



Master B-0077: Garden of the Gods

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Category: Dark Erotica

Description: With the death of Whitlock, a new home for horror is born... Garden of the Gods GOTG Registry Name: Pistol Stephens Master #: 0077 Occupation: Rockstar Slave preference: b Recruiter #: 21201411 Experience Beginner Intermediate ? Experienced Main Master Notes: Pistol Stephens never had an easy life. Losing his mother to an overdose as a teen, he blamed his father for the hardship of his tragic childhood. It didn't help discovering his deadbeat dad had a few secrets of his own. Secrets...that found their way to the Gardens. His hate can't be denied, and the moment Pistol sees Ashlee, her fate is sealed. His focus is to make her pay for the father's sins. Little does Pistol know, the mystery of Ashlee's past may very well determine his future. Blood is thicker than water...especially when you introduce it to heat. -Elec

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Garden of the Gods

Colorado Springs underground facility

There weren't many things that made me happy. People. Well...people...I couldn't stand them. But shows, speakers, and entertainers, I loved them. I could lose myself when I wasn't the one putting on the show. That was nice. I was always in the spotlight. Always the one on the microphone. Not tonight.

“This is the beta run. Even though you have taken classes, and even though our slaves have been trained, no position as Master or Mistress is set in stone until you can prove you're worthy of the title. So far, you've passed enough tests to make it here to our first auction, but who are you? I'll tell you. You're the wealthy. The powerful. Influential. That got you here, but that's where it ends. Inside the Gardens, you have no name; you have a number. Your identity or status in the outside world means absolutely nothing. Zero. Here, there is no power or favoritism. This is my world, and you are no one. Let that sink in.” He paused, staring us all down. “You are no one. The only thing that connects all of you is ...you're all fucking sick.”

A smiled tugged at my lips as laughter echoed in the large theater-type setting. We were surrounded by luxury: crème-colored silk chairs. Pale lavender velvet accents. The entire space invoked welcome, just as the Main Master, Elec Wexler did through his introduction as he continued.

“Tonight is the first night of endless more auctions. A small majority of you come to us from Whitlock1. Take note, this is not that place. The rules are different. The location is different. Do not mistake me for your old Main Master. I'm not Bram

Whitlock2. The Garden of the Gods will never fall.”

Silence. Bram Whitlock. The Bram Whitlock? So, the rumors among the elite were true.

“For those who are new, let me explain how this works. We start the bidding with the white, or w’s³ for short. These are the virgins. From there, we move to the b’s⁴: or blue.” He paused, raising one of his eyebrows sarcastically. “You guessed it: not virgins. The d’s⁵ will follow. They’re docile, trained, and good for those who are looking for a long-term slave. Lastly, come the black, or as we call them, the crows⁶. They’re not your typical slave. These are the cheap, buy-one-get-one-half-off sort of deals. They’re the convicts. The disfigured. The breeders. Some are plain repulsive.” He shrugged. “And if you’re into it, old. You get it. Like I said, not typical for a place where beauty is the standard.”

“For the Mistresses or those looking for our programmable, ‘blank slate’ 7males, your auction is just through that door off to the right. The information was in your packet, but just in case you missed it, these are the males who have had a portion of their memories erased. They know who they are, but they only remember what we want them to. We’d like to think when it comes to security issues, we’ve learned from the past. Like I said before, we’re in the beta stages, but we’re assured these male slaves are safe. Since we’re doing our own trial run, you can get them at a steal. They will take orders. They will obey no matter what the demand is. Use your imagination. If you’re still having trouble understanding, read more about each of these in the pamphlet.”

He turned, pointing, but continued with his speech. “Some of you are here to spill blood. Some want sex beyond the norm. Here, there are no rules. What you buy is yours. Do with it what you will. Fuck it. Kill it. Eat it.”

The Main Master walked the length of the stage. His towering stance couldn’t be

ignored. I saw it. Everyone did as he continued to take us all in. He wore a black fitted suit with a matching black button-up shirt and tie. His dark hair was on the shorter side. He was in a room full of celebrities. They were some of most beautiful people in the world, and he fit right in with them. What I couldn't stop thinking about was Bram Whitlock. There was no mistaking the resemblance. If I'd heard right, the two men were cousins, so it only made sense that Elec would step in when Bram stepped out.

"If you look down the arm of the chair, you will see a button. Do not." He stopped, turning in a slow circle to view everyone in the room. "Let me say it again so I'm not accused of not making myself clear. Do not... press that button unless you are sure you want to bid. Also...do not continue bidding if you don't have the money. Here, there's no such thing as accidents. If you bid, you buy. If you can't pay, I will take my payment however I see fit. Your business. Your house. Your hand." His eyes narrowed. "Your life. I am not your friend. I am not going to take it easy on you. If you cross me, you're dead. If you lie to me, I will cut out your tongue, and then you will die. Honesty is everything. Remember that."

"The rules are easy if you follow them but being accepted into a place like this comes at a price. You signed a contract to get this far. You know the 'dos and don'ts. Memorize them. It could mean your life if you forget."

Lights raced the length of the circumference, illuminating the edge of the floor and running over the top arches of multiple doorways. Gasps and chatter filled the theater, and heads spun from the stage to the nearest entrance. Beautiful women adorned in sheer, white robes waited for the Main Master's signal. Although a w8 wasn't something I was interested in, I was intrigued to see how this was going to play out. That was if the two men at my side didn't ruin my night, first.

"Now that we got that out of the way, prepare to empty your wallets. This is the fun part. You're about to have your wildest, bloodiest dreams come true. Happy bidding,

Masters and Mistresses. I have no doubts you'll enjoy."

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“No fucking way, Pete; you’re so full of shit.”

“Fuck you, Anthem. Ask Pistol. He knows the truth.”

I stayed quiet, ignoring the argument between my drummer and the kid movie star, Pete Fitzgerald, aka Master B-Thirteen. He wasn’t a kid anymore, but I assumed that didn’t stop him from getting the benefits from his legendary producer father and actress mom. The same went for my drummer, Master, B-Eighty-four, who’s dad happened to own a record label. It’s like no matter where I went, I couldn’t escape the rich and famous. Not in Hollywood, not at the Gardens, and not even at the fucking auction. Maybe I should have expected this after a good hour or two of watching the slaves take their turns. I shouldn’t have sat so close to the stage. It’s not like I didn’t have the money to pay for privacy, I’d just wanted a better view. What I got was two bitch-ass whiners who wouldn’t shut the fuck up and let me enjoy the b’s1 as they took their turns heading for the stage.

Laughter exploded to each side of me at something Anthem said in response. “Fine, you think you know everyone’s secrets. Boxed seat directly to the left. Old man winter up there with the pasty skin. What’s he here for?”

“Ooh, you don’t know?” Pete let out something between a laugh and smug humph. “My dad has a friend named Rosco. Dude is as dirty as they come, but that guy up there is who he works for. Benjamin Gorby.” Pete craned his neck as Anthem and I glanced over. “Weapons. Foreign shit. Mommy fixation. He’ll be here for the crows. For the breast milk and still swollen bellies. What he wants is tit and diaper changes. One of the most powerful men in the world who’s still hung up on Mommy. Ain’t that some shit? Literally.” He laughed, and my teeth grinded into each other, angrily.

“See, I knew you were making this up. Kinks alone won’t get you here, dumbass. He could get that shit anywhere. Especially if he’s as well off as you make it seem.” Anthem rolled his eyes, but I went back to watching the stage. “Besides, there’s no babies here.”

“That’s what you think. There’s a fucking nursery somewhere in this place. I hear kiddies are by demand only though. It’s a not-so-secret-secret amongst those who are interested. Think what you want, but I am not making this up; it’s the truth.”

“How do you know all this? No way this dirty Roscoe guy spilled the beans on the lies you’re telling. I sure as fuck know it wasn’t your father who clued you in. You may be here because of his status, but I doubt he even knows about the Gardens. Mine doesn’t, and he’s a hell of a lot more fucked up than your dad.”

“Of course he doesn’t know. Elliot has connections, but he’s not into the stuff we are. More...prostitutes and trannies. That doesn’t mean his circle isn’t vast. I’ve met many people who are here tonight, in connection with my father. The one who invited me happens to be sitting not far away from us.”

“You’re talking out of your ass and avoiding my question. You’re social, so what. Explain how you know the secret stuff.”

Pete’s lips grew tight. “I can explain without creating an elaborate story. I made a friend who was part of the contracting crew that helped get the apartments ready. Gorby, up there, had a man-sized crib installed in his room. No bed. A crib. And, the closet was filled with extremely large cloth diapers. I don’t think those were meant for the slave if you know what I mean. What else he’s into besides that, I don’t know. What will come out of it, no fucking clue. But that crib and diaper part are one hundred percent real. Do you think he’s wearing one now?”

“Disgusting. I don’t want to know.” Anthem shook his head, and I couldn’t stop the

annoyed sound from escaping my lips.

“Disgusting for who, Mr. Vampire, Werewolf-wannabe?” I snapped. “Did you have your teeth sharpened before you got dressed up in your all-black gothic get-up? I’m sure good ‘ol Ben up there wouldn’t find ripping out throats and drinking blood is all that appealing either. Did you not hear the Main Master? We’re all fucked up. That’s why we’re here. He likes...that shit,” I waved to the side, “you like yours. The whole point of this place is to escape judgement and unleash our true selves without fear of getting in trouble for it. I guess you both were talking so much you missed the fucking memo.”

Lights flashed indicating another winner, and I turned to see a vibrant blue in the distance behind us. The sheer material parted as she started to walk forward, but with how the bidders behind were lifting to stand, they were suddenly blocking my view. I couldn’t see. Next time, I’d be up top. Alone. In the quiet.

“Holy shit,” Anthem breathed out, standing all the way. “I should have bid on her instead. Maybe I will anyway. You have two slaves, Pistol. Maybe I should get another too.”

“Fuck you, Anthem, she’s mine.” Pete pushed to his tiptoes. Both men were standing, and I groaned as I followed suit. Even at six feet, I still couldn’t see much. Blue floated around a curvy body and in-between suits, blonde, wavy hair reached the middle of her back. It covered her breasts as she swept by. I couldn’t see her face, but I couldn’t shake the odd sensation as I watched her climb the stairs and enter the stage. Everyone lowered. Everyone but me. My feet were cemented to the ground, and my spine was stiff as the hood floated back from her head and her pace slowed. Her profile. I would have known her face anywhere. It wasn’t just a soft jaw, full lips, and defined cheekbones. It was the feminine version of me.

“Pistol, sit.”

A hand tugged against the sleeve of my suit, but I still couldn't process words. Nothing made sense, and an odd emptiness burned through my insides only emphasizing the hole that was growing inside of me. Thoughts wouldn't even form outside of the name that repeated in my head. It couldn't be. It wasn't. The drugs and liquor mix were messing with my mind. They were doing this. It had to be, and it wouldn't be the first time. How many shows had I put on barely functioning? Had I not known my songs like air, I wouldn't even be here now. I lived my work. I breathed music. It was my life. This...this was nothing but a mere merging of a memory and a deep-seeded hate from another life I never wanted to remember. After all, wasn't it—wasn't she...part of why I was here?

“Up next, we have slave one-fourteen.”

Doe-shaped eyes blinked, and she turned forward, her chin high as she stared straight ahead. No fear. No emotion at all.

Not me. I lowered, gripping to the arm of my chair like an anchor. With my free hand, I rubbed my eyes, trying to clear the hallucination that had me. It wasn't her. It was her, but it wasn't. Or could I be wrong? Hadn't it been six years since I'd visited Rock Springs? Since I...discovered more than I wanted? Fuck, I was going to be sick. Eight siblings from my deadbeat, trucker father. Eight, and from four different women, in three different states. And she was the only one I'd gone to visit. The only other single child born from his affairs. Texas...Ashlee. She'd barely been a teen back then, but that face. My face. I'd ran after I saw it, and I almost wanted to now. It was mine. His.

A sound left me as I let go of my seat, wiping the sweat away as it began surfacing all over my forehead and cheeks.

“Dude, you're pale as fuck. Are you okay?”

I barely felt the buzzing to each side of me. The room swayed, but I forced my gaze to cut up. Rage. It was making me shake as I took in the zombie blonde who stood on the stage. Her breasts were full, pushing into the fabric, drawing my gaze and immediately making me even angrier at the reaction I felt to them. To any of it. Fury met lust. Lust met loneliness. Loneliness created even more of a need to react. To hurt. To kill.

“Pistol. Pistol Stephens. Hello?”

My head snapped to Anthem, and I bared my teeth, only to stop and grind them together. “Fuck. Off. Give me a minute.”

“You don’t look so good.”

“Because I’m not. Where the fuck did you get that shit from you gave to me earlier? Is it bad?” I went to jerk at my shirt, only to realize I wasn’t wearing anything under the jacket. That’s right. The fancy suit was required, but not the actual shirt underneath, so I hadn’t bothered wearing one. Tattoos covered almost every inch of my body from the neck down, even some on my face, and it was my signature. It helped me deal with the pain. It hid the pretty-boy who’d spent his life getting beat up by peers in the system. It was me. And this me learned to fight back. This me was dangerous.

“Bad? Fuck no my shit isn’t bad. You know better than that. Did you take too much?”

Real concern passed over my drummer’s face as he studied me.

“I don’t know. I...fuck. I’m seeing shit.”

“What? Not from my stuff you’re not. It’s not a fucking hallucinogenic, Pistol. I’ve had the same batch for a week. I bought a brick. It’s good stuff.”

Again, my eyes rose, this time more in horror. And not even because I was afraid. It was quite the opposite. The emotions hitting me were strong. Unfamiliar. Overpowering.

“Stop bidding.”

“Stop?” Anthem threw me a look. “Are you kidding me?”

My gaze shot to Pete. “You too. Stop bidding.”

“Fuck no.”

I reached over, pressing my body into his powerfully as I pushed his hand away from the buzzer.

“I’m dead fucking serious. I said stop.”

“Why, so you can bid on her yourself?”

I turned back to Anthem at his question. Bid. Yes...I could do that. No, I had to do that. There was no other way. If I didn’t take her, someone else would. I couldn’t allow that to happen. Not with what she represented, which was the disaster of my entire childhood and life. She was here, here to die, to be punished, and she was being served to me on a silver platter. If she was going to be the root of anyone’s pleasure or pain—good or bad— that person was me.

“I think I will. Do you really want to try to outbid me? I’ll win. You know I will.”

“Maybe not against me.”

I glared at Pete. “You don’t think so? You won’t get this one. I guarantee it.”

“Then perhaps I’ll make her cost you a fortune just for being a dick. Anthem’s right. You already have two. Why her? What makes this one so special?”

Anthem wouldn’t let his gaze leave my face. He knew something was wrong. Out of all my episodes, I’d never reacted like this. I hated that I couldn’t control this meltdown. Weakness was something I never showed to anyone. The fact that I even appeared vulnerable had me letting out a frustrated sound as I looked back up towards the stage. The slave wasn’t staring ahead anymore. She was looking right at us. At me.

Anthem moved in.

“Pistol, spill it. What is going on? Why not her?”

I clicked my button, swallowing back the need to split skin, fight, or strip flesh. My fist tightened around the buzzer, and I wasn’t even sure I could say the words out loud. Not to one of my only friends, and sure as hell not to myself.

“It doesn’t matter.”

“You’re wrong. It does. I’m about to give you one hell of a fight unless you start talking.”

Pete leaned closer at Anthem’s words, darkness drawing in his unhappy features. Unmasked, the evil shone through, not at all making me flinch or blink in its presence. “That goes for both of us. I’m not stupid. That’s not a stranger you’re freaking out about. You know that girl. Who is she, Pistol?”

My lids closed, only to open and connect with light eyes. Honey brown eyes identical to mine. They were curious. Maybe even afraid as they held my stare from the stage.

“Here, it’s Master Seventy-seven, and I don’t have to tell either of you shit. Push that button if you must, but you’re not going to win. That slave is mine, and the only one she’ll be leaving with is me. Don’t believe me...start bidding and let’s find out.”

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Liquor. I smelled the nauseating stench before I heard a sound behind me. Before the squeeze to my shoulder nearly brought me to my knees. The overwhelming aroma had me holding my breath to escape my past, but it quickly got trapped in my lungs as the pain had me dipping and crying out. I went to turn, unable to see who kept me trapped at the pressure.

“The registration is complete. She’s yours, Master Seventy-seven, and the other two slaves have already been delivered and restrained in your room. If you come across any issues or need a pick-up, there’s a list of numbers in your pamphlet. You’re free to enjoy the party or head back to your room now. Have a nice night, Sir.”

“Thank you...guard.” We both swayed at his weight coming forward. “Mine. Just like I said.” His tone was deep, smooth, just behind my ear, and for the briefest moment the pressure eased. “You. Slave. You’re going to walk, and you’re not going to turn around. One look at me and I’ll drop you. Do you understand?”

The voice was suddenly full of anger. Tears welled in my eyes, but I held them in as I nodded. I had been trained in what to do. I wasn’t stupid like some of the rebellious girls here. There were reasons I couldn’t die.

“Yes, Master.”

“Start walking. Go straight, towards the elevator.”

“Pistol!”

A voice yelled out from behind. Instinct had me wanting to turn, but I knew better.

That name. It rang bells in my memory, but I wasn't sure why. At times, my other life was so far away. Unreachable after giving in to the constant demands and classes I'd undergone. How hard had I let go of my past so I could put all of my strength into becoming a d1? I had wanted it so bad if it meant to live, but I wasn't granted the position. One screw-up. One outburst, and I was condemned to stay a b2. I'd ruined my chance at possibly being safe, and now I wasn't sure what to expect. Death...if the Main Master was right, and all because of my explosive temper. I'd tried so hard, but it was sometimes impossible to separate myself from what was ingrained in the oldest parts of me.

"Pistol, hey, wait up."

"What the fuck did I tell you? You need to call me by my Master name. I'm Seventy-seven and you're Master Eighty-four. I'm not your friend. I'm nothing, just some random fucking guy."

"That's dumb, and I'm too drunk for that shit. Don't tell me you're bailing already? Send the slave back to your apartment and come party with me."

"I have plans. You know, the entire reason we're here? You should go back to your own apartment and see your slave."

"There's plenty of time for that." A sound came from the other man. Relief at the distraction had me trying to relax as best as I could given the circumstances. The grip wasn't painful anymore, just merely there, holding to me. I'd been ready for this night for weeks. Months. Although I was terrified at what it might mean, I was too drugged up on the oil to feel the true effects. There were moments I was fine, and others where it didn't even feel like I was here at all. That was a good thing if this new Master was ready to get right down to hurting me. I needed all the numbing I could get.

“Thirty minutes. That’s all I ask. It’ll give you time to calm from the auction, and you can wind down. Pete...that guy is pissed.”

“Let him be; I don’t care. I told him he wasn’t going to win. Besides, he seemed just as interested in the slave that took this one’s place. He’ll get over it.”

“A few more drinks.”

“I’ve had enough. I’m calling it a night. Stay out of trouble. You can’t talk your way out of the bullshit if you fuck up here. The Main Master isn’t messing around. Got it?”

“Yeah, yeah. I’ll be fine. Go...have fun with your slaves. Three. I should have got me a second.”

The pressure became unbearable again as he squeezed and led me forward. I tried to stand up straight as I kept a fast pace, but I couldn’t with the amount of pain. My body was screaming just as loud as my mind. This Master was here for only one thing, and that was evident as we approached the elevator.

“Well, well. Look who we have here. I should have known you’d make the list.”

The purr of the female voice didn’t slow us down. It was the elevator door being closed that brought us to a halt.

“Aren’t you even going to say hello, or are we playing this game down here too? Number?”

The Master let out an aggravated curse, again loosening his grip. “Seventy-seven. You?”

“Mistress Forty-two.”

“Great.”

“So...three slaves? That’s what I hear. Groupie syndrome?”

“I don’t kill my fans, Lilian. That’d be you from your horrible voice. Is there something you want from me again? More promotion? Another jumpstart to your dying career? Or maybe it’s my dick you’ve been missing. I told you it won’t happen again.”

“Fuck you. You didn’t help my career. If anything it was the other way around. I did very well modeling before I picked up a microphone. I was already well-known.”

“You sure were. You made your way around twice as much as any greedy up-and-coming, didn’t you? I’m just glad I got to it first before the industry got sucked down the black hole of not-so-good pussy.”

“I fucking hate you.”

“I thought you said you loved me?”

The door opened and I was forced forward, only to be spun toward a woman staring at us with the most hatred I’d ever seen. Dark eyeshadow, liner, and mascara accentuated her slanted, brown eyes, and her black hair was straightened, stopping in jagged angles at her bare shoulders. The white dress she wore looked more like a historical wedding gown, bustle and all.

“See you around, Mistress Forty-two.” The doors shut. “Fucking cunt. God, I seriously can’t escape it. Where is my peace?”

Swallowing hard, I tried to stay as still as possible as the man's hand dropped from me. My eyes closed and the darkness only made me aware how much I was trembling. Kill. He'd said kill, which meant the Main Master was right. Pistol, Seventy-seven, had no intention of letting me live. So, why was I standing still? Why wasn't I getting ready to make a break for it once the doors opened? Why? Perhaps I was stupid aside from sedated. My training towards a d wouldn't let me believe there wasn't something I couldn't do to sway my Master's mind. If he could just see I was there to assist. To help with anything he might need, I could take the abuse. Small. Big. I could bear it to live. I needed to live.

Silence played out between us as the elevator doors opened. I stepped forward, crying out and nearly falling backwards as fingers fisted in my hair, ripping me back.

"I didn't say to walk. You wait for me."

"Y-Yes, Master. I'm sorry."

In fast strides I was led out, but we didn't go far. We'd barely made it a few steps into the hallway before he froze. I was tugged back by his continued hold on my hair, not sure what to do as his face buried in the side of my neck. With his other hand, he flattened it on my stomach, flexing his fingers as he held still. I tried to stay soft, not rigid against him. Inviting. Calm. A refuge, like I'd been taught. I tried...when all I wanted to do was cry at the overwhelmingness of it.

"I can be a good slave," I said, softly, holding in the sob. "I would be honored to do anything you wished of me. If my Master would just give me a chance—"

The hand from my hair came to wrap across my mouth, holding securely as the smell of liquor engulfed me. Breaths became heavier as his other arm came to lock around my stomach too.

“Anything?”

The barricade over my mouth flattened harder, and he used it to angle my head to the side. Teeth raked alongside my throat, tugging at my skin as they headed towards the junction of my collarbone. I was shaking against his hard body, being squeezed tighter as he wrapped himself around me. A sound of pain forced its way free, muffling against his palm, and he let me go, pushing me forward, roughly.

“Two doors down. Wait for me. Do not move.”

I did as I was told, stopping and remaining straight as I stared inches from metal. My Master was in my peripheral, digging through his pockets. He took his time, even snorting something before continuously sniffing and clearing his throat. When he joined me and slid the card into the lock, I didn’t go inside when he pushed the door open. I waited for instruction, just like he wanted.

“Ooh. You learn fast.” He gave me a shove. “In. Take that hideous blue robe off and kneel next to the sofa.”

The sheer, bright color pooled at my feet, and I kept my pace steady but not overeager as I obeyed. Footsteps stomped off to the side, and I didn’t dare look to see where they were going. My stare stayed at the bare, black wall ahead, losing myself in the color as my mind began to fade from the adrenaline again. My breathing slowed. My body slightly swayed. Despite a female cry sounding in the distance, I kept in my trance, letting the time drag out as random bangs sounded. Crinkling. Something heavy dropping. My line of vision was disrupted by a blur of colors. What I thought was a possible tarp or blanket was placed down. Then a good size tin tub over it. Tears blinded me and I let them. I didn’t sob. I didn’t cry. If I were going to die, I’d stay here. Right in this nothingness I was losing myself to.

“I can’t stand to look at you. You shouldn’t even be here. Not...alive. Not at all. Did

you have a good life? A nice family? Or maybe you suffered like me. Suffering is good. You learn. You fucking survive.”

Whatever the Master was talking about, I wasn’t sure he was truly talking to me. He was drunk. On drugs from what I picked up in the hall. I wouldn’t play into his intoxicated ramblings. It would increase his anger. They’d taught me that.

Stare ahead.

Keep emotions out of it.

Calm.

Serene.

Stay composed.

A tear dropped down my face and I was reminded of my failures and why I was a blue to even begin with. Hadn’t the same thing happened when I lost my temper. It all started with a tear. The screaming in my face. The name calling. The abuse. I snapped and lost it. I tried to defend myself and fight back instead of taking the beating and rape like I was meant to. It was only one time, but it was enough. All the months of training...gone in the blink of a moment to what...land me here?

“Don’t you fucking cry. You don’t deserve to cry! Do you know who does? My mother. But she didn’t. Not once. Not a single goddamn time. She died strong despite it being his fault she got sick to begin with. He took her from me. Left me alone at fourteen with the memory of a junkie mother. Did he do that to you too? I doubt it,” he answered. “You had it all. I bet he even sent you cards in the mail and gifts for Christmas. Did you have nice things like that?”

Still, I remained silent, staring ahead. Another tear fell, but the Master didn't see as he turned and left me again. Scuffling echoed and more color was returning. I blinked, not allowing myself to lose sight of the wall. I kept ahead...until I didn't have a choice. The Master pushed a slave down right in my line of vision, kneeling behind to wrap around her restrained body as he glared at me. For seconds as I stared into his tattooed face, I couldn't catch my breath. Despite not being able to see him clearly as I stared down at him in the audience, I knew this man. The lights had been so bright. Blinding, but I could glimpse his gorgeous face, here and there. He'd bid, and although I hadn't known until this moment, he was the one who won. He was clear now with his bleached short hair. A small tattoo of a gun was pointed towards his eye, and there was a money symbol above, a diamond below, and the word lethal above his eyebrow. On the opposite side, a snake slithering from his upper cheek, through his temple, and around his forehead. Nothing stuck out as a trigger to my memory, but...I couldn't shake his familiarity. There was something about his face. His eyes. I couldn't stop staring into them.

Pistol. Pistol. Pistol.

My gaze went to the gun as the name the other Master had called him repeated.

Pistol.

No, it sounded familiar, but it didn't ring a bell. If he was famous or well-known, I couldn't place it. There'd been no time to focus on trends or have dates with girlfriends. Not when all my time went to working and helping my mom pay bills so we could keep a roof over all of our heads. Me, my mom, and Kyle. He was barely four now. Were they okay?

My lids stayed down longer at the thought. I wouldn't think of them. I couldn't. She was fine. My mom raised me okay on her own before I was old enough to help. She'd be okay taking care of Kyle too.

“Open your eyes and look at her.”

A sob exploded from the girl's mouth as he fisted her hair and the tip of a blade pressed into the side of her neck. Air wouldn't come. My stare scanned over her beautiful round face. She had blue eyes and long brown hair. Her bottom lip quivered constantly as her gaze begged me for something I couldn't give: help.

“Do you see what you've done?”

The knife pushed in a good half inch, and I sucked in a breath as the girl let out a deafening scream. Blood ran down her pale skin like the serpent on my Master. She fought while he kept the weapon in place, slowly cutting microscopically as his stare stayed on me.

“You did this. Just looking at you, I can't help myself. I despise you with everything I am. You make me sick. Don't you dare take your eyes off of her. See what you do. Don't miss a thing.”

Although I wanted to disappear or do something, I kept cemented like a statue, obeying his order while she screamed. The slave kept pulling against the hold he had on her hair, but with her hands locked together behind her back, the Master had control. The slit in her neck was getting longer, deeper and beginning to split open as his eyes closed and he rubbed his face against the side of her head. The act was so...intimate as time drug out, it was hard to keep still and not turn away. The color was almost gone from her complexion. The drip-drip of the blood was bouncing against tin.

Frantically, her eyes sprung wide despite they were starting to droop. Her mouth searched for oxygen, but no sound remained. Only a shocked silence and tiny gasps of air. Crimson stained the inside of her lips and tongue and still, she tried flinging her shoulders away. There was no helping her now as the blade reached towards the

middle. My Master was starting to slice faster. Blood was gushing out of her neck and spilling from her mouth, dinging against the tin louder as his awareness began to return. Although I looked at her like he ordered, I knew his stare was back on me.

Ragged breaths began filling the space and a growl came from him as he jerked the knife, splitting the rest of her neck wide open. My mouth parted at the brutality, dropping open entirely as he wrapped his arm around her chest and gave hard, awkward tugs. For minutes he jerked and cut against the severed head, fighting the thick muscle and skin that kept her together. Blood splattered over my nude body and face at the jerks, and a deafening yell full of anger filled the living room as he used his strength to pull her head off completely. Heavy, broken-up pants left him, and I fought the urge to pass out as he launched the head right at my chest. It hit with a wet, stinging thud, nearly knocking me over.

“A gift, dear slave. May we both be lucky, and the next head removed belongs to you.”

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“Please. Blue, please. I can’t wait any longer. I’m begging you. Blue.”

My lids cracked open. Pounding immediately made me wince as I flattened my hand on the floor. A whimpering mixed with chains in the distance, and memories exploded through as I caught the blood covering my arms and hands. Shit, it was all over me.

Pushing myself up, I stopped on my knees, meeting Ashlee’s swollen, bloodshot eyes. Had I been praying through my fucked-up state that it wasn’t her? That I was wrong? I wasn’t. Her body was still trembling. Still kneeling and staring towards the wall exactly like I’d last seen her. Except now I was in her path, making her look at me. Blood was splattered over her face. Not smeared. Not wiped away. It covered and streaked over her chest and shoulder from where I’d...Fuck.

Had last night really happened? Had I...

Inches from her thigh rested the other slave’s head. I groaned, bringing my hand up to cover my pounding eyes.

“Master. Master, please. Can I be uncuffed? Master, please. I have to go to the bathroom.”

Another slave. Yes. I had bought three.

I dropped my hand, looking back at the one person I never wanted to see again. What had I been thinking, buying her? It was a mistake. One I couldn’t do anything about now. I should have let Anthem tear out her throat, or Pete do...whatever it was he

did. She was trouble, and her presence would take me down a road I wasn't sure I was ready for. Could I face my past? Or this...eating away of my insides from what I was missing? I couldn't even understand what 'it' was.

“Go let the slave free and you both clean yourselves up.”

“As you wish, Master.”

Her throat was raspy. Raw. My gaze raked over her form as she rose on shaky legs. Each step was stiff as she made her way to the bedroom. That Ashlee had stayed awake the entire time and not moved was surprising, but not something I wanted to think about. I stood, heading to the sink to down a glass of water. My hand reached for the counter, and I closed my eyes, reliving the flashes that had my heart racing all over again. My cock hardened, and I made a sound as I pressed into the countertop. God, I wanted it again. The blood. The death. It wasn't my first time to kill, but it sure as hell was the first time I hadn't had to worry about it, and that made all the difference. So much, I'd completely crashed and burned. I'd even thrown up at one point if I could recall, but...it was such a blur with how fucked up I had been. So...unreal.

I chugged back more water, cringing through the migraine starting to take over. Putting down the glass, I started opening cabinets. Nothing but plates and more glasses. Drawer after drawer, I searched for some sort of pain relief. As easily as I could have medicated with what got me here, I needed to think. To relive last night with a clear head. One that wasn't about to explode.

“Fuck. Come on.” Silverware slid to the front at my pull, only to slide back as I slammed it shut. Movement caught my attention, but I ignored it as I kept searching. Each minute was a torment I wasn't wanting to deal with.

“Master?”

I ignored the voice, moving to the cabinet below the sink, knowing what I was looking for wasn't down there.

“Master, I believe I can help.”

My head lifted as I glared. I took in the bottle, only to come back up to Ashlee's cautious face. Her hair was still wet, and she was wearing a white spaghetti strap slip. It did little to hide what was underneath. Damn her shower had been fast, or had I been wandering around the kitchen longer than I thought? Had I checked these drawers more than once?

“Did I tell you to dress?”

I went forward, snatching the bottle, and watching as her hands instantly rose to the straps. Morality battled making me want to lash out all over again.

“Forgive me, Master. After you said how much I disgusted you, I thought you would like me to cover myself. I'll take it off.”

My narrowed eyes lifted as I opened the bottle, pouring out two pills to my palm and immediately throwing them back to swallow. A strap fell down her bicep and I shook my head as she reached for the other.

“Leave it on for now.”

“Of course. Are you hungry? I can make you something to eat. I had special training here on a variety of different foods. I would be more than happy to try to make anything you wish.”

“You keep saying ‘wish’. What I wish is for you to leave me alone so I can think.”

She gave a nod, heading back to where she'd been kneeling before. I let her, trying to ignore how much my eyes kept drifting that way. The pull to take in her face, to study every single line and expression she could make and compare it with my own was overwhelming. How could someone who didn't share both parents look so similar? Fuck, if I wasn't a good ten years older than her, we could have been twins. My hair may have been white, but naturally it was just as blonde as hers. And as much as I wanted to walk around and keep staring, it was equally just as hard to see my father in feminine form staring back at me. I could barely look at myself. Now to have to constantly look at her too? I didn't know how not to fuck myself over at every turn. It burned my stomach, or maybe I truly did need something to eat. When was the last time I'd had a real meal that wasn't booze or drugs?

"I changed my mind. I am hungry. I made a list of what I ate before I came here, so I think there's food. Make me something."

No glance in my direction. No smile or emotion. Ashlee sprung to her feet, keeping a fast pace as she headed for the kitchen. Footsteps had me turning and the other slave jerked to a stop at the body on the floor. Shades of color left her face and she turned to face the wall, going right into the kneeling position like Ashlee had. I grabbed my phone from the end table, lifting the stack of papers. The number I needed was listed amongst everything from the guard to restaurants to even a number to hit for movie times.

Ringin g filled my ear, and a male voice quickly came through.

"This is Master Seventy-seven in room nine-oh-four. I need a pickup."

"Due to the number of calls, arrival time will be in roughly twenty minutes."

"Thanks." My brow crinkled as I pulled the phone back and ended the call.

Twenty minutes. Hell, I wasn't going to complain. It's not like I had to bury or get rid of the body myself. Although, it'd been years since I'd been here. And it's not like I killed often. Only twice when episodes and drugs overtook me. Luck had been on my side, until my secret was exposed by the same person who invited me here. Blackmail? Not for me. I would have given them every penny I had for this spot, and it couldn't have come at a better time.

Pans clinked and I winced, shutting my eyes to the pain. I could have fallen asleep standing had it not been for the sudden whiff of flowers I'd gotten. Gardenia? No...lavender?

My eyes opened to see Ashlee holding out water. My teeth gritted and before I could yell at her, knocking sounded. I grabbed the glass, turning to the door. Where I'd been thinking it was the guard, I internally groaned at Anthem pushing his way in. Deep claw marks were embedded to the side of his neck and his eyes were nearly black they were so dilated. He barely made it in when his head reared back at the mess on my floor. Even the tub was still there thickened with clotted and dried blood.

"Fuck, you weren't joking about needing this last night." His boot pressed into the head on the floor sending it awkwardly rolling a good foot or two. I'd been holding the corpse's hand when I fell asleep. I didn't want to remember that right now.

More banging. I glanced over, the sound pulling Anthem from the living room.

"Breakfast. Excellent. I'm starving. What are we having?"

"You," I said walking forward, "are going to make your own slave cook for you."

"I can't. She's dead. Is that eggs? Do you have stuff for pancakes?"

Ashlee glanced at me, refusing to look at Anthem as she continued collecting

ingredients and getting everything together.

“There are tons of restaurants. You’re eating there. Just because it’s not night doesn’t mean I’m finished. Your slave is dead. Mine aren’t.”

“I’m pissed I didn’t get two. Months of waiting all for a matter of hours. You were smart. I won’t make that mistake again. Hey, did you bring your guitar?”

My eyes closed through the increasing throb in my head.

“Anthem, get the fuck out of my apartment until I invite you over. If you’re still here when my eyes open, I’m throwing you out.”

“No need to get pissy. Can’t I just stay for breakfast?”

Opening my eyes was a mistake. The way his stare was fixated on Ashlee’s ass had me fisting his shirt before I could stop myself.

“Get...the fuck out of my place.”

“Fine. Fine. Shit, man. Take a few hits and chill out. We’re all good.”

“We’re not. I said I’m not done. Leave until I call.”

He gave a jerk, throwing me a look as he headed for the door. The moment it shut, my eyes shot back to the kitchen. Back to Ashlee: Miss Perfect in every goddamn way. She didn’t dare break the focus on her task as I headed right for her on a warpath.

She might not have been at fault for Anthem’s actions, but I couldn’t stop the possessiveness rolling through. I’d had a hell of a fight trying to obtain her. In truth,

what she cost me only added to my deep seeded hate. Five slaves. That's how many were equivalent to her price. Hell, maybe six if I didn't care at all for looks.

"Turn."

Honey brown eyes held worry as she spun and briefly met my gaze. Immediately, her stare lowered, settling on my bare, bloody chest. I was still a mess. Still dirty as fuck, and the flowery scent I detected from her only reminded me of that. It drew me so close, I was pinning her into the counter.

"You know I'm pissed, and you know why."

"His eyes were on me. I could feel them. I didn't look." Her voice cracked, and she grew quiet as she kept staring at my chest.

"You're not as stupid as I thought. Or a liar which just saved your ass. One look at him, and I'll kill you. One word. One anything towards him or anyone else, and you're dead. Do you understand?"

Blonde hair bounced as her head nodded. "Yes, Master."

My finger pushed under her chin, tilting her head up. Still, she averted her eyes.

"Look at me." Instant connection. My lips parted while I searched for words. Searched for anything to say. I couldn't force myself free of the pull to her golden depths. Such...sadness. Heartbreak? Fear. And it wrapped itself around me like a blanket, like something we shared, softening me as I pushed even more against her.

"Master."

It wasn't a question, but she was breathless through the whisper. It was so low, had I

not looked down and fixated on her lips, I might not have heard or made sense of it at all. Fuck, what the hell was wrong with me? I stepped back, feeling the rage return. Lust, it had me nearly spinning her to take her right then and there. How? I didn't understand it any more than I hated how it consumed me. Hated her, my father, and the tons of other damn siblings I had, all thanks to that piece of shit. We were all doomed. All...ruined in one way or another because of him. Bad genes. Bad blood. Hadn't my mother said that referring to my father once during one of her episodes?

"Make my damn food. I'm jumping in the shower. You can open the door for the guards when they arrive." My voice raised. "Guards only. When I get out, if either of you are anywhere different than where you are right now, I will slit your throat on the spot. Don't believe me, ask headless Heidi over there. Give me an excuse. I'm begging you."

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There was something about purpose that could completely transform the state of mind for a person. It didn't have to be big or even grand. So long as it was serving, that's all anyone needed to continue carrying on. At least me.

As I scrubbed the blood from where the head had been on the wooden floor, I almost wanted to smile. I was cleaning. My Master was eating. So far, I was still alive. Perhaps I expected him to be dramatic about it, throwing the meal across the room like Lionel, my mother's ex had a habit of doing. Or maybe I thought he might toss it in the trash for it not being good enough. So far, that wasn't the case. And something as simple as him enjoying what I made left me feeling...relieved. Maybe even slightly giddy, which was ridiculous, but it was the truth. It wasn't a big accomplishment, but it was something in months full of nothings.

"You, by the wall, go see if I have any hot sauce."

"Yes, Master."

My eyes stayed down at the bloody, soapy water. Footsteps padded against the far side of the room, and I followed them to the kitchen. Should I tell her it was on the second level of the refrigerator door? No. The less attention I brought to myself, the better. I'd stay like this. Take my time. Make sure not a speck of blood remained.

"They taught you to cook here?"

Instinct wanted me to lift my head, but I continued to scrub.

"I took many classes for a variety of different things, Master. I had hopes of

becoming a d1, but I'm afraid it didn't work out. The meal you're eating now is the first I learned to cook when I was young. Eggs, bacon, and fried potatoes. It's a common breakfast from the area I'm from. You didn't have tortillas though...or flour, or I could have made them from scratch. I used to enjoy doing that."

The sarcastic laugh was barely audible, but it didn't escape me. Something about it stirred my blood in a bad way. It was mocking to a life I missed more than anything and it made my heart ache unbearably.

"Elaborate breakfast. It must have been nice growing up with such pleasantries. I was lucky to eat sometimes. Breakfast is whatever I managed to scrounge up. Sounds like you fared just fine."

Anger left me scrubbing harder. What did this Master know about my life or what I had to endure? He didn't have a clue what I had gone through, or what traumatic horrors I'd had to face. He may have been a victim of circumstance, but it's not like he was the only one in the world who had ever faced hard times.

"I bet every meal was a feast for you. Was it three courses or four? Let me guess, you even had dessert after dinner too. Probably even a snack before you got tucked into your soft, cozy bed.

"No. Not even close."

"Don't get modest now, Miss Perfect. Did you enjoy your fancy food? I bet you lived like a little princess."

"Sure. I even wore my crown as my mother fucked the butcher just to make sure she could feed me. Great memories. At least we didn't go hungry though."

The clinking had my stare shooting up and mouth snapping shut. Narrowed eyes

displayed emotion I couldn't begin to read.

"Forgive me, Master. I didn't mean...I...I'm sorry." Faster I scrubbed, grabbing the towel and soaking up all the water I could. I needed to kneel. To keep my mouth shut before I said something that got me more than a death glare.

"So, your mother fucked for food—

"Only once that I know of. I was young and she asked to work for it, but." I stopped. "I wasn't supposed to hear."

"Big deal. I bet you still had a nice house to live in. Let me guess...relatively new, one-story on a corner lot. I bet it even had a white picket fence portraying the perfect family that lived inside." He paused. "Bikes on the front lawn. Sprinkler going as you and the neighborhood kids ran through the water, having the time of your lives."

My brow was drawn in as I stared at the floor. The memory was one I knew well. One I cherished above most, but...only because it was the last good days I had before...

"Once," I whispered. "My aunt had a house just like that. We lived there for a little while so my mom could save for us a place but." I stopped. "Once."

The Master grew quiet, but only for a moment. "Didn't you have a father to help the two of you out?"

I laughed, angrily, scrubbing so hard I was sure I was scratching right through the wood. I couldn't stop myself at the bitterness that flooded through. By a miracle, I managed to prevent my eyes from cutting up at the heat that boiled my insides. I shouldn't keep talking. I was manageable when I was silent. Even pleasant, but not speaking about this subject.

“Answer, slave. Tell me about your father.”

“What father? What are those: boyfriends? Liars? Fathers barely exist anymore. There is no such thing. Not for me.” I snatched the towel from the floor, fisting it as I tried to calm myself. “May I clean this up now, so that I can get back to kneeling?”

Silence. It reigned long enough to have my eyes lifting to the livid source who stared me down. It was enough to have fear overtaking all other emotions I felt.

Had I lost my mind? Had I gone dense in the last few minutes? I’d just been happy with my purpose. One mention of my past and I was ruining it all over again. This time wasn’t training. This time I could very well be killed on the spot.

“Forgive me, Master. I’m afraid I wasn’t prepared for how upset your questions would make me. My life wasn’t easy.”

“I’ll be the judge of that. What’s the worst thing that’s ever happened to you because of your circumstances? Listening to Mommy fuck? Having no daddy? And fucking look at me when you start talking. I’ll know if you’re lying, so you better not even think about giving me some bullshit sob story that’s not true.”

Tears. No way was I going to cry over this. That life didn’t exist anymore. It was words...it was gone from me now.

“I’m assuming you mean aside from this part, here?” I met his eyes and he nodded. I took a deep breath waiting as the other slave handed him his hot sauce.

“Talk.”

As he poured, I searched where to even begin. We’d always been poor. My mother didn’t make it a habit to fuck people to take care of us. She was an extremely hard

worker, but there were times we needed to survive, so she did things she didn't want. That wasn't even the worst of it. I wasn't even upset by it, which had to show how bad off psychologically that I didn't even care.

"My mom dated a few guys throughout my life. She was pretty protective over me, so she didn't really get serious with any of them until I was older. She worked a lot back then and I guess...well, I stayed a lot with friends so I wouldn't be alone. Or...one friend."

"So, what, you were raised by your friend's family? Let me guess, they were mean to you."

"No. Quite the opposite. At first it was wonderful. I liked being there a lot. Bailey was my best friend, and her family loved me." My eyes rolled as I tried to stop the tears. "For a while, it was fine. It was a few months before I turned thirteen when bad things started to happen."

"Bad things, how?"

I let go of the towel, ringing my hands. "The normal bad stuff."

"What? Someone touched you?"

"You could say that."

"Who? The brother? Father?"

My Master's face blurred, almost unrecognizable as I tried pushing back the memories.

"Her stepdad. It started off as small things. A touch here. A hold a little too long,

there. I thought maybe I was getting uncomfortable for the wrong reasons. He'd lay on the ground and ask us for backrubs. I didn't understand it. Weeks went by. I...almost didn't go back but my mom kept asking questions, and I thought maybe it was all in my head."

"So? You told her you were being molested? I'm assuming that's what this is all about."

Anger. It was in every word he spoke. My head shook, and I almost couldn't go on.

"Not quite. Back then. That night." I bit into my bottom lip searching for the words. "Seth got wasted worse than he usually did. I mean, usually he had a few beers while barbequing, but Rebecca, Bailey's mom was out of town. He was different. He kept tossing back shots of liquor. The way he kept looking at me, I didn't like it. I told Bailey I was sick, and I was going home. It was already dark, and I only lived a block away. I left and it was fine, but I barely made it in the house when Seth came pulling up in his truck. My mom was at work so I—"

The Master let out a groan. "Let me guess, this is the part where he rapes you."

I stiffened, the tears spilling over at his callousness.

"He did. He got me pregnant. I was barely fourteen."

"Wait." His head shook. "You're serious."

"Did you think I was lying?"

"Yes." The Master stopped. "He raped you and got you pregnant?"

"Yes. I have a son. His name is Kyle. He's four. He's probably with my mom now.

He was at daycare when I was taken to be brought here.”

Whatever was going through my Master’s mind, I couldn’t read. There was a blankness, but a hard one taking over his face. The plate was thrust to the side and the other slave ran over to grab it as she headed back for the kitchen.

“I don’t believe you. You’re lying.”

“I’m not.”

“You better be fucking lying.”

My lips parted. Confused, my head shook again. “Master.” I stood, pulling up the gown just enough to show the scar from my cesarean. “What I speak is the truth. I have a son.”

“From a pedophile rapist?”

“Yes.”

“Is he still alive?”

“Last I heard. He’s in prison for what he did. Although...maybe for not much longer.” My words faded towards the end and a sickening feeling nearly made me sway. With me gone, wouldn’t Seth have access to Kyle? Would he even want anything to do with him? What if he did? What if he tried to get custody of him? Was that possible with his history if they thought I was dead?

“I...” Was I standing? God, I was, and I was walking, running, right for the bathroom without asking permission.

Bile burned my throat, and I heaved as I hovered over the toilet. I'd done so well blocking the outside world. To not think about my son or mother was all I could do not to lose my mind. Maybe I held to hope a miracle would happen and I'd get free. Maybe not this year or next. But someday...What did that mean for the meantime? I hadn't let myself think of that. My heart or state of mind couldn't take it on top of everything else I was faced with. I'd thrown myself into training and had been content for my life's sake to lose myself to it. Not anymore. I'd been forced to face the truth, and I couldn't stomach what that meant.

More I heaved, gagging through the flashes of my past. It was something I never wanted to remember. Something I hadn't even let myself relive until this moment. I had to stop all of this. I had to get back to where I was before I opened my mouth. No words. Obedience. Silence. Quiet calm.

"I'm headed down to the city. I have something I have to do. We're done for now. Hurry up and finish and then get yourself something to eat. You don't even have anything in your stomach to throw up. You're worrying yourself sick over nothing."

I nodded, not able to respond as I tried to catch my breath. The Master was already gone, but his words did little to reassure me. I'd opened Pandora's box of terror. Every bad scenario was now running through my mind and there was nothing I could do to stop it.

Kneel.

Kneel.

Kneel.

I flushed, grabbing the toothbrush that was mine. As I hurried through the act, I did everything I could to erase the past. I had to stay in the present. It was the only way. I

was a slave. Ashlee Dawn Wilkens was just as dead as the outside world thought her to be. This was my life, and it was going to be a short one unless I got back into my role.

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Had I thought Ashlee had lived a comfortable life in her small Texas town? I did, and only because I'd taken what I'd seen outside of the white picket fence and invented a story of my own. The house was nice. The blonde little girl who I knew was my half-sister was smiling. Laughing. She was beautiful and so full of happiness. I naturally assumed that with her living there, the house had belonged to her parents. I should have known my father didn't do anything more with them as he'd done with me and my mom. The man was a ghost. A good-for-nothing I dreamed of someday killing. That was, if I could ever find him. He deserved to pay for cursing our two families with such hardship. Ashlee and I didn't ask for what happened to us, but there was nothing anyone could do about it now. It all took place, and now I had a nephew out of it. I was an uncle.

No, not really. Not yet. Titles didn't exist in these walls. Neither did people who didn't reside within them. No little boy. Not while I was at the Gardens. Out there...he was family. Real family, like I hadn't had in years. I could check up on him. I could help him if I wanted. Did I want to? God...I did. What was wrong with me? I couldn't deny the needs I kept trying to push away. The wants...Ones I never thought were a possibility. But it didn't matter right now. I wouldn't think about the boy. Not yet. I had to focus on her.

Down here, it was just me and Miss Perfect. Master and slave. Not even half brother and sister. I refused to see that status. It was just us, and whatever I wanted to do to her, which probably wasn't anything good. Just because I didn't like some sicko touching her didn't mean I'd had a change of heart. Ashlee was still going to hurt with me. Maybe I'd even kill her. I didn't like her past, but that shit occurred every day. It transpired here by the hour. Bad shit sure as fuck happened to me while I was trying to take care of myself. She was lucky I'd given her this much time, wasn't she?

I wasn't responsible for her rape because I ran from her instead of being a good big brother and actually staying in touch or being there...right? Fuck. I wouldn't think about that either. Not her, not me, or how our lives were full of people hurting us. I wouldn't think about anything at all.

Silence reigned as I went in and out of sleep on the sofa while the women kneeled. Hours passed. It felt good to doze with the awareness of the new tattooed mark from the dead slave added to the tally on my forearm. I liked it even more that I'd gotten it here at the Gardens. That they catered to me made this place even more real. Better than home. To know I could get inked up at any time and then split their skin was invigorating. This place was great. Tattoos and death. Nothing was better than that. Or...maybe something was.

My cock hardened just thinking about it. Prey. The word repeated as I listened to the dark hair girl shift the weight from her knees. Were they anticipating my next move? Were they wondering how long it would be before I decided to take one of their lives? After last night and the aftermath of this morning, absolutely. But it was hard to think too much on that as the all-too familiar prickling pull to numb out returned between consciousness. To sleep gave me relief. To be awake and aware, now that was something I'd avoided for years. If I wasn't working, I didn't know what to do. Most often it led to thought, to my past and lonely life. To the festering hole that wouldn't go away. That only sent the looping of my thoughts back to Ashlee and Kyle. They were part of me even if I didn't want to admit it to myself.

My eyes opened as I debated to grab a drink. The back of little Miss Perfect's head was level with my foot as she stared at the dark wall. I took in the column of her neck and how it met her ivory shoulders. Her breasts were high, pushing into the nearly see-through slip. She almost looked better to the side. Even her profile was flawless. I almost couldn't believe this is what she'd turned into. The resemblance to the child I saw, to me, was as clear as day, but I never imagined this. She was perfection. Everyone at the auction had seen that.

“Did I have beer in the fridge? Something harder? Bottles anywhere?”

I sat. The dark-haired slave who kneeled off to my side turned to look towards the kitchen. Her mouth opened and she glanced back at me, worry covering her face.

“I’m not sure, Master. I can check for you.”

“There’s no beer. Just bottles in the pantry. Vodka, Gin, and I believe Whiskey.” Ashlee kept her stare forward. “Second shelf from the top.”

Should I be impressed? The emotion was one I quickly pushed back.

“Whiskey.”

Ashlee went to stand, but my hand clamped to her shoulder, pushing her back down. “Not you, Miss Perfect. Slave,” I yelled out as the dark-haired girl looked at me. “You, bring me the Whiskey.”

She jumped to her feet as I loosened my hold to slide to the back of her neck. At my pull, Ashlee followed my lead, crawling until she was now kneeling between my legs, still facing the wall. Blonde was bright against my black jeans, and I didn’t hold back from picking up strands of the silky length to let it slide between my fingers.

“Miss Perfect. That’s what I’m going to call you. Did you memorize everything in there?”

“I tried, Master.”

Her voice was shaking just as much as her body as I continued to run my digits through the tresses.

“What about the bathroom? You knew to bring me something for my headache. I’m assuming you went through all the stuff in there too?”

“I wasn’t...trying to appear nosey.” She paused. “I was trained for this sort of thing. To learn. To know where everything is so I can be prepared. I was just trying to help.”

“Help. Yes, you’re trying so hard.”

I trailed down the side of her cheek, working my way down until my hand was covering her throat and cupping under her jaw. Her pulse was racing against me as I tilted her head back so that she’d have to look up at me. When my other hand settled on her chest and began to lower, the shaking grew more powerful.

“Fear.” My lips pulled back to the side in a half smile as I brushed her cleavage, moving in to tease over her nipple. Pressure registered against the hold I had to her face, and my grip only tightened as I rolled the nub between my fingers.

“Master.”

“Shh.”

The other slave came to kneel a few feet away with the bottle. I didn’t so much as break my gaze from Ashlee’s as I moved to her other breast. A small, panicked sound left her, and my lids lowered through her mounting anxiety. If there was ever a fight or flight response, my half-sister was walking along its edge at my touch.

“Were there other men after your rape? Did you date? Try to find your son a daddy?”

Another little whimper as I leaned forward, moving my path between her ribs. Resistance grew at the hand that held her face, but she froze as my lips leveled with

her cheek.

“Answer me, Miss Perfect. How many other men were in this pussy before you came here?”

“N-None, Master.”

Tears broke free at her admission, getting my own face wet as I rubbed my mouth and cheek against her soft skin.

“Not even once?”

“No...Colt Douglas tried talking to me a few times, but I never went out with him. I had to work. I had a son to take care of. Men are—” A sob cut her off. “Let me kneel. I won’t say a word.”

“Men are what?”

For some reason, I found myself kissing against the tears. Kissing and trying to sooth on a level I hadn’t reached since my mother was alive. Hadn’t I given her affection when she seemed overwhelmed? Upset and closed off? I’d tried, but she didn’t care much for bonding. For touch. Ashlee didn’t have that option. She couldn’t push me away, although she was trying. That only made me want to do it even more.

“Don’t make me ask again.”

“Men are liars. They’re not to be trusted.”

“Yes, I agree.” My shoulder shifted as I reached further down, letting the pads of my fingers settle over the top of her slit. I turned her face away from me, moving to kiss just behind her ear and hairline as I teased her clit. “You were smart to see that so

early. Most men are pigs. They're vile. Self-centered. You don't have to worry about that anymore; you have me. Here, you know exactly what you're getting. The worst of the worst. Maybe the sickest man of all. You were well prepared." I let go, sitting up as I reached for the bottle. "Now, take off that slip and go back to your spot."

Ashlee sniffled, standing and letting the thin dress slide down her curvy body. My fist tightened around the bottle as I soaked in every inch. Wrong or not, I was past the point of caring. She was a slave, a body, and she belonged to me. That's where it ended. Any emotion or twisted craving I felt was becoming more of a bonus by the minute. I was accepting this situation. Even...liking the idea of it.

"Hey." My head shook as the dark-haired slave tried to sneak away. "Your fun's just beginning. Slip off. I want you on the floor," I pointed in front of me, "legs spread. I want a show and you're going to give me one."

Brown eyes darted to Ashlee, only to come back to me. She swallowed hard, letting the dress slowly lower just under her large breasts. Although she listened, the way she looked at me was something I recognized immediately. This girl may have been terrified, but she couldn't hide the starstruck dazzle deep in her depths. She knew who I was, and I wasn't sure how I felt about that.

"Every second that my dick gets softer, your neck gets closer to meeting my knife. On your ass and spread your fucking legs."

She shoved the slip down. I rolled my neck on my shoulders, easing back against the sofa to relax and enjoy my Whiskey. Shaky legs spread wide, and the girl's fingers twitched and trembled over her pussy. Despite any awe she felt at knowing my identity, she wasn't comfortable so exposed. I chugged back some of the amber liquid, wincing as I swallowed.

"Better." I took another drink. "But not good enough."

Something between a deep groan and cry filled the space as her lids squeezed shut. Her speed slowed, and a broken-up breath left her as she made a path down to circle her entrance.

“Lick your finger and keep doing that. But open your fucking eyes and look at me. If you close yourself off again, you won’t get another chance.”

“Yes, M-Master.”

Full lips enveloped her digit, and she went back, circling and dipping into herself. Straight hair swayed as she shifted and bit against her bottom lip. A good few minutes passed as her breathing began to change. My smile was automatic while I continued to chug back the liquor.

“Finally.”

I glanced over, immediately feeling the darkness in me stir. Ashlee’s cheeks were rosy, and her stare was stuck on the wall. Although she was still, her finger tapped nervously against her leg telling me her thoughts were probably racing.

“You don’t want to enjoy the show? You do. You know you want to. Watch.”

“I don’t.” Her head jerked to me full of unease. “But...I will if that’s what my Master wants.”

I growled, locking to her bicep to jerk her to sit on my lap. “You think that’s going to save your ass from talking back to begin with? You have a temper.”

Pushing the bottle to Ashlee, I watched as she took a drink, cringing as she tried to force it down.

“More.”

Whiskey dribbled over her chin and her face drew in as she sent blonde hair flying through the shake. She didn't like it, but she obeyed.

“Again.”

Coughing filled the space at the continued gulps, and I laughed, grabbing the bottle to bring back to my lips. Half was already gone, and the weight of the world was lifting...easing from me as I put down the Whiskey and wrapped my arms around Ashlee. Her ass was right up against my hard cock, and she was so warm against me. On fire as I pulled her back against my chest.

“You're so damn stiff. Relax. Watch.” I fitted her legs over the sides of mine, spreading them as I widened my own. I exhaled against her neck, keeping my attention on the slave who was pushing her finger deep in her pussy. “Beautiful, isn't it? She's getting so wet.” I lowered one hand to grab to her thigh. “Are you, Miss Perfect? Do you secretly like what you're seeing?”

“I don't feel comfortable. This is...a lot.”

“But it's just us. No one else can see. Give it a few minutes. You're going to love this.”

My fingers twitched, remaining in position only inches from the one thing I shouldn't have wanted. Shouldn't...but did. I let the alcohol do its job, not having to wait more than a few minutes before Ashlee sunk into my body, making herself comfortable. The slave on the floor was breathing hard, moaning out through the teasing of her clit. My hand slid up, not quite touching. Air got trapped in her lungs and the moment she breathed in, I let my fingertips brush over her folds almost nonexistent. I hovered, making contact, but only in small bursts.

“I knew you’d like this. Men aren’t only liars, you know. They’re good for some things.”

“Like this, Master?”

Whether there was sarcasm in her tone or not, I wasn’t sure. I grabbed the bottle making her take more drinks before I downed even more, myself. When I leaned to return the bottle, a laugh exploded from Ashlee as she fell over. Her hand flew to her mouth, and she seemed to catch her mistake. The fact that my smile was genuine had me smacking her ass and spinning her on my lap so that she had to straddle and face me.

“Look how cute and giggly you are when you’re drunk. Adorable. Let’s change that, shall we?”

My hand cupped her face as Ashlee’s expression melted into one of uncertainty. “How do you want me to be, Master?”

“I’m not sure yet. Angry. Afraid. I haven’t decided. Move against me.”

I bucked my hips sending Ashlee rocking forward. As I used my other hand to show her the motions, my lids closed, basking in the pleasure.

“There we go.” I paused, glancing to the other slave on the floor. “Don’t you dare stop.”

“Yes, Master.”

I went back to Ashlee, lowering my voice. “What if I had a secret?”

“A...bad secret? About you?”

Pulling her face to mine, I kept my stare locked to hers. My tongue slid over her lips, and she let out a breath, gripping to my t-shirt as she took over the motions of sliding against me. I was so fucking hard I couldn't stand it. "Maybe. Maybe it's about both of us. Do you want to know my secret? Do you think you can handle it? I'm not so sure you can."

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Secrets. I cared nothing for them as I let the arousal steal me from my reality. It felt too good to think or try to figure out some pointless puzzle. I couldn't think anyway. All I wanted to do was laugh or lay there and just 'be'. My Master wouldn't let me as he continued.

“Answer me or I'll give you a reason not to. I'm going to teach you everything.”

Lips pressed into mine, stealing my mind once again. I was swallowed by the overpowering sensation of needing more. Of impatience and moving with the flow of lust that was robbing my focus. I was so gone from here. Nothing existed but the shell that I was. It needed things. Things I never had given thought to.

“I can keep a secret, Master. Only if you want to tell me.”

His tongue was pressing into my mouth, dueling with mine as he moved me faster. He pulled back, breathing ragged as his head moved to the side to check on the other slave. Whatever he saw must have appeased him as his attention came back to me. But I was spun so fast to my back, the room swayed, and it took me a moment to realize I was even laying down and that his face was between my legs. Wet pressure had my mouth shooting open, and my eyes rolled.

“Master.”

Still I moved, this time to an entirely different degree of ecstasy. He was exploring my slit, licking and sucking over the sensitive nerves. When he pushed the tip of his tongue inside of me, I could barely catch my breath. My head flew up, only to drop back as the pleasure intensified.

“Maybe you were made for this. For me, here. Why else would we have been brought together? I keep going over it, trying to make sense of everything. I don’t understand. Maybe I don’t want to.”

I gasped as his finger slid into me and he moved up to hover over my body. The thrusts were stealing me away from what he was saying. Away from this secret he was tempted to tell me.

“Can you believe a part of my mind is telling me to stop? To be decent and salvage something between us? I can’t. I don’t want to.”

My entire body swayed as he tore the shirt over his head and jerked at his pants to unbutton and push down.

“Why would you want to stop,” I asked, more trying to figure it out myself, but the question only made him smile.

“Exactly. Why would I? I want you. You want me. Roles, names, don’t exist here. They push the hell out of that in the booklets and pamphlets they give us. Why should the identity of a slave be any different than a Master? It’s not.”

“You’re right.”

I was so confused as he rubbed his length along the wetness soaking me. In my peripheral, I could still see the slave off to the side, touching herself. At one point I was sure she was moaning through an orgasm, but she continued, just like she was told.

“So, it shouldn’t matter. Not that I cared too much, but it’s all so new. You. Me. Fuck, you’re so hot.”

He slowed, and I stiffened as the head of his cock pushed into my entrance. I waited for the brutal pain. For some sort of stinging or tearing. Sure, I'd masturbated throughout my life, but I never used anything more than my fingers. Although, I had been tempted at times. It just wasn't easy with my past or the hectic life I led.

"Oh...fuck. God." Pistol let out a deep moan as he inched his way inside of me. I could feel myself stretching to take his big size, but all it was doing was sending me down a rollercoaster of need I couldn't begin to decipher. I was moaning, trying to move against him faster as he took his time. I'd already been so close with the way his tongue was inside me. The rubbing. Kissing. Now, this...this was so much better.

"Master. I...need more."

"Me too." His hand gripped tightly to my hip as he surged forward. I gasped, my mouth shooting open as he withdrew, only to push back into me. The force was there, but not brutal as he stayed consistent. "Bring your legs up higher and arch. Jesus."

I barely managed to lift my feet in the air before he began pounding into me. The slight bursts of pain to my clit at the impact had my entire body coming alive. My legs shook and I dug into my Master's back. For minutes he had me crying out. He lifted one of my legs higher, only to put it over his shoulder. My orgasm was right there, and I was on the brink of begging for more. I wasn't sure how, but he seemed to know exactly what to do as he slowed and ground his hips into me, using his leverage of the floor to push deep.

"That's it; fuck yes."

The slave's cry from the floor filled the room, and something about the pleasure in it only built up mine even more. I squeezed into my Master's chest as he kept drinking in my moans.

“Yes. Master. Please.”

“I knew this pussy would be good, but this. I had no idea. You’re so close and wet.”

Just his words had me moaning even louder. I was tightening around him, trying to hold to him tighter.

“That’s it. Fuck yes; cum on my cock. Don’t you dare fucking hold back from me or stop yourself. Do it, Ashlee. Come.”

The order outweighed the shock of hearing my name. How, I wasn’t sure. I was screaming, jolting through the spasms, but I knew at the same time the surprise and maybe even horror had somehow seeped through as I stared at him. Hadn’t he said something about a secret? He knew my name. Did I know this man and just not remember? I had felt a familiarity around him from the start. I couldn’t understand it, but I didn’t think I’d seen him before. I was almost certain of it.

“Shit. God dammit.”

Something between a growl and a moan left him as he pulled out, shooting his cum all over my stomach. Still, I was staring, and my Master...was watching me with an expression I couldn’t read as he tried to catch his breath.

“How do you know my name? You said my name, right?”

Pistol stood, waving his hand towards the other slave to stop.

“Your name? How would I know a thing like that?”

“But I heard you. You said Ashlee. I could have sworn—”

“You’re drunk, and for that, I don’t think I’ll tell you my secret after all.”

“But.” My gaze shot to the other slave to search for some validation, but she wouldn’t even look at me. I quickly turned back to my Master as he slid his jeans on, leaving them unbuttoned. “Do I know you? Do you know me?”

“Are you still talking?”

At the glare and change in tone, I lowered my eyes. What happened between us meant absolutely nothing. I had to remember that. I was a slave. Disposable. I didn’t even deserve to clean myself. Per my training, I was my Master’s to use any way he deemed fit. Tonight, that was fucking. His stupid mind games were nothing but a delusion he’d obviously slipped back into like last night, which meant I had to be even more careful. What he did to that dead slave could be me if I didn’t fall back into my place.

As the Master grabbed the bottle and headed for the kitchen, I eased to the far end of the sofa, kneeling like I was meant to. I wouldn’t think about how I was still covered in his cum, or how his dick was enjoyable despite my aversion to him. Had I seriously started feeling some sort of connection to the monster who now owned me? As if...maybe he liked me in some minuscule way? I was so confused. My brain was scrambled on the alcohol, but so much more than that. Somehow, that was clear through the inebriation, but with everything I’d been through—with the way I’d had to alter my mindset to survive...I was losing myself to right or wrong. To...morality to begin with. The only thing I knew the most was to serve, and it was the only thing that was going to keep me alive.

“It’s already night. Aren’t one of you supposed to cook or something? Do I have to tell you to do that, or maybe I should kill you both and buy an actual d at the next auction to take care of this shit. Why either of you two are still here, I don’t know. I’m starting to think I made a mistake not killing all three of you last night.”

I stood and turned just in time for the Master to close the distance and grab me around the throat. My hands shot up, gripping to his wrist tightly as he jerked me forward. Air was hard to take in as he held tight, squeezing through the light kisses he placed on my tingling lips.

“Did I make a mistake buying you? Or maybe you think what happened between us was a mistake?”

To answer that would be certain death, but what was a mistake? That implied I had a choice, which I didn't.

“Speak, Miss Perfect. Honestly.”

“No, Master.”

I mouthed the words, unable to get out any sound. With every second, burning and aching took over. Time stretched as stars danced in my vision, and I felt us move but was past the point of realizing what was happening. Eternity dragged out. Longer, as the grip became almost crushing.

“Look at you trying to be strong. You're not having regrets?”

My head tried shaking frantically.

“Not even a little?”

“No.” Again, I tried to speak.

“I don't either. Fuck no I don't. I should. It's eating at the nothingness in me, but I won't listen to that voice saying I'm wrong. I want to do it again.”

He flexed his hand, but not enough to give me oxygen. My mind was screaming as he went back to pressing his mouth to mine in light kisses.

Don't fight.

Don't fight.

Calm.

Wait it out.

Don't...fight.

Kyle.

Kyle.

Just as my knees gave out, he let go, scooping me in his arms. Pistol laid me on the sofa, wiping my stomach with his shirt that had been laying on the ground.

“Fucking amazing. Fuck. You actually just took that.” He licked his lips, searching my face in what looked like awe. For long moments neither of us moved. For as much as he studied me, I mentally traced every line on his face. I took in his light brownish-gold eyes. The shape. The color. His straight nose. His lips were defined but not overly full. He was handsome, despite his bleached hair and massive number of tattoos, which wasn't really a style I found attractive. Truthfully, I didn't even see them anymore in our moment. There was some unknown call I couldn't quite answer. Something...a strange pull, and it softened me the longer we stared. I should have been afraid, but I wasn't.

“I don't feel like eating in tonight. We're going to the city. Me and you. Just...you.”

Still, he seemed to study me, but he stayed silent in whatever it was. “Go get dressed. I don’t think you have much. I didn’t expect anyone to be living more than the first night, but we’ll get you some stuff. Maybe you’ll actually make it a week. It’ll be a record for me. I’ve never lived with a female before. I hate women just as much as I hate men. They’re weak. All of them, but not you,” he said lowering his voice. “You didn’t fight me. You would have let me kill you.” He paused. “You’re like me. You’re not weak, are you, Ashlee?”

It didn’t even really sound like a question. The name sent my disheveled mind into even more of a spiral. I had been called slave or one-fourteen for so long, it sounded...off. Not quite right when spoken directly to me.

“No.” I cleared my throat, barely able to speak at the raw ache. “My mom used to say weakness was only strength untested. We all suffer; some of us just learn to embrace the pain so we can bear to live in it. I plan to thrive here, Master. If it’s a week you’re giving me, I’m going to try to survive two. I want this to work. I have to live.”

“Then you better convince me why you should. I want to know everything about you. About your son. You’ll hold nothing back.

Source Creation Date: July 23, 2025, 3:30 am

I'd been to the tallest and most luxurious buildings in the world. I'd seen the best, the worst, and stayed at resorts I never wanted to leave. I didn't think much of the accommodations at the Gardens, but I didn't have the view outside of the Main Master's office, either. We were high. Not overly so, but a good twenty-floors above the city, and for the first time, I was looking over the streets and buildings in a bird's eye view. It was astounding, and so much bigger than I realized being down there. I could see the stage in the far back. The orchards. The streets were busy, but not too bad this early which reminded me I had to go down there afterward to grab Ashlee's clothes I'd ordered online through the boutique. The mere thought made me want to hit the bottle. I wasn't doing that anymore until I figured this out. Was I even doing the right thing? Did I have a choice? Well...I had a few.

The sound of a door opening had me turning. The Main Master's features were set tight as he took me in and gestured to his office.

"Master Seventy-seven." He shut the door behind us, pointing to the elaborate chair on the other side of his desk. As he took his seat, I followed suit, trying not to overthink my damn situation. "What brings you here?"

"A couple of things, actually."

"Let's start with the most pressing issue. We'll go from there."

"Alright." I let out a breath. "Slave one-fourteen."

"I thought so. You spent a lot of money on her. Is that an issue?"

“Not at all.”

“Then what’s it about her that brings you all the way to me? It would have to be important. After all, I offered you a meeting with any of my board members with which you declined.”

My lips pressed together, annoyance and anger leaving me even more on edge.

“I declined because what needs to be revealed can only be said to you. Slave one-fourteen is my half-sister. She doesn’t know, but I do. We’ve never met before the night of the auction, but during research to uncover more about my father, I found out he had other children. Children he apparently abandoned like me.”

Elec’s fingers interlaced on his desk. “I see. So, you’ve come to me before even informing the slave she’s your sister.”

“Half-sister,” I corrected. “And yes. I’m not sure yet if I’m going to tell her.”

His lids narrowed the smallest amount. “Have you fucked her yet?”

My back stiffened before I could stop the reaction.

“You have. Well, that makes things easier. I’m guessing you have no argument on her staying?”

“No. I want her as my slave. I didn’t come to try to set her free. I came to you because we’re required a level of honesty and disclosure to remain here, and I’m giving it.”

“I appreciate that. You said there was more.”

I let out a breath. “She was raped at thirteen. She has a son on the outside world. He’s four.”

Elec was quiet as he drew his hands apart and leaned back in his chair.

“What is it you’re asking me, Master? You don’t expect me to allow a child into the Gardens to live with the two of you. Tell me you’re not stupid enough to want to do that.”

“Not to live, no. He’s young. One visit so she knows he’s okay. He doesn’t even have to see her. Then he remains in the outside world with the care I provide for him. Kyle is blood, and I feel an obligation no matter how much I’ve been fighting it. And trust me, I know who I am. My life isn’t suited for a kid, but he doesn’t deserve to grow up shitty like Ashlee and I did. I have the means to give him a good life. Raise him in our lifestyle.”

“Our. So, what you’re truly saying is, you’re grooming him for this world.”

At Elec’s words, I couldn’t help the certainty in my nod. I had been thinking it despite I was crazy for doing so.

“He’s going to be someone. I’ll make sure of it. He’ll have wealth, power, and whatever else he needs to fit into the right circles. Regardless of your answer today, he will be raised by me. He’ll be at the Garden’s some day with or without my help. Kyle won’t be able to escape it. Aside from the bad blood in his veins, he was born from a violence only we down here understand. There’s no being free of that. The child was doomed from the start. Or blessed. It’s up to us.”

“You’re either a fool or extremely smart; I haven’t decided yet.”

I shrugged. “Hopefully the latter. I’ve heard stories of the old place. This...Whitlock.

Masters were born into that world. They were held spots and allowed their place there after a certain age. They banded at the fortress and the outside world to take care of each other. I wish that for Kyle. A new era, so to speak.”

“Appealing, but this is not Whitlock, and you have no idea what you’re asking. You want a brotherhood for him. The Gardens is not that. It’s a place that caters, but you have no identity here. You are a number, nothing else.”

“I understand that. I do. But I’m not merely talking about the Gardens. I think you know what I’m referring to. It’s the force that makes this world move. The stability of it. The protection.” I paused, seeing his interest. “Is a deeper connection between all of us not worth it? Would it not be better to start now with the younger generations so that they can be prepared and accepted? Raised into it? This could be a great idea. Kyle could start that generation. He could grow up to be made for this world. To help it. To build it. To lead it.”

Elec’s eyes were narrowed as he listened.

“Main Master, I never wanted kids, but now that I’m going to be raising one, I want what’s best for him. Our way. Not with money, I can set him up just fine as he begins his own life. I’m talking about the power and camaraderie amongst the darker elites. Let him start this or be part of it if something like this already exists.”

“What of the slave, his mother? Does she know what you’re trying to do?”

My mouth twisted. “No, nor do I care to tell her the direction I plan to take with his life. She’ll know he’s safe and happy and that’s enough.”

For the longest time Elec took me in. He didn’t show emotion. He didn’t fidget or react under my intense gaze. I was the one who almost reacted as he devoured me with the emptiness of his stare. He only started talking when he was ready, showing

me who held the control between us, and it wasn't me.

“Let's just make this clear. You do understand that what you're asking falls outside of the Garden or auctions, and you're bartering with me one-on-one for this child's life?”

“I want him to be a part of this world. Your world. You can make that happen.”

“I can, but do I want to?” He got quiet, seeming to weigh things I hadn't a clue on. “The idea does have appeal, but the biggest question is, can he handle the cost? Can you, and I'm not talking money.”

Scenarios filtered through. My past. Ashlee's. I didn't fail at anything I went after. I was incapable because I wouldn't stop until things were exactly as I wanted. Ashlee appeared the same way, even being forced as a slave. She took my pain, no matter the degree. She took everything I dished at her because she had to. She had a role, and she knew how to fulfill it. It was one of the main reasons I was here. We were alike. We had paid our price. And I related to her. After the loneliness in the last few years, it was so fucking nice to be able to breathe. The child would be like us: strong, prepared. I'd make him like us. He'd have a good life. Better than we ever had, but with raising him right, I could make him stronger than us. With that foundation and drive, how could he not fit in this world and thrive amongst it?

“Answer the question, Master Seventy-seven.”

“I could say yes without a doubt in my mind, but you tell me how this will work. What cost, so to speak, should I expect on your part? What would it take to bring Kyle in completely?”

Elec stood, walking to the small bar at the edge of the room.

“Completely.” He stopped, pouring his drink. “Such an encompassing word for what I see your nephew having to go through. We’re not just Masters at the Gardens, Seventy-seven. Some of us will never own a slave. Some of us have no need to come here at all. That doesn’t mean I’m not going to charge you for it. We’re a new breed, made outside of blood or circumstance. Our agenda is one, and yet all. What has got us there, the training, what we survive and see, you’ll never know or learn, but I can tell you it’s beyond what you can begin to process. Let me just get to specifics on where we should start. Aside from the fortune I’m going to charge you to assure his alpha status when he comes of age; I’ll tell you exactly the terms and conditions if you wish to go further. I may even make it better than you could imagine. But again, I want to stress the cost. It may be too high for you to pay.”

“I want to hear.”

He nodded, taking a sip and heading back towards me.

“Two yearly, one-hour visits with his mother at the military installation above. She will know of it; he will not. Once he leaves that room, his memories will be blocked. Only when he comes of age will he learn and see the truth. During the meantime, his schooling will be through special tutors of my choosing. He will have strengths. Whatever they are, I will build on them to suit my purpose. At the age of nine the child will return here and his identity of being a sovereign individual will end. He will be examined, chipped, tracked, and every other weekend you’ll bring him here where his real training will begin. When I deem necessary, he will undergo testing. He will take polygraphs, and that part will never end, just like with me. He will learn our ways. Not your ways. Not the ways of the outside. Mine. Ours. The events he will undergo over the following years will be nothing short of horrifying. You want to know the cost? This may break him. It may kill him.” He paused... “Best case scenario, he becomes part of this remarkable machine and turns into an impressive monster. If he’s like me, and those who have walked this path before, he will be born into more than this facility. He may be lucky to someday help rule it, or one like it. If

not, he will play a major role in the outside world to support it. There is no going back on your word once you agree. If for some reason you fall on hard times and you can't maintain my fees or this lifestyle, you die and the child, the collateral, is mine to do with as I please."

"What is that exactly?"

The Main Master shrugged. "It depends how much promise the kid shows and his age. The possibilities are endless, and they can go any way. Worst case, you die or fall in status, he proves useless, and I make him a slave. You can never have too many of those."

"A slave." I blinked through the word. "That's the opposite of what I want."

"Then you better not slack off or die anytime soon. If you want the kid to make it in my world, you better do a fantastic fucking job of raising him."

Easier said than done, but I wanted this for Kyle. The kid's life was literally resting on my shoulders. I never dreamed nor wanted to be a father, but I suddenly had more responsibility than my own dad. There was something...challenging...rewarding in that. Even if it was a fucked-up deal I was trying to barter. It gave me purpose, where I'd been lacking that lately. Maybe this was the best thing that could have happened.

"I believe Ashlee's mother has him now. What of custody? There has to be a lawyer good enough here I can use. It won't be easy to obtain him out from under her."

"I'll do you better. I'll give you a lawyer and the judge. The child is yours if you're ready to make this deal. We can even speed up this process if you'd like. Just say the word, Master, and I'll have the child here within days."

"That soon?"

“If we don’t want any suspicion, which would be best.”

It was one thing to want in this darker world, and another to see just how easily the outside one could be manipulated. If I had any doubt of the Main Master’s power, I didn’t anymore. He wanted this deal, where I hadn’t been sure he’d even listen. It gave me pause, but it didn’t take away from what I wanted either. I could raise Kyle. Make him into who I wanted, but...I wouldn’t be the only one. The boy would belong to Elec just as much. Even if it was through schooling or training.

As I scanned the Main Master’s hard face, I suddenly saw him in a different light. Not just as powerful and dangerous, but sinister, maybe even heartless. There was something bigger in play here. Maybe the essence of control, itself. Elec didn’t just govern killers in this underground world of nightmares, his reign on the world above was just as equal, and no one knew just how much. This man had a power to ruin lives. To change them. I stopped, not able to hold in my smile as only one thing overshadowed them all. He could take lives, and Kyle deserved not to suffer like I had. He wouldn’t have to if he had no father to worry about.

“The rapist.”

He laughed under his breath, seeing all too clearly where my mind had drifted. “Shake my hand, sign the direction of Kyle’s future over to me, and the rapist is all yours. I’ll even make this deal a little sweeter. How bad do you want to find your father?”

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Source Creation Date: July 23, 2025, 3:30 am

I had seen the city during my tour. I'd even ventured into it with Pistol when he'd brought me out to a restaurant the other night for dinner. It was packed then, but it wasn't this bad. With the late hour came the real crowds. The rowdier ones. It had to be close to midnight. Laughter and cries rang out from the shadows, and mostly men took up almost every inch of room in the street between the buildings. Pistol's hand stayed at my back, but I didn't have to worry too much about anyone getting close. His presence alone was like a shield. People could feel his energy long before he got close, and maybe that's because his darkness was growing. I could feel it with every touch. Every possessive hold. People stared. Some Masters nodded or smiled. They knew him, and I couldn't help the intrigue of wanting to know him too. Not the Master, but the man he was on the outside world that had captured the attention of people so sinister.

Did he behave the same? Did he carry himself as he did now...as a killer? Perhaps. I didn't think Pistol was one to hide his true nature. Wasn't death tattooed on most of his body in one way or another? It was a beacon of warning. A plea for braver, unstable minds looking for a fight. I should have stayed scared being so close to him, and I was, but I was also intrigued by his change in personality. My Master hurt me, but he held back too, where he didn't with the other slave. That left me asking questions I couldn't begin to make sense of. It was like he was hiding something. Almost as if...he was embracing the thought of us for reasons I didn't understand. Was it chemistry? Was it because we'd both lived hard lives? Was it more? It was all so soon, but he'd changed in the last few days into someone almost...decent. Caring.

"Your eyes are all over the place. Don't look so worried, Miss Perfect. No one's going to hurt you."

That was debatable, but I nodded, knowing so long as I was with him, he was right. It still didn't put me at ease as men's eyes raked over my body. New clothes didn't change their mindset. Not even pulling my hair back in a bun seemed to work.

"Master, do you think it'll always be so packed like this?"

Pistol's arm went around me, his hand resting on my far shoulder as he threw a glare to a group of men off to the side. I only caught it for a moment before he leaned back in to talk over the loud voices and music starting up from the pub across the street.

"Probably not. Last time I talked to the Main Master, he said it should thin out after opening week. That's over now." He steered us toward one of the side roads, holding me even closer as he led me to the opposite side of the street. "I know you've told me a little here and there, but I want to hear more about Kyle. What sort of things does your son like?"

For a moment I couldn't speak. The pain came back a million-fold and the yearning was unbearable. How much had he grown in the months I'd been gone? More than I could probably imagine.

"He..." I stopped and Pistol slowed us, grabbing us a seat at a small bistro table outside of a cafe. There were a good five tables resting outside the packed interior, with decorated lantern-style lights that hung above each of them. Only one Master sat at a table at the far end of the dimly lit place, and I shifted in my seat as I thought over the question. "I'm not sure I should keep talking about this."

"I want you to. Tell me about him."

My arms wrapped around my stomach as I forced myself to speak. To remember. "Kyle never cared much for cartoons or games. He loves being outside and riding his balance bike. When I first bought it for him, he didn't want to have much to do with

it.” I smiled, wiping the tear at the overwhelming memories. “It wasn’t until he came across a dirt bike race on TV that he sort of fell in love with the idea of riding. He’d bring his little bike inside and sit on it, not turning away until the race was over. He was barely three, but he seemed to know what he liked. Loved, even, I guess. I wonder if he still watches or if my mom has gotten him a bigger bike now. He’d need a bigger one. He.” I couldn’t continue. If I didn’t stop, I was going to slip into a place I couldn’t afford to. One so dark, I may never surface again. Kyle was fine. My mom was taking care of him. She loved him as much as me.

“Dirt bikes.” Pistol smiled. “There was a track down the road from the house I grew up in. I used to go and watch the riders to kill time.” He grew quiet, his face changing through different emotions. “What does he look like? Not the bastard father.”

My head shook, not missing the anger. “Thankfully not so much. Light hair, like mine, but green eyes.” I sniffled. “Maybe my nose. It’s hard to tell this young but.” I smiled. “He’s a good-looking boy. Sweet. Such a big heart. He was my helper. It took a lot to.” Again, I stopped, trying to stop the shaking that rattled me. “I almost didn’t keep him but—”

“He’s yours. You had to.”

I nodded. The dimness was nice as I fought for my slave mindset. It didn’t want to come, but it did as I thought of Kyle. He needed me to make this work. He needed me strong.

“What else besides bikes?”

A slave waiter came out and Pistol ordered us sodas and nachos.

“I know you don’t want to talk about this, but what else?”

“He sings.” I smiled as I looked down. “He’s always singing. Sometimes it doesn’t even make sense, but it sounds so cute. He likes to draw and be read to. He’s so smart.”

“He sings?”

My eyes rose from the table, taking in my Master’s guarded expression. His features were hard, but his voice was anything but.

“All the time. If he’s not singing, he’s humming.”

“Singing is good. And coloring. Bikes. Reading. Got it. What about food? What does he like? Dislike?”

It took me a moment to stop the violation into my private life. I didn’t like these questions. I didn’t want to talk about Kyle at all.

“The typical stuff. He loves chicken nuggets. He hates vegetables. He does love fruit though.” I paused as the waiter put down the drinks. “Master, can we talk about something else?”

The distraction was obvious as he nodded and picked up his glass, bringing the straw to his mouth.

“Do I get to know more about you?”

Light brown eyes rose.

“I...sing too. And play the guitar. I have a band. They’re awesome, although Anthem drives me crazy most of the time. He’s my best friend. My family. Let me see. Never married. No kids. I have five motorcycles, two sports bikes, three cars. A yacht. A

house in LA and Miami.” His lids lowered as his head shook. “I think I’m going to sell most of that and start new. Somewhere...good. Private. I don’t need so much stuff. I need to direct my focus on the future. To more important things.” He stopped. “I don’t like talking about me.”

“I know. I’m sorry.” I let my gaze be pulled further down where people were leaving and walking into the bars and shops. The buzz was worse towards the main road. I was glad we’d distanced ourselves from most of the commotion. It wasn’t so congested this far out. In truth, there weren’t many people at all.

“Ashlee.”

My head gave a hard shake at the name that grated my ears. I wasn’t her anymore. I couldn’t be.

“Slave is fine, Master.”

“I can call you whatever the hell I want. Stop getting all mopey over your son. I told you he’d be fine.”

I could have argued back. I sure wanted to, but I stayed quiet. The waiter brought out the large tray of nachos, and I picked at the cheese covered chips, barely tasting anything at all as I tried to adjust to this new life. To this Master I didn’t quite understand. Minutes went by, but still I was so confused by everything that had transpired.

“Are you finished?”

“Yes.”

“Yes? That’s it? Watch it, slave. It’s ‘yes, Master’. Cheer the fuck up.”

He threw down cash, grabbing my bicep as he led us deeper down the dim road. Where we should have gone right, we went left, away from the center of town. Did I say something to let him know? Yeah, right. Pistol wasn't an idiot. He had a reason for heading towards the orchard, and I wasn't sure that was good news for me. He'd been angry at my slip up. Not...overly, but what did I know?

One shop. Three. Closer we came to the pitch black nestled between the outline of trees. Fingers flexed against me, and I managed to jerk my bicep free, wrapping my arms just above Pistol's elbow. I even lowered my head against his shoulder, staying close. So what if my fear shone through. I did not want to go in those trees. If he planned beating or killing me for not listening, I'd give him reason to do it in the light.

"What are you doing? Slave."

Stopping at the last door, he pried me off him.

"I don't want to go in there."

"In the store?"

"In the trees."

"Why the fuck would I take you in the trees? We're going here," he said, pointing to the boutique. "They needed more time. Only half your order was finished when I did the pickup. You need clothes, don't you?"

My pause was obvious as I tried to make sense of the words. Clothes, not a beating. Not murdered. Clothes.

"Yes, Master."

“I told you to stop worrying.”

“I’m sorry. I’m trying.”

And I was, but it wasn’t easy with him mentioning Kyle all the time now. I just needed to push through. Once Pistol got the curiosity of my son out of his system, he’d never mention him again. Then I could get back to normal and put my focus on being the best slave I could be.

“There’s a look I haven’t seen before. That’s pure panic if I ever saw it. You don’t like talking about Kyle with me.”

“At all,” I forced out. “It’s too hard.”

“But you’re tough. Come here.” Large hands settled on my hips, drawing me in. Pistol stared into my eyes, raising one of his eyebrows until I forced a grin. It immediately made him mirror me and my smile grew, becoming genuine as he gave me time to adjust. I calmed, nodding as an indication to him that I was better. It also just brought in more questions concerning his change. Aside from asking about Kyle, he was watching me close the last few days. Waiting...Almost concerned. It was nice, but a part of me knew it may not be permanent.

“Thank you, Master.”

“Don’t thank me yet. Touching you isn’t easy. I’m not sure I want to stop now.” His hands slid up, easing under my shirt to make a path up my ribs. Just before he got to my breasts, he paused. I held my breath, nearly moaning as he went higher so that one of his thumbs could circle my nipple. The sensations were all so new. I liked them. Maybe a little more than I wanted to admit.

“People will see.”

He scanned the area, a smile pulling back half his mouth as he leaned in wickedly. “No one is looking but I could care less if they were. You’re mine. I can touch you whenever I want.” He bit his bottom lip, cupping my breast as he rolled the hard nub between his finger and thumb. “I could turn you around and take you right here. Maybe I will. Would you still make those cute little sounds if you were being fucked out in the open? Whisper ‘Master’ as you started to come? I love when you do that.”

I gripped to his shirt as his hand dropped and pushed past my jeans and panties. When his finger traced my slit, he moaned at the wetness. My mouth flew open, and I cried out as his shoulder dipped and he eased his finger inside me. Pleasure burst through, making me once again wrap my arms around him. This time it was his neck as I buried my face against his throat. The urge to kiss was automatic. Although the slave within warned me not to do it, I put my lips to his skin, pressing, sucking, even gently biting as the thrusts increased the ecstasy. For the life of me, I couldn’t stop moving against him.

“Fuck, you’re driving me crazy. I’ve been waiting to be back in this pussy all day.” He turned to face me, his nose nuzzling into mine. I didn’t hold back as I hungrily met his lips. “Jesus. God. This is...fuck.”

My cry echoed from the buildings as another of his fingers stretched me. Pistol was kissing me harder, more desperately as he moved us closer to the side of the building. It was getting darker, hiding us from anyone randomly heading into the stores. It was the first time I wasn’t worried about being in the shadows.

“This is not forced on your part. You want me too, and it has nothing to do with your duty as a slave. You want me. Say it.”

“I.” I took in his silhouette. Heavy breaths left us, and my lips were tingling from the bruising force we were both guilty of. “I...do. I want this. I like it...You’re different than before.”

Pistol didn't say a word. He pulled his hand free of my pants, scooping me around the waist to carry me to the other side of the building like a sack of potatoes. When my feet hit the ground, he tugged, pulling my jeans open. "Different doesn't always mean good, slave." He spun me, ripping my pants down. My hands shot up to the building for balance and within seconds pressure fitted against my entrance, easing inside of me inch-by-inch.

"I think a part of you is good."

One of my Master's arms wrapped around my hips while the other barred between my breasts, holding tightly to my shoulder. I was on my tiptoes, barely able to stand as he withdrew, surging deeper, and burying himself.

"Good, bad. You can't have one without the other. Let's be honest. Beneath it all, we're both fucked up. The night we met, I bounced a dead slave's head right off your chest. Minutes from now, you're going to be begging me to fuck you harder. How's that for good?"

I didn't answer as Pistol withdrew only to pound back into me. There was nothing gentle about what was happening. Each slam nearly stole my air. My palms stayed flattened to the building, my nails digging into the hard surface as my orgasm built.

"Master."

His arm dropped from my chest, lowering so that he teased my clit. The hold to my hip tightened and I cried out through the pleasurable burn I'd been craving for hours. It was like I was addicted to this new act. Pistol had opened some sort of door, and all I could think about was when we could do it again.

"Yes. Master. Like that. Like...Please. Please." My mouth shot open, and my body jerked through the spasms. His fingers added more pressure, moving back and forth

even faster over the top of my slit, prolonging the orgasm until I was nearly screaming. Teeth sunk into my shoulder hard and hot cum shot into me repeatedly as my cry echoed from the buildings.

“Son of a bitch.” He gasped, trying to catch his breath as he jerked repeatedly from his own release. “I wasn’t going to come in you but...fuck. That’s so much hotter. Let’s get your damn clothes. I want to get you home. We’re going again.”

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Source Creation Date: July 23, 2025, 3:30 am

I probably should have adjusted to fucking my half-sister. After all, I'd had Ashlee more times than I could count in the almost two weeks since I'd bought her. But I hadn't. I couldn't get enough. Maybe because it was so taboo and wrong. It was more than sex. Being inside her, holding her, tasting her...it was like regaining a part of myself I'd been missing now for years. Ashlee was mine. She was part of me like no one else. Sure, I had other half-siblings and a father, but they didn't count in my mind. I hadn't met or seen them in person like Ashlee. It was just us. Me and her, and this. What revolved around it, I tolerated.

"Did you have to wait so fucking long though? I was about to leave. There's only so much smashing skulls or human hunts one can endure alone. Did you know I went bowling by myself last night? Human heads as balls...if you want. I think it's a gag sort of thing and is supposed to be funny. I used the heads, anyway, just because it was cool as shit. When's the last time you did something fun? You should have gone and stopped being a hermit, Pistol. We could have got drunk and had a blast.

"I'm taking a break from drinking for a while."

"Break? What the fuck for?"

Music filled the room as I strummed my guitar only half listening to Anthem. His drumsticks tapped against the end table he'd moved in front of him, but even that sound was so far away. I kept seeing Ashlee moan out in pleasure as I looked down at her. Kissed her. The way she stared up at me. It was like a confused captivation. She liked me, and not as a slave pretending so she'd survive. I'd seen that outside in the city. There was something between us but was it real or ingrained in our very DNA. I strummed too hard, not sure I wanted to even think about that.

“Things are about to change in a big way. I might as well tell you. I should be getting a call soon. Any day now really. Fuck. Where do I even begin?”

Anthem didn't seem to care as he suddenly became focused on my hands.

“What's that tune you're playing? That's new.”

“It's not mine. I mean, I didn't make it up. I think one of my slaves was humming it earlier.”

“I can't believe they're even still alive.”

“I've been too distracted, but the time is coming. Hold on and let me switch this up. Let's see what comes.”

I kept playing, letting my fingers drift off to different notes, twisting the tune into something darker, more my style.

“Ooh, I like that. Keep going.” Anthem picked up the beat, tilting his head through the chords I repeated. Once. Three times. The song I played reminded me of Ashlee and our situation. Forbidden. Tempting. Wicked and wrong. A sweet abomination that didn't belong in the real world but that found a secret home at the elite's evil retreat.

“That is fire.” Anthem was scribbling down shit for me, looking between my hands and the end table as his mind worked its own musical genius. Where he was all work, I was unadulterated inspiration. It weaved and flowed in a melody of deceitful deliciousness, and it was all her. All us. The lure kept me locked in as I didn't think through the strumming of my fingers. Minutes passed as I looped through what I knew was a chorus, and words jumbled in my head, searching for their place as I repeated the repetition.

“What do you hear? Anything good?”

“Hold on.”

I came to the end of the chorus, beginning again, letting my fingers pick the strings in the web of notes that twisted quickly around each other in their hypnotizing tune. Where most of my songs were rock with a tinge of rap, this was different. My music was already unique, but this...it wasn't my usual style, and I was digging it even more.

“Behind her eyes it's all a lie

The girl that cries, dies inside

She'll never know the truth I hold

A rolling stone; a love on loan.

To fight the pull, she'll bleed for me.

No call, she waits, the world won't see.

This dead man pays, he counts his days.

For easier times, a choice to stay.

Anthem wasn't writing anymore. He wasn't even drumming.

“Write the shit down before I forget. It'll need adjusting. More words or... breaks here or there. Write.”

“Yes. Sorry. Son of a bitch. Dude. Dude! Repeat it as I write.” His hand scribbled fast as I continued, coming to a stop as he grabbed his drumstick. “Keep going. We’ll play together. We’ll see if more comes.”

My fingers went to work in earnest, and I began to lose myself again. It was a muffling sound that I couldn’t place that pulled me from the zone. I stopped, my brow drawing in as I tried to place it. Seconds went by, and I brought my hand down over the strings again. Hushed talking had me standing and putting down my guitar.

Hadn’t I told them to stay quiet? What the hell were they doing?

“Pistol, where you going? Leave them, let’s keep working on this.”

My hand shot up, but I didn’t turn around. I stood at the closed door, my lids narrowing through the hum of talking from inside.

“You’ve gotta be kidding me. How have you never heard of him? He’s Pistol Stephens. Me and my girls listened to his music all the time. Parties. It’s just what you played. I’ve even been to two of his concerts. I know everything about him. His story is quite...unbelievable and fascinating. He’s twenty-eight. He’s been on the streets since he was a teenager. Like, early teen. He had a hard life. His mother was an addict, father, who knows. Are you sure you’ve never heard of him before? He’s only released tons of number one hits. Hide Away is like one of the most popular songs in the world. Like, the entire world. Did you live under a rock before you were taken? The guy is beyond famous. Celebrity royalty famous. He’s going to go down as a legend. I guess that’s what blows my mind the most. It’s him...and he’s here. He’s a murderer. A druggie, but I guess everyone knows that. With the drugs, I mean. Actually, maybe he quit or is taking a break. I haven’t seen him do any in a while. Not even drink. Have you noticed that too? Oh well. Who cares. You spend a lot of time with him. Is he nice to you? I wish he’d buy me new clothes too. Do you like him?”

“Of course I do. He’s...sweet. Incredible at times. He makes me feel...” Ashlee grew quiet. “We shouldn’t be talking about our Master behind his back. I’m done. I won’t do this.”

“Done? But...we’re just talking. Just a few more questions.”

“I said no.”

“Please. We never get to talk.”

I threw open the door, glaring at the two girls who were kneeling feet from each other, facing the wall. Their back was to me, and only one slave turned around as I barged in. It wasn’t Ashlee.

“Do you want to share with everyone being as I can fucking hear you out there?”

“I’m sorry, Master. I didn’t think I was being so loud.”

“Loud is the least of your problems. You like talking about me? Stand up.”

“Master—”

“Stand your ass up before I make you. You don’t want that, slave. Once my hands are on you, it’s all over with.”

“I made a mistake.” The brunette rose, her body trembling as I called her forward with my finger. “Master, please, I’m just lonely. I’m sorry.”

“You’re sorry?” I lurched forward, grabbing the back of her neck, and marching her to the middle of the living room. The slave cried out at my squeeze, crashing to her knees as I forced her down. “You know everything about me, do you? And it

enthalls you? Makes you in awe of me? Who cares about the booze or drugs. Personal wellbeing doesn't matter if you're pushing out the hits. Did you learn that out there too? I may be at my lowest, but my feelings are irrelevant. What I go through doesn't matter. If I suffer, no one cares. But your feelings matter. All their feelings matter. So, let me cater to you. Have a front row seat to your own personal show because that's what we entertainers do. What song can I sing to you, slave? Would you like a dedication? How about I plaster on a smile and pretend I wrote every lyric about you. Is there anything else? I'm just so famous. A legend someday, right?"

"M-Master."

"Look at her squirm." Anthem's head cocked to the side as he took her in. "I'll give you five grand. No, ten, if you'll let me have her."

Brown eyes bounced between us, fear making them jerky through their movements.

"I won't say another word. She didn't know how great you were. I just wanted her to see—"

"See what? That my mom was an addict? That my father was who-knows-who? That I grew up on the streets? Did I ask you to tell her shit? She already knew some of that, but did it ever dawn on you maybe I didn't want her to know all the details? That maybe I wanted to tell her in depth, myself, when the time was right? Who are you to decide anything?"

"I'm no one, Master. Nothing."

"You're right."

"Twenty grand."

My blood ignited in an inferno inside of me at the two of them. One I should have killed a week or two ago, and the other I disliked at times but couldn't be without either. Anthem may have drove me crazy, but he'd been my closest friend for years. Even family, in a way. If it wasn't for him or his father, maybe I'd still be playing in clubs. Maybe it might have taken me longer to get discovered. Or perhaps I'd be dead somewhere, overdosed just like my mom.

"Twenty-five."

"Anthem." I growled, closing my eyes. "If you would have given me a moment, I would have given her to you for free."

"Free? Nothing is free with you."

"I know. There are conditions. Think of it more as a favor. A...friendly gesture for a secret."

"Of course. Anything."

"Good because this is big. Bigger than I originally thought. I'm sort of in a predicament."

I glanced toward the door as the slave sobbed and pressed her hands to the floor through her fear. My finger rose to my lip as I turned to my friend, signaling that what I was about to tell him was secret. "I'd like you to meet my half-sister."

"...sister?" As the slave's horrified voice cracked, she grew silent at my murderous glare. I turned to Anthem. His stare was glued to the bedroom door.

"Sister?" he repeated, whispering.

“Half.”

“But...how? I knew you were looking into your dad years back, but you said you didn’t find anything.”

“I lied. This.” I laughed, shaking my head. “How is this for fate? Isn’t it grand?”

“You don’t fucking say.” Anthem brought his still surprised gaze to me, laughing incredulously, but keeping his voice low. “I knew she looked familiar. Shit...she looks like you. How did I not piece that together? What will you do?”

“What do you mean? I’ll do whatever the fuck I want. I’ve decided I’m keeping her. For however long, I don’t know. Shit happens, but for the meantime, she’s mine. For me.”

“For you?” At my silent look, he shrugged nodding. “I can dig it. So, I can have this one?”

“For your silence. My sister can’t know. Not until I’m ready.”

“I haven’t spoken a word about anything you’ve ever told me.”

“I know. That’s why I’m trusting you. I’m going to need your help. Like I mentioned before, things are about to change. Massively. Outside here, I have a nephew who’s four. I’ve already worked some shit out, but he’s coming to me soon. I’m getting custody of him. Let’s just say, now that his mother, my sister, is missing and presumed dead, he needs a stable guardian.”

“Holy shit.” Anthem grew quiet, eventually laughing under his breath. “We’re going to have a kid? I like kids. Hell, we can spoil the shit out of him. We’ll make him the most badass kid there ever was. This could be good. Brilliant. We’d have a kid to

hang with, to make into a star someday, plus the tabloids will eat it up. It's a win-win. Pistol Stephens raises dead sister's son. This could work big time in our favor."

"I...guess. I haven't thought much about that part. I'm more focused on the reality of the situation. Kyle needs someone to watch out for him. To protect and raise him right, you know? I didn't have that shit. I don't want to mess this up, hence the no drinking and drugs," I said, glaring at the slave.

"I get it. Mad respect for that, too." Anthem's brows drew in. "Where's the dad?"

"Prison. He raped her when she was thirteen and knocked her up. Her own friend's dad. It was fucked up, but it happened. Now, I'll have Kyle because of it. I can't be mad about that. He's the only family I got now besides her. No one else matters."

"Family. We take care of ours. I'll help you any way I can. The band too. You already know this."

I nodded, my eyes cutting back over to the slave. She was crouched, but she wasn't kneeling anymore. There was a wildness, one that had me smiling even more. Future bloodshed. Fucking. A new song. My nephew to raise. A call I was expecting from the Main Master any moment now. The rapist and my father I was going to kill. My sister and real slave, Ashlee. Life was fucking grand.

"Little Miss Perfect. Hey!" Anger tinged my call and seconds went by before Ashlee surged in. She was in a black silk slip-style nightgown, and her stare stayed transfixed with mine. I put up my hand for her to stop, taking in Anthem's shocked gaze as he glanced between us. He seemed to read my mind, nodding, but not losing the surprise.

"Yes, Master?"

I calmed, smiling at all the wicked thoughts barreling into me.

“Come, sit next to me. I’m going to need your help for this one. Let’s put on a show for one of my biggest fans. What do you say? Can you sing?”

“Me? Oh...no, but I’ll try if that’s what you’d like.”

“You won’t try. You’ll sing for her. Anthem, go to your new slave while we play her a tune. I want to see. I want to watch, and you can watch us too.”

Fear flickered in Ashlee’s eyes as she slowly lowered next to me. She knew things were about to get bad and bloody. Her fingers interlaced, turning white in her lap through her nervous pulls and twists.

“Let’s start with something simple.” I picked up my guitar. “Since you don’t really know any of my music, we’ll play a song you choose. I’m familiar with almost every song released in the last forty to fifty years. I’m quite talented that way. Music of all kinds have been my life. I only have to hear it once to be able to play it.” I grabbed Ashlee’s hand, bringing it to my lips, biting against the edge of her finger just the smallest amount. “We’ll take it slow. You’ve got this. What would you like to sing?”

Source Creation Date: July 23, 2025, 3:30 am

My mind was blank. In my peripheral I could see Pistol's friend Anthem wrapping around the slave, and with how fast my heart was racing only one song would come to me. But could I sing it out loud? For this? The memories of my mom singing it to me as a child, the love I had as I sung it to Kyle as he grew, it would be tainted with this new life. Yet, nothing else would present itself as my Master kissed over my hand. He was scrambling my brain again, warping my fear with lust.

"I..." my head shook as a last warning, but there was no escaping what song wanted to be sung.

"You can do it."

Tears filled my eyes, and I cleared my throat. "Feeling Good. I'm sure you know it."

"Excellent choice," Anthem purred, rocking him and the slave. I didn't have to turn to see their sway, it was almost nonstop as his face moved into her neck and she choked on her sob.

"I do know it. We even have a cover in our own style, but I want to hear yours. I'll make it easy and sing you in with the note. When we hit the chorus, I'll start playing the guitar. Feel the flow and perform as if we're not here. Let your mind take you back to where you feel safe. Back to where you want to be. Nothing exists but that moment. Sit up straight." I obeyed as he ran his hand up my back. "Push from here." Pistol's palm flattened on my diaphragm, emphasizing what he meant. "Do not whisper. Do not stop for anything. You're to sing loud and with everything you have. When this starts, the last thing you want to do is make me angry. You've seen me in that state of mind before. Sing. Even if you have to start over and repeat it again, and

again, and again. Whatever you do, don't stop until I tell you. Do you understand?"

"Master, please. I promise it won't happen again. Master." The slave cried harder, jerking against the large giant of a man behind her.

My body was on adrenaline overdrive as I nodded, trying to ignore the two who sat in the middle of the living room. My teeth chattered, and I felt sick as Pistol's eyes closed and he took in a long and deep breath. I did the same, closing my eyes to find my mom and son. To find that place back in our old house after we'd moved from the rape. That's when the good times started. Not at first, but when Kyle was born. It brought me and my mom closer together.

A hum filled the room, a soothing, almost haunting sound as Pistol started the melody. I grasped to the pitch with everything I had. To the beat. To the flow, like he'd mentioned. When my part started, I was too afraid not to begin as I should. But I was also holding my infant son, and my heart wanted him to hear me sing to him. To show him how much I loved him despite how we'd been brought together or torn apart. Once he was born, the past didn't matter. I hadn't been expecting that part. What I had prepared for was an obligation. The love I felt when his eyes first met mine was unlike anything I knew. It was a mother's love, and although I was young and didn't know the first thing about being a grown up or even a woman, my heart knew what to do. Just like right now as cries and pleas intensified. My place was cemented into the very floor my feet rested on. The slave in me, as well as the mother in me, sang. And sang.

Screams turned blood-curdling, shocked, and horrified through her high pitch. My eyes opened to stare at the wall, and I continued. It was only as the thuds vibrated through my feet and into every inch of me that I heard Pistol singing and playing his guitar with me. We were in tune. In perfect harmony. We sounded...good together. Almost one, yet in two completely different voices.

As my eyes met his, he was all I saw. All I wanted to see. Something stirred in my chest at his smile, and I could almost block out the gurgling and sharp gasps off to my side. The sounds were turning quieter as if the slave was losing her fight. Her life. And I supposed she was. After all, it was inevitable, just like with me. Some day I'd be her, I'd be killed, but I wouldn't think about that now. I couldn't as Pistol's hand left his guitar to trail over my cheek.

Naturally, I leaned into his touch, closing my lids all over again as I continued the song. The darkness didn't last as he slid his hand, wrapping to the back of my head. I took in the lust burning in his eyes. He put his guitar down, leading me to straddle his lap. I kept wanting to look behind me. To stop singing and hide from his friend, but I knew better than to do either one.

"I knew you'd sound amazing. I fucking knew it."

A moan tangled with a grunt from behind and my Master put his finger to my lips, reaching for a remote on the end table. Music began to play, but not anything I'd heard before. His hands came up gripping the thin spaghetti straps, pulling them down my arms until the V-cut nightgown fell from my breasts.

Back and forth his head shook before he leaned forward, sucking against them. I still couldn't breathe right, and my pulse pounded. I was sure I wouldn't be able to speak tomorrow, if I had a voice left at all. How long had gone by I didn't know. How many times I'd gone through the chorus had to have been more than I could guess. Or maybe time just seemed to drag on even though it hadn't. Nothing felt right. I was drained yet more alive than ever, and I didn't understand why. Shock? Perhaps. It didn't matter if it was me or someone else. Death wasn't easy to face when it was the one thing I was running from the most.

"Perfect. Absolutely...perfect. Such a fitting name for you. I see no flaws. How is that possible? It makes no sense. Are we so much alike, Ashlee?"

I couldn't speak as he sucked my nipple harder, moving to bite his way across my chest. The sensations were stealing me away. They were taking my insecurities. Erasing anything my Master didn't want.

My fingers weaved through his short hair, molding to the back of his head. I drew him closer, pushing my breasts more into his face. I was moaning; I knew that. And it wasn't soft or subtle. The arousing tone was a statement. A show to my Master. It was truth. Perhaps it was even an offering from the slave who'd completely given herself to him in every way she could. I was trying to live up to my name, wasn't I? I refused to fail and not be what he needed. I'd make this work, even if I lost myself trying to make it happen. That's what I'd been taught. Trained. That's what would keep me alive.

"Master."

Pistol hurriedly shifted underneath me, his belt clinking in his haste to get it undone. The moment he entered me...bliss. I was being lifted, moved. The room spun and his lips crushed into mine as my back crashed into the sofa. I cried out, my head turning as he moved to suck hard against my neck. The moment my lids opened, all I saw was a bloody face staring right at me. The slave was on the floor, her entire throat nothing but a mangled mess of shredded, chewed mush. Part of what I thought might be her windpipe was exposed, and a chunk of her lip was dangling near her cheek. Crimson was smeared all over the floor, pooling around her shoulders and up by her head. Although I wasn't looking down farther, I could see Anthem touching her. Doing...things to her. What, I didn't know for sure, but maybe my mind didn't want to know. Maybe it was blocking out what was so obvious to my subconscious.

Fingers brought my face back up. Where I expected wrath for my disobedience, all I got was a hard kiss and slow fucking as my Master squeezed hard into my ass through his thrust.

“Get used to it.” His fingers buried in my hair, keeping my attention on him. “This is only the beginning. It’s going to get a lot worse. There will be times you will help me kill slaves I buy. If it’s going to be us, I’m going to want that from you. Do you want to be with me here? Be mine?”

I nodded, the horror of what I saw already fading as he ground his cock into me.

“Are you sure you can handle that life?”

“I can. I was trained for this.”

“And you’ll do anything I say?”

A whimper left me as his fingers tightened painfully at my scalp. It triggered something, morphing the pleasure into a different type of desire.

“Anything.”

“What if you learn things about me you may not be okay with? Things that may be shocking? Disgusting to you, even. Would you still want to be with me like this?”

I searched his eyes as he brushed his lips over mine in the softest kiss.

“My loyalty or feelings will not waver.”

“Don’t be so sure of that. You’ll be tested sooner than you think, and we’ll see just how deep your loyalty or feelings go. What you learn may change everything. Death may not seem so bad when faced with the alternative. You may beg me to kill you.”

The words caused my arousal to waver, but Pistol didn’t let it for long. He was back to teasing my breasts. To sucking my neck and kissing me. There was such passion

and longing in everything he did with me that what he spoke almost seemed impossible. The actions swept me away, building up my bravery for whatever lay ahead. I'd be strong. I'd stand my ground and know my place. It was by his side as his slave, no matter what.

"Ashlee." My name was moaned as he lifted my leg, pushing even deeper. He was making sounds, and I was starting to make them again too. Anthem's didn't escape me either. It was all too much, and yet as my lust grew, it wasn't enough. My brain kept looping through Pistol's worry of my loyalty. He didn't show it, but the slave in me knew what my Master wanted. I'd been trained to read between the lines. I'd been taught to face situations in a mindset that would best make my Master happy. Right now, it was to enjoy this. That meant I needed to arch my hips and come all over his cock. To state his title to make him feel superior over me. All of which I had down to an art. Not that I didn't enjoy it or that it didn't come naturally. It did, but I wasn't stupid, either.

"Master. Yes, right there. Master." My head lifted as my orgasm was right on the edge. Both my legs drew up even higher, and I clawed into Pistol's back, my legs kicking out as he shifted his hips and added friction to my clit. Spasms hit hard, and I wrapped around him as he continued through the thrusts that brought me to release.

"That's what I like to hear." His hand gripped to my face, holding tightly as he turned to watch the dead slave and his friend. His attention stayed there through the increased roughness of his thrusts. Harder and harder he slammed into me, his grip lowering to my throat as he locked on. I knew better than to move as he began to squeeze. "Fuck. God...fuck."

The cushion underneath did little to protect against the powerful pounding. The slap of our skin was like drums in my ears as sound began to waver. I couldn't breathe. There was so much pressure in my face, I was sure every blood vessel in my eyes were going to rupture. My lips felt numb and huge and just as I saw my Master's

blurry body fading out...air.

I gasped, coughing as cum pumped into me. Words were being spoken, but what Pistol or Anthem was saying as my Master's thrusts slowed was beyond me. I was on a high I didn't ever want to come down from. My body felt everything, and I wanted to stay in this moment for as long as I could. If I was here, I wasn't being tested. If I was here...I couldn't fail.

Source Creation Date: July 23, 2025, 3:30 am

I'd barely hung up the phone after calling for a pickup when it rang again. Ashlee was asleep on the sofa, curled into a ball where I'd left her, and Anthem was in the kitchen covered in blood and chugging what was left of the Gin. I was on cloud nine, happier than ever, in for as long as I could remember. And I was sober. That had to mean something. Sure, it wasn't fucking easy, but I was doing it, and I was doing it for family. My real family. The only ones that mattered.

I looked down at the illuminated screen, my eyes jerking to Ashlee's small body as I hit the button and brought it to my ear.

"Main Master."

"I know it's late, but it's time. Since this is not part of the Garden's, you are to go back up the elevator you came down in. Once up top, you will be taken to a room. You'll have two hours starting right now to do what you want. Time is ticking down."

"Kyle?"

"Not yet. He's on his way. He may even arrive by the time you finish."

"Can you tell me how it went with Ashlee's mother? Does she plan to put up a fight?"

A pause. "I'm afraid the mother suffered an accident and died the night you signed my contract. The boy has been in the system, guarded by some very trusted friends. All the paperwork has been sorted out and everything is as it should be to legally

move forward.”

I forced myself to swallow. “An accident. Of course. So, this meeting is for the rapist and my father, then.”

“That’s right.”

“Can I bring Ashlee? She deserves to see and say any last words.”

“She’s a slave, Master. She deserves nothing. Being as her son will be arriving shortly, I will allow it. If you wish her to have last words, that’s your decision. I don’t care nor want to hear about it. I’m only interested in Kyle. When she arrives in the room with him, the clock will start. One hour. Not a minute more or I subtract it from the next visit. You report to me tomorrow at noon. I will give you the boy’s schedule, his tutors, and what I expect of him. In the meantime, he will be kept at the top, monitored, until you’re ready to leave the Gardens. I have decided it is to be like this every time you visit. You are not to come without him. He stays on top to go through whatever it is he needs while you visit, and when I deem necessary, he will meet with me so that I can gauge his progress. This will be the easy part. Enjoy these younger years, Master. Time will fly faster than you’ll be prepared for. Your court date is in five days. We will talk more about it tomorrow. It was nice doing business with you.”

The line disconnected, and I turned to see Anthem staring at me.

“I have to go. Fuck...Fuck.” I couldn’t process it all as my hand ran down my face. My father. Our father. I’d spent years searching and hiring the most expensive people for someone the Main Master found in a matter of days. Found...like it was nothing. Like my father hadn’t made a career out of being untraceable.

And the accident. I’d killed Ashlee’s mother despite I hadn’t asked for it. I suppose it was easier that way, but I hadn’t thought about the ripple wanting Kyle would cause.

Overall, it didn't matter. I had the kid, and I was ready to step into the role, no matter how much a part I actually played in it. This was what was best for him. He'd never want. Never lack for anything. It came at a cost, but no matter what it was, it was worth it.

"Dude, you good?"

"Yeah. Better than good." I laughed, half in surprise and half in disbelief. "My boy will be here soon. I have to take care of some shit."

I shoved the phone in my pocket, leaning down to slide my hand under Ashlee's face. She'd already seen so much tonight, and it wasn't going to compare to what she was about to see or do.

"Ashlee." A soft sound had me smiling when it shouldn't have. I didn't even know who the fuck I was becoming anymore. "Hey, slave. Miss Perfect. Wake up." I tapped against her cheek with my other hand. Bloodshot eyes blinked, meeting mine, and I noticed the edge of the white by her temple was completely red from my choking. I nearly cringed, hating that Kyle would have to see her like that. I'd seen my mother all messed up at times, and the memories stuck worse than glue. Whether he remembered them now or in the future when he became of age, he'd see her like this. "Hey, we have to go. You need to get dressed."

"Go?" I helped her to sit up. "Is it morning?"

"No. You haven't been asleep long. I have a surprise for you."

She smiled, and I eased her to her feet, walking her to the room.

"What sort of surprise?"

As we entered the closet, I spun her to face me, feeling my heart rate jump. As good as this was going to be, it could completely go to shit real fast. Ashlee could lose it. She may hate me. I wasn't lying when I said she might ask me to kill her. I could see that happening after she found out who I was.

"Do you remember the test I talked about?"

The smile melted as she nodded. "Is this it?"

"It is. Dress in whatever you don't care to ruin but bring extra clothes. You're going to need them for my other surprise."

"There's two?"

"Technically, three."

"Three?"

I grabbed a long sleeve black thermal shirt, sliding it over my head to pull down as I ignored the shock. Ashlee wasn't wasting time getting dressed. She put on jeans and a shirt almost identical to mine. If I ever thought we hadn't looked like siblings, I couldn't deny it now. We could have been fucking twins.

She went to grab another pair of jeans when my hand shot up. "Something nice." My eyes scanned her new clothes, and I grabbed a conservative black dress I'd bought for one of our dinners. It wasn't the best of colors, but it was going to be her funeral or mine. Fuck, it was going to hurt like a bitch if she rejected this. Me. I expected it. She'd be fucked up not to, but I was holding to hope she held my bad blood because I was really getting used to having her around. To...having a real connection with someone.

“Master.” She stopped, taking the dress and the heels I handed over to her. “Can I please have a hint at what’s going on? Something? Anything? I won’t turn on you. I’m not going to—”

My finger fitted over her lips.

“We don’t have time to go into it right now. Everything will come together soon enough.” I led her out as Anthem opened the door to the guards. I stepped over the smears of blood, dodging the slave’s body and puddles, stopping to turn back to Anthem. “Don’t leave until you either have this cleaned, or you scrub it down yourself.”

“Yes, Daddy.” He smiled, winking, despite I had conflicted emotions over the title. I sure wasn’t a father; I was an uncle, but I’d do a damn better job than my own dad did. “It’ll be clean before you get back. Have fun.”

“You have no idea.”

My arm went around Ashlee, and I pulled her in close as I led her out of the apartment. Our ride down the elevator was silent. When we exited the building and headed for the gate, she jerked to a stop.

“What are you doing? We have to go.”

Her head shook. “I’m not allowed to go past the gate.”

“This time you can. The Main Master knows.”

Uncertainty was clear as she looked between me and the large golden arched doors giving entrance to the Gardens. “Is this my test? To choose you or death?”

“What? No. This is not your test. Come on, we don’t have time.”

“She can’t go out there.”

I paused, looking towards the main doors to the apartments. Lilian stood there with two male slaves, her arms crossed over her chest as she swayed. From the slur of her words, she was obviously drunk.

“Mistress Forty-two.” My voice deepened at the anger. “Did you follow us out here?”

“Don’t be ridiculous. We were headed to the city to keep partying. What do you think you’re doing out here at this hour? Trying to sneak out? She can’t leave the Gardens. The girl is a worthless slave.”

“Careful.”

“Or you’ll what? Tell on me? Maybe I’ll tell on you first.”

“Grow up. Not that it’s any of your business, but we’re not leaving. We have an appointment courtesy of the Main Master. Go ahead and call him if you want, but I wouldn’t advise getting on his bad side. Or do. I don’t care. Stay the fuck away from me. Here. Out there. God, it’s like I can’t get rid of you.” My eyes cut down.
“Ashlee.”

I grabbed her bicep, feeling the resistance as I pulled her forward. She was fighting, but not overly as she clutched tighter to the dress and shoes she carried. Lilian stomped off and I was glad as Ashlee’s voice pulled my attention back to her.

“You’re sure I can go? He really knows?”

“Yes. Slave.” My glare was hard as I stared down. First Lilian, now this. We didn’t

have time. We were steps from the opening, and she was starting to dig her feet in. “Look at me. This is not your test. Your test lies at the top of that elevator. We have guests. You’re about to learn something this stupid gate doesn’t even compare to. Death is easy. Live with the truth like me. Battle what the fuck that means, and then question whether life is worth living. I happen to think it is.” I pulled her in, pressing my lips to hers knowing it could damn well be the last time she’d kiss me back willingly. “Stop thinking about what’s going to happen in the form of a test. That’s what it is, but this is our life too, and I’ve done everything in my power to make it better.” I pulled her in impossibly close. “You don’t know me, and I don’t know you, but we have an undeniable connection, yes?”

Slowly, she nodded.

“I want that connection to continue. To stay like this but get stronger. Only you have the power to make this work. I’ve put the puzzle together. It’s about to be whole. It’s about to provide you with something you’d never have otherwise, but the only way to keep it from falling apart is to accept every piece of it. The good. The bad. Even the wrong.”

There was no fight as I drug her to the elevator and hit the button, only confusion as she continued to stare at me, lost. Her mind was going nonstop as she never broke her eyes from me. Whatever it was she was trying to make sense of, I didn’t know. I wasn’t even going to waste my time figuring it out when she’d see soon enough firsthand.

“Master Seventy-seven? Slave one-fourteen?”

I nodded at the armed guard who called out our numbers. The way they were looking at us, I knew the Main Master had prepared them for our arrival. The other looked at Ashlee, bringing up a handheld scanner, leveling it with her eyes. She jumped as he pressed the button, but nothing happened that I could see, and she didn’t react

differently as the guard nodded to the other and allowed us in.

“Master...Can’t we just go back to the apartment? I don’t want things to get bad. Do I have to do this?”

My lips twisted, and I pulled her in, wrapping my arms around her as we headed up.

“It’s inevitable. We can’t escape it. Not either one of us. Besides, although you may not like the first surprise, the second will make up for it.” I held on tighter, resting my chin on the top of her head as we continued up, towards the surface. When the doors opened, gray cement walls of the military installation appeared. Ashlee’s arms broke from my waist, but she stood up taller, holding to one of my arms as two more guards approached.

“Right this way.”

We didn’t have to walk far. An electronic door opened, and we passed two doors before a third to the left gave us entry. I didn’t even have to walk in to have my heart in my throat. The far back wall was glass and through it I could see two men walking around in a room. There were four guards along the back wall, their large guns held steady against their chest.

“Master.”

I hadn’t realized Ashlee was pulling against my arm. It was the panic in her voice that tore my eyes away from our father, who happened to be looking right at me. He shared mine and Ashlee’s blonde hair, but his was whiter, like mine. His wrinkles were deeply set at the corners of his eyes and even though I could see the resemblance, I hadn’t expected him to look so old. Maybe it’s because the last photo I uncovered from one of his aliases was from a good ten years ago.

“It’s okay. Let’s go in.”

“I can’t. I.”

“Don’t you dare let either of these pieces of shit see your fear. Show them your hate. Show them your anger. Do not let them see weakness. They don’t deserve that so close to death.” I turned her, holding tight to her biceps as I stared hard into her eyes. “Today our past dies. Starting today, it’s just me and you. Come on. Chin up. Show that motherfucker he didn’t break you. He gave you a gift, but one that cost him his life. He put his poison in you only to find out too late that you were the lethal one. You hold the power now, Miss Perfect. Use it.”

“We can kill him?”

Her lips stayed parted as her eyes left mine to look towards the glass.

“Oh, fuck yes. He’s already dead. He just doesn’t know it yet.”

Her hands shakily gripped to my shoulders, and she moved in hard, pulling me in to throw her arms tightly around me.

“You did this for me?”

“I did.”

Ashlee’s lips crashed into mine, and she seemed to catch herself at the boldness, pulling to look back towards the staring men. They weren’t walking anymore. Seth was confused, but glaring, and Jake, our father, held an expression I couldn’t begin figuring out. Did he recognize us? Did he even have any idea who we were?

“Who’s the other man? He’s...”

I laughed, not at all happy as I led her forward so she could set down her clothes and shoes on a table against the far wall. Not far from it was a rack full of tools. She was too preoccupied to notice, but I didn't miss them or the shackles mounted to the back wall. "He goes through more names than you can imagine, but his real name is Jake Stephens."

Her head whipped to me. "Stephens. Your dad."

It wasn't a question.

"You could say that, although I wouldn't say he was ever there to claim that title." I glanced at her as her face drew in, studying him. "I think. He looks...He."

"You feel it, then?"

She turned to me. "Feel it?"

"Who he is. Look at him, Ashlee. What do you see in his face?"

Fingers trailed down mine as she let go and stepped forward. She didn't stop until she was inches from the glass. The man shook his head, crossing his arms over his chest angrily as he turned his back to us.

"I...Master?" Ashlee turned to me. "Do I know him? I think I...might. Yes. It's right...there." I didn't even get to answer before her hand shot up and her eyes flared. There was something. It was in the fluttering of her lashes over those round, angry eyes. In the way I saw the slave in her drop, and true rage seep into her beautiful features. Honey brown darkened as her gaze met mine, only to return back to the window. She reared back, slamming the side of her fist into the glass. Seth stepped back, and whether it was the noise or the energy that had our father turning back to face her, I wasn't sure. I moved closer, not able to break my fascination as I watched

her personality change completely. The woman I saw, I didn't know. Not even close.

"You." She pounded back on the divider as he met her eyes. "I knew you looked familiar. You used to come to my mom. I know you. I was young, but I remember. You...You..." Her head shook as a sound left her, and her eyes cut back to mine. "He hit my mom once. I saw him. I...remember." Like a predator, she went back, stalking the glass. Back and forth she paced. "I saw you. I saw what you did. I know you. Who...you are. I...heard her talking. She said. She called you..."

"Ashlee." I grabbed around her waist, bringing her back to focus on me. "Breathe. You can take your anger out on both of them soon enough. You know who he is?"

She swallowed hard, her tear-filled eyes scanning mine looking for answers. For confirmation.

"Then you know who I am. Ashlee, you have to say it."

Her head shook, the anger still tightening her beautiful features as her hand clamped over my mouth. I could have easily slapped it away, but I wanted her to process. To deal and face what we both now knew.

"It's not." She growled, a sob tearing through as her other hand gripped to the back of my neck pulling me towards her so our foreheads could touch. "It's not true. You didn't know. We...didn't." Another angry groan mixed with a cry as she broke the touch and moved back to stare into my eyes. "You did know. From day one. You knew. And you. We. The secret. My name." One fist slammed into my shoulder. Then, she hit again, squeezing my shirt to hold on so she didn't continue. So many emotions changed her face. She kept searching my depths. I didn't offer her a sympathetic glance. I wasn't apologizing for shit, and I wanted her to see that. A good few minutes went by before a deep exhale left her. When she sobbed, she immediately turned, wiping her wet face against the shoulder of her shirt.

“Ashlee.”

“The puzzle. I see it now.” She sniffled, clearing her throat as her thoughts had her looking down. “It’s so clear. It’s the only thing that makes sense. You saved me. That’s why you bought me. You didn’t want me, but you saved me from possibly dying and we...connected. There was something there.”

“Say what I am. Who I am.”

The directness of her eyes, the power behind them, didn’t waver or retreat as she stood taller.

“You’re my Master. My...brother...but my Master. It changes nothing.”

I towered over her, flattening my hand at her lower back to jerk her to me. “Nothing? It changes everything.”

“To who? To you? Did you prefer I not know? Does it not hold the appeal now that I do?” Her anger ignited my own, mixing with lust as she grabbed my shirt. “I don’t know you. We weren’t raised together as brother and sister. You’re my Master. If we share blood, I can’t see it. I may feel it, but I happen to like the connection we have. This means nothing. If anything, it brings us closer together.”

“You think so?”

“How can it not? I know you as my Master, but you’re my brother. Brothers protect. They take care of what’s theirs. They help. You’ve done that.” She stopped, only to continue. “Sisters do the same for brothers. I’ll take care of you, Master, better than any slave you could buy. I’m part of you. No...I’m more than that.” Something changed in her stare as it lowered to my lips. “We share something different. Special. I don’t think I want to lose that. I like what we have, and so do you. Why fight this?”

We don't want to, and I won't. Our puzzle is complete." She leaned forward, easing her body into mine. "I accept every piece. The good, the bad...even the wrong."

Source Creation Date: July 23, 2025, 3:30 am

If I had learned anything in all of my teachings, it was that words had more power than the truth behind them. How they were spoken. How they were said. If the right emotion backed the statement, it was all that mattered. Even a lie could become truth. But was I lying? Did I mean what I said? Was the passion in my voice just as real as it sounded?

Pistol grabbed my ass with one hand while the other wrapped around my back. His kiss stole any thoughts I might have held, and perhaps that said everything. Afterall, wouldn't any sane person have fought to escape? Fought their Master to the death for morality? It seemed so pointless and stupid to me. My Master may have been deadly, heartless, a liar, but he wanted me more than anyone else ever had. Maybe even Seth, who's reminder only had my skin heating even more.

I pulled back, mirroring Pistol's stare as he took me in.

"It's final then. This. Us." He nodded glancing over to the men behind the divider. "We don't have much time. We kill the rapist first." My Master turned, pointing to Seth and signaling to the guards. As they moved in to grab him, Seth started to fight and jerk against their hold. Kicks had them grabbing him tighter as they pulled him through a back door, disappearing from view.

"Are we supposed to kill them here? In this room? How?"

Pistol gestured to the shackles on the back wall, and then the rack full of tools further down by the table. My Master pulled me towards them as I still tried to figure out how all of this transpired.

“How did you do this? I can’t even believe I got through the gate. But...them. Seth, he was in prison, and my.” I stopped. “Our dad. How?”

“It’s a little complicated, but I have pull as well as influence. I guess it’s sort of an even trade. That’s yet to be seen. I don’t care either way. This will be worth it.”

I stopped as I took in the older man still watching us. “You hate him.”

“I do. More than anything. He might as well have killed my mom. What he did to her. What he turned her into.” A shaky breath left him as his fury shone through his evil stare. “He ruined her, and he’s going to pay for that. For hurting your mom too. For making our lives the way they were. He has more kids than us, Ashlee. Four women. Eight kids that I know of. All abandoned like us. Who does that? How does someone do that?”

“I don’t know. He won’t hurt anyone else though. He won’t do this again.”

A grin pulled at Pistol’s lips. “No. He won’t. First, Seth. I want you to start. You go as far as you can. If you can’t finish, I’ll take care of the rest. You need this.”

The door opened and I felt sick as the guards marched him in. My body trembled, and I could barely keep standing as old fear and memories returned full force. I could still smell the liquor. Still hear me making excuses. He hadn’t wanted me to stay home. He was responsible for me, and my mom thought I was at their house. I said I was fine waiting at home for her but when he saw I wasn’t going to give in and go back, he pushed his way inside. He tore off my clothes and raped me not two feet from my front door. I fought so hard. I’d screamed so long and hard that my throat was raw. But I hadn’t stopped, and I was lucky the neighbors heard and came home when they had. They saved me from what might have happened afterward, which could have been anything.

“You. Bitch! You must have missed me to bring me all the way out here. Look how pretty you turned out. Fucking cunt. Are you happy about what you did? Hey! Bitch, I’m talking to you.”

Pistol grabbed my hand, his lids so low I could barely see his eyes as he glared over to Seth. “Strip him down and chain him up.” He turned to face me as yells grew louder. “Make this good. I’ll try to hold off for as long as I can but if he keeps running his mouth about you, I make no promises.”

I couldn’t respond before yells started again. “Leave that on. What is this shit? Hey! Take me back. You can’t do this!”

“Go find something off that cart, slave. I’m going to go introduce myself.”

I nodded, turning, only to get spun around for one more kiss. The moment Pistol broke from me, he pulled his sleeves up on his forearms, unlatching his watch to place on the table. The guards were stepping back from Seth’s chained, nude form, but he didn’t look at them as they headed out. He was too focused on my Master as Pistol headed for him.

“Well, look at you,” Seth said, smiling angrily. “Aren’t you a pretty thing for a man? Too pretty, is that what the tattoos and hair are for? A distraction?”

Pistol walked towards him slowly, never breaking his stare as he approached.

“You raped my sister.”

“Your...sister? But you were just kissing her.”

“I sure was. I own her. I can do whatever the fuck I want. That doesn’t change the fact that you raped her when she was a child.”

“Rape. Please. She wanted it.”

Pop!

The hit connected against Seth’s nose so solid, I jumped at the savage connection. Seth’s legs buckled and blood gushed from his nose.

“She was thirteen. Twelve when you started molesting her. You think she wanted that? From you?”

“Yeah, motherfucker, she did.”

Whack!

Whack!

Whack!

The combination of hits could have been done by a professional for how quick and brutal the blows landed. Jab-jab-cross. Jab-cross-uppercut. Jab-cross-hook-cross. Pistol had had training at some point, and it showed with every explosion to Seth’s face.

“Fuck! Fuck, man. This is bullshit. Come on.”

“She was a child. Say it.”

“She didn’t look like a child.”

“She was a child! Say it!”

Whack!

“Fine! She was a child. Guards!”

“No one is coming for you. You’re here because of me. I did this. I brought you here. You are closure for my slave. She deserves that after what you did. Ashlee.”

My head snapped to the cart at my Master’s call, and I grabbed the first thing that pulled to me. It wasn’t the typical knife, mallet, or hammer at the front. Those brought me too close. I wasn’t ready for that. I grabbed the bat resting in the back that was covered in large spikes. It was heavier than I expected, but it was the only thing I felt comfortable using.

“There’s my girl. Good choice.”

Blood was trickling down Seth’s chin from his busted lip. There was even a small river of crimson dripping from the far side of his jaw. The injured skin was already starting to swell, puffing out at the split area under his left eye.

“What the fuck is she going to do with that? Ash...don’t do this. Ash, I messed up. I was drunk. I wasn’t thinking. I tried to stop. I really did but.” My lids narrowed as I drew the bat up over my shoulder. “Ashlee, it was a mistake. I mean, think if I wouldn’t have. You wouldn’t have a son. We have a son.”

A tremor shook my entire body as I yelled and reared back.

“Ashlee, stop. Please! “Ash—”

I didn’t stop. I put every ounce of my strength into my swing. With the way Seth’s wrists were cuffed at his sides, near his hips, the spikes tore and stuck right into his upper left bicep and shoulder. The hard thunk that reverberated in my hand from

hitting bone made my palms ache, but I was too busy jerking with all my strength to dislodge the large spikes that were deeply embedded into his now shattered collarbone.

“Fuck! Bitch!”

“That’s my son. He is not yours. He is nothing to you. He’s my son!”

“Fine! God dammit. I need a doctor. Help! Guards!”

Pistol walked more to the side, his arms crossing over his chest. “Didn’t I say no one was coming for you? Ashlee, baby, swing again. Keep going until you can’t anymore. I want this bastard so full of holes, we can see through him.”

The order registered with ease, as if my Master had told me to do something as simple as kneel. The hate I had for the man who hurt me knew no bounds. Had I truly ever feared Seth? I didn’t feel that now. All I wanted was to make him pay. To erase any knowledge of my son from his head completely.

Moving to position myself better, I drew back, soaking in the screams that were already starting. Seth was yelling out for his life. Yelling for help. He was yelling to a God that didn’t reside in these walls. Again, I put my strength into swinging, this time tearing into his abdomen. Blood squirted out, spraying me as I leaned in, tugging back the bat. When I went again, I swung in an upward motion, coming from the floor to connect diagonally. And I went right for the one area that had hurt me the most. Red was running down his leg, squirting out as the spikes were removed from his thigh, sac, and cock. The bat was growing heavier as I aimed for the general location again.

All I could see was the weapon he’d used against me. His actions had scarred me for years. The pain, the trauma, did damage I still wasn’t quite healed from. Hadn’t I

been terrified of anyone male after Seth? In the outside world, I couldn't date. I couldn't hang out. I couldn't even have friends with the fear that they'd hurt me too. Men had been a trigger for me in general. How hard had it been even holding a job, or holding a conversation with the opposite sex? I'd forgotten it all through the brainwashing of my training, but that was only because I kept getting told I had bigger things to fear...like death. Like mutilation. Torture. I had a son. I needed my son. To live for him. To survive. I had to find a way to somehow get him back. To see if he was okay. To know he was safe!

“Ash, please! No more. No more! Ashlee! Help! Fucking help me!”

The pool of blood beneath him grew bigger as I kept tearing through layers of his flesh. His cock was split in half, his sac tore open. There were deep jagged gouges all over his legs, stomach, and chest. I kept hearing my Master. I kept seeing Kyle, my son.

Keep going until you can't anymore. And I was. I was breathing heavily, fighting with everything I had to lift the heavy bat again, and again. Sweat was starting to coat my face and dampen my hair. Still, I tried, sending the spikes sinking right into the sternum of his chest. I pulled back but couldn't seem to get them free. My body swayed, only stopping as Pistol's arms wrapped around me from behind as support.

“You're the most beautiful person I've ever seen in my life.” His mouth and nose nuzzled into my cheek, sliding on the mix of sweat and blood. “I should have been there for you before, but you have me now. Let's finish this, together.”

All I could do was nod as his hands covered mine, and he used his strength to jerk the bat free. Seth's eyes were already rolling and for the first time I realized the vomit mixing with the blood on his chin. It was sprayed all over the floor and on my shoes. For a moment so momentous and quick, I was seeing everything in slow motion. Details were soaking in on areas I wasn't even comprehending. A turn of my body

this way to swing—Jake’s terror-filled gaze as he watched on. A pivot of that bat this way—the table holding my black dress and shoes. The impact against Seth’s face—cement, caving bone breaking through skin, more blood, teeth flying free of his mouth as his lips made a wave-like motion from the force. Even skin sticking and tugging to the sharp pointed metal as we pulled free. And then we did it to his head again. Three times, but the last to the opposite side.

No more screams, only a deaf-sounding, monotone hum that mixed with an airy gurgle. Eyes were open, but they were gone. Dead from us. So many things. I saw, but my processing was off. Everything was...swaying. Wanting to fade with what I was doing. Bile scorched my throat and mouth, and I swallowed back my own vomit, still under the control of my Master as we went to swing again. The feel would never leave me. The jarring was doing its job imprinting in my brain. Warping me as I knew I’d never escape the vibrating, numbing ache of my hands. Killing wasn’t easy. It was hard. Messy. But worth it to know the man who I thought would be free, would never hurt me, Kyle, or anyone else again. Seth was dead, and me and my son were free of him. It was all thanks to my Master...my brother.

Source Creation Date: July 23, 2025, 3:30 am

“You have thirty-seven minutes.”

The cuffs locked around my father’s wrists and the guards left the room, leaving me, Ashlee, and Jake together in silence. Seth’s body was gone now. Only the mess of our anger was spilled all over the floor in dark red puddles and smears where his feet had left a trail from them dragging him out. He’d been nothing but a broken pin cushion of our aggressions by the time we finally got done with him.

“Killers. Freaks. That’s what the two of you have turned into?” He glanced around the room. “I’m not sure whether to be proud or disappointed. Do one of you want to explain to me why the hell I was drug out of bed at two in the morning, days ago, only to be brought here to witness this sideshow horseshit?”

I kept quiet, devoid of words as I stared at the man who’d completely altered my very existence.

“You hurt my mother.”

Ashlee walked forward. Blood speckled her face and hair, saturating parts of her jeans and shirt. She didn’t look afraid or even hesitant. She looked well past pissed.

“Your mother.” He let out a long breath. “God rest her soul. She was a good woman. Stubborn as hell, but she raised you right in your youth. Or...I thought she did. I’m not sure how she’d feel about you kissing your brother like that, but hey...what do I know? I’m the one in cuffs because of you two.”

“What do you mean ‘God rest her soul’?” Ashlee’s eyes jerked to me but went back

to him. “What the hell are you talking about?”

“Oh, you didn’t hear? I probably wouldn’t have either had I not been traveling through on one of my stops. She passed not too long ago. Horrible car accident. A pile up on the interstate or something.”

“What? No, you’re wrong. No. You have the wrong person. My mom is fine. Kyle.” Ashlee turned in a circle, looking as if she didn’t know where to go. I pulled her in close, feeling her clutch to me through her panic.

“Kyle is fine. I was waiting for the right time to tell you about your mom. I’m sorry. It hurts losing your mother.”

“But...No.” she sobbed, breaking as she collapsed in my arms. “Not like this. Not like this!”

“Shh. I have this taken care of. I told you everything will be okay, and you trust me, right? You know I got you. Come here.” Taking her to the table, I pulled out a chair, sitting her down. She was still crying, barely able to catch her breath as I wiped the tears and kept my stare locked with hers. “No more. She’s in a better place now, I promise. Ashlee, you need to calm.” Again, I wiped more tears. “Use what you’re wearing and clean yourself up. Put on your dress and heels. Clear your head. Don’t even look back towards that bastard over there. He’s dead to you now. That’s done. Focus on yourself. On something good that’s about to come your way.”

My hands cupped her cheeks and my lips pressed into hers.

“We’re family. You and me, Miss Perfect. We’re blood. You may be my slave, and I may hurt you at times, but I also do the impossible for what’s mine. Never doubt me. Never question my actions. Be good and obey, and I’ll move mountains for you. I’ll slay dragons.” I leaned towards her ear, shoving my fingers through her hair to squeeze. “I’ll bring you your son. Nothing is beyond me when I want something bad

enough. He's coming here right now. Not to stay, but you get an hour."

"Kyle's coming? Here? I can see him?"

The sobs returned as she clutched to me but faded as she sucked in deep breaths trying to stop herself. I pulled back, meeting her gaze. Ashlee could never know the truth. There was no point. All she had to know was her son was going to be okay, and that she needed to trust me.

"That's right. I've been talking to the Main Master. I told him who we were. I had to. I didn't have a choice. The rules here are very strict. They naturally had to look into records because of the connection, and Kyle's name came up. He was in the system after your mom passed. The Main Master is having him brought to me. I won't let him have a life like I did. I'm going to raise him, Ashlee. I'm going to do my best so that he never suffers like we did."

More tears...and something else. Something I couldn't read, but I knew it was just her processing the information overload.

"Think about it," I said, lowering my voice even more. You only get to see him twice a year for an hour each time, but I'll have stories. I can't bring my phone in here, but I'll have pictures I can keep in my wallet. You can still see him as he grows. You can know how he's doing. I'm going to spoil my nephew. He'll have it all. Good tutors. An amazing place to live and grow. I'll print out all the listings. You can even help me pick out which home is the best environment for him. This could be good for both of us, Ashlee. Great, for him. His life will be set."

Arms wrapped around my neck, pulling me in to hold tight.

"Thank you." She sniffled, her body still going through the motions of sobbing regardless that she wasn't making a sound. "You don't know how much this means to me. I'll be the best slave. The most perfect slave."

“I know you will.” She wasn’t going to have a choice. I may have been having the feels lately, but in time, I knew things might change. Maybe even me to an extent, but to think I’d never hurt her again was pointless. I would. Maybe a lot. And maybe what I told Elec was the truth. Maybe some day I would kill her, but in the meantime, she’d still have more than she would have had I not embraced the idea of my nephew—my only surviving family on the outside world I’d ever claim.

Knocking on the glass divider had us turning to look. The Main Master was pointing to his watch, and I knew the fact that he was even up here meant so was Kyle.

Pulling back, I let go, standing.

“Get dressed. Make yourself look as presentable as possible while I take care of this. Kyle’s waiting.”

There was no hesitation as Ashlee began stripping her clothes off. I turned, reaching over to grab a knife from the rack. The blade was a good six inches long, and it curved along the length, coming to a sharp pointed tip. When I turned to face my father, his lips tightened.

“So, this is how we end?”

“We never began.”

“I spent the first four years of your life with your mother.”

I lunged, closing the distance as I slashed the blade across his chest. He was still dressed. The shirt was slit where the blade had cut through and blood was beginning to soak into the dingy white cotton, webbing out color into the material more by the second. “Don’t you mention my mom. You destroyed her. You fucked her head all up.”

“Her head was already fucked up.” He winced, his teeth becoming exposed as he grimaced through the pain. “Why do you think I left? Your mom had issues. She was a drunk. A junkie, long before she lost herself to it after I took off. Just because you don’t remember doesn’t mean it wasn’t true.”

“What I remember are the fights. What I remember is hiding under the table while you knocked her on her ass more times than I can count. You broke her arm.”

“She fell wrong. I didn’t break it.”

My eyes closed through the deep breath. When I was opening them, I was already reaching up to his ear. I brought the blade down hard, cutting it off.

“Look at that. Your ear fell off. I don’t think it had anything to do with my knife.”

Yells were filling the space as Jake thrashed against the cuffs holding him in.

“You crazy son of a bitch. You crazy fucking bastard.”

“Bastard. You got that right. I have you to think for that. You were never a father. Not in my first four years, or any time after that. All I got from you was your bad blood. You pretended I wasn’t even there. I guess that was a blessing.”

“Let me out of these chains, son. You got your point across.”

“I’m not your son.” I reached up, using the knife to cut through the shirt so I could see the body underneath. There was nothing impressive or even distinct about it. No scars. No tattoos or even muscle tone of that matter.

My hand angled, moving the tip of the knife a few inches above the deep gash running over his pecs.

“Son. Son, please. You’re angry. You hate me. I understand that. I hate myself. You don’t have to do this. Let me go and you’ll never hear from me again. No one will. I’ll disappear. I’ll—”

“Go back to what you know?” Each word had me pushing the sharp tip a good inch into his skin as he yelled out. “Fuck you. You’re done hurting people. If I didn’t have someone important waiting on me, I’d spend hours, days, making you suffer like you made all of us. Instead, I’m going to leave here knowing you did. Do you know why?” I pushed into the right side of his chest, hitting bone, only to pull free and stick him again, this time finding a location where I could go deeper.

“Christian—”

“No!” I stabbed the knife in the three places guaranteed to back up my threat. My father gasped, his eyes like saucers as he looked down, only to jerk his gaze back to me. “Don’t you fucking dare call me that. That is not my name. That boy died on a dirty kitchen floor, holding his mother’s hand as she choked on her own vomit. Holding her fucking hand!” I spun, only to turn back through my rage. “I hate you. I’ve hated you for as long as I can remember. Today, that hate dies right here. You roughly have a few minutes to live. Within seconds, your lungs are going to fill up, and it’s going to get hard for you to breathe. Your liver is punctured as well as your kidney. I hope you have fun bleeding out. You’re going to do that all alone, just like you lived your life. All by yourself. No one will save you. No one will be here to hear you beg. To hear your confessions or regrets. How does it feel to know not a soul is even going to mourn your death, or know you’re gone? Pathetic. But me and Ashlee, we’ll know. Don’t worry, I’ll smile every time I think about you in this room, gasping for air, choking on blood, wishing you had someone to hold your hand like she did as the fear kicks in for your impending death.” I turned my back to him, dropping the knife. “Ashlee, let’s go see our boy.”

“Chris—Christian. Please.”

The click of heels echoed throughout the room. I reached my hand out to her, bringing her fingers to my lips. I didn't look back at my father and neither did Ashlee as she took my arm and I led her to the door. My father continued to yell out, but that didn't matter anymore. He'd suffer in there by himself, alone, just how it was meant to be. And me, I said I'd drop my hate for him, but I wasn't sure how that was going to happen with how unsatisfied I felt. He'd brought me to the Gardens, and now he was going to curse me to stay there, releasing this anger on every slave I could.

"This way."

Elec's hands unclasped as he walked forward, taking a right and leading us two halls over. Ashlee was shaking as she grasped to me, but she held tight, keeping her pace steady. The moment we stopped in front of the door, I turned her to me, searching her face to make sure she'd gotten rid of any blood she might have missed.

"You look beautiful. You can do this. Smile. You're about to see your son again." I tucked a saturated red lock of hair behind her ear, waiting for her to smile before I turned to Elec.

"The moment you both walk through the door, your hour starts. You are not to mention the Gardens. You are not to say the term slave or Master. The truth will come in time. As of now, you're at a retreat to make his life better. To make him happy. You're not sick. You're not unwell or stressed. You are not sad. No key words that point to negativity. Everything is positive. If you neglect to follow the rules, you lose half the time for your next meeting. Do both of you understand?"

"Yes, Main Master."

Our answer was in unison. The door opened and we headed inside. What I walked into was not a room I was expecting. It was a...nursery, just like Pete had mentioned. A room with cribs, small beds, and toys everywhere. Although the space easily held fifty children, the only one in sight was a small blonde boy sitting a good twenty feet

away playing with some toy cars on carpet resembling a racetrack.

“Kyle?”

At the sound of Ashlee’s voice, the boy’s head whipped around. For seconds he stared, his brow drawing in confused. I knew the moment he realized who she was. Green eyes flared and he jumped to his feet, sprinting right for her.

“Mom!”

Ashlee rushed forward, crouching to catch him as he dove into her arms, but I didn’t move. I couldn’t as Elec’s hand grasped my bicep, clamping down as I went to step.

“Give them some time. We need to talk. I’ve had my people looking into Kyle the last few days. He’s a smart kid. Extremely bright, which is good news for all involved. It’s the reason I want him brought here every time you return.” He glanced over, coming back to peg me with a hard stare. “I want to make something extremely clear. That boy is an investment. My investment. Your lifestyle—”

“Will not be an issue.” I jerked my arm free. “He won’t be exposed to anything that will hurt him or alter our plans.”

“You better make sure of that. I know everything so don’t try at any point to get something by me. I’m the first call you make in any situation. Good. Bad. I don’t care if he scrapes his knee while he’s playing. It’s me you reach out to. To Kyle, I am more than some man watching over him, and he’ll find that out soon enough. This is the first project I’ve overtaken personally for my lifestyle, and I don’t intend for anything to fuck up this boy’s path. Do you want him to have a good life? To be the best? The most powerful? To be feared and respected no matter where he goes?” He glanced to Kyle, only to return back to my eye contact. “You asked this of me. I believe you were genuine. Keep that mentality. Do your part, and his future will be set. If you fail after I gave you warning, I’ll take more than your nephew. I’ll take

your life, and then I'll take hers. All the boy will have left is me."

Elec left me standing there, plastering a smile to his face as he approached Ashlee and my nephew.

"You must be Kyle. My name is Elec. You and I are going to be really good friends. Why don't you show me and your mom this car you're playing with."

There were no words as I watched the switch flip inside the Main Master. It was like he was a completely different person. I took in the nursery, knowing this went so much deeper than rumors or speculation. Where I thought I had everything figured out and under control, I couldn't stop the warnings that revolved as I watched Elec. All of our futures might have been set, but at any wrong turn, I risked losing it all. Like dominoes, we would fall if I made a mistake. That's what happened when you made a deal with the devil. It was all or nothing. Luckily, I'd been in Hell long enough to know how not to get burned. I'd comply with the Main Master's rules, and in time we'd all be rewarded. I was in deeper now, more than ever, and after the shit I'd been through, I deserved to be here. I deserved my family, my new life, and I sure as fuck couldn't afford to let anyone get in the way of that. Not even myself.

The End