



My Deepest Desire (Between the Sheets #8)

Author: *Elyse Kelly*

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Description: He used to be my everything. Then he pushed me away and broke my heart.

He became someone I didn't know—someone I didn't recognize—and humiliated me in front of everyone. I despised him and kept my distance, vowing to never speak to him again.

Until someone came after me, stalking me and threatening my safety. There was no one else I could turn to, and I had no choice but to seek his help.

I thought he'd turn me down. So imagined my surprise when called me his Little Mouse. A familiar name I hadn't heard in years.

All those old feelings came rushing back. Only he's not the boy I used to know. He's a man with a deadly reputation, and he's ready to make me his.

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TREY

I sit like a king in the back corner booth. It's my vantage point, where I can see everything happening in the bar. I take in my surroundings, the sounds, sights, smells. I have a girl whose name I can't remember sitting next to me with my arm around her shoulders.

She's pretty and I'll sleep with her but I never go back twice. It's better this way or they get attached. I know I'm attractive, always have been, but that's not important to me. Sex doesn't make me feel alive, not the way I do when I punish and torture. Men only. I don't hurt women or children—that's my only rule. And no matter the price clients are willing to pay me, I decide which jobs I take. I don't kill innocent people.

A server comes to my table and I order another whiskey. "I'll get that for you, Trey. Anything else?"

She's a hot blonde, not unlike the one sitting next to me. I wonder if they'd be interested in a party of three tonight. But just as my dick awakens at the thought, the server says something that makes my heart stop beating.

"There's some girl looking for you at the bar. Says her name is Maggie Houser. Want me to get rid of her?"

I remove my arm from around the girl next to me and shift in my seat.

Maggie Houser. What the fuck is she doing here?

“No. Send her over.”

The server’s face drops and the girl at my side huffs with a pout on her lips. I don’t even know her, and if she thinks she has a claim on me, then she’s out of her fucking mind.

“Oh, okay. I’ll tell her. And I’ll be right back with your drink.” She offers a weak smile before heading to the bar.

Guess the waitress thought I’d send Maggie away. It’s what I usually do. Most people in town know to leave me the fuck alone when I’m here, because this is where I come to relax and unwind when I get back in town from a job. I like to people watch, learn their behaviors, observe how they interact. And it helps to hear the gossip they’re all so eager to spread. I don’t get involved, but I pay attention to what’s happening around me. That’s a key to survival in my line of work.

Maggie, however, isn’t like the rest of them. When we were kids, she used to talk a mile a minute, and it always amused me. Yet, over the years, she’s grown quieter and more reserved. I’m sure I played a role in that, but I got what I wanted—she avoids me and people don’t mess with her. That’s how I need it to be, since I’m not around much.

Seconds later, the one person I’d give my left nut for is standing in front of me. All timid and nervous, wringing her hands together.

My little Mouse.

I look her up and down and take in her modest appearance. Her long, curly dark hair that she tries to hide behind. Her thin-framed glasses and pert nose. That smooth,

light-brown skin and those plump lips that I long to have wrapped around my cock.

That'll never happen, though, because she hates me and it's my fault. I did what I had to do, and I'd do it again. I kill people for a living, for Christ's sake. My childhood friend deserves better than that. I do miss her, though, and I've been keeping tabs on her since we were kids. That'll have to be enough. Because, right now, I have to pretend I don't like her, and it fucking kills me.

"Well, well, well... look what the cat dragged in." I give her a cocky smirk. "What are you doing here, Maggie?"

Her lips are pinched together while her eyes narrow. Then she grits her teeth. "I need to talk to you."

"Speak up, Mouse. Can't hear you." I'm being a dick, but it's for her own good. Until the girl next to me snickers, and I shoot her a seething glare.

Maggie huffs and straightens her spine. "I need to talk to you, Trey. It's... It's important." Her voice is stronger now, but if she clenches her fists any harder, her nails will cut into her flesh.

"I ain't stopping you. What do you want?"

"I was hoping we could talk privately ." She raises her eyebrows before shifting her gaze to the scantily-clad woman on my left.

"I don't have all day, Mouse, so get to it." God, I hate being such an asshole to her, but it's best she stays far the fuck away from me before I ruin her, like I ruin everything else.

She closes her eyes and shakes her head. "Just forget it. This was a mistake." She

turns away, but I'm not letting her go that easy. Maggie never comes here. I'd know if she did. So if she made a point to bring her sweet ass inside this bar, just to talk to me, then I know something's up.

"Where the fuck do you think you're going?"

She whips around to glare at me with her soulful brown eyes, and I hold her stare.

"Leave," I command and she rears back, but I'm not talking to Maggie. I look at the girl in the booth with me with a passive expression. "Did I stutter?"

She points a pink-painted acrylic nail toward herself while her eyes go wide. "Me? Baby, I thought?—"

"Don't call me that. You don't know me," I sneer. "Now get the fuck out."

Her heavily made-up face twists into a scowl before she yanks her purse off the table and slides out of the booth.

Maggie stands frozen in place until the other girl leaves, then lifts her gaze to mine. I nod my head to the side and indicate for her to sit down. She hesitates for a moment but finally takes a seat at the edge of the booth, avoiding getting too close.

"You have my attention. Talk."

An exaggerated sigh escapes her pretty mouth. She pivots her body toward mine. "I... I need..." Her shoulders slump as an exasperated expression spreads across her face. "I need your help."

I've known this girl since kindergarten and she's never come to me for anything. Not since the fifth grade. Not since we stopped being friends. Not since I became her

tormentor when we were fifteen. If only she knew the truth, but that'd probably make her hate me more. Knowing I crave the feeling of warm, copper-scented blood on my hands would scare and disgust her. It would any normal person, but I'm far from that.

"I can't help you." The lie tastes bitter on my tongue.

"Can't or won't?" She shakes her head with disappointment. "I never should've come here. I don't know what I ever did to you, Trey, but?—"

She's trying to get away, but I stop her in her tracks with a heavy palm landing high on her thick thigh. My fingers wrap around the inside of her leg and if I flexed my index finger, I'm positive I could brush it across her denim-covered pussy lips. My dick twitches and begins to lengthen inside my jeans.

"Get back here, Mouse." I drag her supple body into my muscular side and wrap a protective arm around her, caressing her shoulder with my thumb.

I shouldn't touch her like this, but it's been more than a decade since I've been this close to her. Her familiar scent is intoxicating, warm and sweet and innocent like fresh-baked sugar cookies. She's so fucking beautiful and she's not even trying.

"Now, talk."

Her gaze falls to the hand I still have on her—the same one I refuse to move until she makes me. "I... I think someone might be stalking me." Her words penetrate my chest like a sharp knife.

"What the fuck do you mean, Maggie?"

She starts to explain, but doesn't look at me. That won't do, so I lift her chin with my free hand and force her eyes to meet mine.

“His name is Chris. Or at least that’s what his profile said.”

I’m struggling to listen while getting lost in the gold-flecked amber of her eyes.

“What does that mean? His profile?”

“That’s the thing about small towns. Nobody will date me now, after you deemed me some kind of pariah back in high school. You bullied me constantly and acted like I had the plague. Everyone took your cue and it’s followed me around ever since.”

I wince. I was attractive, athletic, and popular. Guys wanted to be me and girls couldn’t stay off my dick. They hung on every word I said like it was law.

Fucking lemmings, the whole lot of them.

“Get to the point, Maggie.”

She rolls her eyes but continues. “I don’t have a lot of friends. And now that my parents have retired to Florida, I’ve... I’ve been lonely,” she whispers, dropping her chin to her chest. “I thought I’d try one of those dating apps and see what was out there.”

I barely contain the growl threatening to escape my throat. “And what did you find, Mouse?” It’s a struggle to keep the anger out of my tone, but I manage. Those sites are filled with nutjobs and predators, and Maggie makes the perfect target—beautiful, sweet, and finds the good in everyone.

“He lives a few towns over. He seemed so nice and kind at the beginning, and we had lots in common. We both love indie films and amusement parks and books. He thought my job as a librarian was cool. Or so he said.”

I chuckle, and she nudges me in the ribs. I used to tease her for always carrying a

book with her, and now she does it for a living.

The truth is I loved hearing about her books. I was never into them myself, but Maggie'd get so excited summarizing the stories to me and telling me about the fictional worlds and characters. She'd come alive when she talked about them, and I was mesmerized by her passion and animated expressions.

"We chatted for weeks and weeks, getting to know each other. We were planning to meet in person, but then he started to say things. Things that..." Her voice trails off and she knits her brow.

My fingertips graze the bare skin of her upper arm and goose bumps rise to the surface. I like seeing that I affect her because fuck knows she affects me. She always has.

"Things that what, Maggie?" I know I'm not gonna like whatever she says next.

"It all started so sweet. I swear. But then... then he told me what he wanted to do. He scared me."

Fire floods my veins at the thought of someone harming her. She's the only one in this world, besides my parents, who I'd kill for with no questions asked. "What did he say to you? And don't leave anything out," I warn.

"I'm not sure if he was joking or not. Maybe he was, but it didn't sound like it." Maggie takes a deep, cleansing breath, her ample chest visibly rising and falling. "He said he wanted to choke me. Wanted to see fear in my eyes. See the bruises forming on my skin." She visibly shudders. "He wanted to cut me to see what my blood tasted like. Said he thought the noise my bones would make when he broke them would sound like music."

Her voice is shaky now, and I tug her closer. I'm ready to find this motherfucker and kill him with my bare hands. Drain the life out of him while I laugh in his face, then fuck Maggie in a pool of his blood.

I keep my tone indifferent so my anger doesn't scare her. "Did you ever meet him?"

She shakes her head. "No, I never did. He had my phone number, but I blocked him. Blocked him on the app too. I thought that would be the end of it. But then, I started getting calls and texts from new numbers. Emails started coming in from fake accounts, telling me they were watching me. That they knew what I was doing, knew where I was."

"Did you tell the police?"

"I did, but they couldn't help me. They said without proof that it was Chris—I couldn't even tell them who Chris was because I didn't have a last name—and since he hadn't physically done anything to me, it was out of their hands."

Of course, they wouldn't do anything. Lazy fucks. They could've at least tried to investigate.

"Then the notes started. I'd find them on my doorstep, or the mailbox, and sometimes on my car."

I'm pissed she waited until now to tell me, but it's my own fucking fault, and I have no one to be mad at but myself. "What the fuck, Maggie? You should've come to me sooner?"

Her laugh is humorless. "Are you joking? You've hated me for years. Why would I have come to you? I'm only doing it now as a last resort before I decide to move away so he can't find me."

Over my fucking dead body is she leaving.

“What do you want me to do?” Just tell me, and I’ll do it.

“I don’t know.” She sighs with apprehension in her eyes. “Maybe you could pretend to be my boyfriend or something? But only for a little while!” She blurts out the last part as if she’s worried I’d say no. “Just until this blows over. If Chris, or whoever he is, sees that I have a man in my life, maybe he’ll lose interest and go away.”

My poor little Mouse. So delusional.

No man could ever stay away from her, and not one obsessed like I am. If anything, having a boyfriend will only piss this guy off. But if he’s ballsy enough to come near her, I’ll destroy him and take pleasure in ending his life.

I sink deeper into the leather cushions, spreading my muscular thighs farther apart until my leg touches hers, and she jolts. “You want me to be your boyfriend, baby? That what you need?” I taunt her because I like watching her squirm, just like she did when I used to chase her around my yard with worms.

“My fake boyfriend, Trey. Fake.”

“Fine. Then we start now.”

Maggie’s eyes go as big as saucers, and her mouth drops open.

“I’m taking you home, and you can tell me everything I need to know. We have a lot to catch up on, Mouse.”

It’s time for me to stop pushing away the only woman I’ve ever loved. She’ll either accept me, or run for good once she learns the truth.

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MAGGIE

Why do men become hotter as they age, but women slowly turn into hobbits? So unfair.

Trey Smith gets sexier every day and I hate it. I hate him. Well, that's not true. I don't actually hate anyone because I'm not that kind of person, and I could never hate Trey. I just don't like him very much anymore. There was a time when I did, though.

We used to be inseparable. He had the coolest treehouse in his backyard, and we spent hours up there playing around and daydreaming about the craziest things. We went on adventures in the neighborhood, getting into the stuff we shouldn't have, as he always pushed me to do things out of my comfort zone. He made me happy when I was sad, made me laugh until I cried. He was everything to me until he moved away.

When his dad took a new job in Lunsford, it was like they moved across the ocean instead of an hour away. Our parents promised we'd still be able to see each other, but that didn't prove to be the case. We'd text and chat online occasionally, but the messages died off as we got older, and I chalked it up to us both being busy with extracurriculars. So when mom told me that he was moving back our sophomore year, I couldn't contain my excitement—I was finally getting my best friend back.

Only I didn't. Because the boy who came back was not the one I used to know.

Trey was different. He left a boy and came back a man. He looked nothing like the

scrawny, pimply-faced teenagers at school, and he had bigger muscles than most of the seniors. At over six-feet tall, with a chiseled physique and a no-fucks-given attitude, I hardly recognized him. He'd always been well liked growing up, but at sixteen, kids flocked to him like he was the second coming of Jesus or something.

I was the shy one of our duo and only became more introverted when he moved away. I wasn't expecting him to pull me out of my shell or turn me into one of the popular kids, but I wasn't ready for our interaction on the first day of tenth grade. Nothing could have prepared me for that. Or for whatever this is...

Trey throws a few bills on the table and ushers me out of the corner booth. All eyes are on us—on him to be more precise—while we walk out of the bar. I recognize several faces, which is easy when you live in a southern town with a small population. I'm sure they're wondering what the local bad boy is doing with the nerdy librarian.

When we step outside, I fill my lungs with the cool, night air. The crisp evening feels nice against my heated face. I tug my cardigan tighter around me before peering up at the man next to me. Trey is a giant compared to my five-foot-two frame.

"So, who was that girl back there?" I hike a thumb over my shoulder.

His expression is emotionless when he glances at me as we walk to the parking lot. "What girl?"

"The one sitting with you when I came in."

He lifts one of his shoulders. "Don't know. I didn't care to get her name."

My lips curl with disgust. I've heard the rumors about him, and I get the appeal. Women have been throwing their panties at my former best friend since he could

drive, and he's earned the reputation of being a bit of a man-whore. Supposedly, he even slept with a few teachers. I doubt that's true. Trey may be a lot of things, but I know he has some principles, just not many. He may be able to fool everyone else around here. But the thing is... I know who he really is, and I've never forgotten.

I step into his path and stop walking, turning around to face him. "Look, it took a lot for me to approach you tonight, because believe me, I didn't want to."

Trey's expression softens and he lifts an eyebrow.

"I know you travel a lot and I'm sure you're busy?—"

"You keep up with my schedule, Mouse?" His cocksure grin is annoying.

"No, I don't. I just notice things, and you'd be surprised at the gossip you hear being whispered at the library." I pop my hip out and fold my arms over my chest. "All I'm saying is that I don't think this will take more than a few days, whatever this is."

"This is me being your boyfriend. Isn't that what you wanted?" The corners of his eyes wrinkle with his mischievous expression.

"What I want is to—" The hairs on my neck rise and a tingle runs down my back as I stiffen.

Trey's gaze sweeps up and down my body. "What? What's wrong?"

I lean to the side, peering around his muscular frame. "I swear I saw... I thought I saw something in the shadows. Someone standing by one of the cars parked on the street."

He turns to investigate, pulling me close behind him while he scans our surroundings.

“There’s no one out here but us. You sure you saw someone?”

I shrink back, feeling foolish. “Maybe not. I’m probably just paranoid with everything going on.”

Trey pivots to face me again, putting his hands on my shoulders. “I’m gonna walk you to your car and follow you home.”

“You don’t have to do that, Trey. We can exchange?—”

“I wasn’t asking, Maggie.”

Maggie, not Mouse. Makes me feel like I’m in trouble with the principal.

“I’ll make sure you get home safe. Then we’ll figure this shit out. Got it?” His tone is stern and his gaze is intense. It would be futile to argue with him right now, so I don’t.

“Fine. I’m parked in the silver SUV up front.”

His gaze follows my finger to where I’m pointing. “The mom car?” He side-eyes me with a chuckle. “How old are you? Forty-five?”

“I’m twenty-seven.” I scowl. “And it has excellent safety ratings, low payments, and low insurance premiums. It was a sensible purchase.”

“That’s right. Maggie Houser is always the good girl.”

I ignore his ridicule as he guides me with a hand on the small of my back to my vehicle. I unlock it. Then Trey opens the door and offers me a hand to assist me inside. What surprises me, though, is when he leans across and latches my seat belt.

There's a peaceful sentiment in his eyes, as if he likes doing this for me, likes taking care of me.

Peculiar, but interesting.

"Lock up and wait for me at the exit. I'll get my truck and follow you." He shuts the door and taps the roof twice.

After starting the engine, I do as he says, waiting only a few minutes before he's behind me, and I catch his intense gaze in my rearview mirror. Those piercing blue eyes could melt the coldest heart. Even mine.

As mad as I am after everything he's done, I'm still in love with Trey Smith.

TREY

The music streaming from my speakers does nothing to drown out my thoughts while I follow Maggie home from the bar. I'm still processing her situation as my truck's headlights cast a shadow over her SUV when she pulls into her driveway. I park on the street, close enough to keep an eye on her but far enough to not arouse suspicion from her neighbors.

She sits in her vehicle, tossing items into her purse. I'm annoyed at her lack of basic safety skills as a single woman alone at night. Exiting my truck, I stride toward her driver's side door, my boots thudding on the pavement beneath me.

"Mouse." I pound a fist on her window, startling her into awareness. She jumps, eyes wide behind her glasses, as she looks up at me. Even afraid, she's so damn beautiful it makes my heart stutter.

Maggie yelps, bringing a hand to her chest. "Don't scare me like that!"

"You need to be more careful," I chastise, my gaze scanning the surroundings for any sign of danger. "Fuck knows who might be lurking around here."

Her eyes narrow as she studies my face and my icy-blue stare, but she doesn't argue and unlocks the door. "Thank you... I guess?" She rolls her eyes and maneuvers out of the car.

I step closer, the air thick between us—electrifying and tense. “Let’s get you inside.”

She nods, and we start toward her front door. I keep my pace steady, purposeful, but I feel her energy shifting as we approach. She stops dead in her tracks and gasps.. I follow her line of sight to a long white box resting ominously on her porch.

“Are you expecting a package?” I ask, scanning the area for anything that doesn’t belong.

Her head shakes slowly, and I feel the tension coil tighter in my gut. I reach for her hand. It’s small and warm against my rough palm, grounding me as adrenaline spikes through my veins. Together, we stride toward the door, my instincts screaming at me to protect her from any potential threat. Once we reach the porch, I crouch down to pick up the box, peering through the cellophane window to find a bouquet of flowers.

“Roses,” I announce, keeping my voice low as I glance back at Maggie. Her face drains of color, her eyes wide with panic. “Guessing you didn’t order these.”

She doesn’t respond and keeps her focus glued to the package in my arms.

I open the note attached and read it aloud, my throat tightening around each word:

I’ll be seeing you soon

The weight of one sentence hangs heavy in the air, suffocating any semblance of calm. I glance at Maggie, fear etched deep into her features, and the sight ignites rage inside me. This fucker is getting bold, and I’m going to make him regret it soon.

“I’m staying here tonight. This guy knows where you live, and he’s escalating from notes and emails to leaving gifts. The cops may not be able to help you, but fuck if I’m taking any chances. Gimme your keys.”

Her lips part as if she's about to protest, but the resolve in my voice cuts her off before she can even form a reply. She relaxes her posture and surrenders with a reluctant nod, placing the cold, dangling metal into my palm. I unlock the door and usher Maggie inside, closing us in and flipping the deadbolt behind us.

My gaze sweeps over the darkened interior before settling back on her. "Stay put while I check the house."

Maggie watches me with a tilt of her head as I move methodically through each room, ensuring there's no one lying in wait. While I search, I wrestle with the decision to tell her the truth about what I do, then decide that's a conversation for another time. Instead, I settle on revealing just enough to quell her curiosity.

"I work in security. I do this kind of thing all the time," I confess when I've rejoined her in the foyer.

"Security?" she repeats, her voice laced with skepticism.

I nod, knowing that my revelation won't satisfy her entirely, but hoping that it's enough for now.

"I could've sworn your parents told me you were an independent contractor."

My parents. George and Regina Smith. Pillars of the community here in Cedar Point. Good, upstanding people who couldn't have their heads buried any deeper in the sand if I dug a six-foot hole and threw them inside. They mean well, but they'd be horrified if they had any idea what I did for a living. If only they knew it was Gene, one of Dad's old college buddies, who got me into this business.

Dad thought Gene was in computer sales, which is comical because the guy hates technology and barely uses burner phones. He'd drop by the house, all smiles and

hearty handshakes, making boring conversation as if he was your average, middle-aged guy. At that time, I was just figuring out that my thoughts and urges weren't typical of a thirteen-year-old, but my parents brushed it off as influence from TV and video games. I knew better. And so did Gene. He saw something in me, a cold, calculated ability to compartmentalize and disassociate, paired with a deeply-ingrained sense of justice.

We talked a lot, while the other men huddled around the barbecue making lame jokes and shooting the shit about sports. When I'd earned his trust, he finally explained his real job and how the life he lives now is just a cover. Gene introduced me to the world of contract killing. It sounded alluring and powerful, like something I could excel at. I still have my morals, but I have no problem killing a man who does bad things. And I have no problem killing one who fucks with Maggie.

I hate lying to her, but I need to keep her in the dark a while longer, so I continue the ruse and confirm what my parents told her. "I am an independent contractor. I do private security for various clients."

I'm relieved when she accepts my answer, but the guilt still gnaws at me.

Moving farther into her home, I take in all the details. Her house is a warm, inviting space that feels like an extension of her personality. The living room, bathed in golden light from the table lamps, boasts plush, overstuffed furniture draped with fluffy throws and pillows. Bookshelves line the walls, filled to capacity with well-loved novels and whimsical trinkets she's collected over the years. And there's a faint scent of vanilla and cinnamon that lingers in the air from the candle on her mantel.

"Make yourself comfortable. I'm just gonna tidy up a bit."

It's obvious she wasn't expecting a guest as she scurries around, taking her empty mug to the kitchen, shoving a discarded bra under a pillow, and straightening a short

stack of books and mail on her coffee table. She's cute when she's flustered, and I watch her with amusement.

I drop my tone an octave, stepping closer to her. "Relax, baby. You don't have to clean up for me. I've seen you naked." When I wink at her, a soft peach blush blooms on her cheeks.

"We were ten and we were camping. You weren't supposed to be looking," she scolds, but her eyes twinkle while she suppresses a smile. "There are fresh sheets on the guest bed and extra toiletries in the bathroom across the hall."

I raise an eyebrow at her.

"I keep the room ready in case my parents decide to visit. Now that they're retired, they do a lot of travelling and you never know when they'll stop by."

"I haven't run into them in years. How are they?" I remember them fondly. They were good neighbors and our parents got along well.

"They're great. I just miss them and wish we could visit more often." Maggie's expression is wistful when she strides down the halls and returns with a stack of towels, our fingers brushing as she hands them to me. "There's some in the bathroom, but just in case."

Always thoughtful and prepared. I wouldn't expect anything less from this woman, which only heightens my guilt at how I pushed her away years ago.

"Thanks," I reply, tucking the towels under my arm. The faint scent of her perfume lingers on them, setting off a swirl of emotions inside me.

"Okay, I think you've got everything you need, right?"

“I still need answers, Mouse. I need to know everything so I can keep you safe.”

“Can we talk in the morning? It’s late and it’s been... an eventful night. I mean, Trey Smith is standing in my living room. I never thought I’d see the day,” she jokes, but I can tell she’s still rattled by the surprise gift on her doorstep.

“Tomorrow,” I confirm with an uncompromising tone.

“Goodnight, Trey.” Her eyes search mine. Looking for answers to questions she hasn’t voiced yet. She’s halfway to her room when she pivots around and gazes at me with hurt and resignation in her eyes. “Just one more thing. Why?”

“Why what ?” I know what she’s asking, but I’m stalling.

“I missed you—missed my best friend—while you were gone. And when you came back, you weren’t just cold and distant. You were cruel. You’ve never been cruel, at least not to me.”

There’s an apology on the tip of my tongue that’s been a long time coming, but I don’t give it. “I’ll explain everything soon. I promise, Mouse.”

She doesn’t respond, just nods her head solemnly before heading off to bed.

I will tell her the truth, and I hope to God she can handle it.

MAGGIE

Trey Smith is in my house, and every nerve in my body is on high alert. How am I supposed to sleep when a stunning, six-something behemoth with piercing-blue eyes is mere feet away? I can't pretend not to notice his chiseled muscles and rugged features; they command attention from anyone who crosses his path. And here he is, sleeping under my roof, the epitome of danger and desire.

But it's not just his physical presence that keeps me awake at night. It's the knowledge that he works in security, a profession that requires him to be ultra-aware and highly skilled in protecting others. Which means he must have countless women throwing themselves at him for protection.

The thought sends a sharp pang of jealousy through me, even though I know we could never be together. Not after what happened between us in high school: his careless words that shattered our friendship, his sudden popularity that made me invisible.

Whatever. I have more important things to worry about right now, like Chris Whatever-his-last-name-is. He's become obsessed with me, stalking me with chilling gifts and sinister intentions. Why would anyone fixate on plain old me?

My dark curly hair is wild and unmanageable most days, and I rarely wear more than a few coats of mascara and tinted lip balm. I'm short and curvy with huge boobs that get in the way and a fat ass that has a tendency to bump into things and people. I do

have nice eyes, though, even if they're overshadowed by my glasses, and I like my smile. That's one thing I do get compliments on.

Still, why on earth would anyone want to stalk me? I'm a librarian, for Pete's sake!

I might as well quit pretending I'm going to fall back asleep and get out of bed. I'm wide awake, tossing and turning as I think about the man down the hall. I can't believe I went to him for help, desperate after being turned away by the police yet again. And now look where it's landed me: alone in bed with a man who holds both my past and present secrets.

Sighing heavily, I kick off the sheets and sit up, my feet sinking into the plush carpet beneath me. My mind races as I try to process everything that's happened until a delicious aroma reaches my nose. Coffee. Without even thinking, I follow the scent to the kitchen, where I find Trey shirtless and cooking breakfast like some Greek god.

He doesn't even have to turn around for me to know he's aware of my presence. "Morning," he greets me without missing a beat. "I won't ask if you slept well, because I know you didn't."

Giving up any pretense of being quiet, I walk over and pour myself a cup of coffee, trying not to let my eyes wander too much over his perfect physique. "How do you know how I slept?" I ask, trying to sound casual.

Trey turns to face me, revealing a multitude of intricate tattoos and scars that hint at his dangerous line of work. "I could hear you tossing and turning all night," he says, observing me with those intense blue eyes that never miss a thing. "Not surprising after coming home and discovering your stalker has been to your house."

My heart races as I take in everything he's saying, realizing just how deep I've gotten myself into this mess. And yet... part of me is grateful that he's here now, looking out

for me in ways no one else can. But underneath all that gratitude lies an undeniable attraction that threatens to consume us both. And as we stand there in my kitchen, sipping coffee and trading glances filled with unspoken words, I wonder if this is the calm before the storm.

Trey portions the eggs onto two plates with a calculated precision, then sets the pan on a trivet to cool before popping a few slices of bread in the toaster. His gaze continues to find mine as he moves around my kitchen with an unsettling familiarity. As if he's been here before and feels right at home. I watch him with a sense of unease while he flits around. Wondering what other secrets he's hiding.

He butters the toast, putting two slices on each plate, then hands one to me. "Send his phone number and his profile link."

"I already blocked him. I don't know what good that'll do." My stomach churns at the thought of Chris having access to my personal information.

Fighting back my panic, I take a sip of my hot beverage and attempt to focus on something else. But Trey's words keep ringing in my head, reminding me that a strange man knows where I live, and it makes it hard to concentrate on anything else.

My mind is reeling but I force a smile while I study my eggs. "Feelin' fancy this morning? What's in these?"

"Chives and gruyere. It's flavor, not fancy."

I've never had a man cook for me before, but I must admit it's quite nice. "When did you become a chef?" I tease, before wrapping my lips around a steaming forkful and moaning at the delicious taste. "Oh, wow. These are so good!" Marginally hanging on to my decorum, I dig into my breakfast, savoring each bite.

“I’ve lived alone since I was eighteen. Had to learn real fast, or else I would’ve survived on nothing but frozen meals and canned goods. Can’t get abs like this eating junk all the time.” He pats his washboard stomach and my pussy clenches. When he catches me ogling him like a teenager, his lips curl into a cocky grin, making me blush.

“Thank you for breakfast.” I push my plate away and wipe my mouth on a napkin. “I need to get ready for work, and I’m sure you do as well. Should we just meet back here this evening?”

Trey leans his tight ass against the counter and folds his arms over his chest. “Nope, I’m with you today. And every day for the foreseeable future. You’re stuck with me, Mouse—where you go, I go.”

I freeze with my mug a few inches from my face. “Uh... that’s not what I was thinking. I thought we’d just be seen together around town a few times or something.”

I’m not sure I can handle being this close to him 24/7. Sure, we were joined at the hip as kids, but he is definitely not a kid anymore. He is all man, the delicious kind of man I read about in my smutty romance novels.

“I can work from anywhere and I have a go-bag in my truck. I’m going to work with you, and while you strut your cute ass around and do sexy librarian shit, I’ll be on my laptop, learning all about your stalker. So don’t forget to send me his number and profile link, or I’ll have to punish you when we get home.”

Wetness pools between my thighs as I envision what kind of punishment he has in mind.

Did he call me cute and sexy? What is happening?

My brain is rebooting while I struggle to formulate coherent words. “I... Um... Okay, well...” I squirm in my seat, and the smoldering smirk Trey gives me tells me I’ve failed at trying to hide my body’s reaction to him.

He carries my plate and mug to the sink. “Get dressed. We leave in thirty.”

I’m too discombobulated to argue while he cleans up, but find my feet move of their own accord, taking me to my bedroom. My body is on autopilot as I get ready for work, shuffling around in a confused stupor.

I know there’s more going on here. Yet I push aside my doubts and hesitations, letting my instincts guide me as we head out the door. Because even though Trey may be hiding something, I still trust him. He’s the only one who can give me the answers I seek, and I need them if we have any hope of moving forward.

Trey glances in my direction, from where he’s positioned next to me at the circulation desk, while typing on his computer. “If you’re gonna stare, at least close your mouth and stop drooling.”

Jerk. I’d love to wipe that smug smile right off his face.

“I wasn’t drooling. I’m just not used to having someone in my personal space,” I huff, trying my best not to let his handsome face distract me from my work.

He eyes me skeptically. “I’ve seen two volunteers coming and going around here all morning. From the looks of it, I’d say they were regulars.”

“Well, yeah, but those are two retired ladies who like to stay busy. Not a big hunk of man meat covered in tattoos,” I mutter, reorganizing the same pile of books for the third time.

Suddenly, my cheeks heat up and I pinch my lips together as Trey's lips curl into an arrogant grin. "Hunk of man meat, huh? Is that what you think of me?"

I stifle a giggle behind my hand. My mind is a whirlwind of emotions after the past twenty-four hours. Yet the one thing that has kept me grounded is Trey. It scares me how easily we fell back into our familiar comfortability.

This is what I was expecting when he moved back to Cedar Point, which is why I was hurt and confused—I still am—when this wasn't the reunion I received. We've both changed and grown up, but there are glimpses of the boy I used to know lurking beneath that rugged, chiseled exterior. He's got his secrets, and I'll be patient until he's ready to share them with me. But I won't wait forever. I'm done waiting for my Trey to come back to me.

The hours rush by in a blur, with a parade of women finding any excuse to make their way to the circulation desk. When it's just me here, they hardly acknowledge my presence, but they can't stay away from the town's sexiest bachelor.

Maria comes in for the closing shift, but stops in her tracks when she sees who's sitting next to me. Her mouth drops open and she stares at me, covertly pointing at Trey. Then she mouths, "Who is that?" while making lewd gestures.

The joys of employing a nineteen-year-old college student.

I indicate with a wave of my hand for her to join us. She's practically skipping as she rushes over.

"Trey, this is Maria. She'll be closing up tonight. She's a student at Grant State." I wrap an arm around her shoulders and usher her forward.

He spins on his stool to face her and his full lips part into a suave smile. My

employee and I both almost melt into puddles on the floor. “Nice to meet you.” Four simple words send the awestruck teen into a fit of girlish giggles. “Ready to go home, Mouse?” Something flickers in Trey’s eyes but I can’t quite decipher what it is.

Maria turns her head to look at me with a puzzled expression. “Mouse?”

I dismiss the question, but Trey answers for me. “It’s the nickname I gave her when we were kids. She’s always been so cute and petite.” His gaze shifts to mine and captivates me in an intense stare. “And she loves it when I chase her. Don’t you... Mouse?”

The room seems ten degrees hotter now and I need some fresh air.

I hurriedly gather my belongings and toss them into my bag. “Okay, so... looks like you’re all set.” I chuckle, sweat blooming along my spine. Trey takes the hint and shuts down his laptop before sliding it into his bag. “Don’t forget to set the alarm, and call if you need anything.”

“Sure thing, boss. This isn’t my first time closing up shop,” Maria teases me with an amused grin.

I tug on the sleeve of Trey’s t-shirt. “Let’s get out of her way. It’s stuffy back here.”

He stands to his full height and towers over me while I peer at him from beneath my lashes. “You alright, Mouse? Seem a little flustered.”

“Yes. Of course. I think I’m just hungry.”

A dangerous glint flickers in his eyes as he leans in closer. “Well, I guess I’ll have to feed you then.”

My heart stutters at the implication, and my brain struggles to process it. Before I can think too much, though, I grab his wrist and drag him behind me while he snickers.

“Good night, Maria,” I toss over a shoulder while marching to the entrance.

The night air hits my flushed face and I close my eyes, breathing in deeply. Trey is flirting with me and it’s throwing me off balance. I shouldn’t forgive him so easily, but there’s always been an undeniable attraction between us, a chemistry I can’t ignore, no matter how hard I try.

Lost in my thoughts, I don’t register when Trey stops and holds out a hand. “Keys.” The demand is firm and direct, but his tone isn’t harsh. That’s the intriguing thing about him—his presence is so domineering that people are eager to give him what he wants, myself included.

I fish my keys out of my purse and hand them over as we make our way to the back parking lot reserved for employees. When my SUV comes into view, I gasp and we both come to a screeching halt.

Why would someone do this?

5

TREY

“Thanks for the ride home, officer.” Maggie’s voice trembles as she closes her front door, weariness weighing heavy on her shoulders.

Officer Lawrence assured her that insurance should cover the damage, but seeing her car vandalized with the word “whore” keyed into the hood was too much.

I swear when I get my hands on this motherfucker, I won’t stop until he’s dead.

She locks the door and shuffles to the living room, plopping onto the couch and slumping into the cushions. I take a seat next to her, and as soon as she glances over at me, she breaks. I can ignore anyone else’s tears but hers.

“Why is he doing this? He doesn’t even know me,” she sobs, and I pull her into my side. She comes willingly as exhaustion settles around her eyes.

“I don’t blame the asshole for being obsessed with you. That I can understand. You’re perfect. You’d drive any man crazy.”

Her tears dampen my shirt. “You don’t have to say that just to make me feel better, Trey.”

“Believe me, Mouse. I don’t say shit I don’t mean.”

Maggie gazes at me with watery eyes and a quivering chin. Even when she cries, she's pretty.

"But this guy fucked up. And I'm gonna make sure he pays for it."

"I just want it to stop."

"Oh, it will. I promise you that."

I did some digging into this piece of shit while Maggie was working. He's a fucking data nerd who hides behind a computer all day. It didn't take long to figure out his real identity, and with a few clicks of a button, I got his home address and the location of his employer. We'll see how tough he is when I show up at his house and stomp a fucking hole in his chest before I make him eat the curb.

Fuck, my dick twitches at the thought of spilling his blood in the streets. Or maybe it's the voluptuous beauty curled into my side.

She plays with the hem of my t-shirt, paying no attention to how dangerously close her fingers are to my cock. "Maybe he saw you with me at the library and got mad. I thought seeing us together would be enough to deter him. Not set him off so much that he destroyed my car."

"Based on what you've told me about this guy and the things he's said to you, it's not unexpected he'd react this way. He's a fucking coward and gets off on scaring women who tell him no ." I've met dickheads like Chris before, and it's usually because I've been paid to eliminate them, but this is one asshole I'm willing to kill for free.

Maggie pulls back and gazes at me. The fear I see in her eyes tears me up inside. "What am I gonna do, Trey? I can't live like this."

“You have no reason to believe me, but I swear I’ll take care of it. Do you trust me?”

She stares at me for a long moment, then nods her head. My desire for her reaches the surface, knowing she sought me out for help. That she’s putting her faith in me to fix her problems. Just like things used to be before I fucked everything up.

Something inside me snaps and I lean forward, crushing my lips to hers. I’m wondering if she’ll push me away or slap me, but she does neither. Instead, she kisses me back and parts her lips to let me inside her mouth. Her taste is sweet and minty, and her tits brush against my chest with each rapid breath she takes. Kissing Maggie is like fucking heaven, and I’d gladly die a thousand deaths if that’s what it takes to have her.

I shift her onto my lap, her thick thighs on the outside of mine while she straddles me. My dick strains against the zipper of my jeans, begging for release. Her small palms cup my face as I grab two handfuls of her fat, juicy ass. When I squeeze, she yelps before melting into my touch.

I need to feel every inch of her curvy body, so I guide her to stand, then rise to my feet. When I lift her chin with my index finger, her big, honey-brown eyes gaze up at me with a mix of fear and desire. I lean in, pressing my forehead to hers.

“Trust me, Mouse,” I whisper against her lips.

“I do.”

Her quiet vow is all I need to hear before I step back and start undressing. My shirt hits the floor first, revealing the tattoos that cover my muscular chest. Her eyes widen as she takes in the sight of me, but she doesn’t look away. She anxiously bites her lower lip, making my dick harder than ever.

Once I kick off my boots and strip out of my jeans and boxers, my throbbing cock springs free, and Maggie gasps. She stares at it like it's some sort of monster, and there's a flicker of uncertainty in her eyes that makes me pause.

"You're in control here. We'll go as slow as you want."

She swallows hard before reaching out to touch me tentatively. Her fingers wrap around my shaft, stroking as if testing its hardness. When she touches me, it's like nothing else matters—just us and this primal need between us.

I carefully remove her glasses and place them on the nearby table. Then I undress her, unbuttoning her blouse and unclasping her bra to reveal ample breasts that spill over my hands. Her skirt and panties follow suit until we're both naked and exposed.

Lifting Maggie into my arms, I sit back down on the couch with her straddling my lap again. My cock brushes against her wetness, causing us both to moan. The feel of her soft pussy against my aching dick is driving me crazy.

"I won't hurt you," I promise while guiding myself to her entrance. "I'll take it slow. You decide how deep and fast you need it."

Her nails dig into my shoulders as she sinks down onto my cock, inch by agonizing inch. Her body shakes with anticipation, and the sight of her above me is enough to make me lose my mind.

"Use me, baby. Show me how you like to fuck yourself."

With that, she takes a deep breath and starts to move, the first taste of a true connection between us. It's slow and sweet and fucking perfect. This isn't just about the pleasure or the intimacy. It's about making Maggie feel good, feel safe. It's about showing her that I'll never let her go—not now, not ever again. And I'll be damned if

I don't make every moment count.

I let out a growl of satisfaction as she moves more confidently, setting a rhythm that has us both moaning. She loses herself in the sensations, her soft curls trailing down her back. She's beautiful and unapologetically herself, just the way I've always remembered.

Her hands grip the edge of the couch, her fingers digging into the furniture as if she's holding on for dear life. Fuck, maybe she is. Her brown eyes stare into mine, darkening with every thrust. Seeing her panting and flushed with desire makes my heart pound against my chest.

"Maggie..." I whisper, but it comes out more like a plea than her name.

She just nods, already lost in our connection. She leans back, giving me full view of her breasts swaying to the rhythm of our movements. My hands go to them, kneading roughly before I dip my head to take one into my mouth. The taste of her skin is intoxicating, sweet and salty all at once.

She cries out when I bite her nipple, the sound echoing around the room and straight to my cock. Then she moves faster, harder, rolling her hips as she chases that first orgasm. It's raw and real and so fucking right that I surrender to it completely.

"Trey..." she gasps out. "I'm... oh, God... I'm..."

"Don't hold back," I tell her, gripping her hips tighter. "Let go for me, baby."

Then she screams, her body convulsing with the kind of ecstasy that has her slick walls milking my cock. Watching her climax unravel beneath my touch is something I want to see over and over again.

As soon as Maggie's spasms subside, I flip us over and lay her on her back. She sucks in a short breath, then cries out when I slam my dick back inside her. I remain still for a moment, relishing the feel of her tight pussy warming my cock.

When I start to move, it's slow and deep, making me want to fuck her so hard she can't think of anything else. I maintain my gaze on her face, on every small reaction she gives me—the way her eyes flutter shut, the way her lips part slightly when I hit just the right spot.

“I've got you, baby,” I murmur into her ear as I thrust into her again. “I've always got you.”

It's a promise that is as much for me as it is for her.

I watch her expression shift from lust to something softer, more intimate. Her eyes lock on to mine and her hands clutch at my back as she wraps her legs around me. Feeling her body, her glistening bare skin, only spurs me on to make her come again. Then her breath hitches and her muscles tense, her pussy clamping around my dick. She's close, so damn close, and I want to push her over that blissful edge.

“Trey... I'm...”

“I know,” I cut her off, leaning down to capture her lips in a searing kiss as I increase my pace. “Let go, Mouse. I need you to come for me.”

And she does, with a scream of my name that echoes throughout the quiet house. The way she comes undone is enough to send me spiraling into my climax too. With one last thrust, I shoot my cum inside her, groaning into the crook of her neck. My heart thunders against my ribs as I struggle for breath, every muscle in my body screaming with tension and release.

Slowly, as we both come down from our highs, I roll off Maggie and pull her body over mine until she rests her head on my chest while the circulating air cools our sweat-dampened skin. For once, there are no regrets or second thoughts clouding my mind. Just a sense of rightness that leaves me stunned.

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Source Creation Date: July 23, 2025, 4:06 pm

6

MAGGIE

Lying on the couch, my body entwined with Trey's, I struggle to catch my breath. The heat of our passion still simmers on my skin as his chest rises and falls beneath me. My head rests on the steady rhythm of his heartbeat. It resonates within me, healing a part of me that's been broken for so long.

I've cared for this man for most of my life, but this newfound closeness... it's consuming. A connection I never imagined possible.

As the afterglow begins to fade, a nagging thought tugs at my mind. Why did he push me away all those years ago?

The weight of the question feels heavy in my chest, threatening to crush the fragile serenity that surrounds us. My heart wants to enjoy this blissful peace a while longer, but my brain won't let me. It's now or never—I need to know.

I lift my head, resting my chin on my overlapped hands. My gaze meets Trey's, and I'm struck by the adoration I find there. It's an expression I've never seen from him—or any man—before. His blue eyes, once cold as ice, now shine with warmth and vulnerability.

“I know you want answers, Mouse, and I'm ready to give them.”

Surprised by his willingness to be forthcoming, I patiently wait for him to continue.

The tension in the air is palpable, my heart pounding with anticipation.

“I’m sorry for everything. I?—”

Before he can finish, a brick crashes through my front window. I scream as it shatters glass everywhere and thuds onto the hardwood floor. The sudden intrusion ignites a fresh wave of panic, and my heart feels like it’s going to burst out of my chest.

“Fuck!” Trey rolls me off him and surges to his feet. His movements are swift and controlled, every inch the lethal protector he has become. He tugs on his jeans and shoves his feet into his boots, all while keeping his intense gaze fixed on the broken window. “Fucking coward,” he mutters under his breath, shaking his head.

“Should I call the police?” I ask with a trembling voice.

“No. I’m gonna end this once and for all.”

“Wait... What? Trey?—”

Before I can finish my protest, he grabs a gun from his bag, a sight that sends chills down my spine. Trey’s private security work has never seemed so real or dangerous until this very moment. The weight of our situation crashes down on me, and I struggle to decide what to do next.

“Stay put, Mouse,” he orders, his voice brooking no argument. Then, without another word, he rushes out the door, leaving me alone with my chaotic thoughts.

How can I stay put when the man I’ve loved for most of my life is in danger? What if something happens to him, and I never get the chance to tell him how much he means to me?

Screw it. I won't let fear hold me back anymore. He might be mad at me for putting myself in harm's way, but I can't just sit here and do nothing.

Swallowing my angst, I throw on my clothes and grab a pair of slip-on sneakers from the front closet before running outside. The street is eerily quiet, illuminated only by the occasional flickering streetlight. I glance around, searching for any sign of him. Then I catch a glimpse of his tall, powerful frame sprinting down the sidewalk about a hundred yards away. Despite the distance, there's no mistaking his purposeful stride.

"Damn it," I mutter under my breath, determination coursing through me as I take off after him.

My lungs burn with each breath as my pounding footsteps echo off the empty streets like a drumbeat urging me forward. I push myself to run faster, my chest heaving as my short legs struggle to keep up. Then he takes a sharp left, disappearing behind the shadows cast by the row of houses. Desperate to catch up, I cut through my neighbors' yards, hopping over flower beds and narrowly avoiding lawn decorations.

When I finally reach him, I'm met with a scene that both relieves and horrifies me. Chris is on the ground beneath Trey, his face battered and bloody. Trey's fists relentlessly pummel him, each strike accompanied by a sickening crunch. My pulse thumps at the base of my neck and sweat blooms on my forehead. I'm torn between the reassurance that Trey isn't hurt and shock at the violence unfolding before me.

"You fucking asshole!" Trey snarls, landing another blow on Chris's already-marred face. "You thought you could harass my girl and get away with it?"

"Please," Chris gasps, choking on blood and spit. "Stop..."

"Shut the fuck up!" Trey roars, his anger palpable as he continues his assault.

“Please, Trey! Stop!” I beg him, my voice cracking with emotion. “Don’t kill him!”

Trey freezes, breathing heavily as he glares down at Chris. His eyes flicker to me for a moment, then back to my stalker. “Why should I? He needs to learn not to fuck with what’s mine. No one fucks with my girl and gets to live.”

His words send a different kind of shiver down my spine. Trey thinks of me as his girl?

There’s no time to process this revelation right now—all that matters is stopping him from crossing a line he can’t come back from.

Chris’s face is a mess of blood and bruises, his eyes swollen shut as he gasps for breath. It’s difficult to reconcile this pitiful figure with the man who’d been terrorizing me for so long. Trey stands over him, satisfaction etched across his rugged features.

“Let’s make sure you won’t forget this,” Trey growls, flipping Chris onto his stomach and wrenching his arms behind his back. He shoves Chris’s face into the pavement, grinding it against the rough surface. The sound of muffled screams makes my stomach churn.

“Please,” I repeat, tears streaming down my face. “Just let the police handle it. Don’t do this.”

Trey looks up at me, his blue eyes cold and unyielding. “This is what I do best, Maggie. Killing a man who hurt people is just another Tuesday for me.” The casualness of his statement is hair-raising, and I realize just how little I know about the man standing before me.

Is this really the same boy I grew up with? The same man who held me tenderly just

moments ago?

“Please, don’t do this,” I whisper, hearing the blood rushing in my ears.

As if in answer to my prayer, a neighbor’s porch light flickers on, and an older man steps out. “I’ve called the police!”

Trey snarls at Chris, whose groans are now barely audible. “You’re lucky there are witnesses, or you’d be dead right now.” With one final shove, he releases Chris and stands, flexing his bloodied knuckles.

The sudden shift from violence to calm sets my nerves on edge. This version of Trey scares me, and I can’t help but question everything I thought I knew about him.

TREY

The flashing blue-and-red lights cast eerie shadows on the surrounding houses as we watch as Chris struggles against the handcuffs that bind him, mumbling nonsense at the cops holding him down. The motherfucker deserves every bit of pain he gets, and more.

“Looks like you did our job for us,” Officer Lawrence says, his voice pulling me out of my thoughts. “Can you tell me one more time what happened tonight?”

“Look, Officer, I’ve already told you everything. Chris came after Maggie. I stepped in and kicked his ass. End of story.” I want to get this shit over with so I can focus on my girl and not the idiot who should be leaving here in a body bag.

I grit my teeth, struggling to keep my composure as I glance back at the sorry excuse for a man in the back of the police cruiser. My knuckles ache from the pounding I gave him, but it was worth the bruises and split skin.

My mind races with thoughts of vengeance, the rage inside me barely contained. I know I should let the justice system do its thing, but the thought of leaving Chris alive—even behind bars—has my blood boiling. I could finish the job, make him disappear for good. But would that be too much? Would that scare Maggie away?

“You two okay?” Officer Lawrence says, looking at us expectantly.

“Yeah, we’re fine,” I reply.

“Alright then.” He scribbles a few more details in his notepad. “We’ll be in touch with you both in the next few days.”

“Thank you, Officer,” Maggie says, her voice small but steady, still shaken by the night’s events.

I clench my fists at my sides, simmering anger coursing through me. If the cops had taken care of things, none of this would’ve happened. Then again, if they had, Maggie wouldn’t have needed me like she did tonight. And maybe that’s what I needed too—to be reminded of what matters most, something to light a fire inside me to tell her who I really am.

As we walk away from the scene, the silence between us feels heavy. Suffocating. I wonder what she’s thinking, if she realizes how much this night has changed everything between us. It’s time to come clean but I don’t know how she’ll react.

Will she still want anything to do with me once she knows the truth? Will she be angry? Disgusted? Terrified?

When we reach her doorstep, I’m praying that whatever happens next she’ll understand why I had to keep this secret for so long.

The moment we step inside Maggie’s house, she disappears into the bathroom to grab a first aid kit. I glance down at my bloodied-and-busted knuckles, feeling a mix of satisfaction and concern. There’s no other evidence of the one-sided beating I delivered tonight—Chris’s smaller, weaker stature was no match for my size and extensive training.

Maggie returns to the living room and tugs me over to the couch, where we sit down

and she tends to my wounds. We're both silent as she carefully cleans and bandages my hands. Until finally, she speaks. "What was that back there? You became someone I didn't recognize. Someone I didn't know."

"I know," I admit, my chest tightening with hesitation. "There's a lot you don't know about me."

This woman deserves the truth, as terrifying as it is to share it with her.

"Explain," she demands. Firm but gentle.

Taking a deep breath, I prepare myself for the confession. This is it—no more secrets, no more lies. "Growing up, I always knew I was different," I begin, my voice low and raw. "I used to listen to you and the other kids talk and laugh, and I realized I didn't think like you guys did. As I got older, my thoughts got darker, more violent, and it scared me because I knew it wasn't normal."

"Why didn't you tell me?" Maggie asks, pain flashing in her eyes.

"Because I didn't know how. I didn't know what to say." I look away, unable to meet her gaze as I continue. "Things got worse after I moved away. I felt this constant anger inside me that I couldn't explain or understand. I told my parents about it, but they just brushed it off as teenage hormones. I knew it was more than that, though."

Maggie watches me intently, her gaze never leaving mine as she urges me to keep going. "So what did you do?"

"I tried to control it, to channel it into something productive," I explain. "But it never went away. It was always there, lurking beneath the surface, waiting for a chance to break free."

Maggie's eyes are filled with a mixture of fear, sadness, and understanding as she processes my words. She's always been able to see through my bullshit.

"Turns out, a family friend recognized what was going on with me," I continue, swallowing hard as I recall the memories. "He could see that I lacked empathy and remorse. That I could disassociate and compartmentalize easily."

She lets out a nervous laugh and shakes her head. "You make it sound like you're a serial killer or something." Her laughter dies when she sees my stoic expression.

"I am."

That simple confession makes the color drain from her pretty face. She backs herself into the corner of the couch. The sight of her fear cuts deep, but she needs to understand.

"I don't kill random people, Mouse. And never women or children, no matter what they've done. I work by contract only. So when my parents told you I was an independent contractor, that was true, in a way."

"Your parents... Do they know?"

"No. It's best no one knows," I admit.

"Then why are you telling me?" She wraps her arms around herself, staring at me with eyes that beg me to tell her this is all a joke, that none of this is real. Part of me wishes I could.

"Because I love you. And you deserve the truth if there's any chance we can be together."

Maggie holds my gaze, searching for something within me that I hope like hell she finds. Something that deems me worthy enough to be with her. The silence threatens to suffocate me, but I force myself to remain still and wait for her to speak.

“Is this why you pushed me away when you came back to Cedar Point?” she finally asks, her tone a mixture of hurt and anger. “You realized you wanted to kill people for a living?”

I shake my head, struggling to find the right words. “I didn’t know that at sixteen, Maggie. I just knew I wasn’t good enough to be around you anymore. I did my best to mask my true personality from everyone, pretending to be the smartass, popular jock to keep people from asking questions and getting suspicious.”

Her expression softens a fraction, but the hurt in her eyes remains. “I wish you would have told me sooner. Would’ve saved me a lot of heartache. But I also regret not being there for you when you needed me. I should’ve tried harder.”

I scoff at her. “How could you have tried harder when I was such a dick to you?” My chest tightens at the memory of the pain I caused.

“Because I knew something wasn’t right. You weren’t acting like the boy I knew.”

“So you knew I’d be a murderer when we were in second grade?” I lift a single eyebrow at her.

“No,” Maggie says firmly, pinning me with her beautiful eyes. “That’s your job, Trey, not who you are. You eliminate bad people from the world, but that’s not your identity.”

Her words hit me hard, like a punch to the gut. A revelation I hadn’t considered. She’s right—I’m not defined by the blood on my hands. I may be a killer, but that’s

not the extent of who I am. And with Maggie, I want to be more than just my profession; I want to be the man she needs me to be.

“Your words,” I murmur, my voice thick with emotion, “Are exactly why I love you, Mouse.”

She blinks, her expression softening for a moment before she narrows her eyes. “That doesn’t mean we’ll be together...”

I lean forward, the intensity of my feelings for her fueling my resolve. “I’m not giving you a choice.”

In this moment, I know without a doubt that I would do anything to make her mine. I won’t let my past or my job dictate our future. I’m still an asshole who hates most people and can’t stand to be around them. But for Maggie, I’ll be the man she deserves—the one who protects her, cherishes her, and loves her unconditionally.

MAGGIE

My hands tremble as I finish wrapping the last of the bandages around Trey's knuckles, the evidence of his violent encounter with Chris still fresh and raw. The room is thick with tension, the air heavy and charged as we sit on the couch in my living room. Trey's confessions hang between us like a dark cloud.

"Done," I announce, securing the last piece of tape and looking up into his intense blue eyes. I'm conflicted. This man, who I've loved since childhood, has just revealed something that should be impossible for me to accept.

"Thank you, Mouse," he tells me.

As I pack up the first aid kit, my mind races with a thousand thoughts and questions. It's true that I suspected there was more to his life than what he let on, but this? I never could have imagined it in my wildest dreams.

I want to be appalled, disgusted even, knowing that he kills people for a living. Then again, he mentioned having boundaries—only going after those who truly deserve it. Does that make it any better? Should I be able to overlook this because of his moral code?

And what about me? What does it say about my character if I can rationalize and accept his actions? Am I a bad person, or worse, an accomplice if I don't report him?

I shake my head, making a mental note to stay as far removed from the details of his work as possible. That way, I can't be connected to it.

"Mouse," Trey whispers, leaning closer. "Talk to me. Please."

I set the kit on the coffee table. My gaze locks with his, and all I see is the boy I've loved since I was five years old staring back at me. His past actions might have created a chasm between us, but the love has always remained. And now, with everything laid bare before us, I have to decide if that love is worth the risk.

In this moment, I choose to believe in him, in us. Love may not erase the past or change the future, but it's a start. And maybe, just maybe, it'll be enough.

I choose to show Trey how I feel instead of saying anything.

Leaning forward, I press my lips against his, the kiss slow and tentative at first. As my thoughts blur, I feel the heat building between us. It doesn't take long for Trey to take control, his dominant personality coming through as he deepens the kiss.

I submit to him willingly. The passion between us is undeniable. It's what we've both been missing all these years. My heart pounds and his hands are everywhere, leaving a burning heat over every inch he touches. He breaks away and rests his forehead against mine. Our breaths mingle in the small space between us, heavy and labored as we try to regain control.

"You're mine, Mouse," he says possessively. "I won't live without you anymore."

"I'm all yours. Show me who I belong to."

In one swift motion, Trey scoops me up into his arms, carrying me bridal-style to the bedroom. My blood rushes in my ears, a mixture of excitement and anticipation

flooding through me. As he lays me down on the bed, he leans forward, his eyes filled with a raw hunger that I've never seen before. He runs his fingers through my hair, then trails them down my neck, dragging the tips over my peaked nipples.

"Is this what you want, Mouse?" he asks. "Do you want me to claim you as mine?"

"Yes," I breathe out, my body aching for his touch. "Please."

Trey smirks, a wicked glint in his eyes. "You beg so pretty for me."

He takes his time, pressing hot, open-mouthed kisses across every curve and dip of my voluptuous body. Then he steps back to admire the view, his gaze dark and appreciative. "You're even more beautiful than the last time, baby," he murmurs, his voice thick with desire.

As he lowers himself between my legs, I feel vulnerable but also incredibly turned on. He doesn't hesitate for a second, diving straight in and using his tongue to bring me pleasure like I've never experienced before. It's indescribable, and I can't help but moan, my fingers gripping the sheets beneath me.

"Tell me how much you want this, Mouse," he commands, pausing his movements to look at me. "Tell me how much you need me inside you."

"Please, Trey. I need you so badly."

"Good girl," he says approvingly, before returning his attention to the task at hand.

He continues to fuck me with his fingers and tongue, and no matter how wrong his actions toward others may be, the way he is with me feels nothing but right.

The fire in his eyes makes me quiver with an unspoken promise of the passion that's

about to consume us both. I feel the tension in every muscle of his body as he holds me down, exploring every part of me.

“Fuck, Mouse,” he growls low in his throat as he teases my clit. “You taste incredible, baby.”

His words send a rush of heat straight to my core, and I can’t stop the moan that escapes my lips. “Trey, please... I need more.”

“More? I’ll give you everything you need, baby girl.”

As he continues to lavish attention on my throbbing clit, his fingers slip inside me, stretching and filling me in ways I’ve only ever dreamed of. It’s almost too much, and I feel my orgasm building, threatening to tear me apart from the inside out.

“Come for me, Maggie,” Trey commands. “Let go and let me see you lose control.”

That’s all it takes. With a strangled cry, I come apart beneath him. But he doesn’t give me a moment to catch my breath. And before I know it, he’s shifting us both and positioning himself between my legs.

“Look at me,” he grits out, his blue eyes blazing with intensity. “I want to see your face when I’m buried deep inside you.”

I can’t focus on anything except the feel of him pressing against me, but I manage to lock eyes with him as he slowly eases forward. The stretch is delicious, almost painful, and I whimper at the fullness.

“God, you’re so tight,” he groans, his restraint hanging on by a thread. “Feels like I’m gonna lose my mind in this sweet pussy.”

“Please. I want it all.”

Then, with a guttural growl, he slams into me, setting a punishing pace that has me clinging to him for dear life. Every thrust sends sparks of pleasure shooting through me, and I know it won’t be long before I’m lost to the sensations once more.

“Come for me again, Maggie. Show me just how good I make you feel.” He drives into me with relentless force, and I happily obey.

The heat between us intensifies, each flick of his hips forcing me closer to the edge. My nails dig into his muscular shoulders, leaving crescents in their wake as I desperately grasp for something to anchor myself.

“Fuck, this feels good,” Trey growls. “I’ve never felt anything like this before.”

“Me... either...” I gasp, unable to form a more coherent response. Every fiber of my being is focused on the joining of our bodies and the intoxicating rhythm he sets.

“Squeeze my cock, baby. I wanna feel you shatter around me.”

His words send me spiraling over the brink, my second orgasm crashing over me like a tidal wave. My vision blurs as euphoria racks my body, the force of it stealing my breath and rendering me speechless. No one has ever made me feel like this before, and deep down, I know that no one else ever will. Trey is it for me—the only man who can reach inside and touch the very core of my soul.

As I tremble with aftershocks, he slows his movements, giving me a moment to catch my breath. When his gaze meets mine once more, I can see the fire still burning within him. He’s far from finished.

“Ready for more?”

I nod, knowing that I'd follow him to the ends of the earth if that's what he asked of me.

Trey shifts us again, dragging me to the edge of the bed and flipping me onto my stomach. He positions my feet on the floor, spreading them apart so he can fit between them. The cool air against my overheated skin is a sharp contrast to the warmth radiating from his body as he lines himself up and slams back into me with a raw, primal force.

"God, Trey!" I cry out, the sudden intensity of our new position sending shockwaves through me.

"Fuck, this pussy," he grits out between clenched teeth. "I can't get enough of it."

As we lose ourselves in each other once more, I know that this is where I belong—in the arms of the man who has always held my heart.

"Tell me how good I make you feel, Mouse," he growls into my ear.

"So good..." I manage to gasp out between moans. "Never felt like this."

"You're mine, Maggie. Say it."

"I-I'm yours," I stutter, my voice barely above a whisper as bliss threatens to consume me.

"Fuck, that's it," Trey groans, his fingers digging into my flesh as he drives himself deeper into me, pushing us closer and closer to the edge.

Ecstasy crashes over me, and I cry out as my orgasm hits, my body convulsing with the sheer force of it.

“Fuck, Maggie!” Trey roars as he follows me over the edge, releasing his hot cum deep inside me. I can feel every twitch of his dick as it fills me, cementing the bond we’ve forged tonight.

When we’re both spent, I collapse limply onto the bed. And Trey squats down behind me, his blue eyes dark with lust as he spreads my ass cheeks and gazes at the evidence of our coupling.

“Look at you,” he murmurs, a sexy smirk playing on his full lips. “So pretty with my cum dripping out of you.”

Before I can respond, he leans forward and laps at my swollen pussy. The sensation is almost overwhelming, and I can’t help but whimper at the unexpected intimacy of the act. He flips me onto my back, hovering over me with that same sly smirk, and kisses me deeply, transferring our combined releases into my mouth.

I’ve never imagined doing anything like this before, but somehow, he makes it feel natural and sexy. I fervently kiss him back, accepting the gift he’s given me and swallowing it without hesitation. This moment, right here, encapsulates the depth of our connection—unfiltered, raw, and breathtakingly real.

“Can’t believe you just did that,” I whisper, still reeling from the intensity of our shared experience.

Trey’s smirk remains, and he leans in close. “Can’t believe my good little girl liked it,” he teases with a devilish glint in his eyes. “And there’s so much more we’re gonna do.”

My cheeks flush at the thought, but before I can say anything else, Trey tells me to get comfortable in the bed and that he’ll be right back. I’m too worn out to question him, and I let my body sink into the soft mattress.

When Trey returns, my heart melts as he spreads my legs and gently cleans me up with a warm, wet cloth. He's tender and caring, making me feel beautiful, sexy, and cherished all at once.

"Thank you," I murmur, unable to find the words to express my gratitude.

"I'd do anything for you," he replies, tossing the cloth into the bathroom before climbing back into bed with me. Trey tugs me into his side, wrapping his strong arms around me as we cuddle. His warmth envelops me, and I've never felt safer or more loved. He looks deep into my eyes, and his voice is low and sincere when he says, "I love you."

"I love you too, Trey," I reply without hesitation, feeling the truth of those words down to my very soul.

"You'll always be mine, Mouse," he whispers, nuzzling my neck. "For the rest of my life."

As I nestle into the crook of his arm, I realize that if being with Trey is my reward for all the years of heartache and tears, then every single minute was worth it. And as we drift off to sleep, entwined in each other's arms, I know that I've finally found the happiness I've been searching for.

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Source Creation Date: July 23, 2025, 4:06 pm

TREY

Six Months Later

The streets of Prague fade into the background, just a memory, as I park my truck and grab my duffle bag from the back seat. I'm tired as fuck, but this was a job I was more than happy to take.

Anatoly Petrov, the head of one of the Bratva families in Russia, had contacted me through my encrypted server. His message revealed some sickening shit that made my blood boil. His brother-in-law, Ivan, had been sexually abusing his own daughter since she was ten years old. The girl managed to tell her cousin, Anatoly's niece, who informed her mother, knowing full well it would reach the crime boss eventually.

Clever girl.

Taking out the trash doesn't even begin to describe Petrov's request. As much as I wanted to rip his brother-in-law apart limb by limb, I asked him why he didn't send one of his own men. He explained that family matters like this were delicate and couldn't be tied back to the Bratva. I understood, and with no hesitation, took the redeye to Prague to handle their dirty deed.

"Sick fucking bastard got what he deserved," I mutter under my breath, recalling how I tortured Ivan for hours before cutting off his dick and shoving it down his throat. It was brutal, but necessary. My work may be dark and twisted, but there are certain lines men don't cross without facing deadly consequences.

I hop out of my vehicle and head inside. Knowing Maggie is waiting for me makes everything worth it, no matter how grisly the job gets. She's my light in the darkness, the one person who can make all this shit fade away. And I'd do anything to make the world better for her.

Taking a final deep breath, I push open the door and announce my presence. "I'm home, Mouse."

In an instant, she appears, running from the kitchen with a wide smile on her face. Her arms and legs wrap around me, making me grin at her enthusiastic welcome.

"Guess you're excited to see me, huh?"

Maggie pouts playfully, her brown eyes meeting mine. "You've been gone for four days. Don't you miss me too?"

"Always. I miss you anytime we're apart, even when you're just at work." I lean in, capturing her lips with mine in a sweet, lingering kiss before setting her back on her feet. The rich aroma of a home-cooked meal fills the air, and my stomach growls in response. "What smells so good?"

Her eyes light up with pride. "I made your favorite—pot roast with mashed potatoes. Get cleaned up, and I'll fix you a plate."

When Maggie turns to stroll back into the kitchen, I snag her by the waist, pulling her close. "That's not what I'm hungry for right now."

A sly smile forms on her lips, mischief twinkling in her eyes. Wordlessly, she wriggles free and dashes toward the bedroom, shedding her clothes as she goes. I follow after her, every step I take reaffirming how goddamn lucky I am to be in love with my best friend.

As I enter the room, the sight of Maggie stripping down to nothing sends a jolt of electricity through my veins. Her leggings and panties join the discarded pile on the floor as she climbs onto the bed and faces me.

“Wanna show me how much you missed me?”

She nods, licking her lips in anticipation.

“On your knees, Mouse. Show me with your mouth on my cock.”

Maggie doesn't hesitate, her eagerness lighting a fire in my gut. She slides off the bed and drops to her knees while I rip off my shirt, the fabric tearing beneath my fingers. Her hands reach for my belt and jeans, deftly unfastening them as I toe off my boots and kick them to the side.

Her fingers trace the lines of my abs, sending a tremble straight to my dick. The warmth of her hands, the way she's so willing to please me just as much as I want to please her—it feels like my body is coming alive after being dormant for too long. She helps me undress, leaving me completely exposed to her.

“God, you look so fucking beautiful like this,” I murmur, watching as she takes hold of my cock and slowly begins to lick it.

Her eyes, filled with adoration and lust, never leave mine.

“Your mouth is heaven, baby,” I groan as she wraps her lips around me. “You know exactly how to make me feel good. Don't stop.”

She teases me with her tongue and flicks it against the sensitive underside of my shaft. As she continues, every touch and stroke sends wave after wave of pleasure through me. My world narrows to this moment, the connection between us more

powerful than anything I've ever experienced.

"Fuck, Maggie," I gasp, gripping her hair tightly. "You're gonna make me come undone. But I don't want to finish like this. Not yet."

The heat between us continues to build, and I know without a doubt that there's nowhere else in the world I'd rather be than here with her. With every touch, every whispered word, our bond only grows stronger. And I'll do whatever it takes to keep her by my side, for as long as she'll have me.

She speeds up, her lips sliding up and down my length, while her free hand slips between her thighs. As she begins rubbing her clit, I watch the erotic display, wanting nothing more than to taste her sweetness.

"Take all of me, baby," I command, thrusting forward and feeling her gag as I hit the back of her throat. But Maggie swallows around me, taking everything I have to give.

My balls draw up, tingling with the imminent release, but I don't want to fill her mouth—not when I know how much better it'd be to spill inside her. I pull out abruptly, lifting her to her feet, my breathing heavy and ragged.

"Get on the bed, Mouse," I order. "Let's see if I can fuck you good enough to make a baby."

Maggie scrambles onto the mattress, giving me that intoxicating view of her plump ass. She spreads her legs wide and I wedge myself between them, my muscles straining with the need to possess her fully. My aching cock finds her entrance, poised to plunge into her velvety cunt.

But I pause, staring into her eyes. There's something I need to say before we lose ourselves completely. "Thank you for not giving up on me, Mouse," I whisper, my

voice thick with emotion. “You loved me when I didn’t think I could love myself.”

Her eyes glisten with unshed tears, and she reaches up to cup my face. “I’ll always love you, no matter what,” she promises. “As long as you come home to me.”

With that vow, I know there’s no turning back. We’re bound together, our love stronger than any force on earth. As I finally surge forward, burying myself inside her, I can’t help but think that we were meant for this, that we’ve always been meant for each other.

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Vince Moretti is a relic of the past. A childhood crush that is all but forgotten. Holden Braddock is my future.

I arrive at Deseo just before seven to find Holden, looking impeccable in black slacks and a light-blue dress shirt that effortlessly compliments his eyes, waiting outside for me. His hair is styled down and straight, and splayed over his muscular shoulders.

Good God, he's perfect.

Holden greets me with a dazzling smile. “, you look fantastic.” He leans in and kisses both of my cheeks.

“Thanks,” I reply with a blush, hoping the ridiculous amount of money I spent on this Kai Milla evening dress was worth it. I loop my arm through Holden's, and together, we approach the restaurant entrance. “I have reservations under the name Scott, please,” I say.

The host looks up, his eyes wide, but his excitement fades when he realizes I'm not with David. “Of course, Miss Scott. Right this way, please.”

He leads us to a cozy little table on the terrace surrounded by plants and fairy lights. It's perfect. After being given menus, and a glass carafe of iced water, the server leaves Holden and me to decide on our meals.

“So, how have you been?” I inquire.

A frown mars Holden's gorgeous face. “Busy. I've had clients coming in nonstop and

have Nike and Adidas competing for sponsorship deals.”

“Sounds stressful,” I reply sympathetically, knowing how vital Holden’s work is to him.

“Yeah, and that’s not even mentioning the problems I’ve been having with this other trainer and the apartment I rent?—”

My eyes glaze over as Holden drones on and on. What happened to the fun, endearing guy I’ve been chatting to online? It’s like he’s morphed into a completely different person now that we’re meeting face-to-face.

“...And I found if you use a leave-in conditioner and argan oil right after washing your hair—” he says, now running through his hair care routine. Like I’m even remotely interested?

A commotion at the door grabs my attention, and I turn my head at the same time every other woman in the room seems to rotate in their seats. All eyes are focused on the entrance, where someone stands in a smart black suit, looking immaculate. Apparently, there’s some celebrity or something asking to be let in. And then I see who that celebrity is.

Vince. What in the actual fuck?

Did David put him up to this? My frustration at Holden transforms into full-on annoyance at Vince when he strides across the restaurant—every female eye following his progress, some onlookers with their mouths agape—and approaches my table. Thirsty bitches.

“Let’s go, Princess,” he says in a no-nonsense tone.

I bristle at the childhood nickname but feign indifference. Then, tossing my long

black hair over my shoulder, I say, “Do I know you?”

Vince smirks. “Oh, you know me very well, .”

I glance away dismissively, my attention turning back to Holden, who—to my dismay—looks utterly starstruck. Have I been catfished? This can’t be the same guy I met online. Ugh. I need to deal with one issue at a time.

“I’m sorry about this, Holden. I have no idea who this guy is.”

My date’s eyes widen. “I do.”

Faking ignorance, I say, “Oh, is he a friend of yours or something?” I glance back at Vince, barely able to contain the grin on my lips.

“Quit playing games, . You know exactly who I am. I’m not an easy man to forget, after all.” He flashes a devastatingly handsome smile that makes my knees weak.

It doesn’t matter how hot he is; he’s still an asshole.

“You’re wrong there. I wouldn’t be able to pick you out of a crowd,” I reply with my eyes trained on the table, knowing if I look into Vince’s sparkling blues, the game is up.

“Sure you wouldn’t, Estelle Scott.” He uses my entire name to prove without a doubt he knows me, but I simply laugh.

“Oh, come on, anyone with the internet could have looked up my full name. It doesn’t take a genius. Not that there’s one here,” I quip.

Vince frowns and clenches his fists. “Stop acting like a little brat before I bend you over my knee and spank your ass.”

I feel liquid heat pool between my legs at the mental image he's creating, but I refuse to let him get to me. Gripping my steak knife for emphasis, I lean back in my chair and coolly reply, "Try it... and I'll stab you." My voice is deceptively sweet, as is my smile.

"Oh, I'd love to disarm you in a room full of people, Princess," Vince declares, grabbing my wrist and applying pressure so that I have no choice but to drop the utensil.

He pulls me from my chair and leans in, mere inches from my face. Then, pressing his body to mine, he forces me against the table. As Vince moves in closer, he's pinning me to the furniture's edge, and I barely resist the instinct to wrap my leg around his hip and grind my needy pussy along the bulge I see in his pants.

Do not go there, .

From the corner of my eye, I catch Holden staring at us, wide-eyed and slack-jawed. I can only imagine what he must be thinking.

"That was fucking hot," he blurts with an awestruck smile on his face. Vince smirks while I scowl at both of them. Unbelievable!

"Let's go, Princess. Before I throw you over my shoulder and carry you out of here."

"I'd like to see you try," I threaten, my arousal steadily transitioning into anger once more.

"One way or another, we're leaving this restaurant," Vince insists.

"And then what? You're going to drag me back to my brother like a good little girl. I don't believe you. You're both insane."

“You know it’s not safe here,” Vince says, and his eyes darken. This isn’t just about getting under my skin and playing silly mind games. He’s serious.

I sigh in resignation. “Fine.” I sound like a petulant child, but I don’t care.

Vince finally straightens, and for a brief instant, I miss the feeling of his powerful body pressed against mine. However, I ignore that thought and straighten out the wrinkles in my dress.

“Holden, I wish I could say it’s been a pleasure, but even before my brother’s friend showed up, this date was going nowhere. A tip for the future, maybe with the next woman you date, ask her a little about herself instead of prattling on and on about yourself. And your hair.”

Holden’s mouth opens and closes like a goldfish, while Vince chuckles. Then without another glance at either of them, I hold my head high and stride out of the restaurant. I know everyone is watching. Let them watch. I’m Estelle Scott, and I have nothing to be embarrassed about.

I find Vince’s black SUV waiting for us in the parking lot, and I can’t help but wonder what he has planned. Is he going to take me back to David or something else? A thrill shoots down my spine as I recall our most recent interaction and how hot it was, even with everyone watching.

God, get a grip, .

Ten years ago, I swore never to give Vince Moretti another moment of my time. That’s not about to change just because he’s managed to make my heart race like no other man ever has. Or could.