



Falling for the Babysitter

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1

Remy

The trash smells disgusting. “God, did something crawl in there and die?” my friend Clara says beside me as I wheel the trashcan out to the curb. She’s stayed over for horror movie night, a monthly tradition we’ve held since we were twelve.

I hold my breath, face scrunched up tight. “Yeah, whatever that thing was my mom tried to feed us last night.”

“What was that?” Clara says.

“Tofu.”

“Is that some kind of bird, because if it is, it should be hunted until it’s extinct.”

I laugh. Poor Clara. Her family is strictly meat and potatoes. She never even saw a Brussel sprout until we met. She thought it was the cutest little baby cabbage until she actually tried it. Now she calls them devil warts.

“It’s made from soy beans, I think.”

The sun has just risen. There’s a mist curling off the cement as the day warms up. The sky, with its layers of vibrant orange and yellow, looks like candy corn. A beautiful fall day.

The sprinklers come on with a hiss that startles me at first before I realize what made that sound. We have to sprint across the lawn in bare feet to get to the newspaper before it's ruined. No matter how many times my mom complains, the guy who delivers our newspaper always tosses it onto the lawn instead of the front porch.

I'm shaking off the water droplets when I hear the deep rumble of a pickup truck. I watch as it pulls into Sam's—my neighbor's—driveway. But my neighbor drives a Toyota Prius, so I know it's not him, unless he got a new car. With his office geek appearance, he doesn't really seem like a truck kind of guy, so I doubt it.

The engine turns off and it takes a minute for the driver to exit the vehicle. Then Deacon steps out of the driver's side and my heart explodes in my chest.

"Oh my god," I say, standing there, dumbfounded.

Clara turns toward my neighbor's house. "Holy shit, is that—"

"Yes, it is. Don't stare!" I grab her by the shoulders and twist her body to face me.

"Pretend we're talking," I say.

"We are talking."

"Just stand there so I can stare without being obvious I'm staring," I say as I watch him over her shoulder.

She grumbles. "Fine. But hurry up. It's freezing out here."

Deacon is Sam's brother. He used to own the house, then sold it to Sam after he married. I remember sitting in my old tree house, watching as he loaded his boxes into the U-Haul, half tempted to go next door and put each box back in the house so

he couldn't leave. That was a couple years ago. I haven't seen him since. Until now.

He still looks just as amazing as he did back then. A little more mature, maybe, and thicker with muscle than I remember. Clearly that confident swagger never went away. That's easy to tell even at this distance as he goes to the back door of the truck.

What's not easy to see is what's in the back seat of the truck. I squint to see better. Is that the top of a car seat I see in the back window?

"Is that ..." I start to say, but get distracted and don't finish the thought.

"Is that what?" Clara says, starting to turn around, but I stop her.

"Don't look," I say. "He'll see us watching him."

"Then tell me what's going on!"

I keep watching, holding my breath. Does he have a baby? My heart is thumping so hard I can feel it in my teeth. I stand on the tips of my toes, looking through the mist of sprinkler spray. When I take a step closer, a stream of water hits me dead on in the face. I yelp, and Clara screams as we try to get out of way. Deacon looks over at us, and I pretend I wasn't looking.

When we're out of the way of the sprinkler stream, I glance at him again. That's when Deacon pulls a baby from a car seat.

"Oh my god, he has a baby now," I say.

Clara gets this irritated antsy look on her face. "Can I please look now?"

"Not yet."

Deacon was twenty-five years old when I first started noticing him as something more than just my neighbor like all the rest. I was thirteen. I had the biggest crush on him. It was his smile that first attracted me to him. Some neighbor kids and I were on skateboards out in front of my house. One of the boys I hung out with at the time—my first crush—had built a quarter pipe for us to skate on, and we'd drag it out into the street during the summer while most people were at work and we didn't have to worry about traffic. I was too embarrassed to wear a helmet because I thought it made me look stupid, and I wanted to look good for my crush, so I'd taken it off. Well, like a dumbass, I fell. Not in some big, epic way while doing a trick either. I was skating on a flat surface when my wheel caught a rock and I went face first into the cement.

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“Maybe you should subscribe to the news website instead,” I suggest.

Clara sits at the table and pours herself a cup of coffee.

“I think I will.” My mom tosses it in the trash. “There are pancakes on the counter if you two want any.”

Clara gives me a questioning look. If they’re anything like last night’s dinner monstrosity, she’s out. But luckily it’s just whole wheat pancakes. Healthy but edible.

I put two on each of our plates and smother them with butter and syrup. Then I grab a glass of orange juice and a cup of coffee and sit next to Clara, across the table from my mom. But instead of eating, my mind starts to wander, and I find myself staring out the window. All those feelings I’d harbored for Deacon as a young teen come rushing back. They’re all consuming just as they had been back then. It’s like they’ve been lying dormant, awaiting his arrival.

Back when Deacon still owned the house next door, I used to get home long before my mom. I’d lie in bed and picture him knocking on the front door. When I would answer it, he was there with no shirt on and a bouquet of long stem red roses cradled in baby’s breath. He’d tell me how beautiful I was and how he couldn’t live without me one more second. Our twelve-year age difference never mattered to him in my fantasies. I was all he could ever want or need. In my daydreams he was a hopeless romantic.

I even used to tell people at school I was dating an older man. Because in my heart he was mine. And though I knew it wasn’t true and being together would probably never

happen, I felt that if I said it out loud, tossed it up in the universe, that somehow—like wishing on a star—it would come true. I never said his name or told them he was my neighbor for fear my lies would get back to him, or get him trouble. But I sure as hell hinted at it. Not that anyone actually believed me. Most people thought I was lying. Or, on the off chance I was telling the truth, that the older ‘man’ I always talked about was some freshman in high school.

Sometimes, at night, I would look out my bedroom window and watch him dress. I didn’t think much of it back then, but now I realize I was a total stalker. His window wasn’t large enough to show his whole body when he would change. Just from the waist up. But I had a wonderfully vivid imagination.

“Remy?”

I startle at the sudden sound of my name. “What?”

“Did you hear me?” my mom says. “You were spacing out.”

Clara smirks, and bumps my shoulder. She knows exactly what’s distracting me. She was the only one I ever confessed to about all of my Deacon fantasies.

“Oh, sorry. I was daydreaming. What were you saying?”

She blows at the steam rising from her coffee cup and says, “I was asking if you remember Deacon who used to live next door.”

I try to wipe away any signs of recognition or swooning at the sound of his name off my face.

“Who’s Deacon?” Clara says with that same mischievous tilt of her lips.

I glare at her.

“Vaguely,” I say to my mom.

“Didn’t you used to have a crush on him?” my mom says with a teasing lilt in her voice.

I hold my finger up to keep Clara from making any more comments.

How does my mom know about my crush? Was I that obvious? Or maybe it’s because everyone in the neighborhood had a crush on him at the time and she’s just assuming I was one of them.

“Probably. I was thirteen. I had a crush on everyone,” I say, hoping I sound as nonchalant as I do in my head.

“I talked to him yesterday when he first arrived in town.”

He’s been here an entire day and I’m only now seeing him?

“What did you guys talk about?” I ask, trying to pry more information out of her.

My mom puts her elbows on the table, looking out the window toward the house his brother now owns. “Poor thing got divorced a while ago. His wife left him and the baby in order to go party.”

My eyes open wide. Luckily she doesn’t notice.

That’s so horrible. I can’t imagine anyone wanting to leave Deacon to go party, or for any reason, actually. And who leaves their baby? Deacon and his child are better off without her as far as I’m concerned. While I do feel bad that Deacon had to go

through all of that, I can't say I'm too upset about him being single now. Maybe I actually stand a chance with him ...

I shut that thought down again. Best not to get my hopes up.

"He has a job here in town," my mom continues. "He'll need a babysitter he can trust. I volunteered you for the job. I hope that's okay."

Clara glances at me, a playful twinkle in her eyes. It's not hard to tell what's on my mind, I'm sure.

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“No worries,” I say. “Juice is fine.”

He grabs the bottle from the fridge and pours some into a glass, handing it to me.

“I’ll show you around so you can get a feel for the house, then I’ll introduce you to Bailey.”

The house is two levels. We start on the first level, walking down a long, narrow hall. “If you’re downstairs, this is the guest bathroom,” he says, showing me a small half bath with just a sink and toilet. “And just behind it is the mud room and washing machine in case you need to wash anything. Bailey can be messy and I don’t have much in the way of clean clothes for her at the moment. Everything I have is in storage until I can find a place of my own. I didn’t want to bombard my brother with all of our stuff. I don’t plan to stay too long. He’s not big on kids.”

“I’m so sorry about what happened,” I blurt out without thinking. “With your wife, I mean.”

He turns to look at me, and even though his face still looks friendly, I immediately regret saying it.

“I shouldn’t have said that. It was dumb,” I say, trying to erase whatever damaged I caused by opening my big damn mouth. “I shouldn’t have brought that up. I don’t know what I was thinking. It’s just my mom told me about your conversation with her yesterday, and ...” I let my words trail off, not wanting to say anything else just in case I dig the hole deeper and make things worse.

“No, it’s okay,” he says with a gentle smile. “I’m glad it happened when it did. Bailey is young enough so she won’t remember her mother and she’ll be able to move on from this. If it were to have happened when she was older, it might’ve been devastating. I’m actually excited about moving forward. My marriage was horrible from day one. I lived in a house I didn’t love, with a woman I didn’t love, and I was stuck at a job I hated. This change is actually a good thing.”

I let out a sigh of relief. “Good. I’m glad. You don’t have to worry about Bailey while you’re out working. I love kids and I’m really excited about being here.”

I’m gushing. I can hear the longing in my voice. He has to hear it too. I sound desperate. Maybe he’ll assume it’s just because I need the job and not that I long for him. He can’t possibly know that.

“I’m happy to have you here too,” he says. “Should we go meet Bailey now?”

“Yes, please.”

We head upstairs. As we’re walking, he stops abruptly and turns to me. “Oh, and one other thing—”

The quick stop makes me bump into him and I catch the glass in my hand before it falls, but not before it splashes red juice all over his work clothes and on the floor.

“Oh my god. I’m so sorry,” I say, practically in tears. I’m touching the front of him, trying to wipe the juice away but only making it worse by spreading it around. How many times will I have to apologize to him before he leaves the house?

He looks down at the front of his shirt, arms out. He doesn’t look mad like I thought he would. Instead, he laughs. “That is not your fault. Not at all. I’ll just toss this in the wash before it stains.”

He takes his shirt off right there in front of me. My jaw falls open and I can't help but stare. I think he notices, because he's looking at me differently too. Shy, almost. Maybe he's not used to being shirtless and alone with girls.

"There's still some on your chest," I say, fighting the urge to reach out and touch his smooth skin. His body is as perfect as I imagined it would be. Thick, corded muscle, but not all sinuous like a body builder. More like a man who stays busy and maybe goes to the gym a day or two a week. There's a small patch of hair on his chest, and that stomach ... I have a thing about men's stomachs. His is a lovely washboard. I want to lick him from the trail of hair below his belly button up to his sexy full lips. Wait, who am I kidding? I want to lick everything. I want to taste everything about this man.

"It's fine," he says. "I'm always covered in some kind of mess. It's just part of the territory when you're a parent."

I'd like to cover him in my own kind of mess. I can already feel myself getting wet with him standing here half naked in front of me.

I start to speak, but I'm interrupted by Sam as he comes up the stairs behind me. "What's going on here?" he says.

I hadn't heard him until he spoke. He's a sneaky guy. Makes sense because he looks kind of sneaky. He just has that weasel appearance that I don't like. Maybe it's because he's the one who bought Deacon's house and ruined my most cherished childhood fantasies. I secretly blamed him for Deacon leaving, even though I know it wasn't his fault.

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I contemplate going into Deacon's room. Just to see what it looks like. My guess is it's the one closest to the office so he can be near Bailey. It's the same room he had when this was his house.

Bailey stirs. I glance over at her and she's watching me with a sleepy look on her face. She's the cutest baby I've ever seen and looks so much like Deacon. From what I remember of Deacon's ex, she had dark, nearly black hair and equally dark eyes. Bailey's hair is blonde like her dad's and she even has those same light green eyes too.

"Hi," I say to her, smiling.

Her chin wrinkles and starts to bob. I'm a stranger. She's used to having her dad with her. She must be so scared.

"Oh, sweetie, come here," I say, and pick her up when she starts to cry.

She continues to whimper as I change her. When I'm done, we go downstairs and I make her something to eat. The crying stops and she watches me like a nervous dog would. No yet sure if I'm friend or foe.

We play with toys and when she gets bored of those, I read to her. It doesn't seem to matter what the words are. She's more interested in the sound of my voice. So when we've read through all the books in her small library of children's books, I read to her from the one I brought. It's a cozy mystery. Nothing with potential of scaring her. Just a good who-done-it. She tugs at a set of plastic keys on a ring, playing contently as I read to her.

After a few hours she starts to doze off. By far the easiest baby I've ever taken care of out of all the children I've ever babysat. I carry her to her room. Afraid of waking her, I sit on the floor and hold her on my lap instead of putting her back in the playpen.

I'm still reading to her, wanting her to feel comforted by my voice even if she's asleep. She's in a new home, surrounded by new things, so I don't want her to feel alone or scared. Especially with her dad gone.

Suddenly I have this strange feeling like I'm being watched. When I look up, Deacon is standing there, leaning against the door jam. I have no idea how long he's been watching me.

I smile at him. "She's a big fan of literature. She needs more books. I have a ton of them leftover from my childhood. I'd like to give them to her if that's okay with you," I say.

He has the strangest look on his face. So serious. He looks overwhelmed. Intense. I wonder if he had a bad day at work.

"Yeah, that's fine," he says.

2

Deacon

Seeing Remy sitting there, holding my child so lovingly, wakes something up inside of me. I want her—no, I need her. I never once felt this way about my ex, Karen. It took weeks of dating before I was even attracted to her, if I was being honest. At the time I lived alone in a big house and I just wanted someone to share it with. Somehow I convinced myself it was her, even though I suspected she wasn't the one.

I mean, who offers to suck a guy's dick an hour after they meet? That's what she did on our first date. It never occurred to me until it was too late that she was like that with every man she was with.

With Remy there was an instant connection when I saw her standing at the door. She has this inner light that radiates. The kind of smile that makes everyone else around her want to smile too. There's something so innocent about her, and yet there's no mistaking that she is all women. She brings out urges in me that I've never had before. I want her. I want her more than I've ever wanted anyone before. I need to claim her. She has to be mine.

I hadn't noticed before, but after Sam said something, I'm starting to notice how she's looking at me. I thought maybe there was a mutual spark there between us, but at first I thought it was just wishful thinking. Now I see that it's more than just a friendly look between neighbors. When she was younger, I suspected she might've had a crush on me by the way she was always peeking over the hedges to watch me wash my car. But she was just a kid. I was younger then. I felt younger. After the divorce, things changed. Women look at me still, but when I look at them, I see Karen's face. My ex-wife really did a number on me. She cheated. Slept with men I thought were friends. She went out every night and came home drunk in the early hours of the morning. Even when Bailey was colicky. I was at home with a sick baby, sometimes even winding up in the emergency room with our child while she was out having a good old time, not even bothering to answer my texts. Every time she came home she had a new excuse. Often saying her phone was dead, or she'd forgotten her phone in her car. This coming from a woman who never let it out of her sight. She forgot I knew her better than that. I knew she just couldn't handle the pressure of motherhood, or the monogamy of marriage. I knew that before we got married, but somehow I'd convinced myself she could change.

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“What are you doing?” I whisper to the window.

Her hands slide over her breasts and my cock hardens at the sight of her. When her head tilts back, I know she’s enjoying the feel of her own skin, and I wonder if she’s thinking of me. She glances out her window, looking right at my room. My light is off so I know she can’t see me, but she’s looking. Is she hoping I’m watching? Is she hoping to see me too? Well, I’m watching, sexy girl, so give me a show. She knows her curtains are open. She knows someone might see her. Luckily, Sam’s room is on the other side of the house. She must know that, right? Did she come into my room? I picture her in here, looking through my things, rubbing herself against something that she thinks I might smell. Grinding against my pillow.

Probably not, but the fantasy brings my body to life. I watch her touching, rubbing herself and I reach into my boxers, taking myself in my hand and start to rub. She turns her back to me. I can just see the swell of her hips but nothing below. From this angle it looks as though she’s not wearing panties. She reaches behind her back, unhooking her bra. It drops to the ground.

I’m fully erect, my cock so hard it aches. I jerk it harder, resting my other hand on the windowsill to hold myself up. She’s doing something with her hand in front of her. Has it slipped between her legs? I don’t know, but again, I tell myself that’s what she’s doing. Beating faster, I’m almost there, my breath rushing from my lungs, balls tightening. It’s coming, that pressure, the buildup before the explosion. Stroking, stroking, until finally release.

I lean against the edge of the window, trying to catch my breath. After cleaning up the mess, I watch her until she puts on her nightgown and the light goes off, then I

flop back in bed and finally fall asleep.

3

Remy

Last night while I was in my room I felt as though I were being watched. I don't know if it was Deacon, but I hope it was. I made sure to stand exactly where I knew he'd be able to see me. If I'd have known for sure, I would've shown him more skin. But on the off chance I was facing Sam's room, I didn't want to come off vulgar. The curtains were just open enough to where it might've looked like they came apart by mistake, and I didn't make it entirely obvious I was touching myself. Just hinted at it.

The thought of being watched was so thrilling. I've never been that reckless before. It felt good.

Unable to sleep well since Deacon moved back in next door, I go downstairs, sit at the kitchen, swirling cream and sugar into my coffee. I can't stop thinking about him and how close we came to kissing. What more could've happened between us had Sam not walked in? Much more, I'm sure. We might've even gone for the gold, having wild, passionate sex right there in Sam's house. He would've lost his mind had that happened. I can't help but laugh when picturing his red face, blood pressure boiling over as he walked in on us, the scent of our lovemaking filling the air.

I still can't believe Deacon's into me. All those years pining for him, picturing what it would be like to be with him, fantasizing about him falling in love with me. Then he moved away and I lost all hope. After he left I went on a few dates with boys my own age. I even liked one of them. His name was Trevor. He was tall with dirty blonde hair and light green eyes. He could've been Deacon at a younger age, they were so similar in looks. He liked me too and the relationship was going somewhere. He would climb the side of my house and sneak into my room nearly every night just to

make out, never pushing me to go further than I wanted to. We talked about traveling to Europe after graduation, and he was exciting. Played lacrosse and rode dirt bikes. So different from me. I was a home body. I liked homework and reading and fantasizing about things most girls my age never really thought about, like having a family and settling down.

I thought maybe an adventure was what I needed. How would I really know what I wanted from my future unless I got out and experienced other things?

One night, at a party, Trevor and I almost went all the way. We were kissing, fondling each other. Our clothes were off. He lay on top of me, rubbing against me and it felt amazing. I was even excited to lose my virginity. At the time I thought that's what made a girl a woman, and I really wanted to be a woman.

But just as we were about to take our relationship to the next step, I thought about Deacon. In my head it was Deacon's hands all over me, his lips kissing me, his body against mine. I felt so guilty because not once did I ever think about Trevor during that time. It wasn't fair to him, to be thinking about another man while we were about to have sex for the first time. I stopped him from going any further and ended up breaking up with him the next day. The entire reason our relationship even existed in the first place was because he looked like Deacon. It was wrong. The whole thing was just messed up. That was a year ago and I've been single ever since.

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Deacon is kissing the side of my breast, watching my face with a teasing smile. “How was that?” he asks.

“What the fuck just happened?” I say, breathless and a little confused. How had I been masturbating for years and never knew it could be like that? It’s almost like a betrayal, like my body has been lying to me this entire time.

He buries his face between my breasts and starts laughing. Like, crack-up laughing. I feel kind of dumb, like some ignorant little girl instead of the sexual woman I try to portray myself to be.

“You’ve never had an orgasm before?” he says when he finally stops laughing.

I’m still breathless, my heart pounding in the back of my neck. “Not like that. Nothing close to being like that.”

He looks at me, smug now when he smiles. “Oh, honey, that’s nothing compared to the things I plan to do to you.”

A shiver rolls through me and it feels a little like Christmas right now. I’m so excited I can hardly sit still.

He kisses his way down my body until his head is between my spread legs. At first he just teases me. A nibble here, a bite there. My body reacts. Just knowing he’s down there is enough to turn me on. Then his tongue reaches out, touching that most delicate spot and it’s as though the rest of the world has just slipped away into the abyss. I close my eyes, marveling in the feelings he’s giving me. He sucks at the skin

of my labia, nursing at my clit. Tongue driving deep. Drinking in my excitement. He's so focused. The skin on his forehead tightens as he concentrates on bringing me pleasure.

When he comes up for air, he says, "Your pussy tastes so good." Then he's diving back in. I hold the back of his head, running my fingers through his thick hair.

He fits his entire mouth around my pussy, hungry for it. Sucking and licking as if he's afraid to miss a single drop.

A wonderful warmth spreads through my body, reaching out to my limbs and I lie here feeling as if I'm glowing from the inside out. I've never felt like this. It was always awkward and confusing with other boyfriends when we'd fool around and it was obvious that neither of us had enjoyed the experience as much as we should have. Maybe it's because Deacon is older and more experienced. He seems to know exactly what my body needs exactly when it needs it.

He slips his finger in, and though I've been fingered before—including by myself—it's as if he's found some kind of secret passage, a pleasure center that's been hidden my whole life and only his finger is the key to unlocking it.

I let out a loud moan despite trying to be painfully quiet as not to wake up the baby. It's probably too late for that now. I already cried out more than once.

He tries a second finger. It's an uncomfortably narrow fit. "Jesus, you're tight," he says.

I almost tell him it's because I've never had anything more than one finger in there before. I'm afraid to tell him I'm a virgin, afraid it'll scare him away. I don't want this to stop. I don't want him to think of me as the little kid next door. I'm a woman now, and I don't want to come off as anything else.

I take his hand and move it before he realizes I'm a virgin. "I need you," I tell him. "I want you inside of me."

He climbs his way up my body, kissing me the entire time. While he's on top, he looks at my eyes and he's so insanely handsome. I can't believe this is actually going to happen with him. All of those adolescent fantasies finally coming to life. I can hardly stand the anticipation.

The head of his cock rubs against my clit, both of us wet and slick, driving me wild. He starts to push into me and when he does there's a slight tinge of pain. He stops, hitting my barrier. His brow furrows. There's a long pause, him studying my face before he finally says, "You're a virgin?"

I take a long breath. There's no sense in lying. It's pretty obvious. "I am."

He lets out a disappointed sigh, and my heart clenches. "Remy, your first time should be with someone you care about." He starts to pull out, but I grab his hips, holding him in place.

"There's no one else I would rather lose my virginity to. I've been in love with you since I was thirteen-years-old. No one has ever made me feel the way you have. I've always been waiting for you," I say. "I want to do this with you and only you."

The hunger in his stare intensifies. His lips devour mine, our tongues clashing together, twisting and writhing around each other.

"Are you sure you want this?" he says, breathless, when our lips part. His thumb traces the curve of my bottom lip.

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“Of course I’m sure. I’ve never been more sure about anything in my life,” I say.

He moves the hair out of my eyes and kisses my forehead. “This might hurt.”

“I know. It’s okay,” I assure him. “I want it.”

He reaches down between my legs and starts to rub my clit as he moves the head of his cock in and out of me, slightly pressing against my virgin wall. I let out a moan, my eyes rolling back in my head. It feels amazing.

Then he pushes inside of me. There’s a sharp, knife-like stab as the barrier brakes, a jagged, cutting pain as he drives all the way into me. My breath catches, too startled to make a sound. He doesn’t move, allowing my body to adjust to this new feeling. Suddenly I gasp after holding my breath for so long.

“Hey, are you okay?” he asks, looking down at me with concern.

The pain doesn’t last long. It’s mostly shock that keeps my mouth and eyes open.

I nod my head. “Yeah, I’m fine.”

He kisses my lips and it’s the most gentle, tender kiss anyone has ever given me. He starts to move, sliding in and out of me. This time it feels good. “Is this all right?” he asks. The more he moves, the better it feels.

I close my eyes and smile. “It’s perfect.”

His eyes close, and his face is a combination of pleasure and pain.

“Jesus, your pussy is so fucking tight. You feel amazing.”

He goes slowly at first, and it’s wonderful. If someone would’ve told me how awesome this feels, I might’ve lost my virginity years ago. But all anyone ever talked about was the horrible pain it caused. No one ever said it only lasts a second and once it’s gone, the sex is fucking mind blowing. Either I have shitty friends, or they’ve had shitty sexual experiences. Or maybe it’s just because Deacon knows what the hell he’s doing.

Going slow is fine for a little while, but there’s this need for him, this ache low in my groin. I raise my hips to meet his thrusts until I’m slamming into him, our hip bones colliding.

He smiles. “So you want it harder, huh?”

I grab his ass, squeezing. “Yes, I want you to fuck me,” I demand.

He sits back on his knees, grabbing my legs and resting my ankles on his shoulders. He lifts my ass into the air. The next time he slams into me, he bottoms out and I scream. It’s so deep, this new sensation. Startling, and confusing, and wonderful. Almost painful, but not exactly.

He’s still thrusting hard when he says, “Holy shit, I’ve never felt a cunt so tight. You’re killing me, girl. I don’t think I can hold it in much longer. I’m going to fuck my seed right into your womb.”

His words shock me at first. He’s not wearing a condom. I guess I didn’t really think about that when we started. Once I did, I just figured he’d pull out. I never thought that he would actually want to come inside of me. But now that he says it, I picture

my belly big and round with his child, and I can't think of anything I want more.

"Do it," I say.

"You sure?" he asks.

"Yes, please, do it."

The second the words leave my mouth, he lets out a thunderous growl and I feel his cock spasm inside of me as he shoots his load. I can feel it hot and creamy, coating my walls. When he's drained, we both collapse on the bed together, panting and happy.

4

Deacon

I don't want to go to work. There's nowhere else I want to be other than in this bed with Remy. It's almost frightening how fast I've fallen for her. The connection between us in just these last couple of days surpasses anything Karen and I ever had. Remy is so much more. The fact that she let me come inside of her, and the look of wonder on her face when I told her I wanted to impregnate her, just sets everything in stone. I want her pregnant with my child. I want to see part of me growing inside of her, proof of our love.

I kiss the flat part of her stomach below her belly button, picturing her round and pregnant. I'm starting to get hard again.

"You know you can get pregnant from me coming inside of you?" I ask.

She gives me a teasing look. "Oh, is that how that works?"

“Smart ass. What I meant was ... it could happen and I wouldn’t be upset about it.”

She leans over and kisses me, the most beautiful smile on her face. “Neither would I.”

She sits up and stands. A drop of my cum rolls down the inside of her leg. She walks over to the window and stands in front of it, her perfect naked ass facing me. She has an incredible body. So tight and pert. Seeing her standing there like that has my cock aching.

“Did you watch me last night?” she asks. She breathes on the window, fogging it up to show my fingerprints where I’d leaned against the window to hold myself up while jerking off to her touching herself.

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“You did that on purpose for me to watch, didn’t you?” I say, walking up behind her. I wrap my arms around her.

“I hoped you would,” she says, rubbing her ass against my hard dick.

I slip my cock into her dripping pussy. She gasps.

“Well I did and I stroked myself while I watched.”

Holding onto her belly, I push my cock deep inside of her with hard thrusts. Her tits and the side of her face are pressed against the window. She screams my name. There’s a man walking his dog down on the sidewalk below us. If he looks up he’ll get quite the show. Part of me hopes he looks up and witnesses me fucking this goddess.

“I’m going to fuck my load into you again,” I tell her, pounding, drilling my way into her tight cunt. “I’m going to fill you with my cum and watch your pregnant belly grow.”

Again, to my surprise, she says, “Fuck yes, I want it. I want to be big and round with your child.”

Picturing her naked and pregnant, a big swollen belly, sets me off and I dump another load of cum inside of her. I keep my cock buried in her for several minutes. Once I’m deflated, I finally pull out. Her pussy is so tight, even after all that fucking, she barely drips.

I turn her around to face me. Her breasts are cold to the touch from being pressed against the window. As much as I want to stay here and bask in the afterglow, if I don't get to work, I'll be fired, and that will make starting this new family together much harder than it should be.

She goes over to the bed and lays down, her body spent after the workout it's been given. She wraps the sheets around her waist, leaving her beautiful milky breasts exposed. I lean over and kiss one. I can't help myself. They're just so perfect and silky smooth. She runs her fingers through my hair and lets out the sexiest little moan. I'm already getting turned on again. But there's nothing I can do about it. For one, I will be even later than I already am, and two, I don't want her to be too sore after the two poundings she just took.

"That was amazing," she says.

It was better than amazing. It took sex to a whole other level. "Yes it was."

I still can't believe she was a virgin. I have to admit, being with someone so pure and untouched is every man's fantasy; I'm no exception. It's a caveman thing, I think. Conquering a mountain. Being the first man to plant his flag. I was the first to plant my seed, to hopefully watch it grow. She'll be mine and only mine forever if everything goes right.

I grumble. "I have to get to work," I say reluctantly.

"No time for another quickie?" she says, curling up against me.

I let out a tortured laugh. "You have no idea how tempted I am to do just that, but I can't be later than I already am. As it stands, Sam is going to be pissed. He's the reason I got the job in the first place."

She kisses my arm. “I understand. No need to make Sam hate me more than he already does.”

“He doesn’t hate you,” I say.

“Yes he does.”

“Okay, maybe a little.”

She laughs and it’s a sound that warms up my chest and makes me feel full inside. It lets me know even more than I already do that this thing between us is meant to be. With Remy I feel whole again.

I’m going well over the speed limit to get to work. I’m already late, but the later I am, the worse off I’ll be. Pulling into the space next to Sam’s car, I get out of my pickup and tuck my shirt in. I was hoping to get inside the building undetected, but I’m about halfway there when Sam walks out. He sees me before I can hide behind one of these cars.

He makes a B-line toward me, his crisp gelled hair staying stiff in place despite the breeze. “It’s already starting,” he says, laying into me without even a ‘hello’ first.

“What are you talking about, Sam?”

Normally, a confrontation with my brother would instantly put me in a bad mood, but after what just happened between me and Remy, nothing can get me down. Not even Sam and his doom and gloom.

He says, “You’re making the same mistakes you made with Karen.”

I open my mouth to speak, but Sam talks right over me. “Don’t act like you don’t

know what I'm talking about." He looks me up and down, shaking his head distastefully. Still the high and mighty little shit he always was. "Before you try to deny it, take a good look at yourself. You just started the job I helped you get, and you're already running late." He throws his hands up in frustration. "And for Christ's sake, pull up your zipper."

I fight back a smile. When I yank up my zipper, it makes a short rasp sound. I realize now that Sam will never change. Even as kids he tried micromanaging my life. He worried about everything, always more of a mother than a brother.

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“Remy is going to ruin your life,” he says. “It’s already started.”

There’s no sense in denying my feelings for Remy any longer. I’m obviously not hiding them very well.

“Remy is nothing like Karen. You don’t know her. You’ve never bothered to try,” I say.

He glares at me. “Neither have you until recently.”

His voice is heated, rising loud enough to call attention to our argument. The longer I stand out here, the later I will be for work and the more trouble I’ll be in with my boss. I’m on a probation period for the next couple of months. Though being late to be with Remy was well worth it, I can’t afford to lose this job. Even if it means being stuck most of the day with Sam.

“Keep your voice down,” I hiss. “Not everyone needs to know our business.”

“Well, it’s true,” he says, quieter this time.

Maybe it is true. I never really tried to get to know Remy when I lived next door to her. She was just a kid back then. It would’ve been inappropriate. But I do know she’s nothing like Karen. I’ve watched her grow up. She was the neighborhood sweetheart. All the neighbors used to say what a good kid she was. Like how she used to mow Mrs. Holister’s lawn without being asked and without expecting to be paid for it. She did it because she saw an old woman who was in need. Karen never would’ve done anything like that. She didn’t know what the word charity even meant.

I remember once Remy's mom telling me how Remy used to find battered and broken animals and bring them back home, nursing them back to health. Birds, possums, and even a baby skunk. She's motherly and nurturing. Two things what were never built into Karen's DNA. I saw that from the very beginning of our marriage, but I didn't want it to be true, so I ignored the signs. My eyes are wide open now, and I see Remy for who she really is, and she's exactly what I want.

I should've never been with Karen. I'm glad I was because of Bailey, but if I could've had Bailey with Remy instead, I would've been better off. Karen was rude, hot tempered, and just not a good person in general.

"I know her better than you think I do," I say.

Sam touches my shoulder, but I push him away. "I need to get inside before I get fired," I say and walk past him.

It's a grueling eight hours, but at least I didn't get written up for being late. No one seemed to notice. All day, the only thing I can think about is getting back to Remy. Whatever this thing is between us feels more real than any other relationship I've ever been in before.

I pull into the driveway and see a car parked in front I've never seen before. I go inside and Sam is standing next to an older woman who I've also never seen before.

"Where's Bailey," I ask, assuming Remy must be upstairs with her.

"In her playpen," Sam says. He has a look on his face I don't quite trust. Like he's hiding something.

I go upstairs, taking two steps at a time in a rush to see my daughter and Remy. But when I go into the office, Remy isn't there. Just Bailey, standing up, crying. I pick

her up and go back downstairs.

“What the hell is going on?” I ask, trying not to raise my voice so I don’t upset Bailey more than she already is. “Where’s Remy and why the hell was my daughter alone upstairs crying her eyes out?” I’m pissed, and not doing a very good job at holding in temper in front of this stranger. I know Remy wouldn’t just leave Bailey alone like this. Sam has done something. I feel it in my bones.

“I sent Remy home,” Sam says, raising his chin and setting his shoulders. If I weren’t with my child and this old woman, I would hit that smug look right off his face.

“What do you mean you sent her home?” I demand.

“I didn’t think it was appropriate to have her here anymore, and so I had a babysitting service send someone over. This is Deloris.”

I look at the stranger, my blood boiling over. She has a stern mouth, no trace of the patience or tenderness it takes to watch a busy infant. I’m sure she’s perfectly competent, and no doubt a babysitting service runs background checks, but this isn’t the face I want my child to see day in and day out while I’m working. I want Bailey to feel secure. Remy has a way with her warm smiles and gentle voice of putting people at ease. That’s the face I want my child seeing every day. That’s the face I want to see every day.

“You had no right,” I say, voice dipping dangerously low. I hope he hears the threat in it and isn’t as stupid as he looks.

“Actually, I do. I have every right. This is my house now, and I say who gets to be in it. And I don’t want Remy here,” he says defiantly.

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“You don’t get to say who watches my child. You’ve crossed a line this time.” I look at Deloris and ask, “Is there any way I could get you to stay a little while longer?”

She looks confused. So does Sam. “I suppose I can,” she says.

“Thank you.”

I press my lips against Bailey’s cheek and blow ‘kissy bubbles’ against her cheek. She loves the sound and tickle of it, and is always good for a guaranteed laugh. When I’m sure she’s happy and won’t cry, I hand her off to the sitter. As I walk toward the door, Sam calls out, “Where are you going?”

I slam the door without answering.

I’m on the phone, dialing Remy’s number. She doesn’t pick up. Fear and anger surge through me. What if Sam said something to ruin things between me and Remy permanently. This relationship is new and already full of drama. Remy is smart and beautiful and could have any guy she wants. It’s not like she needs to stay and take this kind of abuse. She might think she’s in love with me after having this crush for years, but how long will it take for her to see this broken life of mine isn’t what she signed up for?

I dial the number again, and again she doesn’t pick up. I want to throw my phone in the street and watch it shatter.

I march across the street. Her mom’s car is out front and once I go to her house and Remy’s mom sees how upset I am, she will know there’s something going on

between me and her daughter. I doubt she will approve. Her daughter is barely out of high school and I'm twelve years older with an infant and an ex-wife. I don't exactly have a great track record with women, but that would've been different had I ever known anyone like Remy.

Remy probably won't want her mom to know about us this early in the game either, but I have to see her. I need to know she's all right.

I knock on the door. Each second that ticks by without it opening feels like an eternity. I'm about to knock harder when it opens. Remy stands in the doorway wearing a summer dress with no bra. Her pert nipples are hard beneath it. It takes all my self-control not to scoop her up and carry her away with me. Her long blonde hair cascades over her sun-kissed shoulders. The skin around her eyes is puffy and red, as though she'd been wiping at them. Had she been crying?

"Did Sam hurt you?" I insist. She won't look at me. I take her chin in my hand and turn her head so our eyes meet. "Tell me."

A tear slides down her cheek. I swear to god there's a bull inside of me about to break out of my skin and go next door to pummel my brother into the ground. I should've known better than to move in with him. He's always been a control freak and always will. But then again, if I hadn't moved in with him, I never would've connected with Remy. That makes dealing with all of Sam's bullshit worth it. Still, I would love to hit the guy right now.

"Sam thinks I'm going to ruin your life," she says in the most fragile voice I've ever heard. It brings out the protective instincts in me, wanting to protect what's mine. I want to wrap my arms around her and make sure no one ever hurts her again.

She continues, "He hired someone else to watch Bailey and told me to leave. He wants me to stay and away and think about all the reasons I'm wrong for you." Her

chin trembles and more tears fall from her eyes. “But I can’t think of a single one. I care about you and Bailey. I would never do anything to hurt either of you.” She pauses, then shakes her head. “But maybe he’s right. How will this ever work between us when your brother already hates me?”

I take her by the shoulders, holding her firmly in my hands. “Fuck Sam. He doesn’t matter. He doesn’t know what I want or what I need in my life.”

I lean forward, kissing her on the lips. She hesitates, then pulls away. “I can’t. My mom’s upstairs.”

I take her by the hand. “What are you doing?” she asks.

“You’ll see.”

I pull her into her backyard. There’s a row of bushes near the fence that separate our two houses. I know that between those bushes is a little clearing where she used to hide. Once, years ago, when I’d bent down to scrub the tires while washing my car, I saw her there, watching me. That was the first time I suspected she had a crush on me. I watched her the entire time through the reflection of the car while I washed it. She never had a clue that I noticed.

The bushes are overgrown compared to how they were back then. No one will be able to see us. Not even from a higher vantage point.

“Remember how you used to watch me wash my car from here?” I say, teasing her.

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She blushes. “If you saw me watching you, why didn’t you ever say anything?”

“I didn’t want to embarrass you.” I smile. “And I kind of liked the attention.”

We squeeze through the space between the bushes. The small clearing is just wide enough to fit our bodies. As soon as we’re hidden, I kiss her. Her arms wrap around my neck, our tongues at war.

I slip my hands beneath her dress, unable to restrain myself any longer. Her panty-clad ass cheeks fit perfectly into my hands. But I want to feel her skin against mine so I slip my hands beneath the fabric and massage. Those beautiful breasts press up against me. The fabric of her dress is so thin I can feel her hard nipples beneath them. I can’t take it anymore. I need her naked. In one quick motion, I’m slipping the dress up over her head. I then slip her panties off.

Her breasts are magnificent. So perky they defy gravity, small areolas and bright pink nipples. I slip one into my mouth while I tease the other one with my fingers. Her moaning sounds drive me crazy. I fight back the animal inside of me that wants to spread her apart and pound its way inside of her. I have to keep reminding myself that up until yesterday she was still a virgin and her body might not be ready for that kind of ravishing yet.

Instead, I take my time, making sure she feels good. I slip my fingers between her folds.

“Damn, you’re so wet,” I say.

“That’s because it likes you,” she says as if her pussy were a kitten I’ve cuddled up with.

“I like it too. So does my cock.”

When she giggles, her muscles flex against my fingers. I groan, knowing how fantastic that would feel against my dick. In due time, I remind myself. Those muscles will flex even stronger when I make her come, and to make her come I need to not rush things.

I find the ridges of her g-spot and start to massage with the tips of my fingers, hooking them, pushing them. Watching Remy’s face as I do this, her eyes grow wide, mouth open, eyes glazed over as she stares at the sky. Her wetness builds up inside, pooling around my fingers. I move them faster.

The little whimpers she’s making are turning into full cries. I lock my lips on to hers so she doesn’t alert anyone who might be hanging around nearby. The last thing I need is for Sam to be wandering around. It’s very possible he’s walking around the neighborhood looking for me.

I break away from our kiss when her cries die down. “Fuck you’re tight,” I say when I try to enter a third finger but it won’t quite fit in.

“Feels so good,” she says, breathless.

Suddenly her body becomes rigid and she starts to spasm. That’s when I really start to pound my fingers into her. Again, my mouth clamps onto hers when she starts to scream. She becomes a puddle in my arms, her muscles spent and weakening from the orgasm. I lay her down on the sundress beneath her. When she finally comes down off her high, she looks at me, blinking as though I’m just now coming into focus.

“Welcome back,” I say, smiling down at her. She has leaves in her hair. I pick them out.

She looks sleepy, her eyes hooded. After the confrontation she had with Sam, she’s probably mentally drained. “That was incredible,” she says. “Why don’t orgasms ever feel like that when I give them to myself?”

I start to think about her alone in her room, in her bed, her fingers inside of her, frantically rubbing, trying to reach that brief moment of release. The look on her face when it finally happens.

My dick is so hard it feels as though it might explode. Yet, I still just want to make her feel good.

“I’m not done with you yet,” I say, patting her on the thigh.

“You better not be,” she says with a sluggish smile.

“I want you on your hand and knees.”

A look of nervousness briefly crosses her face. “Oh, it’s kind of bright out here and …” Her cheeks flush. The redness goes down her neck and chest. “I’m embarrassed for you to see everything.”

I’m not used to women I meet being embarrassed about anything when it comes to their bodies. Probably because most of them used it to get whatever they want. Flashing their bare asses was a bargaining chip. And it always worked. Remy isn’t like that though. She’s not the kind of girl to manipulate a man into getting what she wants.

“It’s okay,” I say, laying delicate kisses on her lips, nose, and chin. “You don’t have

to be embarrassed in front of me ever.” I rub my hand across the soft skin of her flat belly, imagining what it would look like as it grew with my child inside. “I want to see every part of you, learn everything about you, know you inside out.”

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She sits up, kisses me deeply before turning over onto her hands and knees.

My balls clinch when I see this stunning new view of her with her beautiful velvet round ass, and her little pussy glistening wet.

“You’re perfect,” I tell her, not wanting her to get confused by my silence.

I want her in my mouth. I want to taste her, so I dive right in. Lapping at her silky wet fold with my tongue, sucking her clit into my mouth. I lick my way from her clit to her asshole and back again, making sure every part of her gets enough attention.

She tastes as sweet as fruit and smells just as good. Not too strong. Just a hint of her female musk to know she’s turned on.

When my balls start to ache to the point of being uncomfortable, I rise and line up behind her. Holding onto her hips, I ease my way in. Her tunnel is like a warm wet fist around my cock, so tight. It feels remarkable. The satisfied sound she makes is music to my ears. She’s wet enough to where I slide right into her, and in this position, I’m able to reach all the way down to her wall.

She lets out a breath of surprise when I bottom out. I make sure not to press too hard, just easing in and out of her slowly at first. I close my eyes, trying so hard to concentrate on not coming too soon, but this is going to be difficult. I’ve never been a two pump chump. Not even when I was younger, but Remy turns me on so much it’s hard not to.

I find my rhythm and she starts to rock back and forth with me, like it’s a dance

we've done a million times before. I squeeze her ass cheeks, pulling them apart. Jesus, this is one hell of a view. I move faster. Her moaning getting louder.

This hunger inside of me takes over and I start drilling into her. "Fuck, baby, you feel so good. I'm going to fuck you until you're pregnant. Drill my seed right into your womb." I take her by the shoulders and thrust harder. She bites her lip to keep from screaming and alerting her mom who's right inside the house.

"Yes," she demands. "I want it. Blow your load in my pussy. I want your baby."

Her words are enough to send me over the edge. I pump into her two more times, hitting her wall, my cum filling her hot canal.

When I'm done, she collapses on the ground, and I lay up against her, spooning. There's a chill in the air, but after all of that, neither of us is cold.

I wrap my arm around her waist, rubbing her belly, and kissing her shoulder. "You know I care about you, right?" I say.

She rolls over to face me. "I was hoping you did. I don't want to be just a convenient lay."

I brush my thumb over her cheek, mesmerized by that pretty face. "Never. I ... I think I've fallen for you."

"You finally caught up." Her smile shows every one of her perfect white teeth. "I fell for you long ago."

I reach up and scratch the back of my head, feeling like a kid asking a girl to be his girlfriend. "So, um, does this make us a couple?"

“I think it does.”

Relief rolls over me. I can finally call her mine. I begin kissing her, and press her naked body against mine. I never want to let her go.

5

Remy

Two months later

Sam is still being an ass after all this time. I thought he'd get used to Deacon's and my relationship by now. He changed his work schedule so he and Deacon are on the same shift; that way he's home when Deacon is and we have no time to spend with each other in the house. If Deacon and I want to spend time together, we have to leave. That's not necessarily a bad thing, but it would be nice once in a while to sit on the couch with the man I love and his child whom I adore, and just watch TV without Sam's nagging voice in our ears. I want to fall asleep in Deacon's arms without Sam waking us up and telling me I can't stay the night. It's like constantly having a parent around.

I wake up early. I'm not feeling so well. It had been a fitful night of sleep—if you can even call it sleep. Mostly just a lot of tossing and turning. I have the chills and no matter how many blankets I wrap around myself, I can't get warm. The sun streams in through the space between my curtains, piercing my pupils. This headache won't go away and I always feel like I'm going to puke, which, for some reason, makes me constantly yawn. It's getting really annoying.

All night my stomach had been feeling queasy. I don't think it's a stomach bug because right after I throw up, I'm hungry. Usually with a stomach bug, just the thought of food makes me want to hurl. Maybe it's food poisoning—I have been

eating some questionable things lately. It's weird because my whole life I've hated olives. Only crazy people without tongues would eat such vile things, and yet now, even though the smell of them is still gross, I can't seem to get enough of them.

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Scents are tricky too. Say, cake for example, which most people love the smell of, has become completely repulsive. So much so that I would rather spend my time in a Coachella portable outhouse than step near a bakery. Normally my mom's strawberry shampoo is a pleasant smell, but now I have to hold my breath when I walk past her. It's like I suddenly have the nose of a bloodhound.

The scent of bacon wafts up from the kitchen. The greasy smell instantly turns my stomach. Springing up off the mattress, I get out of bed and I trip over some clothes on the floor, knocking everything off my dresser in my rush to the bathroom. Luckily I catch myself before I fall, but I'm not able to catch the perfume bottles before they break. Great. More new scents to make my head swim. I barely make it to the bathroom on time.

"You okay, Remy?" my mom calls from downstairs when she hears all the noise I'm making.

I throw up again and again. My stomach must be the size of a keg because it keeps coming. I'm choking, trying to catch my breath. It takes me a minute to reply. "Yeah, I'm fine," I say, even though I feel the opposite of fine. This is what road kill would feel like if it could feel anything. That's me. Road kill. Not only that, but I look like shit, too. I can see my reflection in an open compact mirror on the countertop. My skin is pasty, dark circles around my eyes that almost look green.

I'm leaning against the cool porcelain, hugging the toilet, when my mom comes into the room to check on me. She puts her back against the door, arms crossing her chest.

"What?" I say, when she gives me that observant mom look.

“You’re pregnant.”

My stomach lurches and again I throw up. I spit into the toilet and groan. “What? No,” I say, wiping my mouth with a wad of toilet paper.

How the hell am I so cold, and yet uncomfortably hot at the same time?

In my head I’m trying to remember my last period. It’s difficult because I’m not one of those girls who keeps track. I’ve never needed to before now, so I haven’t made a habit of it. Now that I think about it, I realize it’s been a while since I last bought feminine hygiene products.

“Oh my god,” I say. For some reason, even though I know it’s physically possible, I thought it would take longer than that to get pregnant. It makes sense, though. Deacon and I fuck like crazy whenever we get the chance—which isn’t nearly enough in my opinion—and he always comes inside of me. Some of our best sex revolves around him telling me he’s going to get me pregnant. It really turns him on, the thought of me carrying his child, and having a big round belly as proof of our lovemaking.

“Come on,” my mom says with a sigh.”

“Where are we going?” Right now I don’t feel like going anywhere. I just want to crawl back in bed and hide under my sheets until this terrible nausea goes away. If it ever does.

“The drug store to get you a pregnancy test.”

After changing out of my pajamas, we go downstairs. I have to keep my shirt over my nose to avoid the breakfast smells. We get into the car. Deacon and Sam are standing outside on their front porch, arguing about something. They glance at us as we drive

by. Deacon waves. Sam glares at me.

“I really don’t like that Sam guy,” my mom says, waving back.

“No one does.”

I want to turn in my seat and look back at Deacon. If he only knew where we were going. I could text him, I guess. But I don’t want to mention pregnancy tests until I know for sure.

The road is too bumpy. I’m starting to think my mom is intentionally finding all the potholes. She turns the station to easy listening. It’s like she’s trying to torture me or something. Maybe she’s pissed about this pregnancy thing. There’s an awkward silence between us. It’s as if I can hear the gears turning in her head. I want to say something too, but I don’t know what.

This is a tricky subject. She’s always had these images in her head of all the grand things I would do with my life, even though all I ever really wanted for myself was to settle down and have a family. When she was my age she wanted to travel the world, live abroad. Study other cultures and see amazing things. She never got the opportunity because she met my dad and accidentally got pregnant. Her family was religious so terminating a pregnancy was out. Her mom threatened to disown her if she decided to give me up for adoption. I’m glad she didn’t and I know she’s glad about that too now. But there’s always been this void in her life, this longing to escape it. She wants things for me that she never got to experience in her own life. She can’t seem to understand why I don’t want those things for myself, too.

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“Maybe the neighborhood is on fire and it’s an evacuation,” I say. Every bad thing imaginable crosses my mind and there’s no way I can ignore it any longer.

“It’s probably just Sam coming to check and see if our curtains match the couch,” Deacon teases.

“Don’t ever mention your brother when we’re having sex,” I say. “I didn’t think there was anything you could possibly do to turn me off, but you might’ve just found the one thing.”

He laughs and smacks me on the butt.

“Please, I need to go check,” I say. “I can’t focus on us until I do.”

Deacon sighs. “All right. I’ll go check it out.”

“No,” I say, climbing off of him and wrapping my robe around me. “You stay and keep that thing hard for when I come back.”

He smiles at me and takes hold of his massive cock, stroking it.

I wink at him and smile. “Good boy.”

I wrap my robe tight around me and tie the belt in a knot. I jog into the living room. When I open the door, I’m not sure what to expect, but it definitely not the person standing in front of me.

The woman doesn't say anything to me at first, just scrutinizes me, looking up and down from my mussed up hair to my bare feet. She's a bit older than me. In her thirties. Closer to Deacon's age. She has bleached hair with long dark roots. Not the kind that's fashionable right now, but the kind a woman gets when she neglects to keep her salon appointments. She wears an oversized hooded sweatshirt and jeans with boots, and too much makeup. Her thin lips and the harsh set of her mouth make her look severe.

"Can I help you?" I ask.

"Where's Deacon?" she says bluntly.

I hear footsteps behind me. I turn. Deacon is standing there with only a pair of sweatpants on. "Who is it?" he asks.

I open the door wider for him to see. His mouth falls open in surprise, then closes, his eyebrows coming together in an angry look. "What the hell are you doing here, Karen?"

Karen? This woman is his ex-wife? I remember her being prettier than she is now. I was so jealous when she came into the picture. She's not ugly, really, just ... harsh. Like someone who is scraping through life by the skin of her teeth. Deacon says she's a drunk and a party girl. I wonder if that includes doing drugs as well, because that's the vibe I'm getting with her.

6

Deacon

I haven't seen my ex since she walked out on me and our child nearly six months ago. Not a phone call. Not a text. One night she drained both our bank accounts, gathered

all of her possessions—and some of mine—and disappeared with a note that simply said, “I can’t do this anymore”.

Now here she is.

At my new house where I’m building a new life. One that was supposed to be Karen-free.

She looks much older than the last time I saw her. Her skin is thin as parchment, hair dry like straw. She looks rode hard and put away wet, as people say. A typical bar fly. All that partying has caught up with her. Not that she was ever stunning to begin with. It wasn’t her looks that attracted me to her, it was her confidence. The way she walked right up to me and said, “You’re taking me on a date.”

I almost said no that day. I should have. But I hadn’t been on a date in a long time and I thought, what the hell. I’d never been attracted to women so outspoken and so confident before. I thought it would be a nice change from the girls I usually dated. I quickly learned that just because something is different doesn’t mean it’s better. But I had my blinders on. Honestly, I don’t know what I was thinking. Looking at her now, I can’t remember a single thing that attracted me to her at all.

“How the fuck did you find me?” I demand.

Remy starts to back away from the door. She didn’t sign up for this. I don’t blame her for not wanting to be part of my drama. Karen isn’t the type of woman someone as sweet and innocent as Remy would want to confront—and she shouldn’t have to. Karen is the type who would smile at her face and as soon as she dropped her guard, yank her back by the hair. I’ve actually seen her do that once before when she was drunk at a club. She did it to one of the bottle girls who she thought looked at me wrong. It got us kicked out and permanently banned from the club.

She was always crazy-jealous. It wasn't like she actually cared about me. But she sure as hell wasn't going to allow anyone else to flirt.

"Sam gave me the address," Karen says.

Remy looks completely shocked. She probably thinks Sam betrayed her after they were becoming so close. But I know that's not the case.

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“Bullshit. Sam would never do that,” I say. If there was one person I know Sam hates more than anyone else, it’s Karen. She was horrible to him from day one.

She smiles smugly. “I pretended I was an insurance provider on the phone and he spilled all your personal info me. Someone should tell that guy he has a big mouth.”

Believe me, I have. He never learns. I plan to give him an earful about it next time we talk.

It makes perfect sense. Karen and her schemes. Some things never change. I would really love to slam the door in her face right now and go back to making love to my beautiful girlfriend who doesn’t deserve to be put through any of this. I can tell Remy doesn’t want to stay, but she does because she wants to be here for me. I don’t want to put her through this anymore.

“Babe, could you make sure I blew out that candle in the room?” I say to her.

She lets out a long sigh of relief and gives me a sympathetic smile. “Sure.”

When she’s gone, I turn back to Karen who watches Remy walk away. “Jesus, Deacon, what is she, twelve?”

“She’s eighteen and far more mature than you ever were,” I snap. “Why are you here?”

I never used to stand up to her. She’s not used to being talked to like this. That self-righteous sneer she gives me says it all. She thinks she can come back here and boss

me around like she used to. Well, fuck that. Not going to happen. Being with Remy has shown me how I deserve to be treated.

The look on her face is a mixture between shock and rage. “I’m here to get my daughter.” She spits the words out like they’re poison on her tongue.

They hit me like a punch in the gut.

“No,” Remy says. I look behind me where she’s standing at the entrance of the hall. She must’ve been eavesdropping. She looks terrified. “You can’t come back here after being gone for months and just take her. You have no right.” Her voice is high-pitched, frightened. She’s practically in tears. She and Bailey had formed an instant bond. Remy’s the only mother Bailey has ever truly known.

“I have every right. I’m her mother,” Karen says, her lip curling into a vaudevillian smile.

“There’s no way in hell I’m letting you anywhere near my daughter. No. Fucking. Way,” I tell her.

Her smile is hideous. Evil. She wants to rip my new family apart. Destroy everything I’ve built. Everything I will fight to death for. I’ve never raised my hand to a woman. Never even entertained the idea. But seeing that look on her face and knowing she plans to take my daughter from me ...

“You’ll have to take me to court for custody,” I say. “No judge will ever hand Bailey over to you. You’re a drunk and have no stability. You’re practically a stranger to her.”

“We’ll see about that. I’m her mother. Children belong with their mothers and any judge will see that. I have a full time job and an apartment of my own. There’s

nothing you can do to stop me.”

I can’t believe she’s doing this. She doesn’t want to be a mother. I know her better than that. So what’s her angle? With the way she keeps looking at Remy, I think I can guess. She probably blew through all the guys she’s been dating—literally and figuratively—and once they saw through her shit, most likely, they dumped her. So, as usual, she comes running back to me. This has happened plenty of times in the past. Like a fool, I always took her back because of my dreams of having the perfect family. Things would be good between us for a while. She would do wifely things: make dinners, do laundry, go shopping. But then she’d always get that itch to go party. One night of going out with the girls led to another night, and another, until it was every night. Then she wouldn’t come home at all.

Now that she knows I’ve moved on, she wants to hurt me. The only way to do that is to go after Bailey. She’s vindictive enough to do it too. I believe that. She’ll fight for custody just to spite me. There’s no way I’m giving my daughter up without a fight.

She shrugs. “I guess I’ll see you in court,” she says and walks away.

I slam the door, feeling sick to my stomach. Remy rushes over and wraps her arms around me.

“Please tell me that didn’t just happen. It’s just a horrible nightmare and we’ll both wake up from it any minute now.”

I rub her back and hold her tight. “I wish I could tell you that’s the case, but it’s not.”

“Bailey is like a daughter to me. I love her so much. That woman will ruin her life,” Remy says.

I sigh. “I know. But Karen’s right. She’s Bailey’s mom. That seems to be important

to judges, even though she's like a toxic mold.”

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“But that woman has been MIA for months. We have a home. Bailey has her own room and her things are here. She would be so scared going and living with a stranger.”

The clenching in my stomach gets worse imagining how scared my child would be with a woman she hardly knows. Enough time has passed that I don’t think Bailey would even recognize her own mother.

“I know, but Karen and I are both single parents. Everyone always sides with the mother.”

“Unless you can provide you have a more stable home,” Remy says eagerly. “Two parents in a loving home is better than one, right?”

“What are you saying?”

“Marry me,” she says.

Surprise cuts my words off. I don’t know what to say other than, “Marry you?”

“Yes, marry me. We can get married and that way when you go to court, a judge will see that Bailey has two loving and devoted parents, a dependable income, and a sibling on the way. Karen might have a job and apartment, but she doesn’t have a home.”

“Remy, I love you. You are the best thing that’s ever happened to me, and I want to marry you more than anything, but I don’t want it to be because you feel you have to

in order to appease a judge,” I tell her.

“That’s not it at all. I love you too. I love Bailey. You and I are going to have a child. There’s nothing holding us back from getting married.”

The fear I’d been harboring starts to fade. “Hold that thought.”

“What? Why?” she says.

“You’ll see.”

I go into the bedroom and into the closet where I find an old suit jacket that doesn’t fit me anymore in the back of the closet. In the pocket is where I hid the ring I bought for Remy. I’ve had it for a month now. I wanted to plan some huge elaborate proposal, get all our friends and family to pull it off, but I guess it’s too late for that now.

I grab the ring and hide it behind my back. Then I stand in front of her. I kiss her lips then get down on one knee. I pull out the box from behind my back. Remy puts her hands to her mouth and I open the velvet box, revealing the princess cut solitaire inside.

“Remy, I love you with all my heart. You’re my soul mate and I want to spend the rest of my life with you and our children. I want to build a life and a home with you and grow old together. Will you marry me?”

She’s laughing and crying at the same time. Holding her hand out, I slip the ring on her finger. It fits perfectly as I knew it would. I’d taken her mom with me to go shopping for it. We’d taken Remy’s high school graduation ring with us to make sure it was the right size.

“Of course I’ll marry you,” she says and wraps her arms around my neck. I know she’s looking at it over my shoulder, because she keeps saying, “It’s so beautiful.”

I pull back and kiss her lips. The kiss deepens. Her hands slip beneath the waist of my sweatpants, finding my ass. She pulls away for a brief moment and says, “We have some unfinished business to attend to.” Then her lips crush against mine once more.

I lift her into my arms and carry her back to the bed. The robe she’s wearing falls open as she lays back on the bed, spreading her legs for me. Her beautiful pussy is still a bit red with friction from the earlier pounding I’d given her that was so rudely interrupted. I kneel in front of her and lick her worked flesh with my tongue to soothe it. She coos as I gently lap at her folds. It doesn’t take long for her to get wet. She’s easily turned on.

“I need you inside of me,” she demands.

I give her clit a kiss and move my way up until I reach her belly which is showing the slightest pooch. I wouldn’t call it a baby bump. Not yet. It’s still just as flat as ever, just a little swollen-looking compared to usual.

I caress the smooth skin. My child is in there. We made that. Us, together. Our love did that.

I continue to kiss my way up her body until I’ve reached her lips. Right now it’s not about fucking and getting each other off—even though that’s definitely about to happen. But instead, it’s about making love to her. Being with her. Being inside of her. Showing her, physically, how much I love her.

She gasps as I enter her. She feels swollen and tight, and slippery wet. Her sheath grips my cock in the best possible way. I thrust my hips, moving in and out of her. She whimpers, begs me not to stop. I don’t. I move faster, harder. Her pussy starts to

clench around me. Grabbing me. Holding me until it takes some serious effort to keep moving. Her muscles milk my cock until I can't take it any longer. With a growl, I release my load inside the most perfect woman I've ever seen. The love of my life.

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“Or ...” I say, caressing the clothed shaft of his cock with the back of my hand.

“I like ‘or,’” he says, and kisses me.

His hand tickles the skin of my lower back, sliding a finger down the crack of my ass. His lips become more eager until he’s kissing me as if his life depended on it. He flips me over onto my back and practically tears my bra and panties off. So it’s going to be like that, I think with sudden excitement. Making slow, passionate love is wonderful. The orgasms are explosive. But there is something about when he fucks me like a mad person that drives me crazy.

I frantically peel his boxers off of him, springing loose his gorgeous cock.

He reaches between us, rolling my clit in his fingers. I moan into his open mouth, encouraging him. His fingers dip into my waiting wet hole. The sticky sound of his fingers slipping in and out of me only seems to make him more frantic, until soon his hand is slapping against me fast and furious, the muscles in his arm taut and flexing. I’m howling as my first orgasm rushes me. The sound of my voice can probably be heard by the entire neighborhood but neither of us cares. Once they see all those cans tied to the truck out front, they’ll understand.

He doesn’t give me time to come down from the first orgasm. Instead he dives face first between my legs. It’s so wet down there, but that doesn’t stop him from devouring every drop of my juices. He’s a fiend for it, delving his tongue in and out, straining to reach more. He licks my asshole too. That’s always a startling feeling and I’m still not used to it. Once the initial shock of it wears off, I let myself slip into the pleasure of the feelings he’s giving me. He’s so thorough, spending as much time

down there as needed to get me to the peak of my arousal. Never in a hurry.

Finally, when I can't take anymore, I say, "Fuck me."

"As you wish," he says. He eagerly slips his cock into me. No hesitation, no teasing with just the head as he sometimes does. It's just full-force penetration. I gasp as he slams into me. With all of his force, he drills into me, the headboard hitting the wall so hard it sounds as though it might punch right through the drywall. Neither of us cares, though. Maybe we will in the morning, but right now it just feels so fucking amazing, neither of us are willing to slow it down.

Grasping his ass cheeks, they flex beneath my hand. My legs are up in the air, arms folded behind my knees to lift my ass higher, getting myself in the best possible position so that he can thrust deeper inside of me. Hard sex with Deacon is always a balancing act between pain and pleasure.

In the beginning, when he would fuck me hard like he's doing now, there was always a fear in the recesses of my mind of bodily harm. He's so big I was afraid he might cause some internal damage. But now my body is used to it and I know I can take it, and so those little tendrils of pain only add to the excitement.

"I love that fucking pussy," he says. Each word lands on a thrust so that there's a pause between each one. "Come for me baby, I want to make you feel good."

Normally I participate in the dirty banter, but I'm right on the cusp of an orgasm. My words don't work. Instead I scream, "Oh fuck!"

We must've reached our peak at the same time, because he lets out a roar and starts fucking me so hard the entire room blurs. And then he stops, his cock twitching inside of me as he releases his load.

When he pulls out of me, our combined juices run down my ass, leaving a wet spot on the bed. Both of us are too out of breath to speak. Instead we curl up together and soon fall asleep.

I'm nervous as we walk into the courthouse. My entire body is shaking as we go through the metal detector. Sam hired the best lawyer middle-class money could buy. It was his wedding gift to us. Deacon has chewed his nails until there's hardly anything left of them. Neither of us says anything as we enter the courtroom. We just clutch each other's hands and hold on for dear life. My mom comes in with us, holding Bailey. We are ready for the fight of our lives.

Karen's lawyer is sitting on the bench, holding his cellphone and texting. He keeps glancing at us and our lawyer. He looks sleazy. Just the type of person someone like Karen would hire. The judge enters the room. We all rise. Then eventually we're given permission to sit.

Still no Karen. All the dread I've been feeling for the past couple of weeks, shifts into something else. Not quite relief yet, because this isn't over. Not yet. But no Karen has to be a good sign, right?

"Where's your client, Mr. Montgomery?" the judge says to Karen's lawyer.

"I'm afraid she's not here."

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“One day,” I tell her. “But I’m not in a rush, Anna.”

“I know.” She pouts, and for a split second, I feel bad for her. Then I remember she chose this.

As if ignoring my comments about what I want, she launches into a new plan.

“Ohh! Brent can set you up with someone from work and we could have a double date. God, I need a night out.”

She is literally the last woman I know who needs a night out. She sends Nicolette to a fancy-pants preschool, has a private chef and a personal driver.

“No thanks, and I doubt Brent would want to help me,” I snort, thinking about her husband and the way he was condescending when I told him that I wouldn’t be taking my father’s money.

“It’s because you aren’t grounded. Once you have your shit together, a husband, a house, and a 401k, then you and Brent will get along.”

I swirl my mimosa, wondering what planet my sister lives on. I love her, I do. But she’s living in a completely different galaxy.

Anna must sense my irritation because she softens her stance. “Listen, I just care about my little sister. You’re twenty-five and don’t have a plan.”

I groan. “I do have a plan. The reality TV show is going to fund my life,” I explain,

circling back to where we started.

Anna raises her hand and signals for the check. “And if you don’t get the job?”

I down the rest of my mimosa. “Then I guess we’ll have to go on that double date.”

* * *

Well. That sucked.

I was so not supposed to eff up that interview. I was supposed to be classy and smart and current. I was supposed to speak clearly and look at the camera.

Instead, I was a bumbling mess of nerves.

A complete disaster.

I was thrown the moment the concept was pitched. I thought the show would entail me making over some mansion in the Hollywood Hills, not designing the interior for a cabin in the woods. My ideas were all wrong. I was thinking gilded tables instead of buffalo plaid.

My design work had not prepared me for this. At all. I couldn’t be less suited for the job.

“Ms. Saint Claire,” a television producer says, stopping me in the hall. “I want you to know I was rooting for you. I saw some of the work you did in the last Seattle City magazine, and it was gorgeous, which is why I brought you in for an interview.”

“Well,” I tell her, swallowing tears. “Thank you for your time. I know I don’t have experience with this sort of design and would be all wrong for the project.”

“I wish this show was a better fit for you.”

I take a deep breath, wishing I hadn't pinned all of my hopes on this, and say goodbye.

* * *

In the hotel lobby, I order a well drink, gin and soda, grateful for the happy hour prices. Sure, I could ask my parents for money, but that has never been my mode of operation. And I'm not destitute. I have a few more projects lined up for the spring, and by then I will have found a few more.

I look down at my phone, not having the courage to text my sister. I swear to God the moment I do she'll be making reservations for our double date.

Instead, I lift my eyes and look down the bar.

A man raises his pint of beer to me, smiling. Unabashedly. They aren't tiptoeing around anything. His eyes say, Slide down, sweetie. Let's make this a night to remember.

I smile back, because, well, it's nice to have someone flirt with me, especially after the afternoon I've had. Especially this someone.

He's the opposite of Brent, even though he's in a dress shirt and tie. His shirtsleeves are rolled up, revealing tattoos on his forearm. He may clean up nice, but it's clear he's rough around the edges. His beard could rival any of the hipsters in town and he has a look that says, Let's do this, baby.

Without hesitation, I pick up my drink and move four seats down the bar.

I may not have gotten a television gig today, but I can certainly end the night with a

bang.

Wilder comes out January 12!