



Christmas with My Enemy (Feuding Hearts Christmas)

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Category: Urban

Description: I'm the daughter of a kingpin, set to marry a man I despise by Christmas.

Then I meet Beast...

Jamal Morgan is my biggest mistake waiting to happen.

But also my only chance at escape.

I run from my father's prison into the arms of the one man who could start a war.

Beast is dangerous, brutal, and everything my family hates.

But when he looks at me, it's like he's daring me to risk everything.

I thought running would save me, but now I'm more trapped than ever—between a man I'm falling for, my parents, and a past that won't let me go.

The holidays are closing in, and the wedding is looming.

I have one shot at freedom.

My heart's all in, even if it costs me everything.

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one

JAMAL “BEAST” MORGAN

Detroit bleeds Christmas spirit, but all I see is red—the kind that stains concrete and doesn't wash away.

Holiday lights twinkle against fresh snow outside Metro Flex, my newest legitimate business, while I try to forget the blood I spilled defending ESB territory last night.

Another body, another step away from the clean break I'm fighting for.

For most, this is a time for love and connection, but with Pops behind bars and Elijah six feet under, my life revolves around my plan to get out of the fuckin' game. But I'm holding down Eastside Steel Brothers until my father, Luther “Steel” Morgan, is free, even if every move takes me deeper into a game I'm learning to hate.

But the streets don't care about your plans for tomorrow when they're calling in debts today.

The weight room's familiar sounds of clanking metal and grunted breaths grounds me, drowning out memories of Elijah's voice.

"We gotta find a way out, Beast. There's more to life than this street shit."

Three years since I lost him, and his words still haunt me. Now I'm watching his son, my nephew Pop, follow the same dangerous path, despite my efforts to push him

toward something better.

Pain flows through my upper arms as I push the barbell with all my strength.

Sweat beads run down my forehead, stinging my eyes as it trails down. Each drop reminds me of the price I pay for keeping fit in a world where it's easy to lose discipline.

My bulk is part of what separates me from the rest of niggas around here. Standing at six-four and over two hundred pounds of muscle, bitch-ass niggas think twice before crossing me. But bulk can't protect against the politics of Detroit's underground, where respect is currency and betrayal comes gift-wrapped in family ties.

“Yo, ass must be eating too many damn Christmas cookies.” Bones folds over, talking shit as usual.

Quentin “Bones” Tate is known for his attention to detail and quiet strength and serves as my second-in-command and a friend. He's discreet, loyal, and knows how to read a room. Except when we're in the gym. Here he's a pain in my ass.

“Nigga, fuck you.”

“Nah, nigga, don't fuck me, fuck ya girl, bro. Now make that set your bitch so we can get outta here.”

My arm muscles strain against the weight, every fiber protesting under the pressure, but I push through it. I'm determined not to scratch until my set is complete. The ache in my arms is the only thing grounding me to this moment.

A grunt escapes my lips as I push for the twentieth time. I can almost hear the distant laughter and celebration of the season tugging at my conscience, but those joys are

eclipsed by the callouses on my hands and the roar of the weights.

“That’s what I’m talkin’ about.” Bones grips my hand and pulls me forward.

“Damn, do you have to be so loud?” I tease, knowing the answer.

“Yes, what they gonna do? Throw me out. You own the spot.”

I shake my head, reaching for the dark green towel to wipe my face, and the faint scent of mint and sweat fills my nose. I’ll finally be done with today’s workout.

As I glance around the gym, my eyes dart over the faces of the members, each one absorbed in their own struggles, pumping iron and grinding toward their own goals.

The gym is full today. And then I see her.

Bones shifts the conversation to god only knows because I can't hear him. I watch the woman rush in, her dark locs swinging behind her as she comes to an abrupt stop just inside the door.

She's wearing tight yoga pants and a pink sweatshirt, both drenched in sweat. Her chest heaves as she tries to catch her breath.

Something about her pulls at me in a way I can't place, familiar yet dangerous. I know she's not a regular here at Metro Flex. I'd never forget a face like that.

The woman's eyes dart around nervously before she moves closer to the large storefront window. She peers out into the parking lot, her body tense. Whatever she's looking for, it's got her on edge.

I make my way over. As I get closer, I see the worry etched on her face. She's

beautiful, even with fear in her eyes. Whatever's got her spooked has my protective instincts firing. Five years running ESB has taught me to read danger. And it's rolling off her in waves.

"You good?" I ask, keeping my voice low.

She jumps slightly at the sound of my voice, turning to face me.

"I'm fine," she says, forcing a smile that doesn't reach her eyes. "Just... catching my breath."

I nod, not buying it for a second. "You sure? Looks like you're running from something."

Her eyes widen for a split second before she schools her expression. "No, nothing like that. I just... needed a moment of peace."

"Enjoy your workout."

I return to my crew, unable to take my eyes off her. This girl has me looking over my shoulder again and again.

Her bad posture when she gets into the plank position alarms me. Without thinking, I walk back over.

"This nigga tryin' holla at the gym," Bones teases, and I don't stop until I reach her.

"Hey, ma. Your form is wrong."

"Excuse me?" Her brows lift, and a frown comes over her pretty face.

"You're gonna gain those muscles in the wrong places if you keep doing it like that. Let me. . ."

"No, thank you." Her voice draws a couple of heads in our direction.

"I'm just trying to help," I chuckle, giving her space.

"Mansplaining...", she stands, sighing like she's frustrated. "If I need help, I'll ask. You don't have to come here and tell me what to do like you own the damn gym."

I can't help smirking as she says that because I own the gym. The fact that she doesn't know convinces me she's new around.

"My apologies, enjoy your workout." I return to my area to help Bones finish his reps.

I look in the girl's direction, and she's also looking at me. Her ass is up in the air, butt bridge. But when I catch myself staring, I look away before she yells at me for staring.

Women like her are trouble, and I like my peace.

"Hey, Beast." Pop's deep voice slices into my thoughts.

Gerald "Pop" Morgan is my nephew, my late brother's only kid. He's book smart, clean cut, and in his early twenties. He dropped out of college to learn the business, and I question whether he's built for this street shit.

I glance over at Pop. He looks troubled as he stands next to the bench. We started calling him Pop as a kid, thanks to his old-man disposition. The nickname still applies.

"What's up? You know I hate being interrupted during my workout."

"There's a body outside the Metro Mirage," his voice trembles as he fiddles with the brim of his cap.

I stop. "What? When?"

"Just now. I asked the boys to hold on before they clear it off, in case you have something in mind."

"Call them and take care of it." I expect him to know how to handle these things.

"Right, I'll do that. But if it's a setup. . ."

"Get rid of the fucking body, Pop!"

"Right." He hurries off, getting on a call as he walks away.

The drive to continue working out is gone. I hiss and dash to the changing room. In a blink, I swap my drenched workout gear for a hoodie and sweats.

"You, ready to roll, boss," Bones asks with the keys in hand.

"Yeah, I'll meet you there." I glance around, looking for the beauty from earlier, but she's no longer here, as far as I can see. A tiny sense of loss runs through me, then I remember her sharp tongue and fight off the feeling.

That's not my kind of woman. I prefer intelligent and humorous women like Beauti, my ChatterSpot friend. Okay, this isn't the time to think about Beauti!

Snowflakes cling to my sweatshirt as I hurry to the parking lot, jump into my black

Cadillac Escalade, and steer onto the street. The club is ten minutes away. That's ten long minutes of anxiety. Pop should be able to handle this, but it's never a bad idea to follow up on the situation.

Metro Mirage marries high-end luxury with the gritty essence of Detroit. Nestled in a bustling area, it is a go-to spot for the city's elite. And it's the cornerstone of my exit strategy—the club and my chain of gyms. But all of it could go to shit if ESB bullshit fucks it up.

I approach the building and see three patrol cars outside. That's not good for business. Looking at the flashing blue and red lights through the light snowfall makes me pissed.

We could have avoided this situation if Pop had told the crew to dispose of the body.

My mind races with frustration at the thought of the mess we are now embroiled in, a stain on the reputation I've fought so hard to build.

I maneuver the Escalade into a tight spot, a few spaces down from my usual spot since it's blocked by the cops, carefully avoiding the growing crowd of onlookers that even the snowy weather can't deter.

The yellow barricade tapes dance in the gentle breeze. My eyes dart to the ambulance and the small crowd standing around.

Safe to say, they didn't get here in time. With my jaws clenched, and my nose flared, I push through the small crowd and get to the Do Not Cross sign.

"No, you can't be here," a cop yells at me.

"This is my club!"

The cop purses his lips. "Okay, we've got some questions for you."

He lets me through and places a firm hand on my shoulder, pointing to the only man at the scene in a suit. He turns, and I recognize homicide Detective Wesley Edwards. He's put on weight since the last time I saw him.

"He says he owns the place." The cop stops in front of Edwards.

"Yeah, I know Jamal Morgan quite well." Detective Edwards walks over. "Beast, mind explaining what the hell happened here?"

"No idea."

Detective Edwards follows up with a barrage of questions. What do you know about the dead man? Did you or any of your boys do it? Why is there a body outside your club? I answer with as much calmness as I can muster.

"Are you sure you know nothing about this?" Edwards's brows hitch.

"I'll be super dumb to shoot someone and leave the body behind my business. So, how about you find who did this shit?"

Detective Edwards halts and shoots me a knowing look.

"I will, and I'm sure we'll have to revisit this conversation. Because the body didn't just fall from the sky."

There's a hint of threat, but I don't give a fuck. I've had occasional brushes with the law, but this won't be one of those situations.

The Detroit Kingz, long-time rivals to my crew, are trying to set us up. Every since

Kingz son died, our fucked up situation got worse.

"Who is it?"

"Just a second." Edwards walks over to the body and talks to the cops standing around.

Let me find out it's those niggas dumping bodies in my backyard. I wait, scanning the crowd for my crew. Then I see Bones approaching.

I lean in close for only him to hear. "I want to know who, what, when, where, and why. Now ."

"Yes, sir." Bones slips back into the crowd and disappears before Detective Edwards flags me over.

Just like I have nothing with this dead body has nothing to do with any of my boys.

"Come," Edwards says, leading the way to the body in the black bag. With his gloved hand, he pulls down the bag's zipper.

The kid has cornrows, and his lips have dried blood on them. My eyes land on the large hole in his chest. He was stabbed, not shot.

"Do you have any idea who he was?" Edwards asks. His eyes are fixed on me as I peer at the dead guy.

I don't know if he's searching my face for signs of guilt. Whatever he's doing, he's looking at the wrong guy.

"Nah. I've never seen this dude before."

Edwards's lips tighten, and his face tells me he doesn't think I'm telling the truth. "We'll investigate," he murmurs again.

I don't care what the cops think about me. My crew has nothing to do with this body, but I'll find out who does.

Detective Edwards zips the bag and walks away, leaving me rooted to the spot. The snowfall intensifies. I pull the club door open and step inside. The blast of warm air hits me, carrying the lingering scent of top-shelf liquor and designer perfume. But the usual buzz of laughter and music is replaced by an eerie silence.

I round the corner and see Pop and a couple of guys waiting for me at the blackjack table.

"The cops won't give us trouble, right?" Pop inquires, walking over to my side. If he weren't my nephew, I would have punched him in his fucking face.

"Why didn't you get rid of it?"

"The cops were here before I got back."

"I mean the moment the boys told you about it. You could have given an instant order to do something about it. You know the rules. Don't slack or you'll be a dead man."

Pop goes with me to the center of the room where the other boys are gathered. I stand at the head of the table, surveying the room. Every face turned towards me belongs to Eastside Steel Brothers.

My father's legacy. My responsibility.

"Listen up," I say, my voice cutting through the tension. "We got a situation.

Someone's trying to fuck with us."

Murmurs ripple through the crew. I raise a hand, silencing them.

I think of my father locked up but still casting a long shadow. He entrusted me with ESB, and I'll be damned if I let him down.

"Fifty bands to the nigga that tells me who's stupid enough to dump bodies at our door."

Bones steps up. "I put out the word. It won't take long to shake something loose."

I nod, appreciating his loyalty. "Good. I want names. I want reasons. And I want it yesterday."

The crew starts to disperse, each member knowing their role. This is how we operate—efficient, ruthless when necessary, always united.

Before heading home, I grab a glass of rum and coke to lift my mood. As soon as I step out, the cops rush in.

"What the fuck is going on?" I yell. In a blink, my boys are all forced out of the building.

Detective Edwards is getting on my nerves. But apparently, he's gone and left this shifty-eyed pig to close down my spot.

"What's going on here, Officer?" I ask.

"Sealing the place up."

"Why?"

"We need to investigate properly. Don't worry we're not arresting anyone. At least not yet."

So much for the fucking holiday spirit. I watch the cops seal up Metro Mirage, my dream of legitimacy crumbling like the snowflakes melting on my hoodie.

Christmas spirit be damned—someone's trying to fuck with me. Whether it's Detroit Kingz or someone else, they're about to learn why they call me Beast.

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two

TATIANA “TATI” REYNOLDS

Christmas is in twelve days. There are snowmen, trees, and fancy lights in the streets. Carols are being played everywhere. All around me are joyful faces. Everyone is caught up in the festive mood. But I think this will be the worst Christmas of my life.

I’d like to believe I’m not the only one not feeling the Christmas spirit. That behind their smiles lurks unsolved problems and worries about the future. I’m no different it just sucks that the fine pseudo-trainer at the gym had to get a taste of my holiday gloom. But he interrupted me. It wasn’t the other way around.

My father has always created a world that portrays me as someone who always needs help. I hate it to my core, so whenever someone treats me with kid's gloves, I double down to remind everyone to let a sista breathe.

I had no intention of working out, until Mr. Delicious came over. He stood before me, his muscular frame dominating the space, sweat glistened on his deep mocha skin, emphasizing his broad shoulders and powerful chest. His height made even my father seem small in comparison.

And his eyes... His dark brown eyes held an intensity that had me tongue tied. So much so, that I thought I recognized his voice.

The man was so fine that I almost lost my train of thought. I had to scramble to pretend I belonged while I waited for my father’s thugs to get lost.

I watched from the storefront window until they left in one direction, and I went in the other.

Joining Metro Flex cost me twelve hundred dollars, but I had time to myself for the first time since I returned home to my parents acting more protective and hovering than usual. They forced me to return home for the winter break.

After I lost my bodyguards, I spent the rest of my day aimlessly driving around in circles, my thoughts racing as I tried to evade the inevitable confrontation with my parents. The city whizzed by beneath the dim winter sun, but my mind was trapped in a loop, replaying every moment that led me to this suffocating point in my life.

My father, Rodney "Kingz" Reynolds, ruled our family with an iron fist, orchestrating his power plays like a mobster. He wants to control everything—his crew, his empire, and, most importantly, me.

As the perfect daughter, I always believed that if I excelled in school and followed the rules, my parents would finally grant me the freedom I desperately craved.

But Nate, my older brother, warned me that it wouldn't be so simple. He always insisted it would be college that offered an escape from this stifling existence, a ticket to a new life beyond my father's grasp.

And then there was my mother, Phylicia. She wore her dutifulness like a badge, always ready to please my father and suppress her own identity to maintain the peace in the family. Her blind acceptance of his ruthless ways infuriate me.

I longed for her to stand up, to show me that it was possible to break free from his oppressive control. But instead, she often turned a blind eye, as if her quiet resignation made everything okay.

With every step I took toward independence, it felt like she only enforced my father's grip, convinced that rebellion was something I couldn't comprehend.

With every rebellious thought I entertain, it feels like the grip around my neck tightens, reinforcing my parents' belief that I don't know what was best for me.

As the sun dipped below the horizon, its last rays fading behind the sprawling skyline, I reluctantly leave the Detroit city limits and turned toward the family estate in Grosse Pointe Shores.

The mansion is less like a home and more like a cage. That's the sad reality of my life. Growing up, I never enjoyed my life because my father ruled the family like he ruled the Detroit Kingz—with an iron fist.

It wasn't until I entered high school that I realized I was different. The other kids didn't have bodyguards. The other kids didn't live in a gilded cage.

The few friends that tried to ignore the fucking obvious eventually stopped inviting me to hang out because I was never available for anything fun. So, all I had was my big brother Nate.

Nate was more than just a sibling. He was my confidant and my protector. He understood the stifling pressure weighing down on me, often encouraging me to pursue my dreams.

"You're too brilliant to be trapped here, Tati," he would say, inspiring me with visions beyond my father.

But since his death, I've become a loner, and it wouldn't have been a problem if my dad had no part to play in it.

College was much of the same until I entered grad school at Howard. And my life truly became my own.

Initially, I applied to buy myself more time to create an escape plan. But while there, I met my girl Jash, and she's back at Howard working on her final thesis for Chatterbox.

The only time I get to breathe is when I'm in school or enjoying a long drive, like today. But I'm back by force and have another reason to hate him. I'm twenty-four, and he's still controlling my life, and I'm fucking tired of it.

I approach the guard outside the subdivision, and he nods, opening the gate with a practiced motion that feels all too familiar. As I drive through, the pristine streets are covered in snow, glistening under the early evening sky that fades into a palette of blues and purples.

My eyes slide to the largest house on the street, the Reynolds estate, a sprawling mansion that looms over the landscape like a fortress. Its elegant facade of white marble and glass glimmers with the soft glow of lights from within, while intricate wrought-iron balconies overlook meticulously landscaped grounds.

The mansion that should feel like home instead fills me with a sense of dread. I wish I had someplace to go other than here. But I don't.

For a second, I think of DaBeast. He's somewhere in Detroit, too. But I'd never want to ruin our friendship or allow my father to destroy another relationship.

My hand tightens against the steering wheel as I gaze at the colorful sky, making its departure for the day, taking its warmth.

I sit in my car not wanting to go inside and my phone chirps, and I know it's the

Chatterbox app.

I reach for my cellphone, ready to think of something other than my parents, I open the app.

DaBeast: 112. Cupid.

“That’s a good one,” I whisper, knowing he can’t hear me.

I open the Apple Music app to see where he’s added the song to our joint playlist. Then, I press play and turn up the volume.

I close my eyes and let the melodic sound soothe the anxiety swirling through my body. Graduation is in under six months, and my relationship with my folks is worse than ever. I’d rather die than return to Detroit and live under their roof again. But they won’t let me live my life.

What am I supposed to do?

The song continues, and my thoughts shift from my predicament to the man without a face or a name that seems to occupy my every waking thought.

Unlike most girls I didn’t date, I didn’t have a hoe phase, and I’ve never been given the space to have a real relationship.

DaBeast is a friend from ChatterSpot, a social media platform created by my best friend Jash and her team. I joined to support Jash, whose ambitions extended beyond just coding. She wanted to build a community around hobbies.

I met DaBeast in a 90s R&B group, where our love for the smooth melodies of classic artists like Boyz II Men and Brian McKnight sparked an instant connection.

As we bonded over music, our conversations grew deeper, ranging from our dreams and aspirations to the struggles we faced in our lives.

We've developed a relationship built on trust, laughter, and mutual understanding, although it's tinged with a bittersweet shadow. We've never met in person or exchanged real names, keeping our identities private.

I know the moment he discovers my dad is Kingz, he'll vanish like the others. My father's notorious reputation as one of Detroit's most infamous kingpins has a way of chasing away even the strongest of friendships.

My eyes dart to the house next door, and I'm not surprised to see our neighbor.

Rosa Mancini's snow-white hair seems to glow. I can't count the number of times she told my father about my late-night escape attempts.

Ms. Phyllis waves at me, and I wave back. She's fussing with the garlands on her banister, watching my every move. But I know what's up. Her Christmas lights and shining ornaments were professionally designed and hung to perfection. She's fiddling because she's nosy, Rosie. I'd bet my trust fund that she ratted me out today.

"Hi, Ms. Rosie," I call out rubbing my hands together after stepping out of the car.

"Hello, Tatiana. Where is your jacket, bella?"

I force a smile. "Inside, in my haste, I forgot to grab it this morning. So, I should get inside."

"Yes, of course. Merry Christmas."

"You too."

I'd give her a piece of my mind, but her son is mafia boss, Rocco Mancini. She nods and slips back inside.

As I rush up the concrete footpath that demarcates the garden in front of the building, I notice the giant Christmas tree in the front bay window of the sitting room my parents use for entertainment.

"Fuck." My stomach drops. I crane my neck toward the back of the house and see the caterer's van. "They didn't tell me we're expecting guests."

I stop and consider jumping back in my car, but I see the ground guards when I turn around.

"Your parents are waiting for you inside."

"Fine." I roll my eyes and make my way to the side entrance.

After several rapid strides, I climb the stairs and enter the house, careful to listen to gauge the location of my parents.

I shut the door behind me and hurry down the hallway, and up the stairs, tiptoeing as quickly as I can. Just before I reach my room, I spot my father standing at the end of the hallway.

I freeze. He raises a brow. I swallow, patiently waiting for him to hand me my ass as if I'm not grown.

His clean-shaven head gleams under the harsh glow of the yellow bulb, adding an intimidating sheen to his imposing presence.

Rodney "Kingz" Reynolds is the founder of the Detroit Kingz, a crew steeped in

power and menace. Respected and feared throughout the streets, he commands a presence that makes my heart race and palms sweat.

From drug trafficking to illegal operations, he moves weight that sends shockwaves through the city, establishing his dominance in a world where loyalty is often bought and sold.

He's my father, but the truth is, I fear him like everyone else. The authority he wields is suffocating, and that power creates a rift makes me long for my daddy but I know Nate's death ensured I'll never see the father I loved again.

"Tatiana, where have you been?"

"The gym."

"Why? What's wrong with the one in this house?" Veins pop on his forehead.

"Dad, I'm not a kid anymore. And you can stop clocking my every move." Even though I try to control my temper, my voice still quivers in frustration.

"That's not an answer."

"Because I'm tired of looking at the same four walls. I needed some air and privacy ."

"Don't disrespect your father, Tatiana ."

I glance toward the stairway. Mother's wearing a knee-length black gown that perfectly outlines her slender figure, draping gracefully as she moves.

Her hair falls in soft waves just past her shoulders, framing her oval face with a classic elegance. Her warm caramel complexion glows under the subtle lighting,

while her soft brown eyes glint with a sense of calm.

I'm standing between them, listening to them scold me like a child .

This has to stop!

"You know I'd never disrespect him. I'm just fed up with all these questions about my movements. This is the second time I've gone out in a week. Do I need permission to go to the local gym now?"

"Your father has provided everything for you, and you should appreciate that," Mom speaks calmly, and I'm not surprised. She's the blindly submissive wife who turns a blind eye to all her husband's evil deeds, and I'm no exception.

Call me disrespectful, but I never want to be her.

Mother thinks it's about what my father does for a living, but it's more about how she doesn't have a voice. Everything is his way.

She's not the kind of woman I want to be. Never .

"Mom, I understand, and I appreciate everything he's done for me. But that doesn't make me a prisoner."

"Prisoner? You drive a G-Wagon, dress in designer clothes, and live in a mansion. Your tuition is paid, and you have a quarter of a million dollars at your disposal. You'll be a billionaire when you gain your inheritance. What kind of prison is that?"

I hear this every time I want my own life. Every time I ask them to back the fuck up and let me live.

“That just means my freedom isn’t cheap. I didn’t ask for this. You did.” I point my finger in his direction, knowing I’ll pay for this later. But I don’t give a fuck.

"You done lost your fuckin’ mind." The growl in his voice is a clue that I’m talking to Kingz, the kingpin, not my father.

He walks closer. His shoulders are so broad that they span the hallway's width.

My daddy was the best daddy ever until we buried my brother, and I met Kingz.

It’s like my brother’s death killed us all. My mother is a shell of her old self, my father is a tyrant, and I’m stuck in a life most would kill to have.

But I don’t want it. I don’t want any of it.

My father’s jaw muscles tighten as he looks at me. “As my prisoner , you will tell your mother when you come and when you go. You will have two guards with you at all times.”

I cross my arms over my chest and stare back. At this point, we’re two unmovable objects about to crush under the weight of our stubbornness.

Why's it difficult for him to understand me? Or am I speaking a different language?

My father’s phone rings, and he pulls out his phone from his jacket.

"She's here, and the next man that loses her is six feet under," he says into the phone and returns it to his pocket.

A chill snakes down my spine. He’d kill them because of me.

He takes another step, and I can see the specks of honey gold in his eyes.

"Those guards would give their lives for yours, and their blood will be on your hands if you run off again."

"I'm sick and tired of your bull—"

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three

TATI

My father's hand connects with my face so fast I see stars. I grab my cheek and look up at him through unshed tears.

As a little girl, I believed my father was invincible. He was my Superman. My everything. But this man isn't my father.

He's a thug. A kingpin. Kingz .

Everyone around him will eventually die, just like Nate.

Nate used to shield me from my father. But I don't have Nate anymore. I only have myself, and I'm getting the fuck out of here.

"I hate you ," I dodge past him and run upstairs to my bedroom.

I slam the door so hard the windows rattle and lean my back against the door, cupping my throbbing cheek.

I press my eyes shut, and when I open them, I stare at the chandelier above my bed.

I need to get out of this mess. I'm not my mother. I won't settle for this kind of life.

I walk over to my bed, sit on the edge, and pull my phone. Then, open the

ChatterSpot app, and his message pops up.

DaBeast: How's hell today?"

I've complained daily, and now it's a running joke. So now that I'm burning in hell, my response will be forthcoming.

"Honeybee, your fiancé will be here for dinner."

Wait? What? I stop typing trying to make sense of her statement. I don't have a fiancé.

"Your father had a Vera Wang gown commissioned. It's in your closet."

The massive room shrinks before me, and it feels like I'm in a box, suffocating.

There's no way she said what I think I heard. So, I spring up, make three rapid steps to the door and pull it open. My parents are standing in front of me.

"What did you say?" My gaze flicks to my father. He's the brains of this operation since my mother is a willing participant in his foolery.

My father smiles, and I swear I hear the gates of hell open wider. "Tonight, we'll make your engagement official. William Jackson will join us for dinner. So behave and don't embarrass us or fuck up this deal."

My eyes widen, and a frustrated chuckle jumps out of my mouth.

"You really are insane. I'm not marrying Stacks. I don't love him. Hell, I don't even like him. And the last time I checked, we only went out once. How did he become my fiancé?"

Dad cocks his head to the side. "Then, tonight will be the second date. And you don't have to love him now. Affections will come in time."

I look at my mother. "Mom, please—"

"It will work out. You'll see."

I turn my face to the ceiling, praying this is a fucking nightmare.

But when I look at my father, I know it's real.

"Why are you so determined to ruin my life? You hover over me like a child, and now you've chosen my husband." My voice quivers, and I feel an overwhelming urge to cry.

"I know what's best to protect you. William Jackson is a feared man. He'll provide for and protect you, like your father." His tone is dry and stern, like I don't have a choice."

"No, Dad. I'm not part of some business deal. Like I'm fucking cattle. Find someone else to play this game."

"Oh, but you will. You're getting married on Christmas day."

The word hit me like a bomb. Even though the weather is freezing inside and outside, sweats burns through my pours.

I want to protest, scream, and cry, but instead, I stumble back to my bed, unable to stand.

He looks at my Mom. "Phylicia, get her ready. I need to make some calls."

You're getting married by Christmas.

His words resonate in my head. It's like those medieval movies where a girl is forced to marry a stranger. I wish the ground would crack open and swallow me up.

My stomach clenches, and I feel sick.

Mother steps inside the room and shuts the door, wearing a gentle smile like everything is fine. I run to her and grab her hands. Maybe, now that we're alone, she'll see how fucked up the situation is. That's the only plan I have for now.

"Please, Mom, he can't do this. I can't marry Stacks. Is this really what you see for my future? I don't love him."

Love . It seems like I had all the time in the world to find love. But if my father has his way, I'll be doomed to a life with the only man second to my father's notoriety for guns, drugs, and mayhem.

"Your father means well, Tati." She runs her palm on my face, shaking her head. "Maybe his manner of communication comes across harsh, but trust me he means well. He's got loads of enemies, and their eyes are on you. He can't trust you with anyone except William Jackson."

"Mamma, this is Stacks we're talking about. You should just sell me to the highest bidder."

"You're shocked and exaggerating. Just meet him for dinner and we'll take it one day at a time." She frowns, inching near my closet.

Okay, now it's clear no one's listening to me. Next on my agenda is Plan B. And my Plan B is nothing !

Mother reveals a cream gown with a million tiny beads.

"What do you think?" She raises it for me to assess.

I force a smile. "Beautiful."

"Good. I'll leave you to freshen up and maybe take a nap to calm your nerves." She kisses me on the cheek. "You'll be fine."

I gave a sharp nod, pretending everything is fine.

As soon as she shuts the door, I collapse on the bed and scream, covering my head with the pillow. I don't have anywhere to go.

I could go to a hotel, but that's not good enough. They'll find me in no time.

I consider flying by to D.C., but I don't want to put Jash and her future in danger.

I'm left with one person.

DaBeast!

As if waking up from a trance, I throw the pillow aside and jump up when the name pops up in my head. I pull out my phone and click open the ChatterSpot app icon. My eyes glance through his response to my previous message before I start typing a new message.

Beauti4U: Beast, I need your help.

I chew my nails, waiting for the typing bubbles to appear.

DaBeast: Shoot.

Beauti4U: I need to get away from here. Now!

DaBeast: Bet. But are you sure it won't just blow over?

Beauti4U: Not this.

I catch a tear running down my cheek. It's like I'm a possession and not their daughter. How fucked up is that?

DaBeast: Talk to me. What happened?

Beauti4U: My family wants to marry me off at Christmas. I've got nowhere to go. Can I stay over for a few days at your place?"

DaBeast: Yes. Send the address and I'll come get you.

I shake my head as if he can see me.

Beauti4U: You can't come here. Send the address and I'll be there ASAP.

On one hand, DaBeast is a total stranger, since we've never met in person. But on the other hand, he knows almost everything about me except my name, and that I'm the daughter of Rodney "Kingz" Reynolds.

At this point, it is what it is. I have to leave before Stacks arrives. Honestly, I'm nervous, but I'm not turning back.

I change my gym clothes for jeans and an oversized pink sweater. To find a balance, I settle on the edge of the bed, slide my feet into a pair of boots, and spring up.

I press my lips together and push the window open. I used to keep a rope under my bed but my parents took it.

The guards only circle the back of the house hourly, so I gaze around the room, searching for something to get me down. My eyes dart to the dinner gown Mother laid out on the bed.

Perfect .

Fuming, I yank off the duvet and pull the sheet off, knotting it to the evening gown. It's impressive to know the dinner gown can do something other than making my life miserable.

I grip the makeshift rope tightly, my heart racing as the fabric digs into my palms. It's a stupid idea, but desperation breeds creativity.

I lower myself slowly, inch by inch, the gown dragging against the edge of the window. The chill night air bites at my exposed skin. The temperature is dropping fast.

Every creak of the house makes my pulse quicken. I can't let them hear me. I'm twenty-four, but here I am, acting like a kid sneaking out for the first time.

Shouldn't I be beyond this?

I shake my head moving before I find myself married to Stacks.

I lower myself further, feeling the rough fabric stretch beneath me. My legs start to tremble with the strain, but I push through. I'm close. My heart pounds in my chest, like I'm about to dive into deep water.

I could get caught. I could fail. But I can't think like that. This is my only choice.

Breath steady, I take one last look over my shoulder. The coast is clear. I'm almost there. The ground seems far away, but it's just a jump.

With a quick glance below, I let go. I hit the ground—hard but silent. A rush of relief floods through me as I fold into a crouch, the cold earth grounding me.

The thrill of freedom washes over me, and for a moment, I almost want to laugh. But I need to move. Fast .

Every second counts, and I can't shake the feeling that my time is limited.

I round the back of the house praying nosy, Rosi isn't on patrol.

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four

BEAST

I lean back, the leather couch creaking beneath my weight as I try to focus on the laptop screen. Numbers and figures blur together, a headache building behind my eyes from staring too long. But I can't afford to doze off—not tonight.

A text buzzes through, pulling me from the monotony. It's Pop, letting me know the crew is monitoring the club and there've been no issues with cops so far. A small relief, but I keep my reply short. Good. Keep me posted.

There's only one person I take time to compose thoughtful messages for these days—Beauti. The woman I've been waiting over a year to finally meet face-to-face after forming a bond unlike any other through direct messages and music.

A soft rap at the door drags my attention away from the phone. My pulse kicks up as I hurry to answer it, a thrill coursing through me. But the woman standing on my porch isn't at all who I expected to see.

Beauti's profile pic is some ancient queen painting, giving no hint of what she actually looks like. But I never imagined she'd be the same fiery dime I had that run-in with at the gym.

"Think I got the wrong address." She shakes her head, already turning to leave, as she glances at her phone.

I can't tear my eyes away from her curves hidden beneath that oversized pink sweater, dotted with melting flakes. Hard to believe this sexy-as-hell woman could be my Beauti. The one woman I've been dying to meet.

"You Beauti4U?" I ask before she can walk away.

She nods, blinking hard. "DaBeast?"

"Yeah." I mumble the confirmation, my brain still catching up. "Didn't expect you to be this person."

"Me too," she echoes, just as thrown.

An awkward beat passes between us until I break the tension. "Still wanna come in?"

She glances over her shoulder, hesitating, before stepping inside. "Yeah, thanks."

I close the door, boxing us in together for the first time. Even with all those layers, she's stunning in a way that stirs something deep in my gut.

I can't deny that her affinity for pink—all pink at the gym and a sweatshirt tonight—is definitely fitting for my Beauti .

Damn, I'm already claiming shorty .

"I still can't believe this," I murmur, shaking my head slowly.

"Sorry about the gym." Her tone has lost that sharp edge from before, now softer around the edges. "I've had a really bad day...couple of weeks, actually. I just couldn't deal with another situation where another man was trying to tell me what to do. It's frustrating as hell."

Something in her words resonates, reminding me of the weight she carries, the restraints she's fought against with her parents. Her expression gives me a peak at the woman I've come to know—the real her, beyond the attitude and circumstances of our first meeting.

I've asked in the past, and she's always managed to avoid talking about her folks. But I doubt we can avoid the subject if it made her run to me.

In that moment, I see her—the real her, beyond the attitude and the circumstances that led to our heated first meeting.

"It's fine." I assure her with a nod, waving her toward the couch. "Have a seat."

She mutters a quiet "thanks" and sinks into the plush cushions. Through the nearby window, fat flakes drift lazily to the ground, and I'm struck by the serenity of the view, the promise of a calm evening ahead.

A rare reprieve from the usual chaos.

Beauti rubs her hands together, head bowed, and I realize she's cold.

"You chilly?" I ask, already rising.

"Yeah, a little."

I grab a blanket from the closet and drape it over her shoulders. A grateful smile curves her full lips, and suddenly, everything about her warms my soul in a way I can't explain.

"Want something to drink?" I offer. "Tea? Coffee? Or something stronger?"

She starts to decline, but I can't have her uncomfortable under my roof. "You've been out in this weather. I can't have you freezing. Let me take care of you."

Surprise flickers in those soulful brown eyes, but she gives in with a slight nod. "Okay, coffee, I guess."

I switch on the TV, flipping channels until some random movie plays, and then head for the kitchen. As the coffee maker hums, I lean back against the counter, mulling over this situation I've found myself in.

It's been a long damn time since I've let anyone into my personal space like this. For years, I've been a loner, a one-man army focused solely on the grind, the hustle. But now I've got this gorgeous woman lounging in my living room—someone I've connected with on a level most people never experience.

Yeah, we've swapped countless messages, baring our souls in ways that would make others blush. But that confrontation at the gym showed me a side of her I didn't expect—a raging wildfire ignited by the mere hint of a man trying to control her.

I pour the steaming coffee into a mug, and I move to return to the living room when I remember how she likes her coffee. I add a heaping spoon of sugar and a splash of oat milk.

When I return, the TV is now tuned to a basketball game, and she leans forward, focusing intently on the players' fluid movements.

"You like basketball," I observe, handing her the mug.

"Yeah, movies aren't really my thing." She accepts the drink with a slightly shaky hand, whispering her thanks.

She takes small sips. “This is perfect.”

“I had to use oat milk instead of soy. I’ll have the housekeeper get some for you tomorrow.”

Her eyes round as if shocked by my words, and frankly I am too. I’m ready to move her in and I don’t feel awkward about it.

I study her as she cradles the mug. Exhaustion is written all over her—the tired eyes, slouched posture. It’ll be a matter of time before she crashes.

"Let me know if you need to sleep," I offer. "I got a room ready for you."

She looks up, surprise and gratitude mingling in those expressive eyes. "I can't thank you enough."

"I told you, I got you." I chuckle, trying to put her at ease. "We've been good friends for months."

"On ChatterSpot," she clarifies as if reminding herself of the boundary between our online world and this new reality.

"It doesn't matter," I assure her with a pointed look. "You're safe with me."

She seems to accept that, giving a small nod before taking another sip. "Thank you. And I'm not sleepy yet. Are you?"

"Nah."

Whatever weariness I felt earlier is gone, replaced by a strange alertness, a thrumming energy I can't quite put my finger on.

"What's your real name?" she asks. "I still think of you as DaBeast."

A faint smile tugs at my lips at the use of my online handle. "Jamal. And you?"

"Tati." She drains the last of her coffee and sets the mug aside. "Your house is nice, Jamal."

"Thanks." I nod, taking in the compliment. "And I gotta admit, it feels nicer with you in it."

"Don't tell me you're about to feed me some playa playa lines ."

I laugh. "Now that's the Tati I know."

We freeze. Her name rolled off the tip of my tongue as if I've said it a million times. This is better than I imagined.

I always wondered what it would be like to meet her. But she wanted her privacy and I enjoyed her friendship. I don't have many people I trust, but I trust Tati, even if this is the first time we've met in person.

"What do you do for fun around here?"

"Honestly, I'm usually at work. So, I usually shower, crash, and return to work."

"Am I keeping you from—"

"You're here, and I'm glad you're here. It seems like I've known you forever. So, don't clam up on me. I'm ready for one of our marathon conversations in person."

I lean back, hoping my relaxed posture will help her feel more comfortable. Since this

is an opportunity to truly connect and get to know the woman behind the words I've grown so fond of.

"Okay. What shall it be?" One delicate brow arches. "History? Politics? Music?"

She knows me too well, calling out my passions that we've discussed at length. But tonight, I want to understand her—to peel back the layers and see the person beneath the digital facade.

"Nah, let's talk about you." I lean forward, elbows on my knees as I study her intently. "Why are your parents so eager to marry you off at, what, twenty-two? Twenty-three?"

She shakes her head. "Twenty-four. And I've been protected like this my whole life."

I nod, trying to imagine that level of control, that lack of freedom.

Growing up with a single father who ran one of the deadliest crews in Detroit forced me to fend for myself from a young age, doing everything alongside my brother as the streets became our mother and ESB our father.

I craved love and warmth of a normal home, while she seems to be suffocating under the weight of her family's twisted version of affection.

Life can be cruel .

Tati's expression clouds over as she continues, gripping the throw pillows tightly, her nose flaring when she mentions her father. I can feel the resentment simmering beneath the surface.

"They always been like this?" I ask gently. "Controlling you, shutting down your

wishes?"

"Yeah." She nods, a flicker of pain in those soulful eyes. "But it got worse after my brother died."

Shit . I wasn't expecting that. "I'm sorry," I murmur, my voice thick with empathy. An ache I know all too well. "How old was he?"

"Twenty-five." She rubs her hands together, a nervous gesture. "We were best friends."

"That's rough. I'm sorry." The words feel inadequate, but what else can I say? Losing a sibling leaves a hole nothing can fill.

Tati nods, blinking back tears. "He's always here." She presses her palm against her chest, just above her heart.

I let out a heavy sigh, pulling at my chin as memories of my own loss resurface. "I lost my brother too. It messed me up pretty bad. It was three years ago."

Her murmured condolence tugs at my heart, but I shove down the swell of emotion, keeping my expression neutral.

"I've learned, no matter how long it's been, that pain never really goes away," Tati says, her voice soft but laced with wisdom most don't acquire until they've lived. "We've gotta be strong, honor their memory by being the people they'd be proud of every single day."

"Yeah, that makes sense." I nod slowly, letting her words sink in. The truth in them is a gut-punch I'm all too familiar with. "We can't bring 'em back. The best we can do is keep moving forward."

"Yeah," she agrees, but the weight of our shared grief hangs heavy in the air, an unspoken understanding that some wounds never fully heal.

Silence envelops us as we both nurse our thoughts, our memories of the brothers we've lost, imagining what it might be like to have them back with us, even if just for a moment.

"You know, Elijah and I...we weren't the closest when he was alive," I admit, feeling the need to open up, to share a part of myself with this woman who's already seen so much of my soul. "We did business together, but our methods were different. We butted heads a lot over that shit. Now..." I shake my head, pushing away the useless what-ifs. "I'd give anything to have him back."

My throat feels dry, that familiar ache settling in my chest. I down the last of my wine and rise to pour another glass from the decanter.

"Want a glass?"

"Sure," she accepts it with a nod, taking a sip. "It's good."

"One of my favorites." I smack my lips, savoring the rich flavor as it coats my tongue.

Now that we've bared our souls, I know I need to shift gears, steer us back to more practical matters.

"So what's your plan? I mean, you can crash here as long as you need, but what're you gonna do for real?"

The thought of having her here, in my space, for an extended period sends a strange thrill through me. It's like someone cranked up the thermostat—the air suddenly

thick, charged with an energy I can't quite define.

She's beautiful, curved in all the right places, and even bundled up in that oversized sweater. She's tempting in a way that crosses the boundaries of our friendship.

I'm not sure how long I can keep my cool with her under my roof, but without crossing a line, I shouldn't.

"Jamal?" Her voice breaks through my wandering thoughts, and I realize she's said my name twice now. The sound of it on her lips stirs my shit, and maybe this third glass of wine was a bad idea.

Friends. Just friends. I have to remind myself.

Nothing more, no matter how much my body might want otherwise.

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five

BEAST

"Jamal?"

"Sorry, I was a little distracted," I admit with a slight shake of my head, forcing myself to focus.

"Yeah, I said I plan to go somewhere else. Out of the city, start over fresh. Never come back to this place."

I sigh, scratching my jaw as I consider her words. The thought of her leaving, of never seeing her again, sits like a lead weight in my gut. Just moments ago, I was worried about having her intoxicating presence under my roof for too long. But now, the idea of her being gone...it doesn't sit right with me at all.

With Tati, my sense of clarity blurs, the sharp focus I usually pride myself on slipping through my fingers like grains of sand.

"I could help with that, if it's really what you want," I offer gruffly.

Relief washes over her features. "I'd really appreciate that."

But I can't just let her go without exploring every avenue. Once she's out there, who knows if I'll ever see her again? The thought is like a vise around my chest.

"Or maybe you could go back, and work things out with your folks," I suggest. "Show your family they can't keep controlling you, calling all the shots in your life."

Tati throws her head back with a bitter laugh. "There's no way. Next time my father sees me, I'll be walking down the aisle whether I want it or not."

"Damn, that's crazy." I shake my head slowly, feeling the weight of her words.

The idea of never seeing her again, of losing this connection, twists something inside me. With her, everything feels off-kilter, yet more right than ever before.

"You're safe here, though," I assure her, my voice low, intense. "No one's gonna get to you under my watch."

She meets my gaze head-on, holding it for a beat too long. "Thanks, Jamal. I owe you."

"Nah, there are no debts between us." I shake my head firmly. "I hate that shit."

A slow, sly smile curves those full lips, and she rises from the couch with a newfound energy rippling through her movements. "Then I'd better repay you properly."

Her tongue darts out, wetting her lower lip, and my dick is standing at attention in my sweats.

I'm down to fuck, but something tells me there's more to this offer. And I don't want to be that nigga that takes advantage of a woman when she's going through some shit.

Tati closes the distance between us, her lips brushing against mine in the barest whisper of a kiss.

Her lips part, allowing me to explore her mouth with my tongue, drinking in her soft moans as we fall into a rhythm, our bodies pressed together in a dance of lust and prolonged longing.

When her tongue brushes against mine, it sends a fresh wave of blood straight to my already-hard dick.

The kiss deepens, and my fingers find their way under her sweater, trailing over her smooth skin. Then she pulls back.

"How's that for a thank you?"

The challenge in her tone, the defiant spark in her gaze—it's like lighting a match to the flames of my arousal.

"Not enough," I rumble, holding her stare as I give her a deliberate wink.

She doesn't hesitate, leaning in again, her mouth slanting over mine in a heated kiss.

The blanket falls from her shoulders as she shrugs out of that oversized sweater in one fluid motion, revealing the lacy bra that does little to conceal her peaked nipples straining against the fabric.

Tati pauses, as if to pull away, but the smile playing on her lips tells me she's testing me, pushing the limits of my restraint.

I'm not having it. I pull her closer and she climbs over, straddling my lap.

Wrapping my hands around her waist, I pull her flush against me, our bodies aligned from chest to hip. My lips crash into hers with a hunger I can no longer contain, and she melts into me with a soft sigh.

I groan, gripping her hips as I deepen the contact, tasting the wine on her lips.

On a cold night like this, there's nothing more intoxicating than the warmth of bare skin, the slide of hands over curves, the mingling of breaths in a heated exchange.

My hands roam freely over her body, feeling, kneading, savoring every inch of her softness contrasted against the hard planes of my chest.

Her palm is warm against my face as our lips move in a sensual dance, the room filling with the smacking sounds of impatient kisses.

My dick strains against the confines of my pants, pushing for freedom. She wraps her arms around my neck, pulling me closer, and I lose myself in the moment. Not realizing how much I've wanted this moment, to feel her against me.

My hand cups her plump ass, squeezing, and her moan is like music to my ears. I don't know how much longer I can keep it locked down.

Tati and I stumble from the couch to the floor, our kisses growing more frantic, more desperate. After months of staying celibate, I'm getting down to business, and fast.

We've sent pictures.

Her breasts. My dick.

Her pussy with her fingers inside. My dick with me jacking off.

But none of that compares to right now. I grip her neck, holding her close with my tongue down her throat.

She rocks against me, and the heat of her pussy penetrates my pants. I need to be

balls deep inside her.

My shirt goes over my head, and I don't miss Tati's eyes widening as she takes in my muscled torso. I kiss a path down her neck, circling my lips around her nipples through the lace as she arches into me.

I think of raising her legs, giving her head, and then fulfilling every fantasy I've had about her. Tati's hands rub my chest, charging me up. She stares at the large claw tattooed on my chest.

“A wolf claw?”

I nod.

“Why a beast?” Her finger traces the edges, burning the heat of her touch in my skin.

“It's my twist on a wolf. A symbolizes courage, strength, loyalty, and protection.” She shivers beneath my intense gaze. “It reminds me of who I am to myself and the people under my care.”

Her beautiful brown eyes round. “And what's that?”

“I'm a protector, baby.”

She glances away, but not before I feel the soft whisper of her exhale. Her hand continues down the valley of my stomach and brushes the tip of my head.

The room is crackling with sexual tension. I pull Tati's blue jeans off and reach for her panties. In my head, I'm already thinking about how I'll feel inside her. And I feel I need to play safe here.

I reach for my back pocket for a condom, and Tati freezes.

“You good, ma?”

"Yeah," she whispers. "But you have to be gentle.

An awkward silence descends. It takes me a moment to figure out what she's talking about.

"You're a virgin?"

"Nah," she whispers, a twinge of embarrassment on her face.

“Fuck...” I lean over her and cradle her chin. “Talk to me, Tati.”

She closes her eyes, shaking her head.

All the enthusiasm to make her scream my name goes away. I want to comfort her and protect her more than I need to fuck her.

How is she still a virgin?

“Beauti we don’t have to do this. You’re welcome to stay here as long as you want.” She’s still shaking her head and a tear slides down her cheek. I catch it with my tongue, and her eyes open.

“There you are.”

“I’m sorry, Beast. I should have...”

I kiss her silent. “This shit don’t change nothing.”

“Then why did you stop.”

"I need you to think about this properly. No pressure." I sit back and bring her up with me. "I think I got some Uno cards around here."

“Are you fucking serious?”

“Yes, I’m fucking serious. And tomorrow, you’ll thank me.”

She stares at me and drops to the couch. "Are you really gonna leave me hanging?"

I shrug, hiding a laugh. "Let's not rush anything, okay? It's one thing to have casual sex. It's another having casual sex with a virgin."

Tati rolls her eyes and folds her arms on her chest. I lean forward and kiss the tip of her nose.

“I’ll get the cards. You can start the popcorn. The kitchen’s that way.”

Disappointment is boldly written on her face. I head to my junk drawer to find a distraction because we have to take things slow.

Real slow.

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six

TATI

Why the hell did he stop?

Jamal stopped when I thought I would get rid of my virginity. I lick my lower lip, reminding myself of how his lips tasted. He tasted like fruitcakes. I'll do anything to taste him again.

I'm standing by the window, watching a man taking his husky for a walk in the snowy street. I imagine Jamal and me kissing last night.

He felt so good. Perfect even .

To stop daydreaming, I press my eyes shut and sigh. I wish he had finished what he started yesterday.

All the men I've met will do anything to pop my cherry. So, I'm amazed Jamal stopped when he had the chance to have sex.

I move away from the window, gazing at the massive room I slept in last night.

He's a good guy, not taking advantage of the fact that I'm helpless, and broke. I could access my money, but I know my father has someone watching my cards.

I guess my instincts about Jamal are right. Except I really did want to have sex last

night. Because this thing can go two ways, I get away or I end up marrying Stacks, and I be damned if I give him my virginity.

I'll be Jamal.

Just as I lay my body on the bed, the creaking sound of the door makes me sit up again.

Jamal walks in with a pizza box and two cups of iced coffee. He's wearing a white hoodie and dark sweats.

I can tell he spends hours in the gym, and he's ripped from his shoulders to his calves.

His beard is freshly trimmed, and his fade is too.

Judging by his looks, he's in his late thirties. Jamal's lips curl into a cute smile as he shuts the door and walks toward me.

"Do you have a barber living here?" I tease, trying to break the ice.

I pressed last night when the reality is I'm scared shitless that I won't get out of this wedding. Stacks isn't like Beast. And I doubt he'd even care.

"Nah, he stops by a couple of times a week to keep my cut and beard fresh."

I smile and nod, taking a cup from him. "Look...about last night."

"You don't have to explain. Did you sleep well?" he set the pizza box and coffee on the dresser.

I want to scream, "No." I couldn't sleep because the sweetness of his lips had me masturbating last night. But after I threw myself at him like that, I should act civilized this afternoon.

"Yes, thank you. Pizza for breakfast?"

"Yeah, it's almost one. And I couldn't remember if you're allergic to anything." He smiles and I have a feeling I'll dream of that smile for the rest of my life.

"I guess pizza it is then."

As my eyes rake past his arms to his neck, I notice a scar. It's like someone wanted to slice off his neck and changed his mind halfway. I want to ask him the story behind it, but I remain quiet. Since we now reside under the same roof, the discussion will come up later.

"Good, give me a sec," he says.

I nod, and he rushes back outside. A moment later, he returns with a customized bag of clothes. "Here, figured you'd need something to wear."

I accept it and drop the clothes on the bed one after the other. "Wow! Thanks a lot." I spread the pants and tops on the bed, but I pause when I see a cocktail dress and a pair of high heels. "Do I need this?"

He raises his shoulders in a shrug. "I want to take you out to dinner tonight."

I stare at the dress, and my stomach twists. My stomach clamps when I think of him possibly working for my father. With the dress in my grip, I shake my head in confusion.

“Why?” The question emerges from a place of dread rather than curiosity. Now, more than ever, I’ve developed a personal dislike for evening gowns.

“Because I like you Tati, and if we plan to land in bed, I want to know all of you.” His firm voice resonates in my ears like a sweet melody, permeating a wave of relief all over me.

A curious smile draws on my face. “Are you indirectly asking me on a date?”

“Yes, because I think you’ll be bored staying indoors.”

“uh-huh? You sure, that’s all?” I ask, hoping he’ll cut to the chase.

“I thought you’d want to get out and enjoy the city since you’ve been locked up.”

I drop my hands to my sides. “Yes, I do. But I can go on a walk if I get stifled.”

He rests his hands on his hips. "Go on a walk and get taken by your father's men?"

It's written all over his that he wants me around. And I don't believe his story one bit, but I like that he considers my opinion important enough to lie.

I settle on the edge of the bed. “All right, thank you for the clothes. I’ll pay you back as soon as I get out of this mess.”

He inclines his head. “Eat up, and don’t bother about paying me back.”

I gaze at him, and his eyes are fixed on mine. His brown eyes send a tingling sensation through my body. His eyes travel down to my lips, and he blinks as if holding back, and I can’t help but wonder why.

“I need to be somewhere. See you at seven.” He relaxes his hands in his pockets, and I wonder if he's cold or fighting the temptation to pull me into his arms and kiss the hell out of my lips.

“Am I eating all of this alone? What about you?”

"I'll grab something on my way out." He takes several steps back, as if he's running away from me.

“Be careful, and I'll see you later.”

I smile, watching him go, and I look at the dress he bought for me. Excitement replaces concern, and I start counting the minutes until he returns.

By sundown, I'm halfway through with dressing. I'm staring at my reflection in the mirror, and I like how the black gown fits my curvy shape. My makeup is light because I don't want Jamal to think I'm trying hard to impress him.

I think I look sexy. No, I'm sure I look sexy.

I love my new life now and hope nothing will ruin my freedom. I wear the matching diamond chain and earrings Jamal bought, complementing my classic appearance.

“You look stunning,” he remarks as I walk down the stairway. He wears a black suit that makes him more handsome than the last time I saw him.

“Thank you. You look good yourself.”

He curls the upper part of his lips in a suggestive smile, then grabs my hand and folds it around his arm, leading me to a sleek sports car.

Twenty minutes later, the car halts at the restaurant, and the glittering Christmas lights welcome us as we leave the car. Clusters of stars spread across the night sky, and the atmosphere's chilly.

As we walk into the bright restaurant, Mariah Cary's All I Want for Christmas Is You plays in the background, and the lyric suddenly makes sense. Perhaps the situations around our lives will either make us relish Christmas or detest it.

We're escorted to a table by the window, and a waiter comes over to get our order. I ask him to order first. I've never been to this place before.

Jamal scans the menu, makes an order, and then passes the list to me. Since I like his choice, I select the same thing.

"Do you like it?" he quizzes, and I incline my head, gazing at the fancy chandeliers and table linen.

"I love it. The last time I visited a place like this, I had the worst date of my life."

"Who?" The waiter returns with our food and set the plates on the table—two plates of grilled salmon, mashed potatoes, sauteed vegetables, and a bottle of red wine.

"Tell me about it," he chuckles, leaning back with his wine.

I lean back, swirling the wine in my glass. "So, this guy - let's call him Mr. Ego - picks me up in this flashy sports car. I'm talking neon green, loud as hell. He revs the engine like he's auditioning for Fast and Furious."

Jamal chuckles, his eyes crinkling at the corners. "Sounds like a real winner already."

"Oh, it gets better," I say, leaning in. "We get to the restaurant, and he starts ordering

for me. Didn't even ask what I wanted. Just told the waiter, 'The lady will have a salad.' A salad!"

"Damn," Jamal shakes his head, grinning. "He didn't know you at all."

"Right? So I speak up, order a steak, rare. The look on his face was priceless." I mimic an exaggerated shocked expression, and Jamal bursts out laughing.

"That's my girl," he says, then catches himself. "I mean..."

I feel a warmth spread through me at his words, but I push on with the story. "Anyway, throughout dinner, he keeps talking about himself. His car, his job, his salary. I swear, I could recite his entire life story by dessert."

Jamal leans forward, genuinely engaged. "How'd you make it through?"

"I started making a game of it. Every time he said 'I' or 'me', I'd take a sip of wine. Let's just say I was feeling pretty good by the end of the night."

We both laugh, and I realize how easy this is, how natural it is between us. Then I turn the tables.

"Tell me about the scar."

He huffs. "You don't give up easily, do you?"

I lean back in my chair, swirling the wine in my glass as I watch Jamal's face. His eyes darken, a storm brewing behind them as he speaks.

"Met this girl once. Thought she was innocent, you know? The one." He takes a swig of his drink. "Turns out, she was playin' me the whole time. A spy."

My breath catches. "Jamal, I'm so sorry."

He shakes his head, jaw clenching. "Don't be. It's how the world works. A man tries that shit, he's done. But a woman?" He scoffs. "They get away with it."

"Did you ever see her again?" I ask, leaning in.

"Yeah." His voice drops low. "I let her go. But her boss... He paid."

A chill runs down my spine. "What happened?"

Jamal's eyes lock onto mine, intense. "What happens to enemies."

I drain my glass, trying to calm my racing heart.

"What about this guy you're supposed to marry?" He studies me, brow furrowed. "Does he know you don't want him?"

"Yep, but it doesn't matter. It's all business," I shrug.

Jamal leans closer, his scent enveloping me. Then suddenly, gunshots shatter the air. I fly backward, heart pounding. The restaurant erupts in chaos.

"What the fuck?" Jamal growls.

I spot my father's men, guns drawn. "Shit, it's them. They're here for me."

Jamal grabs my hand, his touch electric. We sprint for the window. Glass shatters as he smashes through with his elbow. Bullets whiz past us as we leap out.

We race for his car. Just as I reach for the door, rough hands grab me from behind.

Without thinking, I yank off my heel and slam it into my attacker's face. He howls in pain.

I dive into the car, slamming the door as Jamal peels out. My heart pounds in my ears.

"Where are we going?" I gasp.

Jamal's eyes meet mine in the rearview, intense and reassuring. "Somewhere safe. I got you."

I've heard that before but with Jamal, I feel protected. Wanted.

His hand finds mine across the console, fingers intertwining. And I realize, I believe him.

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seven

BEAST

I slam the door behind us and lean against it. Tati goes deeper into the cabin, hugging her body and looking disoriented. I barely escaped getting gunned down in the name of protecting her, but she's here looking all innocent like she can't hurt a bug. None of this would have happened if she had told me the truth.

The smell of the mint air freshener fills my nose as I bang my fist against the door. Echoes ring against the room, reminding me the big cabin is empty save for Tati and me.

Tati looks around; her dinner gown ripped to her thigh. She drops on the chair and crosses her legs. My eyes follow her shapely legs all the way up to. . . Wait a minute. I don't think she means that. Seducing me should be the last thing on her mind after what we've been through.

My eyes stay on her body, anger welling up in me. Why did she act like a spy? Act like she has been sent to hunt me down. Yes, she's absolutely stunning. But she's the only daughter of Rodney "Kingz" Reynolds. He is my biggest rival and I know about his wife and two children, but it's been years since I've seen them. We shouldn't have any kind of business together. Let alone the feelings I have for her.

"Why didn't you tell me you're Kingz's daughter?" I growl.

Tati spreads her arms out. "You didn't ask. And I didn't know you are Beast."

I pace the room, rubbing my chin. "Do you realize what this means for everyone? Blood on the streets, that's what. Your father will think I stole you from him, that I'm trying to hurt him."

Tati undoes the straps of her dinner gown. It falls to her waist, revealing her bra and a healthy portion of her breasts. "I'm not some item you can steal! Dad knows I hate his guts. I don't think he'll be too mad about me staying away from him."

"He'll be mad that his only child is with his worst enemy. Damn it!"

Tati changes into silk pajamas and folds the dinner gown. Fire licks at the pieces of wood in the hearth, filling the room with light and warmth. I look back at Tati and see her biting her nails and tapping her feet.

"This is crazy. Kingz's daughter?" I mutter.

Tati looks up at me, her eyes flashing with anger and fear. "You won't throw me out, will you?"

"I don't know, I don't know," I set my hand against my forehead. "I'm still angry you didn't mention Kingz is your father."

Tati claps back at me in a shrill voice. "I didn't know you had history with him!"

"Okay, it's fine," I wave her down when I notice she's getting agitated. "We'll fix this."

"And I won't have to go back to him? At least until I come up with another plan."

"Yeah, you're safe here with me."

"Thank you," Tati says stiffly. "I'll like to get some sleep."

Tati isn't the early-to-bed type, so I know she's going to bed early only because she's bothered.

"All right."

"Good night," Tati mumbles and walks away. She grabs the dinner gown from the couch and hurries toward the room.

"Good night!"

She responds by slamming the door. Now that she's gone, I realize she's just as frustrated as I am that the situation is taking a worse toll on her. We'll need to talk and get back on each other's good sides. But that won't be tonight. I'll let her think and figure out what she wants to do.

I walk to the mini bar and pour myself a glass of wine. While I sip the drink, I make a call to Pop, and he answers immediately.

"Hey, Beast. Where are you? I've been calling all night."

"I was dealing with a situation. I need you to come to the cabin by noon tomorrow."

"Okay."

"Yeah, and go shop for some clothes for me and for a woman, medium size for the clothes, size 7 for the shoes."

"All right. I'll do that."

I stay on the phone, finding it hard to voice the next thing I have on my mind.

"Is that all?"

"Nah. I need you guys to watch out over the coming weeks. The Detroit Kingz might come after us."

I hear Pop's sneer, and it bothers me more.

"Since when did we stay careful with the Detroit Kingz? They tried to set us up recently, and now they shot at you. We've got some scores to settle."

"That's not what this is about. Look, I'm involved with Kingz's daughter."

"What?"

"It's complicated, but she ended up in my house, and I'm protecting her. At least for now."

"Are you crazy?"

"I didn't know she was his daughter when it all started. But I don't want this to affect anybody. Just tell the boys to keep their eyes out and get me those clothes."

Pop chuckles. "Why do I feel you're kidding?"

"I'm not, damn it! This shit is real."

"We need to talk about this."

"Yeah, we'll talk when you bring those things."

The phone clicks off, and I let out a sigh. I can't imagine how the other boys will take the news, but for now, I'll just take a drink and forget about it all. The situation will solve itself.

I guzzle more wine and shuffle to the song of a bird outside. The next coming days will be dramatic. Whatever happens, I'll ensure Tati is safe, even from her father. The good thing about this place is nobody knows about it outside Pop. I can stay here with Tati for as long as she needs to sort things out. She's my responsibility now, and I can't fail her.

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eight

TATI

I roll from under the sheet to find that Jamal isn't next to me. There's no mint smell in the air. It looks like he never came in here to sleep. I let out a yawn and watch the peaceful billowing of the window curtain. I rub my sleepy eyes and yawn. Jamal promised not to throw me out, but can I take his word for it?

I get off the bed and stretch, eliciting a snapping sound from my neck. My stomach rumbles with hunger. It's been hours since I ate anything.

"What a crazy night!" From feeling on top of the world, everything had crashed in a twinkle. It's a pity that my father's men had to ruin what was a special night for me.

I'm almost at the door when a gentle knock sounds.

"Tati?"

"Yeah."

"Are you dressed? Can I come in?"

"Dude, my life is in your hands. I've got nothing to hide from you."

Jamal chuckles, and the door creaks open. He stands at the threshold, his grey undershirt settling immaculately on his built body. That mint fragrance tickles my

nostril again. Damn, I missed it.

Jamal's eyes rove from my face to my nipples, which stand firm against the silk fabric of the night dress.

"Did you sleep well?"

"Nah, kept getting nightmares. I dreamt someone broke in and took me back home. Felt so real."

Jamal places an assuring hand on my shoulder. "No one will attack you here. It's my safe haven."

"Okay, I trust you." I exhale, looking for a way to relieve this sexual tension between us. It's not that dudes didn't try, I always thought it would be cool to share something special with my husband. But my father ruined that dream for me too. "Uh...which do you prefer Jamal or Beast?"

"Beast."

"Beast," escapes in a whisper.

Somehow his dark eyes get blacker. His head tips forward, and the power of his presence should scare me, but I'm not scared of Beast. I feel like I'm home with him. And I've never had this feeling with anyone before.

The closer Beast gets, the deeper his influence on my body. My body tenses as I watch him peer at my erect nipples.

"You really want it?" He asks. My eyes are fixed on his lips as he talks.

"From the first time I saw you."

"Me too."

As soon as he says those words, Beast reaches out and holds my shoulder, pulling me in for a kiss. My heart flops as we fall into a tangle on the bed. We're starting from where we left it the previous night.

Beast pulls my dress over my head and tosses it on the floor. He focuses on my breasts and settles his lips on my nipples right away.

"Oww." My bum clenches. I feel like doing butt bridges as pleasure shoots up my body. Beast doesn't stop. His hand slips under my panties and lodges on my clit. The gentleness of his touches makes me more aroused.

Beast gets my panties out of the way and kisses my inner thighs, making me moan and shudder. My teeth descend hard on my lower lips as I struggle to hold back the moans. Beast's probing forefinger locates my clit and rubs delicately.

"Damn, you're torturing me." I don't care if anyone hears me. My body is on fire!"Fuck me, Beast. Get that kitty."

"Imma take my time."

He replaces his finger with his tongue, lapping at my juices and teasing my clit. His tongue strokes the length of my vulva. I feel an itch in my head, somewhere impossible to scratch. A subdued moan rolls out of my lips as his finger slides into me. It's thick and filling. I grab the bedclothes and squeeze hard. That's thicker than anything I ever got into myself. It goes in and out of me now. The pain is sharp, and I feel like I'll have a bad cramp when all of this is over, but now I'm focusing on the pleasure.

Beast goes from one finger to two, and he turns up the pace at which he finger fucks me. With every passing moment, I feel more pleasure. The pain is deferred.

"Are you ready for me?" Beast whispers while wagging his finger in the air. It's dripping with my juices.

"Take me. I want all of you."

Beast frees his cock from his pants and stroke it against my entrance. He pulses against me, and I bite my lips in anticipation of him inside me. Then he slides in, the entry is not smooth, but after a bit of shoving and going back, he gets into me. And I feel that pleasure. It's everything I ever thought it would be and more.

"Damn!"

Beast grips my waist and thrust, moving slowly, filling me up and pulling back. It's a blissful pleasure. I want to scream at him to go faster, but I'm too filled with pleasure to shout. He lifts my legs to his shoulder and goes balls deep into me. His groans are music to my ears. I feel him expanding inside me and thrusting harder. By now, I'm no longer discreet with my moans. The pleasure is too damaging, too nerve-racking. Just as I feel the build-up of pleasure getting to a new height, Beast pulls out of me and flicks sweat off his forehead.

"Why did you stop?" I whimper.

Beast replies by turning me over until my ass is facing him. Then he slides into me again. My eyes roll in their sockets, and my teeth are bared. The pleasure is too wild, too unfamiliar. I want to scream, and I also want to stay silent and enjoy the waves of pleasure washing up against my body.

He grabs my ass tightly and slides in and out of me, pumping hard. I feel like I'm

floating toward bliss. If the first time can be this sweet, how will the other times be? Beast went in harder and faster. The sound of our bodies smacking together fills the room. I close my eyes and soak in the pleasure. I want it all!

"This is so good!" Beast groans. His grip on my waist is tighter, and his thrusts are deeper. I know he's approaching his orgasm, so I throw my ass back to catch up with him. I don't want to be left alone; the ultimate pleasure I seek is still far away.

After two more strokes, Beast lets it all into me. The warmth from that release is unlike anything I've ever experienced. Beast taps my ass and pulls out of me. A feeling of emptiness washes over me, and I try to make up for that lost feeling by rubbing my clit. The wave of pleasure begins to build again. If I keep at it, I may be able to complete a solo journey to cloud nine.

A creaking sound goes off on the bed, and Beast sleeps next to me. I expect him to nod into sleep, but he doesn't. He circles his hand around mine and takes over stroking my clit. His strokes are gentler, giving more pleasure. My moans become louder than ever. I rest my back against Beast's broad chest, enjoying the wonderful things his fingers were doing to me.

Without warning, Beast settles his hands on my thigh and lifts it, then sets his penis at my entrance. He slides into me and begins to thrust again. The combination of his thrusts and his finger moving on my clit is too much to resist. Soon, I'm thrashing against him, crying to be fucked harder, uttering beautiful nonsense. Beast is consistent with his strokes; they are not too fast. It's mind-blowing.

Beast holds me tighter and thrusts deeper. Now, I feel like I'm edging toward an unstoppable orgasm. I hold my bedclothes and arch harder. Beast goes deeper into me, digging hard, exploring the deepest channels of pleasure.

"Don't fucking stop!" I moan, spreading my legs to take him as deeper as possible.

"I don't intend to," Beast moans back. His hands tease my clit, like a DJ scratching discs.

"Fuck me!" I yell and take all of him in me. We stay in that position for a long while, and I finally escape into the skies, unbound by the shackles of my limitations. I'm in the sky, flying, flush with pleasure, feeling an upwelling of satisfaction. I've always chased orgasm with my fingers, and I got it my first time with Beast.

"That was good?" Beast's voice is a tired drone.

"Absolutely."

We curl up against each other. His dick is still hard and inside my pussy. From the look of things, we'll fuck each other all night. And I'm all for it. I've always heard that the first time comes with intense pain. But for now, all I've known is pleasure and lots of it.

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nine

TATI

"Come on" Beast takes my hand, helping me get into the boat.

"Thanks. While you were away, your nephew brought us more clothes," I say, walking behind him, gazing into the turquoise blue water. Beast looks dashing in the black sweatshirt and blue denim he has on. Even though he doesn't fuss over his looks, he appears charming with little effort, which is another reason I admire him. He takes my hand, and we stroll to the bow of the cruise yacht.

"I'll check them out when we get back to the cabin."

I nod. "Okay."

He smiles. "Today, we're going on a boat tour. Hope you've got no phobia for water?"

"No! Getting locked-up is the phobia I've developed over time."

"Well, this another way to spice up your day."

"Thank you. Since I got to your house, you've been so kind to me. Would you have done that to any other woman?"

A frown crosses his face, making the horizontal lines obvious. "No, I wouldn't. I've known you for some months, at least. And from what you told me back then about

your dad's strictness, I've got some trust for you."

"Do you like Christmas?" I lean on the railings, watching him fill a glass of wine.

"Yes, it's a lovely season. A time to reflect and make some good decisions in case you're the type that make terrible ones." He passes a glass to me, and I let out an appreciative nod.

He stands near me, setting the wine glass to his lips.

I take a sip, then face the sea. A coral peach color spreads across the sky, creating a gorgeous blend with the cloud. And from my perspective, it appears the colorful skyline kisses the end of the water.

"Maybe absconding is the only good decision I've made for myself. Since my brother, Nate, died all the softness my dad has disappeared. "

"Was it an accident?" Beast stares at me.

I shake my head. "Nah, someone shot him."

"Fuck! We could've done such a horrible thing?"

"My dad did all he could, but the killer was never found. That's why I was caged all my life. At times, I wished I were dead too, you know."

"I get you, it's difficult not to feel that way. But you have to remain strong. Life is beautiful. There's something for everyone to enjoy, as long as you open your heart to is beauty."

"You're right."

"I'm angry that the killer is still out there."

I raise my shoulders in doubt. "Yeah. It breaks my heart."

After a moment of silence, I ask him. "So what good decision are you making this Christmas?"

The boat takes off at an average pace, and jets of water draw a straight white line on the water's surface.

Beast closes the gap between us and leans his elbow on the railings, spinning the liquid in his glass.

"It's not like I've been making bad decisions all year. But if I'm going to make a decision, I'll be doing that because it's the end of the year, and I'd have added another age by next year. Getting to that stage of my life when I need someone sincere." He moistens his lips and tilts his head to look at me. Those piercing brown eyes are like feathers, tickling my heart. Now, I'm shivering, and I can't tell if it's the effect of his eyes on me or the biting cold.

"You're cold." He throws a jacket over my turtleneck top.

"Thank you." I veil my nervousness with the glass, sipping the drink. Fuck! The glass's empty, and now he will notice my nervousness. He takes the cup off my hand and sets it in the ice plastic. His hands are wrapped around my waist, and I can't escape his insistence stare. Even though he fucked me all night, I still feel uneasy in his arms. He trails a finger on my lips and nibbles my lower lip while holding my chin. "Will you be mine?"

I look away. "It's complicated. We'll be better off as friends."

"No, I don't want to be your friend...What's complicated about us being together?"
He speaks with determination, and I like that he knows what he wants.

"You're my father's archenemy, I'm on the run, there's a fiancé waiting to marry me on Christmas day. Can you see why it's complex?"

"You're safe with, baby. I'll protect you with every fiber of my being. I swear, he'll never have you." He mentions the word "baby" passionately, and I wish he'd continue to say it. But this wall between us seems insurmountable.

I gaze at the water and notice we're far away from the seashore.

He turns my face to himself.

"What? You don't like me?"

I stare into those worried eyes, wishing we met on good ground.

"I do." My voice comes off as a whisper.

"That's what I want to hear. Leave every other problem to me, okay? I've got this, trust me."

Beast looks like someone I can trust, so I incline my head. "Okay."

"Is that a yes?"

I nod. "Yes."

He tightens his hold on me and takes my lips like his life depends on it. In response, I curl my hands around him, engulfing his lips with delight.

"Wanna see the cabin?" He sounds hoarse as he speaks.

"Sure." He grabs my hand, and we make some rapid strides along the salon to the cabin, a neat, bright room with a medium size bed. He wraps his hands around me and takes my lips into his. Our tongues roll together, and I can taste the grape flavor of the wine in his mouth.

"Now that you're mine, I want to eat you out until you come all over me. I'll make you scream my name." His eyes darken with arousal, and those words stimulate me even before his fingers crawl beneath my thighs.

"Do it."

He kisses my neck while peeling off my pants' buttons. I jump out of it and fling my top in the air. He does the same, and soon we're both half naked. He kisses my shoulder with those confident lips while unstrapping my bra. I can't wait to have those lips on my breasts, so I throw my arms up. When my nipples rub his tense chest, I feel my clit swelling beneath my thighs. A loud moan escapes my mouth when he cups my breasts in his hands, directing each of them to his mouth. I throw my head back, relishing the feel of his warm tongue on my nipples. My moan grows into a whimper when he slides his middle finger into my wet vagina. He's stroking my wet pussy now while making a circular motion on my nipples. He draws back and scoops me in his firm arms.

Fuck!

A large paw covers the skin above his heart. Beast leans my back on the bed and takes a step back. He takes out his boxers shorts, and I bite my lower lips when I see his long dark cock pointing at me.

"Come close." I stand on my knees, crawling near him. Even though I'm fucking

horny, I still want to torment him. While I kiss his sculpted body and the claw tattoo, my finger trails beneath his thighs, stroking his balls. In a flash, I wrap my hand around his hard cock.

"Oh, fuck!" He groans as I massage it with both hands and tease his cap with the tip of my tongue.

"I love your cock." I see fire in his eyes when he looks at me.

The veins on his arms spiral out, and he grabs my head. Without delay, I thrust his length inside my mouth.

"Shit!"

His cock expands as he thrusts in and out of my mouth. Beast's eyes are dim with arousal as I shove his entire length deep down my throat.

"Damn, you setting me on fire." I draw back and lean on the bed with my thighs wide apart.

He let out a wicked smile before going on his knees. At a slow pace, he further parts my thighs before engulfing the corners of my thighs. Fuck, my clit hardens as I picture what he's about to do. He kisses the lips of my pussy tenderly, not minding the sliminess. His tongue is soft against my clit, driving me crazy. My toes curl and uncurl as he draws a circular motion on the sensitive part of my clit.

"Don't stop it!" I whine as I thrust my hips in the direction of his tongue. The pleasure is unbearable, and I want to scream, but instead, I grab the bed cover. He pushes the tip of his tongue inside my hole, tormenting me. Light sparks in my eyes, and I see a rainbow around the Incandescent light. He pins my clit between his upper lip and tongue, soothing it. I'm shivering because he's brushing every part of my pussy with

his tongue, causing my wetness to stream out.

“Faster.”

His tempo is fast, and I can feel my orgasm inching close. In a frenzy of emotion, I thrust my hips forward, desperate to have more of his tongue. My orgasm flies out, bathing him. He climbs on my chest, engulfing my lips with passion. Jeez! I can taste myself in his mouth, making me yearn for his erect penis.

"Now, give me your ass." He speaks with a husky tone. I get up on my knees and arch, showing him all of me. He rubs my wet pussy with two fingers, and desperation makes me gaze back. He strokes his already hard cock, bringing it close to my pussy. My chest heaves, and my clit hardens. I arch my back and widen my thighs to prepare for his entrance.

He parts the lips of my pussy with his penis head, thrusting only his cap inside. "Fuck my pussy!"

That singular act spreads fierce longings all over my body.

He's teasing my clit with his cock; all I can do is beg for his penetration. "Please, fuck me."

He thrusts his penis inside my hole, and a loud moan escapes my mouth. He's so huge, and I can feel him expanding inside me. My vagina lips embrace his cock, opening and closing like a lotus flower as he slides in and out. And as he thrusts out, my wetness coats his cock, making it shiny black.

He kneads the cheek of my butts, thrusting at a leisurely pace. And his gentle thrusts transmit euphoric pleasure all over my body, making me shudder.

He grabs my hips with both hands, pulling my pussy closer to his cock. "I love it inside you, baby." He says while digging my hole, and in response, I shoot my ass out, meeting his thrusts.

"Your cock's setting me on fire, but don't stop," I say but can't hear my voice because of the queefy sound that comes with his deep thrust. I grab the bedclothes, whining without control.

With his hands steadied on my hips, he slaps his groins against my vulva. But in the spur of the moment, he draws back and makes me lie down on my side with my leg hanging on his shoulder. He guides his erect cock inside my hole, fucking me from that angle. My heart is beating fast.

"Deeper!" I whimper.

With every rapid thrust, I feel my orgasm build. Mad ecstasy saturates my body, spreading a tingling sensation to my brain. My orgasm gushes out, wetting his cock.

"Give me more." He speaks with clenched teeth, thrusting and molding my breasts. He let go of my legs and leaned on my chest, arms wrapped around me. He presses my butts to his cock, and his fluids gush into me. Even though he just came, he's still slapping against my vagina area like he wants more. Damn, I love the movement of his cock in my pussy and wish we could replay every damn act.

I fucking love Christmas!

ten

BEAST

I swerve the black Cadillac into the Metro Mirage's parking lot and turn off the ignition. It's my first time here since the corpse incident, and I'm pleased to see business back in full swing.

I get out of the car and pull the hoodie over my head to keep the falling snow off my face. A chilly wind hit me in the face, making my jaws clench. My boots sink into the frosty ground as I take each step forward. I can't wait to get into the warmth of the club.

The doorknob is freezing cold, even with my thick gloves. I walk in and see dozens of customers at the slot machines and the tables. The bright lights, the relaxing music, and the semi-nude dancing girls give the room a magical feel. I pull back the hoodie and bounce toward my office.

"Hey, boss," Jack calls from behind a slot machine. Two dancers are twerking near him.

"Enjoying life, aren't ya?" I chuckle, settling in the next seat.

A wistful smile comes on his face before he waves to the girls to leave us. When we are alone, he leans in and whispers. "Kingz came here this morning."

"Oh, what did he want?"

"His daughter," Jack sighs. "He says he'll fuck shit up if we don't get her back."

I chuckle and run my hand along the side of the slot machine. There's never been a time I'm scared of Kingz. He's a scared little man who goes about hiding behind his crew. There's nothing formidable about him.

"You're not saying anything," Pop sounds alarmed. His dark brown eyes are clouded with worry.

I shake my head. "I've got nothing to say. Kingz can kiss my ass. I'll tell the boys to always be ready, if Kingz pulls up here, they should welcome him with bullets."

"I guess he deserves it for trying to set us," Jack says. He gets off the chair and returns with two martini glasses.

"Thank you," I take a sip and peer at the colorful screen of the machine. "Kingz is gonna get a real feel of my anger."

I lock in on Pop's eyes and see that he doesn't appear convinced about the showdown with Kingz.

"What's wrong with you? You look like you're not buying this. Let me know what's on your mind, son."

Jack takes another sip of the martini before he replies. "I'm concerned about the boys. What will they think when you, the boss, date the child of our biggest opp. It doesn't feel right. I don't know if that makes sense."

"Are you speaking for yourself or for the boys?"

"Both."

"I see."

"What's your plan?" He asks. That bleak look on his face pisses me off.

I drain the glass and push it away. There's no point beating around the bush. I understand his fear and need to clear the air right away.

"Get all the boys together into my office. Do it now."

"Right," Pop looks confused, but he gets straight to action while I move to the office.

The boys walk in, all dressed in flashy jackets and boots.

"Y'all saw Kingz when he came here, right?"

"Yeah," they chorus.

"The truth is I'm involved with his daughter. Started over a chat, turned into a real thing before I knew who she was."

"What if she's a spy?" one of the boys offers.

"Nah, I tested her already. She's as real as they come."

The room falls silent, except for the tiny strands of music from the other side of the door.

"I'm with her because of her soul, because of her personality. I can't let her go back to Kingz. He wants to force her to marry some dude. And that won't happen under my watch. Anyone got a problem with that?"

"We're behind you, boss. Riding with you all the way," another one of the boys says.

Choruses of yeah fill the room. I look at Pop and see him letting a breath. His frown morphs into a smile. That's more like it. I tell the boys to be ready to counter Kingz's attacks, and they all respond favorably. Then I tell them that's all. They hail me and walk out of the room.

"That's the thing about leadership. You've got to come clean, so the other guys can trust you. You don't want your crew to lose faith in you."

Pop jerks his head. "You're absolutely right on this one."

"Is there any other problem I need to know about?"

"I can't think of anything at the moment."

"Good, I'll head out now."

I pat Pop on the shoulder and leave the office. The mood in the club seems to have lifted. The magic in the air is heightened. The girls are dancing with vigor, the music is faster and nicer, and the lights are more colorful.

One of the girls sways over to me, and I dance with her for a minute before going my way. I didn't like the guilty feeling that came over me as the girl rubbed against me. Tati holds a special place in my heart, to such an extent that a little bit of fooling around makes my heart heavy.

"This player has turned to a good boy," I mutter as I get back outside. The cold is biting. I rub my gloved hands together and exhale a thick cloud of vapor.

As soon as I get into the car, I shoot a quick text to Tati.

Where do you want to spend the rest of today?

Her reply comes almost immediately.

Beauti4U: I don't know. Maybe see a movie. Don't think we've ever seen a movie together.

DaBeast: That's cool. I know a nice cinema. Get dressed. I'll be home in a bit.

Beauti4U: Okay. Love you.

DaBeast: Love you too.

I dump the phone and start the engine. As I drive away from the club, I can't stop thinking about Tati and me. I don't know if it's because of our newfound love, the fact that we're locked together, or the magic of Christmas. Maybe a combination of all three. But this truly feels like the best time of my life.

My eyes dart to the Christmas lights outside a small house where two young men in Santa beanies laugh as they shovel snow. Christmas is in the air; love is in the air. I step on the gas and arrive at the cabin after an hour of driving.

I see a window open as I step out into the car. Tati is peering from behind the curtains.

I hurry up to the porch and open the door. After looking over my shoulder one more time, I get into the cabin. Can't let the opps sneak up on me. I lock the door and turn around in time to see Tati rushing toward me. She welcomes me with hugs and kisses.

"Damn, I missed you," she mutters, her lips tickling my face. It turns me on. I'm still

trying to get used to coming home to meet a woman. The thing about hookups is that they have to leave way early the next morning. It's strictly business.

I run my hands down Tati's back and grab her butt. My penis jerks in response to a kiss she places on my neck. I caress her ass while nibbling her earlobe. Her breathing becomes ragged. She's getting turned on, just like me.

"We're gonna defer the Christmas movie thing," I mutter against her forehead.

"I agree." Her voice is husky. And I already imagine her moaning in response to my strokes.

I lift Tati up and take her all the way to the bedroom. We have an hour to do sweet things to each other on that bed before going out, and I'm sure we'll make every second count.

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eleven

TATI

Beast called two minutes ago, asking that I prepare our things because we're heading to another hideout.

If I have to run to the end of the world, I'll do it as far as I won't return to my father's house or see that son of a bitch, Stacks.

I walk to the living room with a traveling bag in my hands and drop it on the couch next to the one Pop brought.

Beast has bought me more clothes than I needed over the past few days. And I love them all because it's a sign that he thinks about me often. His gifts are always well thought out. I love an intentional man!

I fold the clothes and arrange them in the traveling bag one after the other, wondering what Mom must be thinking of me. I shake my head in sadness. She has neither confronted my father nor questioned his actions for once. And I wonder if she knows he's wrong but chose to keep quiet because of fear. I open Beast's bag, arranging his clothes in the box.

He packs light. It's amazing how a man goes to the clothes shop, buys for his woman, and forgets to buy for. . . My eyes dart to a picture in his bag, and the person in the photograph is Nate.

With creased brows, I reach for it. What's the connection?

“Nate?” My mouth falls open, and I shuffle two steps back.

"No, this is impossible!"

To be sure my eyes aren't playing tricks on me, or the incandescent light isn't bright enough, I make my way to the door and step outside, strolling to the snowy field. I'm now gazing at the picture under the white sky, and nothing has changed.

It's Nate, all right. And there's an X mark drawn across his face. Flakes of snow fall on his image, and I brush them off.

What the hell's going on?

In my confused state, I flip to the back; to my surprise, it's not plain.

"Mission done" is written in cursive. For a moment, my breath is suspended. My lips part, releasing a gasp.

“What the hell, I've been fucking my brother's killer."

The realization makes my stomach heavy like I've swallowed a piece of rock.

A sudden coldness hit me from within, and I don't know if it's due to the weather, or the fact that I've been living with my brother's killer.

"Fuck!" I let out a shriek, scaring away the birds on the trees standing on both sides of the cabin. Warm tears roll down my face, and my knees drop to the frozen ground, sinking into the snow.

"You will rot in hell, you son of a bitch." My voice breaks as I speak. I detest myself for crossing paths with him.

God! I can't control bolts of pain shooting through my body right now. I've betrayed my family. Maybe Father is right, after all.

Why are you still here?

That question pops up in my mind. I've made mistakes, and my tears couldn't undo them. Without thinking, I spring up and march into the cabin. I swipe off my tears with the back of my hand.

I can cope as a homeless person but living under the same roof with a murderer is something I can't put up with.

With lunatic rage, I unpack his cloth from the bag, leaving only mine. As my rage increases, so do my tears. I grab the bag and dash out of the room.

Flakes of snow spray my boots as I hurry down the road. I continue to walk down a narrow path, thinking about my mistake. The reason my father chose a partner for me is now pretty glaring. He knew I couldn't do it myself. And I agree with him now because I'm not even capable of making a good decision.

How could I jump into someone's crib just because I knew him from ChatterSpot?

I shake my head in self-pity, strolling along the road. My eyes settle on the snow-covered shrubs on both sides of the road. I think I'll freeze to death if I don't find a hideout soon.

Damn, now I see why he brought me to this deserted place. Maybe he wants to take my life after he's done with me.

After walking for half an hour, I see a gas station across the road. I'm about to cross over to relax my frozen legs, but a car double-crosses me.

Fuck! I was thinking I'll get away without running into him.

"Tati? Where the hell are you going?" His brows furrow, and the face that used to make me smile now makes me sick.

Bile grows in my throat, and I can't find the right word to express my rage, so I spin in the other direction walking as fast as I can. The car door slams and that scares me. I know he's not turning back. He wants to chase me.

"Baby, what's going on? Been looking everywhere for you," he yells while running after me.

The sound of his voice irks me to the core. In my ears, it's the roar of a wild beast stalking its prey. My footsteps halt when Beast gets in my way.

"What's going on? Where are you mad at me?" He spreads his hands in the air.

"Get out of my sight." My voice comes off as a violent roar. Goodness me, I sound like another wild animal now.

"I'm not leaving you. For fuck's sake, it's freaking cold out here. Look, we can discuss whatever's getting you angry, but not here."

I shake my head with all my strength. "I'm not going back to that house with you."

"Why? What did I do wrong?"

"Ask yourself, you pretentious motherfucker. And it's over between us. I don't ever

want to see you again." I yell and try to walk past him, but he stands in my way.

This time, I don't stop. I turn back in another direction, not minding where the destination leads. All that matters is getting this monster out of my sight. But none of that is possible because he grabs me from behind and doesn't let go.

"I'm sure there's a misunderstanding somewhere. Please, let's talk this out. And you're going to freeze to death out here. Okay, I ain't gonna watch you die."

Those hands transmit fire— not pleasurable fire this time— all over my body, causing me to wriggle in his grip. I've never been a violent person, but if I get my hands on a gun right now, I'll take him down. That's how much I hate him.

"Get your fucking hands off me. I'd rather die than have anything to do with you. Did you think I'll never find out who murdered my brother?"

I scream as he lifts and balances me on his muscular shoulder.

"Let go off me, you son of a bitch."

With mad rage, I smack my fists into his back, but he continues to walk to his car like I'm a feather. He opens the door and puts me in the back seat.

Intense anger, laced with fright, permeates my body, and I burst with another yell.

Why won't anybody come to my rescue?

Beast rushes to the driver's seat and starts the car's engine.

Within two minutes, we're back at the cabin. He opens the door, gazing at me. "Please come inside." Even though he speaks with a low tone, his voice still irritates me.

I fold my hands across my chest and shoot him a dark look. "Go fuck yourself!"

He looks around in frustration, and in a blink, I'm on his shoulder again.

"You're going to regret this for the rest of your life, you murderer."

"I'm lost, but I know we can talk this out."

He opens the bedroom door and stomps inside. Before he lays me on the bed, I snatch myself from his grip.

"We'll talk when you're calm."

"Fuck you!" I scream at his departing back before the door slams shut.

Enraged, I grab the pillow and throw it at the door.

Hell, he's just like my father. Worse than my father.

Just when I thought I was free, I was back to being a prisoner.

Realizing that makes me feel an adrenaline rush. "You're worse than my father." I bark at the door, hoping he hears me.

"You're screwed, Tati." I bury my face buried in my palm, sobbing.

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twelve

BEAST

My eyes scream for sleep, but I remain at the window, watching the snowfall. The past few hours have been stressful, and I'm still hurt about how the situation has massively degenerated.

From starting the day as lovebirds, Tati and I are no longer on speaking terms. I don't know where that allegation about me killing her brother entered her head, but she's holding on to it pretty strongly.

I wipe my face and heave a sigh. There's a tightness in my chest that won't go away. I can't think of a time in my relationship with Tati when I was this scared of losing her.

A yawn escapes my lips and forces me to walk away from the window. I love Tati, but I need to get a shuteye. The door is locked, so she can't get away while I'm sleeping.

I'll definitely get one last chance to talk sense into her before she does anything rash.

I'm a few steps away from the couch, almost getting on it, when I see a picture on the floor. Knowing I've not seen anything like that all day, I drop to my knees and check it out.

It's a picture of a boy who has a sharp resemblance to Tati.

Same wide eyes, thin lips, and a magnetic smile. That's her brother. I turn the photograph around and see the words scribbled on it.

"Oh, fucking hell." This is what has been eating Tati up! I bang on the door, begging her to open up.

"I don't know where this came from, okay? I don't have anything to do with your brother's death."

An annoying echo is all I get in response. I bang on the door, overwhelmed by frustration. Tati doesn't reply. I walk to the chair and collapse on it, finally getting some sleep.

It's already morning when I hear Tati's footsteps at the door. She's trying to open the door, but the keys are in my pockets.

"Tati," I dart off the couch. "We need to talk."

"I don't have anything to say to you."

I hurry over to her and place a hand on her shoulder. "You have to listen to me."

Tati turns around. Her eyes are blazing. "No."

I throw my hands up. "All right. It's fine. You can do whatever you want."

I step in front of her and begin to unlock the door. As I attempt to open the door, a flurry of gunshots smashes against the door. One grazes my upper arm.

"Go down!" I yell at Tati as I tumble to the ground. Tati joins me on the floor as bullets fly over our heads. I crawl forward with my elbow, edging toward the couch.

"What are you doing?" Tati makes a scared whisper.

"Trying to get us help," I whisper back, but the heavy gunfire easily swallows up my words.

I crawl forward, sometimes stopping to avoid knocking over already fallen stuff. A muffled cry escapes my lips as I crush my elbow against shards of broken glass.

Blood gushes out of the cut, and it hurts as badly as the bullet wound on my arm. The pain is intense, but I don't stop crawling.

Finally, I get to the chair and pull my phone off the bed. Then I begin to type in the numbers as soon as I get my hands on it.

"Hey, Pop. I'm getting terrible some here at the cabin."

"What the hell?"

"Yeah, you can hear the gunshots, huh? Send backup right now. I'll try to. . ."

My voice is punctuated by a bullet whizzing over my head. I duck hard, and the phone drops from my hand onto the debris-covered floor. I quickly snatch it back and crawl away from the exposed area. The shooting stops after a while, but I know better than to believe the bad guys are gone just like that. They must be on their way to the door to check out what is going on.

Using the opportunity of the ceasefire, I get off my feet and hurry to grab a pistol from the cabin weaponry. When I return and look outside the window, I see the bad guys closing in on us. They must think they got a kill because they are getting closer without hiding anywhere. I still don't understand how they shot at us like that when Kingz's daughter is in here with me. Maybe they know I'll keep her safe.

I smash open the window with my elbow and begin to fire at the bad guys. My first shot hits an opponent in the thigh, and I follow up by catching another one in the neck.

I sigh of relief as my boys pull up, guns blazing. While they fight the Detroit Kingz, I lead Tati to a secret room where she'll be safe.

"You're going back to fight with them?"

"Yeah. Can't leave them all to it."

"I don't like being alone here."

"Yeah, I understand. Only for a while."

I blow Tati a kiss and hurry out to join the other guys. By the time I climb out of the safe spot, the Detroit Kingz have been pushed back. And my men are already gathered to celebrate victory. I slap them on the back and celebrate with them. It has been a hell of a day, but with them by my side, we have beaten the asses of those damn Kingz. Without them, Kingz's crew would have shot me full of holes.

"Thanks for saving my ass, boys."

"Anytime, boss, anytime."

Pop comes over and looks at the bullet-ridden door. "They really came hard on you, didn't they?"

"Yeah, I could have easily got caught. I can't thank you enough."

I hug Pop and thank the guys again.

"You know you can't stay here anymore right?" Pop says.

"They'll come back for you if you try it and we might not make it here in good time."

"Sure, I'll go somewhere else."

"Where?"

"I'll let you know when I get there."

Pop nods and walks back to the other guys. After a short while, they clamber onto the vehicles and drive away from the vicinity of the cabin. I look at my car and see that the tires and windscreen are smashed. I'll need to hire a car to take me away from here.

I return to the room and see Tati sitting in the room, biting her nails and staring into space. She gets off the chair and runs over to hug me as soon as I open the door. I hug her back, sniffing her hair.

"Don't ever try this again," she moans against my chest.

"What?"

"Going off to fight and leaving me here. Next time, I want to fight. It's my fault this fight is happening so it only makes sense that I join in."

I smile at her and hold her shoulders. "I want to protect you, let me do just that."

We walk away from the basement and lurk around the cabin living room. I look at Tati's packed bag and notice that she's looking at it too.

"Still wanna move out or you changed your mind?"

"Not anymore," Tati chuckles. "I've seen that you didn't kill my brother. And you've done your best to protect me from my father, even when you could have thrown me out to him to stop the problem. Thank you."

"Come here," I pull her close and fit a kiss on her forehead. "I love you, Tati."

"I love you too."

Those words brighten my day. The next few hours require us to move out of here to another safe spot. But I feel positive that we'll be fine. Together.

"There's one more thing I need you to do," Tati says with her head resting on my chest.

I pull back and look into her face. "What's it?"

"Now that I know you didn't do it, I need you to find out who killed my brother. Can you help me with that?"

I draw in a sharp breath and nod gently. "Yeah, the street is hot at the moment and your father is bristling, but I'll do my best and find out the killer."

"Thank you," I see the anguish on her face and know how much this means to her. I felt the same way when my brother passed away. I would have said she should let it go, but now that the wound has been reopened, it only makes sense that she knows who killed her brother. That's one more addition to my list for the week. Find Nate's killer. I have no idea where to start investigating, but I have to do something about it, yeah.

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thirteen

TATI

My eyes flick open. The room is dark. I can't tell how long I've slept. After yesterday's attack, I doubt I'll ever have a deep sleep easily.

But with Beast next to me, it's a tad better. When I turn to the other side of the bed, it's empty. Beast isn't there.

I push myself up with my elbows, and the comforter drops to my lap. A sigh escapes my mouth when I see him standing by the window, arms folded across his chest. My eyes settle on the lamp stand, and I peer at the time. It's 3:20 am.

It's still fucking cold inside. My hands caress my exposed arms as I wriggle out of bed. I inch near him and embrace him from behind, feeling the warmth of his broad back. How's he this warm without a shirt?

"Can't sleep?" I ask.

"I can't stop thinking." He tightens my hands around his waist. I tiptop to plant a kiss on his nape.

"About what?"

He shakes his head and turns towards me.

"I didn't expect anyone to discover this place. So who could have given us out? Nobody knows about it."

A frown crosses his face as he speaks. "One thing is certain, whoever gave us out also planted the picture just to turn us against each other."

"Maybe I didn't trust you enough. I'm sorry."

He shakes his head and pulls me close to himself.

"Don't blame yourself. Anyone would have reacted the way you did, okay? I don't blame you one bit."

He kisses my forehead and relaxes my head on his warm chest while caressing my hair.

"I'll find out who did this. Trust me. Won't rest until I find the asshole."

"I'm scared they'll try to separate us again. Who knows what they'll do this time."

He cups my face, lifting my chin so I'm look

ing directly at him. "Don't let that frighten you, baby. I love you to the moon, and no man, I repeat, no man's going to take my love away. You feeling me, baby?"

A smile crosses my face, and I nod.

"Absolutely."

I pull him close and kiss him with passion.

While one arm curls around my waist, the other strokes my face as he takes my lips in his.

He gently bites my lower lip and rolls his tongue against mine as if assuring me I'll forever be his, and no one will separate us.

I respond with the same intensity. Every part of my body craves his touch.

His lips trail to my neck, then to my chest, drawing a moan out of my mouth.

My night dress is so light that Beast can see my hard nipples.

He eyes them with interest.

“Hmm.” He wraps his lips around them, sucking them through my clothes.

I toss my head back and coil my hands around his neck, relishing the warmth of his mouth. Now, my clit is swelling with arousal.

While taking off my dress, he takes my lips again. My hand glides to the edge of his shorts, dropping them to his knees. His dick springs out, bouncing against my crotch. He throws my dress to the ground and wraps his firm hands around my exposed boobs.

My legs are weak with arousal, but I can't cling to his shoulders. Not when my hands are around his dick, massaging it.

A tingling sensation spreads throughout my body as his succulent tongue teases my breasts.

I don't know how long my legs can bare me up. They're fucking weak.

His lips trail from my breasts to my navel, then to my vulva. He gives me a wicked look as he parts my thighs. His finger slides between my wet folds, tormenting me. I grab his head, relishing the feel of his finger inside me. He gets up and takes my hand.

"I want to eat the hell out of that pussy. Now widen your thighs." With my chest heaving, I sit on the bed and spread my thighs with my hands steady on the bed. I don't want to rest my back on the bed. I want the picture of him eating me to stick in my head forever.

He goes on his knees before the bed and coils his hands around my thighs. He sticks his tongue out, kissing the lips of my pussy with fierce emotion. My toes curl and uncurl, feeling the softness of his tongue. It transmits unparalleled pleasure throughout my body, and I moan, "Beast."

My fingers grip the bed sheet tightly, and I launch my head back, feeling my clit harden. He teases the sensitive part of my clit with the tip of his tongue.

My wetness streams out, and he sucks it with delight. That singular act sends euphoric pleasure all over my body, making me long for more.

My head is spinning. I press my eyes shut. The euphoria tugs at every nerve in my brain.

"Jamal..."

My entire body is on fire. I shudder as he closes his lips around my clit. My hands are too weak to bare me up, so I collapse on the bed, thrusting my hips in the direction of his tongue.

"Taste me...."

I widen my thighs to get more of his tongue, and he strokes my pussy back and forth. Now my hips are moving on their own accord, and my moan is continuous.

An early wave of orgasm washes all over me, and my liquid splashes out. He lays beside me, and my eyes settle on his erect cock, pointing at the ceiling.

"Ride me, baby."

I bite my lower lip, creating a mental picture of that hard penis thrusting into my vagina.

Desperation clads his eyes when I straddle him.

Gazing at his cock makes my wetness pool out more. I shift back, squatting an inch away from his cock. My juice sprinkles on the head of his dick.

"Shit!" He reaches up and grips my thighs.

A wicked smile lingers on my face when his cock strains against my entrance. He grips my legs.

"You're killing me. Give me it to me."

Going at a slow pace, I sit halfway on his cock, parting my pussy lips with his tip.

"Oh, fuck!"

My hand coils around his dick, and I guide it into my vagina. My pussy lips open further as I sink him in. Even though I'm dying to fuck him, I still want to torture him more.

I stand on my feet, watching his erect cock wet with my juice.

"Come on, give me your pussy, damnit."

His voice is more of a plea than a command. I feel in control, teasing him and watching his eyes burn with arousal.

My lips fall open as I sink his penis deep inside my pussy. Gush, it's the best feeling I've ever had.

"Oh, fuck!" He groans and clamps both hands on my butt.

My pussy walls tighten around his cock like a bun around a sausage.

With my hands on the bed, I go up and down on his cock.

The thickness of his cock makes me whimper like a toddler.

While he's massaging my ass with one hand, he rubs the small of my back with the other.

My body shudders with pleasure as he folds his knees up, pushing his cock deeper inside me. I place my hands on his chest, fucking him with all my energy.

My breasts slap against my chest as I work his dick with my pussy.

Even though I'm on top of him, I can't get enough.

"Yeah, baby," he groans, intermittently biting his lower lip and opening his mouth.

I nibble on his neck, and as if that triggers a fiery ecstasy, he turns me over with his

cock still in my vagina.

Now he's on my chest, digging my hole.

“Yeah,” I whine.

I spread my thighs to enable deeper penetration.

His thrusts are slow and steady. Out of this world. Satisfying to the highest level.

I squeeze my eyes shut as each stroke pushes me to another planet where it is just the two of us. Orbs of light dance around my sight as my orgasm builds.

He takes my lips into his, engulfing them as he thrusts in a frenzy of emotion.

"Oh! Fuck me." I whine. His liquid jumps inside me, and at the same moment, my orgasm gushes out.

Making love to Jamal is the best thing that's ever happened to me.

fourteen

BEAST

The hum of the power bike grows louder, and I crack my fists in anticipation. The morning sky is bright, and the air smells humid. It's a perfect time to sort vital issues out.

I rub my palms together, waiting for the footfalls at the door and the subsequent knock. After spending weeks in the luxury cabin, this new lodging, provided by Clyde, feels small and cramped.

I'll definitely go back home after Christmas. Kingz won't make me a hide because I love his daughter.

The footsteps finally came. It's the familiar dragging that I've known for years. I sigh and clench my fist.

Beads of sweat spread over my forehead. A mix of anger and sadness spreads in my gut. The knock finally comes.

Now is the time , I mutter.

Pop's smiling face welcomes me when I open the door. He's in a green sweater and dark pants. His hair is slicked back, the way Darren used to be back in the day. I feel a sharp stab in my chest.

"I brought your laptop," Pop taps the black bag slung on his shoulder. I let him in without saying a word.

Pop looks around the cabin and nods. He looks at me and shrugs. "No bad to stay temporarily, right?"

"Sure," I grunt.

"Where's Tati?"

"Over there," I point over his shoulder.

Pop looks back, sees nothing, and turns back to me, and then I let him have it. A nose breaker, packing all my anger and frustration.

Pop tumbles backward and lands sideways on the couch. The stunned look on his face is priceless. If I'm not so mad, I'll probably burst out laughing at his scrunched-up face.

"What the fuck did you do that for?" Pop presses his nostrils and comes up with blood. He looks even more stunned. Yeah, his uncle just did some damage to his bridgework.

I pull out a pistol and set it against his head.

"Oh, what the hell are you doing?" He looks left and right as if searching for a way out of the situation. I'm more annoyed the more I watch him. How could he do this to me? And why is he acting innocent?

"Tell me the truth." I put all my anger and bile in that statement. I want him to know how pissed I am for taking me for a fool.

"What are you even talking about?" Pop tries to swipe the gun away, but I grab him by the neck. His eyes pop, and his tongue flips out. I loosen the hold on his neck, but I keep the gun there just so he knows I'm not messing around.

"Why did you tell Kingz my location? Why did you stab me in the back?"

"That's crazy. I didn't do anything like that."

"Oh, you didn't?"

"Of course, if you can't trust me who else will you trust?"

"Anyone but you. Because you gave me away." Saying those words rile up my anger. Why the hell is he denying it?

"Nobody knows the location of the cabin. But out of the blue, he pulled up at my safe spot and started shooting."

Sweat trickles down Pop's forehead. "Maybe those guys were tailing me when I was coming here. I didn't tell anyone anything, I swear."

"How about this?" I step away from him long enough to grab the photograph I have carefully placed on the couch. I remain careful not to lose my aim on him.

He's still rubbing his nose, and from his body language, he's more concerned about his bleeding nose than getting away. The betrayed look on his face stuns me. Is he trying to win an Oscar with this playacting?

I hand him the photograph, and he looks at it. There's no flicker of recognition on his face.

“Who’s this?”

“Tati’s brother.”

“What has that got to do with me?”

“The picture is sitting pretty in the bag you packed for me. You brought it here, and it caused a rift between me and Tati.”

Pop shakes his head. “You’re getting me confused right now. Do you think I ratted you out or Kingz or set this picture in the bag? How dumb can I be to do that when I know I’ll be the only suspect?”

“You didn’t have to bother about that. You thought Kingz would kill me, didn’t you? You probably have an agreement with him.”

Pop’s lips twist into a mocking smile. “What agreement?”

“You tell me.”

“There’s no fucking agreement.”

I know he’s not gonna confess easily, “You’ll confess when we get to the club guard room and you have to spill in front of all those boys.”

“You’re making a mistake. A big mistake.”

I ask him to put his hands behind him and then tie up both hands. He constantly shakes his head and bites his lower lip.

“Why did you do it?” I step back in front of him. “How much did Kingz pay you to

betray your own blood?"

"How good is Tati's body that you're willing to keep your blood under lock?"

I smack Pop across the face, and he spits on my forehead. Wiping the saliva gob with the back of his sleeve, I step back from Pop and ask him to turn around.

Up close, he smells of the same cologne my brother used to wear when he was alive. My eyes sting with tears. Pop shouldn't have been the guy to betray me!

I lead him all the way to a free room in the cabin, and then I lock him up there. As soon as I have locked him up, I walk back to the bedroom and unlock it. Tati jumps at me and holds me tight.

"I was scared something happened to you," she breathes against my chest.

I rub my hands on her back and whisper. "It's fine. I'm safe. But there's some serious business I want to handle right now."

Tati draws back from me, her eyes full of questions. "Can I come with you?"

"No. It's not even safe for you to stay here."

"Wow. So where will I stay."

I cup my hand and cough into it. "I've made an arrangement with my butler. He'll get you somewhere safe."

While Tati is still asking questions, I dial up Clyde, and he answers right away.

"It's time. Bring the bags."

"Right, sir."

I slip my phone into my pocket and begin to reassure Tati again.

"What will you do about him? I mean Pop."

I shrug. "I'll get him to talk. I have to know everything he has spilled to the bad guys."

"Just take it easy with him, okay?"

My eyes narrow. "There's no virtue in showing mercy to traitors."

Tati is about to say something, but a knock sounds on the main door, and I know right away that it's Clyde. I go out to meet him with Tati.

"He's my trusted worker," I tell Tati, then I turn to Clyde. "I need you to take her to Fort Knox. Call me when you get there safely."

Clyde smiles. "I will, sir. I'll do everything to ensure her safety."

"Good."

I wave to Tati as she and Clyde grab bags and walk out the door. Now, I can focus on the business of getting Pop to talk. It's painful to cause my family so much distress, but it doesn't matter.

Pop has to pay for his actions. And it's time to take the game to Kingz. Like rats, we have nibbled at each other for far too long. The showdown we have managed for so long is about to happen.

Maybe the best crew win.

fifteen

TATI

“How close are to the airport?”

Clyde gazes at me through the rear mirror with that gentle face. “In the next twenty minutes we’ll arrive there.”

It's not like I'm clueless about the distance to the airport, but the direction he's taking doesn't look like the one I know. I gaze through the tinted window at the dazzling Christmas decorations along the roadside restaurants and shops. Perhaps, the dark sky is the reason I can't seem to get the route he's taking. My phone beeps with Jamal's ChatterSpot message.

DaBeast: Are you getting close?

Beauti4U: Yes, we’ll be twenty minutes from now.

DaBeast: Is there a traffic jam?

Beauti4U: No, why?

DaBeast: That’s kinda slow.

Beauti4U: Put your mind to rest. We'll get there.

DaBeast: Sure. Have a safe trip. I've got some things to fix. Call me when you get to the airport.

Beauti4U: All right. I love you.

DaBeast: I love you more.

A smile lingers on my face when I send a kiss emoji. I gaze up, picturing a smile on his face, then I look at his message again.

A frown crosses my face when my brain interprets the image my eyes picked when I gazed up. So, to be sure I wasn't hallucinating, I look up again.

What the fuck , he's turned away from the expressway, and he's now heading to an open field covered in snow.

"Where the hell are you driving me?"

He lets out a sinister grin. "Where you belong."

My heart pounds against my chest. No, this isn't happening.

"I'm supposed to be at the airport. So what.... What do you mean?" He steps on the gas, and he's now heading towards an old warehouse.

"You'll find out now." He speaks as if everything is fine. But I know he's up to something. Something Crazy.

"Who the hell are you?" Intense fear grips me, and I doubt if Clyde is the nice man he claims to be. I try to open the door even with the car in motion. I don't mind falling as long as I'm out of this car.

"Open the fucking door," I scream when I notice the doors are locked. No, I can't believe this is happening to me. My finger shakes as I dial Beast's number, but the car halts on the spot.

Clyde jumps out of the car, open the door, and snatches the phone from my grip. My stomach twists and I feel like puking. This feels like a nightmare.

"You traitor, you'll pay for this."

"As long as you're married to the right person, I don't mind."

He hauls me out of the car, and I kick his balls. He grabs his balls for a moment, then stands up with his eyes burning with rage. He drags me out and carries me on his shoulder.

"Put me down you son of a bitch." I yell, but I know my voice will never make any impact.

A dark SUV is parked in front of the Warehouse, and as Clyde steps near, the headlight comes on. At first, I can't see the face of the person, but when Clyde stands me on my feet, I notice it's Stacks.

Right now, I feel death's the only solution.

"You?" My voice trembles.

I try to snatch my hand from Clyde, but he grips me from behind so much that my hand hurts.

Stacks relaxes his hands in his pants pockets. "Hi, wife."

My blood boils in my veins when I hear those words.

"I'll never be your wife you bastard." I ensure my voice is loud enough to express my resentment toward him.

He shrugs with a confident smile that disgusts me.

"Then you'll be nobody's wife." He looks from me to Clyde. "Thank you. Take her to the car. Be gentle with her please, she'll be my bride in two days' time."

"Sure."

As Clyde hoists me to the car, I try to break out of his grip, but his hands are like steel wire around my arms.

He opens the door with one hand, and I notice his grip is loose. On the spot, I strike him on the jaw with my elbow.

"Arrgh! Damn you!" He cries, soothing his jaw with both hands.

I run like my life depends on it. Okay, my life actually depends on it.

The space is as wide as a runway and foggy in front. So, I'm trying to figure out which way to follow.

My chest heaves as I run with every bit of strength in me. Abruptly, a hand grabs my leg, and I lose my balance, crashing on the frosty ground.

The big guy dives on my back, pressing me to the ground.

"You're going nowhere. You're mine!" Stacks speaks through clenched teeth,

struggling to steady his breath.

"Get your filthy hands off me." I struggle to get out of his grip, but this time his hands are so firm around me that I'm running out of breath.

So, I give up. Tears roll down my eyes as Clyde matches towards us.

With my last breath, I scream, but only a whisper comes out of my mouth. My muscles relax on the frozen ground as Clyde nears us.

You know how the paramedics move corpses into body bags? That's how Clyde and Stacks are carrying me right now.

The only difference is that they're moving me into a car, not a body bag. I wish it were a body bag.

Death, where are you?

"Guess who I brought home?"

My parents' eyes widen with curiosity in their standing position.

Stacks gestures to me, and Clyde hauls me forward before them. Even though we're standing in our luxurious living room, and my parents are now gazing at me with excitement, I feel like a victim of human trafficking.

"My bride."

I fix my eyes on the glass center table, unable to stare at their faces.

"And you have to tie your bride hands with a tape?"

Dad's question is more of a complaint than something coming from a place of rage.

"I didn't mean demean her. You know how stubborn your daughter can be."

Stacks strokes my hair, and I cringe, weaving his next touch.

"Well, I'm sorry for the stress she put you through."

"It's okay. Things we do from love."

Dad inches close, shoves out a key chain, and flips up a mini knife.

While cutting through the duct tape, he gazes at me, but my eyes are fixed in the opposite direction, staring at the white walls. The rage flowing through my blood will never let me stare at him.

"Welcome home, daughter. Your mother and I are happy to see you."

He gawks at Stacks.

"Thank you for bringing back my daughter. I can see you truly love her. As a reward, she'll be your bride tomorrow. After all, Christmas is just two days away, so what stops us from joining you two together on Christmas Eve?"

For the first time, I shoot him a look. And it's a dark one. If looks could kill, dad would be dead right this minute.

And you want to know my conclusion about his disposition? He's a fucking narcissist. My chest is heaving with rage as I lock eyes with him. God! If I were a dragon, I'd have spat fire, and everyone except my mother would be dead.

Stacks lets out a smile and sticks out his hand. "Thank you for the honor."

Dad takes his hand, shaking it. "Priscilla, take your daughter inside. And don't forget to give her some lectures on how to be a submissive wife."

My mother inclines her head and walks over to me. "Come on, let's go inside."

Without further ado, I lead the way walking along the stairway.

For fuck's sake, I have no phone, no means of reaching out to Beast. Guess I'll be stuck with them for the rest of my life. I feel like a pet forced into a cage.

sixteen

BEAST

My handshake with Detective Edwards is firm. He looks even chubbier than the last time I saw him. Makes me wonder how much policing he does in this hood. There's a coffee cup next to his table.

“How can I help you, Beast?” Edwards rubs his hands together. “By the way, I appreciate that you and your boys have maintained order since the corpse issue.”

A smile tugs at my lips. This man doesn't know the shit is about to hit the fan. “You're welcome, Captain. I want to make inquiries about a case.”

Edwards leans forward. “What case?”

“Nathaniel Reynolds' murder. I need the details of the case. The suspects, the eyewitnesses.”

“We can't give you all that.”

“Come on, detective. We have some history. I know you can give me these things.”

“I can't because we don't have it. The case died because there were no suspects, no witnesses. The car that killed Rodney in the drive-by was never seen again. Thousands of crimes happen every day, Beast. We can only spend so much time on dead ends. I'm sorry if that's insensitive, but it's the bitter truth. That case was dead

and buried seven years ago, looking for details today is like digging for fossils.”

I shift in my chair and nod. “I understand from your perspective, but the people involved won’t forget so easily.”

Edwards holds up a hand and quickly gets on a call. I look around his office as he answers a superior officer about a case. The paint on the wall is shiny, and there are stacks of files behind him.

“So, Beast, I’ll let you know if there’s any way we can help, but reviving the case or providing those details aren’t an option.”

I thank him and leave his office, knowing he has to get busy. It has been quite a day for me already, I think as I leave the police station.

I’ve spent the better part of the morning interrogating Pop about his betrayal. Nothing has come out of it. Pop is as stubborn as a mule and built like an ox. Like me, he knows how to resist pain and refuse to talk under pressure.

Seeing the cuts on his body makes my heart bleed, but I can’t stop. The other boys have to learn a lesson. If I can do this to my own family, how much more other betrayers are in my ranks?

I jump into my car and drive home, listening to upbeat rap tunes. The trip goes by in a blur. Before long, I’m on the snow-filled road that leads back to the cabin where Tati and I took refuge after the Detroit Kingz attacked our safe spot. The loneliness and stark whiteness of the road bore me.

I adjust my earphone and put a call to Tati. The call rings on and on, but she doesn’t answer. That’s odd because Tati is rarely away from her phone.

As soon as I get to the house, I wiggle into the parking spot and remain in the car. I open ChatterSpot and shoot Tati a couple of messages on her Beauti4U account.

A look outside the window shows it's snowing again. For a moment, I see two black kids playing hoops in the snow. Two kids, the young versions of Darren and me. The view clears as I open the door.

Hurting Pop breaks my heart. I'm not sure how long I can keep up with that. But he has to fucking confess and stop acting like he's The Rock.

I pull the hood over my head and dart to the door. The door is unlocked. Clyde is back.

“Hey Clyde, where are you?”

There's a shuffle from the kitchen, and then I hear a muffled cough from there.

"Clyde?"

He steps out after a moment, his face his looking red. “Sorry, boss. This cough has been disturbing me since I got back.”

“Sorry, have you taken something?”

Clyde shakes his old head. “I will use something now.”

“Did you drop her safely? When did you come back?”

“I came back an hour ago. And yeah, she’s fine. She looked so sleepy before I left so I doubt you’d be able to reach her.”

“You’re right. I tried already.”

I turn away from Clyde, heading to the bedroom door.

“I made you coffee.”

“Ah, thank you.”

Clyde dashes into the kitchen and returns with a mug of coffee. I take the coffee, hold it to my nose, and offer it to him.

“Take a sip first.”

Clyde’s face immediately reddens. “No, I made it for you.”

“And I’m offering you the first sip,” I stretch the mug toward him.

His hand drops to his side, and even before I see the weapon, I know he's trying to pull a gun on me. I throw the mug at him as a desperate means of distraction and jump away from him.

The crack of his gun and the smash of the mug against his face go off at the same time. I feel a surge of pain as I land on my shoulder, but I quickly pull out a gun and fire at Clyde's thigh.

He crumples to the ground, and his pistol falls up. Before he can struggle to pick it up, I hurry over and kick the gun away.

“What the hell was that? What have you done to Tati?”

“Don’t worry, boss. She’s with the real king of the hood now.”

Source Creation Date: July 22, 2025, 5:15 pm

seventeen

TATI

“Look at you? You look stunning.” Mom speaks with admiration in her voice.

Humans lie most times for selfish reasons, but you see an inanimate object like a mirror doesn't lie. No, they have no reasons to do that.

Judging from the sullen expression on my face, I look like a prisoner about to face execution.

The makeup, wedding dress, and the fucking tiara on my head irk me.

"Why him?" Those are my first words since I was compelled into this house. Mom's hands are rested behind the chair I sat, and she's gazing at me in the mirror.

"After we lost your brother, your father was devastated. It hurts me to see him go through that. All he's doing is saving his only child. The man a woman marries can make or mar her life.

“The murderer is out there, and your father wants to protect you by all means. William is the only man we trust in this city. That might sound absurd, but that's the truth. Your father has too many enemies. And one of them is Nate's murderer. He might want to hurt you too. Does that make any sense to you?”

I shake my head. “It doesn't make any sense that I'm suffering for Nate's death. He's

killer's out, so why not catch him, and throw him behind bars instead of making my life a living hell."

I spin to look at her face. Her eyes are misty, and I feel sad for bringing up Nate's death.

"I don't mean to hurt you, Mom. But you and dad don't care about my feelings. You don't care if your decision hurt me."

Now my eyes are misty too.

"You're my mother, but you don't understand me one bit. You care about your husband than you do about me. Why did you bring me to this world when you know you don't love me?"

Mom shakes her head and covers her mouth with her palm, sobbing.

"Don't say that. I love you." Her voice breaks. "I love you so much. But this is beyond my power. Your father means a lot to me, and I can't go against his wish. I don't think now is the right time to explain what your father means to me."

"The fact that you're my parent doesn't mean you can decide for me. For god sake I'm a twenty three years old woman. I consider this as an abuse, but I don't expect you to understand my feelings because dad means so much to you."

I speak with rage, hoping she'll empathize with me, but no, she can't go against her husband's wish.

The door flings open, and my mother sniffs, wiping the tears with both hands.

"The boss wants to know if she's ready." One of dad's guards speaks through the

door.

“Oh, almost done. She’ll be out in a minute.”

"Okay." When the guards leave, she brings the diamond shoes near the chair. "I'm surprise your father still remembers little details such as your shoe size. He loves you so much, dear. I know you will appreciate it one day.”

I thought my pleas could change something, but nothing has changed in this house. Nobody listens to me. Guess, I have to take my life into my hands now.

“Can I eat something at least? I’m starving.”

“Oh, I’ll get you something.”

“Please, let me feel like a normal person today. I'll go to the kitchen myself.”

Mom is standing by the door with a sober look. “All right. Don’t mess up your make up. You’ll find some chicken soup, and cheese pasta in the kitchen.”

Some minutes later, I stroll outside with my Mom. Stacks is standing next to his car, wearing a smile that irritates me.

“Aren’t I the most fortunate man on earth?”

He sticks his hand out, and I lift my gown to hide the small knife I took from the kitchen. My aim was never to eat.

I’m walking towards him, gazing at the best place to attack him. In an instant, I take his hand and twist it backward, choking him with my elbow around his neck. I point the knife at everyone in front of me.

"I will slice his throat open if anyone comes at me." I set the sharp knife on his throat. At this point, I don't know what I'm capable of doing. One thing is sure, if anyone gets in my way, that person will be sorry.

"No you can't do this." Stacks' voice quivers, but I coil my elbows tighter around his neck.

"Shut the fuck up, you bastard. I'm about to make you the miserable man on earth right now."

"Are you out of your mind?" Dad's eyes are about to jump out of their sockets.

"Yes, and it all your fault. You're the most selfish parents have seen in my life. And I regret the day I was born into this house. I'm leaving this house right now, and I don't want you to ever look for me. Forget you have a child, because just like Will, I'm dead."

"Tati, drop the knife, please."

Dad makes the stop gesture, inching close to me.

I shake my head like a deranged woman. "The time I listen to you is over. I pleaded but neither of you listened. You have no right to use that word."

My voice trembles in rage.

While speaking, I take some steps back, walking past the fucking car meant to drive me to the wedding venue.

Just then, bullets begin to fly in the air, and everyone runs about in the garden. I'm not sure that's Beast since Dad has many enemies, but whoever it is just saved my

life. I let go of Stacks, draw out the fucking shoes, and run out of the garden. But someone jumps on me, and we both land on the ground.

“You’re mine, you got that. I meant it when I said no one will have you except me,” Stacks barks with eye-bulging like a lunatic.

“I hate you!”

I yell, struggling to get out of his grip.

He pulls me up by my dress and smashes the butt of his rifle on my head.

eighteen

BEAST

I step on the gas, keeping up with Stacks. He's twisting and turning like a goddamned snake. His car is making the swerves, and it's so easy to lose him, but I keep my eyes on him.

He has my woman, and I won't let him get away.

The road gets thinner and lonelier. My concern mounts since I'm not familiar with any of the streets. The only confidence I have is that I've got a car full of gas, and I'll chase him for as long as necessary.

A truck shows up just ahead, and Stacks turns a little too late. A part of the car smashes against the truck's lower body. My heart clenches.

“Watch you, you bloody bastard!”

The last thing I want is for Tati to get hurt in this car chase. I hit the gas and pull closer to Stacks' car.

Fuck the limits. I'm almost breaking the speedometer now.

Stacks is going at the same break-neck speed, and it stuns me when he breaks into a break. I hit the brakes and swerve too.

My turn isn't as perfect, but the fact remains I'm on his heels. Stacks pulls ahead, I have no idea where he's going, but I stick to his ass like glue.

After another dangerous turn, Stacks' car tumbles, and my heart stops. The car tumbles twice and lands on its side.

I slam the brakes and jump out of my car. Before I get close, Stacks stumbles out of the car with a pistol held to Tati's head. She looks like she hit her head during the crash, her hands are tied, and she looks woozy.

Stacks has blood dripping from a part of his face, but the danger in his eyes is unmissable. He looks like a man who will do murder just to get away with Tati.

"Let her go," I bark at Stacks while pointing the pistol at him. "Whatever you want, we can talk about this like men."

"I'm not interested in what you have to say. Back off now, or I'll kill her." His muzzle is pressed against Tati's temple. I feel nauseous watching that.

"Look I know everything you did. You've killed Kingz's first child, I don't think he'll forgive you for killing the second."

"No, he won't forgive you for putting her in danger. Nobody will know I did it. You will take the blame as usual."

I chuckle helplessly. "That's pretty slick of you, like the plan to poison me through my butler."

"Listen, I ain't got time for bullshit. You wanna talk, get on radio, man. I want action, I want money, I want the hood. Just back off and let me have my bride. Drop that fucking gun and step back."

Moment of truth. I know Stacks is a pretty good shot. I can't risk him shooting at Tati, although I doubt he'll shoot at her. But who wants to take a chance with a loved one's life?

“Okay, I’ll drop the gun.” I go down slowly, thinking of a plan. Nothing is forthcoming. I’m afraid the bad guy has won, fuck!

As my gun connects with the ground, a loud shot goes off. I close my eyes, believing I've been shot. But there's no burning pain that comes with getting shot.

I open my eyes and see Stacks’ pistol has fallen off the ground, and he falls almost immediately. Tati crumples to the ground next to him, and behind them is Kingz, with his gun smoking at the muzzle. I don't know how and where he got there, but I couldn't be more grateful.

We both rush to Tati and grab her at the same time. A look at her heaving chest shows she’s breathing. Plus, no visible signs of gunshots. It looks like Stacks missed.

"I'll call the ambulance," I say, pulling out my phone.

Kingz holds onto her and says nothing until the ambulance arrives, and both Tati and Stacks are stretchered onto the vehicle. Tears stream down Kingz’s face as he watches police cars surrounding us.

"I did it in self-defense." He mutters as if trying to convince me.

“Absolutely,” I whisper back.

Kingz nods, and his tears flow. "When she gets better, you can go ahead. I mean with the relationship. I can see you really love her. You have my blessings."

I reach for his hand and squeeze it. "Thank you, man."

I shouldn't be thanking a man for saving his own daughter, but I'm not sure what else to say. We stand there as the cops rush down, barking at us. I can't believe that Kingz and I teamed up to fuck someone up.

What a fuckin' day!

Source Creation Date: July 22, 2025, 5:16 pm

nineteen

TATI

Beast and I are seated in one of the fanciest restaurants in Detroit. A plate of red fried snappers with sauce is before us, and beside the tray is a bottle of Sauvignon Blanc.

On one end of the table is a mini Christmas tree decorated with multicolored lights. In the background, Dolly Parton's "Jingle Bells" is repeatedly playing.

The atmosphere is spirited and romantic, especially because Beast is seated in front of me. He looks charming in the burgundy turtleneck shirt and black denim pants. I feel I'm the luckiest woman on earth.

"I'm glad we're no longer on the run." I slice a portion of the snapper and take a deep bite.

Beast nods with a glint in his eyes.

"Yeah. And more exciting is the fact that your father has accepted me."

He reaches for my hand across the table, caressing it.

"You didn't give up on me, thank you."

Beast places a passionate kiss on the back of my palm.

"You're welcome. I won't ever give up on you." He lets go of my hand. We continue to eat, stealing romantic glances at each other.

"How did you find out Stacks was Nate's killer?" I wipe my mouth with the napkin and set it on the table.

As he raises the wine glass to his lips, my eyes flick to Santa's smiling face painted on the glass. A chuckle escapes my mouth because it's comical. Now, I love Christmas.

"Clyde confessed when I caught him trying to poison me."

My eyes bulge. "What? He tried to kill you?"

Beast lets out a vigorous nod. "Sometimes when I get too busy to eat, Clyde reminds me or get something for me eat. That night he did the usual, but I was in no mood to eat. Asked him to eat it. What I saw next was a gun pointed at me. Then he mentioned that he tried to poison but since I didn't eat it, he'd figured a gun would do the job. We fought, and I knocked him down."

"Jesus Christ! That bastard!"

"Then he confessed that Stacks killed, Nate your late brother just satisfy his dream to be the king of the hood. Marrying you was hotshot for him because he'll kill your father, and take over the hood at once."

"Stacks will never rest in peace. He'll rot in the deepest part of hell. If I told you he's our closest family friend, would you believe me?"

Beast raises a shoulder. "This days, close friends are more dangerous than the enemies you know."

"God! And poor Nate trusted him when he was alive. I was the odd one who resented him to the core."

I shake my head in amazement. "Dad has so many enemies and he thinks one of them must be responsible for Nate's death."

They made my life a living hell because they were scared of the enemy. Turns out the enemy was right under our noses."

Beast leans his elbows on the table, eyes steady on me.

"All that is your past now. So don't let it ruin our happy mood. I'm sure Nate is happy we finally found his killer. And if people remember their enemies in after life, I bet Nate's probably putting the boots in Stacks' head right now."

I chuckle at the humor edging his tone.

"You're right. He'll rest in peace now. Thank you. You can into my life and now it's full of bliss. I hated Christmas but now, with you in my life. . . I'm gonna cherish every holiday. Thank you, Beast."

Warm tears well in my eyes as I speak.

Beast shoves out a white handkerchief.

"I don't want to see any tears in your eyes." He gets up and makes a few steps near my chair. He stoops, dabbing my eyes, and a chuckle escapes my mouth between sniffing. "Everyone's staring at us." He turns back to see the faces staring in our direction.

"They haven't see nothing." He stands straighter, gawking at me as if he's contemplating whether to do something or not.

"What?"

He pulls out a red box from his pocket and flips it open.

A gasp jumps out of my mouth when I see a diamond ring. Before long, everyone in the restaurant now had their eyes fixed on us. I spot some recording the moment on their phones.

"I'm not so good with words, so I'll just go straight to the point. I don't want any other future niggas to come between us. Not because I'm scared, but because I don't want to spend one night away from you again. I love you more than I've ever loved anyone, and I want to spend the rest of my life with you. Will you marry me?"

He goes on bended knee and stretches the ring to me. I cover my mouth and nod just so I won't scream. "Yes, I'll marry you."

The diners cheer and clap their hands when Beast slides the ring onto my finger. I stare at it in pride, get up, and lock lips with him.

"Give it up for the latest couple tonight." One of the diners yells, and everyone applauds. I don't bother to look at them. Not while I'm relishing the feel of Beast's lips on mine.

Beast pulls me in and shuts the door. I've longed to have him in my arms since we were in the car. Damn, he's my soon-to-be husband, so stating my needs shouldn't be a shameful thing.

He leans forward, nibbling my lips. The kiss intensifies, and my libido heightens.

"I want tonight to be all about you." He teases my earlobes, sending goosebumps throughout my body.

"I know you want me. Tell me what you want."

He takes my lips into his again, taking turns to suck on my lower and upper lips.

"I want to feel your dick deep inside me. Fuck me until my orgasm wets your dick."

As I speak, I picture him shoving his penis in and out of my pussy. Now, my wetness is dripping on my panties.

He grins, then takes my lips.

His fingers trail at the hem of my dress, taking it up at a snail's pace.

He leans beside my neck, teasing it. "I'll do that and more."

He draws back, and within the snap of a finger, we strip each other. His hands cup my large breasts, guiding them to his mouth.

"Awwn." I throw my head back, moaning out loud.

As if he knows every part of my body longs for his touch, he caresses my thighs, proceeding to my vagina area. My heart pounds with arousal as he rubs my wet folds with two fingers.

I widen my thighs, and he slips his finger into my pussy's lips, rubbing them.

"Oh, feels good." My voice comes off as a whisper.

He scoops me off my feet and sits me on the couch like a doll.

He goes down on his knees. Widens my thighs. And sucks the hell out of my pussy.

My eyes roll upward, relishing his succulent tongue. Because I'm anticipating more, I tuck my knees on the couch and spread my thigh. He opens the lips of my pussy with both thumbs, brushing my rosebud back and forth.

"Eat me."

It's fucking stimulating, and my body is vibrating.

My clit is harder. Even my toes can't stop curling and uncurling.

The pleasure transmits to every muscle in my body, making them contract. I push my hips forward in the direction of his tongue.

"Aww, I love your tongue."

I'm pushing my hips faster because I'm close to the edge. I press my eyes shut, convulsing.

"Oh!" My liquid gushes out all over him. He stands straighter, then leans forward to take my lips.

He stands up, stroking his hard dark cock.

"Are you ready for this?" His eyes are glassy, and his voice cracks with arousal.

"More than ready." I drop my feet to the ground.

"Ache your back on the couch."

I'm desperate to have his cock in my pussy, so I do as he says.

He stands behind me and rubs my wet pussy with four fingers. He holds my hips and

directs his cock into my pussy.

"Fuck me!"

I look behind, awaiting his movements.

My walls hold him tightly.

He closes his eyes and clenches his teeth. His hands grip my hips tightly.

"This is gonna be real fast. Can you take it?"

"I want it fast." Agitation makes my voice quiver.

He thrusts in and out like a hungry stallion. And me, like a mare on heat, meets his wild thrust. His dick is fucking thick in my pussy, transmitting euphoric pleasure all around my veins.

His pace is crazy, and I love it. He grips my hips, poking my hole and molding my breasts at the same time.

"Oh, fuck it." My voice quivers as I speak.

"I. Love. Your. Pussy ."

He pronounces the words one after the other because his breath's unsteady.

The couch creaks with the rhythm of his strokes.

He gets on my back with palms stroking my breasts while digging into my pussy.

His thrusts are fast and furious. His fierce thrust spreads fierce pleasure all over my

body.

“Don’t stop,” I whimper in ecstasy as my orgasm wets his cock. At the same time, his liquid flashes inside me.

We both collapse on the chair with heaving chests.

"Sorry. I was hard on you."

"That's was magical. I love it."

His phone's alarm chimes. "It's midnight. Merry Christmas, baby." He sits up, gazing at me with a happy expression.

"Merry Christmas." He leans forward and kisses me.

Mariah Carey's "All I Want for Christmas is you" pops up in my head. A smile draws on my face.

All I want for Christmas is my beast, Jamal Morgan.

Thank you for reading Christmas with My Enemy !

Unwrap your next obsession...

Christmas with My Grumpy Ex by Ja’Nese Dixon is up next.