moment stewing on the flashback that resurfaced. I think about how different things would've been had I told her.

A text from Drew interrupts my thoughts.

Dude, what are your plans this weekend?

I almost want to tell him, the plan is to fuck with his sister, but...well that wouldn't be kosher.

No plans, other than getting laid, I reply back with a smug smile.

Glad to know nothing's changed in the few days I've been gone. Come to the lake this weekend. We're heading up early Friday. It'll be fun.

I think about Viola staying at our house alone and I'm not sure I approve of that. She can take care of herself, but I'd rather be here if something happened.

It's you and Mia's weekend to be alone. Enjoy it, dude.

One minute we're happy and the next minute we aren't. Dunno what's going on. I think having people here will be better.

I'm no longer smiling. Drew loves Mia and would do anything for her. I don't like to hear things aren't going as planned. If you want me there, I'll be there.

Good. I do. Travis to the rescue. I'm going to invite Viola too. Don't worry, I'll force her to be nice. I'm hoping she can get info from Mia. Be my recon.

Fine. Do you ever stop working? You should be a detective, not a cop. I laugh as I hit send then force myself to get out of the car.

I enter the building, taking the stairs two at a time because I want to feel my body being pushed to the edge. Once on my floor, I walk past the administrative assistant's desk and give her a smile before I go to my office. As soon as I boot up my computer, Blake storms in without knocking.

"King." He takes a sip of his coffee.

I'm really not in the mood for his bullshit today but I put on a fake smile and wait.

"Crawford was impressed with your reporting. He actually asked if you could see him as soon as you arrived this morning." Blake's face is glum, and I know it chaps his ass that I received any sort of recognition.

"Like right now?"

Blake nods his head before walking away annoyed. I drop everything and make my way to the tenth floor, where the executive offices are. I'm trying to gain control of myself as I knock on the closed door. My palms are sweaty and I can't remember the last time that happened.

“Come in,” a rough voice says from the other side.

I put on a smile and open the door and see Sloan sitting behind his desk in a nicely tailored suit. His white hair is slicked to the side and his face is cleanly shaven. As I step in, I see Alyssa sitting in front of her Daddy’s oak desk. My mood instantly drops. She turns and looks at me and gives me a wink. I don’t let the smile on my face falter. I have to push our secret aside and be strictly professional.

“Sit, son.” Sloan is the type of man who doesn’t waste time so for him to even offer a pause before speaking freaks me the hell out. Alyssa crosses her legs, her skirt riding up her thigh and leans toward me when I sit. I shift my body away from her trying to make it unapparent.

“I’ve given Alyssa the digital division of the European account.”

I wait, because I know this isn’t what I was called up here for. There’s more coming.

“But she insists this account should be a co-project and that you’d be the perfect candidate. I looked over the reporting you completed Friday, and I have to agree with her assessment.”

Alyssa is playing games and her father is putty in her hand. He smiles at her proudly, and I know she has his balls in one hand and mine in the other. But this isn’t the type of project a person refuses so I suck up the bullshit and smile. I guess we will be partners. The thought makes me sick.

“Travis is going to be so helpful. I’m really excited for him to join me on this project, Sloan.”

In professional settings, Alyssa is known for calling her father by his first name. I’ve always found it odd, but he smiles at his daughter, his only child, the one who will

inherit it all if she can prove herself to the company. We both want and need recognition in this industry, though I don't like the idea of it, I'll do whatever is necessary because I do deserve this opportunity. I've worked countless late nights and weekends over the last year with little recognition from Blake. This could be my only chance.

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Sloan cracks a small smile. “Mr. King, you’re now partially in control of the digital division of the European accounts. It’s a large venture, but I believe you and Alyssa will do a superb job planning and executing greatness. There’ll be countless hours of digital marketing, branding, online meetings, and making sure our clients know why we’re one of the world’s best marketing agencies. You’ll have a team to work with, but that’ll come later. The two of you need a solid plan. I’d like a report by the end of the week. I’ll have the director of digital marketing send you a list of our current clients so you two can start compiling our award winning strategy right away.”

“Thank you for the opportunity, Sir. I won’t let you down.” I stand and hold out my hand and he gives me a firm handshake in return. It’s a promise I intend to keep but thinking about the amount of work I’ll be doing alone doesn’t please me. I foresee sixty-hour weeks for an indefinite time period. Considering Alyssa is involved and my name is all over it, failing isn’t an option.

“I’ve already let Mr. James know that you’ll be taking on the project and to redistribute your other work,” Sloan says as I’m walking out the door.

Moments later, Alyssa is running down the hallway toward me, but I keep walking.

“Now we can officially spend more time together,” she says, way too excited about the project. I knew it. I refuse to do all the work while she sits around in her designer clothes that daddy bought and looks pretty. This is a co-project but one that needs two people actually working. I continue to the elevator as she speaks. Doing this to spend time with me is pathetic and I already don’t like it. But I’ll swallow my distaste and work with her.

She grabs my arm and I pull it from her. “Alyssa,” I say calmly.

She’s looking me up and down like she would jump my bones in the elevator if I let her. I’m not playing hard to get, but for some reason I think she believes I am. Instead of starting off on the wrong foot, considering I’ll be partnering with her, I just exhale slowly, and regain my thoughts while giving her the benefit of the doubt. Maybe she really believes I’ll be an asset to the project, but I’ll never know the truth. It bothers me more than it should. “Thanks for referring me. I really appreciate it.”

She lifts her eyebrows and traces her bottom lip with her tongue. “You’re welcome, babe.”

Once the elevator doors close, she brushes her fake tits against my chest and stands on her tiptoes to steal a kiss. My dick instantly reacts, but we can’t do this. Not here, not in the elevator that’s eventually going to stop and open on our floor. With this project, the dynamic of our relationship has to change regardless of the attention she’s starving for. Work must come first. I’ll have to push her away slowly as we move forward with our project.

I put my hand on her hip and whisper in her ear, trying to hold her off. “Later.”

The elevator stops and she takes a step away from me. “Promise?”

I give her a quick nod that’s full of lies as I walk past her and go straight to my office and close the door. I pinch the bridge of my nose and realize my life is spinning out of control. The very foundation I’ve built is slowly crumbling below my feet. The everyday structure I worked so hard to create has vanished because of this one project. While having an opportunity such as this should be a dream come true, the circumstance is a nightmare.

What Alyssa and I have isn’t just a side hookup, at least not for her.

Today, that's been confirmed.

I've never regretted sex until now.

Last night with her was a huge mistake.

VIOLA

I wake up in my bra and panties to an awkwardly quiet house. Warm sunshine splashes across the hardwood floor of Drew's room and I walk to the window and open the blinds to let the sunlight in. I walk through the house trying to decide how I'm going to spend my quiet day. I peek out the window and see Travis' car is gone and release a deep sigh. Thank God. I have hours before he comes home.

I crawl back into bed and decide to finally read the text Drew sent me last night.

Stay away from my friends.

Ha. I love Drew, and I know he has my best interest in mind, but he has to realize we aren't kids anymore. He doesn't have control over his friends or me. I smile and send him a text back.

There's nothing to worry about. It was just dinner. How's Mia?

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I only ask to get the attention off me and onto him and Mia instead. I don't actually care much about how she is, only that she's treating my brother well.

Oh, hey, she's alive after all. Wow. Good job. You officially pissed me off yesterday. She's fine. She asked about you and what you were doing this weekend.

I smile at the first part of his message. I don't really know Mia on a personal level, but I do often wonder what Drew sees in her. She's what I'd considered a spoiled trust-fund baby and a complete opposite of who I imagined Drew settling down with, but he talks highly of her, so I try not to judge.

Why? What's up? I respond.

We're leaving Friday afternoon to head up to Mia's family cabin on the lake and we want you to meet us. There's plenty of room. But I told her you'd be too busy memorizing spells and potions.

I laugh, hearing his voice in my head at another one of his lame cracks about my love for Harry Potter. Oh, he's got jokes.

Just messing with you baby sis :)

I roll my eyes and give in. Fine, count me in. I'll head up early Saturday morning.

Travis is coming up too, so just carpool with him. That's if you don't kill him before then.

My heart races when I think about the water dripping off his body. I close my eyes and I'm transported to a fantasy of his lips running across my skin and I sit straight up then stand to stop the thoughts. Whatever, Drew.

Well, good, I was going to anyway. Is everything going okay? Travis's chicks been keeping you company?

I know he's smiling.

Thank God he hasn't brought too many of them home. I had watched it more times than I wanted over the years and once I was able to avoid it, I did at all costs. Now that the ghost of his touch haunts my lips, I'm not sure I can physically handle it. I swallow hard and know Drew's waiting for a response so I grab my phone. Sometimes I wish I could just say what I feel, but that time is not now. It's fine, I type back, and then add, something like that.

Good. Warning though. Mia's been a little hormonal.

Ugh. I don't want to be around her if she's in one of her moods. I made that mistake once, and promised I'd never do it again. But I feel bad for Drew and maybe being there will help break some of the tension. It annoys me though that she gets like that when he works so hard, barely taking time off because he wants to make a difference and he loves his job. I liked her right away when they first started dating, but as of lately I haven't really found much to like.

Just to mess with him, I send him another text back. I'm staying home then!

Ha! I'll see you Saturday, sis! Expecto Patronum!

You're an idiot. Avada Kedavra! At least he could try to use spells in the right context. And yes I used the killing spell because the thought of being around Mia and

him while they are arguing makes me want to murder. I wish Courtney were home, so she could be my sidekick during this little weekend adventure. But at least Travis will be there to distract everyone. He's perfected that, at least.

I lie in bed and close my eyes, trying to push Travis out of my mind. Those old feelings I buried so deeply are trying to resurface again. I can feel them bubbling on the edge and soon, if I don't gain control, they will spill over. I've tried to ignore the buzzing that's been roaming my body since he touched me, but it's useless. His intoxicating lips make me feel like I'm drowning and with Travis King, there's no chance of survival.

There was a time I believed Travis would've given me the world. Even though we were young, it didn't matter. I was Ginny Weasley and he was Harry Potter, and we were destined to be together. Sometimes, when you look at a person, you just know. I knew then.

The first time I met Travis, my ten-year-old heart told me I'd met the person I'd spend the rest of my life with. But the heart was wrong. The heart told lies. It took years to repair the damage he caused and somehow he's ripped off the bandages that held me together. And I hate that I want him.

Something so wrong shouldn't feel so right. His lips on my skin and his hands on my body makes me forget everything. In those moments, it's just Travis and I, and the raw emotions fueling the fire. I swallow hard, and close my eyes tight. My body quickly begs for a release and I can't deny the need.

Source Creation Date: July 14, 2025, 9:07 am

I need water for my parched mouth, but I stop outside of Travis' door instead of going to the kitchen. I swallow as I put my hand on the knob and turn. I'd never paid much attention in his room and I shouldn't be nosy, but curiosity has gotten the best of me. I walk over to his dresser and my eyes drift over the hardwood. I open the top drawer and it's full of photos, baseball cards, and trinkets. On top of the pile are pictures of his childhood dog—Beast—him and Drew throughout the years, and tucked away is a Polaroid picture of me and him sitting under the big oak tree in the backyard. We aren't looking at the camera, but he's looking straight at me. His hair is shaggy and he's wearing a baseball cap. He always looked so cute in that hat. My head is tossed back and I'm laughing hard at something he must have said. I don't even remember this picture being taken. I turn it over looking for some sort of date and on the back I see the words 'My Princess' scribbled in a messy handwriting. I can't help but think about the summer that ruined it all and how things could have been different.

I set the picture back in the dresser and walk over to his bed. As I sit on the edge, I run my hand across the dark blue sheets that smell like summer rain. So this is where the magic happens.

The light scent of his soap and cologne fills the room. I'm surrounded by him and the need to have him almost swallows me whole. Sneaking around in his room and laying on his bed in nothing but a t-shirt and panties is a turn on.

I try to fight the desire, until the need overcomes me. I rush to Drew's room and grab my little black bag and clothes then go to the bathroom. I turn on the shower and stand there for minutes, thoughts of Travis rushing over me like the warm water. I take my time washing my body, the soapsuds dripping down my stomach and legs. I

can't remember the last time I pleasured myself, but I need it.

My hands find their way down my body. My nipples are hard peaks. I pinch one, imagining Travis's hands touching me all over. It's almost too much to handle. I move the shower curtain and take my vibrator from its little black bag and turn it on low. I press it against my other nipple and tuck my bottom lip in my mouth. I lean my back against the wall and prop a leg on the edge of the tub and as soon as I press the vibrator against my swollen clit, I gasp. I can't hold back the moans. Images of Travis's fingers deep inside me, pleasuring and pushing me to the limit, fill my thoughts, and I don't know how much longer I can last as I sink deeper into the pleasure.

I glide the vibrator inside, allowing it to fill me, and I've never been so wet or turned on while doing this. My fingers are slick as I run them up and down my slit, and I know it's because of Travis. My fantasy takes over and I tug my nipple, allowing a shot of pleasure and pain to course through me. The vibrator against my sensitive bud causes my body to react instantly. Travis was right, it doesn't feel the same as his touch. He knows what my body needs and wants as if he's always been my lover.

My body begs for release as the orgasm builds deep inside, but I continue to tease myself, allowing the impending pleasure to linger. I'm right on the edge, and I imagine Travis standing at the bathroom door, silently watching me with a sexy grin on his face as he demands me to come. The fantasy of him is almost as good as the real thing. My body begins to tremble as I move the vibrator along my pussy. The thought of him has me losing myself under the warm water, forcing myself to stay standing. The powerful orgasm rolls through me, and as I come, his name leaves my lips.

CHAPTER TWELVE

TRAVIS

I'm beyond relieved when I finally get to leave work. Today's been...interesting...to say the least. I've been assigned the project of a lifetime, which I'm pumped for, but of course it comes with strings attached—Alyssa Crawford.

Needing to let out some steam, I drive to the gym for another workout. I make sure to take my ear buds in with me this time. I don't need any more distractions and the louder the music, the better I lift.

Luckily, the gym is quiet today, and I get a good hour in before I call it quits. I need a hot shower and food, but then I remember Viola will be at the house. After the way we left things last night, I'm not sure I'm ready to face her, but I won't run away from whatever it is we have going on between us.

Source Creation Date: July 14, 2025, 9:07 am

Things with Viola Fisher have been messy and fucked up for years. That's nothing new, but the way she gave into me the other night, now that's definitely new. This game we're playing is dangerous, and it's a lot worse with Alyssa. If I piss her off, it could cost me my entire career. However, if I screw it up with Viola, it could cost me everything else. Both are too risky to be gambling with and yet, here I am.

Shit, it's only Monday and I already need a drink.

As soon as I pull up to the house, I see Viola's car in the driveway and while part of me is relieved, the other part is terrified at which version of Viola I'll be greeted by.

Turning the doorknob, I cautiously walk in, listening for any signs of life inside. I walk pass the kitchen and see no movement, I walk toward the living room and see her sitting quietly on the couch with another one of her nerd books.

Her hair is pulled up in a messy bun, but it looks wet, as if she just got out of the shower. She's in her normal black leggings and a ratty college t-shirt, and her black-rimmed glasses frame her heart-shaped face. She continues reading even as I step closer, either too invested in her book, or ignoring my existence completely.

"Hey..." I say, testing her for a reaction.

"Hi," she mutters, not even flinching.

"How's it going?"

She swipes her Kindle, keeping her eyes fixed on the electronic page. "Fine."

I pinch my lips together, rocking back on my feet. “Okay, then...” I mumble to myself, taking the hint and getting out of her way. For some reason, her indifference feels worse than when she greets me with a Hey, asshole or Fuck off, Travis. After all these years, it almost feels like her pet name for me—with a side of hatred.

I turn on my heels and walk to my room to grab a fresh set of clothes. Just as I’m about to walk out with a pair of shorts and a t-shirt in my hand, I see my top dresser drawer has been left open. I scan the room, looking for any other evidence that someone’s been in here, and the moment I walk closer to my bed, I smell it. I smell her.

Viola’s been in my room.

And possibly, on my bed.

Now why would Viola Fisher, president of the I Hate Travis King Club and all-around good girl, set foot in my bedroom? The corner of my lips tilt up, curiously, wondering what she was looking for and what it is she found.

That girl can shoot daggers at me until she’s blue in the face, but her body will give her away every time. She may hate me on the surface, but there’s something inside her that isn’t telling the whole story.

I walk into the hallway and peek around, to see her still sitting on the couch, reading. I want to so badly ask why she was in my room, but I’ll save that for another time.

Walking into the bathroom, her body wash scent immediately takes over my senses. A mix of fresh raspberries and something else consume me as I undress and turn the shower on. Does she have to be every-fucking-where?

Work left me tense and going to the gym helped a little, but not enough. I want to

ring Alyssa's neck for using Sloan to her advantage. She has me right in the palm of her hand and she knows it. She knows I've been trying to get promoted to bigger projects and the second I give in, she pulls the rug up from under me.

But how do I say no? How do I walk away from a promotion I've been working my ass off to get? Or rather the better question is, how do I survive the project, without Alyssa Crawford eating me alive?

I'm so distracted by my thoughts that it takes me a moment to see what's behind the shampoo bottle on one of the shelves. What the hell is that?

Brushing both hands through my hair, pushing the water out of my eyes, I see it much clearer. Once I grab it and hold it in my palm, I know exactly what it is.

A pleased smirk spreads wide over my face at the thought of her using this in the shower, and screaming out her pleasure. I press the button, feel it come to life, and imagine Viola thinking of me as she gets herself off.

Now I know exactly why she came into my room—inspiration.

Once I'm finished, I turn off the shower, grab my towel and dry off. I don't leave without her little toy in my hand. I'm about to give Viola Fisher a taste of her own medicine.

With my towel still wrapped around my waist, I strut down the hallway back to where she's sitting, her nose still stuck in her eBook. I almost have to do a double take to make sure she's breathing.

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“So, V...” I stand behind her and lower my body, crossing my arms over the back of the couch where her head is resting. “Good book?”

“What do you want, Travis?” The disdain in her voice doesn’t go unnoticed. I can only laugh at how bored she sounds.

“Well, I was thinking we could play a little game.” Her eyes blink up away from her Kindle, but she doesn’t turn her head. “Winner gets bragging rights for the rest of the week.”

She lowers her lashes, her expression barely changing. “Not interested.”

“Hm...” I say, pretending to really be thinking it over. “I think you’ll be very interested in this game. See, it fully benefits you, I only get partial benefits.”

I see her throat move. “Then why would you even want to play?”

“For the thrill, princess. You know I can’t deny a challenge.”

Her shoulders move up and down, her breathing speeding up. “Fine. What is it?”

She doesn’t even take her eyes off her Kindle, but I’m about to change that real quickly.

“Close your eyes.”

That gets her attention. She jerks her head toward me, furrowing her brows. “Are you

joking?”

“What? You don’t trust me?” I ask, the corner of my lips tilting up and giving me away.

“I wouldn’t trust you even if Jesus himself came and blessed your forehead with a Bible in hand.”

“Funny you bring up what’s in my hand...because I have something I know you’ll really enjoy.”

She narrows her eyes, knowing I’m definitely up to something.

“Viola...” I lower my voice. “Close your eyes.”

She waits a moment to read my face, but I don’t give anything away. She finally exhales and closes them.

“Good girl,” I praise. “Now relax.”

She obeys and releases a gentle breath. “If you smash a pie or something in my face, I’ll feed your balls to the birds,” she threatens and my smile widens.

“I wouldn’t dare,” I mock. “The name of the game is Guess that Object. Are you ready?”

She sighs. “Sure.”

I step in closer to her neck and inhale her clean scent. If I didn’t want to wring her neck the majority of the time, I’d be tempted to do much more than just smell her.

I bring my lips closer, just below her ear and place a soft kiss. Her body shudders. I see the strands of her hair stand up as her skin pricks with goose bumps.

“Is this where I guess?” she asks, unamused. “What’s rough, dry, and promises an STD?”

I back away, trying to read her. I know she’s fucking with me, but how can she pretend her body didn’t react the way we both know it did.

“That’d be your virgin vagina,” I answer before she can.

She clenches her teeth. “That doesn’t even make sense. How would you get an STD if I was a virgin?”

“So you’re finally admitting you’re a virgin?”

“No, asshole.”

“Then I rest my case. No evidence supports your theory.”

“Are you fucking high or something?”

“No.”

“You make no sense.”

“Fine, how about this? What’s thick, long, and vibrates?” I don’t wait for her response before continuing, bringing the toy around her and softly brushing it over her pebbled nipples. “And is used to make you come harder than a porn star?”

Her eyes spring open as she lowers her eyes and notices the toy in front of her.

“With my help of course,” I add.

Her jaw tightens, and I see her body go rigid. “You wouldn’t know what to do with that,” she hisses, grabbing it out of my hand.

“I’m pretty sure you don’t know what to do with that.”

“I know enough to not need you.” Fuck. She’s feisty today.

“That’s not what it sounded like the other day.”

“That was a moment of weakness.”

“Are you saying you’d rather get off with some fake cock than a real one?”

“When I have to. What’s it to you anyway?”

I narrow my brows, really seeing Viola in a much different way. I expected her to be humiliated when she realized she left it in the shower, but she’s barely flinched. Instead, she owns it completely. She’s definitely not an innocent twelve-year-old girl anymore. She’s the one girl who sees through my lines of bullshit and charm.

“It’s important to me if you can get yourself off or not,” I say, genuinely and mocking all at the same time. “As your temporary roommate, it’s my job to make sure you’re taken care of. If this little battery operated thing isn’t doing it, we’ll need to seek other options.”

“The vibrator only does part of the job,” she informs me, her words strong. “While I fuck myself, I rub my other hand over my clit, faster and faster, until my knees buckle and I scream.”

My throat is so fucking dry, I can barely get the words out. “You’re messing with me.”

She smiles and lowers her eyes back to her Kindle. “You should know better than to play mind games with a princess, King.”

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She thinks she's won, but the fun is only beginning.

VIOLA

I can't believe Travis just walked out here with my vibrator, all cocky and hell bent on embarrassing me. I'll deny it till the day I die, but I was so distracted by how sated I felt, that I completely forgot it afterwards. Knowing how well he can work me up, Travis King and a vibrator can only mean dangerous things—dangerous things and dangerous thoughts.

I finish reading my chapter and when my phone vibrates, I see I have messages from Jason and Courtney. I smile as soon as I read her message. You're missing out on all the hot cowboys. I've already been proposed to twice.

I've missed her since she left. Had I known the circumstances that I know now, I would've changed my mind.

I type out a response. I wouldn't mind if you brought one home for me. However, with my current track record, maybe don't. I'd just scare them off.

I glance over at Travis who's made himself comfortable in the chair next to me. After he dressed, he brought all his work shit out here and started looking over his laptop. Aside from his basketball shorts and junkie t-shirt, he looks all business. I can still smell the fresh scent of his shower on him and it's consuming my senses as I try to stay focused on hating him.

You mean staying with Travis isn't helping your dating life? Her next message reads,

and I can hear the sarcasm dripping from her mouth.

Travis lost his shit when I went out with Jason. I hit send, quickly looking up to see if Travis can tell I'm talking about him. He's barely flinched, so I know he's completely zoned into whatever he's working on.

I pretend I'm reading on my phone as I wait for her to respond. She's knows all about Travis since last summer she flew back and visited me for a couple weeks. I always stay with Drew, but Travis and I have always had a mutual agreement to not be around each other anymore than we had to. Not much time has passed, and I'm already in hell.

That's because he so obviously wants you. I can even tell you that from all the way over here!

No, he's hellbent on ruining my life.

Well, the offer still stands. Could book a flight and be here by tomorrow!

I wish.

I can't. I already promised Drew and Mia I'd go to Lake Tahoe this weekend.

Did you really have to mention that bitch's name?

I chuckle, anticipating that exact reaction. She's had a crush on Drew since the first day she met him, four years ago. Drew's a good-looking guy, a police officer, but he's clueless to how he affects girls. Unlike Travis, he doesn't think he's God's gift to the women population.

LOL, sorry.

I want to hear about all the juicy details when I get back!

Trust me, there'll be no details to give.

I highly doubt that. Mwah!

I sigh and roll my eyes. Courtney always knows how to brighten my mood, even if it's at her expense. I click back to my messages and read over Jason's.

Any chance you'd be interested in joining me for a Battle of the Bands Wednesday night? I promise it's not as lame as it sounds.

I'm a little surprised he's asking me out again. I figured Travis would've scared him off and if it wasn't for the way he looked at me as if he wanted to eat me for dessert, I'd be giddy as fuck for his invitation. But Jason doesn't make me feel anything. There's no spark. However, it'd get me out of the house for the night and give me more ammunition against Travis.

Since I'm not in the business of using guys and leading them on, I tell Jason the truth. If I'm going to get back at Travis for his stunt with my vibrator, it might as well be testing his jealousy limitations.

I'd love to go! But I have to tell you it'd just be as friends. You cool with that?

Even if he does agree to just be friends, Travis doesn't have to know that. In fact, I think I'll even make a trip to the mall beforehand for some essentials.

Honestly, I'm glad you mentioned that. I was thinking the same thing, so I'm glad we're on the same page. You're a cool chick to hang with and if I can avoid Drew's foot in my ass, I'd rather take that route.

I let out a nervous giggle and send him back a smiley emoji.

Pick you up around seven.

Sounds good! See you then.

“Fucking piece of shit!” Travis’ deep roar makes me jump and for a split-second, I forgot he was here. “The hell you work this thing?” His fingers are furiously stabbing the keyboard.

“You mean it’s not doing exactly what you say even after you sweet-talked it?”

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“Not now, Viola.” His shoulders tense.

“Ooh, Viola. You must mean business,” I mock, ignoring his harsh tone.

He glares at me, not at all impressed with my backtalk. I turn back to my kindle, ready to ignore him once again. But then he surprises me and grabs my attention in a much softer, helpless tone.

“Any chance you know the common restrictive regulations for advertising in the European market?”

“I might,” I say, not even looking up from my book.

“Do you think you could maybe help me out before I smash my fist through the screen?”

“You mean to tell me you actually don’t know something?” I ask, smug. “But I thought you knew everything?”

“Do you always have to be a sarcastic know-it-all?”

“Well, I don’t have to be, but I think it adds to my appeal,” I smile, gloating.

I finally look over at him and see a disheveled Travis. He looks more tired than usual, maybe even mentally exhausted. Hell, it’s only day three of this two-week roommate arrangement, and I’m mentally exhausted from whatever it is we have going on. The back and forth, the tormenting one another, the emotional exhaustion that comes with

hating him one moment and wanting his hands all over me the next.

I clear my throat to distract myself from those thoughts. Showing any signs of vulnerability around him would only make things worse. He'd use it in any way possible to get back at me.

"All right, smartass. So can you help me or not?" His tone isn't as harsh, but I can see he's frustrated.

Hm...a little frustration and groveling might be good for him. "Well, I could..." I linger, not quite ready to give in.

He exhales roughly, tightening his grip on the chair rest. "Will you?" His features tighten and his jaw locks, frustration written all over him. I almost feel bad for messing with him. Almost.

"What's in it for me?" I ask, using the opportunity to gain some of the household power back.

"Um...how about a roof over your head? A fridge filled with food? A bed to sleep in?"

"You mean, half of those things. Drew pays the rent, too. And face it, you'd still be paying for those things even if I wasn't here, so your argument is invalid."

He rolls his eyes. "Fine, whatever. What do you want?"

I turn slightly, facing him. I need him to know I'm serious. "I help you with whatever project you're working on and you have to abide by all the house rules. No exceptions."

His head falls back against the chair cushion and I can tell he's rolling his eyes at me. "So you basically want me to be a monk in my own damn house?"

"Just while I'm here..." I correct. "The moment I leave, throw a naked kegger for all I care."

He snorts, his face finally loosening up a bit. "All right. If that's what it's going to take, then fine."

"Wow, look at us!" I beam, plastering on a wide, fake smile. "Compromising like an old divorced couple." Or at least making some progress at making this work the rest of the time I'm here.

However, I have a feeling this weekend isn't going to be so accommodating.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

TRAVIS

Viola may be a smart ass, but she knows her stuff. I study her mouth as she talks about the articles of the European Community treaty in detail. She notices me staring and stops.

"What?" Her eyes narrow, and I flash a little smirk and shake my head.

"The main point of this is to not have misleading advertising. It's not like the American market where we can basically insinuate someone's boobs will grow or they'll lose a hundred pounds in a week. Or you'll get chicks if you drink Bud Light. It's stricter. We do have the Federal Trade Commission but the European treaty is that on steroids," she continues on and then stops abruptly. "Are you even listening?"

“You have no idea.” My lips tilt up, holding onto her every word.

She fidgets under my gaze. “Anything else?”

“Actually, yes. Your rules. Aren’t they a bit ridiculous?”

Her mouth falls open then shuts. “No.”

“What are the rules anyway?” I ask, closing my laptop. “You might want to clarify since I’m supposed to be following them for the next week and a half.”

Viola stands and snatches her Kindle from the couch.

“Wear clothes. No skanks in the house. And I don’t want you to say anything that’s even remotely sexual. Basically, you stay away from me, and I stay away from you.”

“Other than when I need your help, right?” I arch an eyebrow and watch as her eyes stroll down my body.

“Did you just check me out?” I flash a knowing-grin. “That was a major eye-fuck.”

She gasps. “Rules!”

“Don’t make this a double standard. If I have to follow the rules, so do you, princess.” I’m amused by the way her face contorts when I’m right.

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“I can see we’re done here. Good luck with that. Looks like you’re going to need it.”

“You too,” I mumbled back, eyeing her tight little body, and she knows exactly what I was talking about—the way she reacts to me.

I reopen the laptop and start researching the parent companies and their past marketing efforts. If we want to stand out in the crowd, I can’t come up with some mediocre plan. I’m actually pissed that I didn’t pay more attention in class when it came to foreign trade and policies. While I wanted and wished for a project such as this, now it feels more like a burden instead of a blessing. But Viola may be my secret weapon.

After making detailed notes, I feel pretty good about what I’ve compiled so far. I stuff my laptop in its case, and catch a glimpse of the pink vibrator sitting on the couch, right where I left it. I pack my things and head down the hallway with it tight in my hand. The images that fill my mind are dirty, but fuck, I love them.

I tap the door with the head of it and wait. After a few seconds, Viola opens the door and I’m pointing the pink cock right in her face.

“Forget something?” I ask, with a smirk.

“Rules.” She glares. “Stop. Breaking. Them.” Her voice isn’t as confident as it usually is I notice, as she rips the vibrator from my hand.

Right now, I want to break her.

“Don’t you know, some rules are meant to be broken?” My voice is silky smooth and my eyes roam down her body. I give a little nod toward her nipples that are begging to be sucked and flicked and she slams the door in my face.

On the other side of the door she screams. “Can you be any more cliché?”

I can’t hold back the smile as I walk into my room and climb into bed.

I’m getting to her. Eventually she’ll crack. Eventually I’ll find her limit.

I close my eyes and it takes no time before I fall asleep and even less time before my alarm is buzzing.

I do my normal workout routine, drive home and stand in the living room brushing my teeth with nothing on but dress pants. The sun hasn’t even risen yet and I feel more energized than I have in a while, though an annoyed buzz swarms inside my body. I’m actually dreading going to work today. It’s the first time that’s happened since I started.

Before walking back into my room, I stop in front of Drew’s door. I stand there for almost a minute before I open it and peek in. Viola is sleeping like the dead with her body sideways across the bed. I almost feel bad for staring at her while she sleeps, but it seems the only time I can without listening to her bitch.

“Travis,” she says in a light whisper and for a moment I think I’m busted. But the glow of the lava lamp Drew refuses to get rid of, gives her away. She’s asleep, whispering my name. If I had my phone on me I’d record it for evidence later, but I don’t. Instead, I finish getting dressed and head out the door. Before I make it to work, Alyssa is already blowing up my phone. Is it still considered sexual harassment when it’s the CEO’s daughter?

Fucking hell.

Can we meet this morning? ;) I can't wait to see you.

I miss you.

We make a great team.

Damn it. I know what that wink means. The meeting isn't to discuss our project, but rather for me to be her project. I sit in the car and listen to the mean growl of the engine as I decide what to text her. I'm walking a thin line that is becoming blurrier with each step forward.

Yeah, what time? I have a meeting with Blake at 10. I let out a huff.

The earlier the better. I'm feeling the urge. If you know what I mean.

I don't like this. Your office or mine?

Mine. And I'll be on my knees waiting for you when you enter.

And now my suspicions have been confirmed. Alyssa wants me to put in, but I don't want to put out. Now to figure out how to break the news to her without fucking myself and this project in the process.

My annoyance must have been written all over my face because the administrative assistant actually asked me what was wrong when I walked by her this morning. I wasn't in my usual flirty mood and didn't say good morning to anyone because I know exactly how the day is going to play out.

I walk into my office, closing the door behind me, and stare at a blank computer

screen with a bright green sticky note from The Office of Blake James. He wants to meet now instead of later. Fucking wonderful.

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I don't bother turning on my computer before I make my way down the hallway towards Blake's office. His door is open and he's busy pecking away at the computer with his pointer fingers. The dude needs to get with the times, but instead of making a slight-handed joke, I just stand in the doorway.

"Sit," he demands, but continues to type.

I don't say a word. Instead I sit in the big bulky office chair that's most likely been in this building since the 1970s and I wait for him to finish. My patience for the day is quickly depleting with every second that passes.

"We need to discuss your new project," he says with a tinge of jealousy in his voice.

"Okay." I want to tell him to take the project for himself because I know that's what he wants. While he's my boss and I respect him because of his title, he's one of those supervisors that want attention. He wants to be heard in a room full of people and tries to take credit for tasks he didn't do. But people see through the facade and they talk, and what they are saying isn't good. The corporate world is a fish tank full of sharks and if you don't watch your back, it's easy to get eaten alive. I've been crossing my t's and dotting my i's since the first day I stepped foot into his office.

"I don't agree with you being assigned to it. I think you're a hard worker and have a lot to offer the company, but..."

Usually when people say 'but', it's to negate every positive thing that was said before. He continues on but I stop listening. The last thing I need is to be double pounded today. Alyssa in the front and Blake in the back, it's miserable.

“...you’ll still be responsible for your current assignments. Sloan agreed that it was okay and that you could handle the marketing research along with your day-to-day tasks, after I spoke to him of course.”

At this point, I’m fuming. My workload has doubled, but my pay hasn’t. I grit my teeth and it takes everything I have to speak calmly. “Thank you for the opportunity. I won’t let you down.”

I’m fucking pissed, but try to push it back.

“I knew you’d be able to handle it,” Blake says, but I know his end game. It’s to smear my reputation and change the way the executives perceive me. He’s always pushed me, and has set me up for failure many times, but even with all the bitch work, I’ve proved him wrong. Since my first week at Crawford Marketing, he’s had it out for me. I know my confidence can be intimidating, but he can fuck off.

The conversation is clearly over so I stand and give him a shit-eating grin before I walk back to my office. I refuse to give him the satisfaction of seeing me spin out of control.

The best motivation is when someone says or insinuates that I can’t do something. I might be a fucking zombie by the end of the next quarter, but at least I’ll have kicked major ass and shown Sloan that I’m a hard worker in the process.

Nine o’clock rolls around and I’m tempted to cancel the meeting with Alyssa, but the truth is, I need to know what she’s completed and what she hasn’t. So after I send a few emails and try to rush through my normal duties, I stand, grab my laptop and stroll to her office. She’s the only one on our floor with a corner office that has windows that line an entire wall. There’s a small conference table and a couch. Why she needs all of the space, no one knows, and considering her title, she sure hasn’t earned any of it. The managers on the floor secretly hate her, but they put up with it

because of who she is and the full helping of tits she provides each day. I'm surprised people don't offer her twenty-dollar bills when she leaves the building for the show she puts on during business hours.

I walk in and close the door, and she's sitting at her desk with her silk shirt unbuttoned, displaying her full breasts. I guess she came to work braless today. I'm sure all the women will be talking about her nipples in the break room over coffee. I almost laugh thinking about it.

"Hey baby," she purrs as she takes a few steps forward. She's a tigress on the prowl.

"Hey," I say, but she can tell by my tone that I'm not having it today.

She pouts, sticking her bottom lip out and begins talking like a baby. "Oh no. Someone's not happy. What can I do to help you?"

I grab her hand, knowing she's waiting for me to touch her. "I'm sorry. I'm not having a good day."

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She places her other hand on the button of my pants and undoes it along with the zipper. “I know what will make you feel better.” Alyssa drops to her knees and runs her hand over my soft cock. Seeing her like this isn’t even making me hard. Great, Viola has officially broken my dick. Alyssa notices I’m not hard then stands and crosses her arms over her tits. Concern flashes over her face.

“What happened?” Her voice is like nails on a chalkboard. “Who should I tell Daddy to fire?”

I tilt my head and look at her for a split-second, realizing she’s not as dumb as she pretends to be and maybe I’m the one being played all along. How the hell did I get myself into this situation? Usually I know a mark when I see one, but somehow I got it all wrong. Maybe I was her mark.

“I’m not having a good day. That’s it. I actually want to be alone. I’m sorry, baby. It’s not you. You know I think you’re gorgeous.” And she is a pretty girl. I’m not lying when I say that, but she’s not the pretty girl I want to fuck. I’ve been there and done that and the allure of having her is gone. For a moment, my thoughts travel back to Viola in the mudroom and I swallow hard, pushing those thoughts out of my head.

Alyssa buttons up her shirt and I zip and button my pants. Just as I do, Blake opens the door to her office as we are standing there, more than a foot apart, and completely dressed. Thank God.

“Yes? Can’t you see we are busy?” Alyssa snarls. I actually like the way she talks to him, but he pays her no attention and walks straight to me and hands me a stack of papers.

“Remember the project you did last week? Can you do that again for me? Today before you leave. I need it in the morning.”

“Do it yourself. Travis has enough work to do,” Alyssa says, taking the papers from my hands and shoving them back to Blake. I’m not sure what to say.

He opens his mouth and closes it before he says what he wants. He’s fuming, but I suppose he knows better than to mess with her. After another second, Blake slams the door and leaves us alone.

“Alyssa, that’s insubordination. I have to do whatever he asks.”

She grabs my tie and pulls me to her lips. “You’ll do whatever I tell you to do, Travis. And I want that dick soon. Whenever you’re ready.” She pushes her lips against mine and I force myself to kiss her back. Relief washes over me and I know that I’ve bought myself some time, but I’m not sure how much.

We walk over to the oval table and I give her a rundown of what I’ve accomplished. To my surprise, Alyssa actually did her half. She’s not well rounded in foreign policies either and I almost verbatim tell her Viola told me. Our meeting ends on a positive note and I’m feeling a little better about our project with a little hope that she might actually pull her weight.

I grab a granola bar from the break room and decide to skip lunch.

When I return back to my office, two stacks of papers are sitting on my desk. There’s a note on the top, from the office of Blake James, and all it says is, have this done by the morning. Instead of giving me one, he doubled my workload, again.

I check the time and know that I’ll be here later than I want.

The rest of my day is fucked, just like I predicted it would be.

VIOLA

The sun is setting over the horizon and I mark another day off my mental calendar. Only eleven more days and I'll be back to my dorm, in my bed where there's no Travis or rules or temptation. I'm actually looking forward to it, or so I've been telling myself between reading Economics and Finance books and trying to convince myself that Travis King is the plague. But all I can think about is how sexy he looks shirtless and how his tongue brushes against his lower lip right before he says something he knows he shouldn't. Ugh!

Back in high school, Travis was part of the in-crowd. A jock, good-looking, always a too-good-for-you attitude. He'd smart off to the teachers, get sent to the principal's office, but rarely had to pay the consequences. Ms. Klein was a young principal and so I'm sure she didn't mind having a guy like Travis in her office as often as he was sent there. Being the basketball team starter didn't hurt either.

Needing a break from my thoughts, I decide to order a cheese pizza. As I'm waiting for the delivery to arrive, there's a knock on the door. I check the peephole but the porch is empty. I think nothing of it and go back to reading. Just as I've finished reading another chapter, the doorbell rings again. This time it's the pizza deliveryman and as soon as I hand him some cash, he bends down and picks up a small box with a cute little red bow on it.

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“I think this is for you,” he says, placing it on top of the pizza box.

“Oh...thank you,” I say, staring at the box with confusion. He nods and walks back to his car.

I close the door behind me and place the pizza on the table. Staring at the box, I chew my lower lip, wondering who it could be for or who it's from. There's no tag or name on it and the more I stare at it, the deeper the temptation to open it is gets. I can't even think about food anymore, because curiosity has gotten the best of me. I check my phone and see that it's already after eight. Travis isn't home yet, so maybe just a small peek?

I want to rip off the bow and see what's inside. I pull the neatly tied ribbon from the package, but then hesitate for a split second before talking myself back into opening it. I tear the corner of the brown paper and push my finger under the tape and pop it from the box. Slowly, I unfold the flaps and inside lays a pair of lace panties and an envelope. I hook the panties on my finger and place them on the table hoping to not catch some sort of disease from them.

I turn the envelope over and see the words To My Baby written on the front. My heart hammers in my chest as I peel it open. I'm certain this gift isn't for me and I should stop, but the rational part of me isn't strong enough to look away, especially if it's from one of Travis' bimbos.

I pull a handful of pictures from the envelope and begin flipping through them.

“Oh, my God...” I murmur to myself, unable to look away. They're all of the same

busty blonde, posing naked on a large bed in only a pair of bold red heels. Realization sets in that I recognize her, which really isn't surprising considering how many of Travis' one-night stands I've come face-to-face with as he not-so-casually kicked them out.

Except the more I stare at her features, the flash of recognition isn't from meeting her at the house.

The girl from his office...she was walking out of his office one of the days I brought him lunch. The longer I think about it, the more I remember. Had I walked in five seconds sooner, I'm almost positive I would've witnessed something that would've scarred me for life.

I notice she changes her poses in each photo, but leaves nothing to the imagination. Toward the end of the stack, there's a series of photos with her and a guy who's face is shielded.

Against my better judgment, I bring the picture closer and immediately recognize the ink layered on his arm.

They're of her and...Travis.

I swallow, feeling a huge lump in my throat.

The photos with him aren't Polaroid's like the others, almost grainy, as if printed from a security camera, and upon closer inspection, I see she's written on the back—Alyssa + Travis.

The lump in my throat grows larger as I put the pieces together in my head. He's been driving me absolutely wild, touching me, kissing me, crossing every boundary I've set in place and he's been messing around with this Alyssa girl from his work giving

her the same hope I once felt.

Except that hope had resurfaced and all those feelings back from when I was only twelve years old were recurring.

The photos fall out of my hands and scatter across the table and floor like a deck of cards, landing face up. Alyssa stares up at me with her piercing green eyes, as if she's telling me something. An unspoken message that she's claiming Travis as hers.

I stand frozen, looking over the photos and feeling numb. I never should've opened it.

My stomach growls, reminding me that I need to eat. I open the pizza box, knowing my appetite has fled the scene, but I force myself to take a few bites. I sit at the table and try not to look at the blonde bombshell with her legs wide open, showing everything she has to offer. I grab one and flip it over, then another, and another, and realize words are written on the back of each picture.

All for you.

Wet for you, baby.

Love the way you taste.

Forget Viola. You're mine.

I almost choke on the piece of pizza I'm chewing. Why the hell does she know my name? Or know of me at all?

I flip over the last one that reads, The other night was perfect!

I flip it back over to her making kissy lips as she blows one to the camera. What the

hell? The other night? Which other night? The night when I lost myself to his touch?
The other night when he undressed me and put me in bed? The other night when he
went all caveman about Jason? The same night he smelled like another woman's
perfume?

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It suddenly begins to all make sense.

Just when I think I'm finally cracking into him, something like this happens, and I'm reminded of who he really is—a player who has a different woman for each day of the week. The feelings have never been mutual and he's always made that very clear.

It takes me back to our teenage years when all I wanted was him, while he was out having everyone else. I should've never romanticized the thought of him or allowed him to touch me. The images of him with her makes me sick to my stomach. It's a familiar feeling that I know all too well.

Hurt and anger boil inside me as I think of the way I felt back then and how I feel it again.

It's because I know panties and pictures aren't something a one-night stand sends to a doorstep as a gift. Travis is a lot of things, but he wouldn't be stupid enough to mess around with a girl at work when he knows it could jeopardize everything he's worked for, but maybe that's giving him too much credit. We're talking about Travis King—thinks only with his dick in mind and nothing else.

I grab my cell and snap a single picture of the images scattered across the table and send him a text. You disgust me, Travis.

I turn off my phone before he can send a reply because I don't care anymore. I don't want to care anymore. As I sit at the table and stare at the blank wall, I remember being so in love with him. I was a stupid girl with a stupid crush, but even then, I deserved more.

When Travis started dating, I felt like my insides were being ripped into a million little pieces. I couldn't stand to hear the girl's name, and I didn't want to see them together. So I made it my mission to avoid him as much as possible. I thought I was strong enough to play his game, but I'm only allowing myself to get hurt again. For just a small fraction of time, in some fucked-up sort of way, I thought I was maybe more than just another notch on his "girls I made come" bedpost.

I place the pizza box in the fridge and leave my books where they are. After turning off all the lights, I go straight into Drew's room and lock the door. I shouldn't give two shits about what or who Travis does, and starting now, I'll avoid him just like old times. It's better for me that way, even if that means hanging out in the coffee shop that's close to campus until bedtime.

There's only eleven more days left of spring break but I'm one heartache away from packing my bags and staying with my Mom and her boyfriend. Then he can have all the wild sex he wants and I won't be around to be a witness. I learned long ago that it's better to face your problems than to run from them. But just because I'm facing Travis doesn't mean I have to talk to him.

No more games.

No more being nice.

He's officially cut off.

The old familiar feelings—jealousy and hatred—linger, and the realization that we could never be just friends sets in. I was stupid to even consider it could be a possibility. I hoped things would be different, but that'll never happen, and I hate him even more for giving me hope and then snatching it away.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

TRAVIS

I'm not sure which is more distracting.

The choking sound Alyssa Crawford makes when she's deep-throating my cock or envisioning Viola Fisher on her knees in front of me.

If I had to guess, I'd say it's the latter.

After lunch, I silence my phone and hustle until four p.m. when Alyssa prances her little ass into my office.

"What do you want?" I ask.

She sways her hips, takes a seat on the edge of my cluttered desk. "I came to see if you wanted to have dinner tonight? We could write it off as a work expense." She grins, twirling a black credit card in her fingers.

"I'm under the gun. Blake has doubled my workload," I say without looking back up at her.

"Oh, come on, baby. You can take a little break." Her baby voice makes my ears bleed. "You can't be all work and no play."

"I can't, Alyssa," I say, firmly. "Not all of us work CEO's daughter's hours. I'll be here all night."

She sticks her lower lip out, not pleased with my harsh response. "Well..." She swings her body off the top and rounded my desk, grabbing the arm of my chair and swinging it toward her. "Let me help make the longer hours a little more bearable then."

Before I have time to argue, she's on her knees, unzipping my slacks and palming my cock. I'm at a loss for words the moment she runs her tongue up my shaft.

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“Alyssa...” I say, trying to control myself, but it’s a lost cause. The girl may be a complete airhead in the office, but her true talents don’t go unnoticed.

I swing my chair back toward my desk, needing to make sure she’s out of sight in case anyone barges into my office again.

“I love hearing you say my name...” she purrs, looking up at me. The look in her eyes tells me everything I already know. She thinks she has me wrapped around her little finger, and the more I give in, the more control I hand her. However, it’s too late to do anything about it now. Piss her off and I may as well piss away my career. “Sounds so much better on your lips than that bitch Viola’s.”

She wraps her lips around my cock and takes it all in her mouth, making me lose the words I was about to throw back at her. Mentioning Viola at a time like this only makes it worse. Now, I’m picturing her tits bouncing in front of me and the wetness of her lips.

“Shit,” I curse, unable to hold back.

She moans as she swallows and licks the corner of her mouth. “Mm...” She crawls in between my legs and adjusts her arms over my lap. “Now hopefully you won’t be so tense.” She puckers her lips out, begging for me to give her a kiss of approval.

“Alyssa,” I growl, tucking myself back into my slacks and zipping up. “I need to get back to work.”

She finally takes the hint and escorts herself out of my office, and I immediately

drown myself back into my files. I work through dinner, even though I'm starving and tempted to ask Viola to bring me something, I can't take another distraction.

Just after eight p.m., I check my phone and see Viola's sent me a message. I half expect her to ask if I'm coming home tonight or some smart-ass comment about being out with another chick, but I'm completely at a loss the moment I read her message, You disgust me, Travis.

It's attached with a picture of a dozen or so photos sprawled out. It's hard to make out exactly what they are, but I recognize Alyssa's long blonde hair and then when I take a closer look, see that she's naked in them. What the hell did she do now?

I don't have time to explain or to even hunt Alyssa down and ask her what the hell she was thinking, so I do the only thing I'm good at.

Stop being such a prude, princess. I remember a certain someone also posing naked in front of me, I reply before packing my shit up and heading out of my office. Today can kiss my ass. Blake is trying to wear me down, but I can't let him.

When I get back to the house, all the lights are off, which can only mean Viola's in bed already. No way she'd be out actually having a life or anything.

It's completely silent and pitch black when I walk in. Not even a reflection of the TV is glowing, so I flip the hall light on and walk to the kitchen to flip a few more lights on.

"Viola?" I call out, but she doesn't answer. I walk down the hall and see Drew's room completely empty. I check my room, the living room, and bathroom. When I walk back to the kitchen, I notice the same photos from her message on the table.

"Fucking hell," I mutter, grabbing the pictures and analyzing them for myself. "What

the hell is wrong with this chick?" I shake my head at the ones she printed out from the cameras. This is a whole new level of crazy I hadn't anticipated.

I collect them all in my hand and go to toss them out when I see her handwriting on the back. Flipping them over, I read over them all and curse when I read Viola's name.

"Goddammit!" I firmly brush a hand through my hair, my jaw ticking at the thought of Viola seeing and reading these. Where the hell is she?

I reach for my phone, still no reply from her, and decide to send her another text.

I'm home. We need to talk.

If I had known, I would've never sent that reply back to her. Now I feel like more of an asshole than usual.

After fifteen minutes and not hearing back from her, I decide to call her. It rings once before going straight to voicemail. Hey, you've reached Viola. Leave me a message and I'll call you back!

"Viola, c'mon, I know you're there. Get your ass back home. We need to talk."

I hang up and immediately text her again. I saw the pictures. I'm sorry. Come back home.

I dig through the fridge and grab the box of cold pizza. I'm too worked up to really taste it, but I haven't eaten in hours, so I take the last few pieces. I can't even settle down enough to watch the ten o'clock news, so I just stand in the kitchen with a can of beer and an empty pizza box.

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I check my phone again, still nothing. I call her again. Voicemail. I send another text, nearly begging her to at least let me know she's okay. Pissed at me or not, she's always been smart about letting Drew know she was safe.

Quit the shit, Viola. I had a long day and have an even longer one tomorrow. Get your ass home. We need to talk.

I grab another beer from the fridge and debate calling Drew to see if he's heard from her. After another hour of silence, I break down and call him.

"Hey, man. What's up?" He sounds genuinely happy, and I hate that I have to bother him. I hope him and Mia have reconciled their differences since the last time we talked.

"Hey, nothing. Have you heard from your sister tonight by chance?" I try to mask my voice, but he knows me too well.

"What'd you do?" is his immediate response.

"Nothing!" I say a little too harshly. "I've been at work all night and she wasn't home when I got here. She's not answering my texts or calls."

"Who's that, baby?" I hear Mia in the background. "Everything okay?"

"Yeah, everything's fine. Travis pissed Viola off and now he can't find her," he responds as if I can't hear everything he's saying.

“C’mon man,” I groan. “Just call her for me, okay? I need to know she’s okay before I can pass out.”

“Fine, I’ll call her and let you know.”

“Thanks.”

I hang up and eagerly wait to hear back from him. By the time he messages me, I’ve already taken my slacks and shirt off, dreading having to put on the same attire again in the morning.

I called and texted her. No response.

Goddammit.

Where the hell could she be?!

Chill, man. She’s a big girl. She probably just went out with some girlfriends.

I roll my eyes. He and I both know that’s unlikely. Or she’s getting groped by some douchebag, I send back.

I know it’s dramatic, but this isn’t like Viola at all. On a good day, her hair is pulled up in a messy bun, sporting her black-rimmed glasses and bright-colored leggings with a book or two in her hand.

He replies moments later. Nah, she probably carries mace in her purse right next to her box of condoms.

I hate that he’s not taking this seriously. In high school, if any of his friends came near Viola, he’d—

Wait.

I stop and message him back right away. Are you fucking with me? Do you know where she is and not telling me?

No. I don't.

I can't tell if he's lying or not, so I don't push it. I grab a pair of drawstring sweatpants and park my ass on the couch. Exhausted or not, I'm not going to sleep until I know she's home safe.

After watching a couple Seinfeld re-runs, I can't keep my eyes open, but every time I close them, visions of Viola being groped by some sleazeball enters my mind. Just as another episode starts, I hear rattling at the door. I practically fly off the couch and rush to the door just as I see Viola stumbling in with a guy wrapped around her from behind. She's giggling and he has asshole written all over him.

"You've got to be fucking kidding me," I growl, my jaw ticking as I clench my fists.

"Travis?" She's obviously been drinking. "Hey, it's Travis!" She giggles.

"What the fuck are you doing? Who's this tool?" I nod my head to the shrimp next to her, wrapping his arms around her waist.

"His name is..." she stumbles again, laughing as I catch her. "Aaron!" She looks to him for approval and he furrows his brows. "I mean..." She snaps her fingers. "Andrew!"

"That's wonderful. Andrew needs to leave now."

"Dude, I'm right fucking here." He snaps his head, glaring at me. "And I'm not going

anywhere.”

“You’re in my fucking house, man. I wouldn’t push it.”

“Travis, don’t be an ass.” She lightly smacks her hand against my chest. “We met at The Lounge. I didn’t want to drive myself home and he offered.”

“How nice,” I deadpan, knowing exactly what he was offering. “Well, you’re home now. He can leave.”

“Shouldn’t you be in bed,” she scoffs, pushing through me and walking toward the living room. “Or rather, someone else’s bed.”

“Viola!” I shout, grabbing her attention back toward me. She trips over her own heels and catches herself on the wall before she falls. “Do you have any idea how worried I’ve been? Or the thoughts that were running through my mind? You wouldn’t answer my calls or messages. I thought something happened to you.” The anger boiling under my skin terrifies me, but I don’t have enough strength to stop myself.

I feel a hand on my shoulder. “She was safe with me.” I hear his condescending tone behind me. He squeezes his fingers into my skin with a hard chuckle.

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“Get your hand off me.” I jerk my shoulder, but he must be hard of hearing because he doesn’t move. All I see is red and without thinking, I grab his wrist and face him, locking his arm behind his back as I cup his throat. “I fucking warned you.” I release him and he falls to the ground. “Get out of my goddamn house!”

“Travis! Stop it!” Viola squeals, but it sounds distant, and I ignore it.

“Fuck you, asshole.” He stands up, adjusting his shirt. “She ain’t worth it.”

“Wrong answer.” Viola Fisher is worth every damn thing. My mind blacks out on me and all I can do is react.

I lunge at him before I can think twice. My fists collide with his face, over and over, until he’s on the floor. He covers his face with both arms, but that doesn’t stop me. The anger is too much and this guy deserves every piece I’m serving him.

“She’s not a fucking piece of meat, you piece of shit!”

Viola locks her hands around my bicep and attempts to pull me back. I barely flinch, but it’s enough to break me out of my trance. I let my guard down and the asshole releases one arm and throws a punch at me. I quickly dodge it, twisting my fingers around his arm and intercepting the blow. I feel him flailing under me as I try to cover another hit he’s aiming at me.

“Ah!” I hear Viola’s scream, paralleled with a hard smack against the wall.

I turn and see her against the bookcase, clutching her right shoulder as she leans her

body forward.

“Viola,” I call out, jumping off Andrew and rushing to stand in front of her. “Are you okay? What hurts?” I kneel down and look for any sign of blood.

“No, I’m not okay!” she yells. “While you two idiots were wrestling down there, you knocked me into the fucking bookcase.”

“Don’t blame me. Blame your psychotic boyfriend who tried to pummel my face in,” Andrew hisses.

“Trying would insinuate I didn’t succeed and by the looks of your bloody nose, it appears I have.” I glare at him.

“Fuck off, jackass!” He wipes his face with the back of his hand and walks toward the front door.

“You motherfucker!” Viola screams as the front door slams shut and then he’s gone.

I look back at Viola and see her rubbing the spot on her back. I feel terrible she got put into the middle of all this and ended up hurt.

Fuck, I shouldn’t have reacted like that. I haven’t lost control like that in years.

“Let me see.” I stand up in front of her, and grab one of her hands to spin her around, but she doesn’t budge. “Viola,” I say firmer. “I just want to look at it.” Finally, she complies, turning around so I can examine the injury.

I slide my hand down her spine and finger the bottom of her shirt. Slowly, I lift it and watch as her entire body shivers. “Lift your arm up so I can pull the shirt up higher.”

She winces as she attempts to raise her arm. “It hurts like a bitch.”

I finally see the area where she hit on the corner of the bookcase. I slowly rub the pad of my thumb over it, feeling how soft and smooth her skin feels against mine. The area is red and a little puffy, but no cuts or bleeding. “Well, that’ll teach you to bring assholes like him back home.” It’s a snarky comment, I know, but we need to talk about the elephant in the room.

“Screw you,” she hisses, putting her arm back down and shifting away from me.

“Excuse me?” I ask, following behind her as she walks toward the kitchen. “You come home at three in the goddamn morning with some fuckface who only wanted to use you for sex and you’re pissed at me?”

She digs around in the cabinet and grabs a bottle of Advil. She slams the door shut, scowling at me. “Maybe I wanted to be used. Did you ever think of that? Maybe, just maybe, I wanted to have a guy want me, even if for a night, even if it was just sex.”

She walks around me and heads to the fridge, where she grabs a bottle of water.

I stand there like an idiot, my jaw locked. I’m seething, certain she has to be testing me.

“Guys do it all the time.” She shrugs casually, twisting the lid off and shaking two capsules out. “Hell, you’re a walking, breathing example. So why can’t I?” She swallows the pills, keeping her eyes locked on mine, daring me to challenge her.

My jaw ticks again, taking a step toward her. “You aren’t like that, Viola,” I tell her sincerely.

“And how would you know?” She steps toward me, closing the gap between us. “You

only assume I'm not. Just because I like to read and don't flaunt my body doesn't mean I don't like to have meaningless, one-night stands, too."

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My breath hitches as my eyes watch her chest rise and fall. She's just as worked up as I am.

I study her carefully, trying to read her body since I know she'll never say the words she really wants to say.

"You broke your own house rule," I inform her, needing to break the tension.

"Well..." She shrugs. "If you can't beat 'em, join 'em."

I furrow my brows. "So you only brought him back here to piss me off, is that it?" I cross my arms over my chest, feeling my face heat as my body burning with rage. "You wanted a reaction?"

"I wanted to give you a taste of your own medicine," she replies, chewing on her lower lip. "Doesn't feel so great, does it?"

I swallow, stepping back. "I don't know. You tell me. You're the one with the wounded shoulder blade, princess."

She rolls her eyes. "It's not a wound, although it did hurt like hell at first. But it'll heal. Plus, you're the one who broke his nose."

I scoff. "It's not broken," I assure her. "But he'll be hurting in the morning."

"So your plan is to just beat up every guy I want to have sex with?"

“I didn’t beat Jason. Although, I could’ve.” I shrug.

She snorts. “Whatever, Travis. You’re such a hypocrite.”

Just as she takes a step around me, I grab her arm and pull her to my chest. “How so?”

I watch her throat move as she swallows. Her body is flesh against mine, her breathing labored.

“You sleep with every other girl on the planet, but the second I bring a guy home for a good time, you want to beat the shit out of him. You’re the one who gets high-fived for your one-night stands, but God-forbid I want someone to fuck my brains out; you go all Mike Tyson on the guy.”

My cock twitches at her words, and I can feel it harden under my sweats. The way she talks is so unlike her, and it takes all the willpower in me to say what’s really on my mind.

“You aren’t that girl,” I whisper.

“Maybe I want to be,” she whispers back. “Even if just for a night.” Her body is begging for it, and I can see the lust in her eyes.

I bow my head, lowering my eyes to hers, our lips almost touching. “Sorry, princess. I don’t fuck virgins, remember?” I know it’s a dick move, but I can’t have my best friend’s little sister underneath me, as much as I want her to be.

“Good thing I’m not a virgin.” Her tone is brave, and I wonder where it’s coming from. “But if the real reason is because you’re afraid you won’t live up to the Travis King name, then—”

Annoyance piles up inside me and before I can stop myself, I grab her hips and pull them the rest of the way into me, capturing her words with my mouth. She opens for me, needy and desperate. I press my hips into her, hard and greedy.

“You want someone to fuck your brains out, princess?” I ask against her lips, pushing our bodies against the kitchen wall. “Is that what you need to stop being a smartass little know-it-all?”

“Make me come and see for yourself, asshole.”

I groan against her lips. “Goddammit, Viola.” I know I should stop. She’s been drinking, and I’m clearly not in the right frame of mind to make smart decisions right now.

She presses her mouth to mine and wraps a palm around my cock through my sweats. I wrap a hand around her neck, moaning in her mouth as she begins stroking me.

“Viola...” I say, almost pleading. “Fuck, that feels good.”

“Mm hmm...” she hums against my lips.

“Princess, we can’t...” I hate myself the moment the words come out.

Her hand stalls and she jerks her head back. “You’ll fuck anything with a vagina except me? Is that it?”

“No,” I growl. “You’re my best friend’s little sister.”

“So if I was just some bimbo at a bar, you’d have fucked me six ways to Sunday already? Is that how it goes?” She doesn’t sound hurt, she’s pissed. “You’re a fucking asshole.”

I grab her before she can storm off again. “And you’re a goody two-shoes who uses every opportunity to remind me of that.”

“Well, if the shoe fits...” she barks right back, her eyes narrowing in at me.

“Fine, you want to be treated like one of my girls? Fucked to oblivion and then tossed out like yesterday’s trash? Because I guarantee it’s not going to be anything like you read in your romance books.”

She stares at me, mouth agape, her breasts pushing up with every deep breath.

“That’s what I thought.”

Before I can back away, she lunges at me. Her lips press against mine, opening my mouth with her tongue as her hands grab my drawstrings and palms my cock bare.

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A hungry moan releases from my throat at the urgent way she touches me. Her hand is firm and every motion is calculated to get me off. I've never seen this side of Viola before and a part of me wonders if this is a side I bring out in her or if she's always been like this.

"Fuck me like one of your whores, Travis," she says as I kiss down her neck.

"You're not a whore," I tell her, meaning it.

"Can't I be just for one night?" She sounds desperate, and I can't find it in myself to deny her any longer.

"We play by my rules, Viola." I pull her earlobe in between my teeth, feeling her shiver against me. She doesn't respond. "Do you understand?" I tilt her chin so she looks up at me. "You fight me and you'll end up hurt. Got it?"

Her eyes glass over as she nods. "I won't break."

"Don't be so sure," I say, pressing my lips back to hers. I wrap a hand back around her neck, guiding my tongue inside her mouth as I palm her breast with my other hand. Everything about Viola Fisher screams perfection. Her tits fit just right in my hand, her full lips capture every motion I give her, and her body responds in all the right ways. Even her moans tell me exactly what I need to hear.

"How many times can you make yourself come?" I ask against her lips, but she doesn't respond. "I want to know your magic number. Tell me."

“I don’t know...three, maybe?”

I smirk against her lips, pulling her lower lip in between my teeth. “I can do three in my sleep, princess. I hope you’re ready.”

She has no idea just what she’s asked for.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

VIOLA

Travis’ muscular arms wrap around my waist as he pulls me up on the kitchen counter. My entire body is on fire, burning for relief. The way he kisses me overpowers my entire mind, and I can no longer fight the desire to need him.

“You need it, sweetheart. Don’t you?” he asks against my mouth. He’s never called me that before, which means it must only be reserved for his whores. I don’t have it in me to care though. I’ll take any part of him he’s willing to give me.

I tighten my legs around his waist and press him closer. His lips curl up, and I can tell he’s smiling.

“That’s what I thought.”

He steps back slightly, keeping his eyes locked on mine as he hooks his fingers to the waistband of my skirt and begins pulling it down with my panties. “Let’s break your record. You okay with that?” He kneels down in between my legs and smirks up at me. “Hang on, princess.” I smile at his words.

He spreads my legs wider and licks his lips. I feel his hot breath on me, his tongue sliding up my slit and circling my clit. It feels oddly intimate, but I don’t let the

thought linger for long. The pleasure is instant and my body knows he's the one in control.

My throat hums at the sensation. He throws one of my legs over his shoulder and pulls my ass to the edge of the counter. I lean back and lay my palms flat, but he's sucking so hard, I can hardly keep myself up.

"Ohmygod," I cry out, my head falling back. My toes curl as his tongue circles my clit over and over, making my eyes roll to the back of my head and losing all control. "Holy shit." I've never come that fast before. My body's been on fire since that first time in the mudroom. I knew it wasn't going to take much, but that was intense.

"You're so fucking wet." His voice is raspy as his eyes meet mine, slowing his rhythm. "Count," he orders. He brings a finger up and begins teasing me as he watches my reaction.

"What?" I ask, almost inaudibly. My eyes flutter closed as he curls a finger deep inside.

"Count with me, Viola."

Is he serious right now?

"Do it," he demands, his voice firmer now. He speeds the rhythm of his finger and fucks me hard with it. "Count how many times you come."

My head falls back, riding each wave and biting my lip.

"Viola," he growls, grabbing my attention back to his mouth.

"Why?" I ask, arching my hips and meeting his pressure.

“You play by my rules, remember?” He slows his pace, threatening to stop completely. “Now count.”

“You’re such a prick,” I spit out, trying to control my breathing. Why does he get off on humiliating me?

He grins, unapologetically. “I warned you, princess.”

I sigh. I can’t fight it any longer. “One.”

He smiles and grabs under my thighs, pinning me down with his mouth. His tongue fucks me and takes complete control. My breathing is ragged as he twists his finger back inside me, thrusting in and out, in and out, until I can’t breathe at all and my body shakes as I release against his tongue.

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“Two,” I say on a shaky breath.

“Good girl,” he praises, running his tongue along his lower lip, a pleased smirk forming over his face. “Whatever you do, don’t move.”

“What?” I can’t breathe.

I feel his finger playing with my clit, rubbing slow circles. He brings up his other hand and slowly rubs another finger down my slit at the same time, barely giving me time to recover from the last orgasm he gave me. I’m honestly not sure how much more I can take. I want him inside me.

“Patience, princess.” He makes eye contact me briefly. “Remember, don’t move.”

Before I can ask why, I feel his finger move lower until he’s circling my tight hole. I gasp the moment I feel his finger push inside. What the hell is he doing to me?

“Travis,” I moan on a whimper. My body feels tense, unfamiliar with the sensation. As he pushes his finger deeper, his other finger continues circling my clit at the same time. “I can’t...holyshit.”

My legs spread wider, giving him the approval to continue.

“Goddamn, you taste amazing.”

He thrusts his finger in and out, speeding up his pace as he rubs my clit. My hips are uncontrollable as another wave of pleasure rolls through me. He brings his mouth

down, licking up my release. His fingers don't stop, even when my legs give out. He wraps them around his shoulders, holding me up.

"Viola..." he growls, and I know exactly what he's after.

"Three!" I gasp.

His fingers work magic and he doesn't let up until I've counted to five. My body is completely spent, and I'm pretty sure I've lost my voice entirely.

He stands up in between my legs, wiping his mouth and chin. He cracks his jaw with a sly smile. God, I hate that smile. No, I don't. I fucking love it, but dammit, I hate that I do.

By now, the alcohol has worked out of my system. I should come to my senses and stop him, but I'm too far gone into his spell now.

"So how'd that compare?" He leans in and asks. I want to rip that smug smirk right off his face.

"To what?" My breathing is still staggering.

He cocks his head. "Compare to how it feels when you do it yourself." He can't be serious right now...

His arrogance pisses me off. I'm not one of those girls that'll feed his ego just to keep him around.

I shrug, knowing it'll piss him off. "It was mediocre."

"Mediocre?" He cocks a brow.

“At best,” I continue, pushing myself further back onto the counter.

“You’re lying.”

“You’re full of yourself.” I keep my eyes locked on his, challenging him.

“Less than a minute ago, you were full of my tongue.”

I scoff. “Don’t flatter yourself. It’s not like you’re the only guy that knows how to watch porn and learn new tricks.”

He throws his head back, and in true Travis fashion, laughs in my face. He brushes his fingers over the stubble of his jaw and lowers his face to mine.

“Your cunt is barely broken in, princess. I had you coming so hard, you nearly passed out,” he states matter-of-factly, his voice raspy and controlled. “Admit it.”

“No.” I stay firm, trying to clench my legs together. Having his cock press up against my bare thigh is driving me insane, and I need relief.

“Then why are you legs shaking right now?” He arches a brow.

My mouth clamps shut, because I don’t really have an answer for him.

“That’s what I thought.”

“Do you get off on girls telling you you’re a god? Because if that’s what you need, it’s not happening.”

He purses his lips and grabs both of my wrists with his hands, planting them to the countertop. “I think you forgot the rules, princess.” He sucks in his lower lip and dips

his head into my neck, whispering over my ear, “You’re mine tonight and you’ll tell me whatever the hell I want because you and I both know you want to be fucked like a meaningless whore. So unless you want me to leave you here, soaked and begging for it, you’ll say exactly what I want to hear.”

I swallow as his hot breath tickles my burning skin.

“Do we have a deal?”

I must be possessed, because it takes me less than a second to respond. “Fine.”

He presses his lips to my cheek. “That’s my good girl.”

My body shivers and he feels it.

“I want your mouth on me, Viola.” My eyes blink open as he backs away. “On your knees.”

He grabs my hand and guides me off the counter. From the waist down, I’m bare, so I pull my shirt off over my head and toss it on the floor. “Bra off,” he orders before I can kneel down. I wrap my arms around my back and unhook it.

Before I can pull it off, he brings a hand to my shoulder and slowly pushes the strap down. He plants kisses along my shoulder, slowly igniting my senses. He moves to the other shoulder and pulls the other strap down, repeating the same motion with his perfect lips. Once it falls to the ground, he palms my breast and squeezes it roughly in his hand. My head falls back and sucks in a deep breath.

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“Your tits are amazing,” he says, bringing me closer to him. “I want to fucking come all over them.” He brings his mouth down on mine, stealing the gasp that was about to release. He rolls my nipple in between his finger and thumb, bringing it to a hard peak. I feel his hard cock pressed against me, and I’m greedy to taste it.

I bring my hand to his drawstrings again and this time, loosen them completely so they fall to his ankles. He kicks them off as I palm his shaft and feel it grow even harder.

“Goddammit, Viola,” he hisses against my lips, pressing his forehead against mine. “If your mouth feels half as good as your hand does, you’re going to kill me.” I feel his chest vibrate against me as he catches his breath. “I’m not coming in that filthy little mouth just yet.” He wraps both hands around my waist, pulling me up so my legs wrap around him. “We’ll save that for round two.” I hear the smile in his voice, and I don’t have enough willpower to deny him.

He walks us out of the kitchen and down the hall to his room. He pushes the door open with the heel of his foot and doesn’t close it behind him. I know no one else is home, but it still feels risky. By the time Travis lays me down on the bed and towers over me, all thoughts of it leave my mind.

My legs are still wrapped around him as he presses kisses to my throat and down to my collarbone. Moans vibrate against my skin as he makes his way down my chest and covers my nipple with his wet lips. My back arches on impact, begging him not to stop.

“Shit, Viola.” He groans in between sucking. His mouth, lips, and hands are all over

me and it still doesn't feel like enough. "You taste so fucking good."

"Fuck me, Travis," I demand, tightening my legs around him. "I need to see what all the fuss is about."

"Don't make me fuck that smart mouth of yours instead, princess," he warns with a smile. My legs unwrap his waist as he pushes off the bed. I watch as he walks to his dresser and pulls out a box of condoms. Knowing I'll only be a number of many, part of my stomach starts to turn.

He's right about one thing. This isn't me.

I close my eyes and think about the heartache I suffered from him years ago. I was a kid, I know, but no matter what my age was, it felt every bit real. Could I give in to Travis and still keep my heart intact? Would this change anything?

Did I want it to?

I watch as he slips the condom over his cock and my body shivers just watching how hard he is for me. Travis King. Standing in front of me, naked and hard, ready to fuck me like one of his whores.

As bad as it sounds, I can't deny how much I want him to use me. I want to use him just as much. I want him to see and feel what he's been missing out on and if that means giving a part of my soul away to make that point, then I will. Because the truth is, sleeping with Travis or not sleeping with Travis, changes nothing. This is all a game to him, and I don't plan on losing.

He towers over me once again, my head a cloud as I feel the tip pressed against my clit. My eyes graze down his face, chest, and to the happy trail that leads me right to the gorgeous cock that my body is begging for. His arms on both sides of me, veins

popping out, and his sculpted jaw all in front of me makes it impossible to resist what he's offering. Fuck standards. Tonight I'm all in.

"Are you sure you're ready?" He cocks his mouth to one side, a brow raised in confidence.

"Stop being a cocky asshole and fuck my tight cunt." The words come out before I even know what I'm saying, but by the throaty groan he releases, I know he hadn't expected it either.

"Jesus," he says on a breath, pressing himself inside me. My back arches, greeting him, encouraging him to go in deeper. "Fuck, you're so tight."

It doesn't take long for him to slide inside completely and form a rhythm. He grabs my leg and pushes my knee to my chest, driving himself even deeper. The sensation is almost too much, and I know it's not going to be long before I explode again.

My moans are uncontrollable as I feel him against me. He pummels into me with no remorse, taking what he wants, and slowing down just when I feel myself building up. He knows it, too, and I'm sure it's all part of his little game.

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“Your pussy is so wet.” He leans over me, with my ankle aligning my face, and wraps a hand around my throat. “I could fuck it for hours.”

I tilt my neck, letting his fingers dig into the flesh. He knows I’m close and tightens his grip as soon as he feels me shuddering underneath him.

Oh. My. God.

Ohmygod. Ohmygod.

Holy shit.

There are no words, only gasps of air, because the harder I come, the harder he presses his fingers around my throat. Lack of oxygen fuels my orgasm even more, and I feel my entire body shaking.

I hear him let out a loud, deep, animalistic roar as his body tightens above me, trying to control himself. His hand releases from my throat and before I have a second to come down, he shifts off me and grabs my hips.

“Your pussy nearly squeezed my dick off,” he roars, sweat glistening off his neck and shoulders. “Now turn around and stick that ass out for me. And count.”

I’m still trying to catch my breath. “You aren’t the boss of me, Travis.”

The corner of his lip curls up in amusement before flipping me over on all fours and adjusting himself in between my legs again. He leans over and whispers in my ear,

“Maybe not, but I own that pussy and we both know it.” He slides his hand up my spine, pushing my chest flat against the bed and adjusting my legs so my back is arched up to him.

“Six,” I whisper.

God, I wanted to hate him. I do hate him, but right now, he’s managed to manipulate every brain cell into obeying him, even after fighting to stay strong around him. But I won’t surrender my heart to him, because I’m not giving in. Letting Travis King win would only feed his ego, and I’m not sure it even has room to grow anymore.

He positions himself against me once again and this time he’s not nice and gentle. He slides inside, deep and hard, going for exactly what he wants. I gasp and clench the sheets in my palms. He thrusts out and back in again, harder than the first time.

“Fuck...” I exhale. He’s deep and greedy, using my body for exactly whatever he wants. His fingers dig into my hips, driving faster and faster inside me.

“You let all your other conquests fuck you like this?” he asks, muffled by his heavy breathing.

“Screw you,” I spit out, widening my thighs.

I feel a hand slap across my ass cheek, hard. It instantly burns, but I don’t have time to react before he slaps it again. “Tsk, tsk, princess. You keep talking to me like that, I’ll make sure you don’t sit for a week,” he threatens, his tone low. I don’t doubt for a minute that Travis King could ruin my pussy, but I won’t give him the satisfaction of knowing that. “Every step you take, you’ll be reminded I was inside you. Is that what you want? You want the memory of my cock fucking you like a fifty-dollar hooker?”

His words sting, but I can’t stop wanting to hear them. “I’d charge you double just for

your brazen attitude.”

“Would that include extras?” he asks, fisting his fingers around the thickness of my hair and pulling my head back. His other hand wraps around my waist, holding me up. “I’d pay triple just to see you touch yourself, maybe more with a plug in that perky little ass of yours.” His words vibrate against my skin, sending shivers down my spine. His hand slides down my stomach until it reaches my clit. He adds pressure by rubbing small circles over it and slowly thrusting in and out, almost to the point of being torture.

“You couldn’t handle extras,” I say, self-assured. “I’m fairly flexible...” I drawl, hearing his breath hitch.

“You dirty, little cunt.” I feel him smirking against my neck. “Don’t start something you can’t finish, princess.” I feel him speed up and before I can respond, he pushes me back down and thrusts deeper and faster, hitting just the right spot to make me scream out. “Seven!”

I feel him release right after me, roaring and grunting as his nails scratch down my back.

“Jesus Christ,” he hisses, moving his hands to my hips and gripping them once again. “I knew you’d be a goddamn screamer,” he praises. “Took a little effort, but like I said, I have a one-hundred-percent satisfaction guarantee.” He slaps my ass cheek once again, almost as if to say ‘good game’.

“You’re such an asshole,” I mutter as he slides out. My body is limp and feels numb from the waist down, but I’m not letting his body and charm win my emotions over. “Perhaps you were taking so damn long, I had to fake it.”

I roll over to my back, giving my body time to recover. He stands on the side of the

bed, watching me as he removes the condom and tosses it. His hair is slick with sweat, his cheeks flushed. His body is taut and the veins popping out of his arms are distracting. I admire his tattoos but stay focused as I remind myself how I ended up in his bed in the first place.

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“You’re hilarious, Viola.” He props one knee up on the bed as he leans over with a sultry, shit-eating grin. In a low, deep whisper, he says, “You can’t fake the way your body responds to me, no matter how much you want to deny it.”

His lips are centimeters away from mine. I run my tongue along my lower lip before pulling it in between my teeth. I can’t decide if I should kiss him or punch him.

I groan, inhaling a deep breath. Stay strong, Viola, I remind myself.

“God, I hate you.” Seething, I press my palms against his chest and push him back. I stand up and toss my hair over my shoulder. So much for keeping my cool.

I walk through his room, having no idea where my clothes are, but needing to get the hell out of here.

“Yeah, I hate you too, princess,” he says right back. I glance at him as he pulls his boxer shorts back up, that smug look on his face driving me insane.

“Fuck off, Travis.” I turn back around, stepping out into the hallway.

“No need. Your tight cunt rode it raw,” he bellows, but I’m already down the hall, feeling the ache sting between my legs. I’ve never experienced anything like him before. I’ll deny it till the day I die, but Travis King and his royal cock have completely ruined me for anyone else.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

TRAVIS

Fuck.

It's a quarter after four in the morning and my alarm is set to go off in less than three hours. My dick won't calm down and all I want to do is take her again. She hates me, but what else is new? At this point, it's just the normal Viola behavior. When she's not angry with me, then I'll be worried.

I skip the gym and sleep until seven. After waking up, all I can think about is being deep inside Viola's tight little pussy. I want seconds and thirds and fuck I'd be lying if I said I didn't want fourths. I want her begging to be fucked and the thought makes my dick twitch.

I shower and get dressed. Before heading out, I grab my thermos and the pictures from the table where I left them. The Alyssa shit needs to be settled today. She's crossed the line one too many times and has to be made aware of where I stand before she continues to spin out of control. I drive in silence and feel like a zombie as I walk across the business parking lot.

As soon as I step off the elevator, the entire floor is eerily quiet. The printer isn't shooting off stacks of papers and there's no one gossiping in the break room. All the cubicles and offices are empty. Did the fucking apocalypse happen on my way to work?

I continue to my office and see a note from Blake about an emergency staff meeting. I go to the conference room next to his office. The chatter stops when I enter and Blake looks down at his watch with a smug ass look on his face. I smile at the blank faces sitting around the table and my eyes stop at the only empty seat available next to Alyssa, who's beaming. I sit and turn my head toward him, ignoring her stare, and give silent permission to continue whatever the fuck is so urgent.

“As I was saying, my last day in this department is in two weeks.”

“What?” I interrupt aloud.

“I’ve been promoted to manage the sales executives,” he continues. “Though I’m transitioning to a new position, you’ll still report to me until the position is filled.”

While Blake continues on, Alyssa’s hand trails up my thigh until my balls are cupped in her hand. I play it cool, but the truth is, I’m so frustrated that I want to yank her from her chair and shake the fuck out of her. I hate how she brings me to that level. I hate how she brings the worst out in me. We had rules in place to protect us and she’s determined to ruin that in front of our entire department. I grab her hand and squeeze it hard, until she quietly squeals and pulls away.

“I’ve made recommendations for several of you for the position. I’ve spoken privately with a few of you over the last few days. I’d suggest signing on to the back office portal and submitting your resume if you’re interested in the opportunity.” Blake’s eyes gloss straight over me making it apparent that he isn’t speaking of me. Fuck him too. He ends the meeting and everyone is offering their congratulations, but I walk out. Alyssa trails behind me, heels clicking on the tile floor, and all I can think about are the pictures burning a hole in my pocket. I walk into my office and she follows. Once she enters I shut the door and lock it. I rush to her, pinning her against the door and she smiles.

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“Oh, Travis. You’re going to fuck me against your office door? So hot.” She begins to unbutton her shirt and pull up her skirt, but I grab her hands.

“We’re done, Alyssa. I’ve had enough of your bullshit.” I pull the pictures from my pocket and throw them at her. Even if Viola wasn’t consuming my mind, I’d be ending this little arrangement anyway.

She glances down at the images and tilts her head back and laughs. “So you didn’t like my present? I’m so sorry. Let me make it up to you.” Alyssa continues to undress until her breasts are out. She walks toward me and runs her fingers down my arms. I grab her wrists and hold them tight at her side.

“Are you fucking insane? I don’t want what you have to offer. You don’t know how to listen. That’s your problem.”

“I hear you loud and clear,” she says with menace in her tone.

I release my tight grip and suck in a deep breath, trying to regain composure. I hate how she pushes me to my limit, causing all control to slip through my fingers. I’m two seconds away from picking her up and tossing her ass out. I don’t care if her Daddy owns the company or not. Instead, I inhale a deep breath and try to regain my composure, although I can feel it seeping through.

“I hope you love your job, King. Because after I tell Daddy how you took advantage of me I doubt you’ll have anything left.”

“Not even your father would believe your sick lies. Now get the fuck out of my

office.”

“He doesn’t have to.” She bends down and grabs the pictures that are scattered across the floor. “I’ll just show him.”

My adrenaline spikes, and I’m so mad she’s threatening me that I grab her by the arm and pull her out of my office. At first she struggles, but the closer we get to the door, the more she realizes she’s not going to win. I throw her out and shut the door in her face, giving no shits that I’ve just started a battle I’m sure to lose.

Though I’m somewhat worried what she’ll do, I feel as if I can finally breathe for the first time in weeks, knowing I’ve left no room for misunderstanding. Being around her will get worse before it gets better, so if I have to finish this project alone, I will.

Fuck her.

No one controls me.

No one threatens me either.

I’m so pissed I can barely work. I open up the project, knowing damn well that I’ll be here later than usual again and that doesn’t make me happy.

I can’t focus for shit and that just adds to my frustration. This is exactly why I stayed away from relationships of any kind. Watching the way my father acted toward my mother tainted any feelings I had about being a “couple.”

I grab a stale bag of chips from the vending machine since I skipped lunch and my appetite has pretty much evaporated. As I sit behind my desk, staring at my screen and shoving the final crumbs in my mouth, I think about Viola and my mood instantly lifts. I fight the urge to text her, but hell, I need a pick me up, so I grab my

cell and send her one anyway. I know anything that comes out of her mouth will make me smile. I know things didn't end in a fairytale fashion last night and that she was seething, but that's not going to stop me.

So on a scale from one to ten, how jealous is your vibrator? I smile after I hit send. It's actually the first time I've really smiled all day.

Not jealous at all. It's been places you can only dream of and I HATE YOU!

How sweet, just the response I was hoping for and now I'm definitely intrigued.

Is that so? Guess you'll have to draw me a picture since it's only something I've seen in my dreams.

Don't be an idiot. It doesn't look good on you.

Does that mean you think I look good normally then?

Shut up.

I chuckle, setting the phone down and getting back to work. My body is exhausted and as much as I fight it, I pull through for another hour. Once I call it a night, I back up my files and turn everything off. I walk out to my car, relieved to finally be heading home for the night.

The parking lot is practically empty and the warm glow of the setting sun reflects off the shiny black paint of the Challenger. As I unlock the car, I see FUCK YOU written across my back windshield in dark red lipstick. I'm fuming at the way she's marked my car, but all bets are off when I notice every tire is flat. Alyssa wasn't stupid enough to slash them, only angry enough to let the air out. Either way, it's a big fucking inconvenience.

VIOLA

As soon as I blink my eyes open I feel my muscle ache, reminding me exactly what happened last night. I reach back with my hand and rub over the bruise on my shoulder. It's tender to the touch, but nothing major. I know it'll be visible if I wear my swimsuit this weekend up at the cabin, so I make a mental note to come up with an excuse beforehand. Tripping and banging into things isn't really farfetched from my norm, so as long as Drew doesn't suspect anything, all should be fine.

The more I think about Travis and what we did last night, the more I begin to mentally freak out. I still don't believe what happened. The electricity of him and I together streams through my body. It's a low hum and as much as I try to ignore it, I can't. Even after I force myself to study into the afternoon, I can't get the feeling out of my body. I've read the same sentence over and over. Each time I close my eyes, I see him hovering over me—fucking me like he owns me, like I'm one of his whores—and while I love it, I also hate it. It's so frustrating.

Needing a distraction, I decide to text Courtney and ask how she's doing, but she doesn't respond, which can only mean she's too busy with all her hot cowboy friends.

I walk around the house, feeling his hands and lips with every step I take. Finally, I force myself to sit down because I can't take it any longer. My body is aching, desperate to feel it all again. The sex was everything I've imagined it would be with him. Girls at my school hadn't exactly kept it a secret of how good he was and how they craved more, but he wasn't as willing for a round two. He didn't get his reputation as a sex god for nothing. And the bastard knows it.

However, it can't happen again. No matter how much I really want it to, I know it wouldn't end well. I can't separate my emotions to justify a fuck-buddies kind of relationship. The fact that he's Drew's best friend makes it complicated enough. But I'm only halfway regretting I let it happen. I know him well enough to know his history. It'd be better for my emotional wellbeing to get out while I can, before I get hurt by him again. Having zero expectations is the only way I'd come out of this alive. I'm just another notch on his bedpost. Before he can crush me, I have to consider him as nothing more than a check on my to-do list.

Hello player, meet the game.

I grab a bottle of water and sit on the couch right as my phone dings with a text.

It's Drew. Oh shit. If he finds out, he'll flip his shit.

What the hell? I stare at his message for a minute.

My heart drops. Does he know? Did Travis tell him? I would deny it until the day I died.

What's your problem? I send back.

What the hell happened to you last night? Did you fall and get a concussion that would cause you to bring a random dude back to the house?! I'm just glad Travis was there to protect you.

I roll my eyes, knowing he doesn't even know the half of it.

I'm grown, Drew. You can't protect me from the penis forever.

If he only knew what was really happening while he was away. It just confirms that

he must never find out. I'd feel horrible if their friendship of over ten years was jeopardized because of me.

We'll see about that. Excited to see you guys Friday! No more company in the house, you hear?

Does that go for your slutty roommate, too? I have to remember to act the exact same as I normally do or he'll suspect something.

I don't have control over that one, sorry.

So how's the Future Mrs. Fisher doing? I tease him because I know Mia's been pushy about it and Drew isn't ready for that yet.

That's not even remotely funny.

I chuckle to myself, not even feeling bad after all the shit he's given me.

So I guess not so good? ;)

Things are fine.

I drop the conversation and lay my head back on the couch. I take a deep breath and before I can even exhale, my phone dings again.

This time it's Travis.

He thinks he's funny and that he's going to win this little battle we have going on, whatever the hell it is. Either way, I'm not claiming defeat, no matter what he does or says.

Flashbacks to my thirteenth birthday come surfacing and the memories of how Travis' gift changed everything.

Spending alone time with mom and dad was becoming a rare occasion with everyone's busy schedules, but for my birthday we all went out to a movie and stopped for a late lunch afterwards. My mom had even taken me shopping the day before to get some new clothes, so when we arrived back home, I headed up to my room to try them all on again.

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I didn't really have any girlfriends to hang with, but I actually didn't mind that much. I had my books and knowing Travis was across the street was reassuring.

As I began digging around in my shopping bags, I noticed something peeking out from under my pillow. I grabbed it and saw my name written on the top of the small box. It was in Travis' handwriting and a wide smile spread across my face. I couldn't believe he got me a gift.

As I peeled the box open, my eyes widened in shock. It was a heart-shaped locket with my initials engraved on the front: VF.

I took it out of the box and clasped it around my neck. It fit perfectly, and I was so excited for him to see me wearing it. I'd never owned a locket before and getting this one from Travis made it absolutely special.

Once I was finished putting my new clothes away, I tucked the locket inside my shirt and headed back downstairs. Mom was making me my favorite dish for dinner, and I couldn't wait to see Travis and thank him. He'd be coming for dinner like he did every Saturday.

After a couple reruns of Gilmore Girls, I heard the front door open and I knew it had to be him. Drew had jumped off the sofa before I could, so I sat and waited for a private moment alone with him. I didn't want to say anything in front of my brother because I knew he'd say something snotty like he always did. Drew didn't like me hanging around him when he was with friends, but Travis never minded.

I walked to the kitchen to see if Mom needed any help setting the table and just as I

went to walk into the dining room, I overheard Drew and Travis talking.

“She has no friends. She’s a loner. I feel sorry for her...” It took me a moment to realize those were Travis’ words.

“That doesn’t mean you have to be her pity friend. She’s thirteen, it’s time she grows up and realizes she’s a dork.”

“Well, she’s always around. What am I supposed to do?”

“Just ignore her like I do.” He laughed and Travis laughed with him.

“I guess being your friend comes with consequences.” He chuckled again.

I couldn’t believe what I had heard. Travis never talked to me like that, gave me no reason to believe I was annoying to be around. Sure, he was a couple years older than me, but all those moments on the rooftop, hadn’t they meant something to him like they had for me?

“Nah, don’t pity her. She’s the one that chooses to be a dorkzilla. Plus, hanging out with a girl like Viola will bore you to death.”

“Dude, I don’t hang out with her. She follows me around like a lost puppy.” His words stung, shooting a dagger right through my heart.

I’d heard enough. I turned and walked the other way, ripping the necklace from my neck and tossing it into the trash on my way out of the kitchen.

For my thirteenth birthday, I’d learned a harsh lesson.

Travis King was the worst kind of asshole, and I’d never forgive him.

He broke my heart that day. I never did confront the jerk for what he said. He didn't deserve a chance to explain. A couple weeks later, school started back up and I didn't have to see him as much. It helped with the heartbreak, my young heart healing from the only pain it'd ever felt before.

Too bad it didn't last.

The following year, I went into high school and had to watch my friends hang out with him. He loved it, of course. He always found a way to make my life hell, so I gave it right back. I wouldn't allow myself to be around him for very long. I may come off as a book-loving nerd, but I'm no one's pity-friend.

Although he never found out that I had heard him that day, the reminder was always there. He'd ignored me, dated my friends, and had acted like a total showoff. He'd taunt me about my good grades and proper manners. I didn't need to pretend to be someone I wasn't just to get his approval. I wouldn't allow myself to fall for his charm like the rest of the school seemed to.

I decide I can't let myself dwell on him any longer. I shower and barely have time to wrap the towel around my body before the doorbell rings. The annoying ding-dong is followed by knocks on the door. What the hell? I walk through the house leaving puddles with each step. When I move, I can feel the places Travis has been, but it's not something I'll ever admit. He would just rub it in my face and say I told you so and I can't have that. I may have given him my body, but I refuse to give him my heart. That'll never happen.

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I look through the peephole and see Courtney standing outside with a huge purse plopped over her shoulder. I open the door, practically naked and in complete shock when I see it's really her.

"Viola!" she squeals, wrapping her arms around me. "Surprise!" She releases me and smiles wide.

"What are you doing home already? I thought you weren't getting in until tomorrow?"

Courtney lives off-campus in a really cute apartment right next door to a used bookstore, so she doesn't have to go home during breaks, but flies out when she has the chance.

"I'm all about family time, but three days was plenty. I can only do so long at a Brooks family reunion."

"Weren't Jackson and John there?" Those are her super hot twin brothers.

"Yes, but Jackson brought his girlfriend and John was super busy showing the new foreign exchange student around the farm." She rolls her eyes, and I laugh. "Plus, Since Toby will be back soon, so I figured I'd come back early and wait for him.

"Wait for him meaning I won't see you until school starts because you'll be shackled up next week." Toby is her high school sweetheart that she bangs every chance she gets.

She drops her bag on the kitchen table and sighs. “I’ll text you when he lets me up for air.”

“Please, spare me the details.”

She purses her lips and shakes her head at me. “Sometimes I wonder how the hell you even managed to lose your virginity.” Her mocking tone doesn’t go unnoticed even though I know she’s only teasing.

“On my back with my legs behind my head, thank you very much,” I sass right back.

Her eyes trail down my body, studying me. “Speaking of being on your back, you have sex bruises all over your thighs and arms.” She arches a brow. “Care to explain?”

I pinch my lips together and turn away from her, walking toward the living room.

“Viola Annabelle Fisher,” she scowls in a motherly tone, following quickly behind me. “If you’re getting laid, I deserve to know.”

I sit on the couch and grab the remote. “I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

She sits next to me, focusing her attention to my legs. “It looks like thumb bruises to me. So not only was it sex, it was really hot, rough sex.”

After a moment of silence and not answering her, she grabs the remote out of my hand, forcing me to look at her.

“Fine, I got laid. Happy?”

The corner of her lips curl up. “Not as happy as you should be.”

I roll my eyes and look away again.

“C’mon, I have to pee.” She grabs my hand and pulls me up with her. “You can tell me all the dirty details.”

“I’m not telling you about my sex life while you pee!”

“Oh, so now you have a sex life? I want all the details.”

She drags me into the bathroom with her, not minding that I’m right in front of her as she drops her shorts and sits.

“You know you aren’t in hillbilly country anymore.”

“Oh please. You’ve seen my bare ass before. Peeing is nothing. Don’t be a prude.”

I burst out laughing because she’s absolutely ridiculous. She flushes, washes her hands, then checks to see if anything is in her teeth.

“So what are your plans tonight?” she asks, leading us out of the bathroom.

“I’m going to watch a few bands.”

She turns and looks at me as we make our way into the kitchen. “Oh, like a date?” she inquires, digging around in the fridge. “With Mr. Rough ‘n Dirty Sex Machine?”

Courtney has absolutely no filter. It’s one of her many pleasant qualities.

“No, and it’s not a date, so you can join us if you want. It’d probably make things less awkward anyway.”

She shuts the fridge door, empty-handed. “I’d love to be your third wheel, but I’m already exhausted from flying all day. Can I take a rain check?” she asks, opening up the cupboards and shuffling cans around.

“Between two grown men, you’d think there’d be something to eat in this house.”

“There was.” I chuckle. “They scarfed it all down.”

She laughs, shutting the doors and giving up. “Well you better get dressed then. I’m starving and will stab someone soon if I don’t get some food.”

“Damn. I forgot how crazy you get when you’re hangry.”

She laughs again, following me into Drew’s room and starts chatting about her horrible flight from Dallas and the many delays she experienced. She looks at the perfectly made bed, and I hear her sigh.

“What I would give to be in that bed with your brother for just one night. I’d totally use my weekend pass on him.”

“Gross,” I say, secretly thinking about being in Travis’ bed and what happened here hours earlier. “What the hell is a weekend pass?”

“A sex pass?” She arches her brow. “A free pass to have sex with one person one time while in a relationship.”

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“That’s not really a thing,” I say. “Is it?”

“It’s a thing, but most couples wouldn’t be okay with actually following through with it.”

“Well, even if you did want to follow through with it, good luck getting him away from Mia long enough to strip your clothes off.”

“I wish he’d break up with her already. She’s not even his type. Controlling. Snobby. She’s probably never worked a day in her entire life. And her laugh. Her laugh is terrible,” Courtney goes on and on, turning her head while I change. “He’s too good for her.”

“Maybe so, but I wouldn’t be surprised if they got married.” I put on a pair of jeans and a t-shirt and turn around to see her leaning against the wall with her palm pressed against her chest.

“My heart couldn’t take it,” she says dramatically. “I’ll be a wedding crasher then. I don’t think I’d hold my peace.”

“I don’t think you’d be invited.” I laugh.

“Hence the crasher part...” She smirks.

I shake my head and smile. “I’ve missed your level of crazy. It’s nice to be with my people again.”

“Good, then I better be your plus one if they do.”

“Obviously. But just for the record, I would love to have you as a sister-in-law.”

She smiles as she walks down the hallway to the living room. “Sign me up! I would fuck your brother so damn good. I mean, given that I was single.”

“Ew. Just no. Don’t ever say that word with my brother in the same sentence ever again.” I laugh and lock the door behind us. I swear she says stuff like that just to watch me cringe.

The top is down on the jeep, and the sun is lazily hanging in the late afternoon sky. The engine roars to life and Courtney turns the radio up as loud as it goes. We are rocking the typical college girl stereotype, in a Jeep, listening to hip hop, but I don’t mind. I’m really happy she’s home to be my personal distraction until Drew returns. Maybe she’ll pull the plug on whatever is going on between Travis and I.

I feel my phone vibrate in my pocket and when I grab it, I see Travis’ name flash across the screen. Courtney takes notice and smiles.

“What does he want?” She lifts an eyebrow at me, and I when I don’t answer, she speaks up again. “Hello? Since when were you two on texting terms anyway?” She knows how I feel about him and has heard many hours of my hatred for him. I turn my head away from her, hoping to hide the evidence that’s all over my face. She doesn’t need to see the blush across my cheeks to know it’s there.

“Oh, my God,” she draws out. “Please tell me Travis King isn’t Mr. Rough ‘n Dirty Sex Machine Man,” she pleads, urgently, her hand squeezing harder around the steering wheel.

I slowly turn my head at her, knowing she’s going to find out now anyway. I shrug

and pinch my lips together, unable to deny it.

“Holy crap on a cracker.” Her southern accent is more evident

“No judging,” I say before she can say another word.

“Oh, I’m so judging you right now, but more importantly, I want details, and not just regular sex details, I want Travis King details,” she says matter-of-factly.

“You’re ridiculous.” I try to disguise my voice as nonchalant and completely cool, but as soon as she pulls into the coffee shop and parks it, she flashes me a look that tells me she can see right through my poker face.

It’s a small local cafe, which means not many other cars are parked near us.

“So, when did it happen?” She’s beaming.

I sigh.

“See! I knew it. Please tell me he’s hung like a fucking bear.”

“Oh, my God.” I close my eyes and try to think of a way out of this. “I can’t talk about this in public, Court.”

“You’re right. We’ll go in the drive-thru instead.” She reverses the Jeep out of the parking stall and drives it over to the drive-thru lane.

“It happened last night.” I close my eyes a moment before opening them again and continuing. “I had been drinking, he was pissed I didn’t let him know where I was, and we got into a huge fight and...” I pause, trying to find the right words. “And I wish it never would’ve. I hate him. I hate him even more now.” I try to repeat it over

and over so then maybe my body will stop responding to the thought of him.

“You totally hate-banged.” Her jaw drops almost as if she’s impressed.

I groan. “It was the best hate-sex I’ve ever had in my life.””

She frowns. “You mean your first time ever having hate-sex.”

I roll my eyes, albeit agreeing with her.

When it’s our turn at the window, she orders two soy lattes, blueberry muffins, and lemon pound cake. I dig around my purse for some cash as she pulls up to the window.

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Once we pay, she lowers the radio and her questions don't stop. "So what did it mean?" She shifts into park as we wait for our drinks. "Does it mean you two are like together?"

"Oh, God, no!" I'm quick to push that idea out of her head. "It was a one-time itch and it'll never happen again."

"Never?" she questions, her brow arched in disbelief.

"Nope. I don't have time for complicated in my life and Drew would have my head, or his head, or both. I don't know. Either way, it was a huge mistake, and it cannot ever happen again." I know I'm telling her the words, but it feels as if I'm trying to convince myself more right now.

She nods at me with a disbelieving smile. "I totally believe you."

I sigh, giving up on trying to explain myself. My head's a complete cluster fuck and I don't need to overthink it anymore.

The girl at the window interrupts my thoughts and hands over our lattes and Courtney's pastry buffet. While we drive around, she continues the twenty questions, popping pieces of her muffin in her mouth every free chance she gets. The sky is turning a deep bruised purple and the wisps of clouds are a pretty pink. We've been driving for over an hour, and I am relieved that she came back early and can help me process the hot mess I've created.

"So I know you've hated him since like forever, but maybe this is a good thing," she

says as she pulls into Drew's neighborhood. "Maybe it was meant to happen. Like fate."

"Not unless fate was drunk," I snort.

"Well, being drunk is the whole reason you're in this situation now, isn't it?" She grins.

I glare at her, even though she's right.

"Trust me when I say it's not. Biggest mistake ever. I'm not sure I can even look at him. And I have to live with him for the next week and a half."

"Listen, we've all been there and done that. But at least it's Travis. The dude is sex on legs, so it's not like you had a one night stand with some random guy." She's trying to make me feel better about it, but the truth is, it's going to take more than that.

"I wish Professor Snape was here to steal the memory of it away," I sigh.

"Huh? Who's Professor Snape? Is that the lit professor?" She's really trying to figure it out and all I can do is laugh.

"I seriously don't know how we are friends. If you don't read Harry Potter in the next year, I'm best friend divorcing you."

"Hardy har har. All I'm saying is, don't get worked up about the future like you usually do. Chill out. Have fun. Enjoy yourself. You're young, beautiful, and my bestest friend in the whole wide world and you deserve to be happy. Just forget the past and focus on those sexy abs and gorgeous eyes." She looks up as if she's imagining him in her head. "Actually, I'm glad Travis helped clear out those

cobwebs.”

“Whose side are you on anyway? I have plenty of sex.” I really don’t and she knows it. All she can do is laugh, and I start laughing too.

Courtney is right. I should focus on the now, even if I can’t stop thinking about last night. At the thought, I remember Travis sent another text message. As we pull into the driveway, I unlock my phone and open it.

I know you’re probably super busy thinking of me and all, but I need a huge favor.

I roll my eyes and write back, Define huge... Knowing I’m playing with fire, I press send anyway.

Any chance you’d pick me up from my office?

I furrow my brows, curious. Why? One of your mistress’ husband’s find you out and steal your precious wheels? I snicker as I hit send again.

He responds almost immediately. Not quite.

I sigh. Fine. Be there in 15.

Thanks, and just for the record, I don’t fuck married women either.

I groan inwardly to myself. Just the ones with STDs and daddy issues. I don’t even think twice before hitting send.

Are you trying to tell me something? Should I be worried about the herp now?

I clench my jaw. Fuck off, Travis!

See you soon, V! :)

I lock my phone and slam it into my lap.

“Dang. You two must’ve hate-banged the shit out of each other if there’s that much intensity.” Courtney glances over at me with a smile.

I give her a side-glance evil eye. “He needs a ride.”

“I bet he does.” She chuckles, wagging her eyebrows at me.

“Does everything have to be a sexual innuendo with you?”

“Obviously you haven’t been around me long enough.” She grins, making a U-turn and heading downtown to where he works.

As we coast through the streets, music blaring, and my hair blowing in the wind as the sun sets, I think about my options.

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I can ignore Travis the rest of my break, which seems nearly impossible considering the lake trip this weekend and the fact that he's Travis, and will be in my face every chance he gets. Or I can forget our shared history, his words, the anger and hatred, and take advantage of the next week and a half alone with him and play his game every chance I get.

After all, if I'm the one writing the rules, there's no possible chance of losing.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

TRAVIS

As I lean up against the Challenger, waiting for Viola to pick me up, I see Alyssa and Mr. Crawford walk out. She has her arm linked into his, smiling and laughing as if he actually has a sense of humor.

The way she hangs herself all over him is quite disturbing. She's completely wrapped up in money and not really wanting to work for it, but if I see him glance down at her chest once more, I might throw up.

"Have a good night, Mr. King," Mr. Crawford hollers over to me, startling me. I hadn't even realized he was looking over at me.

I nod in return.

"Good night, Mr. King," Alyssa lingers over my name slowly, popping her tongue. "Good luck getting home." She tilts one side of her mouth up, telling me everything I

already knew.

If my job wasn't on the line, I'd do more than just stand and watch her walk away from me right now. Karma's a bitch, and if I know anything about karma, she'll show up just at the right time.

Just as Mr. Crawford drives them off, I see a Jeep rolling in with Viola in the passenger seat, the windows down. She's looking at me and shaking her head with a knowing grin.

"Fuck you," she reads the words on the window. "Classy."

Viola's friend leans forward and grins. "Love the custom paint job."

"You two are relentless," I groan.

"Hope you don't mind riding bitch," she says, leaning an arm over the window.

"You're enjoying this way too much," I say, shaking my head and pushing off the Challenger. Grabbing my briefcase, I open the door and slide in.

"More than you know," she beams. "Travis, you remember my friend, Courtney?" She waves a hand between us.

"Yeah, of course." I have no fucking clue.

"He better! I'm unforgettable, Viola." She spins the steering wheel and squeals the tires as she circles out of the parking lot. Viola laughs as she hangs on for dear life and soon I'm wondering if I should've just taken a cab home instead.

"I just need to grab my air compressor back at the house," I shout over the wind and

music. “Then a ride back.”

“Hm...I don’t know, pretty boy. That’s going to cost you,” Courtney teases. I can see her smart-ass grin in the rearview mirror.

“And what’s that, sweet cheeks? A ride in the King’s Stallion?” I ask.

Viola’s jaw drops, but quickly clamps it shut when she realizes I can see her reflection.

Courtney laughs. “Sorry, I don’t do sloppy seconds!” Her hair blows in my face as we take a sharp corner.

“Oh my God,” I hear Viola mumble, her cheeks reddening as she turns her head away.

Wait. Does that mean she told her about us last night?

“Well, it wouldn’t be sloppy...” I start to defend, but she holds her hand up and stops me.

Before I can continue, Viola whips her head and cuts me off. “Seriously? Right in front of me?”

“What?” I’m genuinely confused.

She rolls her eyes. “Some things never change,” she mumbles, looking away, but I hear her loud and clear.

“Have you looked in a mirror lately, princess?” I challenge and her shoulders tense. “Aside from your tits getting bigger, you haven’t changed a bit. You’re the exact

same little prissy know-it-all you were when you were ten years old.”

Courtney snorts, holding in her laughter. Viola shoots daggers at me, biting her tongue.

I smile until we’re back to the house and am reminded why we’re even here. That bitch, Alyssa.

After grabbing my air compressor in the garage, I head back out and drop it in the back before sliding back into the backseat.

“You sure you don’t need anything else, pretty boy?” Courtney asks, eyeing me from the rearview mirror as she jerks the Jeep into drive.

“No, that’s it,” I reply, buckling in. Viola chuckles from her seat, still looking away from me as if I’ve missed some inside joke or something. “What’s funny?”

“Aside from this whole situation?” Viola cracks, her shoulders shaking from laughter.

I sigh and sit back against the leather seats. “Yeah, hilarious.” I know I have no one to blame but myself, but hell, Alyssa didn’t give me the psychopath vibe when we started hooking up. I suppose karma would come back to bite me in the ass, eventually. Nailing the CEO’s daughter isn’t exactly on my list of great accomplishments, but fuck, you’d think her pussy were made of diamonds by the way she’s treating me now.

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“Aw, don’t be so harsh, Lola.” Courtney shoots me a look of pity in the mirror. “It’s not easy being a walking, talking eye candy machine. It’s probably a lot of pressure to be hot and perfect twenty-four/seven.” The way the corner of her lips tilt up tells me she’s mocking me. I know I deserve it, but that doesn’t mean I want it rubbed in my face right now.

“Oh, trust me,” Viola begins before I have a chance to defend myself. “He’s perfected his whole act of being a god. Back in high school, he managed to date every one of my friends. He thinks he’s a master of getting any girl he wants. Don’t feel sorry for him.” She speaks as if I’m not right in the car with them. Her voice is filled with disgust and anger. Damn, Viola’s hatred runs deep.

I clear my throat. “What little Miss Goody two-shoes forgot to mention is that her friends came onto me. While she made crude rumors about me and buried her head in a book every Friday night, I was kicking ass playing sports and actually having a life.”

“Banging every girl on the cheer squad doesn’t mean you had a life. Means you had low standards and were easy.”

“I banged you,” I counter. “What’s that say?”

Courtney nearly dies from laughter, her eyes widening and cheeks reddening. I’m sure this is probably the worst timing for a fight with Viola, but Courtney seems to be enjoying the show.

Just then, we pull into the office parking lot and I can practically see steam coming

from Viola's ears. Yeah, she's pissed all right.

Just as I'm about to swing my door open, Courtney looks at her phone and shouts for me to wait.

"Shoot, my boss wants me to swing by real quick to discuss my work schedule."

I can see part of her phone screen, which is completely blank by the way, and know she full of shit.

"Would you mind if I dropped you both off here and have Travis take you home?" She must be in acting classes or something because she's laying it on thick and Viola's following every word of it. "I'm so sorry." She pouts out her lower lip.

I pull the door lever and push my door open. "Let's go, V. Ass, cash, or grass. Nobody rides for free!" I smile at the scowl she flashes me.

"That's not what Lacey Benkins told me freshman year!" she yells as she gets out, slamming the door behind her.

"Well, I've become a better businessman since then." I wink, loving the way it drives her mad. I grab my compressor from the back and thank Courtney for the lift.

"Can we just get this over with?" Viola stands with her arms crossed.

"What's the rush? Your vibrator getting lonely?"

I set the compressor down to the first tire and start setting up. As soon as I turn it on, it drowns out Viola's next words.

Ten minutes later, all four tires are filled back up. I find the valve caps in my center

console. Either Alyssa is more stupid than I thought or her real intention was just to piss me off enough to make a point.

Either way, I toss the compressor into my trunk and walk to the driver's seat where I find Viola sitting.

"Not in a million years," I say, whipping the door open.

"Why not?" she asks, her palms wrapped tightly around the wheel.

I bend down, pressing a hand to the top of my car, holding myself up "You couldn't handle a car like this, princess. Now move over." I nod my head toward the passenger seat.

She licks her lips and taps her fingers. "I handled you just fine."

I groan, knowing exactly what she's playing. "Not happening. You don't even know how to drive a stick shift."

"Actually..." she begins, biting down on her lower lip.

"You say another sexual innuendo and I'm going to pick your ass up and drag you to the other seat. Rules, remember?"

"Okay...but don't forget the foreplay," she mocks, scooting across the center and popping into her seat.

I slide in and adjust the seat. "Just be glad you still have all your fingers after messing with my shit."

"You're not as badass as you think, Travis," she says matter-of-factly. The engine

roars to life, and I'm tempted to push her out as soon as she opens her mouth again.
"Men with shiny, loud cars are usually compensating for something."

I reverse the Challenger out of the parking spot and shift it back into gear, squealing the tires as I drive out of the parking lot.

"I don't have anything to compensate for," I say, shifting again as I catch speed.
"And from the sounds that came out of your mouth last night, I'd say you agree."

"Well to be fair, alcohol does lower inhibitions, so it's not like I was a good judge of character or anything."

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I scoff at that. “Trust me, Viola. You were dripping wet when you stormed out last night, and if I recall correctly, with a limp, too.” I grin, thinking of just how sore she must’ve been when she woke up this morning.

She lets out a dramatic snort. “You disgust me.”

“So you’ve told me.”

“Why did you kiss me last night?” she turns and asks with rage in her eyes.

“Because you wouldn’t shut up,” I say without looking at her. It’s a lie and she knows it. I kissed her because I damn well wanted to. “If I disgust you so much, why’d you jump me?”

She doesn’t respond right away. Out of the corner of my eye, I can see her chewing on her lower lip, contemplating her answer.

“Bad judgment, I guess,” she says, sounding defeated. “I shouldn’t have brought Alex back to the house.”

“Andrew,” I correct. Glancing over at her, I think about her shoulder again. The thought of it angers me but I try to push thoughts of it away.

She chuckles. “Yeah, whatever.”

“So why did you?”

She shrugs, pursing her lips. “It was nice to feel wanted. I’d hope you’d be in your room and you’d be woken up from the sounds of us coming home. I wanted you to hurt the way you hurt me.” Her voice is so soft, raw with emotion, and it’s the first time in a long time I’ve seen her this vulnerable.

I pull the car over on the shoulder and shift the gear into park, letting it idle.

“What are you doing?” she asks, looking around.

I unbuckle my belt without answering her. Reaching over the center, I unbuckle hers and wait for it to zip back into place.

“Ask me again,” I say, turning so we’re face to face.

“Ask you what?” She furrows her brows.

“Ask me again why I kissed you last night.”

She licks her lips and swallows, tracing my features with her eyes. She shifts her body slightly toward me and blinks. “Why’d you kiss me last night?”

The corner of my lips tilt, so fucking glad she actually listened to me for once. “Because I couldn’t take another minute of not having the taste of you on my lips.”

VIOLA

Oh my God.

I feel like I can’t breathe.

He’s taken my breath away.

My heart beats rapidly against my chest, faster and harder with every passing moment that stays silent. Travis' words repeat in my head, the feel of his kiss still lingering on my lips.

This is the first time he's admitted to wanting to kiss me ever. He's always mocked my lack of experience, mostly by insinuating I was a virgin, but he's never spoke aloud about wanting me in that way. Last night only happened because I had pushed his buttons and he had something to prove.

Up until he just spoke those words, I never believed he would be interested in me that way.

I still don't believe it.

I'm losing myself in his words and my thoughts. The memories of our childhood and of last night are almost too much to handle. My insides tingle at the roughness of his voice and I think I'm in shock. Words evade me and when I look back up at him, he's staring, trying to read me.

I've been waiting for him to say those words for over ten years. Instead, the words I heard him say crushed everything I thought I knew about him. He's staring at me, and for a moment, I see something flash in his eyes, which causes his entire demeanor to shift. It almost looks like regret.

"I don't want to be your pity fuck, Travis." He flinches as if I slapped him across the face. Maybe it felt like it. Maybe I meant it as one, too.

"Pity fuck? Is that what you think last night was?" He nearly growls, his jaw tightening.

I shrug, keeping my emotions on the defensive. No matter how my body reacts to

him, I need to always stay in control.

“I told you. I wanted to be used and fucked like a meaningless one-night stand, so of course that’s what it was. But I know it wasn’t anything more than that. You saw Andrew and saw red. You wanted poor little pathetic Viola all to yourself, even if you could never truly have me.”

I know I’m being the hypocrite here, but I need to do everything I can to push him away. I can’t afford to get tangled in his web of heartaches again.

“Is that so?” he challenges. “So it was just an itch you needed to scratch?” I don’t miss the accusatory message behind his tone.

“Yup.”

“I call bullshit,” he spits out, his eyes narrowing in on me. “You only used Andrew as a pawn to get to me. You can’t tell me you haven’t been begging for it since before your tits grew in and your mouth was filled with metal. Is that why you hated me so much?”

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“The only time I’ve begged for anything from you was during a moment of weakness and a moment of alcohol-induced stupidity. And my reason for hating you goes much deeper than that.”

He coughs out a fake laugh, his eyes widening in disbelief. “Moment of weakness, my ass. If I felt in between your legs right now, you’d be drenched, wouldn’t you? You can lie to me all damn day, but your body will always give you away, princess.”

“Even if I was, you wouldn’t do anything about it. You don’t go back for seconds. Tag’em and bag’em, right?”

“Good lord, it’s like you’re this genius little book rat but when it comes to actual common sense, your mind can’t comprehend anything over frat house knowledge.”

“That’s not true,” I defend weakly.

“Then kiss me,” he demands. “Kiss me and I’ll prove you have as much willpower as a peanut.”

I snort, rolling my eyes. “You’re pathetic. You really think I’m going to lower myself to your standards and play your stupid little game?”

He leans over the center console and cups my cheek as he nuzzles his nose in the crook of my neck, pressing his lips just under my ear. His touch sends electricity down my spine and momentarily paralyzes my vocal cords. His lips move and I can feel his warm touch all over my neck and shoulders. My eyes flutter closed as my head falls back, giving him all the access he needs.

“Tell me to stop,” he demands, pressing his lips harder against my skin. He nips with his teeth and I hold back a moan.

“Push me away,” he challenges, pressing his lips against the shell of my ear.

Damn him. Damn him and his perfect, soft lips and his perfect, warm hands touching my face. I want to stop him. I want to have the upper hand, but he’s so right. I have zero willpower when it comes to him. Even the thoughts in my mind start to disappear.

“Your skin tastes like warm honey,” he whispers against my collarbone. “I could kiss this neck for hours.”

His hand palms my breast and squeezes with force, having no self-control to stop him, I arch my back against his hand and moan.

“I knew you were hungry, princess. But goddamn, you’re a starving little vixen, aren’t you?”

My body shudders by the way his words tickle my neck. His hot breath against my skin make it impossible to form words. My throat squeezes tight, releasing a deep moan that teases him just right.

“Fuck, Viola,” he growls, bringing his mouth over mine, but not quite touching. “Say it,” he whispers. “Say you want me just as much as I want you.”

The earnest way his words come out make me want to believe he’s being genuine. I feel completely vulnerable in his arms, but I don’t know if that’s enough to trust him.

“You aren’t the boss of me,” I spit back my earlier words at him with a sly grin.

“If we weren’t parked off the road on a busy street, I’d bend your ass over so fast, you wouldn’t even have time to brace yourself.”

I tick the corner of my lips up, wanting to push his boundaries. I move closer to him, letting my lips rest against his. “So, improvise.”

He presses his lips to mine in a heated rush of need and desire. My body gives in and wraps my arms around him, pulling him closer.

“Sit back,” he says, breaking the kiss. I do as I’m told and watch him climb into the backseat of his Challenger. Once he adjusts himself, I watch as he undoes his dress slacks and pulls them down to his ankles. I notice the large bulge in his boxer shorts and memories of last night send an ache between my legs. “Saddle up, princess.”

My brows shoot up in surprise. “Here? Right now?”

“Tinted windows,” he says as if that’s a good enough reason. “What? You worried someone will see you not being a perfect saint?”

“Don’t be an asshole,” I say, crawling to the back. “And I’m not a perfect saint.” I begin to unbutton my jeans and pull them down and off. I straddle his lap and feel his erection against my panties.

“Prove it then.” He leans back with his arms behind his head, his lips in a crooked smile.

“Fuck you in the backseat of your Challenger to prove what? That I don’t have standards?”

He grabs the outside of my bare thighs and rubs himself against my core. The pressure adds to the desperate ache that’s already there. “That you’re actually a bad

girl hidden behind the dorky glasses and Harry Potter t-shirts.”

“Do you just have to push every damn button of mine?” I widen my legs, falling harder against him. I rotate my hips and feel him growing harder underneath me.

“Don’t fuck with me, princess,” he warns, bringing his hips up to rub against my pussy again, his fingers digging into my skin. I start grinding against him faster, his head falling back against the seat with a throaty groan.

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“And why’s that?” I whisper with confidence. “You going to—”

He slides a finger under the fabric of my panties and moves them to the side. He rubs his thumb over my clit that’s already sensitive and aching. He adds just the right amount of pressure to make my body sing.

My hands rest on his shoulders and squeeze as he slides a finger inside. I grind my hips down and feel him go deeper. “So you want to tell me again how I’m not the boss of you?”

I want to slap that smug look of his right off his face, but instead I lean down and kiss him. At least I can shut him up for now.

He slides a second finger in, moving faster and pressing deeper. He swallows my moans with his mouth and kisses me with absolute ferocity.

“Don’t forget my rules, Viola,” he warns as my body tightens to a crescendo.

I release a harsh breath, resting my forehead against his as the build-up slows then releases. I grit my teeth and say, “One.”

He smiles. “That’s my good girl.”

I shake my head at him, narrowing my eyes. “You’re such an egotistical asshole.”

“Whatever keeps the fire burning,” he quips, his fingers sinking deep inside again. “You think it’d be this good if we didn’t hate each other so much?”

I grind against his hand, feeling the pressure build up again.

“Everyone has their own ways of getting off, princess. And pissing you off, seeing that look of distaste on your face, only makes me harder.”

“So what you’re saying is, hate-fucking is some kind of fetish of yours?”

“Just with you, Viola.” He smiles, pulling me closer and pressing his mouth to mine. “Only you.”

I count to three before I can no longer take it and demand he fucks me. He has me reach behind to grab a condom out of his center console.

“Condoms in your car? Really?” I ask as I hand it to him. “Could you be any more cliché?”

“Could you be anymore desperate to ride it?” he counters, a sly smirk on his face, having zero shame.

I roll my eyes, pinching my lips together to hold in an amused chuckle. Why is it even the most crass things he says makes me melt like a pathetic lovesick puppy?

Sitting back, I watch him lower his shorts and roll the condom over his massive hard on. He grabs my hips and positions my body over him, sliding in slowly. He looks up at me, watching for my reaction. My eyes flutter closed as the sensation takes over my body and everything turns white. God, the way he makes me feel is indescribable. I hate him and his cocky attitude. The way he knows how to get exactly what he wants, even when I’m fighting it inside.

I’m completely losing myself in him. With every second, my heart beats a little faster, falls a little deeper, and every time his mouth covers mine, I forget how much

he broke me in the past.

“Your pussy squeezes my dick so fucking hard,” he growls, fisting his hand in my hair as his other hand digs into my hip, rocking my body against his. His words make me grind into him faster and faster, wanting to see the look of satisfaction on his face.

“Fuck, princess. You like it so goddamn rough, don’t you?” His head falls back against the seat again, both hands gripping my waist as he arches his hips and pounds into me harder.

“Yesyesyesyes...” I cry, feeling him all the way inside me.

“One more,” he says, knowing exactly what he wants from me, but I’m not sure I can. My body is aching.

“I can’t,” I breathe out, panting. I’ve already counted to seven.

I see a sly smirk spread across his face. I know that look. “Oh come on, you’re not even trying.”

“Screw you,” I hiss, knowing it’s exactly the reaction he’s looking for.

He chuckles, reaching up and pulling my shirt and bra up. He sits up while keeping me in his lap and licks the tip of my nipple that’s standing at attention. He blows warm air over it while massaging the other one. I rock my hips faster against him as he wraps his mouth around the nipple and sucks it into his mouth.

He moans his approval and before he can move to my other nipple, I count out number eight. I’m completely spent. My legs feel numb from kneeling around him and my back feels like it might give out any moment.

“Stay with me, Viola,” he says, looking up at me. He must sense my exhaustion because before I can come to terms with what he’s doing, he wraps an arm around my waist and repositions us. Soon, I’m laying flat against the seats with him on top of me. “I see those years of gymnastics are paying off.” He spreads my legs wider, pushing himself back inside before I can think of a comeback.

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There's nothing sweet or romantic about what Travis King does to me next. He jackhammers into me, pulling all the way out and ramming back inside me as if he has a point to prove. With every movement, it's almost as if he's claiming me as his.

I brace my hands above my head on the panel as he palms my breast with so much force, I'm certain they'll bruise. But that doesn't even compare to what his dick is doing to me right now. He's so fucking hard and my pussy is so damn sore, I can't keep up with his pace.

"Goddammit, Viola," he growls, his hips never slowing down. "You feel so fucking good. I can't control myself around you."

I arch my hips in response, feeling him slide in even deeper. He hits just the right spot before I'm screaming out his name and he's moaning his release. I feel him tighten as he digs his fingers into my thighs, his back arching with every burst I feel inside me.

"Holy fuck," I hear him mumble, his chest rising and falling. My breaths come out in short bursts, trying to catch up.

Before we have time to say anything, a bright light flashes into the rear windshield.

"What the hell?"

My head pops up just as Travis slides out of me and looks.

"Oh, my God." I finally see what he sees and we both rush to adjust ourselves. He pulls his shorts up, I yank my shirt back down, and we both rush to our seats, fighting

to get our clothes back on.

Just as I buckle my belt back into place, a knock startles us both as a cop appears on Viola's my side of the car.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

TRAVIS

"Fuck," I mumble under my breath again as the tapping of the flashlight on the window rings through the car. I lower it and the cop shines the light right in my face.

"Everything okay in here?"

The car smells like sex and the windows are foggy, not to mention the writing on the back window. I'm fucking fantastic and it's pretty obvious what we were doing. My dick is still halfway hard and my body is humming from the rush of being with Viola. I smile as the officer shines the light on Viola. I catch a glimpse of her hair that's a sexy mess. The longer he stares at her, the brighter her cheeks become. She tucks her swollen lips into her mouth, and I hold back a chuckle.

"We were just having a friendly conversation," I say, trying to pull the attention from her. Luckily, I don't recognize the officer as one of Drew's cop friends, but that doesn't necessarily mean anything. I've met up with him and his buddies at the bar after their shifts several times, not always remembering every face he's introduced me to. The last thing we need is someone recognizing Viola or me and catching us together while he's away on vacation.

"On the side of the street? Not a very smart decision, son."

I nod in return.

“I need your driver’s license and proof of insurance.”

I lift my butt out of the seat and reach for my wallet, which is no longer in my back pocket. I look around for it and see it in the backseat along with the condom wrapper.

“My wallet is in the backseat,” I explain. “May I get it?”

The officer nods, his lips turned down in annoyance.

“Interesting message on the back of you car there.” He gives a disapproving look.

I clench my jaw, trying to hold back my reaction and reach behind the passenger seat and grab my wallet. I immediately take out what I need, handing them over to the officer. I glance over at Viola, her breathing still hitched and her eyes wide.

The officer shines his light over my license and reads it over. “I’ll be back in a few moments, Mr. King,” he says before walking back to his car. I glance in the rearview mirror, watching the flashing lights light up the street.

“God,” she says, releasing a deep breath. “Drew cannot find out we were together in your car. That’ll be too suspicious, considering he thinks I’d rather eat rat poison than be alone with you.

“Damn, I knew you hated me, but rat poison? Really?” I arch a brow, trying to lighten the mood.

“Shut up,” she says, rolling her eyes and leaning her head back against the headrest. I don’t want Drew to find out about us this way either, but the more I think about it, the more I wonder what his reaction would be.

Would I be crossing the lines of our friendship? Would he think I’m not good enough

for her? Or that I'd just be using her like all the rest?

It's too early in the game to tell, but for her sake, I don't want our little secret getting out.

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The cop returns and hands me my cards back. “This is your warning, kids. Don’t let me catch you parking on the side of a busy street again, unless it’s an emergency.”

I give him a small smile of understanding and it takes everything I have in me to keep my mouth shut about how needing to fuck Viola in the back of my car was an emergency. A desperate sex emergency, but still.

He jerks his head toward the street. “Now, get out of here before I change my mind.”

I nod my head, roll up the window, and pull onto the street.

She finally relaxes and bursts into a fit laughter. “I don’t think I’ve ever had an adrenaline rush like that in my life.” She’s smiling.

“Get ready for many firsts.”

Viola leans her head back against the headrest as I shift gears and slam on the gas. The engine roars as we enter the highway and I shift once again until we’re cruising. Moments pass and the silence cuts through the moment like a sharp knife.

“What are you thinking about?” I ask. She’s quiet and I feel like she’s building that wall she’s perfected over the years. She turns her head and looks at me. If I could pull this car over on the freeway and fuck her again, I would. She’s addicting.

“What are we doing, Travis?”

I grin. “We’re going back home for round two.”

“The truth, that’s all I want for once. Not a Travis King smart ass answer.” The frustration and confusion is clear in her voice. She tucks her hair behind her ears, just like she did when we were young and would get nervous around me. There’s no jab at me, no hateful remark, Viola genuinely wants to know what we’re doing, but I don’t have an answer. The sexual tension between us has been evident for years, but now that we’ve finally crossed that line, I don’t think we could ever go back.

I focus on the road ahead of us, thinking how selfish I’ve been. I want her, but I’m worried if this goes any further than what it is right now, that I’ll only end up hurting her. I can’t give her what she wants and especially what she deserves. I won’t allow myself to be the man my father was to my mother. It’s one of my biggest fears and biggest reasons I need to protect her from me.

I take the exit off the highway and travel down the service road before turning into my neighborhood. I think how to answer, but know that whatever it is won’t be enough for her. “I don’t know.” I swallow, trying to find the right words, but nothing sounds right. “Being with you—”

She waits with bated breath for my next words, but they never come because when I see Jason parked in the driveway, my driveway, leaning against his car with his hands tucked into his pocket, I see red all over again

“Shit,” Viola mutters under her breath. “I forgot we made plans.”

I slow down before pulling into the driveway and parking in my usual spot. I rev the engine, but Jason, being the coward he is, doesn’t look at me.

I leave the car idling as my jaw ticks with rage.

“Are you fucking serious?”

“Travis, I’m—” she begins, but I interrupt, choking out in mock laughter.

“Go on, Viola. Your date is waiting.” I can’t believe she’d do this, but I have no hold on her. She’s not mine, no matter what’s happened between us, but that doesn’t make any damn bit of difference to me right now.

“Travis...” she pleads, desperate for me to allow her to explain, but I don’t want to hear any of it.

“Get. Out.” My words are cold and emotionless. I can’t even look her in the eyes.

“Travis, please.”

I lean over her body and grab on to the door latch until it pops open. “Make sure to tell him I got you good and loosened up for him. Fucked you real hard and broke your pussy in.”

She sucks in a breath and narrows her eyes at me. My words are harsh but that’s my intention. I want her to feel the same way I do at this very moment—angry, hurt, and confused. Just the thought of them together sickens me.

“Now.”

She forcefully pushes open the door and before shutting it she leans in. “Fuck you, Travis.”

“No thanks. Been there, done that.”

Viola slams the door with force and walks away, toward Jason and his smug expression. She flashes a fake smile, but I don’t wait around to watch them together. Instead, I reverse the car out of the driveway and peel out as I speed down the street.

At the first stop sign, I slam my fist against the steering wheel. I don't even know how to process all of this. I'm losing myself and I need to get a fucking grip.

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This is everything our relationship is founded on. We can't be in the same space long together without a fight breaking out. One moment we're fucking perfect, the next we're at each other's throats. All that tension bottles up and releases in harsh waves, ready to jump each other's bones or kill one another.

I end up driving to Good Times and decide I need a drink or two. I'm still in the slacks and dress shirt I wore to work, my hair now a mess, and the anger evident on my face. I need more than a drink at this point. My head is in a haze after all that's happened today, and I replay every moment as I walk to the empty stool in the middle of the bar.

"Whatcha having, baby?" The bartender leans against the counter in a low-cut shirt. She's cute and eyeing me like she's going to take me home and do naughty things to me.

"Whiskey and coke."

She pours it tall and winks at me as she hands it over. I offer her a weak smile and she licks her lips. If this were any other time, I'd be laying it on thick, flattering her and commenting about her looks, but right now all I can think about it Viola being with that tool bag, Jason.

I feel my phone vibrating in my pocket, but I ignore it. I need time to think. Or rather, I need to drink and not think at all. A few big gulps and the whiskey and coke is gone. The bartender points at my glass, and I nod for another. As she sets it on the bar, I hear a familiar voice behind me.

“Travis?” I turn around and see it’s Courtney. “What in the hell are you doing here?”

She looks genuinely confused as she sips her martini. The music is loud and she’s yelling to be heard.

“What are you doing here?” I don’t really care to hear her answer. I turn back around to my second whiskey and drink. She takes that as an invitation and sits on the stool next to me.

“You’re supposed to be in your bedroom, showing my best friend a good time.”

I sarcastically laugh. “No. She’s too busy fucking someone else.”

“Jesus Christ,” she mutters. “You’re both so damn stubborn.” I shrug, not disagreeing with her statement, but not agreeing either.

“That’s it.” She grabs her phone from her purse, picks up her martini, and walks off.

“Don’t—” I turn toward her, but she’s already vanished into the hoards of people on the dance floor. Fucking great. I don’t have the strength to chase after her, but she doesn’t seem like the type of girl that listens very well anyway.

“Drowning in your sorrows over here?” The bartender asks with a smile on her face.

“Something like that.” I’m not in the mood to chat.

“She’s one lucky girl.” She pours me a shot of tequila. “This one’s on me. I’m Krystal.” She holds her hand out and reluctantly, I take it.

“Thanks, Krystal. I’m Travis.”

“Travis,” she repeats. “Well, whatever you’re drinking to, feel free to stay as long as you’d like.” She winks before getting called over to the other side of the bar.

The dynamic of the room changes as the music slows down. There are countless drunk couples grinding all over each other on the dance floor so I bow my head and take another swig.

As I start on my third drink, I glance in mirror that lines the bar and see Viola walk through the door in the same blue jeans and t-shirt she was wearing earlier. She makes a beeline to Courtney who’s eagerly waiting on the edge of the dance floor with a huge smile on her face. Courtney pulls Viola into a big drunken hug then points to the bar. I don’t know what the hell Courtney told her, but I try to blend in anyway. If I get up now, I might be able to make it to the door without being seen, but I have a tab open and Krystal is busy at the other end of the bar. My body stiffens because I don’t want Viola to notice me, so I focus on my drink. After a few moments, I hear a clearing of a throat behind me, but I ignore it.

“Travis,” Viola says, angry.

I suck in a deep breath and swallow hard before turning around. I see Courtney behind her, pushing her way through the crowd and parting their bodies like the red sea. Her lips are spread in a wide grin and I curse under my breath at the realization that she called Viola here.

“Where’s your date?” I ask in a dissatisfied tone, glancing behind her as if I expect him to be following her inside.

“Just stop it. Okay? Shut the fuck up and listen for once.” Viola places her hands on her hips. The flashing lights from the dance floor streams over her body and even though she’s not dressed up, she’s the sexiest woman in this entire room. She doesn’t even have to try.

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“Oh hey, Travis. I didn’t know you were here. Did you order my drink, Lola?” Courtney gives me a wink then turns to Viola.

“No.” Viola isn’t amused, her lips in a firm line.

Courtney’s been dancing for the better half of the night and smells like gin, perfume, and sweat. I shake my head and a small smirk plays on my lips as Courtney leans over the bar like the typical drunk girl and orders another drink. She pats me on my back before she goes back to the dance floor.

Viola doesn’t even notice. The only person she’s looking at right now is me. And she’s shooting daggers at me.

I lick my lips and as hard as it is, I look her in the eyes. She’s flustered and upset, and I study her face.

“Have you been crying?” I’m genuinely concerned.

“No.”

“Liar.”

She rolls her eyes. “Whatever.”

My mouth slightly falls open to respond, when I realize I’ve done exactly what I never intended to do—hurt Viola. I should’ve let her explain and probably overreacted to the situation, but when it comes to Viola Fisher, I can’t control the impulse to stay

guarded around her.

“Forget it. You’re an asshole, Travis. I should’ve figured as much.”

“Okay, I deserve that.” I wave to Krystal to close out my tab. “But in my defense—”

“Your defense?” She raises her brows. “Fuck off.” She spins around and begins walking through the crowd.

Shit.

I don’t wait for my total, instead I just place a couple twenties down and rush after her. “Viola, wait!”

She ignores me and holds her arm up in the air, flipping me the bird with her right hand as she strides toward Courtney, who’s in a large group of girls dancing.

There’s no way I’m going to let her run this time.

VIOLA

I can’t stand to look at Travis any longer. My heart is racing as it slowly breaks, and all I want is to find Courtney and get the hell out of here. She’s the only reason I showed up anyway.

As soon as she texted me and asked for a ride home because she’d been drinking, I put on my shoes and drove over. After Travis’ stunt, I sent Jason away and sat alone in bed. I didn’t want to be that stupid girl that cried over a boy, but the way he acted the moment he saw Jason, without even letting me explain, had my emotions overflowing. This back and forth, from good moments to bad moments to hurtful moments, is becoming too much for me. I don’t know how much more I can take.

The plan was simple. Come in, grab Courtney, go back home and bury my face in my book until I pass out. When I walked in, the last person I expected to see sitting at the bar drinking was Travis.

It's not the time or place to be so confrontational, not while I'm so volatile, so I turn and rush through the crowd as he calls my name. I can't do this anymore and I have to stop it before I fall too far. Though I'm pissed at him, I'm madder at myself for even letting it to get this point. What the hell was I ever thinking?

Travis continues to call out my name, but I ignore him. Before I reach Courtney, he grabs my arm and pulls me to him. My body presses against his hard chest and I suck in a deep breath before I meet his eyes. Travis searches my face, and for a moment, I can't find any words. We are lost in a sea of bodies, the only two people on the dance floor not moving to the slow beat of the music. His skin touching mine almost burns and I've got to get away from him before I say something I'll regret later.

"Let go of me," I say with a voice full of venom.

"Not happening."

I try to pull away from him but his grip only tightens.

"Now," I hiss, mimicking his tone from before.

But he doesn't.

He gives me no other choice. I push against his chest, making him stumble back. His grip releases, giving me the chance to walk away and grab Courtney.

"It's time to go," I yell over the music.

I turn and look at Travis, who's still standing where I left him, not taking a step forward.

"It's time to go," I repeat, pulling her through the crowd.

"Not yet," she slurs. She has had way too much to drink.

"I can't stay here another minute, Courtney. I've got to go." The air is thick and my heart is ready to pound out of my chest.

"Where's Travis?" She stumbles and I catch her.

"We're done. I don't care where he is."

She pulls her hand out of mine and stops walking. "I'm catching a ride with Chelsea. She's right over there." Courtney points to her friend who waves at me and now I'm even more frustrated than I was before as realization sets in.

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“Did you know he was here?” I stop and ask her. Now I feel like it was a giant setup. I should’ve known better, known this was another one of Courtney’s antics.

All she does is giggle, giving herself away. “You’re both your own worst enemy. But I love you, Lola. Not in the girl on girl kind of way though.” She giggles again, alcohol lingering on her breath. “I mean, if you ever wanted—”

“Oh, God,” I interrupt before she can continue her rambling any longer. “You’re ridiculous.” I’m annoyed at her, but she leans in and gives me a hug anyway.

“I’ll see you later, okay? I’ve got a designated driver. I’ll be fine. Make it right.” Courtney wiggles her little butt onto the dance floor and waves bye to me as I walk out the door, seething. All I can do is shake my head. Once the cool breeze hits my face, I finally feel like I can breathe again. I walk toward my car, my mind reeling and my body still screaming from being with Travis earlier. God. If only he would’ve listened to me and let me explain myself. This is all a giant fucking mess.

“Viola,” Travis yells across the parking lot.

“Do you ever go away?” I sigh as I unlock my car, but he catches up to me before I can open the door. I can smell the whiskey on his breath as he comes closer.

“Nope.”

“You’re not driving like this, Travis. Regardless of how mad I am at you right now.”

“Mad at me? For what exactly, princess? If I remember correctly, you were the one

going on a date. Not me.”

“For fuck’s sake, Travis. This is just like the Anthony thing all over again.”

“Andrew,” he corrects me again.

I sigh. “Gah, whatever. The point is that you can do whatever you want, but the moment I go out with someone you act like this. Make up your mind. You don’t want me, but you don’t want anyone else to have me either? That’s bullshit. I’m tired of your double standards. My heart isn’t disposable. It’s not the first time your words have hurt me like that and now I’m making sure it’s the last.”

He looks at me, his expression blank. I take the opportunity to slip inside the car. I roll down the window and watch as he stands there with his hands in his pockets.

“Get in. I’m taking you home.” I snort to myself. “Funny I’m saying that considering it’s the exact opposite of what you told me earlier.”

Travis leans down, crossing his arms against my window frame, his face uncomfortably close, to mine. “I need my car for work in the morning. Unless you plan to be my personal chauffeur?” The corner of his lips turn up in amusement.

“Fine. Give me your keys then.” I hold my hand out in front of him. “You can’t drive like this.”

He chuckles and dangles the keys in my face. “I don’t think you can handle it.”

I groan. “You’re such a child.”

“That’s not what you were saying earlier.”

“If I can handle you, I can handle your precious car,” I say, forcefully snatching the keys out of his hand. I roll up the window and slam my car door shut before locking it. I don’t wait for him before I head toward his car. I unlock the Challenger and climb inside the driver’s seat as he slips into the passenger seat.

“Buckle your seatbelt. I won’t be held responsible if the Travis King gets a boo-boo.” I shake my head and push down the clutch before I snap it into first. It’s a smooth take off and before I know it I’m going over sixty. The engine screams for me to push it to its limits, but I don’t. I look in the rearview mirror and see the backseat and exhale deeply.

“Viola, I’m sorry. I should’ve never treated you like that. I’m a fucking asshole. And when you say I don’t want you . . .”

I pull into the driveway and shut off the engine. I hand him his keys and get out of the car. As much as I want to hear what he has to say, I know it’s better to leave it where it is. I walk into the house and kick my shoes off by the door. Travis walks in and takes off his suit jacket and throws it over the back of the couch.

I should just let it go for now, walk away, and take the high road.

But I can’t.

“You know, Travis, that’s an apology I’ve been waiting on for years.” I walk to the kitchen and grab a bottle of water from the fridge. He stands in the doorway with his shirt completely unbuttoned. I force myself to look away from his abs and how his pants sit haphazardly on his hips.

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“For years?” He crosses his arms and studies me. “For what?” He looks genuinely confused, but that doesn’t surprise me.

I roll my eyes at him and take a sip of water. I don’t even know if it’s worth mentioning anymore. As I try walking past him, he blocks me and am forced to look at him.

“I don’t know what the hell you’re talking about, Viola.”

His features are hard and he’s not letting me pass by him.

“Don’t act stupid,” I state harshly. “You know exactly what I’m talking about. I was your pity friend, and I won’t allow myself to be that girl again...” His face tightens and he clenches his jaw. The man is a human wall, blocking me from running away.

“I don’t.”

“Whatever.” I don’t have the strength for this argument right now. “Please let me by,” I bite out. I need to leave before the tears come. I don’t know how much longer I can hold them in.

“Just wait a goddamn minute,” he demands. “When have I ever said I was your friend out of pity?” He’s dangerously close. I inhale his cologne, stirring up all my emotions.

“My thirteenth birthday. You made it the worst one I’ve ever had. Thanks, asshole.”

The emotions start to surface, so I try to walk past him again before he can respond, but he makes it impossible. “I never said—”

I cut him off before he has a chance to deny it. “You were talking to Drew. You said I’d never be anything more than your best friend’s annoying little sister. I was a loner with no friends. That I only had my books and stupid characters, along with a lot of other shitty things. You took pity on me and only befriended me because you felt sorry for me.”

“Viola...”

“You broke my heart, Travis. I was only a kid, but I trusted you. I held out hope every single day that I’d get to see you, even if just in passing. You didn’t make me feel like a burden to have around. You made me feel special.” I close my eyes, holding the tears back.

Realization sets in, his body tensing. “You were never a burden, Viola.” I hear the sincerity of his words, but I shake my head. I don’t want to hear it.

“It’s one thing to hear those things from your big brother, but hearing them come out of your mouth; I was destroyed.”

“You have to know, I didn’t mean what I said, Viola. I would never think those things.”

“You know, it’s funny, because even while I was listening, I kept holding out hope that maybe just maybe you were pulling some stupid birthday prank on me.”

His shoulders relax as he lowers and shakes his head in disbelief. “That’s why you cut me out of your life? You overheard Drew and me.”

“What was I supposed to do? I was practically in love with you and you’d just confessed your true feelings for me. I felt like an idiot.”

“Why didn’t you say anything?”

“Say anything?” I repeat. “I was humiliated! Here I was coming to find you so I could thank you for the gift when I hear you say it was all out of pity. After that it was as if you purposely flaunted every girl you were with, just to prove your point and dig the knife deeper.” My heart pumps louder in my chest, adrenaline rushing through my veins, as I relive the memories. “Everything I thought I’d felt between us was shattered. I was devastated.”

He rubs his fingers over the stubble that runs the length of his jaw. His lips are in a firm line, and as much as I’m trying to read him, nothing prepares me for what he says next.

“You were devastated?” His deep tone takes me off guard, his eyes narrowing in on me. “I was fucking wrecked, Viola. You ruined me.”

“What the hell are you talking about?”

“I never pitied you, Viola. Ever. You’re the main reason I was over all the damn time. How didn’t you see that?”

“Well, the flock of girls around you didn’t really give me that impression.”

“You should’ve known me better than that to know I’d never mean those words. Drew and a few other guys kept cracking jokes about you and were giving me shit for hanging out with you all the time and I just wanted to shut them up. Drew teased you behind your back every chance he could and so I said the only thing I could think of to shut him up.”

“They sounded real to me,” I say, not quite sure how I feel about his confession.

“So after everything we’d been through, it was just that easy to drop me?” he asks, hurt evident in his tone. “Was that it?”

“Are you kidding right now? I cried myself to sleep for months! I missed you so goddamn much, all while hating your guts. My emotions were all over the place, and then when I started high school, you were all my friends talked about. It was torture.”

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“I tried to get your attention, Viola,” he growls, his lips dangerously close. “You ignored me anytime I tried to talk to you. You walked away as if I’d meant nothing to you at all. You looked at me as if I was the most disgusting person in the world. That destroyed me.”

His words hit me like a brick, and I can’t breathe. “I didn’t want to hear your excuses after that.”

“Was our friendship not strong enough for you to even consider giving me the opportunity to make things right again?” His jaw ticks, and I can see the vein in his throat bulging.

“I already felt like a pathetic loser. I wasn’t about to confront you about what I overheard. I didn’t want to be anyone’s pity friend.”

He shakes his head, pinching the back of his neck. “How didn’t you see, Viola? How didn’t you see how special you were to me?” He shifts his body, fidgeting as he continues, “You were the only person who ever understood me.” He inhales a deep breath. “I never even told Drew about my father. You were the only one I ever told.”

My mouth falls open at his honesty, and I’m lost in his words. My head is spinning and my heart is betraying me.

“I-I never knew that. I always assumed Drew knew.”

He shakes his head, looking defeated.

“Viola, I swear on my life that I never meant a word of what I said to Drew that day. I was a dumb kid, embarrassed for having a crush on his best friend’s sister, but I was never embarrassed by you. I was crazy about you.”

My breath hitches as our eyes lock.

“I’m still fucking crazy about you.” He takes a step closer toward me, trapping me in between his hard chest and the wall, and wraps his hand around my neck, pulling my lips to his.

His kiss is desperate and telling; heated and passionate, deep and soft.

It’s everything.

His other hand cups my face, and I completely lose myself in him, giving into every breathless motion. All the pain and emotion are packed in this one kiss. It’s unlike any other kiss we’ve shared, and I can tell he notices, too.

He leans his forehead against mine, pulling back just enough to catch his breath. “All those years of one-night stands and random hook-ups never meant anything. They were to numb the pain I’d felt from losing you.”

I swallow, unable to fully absorb his words. I keep my eyes closed, afraid if I open them, tears will come falling down. His confession takes me completely off guard, and I want to melt into his arms right here.

“Why didn’t you fight for me then? If you’re being honest about the way you felt, why didn’t you push me harder to ask me what was wrong? It was as if you’d just given up.”

He sucks in a deep breath, shaking his head against mine. “I was scared.”

“About what?”

He takes a small step back, keeping his palm on my cheek and looking into my eyes. “I’d seen the way my father treated my mother for years. I was certain I’d be built the same way and if we’d become closer, I’d eventually turn out like him. I started to convince myself that perhaps you hating me was for the best so I’d never be able to hurt you. I didn’t know how to emotionally handle the way you just discarded our friendship, so anytime you shot daggers at me, I shot them right back to get some kind of reaction out of you, even if it was a negative one.”

Tears well in my eyes. The thought of it hurts my heart. “You’re not your father,” I whisper. “You’ll never be your father, Travis.”

He shrugs, not convinced. “I never wanted to get close enough to anyone to find out.” His words start clicking in my head, making sense of every little thing we fought about. He’s constantly on defense mode. He studies my expression and he begins rubbing the pad of his thumb along my jawline. “I’m sorry I reacted the way I did tonight. It was uncalled for and completely out of line. I have no excuse.”

I’ve never seen Travis like this in my entire life. He looks so vulnerable and desperate for my forgiveness.

His hands run through my hair and instinctively, I fall into his touch again.

“I’m sorry, Viola. I’m so fucking sorry I said those words, that I hurt you, that I didn’t fight for our friendship. I was a coward, and filled with teenage hormones I didn’t know how to control, and I took it out on you every chance I had.” He looks at me with so much sincerity, I can’t take my eyes off him. “I fucked up.”

I’m in shock at how honest and sincere he’s being. I’ve imagined this scenario a hundred times in my head, never really believing it’d happen.

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“I think we both did,” I tell him honestly. “Hating you was the only way I could deal. It hurt too much.”

“Plus, you’re too damn pretty to be so fucking mad all the time.” His lips curl up into a grin. The way he’s looking at me right now, saying all the words I’ve waited desperately to hear for years, is all so overwhelming.

“Years of practice,” I quip, shrugging.

He looks down at me, wrapping an arm around me and pulling me into his chest. His other hand reaches up and cradles my neck, pressing his lips gently against mine. “Viola,” he whispers and slightly pulls away so he can look into my eyes. His fingers slide down the side of my arm and small bumps form on my skin. With his other hand, he traces my bottom lip that’s still swollen from being with him earlier. “You said I didn’t want you.” Before he speaks again, he pulls my bottom lip between his teeth and tugs. I gasp and he lets go. “That’s the stupidest thing I’ve ever heard you say.” His lips press against mine and a small moan escapes from my mouth, begging him to never let me go again.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

TRAVIS

I wrap both arms around her, pulling her up until her legs wrap around me. I tighten my grip and kiss her senseless, until I feel her relax and she kisses me back in the same heated passion. I walk us out of the kitchen and down the hall to my bedroom. Before I open the door, I get a bright idea and walk back to Drew’s room.

“What are you doing?” she asks, breathing heavily. “I’m not doing it in my brother’s bed,” she states with a serious expression. “Or anywhere inside his bedroom.”

I laugh and set her on top of Drew’s old desk. “Just making a pit-stop.”

I feel her eyes watching my every move as I dig through her bags. Once I find what I’m looking for, I palm it and walk back to Viola.

She eyes it, not looking amused. “Are you serious?”

I smirk, glancing back down at the vibrator I once found in the shower. “One-hundred-percent.”

I take her back into my room, wasting no time stripping her down, and showing her exactly what I’ve been dreaming about with her naughty little vibrator.

I wake up sometime in the middle of the night with Viola asleep peacefully in my arms. Fuck, I wouldn’t be surprised if she sleeps until Friday, with the way her body was begging for it over and over again. I’m exhausted, but I can’t sleep. The adrenaline high is too good to sleep through, and now looking over at her makes me want to relive it all over again. No matter what, I can’t seem to get enough of her.

As carefully as possible, I slip my arm out from under her and slide out of the bed. I pull my boxer shorts up and look back down at her. I smile before covering her up and tiptoe to the door. If I didn’t have to piss so damn bad, I’d never let her go.

Just as I’m washing my hands, I hear the front door slam shut. What the hell?

Would she leave? Sneak out like a regretful one-night stand?

But where the hell would she go?

Thoughts are running through my head as I walk back into the hallway and toward the front of the house. I turn on a lamp and do a double-take when I see Drew standing there.

Oh, shit.

“Hey, man!” he calls out, taking a step forward to give me a side-hug. “Sorry to wake you.”

“No, it’s—” I cough to clear my throat, needing to buy time to think fast. “Fine. I was just grabbing something to drink.”

He releases me, and I take note of his bags on the floor next to his feet. “You’re back early.” I try to sound indifferent, but my heart is hammering in my chest as I think about Viola down the hall, wrapped in my sheets.

He squeezes the back of his neck, and I see the tense look in his eyes. “Yeah, change of plans.”

Looking up at me, I see it on his face. “What happened?” I ask, walking toward the kitchen, needing to keep the distance between him and who’s currently sleeping naked in my bed.

“Mia kicked me out. One minute she was all over me, and the next?” He inhales deeply. “Fuck, I don’t know.”

I fill a glass with water and hand it to him.

“Did you two get into a fight or something?”

He takes a large gulp and sets the glass down on the counter. He shrugs casually.

“When aren’t we fighting?”

“Well, more than usual then?” I inquire, grabbing a glass for myself.

“Yeah, I mean, I guess. She started getting all weird and when I called her out on it, she called me an insensitive asshole and told me to leave. It usually blows over in an hour, but tonight she threw all my shit out and told me to get the hell out.”

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“Damn,” is all I have to offer, taking a large drink. “Sorry, man.”

He shrugs like it’s nothing, but I can see the pain written all over him. “Whatever. I guess the space will be good for us, but damn, we’ve just spent most of her semester apart.”

“You think she’s been seeing someone else?” I ask, prolonging the time before he walks down the hallway.

He crosses his arms over his chest and his eyes follow the length of the counter top. “Not sure. It’s possible, I guess. We’re apart more than we’re together.”

I give him a sympathetic look, unsure of what else to say. I’m too distracted in my thoughts when I realize Drew’s walked over to where he left his bag and picks it up, hauling it over his shoulder.

“Uh, whatever, I guess. I’ll just crash on the couch until Viola wakes up.”

My chest relaxes as I walk behind him to the living room. He drops his bag again and kicks his shoes off. “To be honest, I’m surprised you’re still here.” He chuckles, undoing his jeans and pulling them down. “I figured Vi would’ve kicked you out on your ass by now.”

I laugh lightly, relieved. “She’s tried, trust me.”

He laughs again with me, sprawling himself out on the couch with a throw pillow. “She’ll come around, I’m sure. Either that or I’ll have to separate you two with a

switchblade.”

I pinch my lips together, hoping he can’t see the evidence on my smug face.

“Well, get some sleep. I gotta be up in a few,” I say, turning away to hide my smile.

“See you later.”

I walk back down the hall with a rush of urgency, needing to get a plan together stat. Viola needs to get back into Drew’s room without waking him up.

Except when I get back into my room, Viola is passed out cold with the sheet wrapped around her torso. She’s all twisted in my bed and as much as I want to pull her body to mine, I have to somehow wake her up.

“Viola,” I whisper next to her ear. Her breath is steady and relaxed. “Viola,” I whisper again, louder. “You have to get up.”

“Hmm?” She moans, barely flinching. I start to uncover her slowly, knowing she’s naked and I’m going to have to restrain myself.

“Travis...” Her voice comes out in a plea.

“Your brother is here,” I explain. “You need to get up and go into his room before he realizes you aren’t there.”

Her eyes shoot open, and I see the horror on her face. “What?”

I cover her mouth with my hand and shush her. “He got into a fight with Mia and she sent him packing.”

She groans, digging her head deeper into the pillow. “I can’t stand her,” she mumbles and rolls over.

“Come on, you have to get up.”

“I don’t think I can feel my limbs,” she says with a hint of humor.

I smile, knowing damn well I worked her body good. “Well, you’re going to have to try anyway. The last thing I need is him catching you in here and busting my balls for days.”

She finally starts to rise, pulling the sheet back up over her chest. “Because you’re embarrassed to admit you slept with his nerdy sister?” Her voice is condescending, and I can’t tell if she’s being her typical smartass or if she’s truly offended I asked her to leave.

“What? No. I just don’t want his fist in my face.”

She stands up and wraps the sheet around her body, searching for any remaining clothes on the floor. “Whatever, Travis. I’ll gladly leave your sex lair. Wouldn’t want to taint your name or anything.”

She reaches for the door before I can stop her. Viola turns and looks at me and smiles. I can’t run after her with Drew in the living room as much as I want to. We both know exactly why Drew can’t find out, at least not right now. He’s going through whatever it is he’s going through with Mia but also he’s made it very clear he’d never approve of me being with his sister, although up until a week ago, that was never even a possibility.

I look back at the clock and realize my alarm will be going off in less than three hours. I brush my hands down my face, beyond exhausted. In fact, this has been the

most exhausting and draining week of my life.

But I can't say I'd change being with Viola for anything.

VIOLA

I hear rattling coming from outside my door, startling me awake from my dreams. Remembering them being about Travis. Of course. I roll my eyes, sounding like such a cliché. Dreaming about a guy and even wishing he was still laying in bed with me.

“Viola, you awake?” I hear more pounding and realize Drew's knocking. It takes me a second to remember that he came back home early this morning, so now he'll probably want his space back.

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“Yeah, just a minute,” I call out, needing to find some clothes first. I rush through my bags and slip on a pair of old pajama bottoms and one of Drew’s old basketball shirts. “Okay.”

He opens the door and wrinkles his nose, looking around. “Smells girly in here.”

“You mean it smells clean in here? You’re just used to it smelling like sweaty balls and old shoes.”

“Please, Viola,” he says sarcastically, pressing a hand to his chest. “I prefer the term athletic scent.”

I snort. “You can prefer it all you want, but your room reeks like old man dick.”

He laughs and wraps his arms around me. “I knew I missed you.”

“Of course you did.” I smile. “I missed you, too.”

“Sorry to come home early and ruin your sleeping arrangements,” he says, shuffling his things around. I freeze, wondering if he’s talking about Travis.

“My sleeping arrangements?” I ask. Does he know I snuck back into his room last night?

“Yeah, I mean, sleeping here. I can dig up my old air mattress out of the basement if you want? Sleeps better than that damn couch,” he says, rubbing a kink out of his neck.

“Oh,” I remark. “Whatever, I’ll be fine.”

I bite my lip to keep the grin off my face. Hell, if only he knew.

No. He can never know.

“So did things smooth out between you two? Last I heard, Travis was pissed you stayed out all night and brought home some random guy from the bar?”

I face him and scowl. “Don’t get all big brother on me. I’m allowed to go out, you know.”

“Perhaps,” he says, his shoulders rising and falling. “But to me, you’re still my nine-year-old little sister who peed in the Millers’ pool.”

I gasp, laughing and lunging toward him. “You’re such an ass!”

He laughs and shifts his body just in time so only our shoulders collide. “What about you? You’re the one who peed on an electric fence!”

His head falls back as he lets out a roar of laughter. “Shit, I forgot about that.” His hand instinctively covers his crotch. “That fucking hurt.”

As I gather my stuff, I grab my phone off the nightstand and see an unread message from Travis. I tell Drew I’m going to get into the shower and walk out before he sees the guilt written all over my face.

Once I’m in the bathroom, I lock the door behind me and swipe the screen on my phone.

I couldn’t fall back asleep without you next to me. I’m so fucking tired. But it was so

damn worth it.

My face flushes, and I know I'm blushing like an idiot. Sorry, Casanova. If it makes you feel any better, looks like I'm out on the air mattress from now on.

It takes less than a few seconds for his response to come through. He's making you sleep on the air mattress?! What the hell. You can take my bed. I'll take the couch.

No, that'll look suspicious! We can't act any different than we normally do or he'll know something's up.

Oh, so now you're the one embarrassed by me?

Okay, I deserved that.

No, actually. I was super tired this morning. I didn't mean to overreact.

Wait a minute. Did hell just freeze over?

What?!

Did you just admit to overreacting to a situation? Viola, is this really you?

I bite my lip and chuckle. A sense of contentment floods over me. Travis knows me inside and out. He knows all my quirks, my habits, my body language. He's taking over my heart again and the thought of that scares me.

Yes, it's me, you idiot!

Okay, that sounds more like you.

Ha ha. I'm getting in the shower now.

Don't forget your vibrator this time.

I laugh and set my phone back down. Damn him.

He really has shown me a different side of him, but that doesn't mean I trust him. In fact, the whole thing with Alyssa still doesn't sit well with me.

Once I'm showered and dressed, I meet Drew out in the living room. He's pacing, and I know something's on his mind.

"You all right?" I ask, softly, knowing it's probably a stupid question to ask. "I mean, considering..."

"You mean, considering my girlfriend threw all my shit out, tossed me out in the middle of the night, and now won't answer my texts or calls?"

I pinch my lips together, holding back what I really want to say. "Yeah, that."

He shrugs, his face tense. The stubble over his jaw lets me know he hasn't shaved in a couple days. Things must not have been getting better like he said. I see the wrinkles forming in his forehead and the black circles under his eyes. He hasn't slept.

"Want to go get some breakfast?" I ask, changing the subject. He looks like he needs a distraction. Hell, I could use a distraction, too.

"Sure, let's go, little sis."

After we pick up my car from Good Times, we end up at IHOP where we both order the big breakfast. Pancakes, eggs, ham, hash browns, toast, and of course, a little fruit

bowl. Our table looks like two people who haven't eaten in a week.

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In fact, it's probably more than I have eaten all week.

But food is comforting and we both indulge. He doesn't bring up Mia, so I find a way to slip her into the conversation.

"I suppose we're going to be making different plans this weekend?" Not my smoothest way of asking about it, but whatever. I'm pumped up with carbs.

Basically, I need to figure out how I'm going to spend the rest of spring break in a house with my brother and the guy I've been hate-fucking all week without my brother finding out.

Or without my heart being shattered in the process.

"Probably," he mumbles, shuffling his food around with his fork. He's been stuffing his face since the moment the food arrived and now he looks like he's in a coma.

"Do you want to talk about it?" I ask, softly. "I'll just listen if you want."

"Not really." He shoves another mouthful of pancakes in his mouth.

"Come on, Drew. Maybe I can help. Give you some insight or something."

"Insight to what? Why girls are moody for no reason? Why they go from hot to cold in five seconds? Or how they can go from I love you to You're the worst thing that's ever happened to me? Have any insight for that?" He ends the question with a sarcastic remark. Obviously, bringing up Mia was a bad idea.

“Okay, sorry, never mind,” I draw out slowly, only partly sorry for bringing it up. Perhaps this means he’ll be too distracted to notice anything going on between Travis and I. Knowing I have to act like nothing has changed makes me anxious for when the three of us are all together.

“Sorry, I just don’t know why she won’t at least message me back. I think it may be over this time.”

This isn’t the first time Drew and Mia have fought like this. They’ve even broken up once before, but only for a day or two. I don’t remember ever seeing him this down before. Mia is a bit high maintenance, and if she didn’t make him so happy when things are good between the two of them, I’d be really annoyed at him for always going back to her. However, this time I just might shake some sense into him.

“Maybe that’s a good thing,” I say with a shrug, trying to sound sincere. “You guys are constantly going back and forth. Maybe a break would be good for you two.”

“We’re constantly on a break.” He’s exaggerating, but I know exactly what he means. Their relationship is more toxic than it is healthy.

“Well, then play hard to get. You’re always so quick to take her right back. She knows she can just push you around until she feels like having a boyfriend again.”

He pinches his lips and I know a smart-ass comment is coming.

“And you’re the expert?” He raises a brow. Even though I know he’s teasing, he’s not wrong.

I sigh, giving up. “Fair enough.”

We continue eating in silence until my phone beeps with a new text message. I glance

at it and see it's from Courtney.

Is it safe to assume since you haven't called to chew my ass out yet because you and Travis ended up making up naked-style?

I smile weakly, sending her a message back. As your punishment, I'm withholding all the details.

NOOOOOO! I have nothing else to live for!!!!

I chuckle at her dramatics, glancing up at Drew's sad face and getting the best idea.

Fine. Make it up to me and come over tonight and keep Drew company. Him and Mia broke up.

How are you just telling me NOW?! OMG. OMG. OMG.

I smile as I read her message. I can hear her high-pitched squealing in my head. Although she's with Toby, she'd drop anything to hang out with Drew, even in a platonic kind of way.

I take it that's a yes. Come around seven?

"What's that about?" Drew asks, grabbing my attention back to him. "You're sure smiling a lot."

"So? I always smile." Even I don't believe the words the moment they come out of my mouth. "It's Courtney. I invited her over tonight. Is that okay?"

"Depends. Will you be in your nighties having pillow fights and gossiping about NFL players?"

I nearly spit my juice out.

“You’re such a moron sometimes,” I say as we both laugh. The first time I’ve seen a smile on his face all morning.

CHAPTER TWENTY

TRAVIS

Even though I’m exhausted, I go to the gym bright and early. Before I leave, I wipe Alyssa’s message off the back of my car. Lipstick is a bitch to clean off, by the way. I work out for an hour to clear my mind. It’s an outlet I need, and I’ve missed the last few days, so it feels good to lift again.

Every time I blink, my eyes scream out in protest. By the time I get to work, I’m amped up on caffeine and adrenaline and it’s the only thing that gets me through the morning. Well, that and the thought of Viola crumbling under my touch.

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I click through countless folders on my computer and open my shared drive. It's obvious Alyssa hasn't contributed to our project because the last change was made yesterday by me. I suck in a few deep breaths and try to regain control and come up with a solid plan of execution. For hours I rush around with hopes to finish the report by the end of the day because it's due in less than twenty-four hours. I sort through previous project requisitions, contracts, and even research competitors because if my name is going to be put on something, it needs to be top notch.

Fuck. I'm mentally and physically exhausted. Just like every other day since I received this blessing of a project, today is shit.

I run my fingers through my hair then glance down at my phone and see it's nearly lunch time, but there's no time to eat actual food so I grab an emergency protein bar I keep in my desk drawer and wolf it down.

Alyssa sashays outside of my office, pulling me back to the situation at hand, and I'm half tempted to follow her and tell her exactly what I think. Between the pictures, my tires, and her not pulling her weight, she deserves it. Just the thought of everything she's put me through makes my blood boil. I've had enough of her shit. Just as I begin to stand, she turns around, steps in, and closes my door. She's smiling, sweetly, which I know is a big fucking act. She's the devil in designer clothes and lipstick.

I clench my jaw, the sight of her bringing the worst out in me.

"To what do I owe the pleasure of this little visit, Alyssa?" Sarcasm drips from each word, sitting back down in my chair.

“How’s our project going?” she casually asks, sitting down on the edge of my desk. She looks entirely too comfortable as her skirt rides up her thighs and then has the audacity to look me up and down, like she used to, but I know better. She uses her body to get anything she wants. Too bad her looks are trumped by her bitchy attitude.

“My project is going fucking wonderful. It’s due in the morning and since you’ve done less than your part, I’m scrambling to finish it. I should’ve expected that from you anyway.” I cross my arms over my chest and lock eye contact with her. “If only you took your job as seriously as you took sucking my dick,” I say dryly.

She laughs as if I told her a fucking joke. She stands and smiles. “Oh, Travis.” Her voice is thick with pity. “I turned in the project yesterday.” She taps her fake nails along the top of my desk.

“What the hell are you talking about?” I dig my nails into my palm.

Her face lights up like a Christmas tree. “Daddy was so impressed by it.” Her face contorts. “But it’s a pity you weren’t able to contribute anything useful. He couldn’t believe you wouldn’t put in the effort for something so important. If I remember correctly, I believe he said ‘Travis King is a disappointment’ and I agreed with him.”

“What the fuck did you do, Alyssa?” With nostrils flaring, I push my chair back and stand up.

Her evil grin doesn’t falter. “Some lessons are learned the hard way, Travis. This one you should’ve learned a long time ago.”

Unbelievable. Un-fucking-believable. My mind is reeling, and I’m so pissed I can barely control myself. Alyssa takes a step toward me. She’s standing so close, I can smell the stench of her overpriced perfume. She slides her hand down my chest until my dick is cupped in her hand. I’m trying to control my anger but it’s beginning to

spill over.

I grab her wrists and force them tight to her side. My thumbs dig into her skin and she squirms before relaxing. It takes everything I have to not drag her from my office and throw her into the hallway. I release her arms, needing to control my temper before it gets out of hand.

“You’re the biggest fucking mistake I’ve ever made,” I say, realizing how much she disgusts me, even if I’m partially to blame. I knew I was playing with fire messing around with her, but I didn’t deserve this.

“And I’m sure I won’t be your last.” She throws her head back and laughs, like fucking with my career is some sort of fun game to her. The sneer on her face and the gleam in her eyes makes her look insane, but I don’t even flinch. She’s the epitome of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde right now. Her actions could ruin my future, ruin everything I’ve worked so hard to accomplish. Considering she’s never worked a day of her life, it brings me to a level of anger that I haven’t felt in a long time. Before I can speak, a knock rings out on the door and interrupts us. She narrows her eyes at me.

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“I think that’s your cue to get the fuck out.” I glare at her.

“Aww, Travis is mad,” she says in an overly exaggerated pouty voice but then instantly changes her tone to a more serious one. “You could at least congratulate me on my promotion before I leave. Meet your new Global Sales Director. Respect the title, Travis, because eventually I’ll be your CEO.”

“Are you fucking kidding me? You were promoted? Your father must have finally lost his goddamn mind.” I’m shocked. There’s no way she’ll be able to handle the responsibility. She has no experience and is as trustworthy as a used car salesman. She could single-handedly ruin any and all chances the firm has of expanding further into the global market. Unfortunately for her, she won’t be able to suck dicks to get out of it. Good. Great. Grand. Fantastic. Alyssa is a goddamn Director of the firm.

“You’re such a bitch,” I say between gritted teeth.

Before she can respond, the door swings open and Blake steps in. The room grows silent. He’s so worked up, he’s heaving with flared nostrils. He freezes, trying to gain his composure and takes a deep breath before completely dismissing Alyssa. He’s gripping a single sheet of paper so tightly in his hand it’s crumpled.

“For fuck’s sake. I didn’t plan on being tag teamed today,” I say to myself.

Blake takes a few steps forward and then he’s in my face. He smells like stale coffee and old man aftershave. “What the hell is this, King?” he asks, disdain in his tone.

I take the paper from his hand and see it’s the application I submitted for the open

position, for his old job. I furrow my brows and look back up at him. “What about it?”

“It’s your responsibility to inform your upper level supervisor before you apply for any position. It’s a company standard that you, for some reason, think you’re too good to follow. That cocky attitude has gone straight to your fucking head and I’ve had enough of it.”

Alyssa crosses her arms and smiles. She’s fucking loving this.

His words almost catch me off guard, but not quite. I know I should’ve went to him and discussed it first, but after dismissing me in the meeting, I decided to go above him and submitted it anyway. Fuck him and his bad attitude toward me. The man wouldn’t piss on me if I were on fire. He’d block every attempt I made regardless if I’m more qualified than anyone else in our department. So submitting that application was a big fuck you delivered straight from me.

He takes a step back, noticing the anger on my face. “I’ve told HR to remove your application. You do not have my recommendation for that position and as long as I’m around, you’ll never go anywhere in this company.”

I swallow hard, knowing that’s the response I deserve for going over his head. I’m sure it was a shock when he received the call from HR that I had applied. I smile at him, allowing him to taste the hatred I have toward him, tempting him to come closer and say that in front of my face, but he doesn’t. Blake shakes his head at me then turns around and walks out of my office, slamming the door behind him. I clench my fists, fighting the urge to follow him and tell him how many fucks I don’t give about his recommendation.

Alyssa laughs then follows in his wake. Before she grabs the knob, she turns and looks at me. “Don’t fuck with me, Travis. I’ll win every single time.”

I clench my jaw so hard, my teeth grind together. The things I want to scream at her consume my mind and it takes everything inside to not release them. They've probably been double-teaming me this whole damn time.

"Keep up this game and I'll make you wish you never met me."

"Is that a threat, King?"

I smile at her. "It's a fucking promise."

Once the door closes, I clench my fists and pace the length of my office. I'm so fucking livid. My work life has spiraled straight to the pits of hell and I have no control of my future. Before I can stop and take a deep breath, I punch my fist straight through the wall. Sheetrock and dust falls to the ground and my knuckles sting as trickles of blood come to the surface.

It's too much. It's all too fucking much.

VIOLA

The house is empty and quiet, so I take the moment to open one of my all-time favorite books, *Pride and Prejudice*. I've read it so much the pages are worn and discolored. I feel like me and Jane Austen are on a first name basis. Jane is my homegirl. When I think about Mr. Darcy and Elizabeth Bennet all I can do is sigh. I'm devouring the words like it's my first time reading it. After an hour I try to reposition my body so I'm more comfortable, but I feel restless. I have been since Drew came home unannounced. The fairytale is over, isn't it?

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A text message pulls me from the pages and I check it immediately.

I'm taking a rain check on the pajama party. There's a fight tonight, and I'm going to watch it at Jason's house.

Alrighty. I smile almost immediately.

Drew will be gone for the next few hours, guaranteed, and Travis will be home any minute. My heart begins to flutter and my mouth goes dry. I shouldn't feel this way and I kind of hate myself for it, but I push those thoughts aside. A part of me enjoys the thrill of sneaking around with Travis.

Like clockwork, I hear the rumble of the Challenger heading down the street. The engine cuts off in the driveway. I quickly tuck my hair behind my ears, lick my lips, and pick up my book. The door swings open and quietly clicks closed. I shut the book and my mouth falls open when I see Travis. He's distraught and his hair is a disheveled mess. I swallow hard, waiting for him to speak, but he doesn't. Instead, he walks to the kitchen and I hear the freezer door open and shut. Tequila.

"Travis?" I'm genuinely concerned by his demeanor.

"I've had a shitastic day."

He's on edge and isn't making eye contact with me. I watch him take another gulp of tequila straight from the bottle.

"Okay? And?"

My phone begins to ding in the living room with text messages, and lots of them.

“You should probably get that,” Travis says and takes another swig.

I sigh and go into the living room and grab my phone. Courtney has sent me a total of fifteen text messages in one minute. I unlock my phone and begin reading.

OMFG!!!!!!! You’re never going to believe what just happened.

Toby just broke up with me. WITH ME!

Over text message.

What a fucking ASSHOLE!

SERIOUSLY LOLA! I’M PISSSED! HE MET SOMEONE ELSE.

I saw pictures of them together on Facebook and asked who she was.

SO HE BREAKS UP WITH ME! I’M SO FURIOUS!

The text messages go on and on and she’s still sending them.

I’m so sorry. Everything is going to be okay. I’ll text you back in just one minute. I’m not ignoring you, I promise.

And just like that, the messages temporarily stop. Thank God. I throw my phone on the couch just as Travis walks from the kitchen, removing his suit jacket. He places it on the back of the couch and undoes his tie with one hand because he’s tightly holding the bottle of Jose Cuervo in the other. Even though he’s not himself at the moment, he still looks hot as hell. I want him to talk to me, tell me what’s going on,

but he's sealed so tight I doubt the CIA could hack into him.

"I wish you'd tell me what's going on," I say, but don't sound confident or even believable. I've not seen Travis like this in years. Not since he'd come over defeated from hearing his father scream at his mother.

"I don't want to talk about it." He pushes his shoes from his feet and props them on the couch and closes his eyes. I imagined when he came home, things would be much different. We have a few hours to spend together, to be together, but it's obvious he wants to be alone right now.

"Fine." I try to sound like I'm not hurt or disappointed, but my voice gives me away. I wish he'd talk to me, but I won't force him.

I walk over to the couch and bend down to grab my phone. Courtney started with the texts again and I shoot her a quick one. Drew went to watch the game at a friend's house, so I'm coming over. Cool if I stay over?

YES! OF COURSE! GET YOUR ASS OVER HERE PRONTO!

Before I can walk away, Travis grabs my hand and pulls me toward him. When I don't budge, he pulls harder until I'm in front of him. The corner of his lips tilt up slightly because he knows I'm going to make him work for it.

He wraps both arms around my waist and pulls me down to him. Straddling his legs, my body falls on top of his and the warmth of him grazes my skin. I can see the pain in his eyes as I search his face, wanting him to talk to me.

He runs his fingers through my hair and I can't help but sigh and lean into his touch. I inhale his cologne that's mixed with a hint of tequila. Travis leans up and his lips trace the outside of mine causing my body to melt into him. Want and need travels

through me and swirls in the pit of my stomach. Not being able to hold it back any longer, our lips crash together, causing a pool of emotions to spill over. Kisses aren't supposed to steal your breath away, but somehow, that one did. We pull apart and I take a moment to study his face while his eyes are closed.

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“Viola,” Travis whispers; our eyes finally meet. They tell me everything he wants to say and nothing all at the same time. His voice is a plea, and I wish he’d let me in.

I finally break the silence. “I’m going to stay at Courtney’s tonight. Her high school sweetheart dumped her for someone else and she’s a hot mess. I have to stop her from eating a gallon of ice cream.” Alone anyway, I think to myself.

It’s the first time he’s cracked a smile since he’s been home, even if it was a small one.

“You don’t have to go,” he says, genuinely. “I don’t want you to go.” His words go straight to my heart.

I shrug, feeling defeated by the tug-of-war that’s consuming me. “She needs me right now.”

He bows his head and nods. “I’m sorry for snapping at you.”

“We’ll talk when I get back,” I reassure him, but I need the reassurance too.

I nod with a small smile and grab a change of clothes from Drew’s room. If I know Courtney, she really is eating like the world is going to end tomorrow.

Loud bass echoing off the walls and Taylor Swift’s, We Are Never Ever Getting Back Together is blaring through Courtney’s apartment when I walk through the door.

Apparently it's worse than I thought.

"Courtney?" I call out, setting my bag down on the table and kicking my shoes off. I go in search of the music to turn it down, but before I find the stereo, I see Courtney sitting in the middle of her living room with pictures surrounding her in a circle.

Way worse.

"What are you doing?" I yell over the music, searching for the remote to turn it off. The song finally ends and I breathe out in relief.

"Don't make me sit down here all by myself," she says, holding a picture of her and Toby and rips it right in half. Blank Space begins and I squeeze my eyes shut.

Yeah, she's lost it.

"Court," I say, sitting down next to her. She grabs the remote next to her and finally turns the music down. "Talk to me. What happened?"

"He's a cheating asshole who didn't have the balls to break up with me before he slept with someone else."

"He's an idiot." I take the picture from her hand and throw it down. "He doesn't deserve you."

She rolls her eyes and I can tell she's been crying hard. They're red and bloodshot.

"Yeah, I know. But it doesn't make the pain hurt any less."

I wrap my arms around her shoulders and squeeze. "I know."

We sit in silence for a few moments, listening to Taylor's lyrics. "Want to go trash his car? Find a couple golf clubs or bats and go all T-Swift on his ass?"

That makes her giggle as she wipes a tear from her cheek. "Yes." Her lips form into a small smile.

I chuckle. "He's not worth your tears. Or the amount of bail money it'd take to get us out of jail."

She sniffs, wiping her face once again. "I just never imagined someone you love could hurt you so much. He was just telling me last week how he couldn't imagine not having me in his life, how happy he was with me, and how excited he was for our future. I thought he was hinting at getting engaged and now this? How the hell did it go from that to this?"

"Sounds like he was trying to convince himself more than anything. He's a dumbass for letting go of the best thing that's ever happened to him." I grab her hand and grip it to grab her attention. "You know that, right? He wasn't good enough for you."

She nods in agreement, although I'm not sure she really believes it yet. I know she's hurting and she has every right to be, but I want to take it off her mind.

"Want to go out? Or get some ice cream? I won't allow you to wallow over him alone," I say firmly, but with a smile as I play to her ice cream weakness.

"You could give me all the dirty details on you and Travis?" She perks up, her brows rise with hopefulness.

I sigh, rolling my eyes at her. "Seriously? Hearing sex details of me and Travis will not help."

“I’ll be the judge of that.”

I finally talk her into leaving the apartment. We drive around for a bit until we find a cute little ice cream shop. I give her some details about Travis and I, but there isn’t much to say because I don’t really know what’s going on between us. I’m just as confused as I was after the first time we fell into bed together, but a part of me doesn’t want to question it just yet. The more I get emotionally involved, the higher the risk for getting hurt by him again.

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“So now that I’m an old single lady again, how do people my age meet guys?” she asks, licking the ice cream off her spoon.

I laugh, scooping my finger in what’s left of my banana split. I nearly spit it out after hearing her question. “You’re twenty-two!” I almost shout, but then remember people are sitting all around us. “You don’t even get a discount on your car insurance yet.”

“But I feel old to be getting into the dating game. I’ve been with Toby since I was eighteen. I never had to do the bar thing to find a hook-up on Tinker, or whatever the hell it’s called.”

“I think you mean Tinder,” I laugh. “You’re going to graduate soon, so take this as a blessing! You get to be single and free to do whatever the hell you want. You could travel, have all the one-night stands you want, or finally see a movie you want to see for once.”

She snorts. “Yeah, he was kind of an asshole when it came to picking out movies.”

“Speaking of, we should go buy a bunch of junk food and binge eat while watching chick flicks. It’ll get your mind off that douchebag.” I know I’m being an enabler, but if it makes her feel better.

She pushes her empty dish away and dramatically sighs, setting her head down on the table. “I don’t even know how to be single. I keep having to remind myself not to text him, because it’s just something I always did.”

“Texting someone every second of your day was not healthy, Court. You should be

able to go to a store or restaurant or the bathroom without him knowing.”

She looks up at me, not moving her head. “I’m pathetic.”

“C’mon. No pity parties on my watch.”

“Do we still get to binge eat?” she teases, reaching for her purse and letting me pull her along.

“Uh, duh. That’s the main reason I came over tonight.” I grin.

For one night, I set my thoughts aside. I focus on Courtney and cracking jokes to keep her spirits up. We end up renting *How to Be Single* on iTunes and surrounding ourselves with candy and popcorn. I know I’ll wake up with gut rot in the morning, but tonight, I don’t care.

Before I fall asleep, I check my phone and send Travis a goodnight text. I hope you’re feeling better. I ate enough junk to feed a small village and will probably be puking my guts out by morning. I don’t think I’ll be able to look at ice cream ever again.

After waiting twenty minutes and not hearing back from him, I decide to turn my phone on silent. Hopefully, he’s sleeping off his crappy mood and will want to talk about it tomorrow. Courtney is passed out next to me on the floor, but I can’t turn my brain off long enough to fall asleep.

Sometime between remembering meeting Travis for the first time and reminiscing about the last time we were together, I finally managed to fall asleep. When I wake up, there’s a smile on my face, and I can’t wait to see Travis after he’s done with work tonight. The fact that we can’t act any different around Drew is kind of thrilling in its own way.

Then when I grab my phone and see I have no new messages, disappointment fills my heart, and I hate that I even feel that way.

“Are you hungry?” I hear Courtney ask from the kitchen. “I can make pancakes. Or eggs. I might have some bacon around here somewhere...” I can hear her digging around the fridge.

I groan. “I can’t even think about eating right now.”

“Really?” she asks, stuffing something in her mouth. She sounds peppy, so that’s something I suppose, although I’m almost certain it’s all an act.

“Maybe after I shower. I can feel the sugar leaking out of my pores.” I stretch and stand up from the floor.

“Go ahead. I don’t plan to shower all weekend.” The sadness in her voice doesn’t go unnoticed.

I walk to where she is, her hair piled on top of her head, a piece of toast in one hand and her mouth full of jelly. Looks like I may need to stay longer than I anticipated.

“Don’t give me that look.” She sighs. “I just need a couple days to cry it out and then I promise, no more wallowing.”

I can’t really argue with that. Everyone needs a few days to get it out of their system.

“Okay, but by Monday, I expect normal, crazy Courtney back.”

“Promise.”

I smile. “Okay, I’m jumping in the shower.”

“Okay, no problem,” she says around another mouthful.

Ever since the day Travis took my clothes and made me walk down the hallway naked, taking a shower brings a whole new meaning. The memories of our past and the memories of the present makes me conflicted on everything, but I can’t stop thinking about them.

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I close my eyes and allow the hot water to beat down my muscles. The last week has been a bit more active than I'm used to and sleeping on Courtney's hard floor did nothing to help that. I take a little longer than necessary. Her bath wash smells amazing, and I take advantage of her expensive shampoo.

Once the water starts turning cold, I rinse and shut it off. I feel better than I expected to but I know I'd feel even better after Travis and I talk about last night.

As I'm toweling off, I hear Courtney knocking at the door. "Lola, you decent?" Her tone sounds rushed.

"Yeah, come in." I tighten the towel around me and shake my hair out. I start digging around her drawers for a hairbrush. When I find one, I set it on the counter and notice Courtney's reflection in the mirror behind me.

Her eyes are wide and her face has gone pale. Something's wrong.

I turn around and see my phone in her hand. "What's wrong?"

"I-I..." she stutters.

"What is it?"

"Your phone kept vibrating on the table, so I checked to see who was calling." She swallows, finally taking a breath. "It was Drew."

I search her face, worried. "Is he okay?"

“It’s Travis.” Her words go straight to my gut. “He was in a car accident late last night. Or rather, early this morning, I guess.” My heart sinks

“Oh my god!” I shriek, reaching for my phone. “Is he okay?”

“I...don’t know details, but...”

“I need to call Drew back right away.” I begin calling him, then end the call before he picks up. “No, I need to get dressed. I should start heading over to the hospital.”

I unzip my bag that’s sitting on the vanity and begin digging for my clothes, tossing out all the other crap.

“Viola...”

Once I have what I need, I drop my towel and start getting dressed. My mind is spinning and I’m thinking the worst. I should’ve called him after he didn’t message me back or even came gone to the house to make sure he was okay. I don’t know what happened at work, but I’d never seen him that worked up before.

“Viola, wait,” Courtney grabs my attention as I’m about to zip my bag back up and head out.

“I’m stealing a hairband. Hope you don’t mind.” I dig through her drawer and find one so I can throw my wet hair up in a ponytail. “Shit, my keys. I have to find where I left them.”

I walk past her and down the hallway to the living room where I left my purse. As I begin digging for them, I hear Courtney walking up behind me.

“He wasn’t alone.”

I pull my keys out of my purse and then head to the door for my shoes. “Do you know which hospital they took him to? Otherwise, I’ll call Drew on my way out.”

“Viola!” she yells, pulling my attention up to her. “Are you hearing what I’m saying?”

“What? Yeah, you said he wasn’t alone.” I swing my purse over my shoulder and once the realization of her words hit me, I pause. “What do you mean? Was he with a friend?”

“Not exactly.” By the look on her face, I know what she’s about to tell me is bad.

“Tell me.”

“He was with a girl.” She pauses, my heart hammering even louder, needing to hear the rest of what she’s about to say. “She was in his backseat without any clothes on.”

A huge lump forms in my throat. No. There’s no way. I shake my head.

“Who was it?” I ask, part of me not wanting to know. “Do you know her name?”

She pinches her lips tight, pity and regret written all over her face.

I close my eyes, because I’m pretty sure I know who’s name she’s about to say. Tall, busty blonde. Sends nude pictures of herself to him.

I can feel my heart breaking inside my chest.

“Courtney, tell me. What was her name?” My voice is pleading, begging her to say it. I need to hear her say it.

She moves her eyes up and looks at me, inhaling a deep breath. I close my eyes for

the impact, but I wasn't prepared.

“Mia.”