



Carnival Shadows (Carnival)

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Category: Horror

Description: The problem with stalking a predator? Sometimes, they decide to keep you.

I study killers for a living. I analyze their methods, dissect their psychology, and share their darkest deeds with my podcast listeners, but I've never encountered anyone like Remy.

When I spotted him at the carnival, I knew he was different. Those powerful hands, that controlled grace, the darkness lurking behind his eyes—everything about him called to the shadows inside me. I told myself I was investigating the string of disappearances that followed the carnival's route. But the truth? I was obsessed.

I documented his every move, broke into his trailer, and collected pieces of his life like precious treasures. My motel room walls became a shrine to my fixation, covered in photos I'd taken without his knowledge. I thought I was the hunter, the observer safely studying my subject.

I was wrong.

Now, I'm trapped in his world, a willing prisoner to the monster I stalked. He's read my journals and seen every twisted fantasy I wrote about him. Instead of running, he's determined to make each one come true.

They say be careful what you wish for.

But what if your darkest fantasies are exactly what you need?

Carnival Shadows is a dark romance with heavy subjects that some readers may find triggering. There will be access to a full list of the warnings at the beginning of the book. This story has no cliffhanger and ends with a HEA.

Total Pages (Source): 38

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EDEN

I adjust my microphone, ensuring perfect positioning before hitting the record button. The red light blinks to life in my pristine home studio, all sleek whites and grays with perfect acoustic padding. Not a single item is out of place.

“Welcome back to Shadow Stories. I’m Eden Love, and today, we’re diving into the chilling case of the Copper Creek Killer. In 1985, a small mining town in Montana became the hunting ground for one of America’s most methodical predators...”

My voice flows smoothly thanks to years of vocal training and practice. Each word is precisely enunciated, and each pause is carefully timed for maximum impact. The subscribers love my measured, analytical approach. There is no sensationalism, just facts wrapped in psychological insight.

I lean forward, letting intensity creep into my tone. “What made Thomas Reid’s crimes particularly fascinating was his meticulous documentation. Every victim’s final moments were cataloged with an accountant’s precision. Their fear became data points in his twisted ledger.”

The true crime community can’t get enough of my deep dives into criminal psychology. My social media numbers grow daily, academic papers get cited, and the speaking invitations pile up. I’ve crafted this image carefully, ensuring I am a polished professional who can stare into darkness without flinching.

My fingers trace the edge of my desk as I continue narrating Reid's descent into madness. Nobody sees the boxes hidden in my closet, filled with letters from incarcerated killers. Or the artifacts I've collected—a fork used by Richard Ramirez, a piece of John Wayne Gacy's clown costume.

“The question that haunts investigators today is why Reid chose copper miners specifically. Was it the isolation of their profession? Or did it represent something deeper from his past?”

My heart quickens as I delve into his psychological profile. I live for this: dissecting these predatory minds and understanding their drive and compulsions. My listeners think it's academic interest. They don't know how the darkness of each psychopath calls to my own. While I may not act on my own compulsions, nothing says I can't live vicariously through theirs.

“And so the Copper Creek Killer remains in Montana State Prison, where he continues to refuse interviews—except for a cryptic letter he sent to law enforcement last year, hinting at the possibility that there are more undiscovered victims. I'm Eden Love, and you've been listening to Shadow Stories. Join me next week when we explore the brutal home invasions that terrorized suburban Chicago in the summer of 1992.”

I hit stop on the recording, stretching my arms above my head. Another episode is complete. I quickly check the recording, ensuring that the audio quality is perfect. There is no background noise or awkward pauses to edit out.

It's time to dive into research for future episodes. I pull up my special browser, routed through multiple VPNs, and log into my favorite dark web forums. These spaces house the real treasures—unfiltered discussions about active cases, tips from people too scared to go to the police, and rumors that never make it to mainstream media.

A new thread catches my eye: “Carnival of Death?” The original poster details a pattern they’ve noticed—clusters of missing person cases that follow the route of a traveling carnival across multiple states. They’ve mapped out disappearances spanning the last three years.

I scroll through their evidence: newspaper clippings, police reports, and desperate posts from family members searching for loved ones. When I fact-check the information offered, I find that the carnival’s schedule lines up perfectly with the timeline of the disappearances.

I open my research document and take notes, my fingers flying across the keyboard. This could be something big—the story that could take Shadow Stories to the next level. Not just historical cases but an active investigation.

The forum thread grows more intriguing with each post. Someone claims they worked at the carnival briefly and noticed strange behavior from some permanent staff. Another shares photos of the carnival’s distinctive red and gold tents in various locations, matching the dates of reported disappearances.

I need to know more. I pull up the carnival’s website, searching for their upcoming schedule.

My breath catches as I scan the schedule. They’ll be setting up just an hour away next week. What are the odds? A potential serial killer case right in my backyard.

I close my laptop and pull out my leather-bound journal from the hidden compartment in my desk drawer. The rich scent of paper fills my nose as I flip past entries, each page filled with my handwriting meticulously documenting each confession, every stage of death that nurtures my fascination with darkness.

Today’s entry flows from my pen:

I watched a man die today. Not in person, of course—just another video sent by one of my “fans” in law enforcement. The way his eyes glazed over in those final moments... There’s something hypnotic about that transition from life to death. The exact second when consciousness slips away.

My viewers think I’m fascinated by the psychology and the “why” behind murder. They don’t understand that what draws me in is the “how.” The mechanics of death. The subtle changes in skin color, the final twitches, the last desperate gasps.

Sometimes, I wonder what it would feel like to be there in person. To witness that moment up close, to feel the pulse slow beneath my fingers. Not to cause it—I’m not a monster. But to observe, document, understand...

Dr. Harrison says my “academic interest” in death is a healthy way to process trauma. Would he still think I’m processing if he could read these pages? Or would he see the shadows that make me what I am?

The collection grows. Another letter from the Sunset Strangler arrived today. He included a thread from his prison uniform. It joins the other pieces in my treasured archive of death and darkness. Each item thrums with energy, with history. Sometimes, I fall asleep holding them, dreaming of the moments they witnessed.

I close the journal, running my fingers over its worn cover. My public face is a mask—polished, professional, detached. These pages hold my truth.

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EDEN

As I walk through the carnival entrance, the evening air carries the sweet scent of cotton candy and caramel apples. My press badge hangs around my neck—a perfect cover for observing without raising suspicion. The carnival sprawls across the fairgrounds, red and gold tents casting long shadows in the setting sun.

Children dart past me, squealing with delight. Their parents trail behind, clutching stuffed animals and sticky treats. My attention, however, is focused on the staff, the permanent fixtures of this traveling show. A tattooed man adjusts the controls of the Ferris wheel. Two acrobats stretch near the main tent. Each face could belong to my killer.

I grab my phone from my pocket, pretending to check messages while snapping quick photos. The layout matches descriptions from the forum—games section to the left, rides to the right, and food vendors creating a central corridor that leads to the big top.

My research indicated that most victims disappeared after dark when crowds thinned, and shadows deepened. I check my watch—there are still two hours until sunset.

I stop at a cotton candy stand, studying the vendor as he spins pink clouds onto paper cones. His weathered face and kind eyes don't match my profile. Too old, too settled. My killer would be younger, someone capable of overpowering victims.

The crowd parts, and I catch my first glimpse of the main tent's entrance. A man stands there, tall and commanding, in a ringmaster's costume. His presence draws the eye—not just because of his formal attire but also because of something magnetic in how he carries himself. He surveys his domain with calculated awareness.

Movement near the Ferris wheel catches my eye. A man lifts heavy metal barriers with impressive strength, muscles flexing as they work almost effortlessly under bronzed skin. Sweat glistens on his shoulders, highlighting defined contours as he works. My breath catches.

I've studied countless killers, dissected their psychology, and analyzed their methods. Still, something about the first glimpse of this worker makes my blood heat.

My hand grips the phone tightly as I raise it to capture his image. The camera lens feels inadequate to contain his presence. Dark hair falls across his forehead as he checks another barrier. His focus is absolute, aware, yet detached from the crowd flowing around him.

"Stop ogling the guy, Eden," I whisper to myself. I'm here to investigate disappearances, not check out the staff. But my usual clinical detachment crumbles as he straightens, scanning the area with penetrating eyes.

I smoothly duck behind a game booth, not wanting to get caught peeping on the guy. I press my back against the wooden panel. My heart pounds against my ribs—a foreign sensation for someone who stays cool while interviewing murderers. This visceral reaction disturbs me. I'm the observer, the analyzer. I don't get rattled.

When I peer around the corner again, and see that he's moving another section of fencing. His forearms flex, making his veins prominent. A tattoo snakes up his bicep, disappearing under his sleeve. I want to trace its path to uncover where it leads.

My fingers itch to take notes and document this unexpected response. For the first time since my obsession with death and killers started after my father's incarceration, I'm not thinking like a researcher. The predator-prey dynamic I've studied so carefully (is beginning to blur. At this moment, I'm not sure which role I'm playing.

His gaze sweeps across the fairground, and for a heartbeat, our eyes lock. The world stops spinning. I'm lost... and found. I can't look away. His dark eyes pierce through me, freezing me in place and stripping away my carefully constructed facade.

His gaze abruptly moves on, looking around and returning to his work as if I warrant less attention than a gnat being swatted away. My fingers grip the edge of the game booth, knees weak. His carefree dismissal of me stings more than I should let it.

I fumble with my phone's camera, holding my breath as I frame him. The screen captures his fluid movements—the flex of his shoulders as he lifts another barrier, the subtle shift of muscle beneath his shirt. Each photo feels like a stolen secret—my secret.

The crowd flows around me, but I barely notice them now. My podcast, the missing persons cases, and the investigation all fade to background noise. I can't tear my eyes away from him.

My thumb swipes through the photos I've taken. In one, his head is turned slightly, jaw clenched in concentration. Another catches him mid-lift, power radiating from every hard line of his body.

The excitement coursing through my veins isn't professional curiosity anymore. This is something darker and obsessive. I want to know everything about him—his routines, habits, and the path he takes when the carnival closes each night.

I snap another photo as he wipes sweat from his brow. The thrill of watching him, of

collecting these private moments, overwhelms my senses. I haven't felt this alive since I received that first prison letter with a scrap of uniform inside.

The investigation that brought me here feels inconsequential. All that matters is capturing one more image, a glimpse of this man who's awakened something insidious inside me.

EDEN

I clutch my phone, refreshing the search results for the hundredth time. Nothing. There is not a single trace of Remy online. I managed to get his name from a particularly chatty food stall worker. There is no social media, news articles, or speeding tickets. The digital void where his presence should be makes my skin crawl.

The afternoon sun beats down as I weave through the carnival crowds. I've been here since opening, watching, waiting... wanting. My camera is already full of new photos.

A group of teenagers blocks my view of the fenced area. I edge around them, my pulse quickening as I scan the workers' faces—none of them his.

“Looking for someone?” A deep voice asks.

I spin around. The ringmaster stands there, studying me with knowing eyes.

“Just getting some photos for my story.” I hold up my press badge like a shield. “I’m Eden Love from the Shadow Stories podcast.”

“Tyson.” He nods his head. “Interesting choice, focusing on carnival culture.”

“People are fascinated by what goes on behind the scenes.” I try to peek past his shoulder. “One of your workers caught my attention yesterday—Remy? I’d love to

interview him about the physical demands of the setup.”

“Remy keeps to himself.” Tyson’s smile doesn’t reach his eyes. “Not much for interviews.”

My fingers twitch, itching to dig deeper. How does someone exist without leaving digital breadcrumbs? Even prison inmates have online records. Remy’s absence feels deliberate.

“Maybe I could?—”

“Excuse me.” Tyson cuts me off as his phone buzzes. He steps away, leaving me alone with my frustration.

I retrieve my notebook from my bag, adding to my observations.

Strong physical presence. No social media. Avoids attention. Private nature noted by supervisor.

The profile forming in my mind only heightens my fascination.

What secrets is he hiding? What darkness lurks beneath that carefully maintained anonymity? I need to know. The obsession burns through my veins like poison.

I duck under the “Staff Only” rope, my heart thundering against my ribs. The afternoon crowds provide perfect cover as I slip between trailers, each step drawing me deeper into forbidden territory.

My mind races with possibilities about Remy. Maybe he’s on the run, reinventing himself, or working undercover. Each theory is more thrilling than the last. The complete absence of a digital footprint suggests he’s someone who knows how to

disappear.

I pause beside a black trailer, running my fingers along the metal siding. Does he live here? I picture him inside— those powerful hands cleaning a weapon. The image sends heat coursing through me.

My fantasies have grown darker since first seeing him. I wake up gasping his name, sheets twisted around me. Even now, thinking about his intense glare when he was taking in his surroundings makes my skin flush. I've never felt such an overwhelming need as the one his presence provokes, an urge to be utterly consumed.

The crunch of gravel behind me freezes me in place.

“Lost?” His voice is deep and dangerous.

I turn slowly. Remy towers over me, blocking the path between the trailers. Up this close, he's even more magnificent—corded muscle and barely contained power. My mouth goes dry.

“I-I was just...” The words die in my throat as he steps closer.

His shadow falls over me, and I struggle to maintain my composure. “I was looking for the restroom,” I say, gesturing vaguely. “Must have taken a wrong turn.”

“Staff area.” Remy's voice sends shivers down my spine. He takes another step forward, and I take steps back until the trailer's cool metal presses against my shoulders. “You shouldn't be here.”

“I'm so sorry.” I clutch my press badge, using it as a barrier between us. “Eden Love, from Shadow Stories. I'm doing a piece on carnival culture and got turned around.”

His eyes scan my face, and I feel stripped bare under his gaze. My heart pounds so hard I'm sure he can hear it. He's close enough that I catch his scent—metal and sweat.

“Bathrooms are by the food stands.” He doesn't move back. “Long way from here.”

I wet my lips, watching his eyes track the movement. “Would you maybe... want to do an interview? About working here?”

“No interviews.” His hand plants against the trailer beside my head. “And if I catch you back here again...”

The threat hangs unfinished between us. Heat pools low in my belly at his proximity and the danger radiating from this powerful man in waves. Most normal people would be terrified. Clearly, I missed that day in Common Sense 101 because I'm fighting the urge to lean closer.

“What will you do?” The words slip out before I can stop them.

His other hand grips my chin, forcing me to meet his gaze. “Don't test me.”

My breath catches as his fingers dig into my chin. The sensation only heightens my arousal. “What if I want to test you?”

His jaw clenches, a muscle visibly ticking beneath the surface. The power emanating from him makes me dizzy. I press my palms against the trailer behind me to avoid reaching for him.

“You have no idea what you're playing with.” His voice drops into a lower, menacing tone.

“Don’t I?” I lean into his grip, letting him see the darkness in my eyes. “I study killers for a living. I know exactly what I’m looking at.”

His hand slides from my chin to my throat, not squeezing, just resting there. A warning. A promise. My pulse races against his palm.

“Get. Out.” Each word comes out clipped and controlled. “Before I have security come over here and drag you out.”

“You won’t.” I’m practically vibrating with excitement. “You don’t want attention any more than I do.”

His fingers flex against my throat. For a moment, I think he might do it—squeeze until the edges of my vision go dark. The thought makes me wet.

“Last warning.” He releases me abruptly. “Next time, I won’t be so nice.”

I stay pressed against the trailer, catching my breath. “Is that a threat or a promise?”

“Out!” The word cracks like a whip.

I stumble away from the staff area on shaky legs, my throat tingling where Remy’s fingers pressed against my skin. The memory sends another wave of heat through my core. God, what’s wrong with me? I should be terrified, not aroused.

My cheeks burn as I weave through the carnival crowds. After that intense encounter, the cheerful music and children’s laughter feel surreal. I try to ignore the ache between my thighs.

The parking lot stretches ahead as I pass through the carnival gates. The late afternoon sun casts long shadows across the gravel, and I’m grateful for the cooling

breeze against my flushed skin.

I can't stop replaying every second of our encounter. The way he towered over me, his scent overwhelming my senses. The dangerous glint in his eyes when I pushed back. That controlled power in his grip.

My motel is only a few blocks walk, but each step is torture. My underwear is soaked, and my skin feels too tight. I've interviewed serial killers before and stared into the eyes of genuine monsters. Still, none of them made me feel like this – like prey, like a moth drawn to a deadly flame.

I should focus on the investigation and the missing persons cases that led me here. Instead, all I can think about is Remy.

Shame burns almost as hot as arousal. I'm supposed to be better than this—clinical, detached, professional. I'm not some obsessed groupie getting wet over a potential killer.

Maybe that's exactly what I am. Maybe I've been lying to myself all along about my true nature.

I fumble with my key card as I enter my motel room. The door clicks shut behind me, and I lean against it, chest heaving. My skin feels electric, and every nerve ending feels alive.

I strip off my clothes, leaving them in a trail to the bathroom. The cool air hits my overheated skin, making my nipples tighten. In the mirror, I see the faint red mark on my throat where his fingers pressed. A moan escapes my lips as I trace them.

The shower starts cold, but I turn it scalding, letting the water cascade over my body. My hands slide down my curves, imagining they're his. Rough, demanding, I close

my eyes and picture Remy's intense gaze.

"Oh God," I gasp, fingers finding my clit. I'm already swollen and sensitive, so turned on, it almost hurts.

My other hand grips the shower wall as I move my fingers faster, replaying every second of our encounter. The way he towered over me. His scent. The dangerous edge in his voice when he said, "Don't test me."

The coil of pleasure builds low in my belly as I imagine those strong hands on me, pinning me down. Would he be gentle? No—he'd be like steel, unrelenting. The thought pushes me closer to the edge.

I slide two fingers inside myself, thumb circling my clit. My muscles clench around them as I picture his barely contained violence. What would it take to make him snap?

The orgasm hits me hard and fast. I cry out, legs trembling as waves of pleasure crash through me. The world whites out momentarily, and I brace myself against the shower wall to stay upright.

The scalding water pounds against my skin but can't wash away my obsession. My mind circles back to Remy, like a compass needle finding true north.

I press my forehead against the cool tile, letting the water stream down my back. What is it about Remy? The calculated way he moves, like a predator? The complete absence of any digital footprint? Or maybe it's the darkness I glimpse behind his eyes.

I should pack up and leave town, file my story about carnival culture, and move on to the next case. That's what a sane person would do.

But I know I won't. I'm already planning tomorrow's surveillance, imagining new ways to cross his path. The obsession has sunk its hooks too deep.

REMY

Through gaps between the trailers, I watch the podcaster's retreating form. Eden Love. Her name matches her polished exterior—all perfect curls and designer clothes that can't quite hide the darkness lurking beneath. I noticed her the other day, pretending to browse while stealing glances my way. Amateur stalker moves.

She walks with calculated grace. Control radiates from her rigid posture, but I catch the slight tremor in her hands as she clutches her camera. The contrast intrigues me—someone so put together on the surface yet clearly obsessed enough to return searching for me.

My muscles tense as I consider the implications. Her presence could mean trouble. Maybe she's a cop or investigative reporter sniffing around our operation. But something about her energy feels... different. The way she watched me wasn't just professional interest. When I had to kick her out of the staff area, I recognized that hungry look in her eyes, having seen it in the mirror often enough.

She's beautiful in a dangerous way—like admiring the sleek deadliness of a serpent. Her dark auburn hair catches the afternoon sun, and those green eyes hold secrets I want to unravel. But beauty means nothing if she threatens what we've built here.

She disappears around the corner, but her presence lingers like smoke in my lungs. I need to determine what she wants and whether she's more useful as an ally or an enemy.

I stalk across the carnival grounds toward Ty's office trailer, my boots crunching on gravel. Can't take chances with someone like her poking around, not with what we've got running through here.

I give Ty's door three sharp raps.

"Come in." Ty's voice carries through the thin walls.

I step inside, ducking my head under the low doorframe. The cramped space smells of cigarettes and whiskey. Ty sits behind his cluttered desk, papers spread everywhere, but his eyes are sharp as they meet mine.

"Got a situation," I say, settling into the rickety chair across from him. "Some podcaster's been sniffing around. Eden Love. Does true crime stuff."

Ty leans back, running a hand through his hair. "The redhead? Yeah, she asked me about interviewing you specifically."

"How the hell does she even know my name?" I straighten in the chair, muscles coiling with tension. The carnival is a big place with dozens of workers. For her to ask about me specifically means she's been digging.

Ty pulls out a cigarette, taking his time lighting it. The flame from his lighter casts shadows across his face. "Been wondering that myself. She seemed to know exactly who she was looking for."

"What did you tell her?" My voice is low and controlled despite the unease crawling up my spine.

Smoke curls from Ty's lips as he exhales. "Told her you don't do interviews. Period." He taps ash into a nearby tray. "Something tells me that won't stop her. Girl's got that

look in her eye—like a dog with a bone.”

I lean forward, resting my forearms on his desk. “The look?”

“Yeah. The same one you get when you’re hunting.” His gaze meets mine, knowing. “She’s not some podcaster chasing a story. There’s something else driving her.”

The comparison sits heavy in my gut. I’ve seen enough predators to recognize one, even when they wear designer clothes and perfect makeup. Eden Love might think she’s the hunter here but has no idea what she’s walking into.

“Did she say what kind of story she’s working on?”

“Claims she’s doing a piece on carnival culture.” Ty snorts. “But we both know that’s bullshit.”

“What do you want to do about her?” I drum my fingers against the desk’s worn surface. “Could be a threat to the operation.”

Ty takes another long drag. “Not sure yet. Girl’s got credentials—her podcast is legit. But something’s off about her interest in you specifically.”

“Could be working with someone. Cops, maybe?” The thought makes my jaw clench. We’ve been careful, but one nosy reporter could unravel everything.

“Nah.” Ty shakes his head. “Cops don’t move like she does. This is... personal somehow.” He stubs out his cigarette. “I’ll have Phoenix dig deeper—see what skeletons are hiding in Miss Eden Love’s closet.”

I nod, standing. The chair creaks as I push it back. “And in the meantime?”

“Watch her. But from a distance.” Ty’s expression hardens. “Don’t engage. Don’t give her what she wants. Let’s see how she handles being ignored.”

I like the idea of winding her up and seeing how she reacts. She wanted a reaction from me, but two can play that game.

As I exit Ty’s trailer, I spot her across the fairgrounds, pretending to study a display of carnival masks. Her auburn hair glints in the fading sunlight, and even from this distance, I can see the tension in her shoulders. She’s trying too hard to blend in, making her stick out like a sore thumb.

I keep my gaze locked on her as I stride purposefully in the opposite direction, toward the cluster of trailers that serve as our homes. Her head snaps up, eyes narrowing as she watches me. I can practically feel her frustration radiating across the dusty ground.

Good. Let the podcaster stew in it for a while.

I duck into my trailer, the metal door slamming shut behind me with a satisfying clang. The small space is sparse but tidy—just a narrow bed, a desk, and a few shelves for my meager possessions. I’m not one for sentimentality or clutter.

Settling into the chair at my desk, I open my laptop and start digging. If Eden Love wants to play reporter, I’ll investigate her back. It doesn’t take long to find her website, all sleek design and perfectly polished headshots. Her bio reads like a damn resume—degrees in journalism and psychology, awards for her podcast, and guest lectures at universities.

There’s something off about the way she smiles in her photos. It’s too practiced, too controlled, like a mask she’s carefully constructed to hide what lurks beneath.

I scroll through her social media next, but it's more of the same: Curated posts about her latest episodes, stylized photos at crime scenes and courthouses—nothing real, nothing giving any honest insight into her—past or present.

She's good at this game, I'll give her that, but I've been playing it far longer than she has.

I lean back in my chair, considering my next move. If she wants an interview, maybe it's time to give her one, but on my terms.

A slow smile spreads across my face as a plan forms. Ms. Eden Love thinks she's in control here but has no idea what she's stumbled into. And by the time she figures it out, it'll be too late.

Game on, little hunter. Game on.

5

REMY

I lean against the wall of Tyson's office the day after my run in with Eden Love, arms crossed as Lars paces the cramped space.

"We can't have this bitch sniffing around," Lars says, running a hand through his dark hair. "Taking photos, asking questions."

"Eden Love." Phoenix's voice crackles through the laptop speakers. He prefers not to leave his den unless forced, more so since he met Tilly, preferring to join meetings virtually. "Her podcast Shadow Stories has a pretty big following. She's good at connecting patterns."

"The forum's gone now," Phoenix continues. "I wiped it clean. But she'd already found the connection between our routes and the missing people cases."

Tyson drums his fingers on his desk. "She won't stop asking for an interview with the crew for her podcast. Says she's doing a feature on carnival life."

"Deny it," Lars snaps. "We can't risk?—"

"No." I push off from the wall. "Let her interview. We feed her what we want her to hear and keep her close where we can watch her."

"Remy's right," Tyson says. "Better to guide the narrative than have her digging on

her own. Phoenix, dive deeper into Eden. I want to know everything about Ms. Love.”

“Already on it.” Phoenix’s typing echoes through the speakers. “Her podcast focuses on criminal psychology. She’s got credentials—a degree in forensic psychology, consulting work with law enforcement. Still, there’s something off about some of her correspondence with inmates.”

I smile. Of course, there is. I saw it in her eyes that day—she’s not just studying the darkness. She’s drawn to it. Wants to touch it. Taste it.

“I’ll handle her interview,” I tell Tyson.

The others might see a threat to eliminate. I see potential.

“Why you?” Tyson’s eyes narrow, studying my face. “You never volunteer for this kind of shit.”

I push away from the wall, stretching my shoulders. “Because I know her type. The ones who get too close to the edge, desperate to understand the monsters they study. She’s not here for a story about carnival life.”

“No?” Lars crosses his arms.

“She wants to understand the darkness.” I tap my temple. “But what she really wants is to feel it. To know what it’s like to be the predator instead of analyzing it from a safe distance.”

Tyson leans back in his chair. “You sound pretty confident about that assessment.”

“The way she watched me working. Clinical at first, then...” I remember the shift in

her eyes when our gazes met across the fairground. “Something changed, like a mask slipping.”

“Speaking of our curious reporter,” Phoenix’s voice crackles through the speaker. “I can see from the security feed that she’s in the main tent right now, hoping for that interview.”

A smile tugs at my lips. Perfect. “Then we shouldn’t keep her waiting.”

“Remy.” Tyson’s voice stops me at the door. “Don’t play with this one too long. We need her managed, not entertained.”

I meet his gaze. “Trust me. I know exactly how to handle Eden Love.” I stride out, boots crunching on the gravel. The late afternoon sun casts long shadows across the grounds as I approach the massive red and gold striped tent.

She’s alone inside, adjusting her recording equipment on a small folding table. The tent feels charged, like the air before a storm, as I deliberately let my boots echo on the wooden platform. Her head snaps up, and her green eyes widen as she takes me in.

“Mr...?” Her professional mask slips for a moment as she struggles to maintain composure.

“Remy. Just Remy.” I settle into the chair across from her, stretching my legs out. “You have questions about carnival life?”

“Yes.” She fumbles with her recorder. “Though I admit I’m particularly interested in the darker aspects. The isolation, the transient nature that might appeal to certain personalities.”

Her voice catches on that last word, eyes flickering to my hands before darting away.

“You mean fugitives.” I keep my tone neutral, watching how she leans forward at the word.

“Among others. Have you ever noticed anyone exhibiting concerning behaviors?”

The irony of her question almost makes me smile. Instead, I study how her pupils have dilated at the word “fugitive” and how her fingers absently caress the recorder.

“We’re a family here,” I say carefully. “We look out for our own. Notice when things aren’t right.” I let that hang between us, watching her process the double meaning.

I study Eden as she fidgets with her recorder, her polished exterior cracking under my gaze. A light blush creeps up her neck when our eyes meet. She’s stunning up close—those green eyes hold depths I want to explore, and her dark auburn hair catches the filtered sunlight streaming through the tent.

“Do you mind if I...” She gestures vaguely at her camera. “For the podcast website?”

“Go ahead.” I lean back.

“Perfect,” she breathes, lowering the camera but not before I catch her eyes lingering on the screen, staring at my image.

“You seem very... invested in your research, Ms. Love.” I shift forward. “Most reporters keep a more professional distance.”

“Eden,” she corrects, then looks down at her notes. “And yes, I like to understand my subjects completely.”

The way she says “completely” sends a shiver down my spine. Dangerous territory, this one, but the pull is undeniable. When she looks up again, her eyes are darker and hungry.

“Tell me, Eden...” I let her name roll off my tongue, watching her reaction. “What really brings you to our carnival?”

She wets her lips, pen frozen above her notepad. “The mystery. The freedom to be someone else.”

The confession slips out before she can stop it. Her eyes widen, realizing she’s revealed too much, but she holds my gaze instead of retreating.

I shouldn’t find her this appealing. She’s a liability, a threat to everything we’ve built here, but watching her try to maintain her professional facade while practically vibrating with suppressed need stirs something in me.

She straightens in her chair, smoothing her silk blouse. Professional mask back in place—almost.

“I’m fascinated by the nomadic lifestyle,” Eden says. “The freedom of constant movement, never putting down roots. Does it ever feel isolating?”

I stretch, noting how her eyes track the movement. “We’re never truly alone here. The carnival becomes your family.”

“Surely it impacts personal relationships?” Her tongue darts out to wet her lips. “Romantic ones especially. It must be difficult maintaining connections when you’re always moving.”

A smirk tugs at my mouth. For someone trying to investigate murders, she’s awfully

interested in my love life.

“Are you asking if I’m single?”

The blush spreading across her cheeks is delicious. “It’s relevant to understanding the carnival lifestyle. The psychological impact of nomadic life...”

“Ah, purely professional interest, then?” I lean forward, dropping my voice. “And here I thought you might be asking for personal reasons.”

She fumbles with her pen, catching it before it hits the floor. “Of course not. I maintain strict boundaries with my subjects.”

“Subjects?” I raise an eyebrow. “I thought I was just a carnival worker you’re interviewing about lifestyle choices, or am I something else in that fascinating mind of yours?”

She shifts in her seat, crossing and uncrossing her legs, telling me everything her words won’t.

“I simply mean my interviewees. For the podcast.”

“Right.” I draw the word out, enjoying how it makes her squirm. “Well, to satisfy your professional curiosity—I find relationships happen naturally when you meet the right person. Someone who understands the darker pleasures of life.”

Her breath catches at that, pupils dilating. Such obvious tells. She really needs to work on her poker face if she wants to play these games with me.

There’s a spark in her eyes—something I’ve seen in countless others, but the way it shines in hers, brighter and hotter, sends a flash of heat through me.

I let the silence stretch between us, a test to see if she'll break. Her breath quickens, and the pulse at her throat flutters like a wild bird. Her eyes flick down to my mouth and back up.

I lean forward, elbows on my knees. "Do you want to know how often I get my dick wet, Eden? Bet you wonder what kind of women I fuck. If I like to take control or let them lead."

Her gaze flickers to my mouth again. "I—that's not what I meant. I was referring to the impact of your lifestyle. The constant travel."

Her eyes betray her. They can't stop roaming my body, her breath coming faster and shallower. I know that look, that need, but it's not me who's drawn it out this time.

"No?" A smile tugs at my lips. "Tell me then, what do you think about while you're touching yourself at night, thinking of the mysterious carnival worker? Do you think I'm gentle? Holding you soft while I kiss you, tasting every inch of your skin?"

She swallows. "No. I... I mean, maybe you're into that, but that's not?—"

"Not what you picture?" I interrupt. "Maybe I like it rough. Pinning you down, hearing you beg while I fuck you so hard the whole trailer shakes."

"Oh, God." The whisper escapes her before she can stop it, and I see the instant she wishes she could take it back.

I wait for her to break, to run from the tent, but she surprises me. Narrowing her eyes, she leans forward, chin raised defiantly.

"I know what you're doing," she says. "Trying to push my boundaries and see how far is too far for me."

I cock my head, intrigued by the shift. “And how far is that, Eden? Just how twisted does that pretty little mind of yours get when no one’s watching?”

She goes very still, fingers tightening around her pen. Then, in a rush, she breaks eye contact, looking down at the half-filled page of notes. My eyes narrow. Did I misjudge this one?

“Eden?” My voice is gentle.

For a long moment, she doesn’t respond. Then, “I’m not here for that story, Remy.” Her voice is barely above a whisper. “I can’t let myself go there.”

With anyone else, I’d push. See if her control is as tight as she claims, but something about her steely tone tells me this isn’t a test. There’s a line I shouldn’t cross.

“All right.” I sit back, studying her. “Tell me then, Eden, what do you want to know about carnival life?”

Her eyes flick up to meet mine, confusion and relief warring in their green depths. “The community within,” she says. “How do you form bonds when everyone is always moving?”

Her shift in demeanor is so slight that most wouldn’t notice, but I see the relaxation of her shoulders and the subtle flare of her nostrils as she inhales. She expects me to push the boundaries and see how far she’ll go.

Instead, I answer her questions about our family dynamic, feeding her bullshit she’ll easily verify with a few more interviews. She wants to understand the sense of community we foster, the deep bonds that keep us together despite the constant travel. Every so often, she sneaks a glance at my hands and my body as if studying me for future fantasies.

Eden keeps herself perfectly composed as we talk. Still, I see her eyes dropping regularly to my lips as I speak, and I notice the subtle clench of her thighs. My fingers flex instinctively, wanting to test how wet she is. Maybe later. I focus on our conversation, watching how she fidgets in her seat, her mouth twisting as she tries to maintain her professional facade. However, the heat between us is undeniable.

“Do you find it difficult to leave a place when you’ve made connections?” Her voice dips on the last word, probably without her realizing it.

“I always look forward, not back.” I keep my tone casual, but my gaze flicks to her mouth. “Besides, the road is in my blood now. The constant movement.”

She bites her lip at that, hard enough to turn the skin white. When she releases it, her tongue darts out to wet the mark my eyes are fixed on.

“Must get lonely sometimes,” she says softly.

“You know how it is,” I reply. “Some nights, you wish someone was there to hold you, but that’s the price we pay for our freedom.”

She swallows visibly. “I suppose it’s not for everyone.”

My smirk tells her I know what she’s really thinking. That she’s not just thinking about the lonely nights, but the lonely nights with me. I wonder if she’s imagining my body over hers, my hands holding her down, or if she’d prefer to take control, tasting and teasing every inch of my skin.

“Tell me, Eden,” I say softly, pushing the topic again, “how often do you think about me? Do you touch yourself while imagining all the things I could do to you?”

Her head snaps up, cheeks flushing. “I don’t?—”

“Don’t what?” My voice drops. “Don’t think about my hands on your thighs? My mouth between them? Bet your pretty little cunt gets so wet.”

“Don’t be an asshole,” she snaps, cheeks even redder now.

She doesn’t deny it.

A laugh escapes me, breaking the heavy tension. “I’m saying what you’re too polite to.”

Her eyes narrow. “So you assume I’m imagining you between my thighs?”

“I’m not assuming.” I lean forward with my elbows on my knees. “Because I know what that look in your eyes means. I’ve seen it before. You want it rough, don’t you, Eden? Want me to take control? Make you scream?”

This time, she doesn’t deny it. Just watches me with that dark, hungry gaze. After a moment, she clears her throat.

I sit back, placing my hands behind my head and stretching my legs. “Fuck, you’re going to make me work for it, aren’t you?”

Her cheeks flame at that, the glint in her eyes telling me she knows exactly what I’m talking about. “You’re quite confident, aren’t you, Remy?”

A smirk tugs at my lips. “Not confident, Eden. Sure.” I lean forward again, enjoying the way her breath hitches. “Some things you just know.”

“Oh?” Her chin tilts up, daring me to continue.

“Mhm.” I nod, enjoying the game we’re playing, the undercurrent of sexual tension

thrumming between us. “I can tell you’re the kind of woman who needs a firm hand, a hard fuck to remind you who’s in control. Someone who’ll make you come so hard you can’t walk straight for a week, but then you’ll be craving more.”

She wets her lips, gaze dropping to my mouth. Suddenly, she straightens, visibly composing herself.

“Well,” she says, voice steady, “I’m sure that’s true of many women. Perhaps your experience is limited, but?—”

“Limited experience? That’s cute. Want me to prove otherwise?”

Her throat bobs as she swallows. “I think we’re done here.” She starts gathering her papers, movements jerky and rushed. “Thank you for your time.”

“Running away already?” I cock my head. “And here I thought you wanted to understand the carnival lifestyle completely.”

“I have enough for my story.” Eden shoves her recorder into her bag, avoiding my eyes.

“Do you?” I stretch, noting how her gaze snaps to the movement before darting away. “Seems like you’re missing the most interesting parts.”

She stands abruptly, chair scraping against the ground. “I maintain professional boundaries, Mr.—” She pauses, realizing I never gave her my last name.

I smirk. “Just Remy.”

Without another word, she turns and strides toward the tent exit, her dainty shoes clicking against the wooden platform.

“See you around, Eden,” I call after her. “I’m sure you’ll find your way back.”

She falters for just a moment, then disappears through the flap. The scent of her perfume lingers, mixing with the electricity crackling in the air she left behind.

My fingers drum against the arm of my chair. Eden Love is dangerous—smart enough to be a real threat, obsessed enough to keep digging. But watching her try to maintain that professional mask while practically vibrating with suppressed desire...

I shouldn’t want to see her again. Shouldn’t crave the way her eyes darkened when I pushed her buttons... But I do.

6

EDEN

I want more. Need more. Remy's mouth on my neck, his fingers tracing my hips, my thighs—an electric rush with every gentle caress. I tilt my head back, baring my throat, groaning when the pad of his thumb finds my pulse point.

He murmurs my name, the sound thick and raw.

His skin is warm against mine, his breath hot on my skin. Every fiber of my being is attuned to him. My nails dig into his shoulders. He hisses in response, grasping my hips, his mouth covering mine in a searing kiss.

Hunger coils tight and low in my belly, a delicious ache that threatens to undo me. I want to brand him as mine, to imprint myself on his skin and know he's feeling this, too.

Heat coiling within me, a slow burn, intense and wild, threatening to consume everything in its path. I move against him, wrapping my legs around his waist, feeling the tension in his body.

“Eden,” he groans.

His eyes burn with a fierce need before he crushes his mouth to mine. His hands slip lower, his fingertips trailing a path of fire as they dip beneath the fabric of my shirt. I pant against his lips, feeling his tongue against mine, eliciting a sensation shooting

sparks straight to my pussy. His hands—so strong and skilled—know exactly where to touch and how to unravel me.

His teeth scrape my shoulder and jaw as his lips trail kisses along my neck. I'm putty in his hands—molded, shaped by his expert touch. The pleasure and hunger are overwhelming, driving away every thought but this. Want. Need. Desire.

It's a storm inside me, and still, it's not enough.

I wake with a start.

My heart is pounding, and my body feels heavy and warm in a way that makes me ache. My cheeks flush as I realize what—or rather, who—I've been dreaming about.

It was so real. I glance at the empty space beside me, half-expecting to see him there.

Remy.

I haven't been able to get him out of my head. Not since I saw him fixing the fencing at the carnival, his powerful physique moving with effortless grace. A shiver runs through me as I recall the fantasies about him I've been spinning in my mind and in my journal. Now, it's spilled over into my dreams.

Alone in my motel room, I curl my hands into fists. The fantasy is so vivid and so intense that it almost scares me. My fingers slide under the sheets, and my skin is hypersensitive and aching for release.

Remy's face is burned into my memory, his name a mantra on my lips.

I force myself out of bed, my skin tingling from the dream. The clock reads four a.m.—too early for any sane person to be up, but I've never claimed to be sane.

I pull on a black jersey dress. The outfit will help me blend into shadows, perfect for what I'm about to do.

The drive to the carnival takes forever, each minute stretching like taffy. I park far enough away that the sound won't be heard, killing the engine and sitting in darkness. Dawn hasn't broken yet—the carnival is dead quiet, rides looming like sleeping giants against the star-speckled sky.

I know his schedule now. Remy starts work early, before anyone else. He checks the perimeter, tests the fence posts, and makes repairs where needed. My heart races as I slip from shadow to shadow, finding my hidden spot behind an old storage container.

The metal is cold against my back as I wait, camera ready in my eager hands. I shouldn't be here. This isn't professional. This isn't research, but I can't stay away—the pull is magnetic.

The crunch of gravel signals his arrival. My breath catches as Remy's figure emerges from the pre-dawn shadows. My camera quietly clicks, capturing his powerful frame as he tests each fence post.

Even from this distance, I can see the flex of his muscles beneath his shirt and the graceful way he moves despite his size. Another photo catches the sharp angle of his jaw and the intensity in his eyes as he examines a loose section.

I shift position, seeking a better angle. The metal container digs into my back, but I barely notice. All my focus narrows to him. Click. The morning light catches his profile. Click. His hands grip the metal post. Click. A bead of sweat rolls down his neck.

My collection grows with each passing second. These will join the others—hundreds of shots capturing every aspect of him. At the motel, they cover my walls in a twisted

shrine of obsession. I know the exact shade of his skin in different lights, how his shoulders tense before he lifts something heavy, and how his dark eyes scan his surroundings with predatory awareness.

He pauses at the next section, and I hold my breath. His head tilts slightly, nostrils flaring like he can sense something—someone—me. My heart pounds so hard I'm sure he must hear it, but he continues his inspection, and I exhale slowly, carefully.

The need to watch him, to capture these private moments, overwhelms my rational mind. Each photo feels like possessing a piece of him. I snap another as he bends to secure a loose wire.

These moments are mine. My secret. My obsession. Every detail feeds the growing hunger inside me—a hunger that's far from professional curiosity. I want to know everything about him. Every habit, every expression, every dark thought behind those intense brown eyes.

I wait until I'm certain Remy is busy with the fence inspection before slipping toward his trailer. Adrenaline floods my veins as I pick the lock—a skill learned from years of “research” for my podcast. The door creaks open and I slide inside, heart thundering.

His scent hits me first—a mix of cedar and a musk unique to him, making my knees weak. The trailer is sparsely furnished but meticulously organized. Everything has its place. I run my fingers along his dresser, imagining his hands touching these surfaces.

My gaze falls on his laundry hamper in the corner. Pulse racing, I lift the lid—on top lies a pair of dark boxer briefs. I lift them with trembling fingers, bringing them to my face. His scent is stronger, more potent. A soft moan escapes my lips as I imagine him peeling them off his powerful body.

I want to see all of him, taste him, and watch his face as pleasure overtakes him. The intensity of my craving for him should frighten me. Instead, it feeds the depravity I try so hard to hide.

Footsteps crunch on the gravel outside. I freeze, clutching his underwear, heart in my throat. They pass by. Still, I need to leave before I push my luck too far. I carefully put everything back exactly as I found it, erasing all traces of my presence.

My breath is shallow as I scan his space, my heart pounding like a snare drum. I'm dying for more, hungry to glimpse his private thoughts. Then I spot it; Remy's laptop, open on the small table.

Hesitation wars with obsession. I bite my lip, glancing toward the door. Remy could return anytime, but I can't waste this opportunity.

I approach the table slowly and run my fingers over the laptop, surprised when it springs to life. A rush of adrenaline courses through my veins as I realize it's not password-protected. My own laptop is protected with a fingerprint ID and a complicated password. At the same time, this one contains heaven knows what for my eyes to devour.

My gaze scans the desktop, taking in the neat arrangement of files. My pulse races as I spot a folder simply labeled "Selfies." My eyes widen, and my breath hitches.

Selfies?

He doesn't strike me as the kind of guy to snap selfies.

My curiosity gets the better of me, and I can't help but lean forward, my fingers poised over the touchpad. With one swipe, the folder opens, revealing a small collection of files.

At first, I don't understand what I'm looking at. But then, it hits me like a jolt of electricity. I'm staring at a series of dick pics. Intimate, explicit photos of Remy naked. My mouth goes dry as my eyes widen, drinking in the sight. Click. My camera captures the images. Click, click.

I can't stop myself from scrolling through them, my breath catching in my throat. His body is as powerful as I imagined and covered in tattoos, every muscle and angle perfectly defined. I imagine my own hands on him, my lips, my tongue. The fantasy overwhelms me, and without thinking, I reach down, desperate for release.

I close my eyes, my fingers moving of their own volition as I pull off my panties, placing them on the desk.

How would it feel to have him touch me? Kiss me? Pleasure me?

My arousal is instant and overwhelming. I bite my lip to stifle a moan as I picture his mouth on my neck, trailing lower, his skilled hands branding me as his own.

My imagination takes over, and my fantasies become more daring. It doesn't take long for the tension to build; my breath turns labored as my fingers move faster, and my need becomes urgent.

I let out a low, throaty moan, unable to hold it back any longer. The sound surprises me because it's shaky and has a raspy edge. The fantasy is too much, too good, and I quickly spiral into oblivion. My body shudders in release, but still, I don't stop.

I open my eyes, needing to see him, needing more. My fingers linger on the screen, touching the image of his thick, engorged cock, imagining the weight of it against my tongue. I want to make him lose control, and I need to see him fall apart.

The fantasy takes on a life of its own, fueling my actions. The sensations intensify,

coiling tighter and tighter until I break apart again, my breathless cry echoing through the quiet trailer. It takes a moment to realize I've shouted his name, and I immediately clamp my hand over my mouth, my eyes wide as my dress falls back over my lower half.

My heart is pounding, my body weak and satiated, but even as guilt threatens to wash over me, I can't stop staring at the photos.

I can't even remember how to breathe. I'm so transfixed by the photos that I barely register the soft chime from his laptop, indicating a new message has arrived.

My eyes jerk to the chat box as it happens. Three little words appear in the inbox. "Hey, big boy."

Big boy.

My stomach twists, a bitter taste filling my mouth. My eyes scan the chat log, a back-and-forth conversation between Remy and whoever the hell "Baby Girl" is. I don't catch every detail, my vision narrowing to tunnel vision as the jealousy takes hold.

She talks about meeting up, wanting to be filled and fucked by him. My Remy. He responds with the exact tone of dirty talk, sending me into a tailspin.

Why would he share these photos with her?

I feel the burn of betrayal. How could he be doing this? And why haven't I heard about this "Baby Girl" in my research? I'm missing something—someone. I scroll frantically through the rest of the chat, desperate for more information.

But Remy's laptop suddenly shuts off. The screen goes black, and the chat log disappears from view. I grip the sides of the table, panic setting in.

Has he turned it off remotely?

My mind races, trying to figure out how that's possible when I hear movement outside.

I don't bother with subtlety now. I rush to the door. My only goal is to get out unseen.

I slip out of Remy's trailer unnoticed, adrenaline flooding my veins as I move through the carnival grounds. The early morning light is just starting to break, casting shadows across the empty paths. I stick to the darkest areas, blending into the background as I move swiftly towards the exit.

It's not until I'm safely in my car, driving away from the carnival, that what just happened hits me. I left my panties in Remy's trailer. In my rush to escape, I completely forgot about them. They're sitting there on his desk, a damning piece of evidence that I was snooping through his private space.

Panic rises in my throat as I imagine Remy finding them.

What will he think? Will he know it was me?

Of course, he will. Who else would be brazen enough to break into his trailer and leave behind such an intimate item?

My mind races with possibilities. Remy may be flattered and intrigued by my bold move, or he might be angry and feel violated.

I grip the steering wheel tighter, trying to steady my breathing. I need to focus on the road, on getting as far away from the carnival as possible, but I can't stop thinking about those panties.

They're a physical manifestation of my obsession—one I've been trying hard to keep hidden. Now they're out there, waiting for Remy to find them.

I don't know what I'll say when that happens. How do you explain breaking into someone's home and leaving behind such an intimate item? How do you justify that level of obsession?

REMY

I enter my trailer, the familiar creak of metal steps beneath my boots—something’s different. The air feels disturbed, like ripples in a still pond. My senses heighten as I scan the space, noting subtle changes invisible to most.

A delicate hair tie rests near my laptop, its dark elastic a stark contrast against the metal desk. Beside it lies a pair of black lace panties, the damp fabric—Eden.

The little stalker has been here, invading my space.

My jaw tightens as I press the power button on the laptop. The screen flickers to life, revealing exactly what I suspected—my private photo collection left open on display. She’s been through my dick pics, feeding her obsession.

The chat window with “Baby Girl” is open, too. My lips curve into a smirk as I imagine Eden’s face when she was reading those messages. Seeing those flirtatious exchanges and intimate photos, the jealousy must have eaten at her.

Truth is, “Baby Girl” is just another distraction—some random woman I’ve never met who likes to play at being dangerous. We trade photos and engage in light dominance games through chat. Nothing real. Nothing that matters. Just a way to pass the empty hours between jobs.

If she’d been thinking clearly, she would have cleared the browser history and deleted

any trace of her snooping. Still, jealousy makes people sloppy, and Eden's clearly lost her careful control where I'm concerned.

The irony isn't lost on me. Here she is, obsessing over meaningless online flirtations while breaking into my private space. My beautiful stalker, so consumed by possessiveness over someone she barely knows—someone she claims to be “studying” for her podcast.

I pick up her forgotten panties, running the delicate lace between my fingers. The evidence of her arousal only confirms what I already knew—Eden's fascination with me goes far beyond professional interest.

A smirk plays on my lips. Her desperation amuses me. This need to possess pieces of me to violate my privacy. However, she's made a critical error, leaving such obvious evidence behind.

Eden thinks she's the hunter, the investigator piecing together her theories about the carnival. She has no idea she's walking right into my web, leaving breadcrumbs that will lead to her undoing.

My cock hardens instantly as I bring her panties to my nose, inhaling. Her scent hits me like a drug, making my blood rush south.

“Fuck,” I growl, unzipping my jeans. My cock springs free, already rock hard. I wrap her panties around my length, the wet lace clinging to my skin. The same fabric that was pressed against her pussy now grips my shaft as I start stroking.

My head falls back as I imagine her riding me, her curves bouncing, those perfect tits in my face. The way she'd moan my name, desperate and needy. I tighten my grip, increasing my pace. Her scent surrounds me with each stroke, driving me wild with need.

My hips thrust up into my hand as I picture bending her over this very desk, making her scream. Claiming what's mine. Because she is mine now—she just doesn't know it yet.

I grunt, stroking faster. Knowing she came here and touched herself while looking at my photos pushes me closer to the edge.

“You like that? You like thinking about me fucking you hard?” I growl. One of my favorite fantasies is imagining her listening to my voice and touching herself while thinking about me.

I grip my cock tighter, giving it a few more hard strokes. I can almost feel those soft lips around me, sucking and teasing. Her hands wouldn't be able to reach me because she'd be restrained.

“Such a naughty girl, coming into my trailer. Going through my things. But I can't blame you. You couldn't help yourself, could you? Got all worked up, needed some relief.”

I imagine her tied to my bed, those gorgeous tits exposed, ripe for my mouth. I'd roll her sensitive nipples between my fingers, watching her squirm and teasing her until she begs.

“Would you beg, Eden? Would you plead for me to make you come?” I picture her face, those green eyes locked on mine. “Probably not. You'd try to act tough, but your body would give you away. Those tits would be heaving, and your pussy would be soaking wet.”

My breath quickens. “I bet your pussy tastes so sweet. I'd love to lap up all that arousal, but first, I'd spank that perfect ass until it's rosy and warm. Teach you a lesson for sneaking into my trailer.”

I groan, thrusting my hips up. My balls tighten as I get closer, the head of my cock swollen and sensitive. “Then I’d bend you over and fuck you so hard, you’d feel me for days. You’d scream my name, wouldn’t you, baby? Scream for more.”

I don’t need to close my eyes to picture her skin flushed while she writhes beneath me. She’d try to hold back, but the pleasure would overwhelm her.

“Come for me, Eden. Let me hear you.” My balls draw up, and I thrust harder into my grip. “That’s it, let go. Imagine it’s my cock inside you, my hands all over that sexy body. I want to hear you scream my fucking name.”

I roar as I explode, my cum hitting my stomach and chest. My hand falls away from my cock as I catch my breath. “Damn, little stalker, next time, I won’t be imagining it.”

I tuck myself away and zip up, moving to my laptop. Time to learn more about her than when I looked the first time. Eden Love’s digital footprint spreads before me as I type her name into search engines.

Her bio photo shows striking green eyes and a perfect smile, concealing what I know are her darker impulses. The episode list reveals her obsession with serial killers, each title more provocative than the last.

I clicked through her social media. Instagram showcases a curated life—coffee shops, book stacks, and recording equipment... There’s something calculated in each frame like she’s building a character rather than sharing part of her true self.

X gives me more insight. She posts late-night about criminal psychology and responds to true crime fans. She engages differently here and lets slip hints of her real nature. References to her “collection” catch my eye—souvenirs from killers she’s interviewed.

LinkedIn details her credentials and confirms what I know, that she has a forensic psychology degree and has written research papers on criminal behavior.

Her personal Facebook is locked down tight, but her podcast page offers behind-the-scenes glimpses. Video clips show her interviewing subjects, that mask of professionalism firmly in place. Still, I see the hunger in her eyes when they describe their crimes.

Recent posts mention investigating carnival-related disappearances. She's getting closer, thinking she's the hunter. My smirk returns as I save her information to a secure folder.

I open another browser and access deeper channels: property records, phone records, and bank statements. The real Eden Love emerges through data points and transactions: regular payments to prison commissary accounts, multiple storage unit rentals, and late-night drives tracked by toll cameras.

My beautiful little stalker has been busy, but she's not the only one who can hunt.

EDEN

The carnival's history unfolds before me like a twisted tapestry as I pour over newspaper archives and police reports. My laptop screen casts an eerie glow across my desk at two a.m., but I can't stop—I won't stop. Each article leads to another breadcrumb, another piece of this dark puzzle.

"Found another one," I mutter, adding a red pin to my digital map. A nineteen-year-old girl vanished from Springfield last summer. The carnival had been there that week.

My fingers fly across the keyboard, cross-referencing dates and locations. My heart races with each new connection. Two are missing in Cedar Rapids, 2021, and another in Oakwood, 2020. The pattern emerges like a terrible constellation.

"This can't be a coincidence." I pull up my recording software, speaking into my microphone. "Pattern analysis shows eight disappearances in the past three years, all within a five-mile radius of the carnival locations."

I reach for my coffee cup. The liquid inside has long gone cold, but I barely notice. The thrill of discovery burns hotter than any caffeine rush.

"Correlation doesn't equal causation," I remind myself, but my gut tells me differently. These aren't random acts. Someone's using the carnival's movement as cover, and they're good at it.

I again pull up Remy's employee file, studying his arrival dates at each location. My breath catches. He was there. Every single time.

"Oh, you beautiful monster," I whisper, tracing my finger across his photo on the screen. "What secrets are you hiding?"

I grab my black messenger bag, checking that my lockpicking tools remain in the hidden compartment. The weight of my camera and recorder provides comfort as I sling the bag over my shoulder.

I slip into my car, the leather seat cold against my skin. The digital clock reads two forty-seven a.m. Perfect timing—the carnival will be dead now.

The drive takes fifteen minutes, my headlights cutting through the darkness. I park two blocks away, not wanting to risk detection. The gravel crunches under my boots as I approach the carnival grounds.

Moonlight bathes the silent rides, casting eerie shadows across the grounds. The office trailer sits dark and still. I pause behind a booth, scanning for any movement.

Nothing.

The lock yields easily to my picks. A soft click, and I'm in. The door creaks as I ease it open, making me wince. I fish out my small flashlight from my bag, keeping the beam low.

Filing cabinets line one wall. My fingers trail across the labels until I find what I'm looking for; financial records. The drawer slides open smoothly.

"What the hell?" I whisper, pulling out a stack of papers. These aren't carnival receipts. They're shipping manifests, coordinates, and what looks like payment

schedules.

I'm looking at a ledger filled with dates and locations. Each entry lists weights, prices, and initials.

My stomach churns as I realize what I'm looking at. This isn't a carnival—it's a front for an illegal operation. Human trafficking? Drug running? The evidence points to something of that nature.

I carefully return everything to how I found it, leaving no trace. Whatever's happening here, I need to be smart about proceeding because one wrong move could ruin my investigation.

Realizing what Remy might be capable of sends heat coursing through my body. I press my thighs together, trying to control the ache building.

"What's wrong with me?" I whisper, even as images of his powerful hands flash through my mind.

I smooth out the stack of papers, ensuring they lay exactly as I found them. My breath comes in short gasps as I imagine Remy orchestrating these shipments, these disappearances. The clinical part of my brain catalogs the evidence. Still, another part—a depraved part—is thrilled at each new revelation.

Eight people. Eight lives. Did he end them himself? The thought should horrify me. Instead, I feel a rush of arousal so intense I have to grip the filing cabinet to steady myself.

"Focus," I mutter, wiping down any surfaces I might have touched to remove fingerprints. But my mind keeps circling back to Remy—to his quiet intensity during our interview.

Was he studying me while I studied him? Did he recognize something in me that mirrors the darkness in himself?

I make sure everything in the office is exactly as I found it. Each piece of evidence I've uncovered points to something more sinister than I imagined, and Remy stands at the center.

The sickening twist excites me. I want to understand the psychology behind these acts and witness them firsthand, to be close enough to feel the power, the control.

I ensure the door is locked behind me, leaving no trace of my presence. However, I can't hide the thrill stoked within me or deny how much I want to dive deeper into Remy's psyche.

REMY

I slip into Eden's motel room, the lock giving way easily. The stale air hits my nostrils as I move silently through the shadows, my eyes adjusting to find her makeshift workspace spread across a small table.

Files and photos litter the surface—my photos. She has been busy. I pick up one of me working on the carnival rides, muscles straining. Another captures me talking to Tyson. The edges are worn as if she's handled them repeatedly. There are more photos all over the walls, every single one of me. My little stalker really is obsessed.

I grab her suitcase and open it. My pulse quickens as I discover a hidden panel. Inside lies a treasure trove of her obsession—newspaper clippings about disappearances, detailed notes about my daily schedule, and even receipts from places I frequent. And lots of photos of my cock she must have snapped off my computer screen.

But what catches my attention is the small collection of personal items. A coffee cup with a chip that I'd tossed days ago. A pair of my boxer briefs that still hold my scent. A work glove I thought I'd lost. Even a shirt I'd left behind at the laundromat.

"You've been a busy little stalker, haven't you?" I whisper, fingering the worn fabric of my shirt. The scent of her perfume clings to it, suggesting she's been sleeping in it.

Beneath the clothing, I find her journal.

My breath catches as I open the journal to a random page. Her neat, precise handwriting stabs at my eyes.

The fantasy consumes me. Him towering over me, those dark eyes filled with hunger. I imagine his hands on my throat, squeezing gently, cutting off my breath. My pulse pounds in my ears as I crave the pressure.

I want to feel the blade against my skin, the sharp edge contrasting his touch. He traces patterns on my body, inscribing ownership, marking me as his. I beg for more, craving the sting of the knife that will heighten my pleasure.

I'm bound and helpless. He explores my body with his mouth and his hands, owning every inch of me. His name escapes my lips like a prayer, a mantra, a plea.

“Remy.”

I yearn for the edge of sanity and want to topple over into madness with him as my guide. His kiss is my anchor, his touch my salvation. I crave the depths of his perversion and long to lose myself in the abyss of his soul.

His cock slams inside me, and his hands tighten on my body, and I shatter into a million pieces. He catches my fall and holds me together when I can't. In his arms, I find both my destruction and salvation.

I let the journal fall from my fingers. I want to incinerate these pages and erase the evidence of her obsession, but something holds me back. Her words ignite a fire in my veins, and I am captivated by her fantasy because it's so twisted. Suddenly, something that had fallen out of the journal caught my attention. I crouch down and pick it up, turning it over to see it's a photo—a mugshot to be exact. It intrigues me immediately.

Who is the man in the photo?

This is a side of her she's kept hidden away from everyone in her life, and now I hold it in my hands, a weapon more powerful than any knife.

I knew she wanted me, but this is pure insanity. An obsession I can't help but see as an invitation to embrace the deviance of her desires. An invitation I intend to accept.

I collect the journal from the floor and slip the photo back inside, a slow smile spreading. "Fuck, you've got no idea what you've unleashed."

I slip the journal back into its hiding spot, my fingers lingering on the worn leather cover. Eden's words burn in my mind. That darkness she craves? It's there, waiting, coiled like a serpent ready to strike.

My hand traces over her collection of stolen items. Each piece tells a story of her descent into obsession. The coffee cup is still stained. My boxer briefs and the work gloves that carry my scent. That shirt she's been sleeping in.

The corner of my mouth twitches. She's getting sloppy, leaving evidence everywhere.

I spread her photos across the bed. The angles, the timing—she must spend hours following me. In one, I'm mid-workout, muscles straining. Another catches me in the middle of pulling my shirt off while I work.

A burning hunger rises in my chest. I could take her now and end this game, but watching her unravel and composure crack each day feeds something dark within me. Her need mirrors my own, a reflection of a yearning too twisted for daylight.

I've watched her, too. The way she gets excited when I'm near. How her breath catches when our eyes meet. The slight tremor in her hands as she pretends to take

notes about the carnival. Each sign of her crumbling control is a victory, sweet as blood on my tongue.

Let her think she's the hunter. Let her obsession grow until it consumes her. When she finally breaks, when the last thread of her sanity snaps, I'll claim her. Not a moment before.

10

REMY

I sit across Ty in his office, watching him take a long drag from his cigarette. The smoke curls around us in the dimly lit space as he slides a piece of paper across it.

“These idiots think they can shake us down.” He taps the paper with two fingers. “Ten grand by midnight, or they’ll go to the cops about our operation.”

I scan the note, memorizing the meeting location. “Amateurs. If they knew anything about us, they wouldn’t make threats.”

“Exactly.” Ty leans back in his chair, eyes cold. “Usually, I’d send Nash’s crew to handle this, but they’ve got the big performance tonight. Can’t pull them from that.”

“The acrobatics is one of the most loved shows.” I nod, knowing Colt and Nash’s act is crucial to maintaining a legitimate facade.

“Which is why I need you to take care of this.” Ty’s voice carries that edge I know well—the one that means someone’s about to disappear. “Meeting point is the old lumber yard. Midnight.”

“They’re expecting cash?” I confirm.

“They’re expecting their money.” He stubs out his cigarette. “Make sure they don’t expect anything ever again.”

I pocket the note, already planning the cleanup. “Any preference on how it’s handled?”

“Clean. Quick. No traces.” Ty’s eyes meet mine. “Can’t have any loose ends threatening the operation.”

“Consider it done.” I stand, knowing our conversation is over. These wannabe extortionists picked the wrong carnival to threaten. By tomorrow, they’ll be nothing but a cautionary tale.

I step out of my trailer into the morning sun, already feeling those familiar eyes on me. Eden is getting bolder each day. The corner of my mouth twitches up as I grab my tool belt, making a show of adjusting it low on my hips.

Through my peripheral vision, I catch her ducking behind a cotton candy cart—an amateur move. She’s usually more careful than this, but her obsession is making her sloppy. I stretch deliberately, letting my shirt ride up to expose the tattoos crawling across my abs.

“Hey, Remy, need help with the new fence line?” Lars calls out.

I wave him off. “Got it covered.”

The physical work gives me an excuse to put on a performance. I drive posts into the ground with measured strikes, muscles flexing with each impact. Sweat begins to bead on my skin in the heat. I hear the faint click of a camera shutter, knowing she’s documenting every moment. She started with her iPhone camera, but I’m guessing she wanted to see more... so much more.

Eden thinks she’s the hunter here, studying me like one of the serial killers she talks about on her podcast. She has no idea I’m letting her get closer, feeding her obsession

bit by bit. I pull off my shirt, using it to wipe my face before tossing it aside. Another camera click.

“Looking good there, Remy,” one of the carnival girls calls out as she passes. I give her a nod, noting how Eden shifts restlessly in her hiding spot. The jealousy rolling off her is almost tangible.

I continue working, each movement calculated to draw her in deeper. My little stalker doesn’t realize she’s the one being hunted, but soon enough, she’ll learn what happens when you get too close to the monsters you study.

The metal fence post is cold against my palm as I position it. The tattoos etched across my torso tell stories I’ll never share—stories of blood and darkness that would make my little stalker’s fantasies seem tame.

A soft gasp is audible from behind the cotton candy cart. My cock hardens instantly at the sound of her need, straining against my jeans. I hide my smirk, pretending I haven’t heard her desperate intake of breath.

The sweat beading on my chest isn’t from exertion—the morning air is too crisp for that, but Eden doesn’t need to know. Let her imagine I’m working up a sweat. Let her trace every droplet with those greedy eyes. I arch my back as I drive the post deeper, ensuring she gets a good view of the muscles rippling across my back.

My cock throbs, knowing she’s probably squirming behind that cart, pressing her thighs together. She is a needy little thing, thinking she’s in control with her camera and notes. I flex deliberately as I reach for the next post, giving her something worth photographing.

The wind shifts, carrying her scent of wisteria and honeysuckle. My hands tighten on the post, imagining how I’ll make her gasp for real when the time comes. For now,

though, this game of cat and mouse continues.

I lower the post to the ground, pausing my task. My show is forgotten as I turn and stride towards the cotton candy stand, eyes scanning the fairground. No movement. Then—the faintest whimper.

She's touching herself. Right here in the open, this wild cat's playing with herself while she watches me. I circle the stand, and there she is. Face flushed, lips parted, eyes wide as she sees me. Her hands are buried under that short skirt of hers, and she's breathing heavily, hips shifting.

I tower over her, taking in her disheveled state. "Well, little stalker. Care to explain why you're hiding behind here?"

Eden's cheeks are scarlet now, eyes darting like a cornered animal. "I—I?—"

"Cat got your tongue?" I cross my arms, taking perverse pleasure in her embarrassment. "Seems you're enjoying the view a little too much."

She squeezes her eyes shut. "Fuck off."

"Make me." I step closer, invading her space.

She's breathless now, but her hands stay put, still exploring herself beneath that skirt. She's shameless, and it's so damn hot.

"Shouldn't you be keeping your hands to yourself?" I ask, lowering my voice to a dangerously quiet tone. "Or do you want an audience?"

She stops and snarls, pushing past me.

I laugh, grabbing her wrist and spinning her back to face me. The fire in her eyes is almost as hot as the heat between her thighs. I can practically taste her arousal in the air.

“Let go of me,” she hisses but makes no move to pull away.

“You’re the one who’s been stalking me. Come to see the monster up close?” I tighten my grip, pulling her closer. “Or maybe you wanted to be the next victim?”

Eden wrenches her hand free and takes a swing at me. I catch her wrist easily, and our bodies are flush against each other. Her eyes go wide, my intentions clear. She’s not running anymore. Not the little hunter. Not now.

“Why don’t we finish what you started here?” I grind myself against her, showing her exactly what she’s done to me.

Her chest is heaving, and she lets out a breathless laugh. “You think I’m scared of you?”

I chuckle, tightening my hold. “Oh, I know you are.” I crush my mouth to hers, showing her exactly what kind of monster I am. As I drag her deeper into our first kiss, I know she likes it. She’s practically vibrating against me as I pin her in place.

All thoughts of the extortionists are gone. Right now, Eden’s all that matters.

I force her against the cart, one hand pinning her wrists above her head, the other palming her breast under her shirt, thumb stroking her stiff peak. Her breasts are full and soft, and her skin is electric under my touch. This is what she wants—no, needs. To be taken with force, overwhelmed, claimed. I kiss her hard, biting down on her bottom lip until she whimpers, tasting the faint sweetness of cotton candy. My free hand slips under her skirt, finding her slick.

She moans into my mouth, squirming as my fingers delve into her heat, seeking that perfect spot that'll make her fall apart.

With deliberate slowness, I drag my fingers through her cunt, and she bucks against my hand, seeking more.

"Fuck, Remy," she breathes against my lips. "Please."

Just a little more, a little further. I press harder, my fingers stroking that delicious bundle of nerves, and she cries out.

I bend her back, exposing her throat as my fingers work her roughly. "This what you've been fantasizing about, little stalker? Getting fucked by the monster?"

"Yes," she gasps, nails digging into my arms.

"Tell me what you want." I nip at her neck, sucking a spot that'll leave a mark.

"I want you," she moans. "Please, fuck me. Now."

I smile against her skin as I bring her to the edge, circling that sweet clit, making sure she feels every inch of my finger. She's almost there—so close. But not yet.

This is where the true torture begins.

Pulling my hand free, I kiss her again, biting and sucking at her lips until she's breathless. My hands roam her body, teasing her breasts, her hips, her thighs; every touch is a promise of what's to come.

"Don't tease," she begs, trying to pull me closer. I chuckle, spinning her around and pushing her against the cart. Her chest heaves, and she looks over her shoulder at me,

eyes burning with frustration and arousal.

I capture her wrists, raise them above her head, and kiss my way down the length of her spine over her shirt, relishing the shivers that rake her body. My fingers dance over the V of her thighs, ghosting the edges of her soaked panties without giving her what she needs.

I step back, dragging my mouth from her. She whimpers and turns to face me, trying to follow me, but I hold her at arm's length.

“Enough.”

A flicker of confusion crosses her face. “But?—”

“Get the fuck away from me, Eden.” I shove her away, some part of me relishing how her eyes flash with hurt. “Get out of my sight.”

She stumbles back, blinking rapidly, and straightens herself. Those gorgeous tits of hers are heaving, nipples tight under that thin fabric. She thinks I'm tossing her aside, but she doesn't know the plan I've set in motion. She's falling deep into my spinning web and doesn't even realize it.

“What the fuck, Remy?” Her eyes are blazing now. “You want this as much as I do.”

I grab my shirt and pull it on. “Yeah, I wanted to see how far you'd go. But this isn't happening. This isn't some fucked-up fantasy for your pleasure.” I jerk my chin towards her crotch, towards that heat I haven't even gotten to taste yet. “Get the hell away from my carnival.”

She flinches like I struck her, and I know at that moment that I've found the chink in her armor. She'll do anything to get back in my good graces, whatever I demand of

her. This little stalker is about to become my pawn. I leave her standing there, eyes wide, mouth slightly open.

She wants control but doesn't know what it's like when true control takes hold. My control. She's already wrapped around my finger, desperate to taste what we almost had.

And that's exactly what I'll use against her. She'll do whatever I want now, thinking she's chasing after me. She has no idea she's playing right into my hands.

This isn't about satisfying her anymore—pushing her to the edge and letting her dangle there. She wants me? Fine. But she'll have to work for it now. By the time she's done, she'll be exactly where I want her—under my thumb and longing for more.

EDEN

The night air is frosty as I trail Remy's truck through the outskirts of town. My hands grip the steering wheel, and my heart thunders with anticipation. Each turn takes us further from the carnival grounds, deeper into industrial territory I never knew existed.

He pulls into a storage facility—all concrete and steel doors gleaming under fluorescent lights. I kill my lowlights and coast to a stop, maintaining enough distance to remain unseen while keeping him in view.

Remy exits his truck and approaches one of the larger units, unlocking it. Before he can disappear inside, another vehicle screeches into the lot. Two men jump out, faces twisted with anger.

"Where's our money?" The taller one advances on Remy, brandishing what looks like a pipe.

I duck lower in my seat, my pulse racing as I fumble for my phone to record, but I can't tear my eyes away from the scene unfolding.

Remy's response is lightning-fast. In one fluid motion, he disarms the first attacker and brings the pipe down on his knee. The crack echoes through the lot, followed by an agonized scream. The second man charges, but Remy is ready. His fist connects with devastating precision. Blood sprays across the concrete.

I should be horrified. I should be calling the police. Instead, heat floods my body as I watch Remy methodically disable both men. His movements are brutal, though executed with a practiced ease that makes each movement appear graceful, like a dance of destruction. Each impact sends shivers of excitement through me.

I sink deeper into my seat, pressing my thighs together. The violence should terrify me. Instead, I feel more alive than ever, electrified by this glimpse of his true nature.

I hold up my phone, recording every brutal second. The wet sounds of impact, the graceful arc of Remy's movements, the way his muscles flex with each devastating blow—I capture it all. My breath fogs the window as I lean closer, unwilling to miss a moment.

The blood spattering across the concrete looks black under the harsh lights. I bite my lip to hold back a moan as Remy stands over his victims, power radiating from every line of his body. Are they dead? Just unconscious? The uncertainty makes my skin tingle.

I zoom in as he drags their limp forms into the lockup, fascinated by how efficiently he moves—it seems he's done this countless times before. My free hand presses against my chest, monitoring my hammering heart.

Then his head snaps up. Even through the darkness and distance between us, I swear his eyes lock onto my car. My blood turns to ice as he straightens, his massive frame filling my phone screen.

“Shit, shit, shit.” I fumble with my keys, dropping my phone as Remy approaches me. The engine roars to life just as his shadow falls across my hood. I slam the car into reverse, tires squealing against the asphalt.

Through the windshield, I see him running after me, closing the distance with

inhuman speed. I spin the wheel, shifting into drive. My hands are slick with sweat as I floor it, heart in my throat. His footsteps echo behind me until I finally screech onto the main road.

Only when I'm miles away do I realize I'm panting, my whole body trembling with adrenaline. My phone lies forgotten on the floor, still recording. I'll watch the footage in my bed later, replaying every beautifully violent moment until I know it by heart.

I pull into the dimly lit motel parking lot, my hands still unsteady. The neon vacancy sign casts an eerie red glow across my dashboard. My breath finally starts to slow as I shut off the engine, sitting there momentarily to collect myself.

The parking lot is empty except for a few scattered vehicles. My legs feel weak as I leave the car, fumbling with my room key. The night air is cool against my flushed skin.

I go to my second-floor room, constantly glancing over my shoulder. Each shadow makes my heart skip. I triple-check the locks and draw all the curtains when I finally enter.

My phone feels heavy in my pocket, the footage burning a hole in my mind. I sit on the edge of the bed, opening the video. The harsh facility lights cast everything in stark relief—Remy's fluid movements, blood spraying, and pure power in every strike.

Heat floods my body as I watch it again and again. My breath comes faster with each viewing. I trace my fingers along my collarbone, remembering how he looked standing over his victims. So dangerous. So beautiful.

I'm not sure how long I sit there, transfixed by the gruesome beauty of his violence, but eventually, a languid warmth spreads through my limbs. My chest heaves with

every exhale, my skin buzzing with excited anticipation. The video plays again automatically, and I don't stop it.

I cup my breasts through my shirt, thumbs circling my already taut nipples. After he kissed me and touched me earlier today, I've been spiraling out of control. I can't stop touching myself, and this video is just making me more needy. I squeeze my nipples, biting my lip as Remy's image looms larger on the screen. He steps over the crumpled forms on the ground, prowling closer to the camera.

As the scene replays, I finally give in to my hunger. I tug my shirt over my head, revealing my lace bra. I undo the front clasp, freeing my breasts. My nipples pebble in the cool air, begging for attention.

His face fills the screen as he looks directly into the camera, and I tighten my grip on my breasts, breath catching. I squeeze harder, imagining it's his hands on me, rough and calloused from his work. I tweak my nipples between my fingers, hard enough to make me gasp.

Propping the phone up against a pillow, I undo my jeans next, shimmying out of them until I'm only in my panties. The cool air on my skin sends another shiver through me. I slip my fingers beneath the waistband, teasing myself, my eyes never leaving the screen.

Remy's face is closer now on the video, his eyes intense and dangerous. I moan, thinking of what those intense eyes would look like while he's devouring me. My fingers find my aching core, rubbing gentle circles over my panties.

"Remy," I moan his name, breath coming in short gasps as I imagine him in the room with me, his blood-soaked hands touching me, marking me as his. I know I should feel disgusted by what he did, but all I can think about is how glorious he looked doing it.

My fingers slip deeper inside my panties, and I whimper at how wet I am. Slowly, I circle my clit, eyes glued to the screen as Remy looms closer. I push a finger inside, crying out as I imagine him finally taking what he wants. My other hand reaches for my breast, pinching my nipple hard.

The video ends, and the screen goes dark, but I don't stop. I no longer need the visual aid. My mind supplies the details—his intense eyes, blood-spattered skin, deadly grace. I thrust my fingers into myself, moaning.

I imagine Remy's thick, hard cock driving into me over and over. My fingers work faster, my mouth forming his name repeatedly in a desperate litany. I picture his hands gripping my hips, leaving bruises, owning me.

Heat coils tighter and tighter in my core. I cry out, biting my lip to muffle the sound. Then I let go, hips bucking off the bed as I come, waves of pleasure washing over me. My body is sensitive as I imagine Remy's lips curling into a satisfied smile.

I collapse back against the pillows, panting, my body glistening with sweat. My heart is still pounding, my mind floating in a haze of sensation. Somewhere in the distance, I hear a knock on the door.

"Room service," a muffled voice calls.

I freeze, panic clawing at my chest. I didn't order room service. The knock comes again, louder this time. "Ma'am? You ordered room service?"

My door bursts open a moment later, and Remy fills the frame. His eyes lock onto mine, wild and dangerous.

"You're coming with me, little stalker."

I lunge for my phone, but Remy crosses the room in two strides. My heart hammers against my ribs as I back away.

“What the fuck are you doing in my room?” I try to keep my voice steady, but fear makes it waver. “Get out before I scream.”

His laugh is dark, predatory. “Go ahead. No one will hear you.”

I dive for the bathroom, but he catches me mid-stride. His massive hand wraps around my throat, and he slams me against the wall. The impact knocks the breath from my lungs.

“Did you enjoy the show tonight?” His grip tightens just enough to make me gasp. “Think I didn’t see you lurking in the shadows?”

I should be terrified, but heat pools in my belly as his body presses against mine, pinning me in place. His thumb traces my racing pulse, and I bite back a whimper.

“I don’t know what you’re talking about,” I say, but my voice comes out breathy and weak.

His other hand grabs my wrist, pinning it above my head. “The lockup. The fight. You recorded everything, didn’t you?” His breath is hot against my ear. “Such a naughty little stalker.”

I struggle against his grip, but it only makes him press closer. The rough denim of his jeans scrapes against my bare thighs, and I realize with horror that I’m still only wearing my panties, and my breasts are completely bare.

“Let me go,” I whisper, arching into his touch.

His grip on my throat flexes. “We both know you don’t want that.” His eyes are dark with dangerous promise. “I saw how you watched me.”

I struggle against Remy’s iron grip, my heart racing. He reaches into his pocket with his free hand. The glint of a small glass vial catches the dim motel light.

“What is that?” My voice comes out shaky.

“Shh, beautiful. Just something to help you relax.” His thumb traces along my jawline as he uncaps the vial with his other hand.

I try to turn my head away, but his grip tightens. “No, please?—”

He presses the vial to my lips. The bitter liquid hits my tongue before I can clamp my mouth shut. I try to spit it out, but his hand clamps over my mouth and nose, forcing me to swallow.

“There’s my good girl,” he murmurs.

The room starts to spin almost immediately. My legs turn to rubber beneath me, and I sag against his chest. His arms wrap around me, surprisingly gentle, as he lowers me to the floor.

“Just let go, Eden. Stop fighting it.”

My vision blurs around the edges. I try to focus on Remy's face hovering above me, but it keeps doubling and shifting. My tongue feels too thick for my mouth.

“Why?” I manage to whisper.

His smile is the last thing I see clearly. “Because you’ve seen too much.”

Darkness creeps in from the corners of my vision. Remy's handsome face grows dimmer and dimmer until everything fades to black.

12

REMY

I sit in my trailer, watching through the security feed as Eden stirs on the chair. Her eyes flutter open, confusion clouding her features as she takes in her new surroundings. The concrete walls of the on-site storage container's hidden room are now covered in her obsession—every photo she took of me pinned up like a shrine to her stalking.

She stumbles to her feet, those perfect breasts bouncing, still totally naked, aside from her little lace panties. She reaches out to touch one of the photos. Her fingers trace over an image of me working shirtless at the carnival. I notice her breath catch as she realizes how much of her collection I've discovered.

The journal entries are the most revealing. I highlighted the passages where she described watching me sleep, her late-night visits to my trailer, and the times she followed me into town. Her handwriting grows more frenzied in the recent entries, matching her escalating obsession.

Ten minutes pass as I let her absorb the extent to which her fixation has been exposed. Time to make my entrance.

I unlock the heavy door, the sound making her spin around. She reaches up to cover her milky white breasts and hard nipples. Cute but a little late for modesty.

“Good morning, little stalker.” I close the door behind me, enjoying how she backs

away until she hits the wall. “I thought you might appreciate the decor. Your work deserves to be displayed properly.”

“How long was I out?” Her voice is thick with an undertone of excitement she can’t quite hide.

“Long enough for me to learn all about you, Eden.” I step closer, watching her pulse jump at her throat. “Every dark, dirty fantasy. Every twisted daydream you conjure in that warped mind of yours.” I reach past her to tap one of her journal entries. “You’ve been a very thorough observer. Now it’s my turn to watch you.”

Her chest rises and falls rapidly, caught between fear and arousal. I can see it in her eyes—the thrill of finally being caught, of having her obsession acknowledged. She’s where she’s always wanted to be, even if she won’t admit it.

I trace my finger down her flushed cheek. “Did you think I didn’t notice? The way you’d linger at the carnival after hours? The gift you left in my trailer?”

Eden’s eyes widen. “You knew?”

“From the first day.” I lean closer, inhaling her scent. “I watched you take photos from behind the Ferris wheel. Saw you follow me into town.” Her face flushes a deep shade of red at that revelation. “You’re not as subtle as you think, beautiful.”

I pull her podcast microphone from my bag and set it on the small table. “Now, we have a problem to solve. People will start looking for you.” I plug in the equipment. “So you’re going to record a new episode of Shadow Stories. Tell your listeners you’re taking a break to follow a lead out of state.”

“And if I refuse?”

I grip her chin, forcing her to meet my gaze. “Then I release all the evidence of your stalking to the cops. The photos. The journal entries detailing your obsession with death. Those letters from inmates.” I smile as understanding dawns in her eyes. “Your career would be over. Who’d trust a true crime podcaster with such dark proclivities?”

She reaches for the microphone.

I press record and nod for her to begin.

“Welcome back to Shadow Stories,” she starts, her professional voice slightly wavering. “I’m your host, Eden Love, and I have some exciting news...”

I lean against the wall, watching Eden record her podcast message. Her voice carries that polished tone she’s perfected over years of broadcasting, though I catch the slight tremor beneath her words. Professional even in captivity—it’s impressive.

My body tenses as she drops the arm covering her tits. She glances up at me between sentences, back arched and those green eyes flashing with an ounce of fear. Still, it’s underlined by her obsessive desire. She knows what she’s doing because each look she gives me makes my cock stiffen in my jeans.

She grips the microphone with white-knuckled force, but her delivery stays smooth. The control she maintains only makes me want to break it more. I shift my stance, trying to ease the growing tension in my body.

“And I’ll be back with new episodes once I complete my investigation,” she finishes.

Beautiful. The way her chest rises with each breath. How her fingers fidget with the mic cord. The slight flush that creeps up her neck.

I've watched her for weeks, learning her patterns as she studied mine. But having her here, trapped and vulnerable, knowing every twisted fantasy she's written about me in those journals—it's better than I imagined.

The power dynamics have shifted. My prey has become my captive, and the thrill of finally having her at my mercy courses through me. She's mine now like she's wanted to be since that first day she saw me.

I push off from the wall and approach her slowly, savoring how she tenses at my proximity. "Good girl," I murmur, reaching past her to stop the recording. "You did exactly as you were told."

I can feel the heat radiating from her body and smell the light floral scent of her shampoo; having her this close is intoxicating.

A flash of frustration crosses her features.

"Do you call all your girls that?" Eden's voice carries a sharp edge. "Including the one I saw in your chat log on your computer?"

A smirk tugs at my lips. Her jealousy is delicious, so transparent in her clenched jaw and narrowed eyes. "What if I do?"

She tries to mask her reaction but is not very good at it. Eden is jealous. The chat logs with "Baby Girl" mean nothing. They're just another lonely soul seeking connection through a screen, trading fantasies in the dark, cold hours. We've never met, but Eden doesn't need to know that.

"You went through my private messages," I remind her, stepping closer. "Broke into my trailer and snooped through my computer." I tap her chin. "That's bold for someone who claims to be just a podcaster doing research."

Her nostrils flare. “I was investigating.”

“Is that what you call stalking these days?” I circle her, enjoying how she tracks my movement. “Tell me, Eden, did you like what you read in those messages? Did it keep you up at night imagining it?”

A flush creeps up her neck, but she lifts her chin defiantly. “I was being thorough.”

“Thoroughly obsessed,” I correct her. The messages sit forgotten in my chat box, meaningless compared to the living, breathing manifestation of desire standing before me. Eden’s jealousy only proves how deep her fixation runs.

I pick up her journal from the metal table. Its leather is worn and filled with her obsessive thoughts. Each page documents her descent into fixation with meticulous detail. My fingers trace over her hurried writing, feeling the indentations where she pressed too hard in excitement.

“You know what fascinates me most about this?” I hold the journal, watching her eyes track it like a lifeline. “How you started so clinical, analyzing carnival patterns and disappearances. But then—” I flip through the pages, “—it becomes all about me. Every entry, every observation, every dark little fantasy.”

The way she shrinks into the chair, trying to distance herself from her written confessions, makes my blood sing. Such delicious shame mixed with that undeniable hunger in her eyes.

“Tell me, Eden, do you document all your podcast interviewees so thoroughly?” I step closer. “Or am I special?”

Her silence speaks volumes. I can almost hear her heart racing, seeing the internal war between her professional facade and her ravenous need to continue her chosen

path. Perfect.

“You’ve spent weeks studying me, learning my patterns.” I tap the journal against my palm. “Now it’s my turn. I will take you apart piece by piece until I understand every dark corner of your mind.”

The shiver that runs through her body isn’t from fear—no, this is wanton anticipation. She’s been waiting for this moment, even if she won’t admit it. All those hours watching from the shadows, collecting pieces of my life, fantasizing about being caught.

I lean in close, breathing in her scent. “I’m going to break down every wall you’ve built, little stalker. Strip away every pretense until there’s nothing left but your obsession.” My fingers grip the journal tighter. “And when I’m done, you’ll never even think about fixating on anyone else.”

EDEN

“Y ou’re going to read to me now.” Remy breaks the silence, his voice low and commanding. “Loud and clear. No stuttering or skipping words.”

My breath catches in my throat as he picks up my journal—the one where I unleash my deepest, most perverse desires. I can only imagine the filth he’s about to force me to read. Remy’s eyes skim the pages, no doubt soaking in my explicit fantasies, each one making his mouth twitch with growing amusement.

He hands me the journal, his finger marking the page. “Read this part. Every word. Don’t you dare censor yourself for my sake.”

My heart pounds as I take the journal from him, my eyes dropping to the passage he wants to hear. This is one of my wildest fantasies. I never thought I’d be forced to share it with anyone.

I begin to read, my voice unsure at first but gaining strength as I become lost in the words.

“He was wearing a mask which hid his face but I knew it was Remy. I could see his eyes through the holes as they fixed on me. He had me tied to the bed, spread-eagle with my thighs tied to my calves and my wrists tied to the headboard, completely vulnerable.”

My breath quickens as I recall the scenario I concocted in my mind.

“I struggled against the restraints, but Remy just laughed, the sound low and menacing. He moved closer, his body towering over me. I could smell his cologne.”

I pause, my cheeks flaming with embarrassment, but Remy’s intense gaze urges me on.

“He didn’t say a word. He just looked at me, this dangerous glint in his eyes. I knew what he wanted. I begged him to stop, but deep down, I pleaded for him to give me what I needed.”

I swallow hard, my body reacting to the fantasy.

“Remy didn’t touch me at first. He just looked at me, this possession in his eyes. Then, his hand connected with my ass hard. I cried out, and he slapped me again and again, leaving my skin stinging and red.”

I take a shaky breath.

“Remy stood back, just watching the marks he’d made on my body. Then, he touched me, his fingers breaching my asshole without warning. I cried out, but he kept pushing inside me, forcing me to take it.

“I wanted to resist, but my body betrayed me. My back arched of its own accord, pushing against his hand, craving more. So, he gave it to me. He shoved another finger inside me, then a third, easing me open, preparing me for what was to come.

Remy removed his fingers, and I whimpered, needing more. Then, I watched him lube his huge cock. I knew what was coming, and I couldn’t escape it. He grabbed my hips and pushed inside my asshole in one sharp thrust. I cried out, my body

stretched around him, taking him in.

Remy didn't go easy on me. He started pounding into me, hard and rough, just like I knew he would. The bed creaked beneath us, the sound punctuating each of his brutal thrusts. I was aware of the sting of the slaps he'd given me earlier, the bite of the restraints on my wrists, but it all fueled my need.

I begged him to fuck me harder, and he obliged. Remy pulled out almost entirely, then slammed back into me, forcing a moan from my throat. Over and over, he claimed me, each thrust blurring the line between pleasure and pain. I was lost in the feeling of being utterly possessed by him.

The mask hid his expression, but I could sense the intensity in the way he held me. I whispered Remy's name over and over, a mantra of surrender.

He leaned down, his mouth by my ear. "You're mine," he growled, his voice hoarse. "Say it."

"I'm yours," I gasped, and as I spoke the words, Remy thrust into me one last time, sharp and deep, burying himself within me. My body pulsed around his cock, and I cried out as I found my release, my world shattering into a million pieces.

Even as the pleasure washed over me, I knew this wasn't the end. It was just the beginning. There was so much more I wanted from him, so much more I needed to experience. I wanted to explore every twisted fantasy with Remy as my guide, my master.

And in that moment, as I lay there, spent, I knew that I would do absolutely anything to make those fantasies a reality."

"Now it's my turn." Remy's voice is impossibly deep, and my heart skips a beat at its

dangerous edge. My eyes flicker around the small, closed space, hoping for an escape route, but nothing. I'm trapped here with this man, and he knows it.

He closes the distance between us, his eyes burning into mine, and my breath hitches in my throat. This is it. There's no going back. I'm at his mercy, and something about that sends a thrill through me. I feel vulnerable, and yet, I crave this—crave him.

Remy takes his time, his eyes roaming over me as if deciding where to begin. His gaze lingers on my lips before trailing down to my breasts, where my heart is hammering so hard I'm surprised he can't hear it.

Then, his eyes land on my legs, and a dark smile plays on his lips. "Keep reading." He gestures to my journal, still clutched in my hand. "I want to hear more."

I swallow hard, my mouth dry as I comply, flicking through the pages to find where I left off.

"He was still inside me, feeling his cock twitch as it pulsed with his release. Remy stayed there, buried deep, his forehead resting against mine."

I suck in a shaky breath, my eyes closing for a moment as I relive the fantasy in my mind.

"Remy's arms wrapped around me, holding me tight, trapping me against him. I felt so deliciously caged, completely at his mercy. He nuzzled my neck, his breath hot against my skin. I wanted to beg him to fuck me again, but I didn't dare."

I pause, the memory of the words I wrote making my cheeks flush.

"Then, he whispered in my ear, his voice like gravel. "Mine," he said. Just that one word, but it sent a shiver down my spine. And I knew, in that moment, that I was

his.”

I open my eyes to find Remy much closer. “Say it,” he commands, his voice brooking no argument.

My heart is pounding in my ears, but I force the word past my lips. “Yours.”

Something flickers in his eyes—a spark of satisfaction, perhaps? Whatever it is, it makes my core clench with need.

He grabs my chin and angles my face up, staring into my eyes intently. Suddenly, he grabs my wrists and forces them against each arm of the chair I’m sitting in.

“Stay still,” he warns, and I find myself obeying, my heart hammering in my chest as he secures my wrists tightly to the chair with rough rope. I pull at the restraints, testing their strength, but it’s useless.

Remy steps back, his eyes roaming over me like a predator about to feast. “Such a beautiful little stalker,” he murmurs. “And all mine.”

I swallow hard, my mouth suddenly dry as I watch him approach me. He reaches out, his fingers trailing along my neck, down my chest, until they reach the hem of my panties. With a sharp tug, he rips them from me. I can feel the cool air on my pussy, and my breath quickens.

I’m exposed, bare, and a part of me wants to cover myself, to hide from his intense gaze. Another part of me wants him to look and see exactly what he does to me.

His fingers trail along my inner thigh, inching closer to my core, and my breath catches in my throat. “Please,” I whisper, unsure what I’m begging for. Release? Mercy? Or for him to continue?

Remy chuckles. “Please, what, Eden? Tell me what you want.” His fingers inch closer, and I feel his breath on my exposed skin.

I open my mouth to speak, but no words come out. How can I possibly voice the filthy things I want him to do to me? My silence seems to amuse him, and he leans closer, his lips brushing my ear. “Tell me, and I might just make it happen.”

“I...” My voice fails me, and I bite my lip.

“You what?” His fingers ghost over my core, teasing but not touching where I need him.

“I... want you.” The words are barely a whisper, but they hang in the air between us.

There’s a flicker of triumph in his eyes, a spark of satisfaction, and I know he will make me say it. “What do you want me to do to you?”

His fingers are still hovering over my core, his breath warm against my skin. I can feel my pulse throbbing between my legs. My body is aching for release. I take a shaky breath, steeling myself. “I want you to...” I hesitate, my voice trailing off.

Remy arches an eyebrow, clearly enjoying my struggle. “Yes, little stalker?”

“I want...” My cheeks flame with embarrassment. “I want you to take me against my will.” The words hang between us, thick with desire and forbidden longings.

His eyes widen momentarily at my daring, and I see a flicker of surprise on his face. “That’s a very specific fantasy.” His voice is low. “Have you ever done anything like this before?”

I shake my head, feeling so vulnerable, but there’s no going back now.

He considers me, and then a slow, dangerous smile spreads. “And here I thought you were just some obsessed podcaster. Guess there’s more to you than meets the eye, huh?”

I can’t speak, but I nod, my heart pounding. I’ve crossed a line and revealed a part of myself that no one else knows. And now, I’m at his mercy.

“Well, if we’re going to do this, we need a safe word.” His tone is serious, reminding me that this is not a game. “Anything can happen once we start. So, we need a way for you to tell me if you’ve changed your mind and really want to stop.”

I feel a surge of relief at his words. He understands the potential dangers.

“Okay.” My voice is hoarse, my throat dry. “A safe word. Yes.”

His eyes light up with amusement. “How about carnival ? It’s fitting, given the circumstances.”

My heart skips a beat as I consider the word. It’s perfect, a word I would never use normally, but one that will get his attention if things go too far. “Yes. Carnival. That’s... that’s good.”

Remy nods. “All right, we have a deal, but I’m in control once we start. Understand?”

“Yes.” My voice is steady now, and my resolve is strong. I want this—need this—more than anything. “I understand.”

“Good.” He steps closer, towering over me.

A slow smile spreads across his face. He knows exactly what his proximity is doing to my body, and he’s enjoying every second of my torture. “For now, we have other

things to take care of, don't we?"

My mouth turns dry as his fingers trail along my inner thigh, higher and higher, closer to the place that aches for his touch. "What... what things?" My voice comes out as a hoarse whisper.

Remy chuckles, the sound sending shivers down my spine. "Your journal here is very illuminating. You've been imagining all sorts of things you want me to do to you. And I do aim to please."

He pauses, his fingers hovering above my pussy. "So, why don't we start with something nice and simple?" He brushes his fingers over my clit, and my hips jerk at the contact. "How does that sound?"

I bite my lip, feeling a rush of anticipation mixed with embarrassment. "I... yes, that sounds..." I trail off.

"Good." His tone leaves no room for argument. "Then, I think it's time to give you what you've been craving."

And then, without warning, he dives in, his mouth finding my cunt, his tongue tasting me, teasing me, sending sparks of pleasure through me. I moan, my hips bucking off the chair, but the restraints keep me in place. His hands grasp my thighs, holding me down as he devours me, feasting on my arousal, driving me wild.

It's too much and not enough. I'm overwhelmed by the sensation, my body trembling with need as he continues his assault, his tongue working me to a frenzy. My release is building, coiling tightly within me, ready to explode.

The moment I'm teetering on the edge, he stops. He lifts his head, a dark smile on his face, and I whimper. "Please," I beg, unsure what I'm pleading for.

Mercy or completion?

Remy laughs. “You’re a sight, little stalker. All desperate and wanting.” He leans in close. “But I think we need to stop for now.”

I shake my head, unable to form words as I plead with my eyes, silently begging him to finish what he started.

“Don’t worry. This isn’t over.” His fingers ghost over my pussy, sending shocks of pleasure through me. “I promise you’ll get what you need, but it’ll be on my terms and when you least expect it.”

He stands, and I’m left breathless and tied to the chair, desperate for release. “I want you to sit here and think about what just happened. Think about what’s to come. Anticipation is such a delicious feeling, don’t you think?”

I nod, unable to speak, my body still thrumming with need.

He smirks. “Good. I’ll be back for you. And trust me, it’ll be worth the wait.” He turns and walks away, leaving me tied to the chair, aching for release, my body still reverberating with the pleasure he gave me.

I close my eyes, my mind reeling, trying to process what happened. Remy played me like a violin, pushing me to the edge and stopping, leaving me desperate for more.

I’m torn between frustration and anticipation. Part of me wants to rip free of these restraints and go after him, demanding that he finish what he started. However, there’s another part of me—a more deviant part, that thrives at the thought of waiting, of being completely at his mercy.

And as I sit here, bound and wanting, I realize this is exactly what I wanted. We’re

playing this dangerous, thrilling game without rules, and the lines between predator and prey have blurred.

14

REMY

I sit in my trailer, staring at the monitors showing Eden sitting in the on-site torture trailer. The leather of my chair creaks as I lean forward, studying her exhausted form. Even bound and disheveled, she maintains that air of careful control that first caught my attention.

My phone buzzes with a message from Ty about tonight's shipment. The carnival's legitimate business needs attention, too, but my thoughts keep drifting back to my beautiful stalker.

Running my hand over my face, I check the time. Twenty-three hours since I left her there, wanting and desperate. The memory of her pleading eyes haunts me. I've dealt with obsessed women before, but Eden is different. Her calculated pursuit, the meticulous notes, the way she analyzes everything and craves the darkness in me.

The security feeds show her shifting restlessly against her bonds. Even after hours of captivity, her mind stays sharp, those green eyes scanning for weaknesses.

My little stalker, turning from hunter to prey.

I should focus on the shipment arrangements, checking inventory, and coordinating with Lars and the others. Instead, I find myself watching footage of Eden. She'd built such detailed profiles of everyone at the carnival but failed to realize she was also being studied.

My fingers drum against the desk as I consider my options. I can't keep her in there indefinitely, but the idea of letting her go makes my jaw clench. She's seen too much and knows too much. More than that, she understands too much. The darkness she's glimpsed calls to her own.

I check my watch again, willing myself to focus on the logistics spreadsheet rather than the security feed showing Eden. The numbers blur together as my mind drifts to her bound form, imagining the marks the rope has left on her pale skin.

My phone lights up with a message from Lars, this time about tonight's shipment. We're short two men for the drop, and the buyers are getting antsy. I shoot back my reply, but my attention keeps returning to those feeds.

Eden shifts in her restraints, and I feel my cock twitch. The way she tests her bonds, methodical even now, speaks to that calculating mind of hers. She's not just another stalker—she's someone who could actually understand our operation, maybe even improve it. The thought both intrigues and unsettles me.

Ty's warnings echo in my head. Bringing her deeper into our world risks everything we've built, but watching her piece together the patterns and seeing that hungry look when she discovered our darker activities tells me she craves this as much as I do.

I adjust my rock-hard dick, fighting the urge to go to her now. The anticipation is part of the game—let her stew while I prepare everything.

I open the schematics for my trailer on my laptop, marking the modifications needed. The reinforced door and blacked-out windows are already in place, but I need better soundproofing before moving Eden. I can't have her screams drawing attention.

My phone buzzes again with another message about tonight's drop. I swipe it away, focusing instead on the supplies I'll need. Shower essentials, basic clothing, food that

doesn't require utensils—everything must be carefully controlled.

The empty space beside my bed will fit a small mattress. It's not comfortable, but it's better than the trailer floor. I make a note to add restraint points to the frame. The bathroom's too small for her to barricade herself in.

Lars can handle the drop tonight. He's done it before. My attention returns to the security feed, where Eden dozes fitfully.

The trailer just needs those final touches. Once she's settled in, I'll remind her who's in control, thinking she's earned some small measure of comfort. Let her get clean and feel somewhat human again—then take it all away.

I pull up the container footage from earlier, watching her read from her journal to me. Her cheeks flushed with each word, those pink nipples growing hard. Her breathing quickened, and her thighs pressed together instinctively.

My phone vibrates insistently, probably Ty wondering why I haven't confirmed the drop time. Still, all I can think about is Eden's face when she realizes her new cage is another form of control. When she understands that every small comfort comes with a price.

I'm jolted from my thoughts by a sharp knock at my trailer door. Shifting my attention from the monitors, I let out a frustrated breath.

"For fuck's sake, Remy. Open up." Lars's voice carries through the metal.

Running a hand through my hair, I stride to the door and yank it open. Lars stands there, arms crossed, looking less than impressed.

"Been trying to reach you." He shoulders past me into the trailer, eyes catching the

security feeds. “Ty’s about to lose his shit. Buyers moved up the timeline.”

“What do you mean moved up?” I grab my phone, reading the string of messages I’d ignored.

“They want to meet in one hour at the lumber yard.” Lars picks up my discarded jacket from the chair. “Get your head in the game. I know you’re having fun with the podcaster, but we have work to do.”

I check the time again. “That’s not enough notice.”

“Tell that to them.” Lars tosses my jacket at me. “Ty’s already at the location doing recon. He needs you there in twenty.”

Glancing at the monitor showing Eden, I weigh my options.

Lars follows my gaze. “She’s not going anywhere, but this shipment is worth more than she is. Get moving.”

I grab my keys from the desk and take one last look at the feeds. “Fine. But I need to check the cameras every thirty minutes while I’m gone.”

“Whatever gets you out that door.” Lars pushes me toward it.

I slam my trailer door, rage simmering beneath my skin. Twenty-three hours. That’s all I’ve had with Eden, and already, she’s crawling under my skin like an addiction I can’t beat. The need to watch her, control her, possess her—it’s becoming an obsession that rivals her own.

The gravel crunches under my boots as I stalk to my van. Lars’s motorcycle idles ahead, his impatient rev echoing through the empty carnival grounds. The leather of

my steering wheel creaks under my white-knuckled grip.

My mind keeps drifting back to the security feeds, to Eden testing her bonds. Even now, I find myself checking my phone, the urge to pull up the camera feed almost overwhelming.

Lars's bike roars away, and I force myself to focus. The van's engine turns over with a growl that matches my mood. Following his taillights down the dark road, I try to compartmentalize—business first. Always business first. That's what's kept us successful.

My grip tightens on the wheel as I imagine what Eden's doing now, how she's processing her captivity.

Lars takes a sharp turn, and I follow, the van's suspension protesting. The lumber yard isn't far, but every mile takes me further from where I want to be. The rational part of my brain knows Lars is right—this shipment matters more than my fascination with Eden.

Still, my jaw clenches as I check the time again. One hour and thirty minutes. Then, I can return to my beautiful stalker and show her exactly what happens to those who dig too deep into our operation.

I pull up to the lumberyard behind Lars, killing the engine. Ty paces near his black SUV, phone pressed to his ear. His sharp gesture when he spots us tells me everything about his mood.

Lars dismounts his bike, pulling off his helmet. "Told you he'd be pissed."

"Got here as fast as I could." I slam the van door, scanning the shadows. Gage materializes from behind a stack of lumber, his skull mask gleaming in the dim light.

“Nice of you to join us.” Ty ends his call. “The fuck were you thinking, going radio silent?”

“I had something to handle.” I meet his glare.

“Your podcaster can wait. This is a million-dollar shipment.” Ty runs a hand through his hair. “Colt’s dealing with a twisted ankle from his act, Nash is covering his performance with Flora. We’re already short-handed.”

Lars leans against his bike. “Could’ve used Phoenix’s eyes on the cameras.”

“Tech boy’s got man flu or some shit.” Ty checks his watch. “Buyers will be here in forty. Gage, perimeter check.”

Gage nods once, melting back into the shadows without a sound. His silence used to unnerve me, but now it’s almost comforting. At least someone’s focused on the job.

“Next time you want to play with your food, clear it with me first.” Ty jabs a finger at my chest. “We’ve got a system. It works because everyone stays in their lane.”

I grunt my agreement, swallowing the sharp retort on my tongue. Ty’s right—the system works because we play our part, even if my mind keeps drifting back to Eden.

“Sofia’s handling the show tonight?” I ask, helping Lars unload equipment from the van.

“Yeah, my girl’s got the crowd eating from her palm.” Pride colors Ty’s voice. “Said she wanted more practice with the night shows.”

The mention of Sofia reminds me how much Ty’s changed since she came into his life. He used to micromanage every aspect of the carnival. Still, lately, he’s let her

take over more of the ringmaster's duties. Not that anyone's complaining—she's got a natural talent for it.

“Alright, let's get this shit sorted.” Ty checks his phone again. “Lars, take the north position. Remy, you're with me on the exchange. Gage will cover our backs.”

We fall into our familiar roles, the routine of it settling my thoughts. The weight of the duffle bag in my hand grounds me in the present moment. This matters now—not the green-eyed stalker who's consumed my thoughts.

Ty's phone buzzes. “Buyers are early. Everyone in position.”

I shoulder the bag, following Ty to the meeting point. In the distance, the carnival lights paint the sky in neon. Sofia's commanding the crowd's attention somewhere under that glow, giving Ty the freedom to handle this side of our operation.

I stand beside Ty as headlights sweep across the lumber yard. Miguel Martinez's black SUV pulls up, flanked by two more vehicles. More muscle than usual suggests he isn't happy about the price adjustment.

“Six guards?” I say to Ty. “He's spoiling for trouble.”

Ty adjusts his jacket. “Let me handle the talking.”

Miguel steps out, his expensive suit starkly contrasting to the dusty yard. His face remains neutral, but the tension in his shoulders speaks volumes.

“Tyson.” Miguel's accent wraps around the name like steel. “That was some bullshit message you sent about the new rates.”

“Cost of business, Miguel.” Ty keeps his tone light. “Everything's going up these

days.”

“Twenty percent is not going up . It’s robbery.” Miguel’s guards spread out, hands hovering near concealed weapons.

I shift my weight, cataloging threats and escape routes.

“You know how it is,” Ty says. “Fuel costs, border security, new routes. We’re eating most of the increase ourselves.”

Miguel’s laugh holds no humor. “You expect me to believe that? The carnival’s been a good cover for years, but don’t get greedy now.”

“Take it or leave it.” Ty’s voice hardens. “You won’t find another operation as clean as ours. How many shipments have we lost? How many arrests?”

The silence stretches as Miguel considers. His men grow restless, fingers twitching near holsters. One wrong move and this yard becomes a war zone.

“Perhaps we should discuss this further,” Miguel finally says. “In private.”

“Nothing to discuss.” Ty stands his ground. “New rate starts tonight. Your choice if you want the shipment.”

I watch Miguel’s jaw work as he processes Ty’s ultimatum. His right hand keeps twitching toward his jacket, which is a classic tell for a concealed shoulder holster. The pulse in his neck throbs visibly.

“Fine.” He spits the word like poison. “But this conversation isn’t over.”

Miguel snaps his fingers, and one of his men brings forward a briefcase. The clasps

click open with sharp precision. Even in the dim light, I can see the neat stacks of bills inside.

Ty doesn't flinch as Miguel practically throws the case at him. "Always a pleasure doing business."

I proceed with our duffel, maintaining eye contact with Miguel's crew. The exchange happens fast. But there's no usual casual banter, no subtle nods of respect.

Miguel snatches the bag, checking the contents with quick, angry movements. His nostrils flare as he zips it closed. "Twenty percent. You're playing a dangerous game."

Ty's voice stays steady. "Nothing personal."

"Everything in this business is personal." Miguel's dark eyes lock onto mine briefly before shifting back to Ty. "Remember that."

His crew piles back into their vehicles, engines growling to life. Miguel's the last to leave, his rigid posture screaming fury as he slides behind the wheel. The SUVs kick up dust as they tear out of the lumber yard, their taillights disappearing into the darkness.

"Well, that was fun." Ty hefts the briefcase. "Let's get this counted and stored before the night show ends."

I notice how his shoulders stay tense, and his eyes scan the shadows. Miguel's not the type to let this slide; we both know it.

Lars materializes from his position, Gage a silent shadow behind him. "That could have gone better."

“Got the money, didn’t we?” Ty walks toward his Mustang. “Job done.”

I watch Miguel’s taillights fade into the darkness, but the tension in my gut doesn’t ease. Years of carnival life have taught me to read people, and Miguel’s rage wasn’t just about the price hike. There was something deeper there, something personal.

The briefcase sits heavy in the van as I return to the carnival. Ty might be satisfied with the money in hand, but I’ve seen that look in a man’s eyes before. Miguel’s not the type to swallow his pride and pay up. He’s the type to smile, nod, and plan something nasty behind your back.

My knuckles whiten on the steering wheel. We’ve built something solid here—the carnival, the routes, the clean operation. All it takes is one pissed-off client with a grudge to bring attention we don’t need. Especially now, with Eden in play.

Eden. My mind drifts back to her, tied in the on-site storage container. Part of me wants to forget Miguel’s threats and lose myself in her obsession, but survival comes first. Always has.

I pull my phone out of my jacket at a red light, sending a quick text to Phoenix. We need eyes on Miguel’s operation, now more than ever. The tech genius might be fighting the flu, but he’s still our best shot at early warning if Miguel tries something stupid.

The carnival lights paint the sky ahead of me, and I can’t shake the feeling that we’re sitting on a powder keg. Miguel, Eden, the whole operation—one spark in the wrong place could blow it all apart.

15

EDEN

The metal door creaks, and my eyes flutter open at the harsh light streaming in. My muscles protest from being bound to this chair for what feels like forever. The smell of my own urine makes me burn with shame.

Remy's silhouette fills the doorway, and despite everything, the hunger gnawing at my stomach, my dry mouth, the humiliation of soiling myself, my heart still races at the sight of him.

"You left me here." My voice comes out raspy. "I had to..." I glance down at the puddle on the chair, unable to finish the sentence.

He steps closer, and I catch that masculine scent that drew me to him at the carnival. I should be terrified, angry, trying to escape. Instead, I'm fighting the urge to lean into him.

"When can I use a bathroom?" I shift uncomfortably in the chair. "And maybe get some water? Food?"

The rope bindings dig into my wrists as I adjust my position. "Please, Remy. I'll do whatever you want. Just basic human needs here."

My stomach growls, a testament to how long it's been since my last meal. I hate appearing weak in front of him, but there's no hiding my body's fundamental needs.

My throat tightens as Remy moves behind my chair. The ropes fall away, and I rub my raw wrists.

“That’s why I’m here.” His breath brushes my ear. “You’re moving into my trailer. I’ve reinforced it and made it special for you.”

Heat floods my cheeks, not from fear or anger like it should be, but from a sick thrill that races through my body. What kind of person gets excited about being kept prisoner? I can’t deny the way my pulse quickens at his announcement.

“Stand up,” he commands.

My legs are unsteady when I rise, partly from being bound so long, partly from anticipation. Shame burns in my chest at my eagerness. I’m supposed to investigate this carnival, exposing whatever dark operation he’s involved in. Instead, I’m practically trembling at the thought of being locked away in his private space.

“I...” The words catch in my throat. I want to protest, to maintain some illusion of resistance. Still, my nipples harden, and warmth pools between my legs.

Remy’s knowing smirk tells me he sees right through me. Remy knows how twisted I am and how much this situation turns me on. And why wouldn’t he? He’s read my journal and seen my darkest fantasies spelled out in black and white.

“Your pulse is racing,” he observes, fingers brushing my neck. “But not from fear, is it?”

I close my eyes, mortified by how well he reads me, by how much I want this. I should be fighting, screaming, trying to escape. Instead, I’m fighting the urge to press myself against him, to beg him to fulfill every dark fantasy I’ve written in that journal.

My wrists burn under Remy's iron grip as he wraps me in a blanket and marches me across the carnival grounds. The lights from the Ferris wheel cast eerie shadows, and music from the carousel drifts through the night air. Each step feels surreal like one of my dark fantasies come to life.

"Keep moving," he growls, yanking me closer when I stumble.

My shorter legs struggle to match his long strides. At well over six feet, he towers over my petite frame, making me feel even more vulnerable. The gravel crunches beneath our feet as we wind past empty game stalls and closed food stands.

My heart pounds against my ribs. The carnival looks different tonight—menacing rather than magical with this man beside me. Workers cleaning up barely glance our way. Do they know what Remy does? What he's about to do to me?

His trailer has been moved from its original location. It now sits isolated at the edge of the grounds, partially hidden by shadows. The metal steps creak as he pulls me up them.

"Home sweet home," he says, his voice dripping with dark humor. "Though you already know what it looks like inside, don't you, little stalker?"

Heat floods my cheeks at the reminder of my break-in. The evidence I left behind, my panties accidentally left on his desk after a noise spooked me.

The trailer door swings open with an ominous squeak. Even in the dim light, I can see the reinforced locks he mentioned. The windows are covered with metal bars and black-out material—neither were there during my previous visit.

He's prepared this space specifically for keeping me captive. The thought should terrify me. Instead, warmth pools between my legs, and my nipples tighten. What

kind of person gets aroused by their own imprisonment?

I follow Remy into his trailer's cramped bathroom, my legs shaky. He reaches past me and turns on the shower with a quick twist—steam quickly fills the small space.

“Strip.” His command is sharp, brooking no argument.

My cheeks burn with mortification. I'm filthy from hours bound in that chair, urine sticking to my skin, which is angry and red with burns, and I hate that he is seeing me like this.

Something in his eyes tells me hesitation isn't an option. I peel off the blanket with trembling fingers and drop it to the floor.

Remy's gaze is intense and predatory as it rakes down my naked body. His eyes track every movement as the blanket pools at my feet. I fight the urge to cover myself, knowing he won't allow it. The steam swirls around us, making the space feel even more intimate.

“Get in.” Another clipped command.

I step into the shower, the hot water hitting my skin. After being cold for so long, it's almost painful, but I welcome the heat. At least now, I can blame the redness in my face on the steam.

Remy's eyes never leave me, watching through the glass door as water sluices over my body. I've never felt more exposed, more vulnerable. Even so, his unwavering attention is intoxicating, even in these humiliating circumstances.

“Turn around. Face the door.” Remy's voice is rough.

I swallow, my throat dry as I obey. My heart hammers in my chest like it wants to break free and run, but my body stays put, my feet anchored to the shower floor. Desire wars with fear, but my knees don't weaken, and I don't turn and bolt.

Through the fogged-up glass, I see his hand going to his belt and notice the bulge in his pants. I know what he's doing without needing to see, and my mouth goes dry.

"Touch yourself," he orders. "But don't you dare come."

Without waiting for a response, he starts to stroke himself. My breasts feel heavy, and my nipples pebble as I slowly caress my breasts, brushing my thumbs over my rigid nipples. The heat in his gaze reflects the flames licking up my stomach, and my palm glides down to cup my pussy, my skin aching for his touch.

I want to touch him and feel he's real, but my knees almost buckle at the sight before me. His impressive length is in his hand, and his eyes never leave mine as he strokes and teases. I drag my fingers through my aching pussy, my breath catching as he adds a slight twist to his wrist.

"Tell me what you want," he demands.

My cheeks flame, and my lips part, but no words come out. My brain short-circuits, overwhelmed by an onslaught of sensations, barely able to process that this gorgeous man is giving me orders while pleasuring himself.

He groans, his eyes glued to my fingers as they circle my sensitive clit. "Say it," he commands.

"I want you." The words are wrenched from my throat, spoken without hesitation, but absolutely true. I close my eyes, unable to bear the intensity of his dark gaze on me any longer.

“You want me to fuck you?” His question sends a spike of lightning straight to my cunt, and I can’t stop the sharp intake of breath. “Answer me,” he growls, his hips rolling in a way that tells me he’s imagining fucking into me. My walls pulse, desperate to be filled, and I whimper.

“Yes!” I want it now, on the floor, up against the wall. An image flashes of me on my knees, my face pressed to his thighs, looking up at him as I suck him.

The shower door flies open, the cold air a shock to my heated skin, and I turn with a gasp to face him. Remy’s gaze is molten as he wraps a hand around the back of my neck and drags me against him. My body fits perfectly with his, and a bolt of fire burns from my core to the tips of my toes as I feel his thick length against my belly.

Lifting my chin with a finger beneath my jaw, his eyes burn into mine. “Soon, but not yet.” His lips claim mine in a bruising kiss, his tongue plundering my mouth.

My knees nearly buckle when he pulls away. I can’t breathe, can’t think, my body burning with need as he backs me against the wall, the water cascading around us. His hands grab my thighs, and he lifts me, pressing my back to the cold tile as he steps between my legs.

“Such a good girl,” he murmurs approvingly, his hips moving against me as his hands roam everywhere. “Mine to play with.”

I know it’s a game. I understand the rules. I agreed to them. Hell, with my journal, I all but wrote them. Remy pushes, and I push back, but not too hard. This dance between us is intoxicating.

The shower’s still running, but he shuts it off and pushes me to my knees. My legs buckle, but my body screams with arousal at the dominant move.

Dripping wet, I'm right where I belong, on my knees before him. His hand tangles in my hair, tilting my head back, and I gasp as my neck is exposed. I try to imagine what I look like from his perspective—naked, kneeling, his hand fisted in my hair.

He's in control. I'm at his mercy, yet I can't force the word past my lips. The safe word, the one that would instantly stop this, remains locked tightly away.

His hardening length presses against my closed lips, and my pulse quickens. I want to open my mouth, to taste him, but I hold back. I know he wants me to beg. This game we play, this erotic struggle for control—it's a delicate balance.

His hands tighten in my hair, the head of his cock pushing against my lips insistently. I resist, keeping my lips firmly clenched. My heart hammers in my chest and a whimper escapes me as the pressure on my scalp intensifies, but still, I don't give in.

He growls in frustration, a deep sound that reverberates through my body. His hips jerk once, his cock prodding at my mouth. It's the ultimate test of wills.

How far is he willing to go?

How far do I want him to go?

The pressure on my hair eases, and the tip of his cock breaches my lips. My mouth widens in surprise, and he takes advantage, pushing deeper into my mouth, forcing me to brace my hands instinctively on his thighs for balance. The saltiness of his pre-cum infiltrates my taste buds, making my pussy clench in greedy response to the dominant act.

His hands tighten again, guiding the pace as he thrusts gently into my mouth. It's not rough enough, not what I crave, and my teeth graze him lightly, wanting more. I want to feel his hands bruise my skin, for him to use my hair to control me, to thrust deep

and hard into my mouth.

His hold on my hair pulls the follicles painfully, forcing my head back. I look up at him, my lips still wrapped around his impressive length. He's in complete control, owning me, and seeing his hunger for me pushes me closer to the edge.

"You like being on your knees, don't you?" His voice is rough. "Admit it."

I want to say yes, to confess how much this arouses me, but the words won't come. I shake my head in defiance, even as my pussy pulses in response.

He growls low, gripping my hair tighter, forcing my mouth down onto him. It's too much, and I gag, tears springing to my eyes as he shoves himself deeper. I whimper, struggling now, but he doesn't stop, using his grip on my hair to hold me in place.

The pressure in my mouth increases as he thrusts with more force, and I love it. My pussy is hungry for release, and I rub my thighs together, seeking more friction.

"Yeah, little stalker. Suck it." His deep voice growls, his hips rolling. "Wanna feel that mouth of yours milking my cock. Gonna coat your pretty lips with my cum."

His words send me over the edge. My pussy clenches, and a moan tears from my throat around his cock. I suck harder, desperate for the release he's promising, eager to taste him.

But he wrenches his cock from my mouth, and my eyes fly open as I whimper. Confused, I blink up at him, trying to form words, but they die in my throat.

Anger blazes in his eyes, darkening their depths, and my heart stutters at the dangerous glint. He yanks hard on my hair, forcing my head back and baring my neck. Pain zings along my scalp, and tears spring to my eyes.

“You ruined it.” His voice is deceptively calm, belying the storm in his eyes. “I was going to reward you. Let you swallow my cum like a good girl.”

I shake my head, keening softly at the sensation of his fingers twisting tighter in my hair. My scalp burns as he pulls harder, and I can’t stop the involuntary movement of my legs rubbing together. This potent mixture of pain and pleasure delights me, and I’m ashamed of my body’s response.

He twists my hair, forcing my neck to the side. A soft cry tears from my lips, and my body arched in submission. “Then, I was going to paint your pretty face with it, so you could see how beautiful you look covered in my cum.”

My pussy clenches at his graphic words, and I can’t stop a soft, needy whimper. His other hand tangles in my hair, and he tugs, holding me firmly in place. The sting on my scalp and the stretch of my hair excite me, pushing me closer to the edge. I hate that I love this.

“But you couldn’t control yourself, could you?” His voice is harsh and full of condemnation. “So impulsive. I hadn’t even finished, and you had to ruin it by coming without permission.”

The anger in his eyes has transformed into something else, something wild, and my breath catches. He yanks on my hair, forcing me to bite back a moan. I close my eyes, picturing what he described, and my body betrays me with a fresh wave of dampness.

“Little slut,” he snarls. “Open your eyes.”

My eyes snap open, but his hand entangles further in my hair. Helplessness washes over me, and my mouth falls open with a soft gasp.

The first hot burst hits my face, and I cry out hoarsely, caught between humiliation

and arousal. I'm disgusted with my reaction, my body practically trembling with need as the second spurt paints my cheek, some of it landing on my tongue.

I try to tell myself I hate this and that it's disgusting, but I'm lying. I love it, the power he wields over me, the twisted desires he awakens.

He releases his grip on my hair, cupping the back of my neck, holding me gently now. "Look at me, Eden." His soft command sends a shiver down my spine.

My eyes, blurred by tears, flicker open. His intense gaze captures mine, his face a mask of conflicting emotions. Arousal, anger, and something I might interpret as regret darken his features. The look in his eyes makes my heart pound in my chest, and the tears spill over, trickling down my cheeks, mingling with his cum.

He swipes his thumb gently over my cheek, gathering his cum. "Such a waste." He brings his thumb to my lips, and I open my mouth, tasting him. "I wanted to watch you swallow every drop, but you do look so fucking pretty with my cum all over your face."

His jaw clenches, and he yanks his thumb from my mouth. He swipes the rest of his cum from my face, smearing it over my lips. "Lick them clean," he orders gruffly. "Taste me."

My lips part, and he smiles, using his thumb to push my mouth wider. I comply, my tongue darting out to lick my lips, tasting the salty cocktail of tears and cum.

He steps back, his eyes scanning my face, taking in my flushed cheeks, swollen lips, and tear soaked eyes. God knows what I look like to him, and for some fucked up reason, I don't care. All I want is to please him.

16

REMY

I pace the carnival grounds, my boots kicking up dust with each agitated step. The evening air does nothing to cool my racing thoughts. Two days. Two days of knowing she's there, waiting in my space, driving me to distraction.

A group of workers call out greetings, but I barely acknowledge them with a nod. My mind keeps drifting back to my trailer, to Eden on that thin mattress I put on the floor. The distance I'm keeping is calculated torture for both of us.

I turn toward my trailer again and then force my feet in the opposite direction. The need to return, to watch her squirm with anticipation, pulls at me, but I can't give in to my urges, not yet. Her desperation needs to build until she breaks.

Through my surveillance cameras, I've watched her exploring the confined space, testing boundaries. She traces her fingers over my belongings when she thinks I'm not watching. Her frustrated sighs when hours pass without my return.

I smirk, remembering how she jumped when I entered unexpectedly last night, hope and fear warring in her eyes. I'd dropped off food and left again, savoring her disappointed exhale.

The metal steps of the Ferris wheel provide a perfect vantage point to watch the sunset and get my head straight. Being in my own space has become impossible. The knowledge that she's there, so close, just a few feet from my bed...

But she's not ready. She's not broken enough. Not desperate enough to truly submit. When I finally give her what she wants, it will be on my terms after I've stripped away every last shred of control she thinks she has.

I pull out my phone, checking the feed again. She's curled up on the mattress, staring at my bed longingly. Good. Let her want. Let her need. Let her madness build until she can't take it anymore.

I'm halfway to my trailer again when Lars's voice cuts through my thoughts. "Hey, Remy! I need your help with these stalls."

Thank fuck. Something to do with my hands. I change direction, heading toward where Lars is struggling with some warped boards on one of the game booths.

"These fucking things won't stay straight," Lars grunts, throwing me a hammer. "Hold this end while I nail it down."

We work in companionable silence for a few minutes before Lars's mouth twitches into a knowing smirk. "So, the podcaster keeping you busy?"

"Shut up," I mutter, adjusting my grip on the board.

"Just saying, man. You've been pacing around here like a caged animal. Never seen you this worked up over a piece of ass before."

I shoot him a dark look. "Rich coming from you. How's that whole puppy dog routine working out with Alice? Still following her around with your tongue hanging out?"

Lars's hammer misses the nail, nearly catching his thumb. "Fuck you."

“Keep your thoughts to yourself then,” I say, but there’s no real heat. We’ve known each other too long for genuine offense.

“At least I’m not keeping Alice locked up in a trailer,” Lars counters with a laugh.

I can’t argue with Lars’s point, so I just grunt and focus on holding the board steady. Eden’s different because she was already mine before I kidnapped her. Her obsession with me proves it. Those photos she took, the journal entries describing her warped fantasies about me, the way she broke into my trailer...

“At least I didn’t have to chase mine down,” I say finally, unable to resist jabbing back. “Eden came to me. Practically gift-wrapped herself.”

Lars snorts but doesn’t respond, probably remembering how hard he had to pursue Alice. The guy fucking chased her on his motorcycle across town and followed her into a goddamn library, for fuck’s sake.

The board finally cooperates, and Lars steps back, wiping sweat from his forehead. “Still. Keeping her locked up? That’s some next-level shit, even for you.”

I shrug, running my fingers over the fresh nails to ensure they’re flush. “She’s exactly where she wants to be. You should see how she looks at me when I come in like I’m everything she’s ever wanted.” I clear my throat. “Plus, until we know why she’s snooping around, having her off a leash is unsafe.”

And it’s true. Even bound and confined, Eden’s eyes follow my every move with naked hunger. There’s no fear there. She chose this path when she stalked me, documenting my every move. Now, she’s living out her darkest fantasy.

“Whatever you say, man.” Lars shakes his head.

Nash approaches his usual graceful swagger on full display. “You two look productive,” Nash says, leaning against the booth. “Though I heard you’ve been wearing a path in the grass, Remy. Trouble focusing?”

I flip him off without looking up. “How’s the happy throuple? Still playing house with your little bird and the hothead?”

Nash’s smile doesn’t falter. “Flora’s teaching Colt to cook. It’s interesting. Pretty sure we’ll need an upgraded kitchen soon.”

“Better than you in the kitchen,” Lars snorts. “Remember when you nearly burned down your trailer trying to make pasta?”

“That was one time,” Nash protests. “And Flora loves having two men to take care of.”

I roll my eyes. “Yeah, we all know how that works. You do the laundry while Colt does the heavy lifting.”

“Says the man who’s been circling his trailer five times a day to avoid going inside it,” Nash shoots back.

Lars barks out a laugh. “He’s got you there.”

“At least I didn’t spend two weeks stalking a girl,” I say to Lars before turning to Nash. “Or write poetry about Flora’s eyes.”

“That was private,” Nash hisses, color rising in his cheeks. “And Colt helped write it.”

“Of course he did,” Lars and I say in unison.

I lean against the booth. “At least Lars finally got his girl. Never thought I’d see the day when Alice would tame your crazy ass.”

Lars’s face softens. “She’s something else. Called me an asshole three times this morning before kissing me goodbye.”

“That’s love right there.” Nash chuckles. “Though not as entertaining as Flora making Colt do yoga with her. You should see him trying to bend into those positions.”

“Better than you two enabling her video game addiction,” Lars shoots back. “How many hours did you lose to that new game last week?”

Nash shrugs. “Flora kicks our asses every time, but watching Colt rage quit is worth it.”

“Alice wants to host a dinner party,” Lars says. “Says we need to be more social.”

“Domestic bliss looks good on you,” I tease, dodging the hammer he throws my way. “Never thought I’d see the day when the big bad biker would be picking out tablecloths.”

“Says the man with a podcaster locked in his trailer,” Lars counters. “At least Alice chose to move in with me.”

“Eden stalked me, not the other way around,” I growl. “And I don’t know if I’m keeping her.”

Nash raises an eyebrow.

“Different strokes,” Lars says, then grins. “Speaking of strokes...”

“Don’t finish that sentence,” I warn, but I’m fighting back a smile. These idiots might give me shit, but they’re happy and found their matches in women who can handle their particular brands of crazy.

I watch Nash and Lars bicker about their domestic lives, their happiness evident despite their attempts to maintain their tough exteriors. Something twists in my chest, not jealousy, but recognition. They’ve found women who match them, who can handle their obsessions and possessive natures.

My thoughts drift back to Eden. Her collection of killer memorabilia and that journal filled with fantasies.

Eden’s obsession with me mirrors my own growing fixation with her. She’s not just another problem to solve or a loose end to tie up. She sees my darkness and wants to understand every facet of it.

Maybe I’ve been looking at this all wrong. Eden’s not just a stalker who needs to be contained—she might embody exactly what I’ve been avoiding all these years.

17

EDEN

The carnival's silence feels eerie today. There is no cheerful music, no excited screams from the rides, no constant chatter of visitors. There is stillness, broken only by my rapid heartbeat, as I hear Remy's boots on the metal steps outside.

He hasn't spent much time in here. I've noticed his avoidance, the way he comes in only to check on me or give me basic necessities, returning to sleep in the dead of night, but today is different. The door opens and his presence fills the confined space of the trailer.

"Miss me, little stalker?" His voice carries that dangerous edge that makes my skin tingle.

I shift in my seat, the chain around my ankle clinking against the metal frame. "You've been busy."

"Observant as ever." He moves closer, his fingers trailing along the wall. "That's what got you into this mess, right?"

My breath catches as he stops behind me. His hands rest on my shoulders, thumbs pressing into the tense muscles of my neck. The touch is both threatening and intimate.

"You know what I've realized?" His grip tightens. "You're not scared enough of me."

Maybe that's my fault. Maybe I've been too lenient."

I try to turn my head to look at him, but his hold keeps me facing forward. "I know what you are, Remy. I've always known."

His laugh is low. "No, beautiful. You think you know. You've built fantasies in that fucked up mind of yours. But reality?" His fingers slide up into my hair, gripping hard. "Reality is so much darker."

The familiar rush of fear and arousal floods through me. This is what I've craved since the moment he snatched me, his attention, his darkness matching mine, but something is different today. An edge to his energy makes me wonder if I've underestimated him.

The sudden absence of his touch leaves me cold. I watch as he moves to the small kitchen area, his broad shoulders filling the narrow space. The sound of cabinets opening and closing and plates clinking fills the silence.

"Hungry?" He doesn't wait for my answer, already preparing what looks like eggs and toast.

My stomach growls. Five days of this routine—him bringing me food, watching me eat, leaving me alone with my thoughts. The memory of that first day in the lockup burns hot in my mind, his hands on my skin, his promises of what was to come, but since then? Other than him forcing me to suck his cock after my shower, there's been nothing but these loaded exchanges.

He sets the plate in front of me, closer than necessary. His scent washes over me, pure male.

"Thank you." My voice comes out steadier than I feel.

“Such good manners.” His fingers brush my shoulder. “Eat.”

I pick up the fork, aware of his eyes on me. Every bite feels like foreplay, the tension thick enough to choke on.

“How does it feel being away from your collection for so long,” he says, leaning against the counter. “Missing your serial killer memorabilia?”

Heat floods my cheeks. Of course, he knows about that, too. “No.”

“No?” His eyebrow raises. “Found something more interesting to obsess over?”

I set down my fork, meeting his gaze. “You know I have.”

“Careful, beautiful.” His tone drops. “Your obsession might be the death of you.”

The eggs turn to ash in my mouth. It’s the first time he’s directly threatened me. Instead of fear, I feel that familiar twist of arousal in my gut.

The plate sits empty between us, but Remy makes no move to take it away or leave. Instead, he settles onto his worn leather couch, stretching his long legs out.

“Don’t you have work?” I ask.

“Day off.” His lips curve into that dangerous smile. “Thought I’d spend it at home.”

I shift in my seat. The trailer suddenly feels smaller, more confined, with him lounging there, watching me with those predatory eyes. He picks up a book, but I can tell he’s not reading it.

“Stop staring, beautiful.” He doesn’t look up from the pages. “It’s rude.”

I force myself to look away, but my skin prickles with awareness. The sound of pages turning, his steady breathing, and the occasional shift of leather as he moves all fill my senses until I can barely think straight.

Hours crawl by. He makes coffee, the rich aroma pungent. His hand grazes my shoulder when he brushes past me to reach the sugar. The touch, though brief, sets every nerve ending in my body on fire.

“Need anything?” His voice carries a hint of amusement, telling me he knows exactly what he’s doing.

I give a sharp shake of my head.

He chuckles, low and dark. “You sure about that?” His fingers trail along my neck as he returns to his seat. “You seem tense.”

My hands clench in my lap. “I’m fine.”

“Liar.” He sets his coffee down, the clink of ceramic against wood making me jump. “But that’s what got you here, isn’t it? All those pretty lies you told yourself while you stalked me.”

The room feels too hot and too small. Remy’s presence overwhelms everything—my thoughts, senses, and control—and he knows it. I see how he watches me, like a cat playing with its prey.

“I could help with that tension,” he says casually, but there’s nothing casual about the look in his eyes.

“No thanks.” My fingers twist in my lap. “I’m perfectly fine.”

The lie tastes bitter. Every night, sleep eludes me as I lie on the thin mattress, hyper-aware of his presence on the bed next to me. His breathing, the occasional rustle of sheets, it's torture of the sweetest kind.

During the days he's gone, I find myself drawn to his computer like a moth to flame. The photos stored there feed my obsession—Remy naked and stroking his hard cock. I touch myself to these images, imagining his hands instead of mine, his breath on my neck.

“Suit yourself.” He stretches, and my breath catches as he pulls his shirt over his head. “Damn, the trailer gets like an oven this time of day.”

I try not to stare as he settles onto the couch, flicking on the TV. It's impossible. My eyes have a mind of their own, tracing the intricate patterns inked across his skin. Dark lines flow over his shoulders, arms, and chest.

The TV's drone fades to background noise as I follow a particular design that curves around his ribs. All I want is to trace those lines with my fingers instead of just my gaze.

“See something you like?” His voice carries that knowing tone that makes heat pool in my belly.

I snap my eyes away, but the damage is done. He knows. I'm so obsessed with him that this forced proximity only makes my obsession more impossible to ignore.

I bolt from my seat, rushing to the bathroom. The lock clicks into place, and I press my back against the door, sliding down until I hit the cold tile floor.

My thighs rub together of their own accord, seeking relief from the burning need that's consuming me. The mirror across from me reflects a woman I barely

recognize—flushed cheeks, dilated pupils, lips parted with uneven breaths.

What is wrong with me? Here I am, locked in a killer's trailer, and instead of planning my escape, I'm fantasizing about his hands on my body. The collection of serial killer memorabilia in my apartment seems almost innocent compared to this twisted desire.

I study my reflection, searching for answers. My professional mask has cracked, revealing the pure obsidian depths underneath. Something that's always been there, lurking behind carefully crafted podcasts about criminal psychology. I'm not just fascinated by the darkness anymore—I'm drowning in it, and the scariest part is that I don't want to surface.

My fingers trace my collarbone where his touch still burns. The woman in the mirror stares back at me, green eyes wild with a hunger I can't suppress. Maybe this is who I've always been – not the detached observer of darkness but a willing participant.

I close my eyes, but all I see is Remy's knowing smirk, the predatory grace of his movements, the dangerous promise in his eyes. He sees right through me, past all my carefully constructed walls, straight to the twisted core of who I am.

And that terrifies me more than any chain or lock ever could.

18

REMY

I leave the trailer, my skin buzzing with electricity from hours of circling Eden like a shark. The night air hits my face, cooling the fever that's been building all day. My muscles ache from the constant tension of staying out of her reach, watching her eyes track my every move.

I pull the white mask from my jacket pocket, running my thumb over the black detailing. The smooth surface reminds me of Eden's polished exterior—pristine on the outside but hiding so many secrets underneath.

The carnival grounds stretch empty before me, rides still and silent under the stars. My boots crunch on the gravel as I pace, trying to burn off the energy crackling under my skin. Hours of watching her squirm, hearing her breath catch whenever I moved close—it's left me wound tight as a spring.

I've been patient and calculated in every move. The mask was just another piece, carefully chosen to match the fantasies I found in her journal. She thinks she knows me and has me all figured out from her careful observations, but she knows nothing about the monster that lurks within. The perversity I hide and her fantasies? They're my fantasies, too.

The trailer door creaks in front of me against the wind. I know she's waiting, probably lying on her mattress pretending to sleep where I left her. My stalker is desperate for my attention; now she has all of it.

I pull the full white face mask over my face, letting the weight settle against my skin. All that will be visible to her is my eyes. My fingers brush over the blunted blade in my pocket—a prop chosen for tonight’s performance.

The metal steps of the trailer creak under my boots as I ascend. Inside, the air feels thick with anticipation. Eden’s breathing changes the moment I enter—faster and shallower.

I move like a shadow through the darkness, letting her anticipation build. The soft whimper that escapes her lips alerts me that she’s noticed I’m wearing a mask. Good. Let her mind race with possibilities.

The mask transforms me, awakening a long-dormant depravity that I know she’ll embrace. Eden’s eyes widen as I stalk toward her in silence. Her chest rises and falls rapidly, her gaze darting between me and the door.

She scrambles backward on the mattress, her fingers clawing at the sheets. I remain still, watching, waiting. The moment stretches like a rubber band about to snap.

Eden bolts. She launches herself off the mattress on the floor, making a desperate dash for the bathroom. My hand shoots out, catching the back of her neck. Her skin is hot under my palm as I drag her back to me, her feet stumbling beneath her.

I tear my shirt from her body and throw her onto the bed. The mattress creaks as she bounces once, twice. A small sound escapes her throat—half fear, half adrenaline rush, neither of which will save her.

Her hair fans out across my pillow, dark against the white cotton. I tower over her, silent.

I plant one knee on the mattress beside her hip, letting my weight pin her in place.

My hand finds her throat, thumb applying just enough pressure to remind her who's in control.

I watch her squirm, enjoying the way her pulse races under my grasp.

"Please," she whispers, her voice trembling. "Let me go."

The fear in her eyes only feeds my hunger. My fingers tighten, not enough to hurt but enough to remind her of her position.

"I won't tell anyone. I promise. Just—please." Her words catch as tears well up. She tugs weakly at my wrist, her small hands wrapping around mine.

I lean closer, letting the mask brush against her cheek. Her whole body shudders at the contact. The scent of her fear mingles with—arousal. Even now, while she's begging for mercy, her body betrays her.

"I'll do anything," she pleads, her hips shifting. "Just let me leave."

I tighten my grip on her throat, feeling her pulse flutter. My other hand slides down, tracing the curve of her jaw, then lower to her breasts. She's like a trapped bird, searching desperately for an escape route.

"You don't get to make demands." My voice is little more than a growl behind the mask. "Shut the fuck up."

Her eyes dart wildly, searching for an escape. I push her thighs apart with my knee, and she tries to close her legs to protect herself. The moment my hand touches her cunt through her panties, she's liquid. Grabbing the fabric with one hand, I tear it apart.

“Oh, you’re a filthy little slut, aren’t you?” I growl, grinding my knee between her legs. “Getting off on being manhandled and not knowing what’s going to happen next.”

Her breath hitches as my fingers delve insider her.

“Please,” she whimpers. Her hands tug at mine, but she’s not trying to pull them away.

“You like that, don’t you? Begging does nothing for you.” I lean closer, pressing the knife against her throat.

She freezes, her eyes wide.

“But you’ve imagined this, haven’t you?” I taunt, twisting my fingers inside her. “Fantasized about what it would be like to be at some insane criminal’s mercy. This was always the way it was going to end, baby. With you begging, pleading, wet for me.”

Her mouth opens, and a broken sound escapes.

My dick throbs as her hips buck beneath me, desperate to get away and, at the same time, pulling me closer. I see the moment she breaks, her eyes going glassy, her mouth falling open.

“Fuck, you filthy slut,” I snarl, yanking her thighs further apart with a rough grip. “Such a fucking tease. You’ve been begging for this ever since you saw me.”

Her breath catches as I line up, my cock pulsing with anticipation. I’d planned on taking my time, making this last, but the way her body arches beneath me, offering herself up, sends me over the edge. In a rush, I unzip my jeans and free my cock,

before slamming inside her.

The tightness that envelops me is heaven. Her head falls back, her mouth forming a perfect “O” of surprise and pleasure.

“You like that, don’t you?” I grind out, my hips snapping forward with enough force to push her slender frame up the mattress. “You like being manhandled, fucked hard and rough. Admit it.”

Her eyes snap open, but before speaking, her body betrays her. She comes, her pussy clenching around me in waves. I feel her slickness coat my thighs and hear her cry out, half-ashamed, half-drunk on ecstasy.

“You’re a fucking dirty little slut,” I growl, my voice rough as I pull out almost all the way, only to slam back into her. “Your cunt came so fucking fast the moment my cock was inside you. Goddamn it, Eden. So fucking filthy.”

“No,” she gasps. “Stop, please. You’re wrong.”

Her hands push weakly at my shoulders, her body writhing beneath me. I smirk, driving into her again. So predictable. She wants this, fantasizes about this, but still denies it. That denial only makes it hotter and makes me feel feral.

“Lie to me all you want. Your body’s telling me the truth.” I pull out and thrust back in, my hand tightening around her throat. “Even after your little performance, you’re soaking wet.”

She bucks her hips, trying to dislodge my hand from her throat, but I’m too strong. I watch as she squirms, realizing she can’t escape.

“Please,” she whimpers. “Remy, please.”

Hearing my name on her lips like that, desperate, sends a rush of adrenaline through me.

I grab her wrists, pinning them above her head with one hand, my other still wrapped around her throat. She's mine now, completely at my mercy, and I love it—the fear and desire shimmering in her eyes.

I snap my hips forward, loving how her entire body jolts at the impact. The room fills with the sound of skin slapping against skin, her cries of pain and pleasure mingling.

“Such a fucking slut, enjoying getting taken against your will. Bet you've fantasized constantly since I kidnapped you about being held down and taken hard. You can't deny it now.” My voice is harsh. “You dirty little stalker.”

“No,” she gasps again, trying to pull her wrists from my grip as I pound into her. “It's not true. Please, Remy, you have to stop?—”

Her body shudders under mine. How her cunt grips my cock—she can deny it all she wants, but her body's begging for more.

“How long?” I pant, my hips moving faster, taking her harder. “How long have you been dreaming of this? Of being trapped, of not having a choice?”

She doesn't answer, biting her lip to hold back her moans, but it's futile. Her body betrays her again, instinctually moving her hips with me. The tight squeeze of her pussy drives me wild.

Her eyes are locked on mine, fear and a desperate hunger to be owned glistening. She's still pretending, even now, insisting this isn't what she wants, but I have her now, and she can't hide from me anymore.

“Say it.” I thrust forward, burying myself deep. “Admit what you’ve been fantasizing about all this time.”

Eden writhes beneath me, her wrists trapped in my iron grip. She doesn’t speak, staring, her eyes roaming over the mask that hides my face.

That mask has been my disguise, but it’s also been hers. It gives her permission to pretend, to play the part of the frightened victim while her body responds, my wanton slut.

I tighten my hold on her wrists, taking her exactly how I know she wants it. Consensual nonconsent has always been something I’ve wanted to try, and it feels like Eden just fell from fucking heaven for me. So. Fucking. Perfect.

“I—” She swallows, trying to find the right words. “I don’t know what you mean.”

Her voice cracks. She can’t bring herself to admit the truth or break our role play because admitting it would mean shattering the fantasy.

“Lie to me again.” I grin. “Tell me you don’t want this.”

I push inside her, loving the way her eyes squeeze shut, her mouth falling open on a moan.

“Fuck, your little cunt’s so greedy.” I thrust deep, my hips slapping against the back of her thighs. “Bet it’s been a while since you’ve been fucked properly, hasn’t it?”

Eden bucks her hips, trying to meet my rhythm, her body surging against mine in a frantic dance. I squeeze her wrists, feeling her pulse race beneath my fingertips.

“I’m going to breed your tight little cunt. Fill it with my cum.” I drag my cock out

slowly, watching her pussy cling to every inch. “I’m going to do it again and again until you admit what a dirty little slut you are for wanting to be raped.”

Her eyes snap open, the truth landing like a blow.

“No,” she whispers. “No, that’s not—that’s not it.”

“Liar.” I lean forward, staring into her eyes through the holes in the mask. “It’s okay. I get it. You want me to think you’re scared, but it’s just an act, right? Deep down, you’re a little freak who loves being taken by force.”

She shakes her head again. Her body responds despite her false protests. She’s so damn wet, soaking my thighs.

“You want to be a good girl, don’t you?” I tease, nuzzling her neck. “Want to be good for me? Take my cock and come.”

“Yes,” she whimpers, her eyes squeezed shut. “Yes, please.”

“That’s it.” I pull all the way out and slam. Back in, bending her further to my will. “Take my cock, baby. Fuck me back.”

Her hips move with mine, timidly at first, then with growing urgency. Her breath comes in short gasps as she falls into a rhythm with me.

“Good girl,” I praise. “Take every inch.”

With each thrust, I drive her deeper into the mattress, relishing the way she groans.

“Harder,” she pants, surprising herself as much as she surprises me. “Please, Remy, fuck me harder.”

I give her what she wants, pounding into her with abandon. The bed groans, the headboard hitting the trailer wall with each thrust. Her cries echo off the metal walls. I release her wrist and cover her mouth with one hand, muffling her screams as I bury myself inside her again and again.

“You like that, don’t you?” I grunt, pulling out almost all the way, then driving back into her tight cunt. “Like it rough. Like being held down, my hands on your throat, my cock pounding into your tight little cunt.” I release her mouth and palm her perfect tit in one hand, thumb brushing her erect nipple, while the other remains around her throat.

“Yes,” she whimpers, her nails digging into my skin now I’m no longer restraining her wrists. “Yes, fuck me. Harder, Remy, please. Harder.”

I give her what she craves, each thrust punishing, relentless. My hands are bruising her soft skin, but she doesn’t want gentle, sweet love making. She craves the edge, the danger, the fantasy made real.

The sound of our sex fills the trailer. I feel the coil in my stomach, that delicious tension building. My balls tighten, ready to explode.

“Close,” I grit out, my thrusts becoming frenzied. “Fuck, I’m so fucking close.”

Eden moans beneath me, her back arching, lifting her hips to meet each punishing thrust. The scent of her arousal and our sweat-covered bodies fills my nostrils.

“Come for me, baby,” I groan. “Come on my cock.”

She cries out, her body convulsing around me. I feel her slickness coat my thighs as she comes, gripping my cock, her breasts heaving as she sobs with the force of her orgasm.

“Damn, you’re perfect,” I praise, thrusting relentlessly through her climax. “Take every fucking inch.”

With a final, punishing thrust, I explode inside her. She cries out again as I fill her, her body trembling in the aftershocks of her orgasm. My hips stutter, buried deep inside her as I ride out my release.

“There,” I pant, burying my face in her neck. “That’s what you’ve been wanting. To be taken by force. To be fucked hard by a masked stranger. Isn’t that right, Eden?”

She lies beneath me, her body glistening with sweat. Her eyes remain closed, her chest rising and falling rapidly. I pull out slowly, hating the loss of connection.

She whimpers, opening her eyes to meet mine. Her gaze is filled with shame, confusion, and longing. The fantasy collides with reality, and she can’t process it all.

“You enjoyed that, didn’t you?” I ask, stroking her cheek. “Being dominated, forced to take my cock.”

Eden bites her lip, unable to meet my eyes. “Yes,” she whispers finally. “But it’s not—I don’t understand why.”

I pull her into my arms, holding her trembling body close. “It’s okay,” I murmur into her hair, smoothing it from her face.

“Time for sleep.” I release her and stand, removing the mask. “Get on your mattress.”

Eden hesitates, her eyes darting between me and the mattress on the floor.

I arch an eyebrow, waiting.

She slowly moves, wrapping her arms around herself as she settles onto the makeshift bed. I watch her pull the blanket around her shoulders, her green eyes watching me warily. I turn off the light, leaving only the faint glow from outside filtering through the window. The springs of my bed creak as I lie down, keeping my back to her.

The silence stretches between us, broken only by her uneven breathing. I close my eyes, listening to her every small movement as she tries to get comfortable on the floor.

“Remy?” Her voice is barely a whisper.

“Go to sleep, Eden.” My voice is firm but not harsh. She falls quiet, and gradually, her breathing evens out.

I remain awake, alert to any sound of movement. She’s mine now, and I intend to keep her, but first, I need to break my stalker and see what darkness lies within.

EDEN

Waking less than an hour after my encounter with Remy, I walk across the cold floor of Remy's trailer, my body aching in ways that remind me of everything that happened. The bathroom light flickers as I stare at my reflection—hair wild, lips swollen, eyes glassy with a mix of exhaustion and lingering adrenaline.

“Who are you becoming?” I ask myself, tracing the marks on my neck. All those years studying the darkness in others, dissecting their psychological profiles, their motivations. Now, I'm living out my twisted fantasies.

My hands grip the edge of the small sink. The cool porcelain grounds me, but my mind keeps reverting to Remy in the other room. I know he's awake because his presence is like an electric current through the thin walls.

I've interviewed countless criminals and delved into their minds through letters and recordings. I built my career on understanding the psychology of dangerous men, but none of them compared to him. None of them made me feel so alive, so seen in my own depravity.

My reflection shows someone I barely recognize anymore. The controlled, analytical Eden Love, who kept her fascination with killers safely academic, is gone. In her place is someone wild, who craves the danger she used to study from a safe distance.

I splash cold water on my face, but it does nothing to calm the fire under my skin.

My whole body thrums with the need for more, even as my muscles protest. The floor creaks under my feet as I shift my weight; I know he hears it. He knows that I'm awake and wanting. The hunter and the willing prey are caught in this dark dance we've created.

I step out of the bathroom and collide with solid muscle, my hands instinctively pressing against Remy's bare chest. The impact knocks a small gasp from my lips. His skin burns hot under my palms, and my fingers twitch with the urge to trace the dark lines of his tattoos.

"Going somewhere?" His voice rumbles through his chest, and I feel it vibrate against my hands.

All I can do is stare up at him. His hair is deliciously disheveled like he's been running his hands through it while I was in the bathroom. The sight makes my mouth go dry.

My body responds to his proximity like a magnet finding true north. Every nerve ending sparks to life, and I'm painfully aware of how little space exists between us. The familiar ache builds low in my belly as his scent surrounds me.

His massive frame blocks the entire hallway, and I know it's deliberate. He's caging me in, asserting his control, and God help me, but It only makes me want him more.

"You're staring." His lips curl into that dangerous smirk that has haunted my fantasies since I first saw it.

I should step back and maintain some dignity, but my hands disagree. They slide up his chest of their own accord, mapping the ridges of muscle I've photographed so many times in secret.

I gasp as Remy's grip tightens around my wrist, his calloused fingers pressing into my pulse point. My heart hammers against my ribs as he leans close.

"You can't possibly want more after earlier, little stalker." The growl in his voice sends shivers down my spine.

Before I can respond, he spins me around in one fluid motion. My breath catches as he captures both my wrists behind my back, the movement swift and controlled. The wall meets my cheek with enough force to remind me of his strength, of how easily he could break me if he wanted.

My body trembles against the cold surface, trapped between it and the heat of his solid form. Every point of contact burns like a brand, marking me as his prey, his possession. I feel the vibration of his chest against my back as he makes that low sound again—half warning, half predator.

I can barely draw oxygen into my lungs with how he has me pinned, but the restriction only makes my head spin with need. I've dreamed of and written about this in my journal entries. The reality is much more intense than any fantasy my obsessed mind ever conjured.

His free hand slides down my stomach, and he growls again when he feels how wet I am. "You greedy little slut." He tears down the shorts I'm wearing and slips his hand between my legs, stroking through my pussy.

"Don't call me that." My voice comes out breathless, struggling to keep myself upright as my knees weaken. "I'm not?—"

The sting of his palm against my ass cuts off my protest. "Greedy. Slutty. What else?"

My breath hitches as his fingers circle my clit, pressing and rubbing until I'm biting my lip to keep from crying out. I feel the weight of his chest against my back and know he's enjoying every second of this.

"You want more," he whispers. "Say it."

"I... please..." I can't even finish the thought; my mind is lost.

"Please, what?" He thrusts two fingers inside me and leans forward, his teeth grazing my shoulder. "Say it, and I might just give you what you crave."

My hands clench into fists, my nails digging into my skin as my body responds to him as if I were always his. "I need more," I choke out, arching back against him.

"You've got quite the mouth on you." He pulls his fingers out and slowly drags them up my body, tracing patterns on my overheated skin. "Might have to teach you some manners."

He spins me around to face him, his grip like steel around my wrists. His gaze flickers over me, devouring, assessing. I know he's taking in my flushed skin, my swollen lips, and the way I'm trembling from my own need.

His fingers twist into my hair, pulling my head back to expose my throat. I swallow as his lips brush over my pulse point. "Say it again."

"I need more," I whisper, my eyes fluttering shut as his tongue traces the column of my throat.

"More what?" He tightens his grip in my hair, his eyes searching mine.

The words feel dirty leaving my mouth, but I say them anyway. "More of you."

“Fuck.” His breath comes out rough, and he hauls me against him, kissing me hard.

His mouth crushes mine, taking everything I have to give and then some. My wrists burn in his grip, but I don’t care. I kiss him back with a desperation that matches his own, my body molding to his.

Remy pushes me back against the wall, holding me there with his hips as he thrusts his solid cock against me through his tight boxer briefs. The pain of my arms being stretched above my head only adds to the intense, aching hunger that coils tighter and tighter inside me.

His teeth nip at my lower lip, and I moan, needing more of that bite, more of everything. “Please,” I whisper against his lips. “I need you inside me.”

He stills, his eyes searching mine. “You think you can handle more of me?”

My heart pounds in my chest, threatening to crack my ribs. “Yes.”

Remy’s eyes flare with heat, and he releases my wrists only to grip my thighs, lifting me off the ground. My legs instinctively wrap around his hips, pressing our bodies together.

I’m pulsing with need, every inch of my skin electric with anticipation. His eyes hold a challenge, silently daring me to keep going down this path.

“That’s it. Show me how bad you want it.”

I answer by grinding against his hard length. The rough fabric of his boxer briefs rubs against my slit, making me whimper. I arch against the wall, begging for more.

His eyes darken at the sound. In one swift motion, he drops his briefs. His broad

hands yank at my ass cheeks, baring me to his gaze as he holds me out against the wall. I'm already so wet, and my thighs clench at the fleeting feel of his fingertips.

Remy groans, and I release a shaky breath, knowing that his thickness is about to fill me. His hands shift me, positioning me so his tip rests against my entrance. I'm so ready that he glides in with ease, the smooth slide of flesh on flesh.

A strangled cry escapes my throat as he fills me. He's thick and long, and it feels incredible. Being impaled against the wall by this masculine force triggers something animalistic within.

"Fuck," he grunts, his head thrown back as he pulls almost all the way out before slamming back into me.

He's relentless, pounding into me with each thrust, all restraint abandoned. The hard impacts shove my back into the cold wall as he takes what he wants.

I meet his relentless rhythm, my nails digging into his shoulders. This isn't gentle. It's raw and dirty and perfect. Our bodies find a natural cadence—a perfect push and pull of urgent need.

His deep grunts echo in the small space, mixing with my whimpers and the wet sound of our bodies coming together. His fingers bite into my hips, and I feel him everywhere—filling me, surrounding me, consuming me.

"Greedy little whore," he rasps, his lips ghosting over my ear. "You're so tight around me, Eden."

His pace is frantic, his grip bruising. I'm barely aware of anything beyond this overwhelming need to be fucked by him, to be used until I'm a quivering mess. Remy pushes me higher and higher, spiraling me toward a release that will shatter me.

“You like it rough, don’t you, little stalker?” He leans back, looking down at where we’re joined. “Bet you touch yourself thinking about this, about me fucking you like this.”

“Yes...” I hiss, my eyes clenched shut as he hits that spot inside me. “God, Remy, please...”

He groans at the sound of his name on my lips, his thrusts becoming uneven. His forearm braces against the wall next to my head as he slams into me, using his body to pin me in place, his hips flush against mine. The solid weight of him feels incredible, blocking out everything except the demanding pulse between my legs.

“I’ve been thinking about this since the first moment I saw you watching me.” He punctuates each word with a brutal thrust. “Fantasizing about lifting you up and down my cock like a fucking slutty little doll.”

His words only add fuel to the fire, making me clench around him as my orgasm builds. I bite my lip, fighting for control, wanting to draw this out as long as possible. But with each filthy word from his lips, with each brutal thrust of his hips, he tears another shred of control from my grasp.

“Come for me.” It’s not a request but a command my body can’t deny.

My release shatters me, my back arching as pleasure washes over me in violent waves. My cunt pulses and clenches around his thick cock.

He doesn’t stop, thrusting deep and hard, his eyes never leaving mine. My back slams against the wall, each impact jolting through me, building the pressure. His hands grip my hips, marking me with bruises that I’ll cherish later.

His cock pulses inside me, and I feel the warmth of his release. My whole body

tenses as he fills me, my muscles clenching around him in response. Remy buries his face in my neck, his breathing ragged, but he doesn't stop moving.

I'm greedy for more, my body on edge, still craving every last bit of him. He seems to know this because he keeps thrusting until every drop is spent. I'm boneless, sated, but still desperate. I can't get enough.

Remy doesn't speak. He carries me back to his bed, his semi-hard dick still nestled inside me. He lowers us onto the mattress, my legs still wrapped around his waist and the entire length of his body pressed to mine. I savor the feeling of him stretching me, owning me.

He nuzzles into my neck, his stubble grazing my sensitive skin. "Your greedy little pussy can keep my dick warm for the night." His voice is deep and rough, sending shivers down my spine. "A pacifier for your whorish tendencies."

At his words, I can't help but moan. The sensation of being filled, surrounded by him, combined with his dirty talk, has me leaking again.

Remy chuckles darkly, his hips rolling slightly, his cock giving a twitch inside me. "Fuck, you really are insatiable." He bites my earlobe and whispers, "My own little sex doll."

I listen to the sound of his heart, feeling his pulse in time with mine. At this moment, surrounded by the scent of sex and the warmth of his skin, I feel safe in a way that makes no sense. Outside of this trailer, beyond this carnival, people are disappearing, and I'm fairly certain Remy has something to do with it.

Yet here I am, nestled in the arms of the man I've stalked, the object of my obsession. I've invaded his space, crossed boundaries that would make anyone else run for the hills, yet he's holding me now.

Something is calming about this moment, something that feels almost domestic. Remy, the dangerous enigma I've been stalking, now holds me like I'm precious. A rush of conflicted emotions wash over me as his lips press against my skin. I can't deny that I want more of this, even knowing it's a dangerous fantasy that will likely shatter with the coming morning light.

Remy exhales, his breath tickling the fine hairs on my neck, and I feel him relax. My eyelids grow heavy as I trace the lines of his tattoos, committing them to memory.

My pussy clenches around his cock, which is still embedded deep inside me, and my thighs instinctively tighten against his hips. My body craves more even as my mind slips toward sleep. A soft sigh escapes my lips, and I snuggle closer.

I blink, fighting to keep my eyes open, wanting to memorize this moment. The moonlight streaming through the window casts a soft glow on Remy's face, softening his sharp edges.

My eyelids flutter and drift closed. Our mingled scent envelops me in a heady cloud.

The lingering excitement from our explosive encounter fades into a pleasant ache throughout my body. I feel sated, fulfilled, and the soft throb between my legs reminds me of what a good fuck he is.

I drift deeper, falling into a dreamless sleep. In the nothingness of sleep, I'm safe.

20

REMY

“ Well, good morning to me,” I mutter, feeling my dick nestled deep inside Eden’s pussy. I wake up, and it’s still fucking hard, maybe even harder than before. I flex my hips, pushing it in deeper, and can’t help but groan at the sensation. She slept like a damn log all night, but that tight grip of hers around my cock never let up.

Shit, she’s still asleep. I start to pull out, but then I think, fuck it, and push back in slow and steady. Damn, it’s like the chick was made for me. I feel her body relax even further, her breathing soft and even, as I begin to slowly thrust in and out. I take it easy, keeping the pace gentle, not wanting to wake her yet. It’s too damn good, being inside her like this while she’s all mine and so fucking innocent in her sleep.

I let one hand drift up to her tits, cupping a soft, full breast. I squeeze gently, thumb grazing a taut nipple, and her body responds with a subtle undulation. Her pussy tightens around me, and I let out a soft groan, stilling my hips. I don’t want to wake her, not yet. I want to enjoy this a little longer. Just me and her body, totally under my control.

But my damn cock has other ideas. It’s starting to take over, wanting to pound into her, claim her hard and fast. I bite back a groan and force myself to hold back. I need to draw this out, make it last, but damn if my cock won’t listen to reason. Maybe it’s all those hours of watching as she stalked me, fantasizing about what I’d do if I ever got my hands on her. Or maybe it’s just that her body is perfect, made to fit mine—made to take my cock and keep me wanting more.

I move my hand down, sliding it between our bodies to rub her clit, feeling her get wetter for me. I let my hips take over, thrusting harder, faster, no longer giving a shit about waking her. I want her to feel it and know she's mine. My free hand grabs her hip, holding her in place as I fuck her, taking what's mine by right.

Finally, she starts to wake, her eyes fluttering open. For a moment, there's confusion in those green depths. Then, her gaze meets mine, and everything crashes into focus.

"Remy," she gasps, and her hips stutter. I thrust into her harder and roll her onto her back, taking advantage.

I groan, my hips stuttering as I lose control, finally pounding into her with everything I've got. I smile down at her, watching as awareness spreads across her face. "Good morning, little stalker. Did you sleep well?"

"What... what are you doing?" Her voice is hoarse, thick with sleep.

"What does it feel like I'm doing?" I tease, pushing in deep and pulling out almost all the way. I flex my hips, hitting that sweet spot, and she moans, her head falling back. "Don't you like it?"

"I—I didn't expect..." She swallows, looking up at me through her dark lashes, her chest heaving. "I didn't expect to wake up like this."

"Like what? With my cock buried balls-deep in your pussy?" I grab her hips, holding her in place as I snap mine forward, making her whimper. "It's a little late to be getting shy now, don't you think?"

"No, I... it's not that." Her cheeks flush, and her hands grasp at my arms, her nails digging into my skin. "I just... I need a minute."

I lean down, my lips brushing her ear, and whisper, “You don’t get a minute, baby. Not anymore.” I bite her earlobe gently, then pull back to look at her. “You wanted me, obsessed over me. Well, here I am. Giving you everything you’ve wanted. A man depraved enough to spend the night warming his cock in your cunt and fuck you awake in the morning.”

“Remy, please?—”

“Please, what?” I snap my hips again, and she cries out, her eyelids fluttering.

Her breath catches, and she bites her lip. “I...”

I keep thrusting, slow and deep, enjoying the way her body quivers with each thrust. “It’s okay, baby. I get it.” I nip at her jaw, tasting the salt of her skin. “You’re not the only one obsessed here.”

She makes a broken sound, and I know I’ve gotten to her. “Just like that, baby. Surrender. I know all your fantasies, remember?” I tighten my grip on her hips. “I plan to make every one of them come true, Eden.”

“Oh God.” Her chest heaves as I plunge into her again and again. “Remy, please.”

“You like that, huh? Hearing me say your name?” I lean down, mouth against her ear. “You like it when I’m inside you, filling you up?”

“Yes,” she gasps, her back arching. “Yes, God, Remy.”

“Fuck yes, little stalker,” I grunt, my composure failing. “Soak my cock. Let everyone hear how good I make you feel.”

And she does, crying out my name as her body tenses with her climax. I feel her

pussy pulse around me, and it's too much. I spill into her, groaning as I fill her with cum, my body shuddering with the force of it. I hold her tight against me, my heart thumping as we both come down from our high.

I pull out of Eden and rise from the bed, my muscles pleasantly loose. Running a hand through my hair, I glance at her sprawled form. "Be a good girl and stay in the trailer while I work. Don't make me regret giving you some freedom."

Heading to the shower without looking back, I try to ignore this strange feeling settling in my chest. The hot water hits my shoulders, and I press my forehead against the cool tile.

Shit. This wasn't part of the plan. Eden is supposed to be a toy to play with and discard, but something about her is already under my skin.

The way she looks at me. Like she completely and utterly craves me. It's unsettling. Dangerous. I've spent years building these defenses, keeping everyone at arm's length. Yet here she is, this obsessed girl, somehow worming her way past them.

I slam my fist against the tile. I can't afford distractions, not with the operation running so smoothly. Ty's counting on me. The carnival depends on my focus, but my mind keeps drifting back to her sleeping form, how she fits against me like she was made for it.

"Get it together," I mutter, shutting off the water more forcefully than necessary. I need to maintain control. She's another pawn in this game—nothing more.

Even as I think about it, I know I'm lying to myself. The truth is, I'm starting to need Eden just as much as she needs me. And that makes her the most dangerous person in my world.

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EDEN

My mind swirls with conflicting emotions, drifting back to what happened between us two nights ago. Everything feels surreal like I'm floating above reality.

I should be horrified. My psychology training screams at me about trauma responses and power dynamics. Still, the warmth spreading through my chest tells a different story.

My fingers trace over the bruises on my wrists, physical proof that this wasn't another fantasy scrawled in my journal. Remy knows my secrets now. He's seen the depths of my obsession, and instead of running, he matched it with his own intensity.

The morning light streams through the window, and I catch my reflection in the glass. I look different, even from the day before—my cheeks flushed, my eyes bright. The woman staring back at me isn't the controlled professional I've crafted over the years. She's raw, exposed, alive. The woman I've been hiding for years.

The outside world feels distant and unimportant. How can I go back to analyzing other people's deviance when I'm finally embracing my own?

I press my palms against my eyes, trying to ground myself. The logical part of my brain attempts to categorize this as a case study—the subject displays signs of Stockholm syndrome, emotional attachment to captor, and dissociative behavior. But clinical terms can't capture the electric current running through my veins.

“What’s happening to me?” I whisper to Remy’s empty trailer. The silence offers no answers.

The walls of his trailer feel like they’re closing in. He hasn’t touched me since yesterday morning when I woke to him inside me, fucking me. My breath catches in my throat as I pace the small space, fingers twitching. The shower calls to me—a chance to wash away the insanity building in my mind.

Hot water cascades over my shoulders, but it does little to calm my racing thoughts. Who else has stood in this shower? The feminine bottles of shampoo and conditioner mock me from their neat row on the shelf.

I dry off quickly and rifle through the clothes Remy left out for me. A soft black t-shirt and yoga pants that fit. My stomach churns as I open his closet, seeking answers I’m unsure I want.

I find them tucked away in the back—dresses, blouses, and lingerie. Each item feels like a knife twisting in my gut. Are these trophies? Leftovers from past conquests? Or worse—does someone else share this space when I’m not here?

The clothes in my hands smell freshly laundered. My fingers clench around the fabric until my knuckles turn white. The possessive rage building inside me is irrational. I have no claim on Remy, no right to these feelings of betrayal.

But logic doesn’t stop the jealousy from burning through my veins. I imagine other women wearing these clothes, sitting in this trailer, sharing his bed. The thought makes me want to tear everything apart, leaving nothing but shreds of fabric as evidence of my fury.

I hang everything back as I had found it. The neat row of hangers feels like an accusation—proof that I’m another woman in Remy’s collection.

I pull on my shoes and pace up and down. After days inside, the trailer feels stifling, and my muscles ache for movement and fresh air. Not that I want to escape—the thought of leaving Remy makes my stomach clench—but these walls are closing in, and I need space.

I test the door handle. It turns easily, with no resistance. My heart skips. Has he left it unlocked on purpose? Is it because he trusts me, or is it a trap?

The morning air hits my face as I crack open the door. Dew sparkles on the grass, and the woods beyond the carnival beckon. No one's around.

I step outside, bare feet sinking into the cool grass. Freedom tastes sweet, but it's not what I'm seeking. I want a walk to get some air. The trees sway in the breeze, their leaves whispering secrets.

My legs carry me toward the treeline. Each step feels like rebellion, even though I know I'll return. How could I not? Remy has awakened something in me that I can't put back to sleep.

The forest envelops me in shadows and silence. Pine needles cushion my steps as I weave between trunks. Birds call overhead, and somewhere, a stream babbles. It's peaceful here, away from the intensity that fills Remy's trailer.

I find a fallen log and sit, letting my thoughts drift. Not toward escape—never that—but toward understanding. What is it about Remy that draws me in? The danger? The way he sees through my carefully constructed facade to the secrets underneath?

The morning sun filters through the canopy, painting patterns on my skin. I inhale, filling my lungs with forest air. After just a few more minutes, I'll head back to his trailer—to our game of predator and prey.

A twig snaps behind me. My heart leaps into my throat as I whirl around, scanning the dense trees. Nothing moves except shadows dancing in the morning breeze.

But I know better. The prickling sensation along my spine tells me I'm being watched. Remy. He let me leave—wanted me to leave. This was a test, and I walked right into his trap.

Another crack, closer this time. My pulse quickens, but not from fear. The thrill of being hunted courses through my veins. I glimpse something dark moving between the trees and then see a flash of that bone-white mask.

I should run. That's what prey does when cornered. My muscles coil with anticipation, ready to spring. Still, I hesitate, torn between flight and the magnetic pull drawing me toward him.

The mask appears again, closer now. My breath comes in short gasps, and my chest heaves. The energy crackling between us is electric and dangerous.

“Did you think I wouldn't notice?” His voice is distorted by the mask. “That I wouldn't follow?”

I take an involuntary step backward, leaves crunching under my feet. “I was coming back.”

“Were you?” He moves like smoke through the trees. “Or were you testing the boundaries of your cage?”

The possessive edge in his voice pools heat low in my belly. This is what I wanted—what I've always wanted—to be hunted, desired, possessed. My earlier jealousy feels distant now, replaced by an all-consuming need.

My feet move before he finishes speaking, carrying me deeper into the forest. Each step brings a rush of exhilaration, knowing he'll chase. I want to be caught, pinned beneath his weight, consumed by that rough edge he keeps hidden.

Leaves crunch beneath my feet, branches whip my face, and the morning dew soaks through my shirt. The sting of branches against my bare skin only heightens my arousal. Danger has always been the most effective aphrodisiac, the thrill of crossing boundaries.

His footsteps pad behind me, deliberate and methodical. He's toying with me, letting me believe I can escape. My heart pounds in my chest, urging me to run faster, but it has nothing to do with survival. This is about giving in to the wildness.

I can feel his eyes on me, but I don't turn back. If I did, he'd see the wanton need on my face. My cheeks burn with anticipation and the strain of holding back moans. I want him to tear me apart and piece me back together, branded with his mark.

My lungs burn, and my sides ache, but I don't slow down. His voice carries through the trees. "Keep running, little stalker. How far will you get before I catch you?"

The challenge in his voice sparks my competitive streak. I lengthen my strides, pushing harder. The damp forest air fills my lungs, and my legs burn with effort, but the heat between my legs is stronger. It's been building since I saw him, a simmering flame that needs to be stoked.

My heart feels like it will burst from my chest, and my breath comes in harsh gasps. I round a bend, and suddenly, his arms wrap around me, lifting me off the ground. We tumble to the forest floor in a tangle of limbs. The impact knocks the air from my lungs, leaving me breathless.

His weight pins me down. I arch my back, offering myself to him, and he pushes his

mask up so that his lips claim mine in a ravenous kiss. Our tongues duel, each battling for control. Any protests I might have made are swallowed by the hunger between us.

His hands roam over my body, his touch possessive. My shirt rides up, exposing my skin to the morning chill. I whimper into his mouth as his fingers trace patterns that make me shiver. It's not about tenderness, not now. This is about claiming, about marking his territory.

I squirm beneath him, grinding my hips against his growing erection. The ache inside me is a living thing demanding to be sated.

Remy's hands grip my wrists, holding me down. His body is a solid weight on top of mine, his muscles taut with restrained desire. Our heavy breathing fills the forest clearing, the only sound disrupting the peaceful morning birdsong.

"Get off me. I mean it, Remy." My voice comes out breathless. I struggle against his grip, testing the strength of his hold—not that I really want to escape.

He pushes his mask back down, and his eyes glitter with lust visible through the mask's eyeholes. "Running through the woods like a wild thing. Are you my prey now?"

His fingers tighten around my wrists, digging into my skin. Pain flares, sending a jolt of arousal straight between my legs. My hips buck unconsciously, seeking friction, desperate for him to touch me there.

"You want to play these games?" he says, his eyes never leaving mine. "Then let's play."

With a sudden move, he releases my wrists and grabs the waistband of my yoga

pants. A tear rips through the silence as he rips open the fabric, exposing my core.

“No panties, Eden? Did you forget, or did I make sure you wouldn’t have any?” His fingers dive between my legs. “Ah, you’re already wet for me. So eager.”

His fingers swipe through my pussy, groaning as he brings them to his mouth and tastes me. “You’ve been a bad girl, haven’t you? Wanting me like this. Thinking about me while you run.”

His touch is rough, claiming me as his own. I can’t speak, can’t form words to respond. This is another of my deep, twisted fantasies—primal play. The reality is so much more intense. I’m aware of every sensation—the rough bark beneath my back, the smell of damp earth, and the press of his body against mine.

His finger slides inside me, not gentle, but I don’t want gentle. I want savage. I want my civilized, controlled world to shatter under the force of his desire. He adds another finger, and I can’t hold back a gasp.

“Right where you belong, baby. You’re mine out here in the woods, your pussy dripping for my cock.” He strokes a thumb over my clit.

My body arches off the forest floor, a moan tearing from my throat as Remy’s tongue dances over me. He licks slowly, savoring each taste, each whimper it elicits from me. The slick slide of his tongue teases my oversensitive clit, sending sparks of heat through my core. I squirm beneath him, my legs falling open to grant him better access.

His hands grip my thighs, holding me in place as he feasts. I’m powerless to stop him. My toes curl into the soft earth, and I thread my fingers through his hair, urging him closer. I’m burning up, each pass of his tongue stoking the flames higher.

“You taste so fucking good,” he murmurs, his breath hot against my swollen flesh. “Like a dessert that I want to devour.”

I’m wetter than I’ve ever been, my arousal coating his face, and I’m desperate for release. He plays me like a maestro, his fingers and mouth moving in concert to push me higher. I can feel the climax building, a pressure cooker set to explode.

When I think I can’t take any more, he pulls away. I whimper, fighting the urge to pull him back. “Please, Remy,” I beg.

His eyes darken as he looks down at me. “Only when I’m buried deep inside you. I want to feel your pussy clenching around my cock as you come.”

The edge I’m teetering on sharpens, threatening to cut me with frustration, but his words ignite another burst of arousal. I imagine his thick cock filling me, stretching me to the brink. My body thrums with need, my breasts flushed and aching for attention.

I reach for him blindly, desperate to feel his skin against mine. He catches my wrists, holding them above my head with one hand as he unzips his jeans with the other.

The forest air is cold on my exposed skin, and goosebumps prickle across my body. However, my core burns, and I am impatient for his touch. I arch my hips, seeking friction, wanting to pull him closer.

His free hand glides under my t-shirt to tease my breast, pinching my hard nipple. I cry out, my head thrashing. Every movement and sensation feels magnified like my senses have been heightened.

The weight of his cock against my entrance makes me spread my legs wider to grant him access. “Please, Remy, now,” I pant, writhing beneath him.

“Soon, I’m going to give you what you need.” His voice is low, filled with the same hunger I feel.

He teases my entrance with the tip of his cock, and I buck my hips, trying to take him in. He laughs, a warm, arousing sound that vibrates through me. “Impatient, aren’t you? But you forget, I’m in control here.”

He pulls back, letting the head of his cock slide through my entrance before denying me again. My body bucks involuntarily, searching for more contact.

“Tell me what you want.” He grips my hips, fingers digging into my flesh as he thrusts shallowly, not penetrating deep enough to satisfy.

“Your cock,” I gasp, my chest heaving as I struggle for breath. “Fuck me with your cock. Please, Remy, I need you.”

The plea falls from my lips, and he chuckles, dark and dangerous. He lifts my legs, wrapping them around his waist. The head of his cock nudges my pussy, and then he thrusts forward, filling me in one stroke. My body stretches to accommodate his size, my muscles clenching around him.

Remy’s eyes scorch mine as he moves, his hips pumping rhythmically. Each thrust sinks him deeper, awakening every nerve ending. He sets a punishing pace.

“Feel that, angel? How well you fit me.” His mask brushes against my ear. “Let me stretch you open.”

I rake my nails down his back, leaving red marks on his tanned skin. He throws his head back, a growl rumbling in his throat. “Fuck, you feel so good.”

His words fuel the fire blazing within, and I wrap my legs tighter around his waist,

pulling him impossibly closer.

Remy shifts his hips, changing the angle, searing every nerve ending in my body. “There you are,” he grunts. “That’s the spot, isn’t it?”

“Yes,” I whisper, my eyes slipping shut. “More, please.”

His fingers dig into my skin. “As you wish.”

He moves again, each thrust deliberate and hard. I can feel his cock sliding over that sweet spot again and again, setting off sparks of pleasure.

My body tenses, hovering on the edge. I’m so close, but he hasn’t given permission yet. I want to fall, to surrender to the climax building, but I hold back, waiting for his command.

“Come for me, Eden,” he growls. “I want to feel it around my cock.”

The words crumble my restraint, and I shatter into a million pieces. My muscles contract around him, waves of ecstasy washing over me. Remy groans, thrusting through my orgasm, drawing out every last shudder of pleasure.

Slowly, my senses return, but Remy doesn’t move, his cock embedded deep in mine. He removes the mask and his breath tickles my neck, his weight pinning me to the forest floor. I relish the feeling of fullness, of being surrounded by his scent, his taste.

His lips find mine, and we kiss deeply, our tongues tangling sensually. This connection goes beyond physical attraction. It’s as if our souls are reaching for each other in the shadows.

“I want to feel you come inside me,” I whisper against his mouth. “Please, Remy.”

A dangerous glint enters his eyes, and he withdraws, stroking my cheek with the back of his hand. “Anything you want, little stalker.”

He moves again, but he sets a slower and more measured pace this time. Each thrust glides over my sensitive flesh, sending aftershocks rippling through me.

The coil inside me winds tighter and tighter, and my body craves another release, but he knows exactly when to change the angle, the speed, to keep me on the edge. It’s a dance we’re performing, moving in perfect rhythm.

“I love how you feel,” he pants, restraint breaking. “Taking every inch like you need it to survive.”

“Make me come again,” I beg, my fingernails digging into his back.

“How can I deny you?” He levers himself up, pulling my legs up to rest on his shoulders. The change in position lets him slide even deeper, nudging a place inside me that makes my eyes roll back in my head.

The new angle is incredible. My body bows off the ground, my cries echoing through the forest. Remy’s thrusts become more violent, his breathing ragged.

I’m teetering on the edge, my muscles clenching around him. “Remy, I’m?—”

“Break for me,” he commands. “Soak my cock with that sweet pussy.”

His words send me flying, and I explode into white-hot ecstasy. My body shakes uncontrollably, each pulse clenching his cock.

Remy lets out a feral growl, his release taking him. “Fuck, Eden, I’m—oh fuck?—”

His body stiffens above me, and I feel him throbbing deep inside me. I clutch him to me, unwilling to let him go, to let this moment end.

I lay beneath Remy, our bodies still joined, my heart gradually slowing its frantic pace. The forest canopy sways above us, dappled sunlight dancing through the leaves. Every nerve ending in my body hums with satisfaction, my muscles deliciously sore.

This man knows my shameful secrets, has read them in my journal, and instead of running, he brings them to life. The thought sends a shiver through me. He shifts but maintains his possessive hold, his weight anchoring me to the earth.

The scent of pine needles mingles with sweat and musk. Somewhere above us, a bird calls to its mate. Nature continues its course around us, indifferent to our presence and what happened here.

I trace my fingers along the ridges of his back, memorizing each dip and curve. This moment feels surreal—like one of my fevered dreams come to life. But the bark scratching my skin and his weight proves this is so very real.

My obsession with Remy started as something clinical, even academic. I told myself I was studying him, analyzing him like all my other subjects. But he saw through that facade from the beginning and recognized the deviance that mirrored his own.

A gentle breeze cools our heated skin. Neither of us speaks—words would only break this perfect moment. Instead, I close my eyes and simply feel his breath against my neck, his heartbeat against my chest, the way our bodies fit together like matching puzzle pieces.

I've spent years documenting others' obsessions and their descent into depravity. Now, I'm living my own story, and for once, I don't want to analyze it. I want to exist in this raw, primal space where Remy and I understand each other completely.

22

REMY

I shift another crate into position while Cade hands me the inventory list. The early morning sun beats down on us as we prepare for tonight's exchange at the lumber yard.

"So," Cade says with a smirk. "Saw you and the podcaster getting cozy in the forest yesterday."

I shoot him a warning glare. "Focus on the job."

"Hey, I was setting up my own fun with Lily when I spotted you two." He chuckles, checking off items on the list. "Never thought I'd see the day the mighty Remy would let someone get that close."

"Drop it." My voice carries an edge that would make most men flinch. Not Cade, though. We've worked together too long.

"She's got you wrapped around her finger, doesn't she?" He hands me another crate. "The way you were looking at her, that's not just playing with your food anymore."

I slam the crate down harder than necessary. "You're crossing a line."

"Am I wrong, though?" Cade raises an eyebrow. "Eden's different than the girls you usually fuck. I can tell. You're actually letting her in."

My jaw clenches as I continue working. He's right, but I'll never admit it out loud. Eden's gotten under my skin in ways I never expected—ways that could be dangerous in our line of work.

“Just be careful,” Cade says, his tone growing serious. “Distractions can get messy in this business.”

I nod, knowing he's speaking from experience with Lily. We finish loading the crates in silence, both lost in thoughts about the women who've complicated our carefully ordered lives.

I stretch my shoulders, working out the tension from moving crates all morning. Cade lounges against a stack of boxes, taking another unauthorized break.

“You know what your problem is?” He grins, that manic gleam in his eyes. “You think too much. All that brooding and calculating.”

“Better than not thinking at all,” I shoot back, but there's no real heat. Cade's unhinged, but he's also my closest friend.

“Hey, I think plenty.” He pulls out a cigarette. “Like right now, I think you need to get laid more. Loosen up that stick up your ass.”

I snort. “Says the guy who can't shut up about his girlfriend.”

“At least I'm honest about what I want.” He blows smoke rings, oddly precise for someone so chaotic. “You're all...” He waves his hand vaguely. “Mysterious and shit. Must be exhausting.”

“Working with you is exhausting.”

“You love it.” Cade grins wider. “I keep things interesting.”

“That’s one word for it.” I grab his clipboard, checking the numbers myself. “You’re the reason my hair’s going gray.”

“Please, you’d be bored without me.” He flicks ash onto the ground. “Remember that time in Denver?—”

“We agreed never to talk about Denver.”

He laughs, the sound echoing off the metal walls. “Good times, though, right?”

I shake my head but can’t quite hide my smirk. For all his chaos, Cade’s reliable in his own twisted way. He might be crazy, but he’s my kind of crazy.

I hear the crunch of boots on gravel before Colt’s massive frame appears around the corner of the container. His usual scowl is firmly in place as he approaches.

“Need an extra pair of hands?” he asks, already grabbing a crate.

“Thought you had a rehearsal with Nash,” I say, checking off another item.

Colt shrugs. “Finished early. Flora’s got him distracted anyway.”

“Speaking of distractions,” Cade pipes up with that shit-eating grin. “Our boy Remy here?—”

“Shut it,” I cut him off. “We need to focus on tonight’s exchange.”

“Right.” Colt’s expression darkens. “Ty said there might be trouble?”

“When isn’t there?” I hand him the manifest. “Ten crates, fifty thousand each. Buyers are getting antsy about the price hike.”

“Let them get antsy,” Cade says, cracking his knuckles. “More fun that way.”

Colt rolls his eyes. “Not everything needs to end in bloodshed.”

“You’re no fun anymore since Nash got his hooks in you,” Cade pouts.

“And you’re too eager to start shit,” Colt growls. “Remember Pittsburgh?”

“That wasn’t my fault! How was I supposed to know?—”

“Both of you, enough.” I snap. “Midnight. South entrance. We go in quiet, make the exchange, get out. No complications.”

“Yes, boss,” Cade mock salutes while Colt just nods.

After that, we fall into a rhythm, moving crates and checking inventory. The familiar work helps clear my head, pushing thoughts of Eden aside—for now, at least.

EDEN

I toss and turn on the thin mattress in Remy's trailer, unable to find rest. The digital clock blinks two-seventeen a.m. when the door finally creaks open. My heart leaps into my throat at the sight of him—blood streaking his face and shirt, bruises blooming across his jaw.

“Oh God, are you okay?” I rush to him, hands outstretched as I reach for his face.

He grunts, brushing past me to grab a towel. “Fine.” His voice is rough and dismissive.

“Let me help,” I insist, taking the towel from his grip. He allows it, though his jaw remains tight. I dab at the blood on his face, realizing the cuts are superficial. Most of the crimson staining his clothes isn't his.

My breath catches. The evidence of violence coating his skin sends a thrill through me. My fingers trace a bruise on his bicep, and heat pools in my core. The pungent scent of blood mingles with his natural musk, making my head spin.

“You're not scared,” he observes.

“No,” I whisper, continuing to clean him. Each swipe of the towel reveals more of his unharmed skin beneath the blood. The knowledge that he emerged victorious from whatever violent encounter left him in this state makes my pulse race.

My clinical interest in criminal psychology feels far away now. This is a visceral attraction to his obvious power and capacity for violence. As a researcher, I should be horrified. Instead, I'm fighting the urge to press myself against his blood-stained chest.

I set the bloodied towel aside, my gaze still on his body. "I'll get some ice for those bruises."

His grip catches my wrist before I can move away, yanking me hard against his chest. The blood on his shirt transfers to my skin, and my breath catches.

"You like this, don't you?" His voice drops low. "The blood. The violence." His fingers dig into my flesh. "You spent years interviewing killers, studying psychopaths, and now you're here with one."

The academic distance I've maintained through countless prison interviews evaporates. This isn't theoretical anymore—this is real and pressing against me.

"Tell me, Eden." He twists my arm behind my back, forcing me closer. "Does it excite you? Knowing what I am? What I've done?"

"Yes," I gasp, the confession tearing from my throat. Years of professional detachment vanish as I arch into him. The evidence of violence coating his skin only heightens my arousal. "I need help, but yes."

"Such a twisted little thing." His bloody fingers trace my jaw. "All those interviews and research, you weren't trying to understand them. You were looking for someone like me."

I pull away from him, crossing my arms over my chest. "That's not true." The lie tastes bitter on my tongue. "I'm a professional. My research is academic."

“Is that why you broke into my trailer? For academic research?” His fingers grip my chin, forcing me to meet his gaze.

I shut my eyes, shame burning through me. I can’t let him see how right he is, how perfectly he’s pegged my darkest desires. Years of maintaining a professional facade crumble under his knowing stare.

“Your listeners are getting worried,” he suddenly says, releasing my chin. “There’s chatter online about you falling prey to one of the killers you hunt. Ironical, isn’t it?”

My eyes snap open. “What?”

“Your social media’s gone dark. People notice when their favorite true crime podcaster disappears.” He pulls out his phone, showing me Reddit threads speculating about my whereabouts. “You need to maintain appearances.”

“How exactly should I do that locked in your trailer?” The words come out sharper than intended.

His thumb traces my lower lip. “If you promise to behave, to stay put and not try anything stupid, I’ll let you have some freedom around the carnival. You can record your podcast and take photos for social media.”

“You’d trust me with that?”

“Trust?” He laughs. “No, but I’ll be watching every move you make. One step out of line, and you’ll never leave this trailer again.” His grip tightens on my jaw. “Do we understand each other?”

I nod, relief flooding me at the prospect of autonomy, even if it’s an illusion. “I understand.”

His fingers tighten around my throat, cutting off my air. The pressure sends sparks through my body, a mix of fear and something darker. My pulse thunders against his palm.

“One wrong move,” he growls, “and this will be tighter next time. Understand?”

I slightly nod, stars dancing at the edges of my vision. Just as the room blurs, his grip shifts, and his mouth crashes into mine. The kiss is brutal and possessive.

And I melt.

My body betrays every pretense of resistance, molding against him as his fingers maintain their warning grip on my throat. The rational part of my brain that spent years studying criminal psychology screams that this is textbook Stockholm Syndrome. Captive bonding with captor. Classic trauma response.

That explanation rings hollow. My obsession with Remy predated my capture. I stalked him, broke into his trailer, and collected his belongings. I chose this path long before he took control.

This leaves only one terrifying conclusion in my mind as his kiss brands me: I’m falling for him. Not the sanitized version I imagined while watching from afar, but the real, dangerous man who holds my life in his hands.

The realization should horrify me.

I kiss him back with a desperate hunger, my hands clutching at his blood-stained shirt. The unmistakable taste of blood lingers on his lips, and I chase it with my tongue, wanting to taste every part of him. My fingers tangle in his hair, pulling him closer as I press my body against his.

Gone is any pretense of professional distance. This is pure need. I pour years of suppressed craving into the kiss, letting him feel how much I want him.

His grip on my throat tightens in response, and I moan into his mouth. The sound seems to trigger something in him. His other hand grabs my hip, fingers digging in hard enough to bruise. The pain only heightens my arousal.

My hands slide under his shirt, feeling the warm skin beneath. I trace every scar, every mark that tells the story of his violent nature. Each one makes me burn hotter.

The kiss grows more demanding, his teeth catching my lower lip. I taste my own blood this time and whimper. He swallows the sound, consuming my submission like it feeds something inside him.

I arch against him, begging for more. My body speaks a language my professional vocabulary never could, telling him exactly how much I crave his dark side. How perfectly his violence matches my own twisted fantasies.

Remy's fingers dig into my hips as he maneuvers me into the bathroom. The small space feels oppressively intimate, his hard body crowding mine.

The shower roars to life, steam quickly filling the room. Remy strips us both with brutal efficiency, revealing the dark marks my nails left on his back in the forest yesterday. The sight makes something stir within me, a fierce possessiveness that mirrors his own.

He pushes me against the wall under the stinging hot spray, his mouth crashing down on mine. His kiss is frantic, devouring.

This is a staking of a claim. He angles my body to his liking, bending me over. Water cascades down my back.

“Can’t hide how much you want this,” His voice is a growl in my ear. “Your body can’t lie to me.” His fingers slide inside me, making me gasp. “My perfect little slut.”

I want to disagree, to tell him I’m not this person. That I’m a respectable podcaster, not some sex-crazed groupie. But as his fingers thrust inside me, I know it’s a lie.

I’m exactly this person. I always have been.

The proof is in the way my body opens for him, in the moan that tears from my throat, and in the slickness coating his fingers. I’m dripping for him.

His fingers leave me, only to be replaced by his cock. He pushes inside, filling me. My back arches at the delicious stretch, the feeling of being complete.

His hands grip my hips, so I know he’ll leave bruises as he starts to move. The burn between my legs builds a fierce ache that demands release.

I grip the shower wall as Remy’s hips slam against my ass, his blood-streaked chest pressed to my back. The water swirls pink down the drain, evidence of his violent night washing away.

“Tell me,” he growls, fingers digging into my hips. “Tell me how much you love getting fucked by a killer.”

My breath catches. The metallic scent of blood mingles with steam, making my head spin. “I—I…”

He yanks my head back by my hair. “No more pretending. No more hiding behind your professional facade. Say it.”

“I love it,” I gasp as he drives deeper. “The blood, the violence, knowing what you’ve

done, what you're capable of; it makes me so wet."

His bloody fingers slide around my throat. "Keep going."

"I've interviewed dozens of killers, but none of them made me feel like this." My words come out breathless. "I want your depravity—need it. The blood on your hands just makes me want you more."

He groans against my neck, his grip tightening. "Such a twisted little thing, getting off on my violence."

"Yes," I moan, pushing back against him. "I've never been more turned on than seeing you covered in blood. Knowing the power you wield..."

His teeth sink into my shoulder. "That's it. Let me hear how depraved you really are."

The confession breaks something loose inside me. "I want you to fuck me with blood still on your hands and to taste it when you kiss me. I want to watch you kill. Fuck. I need to witness how dangerous you are..."

Remy's hands grip my throat and hips, controlling my every motion. His cock thrusts deeper, demanding my submission.

"I need to watch," I gasp. "I want to be there when you do it again. When you kill. I need to see the life drain from their eyes. Witness the moment they realize they're never leaving that room alive."

His fingers tighten on my throat as he slams into me. My core clenches around him, and I cry out.

"You like the idea, don't you?" His voice rumbles against my neck. "Imagining my

hands around their throat. My blade sinking into their flesh.”

“Yes,” I moan. “I imagine them fighting, struggling... but you’re much stronger. They have no chance against you.”

“No one escapes me,” he growls, teeth grazing my shoulder. “And you’ll never escape either.”

“I don’t want to.” The truth spills from me, raw and uncontaminated by the pretenses I’ve constructed in my public life. “I chose this. You. I wanted you to catch me.”

“Smart girl.” His teeth find a sensitive spot on my neck, his cock pounding into me.

“No one can know what I am or want.” The confession tumbles from my mouth as I arch my back, meeting his powerful thrusts. “This can’t ever leave this trailer, but I want you to show me exactly how powerful you are.”

He growls against my skin. “You want to be mine? To belong to me?”

“Yes,” I breathe, my back arching as a coil of pleasure tightens deep within. “I want everyone to think I’m scared, that you forced me, that I’m your victim... but underneath, I want to be yours.”

His teeth find my ear, biting down gently. “And how would you prove yourself to me, little stalker?”

“Whatever you want. Whatever you need.” I’m breathless now, the pleasure making me lightheaded. “I want to prove my devotion, my surrender. Anything.”

His fingers dig into my hips, leaving bruises I’ll treasure. “Would you beg me to kill for you?”

“Oh God, yes...” I’m on the edge now, every nerve singing. “I need to know I’m capable of it. That I can give in to the same depravity I’ve obsessed over and just let go. But...”

“But what?” His voice drops low, commanding.

“But I’d only do it for you.” I force the words past my lips as my walls clench around him. “Only to prove my loyalty to you. I want to give you that gift.”

He groans, his thrusts becoming more erratic. “You’ll do anything I ask?”

“Yes,” I gasp, my back arching. “Anything.”

His grip on my throat tightens, and the pressure sends me tumbling over the edge. My vision whites out as my body clenches around him. My release coats his cock, gripping him with my pulsing walls.

“That’s it, little stalker,” he growls in my ear, hips still moving. “Come all over my cock.”

My hands claw the shower wall. The helplessness is exhilarating. Remy controls my pleasure, my body, my very breath. The confession that I need this, him, hangs unspoken between us.

He continues to move inside me, chasing his own release. My core twitches around him, pulling out every last drop as he roars.

There’s no denying now that I’m his. Every part of me has surrendered to the powerful man behind me, and there’s no going back. This is where I belong.

REMY

I watch Eden's fingers dance across her phone screen as she posts the staged photo we took this morning. It's a simple shot at the carnival, making it seem like she's still pursuing her investigation. It's a perfect alibi. My plan is working flawlessly.

Last night's blood-soaked encounter revealed something deeper about her—a deviant side that mirrors my own. The way her eyes lit up at the evidence of violence on my body, how she tenderly cleaned my wounds while thrumming with excitement. I've never met anyone who understands this part of me.

"You can walk the grounds today," I tell her, watching her expression brighten. "The carnival's closed, so stick to the back areas."

Eden's eyes widen with surprise. "Really?"

I step closer, towering over her. "If you even think about running..." My voice drops low as I trace a finger along her jaw. "Remember our little chase in the forest? How I hunted you down, tracked your every move?" I feel her shiver at the memory. "Next time won't be nearly as fun for you."

She swallows hard but holds my gaze. "I understand."

"Good girl." I pull back, assessing her reaction. There's no fear in her eyes, only acceptance and that familiar dark gleam that first drew me to her. "Stay within sight

of my crew. They'll be watching."

Eden nods, already moving toward the door with barely contained excitement. I know she won't run. She's too invested now, too fascinated by the dark side she's discovered here. More importantly, she's mine.

I feel my phone vibrate in my pocket. Ty's message is brief.

Office. Now.

Leaving Eden exploring near my trailer, I cross the empty carnival grounds. The morning sun casts long shadows between the rides and game stalls. My boots crunch against loose gravel as I approach Ty's office trailer.

Inside, Ty sits behind his cluttered desk, fingers drumming against the worn wood. His expression is grim.

"We need to talk about your little pet project," he says.

I lean against the wall, arms crossed. "Eden's under control."

"Is she?" Ty's eyes narrow. "Because letting her wander around seems like the opposite of control."

"She won't run."

"That's not the point." He leans forward. "She's a liability. A true crime podcaster who's seen too much. The smart play here is to make her disappear. Clean. Simple."

The suggestion hits me so hard I want to murder Ty. My hands clench into fists, and I push off the wall, looming over his desk. "That's not happening."

“Remy—”

“No.” My voice comes out as a growl. “Eden’s off limits. She’s mine.”

“You’re thinking with your dick instead of your head.” Ty stands, matching my stance. “One anonymous tip from her and everything we’ve built here crashes down.”

“Touch her,” I snarl, “and you’ll find out exactly how much control I have over my impulses.”

The threat hangs heavy in the air between us. Ty studies me for a long moment. “You better know what you’re doing.”

I turn and yank open the door, pausing only to look back over my shoulder. “I do. And Eden stays alive. End of discussion.”

I stalk away from Ty’s office, my blood still boiling. The morning sun does nothing to calm the rage coursing through my veins. My hands clench into fists, staving off the urge to wrap them around his throat for suggesting we harm Eden.

The familiar itch creeps up my spine—that burning need to hurt, to destroy. I’ve controlled it for years, channeling it into the carnival’s criminal operations. But threatening what’s mine? That awakens something far worse.

I spot Lars working on the Ferris wheel and redirect my path. He tenses as I approach, likely sensing the danger radiating off me.

“Need something broken?” he asks.

A harsh laugh escapes me. “More like someone.” I crack my knuckles, the sound sharp in the morning air. “Ty seems to forget who handles the messy parts of our

operation.”

Lars sets down his wrench. “He’s business-minded. Clean and efficient.”

“Clean?” I spit the word out. “There’s nothing clean about what we do. He pretends his hands aren’t dirty because he doesn’t often do the dirty work himself.”

The memories flash through my mind of every throat I’ve crushed, every body I’ve disposed of. Ty gives the orders, but I’m one of the ones who makes people disappear. Not because I have to, but because I want to—because something inside me craves it.

“Ty’s never understood,” I continue, my voice dropping lower. “He thinks this is just about money. But some of us need this.”

Lars takes a small step back, and I realize my hands are clenched into white-knuckled fists. The predator in me recognizes his fear and feeds on it. This is what sets me apart from Ty.

Now I have Eden. Someone who sees the monster and wants to embrace it rather than run from it, and I’ll kill anyone who tries to take her from me.

Lars takes another measured step back, his eyes fixed on my clenched fists. “You’re right. Ty doesn’t understand, but Eden does, doesn’t she?”

The sound of her name cuts through the red haze of anger. I inhale sharply, forcing my fingers to uncurl.

“That’s why you’re protecting her,” Lars continues. “She sees the real you.”

“She doesn’t just see it.” I lean against the Ferris wheel’s metal frame. “She craves

it.”

Lars picks up his wrench again, seeming to sense the immediate danger has passed.

“Then Ty’s wrong about her being a liability. She’s an asset.”

A harsh laugh escapes me. “Since when did you become so insightful?”

“Someone has to be the voice of reason around here.” He shrugs, a hint of a smile playing on his lips. “Can’t all be unhinged psychos like you, Gage, and Cade.”

“Watch it,” I warn. The rage has subsided, leaving behind its familiar dull ache.

“Hey, at least you found someone who appreciates your particular brand of crazy.”

“Just like you pursued Alice, and somehow she has accepted your unhinged ass?”

I watch Lars’s face soften as I mention Alice.

“It’s different when you find that one person who fits,” he says, a rare smile crossing his features. “Alice gets me. All of me. Even the parts I tried to hide.”

The tenderness in his voice catches me off guard. Lars, usually reserved and calculated, transforms when he talks about her. His shoulders relax, the ever-present tension melting away.

“She doesn’t try to change me,” he continues, adjusting a bolt on the wheel. “Just accepts who I am and makes me want to be better without forcing it.”

I think about Eden, how she doesn’t flinch from my twisted side but embraces it. How she sees the monster inside me and wants more, not less.

“Never thought I’d find someone like that,” Lars admits. “Someone who makes the chaos in my head quiet down.”

The words hit closer to home than I’d like to admit. Eden has the same effect on me, not taming my violent urges but understanding them and accepting them. She makes them feel less like a curse and more like a shared secret.

“Alice grounds me,” Lars says, his voice low and intimate. “Makes everything make sense.”

I nod. Some people just fit, like missing pieces we never knew we were looking for.

25

EDEN

I notice the police cruiser pulling up to the carnival entrance. Two officers step out, their eyes scanning the grounds with purpose. I recognize that look—they're here with questions.

“Ms. Love?” One of them approaches me. “We received some concerning tips about your safety during your investigation here.”

I maintain my professional demeanor, the same one I use for my podcast. “Officers, what’s this about? Is something wrong?”

Movement catches my eye as Remy approaches. His presence is commanding even from a distance. He reaches us, standing close enough that I can feel the heat radiating from him.

“Everything alright here?” His voice carries that subtle edge of authority.

“These officers were following up on some concerns about my safety,” I explain, turning to face the officers again. “I appreciate the check-in, but I can assure you I’m perfectly fine. I’m still working on gathering material for my next podcast episode about carnival culture and community.”

The older officer studies me. “You’re certain there’s no trouble, Ms. Love? The tips we received were pretty specific about potential dangers.”

“I appreciate the concern,” I say, letting my podcaster voice shine through—calm, controlled, professional. “But I’m a thorough investigator. I always ensure my safety while pursuing stories. The carnival has been nothing but accommodating for my research.”

Remy’s presence beside me adds weight to my words. The officers exchange glances, clearly weighing my response against their intel.

I feel my pulse quicken but maintain my composure as the older officer pulls out his notepad. “We’ve tracked multiple disappearances along the carnival’s route over the past year. Too many to be a coincidence.”

Remy shifts beside me as two officers approach his trailer. I recognize the stance it’s casual but ready.

“Mind if we take a look around?” The younger officer gestures at the trailer.

“Got a warrant?” Remy’s voice is neutral, polite but firm.

“Not at the moment,” the older officer says, “but that can be arranged.”

I keep quiet, my mind racing to Jessica, my producer. She’s been blowing up my phone lately, concerned about my “unhealthy obsession” with the carnival story. Last week, she threatened to report me missing if I didn’t “come to my senses.” Knowing Jessica, she’s probably been hounding the local PD.

“Feel free to come back when you have one,” Remy says, maintaining his composure.

The officers leave without further comment, but their presence has shifted something in the air. The cruiser pulls away, kicking up dust as it disappears down the access road.

I follow Remy to Tyson's office, my steps measured and calm despite my racing thoughts.

"Fucking cops," Remy growls the moment he steps inside, pacing the small space.

Tyson looks up from his desk, his expression darkening. "What happened?"

"Snooping," Remy says. "They wanted to look in my trailer. I asked if they had a warrant, possibly a miscalculation on my part, but it's not like I could let them in." He runs a hand through his hair. "Fuck. There's too much evidence of Eden's captivity."

Ty grabs his cell phone and dials a number, putting it on speaker.

"What's up, boss?" a voice asks on the other end.

"Phoenix, I need you to investigate the local police department's intentions regarding the carnival. They wanted to look around Remy's trailer. We need to know their plans and whether they intend to get a warrant to search the place."

"Shit." Tyson runs a hand through his hair. "We need to move the?—"

"Wait," I interrupt, my mind racing. "I might have a solution."

Both men turn to look at me, Remy's eyes narrowing.

"My podcast has a huge following. I could release an episode tonight about carnival discrimination—how law enforcement often targets carnivals without cause—paint them as prejudiced against carnival workers."

Tyson leans forward, interested. "Go on."

“I have evidence from other cases where police harassed carnival workers without justification. I can weave those stories with what I’ve observed here—hard-working people being profiled simply because they live differently.”

“It could work,” Tyson muses. “Public pressure might make them back off.”

“Plus,” I add, “I can hint at following leads in another state and make it seem like the real story is elsewhere.”

Remy’s anger shifts to something else; he almost looks... proud. He moves behind me, his hand settling possessively on my neck.

“Our podcaster is becoming useful,” he murmurs.

Tyson nods. “Do it. I’ll have Nash and Lars handle the other preparations, just in case.”

I feel a surge of belonging as they include me in their plans. This is what I’ve wanted, to be part of something illicit and dark. However, the desire to protect someone I care about is a new sensation, as I’ve never had anyone to care about.

“I’ll need more of my equipment from the motel,” I say. “I can have the episode ready in two hours.”

“I’ll drive you,” Remy says, his keys already in hand.

My heart races as we walk to his van, the tension crackling between us. The moment we’re inside, his hand wraps around my throat before I can even reach for my seatbelt. The pressure is firm but controlled as he pulls me toward him.

His lips crash into mine, hungry and demanding. The kiss steals my breath, making

me dizzy. When he finally pulls back, his grip on my throat tightens just enough to make me gasp.

“Such a good girl,” he growls against my lips. “Using that clever mind of yours to protect us—to protect me.”

“I’ll protect you,” I whisper against his lips, and the words shock me with their truth. “Your secrets are safe with me. Always.”

The weight of my promise hits me hard. Just months ago, I was hunting stories like this, exposing killers to my listeners. Now, I’m actively working to mislead investigators, planning to use my platform—my credibility—to point suspicion away from the carnival. The thought should terrify me. Instead, I feel a twisted thrill at my carefully crafted reputation becoming the perfect smokescreen.

But doubt creeps in. Can I maintain this deception? One slip, one inconsistency in my story, and everything could unravel. My entire career has been built on exposing lies like the ones I’m about to tell.

The intensity in Remy’s eyes turns softer—a look that seems reserved for me flickers beneath the surface. His grip on my throat loosens, sliding to cup my face instead. At this moment, despite my fears, I know I’ve crossed a line I can never uncross—and I don’t want to go back.

His groan vibrates through me, sending heat straight to my pussy. My gaze drops to the obvious bulge straining against his jeans. I can’t help but run my palm over him, feeling him twitch beneath my touch.

“Need some help with this?” I trace the outline of his cock through the denim.

My fingers find his belt buckle, and I work it open with anticipation. The metal clinks

as I pull the leather belt free.

“Right here in the van?” His voice is rough.

“We have time.” I slide the zipper down. “Let me take care of you.”

I slide my hand into Remy’s jeans, wrapping my fingers around his thick length. His sharp intake of breath makes me smile. The power I feel in this moment while pleasuring this dangerous man who holds so much control over me is utterly thrilling.

“Fuck,” he hisses as I stroke him, my grip firm but teasing.

I lean in closer, breathing in his scent—sweat and leather. “Let me show you how grateful I am. For trusting me and letting me help.”

His hand tangles in my hair, grip tightening as I bring my lips to his cock. The van’s confined space makes everything more intense and more intimate. His cock pulses in my hand, rock hard and leaking.

I take him into my mouth, savoring his groan of pleasure. His grip on my hair tightens, guiding my movements as I tease him with my tongue. The taste of him, the weight of his cock against my tongue, makes my pussy beg for attention.

“Such an eager slut,” Remy growls, his hips bucking slightly. “Always so desperate to please me.”

My core throbs at his words, and I moan around him. The vibration makes him curse, his fingers flexing in my hair. I take him deeper, hollowing my cheeks as I suck. The van’s windows add to the intensity—anyone could walk by and see us.

His breathing grows ragged as I pleasure him with my mouth and hand. I can feel him

getting close, his thighs tensing beneath my touch. The power I feel is intoxicating—this dangerous man coming undone because of me.

“Fuck, Eden,” he groans, grabbing the lever between his knees to recline back in the chair, allowing me to get better access. “Look at me while you suck my cock.”

I lift my gaze to meet his, never breaking rhythm. The shadows in his eyes make me shiver. This is what I’ve always craved—this connection with someone who understands my twisted psyche.

His cock pulses against my tongue as I maintain eye contact. I know he’s close; I can feel how his body tenses. The hand in my hair tightens painfully, holding me exactly where he wants me.

“That’s it, beautiful,” he pants. “Show me how much you want it.”

I double my efforts, taking him as deep as I can. His groans of pleasure fill the van, sending fresh waves of arousal through me. I’m so wet, so desperate for him, but right now, this is about showing him how valuable I can be in every way.

I feel Remy’s cock pulse against my tongue as his grip tightens in my hair. His breath comes in harsh pants above me, his control slipping. His taste and his weight in my mouth make me dizzy with need. I hollow my cheeks, taking him deeper, wanting to prove my devotion.

“Fuck,” he groans. “I’m going to fill that pretty mouth.”

His release hits the back of my throat, hot and thick. I swallow eagerly, not wanting to waste a drop. His fingers flex in my hair as he empties himself, holding me in place until he’s finished.

When he finally releases my hair, I sit back, wiping my mouth with my hand. His eyes are dark as he tucks himself away, zipping up his jeans.

“Such a good girl,” he says, running his thumb across my lower lip. “Now, let’s get your equipment and make that podcast. Show those cops what happens when they mess with us.”

The praise sends shivers down my spine. I’ve never felt more alive than I do now, using my skills to protect Remy and being part of his dangerous world. Remy starts the van, and I catch his reflection in the side mirror—the subtle curve of his lips, the possessive glint in his eyes.

This is what I’ve been searching for all my life. Not just studying the dark side of humanity but being embraced by it—being claimed by it.

The van rumbles to life, and we pull away from the carnival grounds. My mind is already racing with ideas for the podcast, ways to weave truth and misdirection into a compelling narrative that will throw the police off our trail.

REMY

I lean against the doorframe, watching Eden work her magic behind the microphone. Her voice carries that perfect blend of authority and intrigue that hooks listeners. The way she weaves her stories, building tension with carefully chosen words and strategic pauses—it's like watching an artist at work.

“And that's all for this week's episode of Shadow Stories. Remember, sometimes the darkest tales hide in plain sight. This is Eden Love, signing off.”

She removes her headphones and meets my gaze, a slight smile playing at the corners of her mouth. The professional mask slips a fraction, revealing the woman I've come to know beneath.

Through the window, I spot Lars directing Cade and Gage as they finish securing our operation. They've gotten efficient at this—shifting everything into the hidden compartments built into the carnival rides. Lars gives me a subtle nod, confirming everything's locked down tight.

“Your delivery was perfect,” I tell Eden, stepping into her makeshift studio. “How you spun that story about following leads in Michigan will keep anyone from looking in our direction.”

Eden organizes her notes. “I've built my reputation on thorough research and following evidence. No one will question why I'm heading north to investigate a cold

case.”

I watch her hands move across her desk, remembering how those fingers wrote obsessive notes about me. She’s using those skills to protect what we’ve built here. The irony isn’t lost on me.

Lars appears in the doorway. “Everything’s secured. Gage did an extra sweep of the perimeter. We’re clean.”

I nod, knowing I can trust their thoroughness. We’ve all got too much at stake to get sloppy now.

I shift my stance, trying to ease the pressure in my jeans after watching Eden work. Her voice and how she controls her narrative are like foreplay as I watch her manipulate her audience.

“One of you should update Ty,” I say, keeping my voice steady. “I’ll help Eden finish up here.”

Lars watches us with that knowing smirk playing across his face. He’s seen right through my excuse to stay behind.

“Sure thing,” he drawls, deliberately slow. “I’ll let him know everything’s wrapped up tight.”

My cock throbs as Eden bends over to collect some papers that slipped to the floor. The curve of her ass in that tight skirt is pure torture. She knows exactly what she’s doing because my little stalker has learned how to play her own games.

“Get out of here,” I growl at Lars, not taking my eyes off Eden.

His chuckle follows him out the door, but I barely register it. All my focus is on the way Eden's fingers trail across her desk.

I slide my hand into Eden's hair, gripping tight as I claim her mouth. Her lips part instantly, eager and willing. The way she melts against me sends fire racing through my veins.

"You're so good at playing your role," I murmur against her lips. "Such a poised, professional podcaster, but we both know what lies beneath that mask, don't we?"

Eden whimpers, pressing closer. Her fingers clutch at my shirt as if afraid I'll disappear.

I break the kiss, drinking in her flushed cheeks and dazed expression. "I think it's time we pushed your boundaries a little further." I trail my fingers down her neck. "How about we take this somewhere more public?"

Her eyes widen, pupils dilating with excitement. "What do you mean?"

"The Ferris wheel is still running," I state, watching her process the suggestion. "Think you can keep that professional mask in place while everyone watches us?"

"But someone could see..." she whispers.

"That's the point." I nip at her ear. "Time to show everyone who you belong to."

As I expected, her resistance crumbles. The thought of being exposed, of others witnessing her submission, both thrills and frightens her.

"Yes," she utters.

I grip her chin, forcing her to meet my gaze. “Yes, what?”

“Yes, I want that. Please.”

The desperation in her voice makes my control slip. I pull her roughly against me. “Then let’s go give them a show.”

I guide Eden through the bustling carnival crowd, my hand firm on the small of her back. The neon lights paint her skin in shifting colors, and the pulse of the music matches my heightened anticipation.

“Perfect timing,” I murmur as we approach the Ferris wheel. “Lars is operating it tonight.”

Eden’s breath catches as Lars gives us a knowing smirk, helping us into our cage. The metal bar locks into place with a satisfying click.

As we begin to rise, I slide my hand onto Eden’s thigh, feeling her muscles tense beneath my touch. The wheel stops halfway up, suspending us and giving us a view of the carnival spread below.

“Look at all those people,” I whisper against her ear. “Any one of them could look up here and see what a needy little slut you are for me.”

Eden squirms in her seat, but I hold her firmly in place. My fingers trace higher up her thigh, teasing the edge of her skirt.

“Please,” she begs, glancing nervously at the crowd below.

“Please, what?” I slip my hand under her skirt, finding her already wet through her panties. “You want everyone to see how desperate you are for me?”

The wheel moves again, taking us higher. Eden's hips buck against my hand as I push her panties aside.

"Stay still," I command, sliding two fingers inside her. "Unless you want them all to know exactly what we're doing up here."

She bites her lip to stifle a moan, her hands gripping the safety bar until her knuckles turn white. The carnival lights flash across her face, highlighting her struggle to maintain composure as I curl my fingers inside her.

"That's it," I growl softly. "Keep that perfect mask in place while I make you fall apart."

My fingers move inside Eden as the Ferris wheel creaks higher. I watch her struggle to stay quiet. Her walls clench around me with each slow thrust, and I can feel her thighs trembling against my hand.

"Look down there," I whisper in her ear. "See Lars watching us? He knows exactly what I'm doing to you right now."

Eden's breath hitches, her eyes darting to where Lars stands at the controls. The flush on her cheeks deepens when he smirks up at us.

"Such a good girl," I praise, curling my fingers to hit that spot that makes her squirm. "Fighting so hard to keep quiet while I play with you in front of everyone."

The wheel stops again, leaving us suspended at the very top. My cock strains against my jeans as Eden rocks her hips, desperately seeking more.

"Please," she whimpers, barely audible over the carnival music. "I need?—"

“I know what you need.” I press my thumb against her clit. “But first, I want you to look out there. All those people could look up and see you falling apart on my fingers.”

Eden’s pussy clenches tight around them at my words, and I know she’s close. The thought of being exposed, of others witnessing her submission, drives her to the edge, as I knew it would.

“That’s right,” I encourage. “Show me how much you love being watched.”

I increase my pace, feeling Eden’s walls flutter around my fingers. Her breath comes in short gasps as she fights to stay quiet. The carnival music below barely masks her whimpers.

“That’s it,” I murmur against her ear. “Let go for me. Show everyone what I do to you.”

Eden’s head falls against my shoulder, her body trembling. I can feel her getting closer, her pussy gripping my fingers tighter with each thrust.

The wheel creaks as it moves again, and Eden lets out a strangled moan. The sudden motion and my relentless fingers push her right to the edge.

“Please, Remy,” she pants, her hips rocking against my hand.

I press my thumb harder against her clit, curling my fingers inside her. “Come for me, beautiful. Let them all see who you belong to.”

Her orgasm hits hard, her body going rigid beside me as she fights to stay quiet. I keep my fingers moving, drawing out her pleasure until she’s shaking and overstimulated.

The wheel brings us down to ground level, where Lars waits with that knowing smirk. Eden can barely meet his eyes as we step off, her legs unsteady.

I wrap my arm around her waist, keeping her close as we walk away from the ride. Her skin is flushed, and I can feel the slight tremors running through her body.

“Such a good girl,” I whisper, guiding her toward my trailer. “But we’re not done yet.”

I guide Eden through the carnival, my hand firm on her lower back. She’s still trembling from her orgasm on the Ferris wheel. The haunted house looms ahead, its facade decorated with cobwebs and flickering lights.

A few carnival-goers mill around the entrance, but it’s quieter than the main midway. Perfect. The actress playing a ghost bride waves people through with theatrical moans.

“Time for another lesson in control,” I murmur against Eden’s ear. “Let’s see how quiet you can stay when I’m balls deep inside of you, and there are people just feet away in the dark.”

Eden’s breath catches as I lead her past the ticket booth. Gage nods at us from behind his skull mask. Inside, strobe lights flash intermittently, casting eerie shadows across the narrow corridor.

I can hear other groups ahead of us, their screams and laughter echoing through the maze-like structure. The sounds will provide decent cover, but Eden must still be careful.

“Remember,” I whisper, pulling her against me as we pass through the first room. “One sound, and everyone will know what we’re doing.”

Eden presses closer, her fingers gripping my shirt. The excited tension in her body tells me the risk of discovery arouses her.

A group passes through a connecting hallway, their flashlight beams dancing across the walls. Eden holds her breath until they move on, but I can feel her heart racing against my chest.

“Good girl,” I praise, backing her into a shadowy corner. “Now, let’s see how quiet you can be.”

I press Eden against the wall, sliding my hand up her thigh. Her skin is still flushed and sensitive from her orgasm on the Ferris wheel. The strobe lights cast intermittent shadows across her face.

A group’s screams echo from the next room, followed by nervous laughter. Eden tenses against me, but I run my finger through her cunt.

“The famous podcaster, so professional on air... if only your listeners could see you now.”

I unzip my jeans, my cock hard as stone. Eden’s breath hitches as I lift her, pinning her between my body and the wall. Her legs wrap around my waist instinctively.

The sound of approaching footsteps makes Eden grip me tighter. I slide into her cunt as another group’s flashlight beam sweeps past our corner. Eden buries her face in my neck to muffle her moan.

“That’s it,” I growl, starting a slow rhythm. “Keep quiet while I fuck you right here where anyone could see.”

Eden’s walls clench around me at my words, and I know she’s already close again.

The threat of discovery, the darkness, the intermittent screams from other carnival-goers—it's all feeding into her fantasies.

I thrust deeper, holding her firmly against the wall. Her nails dig into my shoulders as she fights to stay silent. The strobe lights flash across her face, capturing moments of pure ecstasy as she takes every inch of me.

More footsteps approach, and Eden's whole body tenses. Her cunt squeezes around my cock as a group passes feet away from us. Their flashlight beams dance across the walls, but our dark corner keeps us hidden.

"Such a good girl," I whisper against her ear, never stopping my steady rhythm. "Taking my cock so well while strangers walk right past us."

Eden's fingers dig deeper into my shoulders. I can feel her trembling, caught between the fear of discovery and the thrill of being used like this. Her walls flutter around me, warning me she's close again.

A mechanical witch cackles nearby, making Eden jump. The sudden movement drives me deeper inside her, and she has to bite her lip to stay quiet.

"Just like that," I murmur roughly. "Keep that pretty mouth shut while I fill your greedy cunt."

I can see the flush spreading across her chest, even in the dim light. My little slut loves being talked to like this, being reminded of exactly what she is.

The haunted house's soundtrack covers the wet sounds of my cock sliding in and out of her dripping cunt, but Eden still has to muffle her whimpers against my shoulder. Each thrust pushes her closer to the edge, her body declaring how much she needs this.

I grip her ass tighter, changing the angle. Eden moans as I hit that spot deep inside her. Her walls grip me like a vice, telling me she's right there.

"Come for me," I command in a harsh whisper. "Show me how much you love being fucked where anyone could catch us."

Eden's pussy spasms around my cock as she comes, her whole body bowing with the force of her orgasm. I have to clamp my hand over her mouth to muffle her cry as she falls apart.

"That's my good girl," I growl against her ear, never stopping my thrusts. "Taking my cock so perfectly while trying to stay quiet. Otherwise, the whole damn carnival will hear you getting fucked."

The sight of her fighting to stay silent through her release, combined with her tight muscles gripping me, pushes me right to the edge. I bury myself inside her, flooding her with my cum as another group's screams echo through the haunted house.

Eden clings to me, her legs trembling around my waist as I keep her pinned to the wall. Her breath comes in short gasps against my palm, her pussy still fluttering with aftershocks.

"Such a perfect little slut," I murmur, slowly removing my hand from her mouth.

She whimpers as I pull out, my cum dripping down her thighs. The strobe lights catch the wetness glistening on her skin, making her look even more debauched.

"Please," she whispers, her voice shaky. "I need?—"

"I know what you need." I tuck myself back into my jeans before adjusting her skirt. "First, you're going to walk out of here with my cum running down your legs,

knowing that everyone can see what I've done to you."

I guide Eden toward the exit, my hand firm on her lower back. Her legs are unsteady with each step, and I can see the evidence of our encounter glistening on her thighs in the dim light. The walk of shame turns her on—I can tell by the way she presses closer to me, seeking protection even as her arousal builds again.

The exit door creaks open, spilling harsh carnival lights across Eden's flushed face. Her hair is messed up, lipstick smeared, and her skirt is crooked despite my attempts to straighten it. She looks thoroughly claimed.

Lars appears around the corner, nearly colliding with us. His eyes sweep over Eden's disheveled state, taking in her glazed expression and unsteady stance.

"Damn, Remy." He smirks, crossing his arms. "You sure know how to give the haunted house patrons a real show."

Eden's cheeks flush darker as she tries to smooth her hair, but it's useless. Every inch of her screams "freshly fucked."

"Shut up, Lars," I warn, but in jest.

"Hey, at least you're putting the attraction to good use." He winks at Eden, who can barely meet his eyes. "Though maybe we should rename it the 'Horny House' now."

I steer Eden toward my trailer, leaving Lars's laughter behind us.

Fuck. She's gotten so deep under my skin that I can feel her in my veins. Every breath she takes and every subtle movement resonates through me like a tuning fork struck against a bone. I didn't plan for this visceral need that goes beyond mere possession.

I glance at her flushed face, seeing the marks I've left on her neck and how her lips are still swollen from our kisses. My fingerprints are all over her and yet it's not enough. I want to crawl inside her mind, own every thought, every fantasy.

The worst part? She owns me right back. My little stalker has turned the tables, making me obsess over her as much as she does over me. Each whimper, each desperate plea, each time she submits, feeds something in me that I can't control.

I've dealt with obsession before. I've handled people who thought they could get close to me. But Eden? She slipped past every defense, every wall, with those knowing eyes. She sees the monster in me and doesn't flinch; she fucking welcomes it.

The realization hits me harder than any punch: I need her. Not just want, not just desire. It's a need. Like breathing. Like blood in my veins. She's become essential to my existence in a way that should terrify me but instead makes me want to tear apart anyone who'd try to separate us.

27

EDEN

P olice cruisers flood the carnival grounds, their lights painting everything in harsh red and blue, instantly putting me on edge. My heart pounds as I watch them approach the main office where Tyson keeps all the carnival's paperwork.

Detective Morris leads his team into Tyson's office. I spot the office through a window presenting Ty with paperwork—likely a warrant. At the same time, Tyson reviews it with that calm, professional demeanor he's perfected. Several officers spread across the grounds in Morris's direction, methodically beginning their search.

One of the younger officers approaches me. "Ma'am, could you please point me toward the storage areas?"

"Of course," I say, keeping my voice steady and leading him toward it. Once there, I clear my throat. "I've been documenting the carnival for my podcast. Would it be helpful if I shared my notes about the layout?"

"That would be great. Officer Chen will accompany you to get those," he gestures to his colleague.

I lead Officer Chen to Remy's trailer, hyper-aware of the search continuing around us. The secret compartments Remy showed me should be safe—they're far too clever to be found without insider knowledge. Still, cold sweat drips down my back as I gather my research materials.

The search continues for hours. I stay visible but unintrusive, answering questions when asked but keeping to myself. There is no need to draw unnecessary attention. When they finally leave empty-handed, I maintain my helpful demeanor until the last cruiser disappears.

Only then do I let myself breathe. Once the last police car disappears around the bend, I retreat to Remy's trailer, hands trembling as the adrenaline lingers. I've barely closed the door when Remy slips in behind me.

"Smart," he says quietly, studying me. "Staying in the background. Only speaking when spoken to."

I sink into my chair, exhausted. "I didn't want to draw attention."

"Exactly." He moves behind me, his hands coming to rest on my shoulders. The touch is grounding after hours of tension. "Most people try too hard to appear innocent. They talk too much and volunteer too much. You didn't."

"I've interviewed enough detectives for my podcast," I murmur. "I know how they think."

His fingers knead the tight muscles of my shoulders, and I lean back into his touch. "You're learning," he says, and there's approval in his voice that makes my heart flutter. "Keep this up, and you might survive in our world."

The praise in his words, the gentle pressure of his hands—it's a heady combination. His touch is softer than usual—a reward, perhaps, for playing my part well.

Before I can respond, he moves to stand before me and leans down to kiss me. Not the brutal, claiming kisses I'm used to. He kisses me in an achingly gentle way, I would say affectionate, but that feels surreal, truly unlike him. His lips move against

mine with a reverence that makes tears well in my eyes.

When he pulls back, his expression is vulnerable. “You’re incredible, Eden.” The words fall soft between us.

His words linger between us, and my mind races with the weight of what I’ve just done. As a true crime podcaster, I know exactly what I’m risking—obstruction of justice, interfering with a police investigation, potentially even accessory after the fact. Felonies that could destroy my career and land me in prison.

Yet I can’t bring myself to regret it when I look at him. I stand up and reach up to touch his face, half expecting him to pull away, but he allows the contact, watching me with those intense eyes as my fingers trace his jawline. The magnitude of my choice settles in my chest—I’ve crossed a line I can never uncross, chosen his darkness over the law.

“Thank you,” I whisper, the words carrying the heaviness of my decision to potentially throw away everything I’ve built, my reputation, my freedom, all for these moments with him. Part of me wants to laugh at the irony—I’ve spent years documenting criminals, only to become one myself.

“I’m making you dinner tonight,” Remy announces, his hand lingering on my face.

I can’t hide my surprise. “You cook?”

“There’s a lot you don’t know about me.” He tightens his arms around me. “Had to learn young. Foster homes weren’t exactly five-star restaurants.”

The mention of foster care catches my attention. I watch him pull ingredients from the small fridge. “I get that. After my mom died, I bounced between relatives. None of them really wanted me.”

Remy pauses, knife hovering over an onion. “How old?”

“Eight.” I lean against the counter, close enough to feel his warmth. “Car accident. Dad was already in prison. Armed robbery and three counts of homicide.”

He starts chopping, the rhythmic sound filling the silence. “Explains the true crime obsession.”

“Maybe.” I reach for a pepper and start to slice it. “What about you? How many homes?”

“Lost count after twelve.” His movements are precise and controlled. “Learned to cook in the third one. Lady ran a diner and taught me basics between shifts. Only good thing about that place.”

I process this, thinking of young Remy learning to survive. “Is that where you got that scar? The one on your shoulder?”

“No.” He tosses the onions into a pan, the sizzle sharp in the small space. “That was home number eight. Guy liked to put out cigarettes on kids.”

My hand finds his forearm, squeezing gently. He stills for a moment, then continues cooking.

“Your podcast,” he says. “It started with your dad, didn’t it? Trying to understand?”

“Yeah.” I hand him the peppers I’ve cut. “Spent years studying criminal psychology, trying to figure out what makes someone cross that line. Then I realized...”

“You wanted to cross it too,” he finishes.

The truth of it hangs between us as he stirs the pan.

I hesitate, watching Remy stir the vegetables. The question burns on my tongue, but I know how delicate these moments can be. Still, my investigative nature wins out.

“What about your parents?” I ask softly, keeping my eyes on the pepper I’m slicing.

His movements don’t falter, but I notice the slight tension in his shoulders. “Never knew my dad. Just another deadbeat who knocked up a waitress and disappeared.”

I wait, giving him space to continue or stop. The sizzle of the pan fills the silence.

“Mom...” His knife pauses mid-chop. “She married this guy when I was five. A real piece of work.”

My hand stills on the cutting board.

“He killed her.” Remy’s words come out flat, emotionless. “Shot her right in front of me when I was six. Caught her trying to leave him.”

The pepper falls from my trembling fingers. I’ve interviewed countless killers and studied hundreds of cases, but hearing Remy speak about his own trauma hits differently. I think of six-year-old Remy, watching his mother die, and my chest aches.

“Did they catch him?” I whisper.

“Yeah.” Remy resumes chopping, each strike of the knife precise and controlled.

“He’s rotting in prison. Won’t ever get out.”

I process this information, adding it to my mental profile of Remy. So much about

him makes more sense now—his need for control, his capacity for violence, his distrust of connections. And yet here he is, cooking dinner with me, sharing pieces of his past.

Minutes later, I watch Remy plate our food, my heart fluttering at this glimpse of domesticity. How he moves in the small kitchen makes me ache for something I've never let myself want a real connection with anyone before.

“Come here,” he commands, moving the chair so it's placed parallel to the table rather than facing it and unzipping his pants to release his cock.

I move toward him, and he guides me onto his lap. My breath catches as he positions me, sliding inside me with a low groan. The fullness makes me whimper.

“Stay still,” he orders, his voice rough against my ear. “You're keeping me warm while we eat.”

I nod, trying to control my trembling, as he positions the plate between us on the table to our side and grabs the fork. The first bite he offers makes me moan—I hadn't realized how hungry I was.

“Good girl,” he murmurs, feeding me another bite. His free hand strokes my hip, steadying me when I instinctively try to move. “I said stay still.”

The intimacy of it overwhelms me. How he's taking care of me, feeding me while staying buried deep inside me is more than just sex. More than the rough claiming I'm used to from him.

“You're thinking too loud,” Remy says, offering another bite. “Just feel.”

I stop moving and accept the food. For the first time in my life, I let myself hope that

this man has the same need for connection as I do.

I moan softly as Remy offers me another bite of the delicious stir-fry, the flavors exploding on my tongue. His cock pulses inside me with each small movement, reminding me of our intimate connection.

“Your turn,” I whisper, taking the fork from his hand and spearing a piece of pepper. I bring the food to his lips.

His eyes lock with mine as he takes the bite, and something in his gaze makes my breath falter. There’s hunger there, but not just for food or sex.

“More,” he commands, and I’m unsure if he means the food.

We continue like this, trading bites and soft touches. His free hand strokes my hip, thigh, and stomach—not to arouse but to maintain contact and intimacy.

I feed him another bite. When a drop of sauce escapes the corner of his mouth, I lean in without thinking, licking it away. He growls but doesn’t push for more.

“Open,” he murmurs, offering me another bite. The tenderness in his voice makes my eyes sting. I’ve never had someone take care of me, feed me, or hold me like I’m precious.

The food disappears slowly as we savor each bite and each other’s presence. Neither of us speaks much. We don’t need to. The quiet intimacy of sharing a meal while physically joined says everything.

28

REMY

The crunch of gravel outside my trailer startles me awake, followed by hushed voices that don't belong to my crew. My muscles tense as I slip out of bed.

"Stay here," I whisper as Eden shifts, grabbing my knife and gun from the bedside drawer.

Exiting the trailer, I scan the shadows between the carnival rides. Three figures dart between the tents, heading toward Ty's office trailer. My jaw clenches. Those idiots from the Martinez crew think they can strong-arm us by causing trouble.

"I said stay inside," I growl, sensing Eden's presence behind me without turning around. Her breath catches, but she doesn't retreat.

The intruders pause behind the Ferris wheel, their outlines visible against the moonlight. One carries what looks like a baseball bat, another a crowbar—amateur hour.

"Go back to the trailer. Now." I keep my voice low but firm.

"I want to help," Eden whispers back, her stubbornness shining through.

"This isn't one of your podcast stories." I grip my knife tighter as the figures split up, two heading toward the storage containers. At the same time, one continues toward

Ty's office. "This is real, and you need to?—"

A crash echoes through the carnival grounds as one of them knocks over a stack of empty crates. My window of surprise is closing.

"Eden." I turn to face her, meeting her determined gaze. "Last warning. Get inside and lock the door."

She's already shaking her head, that familiar obsessive gleam in her eyes. She's not going anywhere, and I don't have time to force her. The Martinez crew is here, and I need to move.

Cursing under my breath, I stalk forward into the shadows, knowing Eden will follow despite my orders. Her footsteps are surprisingly quiet behind me as we track the intruders through our carnival.

I corner the first guy behind the haunted house, catching him off guard as he tries to jimmy open our storage unit. My fist connects with his jaw before he can cry out. The satisfying crunch of bone beneath my knuckles sends a familiar thrill through me.

"You picked the wrong carnival," I snarl, driving my knee into his stomach. He doubles over, gasping.

Movement catches my eye—the second intruder charging at me with the crowbar raised. I spin, using the first guy as a shield. The crowbar catches him instead of me, and his scream pierces the night.

I drop him and launch at the crowbar guy, my knife finding his shoulder. Blood sprays as I twist the blade. He howls, dropping his weapon. I kick his legs out from under him and slam his head against the storage container. The sound echoes like a gong.

“Remy!” Eden’s urgent whisper reaches me. “watch out!”

I whirl to see the last intruder running toward us, bat raised. Before I can move, Eden swings one of our carnival tent poles, catching him in the back of the knees. He stumbles, and I’m on him in an instant.

My fist crashes into his face repeatedly. Blood coats my knuckles. The wet sounds of impact fill the air, along with his choked gasps.

“Here.” Eden’s voice is steady as she hands me zip ties. Her eyes are excitedly bright, pupils blown wide as she watches me bind their hands and feet.

“You were prepared for something like this,” I say, noting how prepared she was.

“I saw them on the counter and quickly grabbed them in case.” She helps me drag them behind the storage unit, out of sight.

Her hands are steady as she helps me secure them, showing no fear or disgust at the blood and violence. When she looks at me, I see only satisfaction in her gaze.

I check the pulse of our three unwanted visitors. Two are weak but steady. The third... nothing. I press harder against his neck, but the stillness confirms what I already know. My last punch was too much for him.

“This one’s done,” I say, wiping blood from my knuckles. “I’ll need to handle disposal.”

Eden kneels beside me, her fingers trailing over the dead man’s jacket. Instead of revulsion, I witness her fascination. “Let me help,” she whispers, that familiar obsessive gleam intensifying. “I want to be useful.”

The sight of her like this, covered in someone else's blood, eager to dispose of a body, takes my breath away. She's not just accepting my rough edges; she's wanting to dive deeper into my world.

"You're perfect," I growl, grabbing her face and crushing my mouth against hers. Her lips part under mine. When I pull back, her eyes are wild. "Absolutely fucking perfect."

Her hands clutch at my shirt, smearing blood across the fabric. "Show me everything," she begs. "I want to know all of it. How to clean up, where to hide the evidence, what to do next time."

Next time.

She's already planning for more violence, more shared moments like this.

I guide Eden through the process, showing her how to properly secure the zip ties on our two living captives. We drag them into the specially outfitted trailer behind the storage units, just behind where I kept Eden captive. We have an on-site torture chamber at the carnival for emergencies like this.

"Make sure the zip ties are pulled tight," I instruct. "Even if they seem unconscious, they can still cause trouble."

Eden absorbs every detail, her movements precise as she helps me secure them to the metal chairs. Her hands don't shake, and her eyes focus on the task.

Once they're secured, we return for the third one. I retrieve the old wheelbarrow behind the maintenance trailer, its rusty frame creaking under the weight as we load him in.

“Wait here,” I tell her, heading for the parking lot. Minutes later, I return to the spot with the panel van with clean papers. Eden helps me load the third one into the back with the wheelbarrow and two shovels.

“The cops will be watching the carnival,” Eden says as we pull onto the access road. “We need distance.”

“I know a place,” I tell her, turning onto the back roads. We drive for an hour, winding through rural areas I’ve scouted previously. Eden stays alert, watching for other vehicles, but we don’t pass a single car.

We pull onto an overgrown service road leading to an abandoned construction site. The development project fell through years ago, leaving half-finished foundations and pre-dug holes scattered across several acres. Nature has already started reclaiming the site, with thick vegetation providing cover.

“Smart,” Eden says, understanding immediately. “They’ll never connect this to the carnival.”

We back the van to one of the deeper foundation holes, roll the body in, and start the methodical process of filling the hole with the excavated soil in piles nearby.

“Cover his face first,” I tell her.

She nods, shoveling dirt over his head and torso while I work on the legs. As we finish, the moon slips behind clouds, leaving us in near-total darkness as we tamp down the loose earth.

“The construction company’s bankruptcy tied this land up in court,” I explain as we load the tools back into the van. “No one’s coming here anytime soon.”

Eden turns to me, and her lips find mine, pressing softly as she whispers, “Thank you for teaching me.”

My body responds instantly to the sight of her—clothes stained with blood and that wild look in her eyes that matches my savagery.

“You’re perfect like this,” I growl against her mouth, pulling her closer. The evidence of our night’s work covers us both, marking us as equals in this moment.

Her fingers trace my chest, leaving dirty streaks across my shirt. The physical proof of what we’ve done together only heightens my reaction to her. My hands tangle in her hair, and she tilts her head back so I can look at her face—a beautiful mess of blood, sweat, and acceptance.

“I’ve never felt so alive,” Eden pants, pressing herself against me. Her eyes shine with obsession. Still, it’s tinged with a true understanding of the monster she’s been chasing.

I groan as she shifts closer, my body rigid with need. The moonlight catches the crimson staining her skin, painting her in shadows and violence. She’s never been more beautiful than in this moment.

“You’re trembling,” I observe, feeling her shiver under my touch despite the mild night air. It’s not fear that causes it, but excitement, anticipation, the thrill of crossing lines she’s only dreamed about until now.

“Show me more,” she pleads, and I know she means more than disposal techniques. She wants the violence, the control, the darkness I’ve kept contained.

“On your knees.” My voice comes out rough as I guide her to where we left our mark on the world.

The fresh earth smells rich and damp, and the moon above us casts a silvery light on the clearing. Eden's eyes shine brighter than the stars as she drops to the ground, facing me.

Her lips part, and I know she remembers what we did together. The feel of the shovel in her hands. The weight of the dirt as we buried our secret.

"Are you thinking about it?" I ask, my voice low and dangerous. "Are you thinking about the fact that my victim is lying beneath us right now?"

She nods, but her gaze doesn't waver.

"We made this grave, you and I." I step closer, pressing into her personal space. "A team effort."

Her breath catches as my fingers find the hem of her shirt, but she doesn't flinch. I take that as permission to continue. With one swift motion, I rip her shirt open, buttons popping.

Her chest rises and falls rapidly beneath the ruined fabric. Her breath comes in short gasps as my hands explore her body, mapping the terrain I plan to conquer.

"You should be scared." I thread my fingers into her hair, tilting her head back to expose the delicate line of her throat. "But I can see that you're not."

Her lips curve into a smile. "You know why."

Yes, I do. It's the same reason my heart is pounding, and my skin feels too tight for my body.

"Say it." I want to hear the words from her mouth. I want confirmation that she shares

my madness.

“I’m turned on,” she whispers. “I’m aroused by this. By you. By what we’ve done.”

I chuckle. “You’re a monster, just like me.”

“Prove it.” Her voice drops an octave, turning husky with need. “Fuck me over our handiwork, Remy. Right here, where someone lies buried beneath us.”

An animalistic growl rips from my throat as I scoop her up, tossing her onto the soft earth. She lands with a cry, her hair fanning out around her. The sight of her sprawled on our grave, ready and waiting, sends a surge of possessiveness through me.

I drop to my knees between her legs, taking a moment to admire the view. She’s a vision in the moonlight, half-naked and wanting. Her breasts rise and fall rapidly, nipples pebbled.

“You like the idea of fucking over our first victim.” It’s not a question, but I must hear her say it anyway.

“God, yes.” Her hands reach for me, tugging at my shirt. “I love the idea of being so depraved together.”

I let her tear my shirt over my head, then reach for the button of my jeans.

“Wait.” She stops me, her eyes glinting with mischief. “I want to see you. All of you.”

I don’t hesitate. Kicking off my shoes and socks, I strip for her while she lies on the freshly turned earth. The night air hits my bare skin, but I’m on fire. The chill does nothing to dampen my craving as I step out of my jeans, standing before her in all my

naked glory.

Her gaze roams over me, drinking in every inch of exposed skin. I flex my arms, enjoying how her eyes widen at the play of muscle. When her gaze lingers on certain parts of my anatomy, I'm glad for the cold night air.

"Now." She pats the ground beside her. "Take me right here."

I need no further invitation. My body is demanding release, and I'm ready to give in.

Kneeling between her legs, I hook her knees over my shoulders and sink into her cunt.

Our tempo starts fast and urgent, each thrust devouring the space between us. My hands find her hips, guiding her against me as I drive into her. Her nails dig into my back, and her breath comes in sharp gasps.

"Deeper," she pants, wrapping her legs around me. "Harder."

I've never been one to deny a lady's request. Gritting my teeth, I give her everything I've got.

The night air cools the sweat on my skin as I drive into Eden harder, her body arching beneath me. The fresh earth beneath us shifts with each thrust, reminding me of what we've done. Her hands claw at my back, leaving marks I'll wear proudly tomorrow.

"You're mine." I drag my tongue over her neck, tasting the salt on her skin. "Tell me who owns you."

"You do," Eden gasps, her body tightening around me. "Only you, Remy."

Her submission drives me wild. This woman, who's stalked me and studied me, now lies beneath me on the grave we dug together.

I slide my hand between us, finding her clit. Her whole body jerks at my touch, a whimper escaping her. The sound echoes through the trees, unrestrained and so damn sexy.

"That's it," I encourage, circling it as I maintain my relentless pace. "Let me feel how much you want this."

Eden's response is immediate—her inner walls clamp down around me as she comes undone. Her cry of pleasure pierces the night air. There's no pretense here, no carefully crafted persona. This is pure Eden, stripped bare.

I follow her over the edge, spilling deep inside her with a guttural groan. For a moment, we're both lost in the intensity of our shared release, our bodies locked on the disturbed earth.

The moon breaks through the clouds, casting silver light across Eden's flushed skin. Her eyes meet mine, that obsessive gleam now mixed with what I can only describe as adoration. I've never seen anyone look at me like that, and it touches something I thought was long dead and cold—my heart.

EDEN

The van pulls silently into its spot behind the maintenance trailer. My legs tremble with exhaustion as I climb out. Remy's already pulling out the industrial-grade cleaning supplies we'd stored in the back.

"Help me with this," he murmurs, pouring bleach into a bucket of water. We meticulously clean the wheelbarrow and shovels, getting into every crevice and joint. The sharp chemical smell burns my nose, but I know it's destroying any DNA evidence that might have transferred from the body.

"Rinse it twice," Remy instructs, handing me the water hose. "Then we'll do one more bleach pass."

My arms ache as I scrub, but the importance of being thorough overshadows my exhaustion. We're both streaked with mud, blood, and sweat, our work clothes ready for burning. Finally, Remy inspects our tools under his flashlight, nodding with satisfaction before storing them back in their proper places.

"Almost there," he says, his hand steady on my lower back as we go to the trailers. We stick to the shadows, conscious of the evidence we still carry on our bodies. A hot shower and clean clothes await, the final step in erasing all traces of tonight's work, but first, we need to inform Tyson what happened.

The carnival looks different at this hour—all the lights off, rides still, an eerie silence

in the air. Our footsteps crunch on the gravel as we approach Ty's trailer. The metal steps groan under our weight.

Remy pounds on Ty's door with more force than necessary. "Ty! Wake up!"

A groan comes from inside, followed by shuffling. The door swings open to reveal a disheveled Tyson, his hair sticking up at odd angles. His eyes widen as he takes in our appearance.

"What the hell happened to you two?" Ty scrubs a hand over his face, stepping out onto the porch.

I sway, exhaustion hitting me hard now that we've stopped moving. Remy's arm wraps around my waist, keeping me upright.

"We had some unexpected visitors," Remy explains, his voice carrying an edge that makes me shiver. "The Martinez crew decided to pay us a visit."

Ty's posture straightens immediately, all traces of sleep vanishing from his expression. "How many?"

"Three," I answer. "But they won't be causing any more problems."

"Two of them are still breathing," Remy says. "Got them secured."

Ty's jaw clenches. "Show me."

We trek across the darkened carnival grounds, past the silent Ferris wheel, and through a maze of storage containers.

My heart pounds as Remy unlocks the reinforced door. The scent of blood hits me

first, followed by muffled groaning. The two men sit bound to metal chairs where we left them, their faces bloody and swollen. One's eye is completely shut, while the other's nose looks broken.

"Well, well," Ty moves closer to them, his usual charm replaced by something darker. "If it isn't Miguel's boys."

The one with the broken nose spits blood onto the floor. "Fuck you."

Remy's hand leaves my waist as he steps forward, cracking his knuckles. "That's not very polite."

Ty's eyes assess me.

"Eden, you might want to step out for this part," Ty suggests, rolling up his sleeves.

Remy's arm tightens around my shoulders. "She stays. She's all in."

A skeptical look crosses Ty's face, but he doesn't argue. Instead, he pulls a small leather case from his pocket and unfolds it on a nearby table, revealing an array of gleaming tools.

The contrast between their methods becomes immediately apparent. Where Remy is power and explosive violence, Ty works with surgical precision. He selects a thin blade, testing its edge with his thumb while addressing our captives in an almost conversational tone.

"Now, gentlemen, let's discuss your employer's recent interest in our operation."

Remy paces behind the chairs, his energy barely contained. When one prisoner refuses to answer, Remy's fist connects with the back of his head—swift and brutal.

But Ty... Ty takes his time. He makes small, deliberate cuts, each one placed with purpose. His voice remains steady, almost gentle, as he works. The screams that follow make my breath catch, but not in fear.

“Fascinating,” Ty utters, noticing my reaction. “You’re not just tolerating this, are you, Eden? You’re enjoying it.”

I meet his gaze without flinching. “Yes.”

Remy’s hand slides down my back, possessive and proud. The prisoner before us whimpers as Ty selects another tool from his case.

“Let’s continue, then,” Ty says. “We have all night to explore the depths of Miguel’s plans... and your tolerance for pain.”

I am mesmerized as Ty’s blade traces another line across flesh. The prisoner’s scream echoes through the container, but all I feel is a deep sense of belonging. This display of strength and brutality speaks to something within.

My whole life, I’ve hidden behind my microphone, analyzing killers from a safe distance. Here, watching Remy’s fists connect and Ty’s precise cuts, I finally understand. This is freedom. This is true.

Like my carefully crafted public persona, the carnival’s bright lights and cheerful music are a facade. Behind both masks lies something deviant and more authentic. My fingers trace the outline of my father’s mugshot photo in my pocket, which Remy had found and pinned onto the wall of the container he kept me in—a reminder of the legacy that flows through my veins. Remy allowed me to retrieve it after I explained it was my father.

Three bodies. That’s what they found after his robbery went wrong. The papers called

him a monster, but I remember how calm he looked when they led him away, like he'd finally stopped pretending.

Remy's hand finds my lower back, steadying me as another scream pierces the air. He knows what I am. He sees the part of me I've kept caged all these years, analyzing other killers instead of acknowledging my own nature.

"You're shaking," he whispers against my ear.

"Not from fear," I answer, watching Ty select another tool.

The prisoners sob, begging for mercy. I feel nothing except a profound sense of rightness. I've been searching for this in all my research—not understanding killers but understanding myself.

My father's blood runs through my veins, and for the first time, I don't feel shame about it. I've found my truth among the carnival's secrets and shadows. My freedom.

30

REMY

I lean against the fence post, watching Eden through the carnival crowds. Even from here, I can see how she commands attention in that radio booth, her presence magnetic. My lips curve into a smile, remembering how perfectly she handled those cops and Miguel's men.

"You're getting soft," Ty's voice breaks through my thoughts. He approaches with Lars and Nash flanking him.

I straighten, jaw tightening. "What's that supposed to mean?"

"The girl," Lars says. "She's a liability. A true crime podcaster? Come on."

"Like Alice isn't?" I snap back. "Or Sofia? Or Flora? Where were all these concerns when you three brought your women into this?"

Nash raises his hands. "Different situation. They weren't actively investigating?—"

"Save it." I push off the fence post. "Eden's proven herself. She's covered our tracks better than any of you expected. That podcast is the perfect front."

"We're just saying—" Ty starts.

"No." My voice drops low. "You don't get to question this. Not when all of you took

the same risks. Sofia's literally a mob boss's daughter, but that was fine? Tilly's a computer genius who could hack our whole operation, but that's cool, too?"

Lars shifts. "Point taken."

"Eden sees me. All of me. And she's still here." I meet each of their gazes. "She chose this life the same as the other girls did. She's earned her place."

Ty studies me for a long moment before nodding. "Alright. Just be careful."

"Always am." I turn back to watch Eden through the window. "Now, if you'll excuse me, I've got work to do."

They leave me to my thoughts, and I can't help but smile again as I watch Eden. She's more than earned her place here. She's become essential to the carnival.

I'm leaning against the carousel, watching Eden through the radio booth window, when something slams into my shoulder. Phoenix stumbles back, his face flushed and breathing heavy.

"Where's the fire?" I grab his arm to steady him.

His eyes dart around wildly. "Miguel's guys. They're coming for their missing men." He runs a shaky hand through his dark hair. "They're bringing reinforcements, man. Like, serious muscle."

"How long?"

"Hours, maybe less." Phoenix shifts his weight, clearly itching to keep moving. "I was heading to tell Ty, then set up surveillance."

I release his arm, my mind already mapping out defensive positions. Miguel's crew isn't known for subtlety—they'll come in hot and heavy. "Go. I'll round up the others, and we'll need to shut the place down early."

Phoenix nods and takes off toward Ty's trailer, nearly colliding with a cotton candy cart in his haste.

I grab my phone from my back pocket, typing rapid messages to Lars and Nash.

We need to move fast, get the girls somewhere safe, and secure our shipments. Eden's laughter drifts from nearby as she chats with Aurora. She has no idea what's coming.

My jaw clenches. Miguel's crew won't touch her. I'll make damn sure of that.

I stride toward Eden, and her eyes light up when she sees me, but her smile falters at my expression. Without a word, I grab her arm and pull her into a nearby storage unit, shutting the door behind us.

"What's wrong?" Her hand traces my chest, but I catch her wrist.

"Miguel's crew is coming. They tracked their missing men here." I watch her face carefully. "We need to get you somewhere safe."

Instead of fear, excitement floods her features. Her pupils dilate, and her breathing quickens. "Like before?"

"No." I grip her shoulders. "This is different. Miguel Martinez is bringing serious firepower. These aren't some low-level thugs we can pick off one by one. They'll shoot first and ask questions never."

“But I can help?—”

“Eden.” My voice comes out harsh. “This isn’t one of your true crime stories. These men will kill you without hesitation if you get in the way.”

She presses closer. “I’m not afraid.”

“You should be.” I cup her face, forcing her to look at me. “This isn’t a game. It’s not like torturing information out of those guys he sent. They’ll be more prepared and out for blood.”

“So are you,” she whispers, that dark hunger in her voice that usually drives me wild, but not now, not with this threat looming.

“I mean it, Eden. This isn’t about your fascination with violence or death. These men will put a bullet in your head without blinking.”

“If you’re in danger, I want to be there too.” Eden shrugs, her fingers trailing up my chest. “We’re in this together.”

The casual way she says it ignites something fierce in my chest. I slam my palm against the wall beside her head, making her jump.

“No. This isn’t up for discussion.” My voice comes out as a growl. “You think I can focus on staying alive if I’m worried about you? If I have to watch my back and yours?”

“Remy—”

“I said no.” I grab her chin, forcing her to meet my eyes. “For once in your life, stop pushing. This isn’t one of your little experiments or games. I can’t—” My voice

cracks. "I can't lose you."

The words hang between us. I've never had someone like Eden before. The thought of Miguel's men getting their hands on her makes my blood run cold.

"Please," I whisper, pressing my forehead to hers. "Just this once, let me protect you. Stay hidden. Stay safe."

Eden's hands cup my face, her thumbs brushing over my cheekbones. "You're scared."

"Terrified," I admit. "Because you make me vulnerable in ways I never wanted to be, and those men will use that against me if they can."

She stares at me for a long moment, searching my face. I can see when she realizes how serious this is. I've never begged for anything, but I'm begging now.

"Okay," she finally whispers. "I'll hide. But you better come back to me."

I pull back enough to look into Eden's eyes, my hands still cradling her face. The vulnerability I see there matches my own; for once, I don't fight the surge of emotion in my chest.

"I'll always come back to you." My voice comes out rough with conviction. "Always."

I capture her lips, pouring everything I feel into the kiss. The words I've been holding back spill out when we break apart.

"I love you, Eden."

Her body goes rigid against mine for a moment, and I feel her breath catch. Then she melts into me, her fingers curling into my shirt.

“I love you too,” she whispers against my lips.

The world narrows to this moment, and I feel her warmth pressed against me, her confession echoing in my ears. I forget about Miguel’s crew and the danger heading our way for a moment. There’s only Eden; she sees straight through to the darkness in my soul and loves me anyway.

31

EDEN

I grip the walkie-talkie in my hand, heart pounding as gunshots echo through the carnival grounds. I watch the security feeds with the other women from our vantage point in the haunted house's control room.

"West entrance is clear," I report to Remy through the radio. "Three hostiles moving past the Ferris wheel."

Tilly leans forward, typing on her keyboard as she hacks into the Martinez crew's communications. "They're planning to flank from behind the carousel."

"Got it," Sofia chimes in, already redirecting the carnival's lights to blind anyone approaching from that direction.

Alice and Lily coordinate with the ground teams, relaying positions through encrypted channels. At the same time, Flora marks enemy positions on our digital map. Aurora keeps track of our men's locations, ensuring no friendly fire incidents.

"Two more coming in through the parking lot," I warn, spotting movement on camera four. "Armed with what looks like semi-automatics."

"I've cut power to that section," Tilly announces, her fingers dancing across her laptop. "They'll be walking in blind."

The walkie crackles with Remy's voice. "Good work, ladies. Keep those eyes sharp."

Tilly intercepts another transmission. "They're calling for backup. Five more incoming from the south."

"Not anymore," Aurora says with a smirk, holding up her phone. "Just sent an anonymous tip about suspicious activity near their staging area. Police will keep them busy."

I feel proud watching us work together, each bringing our unique skills to protect our carnival family. This isn't just about survival anymore—it's about protecting what's ours. The Martinez crew thought they could take us down but didn't count on the women behind the scenes, coordinating every move like a deadly chess game.

"Movement in sector six," I call out, spotting three more hostiles. "Heading straight into Colt's trap."

We continue in the same way for about half an hour until all of Miguel Martinez's men are either dead or running for their lives.

At which point, all our efforts turn to treating the injured in the big top. Adrenaline still floods my veins as I walk in to find a few of them groaning and nursing wounds, but I don't see Remy.

Flora is trying to tend to Colt and Nash's wounds, so I approach to help.

"Let me," I say, taking the gauze from Flora and pressing it over Colt's shoulder wound. The copper scent of blood fills the air, mixing with antiseptic.

"Hold still," I tell him, cleaning around the bullet graze. "It's not deep, but we need to prevent infection."

Nash groans as Flora tends to his bruised ribs. His knuckles are raw and bloody from the fight, but his eyes stay fixed on Colt with concern.

“I’m fine,” Colt grumbles but doesn’t resist as I wrap the bandage around his bicep. “Just a scratch.”

“A scratch that could’ve been worse,” Flora scolds. “You both need to be more careful.”

I move between the two men, checking their vitals and monitoring for signs of shock. My psychology background gives me enough medical knowledge to handle basic trauma care.

“Here.” I hand Nash some aspirin and water. “This should help with the swelling.”

Flora helps Nash sit up to drink. I squeeze her shoulder reassuringly—she’s holding up well, considering how intense the fighting was and having both of her men injured. Together, we work in sync, passing supplies back and forth.

“The bleeding’s stopped,” I tell Colt, securing the last of his bandages. “You’ll need to keep it clean and dry.”

Nash reaches for Flora’s hand, pulling her close despite his injuries. I understand the impulse after violence like this. We all need to feel connected to those we love.

I document their injuries if we need to reference them later and monitor their conditions. These people have become my family, and I’ll do whatever it takes to protect them.

I rush to Remy when he walks through the door, my hands already reaching to check him for injuries. Blood stains his shirt and splatters his face, but his movements are

fluid, unhindered.

“Are you hurt?” My fingers trace over his arms.

“Not my blood.” His voice is gruff as he lets me examine him.

I find only superficial damage—a few cuts that have already stopped bleeding, and his right hand’s knuckles are split and swollen. The rest of the blood belongs to someone who crossed him tonight.

“Let me clean you up.” I grab the first aid kit.

Remy stays still as I wipe the blood from his face with a warm cloth, revealing the sharp angles underneath. His eyes never leave my face as I work, watching me with that intense focus that makes my skin tingle. I clean each cut carefully, though none are deep enough to need stitches.

“Your hand needs ice,” I murmur, examining his bruised knuckles. The skin is split, but the bones feel intact beneath my probing fingers.

He flexes his hand under my touch, testing the movement. “It’s fine.”

I’m already wrapping an ice pack in a thin towel, pressing it carefully against his swollen flesh. His other hand comes up to cup my face, thumb brushing my cheek.

I notice Remy’s breathing change as I tend to his injuries. His grip on my wrist tightens, and he pulls me closer.

“I’m fine,” he insists against my ear. “Come with me.”

He leads me through the carnival’s back area to a secluded spot behind the equipment

trailers. The moon casts silver shadows across his face as he backs me against the cool metal wall. His hands frame my face with surprising gentleness, thumbs stroking my cheeks.

“You take such good care of me,” he whispers, pressing his forehead to mine. “My beautiful, dangerous girl.”

I lean into his touch, savoring this rare moment of tenderness. My hands slide up his chest. “I’ll always take care of you.”

“I know.” His lips brush against mine. “That’s what makes you mine.”

The kiss deepens slowly, without the usual desperate edge. His hands trail down my sides with reverent touches, making me shiver. I’ve never felt so cherished, so completely understood.

“Remy,” I moan against his mouth.

“Shh,” he soothes, cradling me closer. “Let me show you how much I need you.”

His gentleness makes my heart ache more than any roughness could. In these quiet moments, I see the man beneath the monster and love them equally.

Remy’s hands slide down my back as he presses me against the metal wall. A delicious shiver runs through me. The moonlight casts an ethereal glow on his face, softening the harsh angles as his lips begin to trail kisses along my jaw.

“You’re trembling,” he points out, his voice a low rumble.

“I can’t help it,” I whisper, my eyes fluttering closed. “It’s you.”

His hands move to my hips, guiding me closer until our bodies are flush. “I need to feel you,” he says, his breath warm on my skin. “I always need to feel you.”

He lifts me, his strong arms supporting my weight. I wrap my legs around his waist, letting him carry me into the shadows behind the trailers. He lays me down gently on a bed of rough fabric, probably one of the spare ground sheets for a tent.

His hands slide under my shirt, pulling it over my head. The cold night air sends a wave of goosebumps across my newly exposed skin. I reach for his belt as he strips off his own shirt.

We undress each other urgently, our clothes forming a dark pile beside us. Remy settles between my legs, his hands caressing my waist, hips, and thighs, mapping every curve of bare skin. The night sky above us is a blanket of stars, watching as he positions himself.

Our mouths unite in a desperate kiss as he pushes inside me. I gasp into his mouth, my back arching off the ground. He thrusts slowly, deliberately, making me feel every inch of him.

“You feel so good,” he groans against my lips. “Always so tight, so perfect.”

I clutch his shoulders, my fingernails digging into his skin. “More,” I plead. “I need more.”

He moves with long, deep strokes, shifting the tent beneath us. I match his rhythm, my hips lifting to meet his. Each thrust sends a wave of pleasure through me, and I tighten around him, drawing out his growls of pleasure.

His thumb traces my lower lip as he watches my expression, gauging my reactions. “You like that?” he asks.

I can only nod, unable to find words, as he fills me completely. His fingers tangle in my hair, tilting my head back to expose my throat. He kisses along my neck, his teeth scraping my skin, marking me with bites.

His pace quickens, driving into me harder. I scrape my fingernails down his back, leaving red welts in their wake. He groans, thrusting deeper, and I tighten my legs around his waist, urging him on.

“Break for me, Eden,” he demands. “Let me feel your pussy grip my cock while you come.”

His words trigger my release, and my body shudders as waves of pleasure pulse through me. He groans as I clench around him. With a final thrust, he comes inside me, our hearts pounding in unison.

We lay entwined, his fingers tracing patterns on my skin, an unspoken vow of possession and devotion. My hands rest on his chest, and I feel his heartbeat slowly return to normal against my palm.

Remy presses a soft kiss to my shoulder, his breath tickling my skin. “Stay with me,” he pleads, his voice rough with emotions I can’t decipher. “Please.”

I roll over, snuggling into his side. He tightens his arms around me, holding me like I might disappear. I feel his lips press against my hair, his fingers gently stroking my skin. It’s an intimacy we haven’t shared until now, the complete opposite of the man everyone else sees.

As I tighten my arms around his waist, peace flows through me. I’m exactly where I belong; with him, I’m finally home.

REMY

I wipe sweat from my forehead as I help Ty drag another body toward the specialized trailer. The stench of copper and chemicals fills my nostrils, a familiar but unpleasant necessity. Lars and Gage work efficiently beside us.

“We need to be out of here by dawn,” Ty mutters, his voice tight with tension. “The survivors of Miguel’s crew won’t stay quiet about this for long.”

I nod, conserving my breath for the heavy lifting. The vats of acid bubble and hiss, breaking down evidence of tonight’s massacre. My muscles burn from hours of cleanup, but there’s no time for rest—every minute counts.

“Pass me that tarp,” Lars calls out, his usually pristine appearance marred by dirt and blood. I toss him the heavy-duty plastic, watching as he wraps another piece of evidence that needs disposal.

The carnival feels different—eerily silent except for our grunts of exertion and the occasional splash from the vats. Moonlight casts long shadows between the rides and stalls, creating dark pockets where we move our grim cargo.

“Three more to go,” Phoenix updates us, emerging from behind a stack of crates.

Ty checks his watch for the tenth time in as many minutes. “Faster,” he orders, though we’re already working at our limit. “Dawn’s creeping up on us.”

I grab another body by the ankles, feeling the dead weight as Lars takes the shoulders. Together, we maneuver through the narrow space toward the trailer. The acid vats await, their contents already churning with tonight's work.

"Almost there," I mutter, more to myself than anyone else. The sooner we finish, the sooner we can move the carnival out and leave this mess behind us. For now, there's nothing but the heavy lifting, the acrid smell of chemicals, and the race against the coming dawn.

I wipe more sweat from my brow, glancing at Nash propped against a stack of crates, holding his ribs. The bruising on his face has started to darken, and he winces with each breath.

"How's Colt doing?" I ask.

Nash shifts, grimacing. "Flora's with him. The bullet grazed his shoulder. He'll live, but he's pissed about missing this party."

"Better than bleeding out here," Lars grunts as we haul another body toward the acid vats.

"You know Colt." Nash manages a weak smile. "He said to tell you guys to stop having all the fun without him."

Ty snorts. We're all feeling the weight of tonight's close call. Could've lost two of our own if things had gone slightly differently.

"Tell him to focus on healing," I mutter, adjusting my grip. "We need him back at full strength."

"Yeah," Nash winces again. "No more heroics for a while."

Gage works silently beside us, his skull mask hiding whatever expression he might be wearing. I notice how he keeps positioning himself between Nash and the open spaces of the carnival as if expecting more trouble.

“Phoenix,” I call out. “Go check on Colt. Make sure he’s not trying to get up and ‘help.’”

Phoenix nods and disappears into the shadows between trailers. We all know Colt’s stubbornness, especially when he thinks we need him.

“You should get Nash to rest before the teardown starts,” Lars suggests quietly as we pass.

I look at Nash’s pale face and how he barely stays upright. “Go on,” I tell him. “We’ve got this handled. We’ll give you a shout when the teardown starts. We’re going to need to move quick.”

“I can still—” Nash starts to protest.

“That wasn’t a suggestion,” Ty cuts in. “Get some rest. You’re no good to us if you pass out.”

Nash pushes off from the crates with a grunt, moving toward his trailer. We watch him go, each of us knowing we’re lucky tonight’s body count didn’t include our own.

I wipe my hands on a relatively clean section of my shirt, surveying the remaining work around us. “We need everyone packing up. Dawn’s coming, and we can’t be here when it hits.”

Ty nods, his expression stoic beneath the sweat and grime. “Lars,” he calls out. “Round up everyone who can lift a finger. I want this place stripped down and loaded

before first light.”

Lars straightens from where he’s been securing tarps. “Even the new guys?”

“Everyone,” I confirm. “Tell them it’s a drill if you have to. Just get them moving.”

Lars heads off into the darkness between the trailers. I hear him barking orders as he moves through the carnival grounds.

“What about the...” Gage gestures toward the vats with a tilt of his skull mask.

“We finish this first,” Ty says. “Can’t leave any trace.”

I roll my shoulders, trying to work out some of the tension. “Two more bodies, then we can join the teardown.” My muscles protest, but there’s no time for rest, not with dawn creeping closer and a massacre to erase.

The carnival needs to vanish like we were never here. Just another empty lot by sunrise.

33

REMY

The organized chaos unfolds around me, and my body aches. The carnival breaks down with practiced efficiency—rides are dismantled, tents collapse, and equipment is packed away.

Eden works with Tilly at the ticket booth, boxing supplies and paperwork. Their movements are quick but thorough, leaving no trace behind. Phoenix hovers near Tilly, his protective instinct obvious even as he helps Lars load equipment.

“The Ferris wheel’s almost down,” Sofia calls out, wiping sweat from her brow. She’s been working non-stop with the crew, her usual polish replaced by determination. Aurora and Lily tackle the game stalls, their arms full of stuffed animals and other prizes being packed into crates.

Flora moves between tasks, helping wherever needed, while Colt is slumped in his chair. His wounded shoulder keeps him from heavy lifting. Alice carries boxes of concession supplies to the trucks.

“Time check,” I bark out, scanning the grounds.

“Three hours till dawn,” Nash responds, wincing as he helps guide a section of the tent down.

I watch the other carnival workers pitch in, their faces a mask of exhaustion and

determination. A juggler—Mike, I think his name is—struggles with a heavy generator alongside one of our fire-eaters, Damien. They don't know about the Martinez crew or our operation. Still, they work without complaint or questioning why we must leave so suddenly.

“Need help with that?” I call out, noting their strain.

“We got it,” Damien grunts.

Sarah, our contortionist, weaves between groups carrying bundles of electrical cables. Two clowns, still in partial makeup, wrestle with dismantling the carousel's decorative panels. The fortune teller, Astrid, stacks her props into labeled boxes with mechanical precision.

“Everyone's pulling their weight,” Eden states beside me, her voice tinged with admiration.

I nod, watching Jerry, Duke's replacement, direct a team of acrobats in securing the Gravitron's components. These people think it's just another emergency move, maybe bad weather coming or permit issues.

“The regular crew doesn't deserve this chaos,” I admit to Eden, ensuring no one else can hear. “But they're stronger than they look.”

A group of dancers from the burlesque tent forms a chain, passing boxes of costumes down the line with practiced efficiency. The sword swallower leads a team securing the fun house mirrors.

Eden kneels down to pick up a heavy box of sound equipment from her makeshift radio booth. Without a word, I take the other end, our movements falling into sync as we carry it to the waiting truck.

Her hair is tied back in a messy ponytail, strands falling around her face as she works. There's dirt on her cheek and determination in her eyes. Even now, amid this chaos, she's beautiful.

"We're heading north," I say, helping her stack the equipment. "You okay with that?"

Eden pauses, wiping her forehead with the back of her hand. A smile spreads across her face. "Wherever you go, I go. That's not even a question anymore."

Something tightens in my chest at her words. She reaches out, her fingers brushing against my arm.

"These people," she continues, gesturing to the bustling carnival grounds, "are my family now. And you..." Her voice catches. "You're my home."

I pull her close, not caring who sees. Around us, everyone continues the frantic teardown, but for a moment, it's just us. Her words echo in my head—family, home. Things I never thought I'd have, things I never thought I'd want.

"We need to finish up," I murmur against her hair, but I don't let go right away, and neither does she.

I feel Eden's fingers dig into my shirt, her grip tightening instead of letting go.

"Just another minute," she whispers against my chest. "Please."

My hand finds the back of her neck, and my thumb strokes the soft skin there. I let myself focus on her breathing and heartbeat.

"I never thought I could feel this way," Eden says, her voice muffled. "Like I'm finally whole."

“You make me feel human,” I admit, the words coming easy. “When I’m with you, the monster inside quiets.”

She pulls back just enough to look up at me, her eyes shining. “I love both sides of you. The monster and the man.”

“And I love all of you,” I murmur, pressing my forehead to hers. “Your darkness matches mine perfectly.”

Eden’s smile is soft and genuine. “I’m so happy, Remy, even with everything happening.”

I brush my thumb across her cheek, wiping away a smudge of dirt. “You’re the missing piece I never knew I needed.”

I hold Eden close for another moment, savoring her warmth against me, when Lars’s voice cuts through our bubble.

“For fuck’s sake, you two. Stop making out and get on with it. There’ll be plenty of time to stare into each other’s eyes on the fucking bus.”

Eden stifles a laugh against my chest.

“Jealous, Lars? Alice not giving you enough attention lately?” I shoot back, grinning as he flips me off.

“At least I can keep it in my pants during a teardown,” he grumbles. “Some of us are actually working here.”

I reluctantly release Eden, keeping one hand on her back. “Like you weren’t just sneaking looks at Alice by the cotton candy stand.”

Lars's ears turn red, and he busies himself with a heavy box. "Shut up and help me with this sound system, asshole."

Eden squeezes my arm before stepping away to help Tilly with another load. I watch her go for a second, still amazed at how naturally she fits into our world.

"You're doing it again," Lars says, dropping a cable coil at my feet.

"Doing what?"

"That lovesick puppy look. It's disturbing on your ugly face."

I grab the cables. "Better than your constipated expression whenever Alice walks by."

We share a laugh that only comes from years of friendship and shared secrets. Despite his gruff exterior, I know Lars understands. He's found his version of peace with Alice, just as I have with Eden.

34

EDEN

I step out of our trailer into the crisp morning air of Cedar Grove, watching the carnival come to life around me. The Ferris wheel rises against pine-covered mountains, a testament to the crew's efficiency.

"Need help with that?" I call out to Aurora, who's struggling with an armload of stuffed animals for the game booth. Her face lights up as I jog over.

"Thanks, Eden. These things multiply overnight, I swear." She hands me half the pile. "How are you settling in?"

"Better than expected. Though I'm still learning everyone's routines." We walk together, arranging the prizes at her booth. "The podcast studio setup is almost complete."

Tilly emerges behind her computer station, her chestnut hair tied in a messy bun. "Speaking of tech, want to see what I've done with the security feeds? I've added some cool features."

"Show me everything," I say, genuinely interested. Tilly guides me through her system upgrades, and Aurora perches on the counter, adding commentary and laughter to our conversation.

"We should have a girls' night since the carnival doesn't open until tomorrow night,"

Aurora suggests, twirling a strand of her dark hair. “Nothing fancy, just pizza and maybe some board games in my trailer.”

“I’m in,” Tilly chimes. “I have Scrabble. I’ll bring it.”

The thought of belonging somewhere, of having real friends who understand this life, fills my chest with warmth. “Count me in too. I’ll bring drinks.”

“Great idea,” Aurora beams. “I’ll invite Lily, Sofia, Flora, and Alice too.”

I nod, though my stomach tightens at the thought of more people. I’ve seen the other girls around the carnival but haven’t interacted much. Lily works at one of the food stands, her quiet efficiency drawing less attention than Aurora’s bubbly personality. Sofia carries herself with an elegant confidence that makes me a bit nervous. Flora seems shy but kind, often helping at various booths. And Alice radiates this fierce protective energy, especially around Lily.

“That would be nice,” I say, arranging the last stuffed animal. “I should probably get to know everyone better.”

“They’re all really great,” Tilly states, closing her laptop. “Flora makes these amazing cookies, and Sofia always has the best stories. Alice keeps us laughing all night, and Lily...” She smiles fondly. “Lily has this way of making everyone feel comfortable.”

“Plus,” Aurora winks, “it’s about time we properly welcomed you to our little carnival family. The guys may run things, but us girls stick together.”

The way she says “family” catches in my chest. I’ve spent so long studying others, observing from the outside, that being included feels foreign yet wonderful. These women don’t know my twisted side, but they offer friendship anyway.

“What time should I come over?” I ask, surprising myself with how much I look forward to it.

“Seven,” Aurora says, gathering her cleaning supplies. “And don’t forget those drinks!”

“I won’t,” I promise, waving goodbye to her and Tilly before heading back across the carnival grounds.

The early afternoon sun warms my face as I walk, my boots crunching on the gravel. I can’t help but smile, thinking about how different my life is now compared to just months ago when I was alone in my apartment, obsessing over true crime cases.

I unlock our trailer door quietly, slipping inside. The sight of Remy sprawled across our bed makes my heart stutter. His muscular arm is flung over his eyes, tattoos stark against his skin. His chest rises and falls in a steady rhythm.

The door clicks shut behind me, and his arm moves. Those intense eyes are fixed on me immediately, alert despite his relaxed posture.

“Where were you?” His voice is rough with sleep.

“Helping Aurora with her booth. The girls invited me to a get-together tonight.” I shed my jacket, hanging it by the door. “Just pizza and games in Aurora’s trailer.”

Remy sits up, the sheets pooling around his waist. “Good. You should go.”

I pause, studying his face. “You’re okay with that?”

“Eden.” He reaches for me, and I climb onto the bed between his spread knees. His hands settle on my hips. “You’re mine. That doesn’t change whether you’re here or

hanging out with the girls.”

I run my fingers through his sleep-mussed hair. “I know. I wasn’t sure you’d want me to spend time away.”

“The carnival women look after their own.” His thumbs stroke my hip bones through my jeans. “Besides, I have some business to handle tonight with Ty.”

“What kind of business?” I ask, my fingers stilling in his hair. The memory of Miguel Martinez’s men attacking the carnival is still fresh.

“Just a deal. Nothing major.” Remy pulls me closer, but I resist slightly.

“The last deal ended with bodies melting in acid,” I say. “Miguel’s crew is still out there somewhere.”

“This isn’t like that.” His hands tighten on my hips. “It’s a simple exchange. Cash for the product and the rate are already agreed upon. The buyers are vetted.”

I bite my lip, studying the sharp angles of his face. “I’m worried about you.”

“Eden.” Remy’s voice carries that edge I’ve come to know well—the one that means he’s being deadly serious. “We’ve increased security. Phoenix has eyes on everything, Tilly’s upgraded our systems, and the whole crew is alert. Nothing’s getting past us.”

“Promise me you’ll be careful?” I slide my hands down to cup his face, feeling the stubble against my palms.

“Always am, little stalker.” He smirks, using the nickname that once made me blush but now feels like an endearment. “Besides, I’ve got something worth returning to

now, don't I?"

The tension in my shoulders eases. "Yes, you do." I lean down to press my forehead against his. "Just... come back to me in one piece."

I melt into Remy's kiss, his stubble rough against my skin as his mouth claims mine. My fingers tighten in his hair while his hands slide from my hips to grip my ass, pulling me closer.

"What time do you need to meet Ty?" I gasp as his lips trail down my neck.

"Seven." His teeth graze my pulse point. "Plenty of time to remind you who you belong to."

He crushes his mouth against mine, his tongue plundering, demanding. My fingers tangle in his hair, his hands grasping my ass, pulling me closer. I press against the hardness of his growing erection, feeling his need for me.

Remy yanks my shirt over my head, his lips marking my throat as he kisses and bites his way down my neck. I tilt my head back, and he takes advantage, sucking a bruise just above my collarbone. A rush of heat pours through me, pooling between my thighs.

"You like when I mark you?" His low voice rumbles through me, and I squirm as he teases a hard nipple through my lace bra.

"I like everything you do to me," I confess, breathless. His mouth curves into a satisfied smile as he pinches my nipple, making me gasp.

He pushes me back onto the bed, following me down, his knee parting my legs. He grips my right thigh and pulls it up, bending me open to him. Remy plants a hand on

the mattress next to my shoulder, leaning over me, his eyes burning into mine.

“Watch me,” he commands.

His words send a shockwave of arousal through me, and I squirm beneath his intense gaze. With his free hand, he hooks his fingers into my panties, dragging them down my legs roughly.

Remy’s hand skates up my inner thigh, his fingers circling my clit. My back arches off the bed at the first touch, my eyes squeezing shut.

“See how wet you already are for me?” His voice is smug. “You’re such a slut for this, aren’t you?”

“Please,” I beg, my eyes flicking open to meet his again. “Fuck me, Remy.”

The dark glint in his eyes stokes the fire within me to an inferno as he surges forward, claiming my mouth in a kiss that steals my breath. At the same time, his fingers plunge inside me, curling and stroking, finding that spot that sends sparks of pleasure through my core.

His mouth leaves mine, trailing kisses along my jaw to my ear. “I’m going to take that tight asshole of yours tonight,” he whispers. “I’m gonna stretch your ass out and fuck you ’til you’re screaming my name.”

My inner walls clench at his words, and I buck my hips, chasing more friction. “Yes,” I moan. “Please, Remy.”

I moan as Remy’s fingers work inside me, his words about taking my ass sending shivers of anticipation through my body. My hips buck against his hand, desperate for more.

“Such an eager little slut,” he growls, nipping at my earlobe. “But first, I want to watch you come on my fingers.”

His thumb finds my clit, circling it in time with his thrusting fingers. I clutch at his shoulders, my nails digging into his skin as the pleasure builds. His eyes lock with mine, demanding I maintain eye contact as he pushes me closer to the edge.

“That’s it,” he encourages. “Show me how much you want my cock in that tight ass.”

The combination of his filthy words and skilled fingers sends me spiraling. As I come, my back arches off the bed, crying out his name. Remy doesn’t let up, working me through my orgasm until I’m trembling beneath him.

“Good girl,” he purrs, withdrawing his fingers. He brings them to my lips. “Clean them.”

I open my mouth obediently, tasting myself on his fingers as I suck them clean. His eyes darken with lust, and he pulls his fingers free with a wet pop.

“Turn over,” he commands. “Ass up.”

I comply eagerly, rolling onto my stomach and pushing my hips up. The anticipation of what’s to come has my heart racing. Remy’s hand smooths down my spine, coming to rest on my ass.

“Such a pretty little hole,” he rasps, his thumb circling my tight ring of muscles. “And all mine to use.”

I gasp as Remy’s thumb circles my entrance, teasing and gentle despite his commanding tone. The contrast between his rough words and careful touch makes me shiver with anticipation. My fingers curl into the sheets beneath me.

“Please,” I whimper, pushing back against his hand.

“Patience, baby.” His free hand delivers a sharp smack to my ass that makes me yelp.

“I don’t want to hurt you.”

I hear the snap of a bottle cap, and then cool lube drips between my cheeks. Remy’s finger returns, spreading the slickness around my hole before pressing inside. The intrusion burns slightly, but I force myself to relax.

“That’s it,” he praises as his finger slides deeper. “Such a good girl for me.”

My breath hitches as he works me open slowly, adding a second finger when I’m ready. The stretch is intense, a mix of pleasure and discomfort that has me moaning into the pillow. Remy’s other hand strokes my back soothingly.

“You’re taking it so well,” he rumbles. “Can’t wait to feel how tight you’ll be around my cock.”

His words send another rush of wetness between my thighs. I rock back against his fingers, silently begging for more. He scissors them inside me, stretching me further, and I cry out when he crooks them just right.

“Remy,” I pant, “please, I need you.”

“What do you need?” His fingers thrust deeper. “Tell me exactly what you want.”

“I want your cock in my ass,” I moan, past caring how desperate I sound. “Please fuck me.”

His fingers withdraw, leaving me empty and aching. I hear the rustle of fabric as he positions himself behind me.

The blunt head of Remy's cock presses against my ass. I grip the sheets tighter, forcing myself to breathe steadily as he begins to push inside. The stretch is intense, bordering on pain, but his hand stroking my back keeps me grounded.

"Breathe for me," he commands, his voice strained as he paces himself.

I focus on relaxing as he inches deeper, filling me in a way I've never experienced before. My body burns and tingles, adjusting to his size. When his hips finally press against my ass, he stills, giving me time to adjust.

"Such a good girl," he growls, his fingers digging into my hips. "Taking all of my cock in your tight little ass."

I whimper at his words, overwhelmed by the fullness. Every small movement sends sparks of exquisite torment through my body. Remy's hand slides around to rub my clit, making me gasp and clench around him.

"That's it," he groans. "Show me how much you love having your ass filled."

He starts to move, shallow thrusts that gradually deepen as my body accepts him. The initial discomfort morphs into pleasure, and I push back against him, wanting more. His fingers work my clit in time with his thrusts, building the pressure inside me.

"Remy," I moan, my voice breaking as he hits a spot that makes me see stars. "Oh God, please..."

I shiver as Remy stills, his thick cock buried to the hilt in my ass. His fingers continue to stroke my clit in a lazy rhythm, making me squirm between him and the bed.

"You like being so full, little stalker?" His voice is deep with possessiveness.

“Yes,” I moan, lifting my hips, seeking more friction. “Fuck, yes.”

His free hand joins the other between my legs, slick with lube. I shudder as he slides it down, past my clit, to my pussy. His finger traces my slit slowly, collecting the wetness there.

“You’re so wet,” he growls. “You love being stuffed full of cock, don’t you?”

He presses what feels like the head of a dildo against my pussy, and I groan at the additional stretch. “Oh, Remy,” I breathe, letting my head fall onto the pillow.

The dildo slides inside, and I cry out at the fullness. My entire lower half pulses with sensation—the thick length of Remy’s cock in my ass, the blunt ridges of the dildo in my pussy, his fingers now stroking my clit.

“Fuck,” I moan. “So full.”

“That’s it, my perfect slut.” His voice rumbles through me as he starts to thrust slowly at first. “Take it all.”

I bite my lip, struggling to accommodate his size with the dildo. I feel deliciously stretched, my body burning with arousal. His fingers work my clit in a relentless rhythm, sending spirals of pleasure through me.

“I love your tight little body,” he growls, his hips picking up speed. “Love fucking your ass and knowing how much you need it.”

“Yes,” I pant, my nails digging into the sheets. “Need you, Remy. Always need you.”

He grunts in response, his thrusts becoming more urgent as the intensity builds. His fingers rub my clit furiously, working me higher and higher. I clench around him, my

inner walls fluttering as my orgasm nears.

“Come for me,” he commands, his voice tight. “Come all over my cock and dildo.”

His harsh words push me over the edge. My back arches as I shatter into pieces, sobbing his name. Around me, Remy groans. He spills inside my ass, and I can feel his cock twitch as he pumps his release into me.

For several long moments, we’re frozen in place. I squeeze around his cock, milking the last drops of his release. His mouth presses a kiss to the sensitive skin between my shoulder blades.

“Damn, baby,” he breathes, his voice hoarse.

I lay spent and trembling on the bed, my body still tingling from the intensity of our encounter. Remy’s weight shifts behind me as he carefully withdraws, leaving me empty but satisfied. The loss of his warmth makes me shiver.

“Stay still,” he commands, his voice gentle but firm. I hear him moving around the room, and he returns with a warm washcloth. His touch is surprisingly tender as he cleans between my legs.

“You okay?” he asks, his fingers trailing my spine.

“More than okay,” I admit into the pillow, too boneless to move. “Though I might not be able to walk straight for a while.”

His low chuckle sends warmth through my chest. “Good. I want everyone to see how well-fucked you are when you leave this trailer.”

I turn my head to look at him, taking in his satisfied expression. His hair is a mess

from where I grabbed it earlier, and there are red marks on his shoulders from my nails. The sight of him like this makes my heart flutter.

“What time is it?” I ask, remembering his meeting with Ty and my girl’s night.

Remy glances at his phone. “Still got half an hour.” He stretches out beside me, pulling me against his chest. “Plenty of time to recover.”

I snuggle into his warmth, breathing in his scent. His fingers trace lazy patterns on my hip as we lie in comfortable silence. These quiet moments after sex are becoming my favorite part of being with him—when the intensity fades into something softer, more intimate.

35

EDEN

I hover near the entrance of Aurora's trailer, feeling oddly out of place. The sound of laughter spills through the open door, along with the scent of popcorn.

"Eden!" Aurora waves me in, her smile genuine. "Come sit with us."

The interior is cozy, with fairy lights that warmly glow over the gathered women. Lily and Alice share a loveseat while Flora perches cross-legged on a pile of cushions. Tilly's typing away on her phone, probably texting Phoenix, and Sofia lounges on the small couch like a queen.

"We've got wine, snacks, and absolutely no talk of work allowed," Alice announces, passing me a glass of red. "That means no podcast stories."

I accept the wine, grateful for something to do with my hands. "Thanks. I'm not used to this."

"Girls' nights?" Sofia's perfectly shaped eyebrow arches. "We needed one after everything that's happened. Sit down. You're making me nervous standing there."

Flora shifts over, making space for me on the cushions. Her smile is shy but welcoming. "The popcorn's really good. Aurora made it with caramel."

"And bourbon," Aurora adds with a wink. "Everything's better with bourbon."

“Unless you’re pregnant,” Lily pipes up, and the room erupts in squeals as she blushes.

“Oh my God, really?” Alice hugs her best friend. “Does Cade know?”

I settle into the cushions, watching their easy interaction. These women share a bond forged through experiences—some beautiful, some terrible—and have all found their place in this strange, dangerous world.

I watch Lily reach for a bottle of water, her cheeks flushing pink under all the attention.

“I haven’t told Cade yet,” she confesses, twisting the cap off her water. “Found out yesterday morning.”

“He’s going to lose his mind,” Alice squeals, squeezing her friend’s hand. “In a good way, I mean.”

Lily takes a sip of water, her free hand instinctively drifting to her still flat stomach. “I know he’ll be happy. And he’ll be an amazing dad. It’s just... we hadn’t planned this. Not with everything going on at the carnival.”

“The best things in life are unplanned,” Sofia chimes in, raising her wine glass. “Look at all of us. None of us exactly planned to end up here, did we?”

“True,” Lily agrees, a small smile playing on her lips

I take a sip of wine, considering Lily’s situation. “The money won’t be an issue,” I say, thinking of the massive profits from our cocaine shipments. “Ty makes sure everyone’s taken care of.”

“It’s not that,” Lily sighs, fiddling with her water bottle. “I just worry about what it means to raise a baby when we’re always on the move. New town every few weeks, living in trailers...”

I watch the emotions play across the faces of my newfound friends. Sofia’s eyes cloud with memories of her mob family upbringing. At the same time, Flora’s fingers twist in her lap, no doubt thinking of the foster system that failed her.

“A child needs love,” Alice says firmly, her voice carrying the weight of someone who knows. “I had my mom, just my mom, and that was enough. Even when she remarried and moved away, the love she gave me shaped who I am.”

“I didn’t have either parent,” Flora adds softly, surprising me with her openness. “But watching you with Cade, Lily... the way you both light up around each other. That’s what a child needs. Not a fancy house or a permanent address.”

Aurora nods, her hand subconsciously touching her neck. “Sometimes having parents isn’t enough if they’re the wrong kind. Your baby will have two people who cherish them and this crazy carnival family.”

I think about my childhood—the endless psychology books, the fascination with darker subjects my aunt never quite understood. “Family isn’t always blood,” I offer. “Sometimes it’s the people who see you for who you really are and love you anyway.”

Tilly looks up from her phone, her eyes bright. “Like how Phoenix sees past my nerdy exterior? Or how Remy accepts your interest in serial killers?” She winks at me.

“Exactly,” I laugh, feeling a warmth that has nothing to do with the wine. “And this baby will have all of us. Aunties who understand that normal is overrated.”

I cradle the wine glass as I watch these women interact. The realization hits me like a gentle wave that I'd been anxious about nothing.

"More popcorn?" Aurora offers, holding out the bowl. The caramel and bourbon mixture makes my mouth water.

"Thanks," I say, grabbing a handful.

My whole life, I've kept people at arm's length. My podcast listeners think they know me but only know the carefully crafted version I present. Forensic psychologists study killers from a safe, clinical distance. Not the woman who collects their letters and personal items, who falls asleep surrounded by artifacts of violence.

But here, in this cozy trailer with fairy lights casting shadows on the walls, I don't have to pretend. These women understand the darkness. They've each found their way to embrace it, to love men society would label as monsters.

"Earth to Eden," Sofia teases, tossing a piece of popcorn at me. "You're thinking too hard."

I catch the popcorn and pop it in my mouth, grinning. "Force of habit."

"Well, stop it," Alice commands playfully. "This is a thinking-free zone tonight."

Looking around at their faces—Flora's gentle smile, Tilly's tech-savvy smirk, Lily's maternal glow, Aurora's wild spirit, Sofia's fierce pride, and Alice's vibrant energy—I feel something I've never experienced before. Belonging. These aren't just Remy's colleague's partners or fellow carnival workers. They're my friends. My first real friends.

The thought brings an unexpected lump to my throat. All those years of eating lunch

alone in school, celebrating achievements with only my podcast microphone for company, keeping my true nature hidden—they led me here, to this moment, to these women who get me.

36

REMY

Through the security feeds, I watch Eden moving through her end-of-day routine at the podcast booth. Her fingers dance across the equipment, powering everything down with practiced efficiency. The carnival grounds stretch empty and dark around her, rides standing silent against the star-filled sky.

I shift position behind a row of game stalls, keeping to the shadows. My boots make no sound on the packed earth as I track her movements. She pauses, head tilting as if she's sensed something. Good. I want her aware, want that delicious tension building.

The note I left waits in her bag, carefully placed where she'll find it: "Run, little stalker. I'm coming for you." Our agreed signal is that the game is on. My pulse quickens as she reaches for her bag, knowing the moment approaches.

Her breath catches when she finds it. Even from here, I can see her breathing grow quick and shallow as she reads those few words. Her head snaps up, scanning the darkness surrounding her. Smart girl, but she won't spot me. Not until I want her to.

She backs away from the booth, cautious in every movement now. The click of her shoes on the wooden platform seems impossibly loud in the silence. A twig snaps somewhere in the shadows—not from me, but it makes her jump. The fear response looks beautiful on her.

Eden runs, heading for the tree line behind the carnival just as we planned. Her dark

hair streams behind her as she disappears into the woods. My lips curl into a predatory smile as I give her the head start we discussed.

The hunt begins. The carnival lights dim behind us as I follow her trail into the darkness, savoring each moment of pursuit. This is what we both need—this dance of predator and willing prey.

The mask feels right against my skin as I stalk through the trees. Her footprints leave clear tracks in the soft earth, and she's not trying to hide them.

The rope trap waits ahead, nearly invisible in the darkness. I slow, watching her silhouette move closer to the trigger point. My breath comes faster beneath the mask, anticipation building as she approaches.

A sharp gasp pierces the night. The rope snaps tight, and Eden's body jerks upward. The trap works perfectly, suspending her above the ground, legs bound together as she dangles upside down. Her hands grasp uselessly at the air as she swings gently, helplessly.

"Remy?" Her voice carries equal parts fear and excitement. She twists in the rope, trying to spot me in the darkness.

I emerge from the shadows, letting her take in my predatory stance. My boots crush fallen leaves as I circle her suspended form. She follows my movement with wide eyes, breath coming in quick pants.

The rope creaks as she struggles weakly, testing her bonds. We both know it's futile. I've left her completely at my mercy, exactly as she fantasized in those journal entries.

I pause my circling, standing directly in front of Eden. Her body sways gently in the

rope trap, dark hair hanging down like a curtain. The moonlight catches the tears gathering in her eyes.

“Please...” she whispers. “Stop.”

The word sends a jolt through me. Our agreed signal is that she wants to play this scene out fully. My hand shoots out, gripping her chin roughly.

“Stop?” I growl through the mask. “You watched me. Obsessed over me. And now you want me to stop?”

Eden’s breath hitches. “I-I was wrong. I shouldn’t have... please just let me go.”

My fingers tighten on her jaw. “Too late for that. Far too late.”

“No,” she whimpers, struggling against the ropes. “Someone help! Please!”

Her cries echo through the empty woods. We both know no one will hear her. That’s why we chose this spot, far from prying eyes or ears.

“Scream all you want,” I tell her, running my other hand down her exposed throat. “No one’s coming to save you.”

“Don’t do this,” Eden begs. Tears spill down her temples now. “I won’t tell anyone what I saw. Just let me go.”

I lean in close, my mask brushing her ear. “But I want you to tell them, little stalker. I want you to remember everything I do to you.”

Her whole body trembles at my words. “Please... stop...”

Her pleading turns me on even more. I can't resist taking the game further. With swift movements, I tear at her clothes, ripping the fabric to expose her body. She tries to twist away but is completely at my mercy, trapped and vulnerable in the ropes.

Her chest heaves as I move closer, pulling a knife from my jacket. I slice through the remaining straps, careful to avoid her skin. Fabric falls away, baring her to the night air.

"Please..." The word is barely audible.

"Shh, little stalker. Isn't this your fantasy?" I run the knife gently along her collarbone, down between her breasts. "To be caught, exposed... helpless."

She squeezes her eyes shut as if she can escape me through denial. But her body betrays her, nipples tightening as the night air caresses her skin. I let the blade trace a path down her stomach, enjoying her helplessness.

"Feels good, doesn't it?" I whisper, standing so close she can feel the heat of my body. My free hand catches her chin, forcing her eyes open. "Look at me. See who's caught you."

Those green eyes, wide with desire, hold mine for a long moment. I claim Eden's mouth in a fierce kiss despite the fact she's still hanging upside down, my tongue invading her mouth upside down as thoroughly as I plan to dominate her body.

When I break the kiss, her lips are swollen, and her breath comes in short gasps. I step back, take in her exposed form, and strip off my shirt. The night wind teases my skin, matching the heat of my arousal.

I move to the ropes I prepared earlier, hidden in the shadows of nearby trees. The moonlight catches the thick cords as I pull them taut. Eden's body sways gently in her

suspended position, completely at my mercy.

Approaching her again, I grasp her wrists firmly. She struggles weakly, but we both know it's just part of our game. The rope feels rough against my palms as I secure her arms, creating an intricate pattern to hold her weight safely.

With practiced movements, I adjust the tension on both sets of ropes. Eden's body lifts higher, suspended between four points instead of just the ankle trap. Her form creates a graceful arc in the air.

I test each knot carefully, ensuring they're secure but not too tight. Years of working with rigging at the carnival have taught me the importance of proper rope work. Eden's breathing steadies as she feels the security of my expert ties.

The night wind whispers through the trees. Eden hangs suspended in my web of ropes, completely immobilized. Perfect.

Her body is perfect, suspended, and waiting. I use the blade to tease her skin. Her breath catches as the cool metal dances over sensitive places, mapping the contours of her breasts, her ribs, and the curves of her hips. I take my time, wanting to savor every reaction.

Her voice is hoarse when she speaks, fighting against the bindings. "Let me go. You don't want to do this."

But we both know that's a lie. Eden might play the part of an unwilling victim, but she wants this as much as I do.

Goosebumps rise on her skin, her nipples tightening to points in the cool air.

"Please..." she whispers, a tremor running through her body. "I don't want this."

Her eyes flicker shut, long lashes casting shadows on her flushed cheeks. I smile, knowing this dance of resistance and surrender. She pretends to resist my touch each time, pretending she's not craving more.

The night wind caresses her bare skin, accentuating the beauty of her form. Her breasts rise and fall with each rapid breath, nipples taut. Her bound arms strain against the ropes, their intricate patterns pressing against her skin.

With deliberate slowness, I reach for her again, needing her response. My fingers trail along the curve of her breast, circling her nipple but avoiding it. She holds her breath, a soft whimper escaping as I deny her release.

"Tell me again," I growl, my voice hoarse. "Tell me what you don't want."

Her back arches. "Don't touch me," she gasps. "Don't do this to me."

I love the game we play, the battle of desire and denial. My fingers trace lower, ghosting over the curve of her belly. She strains away from my touch, but the ropes offer no escape.

"Who am I, little stalker?" I ask, letting my fingers dip lower into her wet cunt.

"No..." Her hips buck, an instinctive reaction that exposes her need. "Please... don't."

"Tell me," I demand, thrusting my fingers inside her.

She cries out as I stretch her, fill her. Her body clenches around me, betraying her words. "You're my captor," she gasps. "Please, let me go..."

I withdraw my fingers, slick with her arousal. She makes a soft noise of protest, hips thrusting forward in search of more. I chuckle, raising my fingers to my mouth and

tasting her.

Her taste on my lips fuels my need, intensifying the ache coiled tight in my body. Her skin shines with a layer of sweat, moonlight casting silver highlights on her glistening form.

She struggles weakly, but her strength is no match for my ropes.

“Please,” she whispers again, the word like a needle in my mind. “No more.”

But I have no intention of stopping. Not when her scent drives me mad, or her body is laid out for me like a feast. I will savor every inch of her, take what I want when I want it.

I lower myself to my knees, keeping my eyes locked on hers as I lift the mask. Eden watches me with anticipation in her gaze. When she realizes my intention, a soft gasp escapes her.

I waste no time. My tongue and lips claim her pussy, feasting on her arousal as she hangs helplessly. She cries out, hips bucking, her body desperate for more.

My hands clutch her bound thighs, holding her in place as I work my magic. Her cries echo through the trees, music to my ears.

I nip at her, not enough to cause pain but enough to send shocks through her body. Her body tenses as I thrust my tongue deep inside her. Her hands clench into fists, the ropes biting into her skin.

“Oh fuck,” she moans. “Remy, please...”

Hearing my name on her lips sends a thrill through me. I suckle her, my fingers

delving into the slick folds of her cunt. My tongue teases her swollen clit, drawing out her pleasure.

Her cries become more urgent. I love the way she sounds completely wrecked, the sounds of her pleasure filling the night air. I growl in response, my tongue and fingers moving faster.

Her back bows, ropes creaking as she strains against her bonds. Her muscles tense, body rigid—and then she's coming, crying out my name. Her arousal fills my mouth.

Even as her orgasm washes over her, I don't stop. I lap at her greedily, drawing out her pleasure, reveling in her taste.

I slip my mask back to hide my smile as I straighten. Her chest heaves, breasts rising and falling rapidly, nipples tight. I stroke her bound arms, feeling the tension in the ropes, knowing she's still sensitive, aroused, and desperate for more.

Meeting her gaze, I ask, "Ready for more, little stalker?"

Her eyes widen at my question, and she knows our game. Even as she denies it, her body aches for more. I see it in the way her bound wrists strain against the ropes, her chest heaving with rapid breaths.

"No," she replies, but her tone lacks conviction. "Please, that's enough."

I chuckle, already shedding my pants, eager to feel her around me. "Last chance to change your mind, baby. This could get rough."

Her lips press together. She knows the rules. She knows the safe word. If she doesn't use it, we both know she wants it.

“No more,” she gasps, the pretense thinning. “Please, it’s too much.”

I step between her wide-spread thighs, positioning myself at her entrance. Her body is bared and vulnerable, open and offered to me. I curl my fingers around her thighs, preparing to thrust.

“Last chance,” I say, watching her face. “Say it, and I’ll stop.”

The pulse point in her throat throbs as she swallows hard. She could say it. She could use the safe word. But she doesn’t.

I push inside her pussy, enjoying her sharp intake of breath as I fill her. Her body stretches to accommodate me.

With each thrust, her body sways in the ropes, exposed and helpless. Her cries echo through the forest, and I know she’s pushing her voice louder, wanting her fictional pleas to be heard.

“That’s it, scream for me,” I growl, pulling out almost completely before slamming back into her. “Let them hear how much you want it.”

I give another fierce thrust, groaning as her cunt clenches around me. She’s so tight, and I know how good it feels for her, how hard she’s struggling not to lose control.

“You love it,” I accuse, voice rough. “Admit it.”

“No...” But her words are breathless, yielding. Her head tosses back as I withdraw and thrust deep again.

Her resistance is exactly what I crave. That fight makes me harder and intensifies my need to possess her completely. I grip her thighs, marking her perfect skin with the

pressure of my fingers.

With each brutal stroke, I watch her body respond, see the flush of pleasure and pain on her skin, smell her arousal, and hear the needy little noises she tries to suppress. She wants to play the innocent victim, but her body betrays her.

Her cries echo through the woods, but I crave more volume, more desperation. With my free hand, I strike her exposed breast, enjoying the satisfying slap of skin on skin. She bucks against me, a startled cry escaping her lips.

“You like that?” I taunt, knowing the answer. “You like the pain?”

“No,” she insists, but the denial comes too late. Her swollen clit, so tightly bound, betrays her. She’s so wet, so ready.

I bite back a groan as I plunge into her. “Liar.” Each thrust pulls another little cry from her, turning her flesh raw and exposing her to the night air. Only when she’s marked by me, body throbbing with my possession, will I be satisfied.

And when she’s begging me to stop, when her gorgeous flesh is throbbing and sore, when her voice is hoarse from all her pleading... that’s when I’ll really get started. That’s when I’ll enjoy breaking her in the best ways possible.

“Remy, wait!” Her voice takes on a different tone I haven’t heard before. I pause, looking down at her bare, bound body, ropes cutting into her perfect skin.

“Too much?” I ask, even though I don’t want to stop. Her flesh is so inviting, and there’s so much more I want to do to her. She’s just so damn beautiful like this.

“The ropes,” she whispers, sounding uncomfortable for the first time. “My hands are numb.”

My eyes trail along her bound arms, taking in the intricate patterns I've woven. I've tied her up like this a dozen times, and she's always loved it. But the ropes have been biting into her skin for a while now, and I realize I've underestimated how long we've been playing. It's harder for her to escape the pain this time.

"You want me to let you down?" I ask, reluctantly reaching for my knife. I don't want to stop; the night is young, and my dark needs are far from satisfied.

"I can't feel my fingers," she admits, biting her lip. "Please, just... give me some slack."

I sigh, stepping back and cutting the ropes. Eden rubs her wrists to restore circulation when her hands are free. I quickly move to her ankles, slicing through the remaining bindings. She sits up, hugging her knees to her chest as blood rushes back into her hands. I tamp down my disappointment that the night's entertainment is ending early.

Eden huddles in the dirt, shivering as the night breeze teases her bound breasts and exposed skin. Her wrists and ankles are lined with angry red marks from the ropes, and guilt flutters in my stomach. I didn't mean to take it that far, but it's hard to control myself when she looks so tempting. So damn desirable.

"Are you okay?" I ask, kneeling in front of her, wanting to touch but knowing she might not welcome it.

She shrugs, still huddled in on herself. "Yeah. Just... being suspended from a tree was new. I wasn't expecting that."

I bite my inner cheek. "Sorry. I got carried away."

She shrugs. "No, I liked it. I just..."

“It’s fine,” I assure her, shifting closer despite her attempt to hide her nudity from me. “I like that you have limits too. It means I can still surprise you. Why didn’t you say the safe word.”

A small smile quirks her lips, warming me despite the chill night air. “You definitely did that.” She places her hands on my chest. “Because I didn’t want you to stop.” She rises on her tiptoes and kisses me. “I never want you to stop,” she breathes.

My body responds immediately to her touch, the hunger stirring in my gut again as I deepen her kiss. I wonder if she’s trying to distract me, to lead this back to the path we were on before for more.

Hell, I hope so.

Source Creation Date: July 22, 2025, 1:20 pm

EDEN

Eight Months Later...

I stretch out on the pristine white sand, soaking in the warmth of the Mexican sun. The private beach at our resort feels like another world compared to the gritty carnival grounds I've called home for the past nine months.

"Enjoying yourself, little stalker?" Remy's deep voice sends shivers down my spine as he settles beside me on the lounge.

"Mmm. Though I still can't believe you actually took time off." I face him, admiring how the sun gleams off his tattooed chest. "The carnival..."

"Is in good hands with Ty and the crew." He hands me a fresh margarita. "Besides, you earned this after that cleanup job last month."

I take a sip, remembering how I'd helped orchestrate the cover story when things got messy with a rival operation. My podcast had proven invaluable for misdirection, and my criminal psychology background gave our crew an edge they hadn't expected.

"I never thought I'd find someone who understands both sides of me." I trace a finger along one of his tattoos. "The professional podcaster and the darkness underneath."

Remy catches my hand, pressing a kiss to my palm. "You were made for this life, Eden. For me." His eyes darken with possession. "Though I still can't believe you used to stalk me."

I let out a small gasp as Remy's lips trail down my neck, his strong hands gripping my hips. The sound of waves crashing against the shore fades into background noise as my pulse quickens.

"Anyone could walk by," I whisper, though I know this stretch of beach is practically deserted.

"Let them." His voice rumbles against my skin as he pulls me onto his lap. The rough fabric of his swim trunks creates delicious friction against my bikini bottoms. "I love watching you try to stay quiet."

My fingers dig into his shoulders as he nips at my collarbone. The heat between us has nothing to do with the Mexican sun beating down on our skin. Remy's hands slide up my back, toying with my bikini strings.

"You're mine," he growls, grinding me against his growing hardness. "Every inch of you belongs to me now."

"Yes," I breathe, arching into his touch. The possessiveness in his voice makes me dizzy with need. I'd dreamed of this during those weeks of watching him from afar—being claimed, owned, consumed by his darkness.

His fingers tangle in my hair, pulling my head back to expose my throat. "My beautiful little stalker." His teeth graze my pulse point. "So perfect for me."

I roll my hips against him, drawing a harsh groan from his chest. The lounge creaks beneath us as Remy's grip tightens, sure to leave bruises. Just how I like it.

"Please," I whimper as his free hand slides up my thigh.

"Beg prettier than that, Eden."

I gasp as Remy's fingers slide beneath my bikini bottoms, teasing but not giving me what I need. The sun beats down on my exposed skin as I writhe in his lap, desperate for more contact.

"Please, Remy. I need you." My voice comes out breathless, needy. "Make me yours."

His dark chuckle vibrates against my throat. "You're already mine, little stalker. Have been since the first time I caught you watching me." His thumb circles my clit, making me buck against his hand. "Remember how wet you got, hiding in the shadows while I worked?"

"Yes," I moan, remembering those early days of obsession. How I'd sneak around the carnival grounds, camera in hand, collecting evidence of his criminal activities while secretly fantasizing about him catching me. "I wanted you so badly."

"And now?" His fingers press inside me, curling just right. "Tell me what you want now."

I clutch his shoulders, grinding down on his hand. "I want you to fuck me. Right here, where anyone could see." The thrill of potential discovery makes my inner walls clench around his fingers. "Show everyone who I belong to."

Remy growls, capturing my mouth in a bruising kiss. His teeth catch my lower lip as he withdraws his fingers, leaving me empty and aching. The loss only lasts a moment before he shifts me, positioning me exactly how he wants me on top of him.

"Such a good girl," he croons against my lips. "My perfect little stalker, so desperate for my cock."

I whimper as he pushes my bikini bottoms aside, the head of his cock teasing my

entrance. The beach stretches empty in both directions, but the possibility of being caught makes everything more intense.

The sun beats down on my exposed skin while his hands grip my hips, controlling my movements.

“That’s it,” he growls against my neck. “Take all of me.”

My nails dig into his shoulders as I sink down onto him completely. The position leaves me vulnerable, exposed to anyone who might walk by our secluded stretch of beach. The thought only heightens my arousal.

“Please,” I whimper, trying to move faster. But Remy’s grip keeps me still, forcing me to feel every inch of him.

“Patience.” His teeth graze my throat. “I love watching you squirm.”

I clench around him, drawing a harsh groan from his chest. His control slips just enough for me to roll my hips, taking him deeper.

“Fuck,” he hisses, one hand sliding up to tangle in my hair. “You’re so perfect for me.”

The lounge creaks beneath us as Remy finally allows me to move. I ride him slowly at first, savoring the delicious friction. His free hand slips between us, finding my clit with practiced ease.

“Such a good slut,” he praises, watching me fall apart. “Give me everything you’ve got.”

I increase my pace, chasing my release. Remy’s fingers work magic on my sensitive

flesh while his cock hits that perfect spot inside me. The combination of pleasure and exposure pushes me closer to the edge.

“I’m close,” I pant, grinding down harder. “Please, Remy.”

His grip tightens in my hair, pulling my head back to expose my throat. “Come for me, Eden. Let the entire population of fucking Mexico hear who you belong to.”

I cry out as my orgasm crashes through me, my inner walls clenching around Remy’s thick length. The sun blazes against my exposed skin as I ride out the waves of pleasure, his fingers still working my clit.

“That’s it,” he growls, his hips snapping up to meet mine. “Take what you need.”

Aftershocks ripple through me. Remy’s grip on my hair tightens, keeping me exactly where he wants me as he chases his release. The position leaves me completely at his mercy, just how I like it.

“Mine,” he grunts, his thrusts becoming more erratic. “Say it.”

“Yours,” I gasp, still sensitive from my orgasm. “Always yours.”

Remy groans, pulling me down for a bruising kiss as he comes deep inside me. His free hand grips my hip hard enough to leave marks, marking me as his property. The thought makes me clench around him again.

We stay like that for a moment, catching our breath as the waves crash against the shore. Remy’s hands soften their grip, one sliding up to cup my face while the other traces patterns on my lower back.

“My beautiful little stalker,” he murmurs against my lips. The tenderness in his touch

contrasts beautifully with the gravelly tone of his voice.

The Mexican sun continues to warm my skin as I rest my head on Remy's chest, listening to his heartbeat slow. His fingers thread through my hair, gentle now where they were demanding moments before.

I trace lazy patterns on Remy's chest as we bask in the afterglow, the sound of waves creating a peaceful backdrop. His fingers continue gentle strokes through my hair, so different from his usual possessive grip.

"I used to dream about moments like this," I confess softly. "Back when I was stalking you, I'd imagine what it would be like to be close to you. But the reality..." I press a kiss on his chest. "It's so much more than I ever fantasized."

Remy's hand stills in my hair. "You know what terrifies me?" His voice carries an unusual vulnerability. "How much I need you. Not just want—need. I've never needed anyone before."

I lift my head to meet his gaze, finding honesty in his dark gaze. "I understand that feeling. For years, I studied killers, trying to understand the darkness inside me. But with you..." I cup his face. "I don't have to hide or pretend. You see all of me—the professional facade and the twisted inclinations underneath."

"You're the first person who's ever looked at the monster in me and smiled." His thumb traces my lower lip. "Everyone else either runs or tries to change me. But you..." He shakes his head. "You embrace it. Encourage it."

"Because your darkness calls to mine." I press closer, feeling his heartbeat against my chest. "We're the same, Remy."

His arms tighten around me, protective rather than possessive. "I never thought I'd

find someone who understands both sides of me. The business side and the violence.” He presses his forehead to mine. “You make me feel whole.”

The confession hangs between us, heavy with meaning. I close my eyes, overwhelmed by the intensity of emotion. “I love you,” I whisper. “All of you.”

Who would have thought my obsession with documenting killers would lead me here? I went from studying criminal psychology to finding someone who embodies it. My podcast gave me the perfect cover to explore that darkness to get close to the subjects that fascinated me.

I smile, remembering how I hid in the shadows with my camera, capturing evidence of his criminal activities while secretly yearning for him to catch me. I felt jealous when I found those photos and that chat log with “Baby Girl,” which I now know had meant nothing. It was merely a distraction from his isolation and loneliness.

I’m integral to those same operations, using my psychology background and media influence to protect our enterprise. My obsession has evolved into something deeper and more complete.

My fingers find the scar on his ribs, a reminder of the night he took down a pissed-off client who tried to kill him. I’d helped clean and stitch that wound, my hands steady despite the blood. That’s when I knew my place wasn’t just studying killers from afar. It was here, beside one, matching his darkness with my own.

Source Creation Date: July 22, 2025, 1:20 pm

REMY

Three years later

The smell of barbecue smoke drifts across the riverbank as I watch Eden wade into the shallow water, her sundress hitched around her thighs. Three years, and she still takes my breath away.

“You’re staring again.” Lars drops into the chair beside me, passing over a cold beer.

“Always.” I take a long drink, enjoying the peaceful afternoon. The carnival’s closed today—our first real break in weeks.

The kids race past us, squealing with delight as they chase each other through the grass. Lars’s son, Jack, tears after Lily’s daughter, Emma, both giggling as they dodge between the adults.

“Careful by the water!” Eden calls out, one hand resting on her swollen belly. Six months along, and she’s never looked more beautiful.

Phoenix cradles his infant daughter Luna against his chest while Tilly lounges on a blanket in the shade. The baby is already showing signs of her parents’ tech-savvy natures, constantly reaching for phones and tablets.

Sofia walks over with little Anthony balanced on her hip, Ty trailing behind them with a protective hand on her lower back. Their son’s got his father’s watchful eyes, taking in everything around him.

“Emma, sweetie, time for a snack!” Lily waddles over to corral her daughter, her second pregnancy showing prominently now.

Alice joins us, sinking into a chair with an exhausted sigh. “Jack’s got more energy than a nuclear reactor today.”

“Takes after his father,” I smirk at Lars, who grins and shrugs.

Eden returns to me, and I pull her into my lap, spreading my fingers over where our daughter grows. We already know it’s a girl, though we’re keeping the name to ourselves for now.

“Aurora!” Eden waves as she approaches with drinks and more snacks. Aurora and Gage are the only ones without kids or a baby on the way. Still, they seem content spoiling everyone else’s children rotten.

The afternoon sun beats down as Gage flips burgers on the grill, his face exposed for once. I never thought I’d see the day—the man who terrified countless visitors in our haunted house now makes silly faces at the kids.

“Uncle Gage! Can I have mine with extra cheese?” Emma bounces on her toes beside him.

“Coming right up.” He winks at her, and my chest tightens at how far we’ve all come.

Eden shifts in my lap, pressing back against me. “Remember when you thought he’d never adjust to family life?”

“To be fair, none of us seemed the type.” I kiss her neck, breathing in her familiar scent only today it’s soaked in river water.

The food draws everyone to the tables we’ve set up. Plates clatter, and voices rise and

fall with laughter and conversation. Nash tosses a roll at Colt's head when he makes a terrible joke, and Sofia scolds them both like misbehaving children.

"Your daughter's doing somersaults again," Eden murmurs, guiding my hand to a spot where I can feel the movement.

"Takes after her mother—always putting on a show." I smile against her hair as she elbows me playfully.

Ty raises his beer. "To family—the ones we chose and made."

"To family," we echo. I look around at these people who started as colleagues, became accomplices, and ended up being everything I never knew I needed.

I watch Colt and Nash help Flora from their truck, her belly even bigger than Eden's. Seven months later, neither of them cares which one is the biological father. They both dote on her like she's made of glass.

"Need a hand?" Nash steadies Flora as she navigates the uneven ground.

"I've got her," Colt growls. They've found their balance, these two. Their possessiveness of Flora has mellowed into something that works for all of them.

Cade's stretched out on a blanket with Lily curled against him, their daughter Emma building a sandcastle nearby. Never thought I'd see him so settled, but fatherhood suits him.

Aurora passes by with a tray of drinks, Gage's eyes following her every move. Those two still act like newlyweds, though they've been married for over a year.

"Phoenix, put the laptop away," Tilly scolds, bouncing their fussy daughter. He reluctantly closes it, but I catch him checking his phone. Some habits die hard.

Lars and Alice are helping Jack build what looks like a moat around Emma's castle. Both kids are covered in sand and pure joy. Alice's belly is just starting to show with their second.

Sofia's perched on Ty's lap, little Anthony asleep against her chest. My old friend has never looked more content, though he runs the carnival with an iron fist.

"Room for one more?" Flora waddles over to where Eden sits.

"Always." Eden pats the chair beside her. "How's the nursery coming along?"

"Ask these two overprotective idiots," Flora jerks her thumb at Colt and Nash. "They've repainted it three times because the shade of yellow wasn't 'quite right'."

Nash shrugs, unashamed. "We want it perfect."

"It will be," Colt says firmly, his hand resting on Flora's shoulder while Nash takes her other side.

I watch Eden's face light up as she talks with Flora about their pregnancies, her hands gesturing animatedly. The setting sun catches her hair, turning it to fire. Three years ago, I considered this kind of peace a weakness. Now I know better.

"Your girl's going to be running this place one day," Ty says, standing beside me. "Between Eden's brains and your... particular skills."

I smirk. "Let's hope she gets her mother's charm instead of my temperament."

The carnival has changed since we all settled down. It's still dangerous when necessary, but it's smarter and cleaner. The underground operation runs smoother than ever, with Eden's strategic mind complementing our brutality.

Jack runs past with a water gun, spraying Emma, who shrieks delightfully. Their laughter echoes across the riverbank, mixing with the wind rustling through the reeds, adding to the beautiful day. Even Cade has learned to lower his guard, teaching Emma to skip stones while Lily watches from her beach chair.

“Remember when we thought relationships would make us weak?” Lars chuckles, nodding toward where Alice is helping their son build a sandcastle.

“Turns out we just needed the right ones.” I pull Eden closer as she settles back against me, her fingers laced with mine over our daughter.

The sky blazes orange and pink, reflecting off the river. Phoenix finally puts his tech away completely, focusing on his family. Tilly rewards him with a kiss while Luna babbles happily between them.

Sofia’s singing Anthony Italian lullabies, her voice carrying softly on the breeze while Ty watches them with undisguised adoration. Even Gage and Aurora have found their rhythm, their darkness balanced by each other’s understanding.

“I never thought I’d have this,” Eden whispers, facing me. “Someone who sees all of me and wants every part.”

I brush my thumb across her cheek. “You’re still my beautiful stalker.”

She laughs, the sound pure joy. “And you’re still the monster I chose to love.”

Our family continues their easy conversations and playful moments around us. We’ve all found partners who understand our shadows and embrace them. The carnival might be our cover, but these people are our truth.

Thank you for reading *Carnival Shadows*, the final book of the Carnival Series. It was definitely sad to finish this series, as I’ve loved crafting the carnival crews’ stories! I

hope you enjoyed it as much as I enjoyed writing it.

What's next?

I've got some standalone stories in the works, but I'm also planning a series for the Blackwood Brothers later this year. We briefly saw Xavier and Knox Blackwood in "Carnival Obsession," and there are two other brothers, so there will be four books, one for each brother.