



# Smoke (Daddies Ink #4)

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**Category:** Romance

**Description:** Tia Quinn's Never Just One series is a steamy, high-octane romance saga set in a gritty MC world, where fierce heroines entangle with possessive bikers.

Smoke, a standalone within the series, follows Dawson, a hardened biker with a dark past, as he protects his stepsister Ashley from her haunting nightmares and a dangerous history.

Their forbidden bond ignites with intense passion and deep possession, unraveling secrets and testing loyalties.

Packed with raw emotion and heart-pounding drama, this tale of redemption and desire captivates.

**Total Pages (Source):** 12

# Page 1

*Source Creation Date: July 20, 2025, 8:26 am*

Smoke

“No! No! Please!”

Screams woke me from a deep sleep. I jumped from my bed, grabbed my gun, and rushed toward the sound. It took me far too long to realize that I was in my own home and the screams were coming from my stepsister’s room.

“Fuck,” I mumbled, putting the safety on my weapon and tucking it into my gray sweatpants.

Pushing open her door, I rushed into her room and sat on her bed. “Hey, hey. You’re okay. You’re okay,” I soothed, trying to capture her failing arms.

“Hey, Ash, baby, it’s just a dream,” I tried again.

Slowly she started to come around. She struggled with the covers. I moved them and helped her sit up.

“You’re safe, baby. It was just a dream,” I promised, once I thought she could hear me over her panic.

Her chest rose and fell rapidly, tears were rolling down her cheeks, and her hair was a tangled mess. She scanned the room, her eyes still wide with terror before they locked on me.

“Dawson!” she cried out, flinging her arms around me.

“That’s right, I’m right here. It was just a dream.” I rocked her back and forth waiting for her to get her bearings.

She trembled in my arms and the familiar hollow pain filled my chest again, just like it did whenever her past haunted her through her dreams.

She pulled back and looked at her arm.

“It was just a dream,” she whispered to herself as she pulled her sleeve up and examined her arm. It was still marred with scarring and the hollow feeling was quickly replaced with anger.

“It was just a dream,” I reassured her again.

Hate for the son of a bitch who caused her so much physical and emotional pain consumed me down to my bones.

Seething rage filled every inch of my almost seven-foot body and every day that Ash struggled with her past, I longed to dig up the pile of bones I refused to call my father, and kill him all over again for his sins against her.

It made no difference that he was my blood.

It hadn’t when I put my gun to his forehead and pulled the trigger, and it didn’t at the moment.

Not that the traumatized woman in front of me would know I killed the bastard.

She didn’t need to know about the darker side of me.

Lying and saying he’d been killed in a shady drug deal was better for her tender

heart.

When Ashley was fourteen, her addict of a mother married my dealer of a father.

I'd been in prison and hadn't known about the marriage until months later, far too late to stop it.

When Ashley was fifteen, my father caused an explosion in the house they were living in due to a meth lab he had built in the basement.

Ashley had been the only other person home and she had suffered burns to thirty percent of her body.

It was a miracle he hadn't killed her. She spent her sixteenth birthday in a burn unit, and her seventeenth testifying against my father.

She had been removed from her home and sent to live with her grandmother.

Guilt that I hadn't been able to help her still ate at me.

I was ashamed to admit that was what it took to change me.

I'd loved her since the first time my father brought her to a visitation, even though I'd hated that she was exposed to such a traumatic thing like prison because of me.

Having her come into my life gave me a better outlook on life, having someone so pure being tainted by the drug world was a hard pill to swallow.

Then when I found out she'd been hurt, I channeled all the disgust and anger into becoming the brother she needed.

A few months ago her grandmother died, and Ashley's mother came snooping for an inheritance she thought she was owed.

Ash called me, unable to deal with any more blows, and immediately I moved her to Strickland.

The baby just needed some peace. I hadn't expected my feelings toward her to change so rapidly.

Long gone were the feelings of an almost-paternal love, now a deep sense of possession and even deeper romantic interest flowed.

It was getting harder and harder to control, but I would die before I shared my feelings with her.

"I'm sorry," she whispered.

"You have nothing to be sorry about, Ash. I'm just sorry you're so scared."

"My arm hurts and I thought..." She shook her head and studied her arm. "I think it fell asleep and I dreamed I was in the fire again." Her left arm had been the worst of her injuries, though over forty percent of her bore the scars of his choices.

"Oh, honey, that sounds terrible."

She nodded, wiped her eyes, and sat back in the bed.

"Does that happen a lot?" I knew she had nightmares, I heard her cry out through the monitor I'd hidden in her room, but I didn't realize they could be triggered by pain in her arm.

She averted her eyes. “Sometimes.”

“Ash, look at me.” I waited until she met my eye before I cupped her chin in my hand. “How often is sometimes?”

“A couple of times a month. Like if my arm goes to sleep or something.”

“Oh, honey,” I soothed.

“It’s okay. It’ll be okay.”

“Have you talked to your therapist about it?” I asked after releasing her chin.

“I did. She prescribed me some medicine to help me sleep at night, but it makes me so groggy the next day,” she said, shrugging.

“Does it help?”

“Yeah, usually.”

“Where’s it at? You can take some now, and we can work in a few naps for you tomorrow,” I said, calculating how I could work out a better schedule for her.

She’d gotten a stupid job at the fucking donut shop, but maybe I could use this as a reason to get her to quit.

I had more than enough money for her to stay home or go to college, or fucking anything other than work all the way across town.

Hell, her grandmother had left her more than enough money to do whatever she wanted, but she was a stubborn little brat with a remarkable work ethic. It was

extremely annoying.

“I need to get it filled. I don’t have any more.”

Frowning, I asked, “How long have you been out?”

“A while.”

“Ashley Emery, how long is a while?”

“Before Granna died.”

Even in the dim room, I could see her face flush adorably.

It had always been a telltale sign of her being caught doing something naughty.

When she was a teen it was cute, as an adult it was fucking hot.

I would bet all of my money she’d make the prettiest picture as a freshly punished, very contrite Little girl.

My cock pressed against my sweatpants at the imagery, and I willed it to go down.

That was not what she needed right then or ever.

Ashley deserved a good man, one with an education and a future?one with a 401K and not a felony.

A man who hadn’t murdered his father, or dozens of other men for that matter.

And no matter how badly I wanted to Daddy the Little I was sure she was hiding

inside of her, I wouldn't, because she deserved someone better than me.

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Ashley

“Hi, Ashley!” Eloise, one of the women who worked at Daddies Ink with Smoke, squealed when I walked through the shop doors. I wasn't sure if she was actually glad to see me or if it was because I always brought donuts for her and the other Littles.

I wanna play! my own inner Little piped up, seeing the others.

Not now, baby. When we get home, okay?

“Hi, Eloise!” I set the box on the front desk. “How was your day?” I asked, trying to make conversation and soothe my sad Little.

“It was good. Uncle Smoke tattooed two boobies,” she said, reaching for her favorite raspberry donut.

I snorted at her report. She was so funny.

“On the same body or two different boobs on different people?”

“The same body!” She took a huge bite of her donut, smearing jam all over her face.

“They were the biggest boobs I've ever seen and I've seen some boobs,” Rogue added, hopping up to sit on the front desk.

Her black tights must have been slick because she fell backward, knocking the keyboard off the desk.



Eloise caught her mid-fall. I rushed to help and struggled to help her sit upright.

One long black heel fell off as she frantically kicked her legs.

She laughed hysterically at her predicament. “Daddy! Help!” she yelled between giggles. I don’t know that I’d ever actually seen Rogue so carefree before. Loud thunderous footfalls filled the front office and numerous Daddies rushed to the rescue.

“All the Daddies,” Eloise mumbled, her eyes wide. She almost looked nervous. Uh-oh. That was usually a sign someone had been naughty.

“You didn’t specify which Daddy, baby,” Leland said, grabbing Rogue by the waist and helping her to her feet.

She stumbled into his chest, his strong arms wrapping around her.

“Sugar, are you drunk?”

She hiccuped before dissolving into giggles. “Maybe.”

Blade studied Eloise, his Little one, closely.

“I’m not, Daddy,” she answered, raising her hands in defense.

Ah. Yes, someone had been naughty.

“Cause you’re a good girl.” Rogue giggled. “You never do anything naughty!”

“Rogue Mary Kay, what has gotten into you?” Leland asked, gripping Rogue by the upper arm.

She hiccuped again. “Wine.”

“Daddy?” Allyson moaned, walking into the reception area from the direction of the bathroom. She was holding her tummy. She was Bash’s Little one and judging from her wobbly steps and slightly green coloring, I thought maybe she wasn’t being a good girl either.

“Oh, Allybaby, what’s wrong?” Bash said, going into full protective mode.

“I don’t—” was all she got out before she vomited... well, everywhere.

Rogue giggled. “Lightweight.”

“Allyson, are you drunk too, Little girl?” Bash asked incredulously while trying to wipe her down with the baby wipes someone passed him.

Allyson burst into tears which brought on another fit of giggles from Rogue.

“This is not funny, Little girl. You two are in so much trouble,” Leland lectured.

“So much trouble,” Bash agreed.

“We will get this cleaned up. Why don’t you take them home?” Blade said.

“I can switch with Rogue tomorrow. She’s supposed to open, but I’m sure she won’t be feeling like it with a hangover,” Dawson said.

A warmth spread through my chest at his thoughtfulness. I was always so proud of him, but there were moments where I thought I might be consumed by the emotions that came with my pride.

Dawson's family was complete shit. His mom was doing a life sentence in prison, his dad was dead from an overdose, and his other family had long since cut him off because of who his parents were.

Dawson had followed in their footsteps at first and was in prison by the time he was twenty, but while he was there, something changed.

He became harder. Calloused, but completely different.

He'd forced all of his anger into being a better man.

He'd gotten his GED, started attending meetings, and was released on good behavior two years later.

He'd done amazing while on parole and then probation.

He'd been clean and living a wonderful life since then. I was so proud of him.

"Yeah, it will be even worse working with a sore ass. Tell Uncle Smoke thank you, sugar."

"Thank you, Uncle Smoke," Rogue said, looking much more repentant.

Leland and Bash led their Little girls out the back while Eloise ran and gathered all their things.

"Do you think they're really going to spank them?" I asked Dawson. Worry made my stomach hurt and I tried to rub the ache away. They had been naughty, but I still found myself feeling anxious for them.

"They will spank them, Ash, but it's because that's a part of their dynamic.

If the Little girls thought the punishment was unfair, they would use their safewords.

They are strong, confident women who have been taught well on DDLG relationships, honey.

If they were uncomfortable, they would call their Daddies on their bullshit. ”

I nodded.

“Any good Daddy or Mommy listens to their Little one, even about punishments. It’s a fifty-fifty partnership, not a dictatorship.”

I knew that. I had also been taught well at my club back home...

Well, Strickland was home now, but back before I moved.

Understanding the dynamic I was so drawn to had been my first goal and I was thankful for all the wise people at Ropes, my old BDSM club.

Punishments just still made me a tiny bit nervous.

“But you know that, don’t you, Little one?” Dawson said, studying me intensely.

“I’m not a Little.” I laughed and lied.

“I’m not sure about that, Ash.”

Grinning, I slapped him on the shoulder. “I am.”

I had been through so much already and that meant my Little had too.

She couldn't handle another break so I kept her safely tucked inside of me, only allowing her out in the privacy of my bedroom closet and only when Dawson wasn't home.

Protecting her from more heartbreak was the most important thing in my life and I would do anything to keep her safe, including never allowing her to meet who I thought might be the best Daddy of all Daddies?Dawson.

## Page 2

*Source Creation Date: July 20, 2025, 8:26 am*

Smoke

“Fuck,” I growled when I dropped my design on the floor. Sighing, I bent down to pick it up. I was so fucking tired and my fatigue was the reason I was even more short-tempered than yesterday. Another nightmare had disrupted Ash’s sleep and I was growing more and more worried.

“You gotta put a dollar in the swear tub!” Eloise said.

Her ruffled panties peeked out the bottom of her dress as she bent over a large storage tote.

We’d started with a swear jar, then moved to a beach bucket before having to move to a large plastic tote.

We really did need to curb our potty mouths before the Littles bled us dry.

I opened my wallet and dropped a dollar in.

“Thank you,” she said, before pushing the tote to the next station. “Eloise?” I asked, calling her back into my area.

“Yes, Uncle Smoke?”

“Are you just pushing the tub around hoping to catch someone cursing?”

“Yes, Uncle Smoke,” she admitted without any shame.

I laughed. I couldn't help it, she was too damn cute. The money from the swear jar was going toward a family vacation for all of us and I admired the Littles' hustle.

"Well, make sure you check in with Auntie Kay. I heard she's super grouchy today."

"Okay!" she exclaimed before heading in the direction of Kay's office.

"You're almost as bad as they are," Ash said from behind me.

Turning, I stared at her. She wasn't supposed to be here. She was supposed to be at Rolling in Dough. Where I'd left her. Safely. "Ash, did you walk here again?"

Flushing, she nodded. "It's not right for you to leave work to come get me, Dawson, and we were slow, so they told me to clock out early."

Pinching the bridge of my nose, I tried to breathe through my terror.

Six lanes of traffic. A thirty-five-minute walk.

A very tiny woman with very sensitive skin.

My imagination was flooded with images of dozens of things that could have happened to her.

"It is not safe for you to cross the fucking highway to get here, Ashley Emery. It's not safe for your skin to be exposed to the sun that long, especially with almost no protection and it sure isn't safe for you to fucking walk across town by yourself.

" It didn't matter that her burns were a few years old, her skin would always be sensitive due to the trauma it experienced.

“Another dollar, please!” Eloise yelled, running back to the station and holding her hand out.

I pulled a fifty out of my wallet and handed it to her.

Her eyes grew comically wide. “Uh-oh.”

“I need to borrow Uncle Leland’s office. Watch for my next client, please,” I said, not bothering to wait for a response. I took Ash’s upper arm in my hand and started walking her toward the large office.

“Dawson, I am a grown woman. I can walk across the damn highway perfectly fine,” she argued.

“I draped my apron over my arm to protect the skin, my back was covered by my shirt, and I ket my hat on. I made it safely. You worry too much.” Her words only served to make my panic grow.

My body shook with the horror of knowing anything could have happened to her.

I needed her to understand how serious this was.

I led her into the office, then shut and locked the door behind me, before turning to her.

“I understand you’re a grown woman , Ashley Emery.

I am reminded every fucking time I look at you, but that doesn’t mean that I am going to allow you to do dangerous things that could kill you because you’re worried about being a damn inconvenience.



You are living under my roof and you will abide by my rules.

You will not be walking across town and across a very dangerous highway when you get off anymore, do you understand me?

It's fucking stupid. You're being fucking stupid!

"I said through my teeth. Desperation consumed me like a much too big wave and it felt like no matter how much I kicked and fought, I was never going to reach the surface again.

I needed her to understand how important her safety was.

"No, I do not fucking understand, you asshole," she seethed right back at me.

I'd expected a tearful apology, not the fire and fight Ashley was giving me.

"Excuse me? What part wasn't clear?"

"Fuck you, Dawson," she spat. Her eyes were shining with unshed tears and her luscious lips were almost twisted in a snarl.

"I didn't ask to come live with you, but you made it seem like you really genuinely wanted me here.

Moving wasn't easy, but I did it, chasing some dream of having an actual family.

The last thing I need is another man who thinks that because he's giving me something, I owe him something in return, even if that something is compliance.

Fuck you. I'll be out of your house by tonight.

No matter what I do, or don't do, depending on your rules, it doesn't give you the right to talk to me like I'm less than you or like you're disgusted with me. ”

She snatched her arm from me, and fumbled to unlock the door.

My anger was suddenly deflated and regret sank in my stomach like a rock in water.

“Ashley, I'm...”

“Save it,” she said, turning to glare at me. “Just fucking save it, Dawson. I don't need this, I don't deserve this.”

Pulling open the door, she stomped out of the office and down the hall. Anger was evident in every movement she made, but her anger, even as righteous as it was, didn't muffle the quiet sobs that left her mouth once she was farther away from me.

What the fuck did I just do?

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Ashley

My Little painfully flipped around in my heart as I packed our belongings into suitcases.

What about my toys?

“I've got them. All of your toys are in the pink suitcase, okay? All of your special items are already packed,” I promised her.

But we really love it here.

I knew we did, but I had gone almost my entire life feeling like I was never wanted.

My existence disgusted my mother, inconvenienced my father, and almost caused Dawson's dad to kill me.

I refused to spend another day feeling like I was a bother to someone.

I also refused to live with someone who acted like I owed them something for their help. Love didn't have strings attached.

"I know, baby. It's going to be okay, we'll find someplace else that you love just as much."

Where are we going to go?

"Back to Alabama, baby."

No! She'll find us.

My mother. She would find us. We'd never have any peace as long as we were there, but at least I still had a home there.

I hadn't sold my grandmother's house yet, thankfully.

I guess we could stay there until it sold, and use the money to buy a house somewhere away from my crazy drug-seeking mother. "I'll keep you safe. I promise."

"Ashley, can we talk?" Dawson asked, knocking on the frame of the open bedroom door. He sounded much less angry and much more unsure of himself. I was hoping he'd stay at work so I could leave without another confrontation.

“Don’t worry about it, Dawson. An Uber is coming in twenty minutes,” I said, not bothering to turn around.

I don’t want to leave.

My heart physically hurt. I’d worked so hard to keep my Little safe and I’d fucked it all up by chasing the dream of a family. How damn naive could I be?

“No, it’s not ending this way between us, Ashley. I fucked up, baby, and I’m so sorry. You don’t owe me anything. Ever. I’m sorry I made you feel like you do.”

Not bothering to answer, I kept packing. My heart and dreams were being torn to pieces and I felt like I couldn’t breathe.

“Ash, baby. We’re family…”

“Are we?” I asked, turning around to face him. “Because I’m pretty sure family doesn’t speak to each other the way you just spoke to me. I mean, I’ve never actually had one so I’m not sure, but I don’t think it speaks with disgust and ego.”

“Honey,” he said, stepping closer to me, “I fucked up. I was wrong in how I spoke to you and I’m so sorry I made you feel like I was disgusted with you. That wasn’t the emotion I was feeling at all.”

Swallowing my hurt, I asked, “What were you feeling?”

“Terror.”

“Terror?”

“Honey, you are the most important person in my life. The. Most. Important. I love

you more than life and the thought of you getting hurt guts me. It makes me angry, and shaky, and scares me worse than any of the time I did in prison. Babygirl, I can't lose you and when you do things that put yourself at risk... it just doesn't sit well with me."

"You were scared?"

"Ash, I was fucking terrified."

I plopped down on the full bed in my room. "I thought you hated me."

"Baby, no. Never," he said, coming closer and kneeling in front of me.

"It's so dangerous for you to walk to Daddies Ink when you get off of work.

I know Strickland is a safe town, but that doesn't mean you are safe from injury.

Anything could happen in the half-hour it takes you to walk to the shop, not to mention the effects the harsh sun could have on your skin.

I'd never recover if anything happened to you, baby.

For years, you're all I've had to live for and I'm not sure I could live without you. "

His words brought fresh tears to my eyes.

I hadn't believed him at first when he'd told me he was worried about me walking.

I just thought it was a nice thing he was saying.

I'd been more worried about him having to leave work and get me at the drop of a

hat.

He was already doing so much for me. And he was right about my skin, since I'd been burned and because of all the skin grafts I'd received, my skin was extra sensitive to the sun... and, well, lots of other things too.

"I'm sorry, Dawson. I should have listened to you."

He took my hands in his and lifted them to his mouth for a kiss. "I'm sorry too, baby."

"I promise to call you the next time I get off early."

"Thank you, baby, that makes me feel much better."

"Maybe we could look into getting me a car?" I asked. My grandmother had left me more than enough to purchase a new car. I hadn't needed one when we lived in Alabama, but Strickland was much smaller and there were not as many opportunities for public transport.

"We can definitely do that, baby. Maybe this weekend, yeah?"

"Okay."

Can we stay?

"C-can I still stay?" I asked.

Dawson chuckled. "Honey, you're not going anywhere. If you'd actually tried to leave tonight, I would have gone with you. You're far too special to me."

I smiled at him. I was still a little shaky and hurt, but I felt a lot better once he explained where he was coming from. It was easier to see it was from a place of love now that we'd talked.

"I am sorry for how I spoke to you, Ashley. I was reflecting on the drive home and you were absolutely right for calling me on my shit. Disrespectful words and unkind tones were exactly what was pouring out of my mouth and I'm so sorry. There were better ways to communicate what I was feeling."

"I don't like to feel like someone is disgusted with me," I admitted, twisting my soft comforter in my hands. "You were talking through your teeth at me, and you called me stupid."

"I'm sorry I made you feel that way, sweet girl."

I didn't mean to make you feel like I was disgusted.

I did say you were being stupid, but I meant in regard to your safety.

I was trying to say your choices were stupid.

I can also see how that would have hurt your feelings and I am so, so sorry.

That is an example of how I should have thought over my words better. "

"It did hurt my feelings, but I accept your apology."

"Thank you for communicating that with me. That was very brave."

"I'm sorry I cursed at you and called you names."

He stood and reached out, stroking my cheek. “It’s all forgiven, babygirl, though I’m sure Eloise will send you a bill for the swear tote.”

I laughed; she totally would.

“Cancel your Uber and stay here with me.”

Yay! We can stay!

Smiling at my Little’s excitement, I opened my phone and canceled the car.

Time to unpack.



## Page 3

*Source Creation Date: July 20, 2025, 8:26 am*

Smoke

“Do you see anything that looks like it would be yummy in your tummy?” I asked Ash the next morning at breakfast. I was trying to start some traditions with her and I thought that maybe going to breakfast together once a week would be a good place to start.

“I think I want the birthday cake pancakes with a side of bacon.”

I tried not to grimace at her selection of almost pure sugar. They put vanilla icing on top of the pancakes and then added sprinkles.

“What are you going to get? Oh! Let me guess. Oatmeal? Plain toast? Raisins? Are you going to order off the 55-and-up menu? Do you get a senior citizen discount?”

Blinking comically, I just stared at her with my mouth open for a few seconds. She couldn't keep up the act and dissolved into giggles a few minutes later.

“You must have on your sassy pants today,” I said after sipping my black coffee.

She nodded, her sleek hair catching the sun as she moved. It made her look almost angelic.

“The sassiest.” She grinned.

I was glad we'd been able to work things out yesterday even though I still felt a lot of guilt for hurting her.

“What are your plans for today?” she asked after we placed our food orders.

“Well, I’m taking a very naughty Little girl to the pharmacy to pick up her medications, and then driving that same naughty Little girl to work,” I teased.

She responded by sticking her tongue out at me.

Laughing, I continued, “Then I am going home to help Bash put together a dollhouse for Allyson. Pray for me, if you’ve ever had the misfortune of seeing Bash with power tools, you’ll understand why.”

“Thank you,” she told the waitress as she set down our plates.

“He’s not the…”

“What happened to your arm?” the waitress interrupted her.

Ash’s entire body tensed, her fingers curled so tightly around her cup of juice that her knuckles turned white.

Heat rushed up my neck and I slammed my coffee mug down on the table with enough force it cracked. The waitress gasped as coffee poured from the side. She grabbed the cup and set it on her tray before wiping the table with a cloth she had tucked in her apron.

“We would like another waitress,” I said, instead of the words I wanted to hurl at her. Curiosity killed the cat, but it could also kill a nosy ass waitress.

“Now!” I barked when she didn’t move. The old hag finally scurried off.

“I’m sorry,” Ashley said, ducking her head.

I pushed my chair back and went around to sit on her side of the table. Cupping her chin in my hand, I forced her to look at me. “You have nothing to be sorry for, Ash. She was very rude. I’m sorry she upset you.”

She tried to avert her eyes, but a gentle squeeze to her chin brought her eyes back to mine. “Look at me, baby.” I didn’t miss the way her breathing hitched or the wonder that passed through her eyes. Fuck me. Could she be as attracted to me as I was to her?

When I had her attention, I repeated, “You have nothing to be sorry for, baby. What just happened was because of someone else's carelessness.” My jaw ached from how tightly I was clenching it and my hand that wasn’t holding her chin shook from the force of the rage I was holding back.

Not wanting her to notice, I released her chin and started to cut up her food. She rubbed over her arm and I swallowed the sharp words I wanted to yell at the woman who caused her discomfort.

“Here, baby. I bet your pancakes are yummy. Try a bite.”

Misty hazel eyes met mine before she opened her mouth and did as I asked.

“How does it taste?” I asked, trying to distract her.

Her face was pink from embarrassment and she was rapidly blinking back tears. “It needs syrup.”

Grabbing the bottle, I poured a tiny bit onto her plate and cut another bite before putting my arm around her and stroking her shoulder with my fingertips. I wished I could hold her like this forever, protecting her from the cruelty of the world.

“How about now?” I asked, feeding her another bite.

She chewed slowly.

“A little more.”

She was eating just sugar at that point and the Daddy in me screamed to put an end to it, but she was so sad.

I poured a bit more and offered her another bite.

“More,” she said.

“There is no way it needs any more. You’re going to have a bellyache and twenty-seven cavities,” I argued.

She grinned. “But my heart has a sad and the syrup will make it all better,” she said, batting her long lashes at me.

Tossing my head back, I laughed, thankful she was slowly coming back to me after such a shock. “You little brat.” I was pretty sure I was seeing a small peek of the Little she kept denying she had.

She opened her mouth and I fed her another bite. I was happy to see her tears were starting to dry up.

“It is really good. Do you want a bite, Dawson?”

“No thanks, baby. This much sugar would give me indigestion for the rest of the month.”

“Cause you’re so old?”

“You are being such a stinker today!”

She rested her head on my chest for a minute before taking her fork from me.

“You need to eat too. You’ll need all your strength to deal with Bash and a drill today.”

A new waitress came over and refilled my coffee.

“You’ll need lots of that too,” Ashley said, nodding toward my coffee.

“I will,” I agreed. “The last time Bash tried to fix something, he flooded the bathroom at the shop so badly, we had to close for two days.”

She laughed so hard she snorted. “That’s so terrible.”

We sat in comfortable silence for a few minutes before she spoke again, “Dawson?”

“Yeah, baby?”

“Thank you for protecting me today and for making me feel better.”

“I will never forgive myself for not being there to protect you when you were hurt, but I’ll do my damndest to make sure I’m here for anything else you may face,” I promised her.

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Ashley

I set the pink donuts on the counter and grabbed the jar of sprinkles.

Making the donuts pretty was my favorite part of the job.

I shook the container and smiled when all the tiny flakes of happiness poured out.

My favorite was when we did themed days and I got to use icing bags and tips to decorate donuts.

Picking up the tray, I walked to the display case and started arranging them in their slot.

“Those are so pretty,” a familiar voice said. The voice made my stomach churn and my skin crawl. I shivered at the sensation of spiders crawling on me.

I looked up and into the dilated eyes of my mother.

“Hey, Ashley, baby,” she said. Her skin was pale, her brow sweaty, and her face bruised around her mouth. “Can we talk?”

“No,” I said, pulling the tray back and walking away from the counter. “You aren’t supposed to be here,” I called over my shoulder, trying to sound calmer than I felt.

“It’s really important, Ashley!” she yelled from where she was still standing.

My heart pounded so loudly in my chest that I worried my co-workers would be able to hear it.

“Ashley, is everything okay?” my boss, Edison, asked me. His face was blurred and it was hard to hear him over the blood rushing in my ears.

“She’s not supposed to be here,” I said, not sure how else to say the hard words. “I have an order of protection.” My tongue stuck to the roof of my dry mouth.

“No worries, babe. We’ll get her out of here. Why don’t you call your ride and leave early just to be safe, okay?”

“Yes, sir,” I agreed, trying to get my shaking fingers to unzip my purse.

“Let me help you,” my co-worker Lennon said. She grabbed my phone out of my bag and found Dawson’s number for me. I looked at her in wonder and she shrugged. “Blade does my work and I’ve met Smoke a few times.”

Thanking her, I took my phone and waited for Smoke to answer.

“Hey, Ash. Are you off already?”

“Mom’s here,” I blurted out. My teeth chattered against each other and shivers took over.

“Okay, baby. Are you safe in the store? Are you away from her?”

“Y-yes. In the b-back.”

“I’m on my way, okay? Don’t leave the back. You wait until I get there.”

“O-okay.”

“It’s going to be okay, Ash. You’re safe. I’m not going to let anything happen to you, baby. I promise. Bash is calling the police now, okay?”

I nodded into the phone before I realized he couldn’t see me. “O-okay.”

Tires squealed into the line and I knew he really was doing everything in his power to get to me.

“I’m okay,” I said, not sure if I was talking to him or me.

“You tell that bitch to get out here and face me like a woman!” My mother’s shrill voice pierced the air like a needle to a balloon.

“Don’t listen to her, okay, baby? Don’t let her get to you,” he soothed into the phone.

Could he hear her yelling from the front of the store?

I swallowed. Not letting her get to me was harder than it sounded.

A crash sounded from the front, followed by the sound of glass shattering. Oh no. Someone was going to get hurt and it was going to be all my fault.

Setting my phone down on a table, I walked back to the front. My mother was holding a chair and bashing in the display windows.

“Stop!” I yelled, running toward her. “Stop! These people didn’t do anything to you and you’re ruining their shop!”

“Fuck you, you little bitch. I was just trying to talk to you and you walked away from me!”

“Ashley, go back to the back, sweetheart. We’ll let the police handle her, okay?” Edison said. He was on the phone with the police. “Yes, 102 Main Street.”

“This is my fault, I don’t want her to mess up anything else.” I tried to explain, turning to look at him. “I’ll get her out of here. I’m so sorry, Edison.”



“Mess up? Mess up?” she shrieked. “That’s all I am to you, huh? A mess-up! God forbid a woman make a mistake. Your kids will remember it for the rest of their lives. Fuck you and your high and mighty attitude,” she yelled.

I turned back to her, my hands raised trying to placate her, only I wasn’t prepared for her to hit me with the chair she’d been holding.

The base of the chair hit me in the corner of my eye and immediately I doubled over in pain.

She took advantage of my position and brought the seat down a second time.

The throbbing pain was so intense, I had no choice but to fall on the ground and cover my head with my hands to protect it.

Unable to think or move, I was a victim to her anger.

The chair came down a third time, crushing my forearm and filling my ears with a sickening crunch and my body with white hot throbbing.

I closed my eyes, waiting for the next blow, only it never came.

Big hands rubbed my back and I lifted my head to see Kay, one of Dawson’s co-workers, kneeling in front of me.

Looking around for my mom, I saw her and the sight made me freeze.

Dawson had her pinned to the wall, his face was various shades of red and purple as he screamed at her.

I couldn’t make out what he was saying over the buzzing in my head, but by the way

the veins in his face and neck were popping out, I knew it wasn't being said softly.

He had one hand wrapped around her neck and he was squeezing. He was going to kill her.

"No!" I croaked. "Dawson, no!" I put my palms flat on the floor and tried to push myself up, forgetting about my forearm. Screaming in pain, I struggled to get up.

Kay placed her hand on my back and tried to keep me down.

"No, Kay. Dawson's going to kill her!"

She was back in my face talking to me, but I still couldn't hear her.

I realized it was actually hard to see her too.

Wiping my face with my good arm, I drew my hand back to see it covered in blood.

She grabbed my hand and pinned it on the floor too, before looking over her shoulder and talking to someone.

Suddenly Dawson was there on his knees beside me. His big hands replaced Kay's and he was trying to talk to me. What was he saying? The ringing in my ears was growing louder.

Everything hurt so bad. I rested my head on the cool floor, appreciating that it helped with the pain a bit. Closing my eyes, I gave into unconsciousness.

## Page 4

*Source Creation Date: July 20, 2025, 8:26 am*

Smoke

Wrapping my fingers around the neck of the deadbeat mother in front of me did nothing to ease the waves of anger rising inside of me. Choking her would be too quick of a death. I wanted her to fucking suffer. She'd hurt my baby—my fucking baby—and that wasn't acceptable.

"Smoke, let her go. Ashley needs you," Bash said from beside me.

"She'll never hurt her again," I said through my clenched teeth.

Diamond, Ash's mother, clawed at my fingers. I got far too much satisfaction in seeing the panic in her eyes. Panic like she'd caused my baby to feel.

"Smoke, if you kill her like this, you can't help Ashley. Think about it, man. You're the only constant she has in her life," Bash reasoned.

Fuck, he was right. No matter how badly I wanted to be the last thing Diamond saw when she took her last undeserving breath, I couldn't do it like this.

"Go get your girl. I'll take over," Bash said.

I released her neck but not before slamming her head into the wall. "This isn't over," I spat.

Letting Bash take over, I turned and dropped to my knees by Ash.

“Hey, baby. I’m here. I’m here. Everything is okay,” I soothed.

“I came in on the tail end of her being hit with one of those metal chairs,” Kay said. I’d asked Bash to call her, hoping she’d be able to beat us to Rolling in Dough since she lived on the same side of town.

“I’m going to fucking kill her,” I promised Kay, before turning my attention back to Ashley. “Baby, can you hear me?”

Her eyes lifted to mine before she rested her head back on the floor.

“Fuck, she just passed out!” I yelled. “Someone call 911!” Checking her for injuries was almost impossible due to her position.

“The police are coming and so are the medics!” another employee yelled as they rushed forward with a first-aid kit. They tossed the kit on the floor, opened a small packet, and stuck it under her nose.

Ashley groaned as she came to. Thank fuck.

“Smelling salts,” the woman said before sitting on her ass on the other side of Ashley.

“I want to get up,” Ashley said, moving a bit.

“Hey, baby, stay still for us, okay?”

“Yeah, you don’t want to move too much, okay? We need to see how hurt you are first. Let’s think about something happy,” the woman said.

“Happy?” Ashley echoed, trying to rub one of her ears. “Loud,” she said.

“Yeah, like what you’re going to do when you get back home. Do you have any hobbies you like?”

“I-I like to make things. I just got a new bracelet kit.”

“Oh! What color bracelet are you going to make first?”

“P-pink. It’s for my friend, Eloise.”

“Oh, I love Eloise. Her Daddy does my tattoos and we play together sometimes at The Thirsty Turtle.”

Ah, that explained a lot. Thinking about it, I remembered the woman’s name was Lennon.

“I want to visit. Eloise says they have play parties,” Ash said, closing her eyes again.

“Hey, baby, keep those pretty hazel eyes open for me, okay?” I encouraged, trying to keep her awake.

“Head hurts,” she said, “and my ears are ringing.”

“I know you hurt, baby. I’m so sorry.”

“If you go to sleep, I’m going to have to get the yucky smelling salt again, and you don’t want that, do you?”

“Nooo,” Ashley moaned.

“Kay, can you call Elliot and ask if he can meet us at the hospital?” I whispered, not wanting to disrupt the distraction.

“On it,” she replied, rushing off to do as I asked.

“Dawson?”

“Hey, baby, I’m right here.” I put my hand on her upper arm gently.

“I’m so sorry,” she said. Tears made tracks through the blood streaked across her face.

“Hey, you didn’t cause any of this. None of this is your fault, baby.”

“She came looking for me. I should have just given her the money.”

More rage built inside of me.

“No, baby, you shouldn’t have. It’s your money. Your granna wanted you to have it. Diamond is just a greedy bitch. Nobody thinks this is your fault.”

“Fuck you, you—” Diamond was silenced by Bash; I didn’t bother looking back to see how.

“She’s still here?” Ashley cried in disbelief.

“Shhhh, it’s okay, baby. She is still here, but so am I, and Bash, and Kay, and even Lennon. So many people are here who care about you. You’re safe.”

“Yeah, we’re not going to let that old hag do anything else to you,” Lennon promised.

“The police are here!” someone yelled from the back.

“Hear that, baby? Soon we can get you out of here,” I promised.

Sirens filled the silence of the lobby. “That’s your ride, kiddo,” Lennon said, trying to lighten the situation. I made a mental note to call Blade and make sure she got free sessions for the rest of her life. Gratitude filled my heart at her kindness.

“Have you ever ridden in an ambulance before?” Lennon asked.

“Elliot is going to meet you there,” Kay whispered, coming back to kneel beside me. “The medics are coming in the back now.”

“One time, but I don’t remember much of it,” Ashley answered. I shuddered at the mention of her first ambulance ride after the explosion. I’d always been worried she’d been terrified and that it haunted her. I was glad to know she didn’t remember it.

“Well, let’s make sure you remember this one,” Lennon said, reaching into her pocket. “This is my favorite stuffie. He’s a miniature koala named Larry. You can hold him to help you on the ride. He’s a good doctor. He has all the right koalafications.”

Ashley smiled at her silly joke and closed her fingers around the tiny bear. “Thank you.”

The medics followed another employee in and knelt down beside Ashley.

“Thank you, Lennon,” I told her. “You really helped us today.” I turned to look at Kay.

“Can you help her get home?” I asked, not expressing my concerns over what she’d seen.

Shock could hit her once she got home. I knew Kay would understand.

“You got it,” she whispered, taking Lennon’s hand and helping her stand.

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Ashley

“No,” I said, shaking my head despite the pain it brought.

“Honey, we really need to get a better IV started. I promise it will make you feel so much better,” the older nurse said. I understood, but I wasn’t letting them do anything to me until I could see Dawson. The paramedics let him ride in the ambulance with me, but I hadn’t seen him since then.

“No. I want my brother.”

“He’s not allowed back here, sweetie. I’m sorry, but it’s the rules.”

“Then I want to go home. Please bring me paperwork to sign so I can be discharged.”

“That is absolutely not happening, Little one. Smoke would beat us both,” an older doctor said as he walked into the room.

He had dark hair, skin that looked freshly tanned, and enormous muscles.

He wore a silver wedding band on his left hand and his right hand.

How odd. “I’m Dr. Elliot and I’m going to be checking you over tonight,” he said.

“I want Smoke,” I told him, my voice breaking.

“I know, Little one. I’ve sent my nurse to go get him, okay?”



“You did?”

“I did. It’s not going to do any good to treat you when you’re so scared. If having him here will help you feel calm, then I’m all for bringing him back,” he said, sitting on my bed and looking over the IV site the paramedics had placed.

“She said it wasn’t allowed.” I nodded my head toward the other nurse.

They both chuckled. “He owns part of the hospital, darling. He has a lot more pull than I do.”

“Hey, sweet girl,” Dawson said, walking into the room and sitting on the opposite side of me. He placed his hand on my foot since one arm was wrapped in a loose brace and Elliot was holding the other.

I already felt myself calming as I breathed in his comforting scent—cedarwood and smoke.

“That’s a good girl, just relax for us,” Dr. Elliot said, standing. “Let’s try and get that new IV now.”

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Ouchie!”

“Dammit, Elliot,” Dawson growled.

“Don’t yell at him, he’s doing his best,” I scolded even though it felt like a blow torch was being held to my face.

Dr. Elliot was trying to use glue to secure a gash in my face, close to my eye.

So far I had a concussion, a deep laceration, a broken radius, and we were waiting for a machine to be free to check for any brain bleeds.

It had not been a super fun night. Thankfully some pain meds had at least made it where I didn't think I was dying anymore.

"And she just showed up at the shop, with no warning?" the police officer asked, still writing things down. He'd been talking with us for a long time.

"Yeah, Smoke. I'm doing my best," Dr. Elliot mocked, ignoring the officer.

A loud smack filled the room. "Did you just hit him?" I asked Dawson incredulously.

"I did," Dawson admitted.

"He did," Dr. Elliot grumbled.

"Be nice to him!" I scolded. I couldn't take Dawson getting in trouble tonight too.

"Please be nice to him," the police officer agreed, looking up from his clipboard. "I have enough paperwork as it is."

"Is she going to jail?" I asked, referring to my mom. I'd been too scared to ask at first, but the more my mind cleared, I realized how much better it would be for everyone if she was there.

"She is, for a long while," he answered. "Not only did she attack you, she destroyed private property, was under the influence, and assaulted an officer. You're safe now, honey."

I nodded.

“She’s not ever going to bother you again, baby,” Dawson promised.

He met my eye and his gaze was so intense, I felt chillbumps.

Between the way he was looking at me and the power of his words, I knew he was one hundred percent confident in his ability to keep his promise and I believed him when he swore I’d be safe.

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“It’s really loud,” I said into the microphone Dr. Elliot had given me.

I had been placed in a tube-like machine and I hated it.

It was small and loud and I’d had to take off my clothes to go inside.

I was naked, cold, and ouchie. Okay, I wasn’t really naked.

I had on a thin hospital gown, but I still felt very bothered by the whole situation.

“I know, Little one, but we’re almost done and you’re being so brave,” Dawson told me through the speaker.

“I’m not a Little,” I argued for some unknown reason, maybe just to have something to say. Chuckles echoed through the speakers and I knew they weren’t just Dawson’s.

“Okay, baby. Are you holding onto Larry super tight? The noise might scare him.”

“Yes, I have him. He’s not scared. He’s a brave koala.” My heart hammered in my chest. I was not a brave koala.

A loud beeping sound startled me and the machine started to move me backward.

“All done, baby. You were so brave,” Dawson said into the speaker.

Dr. Elliot and another doctor helped me sit up and then helped me move into a wheelchair. Dr. Elliot covered my bare legs with a sheet, but not before I saw the bruises on them. Mom didn’t even hit my legs and they were bruised, probably from falling forward. I wondered how bad my face looked.

Dawson met me outside the MRI room and knelt in front of me. “You did it, I’m so proud of you. I know that was scary.”

Smiling at him, I took his hand as Dr. Elliot wheeled me back to my room. I didn’t feel brave, but I allowed his praise to wrap around me like a hug from a friend I hadn’t seen in a while.

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Big sobs shook my sore body, only serving to make me cry more.

“Shhh, you’re going to hurt yourself, baby,” Dawson soothed, rubbing my back.

“I wanna go hom... to your house,” I cried, clearly not taking the news of being admitted for observation very well. I didn’t want to stay overnight at the hospital.

“Let the rail down,” Dawson ordered.

“You need to say p-please,” I sobbed.

“Please let the fucking rail down, Elliot.”

Elliot did as he asked and Dawson's warmth surrounded me as he picked me up from the bed.

One of his large arms scooped up my legs while the other supported my back.

He took a few steps backward and settled into a big chair before adjusting me in his lap.

I was too tired to protest. It felt like we'd been at the hospital for hours.

I just wanted to go home, cuddle my babydoll, and suck my thumb in peace.

"I know you didn't want to stay here, baby, but it's what's best for you right now. Just one night and we can go back home, " he said, emphasizing the word home, letting me know it was mine too.

"I w-want to g-g home!" I cried.

Elliot gave me more medication through my IV and before I could even ask what it was, I felt much calmer.

"That's just a little bit more medicine to help you relax, honey," he explained.

My body shook with big sobs and I felt guilty for being so emotional.

Dawson didn't sign up for this when he'd asked me to come live with him but before I could even get myself together and apologize, Dawson started to hum.

His chest vibrated with each note and slowly I started to relax against him.

## Page 5

*Source Creation Date: July 20, 2025, 8:26 am*

Smoke

Ashley was a mess in my arms. Her loud sobs filled the small space and I wanted to tell Elliot to just let me take her home, but I trusted his judgement.

I patted her back and tried to rock her in the oversized chair.

“I w-want to g-go home,” she sobbed.

Elliot gave her something in her IV and she seemed to calm a bit. “That’s just a little bit more medicine to help you relax, honey,” he said.

Feeling a bit helpless, I did the only thing I could think of and started to hum. Humming helped babies, right? She was my baby. Close enough.

It took until the second verse of the song before she started to settle. I felt like a fucking king. Finishing that song, I moved onto another one from the eighties.

Verse by verse she relaxed more and more, and eventually gave into her exhaustion.

Once she was sleeping, Elliot left with a promise to be back in the morning.

Half an hour later a soft knock on the door annoyed me. I’d just gotten comfortable, but I was thankful when I saw it was Bash and Blade.

“How is she?” Bash asked, his tone gruff.

“I was going to text you when I got her settled, I’m sorry,” I apologized, feeling guilty I’d not updated them sooner.

He shrugged me off.

“We know you’ve got your hands full,” Blade said, sitting on the unoccupied bed.

“Literally,” Bash said, sitting beside him. He set a bag on the floor in front of me.

“Hands full of his Little one,” Blade added like I didn’t get the joke the first time.

“She was upset, I’m just comforting her,” I argued.

“Yeah, but the way you almost killed her mom today told me just how much you care about her, even though we already suspected it,” Bash said.

“I wasn’t there to see it, but Kay told me all about it,” Blade added.

“I’ve killed for less,” I said.

“You’re such a bullshitter.” Bash laughed.

I pinched the bridge of my nose. “I don’t know how this is going to work,” I admitted.

“It’s not hard. You, Daddy. Her, Little,” Bash said, meshing his hands together.

“Do you need a diagram?” Blade teased.

“You two are a pain in my ass.”

“Eh, we’re feeling a bit cocky since we won the bet about you two having feelings for each other,” Bash said, shrugging.

“What. The. Fuck?”

They laughed.

“Dude, come on. Someone from your past shows up, who happens to be a Little, who could benefit from your protection and you expected us to not believe you’d be her Daddy?”

“She’s my stepsister,” I argued. Honestly, I had no idea why I was arguing. I’d claimed her the minute I saw that monster swinging a chair at her. Hell, probably before that.

“Not really, your dad and her mom got divorced before you’d even gotten out of prison,” Blade said.

“And you lurveeee her,” Bash sang. He really was a complete menace.

“Yeah,” I agreed. There was no point in hiding it anymore. “What did you win?”

“Three dinners at Kay’s house,” Blade said proudly.

Damn. Kay was a good cook, that was a score.

“And two sessions each with Leland,” Bash added.

“Leland was in on it?” That was surprising. Our boss was more no-nonsense than we were.



“Oh yeah, he started it all.”

Shaking my head, I laughed softly, not wanting to startle Ashley.

“We also don’t know that she’s a Little.” I quoted her own lie.

“Bullshit.” Blade laughed, sharing a look with Bash.

“Yeah, I’m not buying that and I’m sure you’re not either,” Bash said.

I shook my head. I wasn’t.

“Anyway, we stopped by your house and brought some stuff you might need. Toiletries, your charger, some things for Ash. Let us know if you need anything else and we’ll bring it by before visiting hours end,” Blade said, nudging the bag he’d set by my feet.

“Thank you. I really don’t know what I’d do without you.”

“Don’t make it mushy, man,” Bash said, standing and stretching.

“Besides, you’ll want to thank us after you talk to Jasper,” Blade said, standing and grinning like a loon.

Jasper was my boss, not for Daddies Ink, but for a side operation we helped him run.

Jasper was... what some would describe as morally gray.

I would describe him as a fucking nightmare, a nightmare I never wanted to cross.

He was a crazy cyberstalker who could locate anyone you ever needed to find and

have them killed with one call.

Thankfully, he only went after bad people, the worst of the worst. He'd been the only witness when I killed my father, but instead of turning me in, he'd invited me to join him in helping him fulfill his plan of ridding the world of as much scum as he could. I'd joined, thankful to have a place to direct all the rage I felt.

Fast forward several years and Blade, Bash, and I all worked with Jasper.

Jasper'd brought us into his crazy, but gave us a family in exchange. Weird, but it was how he operated.

"What did you do?" I asked, sliding the burner phone I always kept in my pocket and checking for messages.

Don't worry about Diamond. After what my men will put her through in prison, she'll wish she were dead.

Grinning, I tucked my phone back into my pocket. Jasper had contacts everywhere, I wasn't surprised to discover he would reach Diamond even in jail.

"I'm so damn glad that bastard is on our side. He's scary as fuck," Bash said with a shiver.

"Now your Little one won't have to face any more monsters from her past," Blade said before looking down at her scarred arm. "Well, at least no monsters in the form of people."

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Ash twisted fitfully in my arms. "Shhh, baby, you're okay," I soothed.

She'd been tossing back and forth for a while.

I knew I should lay her in the hospital bed but I selfishly couldn't make myself let her go.

She looked so small and frail in my arms—her face was a myriad of blues, the fingers on her broken arm were so swollen, and her legs and thighs were covered in bruises and scrapes.

I just wanted to put her in my pocket and keep her safe forever.

Sleepy eyes raised to look at me. "Mm, okay," she mumbled.

"You're nice and safe. Do you want to get in your bed? Would you be more comfortable?"

"No!" she protested, trying to dig down deeper in my arms. Unfortunately all of her wiggling was directly on my cock which was always semi-erect around her.

I tried to lift her gently to reposition her, but she mistook the action for me trying to put her in her bed, so she only fought more. "Don't put me down!"

"Easy, baby, I'm just trying to get you more comfortable," I tried to reason, but it was too late. She stilled completely when my hard rod rubbed against her backside.

\*\*\*

Ashley

Oh. My. Goodness.

Dawson was... that was... Holy shit, that was Dawson's dick. And it was massive.

My cheeks burned and I ducked my head, but I couldn't stop the twitch of my lip. I made Dawson's cock hard. Me. Ashley Emery.

Ducking my head, I tried to hide my blushing cheeks, but I couldn't stop the corner of my mouth from tipping up. As quickly as it lifted, it fell. Maybe it was just a natural reaction because I was wiggling around. Defeat settled on me like a soggy blanket.

"I can see that big brain of yours working hard, Little girl, so before that negative thinking gets you into trouble, I want you to know this is all for you," Dawson said, thrusting his hips into my backside.

"I've been rock-hard since you moved in and I'm sure that makes me a terrible person, but I can't help it, I can't stop it.

Knowing you're under my roof, in my house, just a few doors down from me drives me crazy.

I've been fucking my hand every night with thoughts of your delicious body.

Those thick thighs are begging to be laid over my shoulders while I worship your cunt and your boobs.

I love your fucking boobs. They look like they'd be heavy and full in my hands and wondering what color your nipples are haunts me at night. "

Gasping at the zing of electricity that shot through me, I leaned against Dawson, grinding his erection against me. His words had me dripping and he hadn't even touched me.

“You’re playing with fire, baby,” he whispered before kissing my neck.

I didn’t care, maybe I wanted to be burned. “I’ve always dreamed of being a firefighter,” I sassed. A low ache filled my belly and I knew I was going to leave a wet spot on his pants if I didn’t get up. That thought sobered me a bit, and I shifted on his lap, trying to stand.

His thick forearms locked around me and he held me in place. “Where are you going, baby?”

“I’m worried... Your pants...” I tried.

“What about my pants?”

Damn him. “I-I don’t have on panties.”

“And?” he asked, teasing.

“Dawson,” I whined, still trying to stand.

“Relax, baby. I don’t want you to hurt yourself,” he said, easing me back down.

Once I was settled back onto his lap, he shifted me a bit so I was facing him. My face was so heated, I knew I must look like a tomato.

“Are you trying to tell me your pussy is wet and you’re worried about leaving your sweet cream on my pants?”

I nodded, biting my lip. He was so damn sexy. His five-o’clock shadow covered his sharp jawline. Reaching up, I ran my fingers over the stubble, wondering how it would feel against my mound. Would it be like I’d read about in romance novels?

Just the thought made me clench my thighs together.

“I’d like to know what you were just thinking,” Dawson said.

Licking my lips, I shook my head. A girl needed to keep some secrets.

His gaze flickered to my mouth. “I’ve wanted you since I picked you up from the airport that day.”

I nodded. “Same.” It wasn’t smooth, but what else was I supposed to say?

“Yeah?”

“Yeah. I’ve kinda always had a tiny crush on you, but I didn’t expect to be so attracted to you when I got to Strickland.”

“Thank fuck,” he said before lowering his mouth to mine. It was a gentle kiss—barely there, soft brushes against my lips.

I whined when he pulled back and he chuckled.

“I want more.” I pouted.

“I’m not sure I can kiss you any more without hurting you, baby.”

“I don’t care,” I argued.

“I do.” He pressed a soft kiss to my forehead.

“What do we do now?” I asked.

“Well, hopefully we can get Elliot to release you and then we can go home and get you comfy.”

Laughing, I winced. Ouchie. I did hurt. “No, I meant about us.”

Smoke’s eyes were full of compassion and he stroked my back gently, ignoring the question. “I’m sorry you’re hurt, baby.”

Resting my head against his shoulder, I took his hand in my good one. “It’s not your fault, not even a tiny bit. Not yesterday and not the day Phillip hurt me.”

As expected, he tensed at the mention of his father’s name. I brought his hand up to my lips and kissed it. “I’ve never blamed you, Dawson. You’re the only one who's ever been there for me.”

“I wish I could have stopped him that night,” Dawson admitted.

“I know.” I squeezed his hand.

“But to answer your question, I think we could explore our relationship. I would love to pursue you, spoil you, and taste you.”

Squeezing my legs together again, I nodded. “I’d like to do all of those things.”

“I’d like to meet your Little too,” he said, raising his brow at me almost as if to challenge me to lie to him again.

“I’ve never introduced her to anyone,” I admitted.

“Oh, honey, that must be so hard for you.”

“Yeah. She’s just... she’s so tiny and I didn’t want her to get hurt.”

He kissed the top of my head and repositioned me on his lap so that we were belly to belly. My knees rested on both sides of his lap.

“I love that you protected her so well, baby, but it’s not healthy to keep her locked up like that either.”

“I know. I let her play in...” I trailed off, embarrassed.

“You let her play where, Ash?”

“In the closet in my bedroom. She has a cozy little nest in there.”

Dawson didn’t look judgemental, his eyes were soft when he spoke. “Well, I am so glad she has a safe place to play. Maybe we can give her a bit more space, yeah? We can turn your room into a playroom or nursery. Whatever you both need. I think the other Little girls would love to meet her.”

I thought over his words.

“A-rre... is...” I struggled.

“What do you need to ask me, baby?”

“What does she call you?” I asked instead of what I really wanted to ask.

“Well, I really hope one day you both will call me Daddy, but she could call me Uncle Dawson if she wanted. There’s no rush to figure things out, baby, but I want you to understand that you both are safe here.



Even if we don't work out, which I really doubt, that doesn't mean you won't live with me, that doesn't mean you would lose your friendships with Rogue, Eloise, or Ally or your relationships with Blade, Bash, or Leland. ”

Smiling, I felt a lot lighter. He was right. We would still have a family in Strickland. It was time to let her be free. “Can you help me?” I asked. I knew how hard it would be.

“I would be absolutely honored, baby.”

## Page 6

*Source Creation Date: July 20, 2025, 8:26 am*

Smoke

“You can show me, Little one,” I encouraged.

Ashley stood at her closet door, playing with the handle nervously.

“I would love to see your safe space.”

We’d been discharged from the hospital earlier and after a light lunch, I was putting Ashley down for a nap. Nothing had changed yet, other than we weren’t denying our attraction to each other anymore.

She took a deep breath.

“I would love to see her too, babygirl.”

Her eyes widened a bit at the name and I smiled, hoping I’d won her over.

“Love it?” she asked.

“I would love to see it,” I confirmed.

She nodded and twisted the handle, opening the door. Dropping to her knees—and making me wince because of her injuries—she crawled inside the walk-in closet and I closed the space between us, following her in to see her safe space.

A pile of colorful blankets were tucked in the back corner of the closet.

All of her purses and shoes sat on the top of the shelves so the floor was free of them.

Instead, she had a tiny pink crib and matching high chair with a small baby doll sitting on the floor, neatly placed against one wall.

On the other side she had cloth storage totes full of toys lined up neatly.

When she'd shipped all her things here, she'd asked me not to unpack them before she got here.

I figured it was a privacy thing, but standing there in her makeshift nursery, I realized just how private she'd wanted it to be.

"This is beautiful, baby," I praised. "It's so neat and tidy and it looks very cozy."

"Lights, " she said, pointing to the light switch.

Ah, yes. I was seeing baby Ashley.

"You want me to turn them off?"

"Off," she confirmed.

Okay, well, fuck me. Her Little babble was adorable.

I flipped the lights off and was met with dozens of glow-in-the-dark stars stuck to the walls and ceiling.

"Wow!" I exclaimed. "You did such a good job."

"Pretty?" she asked.

“Very pretty,” I promised.

“Nap here?”

“You want to nap in your nest?”

She nodded.

“You can totally nap in your nest. Let me get a few more pillows for you, okay? We need to elevate your arm.”

“Arm,” she said, looking down at it.

“Does it hurt?”

She nodded, looking so sad it broke my heart.

“Uncle Dawson will get you some more medicine for it, okay?”

“Unka Smoke,” she corrected.

I grinned. “Uncle Smoke will get you some more medicine for it.”

I grabbed her a few pillows before stepping back into the closet. “Lay down, baby, and let me help you get settled.”

“Babygirl,” she said, patting her chest with her free arm. Her beautiful face was bearing a very large frown.

Chuckling, I stroked my thumb over her forehead. “Lay down, babygirl, and let me help you get settled.”

She snuggled down on her side into her blankets. Kneeling, I gently lifted her arm and propped it up. “How’s your head feeling?”

“Little ouchie.”

“Yeah, unfortunately concussions make f0r ouchie heads. The medicine I’m going to give you will help with both owies,” I told her. “Uncle Smoke is going to make you a baba to drink because the medicine will make you thirsty too. Do you have a favorite baba or do you want one Uncle Smoke has?”

She raised her good arm and pointed toward a pink tote. Standing, I searched the tote and found a pink bottle with fairies on it. “This one?” I asked.

She nodded.

“Alright, babygirl. I’ll be right back,” I promised.

“Right back?”

“I promise.”

“‘kay.”

I headed downstairs, filled her bottle with watered-down apple juice, and grabbed her medicine and an applesauce pouch.

When I got back to her bedroom, she had a bunny stuffie snuggled to her chest. There was something about seeing a Little girl with a stuffie that turned me into a puddle of goop. It was just tooth-rottingly sweet.

She smiled when she looked up at me and I knew immediately I was more gone than

I'd already been.

Kneeling back in front of her, I pulled the top off the applesauce pouch. "Dr. Elliot only had big- girl pills and I know they may be hard for you to swallow. He told me applesauce may help."

"Help?" she asked, lifting her head.

"Yes, help. I'm going to give you a bit in your mouth, then we're going to put the pill in, and all you have to do is swallow," I explained, working very hard to keep my mind out of the gutter.

"Babygirl can do it," she said, giving me a confident nod.

"Babygirl can do it," I agreed, melting even more.

Once she'd taken the medicine and I'd handed her the bottle, I tucked her in and kissed her forehead.

"Uncle Smoke is going to leave your closet door open so he can hear you, okay?"

She nodded.

"Alright, babygirl, sleep good."

I stood and left the closet. I'd make sure she was asleep before I relocated the baby monitor I'd hidden in her room.

Pulling my phone out of my pocket, I called Bash. "I need your help."

"Anything. What's up?"

“How do you feel about some more practice with power tools?”

“Fuck yeah,” he answered.

I laughed at his enthusiasm. “I’m going to call Blade too. I need him to pick up some supplies for me.”

“Bet. I’ll grab some beer and we can order pizza. I have a feeling whatever we’re doing might take a while.”

“Do you have time?”

“Absolutely.”

I was a lucky man.

“Let’s make it a party. Bring the Littles too.”

Loud shrieks filled the phone line and I smiled at his Little girl’s enthusiasm.

“So fun!” Allyson squealed.

I agreed. It was going to be so fun.

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Ashley

I woke up feeling like my bladder was going to explode.

Struggling to climb from my soft blankets, I crawled out of the closet.

Oh no! I really needed to go. Rushing out of the bedroom door, I almost crashed into Bash and Blade carrying a bright pink structure.

I didn't have enough time to even wonder what they were doing. It was a bathroom emergency.

"Oh, sorry, Little one," Bash apologized.

"Is okay!" I yelled, rushing toward the bathroom. I slammed the door shut, ripped down my shorts and panties, and made it just in time. My arm throbbed from the movement and I sighed. I needed to work on remembering it was ouchie.

There was a knock on the door. "Babygirl, are you okay?" Dawson asked.

After finishing my business and washing my hands, I opened the door.

"I'm okay."

"Are you sure? Uncle Bash said you seemed to be in a hurry."

Tattle-tale.

"I really had to go to the bathroom," I said.

"Yeah? Did you need to pee pee or poop?" he asked, completely serious.

My eyes widened. I was not answering that question.

He chuckled at my obvious horror, and brushed my hair back. "Did the medicine make your tummy hurt?"



Shaking my head, I answered, “No.”

“You’re sure?”

“Yes, Sir.”

“Okay, but if that changes you can tell me, alright? No hiding it from Uncle Smoke.”

“Yes, Sir.”

Eloise walked by holding a rolled up rainbow rug. “Hi, Ashley!” she exclaimed, dropping the rug on the floor and rushing to give me a hug. “How do you feel?”

“Um, better.” Why were they all here?

I looked up at Dawson to find him grinning.

“I have a surprise for you,” he said.

“For me?”

“We’ve been working very hard on it the whole time you were napping,” he added. Taking my hand he guided me to the stairs that led to a loft space in his home. He helped me up them one by one until we reached the top.

“There’s our girl,” Blade said, looking up from drilling what looked like a small bed together.

“My girl,” Dawson corrected, making my Little surge with pride.

“Well, let’s show your girl what we’ve been working on.” Bash laughed.

Dawson put his hand on the small of my back and swept his arm around the room.

“I wanted you to have a safe place to go that was bigger than just your closet. This loft is away from everything and super quiet. I thought it would be a good place for you to have a playroom. I tried to base the colors off of your blankets and cloth bins. The walls were already gray, so I thought maybe you’d like it if we painted the furniture bright colors.

Blade and I made a bed for you. I know the room is a bit small, so we raised the bed a bit so you could have toy storage underneath.

Blade and Bash worked on the toy box and bookshelf while Eloise, Ally, and I ran to Target to get some fun things to add to the walls,” he said, motioning to each piece as he talked.

The toy box was purple and the bookshelf was teal.

They’d done a wonderful job matching everything because the rainbow rug really pulled everything together.

They did this all for me? my Little asked.

“You did this for me?” I asked out loud.

“Of course, babygirl. Don’t you understand how special you are to all of us?” Dawson asked.

“I found the bag, Uncle Smoke!” Ally said, rushing up the stairs.

“Careful!” Bash reminded her. “Walking feet!”

When she saw me she tossed the bag on the ground, much like Eloise had the rug. “Hi! How do you feel?” she asked, walking over to me.

“Better,” I answered.

She hugged me gently. “We were so worried about you,” she said, pulling back from me.

“You were?”

“Of course, silly goose! You’re our friend!”

“Thank you all for doing this, i-it really means a lot to me and um... my Little,” I struggled.

“We’re glad to have you both in our lives,” Blade said, looking back at me from where he was installing hooks in the wall.

“Here, Daddy,” Eloise said, picking up the bag and handing it to him. He unfolded the fabric inside and hung the most adorable tapestry on the largest wall in the loft. It had a big rainbow with tiny forest animals on it.

“Bunnies!” I squealed before slapping my hands over my mouth, but I was only met with encouraging smiles.

I love it here!

Me too, baby.

“Thank you all so, so much. I’ve never had this before.. And I’m really thankful,” I told them.

“You’ve never had a playroom before?” Eloise asked. “I didn’t either, not before Daddy.”

“Me neither,” Ally added.

“No... I mean...” I struggled.

“Take your time, babygirl,” Dawson encouraged.

“No, I’ve never had a playroom before now, but I meant friends. I-I’ve never had friends before and I’m really glad you’re all here.”

## Page 7

*Source Creation Date: July 20, 2025, 8:26 am*

Smoke

Cutting up a second piece of pizza, I set it on Ashley's plate.

"Tanks," she said, digging in.

I smiled, bending down and kissing her on the head. "You're welcome, babygirl."  
"Does anyone else need more pizza?" I asked.

"Me, please," Allyson said.

I cut hers in pieces before adding it to her plate.

"Thank you," she said, smothering it in ranch dressing.

"Yuck, honey." Kay laughed. I was glad she'd been able to drop by once the shop was closed. All we were missing was Leland and Rogue, but it was Rogue and her twin sister's Taco Tuesday date and they tried very hard to make it happen each week.

"Is soooo good, Auntie Kay!" she protested.

"I'll take your word for it, kiddo." Kay laughed before booping her nose.

"Unka Smoke?" Ashley asked.

"Yes, babygirl?"

“Babygirl hurts.”

Sympathy filled my chest. “What hurts, baby?”

“Arm.”

“Your arm?”

She nodded.

“I’m sorry, baby. Tomorrow when they put a cast on it, I promise it will feel so much better. I’ll go get some more medicine for you, okay?”

“Hold me?” she asked.

The sympathy I was feeling bloomed into something deeper, something unimaginably tender.

“Of course, baby.” Bending down, I scooped her into my arms. Ashley wrapped her legs around me and I patted her bottom. She rested her head on my shoulder, her warm breath fanning across my neck. “Are you doing okay, babygirl?”

“Yes, Unka Smoke.”

“Are you just a snuggly girl?” I didn’t mind, not even a tiny bit, but I wanted to make sure she was all right.

She nodded exaggeratedly into my neck.

Carrying her up to her bedroom, I set her on her bed, and found the liquid Motrin. “You can have some of this now, and in,” I stopped to check my watch, “in about an

hour and a half you can have more of the stuff Dr. Elliot prescribed you.”

She nodded, sucking her thumb. The small gesture brought tears to my eyes, to see her in her Little space, trusting and open, fuck, it was worth a fortune.

After giving her a dose of the medicine, I scooped her back up, rocking her in my arms.

“You’re just a tiny baby, aren’t you?”

She nodded, her eyes uncertain.

“Do you want to know a secret?”

More overexaggerated head nods.

“Tiny babies are my favorite.”

She studied me for a minute before giving me an ear-to-ear smile.

“You’re perfect for me, babygirl.”

Carrying her back downstairs, I settled onto the couch with her on my lap. Her thumb slid back in her mouth and I suddenly wished I’d grabbed her bunny from the closet.

Eloise climbed up beside us, and popped a pink flamingo pacifier in her mouth. Ashley reached over and took her hand and I swear my heart was so full I feared it might burst.

Picking up my beer, I took a big sip, reflecting on how perfect the night was, but my reflection was quickly ruined when my burner phone chirped. Blade’s and Bash’s

immediately followed and we all shared a look before checking them.

Dammit, Jasper needed us.

Kay shot me a look over Ashley's head and I nodded. We had a job.

Eloise and Allyson shared a look of worry and I hated they were all exposed to this side of us.

"Wrong?" Ashley asked, peering up at me with her big inquisitive eyes.

"Uncle Bash, Uncle Blade, and I have to leave to go do some work, but we'll be back as soon as we can, okay?"

"Nu," she said, her eyes already filling with tears.

Shit.

"I know, babygirl. I'm so sorry, but I promise I'll be back soon."

"Nu," she said, shaking her head and fisting the hand of her uninjured arm in my shirt.

"It's okay, Ashley. Ally and I will stay with you. We can play in your new playroom," Eloise said. Bless her little heart for trying to help.

"Don't go," Ashley begged. Her pleas were like knife wounds to my soul.

"I know, babygirl. You've had an eventful thirty-six hours and now Uncle Smoke has to leave when you were just getting comfortable. It's not fair, is it?" I said, standing with her in my arms. I knew I was going to leave her crying and I felt like complete



shit about it.

Kay opened her arms and I knelt in front of her.

“No!” Ashley cried.

“I know, baby, I’m sorry,” I said, setting her into Kay’s lap.

She clung to my shirt and I gently worked her fingers free.

Allyson and Eloise sat on either side of Kay. “It’s okay, Ashley. I know it’s scary, but I promise they always come back,” Allyson tried.

Stepping away from her took every ounce of will I had.

I told Blade and Bash to give me a minute and I rushed upstairs, grabbing her bunny and then my gun from the safe.

Tucking the gun in my pants, I went back to Ashley and handed her the beloved stuffie.

She took it, buried her face, and sobbed into it.

“Uncle Smoke, can she have your shirt? Sometimes when I get nervous when Daddy leaves, he lets me hold his shirt and it makes me feel better cause it smells like him,” Eloise said.

“That is a great idea, Eloise. Thank you.”

I pulled off the Daddies Ink shirt I was wearing and draped it around Ashley’s shoulders. She pulled it to her face too. Bending, I kissed her head, and swallowed

my guilt.

“We’ll be back in no time,” Bash said, patting me on the shoulder before going and giving his own Little one goodbye kisses.

“I know it’s hard, but it will get easier for her,” Blade added after giving Eloise a hug and kiss.

Sighing, I nodded. I fucking hoped it got easier, because at the moment it fucking sucked.

\*\*\*

Ashley

Auntie Kay patted my back as I hiccuped into her shoulder. Dawson had been gone about half an hour and I had finally started to calm down.

“I’m sorry,” I said, feeling more like my adult self.

“You don’t have to be sorry, Little one. I know it was very hard when Daddy left, and you had to be so brave,” Kay said.

I shook my head. “He’s not my Daddy.”

Kay grinned. “Yet. He’s not your Daddy yet. That man is crazy about you, Little one, and as soon as you’re ready, he’s going to take those next steps.”

I hoped that would be soon.

“Can I go get you some juice, sweetie? You cried so hard and I bet you’re very

thirsty,” Kay said.

Nodding, I climbed off her lap.

“Is your arm feeling okay? You can have some more medicine in fifteen minutes.”

I nodded. “Is not so super bad.”

She kissed my forehead again before going to get my juice.

“Are you feeling a little bit better now?” Eloise asked, looking up from the puzzle she and Ally were working on.

I moved from the couch to sit beside them. “Yeah. I’m sorry I cried.”

“It’s okay to feel your feelings. I still cry when Daddy leaves to help his...” Allyson trailed off.

“To help Leland?” I filled in for her.

She and Eloise shared a look and my tummy felt like it dropped six stories. “He’s not helping Leland, is he?” I asked. I think I already suspected that. The shop was closed, and the phone that Dawson had answered wasn’t even his.

“We aren’t supposed to lie,” Eloise said, talking to Allyson.

Ally nodded. “She’s our friend. She won’t tell.”

“Neither of our Daddies told us to keep it from her,” Eloise added.

Their words made my tummy hurt. Was Dawson doing something illegal? Bile rose

in the back of my throat. “Is... is it drugs?” I asked. Did I have it all wrong? Had Dawson relapsed?

“No! No! Nothing like that,” Allyson promised, moving to sit closer to me and taking my hand.

“No! It’s not bad,” Eloise said. “Well, I mean...”

“Please just tell me. I’m so scared.” My heart felt like it was playing the beat for Thousand by Moby in my chest. It was definitely keeping par with his 1,015 beats per minute.

“Do you know what a mercenary is?” Allyson asked.

“A person who goes around the world telling people about religion?” I asked, very confused. I’d never, ever seen Smoke pray.

“No, that’s a missionary. A mercenary is someone who kills people and...”

“That is a terrible description of what your Daddies do!” Kay exclaimed, interrupting Allyson. She passed us each a sippy cup before sitting down on the floor with us.

“Is Dawson a mercenary?” I squawked. I thought maybe I was more prepared for him to be a drug dealer.

“No, honey, and you are fired from telling Ashley anything else about her Daddy, ma’am,” she told Allyson.

Kay wrapped her arm around me and pulled me close.

Her voice was gentle and patient. I knew whatever she was going to say next was

going to be hard to hear.

“Your Daddy is a good man who has met some of the worst people on the earth. He, Blade, and Bash work for a man who helps make the world a bit better of a place.” She took my hand in hers.

“He does kill people. Bad people. Rapists, child abusers, men who abuse their power, scum,” Kay said.

I brought my bunny up to my face while I processed her words.

“I was going to say he was a good mercenary,” Allyson argued.

“He helped kill my ex. H-he was a cult leader who almost killed me. He would have killed me if I hadn’t escaped,” Eloise added.

Kay reached over and pulled her close too.

“So, he only kills bad people?” I asked.

“Very bad people,” Kay assured me. “People who could hurt us. People the world is better without.”

“One time I was listening to Uncle Blade and Daddy talk about a job they had a few years ago. They took out a small ring of human traffickers. I think there were eight of them, and they killed them all,” Allyson added

“They only kill really bad people,” Eloise promised again.

“I’m sure your Daddy didn’t know you were listening, did he?” Kay asked Allyson.

Her face turned a soft pink and she looked down. “No, Ma’am. They thought I was sleeping.”

“Human traffickers are bad people,” I said, processing.

“I know what they do sounds really harsh, but I don’t think I would be here if it wasn’t for them. It was only a matter of time before my ex and his sheep found me,” Eloise said, her eyes glossy with unshed tears.

“I’m really glad you’re here,” I told her.

“We don’t know who they work for or where they go when they leave and we’re not supposed to ask questions when they get back, but I’m really proud of them. More people are safe because of what they do,” Allyson added.

“Do you work with them too?” I asked Kay.

“No, honey. Leland neither.”

“Uncle Leland doesn’t know about it, though, and we’re not supposed to tell him,” Eloise said.

“I only know because I am on Auntie Kay duty when they get called in and a few weeks ago I threatened to gut your Daddy if he didn’t tell me what the hell they were doing,” Kay added.

Frowning, I glared at her. “You better not hurt my Daddy... I mean... Dawson.”

Despite our serious conversation, Allyson and Eloise dissolved into giggles, and I found myself smiling too.

“I know your Daddy will talk to you about it soon, none of the men like to base relationships on dishonesty and they want you to know sooner rather than later.”

I nodded. That sounded very much like my Daddy... Dawson, I corrected myself

“Now that a few of Ashley’s questions are answered, what do you say we all watch a movie?” Kay asked, probably hoping to steer us toward a happier topic.

“Could we watch it in my new playroom?” I had a new TV in there begging to play a Disney movie.

“I think that’s a great idea. How about you Little girls make pallets on the floor and I’ll make some popcorn.”

Smiling, I nodded. Maybe we could still make it a good night.

## Page 8

*Source Creation Date: July 20, 2025, 8:26 am*

Smoke

I slid my clean shirt on and slammed my truck door with a bit too much force.

“I know it’s hard to leave her the first time,” Bash said as we pulled out of my driveway.

“Just the first time?” I asked, knowing he was full of shit.

“Okay, it sucks every damn time,” he admitted.

I nodded; that sounded more like it.

“I fucking hate it. I love knowing we make the world safer for them, but damn, it’s hard,” Blade said from the backseat.

“Have you ever thought about not doing it anymore?” I asked.

“Every damn time the phone rings,” Bash admitted.

“Every time Eloise tells me she’s thankful we found each other,” Blade said, his voice thick with vulnerability.

I looked at him in the rearview mirror.

He shrugged. “She doesn’t have anyone else. After her parents died and she escaped her abusive ex and his cult, she was on her own for a long time. Knowing that I could



die during these jobs, knowing I could potentially leave her alone again, that's fucking hard."

I swallowed the lump in my throat at the idea of Ashley being alone.

"I know that she wouldn't be truly alone. I trust you all would look out for her, but the idea of putting myself into a position where I could be killed eats at me every time I walk out the damn door," Blade explained.

"Allyson has asked me if I could be hurt or killed," Bash admitted.

"What did you tell her?" I asked.

He chuckled, but it didn't sound real. "That hell didn't want me back, so I wouldn't die."

Blade and I scoffed out a laugh, but the air in the truck had gotten heavy.

"You both are stronger than I am. I want to tell Jasper to go fuck himself and go back to my baby," I said.

"I have that same battle every time I walk out the damn door," Bash said.

"Me too," Blade added.

I pulled the truck into the entrance of one of Jasper's buildings and punched the code into the gate. The keypad flashed red. Frowning, I punched in the code again. I was met with more flashes of red.

"What's wrong?" Blade asked.

“What code did Jasper text us?” I asked, annoyed that I must have jumbled it up. Jasper changed the codes often, but he never sent us the wrong one.

“1221,” Bash said.

“1224,” Blade answered just as quickly.

My annoyance quickly turned to horror. I’d been sent 1226.

Each code was different and in increments of two.

Nobody would know we’d been together and were riding into the factory together.

The few minutes it would take us to punch in the code a second time was enough time for each of us to be ambushed. It wasn’t a mistake, it was a setup.

“Fuck!” I yelled, slamming my truck into reverse and trying to back out of the long driveway.

“To the left!” Bash yelled, pulling his gun out.

“On the right too,” Blade yelled, moving frantically in the truck.

The night sky lit up as gunfire exploded around us.

“Get down!” I yelled, my heart pounding in my throat.

The windows blew out around us. “Stay down,” I commanded, trying to shield my face with my arm as I sped rapidly in reverse down the path.

White-hot searing pain tore through my shoulder and then my side.

Biting my cheek hard enough to draw blood, I tried not to cry out.

I still had friends in the truck and our safety was the only thing that mattered at the moment.

Bash crawled from the front to the back, and helped Blade kick out the remainder of the busted back window.

“Can you see?” Blade asked.

“Yes,” I snapped, spinning out onto the dirt road. They were so damn stubborn.

Throwing the truck in gear, I grabbed my phone and tossed it to Bash.

“Call Jasper and stay the fuck down.” Bash moved back to the front and used a flashlight to bust the glass back from the windshield.

Even though the last thing we needed was for it to blow back and cut us, I wanted him to get down and protect himself.

I reached rapid speeds trying to get as far away from the factory as I could.

“Smoke?” Bash asked, his voice heavy with worry. I knew without looking he could see my injuries.

“I’m fine,” I lied. “Call Jasper,” I ordered again.

Jasper answered almost immediately. His voice sounded rough, like he’d been sleeping.

“Smoke? What’s wrong?”

“We were fucking ambushed tonight,” Bash filled in for me.

I was glad, fatigue was coming in hard, the edges of my vision blurred. Shaking my head, I tried to focus on the road ahead of me.

“What! Where?” he asked. Scrambling sounds filled the line before we heard his computer keys clicking.

“I can’t see your location! Did you turn your GPS off?”

Fuck! Someone had been able to shut off our locations?

“No. Did you send us on a job tonight?” Blade asked.

“No.”

“Fuck!” Blade exclaimed. He was suddenly fussing with my arm. The sound of fabric tearing vaguely registered over the sound of Jasper’s frantic questions.

“We all got texts telling us to meet at the south factory. We were together so we just took Smoke’s truck, but we didn’t realize we’d all been texted different codes.

Suddenly we were under fire. We got out of there as quickly as we could, but we didn’t get any information,” Bash said, trying to help Blade.

“If we’d split up and each gone in alone, we’d be dead.

The only reason we’re breathing now is because Smoke drove us out while Blade and I returned fire. ”

“The girls are at my house with Kay. Send some men to keep an eye on the house.” I

said, struggling to talk.

“Smoke?” Jasper asked.

“Hey, man, pull over, okay? I’ll drive,” Bash said, already taking the wheel.

Blade pulled out his gun and watched through the back window. “We’re not being followed.”

I couldn’t get my right arm to cooperate. It shook from the strain of trying to keep us on the road.

“I got it, man. You’re good,” Bash said.

“Bash?” Jasper asked.

“Smoke has been shot. We need help.”

His words echoed in my ears before the darkness finally dragged me under.

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Ashley

“Can I sleep in Uncle Smoke’s bed?” I asked Kay.

The men had been gone for over eight hours and I could tell by the worried looks and heavy silence that it wasn’t normal for a job.

If it hadn’t been for the pain medicine Auntie Kay had given me, I probably would have been up all night tossing and turning.

“You can, sweet girl. Go brush your teeth and potty and I’ll be up to tuck you in, okay?” Auntie Kay answered.

I felt like she only sent me upstairs by myself so she could talk to Allyson and Eloise alone.

I headed in the direction of the stairs, but couldn’t make my legs lift to go up them.

It was like quicksand held me in place. My heart pounded and butterflies danced in my tummy.

Biting my lip, I shifted foot to foot. Eavesdropping was so naughty, but I wanted, no, needed to know what was going on.

I crept to hide behind the big armoire in the downstairs landing. Tilting my head and trying to quiet my breathing, I listened.

“Daddy’s never been gone this long before, Auntie Kay,” Eloise said. Her voice trembled and my own lip quivered.

“I know, Little one,” Kay said gently. “I know it must be so hard for you when they’re gone.”

“I hate it,” Allyson said. “And then I hate myself for being so selfish.”

I knew what she meant. Earlier, guilt had slammed into me with the force of a linebacker. What Dawson was doing was so noble, but so fucking scary too. He could be hurt or even killed. Then what would I do? I didn’t think I could ever live without him again.

“I feel guilty too. Billy would have killed me if Daddy hadn’t killed him first and I

know Daddy is protecting other people like me, but I just wish he could stay home and stay safe,” Eloise said.

“It’s perfectly normal for you to feel that way, Little ones. I adore your big hearts and admire you for wanting to protect others, but if I was in your shoes, I’d want to know my Daddy was safe too,” Kay said.

Her words made me feel better. She wasn’t a Little, but I appreciated that she could sympathize with what we were feeling.

“You would, Auntie Kay?” Eloise asked.

She chuckled deep and warm. It was almost harmonic and it helped ease some of the tension out of my body. “Do you want to know a secret?”

“Yes, Ma’am,” they answered. I imagined their heads were bobbing up and down as they waited for her to share.

“I don’t like that your Daddies do this.

I think that it’s beautifully dark. I admire their loyalty.

I’m grateful for their bravery, and their willingness to step in when others have stepped out, especially the justice system, but I’m very angry with them for their choices to work in such dangerous situations. ”

“You are?” Allyson asked, her voice almost disbelieving.

“I think that for a long time your Daddies didn’t have anything to live for and doing these jobs made them feel something other than anger.

Maybe in some sort of way they felt like they were getting vengeance from those that hurt them in the past, but neither of those things are the truth.

Your Daddies need to live for the people that love them.

Me. Leland. Their clients and the community.

Deep down, I don't think they fully realize how much they mean to the people around them.

And nothing is going to take away the hurt they feel about the past. Eloise, nothing your Daddy does will ever erase the mental scars his father left on him from all the years of abuse he endured at his hands.

Allyson, your Daddy will always carry some anger in his heart at the bastard who killed his mother.

But what they're doing now isn't going to heal those wounds for either of them. ”

The other two Littles were quiet, probably digesting all her words of wisdom.

“But my biggest fear is that they're going to create their own trauma with you girls.

If they were killed during one of these jobs, they would leave you with the scars they're currently living with.

Their anger would become yours, not in the same way, but it would still be very heavy for you to carry.

You'd grieve their deaths. You'd feel anger with the people that took them from you.



You'd have gaping holes in your stories that were only filled by them.

And as much as I love all three of them, I'm very close to throwing them over my knee and whipping all of their asses.

They're so busy chasing the past, they're missing their futures. ”

Wow, Auntie Kay was so wise.

“I fully plan to talk to them about this, but that's going to be a grown-up talk away from Little ears.

What's important tonight is that you know Aunie Kay is here and that she's very proud of you for how brave you were for Ashley. She's very new to this world and you worked very hard to keep her from knowing it wasn't normal for a job to run this long.

Normally, we wouldn't keep things from friends, but she's been through a lot in the past several hours and you were very wise in your choice to keep her from being stressed out. ”

I was touched at how thoughtful Eloise and Allyson were toward me. I knew they were scared, but it meant so much to me that they tried to keep me from being worried.

“I'm going to give Ashley some medicine and tuck her in and then I'll come back and snuggle you two on the couch until your Daddies get back, okay?”

I scrambled up the steps before I heard their replies. I hoped our Daddies would be back safe and sound, and soon.

## Page 9

*Source Creation Date: July 20, 2025, 8:26 am*

Smoke

“Son of a bitch.” I groaned as Layton dug around in my shoulder.

“I’m sorry, Smoke. I know this fucking sucks,” he apologized.

He was right. It did fucking suck, but thankfully even though I’d been shot twice, we were only digging one bullet out. The other had just been a graze.

“Don’t faint or I’m going to murder you,” Bash said, literally grabbing his gun. His shirt was bloody from where he’d carried me inside the factory, and I had a feeling that I’d be hearing about it until the day I died.

The echo of the metal tweezers tinging together inside of my shoulder sounded like nails on a chalkboard and I ground my teeth together, trying to get my mind off the pain and the sickening sound.

“Fucking finally,” Layton said, dropping the tiny mangled piece into a plastic cup.

“I still don’t understand how this happened!” Jasper yelled. One of his tech men jumped at the sound of his thundering voice. His water bottle slid through his hands, hitting the floor, and spilling water everywhere.

“Sorry, sir,” he said, almost crying.

“Blade, apply pressure to Smoke’s arm,” Layton said, his voice unusually gruff.

Blade did as he asked, but watched Layton with curiosity. I did too. I was glad he'd taken a break from playing doctor. That had been about as much fun as a root canal.

Layton knelt in front of the tech guy, and placed his big hands over the man's much smaller ones. It was impossible to make out what he was saying over the chatter of everyone trying to figure out how we'd been ambushed.

The man fished some ear plugs out of his pockets and Layton nodded encouragingly as he plugged his ears with them.

Layton stood, helping him to his feet before pointing in our direction.

I averted my gaze, embarrassed to have been caught staring.

Layton being so... attentive was a far cry from the guy we were used to seeing on a job.

"Mr. Rush wanted me to bandage your arm if that's okay," he said, standing in front of me.

"That's fine, thanks," I answered.

"My name is Tucker. I have some sensory issues and I'm wearing special headphones that help cut down on background noise.

They still allow me to hear you, so don't be scared to speak up if you need something," he said, blushing adorably and scuffing the toe of his dinosaur sneakers on the tile floor.

Oh. My. Fuck.

Tucker had to be a Little and he must have been a Little that caught Layton's eye.

Looking back to Layton, I watched in shock as he grabbed Jasper by the collar and pressed him to the wall with one arm against his throat.

Jasper's eyes were shining with anger and his jaw was clenched, but he didn't strike back. He nodded at whatever Layton said. That must have pleased Layton because he let him go. Jasper straightened his shirt before stomping out of the room.

"Fuck," I groaned when Tucker pulled the bandage tighter.

"I'm really sorry. Mr. Rush said to make sure it was tight."

Trying to give him my most encouraging smile, I told him, "It's okay, buddy. You're doing a really good job."

He lit up under my praise and I found myself understanding Layton's fondness for the man.

"You good?" Layton asked once he'd stomped his way back to me.

"I'm fine."

"Are you lightheaded?" he asked.

"No." I wouldn't tell him if I was.

"Okay, I really feel like you passed out because of a drop in blood pressure. I'm going to let you get home to your girl, but I'll send our doctor over tomorrow to check in with you. He's in emergency surgery right now."

I nodded, not willing to argue with him. Elliot would check me over.

“You’re just going to let him leave?” Bash asked, almost looking appalled.

“Yes, he’s fine.”

“He fucking fainted,” Bash argued.

“Watch your mouth around Tucker,” Layton scolded, making me chuckle.

I couldn’t help it, it was too damn funny. Bash stared at Layton like he’d been body snatched. The entire thing was so bizarre.

“I feel like I’m in an alternate reality,” Blade mumbled from where he’d moved to once Tucker had taken over.

“Besides, he only fainted because his pressure bottomed out. It’s stable now,” Layton argued.

“He still fuc.... freaking fainted,” Bash argued.

“Thanks,” I said, standing and grabbing my bloodied shirt from the table.

“Let me get you a fresh shirt,” Tucker said, running off before I could even reply.

“He’s sweet,” I told Layton.

“Fuck you,” he replied, but the corner of his mouth twitched and I felt like he knew he was being obstinate.

“This night has been wild,” Blade mumbled.

“Yup, and tomorrow I feel like we’re all going to need to talk about it, but right now I just want to get back to my girl.”

\*\*\*

A soft body snuggling closer to me woke me from a light sleep. The only positive thing that had happened last night was that Ash had asked to sleep in my bed. Kay said she’d missed me and even though I hated her heart was sad, I loved knowing her feelings mirrored mine.

Ash rutted against me again and my hard cock pressed against her belly. Her movements stilled and her eyes opened wide.

“Good morning, babygirl.”

“Dawson!” she squealed before flinging her arms around me.

I hugged her tightly before kissing her forehead. “I missed you last night, Little one. I was so glad when I found you in my bed.” I didn’t add how late it had been or how long I’d had Jasper’s men watching the house. Little girls didn’t need to know everything.

“I missed you too,” she said. “I’m sorry I was so emotional last night. I let my Little be a bit too free.”

Stroking her face, I rolled us so that she was under me. My arm and side protested in agony, but I forced myself to keep a straight face.

“Your Little is allowed to be as free as she wants. I don’t want you to feel like you have to keep her trapped inside, okay? It’s not healthy for you or her.”

She turned her head, looking away from me. Running my hand up her back, I fisted her hair in my hand and forced her to look at me.

She gasped in surprise, but didn't protest.

"Promise me you won't hide her away. She's safe now. You're both safe now."

Her lips parted and her tongue darted out to wet them.

"Promise me, babygirl."

"I promise," she said, panting.

Grabbing one of her thighs, I opened her up to me. Sliding between her legs, I rested my erection against her. The pink panties she was wearing did nothing to prevent me from feeling her heat against my shaft.

Gasping, she rubbed herself against my length. Through her thin t-shirt I could see her nipples pebble. A sudden, almost primal, urge to see her shot through me.

"Can I get you naked, babygirl?"

"Y-yes," she said, already moving to help me undress her. I pulled the sleep shirt over her head and she kicked off her panties.

Her pert titties jiggled with our hurried motions and I couldn't resist the need to suck a nipple into my mouth.

"Dawson," she moaned.

Bringing my other hand up, I cupped her breast before rolling the nipple in my

fingers. She arched her hips up and my cock brushed across her bare mound.

“More,” she cried.

Letting her nipple pop free, I grabbed her hip, stilling her movements. “What do you want more of, baby?”

Her eyes were wide, dilated, and pleading when she looked at me. It was a fucking turn-on to know she wanted me as badly as I wanted her.

“Tell me what you need, Ashley.”

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Ashley

I tossed my head back and forth. “I don’t know!” I cried. “Just more.”

Dawson smiled before lowering his mouth to mine and whispering a promise to help me against my lips. He traced my bottom lip and I opened my mouth for him.

“Fuck me,” he whispered just before his tongue slid across mine. I was met with the taste of cinnamon. “I’m going to take care of you,” he said.

I believed him. I knew I’d be one loved Little one when he was done with me.

Pulling back, he sucked my lower lip into my mouth and I shivered at the powerful sensation.

My pussy clenched and once again I arched my hips trying to gain friction against him.



Grabbing his shirt in with my good hand, I tried to pull it over his head, but he pulled back from me.

I whined, immediately missing the feel of him laying over me.

He took my hand in his and pressed a kiss to my palm. His brows drew together in worry and the air grew heavy with the weight of whatever he was going to say.

“What is it?” I asked.

“I was hurt last night. I promise I am okay, but I don’t want my bandages to scare you.”

“You were hurt?” I asked, trying to sit up so I could check him over. He laid his large palm in the center of my chest and kept me laying on my back in the bed.

“I was shot, but some friends took good care of me and Elliot is going to come by and look me over today.”

“Is it bad? Did the bad men hurt you? Did you kill them?”

“The bad men? Did I kill them?” he repeated. His mouth opened and closed several times. He studied me, looking aghast at my questions.

My tummy flipped upside down, but I nodded anyway. “Yes, Eloise, Allyson, and I had a really big talk last night.”

“You did?”

I hated the fearful look on his face. “We did, but please don’t look so worried.

I understand. Eloise said you and the other Daddies saved her and even though it is still super scary, I'm really glad that you're helping so many other people," I explained, wrapping my fingers around his hand on my chest.

He sighed, loud and long and heavy.

"I'm sorry you didn't have a chance to find out from me, Little one. I planned to tell you, just when I'd figured some more things out."

"When you figured some things out?" I asked, wondering what kind of things he was talking about.

"You are my world, Ash. When I was in prison, I didn't give a fuck, all I could think about was getting out and getting high again.

I hated my dad, hated your mom, but finding out they were getting married and dragging you into the mix was eye-opening for me.

You were so young and innocent. I knew if I didn't get my shit together, you'd never have a chance at life.

It didn't save you. My dad still almost killed you, but it is only because of you that I am who I am," he said tenderly.

"And now that I have you, I'm not sure I want to do those jobs anymore.

I used to love it, but now... Now I love you . "

Tears filled my eyes and for the first time in a very long time, I felt valued.

He loves us! my little screamed.

I pushed up to a sitting position; he let me that time, and I wrapped both arms around him, kissing him deeply on the mouth before pulling back.

“I love you too, Dawson. I think I have for a while and just didn’t know it.”

“You know this means you’re mine now, right? I’m never letting you go, Little girl.”

“Good. I wanna be yours forever,” I answered.

Forever! my Little repeated.

He pulled his shirt over his head before covering my body again.

My nipples pressed against his chest and he dipped his head to suck one and then the other into his mouth.

I cried out in pleasure at the sensation.

Kissing a path from my breasts, down my belly, he settled between my legs and pressed a kiss to my mound.

I fidgeted nervously, but when he lifted my legs over his shoulders, I panicked.

“Dawson, wait!”

“What’s wrong, babygirl?” he asked. His eyes searched mine for a clue at what might be wrong.

“Y-you don’t have to do that,” I said, heat rushing to my face.

“Do what, baby?” he asked.

“O-oral sex. I’m okay without it. It’s not a big deal.”

I knew how much my ex hated it and I didn’t want Dawson to feel like he had to pleasure me like that. I didn’t want him to feel obligated.

Maintaining eye contact with me, he pressed another feather-soft kiss to my pussy.

“Ashley, this is one of my favorite things about being intimate with someone. I can make you feel good in so many different ways, but using my mouth to devour your pussy is top-tier. You’re going to taste so sweet and I know I’m going to be addicted to your flavor before I even take the first lick. ”

He seemed so open, so transparent, that I believed him.

“I really want to, babygirl. I promise I’m not doing it because I feel like I have to. I want to.”

“O-okay,” I said, feeling almost guilty I’d stopped him. I still wasn’t sure why he would like to eat me out, but he’d always been truthful to me and I believed him.

He winked at me before lifting my legs back over his shoulders. Sliding his hands under my butt, he lifted me to his mouth.

The first lick was gentle, almost featherlike, the second one was more direct and full of heat , and heaven help me, the third one unraveled any lingering concerns I had.

Smoke

Holy. Fuck. I could stay camped between Ash's legs forever. She tasted delicious and from the second her flavor hit my tongue, I knew she was mine. I could never let her go.

Lapping at her clit gently brought the sweetest cry of pleasure from her mouth. Sucking the bundle of nerves into my mouth brought her back off the bed.

Her fingers ran over my head, and I pulled away from her heat.

"Rest your broken arm on the bed, babygirl. I don't want you to hurt it."

She frowned, but did as I asked.

"Why are you making a grumpy face?" I asked, chuckling.

"You're hurt too and you're moving," she complained.

"Yes, but it's very different."

"How is it different?" I was enamored with the way her mouth twisted into the sweetest pout.

"Because I'm Daddy," was all I said before taking her clit in my mouth again.

Delicious sounds of pleasure fell from her mouth and her thighs tensed over my

shoulders and despite it pressing down on the bandage, I didn't mind. An intense feeling of possession filled me as I brought her pleasure. I slid two fingers into her heat, curling them upward and stroking gently.

"D-Dawson," she cried.

"Let it feel good, Little one," I whispered against her bare skin.

"I need..." she whined before a shiver tore through her.

It was so raw, so real, that my cock leaked in my sweatpants. "Fuck me, babygirl. I'm going to give you what you need," I groaned, looking up at her. I ran my free hand up her belly and to her chest, cupping a breast in my hand.

"Please, please!" she sobbed, her head rolling side to side as she tried to grind her cunt against me. "I need to come. Please!"

Taking pity on her and sucking her clit back in my mouth, I flicked it rapidly with my tongue. Her legs shook even harder and her body tensed right before she came apart.

"Dawson! Daddy!" she screamed, her cries echoing around the room.

Gently licking her through her orgasm was no great feat. I cherished every cry, every plea, every tremble her body gave me. My head spun from her pleasure and my new title.

Once I knew she was done and she'd given me every ounce of pleasure, I pressed a kiss to each side of her pussy and climbed back up her body.

Her hands pushed at my sweatpants and I grabbed her injured one, easing it back onto the bed. "I need you to keep your arm down on the bed, babygirl. If you can't keep it

down, I'm going to have to stop," I scolded her gently.

"No, Dawson! Don't stop. I'll keep it down, I promise."

"Oh, babygirl. You think after I heard you call me Daddy from that sweet mouth of yours, you're going to get away with calling me Dawson?"

She averted her eyes and I cupped the back of her head with the palm of my hand.  
"Look at me, Ashley Emery."

When I had her full attention again, I said, "My name is Daddy to you, Little one."

Daddy! We has a Daddy! my Little cried.

"Yes, Sir."

"Try again," I said, brushing my lips against hers.

"Yes, Daddy," she answered, her breath fanning across my face. Yes, Daddy!

"Fucking perfect."

Sliding my sweatpants down my legs, I let my cock rest against her thigh.

"Can I see you?" she asked, her voice breathy.

Sitting back on my knees I moved to the side of her, trying not to wince as my skin pulled.

After I helped her sit up, she wrapped her hand around my shaft. "You're so big."

Smiling, I rubbed her back. "You're good for my ego."

"Maybe I shouldn't keep talking like that, it might make you... cocky," she said before snorting in laughter.

I laughed too.

"Can I taste you?" she asked, trailing her finger through my precum.

"You're going to kill me, babygirl. Yes, you can taste me."

Dropping her head she took my cock into her mouth, flicking her tongue as she swallowed me the rest of the way down. Fisting my hand in her head, I moaned. "Fucking hell, Little one."

Bobbing her head, she wasted no time in setting a rhythm that had my toes looking like they were doing rhythmic gymnastics.

"Ashley, pull off, baby," I said.

"Why?" she pouted after popping off my dick.

"Because the first time I come with you, I want it to be in your sweet little cunt."

"Oh," she answered, flushing. "Okay."

I laughed as she laid back on her back. "If you insist."

Sassy girl.

Climbing back between her thighs, I brushed my cock over her swollen clit.



“Daddy,” she whined.

“I know, babygirl. I’m being so mean.”

“Terrible,” she agreed.

Lifting her leg and opening her back up to me, I settled myself against her before slowly easing in. She was wet and hot, and felt too damn good. “Oh, baby. You feel amazing.” I told her, rocking in and out. The sounds of her arousal filled the room.

“Daddy, you feel good too—so good,” she cried. She wrapped her uninjured arm around me.

“It feels good for my girl, huh?” I said.

“So good,” she cried, her pussy pulsing around me.

“Daddy’s going to make sure you feel good all the time,” I promised as we continued our sweet loving—making silent promises to love each other forever.

\*\*\*

Ashley

I held Daddy’s hand as Elliot looked over his arm.

“Do I want to know how you got this?” he asked Dawson.

“No. You really don’t.”

Elliot nodded sharply. “I don’t fucking like it, but I won’t ask questions.”

“I appreciate it.”

“Whoever cleaned this up, though, needs to learn how to do a fucking stitch. You can’t just bandage a bullet wound after you remove a damn slug,” Elliot said, digging through his medical bag angrily.

“I’ll pass that along,” Dawson said calmly. I didn’t think he was actually calm, though. His jaw was tight and I heard him grinding his teeth.

I stroked the back of his hand with my thumb and when he looked over at me I tried to send him a reassuring smile.

“Are you okay, Little girl?” he asked me.

Despite Elliot being in the room, I frowned. “I’m babygirl!” I exclaimed, annoyed I needed to tell him again.

Elliot chuckled and Dawson grinned sheepishly. “I’m sorry, babygirl. Are you doing okay?”

“I’m fine.”

He started to say something, but then winced and cursed. “Fucking, hell, Elliot!”

“This may burn a bit,” Elliot mumbled. I thought maybe he was still angry with Daddy because he wasn’t being so super gentle with him.

“It’s a little fucking late to tell me now!”

“Oops,” Elliot said, clearly not feeling the least bit remorseful. “If you don’t want things to sting, maybe you shouldn’t get shot.”

Couldn't argue with him there.

A knock on the door stopped their argument and Elliot's Little girl Tinsley rushed in.

"Hi, Uncle Smokes! You're nakey!"

I giggled. Daddy wasn't nakey, but his shirt was off.

"Tinsley Kate, what has Daddy told you about running into his office?"

"Not to, Daddy."

"So why are you in my office right now?"

"I knocked first!" she protested.

"Did I tell you it was okay to come in?"

"Nooooo."

"Tinsley Kate!" her other Daddy, Tyler, yelled. He must have been looking for her.

"Oh no. I needa hide!" she said, running over to the couch and picking up Elliot's white lab coat. She draped it over her head, making herself look like a ghost.

Tyler appeared in the doorway and spotted her immediately. "Tinsley Kate!" he scolded, "You know you are not supposed to be in Daddy's office unless he gives you permission ahead of time."

Tinsley stood completely still and didn't answer him.

“Tinsley Kate!” her Daddy scolded again.

Unable to keep my Little from bursting through, I blurted out, “That’s not Tinsley. That’s a ghostie.”

“A ghostie,” Tinsley agreed, nodding. “Oooooo,” she howled, making spooky noises.

Dawson looked at me, his eyes bright with amusement. “Oh, Little girl, you are being so naughty right now.”

Blushing, I looked down, but I couldn’t just stand there and let a Little friend fend for herself against her big, growly tops.

Sliding from the chair I slowly tiptoed over to Tinsley and took her hand.

“Is okay, Mr. Tyler. I’m a certified priest. I’ll get the spooky ghostie out of your house,” I said even though my bottom tingled with nerves.

I guided Tinsley out of the room. We hadn’t even made it down the hall before all three men erupted in loud laughter.

“Oh, there is no way we can let those two be friends. They are dangerous together,” Elliot laughed. I was thankful Tinsley and I had seemed to shift the mood to something lighter even if that meant I might be in trouble later.

\*\*\*

“I want you to stay right here, Little one,” Dawson told me after he’d finished drying my skin from the bath.

“I promise.”

“Good girl,” he said.

I pulled my bunny to my face and rubbed her against my nose. It had been a long day. After getting Dawson patched up, we’d stayed at Dr. Elliot’s until my orthopedic appointment. Tinsley and I had so much fun playing together and our Daddies promised we could have another playdate soon.

“Well that’s a sweet sight,” Daddy said, coming back into view with a sleeper and a diaper for me.

I’d been nervous when Daddy asked if I was young enough to wear them in Little space, but I’d answered honestly. It had worked out perfectly because he really did love tiny Littles.

He opened the towel I was wearing and pressed soft kisses to my belly.

“I love you so much, Little girl.”

“I love you too, Daddy.”

“You know you’re in trouble for the ghostie stunt right?” he asked.

I nodded. I’d figured.

“When your arm and head are all better, your bottom is going to be very sore.”

“Yes, Daddy.”

He quickly diapered me, applied cream, and worked me into my favorite sleeper. It was black with planets on it and when you pulled up the hood, it made you look like an astronaut with a printed helmet.

“Tomorrow I want us to sit down and order some more Little gear for you,” he said, lifting me from the bed.

“Be careful of your stitches!”

Chuckling, he pressed a kiss to each side of my face. “I’m fine, babygirl. I promise. How is your arm?” he asked. “Do you need more medicine?”

“No, Daddy.”

The orthopedic doctor had casted my arm and the extra support had really helped with the pain. I’d gotten a purple cast and Daddy had drawn Rapunzel and Pascal on it. I thought maybe they’d helped with the pain too ‘cause it really did feel so much better.

I tucked my head into Daddy’s neck and he rocked me side to side.

“You’re a sleepy baby,” he cooed.

“Nu, Daddy.”

He chuckled, patting my diapered bottom. “You had a big day, babygirl. It’s okay to be tired.”

“Can I sleep in your bed again?”

“You’ll always sleep in my bed. There’s no way in hell I’m letting you sleep away from me. I’m going to tuck you in and then I’m going to make you a bedtime bottle, okay?”

“Okay, Daddy.”

"And tomorrow we will go pick out a car for you."

I smiled. "That's exciting."

"I'm not sure I like the idea of my baby driving by herself, but I'm going to try to be strong and brave about it," he teased, winking at me.

"I promise I'll be so super careful, Daddy."

"You better, Little one." He tucked me into his bed. Breathing his scent in deeply, I snuggled down into the bedding. After kissing my forehead, he turned to head back downstairs.

A shrill beep made my heart drop to my feet and tears instantly welled in my eyes.

"Do you have to go, Daddy?"

His face softened and he came to sit on the bed.

"That was my personal phone, baby. It was an email," he explained.

I felt foolish and heat bloomed on my cheeks.

"I'm sorry, Daddy. I just thought..."

"You don't have to be sorry, baby. Daddy's sorry he's caused you to be so scared."

Sitting up, I climbed in his lap and he held me close.

"I'm quitting, babygirl. It's time to close that chapter of my life and focus on the next one."

Even though I felt relief, I didn't want him to leave something he loved, just because I was scared. "I don't want you to quit because of me. I'm sure over time I wouldn't be as scared."

Yas-huh! We do want him to quit, my Little argued.

"Tough shit. I am quitting because of you. Because you are my reason for living, you are my love, my Little, and my whole damn future and nothing is going to interfere with that, babygirl."



Smoke

“I’m not used to being on this side of the desk,” Jasper said, staring at me inquisitively. Four days had passed since I’d been shot and each day that I’d been able to spend with Ashley only confirmed I was making the right choice.

“Thank you for coming in,” I said, reciting the words I’d been practicing.

“You’re leaving the team, aren’t you?” he asked.

My heart had been slamming in my chest until he’d said those words. He didn’t seem shocked or even surprised.

“I am.”

He sighed, running his hand through his hair. “I hate that I’m losing you, but I get it.”

“You do?” I asked, trying not to appear as surprised as I was.

“You found a reason to keep living. Truthfully, I thought I’d lose Blade the minute he claimed Eloise. I figure I’ll lose him soon. Bash too. I can’t fault you all for wanting something different— something less dark.”

“You’ve done so much for me. I am really grateful, Jasper. I don’t want you to leave this meeting not knowing that. You gave me a purpose when I felt like I didn’t have any.”

He smiled, but it didn't reach his eyes. "You may be leaving the team, but that doesn't mean I'm leaving you. I'll always be here if you need anything," he said standing and holding out his hand.

I stood, ignoring his attempt at a handshake and walked around my desk. Surprising us both, I hugged him.

"We had a good run," Jasper said, hugging me back.

"We did," I agreed.

"I'm glad you're going to have an even better future."

"I'll stay long enough to help you figure out who set us up," I said. I hated to give him any more time, especially when it could put me in danger, but Jasper had been good to me and I felt like I at least owed him that.

"No, I know already. It's been taken care of," he said.

"You know who set us up?"

He nodded.

"Who the fuck was it?" I asked. My words were much sharper than I intended and I knew the anger bubbling in my belly would only cause more angry words to pour out of my mouth if I didn't get control of it.

"It doesn't matter, Smoke. They're dead now. All of them."

"It does fucking matter, Jasper! They tried to kill us."

Tugging his long beard, he sighed and sat down. “My brother and some of his men.”

“Your brother?” I wasn’t surprised to hear that Jasper’s family had tried to kill us—I knew first hand how evil blood could treat you—but I was surprised to hear he had a brother. I’d been under the impression he had no family.

“Yeah. Look, I don’t want you to worry about it. He wasn’t bright. He managed to get his claws into someone that is and that person found me and managed to gain access to my system and your phones. The important thing is they’re all done and dead and you’re safe. Everyone is safe.”

“You killed your brother?” I asked, not judgmentally. I knew firsthand how easy it was to kill someone vile even when that someone was of blood relation.

“I did.”

“Are you okay?”

He snorted, “Only you’d ask if I was okay after I admit I killed my own fucking brother.”

“Are you, though?”

“All of this, the entire foundation for what I do, was because of my baby sister Kali. Our mom died when Kali was born and my dad always blamed her. He treated her like shit. I tried to protect her, but I couldn’t be everywhere, all of the time.

I got her out, thought I had her safe with relatives, but our dad’s sins ran deep.

He owed some really bad people a lot of money and they killed Kali as a promise of what was to come if he didn’t pay up.

She was sixteen when she was killed. I felt...

I still feel like my whole life ended at nineteen.

Dad valued his own life more than his damn blood's.

She'd been tortured, so badly bruised I almost didn't recognize her.

I found him, killed him. You think what you did to your dad was bad?

I danced in his blood as he lay dying. My brother, Desmond, never forgave me for killing Dad.

He didn't see how evil he was. I hadn't seen Desmond for almost fifteen years.

I guess that's enough time to let a grudge grow big enough to take action on it. "

"That's a heavy weight to carry, Jasper. A lot of heavy weight."

"I feel like it was all for nothing, though. No matter how many people I kill, I'm never going to bring Kali back. The last few weeks I realized I'm not really living either, but without this, I don't know who I am," he said, standing again.

"You know it's never too late to discover who you are, Jasper."

He grinned, but I could tell it was fake. His haunted eyes stared straight through me.

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"Can I talk to you?" Kay asked, coming into my office.

“Yeah, shut the door behind you,” I said, closing my laptop and giving her my full attention. Judging by the look on her face, it was serious.

“I know it’s not my place to say anything, but I’m really worried, Smoke. I’m so worried I haven’t been able to sleep lately and I think maybe I’ll just feel better if I get it off my chest.”

Concern filled me. Had I done something to upset Kay? Had I caused her turmoil?

“You can talk to me about anything, Kay. You’re so dear to me,” I told her, trying to give her the encouragement she needed to continue.

To my horror, her eyes filled with tears and her lip trembled. “Kay, what is it?” I asked, standing and going to sit on the edge of my desk in front of her. I held a box of tissues out to her to take.

She took one before dabbing the corner of her eyes.

“I just think you all are making such a big mistake taking these jobs. I know you’re hurting and you’re trying to avenge the people who have been taken from you or get revenge on the people who hurt you, but the truth is nothing you do is ever going to bring them back or heal the pain of your pasts.

I’m so scared you’re going to cost yourself the happiness that those Little girls can bring you if you all keep going down this path,” she said before sobbing into the tissue.

“Kay, I’m so sorry we’ve been causing you so much distress.

You’re so special to us and I hate that I didn’t know how distraught you were.

You're absolutely right, though. I've been feeling the same way for several days.

Carrying the weight of the anxiety I've given Ashley was eating at me and I talked to our boss today. I left the team, Kay."

Big teary eyes looked up, locking onto mine. "You did?"

"I did," I confirmed.

I reached out taking her hand, "But, Kay, thank you for being willing to do the hard thing and talk to me about how you were feeling. You're a great friend."

"I just want to see you live, Smoke. You've been more alive these last few weeks than I've ever seen you."

"Thank you for doing the hard thing and talking to me, Kay," I repeated.

She nodded, but her eyes still looked a bit haunted.

"I need to talk to Blade and Bash. I don't think I'll feel better until I speak to all of you."

"Will you speak to them soon? I hate that this has been weighing you down."

"Yes. I'll talk to them as soon as I can. Do you think they'll be upset with me?"

Reaching out, I took her hand. "I think they will be grateful to have such a good friend. How about we go together and talk to them?"

"Would you mind going with me? Would it be awkward for you?"

“No, you’re right. We aren’t living. I’ll gladly go with you,” I told her, only speaking the truth. It was time for a change—a change for more than just me.

“Sometimes it’s hard to give y’all advice without feeling like I’m nagging you. I just want you all to be happy.”

Shrugging, I said, “I think being a good friend requires a certain amount of nagging. Besides, one day you’ll fuck up and I’ll get the pleasure of being the one doing the nagging.”

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Ashley

“Can you pass me the green crayon?” I asked Eloise.

She handed it to me and I thanked her.

“How’s your arm?” Allyson asked as she colored a tiger pink.

That was silly, tigers weren’t pink.

“Is lots better,” I answered instead. We were in my playroom. Daddy and Auntie Kay were having a meeting with Uncle Bash and Uncle Blade. I felt like it was pretty serious and my tummy flipped around. I hoped everything was okay.

“When can you go back to work? Lennon said she misses you,” Eloise said, coloring a puppy blue.

We need to help our friends learn their colors. They’re doing a terrible job.

I fought back a grin. My Little was a bit of a coloring snob.

“Daddy thinks it might be too hard for me to go back, so I told the shop I wouldn’t be returning.

They were really nice about it,” I said, shifting on the carpet.

The movement pulled my deliciously sore muscles.

Daddy had fucked me over the back of the couch before everyone came over and each pull and pain I felt as I moved made me feel even more loved.

I think I wanted him to fuck me before we went anywhere so I could always feel owned and adored.

“I think it would be hard too,” Allyson said.

“Yeah. I wouldn’t want to go back either. Are you sad, though? I know you really liked the job,” Eloise said.

“I was a bit sad, but I discovered while working there I really enjoyed decorating cakes and Daddy said we could look into finding some classes to grow my skills and maybe I’ll start making and selling specialty cakes.”

“I’d be happy to sample them all for you,” Eloise said, nodding.

I giggled.

“Yeah, we’ll try anything you make,” Allyson said. “But you should definitely make red velvet.”



“I’ll always share my cake with you, you guys don’t have to be sneaky with it.” I laughed.

They smiled and I found myself feeling even more thankful for them.

“What about your mom?” Eloise asked. Her lips were pressed in a thin line and I was touched that she was worried.

“She was on probation when she damaged the store property and attacked me. She didn’t tell her probation officer she was leaving the state and she violated an order of protection.

She headbutted the police officer that arrested her and broke his nose, so she was also charged with assault of an officer.

She had drugs on her too. Daddy talked to the police and they said she was probably going to take a deal to serve ten years. ”

“Ten years doesn’t seem like long enough,” Allyson said, frowning.

“That’s what I told Daddy, but he told me not to worry. He was pretty confident she wouldn’t bother me anymore. I don’t know what makes him feel that way, but I trust him.”

“Yeah, the Daddies usually aren’t wrong,” Eloise said.

“It’s very annoying,” Allyson added.

I shrugged. “I am so thankful Daddy’s been right about everything so far. Sometimes it is really hard to trust what he says, but he’s got an A+ on all his promises so far,” I said.

“My Daddy has been wrong one time before,” Eloise said.

“Oh yeah? ‘Bout what?”

“Bacon-wrapped asparagus is not delicious.”

I giggled. “Ew.”

“What do you think their meeting is about?” Eloise asked, changing the subject and looking worried again.

“My Daddy quit the team,” I said. I wasn’t sure if I was supposed to share, but I didn’t like that she was so distraught.

Eloise looked up at me and then at Allyson.

“Do you think our Daddies are quitting?” Her voice was soft and her eyes shone with hope.

“I hope so,” Allyson said, tearing up.

I reached across the table and held both their hands. No words were needed as we sat in silence for a little bit. I knew how they were feeling and I hoped their Daddies could bring them the same peace mine had brought me. Nothing compared to knowing my Daddy would be safe.

A little over an hour later the Daddies walked into the playroom.

Eloise and Allyson stood and rushed into their arms. Uncle Bash and Uncle Blade picked them up and whispered something in their ears.

They both burst into loud sobs as they clung to their Daddies, like they were their only support at the moment.

“Are they okay, Daddy?” I asked my own Daddy once he’d lifted me in his arms.

“They are, babygirl. They’re moving onto the next chapter of their lives too.”

I was happy for them. We all deserved to feel secure and know our Daddies were safe. Wrapping my good arm around his neck, I kissed his mouth. “I love you, Daddy.”

“I love you too, babygirl.”

“Forever?”

“Forever,” he confirmed, and just like all of the other times, I believed him.

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*Source Creation Date: July 20, 2025, 8:26 am*

Smoke

“Piggies or bunnies?” I asked Ashley.

“Dunno,” she answered around her thumb.

Laughing, I brushed her hair into two small ponies at the crown of her head. “Bunnies it is, babygirl.”

“Tanks,” she said when I stood her up and turned her to face me.

“You are welcome, cutie-patootie.”

She grinned at the silly nickname.

“Are you warm enough?” I asked, running my hands over her pink bunny sleeper.

She nodded. “Warm.”

“Okay, if that changes you let me know. I’ll keep a blanket in the truck for you just in case.” We were going to a play party at The Thirsty Turtle and while it was warm outside I’d been told it could be chilly in the main room where the party would be.

She nodded.

“Are you so excited to decorate cookies with your friends tonight?” I asked, standing and lifting her from the bed.

““Cited!” she agreed.

“If you get nervous or ouchie, I want you to promise to tell me, okay? I won't mind at all. I take my Daddy duties very seriously and it makes my heart happy to be able to help you.”

Her brow furrowed. “Leave?”

“No, babygirl. That doesn't mean we will leave. It just means we'll take a little break.”

“Little break,” she said, nodding again.

I brushed her hair back behind her ear and kissed her forehead. I hoped she understood how precious to me she was.

“Hair?” she asked, picking up the hairbrush.

“What about your hair?” I asked.

“You hair.”

“My hair?”

“Yas-huh.”

“What about it?”

“Babygirl do it.”

I laughed. She was so damn cute. “You're going to help me with my hair?”

“Yas-huh,” she said, climbing on the bed and standing behind me.

I held her legs to make sure she stayed supported. “Oh, thank you. That would be so helpful.”

She brushed my buzzcut several times before plopping on her diaper covered bottom.

“Careful, babygirl. You still have some ouchies,” I reminded her as I pulled her onto my lap.

She slipped her thumb in her mouth again and I pressed a kiss to the side of her head.

“Love you,” she babbled.

“I love you too, babygirl. More than you’ll ever know.”

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I lifted Ash from the truck and tried to set her on her feet. She lifted her legs and I laughed at her antics. “Put your feet down, babygirl.” I held her by her underarms.

“No feets.”

“Oh no! No feets?”

"Lost them."

" You lost your feet?" I asked, amused.

“Yas-huh.”

“That’s so terrible.”

“So terrible,” she agreed, still holding her feet in the air.

“Where did you lose them?”

“Tennessee.”

Snorting, I set her on my hip and she wrapped her legs around me.

“You are so silly.”

“So silly,” she agreed with a nod.

“Are you excited for tonight?”

“Yas-huh, cookies!”

“I know, decorating cookies sounds so fun, huh?”

“Fun!”

I adored her babbling.

“Hi, Uncle Smoke!” Rogue said, waving from the entrance.

“Hey, Little one. I’m so glad you could make it tonight. Are you feeling better?”

“Yes, sir. My migraine is all gone.”

“Yay!” Ash said, clapping her hands.

“Yay!” I agreed.

“You look so cute!” Rogue told Ashley. “I love your bunnies in your hair.”

“Tanks!”

“Where is your Daddy, Rogue?” I asked after not seeing him around.

“He forgot his ID in the car and he had to go back and get it. He’s so naughty.”

“So naughty,” Ashley agreed from beside me.

“I heard that, sassy-pants,” Leland said as he walked back to us.

“Unka Leland!” Ash squealed, waving at him. My heart melted at her sweetness.

The sound of excited Little girls reached my ears and I turned around to see Eloise and Allyson walking along, holding hands with Kay as they talked at rapid speeds. Their Daddies were working the shop and would meet us later.

“Eloise! Allyson!” Rogue cried as she and Ashley waved at them in excitement. Looking around, my heart was so full as our little family greeted each other.

I handed the bouncer our IDs and carried Ashley inside the building. "Ohhh, pretty!" she said, pointing to the double doors. They'd been decorated to look like cookies and they were very cute.

"That's so cute!" Eloise squealed.

"I'm going to make my cookies look like the doors," Allyson added.

I enjoyed watching their excitement. It was always so refreshing to see genuine Little ones and it looked like Kay, Leland, and I had our hands full of genuinely Little girls for the night.



"I think we're going to need a drink," Kay teased.

"I was actually going to visit the bar anyway, do you really want a drink?" I asked.

A Little girl shriek pierced the air as a large dancing cookie appeared in the walkway.

"Yes, please," Kay laughed before being dragged off to meet the cookie.

"I'll take her," Leland said, holding his arms out for Ashley.

"Can you go with Uncle Leland so Daddy can go buy some drinks? I promise I'll come right back."

She looked hesitant at first, but then the cookie started to blow bubbles and she was entranced. I passed her over before heading to the bar.

"Can I get three of whatever's on tap?" I asked the bartender.

"Well, you just couldn't stand being away from me, could you?" a familiar voice asked.

Grinning, I turned to face Jasper. "What are you doing here?" I asked.

"My three best men quit on me. I'm here drowning my sorrows in liquor."

Taking my drinks from the bartender, I motioned for him to follow me. "Come on."

"Where are we going?" he asked, following.

"I'm going to introduce you to everyone."

He stopped in his tracks. "To your family?"

"Yeah. Come on."

He smiled, a real, genuine smile. "Really?"

"Yeah, really," I laughed.

We quickly located everyone and I passed out the beers.

"This is my friend Jasper, he's going to be joining us for the night."

"Hi, Unka Jasper," Ashley said, giving him her best smile.

Jasper swallowed before answering, "Hello, Little one. Did you know your Daddy was one of my best friends?"

If anyone had told younger me this would one day be my life, I would have laughed them out of town.

Ashley and Jasper had nothing in common, but that didn't stop them both giving me a second chance at life. Jasper had given me a place to belong when all I had to give was anger, and Ashley had given me a reason to love even though I'd never experienced it before her. I was a damn lucky man.