



# My Forbidden Mountain Man (Summer in the Pines #1)

**Author:** *Nyla Lily*

**Category:** Romance

**Description:** Coming home was supposed to be simple.

Fresh air, quiet nights, and a temporary escape from city life—I'm not asking for much. Just a place to crash while I figure out my next move. Logan, the man who was once my stepdad, promised his cabin would always be an option. He has always been a backup plan in case things go wrong.

Sure, we haven't spoken since I left Fairland or since the divorce, but Logan is a man of his word.

Only, the man who opens the door isn't the same one I left behind. He's broader, rougher—his once-kind eyes now sharp with something I can't quite place. And when he looks at me? It's not recognition. It's not warmth.

It's hunger. Dark and deliberate, like he's been starving for something—and somehow, I'm the thing he wants to taste.

He's older. Wiser. A man who should know better. Yet, from the way his gaze lingers, like he's seeing me for the first time... maybe I don't want him to.

**Total Pages (Source):** 8

# Page 1

*Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 11:03 am*

Violet

“We are now arriving at Fairland.” Above, an automated voice tells me what I can see with my own eyes.

A small town my mother brought me to when I was fourteen. Fairland is only one among a list I can count on one hand.

It’s also the place I left without looking back, the moment I turned eighteen. Now look at me, my guitar case tucked between my legs and luggage at my side.

There won’t be any welcoming parties waiting for me. No, I’ve come here unannounced. That’s what happens when a person runs out of options. Not like I have enough money to fly across the country to see if my mother is willing to help.

She’s too busy lounging in her early retirement, where the sun doesn’t just shine—it blisters, and the tourists swarm like locusts, drowning the sidewalks in sunscreen and selfie sticks.

Too busy playing newlywed with fucking Larry—a man I know only as a name on a wedding registry and a smirk in her latest Facebook post.

Another husband, another signature, another flimsy certificate to add to her ever-growing collection. And me? Left on read, like always. She can’t be bothered to help me out with my latest SOS. No, she’s set with a rich asshole who manages his own winery.

The bus groans to a halt, and the driver's voice crackles through the speakers—a nicotine-stained rasp—calling out the name of this town's only stop.

Getting up, I apologize to anyone I brush against with my belongings as I make my way off. While two others join me, they're quick to go their way, having already known where they're going.

Completely the opposite of them, I'm a little more lost.

It's been six years since the last time I've been here. While everything seems familiar, it all looks new at the same time. There are businesses I don't recognize, faces that look unfamiliar.

Strapping my case to my back and dragging my luggage behind me, I head toward a cafe with the name Atomic Roast plastered on top, surrounded by wooden carvings of coffee cups.

As the smell of grounds hits me full force, my mouth waters. With a light wallet, I know I can't fuel my caffeine addiction. At the same time, I'm tempted to ask them for a shot of espresso. Anything to fuel me.

Two days on a bus have left me in a rough state. I'm getting desperate here. If I don't get something soon, this tank will be running on empty.

Hunting down a booth with an outlet, I get comfortable and dig out a phone charger. Plugging it in, I ignore any curious glances sent in my way.

Compared to these mundane customers, who are coated in dull, neutral colors, I'm the complete opposite.

Running mascara, smudged eyeliner, and dark roots, combined with pastel lilac hair,

aren't exactly natural in a tame place like this. We can only imagine how bad the bags are beneath my eyes.

God, I'd trade a felony for a stranger to buy me a coffee right now. I'm not past making myself look worse than I already do. I'm not some innocent flower afraid to wilt.

Get on my knees? Worth the ache. Wouldn't even be the weirdest thing I've done before noon. The taste of cock is easy to cover up with an extra shot of espresso thrown in for something that takes no longer than thirty seconds.

Dignity's a luxury, and I'm on a budget.

Looking around, I grimace when all I see are happy, smiling families.

Man. All this does is remind me that I'm no longer living the city life. After years of traveling from capital to capital, I've forgotten that some places don't have shadows lurking.

For however long this lasts, it will take some time to get used to.

Once my phone powers up, I use the free Wi-Fi to search for options to get to my final destination.

No taxis. No Uber or Lyft. No old friends to bum a ride up the mountain.

Groaning as I try to search through my options, I jerk when a paper cup is pushed toward me.

The delicious brown liquid makes my insides sing, but I'm immediately growing defensive at the sight of the offering.

The last thing I expect to see when I lift my gaze is a friendly face with curly red hair.

Julie, by her nametag, gives me a gentle smile on the side.

“I don’t—” I start, my chest growing tight as my skin prickles.

Nothing ever comes my way for free; there’s always a price to pay. Kindness is always conditional.

“You look like you need it, sweetie.” Her kindness comes with the brutal truth. The one I already know, but most people aren’t brave enough to say it out loud. “You’re also not the first one to come into my business looking lost.”

The craving is too much, and I’m downing a mouthful before remembering to thank her. If this is her business, then she could also kick me out if I insult her in return.

Honestly, she looks too sweet and nice to insult.

“Just trying to find a ride.” My thumb brushes the cup, and the tension in my shoulders melts away. “Got any advice for someone who needs to get on the mountain?”

Julie’s smile only stretches, and I can’t even be surprised that she nods. If she’s willing to give out liquid gold like this for free, I’m willing to bet she has all the answers a woman in my situation can ask for.

“Go to the mountain rescue headquarters. They offer rides for free.” Choosing the words she already knows I want to hear, she looks out toward the glass panes like she can see the building itself through all of the other businesses surrounding the streets.

“The last thing they want is for you to go up there by yourself and get hurt.”

Hell yeah. Okay, my luck is finally turning around.

Julie also mentions asking for Sawyer. Apparently, she's married to a guy who manages the place.

"He's used to me sending people his way, so don't stress. He's happy to help. All you have to do is find a way over there. Can't be more than a twenty-minute walk at most."

I can do that.

Thanking her again, I watch as she drifts over to check in on the other customers, asking them about their drinks and giving them the same warm smile.

Maybe Fairland has improved more than just the businesses. There might be a few good people here, too.

If Jeremy hadn't been an asshole and kept my share of our earnings before kicking me to the curb, I'd have enough money to buy a bunch of the delicious sweets in the display cabinet, and treat everyone here to a drink.

Next time. Call it an IOU.

Appreciating the delicious black coffee for what it is, I let my phone charge long enough to pull up the directions to the headquarters.

Lingering long enough to ensure I have enough battery to play it safe, my empty cup bounces against the rim of the trash before sinking to the bottom.

"Have a nice day!" A chorus of goodbyes makes me feel a little lighter as I make my way out.

The walk to the headquarters is the same as the walk to the coffee shop. Lots of strange stares and lifted brows.

I suppose if I were the face of my ex-band, I'd have to worry about being recognized. But hey, Jeremy made it pretty fucking clear.

Lead guitarist is just a title. Anyone can do it. That's why it was so easy to replace me.

Sighing softly, I kick a rock in my path on the sidewalk hard enough to watch it bounce twice into the road, soon getting crushed beneath a passing car's tire.

When I make it to the headquarters, all I have to do is breathe Julia's name, and the guy running the place comes sprinting . Even better, he's happy to help if it means making his wife happy.

I've got to say, it's a sight for sore eyes. Makes me a little jealous.

There was once upon a time I wanted something like that. A relationship that ended with a cute, happy ever after. Before I got thrust into the real world. Once I got a good reality check, I accepted that true love doesn't happen often.

I try not to let my unlucky hand at love sour my mood. Instead, I give Sawyer the address where I need to be dropped off.

For a moment, he looks surprised. Like the cabin I'm hoping to stay at is nonexistent.

Shit. I didn't even consider that.

If Logan isn't up here...

I shake my head, as if the idea will fly right out.

“Everything alright?” My driver throws me a curious glance.

“Pressure in the ear, that’s all,” I excuse before turning my attention to the passing trees.

The drive doesn’t last forever, thank goodness. Sleep continues to prickle at the corners of my eyes, my exhaustion growing.

Almost there.

When the truck comes to a stop, I’m left looking at a cabin I was dragged to at only seventeen by my mother, who insisted her lover at the time would be the final man I’d be calling my step-dad.

Look how that turned out.

Dragging my luggage up rickety stairs, I abandon all my belongings to approach the front door. Once my hands are free, I’m banging a balled fist against the door as the sound of Sawyer’s truck grows to nothing.

The silence is deafening .

“Logan!” Calling out my ex-step-dad’s name takes strength I don’t realize I have to keep my voice from cracking.

I’m blaming my weak grip on my emotions on a bad day. By the start of tomorrow, I’ll be stronger.

Pounding my hand harder, I don’t stop. Even when my pinkie starts to throb, I need



him to be on the other side.

I need a win.

Finally, when the door suddenly gets yanked open, I almost hit him as my brain stalls because of the sight before my eyes.

A low growl welcomes me, almost enough to make me want to run.

“What the fuck do you—”

The man before me can’t finish his sentence, not as silence returns, and he takes me in.

Not like the strangers of this small town. Not at all. His eyes scan me with purpose, his brows furrowing deep enough to brush his eyelashes.

Oh. Oh.

Logan is just like this town—worn-in at the edges, pretending at familiarity.

I remember him clean-shaven, inkless, his laughter loud enough to shake the dinner table. But the man in front of me now is a stranger wearing his face. A beard, rough and unkempt, shadows his jaw. Tattoos—fresh, dark, deliberate—crawl up his forearms like creeping vines. And his eyes?

They don’t laugh anymore. They measure. And right now? He’s taking me in one inch at a time. Memorizing every inch his eyes touch.

Holy shit, he’s hot. In a weird, falling off the face of the earth, recluse kind of way.

Once I start looking, I find it hard to stop. I'm taking in all the changes one at a time, my pulse kicking in overtime.

He's one of Mom's exes. A relic from her matrimonial dumpster fire. I know this.

Why does he have to be hot? This will make things more complicated.

"Logan." Dragging out his name, my lips curve into a smile. My hands find my hips, and I catch myself using the same tone I always rely on whenever I need something. Call it a bad habit. "Remember me?"

Six years is a long time, and just like him, I'm not the same person. I've abandoned my quiet, shy persona and morphed myself into the person I needed to be to survive. To live the life of my dream and stay relevant.

Sure, my methods are probably frowned upon, but here I am, still kicking.

He doesn't answer quickly enough. His lips part, and it's like he's at a loss for words. There's no way he could have forgotten about me. Not after I sent both of them tickets to our shows for the first few years.

I can't remember when I stopped sending him the VIP passes. It might have been after my mother gave me an earful about their divorce, giving me a whole list of complaints about him.

Didn't really think to remember the small details, not when she does the same song and dance over and over again.

"So listen, sorry to drop on you without warning, but I lost your number some time ago." Sucking on my teeth, I try not to kick myself at the reminder.

“Anyway, I’m looking for a place to crash until I can get on my feet again.

A week or two tops, I swear. And if I remember right, you did tell me your place would always be an option. ”

I always kept his offer at the back of my mind as a last, desperate option. Well, I’ve hit it. There’s no going back.

“ Violet.” My name drags itself out of his throat, low and rough, like an avalanche of boulders tearing down the mountainside.

The sound of it does things to me—sparks a slow, crawling heat that licks down my spine, pools low in my stomach, then settles, thick and insistent, between my thighs.

Fuck.

“I get it if my mother burned the bridge between you two, but I don’t have much of a choice here. Please. Just long enough to get back on my feet.” I hate the crack of desperation in my voice, and I don’t mean to use it as a method of getting my way.

However, it’s what makes a sigh form in the pit of his chest before it comes rumbling out.

He takes one deliberate step back—just enough space to let me through, not enough to avoid contact. The heat of him burns through my jacket as I brush past, intentional as can be.

Even as the heavy scent of pine floods my senses and makes my head spin, I don’t let it stop me from entering the last place I remembered as being safe and comforting.

For the first time in days, relief floods my system, and I can feel the mental weight of

exhaustion come crashing down.

“Take a seat. I’ll need some time to get a room ready for you.” He motions to a couch that looks far too comfortable in front of a fire that is crackling low and soothing.

I don’t argue. Instead, I abandon my belongings at the door, kick off my boots, and thank him softly before he disappears deeper into his cabin.

## Page 2

*Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 11:03 am*

Logan

She shouldn't be here.

Fuck. No. I never thought I'd see her again, not in person.

What happened?

She smells like cigarette smoke has tangled between the threads of her outfit. A tank top and plaid skirt, making her look like a cosplaying catholic school girl after a busy weekend.

The holes in her pantyhose only make me wonder what she's been up to since the last time I've seen her.

Six years is a long time, and despite the different hair color and the added curves to her figure, she carries the same brown eyes I remember.

The only difference is that the last time I saw them, they were full of life. Now, they're empty. Void of anything.

"You have no idea how much I appreciate this." Following close behind me, my back flexes when I feel the light touch of her fingertips. "Seriously."

Grunting, I lead her deeper into my home. I don't think I've changed much over the years she's been away. If anything, my home feels emptier.

Jaclyn took more than half of my belongings in the divorce. I just wanted her out. Living by myself, I never minded the bare walls or empty shelves. All I wanted was quiet, and that woman made sure to give it one way or another.

Violet's looking around, her curiosity blooming. I can see it in her eyes, the way she's trying to figure out what she's missed out on.

The short answer is a lot, but at the same time, hardly much at all.

Once Violet left to follow her dreams, a glaring hole formed in my relationship with Jaclyn, and it got shaky. The divorce was messy, but not as bad as it could have been.

If Jaclyn knew what I'd been doing...

I told myself I was keeping a close eye on Violet because I was a caring stepfather. She was a shy bird taking her first flight out into the cruel world. Initially, I showed my support by attending a handful of her nearby shows.

Over the years, I watched her turn into the woman she is now.

I watched videos of her performances once I could no longer attend, paying close attention to nothing but the motion of her fingers against the guitar strings and the beaming smiles on her face.

Fuck, the reminder does nothing but bring up all the wrongings of my previous marriage. I've blamed myself for the falling out of the divorce.

The unraveling began when Jaclyn stopped reaching for me.

First, it was the absence of her touch—no more sleepy morning kisses, no more hands slipping under my shirt just to feel my skin. Then came the empty bed, the turned

back, the slow, suffocating withdrawal of her love.

I was starving and suffering, all while she looked for her next relationship.

That's how it happened—desperate, thoughtless, a man reduced to base need. Watching one random livestream of Violet performing, something primal overrode every boundary. My zipper hissed open, my hand moved, and the forbidden thrill of it seared through me like a brand.

Maybe I'm twisted. Maybe I was just that fucking lonely.

But the orgasm split me apart—the first real release in years, shame and pleasure fused into one white-hot strike. After that, I tracked Jaclyn's indifference like a roadmap. Every cold shoulder, every night alone, became permission. Violet's face, her body, her existence—my only relief.

It cost me my marriage. Jaclyn found someone else to kiss her awake, to want her openly.

And me? I had Violet. A ghost I could never hold. A forbidden existence I had no right wanting.

Now she's here—flesh and breath and within reach—and I know exactly how dangerous that is. It's not just her physical appearance I find attractive. It's the sultry tone behind her words, the quip of a smile on her lips.

I've always cared about her. I just don't know when it turned into this . A magnetic pull that's turned into an impossible-to-ignore hunger.

I take her belongings from her hold, electricity shooting up my limbs the moment our fingers make contact.

“Need to set up a room for you. Relax for a few minutes.” Jerking my chin toward the couch, I tell myself to add a few logs to the fire when I’m done.

The mountain isn’t like the town at all. Even during the summer months, it gets cold up here. With what she’s wearing, she’ll need all the help she can get.

I’ve got a guest room with her name written all over it. Hell, it’s the same room she stayed in the last time when she lived here. The only difference is the layer of dust collecting on the blankets.

Not like I get many guests. People don’t go out of their way to see me. That’s what happens when I’m one of the less welcoming ones living on the mountain.

Once I’m pulling out fresh blankets and sheets, wiping down surfaces, and tucking her few pieces of luggage in the corner of the room, I’m pausing long enough to wonder if all of this is enough.

Fuck. If she had just sent me a text, or even called, I would’ve had the time to prepare for this and feel less like I’m teetering on an edge here.

This’ll be fine. It has to be.

Heading back to grab her so she can take in her new surroundings, I stop dead in my tracks when I reach the doorway.

There she is—sprawled across my couch like she still belongs there, figure splayed against the cushions like she’s testing their memory of her. Eyes shut, those long lashes of hers brush her stained cheeks.

Five minutes back in my life, and she’s already asleep, breathing slow and deep like the years she’s spent away never happened.



My feet move without thinking, and soon, I'm hovering over her behind the couch.

My hand drags down my face, rough against my beard, but my eyes won't stop drinking her in. Through a screen, she'd been pixels and distance.

Now—now I can see the plump of her lips, the way her collarbone rises with each breath, the faded ink painted across her skin I don't recognize.

The tank top she's wearing clings like a second skin now that she's ditched her leather jacket, dipping low enough to tease more than it reveals—every curve a calculated provocation. Her skirt rides high, the kind of hemline that's an invitation for bastards like me to look as they please.

But it's the torn pantyhose that tells a story. I can't decide whether it's careless or calculated. Snagged on a fence? Ripped off in a hurry? Either way, she wears the damage like an accessory.

I shouldn't be looking this hard. Shouldn't be memorizing.

Fuck.

Violet may no longer be my stepdaughter, but I've got no right looking at her the way I am. My body can't tell the difference.

My cock is already stirring to life, thick and insistent, as if it remembers the rhythm of my hands all too well—the same desperate pattern I fall into, over and over.

It hardens against my thigh, a slow, relentless pulse beneath my jeans, the denim rough and unforgiving as it drags against my skin.

I grit my teeth, squeezing my eyes shut as my fingers dig into my thigh. Fuck. It's not

enough. The need coils tighter, a hot, insistent throb that demands attention.

My hand twitches, torn between shoving into my pants right here and forcing myself to wait—to prove I still have some fucking control left.

My body isn't listening.

Before I can stop myself, my palm presses down, hard, over the stiff outline of my cock, and I hiss at the jolt of pleasure-pain that shoots through me.

My grip tightens, almost punishing, as if I can strangle the want out of me.

It doesn't work. If anything, the pressure just makes it worse—the ache sharper, the need more desperate.

Then Violet sighs in her slumber, rolling onto her side so she can get more comfortable.

Gritting my teeth, I tear myself away from the couch and move toward the woodpile I have stacked next to a dimming flame.

Once I've stuffed enough pieces inside to barely leave me satisfied, I use the need to go outside and get more wood as an excuse to put some distance between us.

Fresh air will do me well. Help clear my clouded thoughts and make me a better man.

I have to be a better man.

\* \* \*

My arms burn with the next swing of my axe. A sharp grunt escapes me as the blade

bites into the wood, splitting it cleanly in two.

It turns out that hard labor is the perfect distraction.

Doesn't hurt that I'll need every last piece of firewood to keep my cabin warm. Even if the pile is growing bigger than it needs to be, it'll be less to cut in the future.

The familiar thump of the front door gives my next swing more added force than needed, sending the two pieces flying.

I try not to pay her any attention, but I feel her gaze burning into my back as I reach for another log. She stays silent, watching, letting me split three more pieces before I'm the one who finally turns.

She leans against the rail, unflinching when our eyes meet. Instead of looking away, the corner of her mouth quirks up, her body shifting with the same quiet amusement.

Her face is scrubbed clean now, though her skin still glows—flushed, as if she'd rubbed it raw.

Not having a clue about the distance I'm trying to keep, she carelessly hops down each step before joining me. One hand cradles her hip while the other digs through the dark roots of her hair.

“Sorry for passing out on you there, but thanks for letting me sleep. Needed it more than I care to admit.” She sniffs before finally looking away. “Need any help? Least I can do since you're helping me out.”

I need to tell her to go back inside, to do whatever the hell she wants as long as she isn't in the same room as I am.

Instead, I grunt. My muscles ache as I drop the axe and jerk my chin to my impressive pile. One that would be a good size if I were preparing for winter, not the middle of summer.

“Grab an armful and help me take some inside.” As the words leave my lips, I move to lead by example.

Once my arm is full, I’m shoving my way forward, not lingering long enough to discover what she sounds like when she’s doing hard labor.

I don’t need to worry about what a grunt or groan sounds like falling past her lips.

With the two of us working, we gather enough firewood for the day in no time. Her pale skin flushes—partly from labor, partly from the wood’s rough bite. She brushes off her chest, fishing out flecks of bark that slipped beneath her collar.

Jesus . She has to know what she’s doing.

“Cool, we’re done.” Her eyes flick up, nearly catching me staring. “Got any food? I haven’t had a decent meal in days. Tell me you’ve got something to stuff my mouth with.”

My body betrays me in an instant. All that exhaustion from chopping wood? Gone. My blood surges south, eager and inconvenient.

“Sure. Check the fridge. You’ll find something in there.” Moving to wash my hands, I cup a palmful of ice-cold water to douse my face with. While it’s helpful not where it needs to be, the cool water against my flushed cheeks is a welcome relief.

Something needs to help control the fire burning in the pit of my stomach.

If it goes unchecked, I'm going to end up sandwiching her body against the counter as I cave to this hunger to get my mouth on her. My hands, too.

With how far my fantasies have gotten me on my loneliest nights, there's an entire catalog based on the things I'd want to do with her.

Things that are out of question.

"So—" She tugs out a container of sliced fruit nearing the end of their life before easily remembering where I kept the forks, "—what have you been up to since... you know...?"

If she doesn't want to say it, I will. Call it a vocal reminder of why I need to make some distance.

"Since the divorce?" Drying my hands, I motion around with them. "You're looking at it."

All quiet and solitude up here once there isn't anyone occupying the spare bedrooms.

"Seems boring." Nudging me with her elbow in passing, she teases me with a smile. "I thought you used to be fun? You seem like a whole different person now."

"The same could be said about yourself." Meeting her scoff with a grunt, I follow her like a magnet to metal. Sitting across from her at the table, I flick my fingers toward her appearance. "Want to tell me what led you to my front door? Last I checked, you were in Washington—"

The moment her brows lift, I know I've said too much. Now the information is out there, impossible to stuff back into my mouth.

“ Logan.” Teasing me with my name in that same tone that makes my knee bounce, her smile seems more genuine.

“I’m flattered that you’re keeping up with me.

You’re right, I was in Washington. Newport, specifically.

But, sometimes you can’t control which way the wind blows and what assholes decide to give you the boot. ”

As her words register, she jabs her fork into a chunk of cantaloupe before bringing it to her lips.

“They kicked you out?” Staring at her, she raises and lowers her brows in confirmation before sinking her teeth into the fruit.

Violet got out of her comfort zone to follow some snot-nosed punk when he promised her a life on the road. Now what, their band is landing hits, and they can suddenly be successful without her?

It’s not until I feel the light touch of her fingertips against my aching knuckles that I realize just how angry I’m getting for her.

“Hey, I’m sour about it too, but it is what it is.

I’m just writing this off as a mini-vacation.

I’ll give that dick some time to realize he’s made a mistake.

When that time comes, I’ll go back with my list of demands.

No worries, I've had plenty of time to think of a lot of them.

"The smile she gives me is outright mischievous, and her thumb traces the vein pulsating along the top of my hand.

"Think you can put up with me until then?"

My throat grows tighter by the second. "You're welcome to stay as long as you need. I don't think you'll have to wait for long. Whoever it was is a dumbass to begin with."

Pleased by my words, her smile softens before she pulls away to eat the fruit. From the way she devours every chunk, it's like she's starving.

"My diet consists of junk food and beer. Sometimes coffee, too, if we have to stop to get fuel. Being on the road constantly sucks. So this? Yeah, this is a godsend. Don't judge me, old man."

For a moment, my scowl cracks at the core. As she insults my age with a grin of her own, it's impossible to be offended. Rather, the pull I feel on myself toward her only grows stronger. All I can do is avoid fanning the flames.

It will take some time to get used to life returning to this cabin.

Can't let myself grow too comfortable. If I start liking the company, I'll accidentally try to keep her around.

Not as my ex-wife's kid, but something else entirely.

## Page 3

*Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 11:03 am*

Violet

Sleeping in—whatever day of the week it is—feels like stolen luxury.

No frantic midnight wake-ups, jerking awake to Jeremy's off-key serenades for whatever starry-eyed admirer has wandered backstage.

No crack-of-dawn scrambles to scribble down a melody before it slips away.

Just the heavy comfort of blankets against bare skin, the cabin's pine-scented air, and the slow, delicious awareness that time is mine to waste.

Oh, and the view isn't bad either—a certain distractingly hunky man moving through the space like he has all the patience in the world.

Logan . When I find him cooking breakfast on day two of my stay, I can see my exhaustion wasn't playing tricks on my eyes.

He's still hot. Like, eye-opening, sexual awakening hot.

No wonder I never took Jeremy's offerings for sex. Any other guy that I accepted was just to pass the time.

When I look at Logan, I get this new sensation I've never felt before. A tingling in my gut, something light and easy.

I want to be the one to ask him for his attention. Hell, even better, I want to work for



it.

This is no good.

If I cave to these wants, what's stopping him from feeling uncomfortable and asking me to leave?

I really like sleeping in.

I also like the look that forms in his eyes when he looks my way. Just like now, when he hears the floor creak beneath my bare feet.

One nonchalant glance turns into a choking sound catching at the back of his throat.

“Is that what you wore around your bandmates?”

His voice is calm, but there's a roughness beneath it—like gravel under polished leather. A warning to keep my distance, a sensation I choose to ignore.

I glance down at myself and take in my sleepwear. Thin cotton shorts, a tank top clinging to every curve to beat the heat. Bare skin everywhere else. I guess I never noticed it. Didn't even think about putting a bra on this early in the morning.

Even though he warned about how cool it gets at night, my mind helped me stay toasty through the late hours. So yeah, my wardrobe isn't terrible.

“Most of the time,” I say, drifting closer. The cabin's warmth licks up my thighs, but it's nothing compared to the heat in his gaze. “Sometimes it's even less, if you can believe it.”

A beat. His jaw flexes.

“Then again, we’re very comfortable in our own skins,” I add, tilting my head at him before letting my hip brush the counter beside him, close enough to catch the scent of him— woodsmoke and more of that piney scent. “I’m not making you uncomfortable, am I?”

His eyes drop—just a flash, but I see it. The way his stare lingers on the dip of my waist, the swell of my chest. He’s quick to look away, but not quick enough.

Unless my imagination is playing tricks on me, I think he might be half as interested in me as I am in him.

“Don’t want you getting cold, that’s all.” His grip tightens on the wooden spoon, knuckles whitening as he pushes around the sausage links. The poor utensil creaks under the pressure.

I don’t need to look down to know my nipples are turning into little peaks. Is it the cool temperature? No, of course not.

Did he catch a glimpse of them? Does he know the true cause?

Sinking my teeth into the bottom of my lip, I fight between asking this man to warm me up, and taking a seat before I do something stupid.

Thanks to the pulse between my thighs, my legs have a little quiver to them as I make the smart decision to turn away and walk toward the table.

Unfortunately, I’m not always completely smart. I’m too addicted to toeing the line.

I keep my eyes locked in his direction as I hoist myself onto the edge of the table, the wood cool against my bare thighs. My lips catch between my teeth, but it’s no use—a slow, wicked smile curls anyway.

He'll scold me for this.

Any second now, that deep, graveled voice will rumble about manners, about chairs existing for a reason, and I'll blink up at him with all wide-eyed innocence, swing my legs down, and play the good girl.

Until then?

I let my feet dangle, kicking them lazily back and forth, the hem of my shorts riding up just enough to tease. The rhythm is careless, but my gaze isn't—every sway, every shift, is an invitation. Anything to get his attention back on me.

No quick glimpses like he's afraid he'll get caught.

Look at me. Please.

Every time he does, the thrill that fills me is almost as satisfying as the touch I want.

When that heavy, dark stare is pointed in my direction, it's like he's peeling back every layer of cotton and skin between us.

Like he already knows exactly where my mind went last night—tangled in sheets, his name a silent scream in my throat as I dreamed of those eyes watching me while my fingers—

A sharp inhale. The memory alone has my thighs pressing together, heat pooling low. His fault. All of it. The damp cling of my panties this morning, the restless ache still humming under my skin.

The spoon clatters against the pan. His jaw works, and he doesn't have to look to know what I'm playing at.

Finally.

His head turns, slow, deliberate. When those eyes land on me—all I can do not to arch under the weight of it is stare back.

I want to say something flirtatious, something to get him to abandon cooking to give me the attention I need.

If I open my mouth, there won't be smooth words coming out. No, it'll be a desperation I can't control. That's what Logan does to me.

It's wrong, but fuck, I know it'll feel right if I cross the invisible line between us.

“You look like you're starving.” Kicking the air, my lips curve higher. “That food almost done, or are you going to burn it?”

A beat. The air between us crackles.

Then—in my head, I let my imagination unfold the next scene.

The spoon clattering against the counter as he opts to let our entire breakfast burn.

His hands on me before I can blink—rough palms sliding under my thighs, yanking me to the edge of the table with a thud that shakes the ground before shoving them open wide enough to make room for his broad hips.

My breath hitching as he leans in, close enough that his scent—warm spice and something wild—floods my senses.

“Five more minutes.” As his words swat away the fog flooding my thoughts, he turns and lets out a soft sigh.

Only in your fantasies, Violet.

No kidding.

\* \* \*

The days in this cabin turn into a blur. A week of silence passes by in a blur, and I adjust as best as I can.

Logan has a pattern, and I follow along with him, creating one of my own. Some of his activities overlap with my schedule, as I often find myself invading his space on purpose.

Eventually, he's going to get tired of all my pushing. I'm waiting for it.

So, after another delicious breakfast, I check my phone for any messages or social media posts. The service out here sucks, and it's what I tell myself for why my inbox is mostly empty.

There's some spam, of course. Word has gotten around about my replacement, so there are a few talent agencies that would love to use my skills for different bands.

None from Jeremy. No apologies, no regrets, nothing .

I hope he gets strep throat.

My mother hasn't tried messaging me either. Though by the little image of her face tucked in the corner, she has seen my last string of messages.

Good to know that she's at least alive. Ugh . Eyeroll.

“You don’t have to come.” Logan’s voice cuts through my agitation like a sharp knife as he works on lacing his hiking boots.

Every day, right before lunch, he walks a couple of miles to build up an appetite. Says the fresh air is good for the soul. I told him I wanted to join him while I sucked down my coffee. He’s been trying to talk me out of it since.

He thinks I can’t survive a couple of mosquito bites and an uphill climb. Well, I’m in the mood to prove him wrong.

The cabin air is stifling. Thick with pine resin and the scent of him. It’s an aphrodisiac, plain and simple, and I’m this close to climbing him like one of those trees he loves so much.

So yeah. Fresh air. A cleansing.

One way or another, I’m coming whether he likes it or not.

While I don’t have boots, I’ve got a pair of sneakers that are worn in that’ll do the trick.

Not wanting my inner thighs to rub each other, I don’t dare think about wearing shorts. It’s too hot for jeans during prime time, so I’m lucky to find some khakis in my luggage.

And for the sole purpose of making Logan squirm, I pick a dangerous top. A crop top that hints at what’s beneath by fluttering against the skin right beneath my breasts.

He’s clearly not shy looking, hardly showing any signs of being turned off by my curves. Might as well show them off even more to see how far I can get.

While I'm working on tying my hair, I pretend I don't notice the way his eyes flicker over to me.

"You're not embarrassed to be seen with me, right?" I lift a brow as I consider the option. I could be what slows him down, I guess.

The words barely leave my lips before his expression darkens— scowling doesn't even cover it. It's like I flipped a switch, and boom, grumpy Logan is back in full force. He straightens to his full height, looming over me, all broad shoulders and barely leashed irritation.

Forget if looks could kill . With him? It's more like if looks could devour you in one bite .

Damn if that thought doesn't send a thrill straight through me.

This can't be my imagination.

"Mountain isn't safe for those who aren't used to it," he finally excuses after a second that feels too long.

Tightening my hair, I move past him, purposely brushing his chest along the way. "Guess it's a good thing I'll be with you then. If anything happens, you'll take care of me, won't you?"

He doesn't reply to my tease, only following behind me.

If I'm right and Logan is attracted to me in one form or another, then I'm going to shoot my shot.

Not just for a quick wave of fun. Down deep, I want to chase after these strange

sensations. The ones that are making my heart flutter in my chest and my body ache.

Whatever he's doing to me, it's a first.

I don't want it to be the last.

"Stick to the trail," he instructs from behind, "I won't let us get lost. Take it at your own pace."

He's so serious, I want to ease the tension between us. Hoping it'll unweave itself naturally after we abandon the cabin, I realize his silence isn't wavering.

Rolling my eyes at the need to take care of it myself, my next step consists of spinning on my foot.

Just my luck, I decided to do it on a patch with a root poking through the dirt.

Logan's moving like he can see the future, already reaching out before I realize he thinks I'm going to lose my balance.

"Careful." The word is a hiss between his teeth.

I could laugh. Doesn't he know? I've danced on stages slick with sweat, leapt from platforms in heels, spun until the world blurred—balance is my job. But the protest dies on my tongue when I look up.

His gaze is locked on my mouth as quickly as his fingers lock around my arms to steady my body.

Slowly—I drag the tip of my tongue along my bottom lip. His breath hitches.



I want to kiss him.

Even with all this fresh air, I feel the need to.

“Violet—” He chokes on my name, and he sounds apologetic. At the same time, he doesn’t pull away.

He wants to touch me as much as I want to touch him. I can feel it in my gut.

It’s also why I feel confident that in this moment right now, he’d let me touch him too. So, I do.

My fingers find his jaw, going rogue as they trace the rough stubble there, and his name slips out in a whisper.

“Logan.”

A warning for what is to come. A warning for what I plan to do.

He should stop me. He knows he should. I see it in the way his throat works, the way his fingers flex like he’s debating putting space between us, but he doesn’t.

We’re playing chicken now. A breathless standoff where neither of us blinks.

One of us will pull away first, if we’re smart.

Except—he’s a brick wall. He doesn’t want to be the bad guy by being the first one to crumble.

It’s a good thing I don’t care what anyone thinks about me.

So, before I get cold feet, I lift onto my toes and kiss him.

## Page 4

*Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 11:03 am*

Logan

My body won't listen to me.

I tell myself don't touch her—then my hand is under her shirt, palming her breast through the lace of her bra, thumb dragging over a nipple already stiff for me.

I tell myself let her breathe—then I'm swallowing her moan, my other hand gripping the curve of her ass, hauling her tighter against me. She arches into it, and fuck, the way her body fits mine—like every inch of her was designed to ruin me.

That soft little kiss of hers? A match to gasoline.

Now I've got her backed into the nearest tree, giving her something to rest against as my hands explore without restraint. Never mind the way the bark bites into her skin, she's begging for more, her soft moans nothing but music to my ears.

Years of watching her through a screen, of biting my tongue raw to keep from telling her how fucking pretty she looks in the mornings, how bad I wanted to pin her against the nearest surface...

Now she's here. Warm. Willing. Whimpering against my mouth like she's been waiting just as long. We've both hit our limit, and now, I'm not sure a few kisses will be enough. I'll want more.

I always want more.

My cock aches, hard enough to throb against her hip. I should stop. There are hikers on these trails—hell, I wanted to stop them from looking at her, and now I’m the one who can’t keep my hands to myself.

But her fingers are in my hair, tugging, and her tongue is sliding against mine, and—

“Logan.” My name is a gasp, a plea, a demand for more.

I break just to drag my lips down her throat, teeth scraping where her pulse jumps. I growl, but my hands are already moving, already taking—hiking her leg up around my waist, grinding her against me until she shudders.

I’m out of control. I need to reel it back before I do something I can’t take back.

“Please, touch me.” Her next moan leaves her breathless as my erection nudges her just right.

“Someone will see,” I argue, trying to convince myself while I’m at it. “You’re somebody now. I don’t want a hiker to recognize you and—”

She’s shameless, pulling my hand away from her chest before she’s dragging it down to the button of her khakis. With one hand, she abandons my hand long enough to pop the button. Through half-lidded eyes, her smile is mischievous.

“You want to touch me, Logan. Just do it already.”

Saying the words so confidently, they make my head spin.

She knows how I feel, and yet, she still wants my touch. Wants me.

As badly as I don’t want to risk ruining her reputation, this sort of hunger is

impossible to ignore.

Releasing her thigh, I'm dragging my fingertips toward the metal teeth keeping the flaps open. Just the simple drag of her zipper is enough to feel the heat radiating from her pussy.

Her breath hitches as I graze my fingertips along the front of her underwear, and a growl escapes me at the discovery of the way the damp fabric is already clinging to her skin. The heat is staggering—an almost sinful promise of how wet she is.

Not from our short-lived hike. This is all arousal.

“Fuck,” I grit out, palming her through the lace, and her hips jerk against my hand. A whimper escapes her, her fingers digging into my shoulders as if she's already losing her grip.

I don't tease, already knowing my patience is running thin, and I push past the soaked barrier, groaning at the slickness that greets me.

Her folds are swollen, aching, and the second my thumb grazes her clit, her entire body tenses.

“Oh!” Her voice is a shattered thing, her forehead dropping against my chest as I circle that sensitive bundle of nerves, slow and relentless. Every stroke pulls another broken sound from her, her thighs trembling as her legs barely hold her up.

If this had happened while we were home, I could have had her flattened on my bed. Instead of tucking my hand between her thighs, I could've spread her wide open and had my tongue buried deep.

Next time. There has to be a next time.

I can feel her tightening, her breath coming in ragged gasps, and I press deeper, curling two fingers inside her just to hear her sob.

“That’s it,” I murmur against her ear, my own control fraying. As my breath comes out heavy, I feel the pricking of goosebumps forming along the crook of her neck. “That’s my good girl. You like my fingers, don’t you?”

As her breathing catches, her pussy flutters around my invading fingers. Add in the addition of my thumb pressing against her sensitive nub, and I can’t blame her answer coming out as nothing but a whimper.

God, how many times have I fantasized this? I’ve imagined her juices pruning up my fingers more times than I can count. Pretended I knew what she’d sound like when she moans, but didn’t come close.

This is a wet dream come to life, one I never want to end. However, Violet is too worked up. She doesn’t stand a chance against my onslaught.

Each hitch of her breath tells a story. She’s getting closer and closer to her climax. It’s the way she reaches down for my wrist, her paint-covered nails digging into my skin as her hips roll against my palm that paints an ending.

“Come for me. Let me feel it.” I don’t recognize my voice or the desperation dripping from my lips.

Her climax hits like an ocean wave during a storm, crashing in violently. Her back arches, her nails scoring my skin, and she muffles a cry against my shoulder as she pulses around my fingers.

I don’t let up, drawing out every last shudder until she’s boneless against me, her chest heaving, her lips parted in a dazed, satiated haze.

For a long moment, all she can do is cling to me, her breath warm against my neck. And despite the guilt gnawing at me—the knowledge that I’m playing with fire—the possessive thrill of wrecking her like this drowns out everything else.

My cock continues to throb against my jeans, begging to join my fingers, but when I pull back, I don’t go to free myself. Instead, I carefully button her bottom.

She leans back against the tree, and confusion slips around in her gaze. Her cheeks are flushed red, growing deeper in color as she watches me bring my fingers up to my lips.

Not wanting to waste such a perfect opportunity to discover her flavor, I taste each finger individually, groaning in the process.

She’s salty and sweet, the perfect combination to get addicted to.

Once she’s caught her breath, Violet’s eyes lower, and I can see the question already forming.

“Not here.” Even if it risks leaking a patch in my jeans, I won’t fuck her. My body might ache, but I’ve already risked too much.

That, and Violet deserves so much more than getting roughly fucked in a patch of trees.

From what I’ve noticed so far since her arrival, it seems like life has already kicked her around enough as it is.

At my dismissal, she sinks her teeth into her bottom lip and nods. What I’m sure is disappointment in her eyes, the wobble of her legs will have to be enough to satisfy her for now.

Once I have her to myself, I won't just want to relieve the stiffness in my jeans. Just getting a taste of her like this is dangerous. Her flavor is enough to get addicted to.

If I get addicted, I won't want to let her go.

With the way she came back into my life, she made it clear. This stay of hers is momentary. Just a place for her to crash until she can get on her feet again. It could be a couple of days, or a few weeks. Or, if I'm lucky, a few months.

She's not aware just how tightly she has me wrapped around her finger, how badly I want her. I've spent too much time beating myself over these feelings I've manifested over my monitor.

Right now, this doesn't feel wrong. Touching her like this, making her feel good, that's been the most right thing I've ever felt. It's something I want to chase.

"Are you able to walk back?" My hands curl at my sides in anticipation, and the hope she'll tell me no swirls around my head. Any excuse to touch her, even if it's simply carrying her back to my cabin, sounds like a good idea.

Unfortunately, she nods her head and already starts walking back along the trail like she can find her way back without me. The expression on her face isn't one of relief from her earlier pleasure. No, she looks as frustrated as I do.

Something so little shouldn't claw at my chest, but it does. Fuck, it's enough to claw at a man's conscious, and now, I'm wondering if I should've had more control over myself. More constraint.

I'll figure out what to do. Even if I'm going in completely blind, I'll figure it out.

One way or another, Violet will be mine.



\* \* \*

It's a miracle I don't have her pressed against the nearest wall the second we make it back. We've only finished half my usual hike, but we're both flushed and gasping like we ran the whole way.

That time spent together has left us in wild disarray, flushed and aching.

Violet makes it hard to ignore the voice snarling in my head, the one begging me to chase the high she's left me chasing. However, I don't get the chance to act on it.

She's already slipping away the moment we step inside, her hurried footsteps echoing down the hall before the bathroom door clicks shut. The shower hisses to life, steam seeping under the doorframe, carrying the faintest trace of her soap—something sweet and sharp, like citrus and possible regret.

Now alone, I drag a hand down my face and groan. Her scent clings to my skin, a taunt woven into salt and sweat. Shit, I'm a mess. There's no coming back from this. No pretending my hands don't still ache with the memory of her.

With the ache of my erection constantly throbbing, constantly wanting to finish what we started, I force my way past the hiss of the shower and escape into my room.

As the door shuts, I jerk my fly open to get everything out of my system.

If she's run away so quickly, I need to give her a little space. Right now, it's the best thing I can offer her if I don't want to spook her.

Not good at this whole thing, I don't want to fuck up again. I'll do Violet right, one way or another. If it means waiting for her to come back to me, I'll do it.

## Page 5

*Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 11:03 am*

Violet

Okay, this is bad.

Have I been wanting to get touched by Logan the moment I fell under that heated gaze of his? Of course. Did I expect to feel anything outside of the satisfaction of release?

No way in hell.

So, why is my stomach clenching up like I ate something bad? It's as if something is crashing around in there. I think it's my heart that's creating such a ruckus. My poor stomach is getting assaulted by what I can assume is butterflies.

Butterflies .

Logan gives me the space I need to figure out these new feelings. I've never been so jerked around by someone before. I don't even know what to call this. There's no way this is love. It can't be. I barely know the guy.

It can't be love.

I slump over the table, my sigh muffled against my palms. Today, I didn't follow him. Didn't let myself fall into step beside him like some lovesick shadow, even though my body ached for it—for the dizzying replay of last time.

Just the memory of his nearness is enough to send heat skittering under my skin, and

God, that's the worst part.

I'm a grown woman, not some flustered kid hiding behind her hair at the mere brush of a boy's hand.

But here I am, heart thudding like a damn drumline, all because a man exists within breathing distance.

Pathetic.

I press my forehead harder into my hands, as if I could crush the longing out of my skull. It doesn't work. Nothing does.

It's the vibration of my phone that gives me a little relief from the complications going on in my head. That is, until I see why my phone has gone off.

Thanks to the signal up here, it takes some time to get messages. So, when I see Noah's name on the screen, the butterflies fluttering suddenly feel heavy. As our manager, I should've expected a word from him before anyone else.

Jeremy is an idiot who does not call the shots. Please tell me you're alright. Violet? Call me so we can get this figured out.

A row of messages all come in at once, each one making my stomach feel heavier and heavier than the last.

Candice won't last. They're already fighting over the spotlight. Trent wants you back, too.

While I know this is what I wanted, why am I not rushing to pump my fist in the air and ready to do a celebratory dance? This is big. I can feel the regret behind each

message.

Is it because Jeremy isn't the one asking me to come back?

Flipping the phone over, I sigh into my hands once more before standing. Slipping into my room momentarily, I grab my guitar case and make my way outside.

Needing to release some of this pent-up anxiety that's building more and more by the second, I already start feeling better as I open up the case to reveal my acoustic guitar.

It's the OG piece I've refused to replace.

While the strings are new, the shell of the guitar is worn down to the bare bones.

Settling on the edge of the porch, I strum my fingers against the strings. Creating a melodic tune that pushes away the thoughts in my head, relief starts to creep in.

For just a few minutes, I'd like to stop thinking about my complex feelings for Logan and the opportunity to return to my old life.

As I play one of our newest songs, I snort at the familiarity of what I'm doing.

My mother got me this guitar when I was fourteen years old. It was her way of keeping me busy with a hobby. Quickly, I learned that if I played loud enough, I could drown out everything.

Her fights with whatever male had her attention. The stress that came with puberty. All of the above, actually.

Right now, there's nothing to drown out. The mountain is quiet, it always is. I'm the

one who is disturbing the peace. Thankfully, I don't think Logan has any close neighbors to upset.

Right now, I really need this.

I don't know when Logan returns, but he does. I don't realize he's watching me from the distance of one of the trees until I open my eyes long enough to take in my surroundings.

He's got this weird expression on his face. One that looks oddly relieved. Once he realizes he's been caught, he moves toward his home. Instead of sitting next to me like a part of me hopes, he takes one of the rocking chairs against the cabin.

"You're amazing, you know that?" Letting out the compliment without batting an eye, his chair creaks. "I always wondered how you played that thing. Self-taught, too, if I remember right."

Heat prickles up at the back of my neck as I continue strumming. "It's nothing crazy. It's just..."

"You're amazing," he repeats, more firmly. Like there's no room for any other word to describe me, he says it in a way like he means it, not because it's something I want to hear.

I'm not used to that.

"You should see me when I'm on stage. That's where I perform best." Murmuring the words, I'm surprised by the chuckle that radiates out of him.

"I have. Before you stopped sending me tickets, I used to try to attend the shows I could. Sure, I couldn't go all the way across the country, but I have been to a handful

of them. The ones I couldn't, I watched recordings." He drops the information with ease.

I'm jerking toward him, my eyes wide. "Wait, seriously?"

I remember clearly how disappointed I felt that neither of them ever came to see me. The lack of my mother didn't surprise me, but Logan... he's always been supportive. I assumed it was by words alone.

"All those tickets included the VIP pass. Why didn't you come see me?" I don't mean to sound hurt, but if I had seen either of them, then maybe I could've seen the signs of the downfall of their relationship. Could've been prepared to see what kind of man Logan had become.

Maybe I wouldn't be struggling as much as I have been lately.

Clicking his tongue, he rocks in his chair. "Didn't want to get in the way, I guess. Figured you should at least have someone in your corner at minimum."

Moving to stand, he approaches and offers his hand. Still smelling like sweat from his stroll, the flutters come back once I'm back to breathing him in.

Telling myself that I shouldn't touch him, I can't deny how welcoming his hand looks. So, against my better judgment, I take his hand and let him lift me to my feet with ease.

Packing my guitar back up takes no time before he's insisting on showing me something. Once I'm leaving the case at the front entrance, he's guiding me up with my hand in his. It turns out that this cabin has an attic.

"Careful where you step. I don't come up here too often." Only releasing my hand

once he pulls me toward a row of totes, he kneels. “Best place for storage.”

Curious to see what he’s hiding inside each, I watch as he shifts through a few of them before finding what he’s looking for.

“I’ll be honest, I never wore any of them, but I still wanted to show my support the best way I could.” He’s unfolding the shirts in his grip as he explains himself.

They’re band shirts. My shirts. The ones we sold at merch stands during our smaller shows before we hit it big.

“You really did come.” The words leave me in a way air leaves a balloon.

I take in the designs, a poor attempt at designs Jeremy, Trent, and I drew up until we met Noah. At that point, he hired graphic designers. But this piece of his? Shirts I don’t even own anymore, makes the knot in my chest grow tight enough that breathing feels impossible.

“Of course. I cared, Violet. Now look at you. You followed your dream. I want you to do what you want to.” His mouth curves into a small smile, and the view is enough to make my head swim.

My dream was to play the guitar for those who needed music, just as I did. I didn’t care if I was performing for ten people or a thousand. There’ve been nights where every ticket was bought, but that never made a difference.

Logan cares more than I thought he did. But now the question of why settles deep in my gut. Is it because he was trying to support his wife’s kid, or could there be more to it?

I know I shouldn’t want him to want me, but I do.

“I’m not sure what I want, not yet.” Taking one of the shirts from him, I sigh softly. “You know, my manager wants me to come back. To return to all the chaos and probably place this as a small bump in the road.”

Logan doesn’t reply, but he doesn’t need to. Despite his earlier words, his smile is gone. The way his jaw flexes, it’s like he wants to say something, but can’t. Or, rather, refuses to.

He wants me to follow my dream, sure, I get that. But he wants something else, too, doesn’t he?

“I don’t know what I want to do.” I repeat as the truth rolls out of me in a sigh.

I really don’t care about fame and fortune. Sure, the last few years of my life have been more than fun, but it’s also been exhausting in every sense.

Fairland might be this quaint little town, but it’s quiet and peaceful in ways I haven’t known in years. Like a breath of fresh air, I’m addicted. The silence I soaked up earlier can’t be found while travelling from city to city.

“If I don’t go back, what other choice do I have? I wasn’t smart, and I didn’t save up money. Perhaps I can persuade my manager to give me something here to avoid dealing with a bad break, but I feel like I don’t have any options. I can’t just keep leaning on you for support. Not when—”

All this time, Logan’s given me space—too much space. The kind that left me aching, wondering if he’d ever close the distance between us. But now, his hands find my face, rough palms cradling my jaw like I’m something fragile, something precious. And just like that, the knot in my chest unravels.

I breathe.



Finally.

“You can lean on me until I die, Violet.” His voice is gravelly, low, and raw, thumbs brushing my cheekbones in slow, deliberate sweeps. “If it means stopping you from doing something you don’t want to, then use me.”

But I don’t want to use him.

I want this—his touch, warm and sure, erasing every doubt with every stroke of his fingers. I want the way he’d touched me during that stroll. I want everything, all at once, and the hunger of it steals my breath.

My pulse thrums in my throat. His gaze drops to my lips.

The world narrows to the space between us—too much, and yet not enough.

“That sounds like a pretty big promise, you know?” Forcing the words out, my hold on the shirt tightens as I will my knees not to wobble. “After what you went through, do you really think I deserve it?”

As his thumb shifts to graze my bottom lip, his breath tickles my cheeks. “My past has nothing to do with what I want. Right now, I’m living in the present. Right now, there’s only you.”

We should talk. Should dissect every unspoken feeling, every complication tangled between us like barbed wire. But logic dissolves under the weight of his gaze, the way his fingers tense against my jaw—holding on, not pulling away.

My mind is static, white noise. But my body? My body knows.

I rise onto my toes, closing the last breath of space between us. The kiss isn’t

desperate, it isn't some fiery collision.

It's a question—soft, testing. Just the brush of my lips against his, then the barest nip at his lower lip. A whisper of teeth, a silent asking for careful footing.

He goes utterly still.

For one heartbeat, two, I think I've misread everything.

Then his hand slides into my hair, angling my face up as he exhales—a ragged, surrendering sound—and answers, meeting me halfway.

What we share in the attic is the opposite of the hike. It's vulnerability. When we separate, it's not to jump each other's bones.

It's the start of something worth exploring.

## Page 6

*Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 11:03 am*

Logan

The air feels lighter with each passing day. We grow more comfortable with each other.

It's why I squeeze her hip in passing, or she brushes her fingers against my chest in return. It's like a game of tug and pull, and this woman is starting to come out of her shell.

The woman I found on my doorstep wasn't Violet. It was someone created by the hardships of surviving her career. Now look at her, wearing the shirt I bought with an old design, happy despite it being big enough to swallow up her frame.

She's smiling as she coasts through my home, lazing about as she pleases. She looks comfortable .

Turns out, it's not just her body I find sexy. It's her feeling contempt for me that does the job. Watching her stretch out on the couch, all lazy curves and sleep-soft sighs, is enough to make me hard in seconds.

But then I catch it—the cracks.

The way her fingers freeze mid-scroll, thumb hovering over some unread message. The way her smile slips when she thinks I'm not looking. She's torn, and I get it. Hell, I'd be an idiot not to.

Doesn't stop the clawing behind my ribs when I imagine her leaving.

I'm greedy. A selfish bastard who'd chain her to this mountain if it meant keeping her here, warm and laughing and mine. But I'd also do whatever it takes to make that smile of hers remain.

If she asked me to drive her to the base right now, to return to her old lifestyle, I would in a heartbeat. All because that's what she wants. Or, that's what I'm trying to convince myself of.

Clueless to the turmoil happening in my head, she lets out a yawn. With another day wrapping up, we spend our night watching a film older than her to pass the time.

All curled up on the couch, she almost takes up the entire length. What few feet she can't claim, the few that I'm sitting against, she uses her feet to rest comfortably against my lap.

In return, I give her ankles a light squeeze, stroking them both with my thumbs.

She's so soft.

"We can finish it tomorrow, if you don't want to fall asleep." Already reaching for the remote, she sends a tired nod in my direction before I power down the television.

Darkness swallows us whole except for the light coming off the flames in the fireplace.

She stretches, arms arching over her head in a lazy curve, fingers flexing toward the ceiling.

"Carry me?" she teases, voice thick with sleep, her grin all mischief. I know she's joking. She has to be joking—especially when she immediately backtracks, waving a hand. "Kidding, kidding. I'm way too—"

I'm already moving before she can finish her sentence. My hands find her waist, lifting her before she can wrap her mind around what's happening. Her gasp is sharp, legs instinctively wrapping around my hips as I haul her up against me.

"Too what?" I murmur, fingers digging into the supple give of her thighs just to hear that little hitch in her breath again. "Tell me exactly how heavy you think you are."

She's weightless. Effortless. Perfect in my arms in every way possible.

For a heartbeat, she just stares at me, lips parted—then her hands slide into my hair, her thumbs brushing the stubble along my jaw. The firelight paints gold across her cheekbones, her lashes, the slow curve of her mouth as she drinks in my appearance.

"God, I think I'm addicted to you," she whispers, the words a confession wrapped in smoke.

And then she kisses me.

It starts soft—just the brush of her mouth against mine, testing, savoring.

But when I groan, her fingers tighten in my hair, pulling me closer.

Her lips part, inviting, and suddenly the kiss deepens, slow and searching.

The tip of her tongue traces the seam of my lips, and I let her in, let her take whatever she wants.

Her breath hitches when I squeeze her thighs in response, my grip firm enough to remind her that I'm here. I'm not letting go.

The logical part of my brain screams that I should carry her to bed—her bed, alone,

where she can sleep like she needs to. But the way she nips at my lower lip, the way her hips press closer, tells me sleep is the last thing on her mind now.

Firelight flickers over us, shadows dancing across the walls as the kiss turns hungrier, wetter. Her teeth graze my tongue, and I swear I see stars.

Fuck.

I'm the one addicted.

Pulling away, she pants softly. Pretty and pink, she teases me with the swipe of her tongue against her lips.

Hard to believe Violet can flush so easily while taking what she wants from time to time.

Remembering how to make my feet work, I carry us out of the living room and toward the hall full of doors. Despite being swallowed up in darkness, I move with ease as I've already memorized this cabin over the years.

Just as I reach her door, I'm not prepared for her breath to tickle my ear.

"Let's go to your room. I don't want to sleep alone tonight." Whispering the words against my ear, she makes me question what she means as her mouth brushes my neck.

Fuck, she's not talking about only the bed.

"You're sure?" Rasping out the words, my hands shift to her ass. One full squeeze and I'm already taking a step toward my door.

Feeling the motion of her nodding, I'm toeing open my door before stepping inside.

Just like the cabin, I know my way to my bed. Reaching it in all of ten strides, as I'm putting her down, she's dragging me right along with her.

Knee sinking into the mattress, she's mapping out my face until she can find my lips through the darkness. Once she finds what she's looking for, I'm the one to groan as she wraps her legs tighter around me, lifting her hips in a way to rub against my growing arousal.

"Fuck me, Violet." Panting against her lips, I don't help slow this down by grinding against her. "You're going to make me struggle to keep up with you, aren't you?"

Her giggle fuels me. How am I supposed to be responsible for this whole thing when she's making it impossible?

I pull away just far enough to reach for the bedside lamp, and she whines—a breathy, frustrated sound as her fingers clutch at my shoulders, trying to drag me back down.

Then light floods the room, and Violet is sprawled across my sheets like a dream I'd hate to wake from.

Her lilac hair fans out in wild, silken waves, tangled from all of her squirming against my sheets.

Cheeks flushed pink, lips parted, those whiskey-brown eyes glazed with a hunger that mirrors my own.

Fuck. She's gorgeous like this—undone and wanting, every sharp-witted retort melted into soft, panting breaths.

I hover over her, drinking in the sight. The rapid rise and fall of her chest, the way her nipples pebble under my gaze, it all drives me mad. Of course, she's not wearing a bra. She's always known precisely how to wreck me.

"Tell me what you want," I murmur, dragging my knuckles up along the curve of her stomach, savoring the way she shivers, "and I'll make it happen."

"Touch me." The words come out so breathless, so needy.

I don't give her time to second-guess.

My hands drag up the hem of her shirt, fingers skimming the warm, bare skin of her stomach as I peel the fabric higher. She shivers under my touch, but she doesn't stop me—just watches, lips parted, as I bend to press my mouth to the delicate dip of her navel.

God, she's soft.

I kiss my way up, slow and deliberate, tracing the faint tremors of her muscles as I go. Her breath hitches when I reach the swell of her breasts, finally free of the fabric. For a second, I just look, taking in the flush of her skin, the way her nipples stiffen under my gaze.

Then I lean in and take one into my mouth.

Her back arches off the mattress, a choked gasp escaping her as I swirl my tongue, teasing the peak before sucking gently. My hand finds her other breast, thumb rolling over the taut bud, and she whimpers, fingers twisting in my hair.

"Why are you so worked up?" My voice is rough, my breath hot against her damp skin as I pull back just enough to glance up at her.



“Because I’m tired of holding myself back,” she admits, the words coming out trembling. Her hips shift restlessly beneath me, her thighs pressing together. I don’t know what moment pushed her over her limit, but I’m in no rush to change things up.

I don’t make her wait. My mouth trails lower, teeth grazing the curve of her hip as I hook my fingers into the waistband of her cotton shorts. “I told you already, I’d take care of you. That means in every way possible.”

I drag her cotton shorts down her thighs with agonizing slowness, my lips following the path of exposed skin.

The scent of her arousal hits me first, warm and intoxicating, and I groan against the inside of her knee.

Fuck. She’s already soaked, her panties clinging to her, and I haven’t even touched her yet.

“Look at you,” I murmur, dragging a single finger along the damp lace. Her hips jerk, a whimper tearing from her throat. “All this for me?”

I don’t wait for an answer.

With a sharp tug, I shove her panties aside, and her pussy glistens in the low light—swollen, flushed, begging for my mouth. I blow a slow stream of air over her, watching her clit twitch. “You gonna come on my tongue, Violet?”

She rises onto her elbows, watching me through hooded eyes—dark, glazed, needy. The slow nod she gives isn’t permission; it’s a plea.

I answer with my tongue.

A long, deliberate lick from her soaked entrance to her throbbing clit, slow enough to make her whimper. The taste of her, sweet like summer fruit, salt-sharp with want, floods my senses. Her back bows off the bed, thighs tensing like she's torn between clamping around my head and shaking apart.

I don't let her think. Don't let her breathe.

Dropping lower again, I circle her clit with the flat of my tongue, teasing just until her hips jerk—then seal my lips around it and suck.

Her cry is ragged, fingers fisting the sheets. “Oh, fuck.”

I groan against her, drunk on her inability to stay in control. Before, I'd only had her on my fingers—quick stolen tastes when she rode my hand. Now? Now she's pouring into my mouth, and I'm fucking ravenous.

Do I worship her here, where she's slick and swollen? Or lower, where she's clenching around nothing, desperate to be filled?

I do both.

Flicking her clit with quick, ruthless strokes, I slide two fingers inside her, crooking them just so, pressing into places she's the most sensitive.

Her thighs clamp down around my ears, her moan high and broken as she comes undone. Even muffled, it's the most beautiful sound I've ever heard. My favorite song she's created. I listen to every note as I drink down her release.

Once I'm pulling back, I can't think. I'm clawing at my own shorts, easily shoving down my waistband.

She's as desperate as I am, happily keeping her panties pulled to the side so nothing stands in my way as I free my cock.

Fuck, I'm aching.

My cock throbs in my fist, so hard the veins stand taut under my grip. No amount of friction eases the burn—every stroke just smears more precum down my length, slick and shameful. And fuck, the way she looks right now?

Violet, sprawled out and breathless, lips swollen from my mouth, skin flushed from the onslaught of my tongue? Jesus.

I pump myself slowly, watching her watch me, the way her thighs spread further apart like she's already imagining me there. The sound she makes when I thumb over the leaking head—a whimper, greedy and soft—nearly undoes me.

This is torture.

Because I could come just like this, just from the sight of her biting her lip as my hips jerk into my fist. But thinking about sinking into her? Feeling her clench around me, hot and wet and desperate? That's a paradise my fist can never bring me.

Even if it's nearly impossible, I'm going to survive long enough to make her come again. This time, it'll be my cock she'll be creaming all over.

## Page 7

*Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 11:03 am*

Violet

I made up my mind earlier today. All it took was a turtle-paced conversation between Noah and me. In the middle of it, as if they thought my mind would be changed, a text from Jeremy had popped in, apologizing .

It's too much effort to get back a guitarist he insisted was easily replaceable. It was also what I needed to realize something that was obvious.

In this whole shitstorm of abandonment, there's been exactly one person whose eyes never wavered from me. Not my bandmates, who barely lifted a finger when I quit. Not my mother, who still sends my calls to voicemail.

Just him.

The man currently gripping himself like he's physically restraining his body from sinking deep into my pussy with one solid thrust, his cock as impressive as the rest of him. The veins in his forearm stand out with the effort of staying still, but his gaze?

Locked on me.

Unwavering. Starving.

Logan won't throw me away or give up on me once he has gotten his fill. No, he looks like his hunger is endless, an empty chasm that goes on forever. Or, however long the rest of our lives are.

Hips twitching, I part my swollen lips to show him just how wet I am. Not just because of my earlier release, but because he's the one making me this wound up.

"I've imagined you like this every night you've stayed here." His breathing is uneven as he continues to stroke himself. His fingers grow more slick, matching mine. "Before then, too."

The confession falls past his lips like he doesn't realize he's said it. It's not until my face gives away my surprise that he pauses, cursing under his breath.

"You've thought of me before?" The words come out slowly, cautiously.

Over the last few years, I assumed Logan forgot all about me. Hell, he didn't have a reason to keep a place for me in his mind.

With his free hand, he gives one of my knees a squeeze. "Shit, I wanted to tell you this on a better occasion. Not while you're spread open for me."

The air between us thickens as he drags a hand through his hair, grip tightening like he might tear it out.

"When you stopped sending tickets," he says, voice scraping raw, "I—."

A harsh laugh escapes him, more pain than humor. It's almost like he's ashamed of himself.

"I still found ways to watch. Jaclyn never gave a damn, so I...I needed to be there. Even if it was just through some shitty livestream or recording, that's how it started.

I wanted to give you my support. Then one night, my support turned into an excuse.

Something I wanted to do suddenly turned into a need. ”

His words hit like a physical touch, skimming down my spine. He keeps talking—halting, stumbling—painting me in compliments that feel like worship. My ink, the way I wear my hair now, how my body filled out in all the right places.

Each admission spills out like a confession dragged from his chest, his voice growing rougher with every fractured sentence. From telling me about how his support morphed into something more forbidden and frowned upon.

He’s almost two decades older than I am. Even if I was an adult at the time, our relationship made things complicated. His addiction grew even more after the divorce, his shackles free.

Logan has wanted me for years, and I haven’t had the slightest clue. And now, he’s making it seem like a curse more than a blessing.

He presses the heels of his hands against his closed eyes. “This is—I know it’s wrong. Ruined the mood, didn’t I?”

Ruined it?

My pulse hammers everywhere at once. He’s still hard against my thigh, heat radiating through his jeans, and I just had him—the man who has haunted my dreams ever since I found him in such a rough state—unraveling over me like I’m something precious.

I reach for his wrist, pulling his hand away from his face.

“The only thing you’re ruining,” I say, thumb stroking his racing pulse, “is my ability to think straight.”

He blinks once before his throat bobs. “You mean that?”

“Every word. Seriously.” Dragging my hand away from his wrist, I listen to his hiss as my fingertips graze the tip of his weeping head.

“You’re not the only one who’s bad. When you first opened your door, those first ten seconds?”

I wanted this. I wanted it badly . Every second I spent with you, I wanted your hands on me. You think that’s normal?”

My admission makes him crack a smile. “I used to look better.”

A click of my tongue echoes between us as I shiver, dragging the thick length of him against my slick, aching folds. The friction sends a jolt of pleasure through me, and we both groan—a ragged, shared sound that vibrates in the charged air between us.

“I’ve got a thing for the wild look,” I murmur, my voice husky with want. “Very caveman-like. Like you want to pin me against whatever surface is near and give in to your wild side.”

The words hang between us, thick with implication, and his lips curl into a wicked grin that mirrors mine. Before I can tease him further, he brushes my hand aside, taking control with a possessive growl. His fingers dig into my hip, anchoring me to him as his other hand guides his cock deeper.

“Violet,” he rasps, his voice rough with restraint, “I do want to do that. A lot.”

A hoarse chuckle escapes him, but it’s short-lived—his brows knit together, his jaw tightening as he fights for control. The veins in his arms stand out as he begins to sink into me, inch by torturous inch.

“Every day I’ve spent with you has been torture, holding myself back. I wanted to wait until you wanted me as much as I wanted you.” His hips snap forward, seating himself fully inside me, and my back arches with a gasp. “If I’d known you’d wanted me as soon as you showed up...”

The rest of his words dissolve into a groan as his mouth crashes against my throat, teeth scraping over my pulse point. I whimper, my nails biting into his shoulders as he sucks hard, marking me.

The sharp sting melts into liquid heat, and my hips roll instinctively, seeking more—more friction, more of his touch, more of him. His thrusts grow relentless, each one driving me closer to the edge, and I can feel the possessive rumble in his chest as he murmurs his claim against my skin.

Then his grip shifts—one hand slides down, fingers digging into the back of my knee as he hitches my leg higher, lifting me with effortless strength. The angle changes, and when he drives into me again, it’s deeper, harder, stealing the breath from my lungs.

“Fuck—” His curse is rough, ragged, as his pelvis grinds against mine, the deliberate roll of his hips dragging his length against every sensitive inch inside me. The pressure is maddening, his body working in slow, deliberate circles now, the base of him rubbing against my clit with every thrust.

The sound of skin on skin is obscene—wet, slick slaps, the creak of the bed beneath us, the ragged hitch of our breaths mingling in the air. Sweat glistens on his chest, on the tense lines of his abdomen, and I can feel it between us, hot and slick, as our bodies move together.

“You feel that? Every fucking inch of you takes me so well—” He growls out the words, his voice raw with need.



So this is what he's like when he loses control? Sign me up for seconds. No, thirds .

His fingers tighten on my thigh, holding me open as he fucks into me with slow, deep strokes, teasing me by dragging out the tug and pull of my sensitive nerves.

"I want you to come like this, with me buried inside you, feeling every pulse of you around me." Panting the demand, he punctuates his words with each thrust.

Gasping, heat floods my system with every word he speaks. I don't think I've ever been with a partner who has told me what he wanted like this. Logan demands it, making the experience so much hotter.

The coil inside me winds tighter, pleasure sparking white-hot with every deliberate drag of his body against mine. My vision blurs at the edges, stars bursting behind my eyelids as the pressure builds, as his rhythm turns punishing, relentless—

And then I'm shattering, my back bowing off the bed as pleasure crashes through me, wave after wave, my cry muffled against his shoulder as he groans, his own release following close behind.

Logan's grip tightens on my hips, lifting me with effortless strength until there's no space left between us—until he's buried so deep I can't tell where he ends and I begin. His voice is rough, commanding, every word sending a fresh wave of heat through me.

"Take it," he growls, his thrusts deliberate, unrelenting. "Every fucking drop."

The stretch is exquisite, the fullness overwhelming as he drives into me, each snap of his hips filling me with his release.

My fingers dig into his shoulders, my breath coming in ragged gasps as pleasure coils

tighter, tighter—until I arch helplessly, my nails scoring his skin as he pulses inside me, his rhythm stuttering as he spills deep, and our breaths mingle in the charged air between us.

For a heartbeat, there's nothing but the two of us, the aftershocks, the raw, unfiltered rightness of it—before he finally stills, his body heavy and satisfied against mine.

“You have no idea how hot that was.” Panting the compliment, my poor pussy flutters around his invasion. Seemingly not ready to pull out, I don't think I'm ready for it either.

Feels too good for him to pull away. Unfortunately, he only lingers for a couple of minutes before he's sitting up.

His hands move to my hips, and he gently massages my muscles. “Lost myself a bit there.”

“You have my permission to do that whenever you want to.” Swiping at the sweat on my brow, I can't stop the laugh that bubbles out of me. “That goes for tomorrow, or the next day, or the next...”

Logan suddenly goes still, his gaze locking onto mine with an intensity that steals my breath. “What about the band?”

I exhale slowly, my eyes flicking to the ceiling as if the answer might be written there.

“I got kicked once. This time, they were unprepared. Who's to say they won't come back with a better plan next time?”

” My voice wavers, betraying the fear I've been trying to bury.

“But... I don’t think I’ll have to worry about that with you. Right?”

The slightest hint of doubt, and I’m undone.

Logan’s frown deepens, and he shifts, his cock slipping out of me, leaving behind an aching emptiness. But before I can mourn the loss, he’s pulling me against his chest, his arms banding around me like steel.

“I spent days telling myself I’d let you go, but now? Now that I know how you feel, now that I’ve had you like this?” His grip tightens, possessive and unyielding, his voice rough. “Someone’s gonna have to pry you from my fucking hands if they want you.”

The words send a shiver down my spine, equal parts thrill and relief. Then his mouth crashes down on mine, claiming me all over again, his kiss so deep and consuming that it makes my head spin. When he finally pulls back, his eyes burn into me. “Do you understand?”

I nod, breathless, and drag him back for another kiss, pouring every ounce of my need into it. His body presses me into the mattress, solid and unshakable, and for the first time in too long, I don’t just feel safe—I feel his .

It’s the most solid footing I’ve had in what feels like ages. The future might still be uncertain, but with Logan beside me, it doesn’t feel so daunting. Whatever comes next, we’ll face it together. Knowing I won’t have to navigate the fog alone is the surest ground I’ve stood on in years.

It’s something I won’t be giving up anytime soon.

## Page 8

*Source Creation Date: July 30, 2025, 11:03 am*

Rusty's Tavern hums with the kind of energy only open mic night can bring—a mix of off-key enthusiasm, half-drunk courage, and the occasional gem of talent. But I'm not listening to the woman belting out her heartbreak over twangy chords.

My attention's fixed on the way Violet's fingers move over the strings of her guitar, sure and steady, like she was born with calluses already formed.

She's not center stage—never wants to be—but she's the damn backbone of the whole thing. The regulars know it, too. They lean in when she plays, like her rhythm's the pulse keeping the room alive.

It's what gives even the shyest of wallflowers the confidence to ask her to play for them. It's what keeps people coming to the bar every Thursday night.

The song ends, some sad ballad about lost love and whiskey, and the crowd claps halfheartedly. Violet flashes a small smile, the kind she reserves for moments like this—when she's part of something but still just out of the spotlight.

She sets the guitar down carefully, stretching her fingers before signaling to Rusty that she's taking fifteen.

I'm already standing before she's fully turned, my glass abandoned. She spots me cutting through the crowd, and that smile shifts, softens.

“You're staring too hard, you know,” she says when I reach her, voice low under the chatter of the bar.

“Not staring,” I correct, brushing my thumb over the back of her hand. “Admiring.”

She rolls her eyes, but there’s no heat in it. Just that quiet amusement I’ve learned to read like my own heartbeat.

“You’re up next, you know,” she teases, nodding toward the stage. “Rusty’s been asking when you’ll grace us with your singing voice.”

I snort. “Not happening. Not unless you want these glasses to crack.”

Getting all cheeky, she tries to give me a challenging look. “Coward.”

I pull her into me, ignoring the way a few patrons whistle.

Let them look. They’ll only ever see the surface—her leaning into my chest, my arm around her waist. They won’t see the way her breath hitches when I press a kiss to her temple, or how my chest goes tight knowing this woman chose me. Keeps choosing me.

“Fifteen minutes,” I murmur against her skin. “Then you’re back to making magic.”

She hums, fingers curling into my shirt. “And after that?”

“After that,” I say, “I’ll take you home.”

A cheeky grin plays on her lips—that rare, unfiltered expression she only wears when we’re like this, when the world shrinks down to just us and the space between our bodies. “What then?”

My mouth finds the warm skin of her temple, breathing in the scent of coffee and the faintest hint of sweat from being under the spotlight all night.

“Then we spend the rest of the night in our bed,” I murmur, letting my voice drop to that register I know makes her shiver. “And then, I show you how magical my fingers can be when they’re not busy holding my glass while I wait for you to finish.”

The flush that blooms across her cheeks is immediate, pink, and perfect. She scoffs, but it’s on fallen ears. She can’t help but pretend I don’t affect her.

Otherwise, she’d put on quite a show getting all embarrassed and bashful on me.

“You’re going to distract me if you keep coming to these things,” she mutters, all false irritation.

I chuckle against her hair. We both know the truth—she plays better when I’m here, when she can glance up between chords and find me watching, when she can carry my quiet pride back to the stage like a secret tucked between notes.

“Liar,” I whisper, nipping at her earlobe. “You love having your own personal groupie.”

Her laugh vibrates through me, bright and unguarded, and just like that, the future feels simple.

More nights like this. More music. More of her breath catching when I touch her, more of my name sighed into the dark.

The mic crackles on stage—Rusty calling her back. But for these last stolen seconds, she’s mine.

And when she walks away, it’s with the promise in her eyes.

A promise of my own private performance later. One I’ve got VIP tickets to.